



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #259 — OCT. 31, 2012**

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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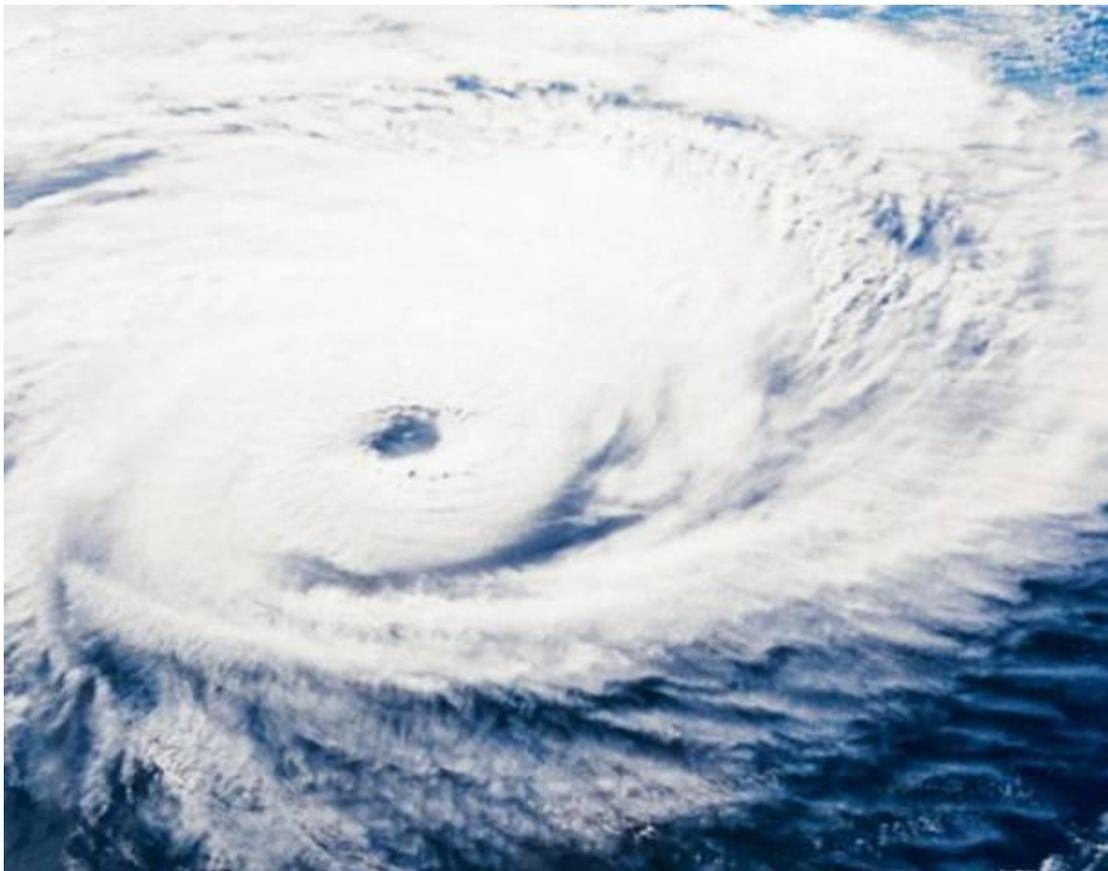
Let the States (or the 'Private Sector') Do It?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 31, 2012)

At election time, "let the buyer beware" lest he be left "holding the bag". Here is some more terrible, unfair, stupid, and wasteful Republican thinking:

"How Would the Paul Ryan Budget Handle Disaster Relief?" by Elise Foley, Huffington Post

Oct. 30, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/29/paul-ryan-budget-fema_n_2040878.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)



(WASHINGTON) If it had been up to Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, disaster response agencies would likely face lower funding to handle the huge costs of dealing with storms such as Hurricane Sandy, a review of his much-touted budget shows.

The budget plan put forward by Ryan as chairman of the House Budget Committee requires massive cuts to discretionary spending, which includes everything but entitlements. Those cuts would almost certainly extend to the Department of Homeland Security and its disaster relief programs under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The ounce of doubt remains because Ryan's budget proposal doesn't include any specifics on FEMA itself. But it also doesn't exempt FEMA or Homeland Security from the standard cuts that it broadly applies to government services. The budget does exempt the military from many cuts. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities wrote in August that Ryan's budget would likely dump the cost of dealing with disasters on state and local governments.

That's in line with a policy prescription advocated by Mitt Romney at a GOP candidates' debate last year, in which he said it was "immoral" for the federal government to play a significant role in disaster relief at a time of high budget deficits. Pressed by CNN moderator John King on whether he'd really send disaster relief to the states, he replied, **"It is simply immoral, in my view, for us to continue to rack up larger and larger debts and pass them on to our kids, knowing full well that we'll all be dead and gone before it's paid off. It makes no sense at all."**

While the opacity of Ryan's budget makes a definitive statement impossible, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities noted that cuts to FEMA would be in line with his general budgetary approach. "This form of discretionary federal aid would be subject to cuts under the Ryan budget," the center wrote. "If it were scaled back substantially, states and localities would need to bear a larger share of the costs of disaster response and recovery, or attempt to make do with less during difficult times."

Third Way, a moderate think tank, wrote in March that the Ryan budget would cut funding by 62 percent for community and regional development, including disaster aid and insurance.

"This would mean less accurate predictions and planning for disasters, less preparation that can reduce the severity of their impact, and less timely responses," according to the Third Way memo. "It would set the clock back on disaster preparation to the days before Hurricane Katrina."

Although Ryan's plan never became law, it provides some insight into the still fuzzy budget priorities of his running mate, who has said he would adopt a separate but similar plan to the one introduced by Ryan. Romney has directly advocated cuts to FEMA and, like Ryan, supports broader funding cuts that would likely apply to the agency.

Romney's budget plan would lead to across-the-board cuts that would likely reduce FEMA's budget between 34 percent and 53 percent, FireDogLake wrote.

Brendan Buck, a spokesman for the Romney campaign, pointed out that the Ryan budget does not mention FEMA cuts and said that whether the agency would be exempt from cuts would be up to the appropriations committee.

"A Romney-Ryan administration will always ensure that disaster funding is there for those in need. Period," Buck said.

Disaster relief funding had traditionally been relatively noncontroversial, but more recently has become politicized as lawmakers seek to drastically reduce federal spending. FEMA nearly ran out of money last year when Republicans refused to pass an increase in the agency's funding unless it was offset by cuts elsewhere -- despite pleas from storm victims at the time.

In June, the House approved an appropriations bill to reduce FEMA's 2013 budget by \$183 million from 2012 spending levels, but Ryan voted in opposition. He voted for the continuing resolution for fiscal year 2013, which maintained funding levels for FEMA.

The agency could face major cuts under the looming sequester, which Ryan voted for and President Barack Obama signed into law, although both have been critical of the deal and said they did not want it to go into effect. The sequester would reduce funding for FEMA by nearly \$900 million, The *Washington Post* reported Monday.

"Mitt Romney's Argument for Shutting Down FEMA Ripped in *New York Times* Editorial" by Huffinton Post

Oct. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/30/mitt-romneys-argument-for_n_2042896.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

A *New York Times* editorial published online on Monday night ripped the argument Mitt Romney made for shutting down the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) last year at a debate during the GOP presidential primary season.

The *NYT* editorial board said of Romney's remarks:

Mr. Romney not only believes that states acting independently can handle the response to a vast East Coast storm better than Washington, but that profit-making companies can do an even better job. He said it was "immoral" for the federal government to do all these things if it means increasing the debt.

As superstorm Sandy threatened the East Coast on Sunday night, HuffPost's Ryan Grim reported on the comments in question from the debate.

Asked at the 2011 event if FEMA should be shut down so that states could take the lead on disaster response, the former Massachusetts governor said:

Absolutely. Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further, and send it back to the private sector, that's even better. Instead of thinking, in the federal budget, what we should cut, we should ask the opposite question, what should we keep?

Pressed on the issue of disaster relief specifically, Romney said he believes it's "immoral" for the federal government to take action if it means "[racking] up larger and larger debts."

The *NYT* editorial board criticized the case made by the Republican presidential contender in no uncertain terms:

It's an absurd notion, but it's fully in line with decades of Republican resistance to federal emergency planning. FEMA, created by President Jimmy Carter, was elevated to cabinet rank in the Bill Clinton administration, but was then demoted by President George W. Bush, who neglected it, subsumed it into the Department of Homeland Security, and placed it in the control of political hacks. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina was just waiting to happen.

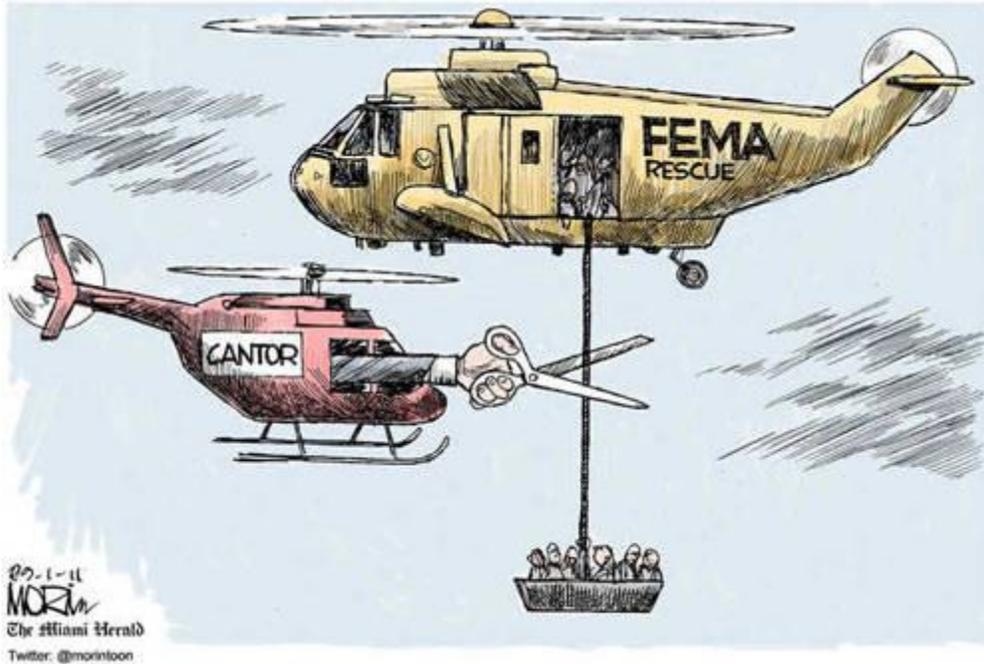
The Romney campaign sought to do damage control after the presidential candidate's remarks on FEMA resurfaced on Sunday night. An official said, "Gov. Romney wants to ensure states, who are the first responders and are in the best position to aid impacted individuals and communities, have the resources and assistance they need to cope with natural disasters."

HuffPost's Jason Cherkis reports:

Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney argues that federal disaster response should be handled at the state level, but when disaster struck Massachusetts, he was missing in action, according to some of the state's local politicians.

On Oct. 9, 2005, heavy rain storms caused the Green River to rise to historic levels and begin flooding into Greenfield, Mass. The flooding destroyed a trailer park and demolished swaths of low-income housing. Roads were impassable. The flood waters submerged the town's water treatment plant.

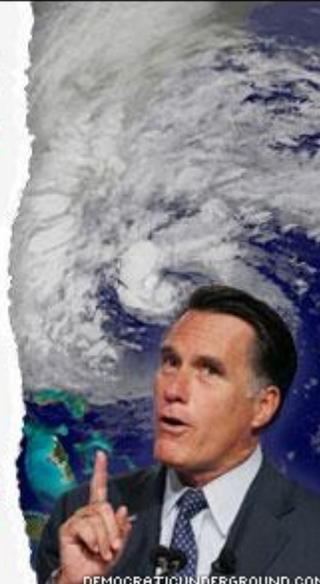
As the rain fell and the Green River rose, Greenfield's then-Mayor Christine Forgey tells The Huffington Post that she did not hear from Romney. About 75 people, including many retirees, lost their homes in the trailer park, she says. Still many more were displaced. Forgey says a resident opened up the high school and used it as a crisis shelter. A radio station launched a food and clothing drive and the Red Cross provided services.



Romney: Federal Disaster Relief “Immoral”

Asked about federal disaster relief for recent tornado and flood victims at last night's GOP debate, candidate Mitt Romney called the spending **“immoral”** and said the Federal Emergency Management Agency should be **privatized** ... Romney said that the victims in Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and other communities hit by tornadoes and flooding **should not receive governmental assistance**. He argued it is **“simply immoral”** for there to be deficit spending that could harm future generations. **“It makes no sense at all.”**

Think Progress, June 14, 2011, thkpr.gs/m6Wbo5



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20121030-01 08:09 SteveB

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #258)

A couple of sickening images (R.I.P., *HMS Bounty*, lost at sea with the captain and one crew member missing):





[20121030-04](#) 09:28 Art Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)

Not second guessing, but was going out in this really a good idea?

[20121030-05](#) 11:38 SteveB Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)

Sometimes you are caught in a situation. Believe it or not, the safest place for a sailing boat or ship is often as far from land as you can get. Maybe that's what they were doing.

I know Cape Fear scares the hell out of me!

I've sailed though some pretty violent storms in the Caribbean when I thought I might not make it, and they weren't nearly hurricanes...but I'm pretty aware of all the permutations and strategies. When you go to sea in a ship or fight in a war (which, fortunately, I have never had to do, but you have and I thank you), you'd better be prepared for anything if you possibly can.

I have arrived in supposedly "hurricane hole" harbors shortly after hurricanes and seen many boats up on land, destroyed.

Some make it in harbor, some make it at sea, and some don't make it. I've always thought I'd prefer the sea route...

Too bad about the *Bounty*, though.

How was the storm for you there?

20121030-08

13:41

Art

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)

You are obviously more the sailor than me, but what you say makes sense to me. I know that most big warships they would rather be at sea. Still, the *Bounty* is not really a tall ship, it is actually quite small.

We weathered the storm OK. No power loss and no major trees down. Very high winds for about 18 hours and lots of rain. All part of global warming.

Here are a few pictures of the *Bounty* in happier days:





[20121030-09](#)

15:16

SteveB

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)

Thanks for the pics, Art. Spain, when you told me about?

A beautiful ship. I've seen her too, years ago, but I can't remember where...Maine? Boston? Freeport? Florida? I remember her, but not her harbor.

I too was impressed with the young men, though we didn't get to talk to any or board.

I know what you mean about "quite small" but she was huge compared to what I'm used to. The biggest thing I've ever sailed was only 54' long, but I'm more used to something in the 30's.

A storm like that...I know I would have wanted an aircraft carrier!

I have two great sailing songs for you (plus Jimmy Buffett and Bob Marley):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bw9gLjEGJrw>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvr44d_m3Tw

Great memories!

20121030-10	15:29	Art	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)
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Actually about half the crew we saw were girls. They actually climbed out on the rigging and pulled in the sails. Wow!

20121030-02	08:58	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #258)
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Steven Greenhouse's essay on part-time work needs our full attention. Greenhouse discusses the use of part-time workers in retail establishments like Walmart or Whole Foods, but there's another institution that exploits part-time labor: universities. At the state university where I taught for nearly 30 years, about one-third are tenured faculty. The rest are adjuncts or part-time instructors. I've known many college teachers who have cobbled together a living wage by teaching at four separate schools per semester. With the commuting that entails, it is a punishing schedule. The drift toward part-timers has been slow but inexorable, and those most affected are the least able to weigh in on the problem. At UNCG the question of whether to allow part-timers to serve in the Faculty Senate was recently rejected, making part-timers literally the silent majority. You don't have to be a Marxist to see the inherent unfairness in such a system, whether it be in higher education or high-end retail.

On a happier note, I heard a group of Harvard undergraduates on NPR yesterday explaining why they are pressuring their university to divest itself from fossil fuels, as they have done with tobacco, and South African apartheid. So far, the administration has turned a deaf ear, but these young people are motivated, smart, and committed. I believe they will accomplish what our generation has failed to. Let's hear it for the young!!--

20121030-06	12:13	SteveB	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to Pam, above)
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I agree, I think it's a huge deal! Next, they'll try to turn public teachers' jobs to part-time.

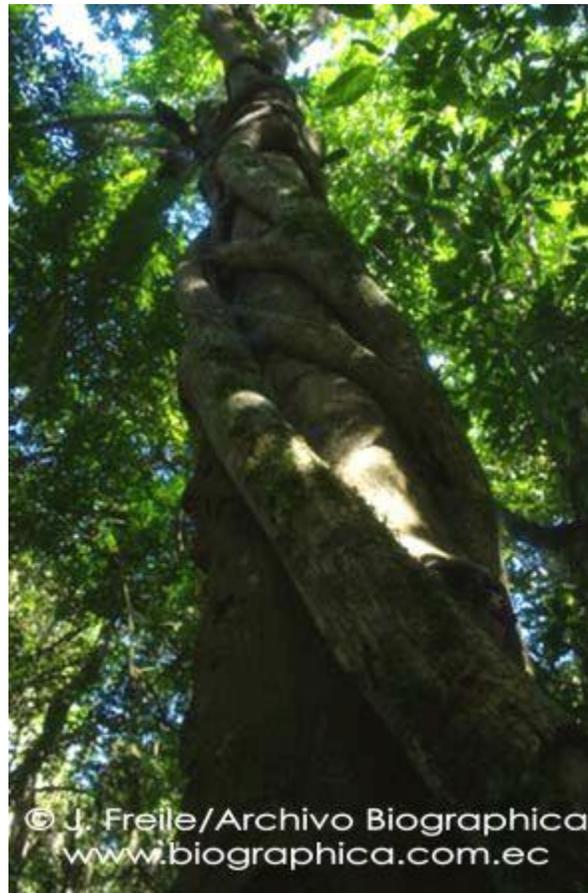
Come to think of it, why not make everyone work part-time but management. That way the 'private sector' could weasel out of the meager worker-protection laws even better!

20121030-07	12:41	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, above)
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In Greensboro, they've stopped paying teachers over the summer, making them ipso facto part-time. Ben always has to scramble to find summer jobs to fill in the gaps. It used to be you worked 9 months and got paid for 12. Now it puts teachers in a real bind. Enrollment in universities has increased 100%. During the same period, administration has increased 300%, with no apparent improvement. And administrators get paid WAY more than faculty. Aaaaaaargh!

"Legend of the *Bibosi* and the *Motacú*" by Bolivia Bella

date unknown, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/legend-of-the-bibosi.html>)



The legend of the *bibosi* and the *motacú* originates in the Bolivian forest. Around the *motacú* palm tree grows a corpulent tree called the *bibosi*. Its scientific name is *Ficus boliviana*. It grows on rocks and other trees—anywhere! It twists around other trees, especially palm trees, as a sort of "parasitic" tree species.

Its roots eventually reach the ground, growing downward along the trunk of its host tree. As the roots extend toward the ground they twist and wrap themselves around the host tree, and eventually the *bibosi's* roots and shade kill the tree that supports it.

This gave rise to one of the best known Bolivian legends: the legend of the *bibosi* and the *motacú*: a long time ago a strong, hard-working young man fell in love with a beautiful girl. When her parents found out about the romance, they were opposed to the relationship and immediately arranged for her to marry another young man of their own choosing.

When she was told of her impending marriage, the girl met one last time with her beloved. It was nighttime. They talked, they cried. Before saying good-bye, the young man held her in his arms and embraced her so strongly that they both died. It is said that the first *bibosi* and *motacú* trees grew intertwined on the spot where the young couple died.

(Thanks to Juan Freile for allowing us to use his photo.)

20121030-13 22:03 Charis Video: "Extreme Downhill Trail: Descenso del Condor in La Paz, Bolivia"

Whoa baby!

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZV7DcUvIfc&feature=youtu.be>.

20121030-11 18:19 Ben Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple

No time to talk about it, but red pepper slices on top burn on contact. Yuzu (Japanese citrus) glaze particularly tasty; sweet potatoes with miso glaze likewise. Somehow the very puckery cabbage salad and -mustard greens- went very well with the chicken and white rice. I ate every bit.



Beggars' Chicken with Pickled Cabbage and Mustard Greens

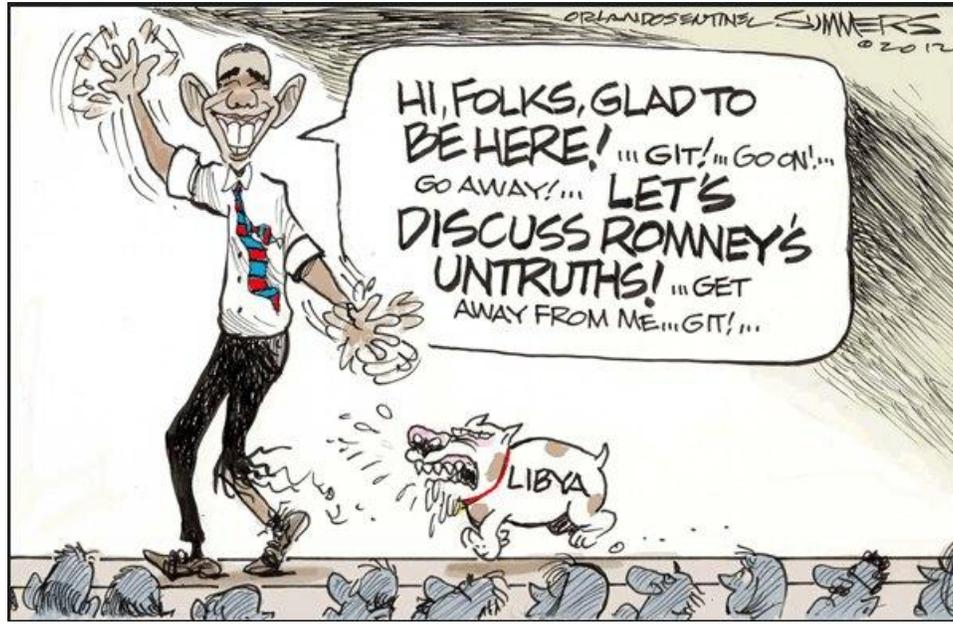
20121030-12 20:03 Marci Video: "How to Get to Mars. Very Cool!"

iEspectacular!!!!!!!

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/XRCIzZHpfY?rel=0>.



Meat head resigns
WASHINGTON — The head of the federal agency overseeing meat and poultry inspections is resigning, after repeated attacks by consumer groups.
H. Russell Cross, administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service, ran the agency during a time when there was a deadly outbreak of food poisoning caused by E. coli bacteria in undercooked hamburgers.



<http://www.dgtphotography.com/>



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

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