



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #262 — NOV. 5, 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.**

### **Even Brats Are Tired of It All**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 5, 2012)

"The Woman had told her that Tomorrow never comes, but Elizabeth knows better. It will come sometime. Some beautiful morning she will just wake up and find it is Tomorrow. Not Today but Tomorrow. And then things will happen...wonderful things."— L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Windy Poplars*

"A Crying Toddler Viral Video Reflects Cranky, Exhausting Election" by Michelle Cottle, *The Daily Beast*

Nov. 2, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/02/a-crying-toddler-viral-video-reflects-cranky-exhausting-election.html>)

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



A sobbing kid tired of 'Bronco Bama' and Mitt Romney captures a larger sentiment among many Americans this campaign season: Where was the passion and pathos last seen in 2008?

Less than a week out from Election Day, the political press corps has gone gaga over a weepy 4-year-old in a pink-and-white Hello Kitty jacket.

Abigail Evans became a viral sensation this week when her mom posted a video clip of the strawberry-blond cherub sobbing piteously that she was “tired of Bronco Bamma and Mitt Romney.”

“It will be over soon,” her mom soothes in the clip, providing some much-needed uplift not merely to the teary tot but to an entire nation weary of this electoral squabble.

It’s not just that the modern presidential season goes on and on. And on. It’s not even that both of this year’s nominees are running campaigns as bloodless and uninspiring as any in recent memory. More broadly, this cycle, almost from the very beginning, has been virtually devoid of both sex appeal and pathos—an absence made all the more glaring when compared to the embarrassment of riches enjoyed in 2008.

Ah, 2008. Back then Barack Obama could melt a room with a single speech. Women fantasized about that smile, those ears ... Chills went dancing up Chris Matthews’s manly leg. The candidate’s supercoolness inspired a smokin’-hot Obama Girl video. Actress Scarlett Johansson struck up an email relationship with the aspiring POTUS that started tongues wagging. It was all so very, very seductive.

And Obama wasn’t even the Democratic contender caught with his fly open that year! That distinction went to John Edwards, who, in October 2007, in the thick of the primaries, found himself grappling with tabloid rumors that he’d managed to knock up some videographer working for his campaign. So desperate and deluded was Johnny that it took another two-plus months for him to leave the race. And, ultimately, his sexcapades proved to be so beyond the pale—even by the standards of high-level politics—that they crossed the border from lascivious into grotesque. But all that sneaking around and whispers about a love child certainly kept things interesting for a time.

There was even a weird sexual vibe to the Hillary campaign, driven, as it was, by all that estrogen. Hillary has never been much of a sex symbol per se, but she has always been a feminist icon, a key player in the small “p” sexual politics of the big “p” political world. Her candidacy fueled a go-girl passion among legions of women—especially “women of a certain age.” And when she lost? Oy. Democratic leaders initially were nervous about how to handle all those bitter cougars roaming the party in search of a throat to chew.

Nor were the Dems the only ones with sizzle to spare. Once Sarah Palin was tapped as John McCain’s running mate, Republicans also began salivating in earnest. The pundits swooned. National Review’s Rich Lowry saw “starbursts,” and the naughty-librarian look enjoyed a brief renaissance. The Internet was flooded with mocked-up dirty pics of the governor.

But 2008 wasn’t only about heat. There was also real pathos along the way. Tough-as-nails Hillary getting all emotional and sniffly at that campaign stop in New Hampshire. Devoted daughter Chelsea looking on teary-eyed as her mom officially withdrew from the race. John and Elizabeth Edwards announcing (before we discovered what a crapweasel he was) that her cancer had come roaring back. Finally, there was the sad spectacle of John McCain—war hero and longtime kick-ass maverick—struggling to woo a party, and a nation, impervious to his charms.

If last time around we were given grand opera, this time it’s like watching a middle-school play. Newt Gingrich’s preening? Rick Perry’s swaggering inanity? Michele Bachmann’s brittleness and unnerving intensity? The closest we came to heat was the alleged philandering of the clownish Herman Cain. The closest we came to passion was Ron Paul’s crotchety-grandpa shtick. And the only moments of pathos were watching Rick Santorum talk about his special-needs 3-year-old, Bella. The 2012 Obama doesn’t send a thrill up much of anyone’s leg. And Romney? Oof. Let’s just say he comes honestly by the nickname Mittbot.

Now and again, the entire display has veered into flat-out farce—like, say, every time Donald Trump or John Sununu open their crazy pie holes. But such instances only emphasize how small, cramped, and petty much of this race has been.

None of which is to suggest that the outcome of this multi-year battle is in any way unimportant. But the slog to November 6th has been dispiriting and enervating enough to put many of us in touch with our inner 4-year-old.



**FotM NEWSLETTER #262 (Nov. 5, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

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<a href="#"><u>20121102-01</u></a>	11:44	Alex	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #261)
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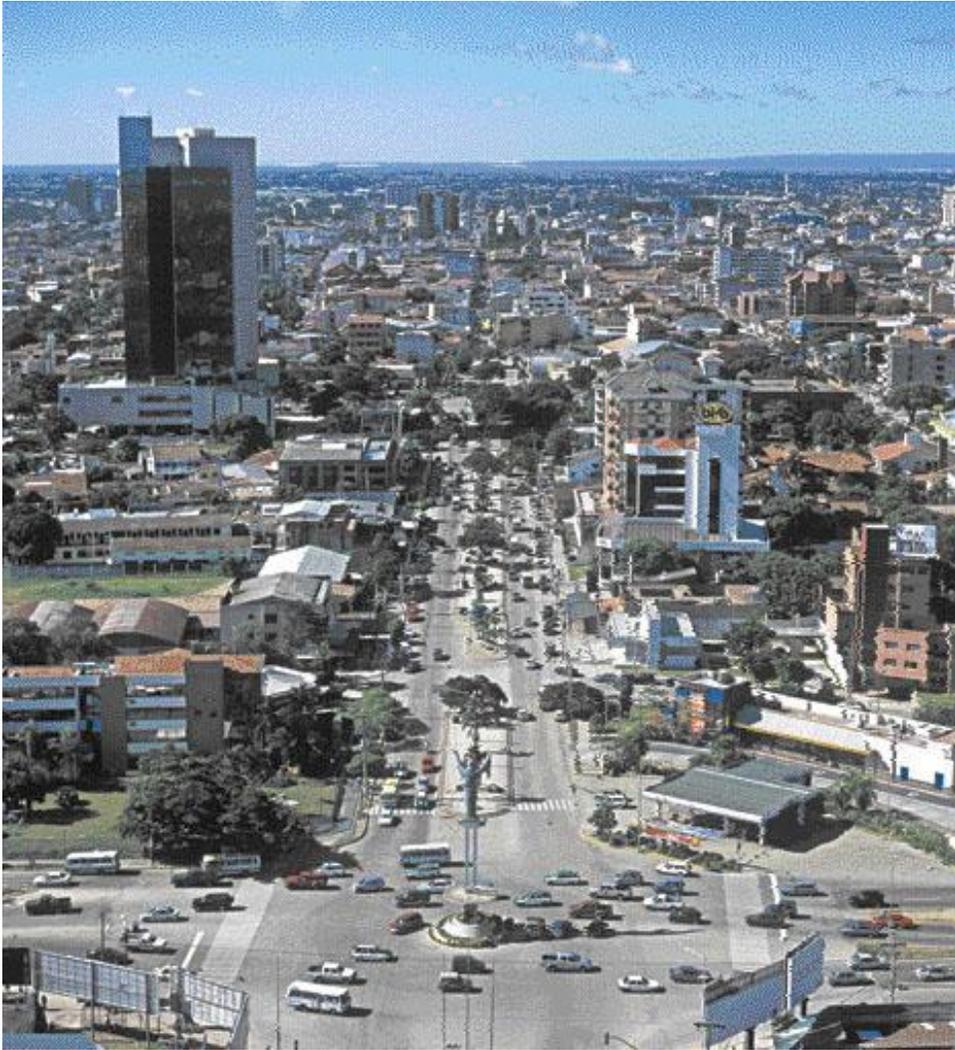
I think there are extremists on both sides of the aisle. Current events today: it appears that our younger generation has had it easy. They think supporting Grandma with social security is grandma's problem. Social Security, started by Pres. Roosevelt, who made it clear that money was in a separate account.. Pres. Johnson put it in the general fund because it had plenty of money. Now, it appears that money is depleted. I've heard from young people, age 30-40, state it will not be there for them. Probably moot now, because the deed is done. Just as sweeping under the rug anything re Pres Obama's past. The deed is done. My experience is that the Left always get hot under the collar. I may read your blog from time to time just to get your slant on things, but nothing really changes. I don't want America to become a socialistic country. For example: while visiting my in laws in Indio, Ca., I met a British couple wintering in the Palm Springs area, both on disability, driving a rental motor home for the winter. The man had a pair of large sunglasses over his regular glasses. I asked why not get Rx sunglasses. He said he was on the waiting list, may take 6 months to a year. But I have a ? for you. Why are you in Bolivia? Maybe I'm looking at this all wrong. If the democrats promise to give Social Security a raise, military raise, and cut salaries of congress, I'd be happy. Maybe you could use your blog to start a campaign to reduce congressional salaries and benefits. The taxpayers would all get a break. Well friend, I may have to check out Bolivia.

<a href="#"><u>20121103-01</u></a>	07:12	SteveB	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)
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I appreciate your response and taking the time to write.

Let me start with your question, I'm in Bolivia because my wife is from here, I have business interests here, and we like it here, but not better than we like it in the States.

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia:



I agree that Social Security is a good government program that has been robbed. I don't think it is young people who want to do away with it or debase it. I believe it is just one political party...the same party that wants to gut education, denies global warming, and seeks an additional \$2 trillion for military adventures that even the generals don't want—the party of the rich, the party who's goal is to reduce or eliminate taxes on the rich at all cost.

Am I overstating that? I can prove I'm not.

And believe me, Mr. Obama and the Democrats are no less capitalists than Mr. Romney and his cronies. Years of being called "socialists" and "communists" by Rush Limbaugh, etc., doesn't change the reality that we're all Americans and all business oriented. It's just that Democrats are promotional of all business—big and small—not just the titanic multinationals which have, along with most of our politicians, sold our great nation down the river via "free" trade, union busting, deregulation, and, I guess you would agree, via illegal immigration.

It might be a good idea to reduce Congressional compensation, but I would rather expend that effort on election reform—mainly trying to eliminate the current corruption of campaign financing, getting rid of the corruption of lobbying, and seeking a return to verifiable paper ballots. I don't trust computers with votes. I consider allowing the buying and selling of our government to the highest bidder to be our root problem.

Myself, I find the European and Canadian (even the Cuban and Bolivian) health care systems to be vastly superior to what we now have. I believe Obamacare has already been a big help to people and businesses and will continue to be so. It will lower costs for all of us and for the government. It might even improve health care to the point that we are no longer so far down the list in health care statistics like per cent of GDP spent on health care and infant mortality. Our current system has to be one of the worst, most inefficient, and wasteful in the world. That's what "private enterprise" has done for our health...largely the same as our previously unfettered tobacco industry.

If you're interested, a lot can be learned about Bolivia on my friend's website: <http://www.boliviabella.com>.

Good talking to you. Thanks again, Alex. Tuesday will be interesting, no?

20121102-02 13:37 Charles Re: FotM Newsletter #261 (reply to all)

You are idiots!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

20121102-03 14:32 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #261 (reply to Charles, above)

And, Charles, you're a model of restraint!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

And...what you have in mind is...????????????????????

Thanks.

20121102-04 14:42 Ben Photo: Today's Healthy Poultry Lunch at Apple

Such a humble thing, the fried chicken sandwich. Ubiquitous. A cliché. Tasty...like Chik-fil-A.

Today, with no fish in the offing and not being a big lamb guy (I bet it was great though; Chef Kelli is said to have come to us by way of Epcot), I decided to revert to the "Standard" Menu (below; I don't usually send it) for a standard grill item: the Fried Chicken Sandwich. And a nice small salad, to keep me properly vegged.

It was a magnificent sandwich, not huge, but with delightfully fresh, tasty ingredients. The chicken breast had been pounded to a flat, uniform thinness (mammogram, anyone?), and breaded with the lightest of batters, seemingly little more than a dusting of flour. Really a bit more than that, but the result was a very low breading-to-chicken ratio, but with a very crispy, tasty surface. The New World Bakery wheat bun was light and tender and

ever-so-slightly not-quite-discernibly sweet, not overly wheatie, and my toppings -- onion, lettuce, pickle -- were undeniably crisp and fresh. I added a little black pepper and a thin wash of yellow mustard. It was simply yummy.

The small salad (actually huge, as it appears below) was all super-fresh, with my usual vegetable-centric additions (chick peas, cucumbers, sweet potato, carrots) and less than a quarter dipper of delicious house-made blueberry vinaigrette. Toppings galore: flax, sesame, and sesame seeds; ground peanuts; dried cranberries, golden raisins, and ... cheddar and feta cheeses in very light measure.

Urp!



20121102-05 16:13 Art "In Benghazi Timeline, CIA Errors but No Evidence of Conspiracy"

I think this is a pretty good timeline of what happened in Benghazi. Of course, I realize that many experienced Republican combat veterans, like Idiot Issa, are going to find fault with all this on Monday morning, but fact is the folks did what they could. As to whether there should have been more there, I was at the US Embassy in Tripoli in 2010, and I could have overrun it with a troop of girl scouts. This isn't the movies and people who work out on the frontier live in harm's way. It goes with the turf and the job.

"In Benghazi Timeline, CIA Errors but No Evidence of Conspiracy" by David Ignatius, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 1, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-cias-benghazi-timeline-reveals-errors-but-no-evidence-of-conspiracy/2012/11/01/a84c4024-2471-11e2-9313-3c7f59038d93\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-cias-benghazi-timeline-reveals-errors-but-no-evidence-of-conspiracy/2012/11/01/a84c4024-2471-11e2-9313-3c7f59038d93_story.html))

A detailed CIA timeline of the assault on U.S. facilities in Benghazi paints an anguishing picture of embattled Americans waiting for Libyan security forces who didn't come and courageous CIA officers who died on a rooftop without the heavy weapons they needed, trying to protect their colleagues below.

It's a story of individual bravery, but also of a CIA misjudgment in relying on Libyan militias and a newly formed Libyan intelligence organization to keep Americans safe in Benghazi.

New details of what led to Ambassador Christopher Stevens's death in Libya emerged this afternoon. In a heated, partisan back-and-forth Darrell Issa said security at the mission in Benghazi could have been better. Diplomatic correspondent Anne Gearan joins us, to tell us what she heard in the hearing.

You may also like...

While there were multiple errors that led to the final tragedy, there's no evidence that the White House or CIA leadership deliberately delayed or impeded rescue efforts.

The CIA is now reviewing its security plans around the world to make sure the agency isn't relying on shaky local forces. This is a difficult task because the United States has vulnerable arrangements in dozens of places.

The CIA timeline was described to me Thursday by a senior intelligence official. The narrative of events is dramatic and disturbing. Rather than try to parse each detail, let's look at a summary of the highlights. The times listed are Benghazi time on the night of Sept. 11 and the morning of Sept. 12:

- 9:40 p.m.: A senior State Department security officer at the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi called the CIA base, at an annex about a mile away, and requested assistance: "The compound is under attack. People are moving through the gates." CIA officers at the base can hear the alarm, and a team immediately begins gathering weapons and preparing to leave.
- 10:04 p.m.: A six-person rescue squad from the agency's Global Response Staff (GRS) leaves in two vehicles. The team leader is a career CIA officer; the team includes a contractor named Tyrone Woods, who later died. During the previous 24-minute interval, the CIA base chief calls the February 17 Brigade, other militias and the Libyan intelligence service seeking vehicles with .50-caliber machine guns. Nobody responds. The team leader and the base chief agree at 10:04 that they can't wait any longer, and the squad heads for the consulate. The senior intelligence official said that he doesn't know whether Woods or any of the other team members agitated to go sooner but added that he wouldn't be surprised. "I want them to have a sense of urgency," he said.
- 10:10 p.m.: The rescue team reached a chaotic intersection a few blocks from the consulate. Militias gathered there have several .50-caliber machine guns, which the CIA team tries unsuccessfully to commandeer; three militiamen offer to help. The rescue party now includes 10 people: six GRS officers, a CIA translator and the three Libyan volunteers.
- 10:20 p.m.: A reconnaissance party of two GRS officers heads to the consulate; at 10:25, three more GRS officers enter the main gate and begin engaging the attackers. The firefight lasts about 15 minutes.
- 10:40 p.m.: Members of the CIA team enter the burning inferno of "Villa C," where Ambassador Christopher Stevens is believed to be hiding. CIA officers try numerous times to reach the "safe room" but are driven back by the intense smoke and fire. Small-arms fire continues from the Libyan attackers.
- 11:11 p.m.: An unarmed military Predator drone arrives over the compound to provide aerial reconnaissance. The drone had been diverted from a mission over Darnah, about 90 minutes away. But without weapons, it can't help much.
- 11:15 p.m.: The CIA team puts a group of State Department officers into a vehicle and sends it to the agency base; at 11:30, the CIA officers depart under fire and reach the annex six minutes later.
- 11:56 p.m.: CIA officers at the annex are attacked by a rocket-propelled grenade and small arms. Sporadic attacks continue for about another hour. The attacks stop at 1:01 a.m., and some assume the fight is over.

- 1:15 a.m.: CIA reinforcements arrive on a 45-minute flight from Tripoli in a plane they've hastily chartered. The Tripoli team includes four GRS security officers, a CIA case officer and two U.S. military personnel on loan to the agency. They don't leave the Benghazi airport until 4:30 a.m. The delay is caused by negotiations with Libyan authorities over permission to leave the airport; obtaining vehicles; and the need to frame a clear mission plan. The first idea is to go to a Benghazi hospital to recover Stevens, who they rightly suspect is already dead. (Also killed was a State Department communication specialist.) But the hospital is surrounded by the al-Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Sharia militia that mounted the consulate attack.
- 5:04 a.m.: The team from Tripoli arrives at the CIA base. Glen Doherty, one of the GRS men from Tripoli, goes to the roof and joins Woods in firing positions.
- 5:15 a.m.: A new Libyan assault begins, this time with mortars. Two rounds miss and the next three hit the roof. The rooftop defenders never "laser the mortars," as has been reported. They don't know the weapons are in place until the indirect fire begins, nor are the mortars observed by the drone overhead. The defenders have focused their laser sights earlier on several Libyan attackers, as warnings not to fire. At 5:26 the attack is over. Woods and Doherty are dead and two others are wounded.
- 6 a.m.: Libyan forces from the military intelligence service finally arrive, now with 50 vehicles. They escort the Americans to the airport. A first group of 18, including two wounded, depart at 7 a.m. A second group of 12, plus the four dead, leave at 10 a.m. for Tripoli and then the long flight back to America.

<a href="#">20121103-02</a>	07:42	MarthaH	"Outside Spending High in Final Weeks of Indiana's Senate Race between Richard Mourdock, Joe Donnelly"
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"Outside Spending High in Final Weeks of Indiana's Senate Race between Richard Mourdock, Joe Donnelly" by Maureen Groppe, *The Indianapolis Star*

Nov. 2, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20121102/NEWS0502/121102044/Outside-spending-high-final-weeks-Indiana-s-Senate-race->)

(WASHINGTON) Outside groups spent more in the last two weeks trying to influence Indiana's Senate race than the entire cost of Indiana's last Senate race.

The more than \$10 million spent by the national parties and by interest groups on ads, mailings and other forms of persuasion shows how important Indiana has become in the battle for control of the Senate.

"It tells you everything you need to know about how close the Senate is, how every race counts and the opportunity that Democrats see here," said Jennifer Duffy who tracks Senate races for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report.

Duffy said that Republican state Treasurer Richard Mourdock was consistently leading until he said at an Oct. 23 debate that he opposes abortion for rape victims because that pregnancy was intended by God. Now, Duffy suspects Democrat Joe Donnelly is ahead, although she doubts that Donnelly has the 11-point lead shown by a Howey/DePauw Indiana Battleground Poll released Friday.

Outside groups supporting Mourdock are trying to rescue him while Democratic groups are trying to take advantage of an opening.

The biggest recent spender helping Donnelly was Majority PAC, a super PAC allied with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. The group spent more than \$2 million since Oct. 19, the most in any state except Wisconsin. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee spent more than \$1.8 million in the last two weeks, more than in any state except Virginia. Those expenditures about doubled what each group had committed to the race.

"Harry Reid and the DSCC didn't waste any time last week," Mourdock said in a fundraising appeal sent Tuesday. "The day after the debate, they launched a \$1.1 million ad campaign."

But Mourdock also has his allies.

The Karl Rove-backed Crossroads GPS and its affiliate American Crossroads spent more than \$2.5 million in the last two weeks on television ads attacking Donnelly. That was more than those groups spent in all but four other Senate races.

The next-largest GOP spender was the National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. The NRSC spent more than \$1.8 million in Indiana in the last two weeks, its fourth-largest recent commitment.

This close to the Nov. 6 election, groups have to report independent expenditures within 24 hours.

The candidates last disclosed their spending through Oct. 17 and won't have to report again until after the election. They do have to report within 48 hours any contributions of \$1,000 or more, giving some sense of how the candidates are doing since the race got more national attention.

Murdock has reported receiving \$32,000 after Oct. 17 but before the Oct. 23 debate. He reported receiving \$149,300 after the debate. Donnelly has reported receiving \$43,000 before the debate and \$44,500 after it.

For the entire election cycle, including the competitive primary in which Mourdock defeated Sen. Richard Lugar, outside spending that has to be reported has topped \$29 million, the fourth-most among Senate races this election cycle. Mourdock benefited from about 60 percent of that total.

The nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics has projected that the amount spent on this year's federal elections will hit a record \$6 billion, which is the same amount that Hurricane Sandy is expected to cost New York in lost economic revenue. The campaign watchdog group said the biggest difference this year is the unprecedented money being spent by outside groups, an estimated more than \$970 million.

20121103-03	08:07	MarthaH	"Murdock Abortion Quote Defining Indiana Senate Race"
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"Murdock Abortion Quote Defining Indiana Senate Race" by Tom Lobianco, AP

Nov. 2, 2012, (<http://www2.tbo.com/news/politics/2012/nov/02/murdock-abortion-quote-defining-ind-senate-race-ar-552375/>)

(INDIANAPOLIS) Indiana Republican Richard Mourdock's comment during a televised debate that pregnancy resulting from rape is something "God intended" has come to define a race that could help determine control of the Senate.

A bipartisan poll conducted in the week following Mourdock's comment and released Friday showed Democrat Joe Donnelly opening up a sizable lead over Mourdock particularly among women voters for the first time in the Senate race.

The snapshot comes as the campaigns enter their final days with the Indiana narrative still locked in on questions of rape and abortion. Democrats in races across the state have kept the comment front and center, and despite Mourdock's best efforts to shift the conversation, even supporters released a video this week featuring women born as a result of rape defending his stance.

Republican pollster Christine Matthews, who conducted the poll with Democratic pollster Fred Yang, said Mourdock had done a good job early on of turning the Senate race into a referendum on President Barack Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

But Mourdock's comment did worse than reverse that momentum, she said. It revived Democratic arguments that Mourdock is an "extremist" tea party candidate.

"I think it was very effective, to nationalize the race against Donnelly, and that was getting some momentum. This completely interrupted that momentum," Matthews said.

The Howey/DePauw Indiana Battleground Poll released Friday showed Donnelly with a 47 percent to 36 percent lead over Mourdock among a sampling of 800 likely voters. Among women in the poll, Donnelly led Mourdock 50 percent to 38 percent. The two candidates were virtually tied among men, with Donnelly garnering 43 percent support to Mourdock's 41 percent.

Libertarian Andrew Horning garnered 6 percent in the poll, while an equally sizable 11 percent of voters said they were undecided.

The large number of undecided voters so close to the election, combined with Indiana's natural Republican tilt provides some hope for Mourdock.

Indeed, Mourdock was optimistic Friday, dismissing the idea that voters still are talking about his comment.

"The only poll I'm talking about today is the new unemployment numbers," Mourdock told The Associated Press during a stop at his Indianapolis campaign headquarters.

But his campaign's actions told a different story, as staffers scrambled to discredit the poll. Campaign staff and consultants accused Matthews of "backpedalling" as she explained her findings on Twitter and lambasted Yang for working with Senate Democrats in the past.

Murdock's deputy campaign manager, Brose McVey, urged voters to be "very skeptical" of the bipartisan poll, saying the campaign's own polling paints a different picture of the race.

Donnelly spokeswoman Elizabeth Shappell basked somewhat in the Howey/DePauw assessment.

"It is clear voters are rejecting Richard Mourdock's 'my way or the highway' approach to politics and responding to Joe's message of Hoosier common sense," Shappell said.

Pam Flickinger, 54, who waited in line Friday to cast an early ballot in Indianapolis, said she would have voted for Republican Sen. Richard Lugar, had Mourdock not unseated him in the spring primary. But she said Mourdock's comment cemented her support for the Democrat Donnelly.

"We gave up a senator with clout in Washington for this dude, and then he pulls this stuff..." Flickinger said. "Well I have a 23-year-old daughter and I would do anything and everything to help her recover from something like that."

Linda Hughes, 42 of Indianapolis, said Mourdock never was going to get her vote, but believed his reaction after making the comment made it more difficult to win back borderline voters.

"Give a public apology and be sincere about it," she said.

Murdock has said he regretted if anyone misinterpreted his comment, but refused to apologize for the comment itself, instead explaining that he meant all life is created by God, not that God intends for a woman to be raped.

National anti-abortion activists came to Mourdock's aid this week, releasing a video featuring women who were conceived as a result of rape. The One Nation Under God Foundation coordinated the video, which was released online and through social networks, and showed women calling Mourdock a hero for opposing abortion in cases of rape and incest.

The Indiana race is one of a handful that will determine whether Democrats or Republicans control the Senate. Republican surrogates, including Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain, descended on Indiana last month with the argument that Indiana's seat is critical to their party winning control of the chamber.

"From Texas to Vermont, State Elections Decide Health Care's Future" by Eric Kayne, NBC News

Nov. 3, 2012, (<http://vitals.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/03/14883112-from-texas-to-vermont-state-elections-decide-health-cares-future?lite>)

(Brandi DeFrank's son Gabriel, 3 months old, is covered under Medicaid, but the program's coverage for the Texas mom herself ended when she gave birth.)

As Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama pack in some last-minute campaigning before Tuesday's election, polls show voters are split just about down the middle on who they prefer: Romney, who has promised to do everything he can do repeal the 2010 health reform law, and Obama, who says its benefits are just beginning to take hold.

But while the presidential race gets most of the attention, the choices voters make to fill governor's mansions and state legislatures may have just as big an effect on what kind of health coverage they will have in coming years.

That's in part because the Affordable Care Act sets it up that way, but even more so because the Supreme Court says it's up to states to decide whether and how to expand the Medicaid health insurance plan for the poor.

"One thing the voters should be aware of is what are their governors are going to be doing. Will more people have access to Medicaid or access to a state-run exchange?" says John Poelman of healthcare consulting firm Leavitt Partners and a former health policy analyst at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Two states at the two extremes of health care coverage are Texas, with a free-market, bare-bones approach, and Vermont, which is unabashedly going for a European-style, government-supported system.

Brandi DeFrank is one of the 6.3 million people in Texas who lack health insurance. That's a quarter of the state's population and the highest percentage of uninsured people in the country.

Like millions of women across the country, DeFrank, 20, was fully covered under Medicaid, the state-federal health insurance plan for low-income people, while she was pregnant. The birth of her 3-month-old son, Gabriel, was also covered, but after that, her own coverage ended. The baby remains on Medicaid -- all states make some provision for children whose parents lack insurance -- but now DeFrank is on her own and gambling that she won't get sick.

Under federal law, DeFrank could have been covered under her parents' health insurance. But when she moved out at 18, her father said she had to learn to be an adult.

"He took me off his insurance," said DeFrank as she cradled Gabriel in a cheerful playroom at Legacy Community Health Services, a non-profit health clinic in southwest Houston where Gabriel gets care. Her husband, who is working as an intern at a medical clinic, is also not covered, says DeFrank, who is about to begin applying to nursing school.

"I didn't really think about Medicaid or anything. You're just thinking about college," she added. "I saved all my money for books."

'We're not going to be a part of socializing health care'

Texas governor Rick Perry, a Republican, has said he won't expand Medicaid to cover people like DeFrank, and the Republican-dominated Texas legislature backed him in turning down \$76 billion in federal matching funds that would have helped pay to do it over the first five years.

"We're just not going to be a part of ... socializing health care in the state of Texas," Perry told reporters in July.

But in Vermont, Gov. Peter Shumlin, a Democrat, and the current legislature are pushing hard for a single-payer system that they say will give them the leverage to lower prices and provide better care for everyone in the state.

But they're not there yet and the election will decide if the state will continue to go in that direction, or whether it will be forced to roll back.

The state's current continuum of programs asks patients to pay at least a minimum premium if they can. They include Catamount Health, a state plan providing subsidies for some people, along with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont; Vermont Health Access Plan, which provides insurance for people who have gone without for a year or more; Dr. Dynasaur; Medicaid, and pharmacy assistance and premium assistance programs.

On Tuesday, residents will go to the polls to decide whether to keep pushing more, towards government-directed health care plan that covers everyone, paid for by taxes.

That's what Anna Gebhardt would like to see happen. Even though Vermont offers more coverage options for low-income families than some other states, she and her husband, Oliver, don't have insurance. Their jobs don't offer coverage, they can't afford to buy a private policy and, since Oliver got a raise a few months ago at his job as an audio engineer, they earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid. Their children, Leviah, 6, and Immanuel, 13, are covered under the state's Dr. Dynasaur program, which offers low-cost coverage for kids, but the family struggles to make the payments for it.

Two weeks ago, Gebhardt, a 33-year-old preschool teacher, was sitting nervously in a Burlington, Vt., emergency room after Leviah fell down at school. When the girl was still crying hours later, her mother took her in. It wasn't an easy decision. Gebhardt was not entirely sure she was paid up on Anna's health insurance premium under the Dr. Dynasaur program.

"My fingers were crossed and I was thinking 'Did I pay the bill last month?'" said Gebhardt. "Two other people had to come over and help make sure we were covered before we could even see a doctor. This gives you a lot of anxiety when you have a child who is crying and in pain," Gebhardt said. Luckily, she had paid and Leviah was just fine.

DeFrank and Gebhardt are just the type of people that Democrats want to reach with expanded health care, subsidized by the government if needed. And they're just the type of people that Republicans say could buy their own insurance if the government would just let the free market take over.

The 2010 Affordable Care Act was designed to transform health care in the United States, which most experts agree currently costs too much and leaves far too many people without health insurance. The Affordable Care Act calls for states to set up insurance exchanges, where people who don't have health insurance through an employer or through government programs can go and buy a plan -- with government subsidies, if they need them.

It also was meant to provide more care to people who can't buy insurance by forcing states to expand Medicaid. The hope was to add about 16 million of the poorest people to the rolls -- about half of those who need health insurance. But after a series of challenges to the law, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June that the Medicaid expansion requirement went too far. While most of the Affordable Care Act was constitutional, the court ruled, the federal government could not force states to offer Medicaid to more people.

#### 'They can disrupt implementation of the law'

So now two of the biggest provisions of the law -- offering Medicaid to more people and setting up the health exchanges -- are in the hands of state officials.

"They can disrupt implementation of the law. Leadership can either be aggressively moving it forward or impeding it," Poelman says.

The Obama administration is offering to pay the full cost of expanding Medicaid at first, but lawmakers in states like Texas say they can barely afford Medicaid now, let alone when they'll have to start kicking in 7 percent for all those extra people in 2019.

This frustrates Garnet Coleman, a Democrat in the Texas legislature who represents much of Houston's poor downtown. Coleman says not only would expanding Medicaid save money in the long run, by getting people treated earlier, it would create much-needed jobs. "Health care is a growth sector," Coleman says. It will create "beaucoup jobs -- good jobs, as your mama would say." Jobs that people can get with two-year degrees. "This is just a boost in the arm to the state of Texas," he says.

Coleman is delighted that Perry and the legislature are balking on setting up an exchange for Texas and looks forward to seeing what the federal government will do instead. The 2010 health reform law says that if states don't set up their own exchanges by 2014, HHS will do it for them.

### Different paths to the same goal

It's not that Democrats want health care and Republicans don't. Both sides agree in principle that it's better for everyone to have health insurance of some kind. It's cheaper to treat disease or injuries early, and best to prevent disease in the first place. People are more likely to get vaccinated and to take medications such as blood pressure drugs if they're seeing a doctor regularly.

The Obama administration says the way to get there is with subsidies and government oversight, with a healthy marketplace allowing private health insurers to offer more to those who can pay -- and strict regulation to make sure insurance companies don't cherry-pick the healthiest customers or dump patients just when they need insurance the most.

Republicans argue that freeing up the marketplace would do that more efficiently. They say that government regulations make it impossible for insurers and health care providers to compete enough to bring costs down.

"No one says it's better to leave people out," says Joel Ario, former director of health insurance exchanges at HHS, who is now at law and consulting firm Manatt Phelps & Phillips. "It is just a question of what we can afford or not afford." It's also a question of who can best make those decisions -- states or the federal government.

"With exchanges, the question is whether the federal government should have a heavy hand in making them work," Ario added.

In Texas, polls suggest the Republicans will dominate. This likely means Texas will continue to offer a bare minimum of health care and will let the federal government set up its health exchanges.

"There are states referred to as 'Hell, no states,'" said David Smith, an analyst at Leavitt, the healthcare consulting firm. "A lot of those states don't necessarily have governors who are up for election." In those states, voters have to decide whether to help governors by electing members of the same party to the state house.

In Vermont, Shumlin's Republican opponent, Randy Brock, says single-payer health care is too expensive. Vermont's legislature will take up the question of how to pay for it in January, with options including a capital gains tax or a tax on employers.

### Where other states stand

Republican governors like Iowa's Terry Branstad, Arizona's Jan Brewer, Sam Brownback of Kansas, Louisiana's Bobby Jindal, Nebraska's Dave Heineman, Nikki Haley of South Carolina and Scott Walker of Wisconsin say they have no intention of expanding Medicaid. Florida's Rick Scott says he won't expand Medicaid even though his state has the second-highest rate of uninsured adults, after Texas.

Leavitt's team predicts the majority of state governors -- at least 30 -- will be Republican after the election. Eleven states will be electing governors, and eight of them have Democrats in office now.

States that are safe for Democrats include Maryland, where Gov. Martin O'Malley was one of the first governors to move on health reform. Oregon governor John Kitzhaber also makes health reform a central policy.

Next door in Washington state, health care is playing a big role in making the race tight, with Democrat Jay Inslee, an eight-term congressman from Seattle, battling the Republican state attorney general Rob McKenna. Inslee supported the health law in Congress; McKenna isn't against expansion but he thinks Medicaid patients should share some of the costs.

In Indiana's race, Republican congressman Mike Pence has said he wouldn't set up a state insurance exchange. His Democratic opponent John Gregg hasn't endorsed the health reform law, either, but has met with current governor Mitch Daniels about how Indiana should move forward on building a health insurance exchange.

Alabama, Florida, Montana and Wyoming have ballot measures asking residents whether they want to block the mandate requiring people to get health insurance. Missouri voters are being asked to decide whether to allow the governor to establish health insurance exchanges.

While they wait to see what happens, Gebhardt and her husband, Oliver, are gambling that they won't get sick and need medical care.

"We are constantly at the whim of decisions being made by people who don't depend on those services and don't realize how their decisions affect people," Gebhardt said. "We are constantly in limbo. We could create a system where efficiency works for the people and for the budget. That is where Vermont can lead the way."

<a href="#">20121104-01</a> 06:21 MarthaH "University's Mock Campaign Reveals Anxiety of Real One"
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A prerequisite to voting!

What the future needs:

If only all voters had this experience, one similar to what I had my government kids do with senatorial candidates, characteristics but no platform on the issues of those days, voting would be EDUCATED.

"University's Mock Campaign Reveals Anxiety of Real One" by Bob O'Brien and Jared Kraham, TODAY/MSN

Nov. 3, 2012, (<http://todayonthehill.today.com/nv/more/section/archive?date=2012/11>)

Robert Lawrence (Jared Kraham) 2012 campaign website: <http://www.robertlawrence2012.com>.

Matt Diaz (Bob O'Brien) 2012 campaign website: <http://www.mattdiaz2012.com>.

During the 1980 presidential campaign, a reporter asked Ronald Reagan how an actor could run for president. Never short on humor, Reagan replied, "How can a president not be an actor?"

For the last 10 weeks, we've been acting like presidential candidates for college credit. Our course is called #ElectionClass: Social Media and the 2012 Election, taught by Professor Anthony Rotolo at Syracuse University. The course aims to examine the presidential campaign through the lens of social media and analyze the electoral process in real time.

The class was split into campaign teams, each representing a different type of candidate. "Matt Diaz," a Democratic U.S. senator from New York went up against "Robert Lawrence," a Republican businessman with no prior political experience for president of the fictional "Amercia," a nod to the Romney campaign's misspelling that went viral this summer. We were surprised how quickly we morphed into our assigned candidates.

Months of watching the real campaigns — we're both political junkies — had prepared us with all the talking points, key phrases and zingers we would need. We closely studied each candidate's stump speech to make sure every one of our quips on "millionaires and billionaires" or "trillion-dollar deficits" was just like the real thing.

We also looked at their social media presence for inspiration, molding our strategies around real-world digital campaigns. Our fellow classmates supported the candidate who utilized social media most effectively and performed the best in debates, not necessarily the one who shared their political ideology. "Diaz" and "Lawrence" won their parties' nominations and moved on into the general election.

#ElectionClass has taught us a lot about social media's role in political campaigns, but has also forced us to reflect on how we view the two candidates. Although we're campaigning on a much smaller scale, we can relate to Barack Obama and Mitt Romney as individuals — imperfect candidates trying to run perfect campaigns.

There was persistent anxiety over how voters would react to negative campaign commercials and personal attacks. We had to differentiate ourselves from the group, so we made over-the-top critiques of other candidates, many who are our friends in real life. We agonized over the latest poll numbers, which seemed to name a different front-runner every week.

We each applied our backgrounds and experiences to shape our fictional candidates. We both have a strong social media pedigree as members of Syracuse University's student social media team, managing the university's flagship accounts including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Bob is a junior information management and technology major from Cleveland. 2000's razor-thin election kick-started his interest in politics at age nine. In his native Ohio, he witnessed the importance of innovative campaigning in a swing state. In high school he won multiple speech and debate competitions, so playing Robert Lawrence at the #ElectionClass debate podium came naturally.

Jared, a dual major in political science and broadcast journalism, covered the Republican campaigns in New Hampshire leading up to its presidential primary. He saw the candidates up close and talked with campaign staffers in the home of "retail politics." Jared's performance as Matt Diaz just might be genetic; his father was a local politician in his hometown of Binghamton, N.Y., where campaign talk dominated dinner table discussions.

Our experience taking this course has been truly unique to our academic career. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more topical class on any campus in America this election season.

Most discouraging for us was knowing we couldn't determine our own fate; it was in the hands of the voters. All our efforts would be forgotten if we lost. It was a big risk, but after many weeks of debates and strategy, we both believe that, win or lose, this experience will be worth the hard work.

<a href="#">20121104-02</a> 06:40 MarthaH "Hyper-Partisan Politics Stymies Americans"
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"Hyper-Partisan Politics Stymies Americans" by Todd Spangler, *USA Today*

Nov. 4, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/11/04/election-partisan-politics/1679561/>)

(WASHINGTON) Jeff and Nita Send need Washington to get its act together.

Fruit farmers near Traverse City, Mich., the Sends are waiting — like farmers across the country — on a new farm bill, a massive piece of legislation that in one section gives cash assistance for a cherry crop lost because of last spring's erratic weather.

With the money, the Sends could replace an aging combine harvester, fertilize trees and prepare for next year's crop without borrowing.

But the bill is stuck in the House as Republicans wrangle over whether it cuts deeply enough. Whatever the House approves, a final version will still have to be hammered out with Senate Democrats at a time when such deals are nearly impossible to negotiate.

"If they worked for me," Jeff Send said of Congress, "they wouldn't be working."

On Tuesday, voters will re-elect President Obama or install his rival, Mitt Romney, as the nation's 45th chief executive. Regardless of who wins the presidency or in Congress, the biggest obstacle to progress — a hyper-partisan, strictly polarized political climate — is likely to remain.

As the Sends suggest, the effects can strike close to home. And it's not just them:

In Sterling Heights, Mich., Mark Signorelli — vice president and general manager for defense contractor BAE Systems' vehicle division — says the absence of a Washington deal to forestall a \$490 billion, 10-year defense cut is keeping BAE and its suppliers from planning future expansion at a time when previous military reductions have already led to job cuts.

In Dearborn, a new train station is being built with federal funds to service a high-speed rail line from Detroit to Chicago. But the Republican-led House is slashing subsidies for high-speed rail, and any cut to the Detroit-Chicago line could reduce riders, which in turn could hurt the rationale for the project, said Dearborn Mayor John O'Reilly.

At Schwartz & Co., in Bloomfield Hills, investment adviser Peter Schwartz — an official with Romney's campaign in Michigan — tries to calm investors who worry about what comes next in Washington on tax and spending policies. Uncertainty makes investors cautious and that can slow growth to a crawl.

In fact, partisanship of the kind now practiced — with levels of gridlock unseen in Congress since before the Civil War — is having its deepest impact on the American economy, even though it's less obvious in the context of the last recession.

Late last month, the National Association of Manufacturers said businesses are preparing for the worst — meaning they're not spending to expand and add jobs — largely because of the threat of two things: A divided Congress and administration can't agree on whether they should spare all Americans automatic tax increases or allow rates for wealthier taxpayers alone to increase, and in the absence of that agreement, the alternative has been a looming across-the-board spending cut, set to come at year's end when those tax increases will also hit.

"Right now we're holding back on all but the most necessary external hiring," said Dave Cote, chairman and CEO of Honeywell, a Fortune 500 firm that employs 130,000 people worldwide. "And on capital expenditures, if I can make the decision now or six months from now, I'll make the decision six months from now and see what develops."

What has kept agreements from being reached on tax policies, spending cuts, debt reduction and how to fund Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security? Democrats and Republicans can't find common ground, egged on by the loudest constituencies on the far right and far left.

### Sense of hopelessness

Financier Steven Rattner — who led the Obama auto task force that successfully ran General Motors and Chrysler through bankruptcy — says it's only a matter of time before stock markets, whose performance has been generally good in recent years but have started to give back gains, sink in the face of uncertainty.

Rattner is part of a campaign made up of Washington officials, corporate heads and others looking for a bipartisan solution to reduce the nation's \$16 trillion debt through spending cuts and increased tax revenues.

But that campaign needs bipartisan support from Washington politicians who have seen the political damage compromise can do to careers and have felt the growing power more-partisan elements in both their parties now have. In some cases, incumbents such as Republican Indiana Sen. Dick Lugar have been run out of office by challenges from the right. In others more moderate voices such as Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe and Ohio Rep. Steve LaTourette aren't seeking re-election, unwilling to put up with Washington's venom.

And it's not just the politicians who have grown more extreme. It's us.

Polls show today's Republicans are more conservative, and Democrats are more liberal. The gap — on issues from immigration and environmental regulations to religious beliefs and support for social safety nets -- has grown wider.

"You would think enough alarm bells would have gone off by now," said Sandy Baruah, president and CEO of the Detroit Regional Chamber and head of the Small Business Administration under President George W. Bush. "But that hasn't happened and I don't know what's going to make that happen."

### What to do?

The causes of political polarization are many. The instantaneous delivery of every utterance from public officials via Tweets, Facebook, mass e-mails, as well as Internet-based mainstream and small-stream media drives equally instantaneous reaction -- and criticism. A loss of competitive congressional and legislative districts gives an edge to one party or another, rather than foster moderate voices.

Still, there are possible solutions.

Redistricting, for example, could be turned over to nonpartisan boards to create competitive districts, potentially breeding more moderation in politicians.

Michael McDonald, government professor at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., says more primaries could be open with respect to political party — as they are in Michigan — which could have the effect of giving more voice to moderate votes.

That would be only a start. Campaign finance laws could be changed to blunt the effect of money in politics, which Jason Grumet, founder of the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, says forces legislators to spend more time raising money than negotiating and legislating.

He notes that ethics rules have the effect at times of keeping members from socializing over now-prohibited lobbyist-sponsored events.

"All of this adds up to members of Congress not really knowing each other," said Grumet. And that, he said, lends itself to a more partisan atmosphere.

There are efforts under way across government to break the deadlock: The Bipartisan Policy Center has brought together respected former officials from both parties to work toward solutions; the Simpson-Bowles panel developed a blueprint for reaching a deal on tax and spending, though it was ultimately rejected by current members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans.

At the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, president Maya MacGuineas says the election and the looming "fiscal cliff" could break the stalemate.

"Behind closed doors, in a highly partisan period, you're starting to see members of Congress who are sick of it," she said. "After the election, people are going to have to start coming toward each other."

Not everyone considers political polarization a bad thing.

Take Chris Chocola, for instance. A former Indiana congressman, he's president of the conservative Club for Growth — a group that spends millions of dollars in support of candidates, including — at times — those running against incumbent Republicans deemed too liberal.

Club for Growth spent more than \$1 million to defeat former Republican Rep. Joe Schwarz of Battle Creek, Mich., in a 2006 primary. Earlier this year, it went after House Energy and Commerce Chairman Fred Upton of St. Joseph, before backing off.

The club and groups like it have been widely blamed with helping to push the Republican Party to the right and sowing the seeds of extreme partisanship.

Chocola sees partisanship as "a good thing," and doesn't believe it's more prevalent today than it has been for 200 years.

His explanation for the change in Washington is that more people are figuring out how to participate in government and that's leading them to demand more accountability. And if compromise means more government, higher taxes, larger spending — as he said it usually seems to -- then that's not the compromise he or his club's members want.

"Why would you compromise on that, ever?" he asked.

But Republicans don't have a monopoly on moves to extreme positions. Many Democrats have shifted to the left. Consider last year's Occupy movement that picked up steam across the nation. In Detroit, Lucianna Sabgash found in it an outlet for political activism that clamored for more rights and protections for the mass of Americans described by Occupiers as the 99 percent.

She readily acknowledged the month spent camping in downtown Detroit helped radicalize her. She believes politicians in both parties are wrong to take corporate money and says members of both "need to talk about how we're going to bring back the American dream."

Despite many Occupy members' suspicions about party politics, however, Sabgash got herself elected as a Democratic precinct delegate from Hamtramck.

From there, she said, she tries to challenge the status quo.

"I started to see the country going in the wrong direction," she said when asked to explain why she got involved.

As for the spirit of compromise, she's all for that — but not when it comes to principles she firmly believes in. Like protecting small businesses and reducing the footprint of big corporations. Like providing equal access to health care and to education. Like keeping abortion and contraception available.

"They say they want a small government but they want to regulate my body? Seriously?" she said.

### Old collegiality gone

There are reasons to be hopeful. Studies show the number of independents increasing. In Michigan, a *Detroit Free Press* poll showed six of every 10 voters believe both parties should compromise to fix the fiscal mess.

But still, one of every four Michiganders considers himself or herself more conservative than he or she used to be. And one in 10 considers himself or herself more liberal.

In the end the problem -- and the solution -- lies with voters, not with Washington.

Rep. John Dingell, a Dearborn Democrat who has served in the House since 1955, recalls longstanding friendships and cooperative working arrangements that helped him at least explore and often reach compromise with members of the other party. He and former Republican Rep. Joe Knollenberg used to have a party each year; today, Dingell still has a close relationship with Upton.

But he sees much of the old collegiality gone.

Dingell repeats what a Chinese diplomat told a friend of his recently: The U.S. appears — in the diplomat's eyes — to be "in a state of terminal decline because of its inability to make decisions."

"It should scare the hell out of you," Dingell said, "because it scares the hell out of me."

Marci was getting ready to go out this morning to her mother's. She was running late and bemoaning the fact a little bit.

I told her that, if she hadn't goofed-off so long reading the paper, she would have been ready long ago.

Marci, with mock indignancy, replied, "I haven't goofen-off at all!"

Now, how can a guy not love a wife like that? Impossible! :-)

(English is a hard language! Think about it.)

[20121104-06](#) 18:51 Tom Joke: The Kind-Hearted Husband

My wife and I walked past a swanky new restaurant last night.

"Did you smell that food?" she asked. "Incredible!"

Being the kind-hearted husband that I am, I thought, "What the heck, I'll treat her!"

So we walked past it again.

[Hey, I must be a good husband too, because I would do this for Marci in a NY superstorm minute! -SteveB]

[20121104-04](#) 10:13 Art Fw: Couple of Good Ones

Couple of things to think about. One funny, but will rankle the racists. But, heck, you're already racists. The other is something to really thing about.



Video-1 ("Chris Rock - Message for White Voters"):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=EDxOSjgl5Z4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EDxOSjgl5Z4). [Hilarious! –SteveB]

Video-2 ("Romney vs. Sandy"): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=ZENTh3psXl4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZENTh3psXl4).

<a href="#">20121104-05</a>	15:24	SteveB	"The Coming Post-Election GOP Freak Out"
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The Right-wingnut unreality, well-explicated!

"The Coming Post-Election GOP Freak Out" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast

Nov. 4, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/04/michael-tomasky-on-the-coming-post-election-gop-freak-out.html>)

(If Romney loses on Tuesday, watch for the right's outrage machine to kick into high gear.)

What's the state of mind this weekend of the conservative outrage machine? With regard to liberals, I think it's fair to say as of Saturday that most of us (excepting your allowed-for percentage of nervous nellys) expect Barack Obama to win. If he somehow doesn't, we'll be surprised and deeply depressed. But provided the outcome doesn't involve some kind of Florida-style shenanigans, in a couple days' time, we'll come to terms with it.

Meanwhile--conservatives? I think that they are certain that Mitt Romney will win and that all information to the contrary is a pack of lies; that they will be completely shocked and outraged if he doesn't; that, if he loses, it will be the inevitable product of foul play; and that therefore they'll immediately start scouring the landscape looking for parties to blame and will keep themselves in a state suspended agitation for...days, weeks, four years, forever. Which wouldn't matter to the rest of us but for the fact that they'll continue to have the power to screw up the country.

The conservatives I read, and certainly my conservative commenters, just can't wait for Tuesday, when the American people will arise out of their torpor and finally send Obama to the dugout. I'm continually struck--nay, impressed, even--by the iron certainty with which they say this, and by their unswerving ability to pluck out the favorable polls (getting fewer and farther between, incidentally) and throw a bucket of ice-cold water on the ones they don't like.

Objective reality says Obama is ahead. But to conservatives, there's always something wrong in objective-reality land, always a reason to claim that the world is in fact spinning in the opposite direction. Quinnipiac has too many Democrats! PPP is a Democratic firm! This one oversampled blacks, that one Latinos. And of course, these objections are never merely just stated. They're the rhetorical equivalent of dirty nuclear bombs. Conservatives on Twitter howl derisively at these polls as if their purveyors are offering alchemical cures for venereal disease.

We're all prey to "confirmation bias," as Paul Waldman called it in his American Prospect column Friday. We look at the polls that we know will be more likely to show the result we want to see. With Republicans, that has meant Rasmussen, obviously, and Gallup. With liberals it has meant...well, virtually every other polling operation under God's golden sun, more often than not, because the simple fact remains that Obama has led in most polls for a year, nationwide and statewide.

But there's confirmation bias, and there's denial. Pennsylvania is up for grabs? If you say so, wingsphere. But Obama's led in 53 straight polls there, journalist Eric Boehlert tweeted yesterday. In the last two days we've seen about 20 different state polls. Obama led in 18. If my guy were on the business end of results like those, I'd be psychologically preparing myself.

Which, indeed, I am anyway. You never really know. The mess in Eastern Pennsylvania could, maybe, so discourage turnout in the Obama-friendliest areas of the state he could lose. Fifty-three straight polls, and 18 out of 20, could be wrong. That many polls have never been that wrong before, but I guess there's a first time for

everything. (Please don't mention 1948, wingers--comparing polling then to polling today is like comparing a '48 Plymouth to a new Lexus.)

You never really know. Most liberals acknowledge this simple reality. But wingers seem to know, or think they know. Of course they don't know, and deep down they know that they don't know, which must be a kind of psychological torture to them, and so they compensate for having to endure that torture by putting up that front of absolute certainty, which in turn brings its own rewards whatever the result. Their guy wins, they get to say, "Ha! I knew it all along." Their guy loses, they get to be outraged and blame the blacks, the media, the pollsters, Nate Silver. In a weird sort of way I suspect many of them prefer the latter outcome.

Yes, it's strange. And it's made all the stranger because I would imagine that outside the political realm, most conservatives are pretty reasonable people who accept outcomes just like the rest of us. If their team loses the Super Bowl, or their kid's project doesn't win the science fair, or even if they get passed over for that promotion, most conservatives surely are unhappy, as anyone would be, but they fundamentally accept the legitimacy of the outcome.

But not in politics. In the political realm, we have this hate machine, this massive propaganda apparatus, that tells conservatives that any turn of bad luck is not merely bad luck but the result of a conspiracy that society has hatched against them. Thus, Mitt Romney--whom conservatives used to hate, before they were forced to embrace him--has made no mistakes on the campaign trail. The furor over the 47 percent remarks, the two debate losses, and much else--these aren't signs of his misjudgment or fallibility. To conservatives, they're all part of the broader plot against him, and more importantly against them.

And so, when you look at the world that way, the conspiracy never dies, the rope never stops spinning. **If Obama wins, the excuses will start coming; the excuses will mushroom quickly into reasons why the victory was illegitimate; illegitimacy thus "established," the next mission is to oppose Obama at every turn with even greater fervor. Any political means necessary to stop or even remove him will become justified. It's all as predictable as a goose sh\*tting.** And if Obama does win, it will start Wednesday morning. What am I saying? I meant Tuesday night.

20121104-07	19:17	SandyI	"The Morning After the Morning After"
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"The Morning After the Morning After" by Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*

Nov. 3, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/opinion/sunday/friedman-the-morning-after-the-morning-after.html>)

THERE are two things I'll predict about Tuesday's election: one is that America's biggest voting bloc — the center-right/center-left — will win; the other is that there's going to be a big civil war within the Republican Party and a small civil war within the Democratic Party starting the day after the election, as they're each forced to accommodate this center-left/center-right victory.

By now, it should be obvious how much America is a center-right/center-left country and how much this center — not the extremes — has dominated this election. If Mitt Romney wins on Tuesday, it would be because he moved from the far-right, Tea Party-dictated nonsense that he used to win the G.O.P. primary to the center-right. Had Romney not "rebranded" himself a centrist Republican in the last month, this election would have been over long ago in President Obama's favor. Conversely, had Romney run as an authentic center-right former Republican governor of Massachusetts from the start, this election might long ago have been over in his favor. Had Obama, though, embraced the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction plan and run from the center from the start, Romney would have been locked out on the fringes long ago and never been able to pull off his "born again" move to moderation. Obama may still squeak by, though, by stressing his "balanced" approach to lowering the deficit and pragmatic foreign policy, while downplaying his more leftward initiatives like health care.

The reason the center-left/center-right bloc is dominating this election is because it intuitively knows that the only way our country can progress is with some grand bargains forged at the center. One is a package deal that slows

entitlement and defense spending, raises taxes, invests in infrastructure, education and research and institutes tax reforms that unleash more entrepreneurship — all in the right sequence and scale — so the economy is nursed back to health. Another is a deal on immigration reform. And a third is a deal that opens the way to exploit our newfound bounty of natural gas, but with a plan that is environmentally sound and doesn't divert us from our long-term goal of a clean-energy economy that mitigates climate change.

If Romney wins, it would be because the center-right/center-left concluded that he would approach these grand bargains with the moderate Republican instincts and willingness to compromise that he has been either faking or sincerely projecting in the last month — and would be able to impose that moderation on his party. If Obama wins, it would be because the center-right/center-left concluded that he has been trying to govern from the center, has made progress, but has also been obstructed by G.O.P. hard-liners, and they wanted to give him more time.

A lot has been written lately about how, given these two options, we'd be better off going with Romney, because he supposedly can control the crazies in his party to deliver his side of these grand bargains — but, by sticking with Obama, we'd only get more gridlock. I don't buy that for two reasons. First, it would be saying that since Republicans on the far-right managed to obstruct Obama on many fronts, and held the economy hostage, we should let them rule because otherwise they'd do it again. That would only invite Democrats to behave the same way, which would leave us nowhere.

I also don't buy it because I think the G.O.P. has gone so much farther to the right than the Democrats have gone to left. I do not trust that Romney will be able to tame the radical G.O.P. base without making concessions to it on the environment, the Supreme Court and foreign policy that are not in the nation's long-term interest.

I think the best thing for the country today would be if the Republicans lost the presidency twice in a row, the way the Democrats did under Ronald Reagan, and then had to undergo the same kind of rethinking and reformation that Democrats did under Bill Clinton, which moved their party solidly into the center-left. Parties learn from defeat, not from victory — especially two defeats in a row.

Granted, the morning after an election defeat, angry G.O.P. hard-liners would surely vow to obstruct Obama more than ever. I'm not afraid. Because the morning after the morning after, G.O.P. governors, mayors and business leaders would see where the country really is and finally do what needs to be done: either crush or separate themselves from a radical base that has forced Republican candidates into a war against math, physics, biology, Hispanics and gays and lesbians — all at the same time.

Their party has no future if it constantly has to cater to or disguise that narrow base. And America's future is hampered if we don't have a responsible center-right conservative party, offering market-based solutions and a spirit of compromise to solve our biggest problems — not a radical right-libertarian-Tea Party coalition that is leading the G.O.P. around by the nose, purging unbelievers and signing loyalty pledges to self-appointed conservative ayatollahs.

A truly center-right G.O.P. would force the Democrats to have their own civil war — the center-left versus the rest — largely over tax/entitlement reform and defense spending. Obama has never fully tested where the Democratic base is on these issues, but that's coming. The Democratic civil war will encompass fewer issues than the G.O.P.'s, but it will be intense and unavoidable — if we are to forge the Grand Bargains that America's center-right/center-left majority clearly wants and the country clearly needs.

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A T-Shirt For You:



20121104-09 21:13 Tom "Victoria's Secret Saves Stricken New York National Guardsmen"

"Victoria's Secret Saves Stricken New York National Guardsmen" by MSN Now

Nov. 4, 2012, (<http://m.now.msn.com/victoria%E2%80%99s-secret-saves-new-york-national-guard-unit-after-sandy>)



Skinny New York Heroes

The bra and panty industry saved lives this week, as Victoria's Secret rescued a hurricane-stricken New York National Guard regiment. The lingerie company was due to hold a fashion show at the guard's Manhattan armory, but called it off due to Hurricane Sandy. When the armory was left without power or communications post-storm, Victoria's Secret threw all their on-site resources at the problem. They loaned the regiment two huge mobile generators, hooked up their T1 microwave Internet connection, and even loaned its forklift to distribute emergency food bundles for flooded-out New Yorkers. Victoria's Secret deserve a medal. But there's almost nowhere we could pin it on.



### Caskets found as workers demolish mausoleum

**We had no idea anyone was buried there.**

**By William R. Weeks**  
*Memphis Daily Journal*

When men a majestic granite mausoleum set on a prominent site in Jackson's Resurrection cemetery, a masonry worker laid pieces of dirt removed from the site.

When completed the dome-shaped mausoleum built by 19th century industrial magnate Harvey Lantry and named for more than 50 years.

But workers that were laying out earth for the mausoleum that was found to be buried in the mausoleum.

Discovery of the caskets this week was just one more chapter of a bizarre story.

"We had no idea anyone was buried there," explained Thomas Hadden, director of operations for the Jackson-Catholic Church.

"We have found some old crypts in the mausoleum. But we had opened all six and they were empty," he said. "But when we removed what we thought was the foundation slab for the crypts, we found another six crypts, buried under 3 inches of concrete."

The graves — in our pet houses who is in them — were covered with concrete with crosses and then removed with earth, Hadden said. And that was the same cross, the graves were left in place.

The mausoleum was demolished because it had become dangerous, Hadden said.

"It had an interior marble register and marble walls and, because of freezing and thawing, they had fallen in the dome — but there was still debris hanging from the ceiling. The building was being kept out of it was dangerous."

And Lantry, although he himself was a man of means, left no money for maintenance, he said. Indeed, he left no record that anyone was buried in his mausoleum.

One of Lantry's relatives, Lois Lantry Hadden, said Harvey Lantry was a steel cutter who was born in New York and later moved to Memphis, Tenn.

He was a successful capitalist for several years on the Mississippi River but began work as railroad construction in the 1850s.

In 1877 he moved to Kansas, bought a limestone quarry and built three bridge abutments for a railroad. Hadden said Lantry was the richest man in Kansas at the time of his death.

According to Hadden, "Harvey died at Grand Grove, Kansas, but he was buried in Jackson. After the death of his father, his mother settled in Jackson along with her children. Because she had such a hard life, Harvey vowed when he was young that he would take good care of her. He did."

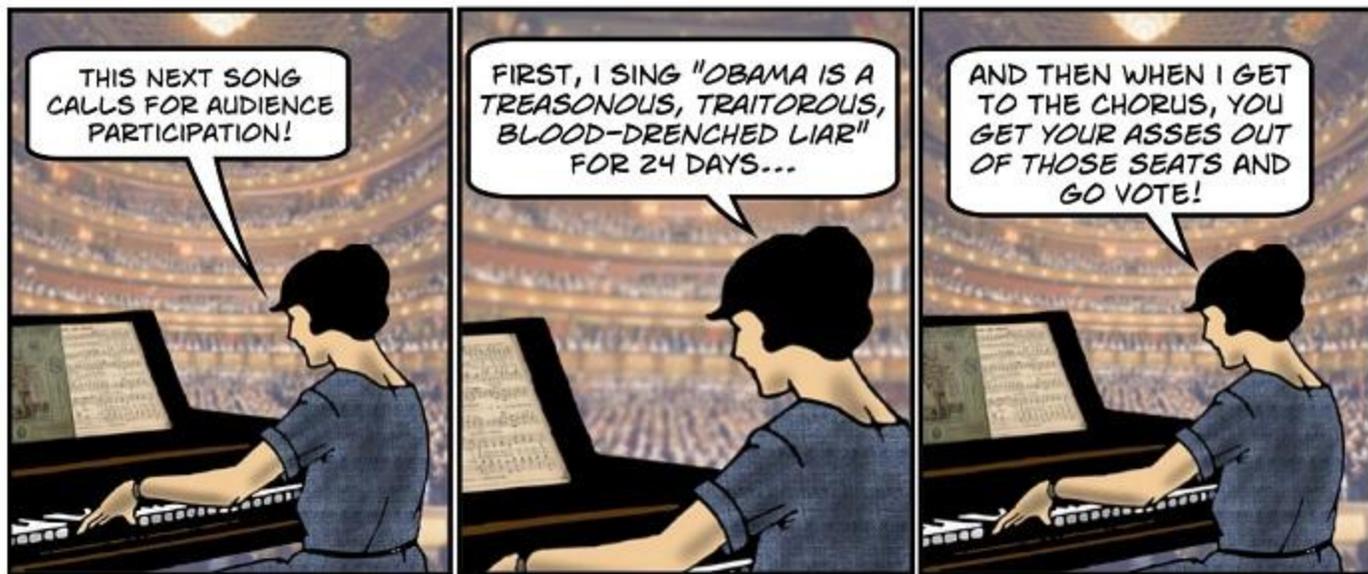
Now his mausoleum is gone and his grave, for the moment, unmarked. Hadden said he has not decided what to do to mark the grave.

The mausoleum had the name "Lantry" carved over its door and, Hadden said, he will need Hadden's name that should also placed on a permanent base at the site.

The Lantry mausoleum, which was moved, is left a mystery instead.

# Hope n' Change

HopeNChangeCartoons.com / ©2012 by Stilton Jarlsberg



<http://thegirlbythesea.com/family/buckin-broncos/>



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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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