



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #294 — DEC. 19, 2012

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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Capitulator-in-Chief?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 19, 2012)

Weak. Weak Weak. Why? Why? Why? Stand-up! Stand-up! Stand-up! Why give-in to a bunch of lying losers?

"Capitulation Is Never Popular. Or Effective." by Markos Moulitsas, Daily Kos

Dec. 18, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/12/18/1171777/-Capitulation-is-never-popular-Or-effective>)



CAPITULATION

Because "Change Is Hard"

You won. Act like it. [Note: Dennis, it's "capitulation" not "copulation"! –SteveB]

If President Barack Obama has a flaw, it's his obviously overwhelming desire to appear reasonable and conciliatory and "work together" to find "compromise" and "get things done". Bipartisanly. With a sane, reasonable, conciliatory opposition, that approach would make sense. But after four years of getting slammed by Republicans eager to destroy his presidency, Obama still hasn't learned the lesson. He still thinks he's going to get rewarded for being the "adult in the room". Yeah, everything I've put inside scare quotes is a joke. A bad, painful joke.

So there's nothing better than headlines like this one, in the Washington Post, to deliver the lesson to the White House to, well, just quit being the Capitulator In Chief:

A rough 24 hours for the White House

You see, Obama had drawn a line in the sand, and then -- to no one's surprise -- ended up capitulating on everything he said he'd never capitulate on.

A few weeks ago, the Obama administration was firm that they wouldn't budge on tax rates for income above \$250,000 and that they wouldn't budge on the debt ceiling. They've since budged on both.

And while Republicans are stupid, even they aren't that stupid.

Republicans increasingly think the White House will concede more now, and that if they don't concede more now they'll definitely give Republicans a better deal if threatened with debt default.

Capitulation is never a strength. A deal will obviously require concessions by the president, but you make those to FINISH the deal, not in the middle of negotiations, and not until after you've branded the opposition with the concessions they're demanding. If a final deal required concessions on chained CPI, then make sure it's the Republicans making those demands, and then make sure everyone *knows* it's the Republicans making those demands. Don't be the one making that offer, for chrissakes!

[White House allies] are disappointed to see an old dynamic reasserting itself: The president makes concessions, thinking he's close to a deal, and then the Republicans pocket those concessions, offering nothing but renewed threats to blow up the talks in return.

Yup, this is insanity. Not only is it brain dead stupid with regards to Republicans, but also betrays his own vice president and congressional caucus -- which had promised several times that Social Security (among other things) was off the table.

Worse, the pushback from congressional Democrats over chained CPI is stronger than the administration expected — note the outspoken opposition from Sen. Dick Durbin, an Obama ally who's often considered a barometer for pragmatic liberals.

At least some Democrats have learned the lessons of the 2012 elections -- that Republicans cannot win as long as Democrats turn out at the polls. And there's no better way to go back to the glory days of 2010, than to reprise the same pattern of appeasement and capitulation that led to unwarranted, unnecessary, and unpopular Republican legislative victories.

Obama wasn't elected to play nice with Republicans. He was elected to lead our nation and improve the lives of its citizens. The political reality is that he needs Republicans to pass legislation. But that doesn't mean he cedes the bully pulpit, solidly backed by the American people, in order to hand Republicans victories they didn't earn -- either in the court of public opinion or at the ballot box.

Tell President Obama to take Social Security cuts off the table, in current and in future negotiations:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=280&tag=1218Capitulation.

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| 20121218-01 | 07:05 | SteveB | From the Right: "Invincible Ignorance" |
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"Invincible Ignorance" by Thomas Sowell, GOPUSA

Dec. 18, 2012, (<http://www.gopusa.com/commentary/2012/12/18/sowell-invincible-ignorance/?subscriber=1>)



Must every tragic mass shooting bring out the shrill ignorance of "gun control" advocates?

The key fallacy of so-called gun control laws is that such laws do not in fact control guns. They simply disarm law-abiding citizens, while people bent on violence find firearms readily available.

If gun control zealots had any respect for facts, they would have discovered this long ago, because there have been too many factual studies over the years to leave any serious doubt about gun control laws being not merely futile but counterproductive.

Places and times with the strongest gun control laws have often been places and times with high murder rates. Washington, D.C., is a classic example, but just one among many.

When it comes to the rate of gun ownership, that is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, but the murder rate is higher in urban areas. The rate of gun ownership is higher among whites than among blacks, but the murder rate

is higher among blacks. For the country as a whole, hand gun ownership doubled in the late 20th century, while the murder rate went down.

The few counter-examples offered by gun control zealots do not stand up under scrutiny. Perhaps their strongest talking point is that Britain has stronger gun control laws than the United States and lower murder rates.

But, if you look back through history, you will find that Britain has had a lower murder rate than the United States for more than two centuries-- and, for most of that time, the British had no more stringent gun control laws than the United States. Indeed, neither country had stringent gun control for most of that time.

In the middle of the 20th century, you could buy a shotgun in London with no questions asked. New York, which at that time had had the stringent Sullivan Law restricting gun ownership since 1911, still had several times the gun murder rate of London, as well as several times the London murder rate with other weapons.

Neither guns nor gun control was not the reason for the difference in murder rates. People were the difference.

Yet many of the most zealous advocates of gun control laws, on both sides of the Atlantic, have also been advocates of leniency toward criminals.

In Britain, such people have been so successful that legal gun ownership has been reduced almost to the vanishing point, while even most convicted felons in Britain are not put behind bars. The crime rate, including the rate of crimes committed with guns, is far higher in Britain now than it was back in the days when there were few restrictions on Britons buying firearms.

In 1954, there were only a dozen armed robberies in London but, by the 1990s-- after decades of ever tightening gun ownership restrictions-- there were more than a hundred times as many armed robberies.

Gun control zealots' choice of Britain for comparison with the United States has been wholly tendentious, not only because it ignored the history of the two countries, but also because it ignored other countries with stronger gun control laws than the United States, such as Russia, Brazil and Mexico. All of these countries have higher murder rates than the United States.

You could compare other sets of countries and get similar results. Gun ownership has been three times as high in Switzerland as in Germany, but the Swiss have had lower murder rates. Other countries with high rates of gun ownership and low murder rates include Israel, New Zealand, and Finland.

Guns are not the problem. People are the problem-- including people who are determined to push gun control laws, either in ignorance of the facts or in defiance of the facts.

There is innocent ignorance and there is invincible, dogmatic and self-righteous ignorance. Every tragic mass shooting seems to bring out examples of both among gun control advocates.

Some years back, there was a professor whose advocacy of gun control led him to produce a "study" that became so discredited that he resigned from his university. This column predicted at the time that this discredited study would continue to be cited by gun control advocates. But I had no idea that this would happen the very next week in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

(Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His Web site is <http://www.tsowell.com>.)

"Mr. Rogers Photo, Words of Advice Go Viral in Wake of Shootings" by Courtney Hazlett, Today

Dec. 17, 2012, (<http://todayentertainment.today.com/news/2012/12/17/15969444-mr-rogers-photo-words-of-advice-go-viral-in-wake-of-shootings>)



Fred Rogers meets children at a school in Pittsburgh in a photograph taken by Jim Judkis. [What a wonderful photo! This is what life should be like! Full of wonder and joy! –SteveB]

During a time when so many are wondering how to talk to their children about the school massacre in Newtown, Conn., some familiar voices of reassurance have surfaced online. Among them is Fred Rogers, even though the children's television icon passed away in 2003.

"Mister Rogers Neighborhood" went off the air in 2001, but the TV host's calm approach and knack for relating to kids is being called upon now. In a message that's gone viral on Facebook, and originated on PBS' "Helping Children Deal with Tragic Events" web page, Rogers talks about what his mother taught him when it came to scary situations.

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, '**Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping,**'" Rogers said. "To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers -- so many caring people in this world."

On the Facebook page 170 Million Americans for Public Broadcasting, the words were attached to a photo showing Rogers interacting with a young child. More than 48,000 people "liked" the image and 88,000 had shared it by Monday afternoon.

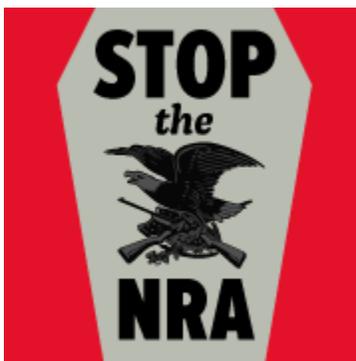
On the Washington Post website, Maura Judkis wrote about the photograph, which was taken by her father Jim Judkis during a shoot for People magazine. The photographer is sure that if Rogers were alive today, he'd be doing anything he could to help the children of Newtown.

LeVar Burton, who hosted "Reading Rainbow" on PBS from 1983-2005, shared his own thoughts on the Reading Rainbow blog. "I offer prayers for the families and the community devastated by this violence against the innocent. This year has seen several tragic shootings which are terrifying for all of us. When this happens in an elementary school, a place of safety, of learning, of play, our suffering is amplified. It would be best of course if children never have to hear about events like these, however that is not the world we seem to live in!"

"Sesame Street," another childhood mainstay, is not going to air a special episode aimed at addressing the events in Connecticut, but has posted resources online to help parents talk about what their kids might be seeing or hearing.

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| 20121218-03 | 12:35 | SteveB | Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell the NRA to Stand Down! |
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from CREDO Action:



"Teachers stand up to gunmen, but Congress won't stand up to the NRA." That's what one of the signs read when hundreds of people joined CREDO's Emergency March on the NRA in Washington, DC.

After the shooter Adam Lanza, no one is more to blame for the massacre of 20 first graders and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School than the National Rifle Association. In order to stop the senseless killing we must first stop the NRA.

The National Rifle Association is a powerful lobby that pretends to represent gun owners. But in reality, it represents the deadly interests of arms dealers and gun manufacturers. And it has been astonishingly successful at blocking regulations that would keep our children safe from gun violence.

In the wake of the Sandy Hook massacre, CREDO organized hundreds of people to march on the National Rifle Association's lobbying office. An action described by The New York Times as a "protest in Washington on Monday against the National Rifle Association, which has virtually unmatched ferocity in advancing its political and legislative interests." We chanted "Shame on the NRA!" and delivered one simple demand: Stand down and let us pass gun control.

Most NRA members are unaware of the organization's extreme stances that have blocked the passage of any major piece of gun legislation in nearly two decades.

Through lobbying, campaign spending, and inciting a paranoia about government among a radical fringe in their membership, the NRA has helped defeat common sense gun measures that polls show an overwhelming majority of gun owners support.

The NRA has successfully blocked efforts to limit the ability to purchase military-style semi-automatic assault rifles and high capacity ammunition clips.

The NRA has successfully blocked efforts to restrict weapons sales to individuals on the U.S. terrorism watch list.

The NRA successfully defeated the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty which would have required countries exporting conventional weapons to certify that they weren't being shipped to a terrorist group or a nation under a U.N. arms embargo like North Korea or Iran.

It's time to end the tyranny of guns. Tell the NRA to stand down, and allow Congress and the President to pass gun control legislation.

In the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre there is momentum in Washington, DC to pass commonsense federal reforms including ensuring that a background check is conducted whenever a gun is sold, banning the sales of military-style assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines, and making arms trafficking a federal crime.

As Senator Manchin's former Chief of Staff explained in the Huffington Post, "Unlike some interest groups, where it is money that creates influence, here it is more the threat of response... The idea is that if you come out for any type of gun control, any type of common-sense reform, they are going to come after you, especially if you are a red-state Democrat. And they will paint you with a broad brush as being anti-gun."

After the massacre not a single one of the 31 senators who received an A grade from the NRA would agree to appear on the influential Sunday morning talk show, Meet the Press. But then Sen. Joe Manchin, a stalwart NRA supporter, said that "the massacre of so many innocent children has changed — has changed America" and that gun control should be up for debate.

This is a rare moment where change is possible. We need to prove ourselves worthy of this moment. In his address to the nation, President Obama vowed "to take meaningful action."¹⁰ We will hold him accountable for sending legislation to Capitol Hill to address the crisis of gun violence in this country. But Congress, which for decades has bowed to self-interest when called to courage on the issue of guns, is not likely to pass any bill proposed by the White House if we don't stand up and force the NRA to stand down.

Tell the NRA to stand down, and allow Congress and the President to pass gun control legislation. Click the link below and sign the petition:

http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/nra_stand_down/?rc=homepage.

Together, we can make this happen. —Becky Bond, Campaign Manager

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| 20121218-05 | 15:10 | SandyI | Just Thinking about the Newtown Tragedy |
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Have already written President, and Congress to urge gun control. Having been exposed to "legal weapons" rather recently, this is hitting close to home.

Have you read seen the FB by Morgan Freeman who asks not to remember the name of the shooter(s) but of their victims? And the article of the mother who says she could have been the mother of the shooter because her 13 year old, brilliant son is out of control and un-controllable? The time is now to at least make those guns that are assault weapons illegal at least and to make it more difficult for felons and those with mental issues unable to purchase legal guns. Make a start and make it now.

I see Westboro is promising a visit to the funerals in CT.



We all could use a little lift from a friend.

[20121218-06](#) 15:35 Pam Re: Just Thinking about the Newtown Tragedy (reply to SandyI, above)

I was listening to NPR this afternoon, and there was a discussion of what to do about guns and the mentally ill in this country. We don't want to over-react and stigmatize everyone who has mental problems, but we most certainly need to pay more attention to the needs of individuals and families that are dealing with these intractable issues. Martha, your comment about how teachers are all too familiar with those lone students, who lurk around, talk to no one, and seem--well--creepy, is right on target. (Bad choice of words.) That's not to say they're all crazy enough to shoot someone, but it's like a snake. When you see one, you recognize the danger and react immediately (at least I DO).

I have never understood why guns can't be licensed and registered like cars are. Why is that a big deal? It's only common sense, and it doesn't violate the Constitution. Americans are allowed to maintain a "well-regulated militia," but some folks have forgotten the words "well-regulated." We're living in crazy times, and we're turning into a crazy, dysfunctional society. I wish I knew what I could do to make a difference--I know, write my Congressmen.

We cannot leave it to families to solve this. I raised a son who was out-of-control and uncontrollable, and believe me I needed all the help I could get. I think he's doing OK now, but his last arrest was as a felon in possession of a firearm. Something is very wrong when convicted criminals can get hold of guns. And NO ONE needs an assault weapon for any reason! Maybe after this horrific tragedy, the country will wake up and shake off the NRA and all the nut jobs who are unleashing such chaos in the name of "freedom."

[20121218-07](#) 16:09 Art Re: Just Thinking about the Newtown Tragedy (reply to Pam, above)

All good points. Heard last evening that 1 in 17 Americans has some sort of mental illness and only 1/3 are getting treatment. By my math that is about 19 million with mental illness and 12 some million are not even being seen. Add to that the fact that we have guns laying around everywhere (about 300M I think) and guess what? Surprise, surprise!

There are solutions. Pam you are absolutely correct. The first step is simple. Stop all sales of assault rifles, 20 and 30 rounds magazines for pistols, small pocket sized hand guns and all other paramilitary type equipment. I think the next step would be to require all those type weapons currently in the hands of people to be registered and documented. Treat them much as you would an automobile (a parallel the gun morons love to throw up). Require licensing, periodic renewals, insurance etc.

This alone would cut deaths but a huge margin I am sure. Make people libel for the use of their guns by others. This would make many think twice about having extensive arsenals in their homes, if they have relatives, children etc who may not be mentally well balanced. Pam, I don't know your situation but I suspect that thought crossed your mind a time or two.

Next require a two week waiting period to buy a gun. Require mandatory gun safety training, paid for by the purchaser. Regulate all gun shows and gun show purchases just like sales from gun stores.

These few and really fairly simple steps would put this country on the right path to getting this under control. It will not really impact the 2nd Amendment at all, but of course the gun manufactures and their NRA lackys will scream bloody murder.

20121218-04 15:05 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

I have grown to love tilefish since the cafeteria first introduced me to it. I had seen it - the whole fish - in markets before, but never had it. It's a beautiful dense, rich, large-flaked flesh with a sweet mild flavor, and Chef Kelli laid out a lovely big filet of it over a generous heap of *haricots verts* with sweet green English peas and baby portabellae and roasted potatoes, topped with fresh parsley flakes and a delicious, tangy lemon vinaigrette. A most delicious lunch, of just the sort (fish and veggies) I'd love to eat every day:



Texas Tilefish, Roasted Potatoes, Peas, HVerts, and Tiny Portabella

20121218-08

23:56

Tom

Photo: Go Out & Enjoy Nature #8



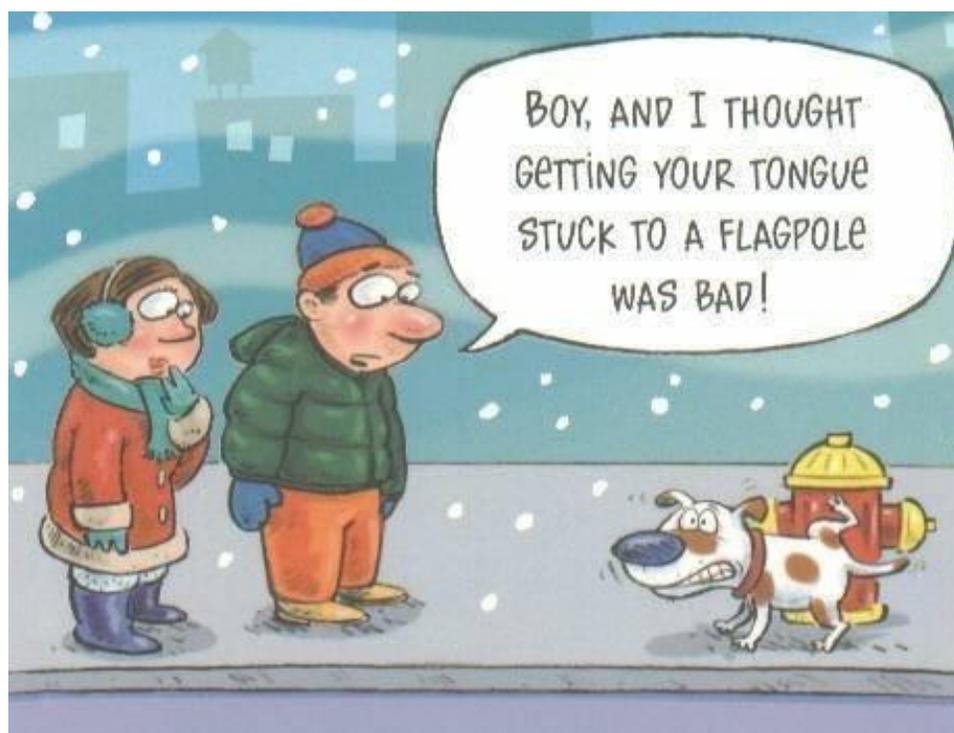
20121218-09

23:57

SteveB

Photo: Cats Imitating Art #5 (Mary Cassatt, *Breakfast in Bed*, 1897)





http://twosideddivinity.blogspot.com/2011_02_01_archive.html



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

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