



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #237 — OCT. 1, 2012**

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Ann Romney's Endorsement?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 1, 2012)

Wow! I'm so astounded I don't even know what to say. Normally a candidate's wife would stand behind her husband 100%, like Michelle Obama does. But here's Mrs. Romney, stating unequivocally that her number one worry if Mitt became President would be his mental health.

As blogger Julie Kent put it: "Ann's lack of confidence in her husband's ability to handle the job as the President of the United States isn't likely to instill confidence in voters." (<http://bstewbiesretreat.runboard.com/p9958>)

I guess Ann doesn't want Mitt to be President either, or she might have kept her trap shut on this particular subject. Poor Mittens!



"Ann Romney: Biggest Fear Is for Mitt's 'Mental Well-Being'" (w/ video) by Reuters

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/28/mitt-romney-mental-well-being\\_n\\_1924622.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/28/mitt-romney-mental-well-being_n_1924622.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) Ann Romney told a Nevada television station her biggest concern if her husband, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, becomes president was his "mental well-being."

In an interview Thursday with television station KTVN, Mrs. Romney was asked what her biggest worry was should Mitt Romney be elected to serve in the White House.

**"I think my biggest concern *obviously* would just be for his mental well-being,"** she said. "I have all the confidence in the world in his ability, in his decisiveness, in his leadership skills, in his understanding of the economy. ... So for me I think it would just be the emotional part of it."

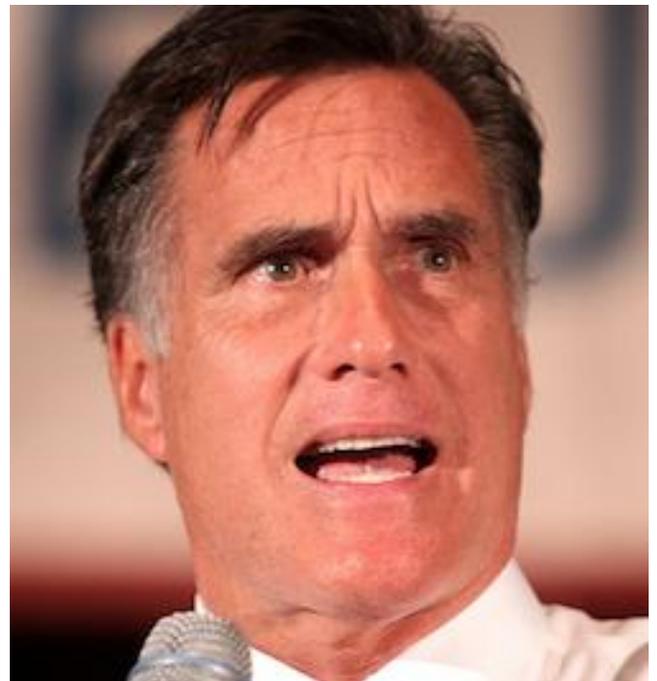
["Obviously!" –SteveB]

Mrs. Romney has been campaigning hard for her husband, with some bumps in the road. She had minor surgery on her right hand recently, making it difficult for her to shake hands, the Nevada station reported.

In Iowa a week ago, she had a tough response for the Republicans who have criticized her husband.

"Stop it. This is hard. You want to try it? Get in the ring," she told an Iowa radio station. "This is hard. It's an important thing that we're doing right now."

Video: <http://www.ktvn.com/story/19636279/ann-romney-campaigns-for-husband-in-reno>.



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<a href="#">20120928-04</a>	12:32	SteveB	"The Three Moments That Wrecked the Romney Campaign and their Common Thread: Conservatism"
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"The Three Moments That Wrecked the Romney Campaign and their Common Thread: Conservatism" by Bill Scher, NationofChange

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/three-moments-wrecked-romney-campaign-and-their-common-thread-conservatism-1348840244>)

Mitt Romney arguably lost Ohio on November 18, 2008, when he penned an oped titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt." Today, 64% of Ohio voters call President Obama's restructuring of the auto industry "mostly good."

Mitt Romney arguably lost Florida, with its heavy concentration of older voters, when he picked as his vice-presidential nominee Paul Ryan, the face of the conservative plan to end Medicare as we know it.

The CBS/New York Times/Quinnipiac poll now has Obama leading Romney by 9 points in Florida, up from a 3 point lead in late August.

In August, Romney was ahead among Florida voters 65 and older by 13 points. Now, Obama is ahead among voters 55 and older (don't ask me why Quinnipiac didn't publish the same age breakdowns) by 8 points. This tracks with what the national Reuters poll found. Romney used to have a 20 point lead with voters 60 and over, now it's less than four.

And Romney arguably lost every possible remaining undecided voter when the "47%" video was uncovered on Sept. 18. What polling we have seen since then suggests Romney, already losing, is now cratering. Quinnipiac also found record double digit leads for Obama in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Gallup tracking poll, long more favorable to Romney than most, has moved five points in Obama's direction since the video. And the ABC/Washington Post poll found 61% of voters disapprove of how Romney has handled his campaign, with 54% disagreeing with his "47%" comments.

**The common thread in all of these moments is they were raw expressions of modern conservatism. Government should not aggressively save an industry in dire trouble. Government should not guarantee health care for retirees. Government should not help those working to help themselves but still struggle.**

**The albatross around Romney's neck is not so much his wealth or his social skills. It is modern conservatism that has sunk his campaign,** and would have sunk any other this year.

The public remembers that conservatism is what wrecked in the economy 2008. And until conservatives make amends for that, they have little hope of earning a majority.

Maybe not even 47%.

<a href="#">20120928-14</a>	19:01	SteveB	"Mitt's Campaign-Killing Snobbery"
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"Mitt's Campaign-Killing Snobbery" by Sally Kohn, Salon

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/mitt\\_romney\\_adrift/](http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/mitt_romney_adrift/))

(If you need help docking your large boat, Romney's your man. That's become a problem for voters.)

At a recent fundraiser, Bill Marriott, chairman of the international hotel conglomerate, introduced Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney by noting that they both have summer houses on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. Marriott told a story of taking his boat into town with his grandkids to get ice cream:

And we got into the docks and they were all full and I looked around, there was no place to park, so we stopped at the end of a dock. They all jumped off and ran up the dock. And I realized there was nobody in the boat to help me dock the boat, handle the ropes, do anything – they just left me out there at sea. So I finally found a place to park after about 20 minutes, and I pulled in, I said, 'Who's going to grab the rope?' And I looked up and there was Mitt Romney. So he pulled me in, he tied up the boat for me. He rescued me just as he's going to rescue this great country.



Republican presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, takes his family for a boat ride on Lake Winnepesaukee, July 14, 2012, in Wolfeboro, NH. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

No doubt all of the big donors in the room who have boats so big it takes more than one person to dock them were nodding along and thinking, "Yeah, Mitt Romney understands us rich people and is here to help." Of course, for the 99 percent of other voters, that is precisely the problem.

The issue is not that Romney is wealthy. There have been many successful, wealthy candidates in American history — Kennedy, both Roosevelts, obviously plenty of members of Congress. In fact, it's worth noting that President Obama's net worth far exceeds that of the average American family.

The issue is that Romney seems out of touch. He just does not seem relatable and sympathetic with ordinary people and their struggles. It is this — and not his bland personality, his bad campaign management — that is sinking Romney's candidacy.

In her RNC speech, Ann Romney tried to simultaneously make her husband appear more human and more Everyman by talking about their run-down first apartment where "our dining room table was a fold-down ironing board." But the fact that both Ann and Mitt came from extremely wealthy families and Mitt was studying at Harvard Law and Business schools at the time, paid for entirely by his father, makes this colorful, cherry-picked detail look desperate — not as in desperately poor once upon a time, but desperate for trying to pretend he ever really knew financial hardship.

An illustrative lesson comes courtesy of the Bush family. In 1992, George H.W. Bush was tripped up in his reelection bid when he couldn't name the price of a gallon of milk during a debate. Fast-forward to 2004, and George W. Bush — who had arguably all if not more of the baggage of growing up rich and privileged — won a much-touted poll question of which candidate voters would rather have a beer with. The younger Bush wasn't any less wealthy than his father, he was simply more likable and relatable.

When Mitt Romney, trying to make nice with an audience of autoworkers, says that his wife has "a couple of Cadillacs," that isn't just a gaffe. It's a revealing window into the mind and heart of a candidate who somehow doesn't understand how incredibly different his life is from that of ordinary Americans and doesn't see any need to respectfully and reflectively act accordingly. Again, the problem isn't that Romney is rich. The problem is that Romney is elitist.

Remember when Romney said to a group of out-of-work voters, "I'm also unemployed"? When he said you should "never get involved in politics if you have to win an election to pay a mortgage"? When he offered to bet Rick Perry \$10,000? And, of course, his lofty dismissal of 47 percent of Americans as irresponsible, dependent victims? He's not just a bumbling guy who's bad at campaigning. Mitt Romney is a snob.

20120928-15

19:53

SteveB

Business Management 101 (to Republicans) & "Five Signs Mitt Romney's Campaign Is Crumbling"

Let me ask you just one quick question...

If the argument is that R0mney would make a better President because of his business management experience at Bain, how do you explain the following business management tidbit?

**The Obama campaign has \$33 million more on hand than Romney's campaign and they also appear to be spending it more intelligently. Last month both campaigns spent over four million dollars on salaries but the president employed *twice as many staffers*.** If the whiff of desperation gets much worse, it will be hard for Romney to raise more funds just as the ability to donate by text opens a motherlode for the Obama campaign. [see source, below]

It sounds as if the President is the better manager, in the world of reality. I guess just about everything else in the two campaigns and polls also proves that. Plus, he's simultaneously managing the most exceptional country in the world and doing a pretty damned good job of it (see recent UN speech).

R0mney the manager? LOL!

Goin' down HARD, very soon! Poor GOP!

"Five Signs Mitt Romney's Campaign Is Crumbling" by *The National Memo*

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/five-signs-mitt-romneys-campaign-is-crumbling/?25851#25851>)

### 1. Romney's Advantage On Economic Issues Is Gone

The most powerful lingering effect of President Bill Clinton's highly praised speech at the Democratic National Convention was the way it wrested the economic advantage in this race from Mitt Romney. After the president's campaign laid a foundation by questioning Romney's career at Bain and record in Massachusetts, Clinton was able to connect the GOP nominee to the failed "policies that got us into this mess." *Washington Post's* Greg Sargent notes, "Eight recent national polls, and several polls in the key swing states, show that Obama has now pulled into a tie with Romney on handling the economy."

### 2. Even Conservatives Don't Buy Romney's Argument

On Fox News Sunday, right-wing pundit Bill Kristol said, "**Bush was president during the financial meltdown, the Obama team has turned that around pretty well.**" When one of your Fox friends shoots down what has been your rationale for election for months, you're in trouble.

### 3. Making Up The Numbers

At this point, conservatives' only hope is that the polls are wrong. One Republican even set up a site to "unskew" polls to weight them all with the highly suspect party weighting Rasmussen Reports uses. Then you'll find a Romney landslide about to happen. But even Scott Rasmussen says that logic doesn't work: "You cannot compare partisan weighting from one polling firm to another." President Ronald Reagan said, "If you're explaining, you're losing." For this case, substitute "unskewing" for "explaining."

### 4. Cash Burn

**The Obama campaign has \$33 million more on hand than Romney's campaign and they also appear to be spending it more intelligently. Last month both campaigns spent over four million dollars on**

**salaries but the president employed twice as many staffers. If the whiff of desperation gets much worse, it will be hard for Romney to raise more funds just as the ability to donate by text opens a motherlode for the Obama campaign.**

#### 5. Inventing Gaffes, Ignoring Policies

As former Bush speechwriter David Frum asked, "How do you message: I'm doing away with Medicaid over the next 10 yrs, Medicare after that, to finance a cut in the top rate of tax to 28 percent?" The answer is, you can't. Mitt Romney's hope was to appease his base with policy, impress swing voters with his competence and tear apart the president for his failures. His competence has become questionable and his failure narrative replaced by Bill Clinton's retelling of the past four years. All he can do is pull the president out of context and hope something sticks. Fortunately for Romney, his base will indulge in anything that makes the president look bad. But the outrage doesn't seem to interest anyone else.

20120928-16	20:18	SteveB	"Fox's Laughable Case for Romney"
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Oops #9...more great media comedy!

"Fox's Laughable Case for Romney" by Howell Raines, CNN

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/28/opinion/raines-fox-romney/index.html?hpt=po\\_c1](http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/28/opinion/raines-fox-romney/index.html?hpt=po_c1))

(Fox's Bill O'Reilly brings on guests who deliver an alternate reality about Mitt Romney's weakened campaign, Howell Raines says.)

Who says the media aren't interested in good news? Fox News has been broadcasting lots of it for Mitt Romney this week. Never have so many gray clouds had silver linings as those hovering over the hapless Republican candidate and his deflating campaign.

I bring you this report after having ventured into Bill O'Reilly's "No-Spin Zone," and believe me, his initial shout-out urging viewers to exercise "caution" before watching is fully, if unintentionally, appropriate. Apparently in Fox World, "no-spin" means "I am now going to share my news-based fantasies."

The Wednesday broadcast featured Dick Morris, Karl Rove and Dennis Miller, an a-cappella chorus humming O'Reilly's favorite tunes: that the mainstream media is rooting for Obama; that the polls consistently misrepresent a race that is still a dead heat; that Romney will re-emerge from this autumnal swoon by winning the October 3 debate through his superior if often-invisible oratorical skills; that Romney is in decline simply because voters don't yet understand the necessity of top-end tax cuts, the sanctity of corporate profits and the horror of social welfare spending run amok.

Across its programs, the Fox News mantra is "there's still plenty of time." That's a truism, but chanting the obvious is not among the standard definitions of journalism. Institutionally, Fox is in denial about the state of the campaign. Romney is looking very weak very early. The attempt to avoid reporting this state of play in a "fair and balanced" way is producing comical results.

Stylistically, the O'Reilly quartet may be on to something new. We've had mainstream journalism, alternative journalism, conservative journalism. This appears to be vaudeville journalism. Wednesday, the verisimilitude of the performance was maintained by the illusion that of the four, only Miller is a stand-up comic.

Rove's role is nuttily professorial. He has adopted one of those erasable white slates popularized by the late Tim Russert. On it he scribbles integers with plus or minus signs. These, he alleges, are the amounts being added to President Barack Obama and/or subtracted from Romney by such daredevil organizations as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CBS, NBC, CNN, Gallup and the co-opted poll-averagers at the website RealClearPolitics.

Bottom line: This vast conspiracy is downgrading Romney three to nine points by using screens that overstate the votes of blacks, Latinos, Asians, women and the young.

Morris, who is beginning to bear a waxen resemblance to Orson Welles, explained, I think, that pollsters cheat by using false baseline figures from previous elections. Morris didn't have time to explicate fully how every news organization except Fox has signed up to help Obama by disseminating these cooked figures. Even so, O'Reilly thanked Morris for explaining polling mysteries he said he had not previously understood.

The effect was somewhat spoiled by an unscripted guest from reality, Larry Sabato, the scholarly political scientist from the University of Virginia, who immediately dismissed Morris' rant as "grassy-knoll" statistics. He added that the poll averages on RealClearPolitics had things about right. Obama was ahead by about four points nationally. Of the big-three swing states, Sabato said, perhaps in order not to appear rude to his host, only Florida is still close.

The presence of Miller is apparently driven by commercial considerations. He and O'Reilly now have a lecture-circuit act that is selling out in such venues as Houston and Las Vegas. The closest I've heard Miller come to elegant public-policy analysis was to call Obama a "crap president" earlier this week. As a nod to factuality, O'Reilly does call Miller a "satirist" and, less plausibly, an NFL expert, due to his badly reviewed stint on Monday Night Football. In any event, it's hard to imagine anyone with a master's in public policy from Harvard, which O'Reilly has, consulting Miller on an important national election -- unless there's money in it.

Which brings us to the interesting case of O'Reilly himself. O'Reilly is no dummy, and he did work as a broadcast news professional before veering into infotainment with "Inside Edition" and the Fox gig. For all his pugnacity, these days O'Reilly has the look of a man doing beautiful pirouettes on increasingly thin ice. He's clearly angling to survive a Romney train wreck with some credible deniability by leaving the delusional commentary to Rove et al. and hinting at his suppressed misgivings about Romney's chances.

He's not a man easily knocked off balance by contrary evidence. Thursday he opened with Fox's own poll, which presumably lacked the evils defined by Rove and Morris. It showed Obama's favorability up by 51% to Romney's 48%. It was, from a Foxian point of view, a nicer number than Obama's five point head-to-head lead, 48% to 43%.

Cannily, he drops in terms such as "in fairness to Obama," praises the president's campaigning skills and takes note of criticism of Romney by other conservatives. He hangs his hat on the observation that October 3 is Romney's last chance to get back in the race. This leaves him room to turn around if the polls -- we're talking the real ones here -- don't.

O'Reilly's newest hedge, unveiled with Fox's bleak new poll, is that the "likability" factor gives Obama an advantage with "uninformed, casual voters."

I think there's a secret behind O'Reilly's trademark smirk. Were it in his interest to say what's on his mind about the candidates' performance to date, he'd almost certainly admit that Obama has come on like a superstar candidate of the Reagan ilk, and so far Romney is one of the biggest duds in post-World War II presidential elections.

Right now, Fox News' general excuse for Romney is that he's not getting his "message" across. I'll tune in from time to time to see when the news from the real world arrives in the Fox studios. The message of Romney's tooth-and-fang financial-market capitalism is driving down the polls, and the messenger is coming across as an unlikable empty suit, even when he ditches his tie and jacket.

At a certain point, campaigns in early decline begin to reek of impending defeat. I can't wait to see how they spin that in the no-spin zone. Meanwhile, we can contemplate the dilemma of another O'Reilly regular, the Loneliest in the Public Opinion Trade, aka pollster Scott Rasmussen. He's telling O'Reilly the race is tied within the margin of error around 46% or 47%.

<a href="#">20120929-01</a> 07:06 MarthaH "Poll: Who Would Thrive Depends on Who Wins in 2012"
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What we knew already!

"Poll: Who Would Thrive Depends on Who Wins in 2012" by Susan Page, *USA Today*

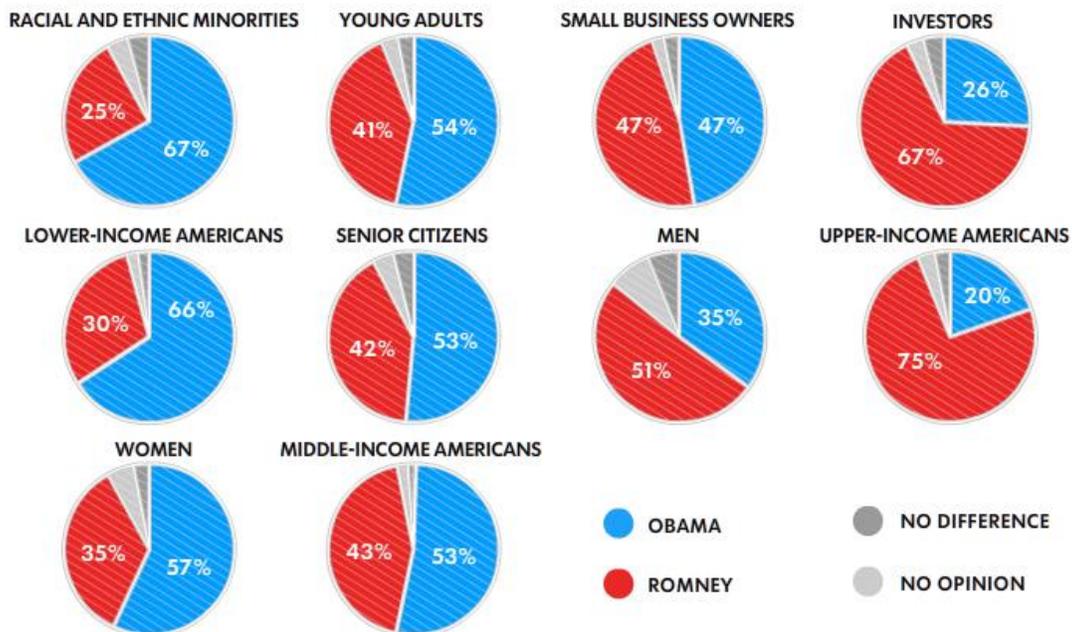
Sept. 29, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/09/29/poll-obama-romney-gallup/1601125/>)

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is using the "are you better off?" argument -- first used by Ronald Reagan against Jimmy Carter in 1980 -- in his current race against President Obama. Voters were asked do you think each of the following groups in the United States would be better off in four years if Barack Obama is elected or if Mitt Romney is elected?

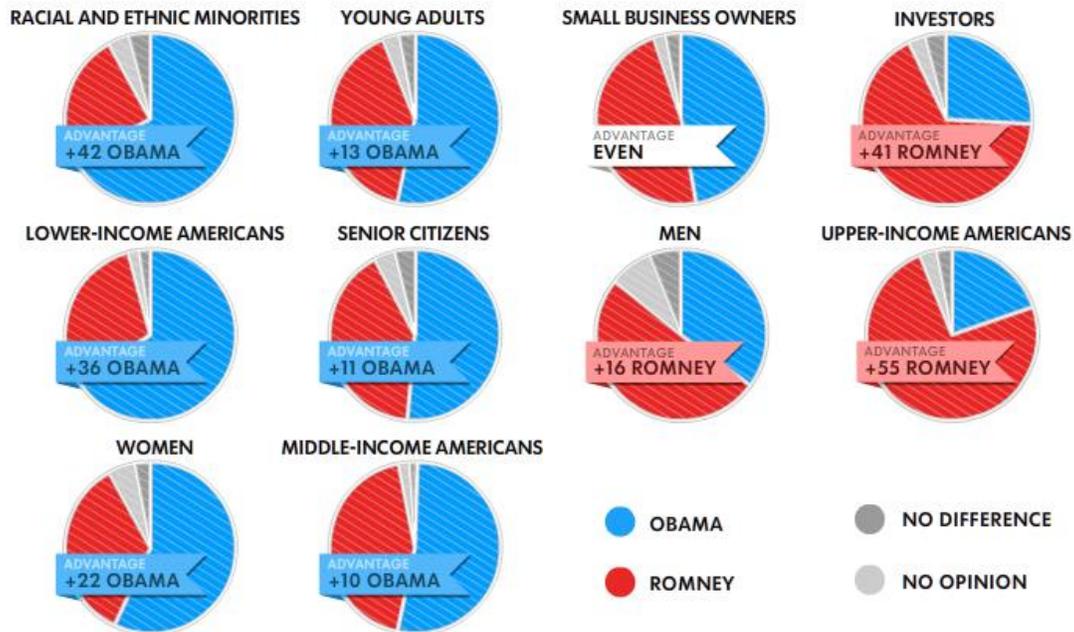
Who would be better off over the next four years under a President Obama or a President Romney? Clear perceptions of winners and losers map the political landscape for the campaign's final weeks.

In a new *USA Today*/Gallup Poll, Americans express definite perceptions about what groups would thrive under which administration, providing a portrait of how each contender has been defined in the public's view. That question and others in the survey map the political landscape as the campaign heads into its final five weeks.

Do you think each of the following groups in the United States would be better off in four years if Barack Obama is elected or if Mitt Romney is elected?



Do you think each of the following groups in the United States would be better off in four years if Barack Obama is elected or if Mitt Romney is elected?



It is an electorate that is less engaged, less enthusiastic and less favorably inclined toward the candidates than at this point in recent presidential campaigns. It is also an electorate that confidently predicts the groups that will be winners and losers, depending on who prevails on Nov. 6.

The rich? By an overwhelming 55 percentage points, those surveyed say upper-income Americans would fare better if Republican challenger Mitt Romney wins.

The poor? By 36 points, they say low-income people would do better under Barack Obama.

And by 10 points, middle-income Americans are seen as doing better over the next four years if Obama wins a second term. That's important politically, since most Americans identify themselves as middle class. One of Romney's most critical tasks -- including at the candidates' first debate Wednesday in Denver -- is to persuade more middle-class voters that electing him would be good for them.

There is also a gender chasm. By double digits, Americans say women would be better off under an Obama presidency; men would be better off under a Romney presidency. Given that, it's hardly surprising that female voters nationwide and in some crucial swing states have boosted Obama while male voters are inclined to support Romney.

With one group, though, there seems to be a disconnect. Those 65 and older are the age group that most strongly backs Romney. But by 11 points, Americans say seniors would fare better over the next four years if Obama prevails.

In contrast, voters under 30 are Obama's best age group. By 13 points, Americans say young people will do better if the president wins a second term.

The decisive judgments on which groups would be winners in an Obama or Romney presidency are a sign of how sharply defined the two candidates have become. Investors would do better under Romney, those surveyed say by an overwhelming 41 points. Racial and ethnic minorities would do better under Obama, they say by an equally huge 42 points.

Only one group fell right in the middle: Small-business owners. By 47%-47%, those surveyed divided over whether they would do better under Obama or Romney. For the other nine groups named, Americans by double digits and well outside the survey's margin of error say they would fare better under one or the other.

The poll of 1,446 adults, taken Monday through Thursday, has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.

Republicans have opened a big enthusiasm gap: 64% say they are more enthusiastic than usual about voting, compared to 48% of Democrats. In general, though, the results show an electorate that is less excited and less engaged than in recent presidential elections.

Democrats are less enthusiastic about voting than in 2008, although Republicans are a bit more enthusiastic. Fewer Democrats and Republicans say they have given a lot of thought to the election than they did in the falls of 2008 and 2004.

Romney's favorable rating is 47%, lower than that of any presidential candidate at this point in the past 20 years. Obama's favorable rating is better, at 55%, but still lower than that of six of the past 10 major-party nominees.

Only 13% say both Obama and Romney would be a good president. Four years ago, 25% felt that way about Obama and 2008 rival John McCain.

<a href="#">20120929-02</a>	07:27	SteveB	"Why Mitt Romney Is the Perfect GOP Candidate"
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The perfect candidate...

"Why Mitt Romney Is the Perfect GOP Candidate" by Andrew Leonard, Salon

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/why\\_mitt\\_romney\\_is\\_the\\_perfect\\_gop\\_candidate/](http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/why_mitt_romney_is_the_perfect_gop_candidate/))

(Mitt Romney is the perfect evolutionary adaptation to a world in which workers get screwed.)

Ever since Mitt Romney began running for president pundits have marveled and conservatives have moaned at the contradiction embodied by the former governor of Massachusetts. A moderate Republican who passed universal healthcare and tried to run to the left of Ted Kennedy on abortion sought — and won! — the nomination of a party that had been moving hard right for decades. The result of the primary campaign of 2012 posed a marvelous mystery. How could such a bad mismatch for the Republican base successfully become their standard bearer?

Romney's competition — a cavalcade of loons and crazies the likes of which hadn't been gathered together since the movie "Freaks" — offers a partial explanation. Romney got lucky.

But there's another way to view his candidacy — a frame in which Romney is the perfect representative of what 30 years of Republican ascendance in American politics have wrought. The truth is, there is no mismatch. Conservative economic policies — union busting, deregulation, tax cuts that favor the rich — have delivered an era of income inequality unprecedented in American history. That's Mitt Romney's America. No politician currently operating in America better encapsulates the divergence of class outcomes resulting from those policies. If he were to somehow get elected, his victory would be the period at the end of the Reagan revolution sentence. Mission accomplished, indeed.

The data are clear. Ever since 1980, working men and women in the United States have been getting screwed. Or, to put it in the more restrained language of a new paper released this week by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, **"Labor income has been declining as a share of total income earned in the United States for the past three decades."**

After 1980 ... average real income grew by 0.05 percent only for the bottom 20 percent of households, while it grew by 1.24 percent for the top 20 percent and by 1.67 percent for the top 5 percent. The share of income earned by the top-income households rose significantly after 1980, while the share earned by the bottom-income households declined.

Let's break that down a little further:

Household income comes in two types: labor income, which includes wages, salaries, and other work-related compensation (such as pension and insurance benefits and incentive-based compensation), and capital income, which includes interest, dividends, and other realized investment returns (such as capital gains). During the last three decades, labor's share of total income has declined in favor of capital income.

Whom do we know who fits into that capital income box? Seems to me that just the other day I was scanning through a really long tax return — oh yeah!

Mitt Romney's tax return for 2011 reported \$13.7 million of income. Virtually every cent falls under the category "capital income." Capital gains: \$6.8 million. Taxable interest: \$3 million. Dividends: \$3.7 million. Wage income: Zero.

Could it be any more clear? Mitt Romney is the living incarnation of the flip side of labor's declining share of income. What working men and women lost, he gained.

And he's the Republican presidential candidate for 2012.

Seriously, that's pretty epic! Mitt Romney is the truth of Republican economics made manifest, the word of trickle-down gospel become flesh. More so than any of his GOP presidential predecessors, Romney exemplifies the changes of the last 30 years. Forget about the flip-flops on abortion, gay rights, healthcare, immigration — you name it. In terms of the practical consequences of the application of Republican economic ideology, Mitt Romney is the perfect Republican candidate.

Republicans increasingly don't believe in evolution, but if we review the class background and job resumes of the recent Republican presidents leading up to Romney, it's hard to avoid the sense that natural selection is at work. In the harsh environment bequeathed to us by Reagan's heirs, only the plutocratic parasite can survive.

The story begins with Ronald Reagan. Don't forget: He was a real working man, an actor who got involved in organized labor as the president of the Screen Actor's Guild (given current standards of rhetoric, you could even call him a one-time union thug!).

Then came George H.W. Bush. Sure, he was the son of a senator and a Connecticut blueblood, which made him an awkward graft onto the Reagan family tree. But he was also a successful oilman. He played an undeniably constructive role in the economy, extracting energy from the ground to fuel the industrial machine. A boss, not a worker, but clearly part of the means of production.

Next up, George W. Bush, an unsuccessful oilman. But hey, he went to business school — he was our first "MBA president." We can now see mutations beginning to bear evolutionary fruit. Pushing numbers around a spreadsheet has now become more advantageous than digging stuff out of the ground or sweating for an honest wage on a Hollywood sound stage.

Finally, we come to Mitt Romney — the private equity wheeler-dealer, a practitioner of a business model that depends on using borrowed money to purchase struggling firms, after which the new owners extract as much profit as possible in the short term before moving on. A man far, far richer than any of his predecessors, a man, for crying out loud, whose wife owns a horse whose yearly upkeep costs more than the average American earns in a year.

The fossil record cannot be denied. The evolutionary class war is over. Mitt Romney won.

It's hard to think of anyone who could have benefited more from the changes of the last 30 years than Mitt Romney. The tax cuts pushed through by Reagan and Bush disproportionately reward him. The tsunami of union-busting touched off by Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controller union signaled the beginning of an era in which workers would be powerless to resist the savage cost-cutting strategies of the Bain Capitals of the world. Larger trends — globalization, deregulation, technological progress — all served to undermine the power of the worker at the expense of the boss. As median incomes have stagnated or fallen, CEO compensation skyrocketed.

## **A world of income inequality is Mitt Romney's world. He owns it — the rest of us just live in it.**

20120929-03 07:57 Pam "Transaction Man"

Another article in this week's *New Yorker* shed some light on the life and times of Mr. Mitt. The magazine is generally liberal--well, quite liberal--but I thought this article was "fair and balanced." The focus was on Mitt's family background, religion, education, and business experience and philosophy. It was extremely revelatory. Mitt worshiped his father, and the family held a grudge against Nelson Rockefeller, who promised to support George for president, then entered the race himself. George et al. felt betrayed. The whole Mormon thing is, Work, Succeed, Live for the Church, Be Responsible, Raise a Family, Succeed, Get a lot of Education, and Succeed. Church members ARE the church; there is no professional clergy, which means members are trained for positions of leadership from age three on. They're a tight bunch. Except for the crazy parts, it's not a bad way of life. Mitt is and always has been extremely confident of his abilities to solve problems, and he's proven himself to be good at doing just that. Up till now, he hasn't been particularly ideological--beyond a Republican privileging of business and his religion--but has been very pragmatic, collecting data, weighing options, deciding on the best one, implementing it, and seeing it through to completion. His MA health care plan is a case in point. I don't find any of this particularly disturbing. What is disturbing is Mitt's utter isolation when it comes to the working stiff who is just trying to get by. Little rich kid, famous father, Stanford, missionary work in France (of all places), BYU, early marriage and big family, Harvard Law (JD, MBA), and his first job was with a top firm in the financial sector. The man is a whiz in the board room, but we've seen what he's like in the "real" world.

I actually found this article somewhat reassuring. I'm pretty sure Mitt has had to mouth ideas he doesn't particularly believe in in order to win hearts and minds. He'll do whatever it takes to get the job done, and if that's what he has to do, then by golly he'll do it. He's a pragmatist through and through. Not stark, raving mad, in other words. But he is so wedded to the corporate mentality he doesn't seem to see anything else. His father was all about business too, but to George politics was the ultimate calling. Mitt's running for president is something that would have made the old man proud. It's what a REAL man, a real Mormon, would do. George was pragmatic about losing the presidency and didn't seem to lose any sleep over it. I suspect Mitt will be the same. He's done what he could with what he had, tried his best, and if the people want something else, so be it. The real tragedy is his hijacking by the far right that has made him into a caricature, looking like a fool. "A man's got to know his limits."

When I compare Mitt to Obama, I see two good men, but their life experiences and backgrounds have taken them in entirely different directions. Romney may well have good ideas about the economy, but he would be ruthless in implementing them. And he ignores the fact that everyone doesn't want to start a small business. That's what he sees as the path to success, but for the vast majority of the un- and under-employed that is simply not a viable solution. He believes dealing with recalcitrant foreign leaders means strong-arming them into a deal they can't refuse. That may work with the board of Bain, but it ain't gonna cut it with Putin and Amadinejad (sp?). Obama has a genuinely global perspective, and we desperately need that at this point. He, too, is a pragmatist, but his pragmatism is in relation to politics. He sees what needs to be done, and he has the smarts to know what is possible. Romney is a great deal maker, and so long as he has a neat office and a good secretary, he can get the job done. I can't see him mixing it up with Angela Merkel or fixing Greece. He'll cut the U.S. loose, just like he did the board at Bain (there are two Bains; I'm talking about the first one), and economically that might not be bad (though I don't see how it could be good), but the rest of the world would hate us for it. Obama, on the other hand, is a better schmoozer, just as smart if not smarter, just as confident, and a whole lot more compassionate. I do think the Tea Party is dangerous, as are the politicians who pander to it, and their insinuation into the heart of the Republican party is disturbing to say the least. Romney isn't part of that, however. That part is reassuring. His narrow focus on business is not encouraging, as there is so much out there that he simply doesn't see. It's hard for a rich person, who's been rich all his life, to even comprehend what not being able to afford shampoo is like. Obama knows.

"Transaction Man" by Nicholas Lemann, *The New Yorker*

Oct. 1, 2012, ([http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/01/121001fa\\_fact\\_lemann](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/01/121001fa_fact_lemann))

(Mormonism, private equity, and the making of a candidate.)

ABSTRACT: A REPORTER AT LARGE about Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for President, and how his political career has been shaped by his background in the Mormon faith and the worlds of consulting and private equity. Author explores Romney's background through historical research, and by talking at length with Romney's friends and colleagues, as well as with the candidate himself. If elected, Romney, scion of an old, distinguished Mormon family (his ancestors had a direct connection to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young), would arguably be the most actively religious President in American history; he's been deeply influenced by the Mormon values of personal discipline and business-centric practicality. His approach to problem-solving, meanwhile, has developed over the course of a long career as a consultant, at Bain & Company, and in private equity, at Bain Capital; he thinks of himself as a rescuer, someone who can apply data-driven analyses to otherwise intractable problems and emerge with workable solutions. Romney, in short, presents an unusual combination: personally, he is driven by old-fashioned values, while professionally he is thoroughly modern, a prime mover in the finance-driven, post-corporate, essentially transactional economy that has come to define America in the early twenty-first century. Though Romney is direct, pleasant, and engaged in small groups, his campaign has been hindered by his inability to open up in front of crowds.

[Continue reading at \*The New Yorker\*...](#)

<a href="#">20120929-04</a>	08:04	SteveB	"The Most Damning Line in the Secret Romney Video"
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"The Most Damning Line in the Secret Romney Video" by David Corn, MotherJones

Sept. 24, 2012, (<http://www.motherjones.com/moj/2012/09/most-damning-line-secret-romney-video>)

In the week since I made public the secret video of Mitt Romney at a private Boca Raton fundraiser denigrating almost half of America as moochers and victims, I've been repeatedly asked what I consider the most damaging—or damning—portion of Romney's remarks. I've noted that the great thing about this story is that people can watch the video for themselves—7 million people went to this site or YouTube in the first days of the video's release and did that—and reach their own conclusions.

Yet one sentence did stand out to me. When Romney was in mid-rant about the 47 percent—simplistically and erroneously conflating three subsets of Americans: those who voted for Barack Obama, those who receive some form of government assistance, and those who pay no federal income taxes—he said:

**I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.**

Here was Romney sharing his view that Americans who don't make enough money to pay income taxes and his fellow citizens who rely on Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, or other government programs are lesser people than he and the millionaires before him. **These people, Romney was saying, are not adults; they do not, and will not, fend for themselves or do what they must to feed, clothe, shelter, educate, and care for themselves and their family members. It was an arrogant insult spoken with true detachment.** This was 100-percent 1-percent.

My view of this one line was reinforced this morning. I walked into a store to buy some cleaning products. The 40-something woman at the counter rang up the purchases and kept looking at me. Once I had paid, she said in a low voice, "I really don't want to bother you, but..."

Go ahead, I said.

**But I know who you are, and I just want to say that Mitt Romney doesn't know what he's talking about. Not at all. I am college-educated, but look where I'm working now. I can't find a better job now. And, and....**

She paused and lowered her voice more:

**I'm on food stamps. I didn't have a choice. I'm making about \$12,000 a year now. And I need them. I work hard. And I'm looking for other work. But just because I'm on food stamps doesn't mean I'm not taking care of myself. Doesn't he know that? Doesn't he get it?**

Apparently not. Many people on food stamps, Medicaid, and the like do strive to provide for themselves and their families. The working poor...work. They may even park cars at fancy fundraisers for minimum wage. Romney all-too-glibly characterized anyone receiving any public assistance as a parasitic freeloader, and he revealed an us-versus-them attitude that was tremendously ungracious, mean-spirited, and predicated on ignorance of the real world.

**"Thank you, thank you," the woman said. "You showed us what he really thinks of us, what he thinks of me."**

Mitt Romney built that.

20120930-08	23:01	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Real Agenda"
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"Mitt Romney's Real Agenda" by Tim Dickinson, *Rolling Stone*

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/mitt-romneys-real-agenda-20120928>)

(If you want to understand Romney's game plan, just look at what Republicans have been doing in Congress.)

It was tempting to dismiss Mitt Romney's hard-right turn during the GOP primaries as calculated pandering. In the general election – as one of his top advisers famously suggested – Romney would simply shake the old Etch A Sketch and recast himself as the centrist who governed Massachusetts. But with the selection of vice-presidential nominee Paul Ryan, the shape-shifting Romney has locked into focus – cementing himself as the frontman for the far-right partisans responsible for Washington's gridlock.

There is no longer any ambiguity about the path that Romney would pursue as president, because it's the same trajectory charted by Ryan, the architect of the House GOP's reactionary agenda since the party's takeover in 2010. "Picking Ryan as vice president outlines the future of the next four or eight years of a Romney administration," GOP power broker Grover Norquist exulted in August. "Ryan has outlined a plan that has support in the Republican House and Senate. You have a real sense of where Romney's going." In fact, Norquist told party activists back in February, the true direction of the GOP is being mapped out by congressional hardliners. All the Republicans need to realize their vision, he said, is a president "with enough working digits to handle a pen."

The GOP legislation awaiting Romney's signature isn't simply a return to the era of George W. Bush. From abortion rights and gun laws to tax giveaways and energy policy, it's far worse. Measures that have already sailed through the Republican House would roll back clean-air protections, gut both Medicare and Medicaid, lavish trillions in tax cuts on billionaires while raising taxes on the poor, and slash everything from college aid to veteran benefits. In fact, the tenets of Ryan Republicanism are so extreme that they even offend the pioneers of trickle-down economics. "Ryan takes out the ax and goes after programs for the poor – which is the last thing you ought to cut," says David Stockman, who served as Ronald Reagan's budget director. "It's ideology run amok."

And Romney has now adopted every letter of the Ryan agenda. Take it from Ed Gillespie, senior adviser to the campaign: "If the Ryan budget had come to his desk as president," Gillespie said of Romney, "he would have signed it, of course."

A look at the bills that Republicans have passed since they took control of the House in 2010 offers a clear blueprint of the agenda that a Romney administration would be primed to establish:

FEWER JOBS

Republicans in Congress have repeatedly put ideology before creating jobs. For more than a year, they've refused to put President Obama's jobs bill up for a vote, even though projections show it would create nearly 2 million jobs without adding a penny to the deficit. The reason? The \$447 billion bill would be entirely paid for through a surtax on millionaires.

In addition, the Republicans' signature initiative last year – the debt-ceiling standoff – was a jobs-killer, applying the brakes to the economic recovery. From February through April 2011, the economy had been adding 200,000 jobs a month. But during the uncertainty created by the congressional impasse, job creation was cut in half for every month the standoff-continued. And according to the Economic Policy Institute, the immediate spending cuts required by the debt-ceiling compromise are likely to shrink the economy by \$43 billion this year, killing nearly 323,000 jobs.

What Ryan markets as his "Path to Prosperity" would make things even worse: The draconian cuts in his latest budget, according to the EPI, would put an additional drag on the economy, destroying another 4.1 million jobs by 2014.

### GOD, GUNS AND GAYS

The retrograde social agenda laid out in recent GOP legislation represents a full-scale assault on fundamental American rights. Last year, the House passed a bill that would broadly prohibit women from purchasing insurance plans that cover abortion. The so-called Protect Life Act would also allow hospitals to refuse a dying woman an abortion that would save her life. Ryan himself co-sponsored legislation that would have made it impossible for impoverished victims of rape and incest to receive abortions unless their assault met a narrow definition of "forcible rape." Under the bill's language, for instance, federal abortion coverage would be denied to a 12-year-old girl impregnated by a 40-year-old man, unless she could prove she fought back.

When they weren't trying to force women to birth babies for rapists, the GOP House was voting to make it easier for would-be criminals to carry concealed firearms. In the first major gun legislation passed after their colleague Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head, the House sided with her attempted murderer, passing an NRA-backed measure that would have undercut state limits on concealed-carry permits. Under the legislation, authorities in a state that prohibits drunk people from carrying a hidden weapon, for instance, would be barred from arresting an armed inebriate if he had a permit from another state without such a restriction. The bill, said Dennis Henigan of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, would "make it easier for the Jared Loughners of the world to pack heat on our streets and in our communities."

The GOP's love of guns is rivaled only by its contempt for gay Americans – even those who take up arms in defense of their country. Unable to block the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Republicans in the House approved riders in the Defense appropriations bill to undermine the rights of gays in the armed forces. An amendment introduced by Rep. Todd Akin – Ryan's co-sponsor on "forcible rape" – sought to prohibit military facilities from being used to hold gay weddings, and to bar military chaplains from presiding over such ceremonies. Another House rider banned the military from offering medical, pension and death benefits to the spouses of gay soldiers.

### DRILL AND POLLUTE

In thrall to dirty-energy interests, House Republicans have held more than 300 votes to hamstring the EPA, roll back environmental protections and open up sensitive public land to drilling – offering polluters a virtual license to kill. "This is, without doubt, the most anti-environmental Congress in history," said Rep. Henry Waxman, the ranking Democrat on the House Energy Committee.

Under the Republicans, the House has voted to ban the EPA from placing limits on climate-warming pollution, to reverse new fuel standards projected to slash dependence on foreign oil and save Americans \$1.7 trillion at the pump, and to end standards signed into law by President Bush that would phase out wasteful, high-wattage incandescent light bulbs. Even more reckless, the House voted to block limits on deadly mercury emissions – a move that federal scientists calculate would result in 20,000 premature deaths – and drop safeguards on cement manufacturing that would kill another 12,500 Americans and lead to thousands of avoidable heart attacks.

In February, over the objections of the State Department, the House voted to approve the Keystone XL pipeline, which would transport toxic tar sands from Canada across the Midwest's largest and most vulnerable supply of drinking water. In that same vote, the House returned to the great dream of the Bush era, voting to permit the oil industry to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In an even more sweeping move, the House passed a bill to block all new major regulations until the nation's unemployment rate falls to six percent – a measure that would choke off not only new environmental safeguards, but also the new limits on Wall Street recklessness required under Dodd-Frank.

### BASH IMMIGRANTS

In June, the house approved a raft of amendments blocking Obama's executive directives on immigration reform. The legislation would prevent the administration from prioritizing the deportation of violent criminals over law-abiding immigrants, and put Homeland Security back in the business of deporting the undocumented spouses of American citizens. The House even found a way to merge its dirty-energy agenda with its anti-immigrant stance, passing a "border bill" that bars enforcement of 16 key environmental laws – including the Endangered Species Act – on federal land within 100 miles of the Mexican border. The bill is a sop to the Minuteman crowd, who don't want to contend with environmental rules as they erect electrified fences to keep out immigrants. But the measure is so broadly written that it also applies to the Canadian border, opening up places like Glacier National Park in Montana to bulldozers. Rep. Denny Rehberg, a Republican from Montana, calls the bill "absolutely necessary" to secure his state from "drug dealers, human traffickers and terrorists."

In perhaps its most absurd gesture, the House GOP managed to weave together its hatred of immigrants and abortions, passing a rider that bans the government from providing abortions to immigrants in detention. The move is a brave solution in search of an actual problem: Federal agencies have never paid for such a procedure.

### ENRICH BILLIONAIRES

House Republicans have voted three times to extend all of the Bush-era tax cuts – a move that would blow a \$3.8 trillion hole in the budget over the next decade. In fact, the Ryan budget – twice approved by the House – goes even further, doling out another \$2.5 trillion to the wealthiest Americans by reducing the tax rate on top earners from 35 to just 25 percent, lowering the corporate rate to 25 percent, and ending the alternative minimum tax, a safeguard against tax cheats.

Romney, in fact, wants to give away even more to the rich than Republicans in the House by permanently eliminating the estate tax – a proposal that alarms veterans of the first Bush administration. "Given the vast amounts of wealth that have accumulated at the very, very, very top, it's an odd time to be eliminating this most progressive element of the tax system," says Michael Graetz, a former deputy assistant Treasury secretary under Bush. Over a decade, Romney's gift to the nation's most fortunate families would allow their heirs to pocket at least \$1 trillion (including up to \$50 million for Mitt's own heirs).

Those without family fortunes, meanwhile, would see their taxes soar. Independent tax groups have concluded that the only way to replace the tax revenue lost by the proposed Ryan and Romney tax cuts would be to end tax breaks – like the one for home-mortgage interest – that directly benefit the middle class. And the poor would get the shaft: The Ryan budget slashes the Child Tax Credit, meaning that a single mother of two earning the minimum wage would watch her annual tax bill rise by more than \$1,500.

### SLASH GOVERNMENT

Under the Ryan blueprint approved by the House and voted for by 40 GOP senators, government spending on everything that's not Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security – NASA, highways, education, you name it – would be cut in half by 2022 and nearly in half again by 2050, until it stands at just 3.5 percent of the economy. As the Congressional Budget Service notes, such spending levels would be unprecedented in modern times: Since World War II, the government's discretionary spending has never fallen below eight percent of GDP.

If signed into law by President Romney, the Ryan budget would slash spending on college tuition grants by 42 percent next year and kick 1 million students out of the program. It would also gut funding for public schools, food and drug safety, basic science research, law enforcement and low-income housing. The cuts to food stamps alone would total \$134 billion over the next decade. Ripping Ryan for trying to cloak his budget in Catholic doctrine, priests and faculty from Georgetown University wrote, "Your budget appears to reflect the values of your favorite philosopher, Ayn Rand, rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ." There is one place, however, where Republicans want to increase spending: Under the most recent Ryan budget, the Pentagon would receive an extra \$29 billion a year, reversing Obama's modest efforts to slow the growth of defense spending. Where would the extra cash come from? In May, the House approved a Ryan bill to replace automatic cuts to the Pentagon under the debt-ceiling agreement with \$261 billion in cuts to the federal safety net. The measure would deny food stamps to 1.8 million Americans, leave 280,000 kids without school lunches and cut off health care to 300,000 poor children.

## DESTROY HEALTH CARE

Republicans in the House have voted more than 30 times to repeal Obamacare – a move that would deplete the Medicare trust fund eight years early, kick 6.6 million young adults off their parents' health insurance, cost seniors \$700 more on average for prescription drugs, and make it legal once again for insurance companies to charge women more than men and to rescind policies when people get sick. At the same time, repealing Obamacare would provide a massive giveback to the rich, handing over nearly \$400 billion in tax revenues to those who earn above \$250,000 a year.

To further boost the profits of insurance companies, the House passed a Ryan plan to voucherize Medicare, subjecting seniors to the whims of the private market. In the first year alone, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the cost to seniors would more than double, to \$12,500 – and taxpayers would not save a dime, as private insurers pocketed the money. By 2050, as inflation took its toll, buying a policy as good as present-day Medicare would cost an 85-year-old more than \$50,000. The Ryan plan would also eviscerate Medicaid by turning federal contributions to the program into lump-sum "block grants" that states can administer as they see fit. The trouble is that the grants, like Medicare vouchers, won't keep pace with soaring health care costs. In the first decade alone, the plan would bilk states out of \$810 billion and deny health care to 30 million poor children, disabled Americans and seniors.

The last time a Republican presidential candidate touted an agenda to cut spending, lower taxes, boost defense and balance the budget was Ronald Reagan in 1980. Like Romney and Ryan, Reagan didn't have an actual plan for his spending cuts – they were an accounting fantasy, openly joked about as the "magic asterisk." In the end, as promised, Reagan's tax cuts went through, and the Pentagon's budget soared. But the spending cuts never materialized – so Reagan wound up *tripling* the debt.

If it didn't work for Reagan, says his former budget director, it would be foolish to assume Romney and Ryan can do better. "The Republican record on spending control is so abysmally bad," Stockman says, "that at this point they don't have a leg to stand on." Indeed, the last GOP administration turned \$5 trillion in projected surplus into \$5 trillion of new debt.

No one doubts Ryan's determination to slash the social safety net: Of the \$5.3 trillion in cuts he has proposed, nearly two-thirds come from programs for the poor. But when it comes time to eviscerate the rest of the federal budget, Stockman says – funding for things like drug enforcement and public schools – Congress will "never cut those programs that deeply." In short, the rich will get their tax cuts. The poor will be left destitute. But America will be driven even deeper into debt.

That, at heart, is the twisted beauty of the plan being championed by Ryan and Romney: The higher Republicans manage to drive up the debt, the more ammunition they have in their fight to slash federal spending for the needy. And the more time they waste trumpeting their "fiscal discipline," the more the nation's infrastructure will continue to crumble around them. Squandering two full workweeks of the congressional calendar on votes to repeal Obamacare has cost taxpayers \$48 million. That's nearly the same amount of money now needed to repair cracks in the Capitol itself – spending the House GOP has refused to authorize, out of anti-governmental spite. "If the House wants the dome to fall in," said Senate Appropriations chair Ben Nelson, "I hope it falls on their side." If the

Republicans experience a crushing blow as a result of their hard-right agenda, of course, it won't be caused by the laws of physics – it will be delivered by the voters on Election Day.

20120928-01 09:21 SteveB "A Culture of Delusion"

"A Culture of Delusion" by Paul Craig Roberts, OpEdNews

Sept. 27, 2012 (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/A-Culture-of-Delusion-by-Paul-Craig-Roberts-120927-669.html>)

A writer's greatest disappointments are readers who have knee-jerk responses. Not all readers, of course. Some readers are thoughtful and supportive. Others express thanks for opening their eyes. But the majority are happy when a writer tells them what they want to hear and are unhappy when he writes what they don't want to hear.

For the left-wing, Ronald Reagan is the great bogeyman. Those on the left don't understand supply-side economics as a macroeconomic innovation that cured stagflation by utilizing the impact of fiscal policy on aggregate supply. Instead, they see "trickle-down economics" and tax cuts for the rich. Leftists don't understand that the Reagan administration intervened in Grenada and Nicaragua in order to signal to the Soviets that there would be no more Soviet expansion or client states and that it was time to negotiate the end of the cold war. Instead, leftists see in Reagan the origin of rule by the one percent and the neoconservatives' wars for US hegemony.

In 1981 curtailing inflation meant collapsing nominal GNP and tax revenues. The result would be budget deficits -- anathema to Republicans -- during the period of readjustment. Ending the cold war meant curtailing the military/security complex and raised the specter in conservative circles of "the anti-Christ" Gorbachev deceiving Reagan and taking over the world.

In pursuing his two main goals, Reagan was up against his own constituency and relied on rhetoric to keep his constituency on board with his agenda. The left wing heard the rhetoric but failed to comprehend the agenda.

When I explain these facts, easily and abundantly documented, some of leftish persuasion send in condescending and insulting emails telling me that they look forward to the day that I stop lying about Reagan and tell the truth about Reagan like I do about everything else.

"Knee-jerk liberal" is a favorite term of conservatives. But conservatives can be just as knee-jerk. When I object to Washington's wars, the mistreatment of detainees and the suspension of civil liberties, some on the right tell me that if I hate America so much I should move to Cuba. Many Republicans cannot get their minds around the fact that if civil liberties are subject to the government's arbitrary discretion, then civil liberties do not exist. The flag-waving element of the population is prone to confuse loyalty to the country with loyalty to the government, unless, of course, there's a Democrat in the White House.

Rationally, it makes no sense for readers to think that a writer who would lie to them about one thing would tell them the truth about another. But as long as they hear what they want to hear, it is the truth. If they don't want to hear it, it is a lie.

Both left and right also confuse explanations with justifications.

When a writer writes about the perils that we as a society face and the implications, it is very discouraging for the writer to know that many readers will not listen unless it is what they want to hear. This discouragement is precisely what every truth-teller faces, which is why there are so few of them.

This is one reason I stopped writing a couple of years ago. I found that solid facts and sound analysis could not penetrate brainwashed and closed minds seeking vindication to keep the mind locked tightly against unsettling truths. Americans want to have their beliefs vindicated more than they want the truth. The success of print and TV pundits is based on allying with a prominent point of view or interest group and serving it. Those served make the writer or talking head successful. I never thought much of that kind of success.

But success as a prostitute is about the only kind of success that can occur in Washington or in the media these days. Those who refuse to prostitute themselves arouse pity and denunciation, not admiration. A couple of years ago an acquaintance from a university in the northeast called me to say he had recently had lunch with some of my former associates in Washington. When he inquired about me, he said the response was, "Poor Craig, if he hadn't turned critic, he would be worth tens of millions of dollars like us."

I replied that my former associates were undoubtedly correct. My acquaintance said that he hadn't realized that he was having lunch with a bunch of prostitutes.

The incentive to speak the truth and the reward for doing so are very weak. And not just for a writer, but also for academics and experts who can make far more money by lying than by telling the truth. How else would we have got GMOs, jobs offshoring, the "unitary executive," and a deregulated financial system? It is a very lucrative career to testify as an expert in civil lawsuits. It is part of America's romance with the lie that experts purchased by the opposing sides in a lawsuit battle it out as gladiators seeking the jury's thumbs-up.

And look at Congress. The two members of the House who stood up for the Constitution and truth in government will soon be gone. Ron Paul is stepping down, and Dennis Kucinich was redistricted out of his seat. As for the Senate, these thoughtful personages recently voted 90-1 to declare war on Iran, as the sole dissenter, Rand Paul, pointed out. The Senate is very much aware, although only a few will publicly admit it, that the US has been totally frustrated and held to a standoff, if not a defeat, in Afghanistan and is unable to subdue the Taliban. Despite this, the Senate wants a war with Iran, a war which could easily turn out to be even less successful. Obviously, the Senate not only lies to the public but also to itself.

Last week the Pentagon chief, Panetta, told China that the new US naval, air, and troop bases surrounding China are not directed at China. What else could be the purpose of the new bases? Washington is so accustomed to lying and to being believed that Panetta actually thinks China will believe his completely transparent lie. Panetta has confused China with the American people: tell them what they want to hear, and they will believe it.

Americans live in a matrix of lies. They seldom encounter a truthful statement. There is no evidence that Americans can any longer tell the difference between the truth and a lie. Americans fell for all of these lies and more: Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction and al Qaeda connections. Saddam Hussein's troops seized Kuwaiti babies from incubators and threw them on the floor. Gaddafi fed his troops Viagra to help them rape Libyan women. Iran has a nuclear weapons program. Change--yes we can! The US is "the indispensable country." America is broke because of food stamps and Social Security, not because of wars, bankster bailouts, and a failing economy. Russia is America's number one enemy. China is America's number one enemy. Iran is a terrorist state. Jobs offshoring is free trade and good for the US economy. Israel is America's most loyal ally. The US missile shield surrounding Russia is not directed at Russia. The South China sea is an area of US national interest. Financial markets are self-regulating.

The list is endless. Lies dominate every policy discussion, every political decision. The most successful people in America are liars.

The endless lies have created a culture of delusion. And this is why America is lost. The beliefs of many Americans, perhaps a majority, are comprised of lies. These beliefs have become emotional crutches, and Americans will fight to defend the lies that they believe. The inability of Americans to accept facts that are contrary to their beliefs is the reason the country is leaderless and will remain so. Unless scales fall from Americans' eyes, Americans are doomed.

[20120928-02](#)

09:35

SteveB

"François Hollande Opts to Punish French Rich with €20bn of New Taxes"

It's a good thing Mitt Romney was only a (haha) missionary in France and doesn't live in France, or he wouldn't like his new 75% tax rate very well...

Once again, French common sense leads the world! And, for once, I don't mean that sarcastically.

"François Hollande Opts to Punish French Rich with €20bn of New Taxes" by John Lichfield, *The Independent*

Sept. 29, 2012, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/francois-hollande-opts-to-punish-french-rich-with-20bn-of-new-taxes-8190467.html>)

(Socialist government unveils 75 per cent levy on top earners as part of 2013 austerity budget.)

(PARIS) France's Socialist government insisted yesterday that it could solve the conundrum of simultaneous deficit-cutting and growth which has eluded every other European country from Greece to Britain.

As new clouds gathered over the eurozone, President François Hollande pushed ahead with the country's toughest budget for three decades, taking €20bn (£16bn) of new taxes from big businesses and the wealthy but imposing relatively moderate €10bn cuts on state spending.

With growth stagnant and unemployment rising sharply, the success or failure of the 2013 budget could decide whether Europe's second-largest economy becomes part of solution to the eurozone crisis or a new, and devastating, part of the problem.

International markets became jittery once again yesterday about the prospects for economic and political meltdown in Spain and Greece, following a broadly positive response to the tough budget announced by Madrid on Thursday. An independent audit of Spain's troubled banks showed a shortfall of €59.3bn. The findings of the stress test will help Madrid decide how much money it will tap from a €100bn European loan facility to prop up its financial sector. Jean-Claude Juncker, head of the group of eurozone finance ministers, said he was "comforted" by the results of the test.

If the Spanish budget was tough, the France's was equally so. It reduced the projected state deficit next year to 3 per cent of gross domestic product from 4.6 per cent this year – but most of the pain will fall on big business and wealthy taxpayers rather than public spending. Among other things, the budget introduces Mr Hollande's "temporary" 75 per cent tax on personal earnings over €1m and abolishes the tax breaks on large firms introduced by his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy.

The Prime Minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, spoke of a "fighting budget" which would help to get France "back on track" after 38 years of successive state deficits. He insisted the target of 0.8 per cent growth next year was realistic and would be achieved.

But opposition politicians said the budget had been "muddled together", and was more concerned with preserving Mr Hollande's campaign promises than addressing France's – and Europe's – deepening economic crisis. They pointed out that, while almost all European countries were cutting back spending, the French budget for 2013 preserved the 56 per cent of GDP spent by the state and marginally increased the number of state employees, by 6,000.

In his successful campaign in the spring, Mr Hollande promised to honour France's EU commitments to cut public deficits while rekindling growth and reversing the rise in unemployment – something that has eluded every other developed economy since the financial crisis began in 2007.

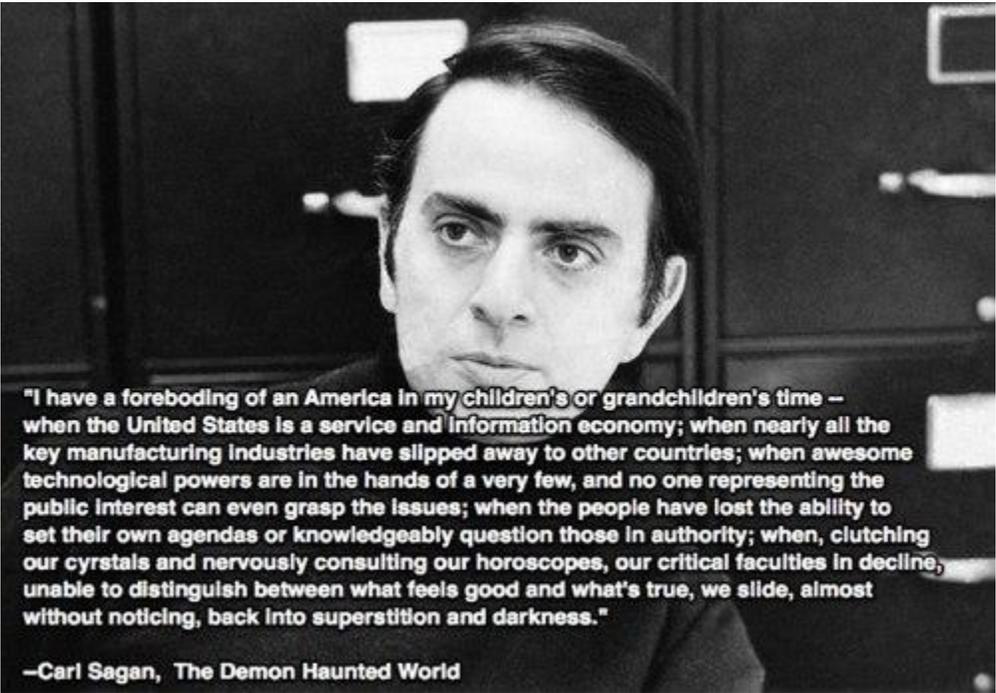
He insisted that this could be done by making the rich pay a "fairer" share of the cost of the state and imposing modest cuts in spending while introducing EU-funded infrastructure projects and job-creation schemes for the young.

Despite the collapse of his popularity and a worsening economic climate at home, Mr Hollande largely stuck to his guns yesterday. Cuts in state spending will be limited to a freeze on hiring in most ministries. There will be some delays or cuts in cultural and transport projects. There will be a new 45 per cent tax band for income above €150,000 and, for two years only, a 75 per tax on earnings of more than €1m.

Critics complained, however, that the budget did nothing to tackle the erosion of France's international competitiveness, which has been blamed for large-scale redundancies in the car industry and other sectors. The cost of employing a worker in France has increase by 28 per cent in the past decade, compared with an 8 per cent increase in Germany.

On Monday, Greece will reveal a draft budget for 2013 which is expected to make new cuts in state spending in an attempt to satisfy markets and the country's troika of bailout trustees – the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

[20120928-03](#) 11:40 Bill Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America



[20120928-07](#) 15:31 SteveB Re: Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America (reply to Bill, above)

Definitely a good one! Thanks, Bill.

[20120928-05](#) 13:54 SandyI Fw: Clint Eastwood

[Source of original email unknown. Possibly: <http://www.isiahfactor.com/2012/09/24/fans-turn-on-clint-eastwood/>. –SteveB]

Clint Eastwood has a movie coming out next week, *Trouble with the Curve*. Yes, the same Clint Eastwood who tried to marginalize our President at the RNC a few weeks ago. Now it's time to return the favor to Mr. Eastwood.

Make sure that you are not one of the people sitting in the audience watching this movie. He used the empty chair to make his point, now we are going to use the empty seats at the theaters where this movie is being shown to make our point. I have always liked Eastwood's movies until he pulled this stupid stunt and showed his true colors, "Black & White" Tea Party Member.

Make sure that you send this to everyone you know. The message has to be sent. The message: There will always be consequences as the result of your actions! He just made my day!

"May the neighbors respect you, trouble neglect you, the angels protect you, and heaven accept you."

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. —Cherokee wisdom

[20120928-17](#) 23:57 Art Re: Clint Eastwood (reply to SandyI, above)

Agree!

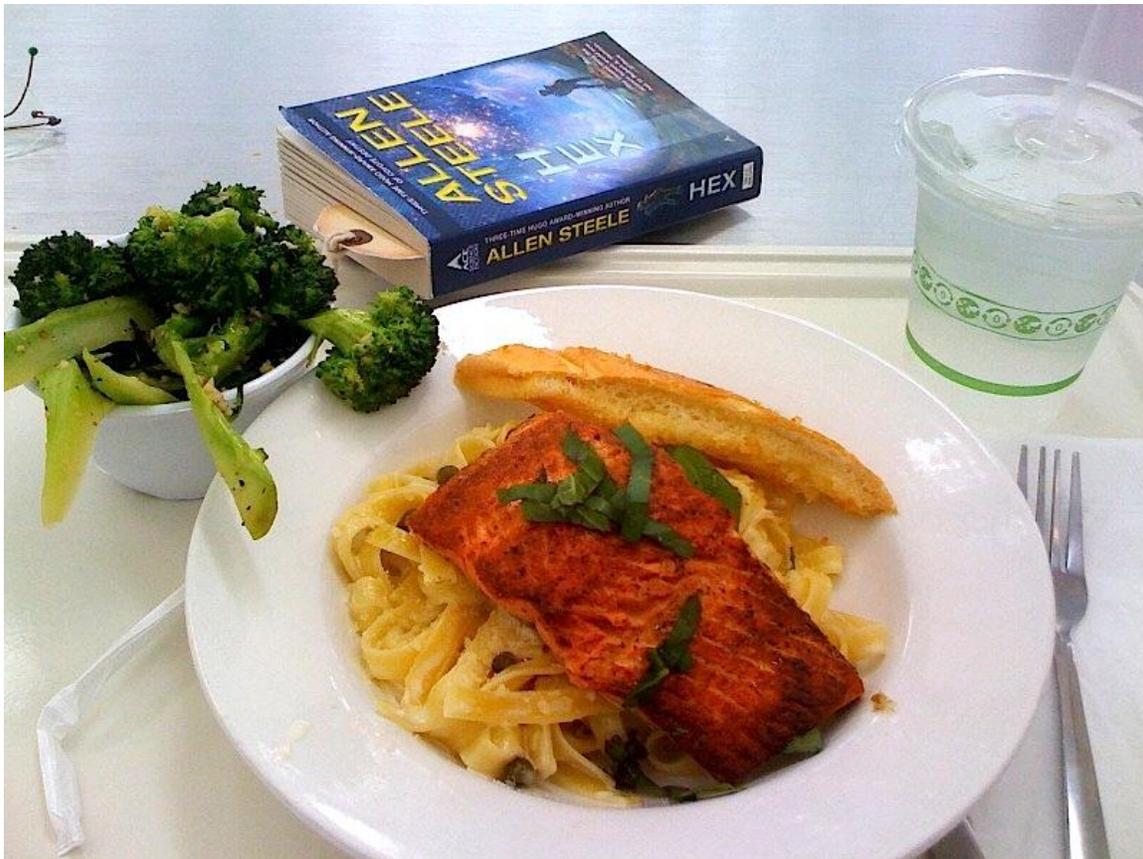
[20120928-06](#) 14:45 Ben Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple

Double AI: That's Fettuccini Alfredo, eaten outside. Great combo!

This was a collaboration between Chef Clark (on the gas grill over two burners of the pasta station) and Chef Patricia (exercising her native Sicilian skills with the pasta and alfredo sauce).

There was a brief delay while I happily waited at the Asian line for more broccoli to emerge from the kitchen; I'd made my decision to pass on the delicious-looking (confirmed true by several actual diners) Kung Pau Shrimp, in deference to the line being out of white rice, which seems only right to me for Chinese dishes. Had to have that veggie: hence, the side of garlic broccoli.

Cup on the tray, I proceeded to Pasta Land, and watched Chef Clark deftly repopulate the griddle with more salmon filets as Chef Patricia refreshed noodles for my plate, and applied a liberal scoop of her delicious Alfredo sauce. (Is that 'Alfredo', or 'al Fredo'? Hafta look that one up somewhere...) Chef Clark dusted my pasta with capers, added a carefully selected filet (he knows exactly how I like mine: a bit toward the rare side, just slightly dark inside, for salmon), and garnished with narrow strips of fresh basil. A perfect presentation, as you can see:



Seared Salmon Fettuccini Alfredo w/ Broccoli Side

20120928-08 17:20 SteveB Stock Market

If a businessman is the best thing for the economy, and if President Obama is a "disaster" and a "socialist" (as Republicans insist!)...

**SHOULDN'T THE STOCK MARKETS BE *CRASHING* RIGHT NOW INSTEAD OF DRAMATICALLY *RISING*???**

20120928-09 17:33 Ben Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)

Is this a trick question?

20120928-11 17:38 SteveB Re: Stock Market (reply to Ben, above)

LOL!

20120928-12 17:44 Ben Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)

ROFLWAALITAFH\*

\*Rolling on floor laughing with arms and legs in the air flapping helplessly

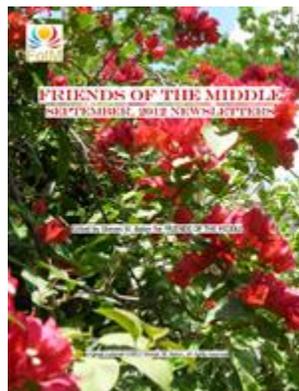
20120928-10 17:35 SteveB Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook

The October, 2012, collected edition of the *FotM Newsletter* has now been published online as a PDF ebook.

To read or download, click on the link or cover photo, below.

Thanks to all of you! Have a great weekend, especially you, Art, there in Turkey! Be careful!

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201209-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>



20120928-13 18:59 Pam Re: Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook (reply to SteveB, above)

This is great, Steve. I am astounded at your enterprise and so grateful to be part of it

20120929-05 12:25 SteveB Graphic: "Money Masters"

Good graphic!

<http://www.nationofchange.org/money-masters-1348932950>

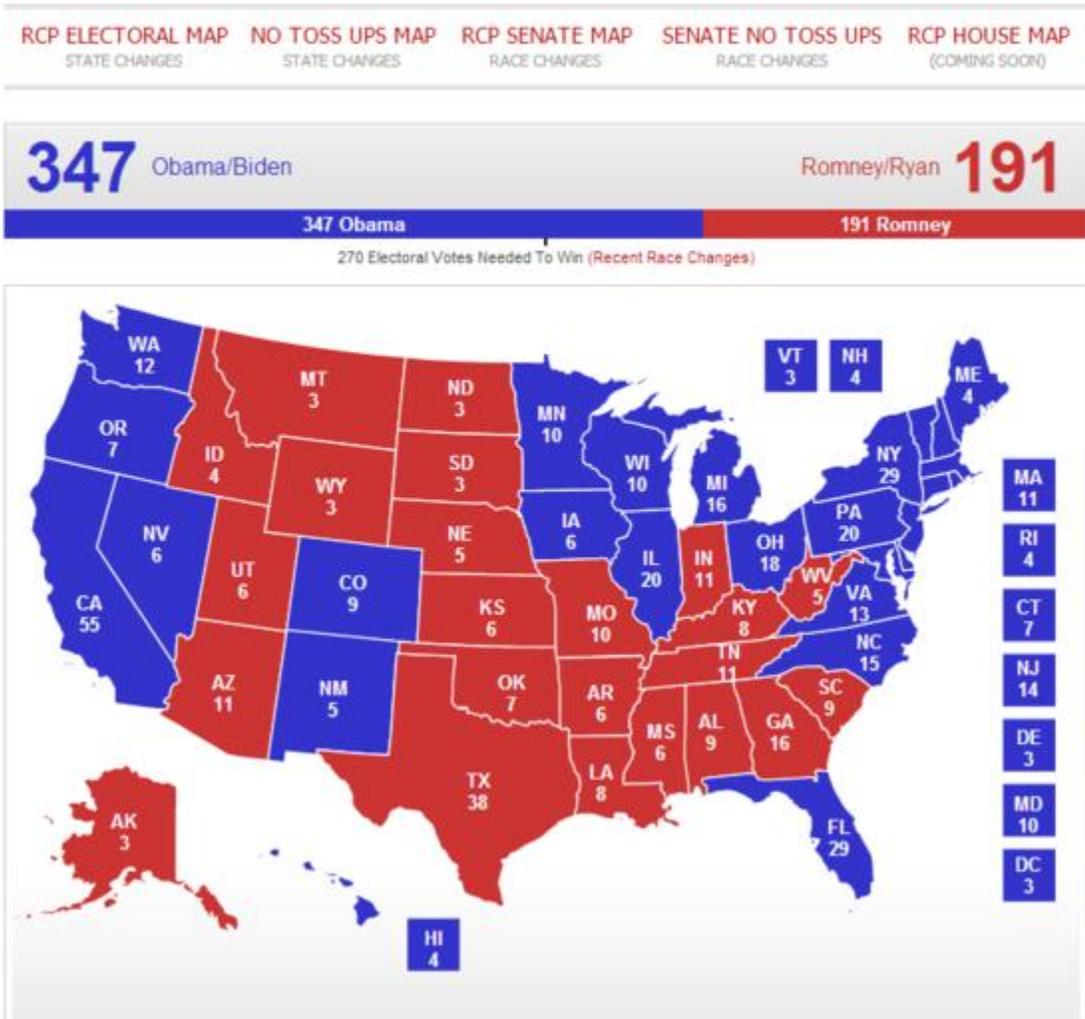
20120929-06 14:52 Dennis Video: "Green Party Presidential Forum: Roseanne Barr & Jill Stein"

For some intelligent political thought....Think Green....

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WGLi5\\_i0xQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WGLi5_i0xQ&feature=related)

20120929-07 22:56 SteveB Graphic: No Swing States Left?

# NO TOSS UP STATES



20120930-01 09:26 MarthaH "Romney or Obama? Political Scientists Make Their Predictions"

"Romney or Obama? Political Scientists Make Their Predictions" by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*

Sept. 29, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/romney-or-obama-political-scientists-make-their-predictions/2012/09/29/c2804842-0a5d-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/romney-or-obama-political-scientists-make-their-predictions/2012/09/29/c2804842-0a5d-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd_story.html))

Are you ready to call the election? Mitt Romney certainly isn't, nor, for that matter, is President Obama. But a few hardy academics have done so. Out now are a baker's dozen forecasts produced by political scientists that predict the outcome in November.

Polls give Obama the advantage, nationally and in most of the battleground states, but they are, as is often said, snapshots in time, not predictions of the future. The election forecasts are in fact predictions, based on various and varied statistical models. Most give the advantage to the president, but the verdict is not unanimous.

The 13 projections are contained in the new issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*, which is published by the American Political Science Association. Eight of them project that Obama will win the popular vote; five say the popular vote will go to Romney. But the degree of certainty in those forecasts differs. One projection favoring the president says there is an 88 percent certainty that he'll win, while two others forecasting Obama say there is only a 57 percent certainty.

James E. Campbell, the department chairman at the University at Buffalo in New York, who wrote the introduction to the package, rates them this way: Five predict that Obama will win a plurality of the two-party vote, although three are on "the cusp of a toss-up." Five predict that Romney will win the plurality of the two-party vote. Three are in what he calls the toss-up range.

One of the most bullish of the Obama-will-win projections comes from Helmut Norpoth, a professor at Stony Brook University, and Michael Bednarczuk, a grad student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. They wrote that Obama will defeat Romney "by a comfortable margin."

Their projection, made 299 days before the election, is based on a model that takes into account the performance of the candidates in the primaries and presidential election cycles. "In plain English," they wrote, "Obama has history on his side as well as the fact that he was unchallenged in the primaries."

One of the most bearish about the president's prospects is Alfred G. Cuzan, the department chairman at the University of West Florida. He notes that since 1880, a sitting president has lost his reelection bid only six times, and only twice when the incumbent had succeeded a president of a different party.

But Cuzan, whose model is called the "Fiscal Model," looks at changes in government spending relative to the size of the economy as his guide. He argues that the expansionary spending policies of the president dim his chances of winning.

"Even if he does squeeze by the Republican candidate," Cuzan wrote, "it is highly likely that President Obama would do so with a smaller share of the vote than in 2008, the first president in well over a century to be reelected to a second term by a thinner margin of victory than he received the first time around."

Alan Abramowitz, a professor at Emory University, looks at the advantages of incumbency, presidential approval as of the end of June in an election year and change in real gross domestic product in the second quarter of the year. He calls his method the "Time for a Change" model. He also has made adjustments to factor in the increased polarization in the electorate, which he says has affected the impact of certain fundamentals that generally determine the outcome.

He projected a one-point margin for Obama in the popular vote, but added: "Barring any changes in the second quarter GDP estimate, this is the closest popular vote margin predicted by the model in the entire postwar era although it is only slightly smaller than the 1.2 point margin predicted for Jimmy Carter in 1976."

That was before the government revised its second-quarter real GDP growth estimate down from 1.7 percent to 1.3 percent. I e-mailed Abramowitz to ask whether he would change his forecast. He said the idea is to forecast the result before the conventions. He said the new GDP number would reduce Obama's predicted margin but said the

president's better approval ratings would somewhat offset that. He also said he believes the race will tighten before November.

Campbell also foresees a close outcome, but he still tipped in Obama's direction. He uses two different models, although both include real GDP as one of the factors. Incumbency, he notes, is one big advantage for the president, while the economy is obviously Obama's problem. In terms of economic growth, he noted, Obama ranks eighth out of the past 10 presidents who sought reelection.

Veteran modeler Michael Lewis-Beck of the University of Iowa and Charles Tien, the department chairman at Hunter College in New York, offer contrasting forecasts based on competing models.

A traditional "Jobs Model" shows Obama in deep trouble. But using a different model, they see Obama winning. Forced to choose between the two, they stick to the jobs model, which shows Obama capturing about 48 percent of the vote. Conceding that any inherent margin for error could result in an Obama victory, they nonetheless concluded, "It still suggests an Obama victory is unlikely."

Robert Erikson, a Columbia University professor, and Christopher Wlezien of Temple University use a wide variety of economic measures in their "Leading Economic Indicators and the Polls" model. They noted the disparity between perceptions of business conditions and leading economic indicators on the one hand and income growth on the other. Four years ago, the first two were at historic lows while income growth was "middling." This year it is the reverse.

They ask: "What does this suggest about President Obama's electoral fate? Is it a dismal election-year economy that dooms the president to certain defeat? Or are economic circumstances brighter than the income numbers would indicate, offering promise of reelection?"

Their answer, made a month before the party conventions, was for a very close election with Obama slightly favored, despite the fact that economic conditions alone would seem to make Romney the heavy favorite.

Douglas A. Hibbs, a retired professor of economics and political science, uses a "Bread and Peace" model — the classic construct of peace and prosperity as the only two factors that really count in presidential elections. He looks at per capita disposable income and U.S. military fatalities in foreign conflicts.

Hibbs projects that, on the basis of his model, Obama will almost certainly lose to Romney. But he is quick to note that he "deviates substantially from prevailing views — particularly those in which I generally put greatest stock: betting price data at the Iowa Electronic Market and Intrade," which he notes has been bullish about Obama's chances of winning.

Thomas Holbrook, department chairman at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, uses only a few measures in his model: presidential approval and satisfaction with personal finances, while taking into account whether one candidate is an incumbent. "This portends a close election, but one in which Mitt Romney is the favorite."

Three models attempt to project Electoral College results rather than the popular vote. One projects Obama with 213 electoral votes, another with 324 electoral votes (but allows that Romney could win) and a third with 301 votes while acknowledging "a great deal of uncertainty about the outcome."

Several of these scholars will talk more about forecasting elections on Oct. 16 at the National Press Club. In the meantime, as pollsters continue to track the race, they've boldly made their predictions and will await the real results along with the rest of the country.

<a href="#">20120930-02</a>	11:54	Bill	Fw: Letter to the Red States
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[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Dear Red States:

We're ticked off at your Neanderthal attitudes and politics and we've decided we're leaving. "Legitimate rape." Sheesh!

We in New York intend to form our own country and we're taking the other Blue States with us.

In case you aren't aware that includes California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and the rest of the Northeast.

We believe this split will be beneficial to the nation and especially to the people of the new country of The Enlightened States of America (E.S.A).

To sum up briefly:

- You get Texas, Oklahoma and all the slave states.
- We get stem cell research and the best beaches.
- We get Andrew Cuomo and Elizabeth Warren. You get Bobby Jindal and Todd Akin.
- We get the Statue of Liberty. You get OpryLand.
- We get Intel and Microsoft. You get WorldCom.
- We get Harvard. You get Ole' Miss.
- We get 85 percent of America's venture capital and entrepreneurs.
- You get Alabama.
- We get two-thirds of the tax revenue. You get to make the red states pay their fair share.

Since our aggregate divorce rate is 22 percent lower than the Christian Coalition's we get a bunch of happy families. You get a bunch of single moms.

Please be aware that the E.S.A. will be pro choice and anti war and we're going to want all our citizens back from Afghanistan at once. If you need people to fight, ask your evangelicals. They have kids they're apparently willing to send to their deaths for no purpose and they don't care if you don't show pictures of their children's caskets coming home.

We wish you success in Afghanistan, and possibly Iran as well, but we're not willing to spend our resources in these sorts of pursuits.

With the Blue States in hand we will have firm control of 80% of the country's fresh water, more than 90% of the pineapple and lettuce, 92% of the nation's fresh fruit, 95% of America's quality wines (you can serve French wines at state dinners) 90% of all cheese, 90 percent of the high tech industry, most of the US low sulfur coal, all living redwoods, sequoias and condors, all the Ivy and Seven Sister schools plus Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Cal Tech and MIT.

With the Red States you will have to cope with 88% of all obese Americans and their projected health care costs, 92% of all US mosquitoes, nearly 100% of the tornadoes, 90% of the hurricanes, 99% of all Southern Baptists, virtually 100% of all televangelists, Rush Limbaugh, Bob Jones University, Clemson and the University of Georgia.

We get Hollywood and Yosemite, thank you.

38% of those in the Red states believe Jonah was actually swallowed by a whale, 62% believe life is sacred unless we're discussing the death penalty or gun laws, 44% say that evolution is only a theory, 53% that Saddam was involved in 9/11 and 61% of you crazy bastards believe you are people with higher morals than we lefties.

We're taking the good weed too. You can have that crap they grow in Mexico.

Sincerely, Stan Singer, Citizen of the Enlightened States of America

Another solemn story of sacrifice

In our continuing series covering the victims of insider attacks in Afghanistan, Dan Anders, father of fallen soldier Spc. Mabry Anders came on the show to celebrate his son's legacy. His son lived in fear of the local forces he worked with. Army Specialist Anders was only 21-years-old when he was killed in a "green-on-blue" attack by an Afghan police officer. But as his son's killer ran away, the Army helicopter had to ask for permission to kill a man who had just gunned down two American soldiers.

Mr. Anders told us that he had gotten more information about his son's death from the media than he had from the US military. He told Laura that the White House sent him a bland form letter without any personal details of his son's life or personality. Anders told our listeners that Obama never called or wrote him after his son's death.

Audio:

<http://www.lauraingraham.com/pg/jsp/charts/streamingAudioMaster.jsp?dispid=302&headerDest=L3BnL2pzcC9tZW RpYS9mbGFzaHdlbGNvbWUuanNwP3BpZD0xMzYxNQ%3D%3D>.

"Russia Reasserts Ownership Over the North Pole" by Bruce Jones and Tom Parfitt, *The Telegraph*/Business Insider Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.businessinsider.com/russia-reasserts-ownership-over-the-north-pole-2012-9>)

A Russian Orthodox bishop has lowered a "holy memorial capsule" into the sea at the North Pole in an attempt to "consecrate" the Arctic and reassert Moscow's claims to the territory.

The service was held by Bishop Iakov on the ice alongside the nuclear icebreaker *Rossiya* during a polar expedition titled "Arctic-2012", organised by the country's Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute.

The metal capsule carried the blessings of the church's leader, bearing the inscription: "With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the consecration of the North Pole marks 1150 years of Russian Statehood."

The Kremlin is keen to claim the hydrocarbon riches off its northern coast despite territorial claims from other governments, and is gradually re-militarising the area.

A conservative Moscow think-tank suggested in July that the Arctic Ocean should be renamed the "Russian Ocean" and this week it was announced that MiG-31 supersonic interceptor aircraft will be based in the region by the end of the year.

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, who says exploiting oil and gas reserves in the North is a "strategic priority".

At the North Pole, the bishop's service was attended by a small group of scientists and the *Rossiya's* captain Oleg Shchapin.

It was held during an expedition to find a floe suitable for Russia's 40th drifting polar research station and to deliver a 17-strong team to man the outpost for the next year.

The consecration earlier this month highlights Russia's urge to claim international waters beyond its continental shelf because of underwater ridges it says are attached to the mainland.

Bishop Iakov, who is thought to be the first Russian priest to visit the pole, emphasised that the consecration symbolised efforts "to restore Russia's position and confirm its achievements in the Arctic".

In 2007, in another political move, Russia planted its flag on the seabed below the polar ice cap using a remotely operated mini-submarine, symbolically laying claim to the surrounding area.

The Rossiya carried on its voyage an icon and holy relics of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker, the patron saint of sailors, normally kept in the diocese's main church on dry land.

Bishop Iakov was appointed last year as bishop of the newly created, most northerly diocese of Naryan-Mar and Mezen, which lies inside the Arctic Circle on the White and Barents Seas.

The diocese includes the islands of Novaya Zemlya and Franz Josef Land, where airfields have recently been upgraded by the Russian Air Force as operational strategic bomber stations.

One airbase on Graham Bell Island boasts a 7,000-foot year-round compacted ice runway.

Bishop Iakov has taken part in other polar missions, sailing the length of the contested Northern Sea Route between Scandinavia and Alaska along Russia's Arctic coast, which Russia claims and seeks to charge ships for using like the Panama Canal, but is regarded by most other countries as international waters.

In 2004 the bishop consecrated an Orthodox church in Antarctica at Russia's Bellingshausen research base.

<a href="#">20120930-05</a>	18:11	Tom	"Speak Up: US Law Enforcement to Use Russian Software to Store Millions of Voices"
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"Speak Up: US Law Enforcement to Use Russian Software to Store Millions of Voices" by Katerina Azarova, RT

Sept. 23, 2012, (<http://rt.com/usa/news/law-enforcement-voice-recognition-759/>)

The US government has already proven its intent to see all evil, with the use of Orwellian programs like TrapWire. But it can now hear all evil too, as law enforcement agencies implement a tool able to store, analyze and identify voices in seconds.

'Voice Grid Nation' is a system that uses advanced algorithms to match identities to voices. Brought to the US by Russia's Speech Technology Center, it claims to be capable of allowing police, federal agencies and other law enforcement personnel to build up a huge database containing up to several million voices.

When authorities intercept a call they've deemed 'hinky', the recording is entered into the VoiceGrid program, which (probably) buzzes and whirrs and spits out a match. In five seconds, the program can scan through 10,000 voices, and it only needs 3 seconds for speech analysis. All that, combined with 100 simultaneous searches and the storage capacity of 2 million samples, gives SpeechPro, as the company is known in the US, the right to claim a 90% success rate.

According to Slate.com's Ryan Gallagher, who spoke with SpeechPro president Aleksey Khitrov, the software is already being used in many different countries and for 'noble causes' only – like in Mexico, where Voice Grid helped identify and apprehend kidnappers during a ransom call, thus saving their victim's life.

Both the FBI and the NSA have expressed interest in the program, which is also expected to be used at 911 call centers and police precincts. And sample lists would, of course, contain 'persons of interest' – known criminals, terror suspects or people on a watch list.

Or would it?

The definition of 'suspect' has been known to be loosely interpreted by US law enforcement agencies in the past. What with the FBI branding people as 'terrorist suspects' for buying waterproof matches or flashlights, and the Department of Homeland Security urging hotel staff to notify authorities immediately if a person has tried to use

cash and/or hung a 'do not disturb' sign on their door, it's easy to see why many are spooked by the idea that not only can the government see you at all times, it can also hear you.

In fact, combined with the capabilities of TrapWire, this would give law enforcement agencies an unprecedented ability to effectively dismiss both the country's founding documents and any notion of privacy you may have had.

An unsuspecting, law-abiding citizen would obviously have to read his private messages or broadcast his phone calls out loud to be considered above-board. If he's whispering into his handset, however, the DHS is relying on its "citizen spies" to pounce and denounce the poor guy.

So, law enforcement agencies now have TrapWire to 'all the better to see you with' and Voice Grid 'all the better to hear you with'. That plus the Patriot Act is effectively turning America into the land of the-no-longer-free-and the very agencies that set out to protect their people and their land into the big bad wolf.

The Patriot Act is probably one of the most controversial pieces of legislature in American history, an acronym that, for all the old and new security bureaus, Provides Appropriate Tools Required (to) Intercept (and) Obstruct Terrorism. But the tools included in the bill weren't – and still aren't – considered appropriate by many. Wiretaps and electronic surveillance were legalized. Arrests were made on a daily basis. When the number of those detained reached 1,200, officials stopped counting. Personal records no longer remained personal – and that was only the domestic beginning.

Officially, 1,200 special interest detainees were held and investigated under the Patriot Act. The Justice Department examined more than 700 of them and none were ever linked to any terrorist group or plot.

Nevertheless, upon his resignation in 2004, former Attorney General John Ashcroft's letter stated that "The objective of securing the safety of Americans from crime and terror has been achieved." This should have meant the end of the Patriot Act, for it included a "sunset" provision, to expire in December, 2005. Seven years later, it's still in place and regularly being enforced...not necessarily for a war against terror.

Statistics show that the so-called sneak-and-peak, a search warrant that can be executed without prior warning, is mostly used for drug-related crimes. Between 2006 and 2009, 1,618 delayed-search warrants were issued for drugs, 122 for fraud – and only 15 for terrorism.

The National Defense Authorization Act allows the indefinite detention of anyone deemed a terror suspect – American citizen or not. And if you look at what makes a potential suspect, you can pretty much expect to be taken in every time you answer your phone.

So bottom line: you can be heard making a hotel reservation and then seen trying to pay cash, for example, or looking stressed at breakfast and then detained as a suspect under the NDAA whilst police comb through your files using a warning-less warrant.

But the good thing is: you'll be totally safe.

<a href="#">20120930-06</a>	21:49	Tom	"Obamacare Fines Kick In" & "Tax Penalty to Hit Nearly 6M Uninsured People"
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"Obamacare Fines Kick In" by AP

Sept. 30, 2012, (<http://www.onenewsnow.com/ap/united-states/obamacare-fines-kick-in>)

If you or an elderly relative have been hospitalized recently and noticed extra attention when the time came to be discharged, there's more to it than good customer service.

Starting Monday, Medicare will fine hospitals that have too many patients readmitted within 30 days of discharge due to complications. The penalties are part of a broader push under President Barack Obama's health care law to improve quality while also trying to cut costs.

About two-thirds of the hospitals serving Medicare patients, or some 2,200 facilities, will be hit with penalties averaging around \$125,000 per facility this coming year, according to government estimates.

Data to assess the penalties have been collected and crunched, and Medicare has shared the results with individual hospitals. Medicare plans to post details online later and people can look up how their community hospitals performed.

It adds up to a new way of doing business for hospitals, and they have scrambled to prepare for well over a year. They are working on ways to improve communication with rehabilitation centers and doctors who follow patients after they're released, as well as connecting individually with patients.

"There is a lot of activity at the hospital level to straighten out our internal processes," said Nancy Foster, vice president for quality and safety at the American Hospital Association. "We are also spreading our wings a little and reaching outside the hospital, to the extent that we can, to make sure patients are getting the ongoing treatment they need."

Still, industry officials say they have misgivings about being held liable for circumstances beyond their control. They also complain that facilities serving low-income people, including many major teaching hospitals, are much more likely to be fined, raising questions of fairness.

Consumer advocates say Medicare's nudge to hospitals is long overdue and not nearly stiff enough.

For the first year, the penalty is capped at 1 percent of a hospital's Medicare payments. The overwhelming majority of penalized facilities will pay less. Also, for now, hospitals are only being measured on three medical conditions: heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia.

Under the health care law, the penalties gradually will rise until 3 percent of Medicare payments to hospitals are at risk.

"Tax Penalty to Hit Nearly 6M Uninsured People" by Ricardo Alonso Zaldivar, AP

Sept. 19, 2012, (<http://timesleader.com/stories/Tax-penalty-to-hit-nearly-6M-uninsured-people,207080>)

(WASHINGTON) Nearly 6 million Americans — most of them in the middle class — will face a tax penalty for not carrying medical coverage once President Barack Obama's health care overhaul law is fully in place, congressional budget analysts said Wednesday.

The new estimate amounts to an inconvenient fact for the administration, a reminder of what critics see as broken promises.

The numbers from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office are significantly higher than a previous projection by the same office in 2010, shortly after the law passed.

The earlier estimate found 4 million people would be affected. The difference — 2 million people— represents a 50 percent increase.

That's still only a sliver of the population, given that more than 150 million people currently are covered by employer plans. Nonetheless, in his first campaign for the White House, Obama pledged not to raise taxes on individuals making less than \$200,000 a year and couples making less than \$250,000.

And the budget office analysis found that nearly 80 percent of those who'll face the penalty would be making up to or less than five times the federal poverty level. Currently that would work out to \$55,850 or less for an individual and \$115,250 or less for a family of four.

Average penalty: about \$1,200 in 2016.

"The bad news and broken promises from Obamacare just keep piling up," said Rep. Dave Camp, R-Mich., chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who wants to repeal the law.

There was no immediate response from the administration.

The budget office said most of the increase in its estimate is due to changes in underlying projections about the economy, incorporating the effects of new federal legislation, as well as higher unemployment and lower wages.

Starting in 2014, the new health care law requires virtually every legal resident of the U.S. to carry health insurance or face a tax penalty. The Supreme Court upheld Obama's law as constitutional in a 5-4 decision this summer, finding that the insurance mandate and the tax penalty enforcing it fall within the power of Congress to impose taxes. The penalty will be collected by the IRS, just like taxes.

The budget office said the penalty will raise \$6.9 billion when fully in effect in 2016.

The new law will also provide government aid to help middle-class and low-income households afford coverage, the financial carrot that balances out the penalty.

Nonetheless, some people might still decide to remain uninsured because they object to government mandates or because they feel they would come out ahead financially even if they have to pay the penalty. Health insurance is expensive, with employer-provided family coverage averaging nearly \$15,800 a year for a family and \$4,300 for a single plan.

The Supreme Court allowed individual states to opt out of a major Medicaid expansion under the law. The Obama administration says it will exempt low-income people affected by state decisions from having to comply with the insurance mandate.

Most Americans will not have to worry about the insurance requirement since they already have coverage through employers, government programs like Medicare or by buying their own policies.

Many Republicans still regard the insurance mandate as unconstitutional and rue the day the Supreme Court upheld it.

However, the idea for an individual insurance requirement comes from Republican health care plans in the 1990s.

It's also a central element of the 2006 Massachusetts health care law signed by then-GOP Gov. Mitt Romney, now running against Obama and promising to repeal the federal law. The approach seems to have worked well in Massachusetts, with virtually all residents covered and dwindling numbers opting to pay the penalty instead.

<a href="#">20120930-07</a> 22:19 Tom "Nader Calls Obama a 'War Criminal'"
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"Nader Calls Obama a 'War Criminal'" by UPI

Sept. 26, 2012, ([http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/09/26/nader-calls-obama-a-war-criminal.html?ESRC=dod\\_A.nl](http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/09/26/nader-calls-obama-a-war-criminal.html?ESRC=dod_A.nl))

President Obama is a "war criminal" while rival Mitt Romney is "a corporation running for president," says Ralph Nader, a former candidate for U.S. president.

Nader, who ran for president as the Green Party candidate in 2000 and as an independent in 2004, told Politico that Obama was worse than George W. Bush.

Obama is "more aggressive, more illegal worldwide" than Bush, the six-time presidential candidate said. The president is a "war criminal," he said, who "thinks the world is his plate, that national sovereignties mean nothing, drones can go anywhere."

Obama's success has been "below average," Nader said, "because he raised expectation levels. What expectation level did George W. Bush raise?"

However, Nader said he liked some programs pushed by Obama, such as the president's focus on renewable energy and his thwarted jobs bill.

Nader said he preferred Obama over Romney, the Republican candidate, because Obama is "the more effective evil" who has "legitimized the lawless war-mongering and militarism abroad of George W. Bush."

Romney, Nader charged, is "basically a corporation running for president masquerading as a human being."

Nader, who twice ran for president under the Green Party banner, blasted the dominant parties. The Democratic Party is "sick" and "decaying," he said, while the Republican Party is "the cruelest, most ignorant, most anti-worker, most war-mongering, most Wall Street-indentured Republican Party in its history, since the 1850s."

Nader isn't running for president this year and hinted he may never run again.

20120930-09 23:59 SteveB Photo: *iQué magnificas!*

<http://feriasbolivia.blogspot.com/2011/09/fotos-magnificas-en-la-expocruz.html>



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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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