



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

NEWSLETTER #281 — NOV. 30, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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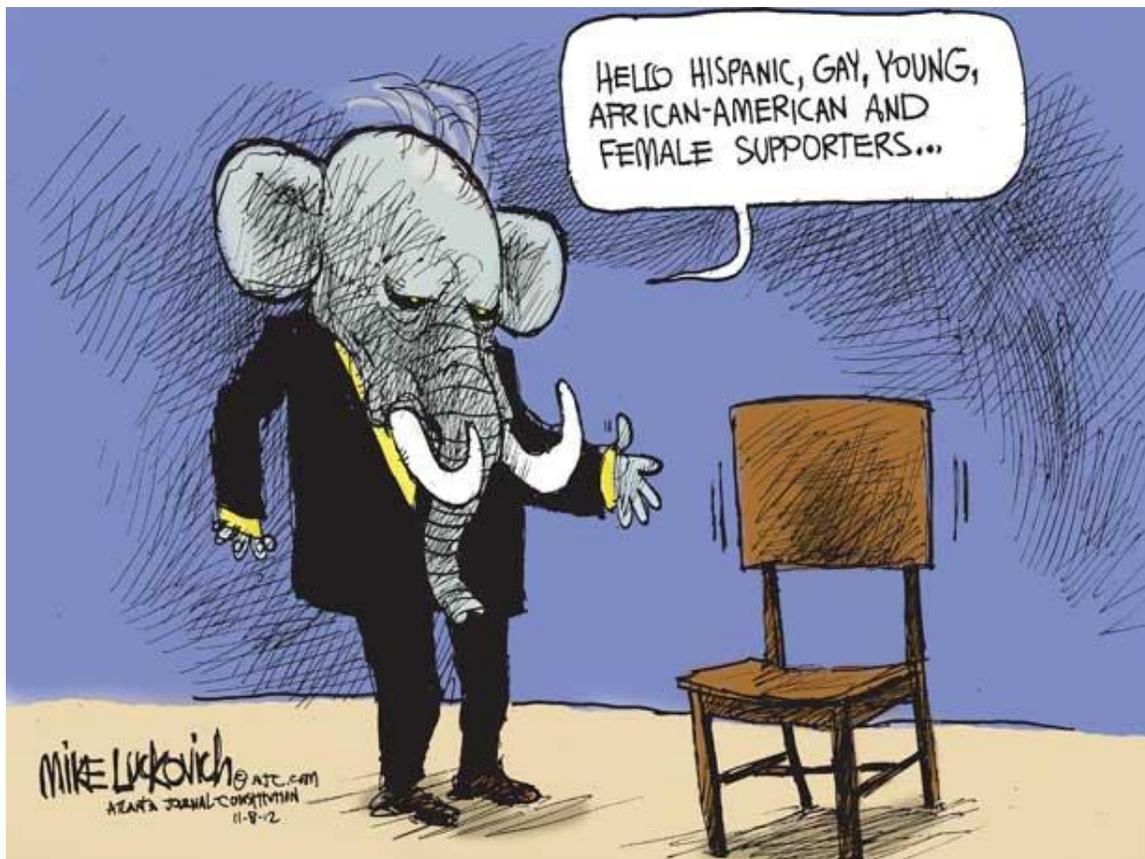
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Is the GOP Lost?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 30, 2012)

I'm not finding much post-electoral contact between Republicans and Reality, myself...

It's really too bad for Republicans that they don't read articles like the one below. Maybe they could pull themselves together, strengthened by patriotic courage, and, as a party, tell the lunatic fringe to go to hell? Maybe they could come down and land and try to help the rest of us rationally try to solve our many problems (which are mainly not the ones the GOP has imagined).



Seriously, Republicans, does the whole GOP stand or fall on: (1) Tax breaks for the rich; (2) Refusing birth control or abortions to raped women who choose that path; (3) Continuing war and military build-up; (4) Emergency Room visits instead of health insurance; (5) Creationism; (6) (LOL!) Romneyism?

If you believe it does, Jurassic Park awaits you.

"The GOP Faces Years in the Wilderness after 2012 Election Losses" by Robert Shrum, The Daily Beast

Nov. 26, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/26/the-gop-faces-years-in-the-wilderness-after-2012-election-losses.html>)

(Sensible Republicans seeking to renew the viability of a conservative party that seems out of touch after a stinging defeat at the polls are being denounced as 'heretics.' Robert Shrum on why the party might never find its way back.)

So here is the Republican Party reinventing itself:

- The GOP majority in the Ohio legislature rushes to defund Planned Parenthood in its post-election session.
- The orange-tinted speaker of the House proposes to undo Obamacare through "oversight" in the name of "solving our debt and restoring prosperity." Never mind that health-care reform doesn't raise the deficit but reduces it. Or that "a new low," 33 percent of Americans, the anti-Obama bitter-enders, still favor repealing the law ([PDF](#)).
- A rising star in the GOP future, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, offers a dim view out of the pre-Darwinian past that maybe the Earth was created in seven days—and that since "theologians" disagree, we should teach "multiple theories."

This doesn't sound like rethinking, or thinking at all, but like the reflex and revanchism of a party that doesn't comprehend or simply can't respond to the dimensions of its 2012 defeat. There's not just the delicious irony that maladroit Mitt Romney, the 47 percent man, will end up with 47 percent of the vote. Outside the South, President Obama defeated his opponent 55 to 45 percent, winning a landslide there as well as in the Electoral College. The bottom line: Romney got elected president of the old confederacy.

The aggrieved and deluded suggest secession—a question that was definitively settled four score and seven years ago. The fantasist who founded UnSkewedPolls.com conjures up a new website, BarackOFraudo.com, "proving" that the president stole Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Florida. Sensible Republicans—perhaps even Boehner, who has to fear the Tea Party and a coup from Eric Cantor, his House majority leader—know this is self-defeating nonsense. So do smart GOP strategists, who for speaking truth to the loss of power were promptly denounced by the grand inquisitor Rush Limbaugh as heretics who want "to get rid of conservatism."

That's not what they're saying, of course. They're insisting that something must be done to renew the viability of a conservative party that seems out of touch, out of ideas, and without much hope for victory short of economic calamity under the Democrats. But beyond the ritual lashing of Romney, who fled the national stage with ugly recriminations about the "old playbook" of "gifts" that bribed voters, the reactions from Rubio to Rush point toward slapping a new façade on a fundamentally unchanged, increasingly self-marginalizing GOP.

One of Limbaugh's targets, Steve Schmidt, a veteran of Bush 2004, who managed Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2006 reelection and John McCain's 2008 campaign, was at NYU's post-election conference at Villa La Pietra in Florence. The Republicans and Democrats there, both analysts and leading actors in the Obama and Romney efforts, heard senior Romney adviser Kevin Madden, a convinced conservative, regret that his candidate had been pushed so far to the right during the primary season. Alex Castellanos, who worked for Romney four years ago, called for a "bottom up" conservatism relevant to middle-class voters, one that offered them clear and persuasive benefits. (He didn't say "gifts." He was focused on opportunity.)

Schmidt was blunt. The GOP had to abandon the ceaseless pursuit of the last white guy in Mississippi at the expense of alienating the mainstream. He argued a case in point: Republicans should be "a pro-life party," but not "the anti-contraception" party, which is how Romney sometimes came across as he felt forced to match the über-purist Rick Santorum in the primaries. Castellanos mentioned that since Republicans believe in states' rights, the answer on abortion might be to reverse *Roe v. Wade* but then leave the decision on the issue to each state.

That wouldn't bring over those who care deeply about reproductive rights. And it would incite fierce resistance from those who believe life begins at fertilization. But at least such moves would provide the substance and not just the slogans of a party repositioning from the edge.

Obama pollster Joel Benenson responded that such shifts may require two or three more cycles of presidential loss. It took the Democrats that long in the wilderness in the 1970s and 1980s, when only one Democrat won the White House for only one term, and then only in reaction to the Watergate scandal. Democratic consultant Steve McMahon amplified the point: until Bill Clinton, Democrats kept hoping or clinging to the certainty that they were right and that all they had to do was find the right candidate.

That's not where realistic Republican strategists want their party to be. But four overriding realities militate against a GOP return to the White House in 2016 and perhaps for several campaigns beyond.

First, the economy, the issue Romney ran on, the issue that in a time of distress can elect an otherwise unacceptably hard conservative candidate like Ronald Reagan, is now likely to turn decisively in the Democratic direction. At La Pietra, NYU professor Joshua Tucker cited models that show growth and jobs rising at a robust pace in the next four years. Tucker, a founder of The Monkey Cage blog, where political scientists grapple insightfully with politics, observed that 2012 was two presidential elections rolled into one. Whoever won this time, Romney or Obama, would get credit for the coming prosperity. A President Romney could have been all but unbeatable for reelection. Now the high cards on the economy will be held by Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, or whoever else is the Democratic nominee.

This scenario could be undermined or undone if the White House and Congress don't come to an agreement on the fiscal cliff and the nation falls back into recession or, less damaging, experiences a period of declining or sluggish growth. But the standard rule may not apply that the president and his party are held primarily responsible for a downturn. A new Pew poll finds that by nearly 2-to-1, voters would blame congressional Republicans rather than Obama for a failure here.

Second, the nature of the Republican primary electorate hamstring the party's capacity to adapt. The religious right and the true believers who dominate the nominating process have their own explanations or rationalizations for 2012. Romney wasn't conservative enough. Richard Viguerie, who invented GOP direct mail, announced: "Romney's loss was the death rattle of the establishment GOP." Franklin Graham, a pale carbon copy of Billy, bore false witness to the electoral facts: "The vast majority of evangelicals did not go to the polls." But they did; they constituted the same proportion of the vote as in 2008, and more of them voted for Romney than McCain.

Schmidt recommended that Republicans dispense with the Iowa caucuses, where the litmus test is who's most for Jesus, according to the narrow measures of right-wing fundamentalists. That change won't happen, not yet; religious and movement forces on the far right won't yield their hold on the primary process and their veto power over the nominee. In the last two elections, they sacrificed at least five Senate seats for the sake of ideological ultra-orthodoxy. So why won't they demand their kind of presidential candidate—no doubts, no flip-flops, always there with them? And they believe the country will come around to them. Former Moral Majoritarian Ralph Reed smoothly explained how. Yes, there has to be change, to "combine core principles with outreach." But outreach to whom, if the core principles are reaction and intolerance?

That's the potentially insuperable challenge for Republicans in the near and medium and maybe even the long term. As Biden adviser and Obama media-maker Mike Donilon said in Florence, the GOP is simply on the wrong side of the emerging majority in the country. In the exit polls, 59 percent of voters said abortion should be legal in all or most cases. By 49 to 46 percent, they supported gay marriage; the tide has swiftly turned on the question that carried George W. Bush to a narrow win in 2004 on a wave of evangelical turnout. And 65 percent in the exit polls favored immigration reform with a path to citizenship.

All this leaves Republicans out there on a demographic cliff with women, Hispanics, and young people. And for the most part, their own primary voters won't let them retreat.

Post-election, Sean Hannity of Fox News did switch on immigration reform, presumably calculating that a conservative softening here will placate Hispanics. He was echoed by others in the Republican leadership and commentariat. This expedient is simplistic, desperate, and ahistorical.

Defining passages forge political identity. When they came to America, Jews were largely welcomed by the Democratic Party and disdained by the GOP. They have remained overwhelmingly Democratic as they have become more affluent, because they lived and believe in the party's values of tolerance and diversity. African-Americans, hard as it now is to remember, used to vote Republican in substantial numbers. Dwight Eisenhower won 39 percent of them in 1956. Four years later, Martin Luther King Sr. was originally for Richard Nixon. He changed his mind after the Kennedy brothers spoke out when his son was in danger in a Georgia jail. Events from then until the Kennedy-Johnson civil rights legislation brought African-Americans to the Democratic fold, and they have never left. Indeed, disrespect for Obama and efforts this year at voter suppression have reinforced their partisan loyalty.

Hispanics have already heard their own share of disrespect from Republicans, the rank racism of anti-immigrant hardliners and the casual contempt of Romney, who told "illegals" to "self-deport." They will hear even more of this as nativists in the party resist a change on immigration—which, even from Rubio, will be a watered-down version of reform.

The GOP used to take comfort in the cliché that Hispanics were cultural conservatives, Catholics who agree with them on social issues. Wrong again. In the exit polls, they are more progressive than the electorate as a whole on questions of marriage equality and the role of government. For Hispanics, the passage here has probably already been made with the politics of insult driving them toward the Democrats. And to add injury to that insult, Asian-Americans also are voting Democratic by a wide margin; the likely reason is that they too see the GOP as the party of an indivisible prejudice that demeans them too, even if it doesn't explicitly target them.

Young people may be another lost cause. As Professor Tucker said at La Pietra, party ID tends to be set by age 30, and those under and approaching 30 are decisively Democratic. So are unmarried women, a growing segment of the population, alienated from the GOP on concerns ranging from reproductive rights to equal pay. Is it really conceivable, soon if ever, that Republicans in the presidential primaries would be willing to leave abortion rights to the states or to leave Planned Parenthood alone? And it's inconceivable that this would be enough to convince women that the party is on their side.

Economic conservatives and wealthy Republicans have formed an unholy alliance with a religious right whose views they don't share but whose votes they covet. Now they're saddled with a base that could leave them with increasingly unelectable nominees—for president, for the Senate, and for the House, which this year was largely saved for the GOP by partisan redistricting.

But the economic conservatives have their own weakness, which is the third reality that now imprints and imprisons the Republican brand. Especially after the fights of the past two years, and the argument the president successfully prosecuted during the campaign, Americans perceive the GOP as the party that favors those at the top and not the middle class. As he refused to let the election be cast as a mere referendum, Obama returned to Democratic ground with the first full-throated populist appeal in half a century or more. In 1992, President Clinton's centrism had a populist tinge as he promised to "put people first." Al Gore has said he regrets the decision in 2000 to back off the dividing line of "the people, not the powerful." Obama never backed off as he constantly pushed a central choice: who stands for the many and not just the few?

The president has laid a predicate for a generation of Democratic campaigns and left Republicans in what could be a permanently vulnerable position. Castellanos obviously realizes this; thus his argument in Florence for a conservatism that is "relevant" to the middle class. But what exactly is that, in light of the debate that's now front and center? The GOP will only deepen its difficulties if congressional Republicans hold tax cuts for most Americans hostage to tax cuts for the rich.

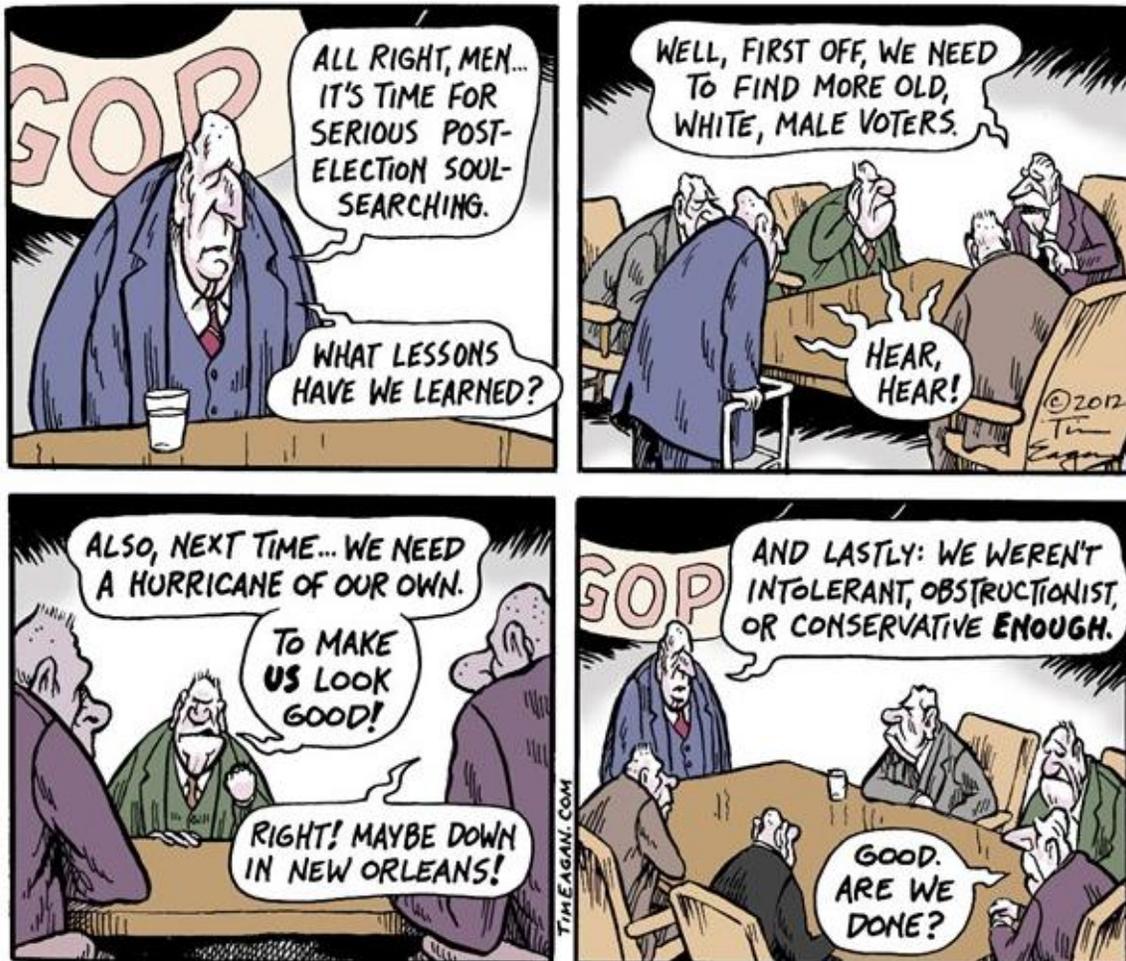
Republican compromise here would represent some measure of change. But that too wouldn't be enough. The fourth reality is a technological gap in voter mobilization; more accurately the gap is a chasm. Karl Rove now talks of imitating Howard Dean's 50-state strategy, which widened the electoral landscape on which the Democratic Party competed. A breakthrough in its time, that strategy is now far behind what the Obama forces did with social media to track contact and get people to the polls—and to buy television time for much less than the Romney campaign paid. What they did was a quantum leap beyond their own success in 2008. This year, their combat with Romney, from micro-targeting to monitoring turnout, was like the Starship Enterprise battling a B1 bomber.

Can the GOP catch up? It's not just a matter of technology. There is a "pressing and alarming deficit in human capital." A sophisticated process doesn't run itself. Thus the imperative of recruiting "a new generation" of Republican operatives; for example, from the "libertarian-minded minority in Silicon Valley." But why would libertarian geeks flock to a party that argues for big government interference in the most private aspects of people's lives, and that discriminates against the gay or lesbian techie who sits nearby in the same open-plan space?

The day after the election, the deputy GOP leader in the Senate, John Cornyn, predicted a "period of reflection and recalibration ahead." But it's hard to envision the party realigning itself to the new and real America.

Instead, in the throes of their self-proclaimed reexamination, many Republicans remind me of a scene in Theodore H. White's classic *The Making of the President 1960*. JFK spoke in the Boston garden on the last night of the campaign, with politicians and ward heelers smoking cigars arranged in rows behind him. As the crowd cheered, White wrote, a look passed across their faces. You could see what the pols were thinking: Kennedy has a trick; if only I could figure it out, I could be president.

It was a false and easy conceit. And if what the GOP looks for now is a trick, what it will find is a way deeper into the wilderness.



FotM NEWSLETTER #281 (Nov. 30, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

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20121129-02	16:15	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121129-03	17:11	SteveB	My Own Cable Channel
20121129-04	17:32	Art	Re: My Own Cable Channel (reply to SteveB, above)
20121129-05	19:11	Tom	Re: My Own Cable Channel (reply to SteveB & Art, above)
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20121129-07	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #18 (Rago National Park, Norway)
20121129-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wilderness Journey

20121129-01	12:29	Tom	"The Danger of International Internet Regulation"
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Globalist CONTROL of the Internet...

"The Danger of International Internet Regulation" by Amy Payne, The Morning Bell/The Foundry

Nov. 29, 2012, (<http://blog.heritage.org/2012/11/29/morning-bell-the-danger-of-international-internet-regulation/>)

Regulating the Internet is something Americans have resisted here at home. Now that fight is going global.

The United Nations—of course—has an agency that oversees international telecommunications. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) was founded in 1865, when the telegraph was its main concern. Now it's trying to expand its influence over modern-day communications.

Starting on Monday, the 193 member states of the ITU will meet in Dubai to update the 1988 International Telecommunications Regulations.

The ITU is looking to transform itself into a "global Internet rule maker," according to a new *Issue Brief* by Heritage's James Gattuso and Brett Schaefer. "At a time when competition should be making it less relevant, it is expanding its turf." They set the scene:

Some countries have proposed granting the ITU more authority over the Internet and making other changes purportedly for such goals as enhancing cybersecurity, reducing costs for developing-country consumers, and increasing investment by telecommunications providers. However, many of these seemingly benign proposals could undermine the Internet freedoms that are essential to spurring economic development and protecting human rights. The U.S. should oppose these efforts.

As with other United Nations bodies, the U.S. gets one vote that is considered equally with countries like Libya. Of course, in the case of the Internet, many countries' governments consider it a threat—online communications have helped people organize protests and uprisings like the "Arab Spring."

"Governments that will be in attendance at the closed-door...summit—including some that currently censor Internet traffic within their own borders—have proposed amendments to the treaty that could make it easier to monitor and control how everyone uses the Web," warns Eric Johnson of AllThingsD.com.

Former Assistant Secretary of Commerce Larry Irving said that "fear is a great driver, and people like to regulate what they fear."

The ITU's process is anything but transparent, so most of the key details known so far have been leaked, appropriately, on the Internet. According to the leaked documents, several troubling proposals are on the table from different countries, many of which resent the current Internet framework because of a perceived dominance by the United States.

For example:

Russia would require networks to identify subscribers when delivering traffic. The sponsoring states argue that these powers would help them fight cybercrime, but they could also be used for censorship and political suppression.

Schaefer and Gattuso warn that regulating the Internet is, in short, a very bad idea. "At best, this is unnecessary, as the Internet is doing quite well under the current framework. At worst, the expansion will allow the U.N.—parent organization of the ITU—to stifle the Web."

The House of Representatives has already spoken out against this international regulation. In August, it unanimously passed (414–0) a resolution urging the Obama Administration to "clearly articulate...the consistent and unequivocal policy of the United States to promote a global Internet free from government control." Senator Marco Rubio (R–FL) introduced a similar version of this resolution in the Senate that passed by unanimous consent on September 22.

America cannot stand for any rules that justify or facilitate censorship or repression, or an expansion of the authority of the ITU over the Internet. The freedom of people around the world may depend on it.

Another delicious lunch and too little time today to say much, but it was DEEE-licious and oh-so-fresh. Seared albacore filets over bok choy, kale, and ramen-like noodles with a rich savory broth:



Seared Albacore over Kale and Bok Choy

I was thinking...

Opra has a cable channel. Al Gore has a cable channel. Ted Turner had one. Etc.

Maybe I should start a cable channel???

I woke up in the middle of the night thinking that there should be one called FECAL or FECES.

It would be very inexpensive to operate because all you would have on it would be, well, shit.

Then I woke up this morning and realized that this cable channel already exists—Fox News. Rupert beat me to it!

Oh, well, I'll keep thinking...

20121129-04 17:32 Art Re: My Own Cable Channel (reply to SteveB, above)

Still, brilliant idea!

20121129-05 19:11 Tom Re: My Own Cable Channel (reply to SteveB & Art, above)

Fox is NOT CONSERVATIVE, RUPERT MURDOCH Has 'SOLD OUT;' HE'S A LIBERAL and he is COMPROMISED!

20121129-06 21:53 Tom "Presidential Memorandum — National Insider Threat Policy & Minimum Standards for Executive Branch Insider Threat Programs"

This has to be read.

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release November 21, 2012

Presidential Memorandum -- National Insider Threat Policy and Minimum Standards for Executive Branch Insider Threat Programs (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/21/presidential-memorandum-national-insider-threat-policy-and-minimum-stand>)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: National Insider Threat Policy and Minimum Standards for Executive Branch Insider Threat Programs

This Presidential Memorandum transmits the National Insider Threat Policy and Minimum Standards for Executive Branch Insider Threat Programs (Minimum Standards) to provide direction and guidance to promote the development of effective insider threat programs within departments and agencies to deter, detect, and mitigate actions by employees who may represent a threat to national security. These threats encompass potential espionage, violent acts against the Government or the Nation, and unauthorized disclosure of classified information, including the vast amounts of classified data available on interconnected United States Government computer networks and systems.

The Minimum Standards provide departments and agencies with the minimum elements necessary to establish effective insider threat programs. These elements include the capability to gather, integrate, and centrally analyze and respond to key threat-related information; monitor employee use of classified networks; provide the workforce with insider threat awareness training; and protect the civil liberties and privacy of all personnel.

The resulting insider threat capabilities will strengthen the protection of classified information across the executive branch and reinforce our defenses against both adversaries and insiders who misuse their access and endanger our national security.

BARACK OBAMA



<http://www.vegetarianfriends.net/issue35.html>



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

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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