



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #285 — DEC. 6, 2012**

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Oh, Ya...the End Is Near!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 6, 2012)

If you were looking for an excuse to go out and get drunk every night this month, look no further. Please don't forget to turn out the lights...

"Safe Haven from the Mayan Apocalypse? Sorry, We're Closed" by Sorcha Pollak, *Time*

Dec. 5, 2012, (<http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/12/05/safe-haven-from-the-mayan-apocalypse-sorry-were-closed/>)



Do you fear the apocalyptic end to humanity scheduled for Dec. 21? Well, there may be hope: a safe haven from the fast-approaching Armageddon in the form of a small, tranquil village in the south-west of France named Bugarach.

Unfortunately, it's now closed.

For reasons that still aren't entirely clear, several websites that have been trumpeting the coming end of the world have also named Bugarach the only place on earth that will be saved on Dec. 21st. When the town's mayor, Jean-Pierre Delord, was alerted to this fact two years ago, his first reaction was not to rejoice in the knowledge that he and his townspeople would be spared the apocalypse but to order special security measures and plans to shut down the village in preparation for a deluge of news agencies, esotericists and Doomsday cultists.

It has been widely reported in recent years that ancient Mayan calendars predicted that the world would end on Dec. 21st, 2012. According to *National Geographic*, it is true that the Mayan "long count" calendar, which spans around 5,125 years, will reach the end of its cycle in December of this year. Dec. 21st will see the end of the 13th Bak'tun, which represents the end of an old cycle and the beginning of a new one. And while everyone from NASA to astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson are insisting that this doesn't mean the end of the world any more than December 31, 1999 meant the end of modern computing, people across the globe are preparing for Armageddon. However, the question as to why the inhabitants of this tiny French village will survive unscathed remains unanswered.

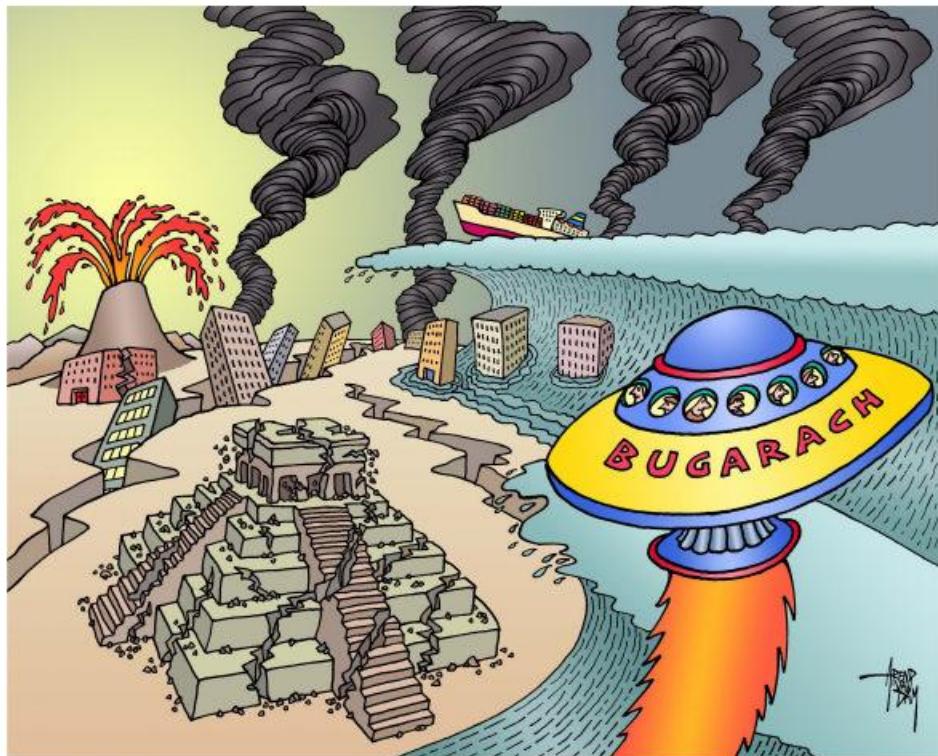
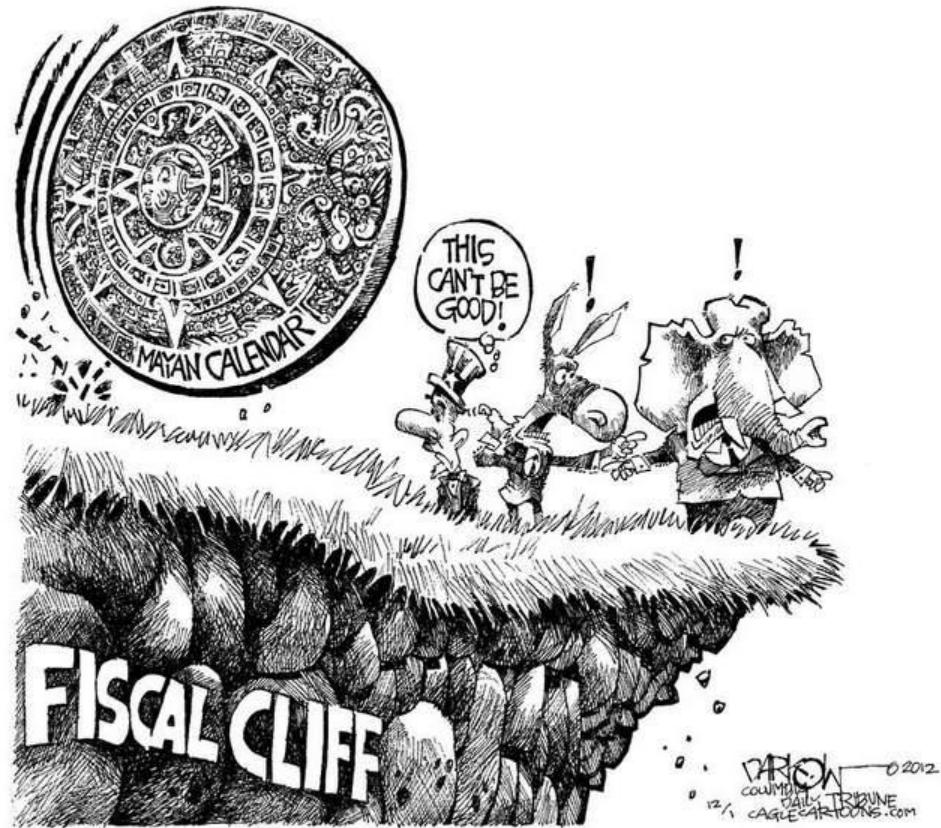
So why would the inhabitants of this tiny French village be spared? Nicolas D'Estienne d'Orves, who recently released a book on Bugarach titled *The Village of the End of the World*, explained in a documentary on the life of the villagers that it has been "impossible" to get to the bottom of the Mayan Bugarach rumor. Why this town? Why in Europe? "It was grabbed on to because this is a place where there's nothing, so you can easily project your fantasies on to it. It's like filling a balloon with air," says the French novelist.

Bugarach is located in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of southern France. This sleepy hamlet of 176 residents has always attracted people with more "esoteric beliefs," Delord recently told the *Guardian*. For years this area of southern France has been known for folklore and magic as well as plenty of conspiracy theories. "It's all about the mountain," says Delord.

He's talking about the 4,300-foot tall Pic de Bugarach, which towers over the village. It is known locally as the 'upside-down mountain' due to the lower layers of rocks that are inexplicably younger than those at the top of the peak. The flat-topped mountain is also reported to emit strange gurgling sounds, which has probably helped make it a prime UFO-spotting site as well. Many actually believe the mountain contains an "alien garage," writes the *Telegraph*, where extraterrestrials are waiting in a massive cavity beneath the rock for the world to end.

Delord fears that many of these Doomsday believers are planning to descend upon his small hometown in the coming weeks in an attempt to avoid what they believe is mankind's imminent demise. Already, the numbers of hikers climbing the mountain have jumped from 10,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2011, writes the *Guardian*. So as to be completely sure of the locals' safety, the mayor has made the decision to shut down the area to tourists for the four days prior to Dec. 21st. Meanwhile, the French government has put the anti-cult watchdog agency Miviludes on the case so as to head off any apocalyptic group activities or possible mass suicides, such as those which were carried out by the Order of the Solar Temple in the Alps between 1994 and 1997.

Some of the locals in Bugarach are still happily taking advantage of their new worldwide fame. One local winery has an end-of-the-world vintage on sale, while a local man is renting out his home for up to \$1,600 a night. "I possess a rare asset, the land of immortality," the landowner proudly told the French newspaper *Depeche du Midi*.



21 december 2012 (Mayan calendar): the world will end except in Bugarach...

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<u>20121205-01</u>	09:53	Ann	"Everything We Need to Know, We Learned in Kindergarten. Too Bad Republicans Missed That Day."
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"Everything We Need to Know, We Learned in Kindergarten. Too Bad Republicans Missed That Day." by Helen Philpot, Margaret and Helen (Best Friends for Sixty Years and Counting)

Dec. 5, 2012, (<http://margaretandhelen.com/2012/12/05/everything-we-need-to-know-we-learned-in-kindergarten-too-bad-republicans-missed-that-day/>)

Margaret, I am beginning to wonder if there are any grownups left in the Republican party .

I've been asking myself that question since 2004 when George Bush got 35 more electoral votes and 4.1 million more popular votes than John Kerry. The next day he announced that he had political capital and he "intended to spend it 'cause that's the kind a guy I am." I swear that man was the biggest jackass ever to live in the White House.

It was so good to see an adult take office in 2008 when Barack Obama won 192 more electoral votes and almost 10 million more popular votes than John McCain. But then the Republicans obstructionism in the Senate started and eventually, thanks to the dumb asses in the Tea Party, the complete collapse of any type of governing ramped up 2 years later in the House. They vowed Obama would be a one term President, and everything we learned in kindergarten went right out the window.

This year, Obama won by 126 electoral votes and more than 4 million popular votes. Always changing the rules of the game, the Republicans are demanding that Democrats need to compromise. I hear that McConnell and Boehner actually bragged to the press that they laughed at the President's plan. Just who the hell are these guys? Even Fox News eventually had to call the election for Obama. You know what, Margaret? If Obama were to leave a

flaming bag of shit outside Boehner and McConnell's office doors, I'd cheer him on. Higher taxes for the wealthy was pretty much the central theme of the election. Mitt was against it. Obama was for it. Mitt lost. End of story.

How about the Republicans finally tell Grover Norquist and the other wackos in their party to sit down and shut the hell up? I know if we leave it up to those Tea Party nut jobs, they'll be digging up Ronald Reagan's dead body and running him in 2016.

The Republicans want compromise? How's this:

- In exchange for Republicans agreeing to once and for all get out of our vaginas and our bedrooms, we Democrats will let you start another war just as soon as you get another Bush in the White House.
- In exchange for Republicans agreeing to fully fund the social safety net for this nation's poor and elderly, we Democrats will do everything in our power to starve camels and make the eye of the needle wider.
- And here's the really big one - If Republicans will agree to take Rush Limbaugh and Karl Rove and make them simply "disappear", we Democrats will not let Bill Clinton speak at the 2016 Democratic Convention.

In truth, I am pretty disgusted with all politicians right now. They've all gotten a little too predictable for my taste. Republicans want more money for the wealthy and more war. Democrats want to take care of the poor, the elderly and want more money for education programs... On second thought, I'm really just disgusted with Republican politicians.

If this is the best we can expect from Republican leadership, we have a bigger problem than going over some cliff. How about we just pass the President's plan? If it fails, the Republicans might actually stand a chance in the next election. If it succeeds, the Republicans might finally have to move into the 21st Century.

Show me a fiscal cliff and I will gladly push McConnell and Boehner over the edge. Maybe then the grown ups can roll up their sleeves and get something done. Because how the hell is any deep thinking going to happen if those two insist on spending the whole day pissing in the baby pool? I mean it. Really.

20121205-02	10:05	SteveB	Re: "Everything We Need to Know, We Learned in Kindergarten. Too Bad Republicans Missed That Day." (reply to Ann, above)
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Hilarious and all so true. Thanks, Ann!

20121205-03	11:58	Art	Re: "Texas Church Offers Firearms Classes to Train Parishioners to Defend Against Imaginary Bands of Mexicans" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #284)
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Unbelievable.

20121205-04	12:02	Art	Re: Response from Sen. Maria Cantwell to Common Cause Petition: Fix the Filibuster! (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #284)
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Good letter.

20121205-05	13:12	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Rep. Hastings: Help End the Bush Tax Cuts for the Wealthy!
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from CREDO Action:

With just 27 days left in the 112th Congress, we are headed for a major showdown in this lame duck session. We know what the Republicans want: to keep taxes on the wealthy and large corporations unconscionably low and military spending sky-high; to gut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security; and to make brutal cuts to important domestic programs like food stamps and unemployment insurance.

Fortunately Democrats in the House of Representatives, under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, are fighting back. Just yesterday, House Democrats filed a discharge petition to force a vote that will finally end the Bush tax cuts for people making more than \$250,000 a year. We need Representative Doc Hastings to sign the discharge petition to allow a vote on the Bush tax cuts as soon as possible.

At a time when the political and media establishment in Washington, DC, are ginning up panic over the so-called "fiscal cliff," speaking up in support of this discharge petition is a major opportunity to send a loud and clear message to Congress. If they are serious about addressing the national debt and deficit, there is a simple way to do it: letting the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy permanently expire at the end of 2012.

More than a decade after they were signed into law, it is clear now that the Bush tax cuts were a huge mistake. Without the implementation of those disastrous cuts, our economy "would have been in much stronger shape to weather all the fiscal storms of the past 10 years and much better prepared for those of the next 10." There is absolutely no reason for Congress to repeat that mistake by extending the Bush tax cuts yet again.

Tell Representative Hastings: Sign on to House Democrats' discharge petition to force a vote on expiration of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

This is a fight we can win if we are relentless. We need to speak up and lay down our marker today to let our elected representatives in Washington, DC, know that we expect them to hold the line against what has turned out to be one of the most disastrous economic policies enacted in our nation's history. Click below to sign our petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bush_taxcut_discharge/.

Thank you for fighting to end the Bush tax cuts once and for all.

Murshed Zaheed, Deputy Political Director, CREDO Action from Working Assets

20121205-09 19:45 SteveG Fw: League of Conservation Voters Petition: Tell Congress to End Oil Subsidies & Support Clean Energy!

from the League of Conservation Voters:

We've got an idea for Congress: How about instead of cutting investments that support our families, protect our health, and preserve our environment, we finally get rid of those handouts that give oil companies billions of our taxpayer dollars every year to keep polluting our air and waterways?

It seems like the most obvious plan, but right now Big Oil's congressional allies are pushing hard to do just the opposite as Congress looks for a way to deal with the so-called "fiscal cliff." Big Oil's allies in Congress want to protect special tax breaks for dirty energy companies while cutting investments in conservation, clean energy, and public health. That makes no sense. But unless Congress hears from us now, they might just have their way.

Email your members of Congress today: Tell them to throw Big Oil off the fiscal cliff, not the environmental programs that we all depend on!

Big Oil has already recorded over \$90 billion in profits so far in 2012. Yet the oil industry continues to receive \$4 billion in taxpayer subsidies every year. It is unacceptable that Big Oil's congressional cronies would have us fork over our tax dollars to these corporate polluters, while being forced to cut programs that protect our health and our environment. But even though environmental programs only make up 1.25% of the national budget, some

members of Congress think we can somehow balance the budget by further decimating these critical programs. They would:

- Eliminate tax credits that have helped the wind industry grow.
- Starve our National Parks of funding.
- Cut programs for clean energy research and innovation.
- Undermine efforts to clean up contaminated waterways.
- End programs that support more than 130 National Wildlife Refuges.

We can't afford to lose these programs that keep our water clean, protect the places and wildlife we love, and build the infrastructure we need to curb global warming. So we need to make sure that Congress hears loud and clear that their constituents will not allow our health and our future to be traded away — especially not while they keep doling out billions to dirty energy companies.

Send a message to your members of Congress right now urging them to put an end to Big Oil handouts, not our environmental protection programs.

If we ended the handouts that we currently give to oil and gas companies, it would save more than \$40 billion over the next 10 years. Given the furor over cutting wasteful spending, this should be a no-brainer. But Congress won't do it without hearing from you today:

<https://secure3.convio.net/lcv/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=949>.

So we hope you'll join us in asking your member of Congress to stop subsidizing an industry that harms our health, and invest instead in clean energy jobs that will strengthen our environment, our economy, and our energy independence.

Thanks, Gene Karpinski, President, League of Conservation Voters

20121205-06 17:24 SteveG Fw: "Moon Was Violently Pummeled by Early Impacts, Probes Find"

[Source of original email unknown, but it's based on the article below. –SteveB]

Thanks to Ebb and Flow, Grail spacecraft orbiting the Moon. [see image #1, below]

Red = Stronger gravity.
Blue = Weaker gravity.

Neat, eh?

The other sides of the moon 120 degrees apart. [see image #2, below]

Gravity measured in Bouguers. !!??

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouguer_gravity

The Bouguer anomaly is related to the observed gravity as follows:

Here, g_B is the Bouguer anomaly, g_{obs} is the free-air gravity anomaly, λ is the correction for latitude (because the Earth is not a perfect sphere) and δ is the free-air correction and ρ is the correction for terrain called the Bouguer reduction.

The Bouguer anomaly is related to the observed gravity g_{obs} as follows:

$$g_B = g_{obs} - g_\lambda - \delta g_F - \delta g_B$$

$$g_B = g_F - \delta g_B$$

Here, g_B is the Bouguer anomaly, g_F is the free-air gravity anomaly, g_λ is the correction for latitude (because the Earth is not a perfect sphere) and δg_F is the free-air correction and δg_B is the correction for terrain called the *Bouguer reduction*.

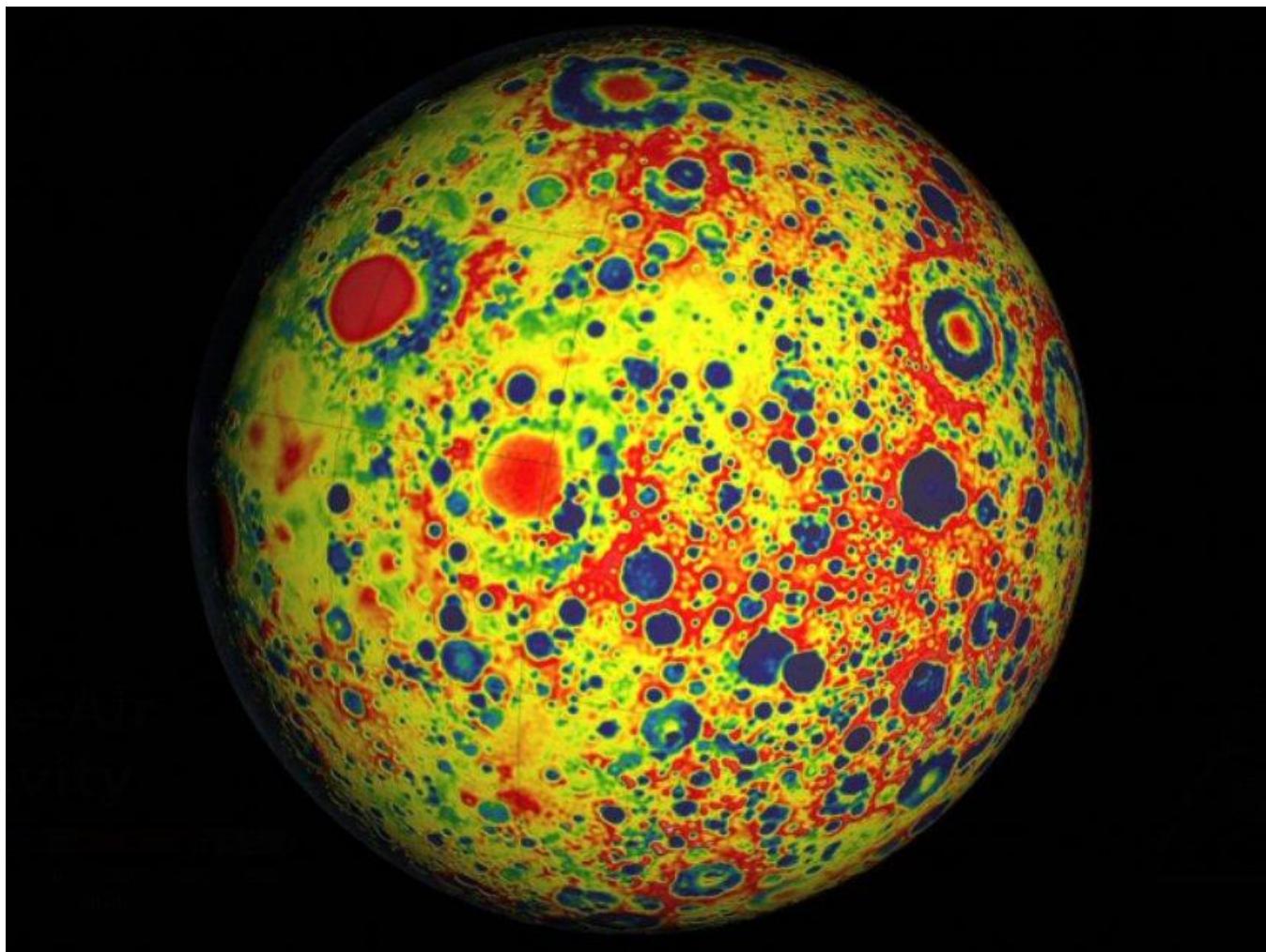
Study this. There will be a test.

Really useful if you are looking for Oil, Water, Metal ores, etc on the Moon. (Anything more or less dense than the average density.) (Works and is used on the Earth too.)

["Moon Was Violently Pummeled by Early Impacts, Probes Find"](#) by Mike Wall, NBC News

Dec. 5, 2012, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/50091114/ns/technology_and_science-space/#.UL_RtoN9Iig)

(Gravity map made by twin Grail probes shows lunar crust almost completely pulverized.)



NASA's Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (Grail) made this new high-resolution map of the moon's gravity field. (NASA / JPL-Caltech / MIT / GSFC)

(SAN FRANCISCO) The moon and other rocky bodies in the inner solar system were pounded by long-ago impacts far more violently than previously thought, two NASA spacecraft have found.

NASA's twin Grail probes have created an ultra-precise gravity map of the moon, revealing that its crust is almost completely pulverized. The surprising find suggests that Earth, Mercury, Venus and Mars endured a similar beating billions of years ago, researchers said.

The discovery "really opens a window to this early stage of just what a violent place the surfaces of all terrestrial planets were early in their history," Grail principal investigator Maria Zuber of MIT said during a press conference here Wednesday at the annual fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union.

The new results shed light on how the moon formed, and they may help scientists better understand where life might be found today on Mars, if it ever existed, Zuber added.

Graphic: How the Grail Probes Work: <http://www.space.com/12497-nasa-moon-gravity-probes-grail-mission-infographic.html>.

Formation Flying

The \$496 million Grail mission launched in September 2011 to map the moon's gravity field with unprecedented precision.

The twin probes, named Ebb and Flow, fly in formation around the moon, detecting the tiny changes in the distance between them caused by lunar mountains, craters and subsurface mass concentrations.

The Grail team has used such measurements to create a new lunar gravity map, which researchers say is the highest-resolution map of this kind ever generated for a celestial body. And it revealed some interesting information about the moon.

For starters, the lunar crust is incredibly porous, suggesting it was fractured by countless impacts long ago. The crust is also thinner than previously thought — just 21 to 27 miles (34 to 43 kilometers), compared to earlier estimates ranging from 30 to 40 miles (48 to 64 km).

Support for the Giant Impact Theory

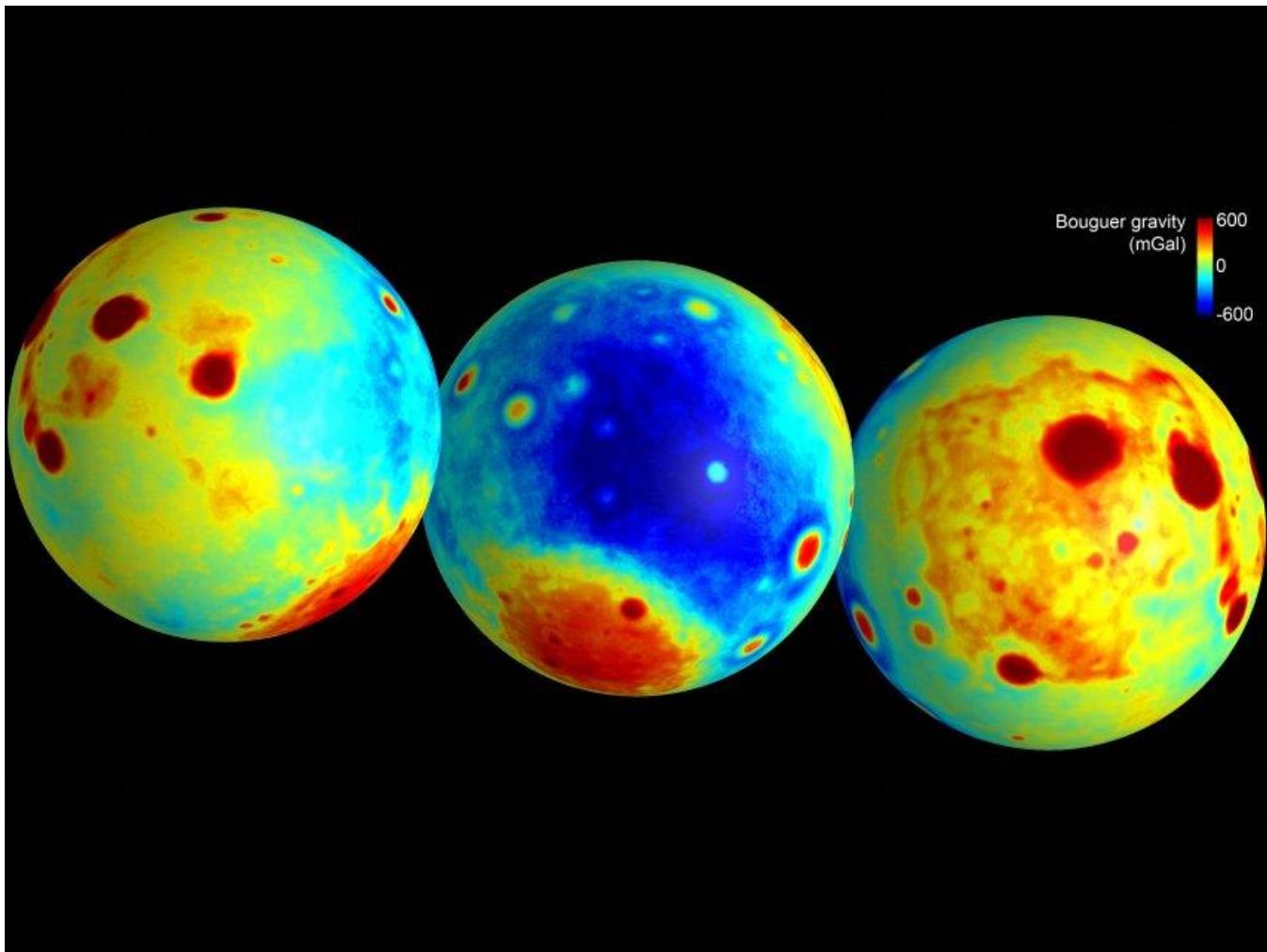
Ebb and Flow also spotted many large, linear structures under the moon's surface that can run for up to 300 miles (480 km). These subsurface "dikes" of solidified magma are covered by craters, suggesting that they predate most of the moon's violent impacts.

The dikes could only have formed if the moon's crust were extending, making room for the magma, researchers said. This would happen if the moon's interior were heating up and expanding, as predicted by the leading theory for the moon's origin — the Giant Impact hypothesis.

This idea posits that a Mars-size body smashed into Earth about 4.5 billion years ago, and the moon coalesced from pieces of our planet that were blasted into space.

"The process of building a moon out of that debris should result in a situation where the moon is cooler on the inside and warmer on the outside," said Grail guest scientist Jeff Andrews-Hanna of the Colorado School of Mines. "And then what naturally happens is that the interior will warm up and expand during that first billion years."

"This had been predicted theoretically a long time ago, but there was no direct observational evidence to support this period of early lunar expansion until this Grail data," Andrews-Hanna added.



These maps of the moon show gravity anomalies measured by NASA's Grail mission. (NASA / JPL-Caltech / CSM)

Martian Life Deep Underground?

Grail's revelations about the violent early history of the inner solar system suggest that the upper crusts of its rocky planets are highly and deeply fractured, Zuber said.

Such cracks could provide a pathway for fluids, perhaps explaining what happened to the ocean that some scientists think existed long ago on the surface of Mars.

"That ocean could well be underground," Zuber said.

As the Martian surface dried out over the years, such underground water may have provided a refuge for surface microbes, if they ever existed. Microbes "could have gone very deep within the crust of Mars," Zuber said.

Ebb and Flow wrapped up their primary science mission in May and are currently embarked on an extended mission that will end in mid-December. Shortly thereafter, they will be crashed intentionally onto the lunar surface; exactly where and when that will happen is still being worked out, researchers said.

The results presented today were from the primary mission. The spacecraft have been circling even closer to the moon during the extended phase — an average altitude of 14 miles (23 km) as opposed to 34 miles (55 km) — so the Grail team thinks the gravity map will get even better.

"We expect a lot more exciting results in the future, so stay tuned," said Grail project scientist and co-investigator Sami Asmar of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif.

20121205-07

18:10 Art

Re: "Moon Was Violently Pummeled by Early Impacts, Probes Find" (reply to SteveG, above)

Ouch and I'm on my third try.

20121205-08

18:28 Art

"Makers Beat Takers"

"Makers Beat Takers" by Harold Meyerson, *The Washington Post*

Dec. 4, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/harold-meyerson-in-this-election-makers-beat-takers/2012/12/04/d672e6f6-3e4d-11e2-ae43-cf491b837f7b_story.html?tid=pm_opinions_pop)

The rich may be different from you and me, as F. Scott Fitzgerald once noted, but bankers are increasingly different from the rest of the rich. In this year's election, Wall Street's campaign contributions and voting patterns, as best we can discern them, bear no resemblance to the contributions and votes from our other most highly paid sectors — particularly high tech.

A cruise through two haunts of the rich — the techies' Silicon Valley and the banker towns of Connecticut's Fairfield County — turns up strikingly different voting patterns. President Obama carried Santa Clara County, the epicenter of high tech, by 43 points over Mitt Romney. In such leafy Wall Street burbs as Greenwich and New Canaan, Conn., by contrast, Romney prevailed by 11 and 29 points, respectively. Outside the most banker-dense villages, Romney's totals plummeted: Obama carried the whole of Fairfield County by 11 points, much as he carried most of the affluent suburbs of New York, San Francisco, Washington and Los Angeles.

The differences between finance and other wealthy sectors are even more pronounced in their campaign contributions. Romney's five largest contributors, by employer, are, in order, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase and Credit Suisse. Wells Fargo comes in sixth. ("Contributors by employer" refers to the total of contributions from employees of a particular company.) There are no tech companies on the list of Romney's top 20 contributors by employer. There aren't even any tech companies on the list of Romney's top 10 contributors by employer in California.

Open Secrets, the campaign finance monitor, has tallied the contributions of each American industry (both employees and the companies themselves) to super PACs this year and found that "Securities and Investment," which donated more than any other industry — \$75,036,769 — gave \$4 to conservative super PACs for every \$1 they gave to a liberal one. (The number-two industry by donations, "Casinos/Gambling" — that is, Sheldon Adelson and Steve Wynn — donated \$31,729,520, of which 99 percent went to conservative super PACs. Those who contend that the differences between finance and casinos are largely cosmetic now have one more argument they can invoke.)

On the list of Obama's five largest contributors by employer, the University of California heads the pack, with Microsoft, Google, the federal government and Harvard rounding out the top five. IBM and Apple are also on the list of the top 20, as are four other universities, but just one bank: Wells Fargo, which placed 19th and which is the only major bank based in Northern California. Open Secrets' tally of super PAC contributions from the "Computers/Internet" industry — they totaled \$9,292,448 — showed that 58 percent went to liberal groups. The New York Times' Nate Silver has calculated that Obama received 97 percent of the presidential campaign contributions of Google employees, 91 percent of Apple employees, 81 percent of those at Microsoft and 77 percent of those at IBM.

Generalizations are now in order. Obama won overwhelming backing from the most productive and innovative sector of American capitalism. Romney won the backing of finance and casinos, whose contributions to American productivity and well-being are more difficult to discern, and which are industries based on reshuffling resources in games the house almost always wins. Obama, if you will, won the makers; Romney, the takers.

The makers, moreover, haven't shown themselves at all averse to raising taxes on the rich. On Election Day, Californians voted to end their 10 years of annual budget deficits and fiscal crises — and underfunding schools and

universities — by passing, 55 percent to 45 percent, Proposition 30, which hiked marginal tax rates on incomes above \$250,000. Santa Clara County gave the measure 63 percent support. The state's tech sector, which historically has supported more funding for education, contributed virtually nothing to the campaign to defeat Proposition 30, which was financed almost entirely by right-wing ideologues.

How do we explain the gulf that separates the techies from the bankers? Part of the explanation may be demographic: The techies are younger, and a new survey by the *San Jose Mercury News* concludes that fully half of the Bay Area's tech workforce is Asian American, a group that backed Obama in California at a rate of 79 percent. Wall Street, by contrast, is overwhelmingly white.

More broadly and at the risk of oversimplifying, techies are into making products while bankers are into making money. In the age of Obama, where the big money dwells, invention is Democratic; sweet deals are Republican.

20121205-10 20:38 SteveG "UN Disability Treaty Rejected by Senate"

Explain the thinking behind rejecting this. I really do not understand. Modeled on our Americans with Disabilities Act and ratified by 126 other countries and rejected by our congress.

"UN Disability Treaty Rejected by Senate" by AP

Dec. 4, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/story/2012/12/un-disability-treaty-rejected-by-senate-84570.html>)

(WASHINGTON) Led by Republican opposition, the Senate on Tuesday rejected a United Nations treaty on the rights of the disabled that is modeled after the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act.

With 38 Republicans casting "no" votes, the 61-38 vote fell five short of the two-thirds majority needed to ratify a treaty. The vote took place in an unusually solemn atmosphere, with senators sitting at their desks rather than milling around the podium. Former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, looking frail and in a wheelchair, was in the chamber to support the treaty.

The treaty, already signed by 155 nations and ratified by 126 countries, including Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia, states that nations should strive to assure that the disabled enjoy the same rights and fundamental freedoms as their fellow citizens. Republicans objected to taking up a treaty during the lame-duck session of the Congress and warned that the treaty could pose a threat to U.S. national sovereignty.

"I do not support the cumbersome regulations and potentially overzealous international organizations with anti-American biases that infringe upon American society," said Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla.

They were not swayed by support for the treaty from some of the party's prominent veterans, including the 89-year-old Dole, who was disabled during World War II; Sen. John McCain, who also suffered disabling injuries in Vietnam; Sen. Dick Lugar, the top Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee; and former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh. Eight Republicans voted to approve the treaty.

The treaty also was widely backed by the disabilities community and veterans groups.

Democratic support for the convention was led by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Sen. John Kerry, Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, one of the key players in writing the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

"It really isn't controversial," Kerry, D-Mass., said. "What this treaty says is very simple. It just says that you can't discriminate against the disabled. It says that other countries have to do what we did 22 years ago when we set the example for the world and passed the Americans with Disabilities Act."

The ADA put the United States in the forefront of efforts to secure equal rights for the disabled, and it became the blueprint for the U.N. treaty, formally the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The treaty was negotiated by the George W. Bush administration. It was completed in 2006 and President Barack Obama signed it in 2009.

The United Nations estimates that 650 million people around the world are disabled, about 10 percent of world population.

Kerry and other backers stressed that the treaty requires no changes in U.S. law, that a committee created by the treaty to make recommendations has no power to change laws and that the treaty cannot serve as a basis for a lawsuit in U.S. courts.

They said the treaty, by encouraging other countries to emulate the rights and facilities for the disabled already existing in the United States, would be of benefit for disabled Americans, particularly veterans, who want to work, travel or study abroad.

Supporters also rejected the argument that it was inappropriate to consider an international treaty in a post-election lame-duck session. They said that since the 1970s the Senate had voted to approve treaties 19 times during lame-duck sessions.

But in September, 36 Republican senators signed a letter saying they would not vote for any treaty during the lame duck.

The opposition was led by tea party favorite Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, who argued that the treaty by its very nature threatened U.S. sovereignty. Specifically he expressed concerns that the treaty could lead to the state, rather than parents, determining what was in the best interest of disabled children in such areas as home schooling, and that language in the treaty guaranteeing the disabled equal rights to reproductive health care could lead to abortions. Parents, Lee said, will "raise their children with the constant looming threat of state interference."

Supporters said such concerns were unfounded.

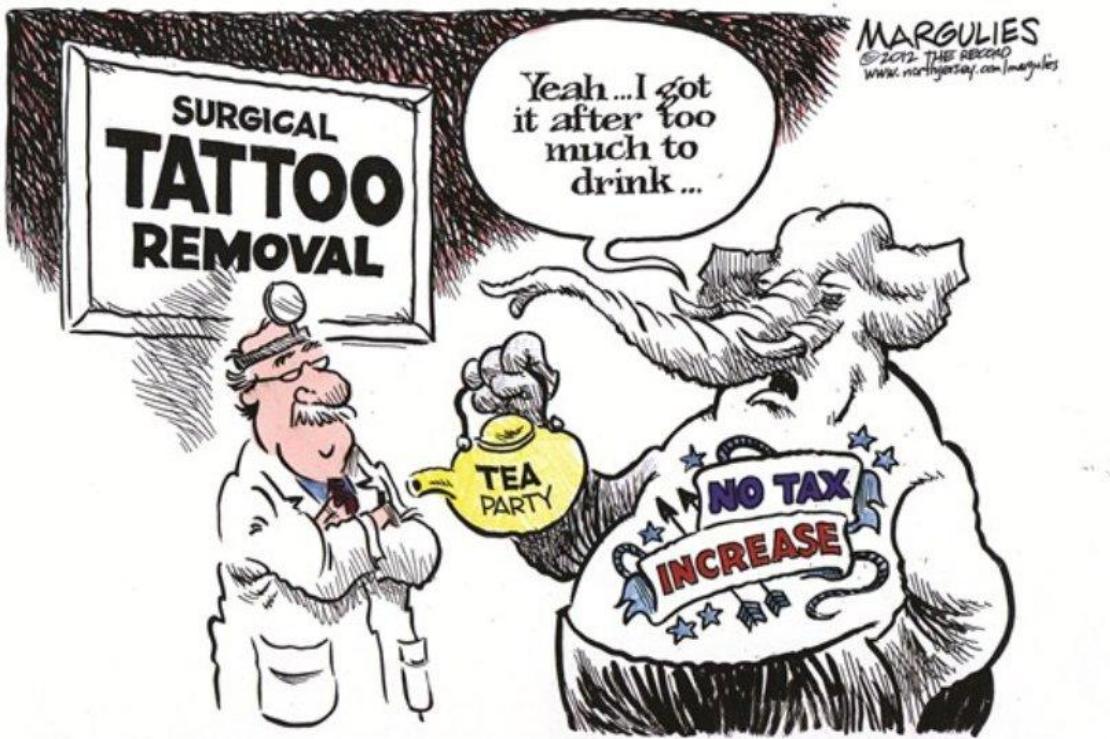
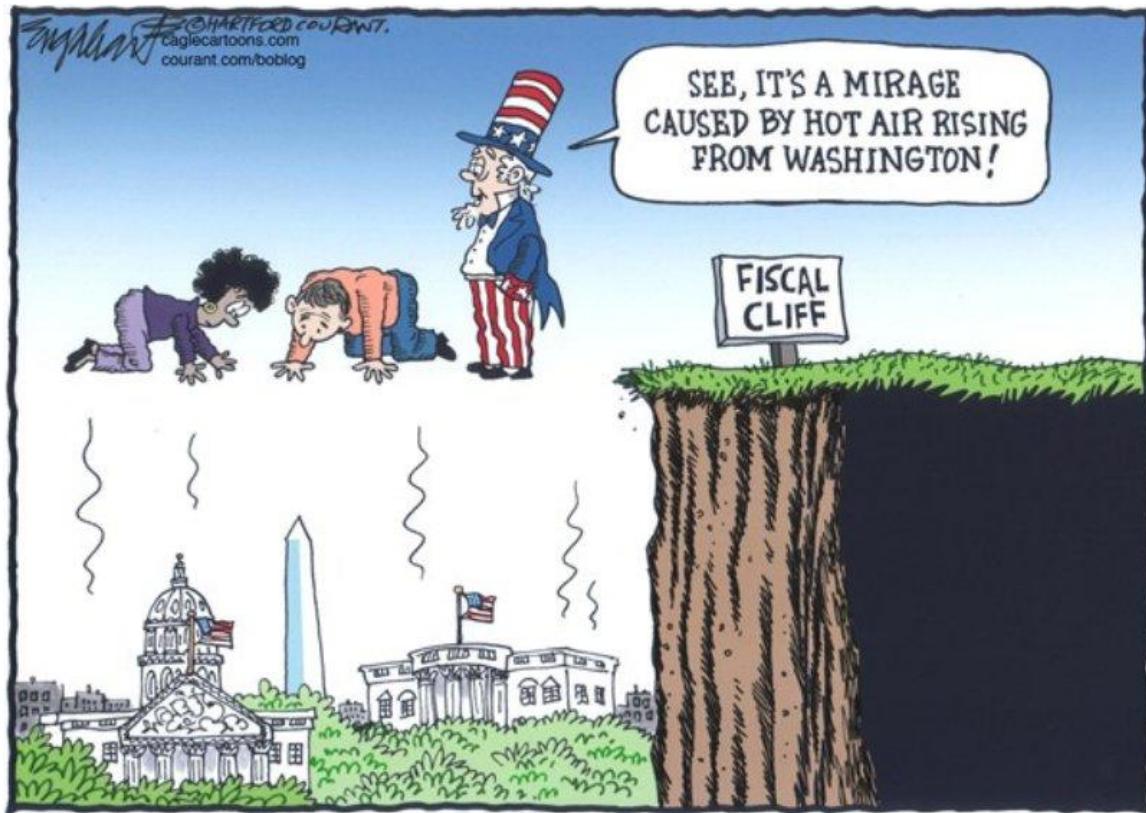
"I am frankly upset," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., "that they have succeeded in scaring the parents who home school their children all over this country." He said he said his office had received dozens of calls from homeschooling parents urging him to vote against the convention.

The conservative Heritage Action for America urged senators to vote no against the treaty, saying it would be recorded as a key vote on their scorecard. It repeated the argument that the treaty "would erode the principles of American sovereignty and federalism."

20121205-11

23:57 SteveG

Cartoons: Fiscal Cliff Hot Air & Tea Party Tattoo Removal



20121205-12

23:58 Marci

Cool Photos #22 (Fields of Lavender in Provence , France)



20121205-13

23:59 SteveB

Photo: Mysterious Moon

<http://wallsa.com/index.php/NATURE-WALLPAPERS/Webshots-Premium---October/Mysterious-Moon>



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

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