



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

NOVEMBER, 2012 NEWSLETTERS

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES			
(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS			
<u>20121105-00</u>		SteveB	Even Brats Are Tired of It All by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("A Crying Toddler Viral Video Reflects Cranky, Exhausting Election")
<u>20121104-02</u>	06:40	MarthaH	"Hyper-Partisan Politics Stymies Americans"
<u>20121104-04</u>	10:13	Art	Fw: Couple of Good Ones
<u>20121104-05</u>	15:24	SteveB	"The Coming Post-Election GOP Freak Out"
<u>20121104-07</u>	19:17	SandyI	"The Morning After the Morning After"
<u>20121105-02</u>	09:19	Pam	Re: "The Morning After the Morning After" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #262)
<u>20121105-04</u>	09:34	MarthaH	"Election Day: Five Important Questions That Remain"
<u>20121105-24</u>	20:21	SteveG	Quote: Aristotle on the Power of the Poor / Vote!
<u>20121105-25</u>	20:34	Art	Re: Aristotle on the Power of the Poor (reply to SteveG, above)
<u>20121105-27</u>	21:34	Pam	Re: Aristotle on the Power of the Poor (reply to SteveG, above)
<u>20121105-28</u>	21:35	MarthaH	"Will Election Day Be a 'Perfect Storm?' Four Nightmare Scenarios for What Could Go Wrong"
<u>20121106-01</u>	04:39	MarthaH	"The Road Not Taken"
<u>20121106-04</u>	14:02	SteveB	Re: "The Road Not Taken" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20121106-12</u>	22:57	MarthaH	"Nonvoters: They're Too Busy, Fed Up, or Say Their Vote Doesn't Count"
<u>20121107-01</u>	08:38	SandyI	Sent Only to Those Who Are Happy This Morning
<u>20121107-02</u>	08:53	MarthaH	History Unfolds...
<u>20121107-12</u>	18:38	SteveB	Re: History Unfolds... (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20121107-16</u>	21:02	MarthaH	Re: History Unfolds... (reply to SteveB, above)
<u>20121107-22</u>	23:58	MarthaH	Cartoons: Comic Relief #2
<u>20121108-01</u>	07:05	SteveB	"How a Race in the Balance Went to Obama"
<u>20121108-02</u>	07:32	MarthaH	"Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught"
<u>20121108-06</u>	11:35	Art	Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20121108-07</u>	11:40	Pam	Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to MarthaH & Art, above)
<u>20121108-11</u>	16:08	SandyI	Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to all, above)
<u>20121108-03</u>	07:38	MarthaH	"Money Can't Buy Happiness, or an Election"
<u>20121108-18</u>	23:58	MarthaH	Cartoon: Comic Relief #3
<u>20121109-10</u>	19:21	Art	Graphic: How the Best & Worst Educated States Voted
<u>20121110-01</u>	07:27	MarthaH	"Mom Names Twins after Obama, Romney (Mitt Was No. 2)"
<u>20121110-02</u>	08:29	MarthaH	Cartoons: Truths
<u>20121110-04</u>	09:15	Pam	Re: Cartoons: Truths (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20121110-05</u>	10:19	Art	Re: Cartoons: Truths (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20121111-01</u>	00:15	SteveG	"Vigo County, Indiana, Is Almost Always Right at Picking the President. Here's Why."
<u>20121111-13</u>	23:58	MarthaH	Cartoon: Comic Relief #4
BARACK OBAMA			
<u>20121031-10</u>	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphics: You've Been Warned #4
<u>20121101-22</u>	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #5

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20121104-12	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #6
20121105-31	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #7
20121101-18	22:45	Tom	"Was Obama Wearing an Earpiece During the Third Debate?"
20121101-19	23:03	SteveB	Re: "Was Obama Wearing an Earpiece During the Third Debate?" (reply to Tom, above)
20121104-08	19:20	Tom	Graphic: Penn State T-Shirt
20121107-00		SteveB	O! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Barack Obama' Acceptance Speech after Winning the 2012 U.S. Federal Election")
20121106-03	13:26	SteveG	"25 Reasons from 25 People Who Are Voting Obama"
20121117-01	07:45	MarthaH	"No, It's Not Christians' Fault Obama Won"
20121119-03	04:15	Tom	Cartoon: White House Toilet
20121125-01	06:12	SteveB	"Rejecting President Obama"
20121126-01	07:25	SteveB	"The Myth of the Obama Cave-In"
MITT ROMNEY			
20121101-00		Art	Get Out and Vote! by Art ("A Vote for the Future or for the Past?" & "Mass Knows Mitt Romney")
20121101-07	11:38	Alex	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #260)
20121101-11	18:59	SteveB	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)
20121101-13	20:08	Alex	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to SteveB, above)
20121101-15	20:31	SteveB	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)
20121102-01	11:44	Alex	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #261)
20121103-01	07:12	SteveB	Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)
20121101-06	11:10	Pam	The Polls! The WAIT! (Re: Get Out and Vote!, reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #260)
20121102-00		SteveB	Mitt's Lies Slapped Down! (Again!) by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Romney Caught Trying to Swiftboat Obama on the Auto Rescue")
20121106-00		SteveB	R.I.P., Mittens! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney's Campaign Insults Voters" & "R.I.P., Mitt Romney")
20121105-15	15:50	SteveB	"Why Romney Is Unfit for the Presidency"
20121106-06	17:53	SteveB	"Why I Voted for Mitt Romney"
20121106-07	18:15	Pam	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121106-08	18:38	SteveB	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to Pam, above)
20121106-09	18:42	Pam	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121106-10	19:00	SteveB	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to Pam, above)
20121107-04	10:34	Pam	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #264)
20121106-13	23:04	MarthaH	Cartoon: Comic Relief #1
20121108-00		SteveB	The Zombie Sagas, Part 1: Love Among the 47% by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Why Mitt Romney Lost")
20121109-00		SteveB	The Zombie Sagas, Part 2: The Disconnect from Reality by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Will Rove Still Be Boss?" & "Romneyworld Reckoning Begins")
20121112-00		SteveB	The Zombie Sagas, Part 3: 'Avalanche on Bullshit Mountain' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Republican Party Needs to Ditch Fox News If It Wants to Win" & "Obama's Critics, Repudiated at Last")
20121112-01	08:54	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Had Every Chance to Win—But He Blew It"
20121116-00		FotM	ROMNEY'S 'GIFTS' GAFFE by Friends of the Middle
20121115-03	13:43	SteveB	"The Final Insult: Mitt Romney's Clueless Gift Gaffe"
20121115-04	13:43	SteveB	"Mitt Romney: Obama Won with 'Gifts' to Blacks, Hispanics, Young Voters"
20121115-05	14:05	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Campaign Did Not Offer Specifics, Say Top Republicans"
20121115-09	21:18	MarthaH	"RNC Report Suggests Other Reasons Why Romney Lost"

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20121120-01	10:11	SteveB	Photo: "Mitt Romney Pumps Gas"
20121120-02	11:18	Art	"Ten Females Who Cost Mitt Romney the Presidency"
(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE			
20121102-02	13:37	Charles	Re: FotM Newsletter #261 (rely to all)
20121102-03	14:32	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #261 (reply to Charles, above)
20121108-10	14:58	Tom	Cartoon: Democrats
20121109-03	12:14	Art	Quote: Charles Bukowski on Intelligent Doubt vs. Stupid Confidence
20121109-04	15:28	Ron	Re: FotM Newsletter #266
20121109-06	16:17	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above)
20121109-07	17:35	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above) & "An Inside Look Behind Romney's Loss: An Epic Failure of Its Orca Big-Data 'App'" & Video: "Frum: Republicans Lied to by 'Conservative Entertainment Complex'"
20121109-08	18:18	Ron	Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to SteveB, above)
20121109-11	19:55	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above)
20121112-02	09:04	Thomas	Re: FotM Newsletter #267
20121112-03	09:10	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #267 (reply to Thomas, above)
20121113-02	11:35	Art	Re: Thomas (FotM Newsletter #268)
20121113-04	12:51	SteveB	Re: Thomas (reply to Art, above)
20121113-08	15:18	Thomas	Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to SteveB)
20121113-11	17:08	Pam	Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to Thomas, above)
20121113-15	19:54	Art	Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)
20121113-16	20:09	Beth	Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to all, above)
20121119-02	04:04	Tom	Cartoon: Food Stamp Program
20121119-05	04:30	Tom	Graphic: "Personal Responsibility, Self-Reliance, Self-Worth & Ethics Are of No Value in a Progressive America"
(04) DEMOCRATS			
(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE			
20121113-00		SandyI & MarthaH	Securing the High Ground by SandyI & MarthaH ("GOP's Red America Forced to Rethink What It Knows about the Country")
20121112-05	11:40	Pam	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)
20121112-06	12:34	SteveB	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)
20121112-07	14:18	SandyI	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)
20121112-14	18:44	Art	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)
20121113-03	12:24	Bill	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI & MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #268)
20121113-05	12:52	SteveB	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to Bill, above)
20121113-06	13:14	Bill	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)
20121113-07	13:54	SteveB	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to Bill, above)
20121113-10	15:58	Bill	Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)
20121113-12	18:47	SteveG	Fw: Enlightened States of America?
20121113-13	18:54	Pam	Re: Enlightened States of America? (reply to SteveG, above)
20121113-14	19:45	Art	Re: Enlightened States of America? (reply to SteveG, above)
20121119-09	14:17	SteveG	"An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore"
20121119-12	15:23	Pam	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121119-13	16:15	SteveB	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)

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20121119-16	18:22	SteveG	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121119-18	19:53	SteveB	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121122-04	15:47	SteveG	"A Thanksgiving Day Note" (from Michael Moore)
20121126-00		SteveB	Now, Let's Get Something Done! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Won Direction")
(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS			
20121101-01	07:35	MarthaH	"Election Winner Gets...a Mess"
20121101-03	08:31	Pam	Re: "Election Winner Gets...a Mess" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121105-05	09:40	MarthaH	Quotes: Political
20121107-03	10:30	MarthaH	An Open Letter to Sen. Mitch McConnell
20121107-05	10:47	Pam	Re: An Open Letter to Sen. Mitch McConnell (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121107-06	11:55	SandyI	Re: An Open Letter to Sen. Mitch McConnell (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121107-07	12:42	Art	Re: An Open Letter to Sen. Mitch McConnell (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121108-04	07:51	MarthaH	"Where Do You Fit? The Political Party Quiz"
20121128-01	13:46	MarthaH	An Open Letter to a Senator
(07) REPUBLICANS			
20121113-01	07:59	MarthaH	"The GOP Is No Party for Blacks, Latinos and Gays"
20121115-02	13:18	SteveB	Graphics: Republican Jesus
20121115-08	18:40	Art	"A Few Words for My Republican Friends"
20121116-01	11:01	Pam	Re: "A Few Words for My Republican Friends" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #271)
20121119-14	17:03	MarthaH	"Lee Atwater and the GOP's Race Problem" (w/ Video)
20121119-15	18:18	SteveG	"10 Reasons the GOP Is Really Messed Up -- According to Republicans"
20121120-04	14:05	SteveB	"How Allen West Blew It"
20121122-00		SteveB	Rubbing It In One More Time by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Republicans Seek Sweet '16 Solutions")
20121121-04	10:19	MarthaH	The House Republicans vs. Susan Rice
20121125-02	06:51	SteveB	"How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" & "Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points & CIA, FBI Signed Off"
20121125-04	16:46	MarthaH	"Republicans Face Unexpected Challenges in Coastal South Amid Shrinking White Vote"
20121127-09	15:31	SteveB	Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote'
20121127-10	15:56	Ben	Re: Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote' (reply to SteveB, above)
20121127-11	16:09	Art	Re: Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote' (reply to SteveB, above)
20121130-00		SteveB	Is the GOP Lost? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The GOP Faces Years in the Wilderness after 2012 Election Losses")
(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS			
20121103-02	07:42	MarthaH	"Outside Spending High in Final Weeks of Indiana's Senate Race between Richard Mourdock, Joe Donnelly"
20121103-03	08:07	MarthaH	"Murdock Abortion Quote Defining Indiana Senate Race"
20121107-13	19:30	SteveG	Good News from Florida
20121107-14	19:30	SteveB	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveG, above)
20121107-15	20:03	SteveG	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveB, above)

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20121108-05	10:21	Pam	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #265)
20121108-09	12:26	Art	Republican Gerrymandering & FotM Newsletter #265
(09) THIRD PARTIES			
(10) CONSTITUTION			
20121115-00		SteveB	Conservatives' War on the Constitution by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Drudge Goes All In with 'Secession' Meme as the Republican War on the Constitution Escalates")
(11) CORRUPTION			
20121119-20	23:17	SteveG	"Maryland, Rutgers Cash In on Their Incompetence with Move to Big Ten"
20121120-03	11:22	Art	Re: "Maryland, Rutgers Cash In on Their Incompetence with Move to Big Ten" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #273)
20121127-01	07:12	SteveB	"The Infernal Machine: From Powder to Dust"
(12) EDUCATION			
20121031-04	20:51	Tom	Quote: Will Rogers on Prohibition & Learning
20121104-01	06:21	MarthaH	"University's Mock Campaign Reveals Anxiety of Real One"
20121105-21	18:46	Ben	"Shit My Students Write"
(13) ELECTION REFORM			
20121105-01	07:27	MarthaH	"Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions"
20121105-03	09:26	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121105-18	16:24	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
20121105-07	11:48	SteveG	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to all, above)
20121105-08	12:27	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121105-09	12:53	SteveG	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
20121105-14	15:40	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121105-20	17:23	SteveG	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121105-10	13:13	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121105-16	16:12	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
20121105-11	13:22	Art	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
20121105-12	13:44	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Art, above)
20121105-17	16:17	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Art, above)
20121106-02	08:04	MarthaH	"See Which Industries Funneled the Most Cash into Presidential Race"

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20121108-13	21:11	MarthaH	Cartoon: Florida Does It Again! (We Need Election Reform!)
20121111-09	23:15	SteveG	"The BIG Donors"
20121125-05	17:37	SteveG	"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned"
20121126-07	16:19	Art	"How Political Campaign Spending Brought Down the Roman Republic"
20121128-00		SteveB	A Shady Tale from Sunny Florida by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Jim Greer, Ex-Florida GOP Chair, Claims Republican Voting Laws Focused on Suppression, Racism")
20121126-03	14:38	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell the SEC: Don't Let Corporations Hide Their Political Spending!"
20121127-05	10:59	Pam	Re: "How Political Campaign Spending Brought Down the Roman Republic" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #278)
(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH			
(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME			
20121112-04	11:30	Ben	"PlaceRaider: Virtual Theft in Physical Spaces with Smartphones"
20121121-01	00:38	Tom	Photo: It's What's for Dinner
20121128-02	14:10	Tom	"You'll Shoot Your Eye Out, Kid!"
20121128-07	16:57	SteveG	"Private Prison Company Used in Drug Raids at Public High School"
20121128-11	22:57	Tom	Beautiful Swords
20121129-01	12:29	Tom	"The Danger of International Internet Regulation"
20121129-06	21:53	Tom	"Presidential Memorandum — National Insider Threat Policy & Minimum Standards for Executive Branch Insider Threat Programs"
(16) IMMIGRATION			
20121106-11	21:54	Tom	Fw: Follow Immigration Election Results Tonight
20121111-02	08:04	MarthaH	"Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us"
20121111-03	10:05	SteveB	Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20121111-04	10:45	MarthaH	Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121111-05	11:41	SteveB	Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)
(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH			
(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH			
20121031-03	17:55	Tom	Fw: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger
20121101-09	18:21	Tom	Re: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger (FotM Newsletter #260) (to SteveB)
20121101-10	18:39	SteveB	Re: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger (reply to Tom, above)
(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS			
(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT			
(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT			
(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
(23) TAXES			
20121101-12	19:39	SteveB	"Congressional Research Service Report on Tax Cuts for Wealthy Suppressed by GOP" & "Taxes & the Economy: An Economic Analysis of the Top Tax Rates Since 1945"
20121111-06	14:10	SteveB	"Bill Kristol: 'It Won't Kill The Country If We Raise Taxes' On Millionaires"
20121121-02	07:05	SteveG	"Sen. Murray: Dems Would Let Bush-Era Rates Expire before Taking 'Unfair Deal'"
20121126-05	15:09	SteveG	"Grover Norquist Warns Dems, GOP: Anti-Tax Pledge Will Hold"
20121126-08	17:13	SteveG	Fw: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge!
20121126-09	19:58	Art	Re: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge! (reply to SteveG, above)
20121126-10	20:30	SteveG	Re: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge! (reply to Art, above) & "About Americans for Tax Reform"
20121127-04	10:49	Art	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #278)
20121127-06	12:04	SteveG	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to Art, above)
20121127-07	12:09	Art	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121127-13	18:37	SteveG	"Grover Norquist's Budget Is Largely Financed by Just Two Billionaire-Backed Nonprofits"
20121127-14	18:42	Pam	Re: "Grover Norquist's Budget Is Largely Financed by Just Two Billionaire-Backed Nonprofits" (reply to SteveG, above)
(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS			
(25) WAR / SECURITY			
20121101-16	20:56	Tom	"Team X-T.R.E.M.E. Warrior INDOC Class 003-12"
20121101-17	21:43	SteveB	Re: "Team X-T.R.E.M.E. Warrior INDOC Class 003-12" (reply to Tom, above)
20121102-05	16:13	Art	"In Benghazi Timeline, CIA Errors but No Evidence of Conspiracy"
20121127-12	16:27	SteveB	"GOP Senators Criticize Susan Rice after Meeting"
20121127-16	19:25	SteveB	More Benghazi: "Fox Says Ricks Apologized, Ricks Disputes"
20121128-09	19:11	SteveB	Benghazi: Too Many Damned Lies (reply to GOPUSA, below)
20121128-10	19:48	Art	Re: Benghazi: Too Many Damned Lies (reply to SteveB, above)
20121104-09	21:13	Tom	"Victoria's Secret Saves Stricken New York National Guardsmen"
20121107-10	13:44	Tom	Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run for the Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial
20121109-09	18:51	SteveG	"General David Petraeus: Soldier, Scholar, Statesman"
20121110-03	09:11	Pam	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (to Art, re. SteveG, FotM Newsletter #266)
20121110-07	14:37	Bill	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)
20121110-08	14:49	Dennis	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)
20121110-12	15:39	Pam	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Dennis, above)
20121110-15	16:36	Bill	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Dennis, above)
20121110-09	15:11	SteveG	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)
20121110-17	16:48	Bill	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to SteveG, above)
20121110-11	15:36	Pam	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)
20121110-16	16:40	Bill	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)
20121110-18	17:05	Pam	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)
20121110-19	17:14	SteveG	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)
20121110-13	16:16	Art	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)
20121110-14	16:25	Pam	Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Art, above)

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20121113-17	23:26	Tom	"Nation Horrified to Learn about War in Afghanistan While Reading Up on Petraeus Sex Scandal"
20121118-03	09:14	SteveB	"Petraeus Scandal Puts Four-Star General Lifestyle under Scrutiny"
20121120-00		SteveB	The Mistress Is a Mentee by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("General David Petraeus's Rules for Living")
20121112-09	17:28	SteveG	CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis?
20121112-10	17:32	Pam	Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to SteveG, above)
20121112-11	17:48	SteveG	Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to Pam, above)
20121112-12	17:55	Pam	Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to SteveG, above)
20121112-13	18:41	Art	Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to Pam, above)
20121112-15	19:11	SteveB	Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to all, above)
20121119-01	03:51	Tom	Video: "Call Me Maybe - Troops vs. Cheerleaders"
20121119-06	05:28	Tom	"Veterans Killed in Texas Train Crash Survived Gunshots, IEDs, Grenades in Iraq, Afghanistan"
20121127-19	21:23	Tom	Video: "Bolivian Kick Boxer Meets U.S. Marine"
(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC			
20121111-07	19:27	SteveG	Book: <i>America, But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto</i>
20121111-08	21:37	Pam	Re: Book: <i>America, But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto</i> (reply to SteveG, above)
20121127-00		SteveB	Stones Play London by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Rolling Stones Celebrate 50 Years with Sold-Out O2 Show")
(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS			
20121108-12	20:30	SteveG	"What the Election Means for the Fiscal Showdown"
20121114-00		SteveB	The Death of Supply-Side Economics by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How Mitt Romney Finally Killed Reaganomics")
20121116-06	20:48	SteveG	"So What the Heck Is That 'Fiscal Cliff' Thing All About, Anyway?"
20121117-02	10:55	Art	Re: "So What the Heck Is That 'Fiscal Cliff' Thing All About, Anyway?" (reply to SteveG, above)
(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH & POOR			
20121105-26	21:20	SteveG	Graphic: "Takers"
20121119-00		Pam & SteveG	Rich & Poor by Pam McRae & SteveG ("5 Ways Most Americans Are Blind to How Their Country Is Stacked for the Wealthy")
20121123-02	12:54	Art	"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged"
20121124-02	10:07	SteveB	"We're Living the Dream; We Just Don't Realize It"
20121125-06	17:42	SteveG	"Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy"
20121129-00		SteveB	A Jump Off the Alleged 'Cliff' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The 'Fiscal Cliff' Deal Is Wall Street's Latest Scam")
(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY			
20121031-08	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #13
20121101-20	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #14
20121104-10	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #15
20121105-29	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #16
20121106-14	23:58	Marci	Photo: Cool Photos #1 (70 Lightning Strikes)
20121107-19	23:55	Marci	Cool Photos #2 (The Edge of Earth — Bunda Cliffs, Australia)
20121108-15	23:55	Marci	Cool Photos #3 (Up High)

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20121111-10	23:55	Marci	Cool Photos #4 (The Stunning Glass-Winged Butterfly)
20121112-16	23:56	Marci	Cool Photos #5 (Lightning Show at the Grand Canyon)
20121113-18	23:57	Marci	Cool Photos #6 (The Hamilton Pool Nature Preserve in Texas)
20121114-05	23:57	Marci	Cool Photos #7 (Autumn in the Adirondacks)
20121115-10	23:57	Marci	Cool Photos #8 (European Beech Trees of Mariemont, Belgium)
20121118-11	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #9 (The Inhabited Volcanic Island of Aogashima)
20121119-21	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #10 (The Great Grey Owl)
20121120-05	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #11 (The Miniature Northern Saw-whet Owl)
20121121-13	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #12 (The Cloud Covered Island of Litla Dimun)
20121122-09	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #13 (The Busiest Train Ever)
20121125-07	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #14 (The Blue Lagoon , Ecuador)
20121126-11	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #15 (The U.S./Mexico Border)
20121127-21	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #16 (Chicago's Lake Shore Drive, Feb. 2, 2011)
20121128-12	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #17 (Awww Yeah, Flowers!)
20121129-07	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #18 (Rago National Park, Norway)
20121031-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Spectacular 9-Gigapixel Image of the Central Milky Way Galaxy
20121101-23	23:59	SteveB	Photo: The President Takes Charge
20121104-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Bronco
20121105-32	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Liberty Bell, Washington
20121106-15	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Explosion!
20121107-23	23:59	SteveB	Photo: La Paz, Bolivia
20121108-19	23:59	SteveB	Photo: End of the Road
20121111-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>Lambada</i> : Set the Night on Fire
20121112-19	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Toucan
20121113-20	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>Sonso</i> & More Local Food at the <i>Rio Piraí Cabañas</i> (Santa Cruz, Bolivia)
20121114-07	23:59	SteveB	Photo: The Tobago Cays (Looking toward Mayreau)
20121115-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Titi (Bolivia)
20121118-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Mississippi River near St. Louis
20121120-06	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Miami Beach, Florida
20121121-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Russia from Alaska (Sarah Palin's Foreign Policy Credential)
20121122-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>The First Thanksgiving 1621</i> (by J.L.G. Ferris, 1913)
20121125-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sunrise on the Georgia Coast
20121126-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>Landscape with a Girl Skipping Rope</i> (by Salvador Dali, 1936)
20121127-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Fireworks
20121128-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Beach Rock on Green Island, Taiwan
20121129-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wilderness Journey
(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER			
20121107-17	21:47	SteveG	Energy Independence?
20121107-18	22:24	SteveB	Re: Energy Independence? (reply to SteveG, above)
20121108-08	11:43	Art	Re: Energy Independence? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #265)
20121118-04	13:30	SteveB	"Driving America's 85 MPH Toll Road before the Fun Gets Old"
20121119-17	18:55	SteveB	Fw: The Dawn of Our Homegrown Energy Revolution: Our New Energy Future Can Help Solve Our Debt and Fiscal Crisis (from the USCC)
(31) FOOD / DRINK			
20121102-04	14:42	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Poultry Lunch at Apple
20121105-13	15:26	Ben	Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple
20121106-05	14:47	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121109-05	15:56	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

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20121112-08	15:24	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121113-09	15:37	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121114-01	15:53	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121115-06	15:10	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Beef Lunch at Apple
20121116-05	15:07	Ben	Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple
20121119-11	15:02	Ben	Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple
20121126-06	15:28	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121127-08	14:48	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121128-06	15:20	Ben	Photos: Today's Seafood Lunch & Dinner at Apple
20121129-02	16:15	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121107-09	13:02	Charis	"High Ambition & Visions of Andean Haute Cuisine"
20121127-18	20:44	SteveB	Fw: Today is National Bavarian Cream Pie Day!
(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE			
20121031-02	11:39	SteveB	October, 2012 Friends of the Middle eBook Announcement
20121101-04	08:55	SteveB	Afterwards... (to Clark)
20121101-05	09:34	Clark	Re: Afterwards... (reply to SteveB, above)
20121101-14	20:15	SteveB	Re: Afterwards... (reply to Clark, above)
20121104-03	10:06	SteveB	Life with Marci
20121104-06	18:51	Tom	Joke: The Kind-Hearted Husband
20121121-05	13:31	Art	Happy Thanksgiving!
20121121-08	16:52	SteveB	Re: Happy Thanksgiving! (reply to Art, above & to all)
20121121-09	17:20	Pam	Re: Happy Thanksgiving! (reply to Art, above & to all)
20121126-04	14:44	Bill	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (to all)
20121127-02	05:25	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #278)
20121127-03	07:31	Bill	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to SteveB, above)
20121127-15	18:59	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to Bill, above) & Bolivia Bakery Biz
20121127-17	20:24	Bill	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to SteveB, above) & Bolivia Bakery Biz
(33) FUN / DIVERSION			
20121031-05	21:04	Tom	Graphic: Stupid People
20121031-06	21:54	Tom	There, I Fixed It! #1 (Video: "Guy Makes 14-Foot AT-ST Walker as a Halloween Costume")
20121107-20	23:56	Tom	There, I Fixed It! #2 (Woody Tires)
20121108-16	23:56	Tom	There, I Fixed It! #3 (Vacuum Leaf Blower)
20121111-11	23:56	Tom	There, I Fixed It! #4 (The Mobile Throne)
20121112-17	23:57	Tom	There, I Fixed It! #5 (Disc Player Enclosure)
20121119-19	21:56	Tom	There, I Fixed It Again!
20121105-06	10:05	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #1 (Washer Toilet)
20121107-21	23:57	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #2 (Iron Grill)
20121108-17	23:57	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #3 (Useful Coat-Hanger)
20121111-12	23:57	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #4 (Quick Draw Slipper)
20121112-18	23:58	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #5 (Car Door Handle)
20121113-19	23:58	GaryF	Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #6 (Impromptu Mixer)
20121114-06	23:58	GaryF	Photos: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #7 (Quicker Picker-Upper & Safety First!)
20121115-11	23:58	GaryF	Photos: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #8 (New Bike & D.I.Y. Toilet)
20121107-11	16:39	Dennis	"To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II"
20121110-06	13:16	SteveG	Re: "To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #265)

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20121110-10	15:33	Pam	Re: "To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #265)
20121114-02	16:53	SteveB	"Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor"
20121114-03	17:13	Ben	Re: "Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121114-04	18:02	SteveB	Re: "Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor" (reply to Ben, above)
20121115-01	07:19	MarthaH	Re: "Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #270)
20121115-07	17:29	SteveB	Great Cat Videos!
20121121-11	19:53	Art	Fw: Professional Predictions from Experts
20121126-02	13:44	Marci	I Don't Understand This Joke...
(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE			
20121103-04	17:56	MarthaH	"From Texas to Vermont, State Elections Decide Health Care's Future"
20121105-19	17:18	SteveG	Health Insurance & Voter Registration
20121105-22	19:17	Pam	Re: Health Insurance & Voter Registration (reply to SteveG, above)
20121105-23	19:59	SteveG	Re: Health Insurance & Voter Registration (reply to Pam, above)
20121121-12	21:40	SteveB	"Study Finds Mammograms Lead to Unneeded Treatment"
20121122-06	17:42	SteveB	"Big Sugar's Sweet Little Lies"
20121124-01	05:54	SteveB	"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (to Pam)
20121125-03	14:30	Pam	Re: "Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121127-20	23:26	Tom	Cartoon: Doctor Becomes Walmart Greeter because of Obamacare
20121128-03	14:13	Tom	Graphic: Obamacare Is a Tax...
(35) HISTORY			
20121108-14	23:11	SandyI	"Lincoln Only Won 39.8 percent of the Popular Vote"
20121109-01	09:46	Pam	Re: "Lincoln Only Won 39.8 Percent of the Popular Vote" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #266)
20121109-02	12:10	Art	Re: "Lincoln Only Won 39.8 Percent of the Popular Vote" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #266)
20121123-01	06:21	MarthaH	"The Ghosts of Muranow: A Journalist's Mission to Illuminate Poland's Haunted Past"
(36) JOBS / LABOR			
20121116-03	13:36	GaryC	Hostess
20121116-04	13:39	SteveB	Re: Hostess (reply to GaryC, above)
20121117-03	14:07	SteveB	"Petition Wants Obama to Save Twinkies"
20121118-02	09:02	SteveB	"R.I.P., Twinkies"
20121119-08	11:07	Pam	Re: "R.I.P., Twinkies" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #272)
20121118-05	17:38	Art	"Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay"
20121118-08	21:32	SteveG	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Art, above)
20121118-06	20:02	Pam	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Art, above)
20121118-07	20:14	Art	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Pam, above)

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20121118-09	21:37	SteveG	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Pam, above)
20121118-10	22:25	SteveG	Graphic: Hostess Brands Debt
20121119-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Twinkies & Hostess Cupcake
20121128-08	19:10	MarthaH	Cartoon: Twinkies
20121123-00		SteveB	The Vampire That Is Walmart by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Why You Shouldn't Shop at Walmart on Black Friday")
(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY			
20121107-08	13:31	Art	Graphic: "The Love I Left Behind"
(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA			
20121031-09	23:57	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #8
20121101-21	23:57	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #9
20121104-11	23:57	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #10
20121105-30	23:57	Dennis	Graphics: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #11
20121119-04	04:20	Tom	Quote: George Orwell on Journalism
20121121-00		SteveB	A Truly Evil Though Minor Man by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("I Got Duped by Glenn Beck!")
20121122-03	13:33	SteveG	"How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP"
20121122-05	17:16	Art	Re: "How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP" (reply to SteveG, above)
20121122-08	20:59	Bill	Re: "How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP" (reply to Art & SteveG, above)
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)
(39) MISC. REALITY			
20121031-01	11:08	Pam	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #259)
20121031-07	23:03	Ken	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Pam, above)
20121101-02	08:26	Pam	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Ken, FotM Newsletter #260)
20121101-08	11:53	Pam	How Stupid Do We Have to Get?
(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.			
(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES			
20121116-02	12:48	Ben	Fw: Petition: For Austin to Secede from Texas
20121119-10	14:22	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Macy's vs. Medicare!
(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY			
20121122-01	06:56	MarthaH	Cartoon: Global Warming
20121122-02	09:45	MarthaH	Video: <i>My Life as a Turkey</i>
20121128-05	14:57	Art	"New Scientist Special Report: 7 Reasons Climate Change Is 'Even Worse Than We Thought'"

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(43) U.S.A., THE			
20121118-01	07:50	MarthaH	"Low Mississippi River Water Levels May Halt Barges"
20121122-07	18:56	SteveG	"Watch: The Disenfranchisement of Native Americans Continues Today"
(44) WORLD, THE			
20121119-07	11:04	SteveG	"Hard Questions, Tough Answers with Yossi Alpher: The War in Gaza"
20121121-03	10:16	SteveB	Bolivia's National Census Day
20121121-06	13:40	Ben	Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, above)
20121121-07	16:04	SteveB	Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to Pam & Ben, above)
20121121-10	17:25	Pam	Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, above)
20121128-04	14:26	Trudy	Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #275)



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #260 — NOV. 1, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

Get Out and Vote!

(posted by Art, Nov. 1, 2012)

The below article from today's *Washington Post* pretty well captures the lineup for the coming election. I think most on both sides would agree. What is also interesting is the line up for scientists and corporate leaders. You can reach your own conclusions as to what that indicates. Guess the question for each of us is: which column would you rather be counted in?

The second reference was sent by a friend and is a collection of comments on what the citizens of Massachusetts think about Governor Romney's reign. What is a little surprising is that the Romney camp is apparently unable to come up with anything similar. From his side, we have only Romney's self-description of how things went.

Get out and vote!



"A Vote for the Future or for the Past?" by Harold Meyerson, *The Washington Post*

Oct. 30, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/harold-meyerson-electing-the-future-or-the-past/2012/10/30/7dd06708-2200-11e2-8448-81b1ce7d6978_story.html)

The 2012 presidential election is fundamentally a contest between our future and our past. Barack Obama's America is the America that will be; Mitt Romney's is the America that was. And the distance between the two is greater, perhaps, than in any election we've had since the Civil War.

The demographic bases of the rival coalitions couldn't be more different. Monday's poll from the Pew Research Center is just the latest to show Obama with a decisive lead (in this case, 21 percentage points) among voters younger than 30. Obama's margin declines to six points among voters ages 30 through 44, and he breaks even with Romney among voters ages 45 through 64. Romney's home turf is voters 65 and older; among those, he leads Obama by 19 points.

Age polarization is not specific to the presidential election. On a host of issues, as diverse as gay and lesbian rights and skepticism about the merits of capitalism, polls have shown that younger voters are consistently more tolerant and well to the left of their elders.

Nor is age the only metric through which we can differentiate our future from our past. The other is race, as the nation grows more racially diverse (or, more bluntly, less white) each year. While the 2000 Census put whites' share of the U.S. population at 69.1 percent, that share had declined to 63.7 percent in the 2010 Census, while the proportion of Hispanics rose from 12.5 percent to 16.3 percent. In raw numbers, total white population increased by just 1.2 percent during the decade, while the African American segment grew by 12.3 percent and the Hispanic share by 43 percent. Demographers predict that the white share of the U.S. population will fall beneath 50 percent in the 2050 Census.

Rather than trying to establish a foothold among America's growing minorities, however, Romney and the Republicans have decided to forgo an appeal to Hispanic voters by opposing legislation that would grant legal status to undocumented immigrants brought here as children and by backing legislation that effectively requires Hispanics to carry documentation papers in certain states. Republicans seek a majority through winning an ever-higher share of white voters. The Washington Post reported last week that its polling showed the greatest racial gap between the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates since the 1988 election, with Romney favored by 60 percent of white voters and Obama by 80 percent of minority voters (a figure that may prove low, if three-quarters of the Hispanic vote goes to Obama, as some other polls suggest it will). The problem for Republicans, of course, is that the minority vote is a far larger share of the total vote today than it was 24 years ago.

By repeatedly estranging minorities and opposing social policies favored by the young, the Republicans have opted for a King Canute strategy: standing on the shore and commanding the tide to stop. Republicans with an eye toward the future, most notably George W. Bush and Karl Rove, have urged the party to embrace immigration reform, but the base is rabidly anti-immigrant and its antipathy is reinforced daily by talk radio hosts and Fox News chatterers who depict an America under siege by alien forces.

Should Republicans prevail in this election and seek to build a more-than-one-term plurality, they will confront a stark choice: Either Romney must persuade his party to reverse its stance on immigration, or the party must seek to extend the scope of its voter-suppression efforts. Put another way, they must try to either accommodate the future or suppress it.

Accommodation with diversity and modernity, however, is simply not part of the Republican DNA. Today's Republican Party has largely cornered the market on religious fundamentalists, even as the number of GOP scientists has dwindled (a 2009 Pew poll of scientists found that just 6 percent self-identified as Republicans, while 55 percent said they were Democrats). Many of the largest Republican funders come from economic sectors hardly distinguished by significant productivity increases or their contributions to mass prosperity (casino gambling, Wall Street), while Silicon Valley remains more Democratic turf. (By the way, all those messages Republican CEOs have

been sending their employees , predicting layoffs should Obama be reelected? Have any of them promised raises if Romney wins? Just askin'.)

Two Americas are facing off in next week's election. By their makeup, the Democrats are bound to move, if haltingly, into the future, while the Republicans parade proudly into the pre-New Deal past — some of it mythic, lots of it ugly. The differences could not be clearer.

["Mass Knows Mitt Romney" by Various, MassKnowsMitt.com](#)

Oct. 31, 2012, (<http://massknowsmitt.com/>)

Those of us from the Bay State know what kind of leader Mitt Romney really is. If you've ever wondered why Romney is down 20 points in his home state, this is your chance to find out why.

[Romney will never win an election here.](#) (from Judith, Worcester, Oct. 31, 2012)

Mitt took tons of state jobs and moved them overseas – computer tech was a hot job at the time and my husband, who is a carpenter was finishing up a computer programming class as something he might do as a second career. Outsourcing all those was a green light to Mass companies to do the same – no one in his entire class got a job.

He then paid increased fees to maintain his professional licenses and certifications, increased fees for pulling a construction permit, increased fees for inspections.

He slashed basic services mostly for the poor including homeless vets. He cut higher public ed by 25% which crippled community colleges and state universities which served primarily massachusetts residents. His scholarship program that he has gone on and on about amounted to less than \$750.00 dollars, you still paid for books, housing, dining plans. If you were a commuter there were fees. The best thing about Mitt Romney being governor was that he was out of the state most of the time campaigning for president – at our taxpayer expense. He only seemed to come back to state to veto legislation – a record 704 times, unprecedented for any governor in our state, especially for someone who claims to have been so bipartisan. He is not even trying to contest this state because he will never win an election here.

[Any man that dyes his hair, spray paints his tan, and fakes that he likes average people has no business running for President.](#) (from Carol, Weymouth, Oct. 31, 2012)

Romney brags that he was a Republican Governor in a Democratic state but there were three others him. He raised the cost of state college 65%, he cut state funding to schools and was responsible for the Big Dig mess. He was bad for Massachusetts and will be horrible for the country. Any man that dyes his hair, spray paints his tan, and fakes that he likes average people has no business running for President.

[Mitt created a fee on handicapped children.](#) (from Judith, Worcester, Oct. 31, 2012)

We had adopted a Handicapped child from the state. Mitt imposed fees everywhere, but the most heinous was directed toward the disabled. It cost \$100.00 just to keep my daughter verified as mentally retarded.

[Romney told other governors to "amend their Constitutions before it is too late" on marriage equality.](#) (from Graham, Norfolk, Oct. 31, 2012)

Romney carried to an extreme his personal fight against the right of same sex partners to marry. He not only fought for a referendum in Massachusetts but also spent a lot of time trying to influence Governors of other states to "amend their Constitutions before it is too late." He had a right to his personal opinion but not a right to take time

from his day job as Governor to attempt to gain national recognition and support for his aspiration to become President of the US. Small wonder that he is unpopular with a majority of voters in Massachusetts.

[Governor Romney is not a man interested in leading the downtrodden.](#) (from Monica, Arlington, Oct. 31, 2012)

During Governor Romney's term, I attended nearly every meeting of the Governor's Council on Sexual and Domestic Violence. He offered no leadership on the subject violence, which surprised me because he has spoken about his compassion for rape victims and his belief that strong families are the key to America's future. His Lt. Governor, Kerry Healey, deserves some credit for taking the bull by the horns and attempting to apply some modern criminal justice principles to the realm of sexual and domestic violence, but without vocal support from the Governor, her initiatives were only tepid steps. Governor Romney is not a man interested in leading the downtrodden.

[We, as Massachusetts citizens, know Romney will say whatever he thinks will get him what he wants.](#) (from Linda, Cambridge, Oct. 31, 2012)

Romney poured buckets of money into slick ads—like the one in which he wore neatly pressed jeans and pretended to do blue-collar jobs like pitching hay for cows, unloading a fishing boat, and hauling garbage. He was good looking, he pretended to be a moderate, some people felt a little sorry for him after he claimed the Democrats weren't being fair to him and, after all, the state has a history of electing Republican governors.

Every Republican governor in MA before him ran for at least two terms. Romney did not seek re-election in 2006. After all, now he could say that he had served as governor, so we had served his purpose. When asked, he said was he had fulfilled his objectives (like, using us as a platform for a run as president). By November 2006 (two months before he left office), his approval rating in our state stood at 34 percent—that is, 48th out of all U.S. governors.

We, as Massachusetts citizens, know that he'll say and do whatever he thinks will get him what he wants. I beg of all those who read this—please don't give him your vote.

[Romney has no long-term principles.](#) (from Mark, Lexington, Oct. 31, 2012)

When Romney was governor, for him it was all about looking good, or at least doing what he thought would make him look good. He's a poser, who has demonstrated no long-term principles. And he sure didn't create many jobs while he was here, nor did he associate with folks outside the 1%.

[Romney spent most of his time out of state, complaining about how awful our state was.](#) (from Sally, Worcester, Oct. 30, 2012)

He was hardly here. He only used the office so that he could run for President. He spent most of his time out of state, complaining about how awful our state was to try and drum up support for his campaign.

His running mate for governor, Kerry Healy ran for governor herself after Mitt left office. Mitt left her holding the bag and she paid the price. Her campaign went terribly and he was out of the picture.

[Romney managed to spin his short-term job into a fairy tale of success.](#) (from Carey, Boston, Oct. 30, 2012)

I remember when he came in as governor, excited that he was going to do good – he didn't. The Big Dig overruns happened on his watch, and there's video of him calling the whole project "[a political tar baby.](#)" The press has him running for President for 7 years, but in reality it's been 17 years.

It AMAZES me his record in Mass doesn't come up more, it's the one time he had a job relevant to the presidency. Like Sarah Palin he's managed to spin his short-term job into a fairy tale of success.

There are folks that have gag orders from talking about Mitt.

[Romney accepted a \\$25,000 statue as a gift says former Bain staffer.](#) (from Bobbi, Cambridge, Oct. 29, 2012)

While working at Bain Capital from 2002 to 2003 as support staff, my colleagues and I were instructed to deliver a statue appraised for \$25,000 as a gift to Governor Romney from his partners at Bain Capital. In 2002, I saw a fax from the NY Fed Chairman inviting one of Mr. Romney's chief deputies at Bain to lunch to discuss ways to shape the direction of the economy.

This struck me as Bain having back door access to power that others did not have. While he was Governor, it was not unusual to see Mr. Romney at Bain Capital huddling with his advisors. This, too, was a Bain back channel to power and influence that others did not have.

[Romney's bait and switch on tuition. Fees skyrocket.](#) (from Trudy, Westfield, Oct. 29, 2012)

Romney says those who pass the high-stakes test at a certain rate get free tuition at state institutions, it's really almost nothing. It's the fees that are the killer.

[Mitt Romney made us 47th in job growth.](#) (from Carla, Pittsfield, Oct. 28, 2012)

Mitt Romney claims he was a job creator but during his term as governor MA was number 47 in job growth. His company, Bain Capital, bought KayBee Toys, loaded them with debt and then sold them. Several hundred people lost well paying jobs. The company had been making money but not enough for Mitt. Bain also owned Bright Horizons Day Care in our local hospital but its own employees could not afford to send their children there.

[Romney made our classrooms into test prep factories.](#) (from Trudy, Westfield, Oct. 27, 2012)

I work in Higher Education. Romney slashed budgets and raised fees on students. Romney claims that Mass. students were first in education. While they may score high on achievement tests, they are not college ready as a result of measures pushed by Romney. Classrooms are simply test prep factories. Simply put – his education policy was a disaster and we are still feeling the effects.

[My annual property taxes were \\$4400 per year before Romney took office and \\$6400 after he left office.](#) (from Robert, Winthrop, Oct. 26, 2012)

I am a retired school teacher who resides in Winthrop, MA. Governor Romney slashed state aid to the cities and towns leaving them with two options: Lay off municipal workers or raise local taxes. During his 4 years as governor, less affluent towns were forced to lay off police, firemen, teachers, and other municipal workers to make up the budget shortfall created Governor Romney's policies. Our town was among them. We were down to the bare bones budget until our we voted on and passed a 6.2 million dollar override. My annual property taxes were \$4400 per year before Romney took office and \$6400 after he left office. When Governor Romney says he cut taxes only tells half the story. The state taxes were cut, but the local taxes increased more. Many local and services were cut. Many new state fees were introduced. The net result was the average homeowner of our commonwealth was paying more for fewer services. Governor Romney is a master of this shell game. Governor Romney is a hypocrite as well. Several times he tried to pass pension reform and cited the abuse of the pension system as reasons for reform. Just before he left office he tried to slip a \$125,000 per year pension to his campaign manager Eric Ferhsten. The Boston Globe uncovered his scheme and made it public. His poor performance as Governor is why Massachusetts will vote 2-1 against Governor Romney for President.

[Mass knows Mitt? No one including Mitt knows Mitt.](#) (from Don, Milford, Oct. 26, 2012)

Each morning during the Mitt the Twit years, the Boston Globe would have another crazy idea Mitt had proposed. The following morning there would be a retraction. Most of the time he was out running for President and bad mouthing Massachusetts. We have had some lousy governors but he is right up there with the worst. Mass knows Mitt? No one including Mitt knows Mitt. His position on any issue will change in the next hour.

[Scholarships were really a few hundred dollars.](#) (from Anne, Cotuit, Oct. 26, 2012)

You know that claim he makes about the scholarship for qualifying high school seniors that provides them with a "free ride" to any state school? Well, in reality it amounts to a few hundred dollars; tuition only, no fees, no room and board included. We were so excited when our daughter qualified, and just as disappointed to learn it really didn't amount to much; like most of his proposals, it sounded way better than it was.

[There is a good reason why he chose not to run for reelection.](#) (from Jim, Sudbury, Oct. 26, 2012)

There is a good reason why he chose not to run for reelection. He would never have made it. It should also be pointed out that it was during his predecessor as governor, Bill Weld, when Massachusetts school children performed very well. Weld should be given the credit.

[No wonder he is at 30 per cent here.](#) (from Lynn, North Attleboro, Oct. 26, 2012)

I was an elected member of our local school committee when Romney became Governor. Although we are a suburban community, we have non-English speaking children in our system. Romney eliminated bi-lingual education funds for Massachusetts. Once he decided to run for President after 2 years as Governor, he went around the country making jokes about Massachusetts and its citizens. No wonder he is at 30 per cent here.

[A mortgage now costs more than three times as much to record.](#) (from Claudia, Stow, Oct. 26, 2012)

Mitt always likes to mention how he didn't raise taxes in Massachusetts. What he did do was raise fees in the state. He raised the recording fees for documents related to land. So to record a discharge of a mortgage you paid off it would cost over 3 times as much. To record a trust, it would cost almost 5 times as much. A mortgage now costs more than three times as much to record. It was sneaky.

[You just cannot trust this man.](#) (from Marcel, Pepperell, Oct. 26, 2012)

Mitt Romney brags that he knows how to cross the aisle and work with legislators from the opposing party. Let's be clear. The reason he signed legislation sent to him when he was governor of Massachusetts is that the Massachusetts legislature is so overwhelmingly Democratic that any legislation that he vetoed, or would have vetoes, would be easily overridden by the legislature. It had nothing to do with bipartisanship. As soon as he was elected Governor he went out of state to campaign for President. He was not only out of state more than in it he denegated and lambasted the very state of which he was Governor. You just cannot trust this man.

[Romney didn't care about saving money for a rainy day.](#) (from David, Amherst, Oct. 26, 2012)

We are struggling with the poor financial state of Massachusetts due to the fact that Romney didn't care about saving money for a rainy day. When that day came, his tax policies left us without proper resources.

[Romney emptied the State Rainy Day Fund.](#) (from Roger, Haverhill, Oct. 26, 2012)

Romney emptied the State Rainy Day Fund — used to keep the state economy stable during hard times — in order to give tax breaks to the wealthy. He cut funding to the cities and towns causing our property taxes to go up. Our fees (i.e.: auto license, dog license, business permits, etc) doubled, while teachers, police and fire-fighters were laid-off. He spent his last year bad-mouthing the state at several Republican gatherings. When he left office, his staff removed all the hard-drives from the state computers to bury his tenure, leaving a check to cover the cost for new hard drives. In my opinion: that is like robbing a bank and leaving an I.O.U. I would like to see the campaign wind-down with the slogan: Ask Massachusetts!

[He will do anything to put the title President of the United States next to his name.](#) (from Carey, Brighton, Oct. 26, 2012)

I took a giant leap of faith and voted for Mitt. His record as a jobs creator in the state speaks for itself. In the third debate he tried to take credit for Massachusetts' excellent public school ranking, when in fact it was his predecessor who enacted the policy that created the improvements. As was the case of most everything else, Olympics included, he stood on the sidelines and tried and take more credit that he deserved. I truly believe that he has the potential to be a more dangerous president, if that's possible, than George W. Bush. Willard Mitt Romney is a crook who will do anything to put the title President of the United States next to his name.

[I remember being impressed with Romney's "Health Care for All" plan...](#) (from Elena, Cambridge, Oct. 26, 2012)

I remember being impressed with Romney's "Health Care for All" plan, an idea that, for some warped reason, he now disavows. Romney's bid for governor was fueled by his running the Utah Olympics, an event largely made possible through sizable Federal government subsidies. He was a mediocre governor and is completely lacking in the qualities required to be the leader of our country. The polls speak volumes: Romney's approval rating in MA is hovering around 30%.

[Special interests over public interest.](#) (from Carol, Natick, Oct. 26, 2012)

Breastfeeding offers important health benefits for mothers and babies. The American Academy of Pediatrics and many other health professional organizations recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six month. Formula company "goodie bags" for new mothers with samples, coupons and advertising send a message that the hospital providing this "gift" endorses early formula feeding and that this practice undermines breastfeeding initiation. The public health, breastfeeding, and childbirth communities support banning those bags. In 2006, Governor Romney blocked this ban, which was supported by the Department of Health. He stood on the side of powerful corporate interests rather than the Commonwealth's mothers, babies, and families. Since his tenure, all hospitals in the Commonwealth have voluntarily eliminated this inappropriate practice. I cannot vote for someone who repeatedly prioritizes policies for special interests over policies for public interests.

[Romney has no intention of working with us.](#) (from Heather, Cambridge/Somerville, Oct. 26, 2012)

Romney was a carpetbagger taking advantage of a weak Democratic candidate to shove his way into office. He had no interest in running the state and spent most of his time out of state complaining about how mean we all were. Even members of his own party couldn't work with him. It's not because he was a "severe conservative" that he's so unpopular now, it's because he had no intention of working with us, he just wanted a stepping stone to where he is now.

[Disgraceful, disgusting, and amoral.](#) (from C.W., Newton, Oct. 26, 2012)

For the last two years of his Governorship. Romney toured around the country campaigning for his "presidency-in-advance" by telling nasty jokes about Massachusetts, the state he was sworn to protect and promote. Disgraceful, disgusting, and amoral.

[Terrifying to think of Romney as president.](#) (from Alexandra, Wareham, Oct. 26, 2012)

I was a State Employee then, (I've been retired for ten years now) and it was a struggle to get a pay increase, or anything while he was in office. He was the worst governor we ever had, it's terrifying to think of him as president.

[We are still cleaning his BS up all these years later.](#) (from Kerry, Boston, Oct. 26, 2012)

He didn't ask for the binder full of women. Womens' groups brought it to him. He was known to ask why more male weren't sent to him for positions as judges! I could go on. He wouldn't win for dog catcher in Massachusetts! We are still cleaning his BS up all these years later.

[I still remember the humiliation...](#) (from Fern, Williamstown, Oct. 26, 2012)

My daughter shared the experience of what it means to be a leader when Mitt was governor. Mitt likes to brag that he did not raise taxes in Massachusetts and balanced the budget. He does not talk about the impact of his decisions. The public high school my daughter attended was forced to make hard choices to maintain the level of education that it had historically. This meant extra curricula activities such as sports and drama saw severe cuts in funding. The only way too extra curricula activities was by instituting user fees. As the parent of the team captain, I had the unfortunate responsibility to inform parents of the user fees and to gently remind them to pay if they wanted their child to continue in the activity. I still remember the humiliation in the voices of her peers' parents as they told me that their children could not participate in the sports because they did not have the spare cash to pay the user fees for the sports. Ultimately, the teams were not inclusive in her public school because the children from upper middle class families were able to participate because their parents paid the user fees. Parents who did not have the extra money did not have the reward of seeing their children succeed in areas that were outside of the academic classes. As for me, the amount I needed to pay for user fees for her to participate in extra curricula activities year round at a public high school exceeded how much taxes had gone up in previous years.

[Liar, Faker, Millionaire.](#) (from Janet, West Falmouth, Oct. 26, 2012)

Yes, I know Mitt. I'm a resident of Cape Cod and I think the most astounding fact about Mitt is that he brought Obamacare to Mass, though like a wolf in sheep's clothing. I knew, from the moment that he chose to be a Mass Resident what he came here for. And yes, he ran for President more than six years. Liar, Faker, Millionaire.

[Romney's war on EMTs](#) (from Todd, Framingham, Oct. 26, 2012)

Governor Romney promised not to raise taxes when he was governor, but what he did do was raise fees. As a certified basic EMT in Mass, I have to re-certify every two years. I have to pay for continuing ED classes, then I have to take a 24 hour refresher course, all so I can work for a company that starts pay at 11 dollars an hour. I also have to pay a fee to the state to process the re-certification paperwork. When Romney came in as governor, that fee was 75 dollars. When he left, it is 150 dollars! That is so I can do a job that pays less than 30,000 dollars a year.

[He was pro-choice as governor; now he's pro-life. I think he's just pro-Mitt.](#) (from Nancy, Malden, Oct. 26, 2012)

He was pro-choice as governor; now he's pro-life. I think he's just pro-Mitt. He was in favor of Obamacare; now he's against it. He was pro-gay rights; now he's against them. Romney is a well-oiled weathervane. He will do anything, say anything to get himself elected.

[Constant Bickering](#) (from Maureen, Bradford, Oct. 26, 2012)

The only thing I can remember about Mitt as governor is his constant bickering with the turnpike authority. I don't think he accomplished whatever he was all worked up about, but there was a lot of noise. I will give him credit for signing in Romney Care. It has saved me a lot of money on my own insurance and on that of my employees. It works really well. What I can't understand is why he doesn't think its good enough for the rest of the country.

[I pray he does not become our President.](#) (from David H, East Brookfield, Oct. 26, 2012)

Mitt was gone almost half the time that he was "Our Governor." I would like to have a Governor like our President. I wrote to our First Lady, Mrs. Obama and within one week, I received an answer and an instruction to always let her know if there was anything else that she could help me with. Of the four letters sent to Governnor Romney, no answer. I pray that he does not become our President.

[He cut local aid to towns, causing towns to raise property taxes.](#) (from R. Wayne, Holbrook, Oct. 26, 2012)

When Mitt Romney was Gov. of Massachusetts he cut state taxes, but raised fees on everything making it very expensive for small businesses. He local aid to towns, causing towns to raise property taxes. Mr. Romney did no favors to Massachusetts business or tax payers.

[I wanted to throw a shoe at the T.V. when he said he was proud of my state.](#) (from Carolyn, Cambridge, Oct. 26, 2012)

Romney spent more time bashing Massachusetts than he did governing it! I wanted to throw a shoe at the T.V. when he said he was proud of my state. It isn't his state. He is going to lose Massachusetts by 20 percentage points. That should say it all.

[Mitt Romney did not go out and SEEK "binders" of resumes...](#) (from Donna, Winthrop, Oct. 26, 2012)

Actually, Mitt Romney did not go out and SEEK "binders" of resumes of prominent, capable women to help head up his cabinet and departments. Instead, women's groups sought HIM out and asked why he had so few women as candidates for his cabinet and departments. That's how it really happened.

[His positions change as readily as the weather in New England.](#) (from Robert, Newton, Oct. 26, 2012)

Romney's record in job creation was appalling and his management of the state's budget left huge deficits. He is a pragmatist whose positions change as readily as the weather in New England. He is not a reliable national leader for the future of the United States and our standing internationally.

[He was not a governor, but a boss.](#) (from Ruth, Acushnet, Oct. 26, 2012)

He was not a governor, but a boss. He sent 800,000 jobs to China, and my poor mother in law at 80+ years, saw her home taxes go up every year so that she had to have help from all of us to keep her home. Her daughter and son in law lived with her along with another son so she could get by. We are still trying to bail out from him. But I think the strangest thing I was told by someone that worked for him was the elevator in the State House. He

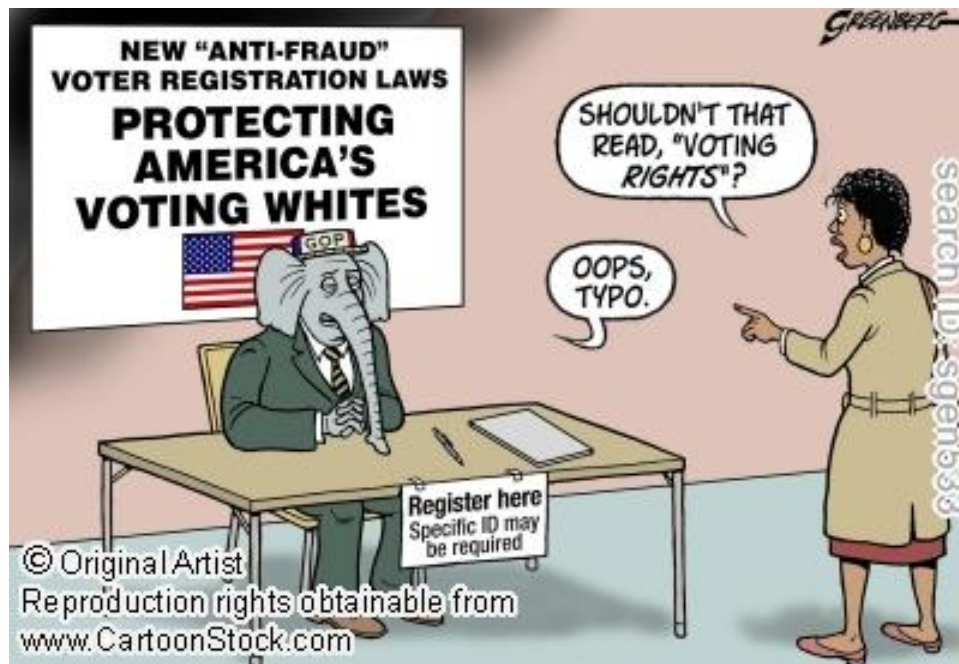
decided it was going to be his. So no one was allowed to use it, and I mean NO ONE except him and everyone else had to use the stairs. Now I have to wonder if a person working there had a medical problem, or a heart attack while he was in office, on the 4th floor, the paramedics would have had to carry that person down 4 flights of stairs as the elevator was off limits! Far as I know, this is a very true story. It was such a relief to see him go.

[Betrayal of same sex couples.](#) (from Cara, Framingham, Oct. 26, 2012)

I will not be voting for Mitt Romney because of his despicable betrayal of same-sex couples and their families in Massachusetts. When he campaigned for the Senate in 1994, and again for Governor in 2002, Mitt Romney claimed to support gay rights. But after the state Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to bar same-sex couples from marrying in 2003, Romney began pushing for a constitutional convention to overturn that ruling. The Boston Globe revealed today that as Governor of MA, he refused to allow the state birth certificate form to be amended for babies born to same-sex couples, instructing that the words "father" or "mother" be crossed out and "second parent" inserted by hand. I have two gay siblings, and I will not forget Mitt Romney's betrayal of them.

[Romney made it so it took a year to get my Social Security Disability Insurance.](#) (from Judy, Holyoke and Springfield, Oct. 26, 2012)

How he affected me? I had to wait about a year before I was able to receive my SSDI and it was a very difficult year for me.



[20121031-01](#) 11:08 Pam Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #259)

The day after...

Things are very quiet here in NC today. The sun is shining; the sky is blue. I feel very fortunate when I think of all the people up and down the coast who are struggling and will be struggling for a long time. I was especially struck by the doctors and nurses who got all those patients out of their hospital, including intensive-care newborns. It must have been terrifying for everyone. I can't imagine.

Those of you in the path of Sandy, please let FotM know how you are. I was disgusted by Romney's and Ryan's "plans" for disaster relief. Jeez. You'd think the private sector was a sacred cow.

[20121031-07](#) 23:03 Ken Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Pam, above)

Amen to all that, Pam. My gym usually has Fox News on in the locker room. I figure a little passive exposure can't get me too riled (but it does). Today their analysts were decrying Obama's rapid deployment of FEMA assistance as grandstanding. Gore also took heat for stating (the truth) that global warming caused this extraordinary storm and worsened its coastal impact due to the gradual rise of the oceans. Fox could use a dose of Fresh Air (T Gross, NPR) to learn what Meteorologists have to say about Sandy and predictable future storms.

[20121031-02](#) 11:39 SteveB October, 2012 Friends of the Middle eBook Announcement

The latest Friends of the Middle eBook, the compilation of October, 2012 issues, is now available online.

This ebook is FotM #12, 431 pages out of total eBook pages of 6695.

It can be downloaded or perused using the following link:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201210-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

Thanks to you all and I hope all of you affected weathered the hurricane unscathed.

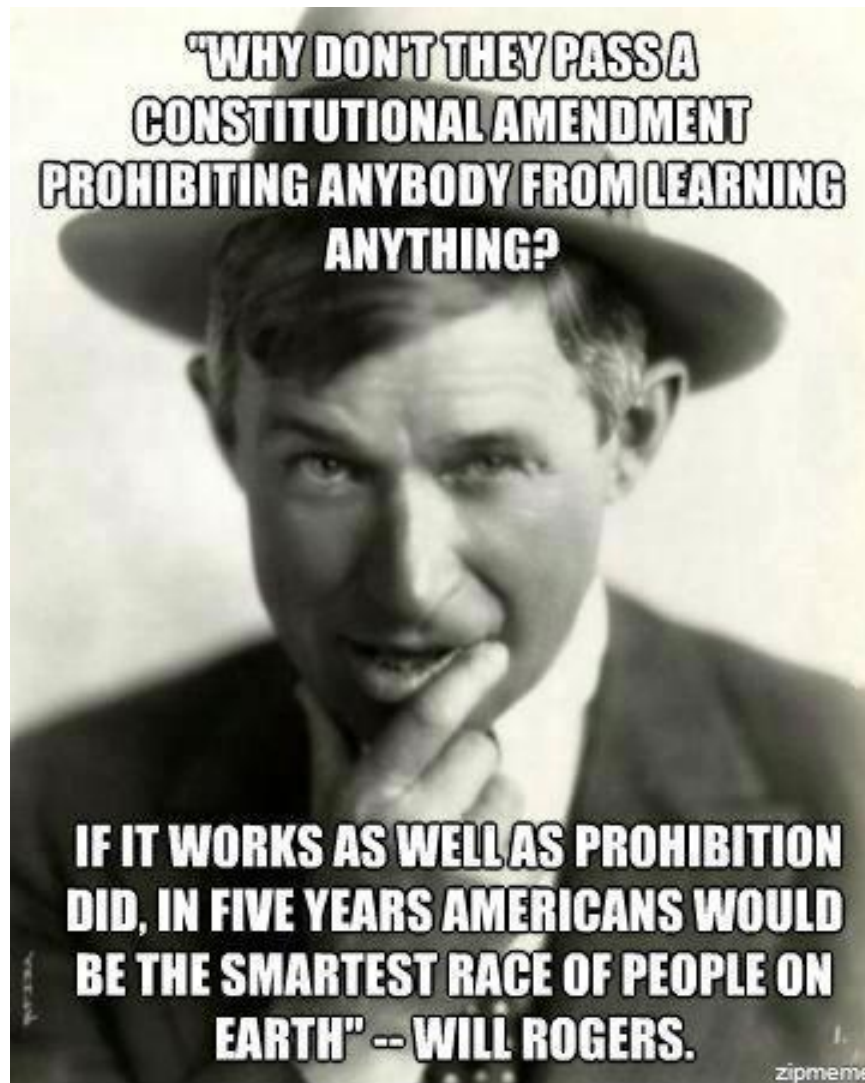
[20121031-03](#) 17:55 Tom Fw: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger

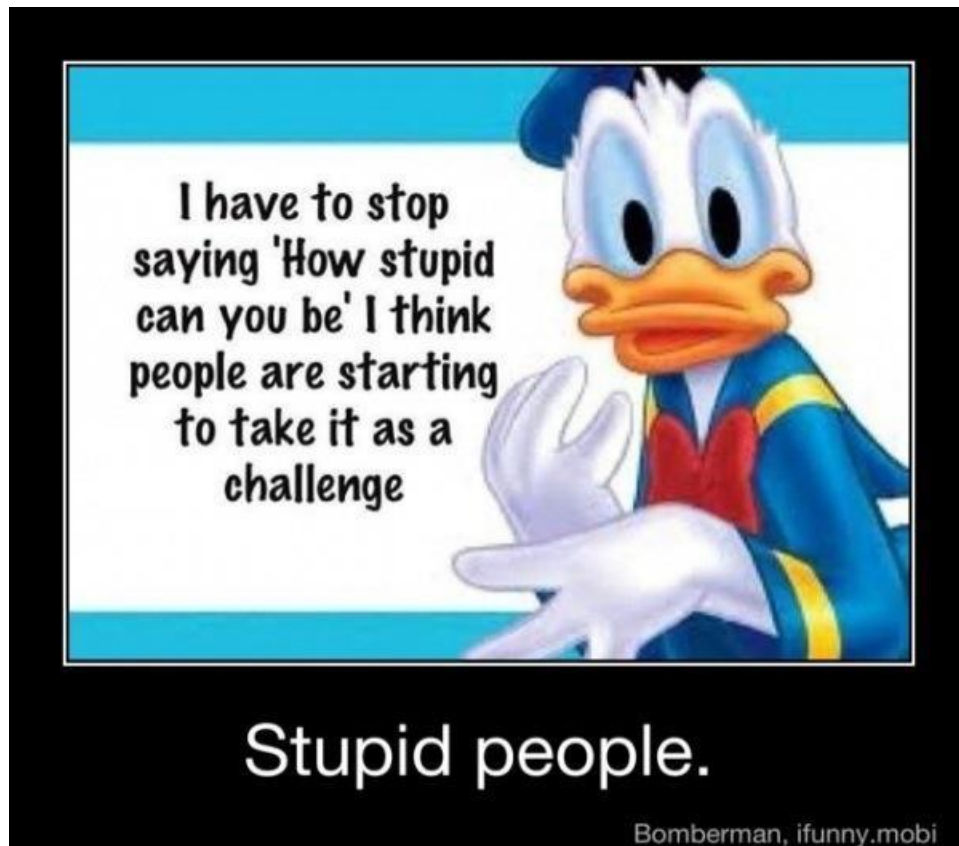
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New Commemorative Pistol

Ruger is coming out with a new pistol in honor of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. It will be named the Congressman.







Video: "Guy Makes 14-Foot AT-ST Walker as a Halloween Costume" by unknown, Cheezburger

Oct. 31, 2012,

(http://cheezburger.com/43983105?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ThereIFixedIt+%28There%2C+I+Fixed+It.%29)

Halloween is here already, but if you want to get an early start on next year's festivities, here's where the bar is set. Judging by this guy's costume, it's set pretty high (14 feet high, to be precise!).




ON TEENAGERS, ADULT:

Statistics show that teen pregnancy drops off significantly after age 25.

*Mary Anne Tebedo, Republican state senator from Colorado Springs
(contributed by Harry F. Poncec)*

MONDAY DECEMBER 1999

Liberal Logic 101



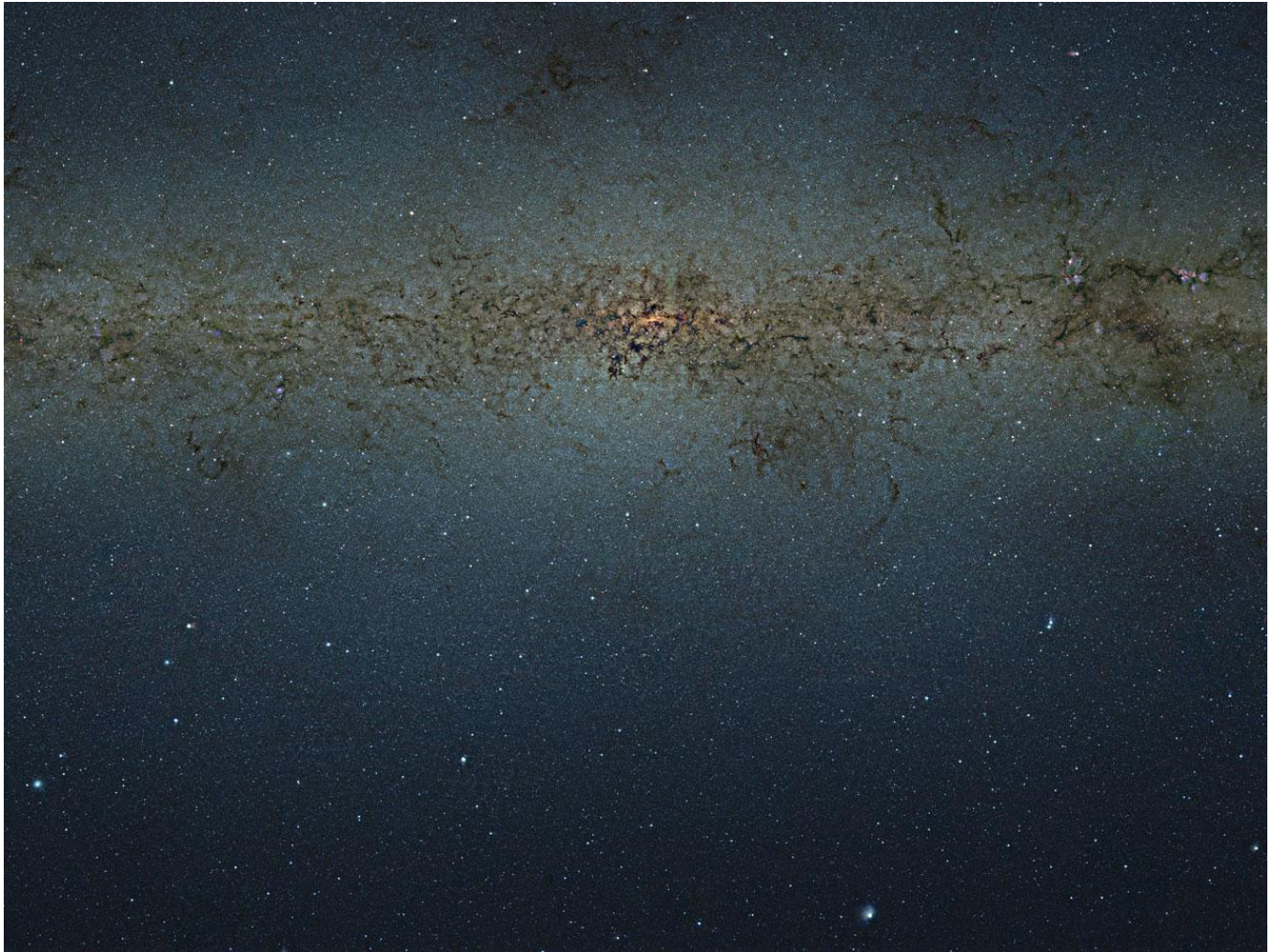
"I lowered taxes on the middle class!"

True, but you did it by trashing the economy so the average middle class income dropped, and of course when personal income drops, personal tax liability drops as well.

<http://LiberalLogic101.com>
(Yes, they are that stupid)



<http://www.eso.org/public/images/eso1242a/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #261 — NOV. 2, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

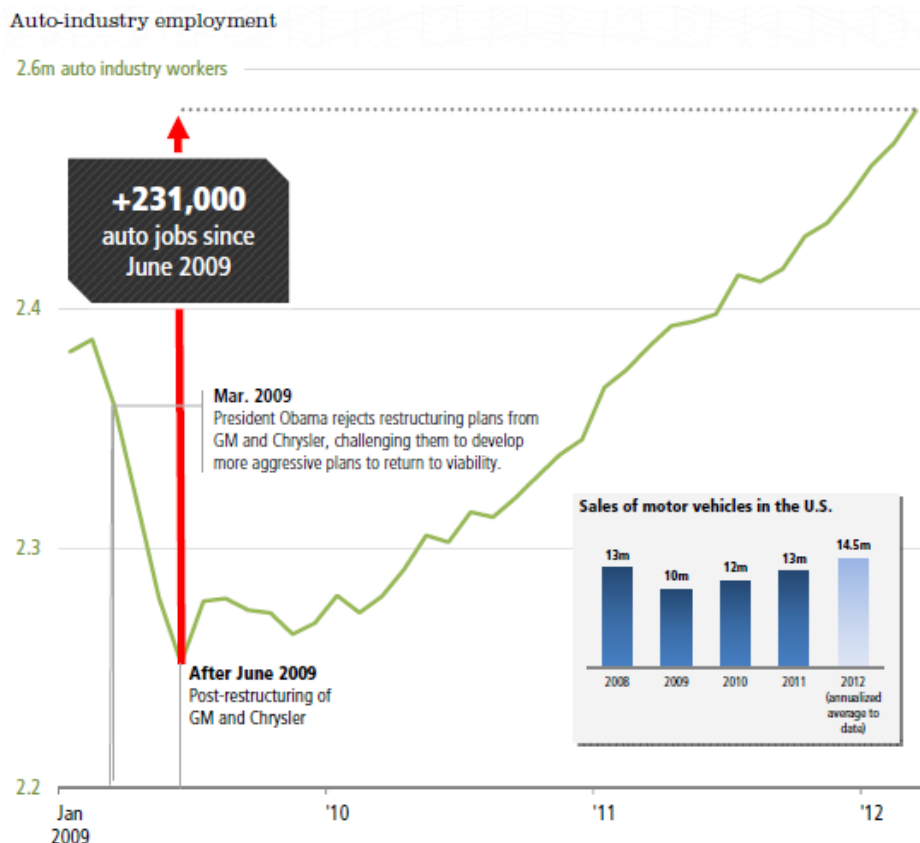
Mitt's Lies Slapped Down! (Again!)

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 2, 2012)

It won't be long now...but, until the end, the lies just keep coming and we keep debunking them. "Truth will out!"

"Romney Caught Trying to Swiftboat Obama on the Auto Rescue" by Jared Bernstein, Huffington Post

Nov. 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jared-bernstein/romney-ohio-auto-bailout-swiftboat_b_2056188.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)



One of the most deceptive jujitsu moves in modern campaigns is known as swiftboating: Trying to turn one of your opponent's strengths into a weakness. Given the centrality of Ohio to electoral success less than a week from today (!), it should be no surprise that the Romney team choose that locale to go after the success of the president's auto rescue.

Full disclosure: As a member of the president's economics team I strongly advocated for the rescue, as per both my principal (the vice president) and the view held by myself and others that the employment costs would be particularly steep in communities that comprised the relevant supply chains. When you think about auto jobs, don't just think about the factory at the end of the line where they assemble the cars and trucks. Think about all the small and medium size manufacturers that make those parts.

That's where many of the new jobs in Ohio are coming from and it's an important piece of evidence for the bailout's success. Which makes it catnip for the Romney swiftboaters.

Dana Milbank takes this apart in Wednesday AM's *Washington Post* (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-romneys-jeep-ad-drives-off-the-road-of-truth/2012/10/30/f207c606-22c9-11e2-8448-81b1ce7d6978_story.html), but the gist is that Chrysler recently announced that they'd be expanding production of Jeeps -- adding new plants -- in China to help sell into that market. Note that they're not talking about shifting U.S. production overseas. They're talking about tapping a trend that I've written about before: producing closer to your target markets.

But in Romney-world, this became an attack on the president auto rescue because according to the campaign, Chrysler was planning to move all of their U.S. production of Jeeps to China. Romney: "I saw a story today that one of the great manufacturers in this state, Jeep, now owned by the Italians, is thinking of moving all production to China."

Milbank prints the response from an aghast Chrysler exec:

Romney's fiction was apparently based on a misreading of a Bloomberg News report a few days earlier, which said that Chrysler would resume production in China for the first time since parent Fiat SpA bought the company -- in addition to Chrysler's production in Michigan, Illinois and Ohio.

"Let's set the record straight: Jeep has no intention of shifting production of its Jeep models out of North America to China," Chrysler executive Gualberto Ranieri wrote in a statement, using italics for emphasis. "A careful and unbiased reading of the Bloomberg take would have saved unnecessary fantasies and extravagant comments." Ranieri said the conclusion that it was moving all production to China was "a leap that would be difficult even for professional circus acrobats."

But what's particularly ridiculous here is that Romney is criticizing Chrysler's global expansion. Since when do conservatives object to that? Is there anyone who believes for a nanosecond that expansion abroad by U.S. multinational's would be viewed critically by a Romney administration?

Back here in reality what we should be debating right about now is the relative positions of the candidates on policies that really matter to both auto production here and investment abroad. Gov. Romney opposed the government's role in GM and Chrysler's managed bankruptcy. Given the absence of private financing at the time, had he been in charge, these companies would have been facing liquidation. Instead, as the chart shows (below), the American auto industry has added 250,000 just since its turnaround (and not that this chart is a few months old; autos employment is up to 250K and sales are on track for 15 million this year).

Moreover, on international tax policy there are big, important differences that haven't gotten enough emphasis so far. Gov. Romney's plan is to allow multinationals to avoid paying any American taxes on their overseas earnings, a clear incentive to outsource, and one according to economist Kim Clausing would lead to 800,000 jobs shifted overseas.

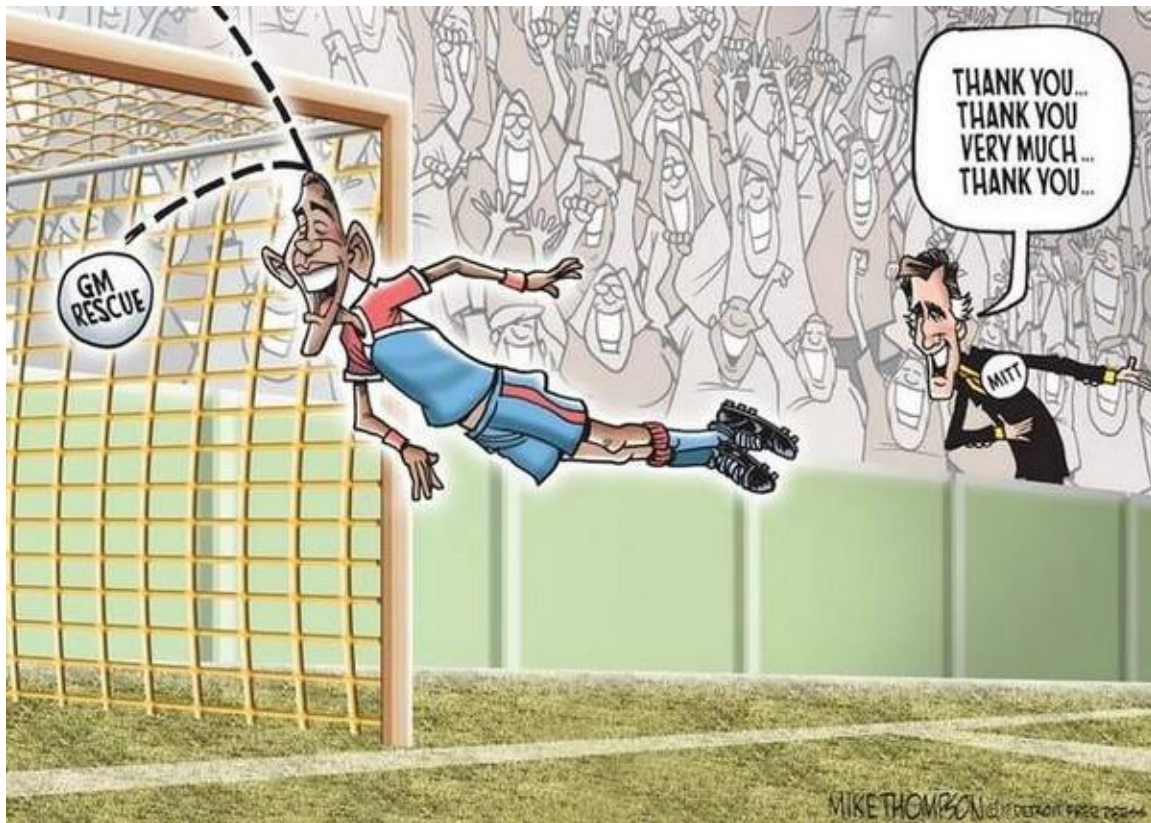
Note the difference between this and the Jeep case. The Chrysler executive cited above explicitly denounced shifting production overseas. Clausing's analysis, however, suggest that Romney "territorial" tax plan would incentivize precisely such shifts.

The president's plan is to increase the tax incentives for producing here, not abroad. These include a lower corporate tax rate with benefits for manufacturers and for on-shoring formerly off-shored work, paid for in part by closing loopholes that currently make it cheaper to produce abroad. Given my view of the most relevant elasticities in play here, the most potentially helpful proposals in this space are the president's minimum tax on foreign earnings (a whack at tax havens) and an end to deferral (where foreign earnings can be endlessly held abroad).

Look, neither candidate should pretend to be against globalization. It's deeply woven into the fabric of our economy and our lives and that's not going to change. And if successful American companies want to expand abroad to sell more directly in those markets, good for them-they're not displacing workers here. It's especially silly for Romney to take a position against this, and even more so given that his position has nothing to do with the reality of the Jeep case.

But public policies should not increase the incentives to produce abroad. If anything, they should go the other way. Obama's do, Romney's do not.

QED.



"Election Winner Gets...a Mess" by Susan Davis and Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

Nov. 1, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/10/31/a-mess-awaits-the-next-president/1672981/>)

The next president will face a steady clip of fiscal deadlines that threaten the U.S. economy if Washington fails to act:

- **Nov. 7, The day after the election** — either President Obama or President-elect Romney will have to begin negotiations with congressional leaders on how to avert pending tax hikes and spending cuts that neither party supports in full.
- **Nov. 13, Congress returns** — to Washington for a lame duck session.
- **Dec. 31/Jan. 2, Fiscal cliff** — Dec. 31. Almost every tax cut enacted since 2001 will expire, including the Bush-era tax cuts, the 2009 stimulus tax cuts, a short-term fix to protect taxpayers from the Alternative Minimum Tax, and a tax package that includes popular tax provisions to encourage things such as charitable giving. The Social Security payroll tax will also expire, as will long-term unemployment benefits for 2 million Americans and a law that affects how doctors who treat seniors through Medicare are paid. Jan. 2: \$109 billion in across-the-board spending cuts for 2013 begin taking effect. Half of the cuts come from national defense programs.
- **Jan. 20, Inauguration Day**
- **First week of February, Budget submitted** — The president sends his Fiscal Year 2014 budget to Congress. If Romney wins, his budget will come later in the month.
- **Mid-February, Debt limit** — The Treasury Department estimates another raise in the current \$16.4 trillion debt limit will be needed, requiring a vote in Congress. The last debt ceiling showdown in the summer of 2011 pushed Washington to the brink of default, rattling credit-rating agencies and global markets.
- **March 27, Shutdown?** — The current funding for the federal government runs out, threatening a shutdown.

(WASHINGTON) Confrontations abroad. A divided Congress at home. A budget stalemate on the horizon that threatens another recession

Come Nov. 7, President Obama or President-elect Mitt Romney might be forgiven if he pines for the good old days of campaign rallies and negative ads.

The world won't wait for either man to enjoy his victory celebration. The bad blood and battle lines between Democrats and Republicans are likely to spill over rather swiftly from politics to policy matters. And only 55 days will remain before a convergence of tax increases and spending cuts threatens to throw the slowly healing U.S. economy back into recession.

"If you watch cable news on any station the day after the election, all you're going to hear is 'countdown to the fiscal cliff,'" says Erskine Bowles, who co-chaired a fiscal commission that recommended nearly \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years.

Without action, almost every tax cut enacted since 2001 is set to expire at the end of the year. The resulting \$500 billion tax hike would raise the average American household's tax burden by \$3,500, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center.

The first \$110 billion of a planned \$1.2 trillion in spending cuts over 10 years to reduce the deficit also would begin at the start of the new year. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has warned that, left unchanged, those defense cuts would threaten the nation's security.

A new or re-elected president confronted by an immediate crisis isn't unprecedented, of course. Obama came into office four years ago facing an economic cataclysm that became the deepest recession in 70 years. Bill Clinton was welcomed with a budget mess. Ronald Reagan walked into the Iran hostage crisis. Richard Nixon was immediately immersed in the Vietnam War. The comparison extends deep into history: Franklin Roosevelt faced the Great Depression; Abraham Lincoln, the onset of the Civil War.

But the next president also is likely to face a deeply divided country and Congress. If today's polls are accurate, a narrow victory will not provide an electoral mandate. He will be forced to reach across the aisle for help in tackling these daunting issues.

"In terms of an environment for transition, this is pretty much the worst I've seen," says Paul Light, professor of public service at New York University. "It's going to be knock-down, drag-out from Nov. 7 on."

At the same time, the president or president-elect will have a slew of personnel moves to make, including Cabinet-level nominations that need Senate confirmation — in a Senate that will likely be nearly divided. Romney would have an administration to populate. Obama would need to replace key people, led by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, who plan to step down.

And the world won't stop revolving while the next president gets his sea legs. Potential crises in the Middle East, Iran's slow march toward a nuclear bomb and the enduring global economic slowdown will demand attention even as the domestic budget impasse dominates the agenda.

Staring at a 'fiscal cliff'

The pre-eminent challenge is finding a path to reduce the nation's debt and deficits while stabilizing the economic recovery. A looming calendar of expirations and automatic triggers — the "fiscal cliff" — threatens economic and budgetary mayhem if Washington can't forge compromise in the wake of the election.

"You could see (the economy) slowed by 3% next year. You could see as many as 2 million people lose their jobs. You could see unemployment go to 9%," Bowles warns. "Sometimes a crisis propels action in the Congress."

The economy faces a twofold threat at the end of the year when tax cuts passed in the Bush administration are scheduled to expire, raising taxes on 90% of Americans. At the same time, across-the-board spending cuts would be triggered as a result of a congressional panel's failure last year to find a path to deficit reduction on its own.

Enacting tax hikes and spending cuts during a slow recovery are all but certain to throw the economy into a recession, given the current 2% growth rate — below the 3% rate most economists believe is needed for an economic rebound.

Also expiring at the end of the year are the tax breaks enacted as part of Obama's 2009 economic stimulus, including expansions of the child tax credit and earned income tax credit; a temporary payroll tax break; a "patch" on the Alternative Minimum Tax, exposing 26 million taxpayers to higher taxes; and a package of pet tax breaks, including one that encourages charitable giving.

More worrisome is the next vote to raise the government's borrowing authority, which the Treasury Department estimates will be reached in February, just weeks after the president's inauguration. A heated debt-ceiling battle in 2011 between the White House and Congress threatened the nation's credit rating and sent stocks tumbling.

And then there's the potential for another threatened government shutdown. The Obama administration and congressional Republicans clashed over spending limits last year but cut a last-minute deal to avert a shutdown after weeks of brinkmanship. The government's current funding extends only until March 27.

"What the next president is looking at in 2013 is a steady series of cliffhangers," says Stan Collender of Qorvis, a federal budget expert. "I'm not sure I see a way out of this unless everybody gets religion."

Yet as time grows short, there is growing consensus that Washington will not be able to solve all its fiscal problems between Election Day and Dec. 31. Congressional negotiators have yet to begin talks on the possibility of short-term fixes, which will be influenced by who wins on Nov. 6.

A world of uncertainty

To hear Romney describe the Middle East as a "rising tide of chaos" in the last debate, one could imagine international affairs intruding on the next president's time as well.

"We don't know what the world is going to throw at us down the road," Romney said. "We make decisions today in a military that will confront challenges we can't imagine."

The former Massachusetts governor made the point to illustrate his opposition to further cuts in the Pentagon's budget, threatened by the budget stalemate. But it just as easily could apply to a number of global hot spots that may confront the next president as early as Nov. 8, when China's Communist Party begins the process of selecting new leaders.

The most likely place is Syria, where violence that began in March 2011 during the Arab Spring has killed 30,000 Syrians and spilled over into Turkey and Lebanon. But the entire Middle East and Persian Gulf region remains volatile: Iran's nuclear program hasn't buckled under the weight of sanctions and negotiations. U.S. dealings with Egypt's new government have been tense. And the Israeli-Palestinian situation is always a simmering wild card.

"You've got to divide the region into two sorts of realities — the migraines and the root canals," says Aaron David Miller of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Negotiations over Iran's nuclear program will likely resume in late November or December, regardless of who wins the election. Those talks involve five other countries, but Obama has opened the door to possible talks between just the U.S. and Iran.

"The clock is ticking," he said at last week's debate. "We're not going to allow Iran to perpetually engage in negotiations that lead nowhere."

Romney has said he would tighten existing economic sanctions and seek to have President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad indicted for genocide.

He also has threatened immediate actions against China. "On day one, I will label them a currency manipulator, which allows us to apply tariffs where they're taking jobs," Romney said during the debate.

Such a move could trigger a trade war, pushing China policy up on the presidential timetable, says Eswar Prasad, professor of international trade policy at Cornell University.

Job One: Make friends

After a relentlessly negative campaign that was the most expensive in history, the central challenge for Obama or Romney might be to repair relations with the other party. By all accounts, it won't be easy.

"It is the single most important roadblock" to a successful start, says Mickey Edwards, a former Republican congressman whose new book carries the subhead How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans. "The challenge that they both have is how they reach out."

Easier said than done.

Obama has spoken to House Speaker John Boehner by phone just twice since July, to discuss the fiscal cliff and the situation in Libya, spokesman Kevin Smith says. Obama's extended hand also would be met by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who made defeating the president a prime objective.

Romney would face Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, who has accused him of tax evasion, among other frequent attacks. A Democratic Senate would be a powerful barricade against Romney's agenda, which includes pledges to repeal Obama's health care law and permanently extend the Bush tax cuts for all.

Either president should "devise a strategy to reach out (to Congress) and almost do nothing else," says Dan Glickman, a former Democratic congressman now at the Bipartisan Policy Center. "There's just no way to get big legislation through without working them, massaging them, toasting them, dining with them."

For Romney, the task would be complicated by the need to fill out an entire administration. Even if Democrats don't retain control of the Senate, they could block his nominees.

"I wouldn't envy the Romney folks the day after the election," says William Galston, a former domestic policy adviser in the Clinton administration. "They have an enormous number of things they have to do simultaneously."

The president also will have to contend with outside pressures from lobbyists, unions, corporate interests and ideological foes. Americans for Tax Reform President Grover Norquist, whose anti-tax oath has been signed by almost every Republican member of Congress, is girding for a fight if Obama is re-elected. "There's no compromise," Norquist says, adding his prediction for an Obama second term: "There's a stalemate."

Despite all the obstacles, Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a Democratic leader who co-chaired the failed deficit-reduction panel, says a deal is possible if Republicans give on taxes.

"There is a balanced deal to be had," she says. "I think we're back to a starting point now for the president to bring people together."

[20121101-03](#) 08:31 Pam Re: "Election Winner Gets...a Mess" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I'm getting to the point where I'm almost numb.

[20121101-02](#) 08:26 Pam Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Ken, FotM Newsletter #260)

It is extraordinary that Fox News persists. How can their talking heads look at themselves in the mirror each morning? Can they really be that consistently evil? At least Chris Christie gave Obama the credit that was due. I KNEW the Right was going to accuse him of grandstanding. And what about the Donald? How generous of him to extend the deadline on his absurd offer. I'm with the little girl I saw on TV who was crying because she's so sick of Romney and Obama. I simply cannot believe the race is as close as they say. I keep thinking we are all being manipulated. Duh.

[20121101-04](#) 08:55 SteveB Afterwards... (to Clark)

Are you and all your family OK after the storm?

How was it where you are there? [in upstate New York, --SteveB]

Hope all is well!

[20121101-05](#) 09:34 Clark Re: Afterwards... (reply to SteveB, above)

We weathered the storm, though lost power for two days, getting it back late yesterday. Nice to have light and warmth again though cable still out so have to rely on phone for email. We were lucky that the heart of the storm veered away from us so we didn't get the full brunt as predicted.

Thanks for checking in!

After not knowing what was going on in the world for two days, was gratified to see the election news is relatively good. Romney seems desperate. Still a lot can happen though with storm snafus, voter suppression, etc. five days left!

Great work with FOTM!

[20121101-14](#) 20:15 SteveB Re: Afterwards... (reply to Clark, above)

Thanks, Clark. Happy to hear you guys are doing OK.

Ya, I think there's going to be a lot of thinking and research put into the POLLING after the election. I'm not sure I've ever seen things so uncertain, though a lot of that is Romney campaign wishful thinking and smoke, I think and hope. Desperation, as you say.

Can there really be undecided people???

[20121101-06](#) 11:10 Pam The Polls! The WAIT! (Re: Get Out and Vote!, reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #260)

How is it possible that the race is as close as the media say it is? All those comments from residents of Massachusetts make a compelling argument about a toxically ambitious man with no core and no compass. The wait for the day after Election Day is about to drive me crazy.

[20121101-07](#) 11:38 Alex Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #260)

Let's remember, Obama attended a church that preaches "hate America", presumably born in America, was a community activist, a close friend of a Chicago mobster, and somehow got elected to the Senate, where he served two years, one of those years campaigning for the Presidency. America is for all ages of citizens, and those who are not citizens should apply for citizenship.

"Happy Trails"

[20121101-11](#) 18:59 SteveB Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)

Always good to hear a voice from the Right!

These are awfully old charges, aren't they?

I think the president has proven himself to be worthy of the office, at least as much as his competitor, whether you agree with Mr. Obama's philosophy, politics, or actions.

He hasn't embarrassed the country, he pulled us back from the brink, he saved the auto industry, he passed a much needed health care reform, he's been a warrior abroad to make Ronald Reagan proud, and he doesn't lie nearly as much as Mr. Romney, in my humble opinion.

I know the world respects America under Mr. Obama much more than it did under Mr. Bush. I know that pretty well because I live in Bolivia right now and travel extensively.

I'm going to be 67 this month. I certainly know which candidate and which party will work the hardest to preserve Social Security and Medicare, and I'm all for that. I'm against tax cuts for billionaires and I don't believe 47% of the American people are inferior to any anyone, not even a billionaire!

So why not talk about policy or any of the important issues of the day? We have so many! The things you raise are really the Republican and Tea Party talking points from 2008 and 2010. What is their relevance in light of four years of history and Mitt Romney's dishonesty (provable!) and lack of any clear, coherent, consistent policy (the 3 C's)? If you know of any such a policy, please explain it to us, as even Fox News doesn't seem to have the faintest...

I'd love to hear more of your thoughts on this or any subject or things you read about in the FotM Newsletter.

Thanks, Alex.

[20121101-13](#) 20:08 Alex Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to SteveB, above)

I have traveled and lived in Germany, visited Great Britain, South East Asia and everyone wants to come to America, even Obama's father. As far as current respect for America, I am not convinced we are as well liked as America used to be. The points I raised earlier are still valid. You have your views and enjoy Bolivia.

"Happy Trails"

[20121101-15](#) 20:31 SteveB Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)

Are you military or former military, Alex? We have quite a few vets in our group and I'm proud to have them.

I think you're right that America and its image peaked sometime before the current grand experiment started sometime about the term of Ronald Reagan.

And, yes, everybody wants to come, mainly because of our schools, which we seem to be in the process of wanting to destroy...

You continue to have your views too, Alex. Hope you'll read the FotM Newsletter. We try hard to present both sides, but even though we practice courtesy almost religiously, our contributors from the Right have always end up getting nasty, name calling, and running away, taking their marbles and going home. Logic, evidence, and truth haven't seemed to matter much to the conservatives we have known, though I'm sure that can't be universal, we pray.

"Happy Trails" to you too! (I used to love the Roy Rogers TV show when I was a kid. It always made me sad when I heard that song because I knew it would be a whole week until next Saturday morning's episode. Later, of course, the song was co-opted by Owsley, Leary, Kesey, et al.)

[20121101-08](#) 11:53 Pam How Stupid Do We Have to Get?

I was reading the *NY Times* this morning about the horrible destruction caused by the storm. There's also an article that points out that scientists have been warning about just such a catastrophe for years, decades even. Climate change is real, folks. Fox News continues to maintain that it's not, despite the abundant evidence that everyone can see. What sickens me most, I think, is the obscene amount of money that has been spent on this election, to say nothing of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, money that America needs desperately, as we are told over and over and over. We are so locked in the status quo that we can't effect reasonable election reform or anticipate a disaster we know is going to happen sooner or later. There are probably many other threats out there--biological

weapons can keep me awake at night--and I only hope that someone, somewhere, in some laboratory is working out ways to defend us. I have a physicist friend who says, If science can conceive of something, it will eventually do it. When those scientific minds are in madmen's heads, we are in big trouble. It's not lack of science, or bad science, that allowed the destruction along the coast. It's human indifference to inevitable but preventable (perhaps) misery. Anyone who builds anything close to any shore from now on has a screw loose IMHO. Eventually we're going to end up all living in the mid-west.

20121101-09	18:21	Tom	Re: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger (FotM Newsletter #260) (to SteveB)
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You left off the funny punch line.

20121101-10	18:39	SteveB	Re: New Commemorative Pistol from Ruger (reply to Tom, above)
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Mmmm...you're right...don't know how I did that...

I'm going to re-try.

Thanks, Tom. Take care.

New Commemorative Pistol

Ruger is coming out with a new pistol in honor of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. It will be named the Congressman.



It doesn't work and you can't fire it.

Yes, this may be a repeat email, but it's worth the resend. Remember, you actually do have an opportunity to fire Congress, at least one of them anyway...next Tuesday, don't forget to:

VOTE!

[20121101-12](#)

19:39

SteveB

"Congressional Research Service Report on Tax Cuts for Wealthy Suppressed by GOP" & "Taxes & the Economy: An Economic Analysis of the Top Tax Rates Since 1945"

I believe these are a very important couple of articles because they offer more proof of the total fallacy of billionaires as job creators and evidence that their tax cuts are detrimental to the economic well being of the country. I only have one word to add: CORRUPTION!

"Congressional Research Service Report on Tax Cuts for Wealthy Suppressed by GOP" by Nick Wing and Ryan Grim, Huffington Post

Nov. 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/01/congressional-research-service_n_2059156.html)

The New York Times reported on Thursday that Senate Republicans applied pressure to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) in September, successfully persuading it to withdraw a report finding that lowering marginal tax rates for the wealthiest Americans had no effect on economic growth or job creation.

"The pressure applied to the research service comes amid a broader Republican effort to raise questions about research and statistics that were once trusted as nonpartisan and apolitical," the *Times* reported. Democrats in Congress, however, have resurfaced the report and published it in full. It can be read below.

Republicans told the *Times* they had issues with the tone, wording and scope of the report, but they clearly objected most strongly to its findings, which undermine the governing fiscal philosophy of the party, that tax cuts for the wealthy will spur growth and benefit everybody.

GOP officials told the *Times* that the decision by the CRS came after a cooperative discussion, but Democrats have suggested that the move is part of a broader effort by Republicans to squelch legitimate research that runs counter to their economic principles.

The CRS report, by researcher Thomas Hungerford, concluded:

The results of the analysis suggest that changes over the past 65 years in the top marginal tax rate and the top capital gains tax rate do not appear correlated with economic growth. The reduction in the top tax rates appears to be uncorrelated with saving, investment, and productivity growth. The top tax rates appear to have little or no relation to the size of the economic pie.

However, the top tax rate reductions appear to be associated with the increasing concentration of income at the top of the income distribution. As measured by IRS data, the share of income accruing to the top 0.1% of U.S. families increased from 4.2% in 1945 to 12.3% by 2007 before falling to 9.2% due to the 2007-2009 recession. At the same time, the average tax rate paid by the top 0.1% fell from over 50% in 1945 to about 25% in 2009. Tax policy could have a relation to how the economic pie is sliced—lower top tax rates may be associated with greater income disparities.

Rep. Sandy Levin of Michigan, the top Democrat on the Ways and Means Committee, demanded the CRS explain its decision. "The impartial research and advice provided by CRS experts informs and strengthens the work of Congress. However, this valuable role hinges on the impartiality of CRS analysts and their freedom from political pressure. As with other non-partisan institutions, subjecting CRS analysts to political considerations undermines the legislative process and the American people's trust in it," Levin wrote in a letter to CRS. "Therefore I was deeply disturbed to hear that Mr. Hungerford's report was taken down in response to political pressure from Congressional Republicans who had ideological objections to the report's factual findings and conclusion."

(Scroll down for Hungerford's response in the UPDATE.)

The report is extensive, but the reasoning behind its conclusion is fairly straightforward. The richest Americans are the least likely to spend extra money they get as a result of a tax cut, and are more likely to save it or invest it

offshore. Those on the lower end of the economic spectrum, meanwhile, are the most likely to spend transfer payments they receive from the government.

A release by the Democratic Policy & Communications Center on Wednesday accused Republicans of attempting to bury the report because its "findings undermine a central tenet of Republican party orthodoxy on taxes." They included a copy of the original report, which is available below:

"Taxes and the Economy: An Economic Analysis of the Top Tax Rates Since 1945" by Thomas L. Hungerford, Congressional Research Service

Sept. 14, 2012, (<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/news/business/0915taxesandeconomy.pdf>)

[Too lengthy for this issue, but highly recommended! –SteveB]

UPDATE: 5:45 p.m.

Thomas Hungerford, the CRS researcher who produced the report, told HuffPost that he stands by it. "Basically, the decision to take it down, I think *The New York Times* article basically got it right, that it was pressure from the Senate minority to take it down," Hungerford said. "CRS reports go through many layers of review before they're issued and as far as the tone and the conclusions go, people who specifically look at the writing and the tone said it was okay. So it's not going to be that and as I can tell you outright, I stand by the report and the analysis in the report."

Hungerford said that he had never experienced suppression like this before, and he pushed back on the GOP argument that he had only looked at the effect of tax cuts in the year immediately following enactment. Regardless, he said, Republicans argue that tax breaks for the rich will bring an immediate benefit to the economy, so their criticism is inconsistent. "I checked out three years and then five years and found that no, it doesn't change the results or the conclusion of my paper. So in a way, I find it interesting that they keep talking about the need to lower the top tax rate in order to stimulate the economy now," he said. "It sounds like they're being a little inconsistent here."

Despite the pressure, Hungerford said he'll continue doing his job in a nonpartisan way. "I'm not going to change. My job is to do economic analysis on issues that the Congress is comparing and quite frankly, I'm going to continue doing that. That's my job," he said.

The *Times* reported that Hungerford has given \$5,000 this election cycle to Democrats. HuffPost asked if that biased his report in any way. "I leave any political baggage at the door when I walk into my office and pick it up on my way out. I'm there to provide help to members of both parties, which I do," Hungerford said.

20121101-16 20:56 Tom "Team X-T.R.E.M.E. Warrior INDOC Class 003-12"
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X-T.R.E.M.E.: for wounded warriors.

Look at this photo closely! Do you have what it takes?

"Team X-T.R.E.M.E. Warrior INDOC Class 003-12" by David Reeder, Kit Up!

Nov. 1, 2012, (http://kitup.military.com/2012/11/team-warrior-indoc-class-003-12.html?ESRC=sm_kitup.nl)

Team X-T.R.E.M.E.'s next Warrior INDOC (Class 003-12) begins Saturday 03 NOV 12 at approximately 0500 on Browns Island, Richmond VA. Warrior INDOC is a "...24 hour mental, physical and emotional evaluation designed to select new X-Athletes to don the gas mask and join [their] ranks."

I'll be surprised if you haven't seen at least a few pictures of Team X-T.R.E.M.E. floating around on Facebook or the 'net. They're powerful stuff. Team X-T.R.E.M.E. is a non-profit organization that supports wounded warriors. It provides a "complete cycle of rehabilitative solutions to wounded service member's of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns". Team members (all active and veteran military members) participate in athletic endurance events and races across the country to honor and bring attention to the sacrifice of wounded military personnel through feats of mental and physical endurance.

Their signature is the wearing of Avon C50 Gas Masks, which they wear to retain anonymity. They also used call-signs instead of their names on their name-tapes. As Jeremy Soles told me, it's about the mission, not the individual.

Team X-T.R.E.M.E. has a fully functioning board with staff and volunteers committed to creating rehabilitative program and opportunities to assist their wounded brethren.

Class 003-12 consists of ten veterans from across the country hoping to be one of three new team members selected on Sunday morning. Members come from US Army and Marine Corps SOF backgrounds, and include three wounded warriors and two females. They will endure numerous evolutions to determine their individual fortitude, endurance and team work. Candidates are briefed on the evolutions just prior to execution. They do not know the distance or the pass / fail criteria for any evolution, nor the number of evolutions. One example of a possible selection course would involve them masking up and rucking up with a heavy load of food, after which they'd be rucking through out the James River Park System over the course of several miles, dropping some of that weight off at the Central Virginia Food bank on the way. Another evolution would require the candidates to carry a simulated Wounded Warrior in a custom fabricated back pack system through another endurance course..



[20121101-17](#)

21:43

SteveB

Re: "Team X-T.R.E.M.E. Warrior INDOC Class 003-12" (reply to Tom, above)

Very cool! Thanks, Tom.

You Check it Out First, then see if it's "True or False?!" ;-)

"Was Obama Wearing an Earpiece During the Third Debate?" by N.P. Contompasis, The Left-Watch

Oct. 23, 2012, (<http://shutking.blogspot.com/2012/10/president-obama-was-wearing-earpiece.html>)

President Obama Was Wearing an Earpiece During the Monday Debate - Further Explains Why He Had no Answers During First Debate - The Earpiece Had Problems



THIS PICTURE WAS POSTED ON DRUDGE FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS - WAKE UP AMERICA - OBAMA IS A FRAUD

President Obama was wearing an earpiece during the last debate. He was advised on what to say using this earpiece.

Is that fair America???

Did Mitt Romney wear an earpiece, no of course not!



Again, this President will stop at nothing to stay in power.

Obama's earpiece and wireless transmitter failed during debate (first debate)

As the mainstream media discuss theories of what happened in last night's debate, I think a very clear explanation is obvious. President Obama's wireless transmitter and earpiece that allow him to receive answers from his handlers was malfunctioning during the debate.

20121101-19	23:03	SteveB	Re: "Was Obama Wearing an Earpiece During the Third Debate?" (reply to Tom, above)
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Haha! Impossible!

R0mney and his "handlers" might be liars and incredibly stupid, but they aren't that stupid! Neither are the news media or the American people.

I know this isn't definitive proof, but your side offers even less proof, check it out:

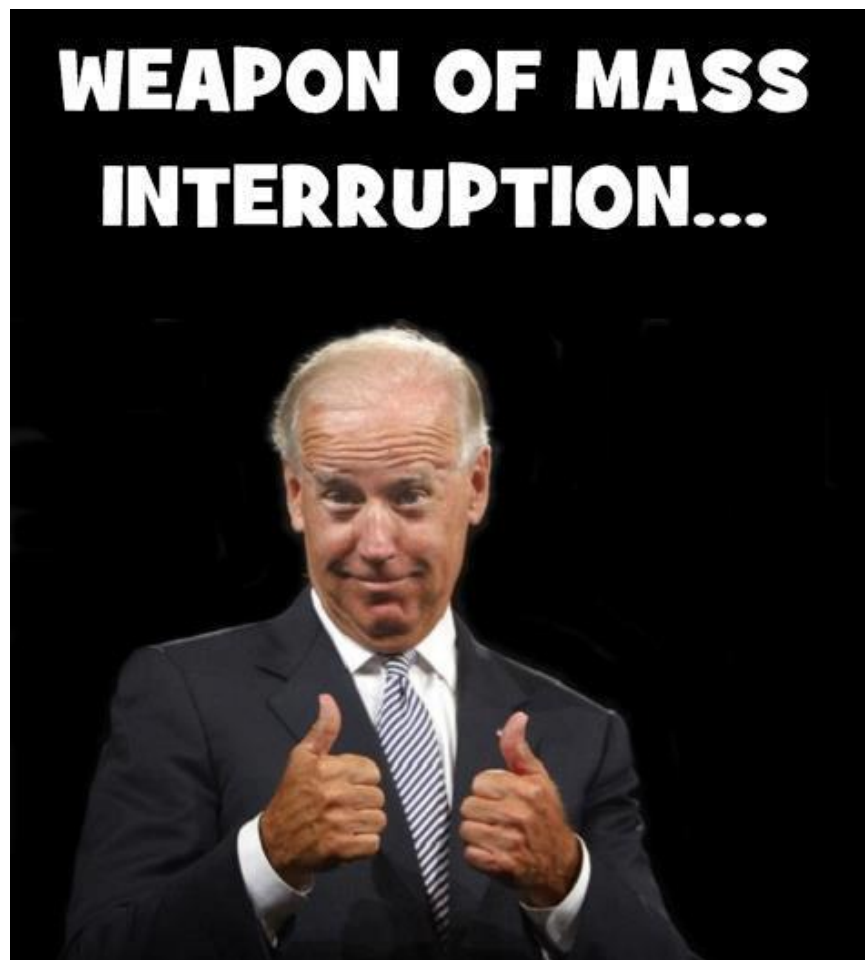
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/photos/earpiece.asp>.

R0mney and his supporters will stop at nothing to get the liar elected! :-)

Keep trying!

20121101-20	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #14
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<http://shutking.blogspot.com/2012/11/time-to-leave-mr-president.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.

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



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

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.



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.



20121102-01 11:44 Alex Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #261)

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.

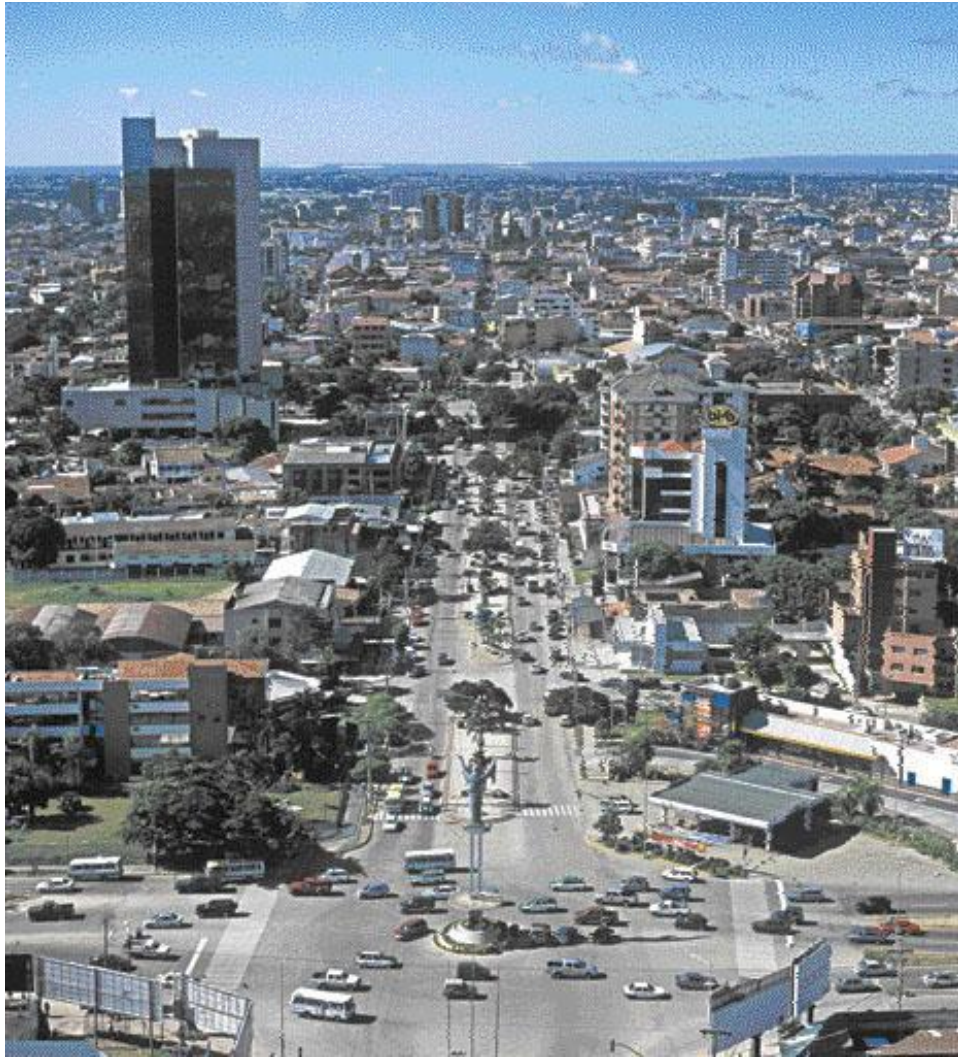
20121103-01 07:12 SteveB Re: Get Out and Vote! (reply to Alex, above)

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!



Shrimp Taco Plate

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)

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.

20121103-02

07:42

MarthaH

"Outside Spending High in Final Weeks of Indiana's Senate Race between Richard Mourdock, Joe Donnelly"

"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.

Mourdock 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	"Mourdock Abortion Quote Defining Indiana Senate Race"
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"Mourdock Abortion Quote Defining Indiana Senate Race" by Tom Lobianco, AP

Nov. 2, 2012, (<http://www2.tbo.com/news/politics/2012/nov/02/mourdock-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.

Mourdock'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.

Mourdock 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.

20121103-04	17:56	MarthaH	"From Texas to Vermont, State Elections Decide Health Care's Future"
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"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."

20121104-01 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://todayonthe-trail.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.

20121104-02	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."

20121104-03	10:06	SteveB	Life with Marci
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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 indignantly, 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. [Hilarious! –SteveB]

Video-2 ("Romney vs. Sandy"): http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZENtH3psXl4.

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 nellies) 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.

A T-Shirt For You:



"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.

20121104-10 23:56 Marci Photo: Special Moments #15



20121104-11 23:57 Dennis Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #10

Caskets found as workers demolish mausoleum

We had to flea anyone was buried there.

By William H. Wines
Special to The Journal

When men a masonry grade mausoleum set on a granite site in Hudson's Riverfront Country, a monthly ritual here gave of dirt remained fixed.

Crews completed the German King of the mausoleum built by the century-old mason Barney Lantry and spent the more than 30 years.

Started under the name of each one four months that previously being the mausoleum of Lantry's family; perhaps to Lantry himself.

Discovery of the vaults this work was just one more chapter of a bizarre story.

"We had no idea anyone was buried there," explained Thomas Kahan, director of excavations for the Hudson-Catholic Church.

"We have been seen in crypts in the mausoleum. Did we had opened all, but they were empty," he said. "But, when we entered what we thought was the foundation slab for the crypts, we found another six crypts, but only under 3 inches of concrete."

The crypts — no one yet knows who is in them — were covered with concrete work crews and then removed with earth, Kahan said. Just long the new crypts, the graves were left in place.

The mausoleum was demolished because it had become too grimy, Kahan said.

"It had an interior marble ceiling and marble walls and, because of freezing and thawing, they had fallen in the floor — but there was still debris hanging from the ceiling. The building was falling apart and it was dangerous."

And Lantry, although he obviously 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 Berlin, said Barney Lantry was a steel fabricator who was born in New York and later moved to Florida in the 1930s.

He was a standout captain for several years on the Montgomery Street and began work on railroad construction in the 1910s.

In 1917 he moved to Kansas, bought a 160-acre quarry and built stone bridge abutments for a railroad. Berlin said Lantry was the first to use in Kansas at the time of his death.

According to Berlin, "Barney died at 80 in Kansas. But he was buried in Hudson. After the body of his father, his mother and his children, because she had such a hard life, Barney wanted when he was young that he would take good care of his family."

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

The mausoleum had the name "Lantry" carved over its door and, Kahan said, he will soon likely have that stone slab placed on a concrete base at the site.

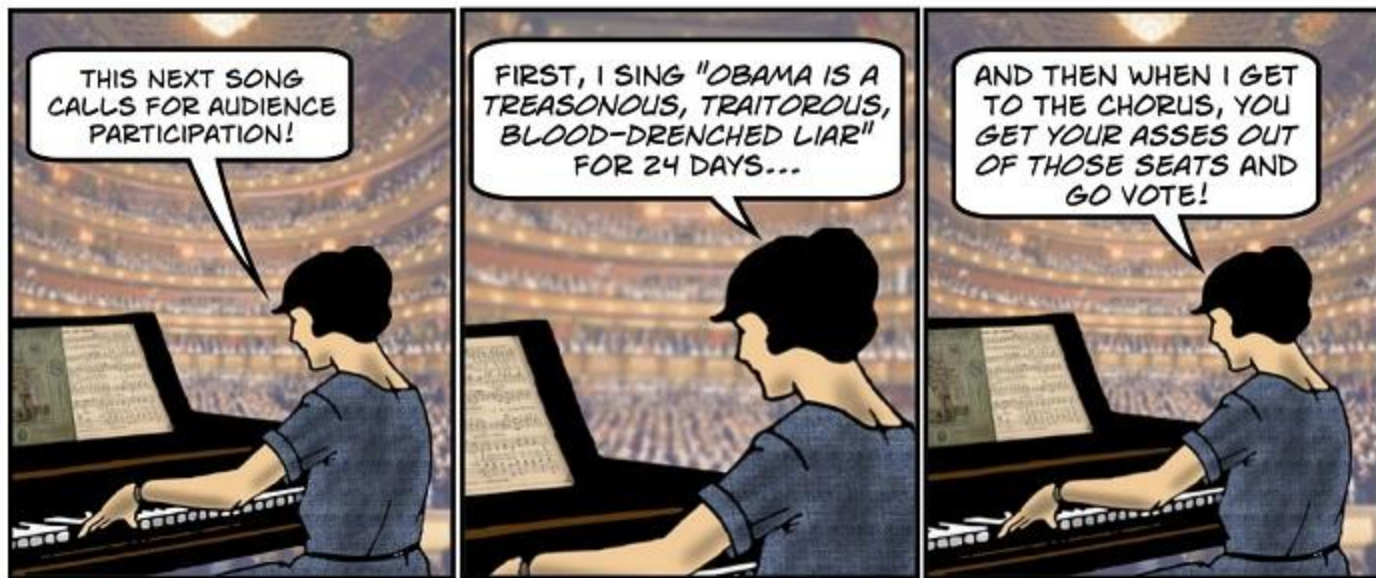
The Lantry mausoleum could no longer, it had a mystery behind.

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

The mausoleum had the name "Lantry" carved over its door and, Kahan said, he will soon likely have that stone slab placed on a concrete base at the site.

Hope n' Change

HopeNChangeCartoons.com / ©2012 by Stilton Jarlsberg



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



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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #263 — NOV. 6, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

R.I.P., Mittens!

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

"Let the auto industry go bankrupt," indeed, Mitt! Thank you, Ohio! As for today's articles:

NAIL ON THE HEAD,
ENOUGH SAID.
NOW GO VOTE!



"Mitt Romney's Campaign Insults Voters" by *The Washington Post* Editorial Board

Nov. 2, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mitt-romneys-election-campaign-insults-voters/2012/11/02/69fcc1fc-2428-11e2-9313-3c7f59038d93_story.html?wprss=rss_opinions&tid=pp_widget)

Through all the flip-flops, there has been one consistency in the campaign of Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney: a contempt for the electorate.

How else to explain his refusal to disclose essential information? Defying recent bipartisan tradition, he failed to release the names of his bundlers — the high rollers who collected hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations. He never provided sufficient tax returns to show voters how he became rich.

How, other than an assumption that voters are too dim to remember what Mr. Romney has said across the years and months, to account for his breathtaking ideological shifts? He was a friend of immigrants, then a scourge of immigrants, then again a friend. He was a Kissingerian foreign policy realist, then a McCain-like hawk, then a purveyor of peace. He pioneered Obamacare, he detested Obamacare, then he found elements in it to cherish. Assault weapons were bad, then good. Abortion was okay, then bad. Climate change was an urgent problem; then, not so much. Hurricane cleanup was a job for the states, until it was once again a job for the feds.

The same presumption of gullibility has infused his misleading commercials (see: Jeep jobs to China) and his refusal to lay out an agenda. Mr. Romney promised to replace the Affordable Care Act but never said with what. He promised an alternative to President Obama's lifeline to young, undocumented immigrants but never deigned to describe it.

And then there has been his chronic, baldly dishonest defense of mathematically impossible budget proposals. He promised to cut income tax rates without exploding the deficit or tilting the tax code toward the rich — but he refused to say how he could bring that off. When challenged, he cited "studies" that he maintained proved him right. But the studies were a mix of rhetoric, unrealistic growth projections and more serious economics that actually proved him wrong.

This last is important — maybe the crux of the next four years. History has shown that it's a lot easier to cut taxes than to reduce spending. Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush promised to do both, managed to do only the first and (with plenty of help from Congress) greatly increased the national debt.

Now Mr. Romney promises to reduce income tax rates by one-fifth — for the rich, that means from 35 percent to 28 percent — and to raise defense spending while balancing the budget. To do so, he would reduce other spending — unspecified — and take away deductions — unspecified. One of the studies he cited, by Harvard economist Martin Feldstein, said Mr. Romney could make the tax math work by depriving every household earning \$100,000 or more of all of its charitable deductions, mortgage-interest deductions and deductions for state and local income taxes.

Does Mr. Romney favor ending those popular tax breaks? He won't say. But he did take issue with Mr. Feldstein's definition of the middle class: Mr. Romney said he would protect households earning \$250,000 or less. In which case the Feldstein study did not vindicate the Romney arithmetic — it refuted it. Yet the candidate has continued to cite the study.

Within limits, all candidates say and do what they have to say and do to win. Mr. Obama also has dodged serious interviews and news conferences. He has offered few specifics for a second-term agenda. He, too, aired commercials that distorted his opponent's statements.

But Mr. Obama has a record; voters know his priorities. His budget plan is inadequate, but it wouldn't make things worse.

Mr. Romney, by contrast, seems to be betting that voters have no memories, poor arithmetic skills and a general inability to look behind the curtain. We hope the results Tuesday prove him wrong.

[I don't think I have ever read such a scathing editorial condemning a leading politician. Amazing, yet completely true! Exactly what a liar deserves! The article below details the reasons why we won't have Mitt to kick around

anymore. And the author doesn't even mention one of Mitt's hugest gaffes—the infamous, candidate-killing, elitist, surreptitious “47%” video! Oh, the many errors! LOL! –SteveB]

“R.I.P., Mitt Romney” by Robert Shrum, The Daily Beast

Nov. 2, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/02/r-i-p-mitt-romney.html>)

Mitt made multiple mistakes that will lead to his defeat on Tuesday. Some of them date all the way back to 2008.)

The campaign has come down to a race between Mitt's media and Mitt's mistakes—and the mistakes are winning.

Republican presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney sits aboard his campaign plane on November 2, 2012 en route to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (Justin Sullivan / Getty Images)

We have now crossed the billion dollar mark in ad purchases. In Ohio alone, the two sides, Super PACs and all, are spending \$30 million in the closing week—and in the battleground states overall, Romney forces are outspending Obama by \$30 million.

But the contest is not as unbalanced as the numbers. The Obama money goes further because more of the total buy has been placed by the campaign itself, which by law pays less for television time than outside groups. Obama's strategists also got more for less than the Romney enterprise by buying well in advance, when the so-called lowest unit rate was lower. In any event, the airwaves in the swing states are saturated. The Thursday before the election, the noon news on the CBS station in Columbus, Ohio, featured 22 political spots one after another. A lot of it, perhaps most of it, is so much electoral wallpaper.

What matters more is what happened months or even years ago, when Mitt Romney inflicted serial damage on himself that can't be wiped away by a last-minute ad barrage or a barnstorming tour through the final hours.

Go all the way back to Nov. 18, 2008, when Romney wrote that op-ed in *The New York Times* headlined: “Let Detroit Go Bankrupt.” Few pieces have had as long or relevant a political life. Michigan, Mitt's original home state, and Ohio, home to 850,000 auto industry-related jobs, have proved stubbornly resistant to a Republican nominee who seems so conspicuously hostile to their livelihoods. If the President carries both states, Romney's prospects next Tuesday look about as promising as the Edsel's in the 1950s. For those too young to remember it, the car was a landmark flop. Wikipedia offers a commonly accepted explanation: it was “a supreme example of the corporate culture's failure to understand American consumers.”

Romney's op-ed was a supreme example of a corporate guy's failure to understand American voters. He can quibble that he favored “a managed bankruptcy”—without the use of federal funds. The Obama campaign—and most experts—respond that in the depth of the financial crisis, there was no private capital available to keep the auto companies in business while they were reorganized. That's true, but almost beside the point. What's indelible, immediately apprehensible, persistently top-of-mind is the headline itself. Romney could have claimed he didn't write it; he didn't. He could have argued it wasn't what he meant. Instead, he doubled down, telling an interviewer: “That's exactly what I said—the headline you read—‘Let Detroit Go Bankrupt.’”

In a last-ditch attempt to crack Ohio and Michigan, Romney has now resorted to advertising an outright lie—that Chrysler's Jeep division will soon move its jobs from the United States to China. The media has debunked the fiction, which was borrowed from the fantasy precincts of the rightwing blogs. The Detroit press called it “false” in a news story— not just on the editorial page. TV stations have scorned the Romney spot—at times, pre-emptively refuting it just before it airs. When Bozo the Trump tweeted the lie, a Chrysler Vice President swiftly tweeted back: “You are full of shit.” The Obama response ad was easy to make, entirely believable—and of course, showed a grimly grinning Romney letting Detroit go bankrupt. Maybe he's created a new watchword and a warning for Presidential politics: Would that mine opponent would write an op-ed.

Now fast forward nearly four years to last summer in a second, probably fateful Mitt mistake. It fits with the first one—and reinforces the narrative of an out-of-touch, plutocratic candidate who doesn't care about working families

or the middle class. Romney let the Obama campaign pummel and define him as the profiteering-job destroyer from Bain. Eighteen years after this attack shattered his Senate bid against Ted Kennedy, you would think Mitt had an answer other than nostrums about "free-enterprise." The fact that he didn't offer one suggests that there isn't a convincing one. When he was asked on CBS, he simply brushed the question aside: the President is "grasping at any straw he can find."

If the Obama of the second debate had showed up to the first, the election would have been over.

After a summer of dithering, the Romney campaign fled to the relatively contentless website, www.sterlingbusinesscareer.com, defending his tenure at Bain. This is an inexplicable case of lame and latter-day rather than rapid response. According to Politico, the site has attracted "far fewer than the number of eyeballs as the Bain attacks on the airwaves." Ceding the ground here left Romney's favorable-unfavorable rates upside down with swing voters from Las Vegas to Toledo—and left him with a steep hill to climb. Even as he made progress, which he finally did, he has been struggling to erase the deficit.

The struggle intensified when he selected Paul Ryan as his running mate instead of the safer, Ohio-friendly Senator Rob Portman—the choice of most of Romney's advisers. Ryan, who has proposed to replace Medicare with Vouchercare, instantly threatened the nominee's margin with seniors, who are essential to assembling a barely sufficient GOP coalition. Some Republicans rejoice that their vulnerability here has been blunted by charging—falsely by the way—that Obamacare cut more than \$700 billion from Medicare (the cuts were in excessive payments to entities like insurance companies.) But the GOP campaign has had to spend time and millions of dollars on this—and the hard evidence suggests that for them the battle is being lost. The latest Democracy Corps survey reports: "[On] Medicare ... Obama [is] trusted by 14 points over Romney in the states where the issue has been contested in advertising from both sides."

If the Republicans lose Florida—and when Obama holds on to senior-rich Pennsylvania, Mitt's last, least hope—put it down to the Ryan mistake. The choice didn't even achieve one effect its champions insistently predicted—that it would energize the Sanfordized Romney. Instead of Romney being Ryanized, Ryan has been Romneyized. He's become a bland non-presence—which, given the sharp edge of his views, may be the better part of rightwing valor.

Then came other big mistakes, interrupted by one notable success.

The convention, which was supposed to introduce and humanize the Republican nominee on its last night, morphed into a Saturday Night Live skit. It was an elementary failure of event planning to let an unscripted Clint Eastwood conduct a farcical debate with an empty chair- and then to push real-people testimonials to Romney's character out of prime time so Florida Sen. Marco Rubio could talk more about himself than Mitt. There was no bounce—and a marked decline for the Republican nominee after a bravura Democratic Convention a week later in Charlotte.

If the Obama of the second debate had showed up to the first, the election would have been over then and there. But he didn't; it was his mistake and Romney's singular moment. But the Republican seemed to have no coherent plan for his second and third encounters with the President other than insisting that the race was simply a referendum: If you're kind of dissatisfied with the economy, give me a try; after all, I am in the midst of a moderate makeover. This typifies the pervasive error of the Romney strategy. The Obama forces cast the election as a choice: who's on your side—on tax fairness, on fighting for the middle class, on equality for women and all Americans, on decency towards immigrants? The President vigorously prosecuted his case in the last two debates- and Romney ended up on the wrong side on choice after choice.

I had predicted that Mitt could win the first debate—and he clearly did. But I argued that this would not change the structure of the race unless Obama stumbled again—and he didn't. The Romney "momentum," which was less than it was cracked up to be, has long since stopped for all but the delusional and disingenuous Dick Morris, the turncoat Clinton adviser who laughably foresees a Romney "landslide." I guess this is what Rupert Murdoch pays him for; at least, Morris could have gotten the electoral votes right for the states he mentioned. Karl Rove, now also of Fox, has offered up more modulated happy-talk. But as Romney desperately reaches for Pennsylvania and Minnesota, virtually no one believes the spin—apparently not even Newt Gingrich, whose blog slipped up and posted a prediction that "Obama is going to win."

Romney's colossal mistake on Libya in the second debate also prepared the way for the real October surprise, the bromance between the President and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Mitt was slapped down for politicizing Libya in that debate—and reproved by moderator Candy Crowley for being outright wrong on whether Obama had called the attack an “act of terror.” The GOP nominee refused to venture back into the controversy the next time the two candidates met. He had disabled himself; despite the fevered advice of the neocons, and the relentless conspiracy-mongering of the embittered John McCain, Romney was quiescent. And the real issue at stake wasn't just foreign policy, where Obama is far ahead, but ultimately the quality and character of his Presidential leadership. The response to Hurricane Sandy was the sequel— and the President's most powerful and persistent validator was Romney's convention keynoter, Chris Christie. He showered praise on Obama as “wonderful”—and added: “If you think right now I give a damn about presidential politics, then you don't know me.”

I think I know who's going to win when I hear the bloviating Rush Limbaugh denounces Christie as “a Greek column” for Obama's reelection. And you can measure the desperation of the Romney Campaign not only in his sudden apparition in Pennsylvania—if he can't make it in Ohio, he has to try somewhere else—but in the race-baiting of the bumptious John Sununu, Romney's co-chair, who attributed Colin Powell's endorsement of the President to the fact that they're both African-Americans.

Whether this was intentional or a mistake, it was plainly shameful. And as I have argued before, it was a mistake for Mitt's strategists to invest so much in the wallpaper of late advertising while neglecting field organization—where Obama has a deep-rooted and potentially decisive edge.

Finally, Romney made some unavoidable mistakes embedded in the DNA of today's GOP. He assumed, correctly, that in the primaries he had to pander on social issues to the religious right— and on immigration to a party that has become the modern incarnation of nativism. He can plead in mitigation that he had no choice—and if that is so, look for another Republican defeat in 2016. On Nov. 7, Romney may be asking himself: What does it profit a Mitt to gain a nomination and lose his chance to make history in the White House?

Still, the fault is not just in his party but in himself. The Romney campaign has been a trail of missteps—and the Obama managers masterfully took advantage of this and took control of the race. So let's thank Mitt for making his own mistakes. As we may have noticed, he's very good at it. Romney — R.I.P.



20121105-02 09:19 Pam Re: "The Morning After the Morning After" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #262)

This is excellent. I'm going to forward it to the world. :-)

20121105-01 07:27 MarthaH "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions"

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"Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" by Michael Beckel and Reity O'Brien, The Center for Public Integrity/NBC News

Nov. 5, 2012, (<http://openchannel.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/05/14928532-elections-biggest-corporate-donor-an-enigma-with-53-million-in-contributions?lite>)

The biggest corporate contributor in the 2012 election so far doesn't appear to make anything — other than very large contributions to a conservative super PAC.

Specialty Group Inc., of Knoxville, Tenn., donated nearly \$5.3 million between Oct. 1 and Oct. 11 to FreedomWorks for America, which is affiliated with former GOP House Majority Leader Dick Armey.

FreedomWorks' super PAC has spent more than \$19 million on political advertising, including \$1.7 million on Oct. 29 opposing Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat running for Congress in Illinois against Tea Party favorite Joe Walsh, a first-term incumbent.

The buy was more than four times greater than the group's previous largest single expenditure.

Specialty was formed only a month ago. Its "principal office" is a private home in Knoxville. It has no website. And the only name associated with it is that of its registered agent, a lawyer whose phone number, listed in a legal directory, is disconnected.

Specialty is the biggest and most mysterious corporate donor to super PACs, but it is not unique.

A new analysis by the Center for Public Integrity and the Center for Responsive Politics shows that companies have contributed roughly \$75 million to super PACs in the 2012 election cycle.

Super PACs, which were created in the wake of the controversial U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision in 2010, can accept donations of unlimited size from corporations, unions and individuals. They spend the funds mostly on negative advertising.

The centers' analysis found that 85 percent of money from companies flowed to GOP-aligned groups, 11 percent went to Democratic groups and the remainder went to organizations not aligned with either party.

Prior to *Citizens United*, corporate spending on candidate advertising was not allowed. The decision raised fears that massive donations from corporate treasuries would flood the election in 2012.

In fact, the largest amounts have come from wealthy businessmen. However, about 11 percent of the \$660 million raised by all super PACs through mid-October has come from company treasuries — mostly privately held businesses, sometimes organized as limited partnerships or limited liability companies.

High-profile donors

Yet a few high-profile companies haven't been afraid to jump into the partisan fray.

In mid-October, oil and gas giant Chevron donated \$2.5 million to a super PAC close to House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, called the Congressional Leadership Fund, which has aired a bevy of ads attacking Democratic House candidates.

Oxbow Carbon, the energy company owned by billionaire William Koch, the lesser-known brother of conservative industrialists David and Charles Koch, and Contran Corp., the business of Republican super donor Harold Simmons of Texas, have both steered significant sums to the coffers of super PACs.

Oxbow Carbon has donated \$4.25 million to GOP super PACs, making it the No. 2 corporate donor to super PACs, while Contran, No. 3, has donated more than \$3 million to Republican-aligned groups.

Another top corporate donor is a retirement community in central Florida known as The Villages — a Republican stronghold where Paul Ryan held his first campaign rally the day after GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney named him as his running mate.

Developer H. Gary Morse created The Villages more than 50 years ago, and this election cycle, more than a dozen companies connected to Morse and The Villages have collectively steered \$1.6 million to GOP super PACs. That's in addition to the \$450,000 that Morse and his wife, Renee, have donated from their personal funds.

Notably, Morse is also the Florida co-chairman of the Romney campaign, and during the Republican National Convention, Morse's Cayman Island-flagged yacht, named "Cracker Bay," was the site of a soiree for some of Romney's top donors and fundraisers.

Other high-profile corporate donors include:

- The Apollo Group, a for-profit education company, which gave \$75,000 to the pro-Romney Restore Our Future and another \$5,000 to JAN PAC, the super PAC of Arizona's Republican Gov. Jan Brewer;
- Convenience store giant 7-Eleven, which donated \$25,000 to Hoosiers for Jobs, a super PAC that supported Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Ind., during his failed primary campaign;
- Hamburger chain White Castle, which gave \$25,000 to the Congressional Leadership Fund;
- Defense contractor B/E Aerospace, which gave \$50,000 to Restore Our Future;
- Payday lender QC Holdings, which gave \$25,000 to Restore Our Future; and
- Weaver Holdings, the parent company of the Indiana-popcorn company known for its brands "Pop Weaver" and "Trail's End," sold by Boy Scouts across the country, which has donated \$2.4 million to American Crossroads, the super PAC founded by GOP strategists Karl Rove and Ed Gillespie.

Only a few other Fortune 500 companies have joined Chevron, which ranks third on the elite list behind only Exxon Mobil and Walmart, in making contributions to super PACs, and none has given as much as the energy giant.

Caesar's Entertainment Corp., for instance, ranked by Fortune at No. 288, has given \$150,000 to Majority PAC, a group that is spending to help Democrats retain the majority in the U.S. Senate.

"Fortune 500 companies are the least likely to be the ones who will be out in front giving publicly," said Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California-Irvine. "They want to have influence over elections and elected officials, but they don't want to alienate customers."

By category, companies in the finance, insurance and real estate sector donated more than \$15 million, "general business sector" firms gave about \$14 million and energy sector companies contributed more than \$11 million, according to the analysis.

Unions, by contrast, have donated about \$60 million to super PACs, from their treasuries or political action committees.

The top union donors include the National Education Association (\$9 million), the United Auto Workers (\$8.6 million) and the AFL-CIO (\$6.4 million). All of these groups have spent heavily on Democratic candidates.

Money 'hiding in plain sight'

Additional corporate money may be flowing through politically active nonprofits that don't disclose their funders.

"I strongly suspect that most of the corporate money is hiding in plain sight in trade associations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce," said Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, a professor at the Stetson University College of Law.

For its part, the Chamber — which collects dues from companies such as Aetna, Chevron, Dow Chemical and Microsoft — has reported spending more than \$35 million on political ads, which have overwhelmingly favored Republican politicians.

Facts about Specialty Group Inc. are scant.

Records filed with the Tennessee Secretary of State's office show it registered on Sept. 26, listing 61-year-old attorney William S. Rose, Jr., as its agent. Rose's \$634,000 home — about a 30-minute drive from downtown Knoxville — is listed as its "principal office."

Yet the company's money has made a huge impact.

After the cash infusion from Specialty, FreedomWorks produced numerous advertisements, including one that blasts Duckworth as a crony of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who was impeached and sentenced to 14 years in federal prison following a corruption scandal.

Duckworth is a double amputee and Iraq War veteran. She headed Illinois' Department of Veteran Affairs and later served in President Barack Obama's U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

FreedomWorks' new ad features grainy footage of Duckworth and audio of her saying, "Gov. Blagojevich has charged me with the mission of taking care of my buddies, and that is what I'm doing." But it leaves out the fact that when she said "buddies," she was referring to other veterans and members of the military.

FreedomWorks for America treasurer and legal counsel Ryan Hecker says the organization only supports candidates who are "ethically right."

Anton Becker, Duckworth's campaign press secretary, says it's conservative outside groups who are peddling "lies."

When asked for details about Specialty Group and the source of its contributions, Hecker expressed ignorance, and doubted that voters care about where the money came from.

"We are in compliance with the law, and we are doing what we can to report to the Federal Election Commission," he said. "If there's an issue with Specialty, it's their issue. It's not our issue."

(Andrea Fuller of the Center for Public Integrity contributed to this report. This story is a collaboration between the Center for Public Integrity and the Center for Responsive Politics.)

[20121105-03](#)

09:26 Pam

Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Neither candidate has said much, if anything, about campaign finance reform, but it's a huge issue. If we don't have some laws with teeth that bite, American is going to be up for sale to the highest contributor. It may be there

already. I'm so disgusted with politics, politicians, and the ENDLESS coverage of the campaign, I could spit. Did you all see Mitch McConnell and Harry Reid on "60 Minutes" last night? Two grey-faced, mush-mouthed, blame shifters, and weasels side by side. What a picture. I hear a lot against Nancy Pelosi around here, but I think she just might be our salvation. She nailed it on "The Daily Show" last week.

20121105-18	16:24	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
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In most of the world, any election is about two months, tops! I'm completely sick of the process myself.

All it would take is a simple law to fix the marathon. I guess Michele Bachmann has been running since her reelection! Imagine!

True election form, true campaign finance reform will be a tough nut. But it would help to limit the debacle to just two months!

But, regardless of who gets elected, I don't see much prospect for progress on any of our many huge problems.

Fortunately, the cookie/salteña/ice cream business is starting to take off...

20121105-07	11:48	SteveG	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to all, above)
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Make you proud of the Supreme Court?

Make you proud of our political system?

Election of the best candidates for the American people?

20121105-08	12:27	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)
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It's a disgrace and an embarrassment. I really believed America was better than this. I recently heard a piece on TV about China and how corrupt their government is. It sickens me to think that we might be no better than they.

20121105-09	12:53	SteveG	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)
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If we buy the candidates, they sign pledges not to do certain things if elected (not raise taxes), then our elected officials are bought and paid for before they take an oath to serve people – which means they do not serve the people,, they serve the sugar daddy.

On Wednesday or so we will know who/whom we have bought and then the question will be how much did the American people pay.

"60 Minutes" interview with Harry and Mitch was a joke – that is what I get for high expectations.

If it were not for granddaughters I would be trying really hard to sell Snicker Doodles – oh yeah, made some yesterday – good cookies.

[20121105-14](#) 15:40 SteveB Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)

Steve, great to hear from you! I thought maybe you got lost on your return trip from Indiana...

We are the USC...the United States of Corruption!

They are a good cookie! Very old-fashioned too! There's a job for you here anytime.

[20121105-20](#) 17:23 SteveG Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveB, above)

Wyoming was rough – snow the first half and brown outs on the windshield when people passed – cleared the windshield in time once to miss a car sliding sideways by about 10 feet. Second half of Wyoming was dense fog – just follow the taillights – only about 2 car length of vision.

[20121105-10](#) 13:13 Pam Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to SteveG, above)

I remember making snickerdoodles in 8th grade Home Ec. They were my favorites, followed closely by peanut butter.

One of my former students has an autistic son; he must be about 8 or 9 by now. She posted on FB that if Romney wins, she and her husband may move to England, which is where her husband is from. They'd have better access to support and services for their son there than here under the Romney/Ryan "plan." I wonder if you described the health care systems of Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Canada, even England, and asked an individual American to choose where he'd prefer to live with what they'd say. The worst thing about our democracy is that most people are so stupid. Can you tell I've about had it?!

[20121105-16](#) 16:12 SteveB Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)

I actually enjoy it when you've "about had it", Pam.

But I share your frustration and worry! I hope you get some sleep the next two nights.

I'm tossing and turning already!

Good luck to us all! (except you-know-who)

[20121105-11](#) 13:22 Art Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Pam, above)

Need to go rescue another dog but in some ways this election is the coming together of the perfect political storm. No one in their right mind with an ounce of intelligence could support the Romney Republican position. It simply makes no sense. Cut taxes, increase Defense spending (which is the vast lion's share of discretionary spending, and "trust me" on the deficit. Absolutely insane.

But what we have is a huge rise in something we thought had gone away - racism. Couple that with religious fanaticism and the other candidate having black skin, and we have the race razor close. It is, as Pam says, fueled by outright stupidity. Just listen to some of the interviews with tea baggers and the stupidity is just amazing. You try not to say it publicly but there it is.

Vote!

PS: I forgot to add the huge influx of corporate money to buy the election. Over a \$1B spent on this election. Why? What do they plan to gain?

20121105-12	13:44	Pam	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Art, above)
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It's obscene. We should hang our heads in shame. I saw the end of *Judgment at Nuremberg* on TV over the weekend. What a powerful movie that is! The part I saw was about how ordinary, decent citizens could allow such monstrosities to occur. Burt Lancaster, if you recall, explains that he didn't think the madness would last, that it would never go to the extremes it did, and that he wasn't able, as an individual, to change things. I hear all of us ranting and raving about what's going on in our country, and I feel like a helpless German in 1938, who saw what was coming, tried to warn others, and failed utterly. I tell myself things couldn't really become as bad as I fear, but what if they can?

And Art, you are right about racism. It's sickening.

20121105-17	16:17	SteveB	Re: "Election's Biggest Corporate Donor an Enigma with \$5.3 Million in Contributions" (reply to Art, above)
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I think I read over \$1 billion on each presidential candidate alone...

20121105-04	09:34	MarthaH	"Election Day: Five Important Questions That Remain"
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The PS questions, a reminder:

"Election Day: Five Important Questions That Remain" by Chris Cillizza, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 4, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/five-important-questions-that-remain-for-tuesdays-election/2012/11/04/8e830e06-268e-11e2-9972-71bf64ea091c_story.html)



In just over two days we will (probably) know the identity of the man who will be president of the United States for the next four years.

Even though the end of this long, strange trip is nearly here, questions remain about the size and shape of the electorate, the true swing-state battlefield on which President Obama and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney will fight over these next two days, and the factors that will ultimately push the sliver of undecided voters to make up their minds.

We lay out five of the most pressing questions:

1. Enthusiasm or organization?

Most polls suggest that Republican voters are more amped to vote in this election than are Democrats. According to *Washington Post*-ABC News tracking-poll data, 80 percent of Republican adults are registered to vote and are absolutely certain to vote or have already voted, compared with 70 percent of Democratic adults. But even the most loyal Romney allies acknowledge privately that the ground operation Obama has built over the past six years — and honed over the past four — is superior to what the Republican presidential nominee has been able to put together since emerging as his party's pick in April. What Tuesday will prove is what matters more: an enthusiasm advantage or an organizational edge. Conventional wisdom dictates that either could boost a candidate's showing by a point or two. But if enthusiasm is working for Romney and organization is working for Obama, do they offset each other and turn this question into a push? And if organization and enthusiasm cancel each other out, then who wins?

2. Is the playing field expanding?

In the last 10 days of the campaign, Romney and his allies have made investments of time and money in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Minnesota amid polling that suggests all three are single-digit contests. (Pennsylvania appears to be the closest, while Michigan still looks like a long-ish shot.) Romney staged a rally in Pennsylvania on Sunday — his first of the general-election campaign — and his campaign is spending nearly \$2 million on TV ads in the Keystone State in the final week. But Pennsylvania has proved to be a Republican trap in recent presidential elections — GOP candidates have been able to earn 48 percent but never 50 percent plus one. (The last Republican to win Pennsylvania was George H.W. Bush in 1988; in the five elections since then, Republican nominees have averaged 43 percent of the vote.) Without

Pennsylvania, Romney faces a narrow path to 270 electoral votes — he all but has to win Florida, North Carolina, Virginia and Ohio. A win in Pennsylvania broadens that path considerably.

3. Where do independents end up?

The story of the past several elections has been the wide swings among independent voters. In 2004, George W. Bush (R) lost independents by one point to Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.). Four years later, Obama carried unaffiliated voters by eight points over Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). (The independent swings have been even more pronounced in midterm elections; in 2006, independents voted for Democratic candidates by 18 points but four years later went for Republican candidates by 19 points.) In Post-ABC tracking polls over the past 10 days, Obama has regularly trailed Romney among independents by double digits. But in Saturday's tracking, the incumbent had pulled into a tie with these voters. If independents do move to Obama in the race's final hours, expect much focus to fall on Hurricane Sandy and Obama's handling of the disaster. Independents love the idea of politicians working together to solve problems, and Obama's trip to New Jersey to tour the devastation with Republican Gov. Chris Christie could have moved some unaffiliated voters to his side.

4. Will young people support Obama again?

And in what numbers? One of the biggest myths of the 2008 election was that Obama drastically increased the number of 18-to-29-year-olds who voted. In 2004, 18-to-29-year-olds constituted 17 percent of the electorate. They made up 18 percent of it in 2008. The difference? Kerry won that youthful age group by nine points nationally; Obama won it by 34 points. Given that, the key for Obama on Tuesday is not to expand the share of the electorate that 18-to-29-year-olds make up but rather to ensure that it doesn't dip significantly, with the young people who vote doing so in something close to the percentages they did four years ago. Polling suggests that enthusiasm (as measured by likelihood to vote) among 18-to-29-year-olds has drifted off from four years ago, but the Obama campaign has placed a giant bet on being able to motivate and turn out these younger voters.

5. How big is the gender gap?

Democrats have spent lots of time in this election driving a narrative that Republicans are conducting a "war on women," pointing to some of the policies espoused by GOP candidates on contraception and abortion — not to mention decidedly impolitic comments made by Senate candidates in Missouri and Indiana on rape. But national polling suggests that Romney is trailing Obama by mid- to high single digits among women — a margin that would rank among the smallest gender gaps in modern presidential history if it holds. McCain lost women by 13 points in 2008, George W. Bush lost them by 11 points in 2000, and Bob Dole lost the female vote by a whopping 16 points in 1996. Democrats insist — and some polling data confirm — that Romney is having more trouble among female voters in targeted swing states where the Obama ad onslaught on Romney's record has been focused.

20121105-05	09:40	MarthaH	Quotes: Political
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http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_politics.html#EbJx7hhai5XZT4zO.03

"Tons of great quotes here." —SteveB

"Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future." —John F. Kennedy

"The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." —John Kenneth Galbraith

D.I.Y. gone mad!



20121105-13

15:26 Ben

Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple

No time...no time...photo is a bit dodgy on iPhone 1 'cause subject was so dark. Would have been a good candidate for the iPhone 4s camera and an HDR (high dynamic range) image, had I had it in my pocket...

Yummy, of course, and bearably firey; it was a two-cups of water lunch.



Jerk Game Hen

20121105-15

15:50

SteveB

"Why Romney Is Unfit for the Presidency"

A true story about a snake... VOTE!

"Why Romney Is Unfit for the Presidency" by David Halperin, Huffington Post

Nov. 5, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/davidhalperin/romney-unfit-for-presidency_b_2076214.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

With polls opening in just a few hours, I want to say this to people who are undecided or lean Republican: Mitt Romney is not like Ronald Reagan or the Bushes or John McCain, all of whom were driven by values, whether you shared them or not. The charge that Romney is not a conservative or a moderate, but rather someone who will say almost anything and change his position to compete for votes is not just a stump speech line, it is borne out by the facts. But worse than that, the record shows that what Mitt Romney actually stands for, what he has built his career on, are the most destructive forms of economic activity: making a quick buck for consultants and money managers and using lobbying and campaign money to buy special breaks in Washington, while ignoring the harms done to U.S. jobs, economic growth, the budget deficit and honest dealing.

Mitt Romney did build Bain Capital which did, especially early on, help expand some businesses. But in many cases, Bain Capital didn't build anything. Instead, Bain was focused on making big profits for itself any way it could, and

often that meant borrowing huge sums to buy a company, laying off the workers, selling off the assets, dividing up the cash with the company management and leaving creditors, sometimes including taxpayers, with big losses. Remember in Wall Street when Gordon Gekko buys and loots Bluestar Airlines? That's about it.

But less well-known than the Bain saga is the fact that Mitt Romney is actively invested right now in a private equity firm, Solamere Capital, run by his son Tagg and his campaign finance director Spencer Zwick. Solamere, which has an investment relationship with Bain, invests in controversial industries like for-profit colleges and underground gas fracking. Some of these businesses, far from being about free market capitalism, depend on taxpayer money and, worse, on Washington lobbying to keep this money flowing. And a surprisingly large number of Romney's policy proposals would blatantly benefit Solamere and big Romney donors, including proposals that undermine fiscal responsibility, government accountability and common sense. The shameless nature of the relationship between the Romney presidential campaign and the Romney family business was underscored in June when Solamere held an investment conference on the same day, in the same place, as a retreat for big Romney donors. The presidency is a public trust, not a business opportunity.

Romney's behind-closed-doors contempt for the 47 percent of people who receive federal benefits -- veterans, seniors and others -- mirrors his winner-take-all, consequences-be-damned approach.

All the while, Romney has used special tax breaks to avoid the kind of tax rates that ordinary Americans face.

In the second debate last month, President Obama made clear why Romney's business approach is relevant to his fitness for the White House:

Governor Romney doesn't have a five-point plan. He has a one-point plan. And that plan is to make sure that folks at the top play by a different set of rules. That's been his philosophy in the private sector, that's been his philosophy as governor, that's been his philosophy as a presidential candidate. You can make a lot of money and pay lower tax rates than somebody who makes a lot less. You can ship jobs overseas and get tax breaks for it. You can invest in a company, bankrupt it, lay off the workers, strip away their pensions, and you still make money. That's exactly the philosophy that we've seen in place for the last decade. That's what's been squeezing middle class families. And we have fought back for four years to get out of that mess.

If you think Romney is ready to transcend his questionable business practices, roll up his sleeves and work across the aisle, consider that in his only political job, in one term as Massachusetts governor, Romney stood aloof from legislators, not deigning to learn their names and roping off a private elevator to keep them away. Clearly he just suffered through the degrading experience of running a state to build his resume for a White House run. His elitist disdain for those outside his circle would surely follow him to Washington.

Whatever your political philosophy, you should consider whether a candidate with that kind of experience and orientation should lead our nation. We have big problems to face -- in strengthening our economy and creating jobs, in dealing with the crises caused by crumbling infrastructure and devastating weather events, in addressing threats and opportunities overseas, and much more. I personally believe President Obama has risen to the challenges and deserves reelection. But even if Obama is not your man, even if you think the Republican Party deserves another shot at fixing our problems, wait until 2016. Because in 2012, the GOP has nominated a shallow opportunist who stands for nothing but his own advancement.

20121105-19	17:18	SteveG	Health Insurance & Voter Registration
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In October we got a letter from Humana, our insurance company through Medicare, that they were discontinuing the policy we had – now in search for coverage. Any ideas?

On August 10 I turned in my Indiana driver's license for a Washington license. The clerk asked if I wanted to register to vote and I replied "Yes". Today I found out I was not registered to vote. There is more than one way to cleanse out registered voters.

20121105-22 19:17 Pam Re: Health Insurance & Voter Registration (reply to SteveG, above)

I don't believe this! And Romney and Obama are supposedly neck-and-neck. You could move to Mexico and live cheaply, but then you might get caught up in a drug war. I'm so sorry, Steve. This is an outrage. You ought to sue somebody.

20121105-23 19:59 SteveG Re: Health Insurance & Voter Registration (reply to Pam, above)

I did email a current Washington senator up for re-election about the insurance – did that Saturday – haven't heard a word and doubt that I do. Washington will go democratic for Obama, so my vote is not really lost, but it is frustrating and ultimately only my word that it happened that way.

Did meet Pablo Gonzales from Zillah, WA. Nice young man, a senior in college. Pablo is running for a state representative seat. Cool!

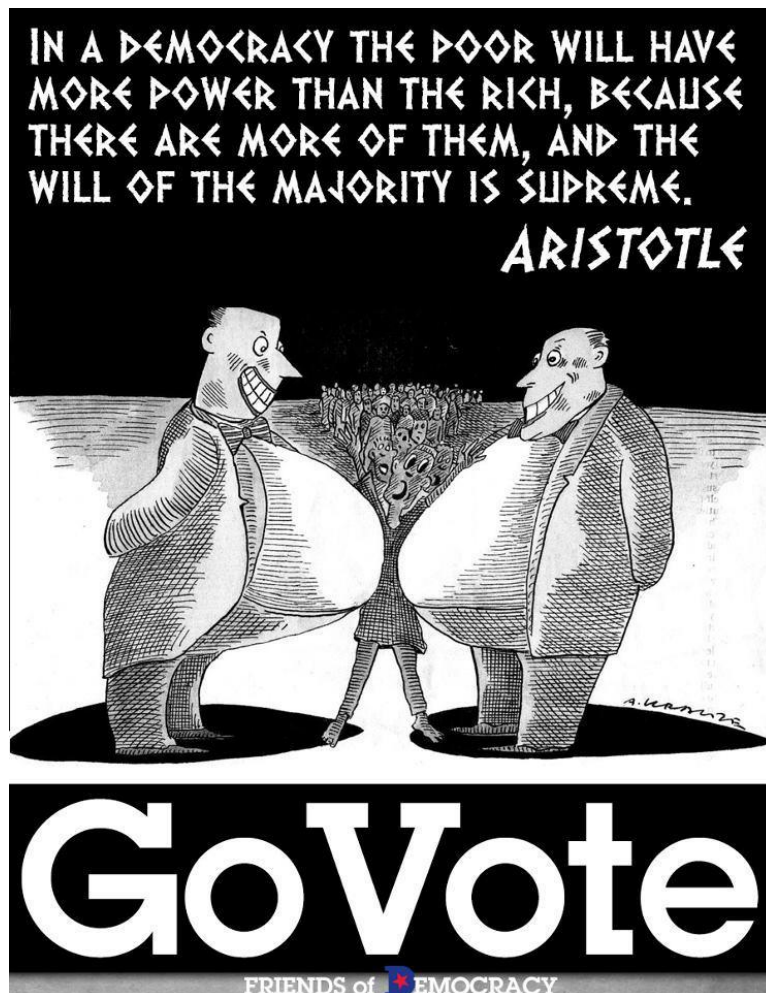
20121105-21 18:46 Ben "Shit My Students Write"

As a former teacher...

... you may enjoy some of the gems in here. They aren't ALL knee-slappers or incredibly obtuse, but there ARE some gems:

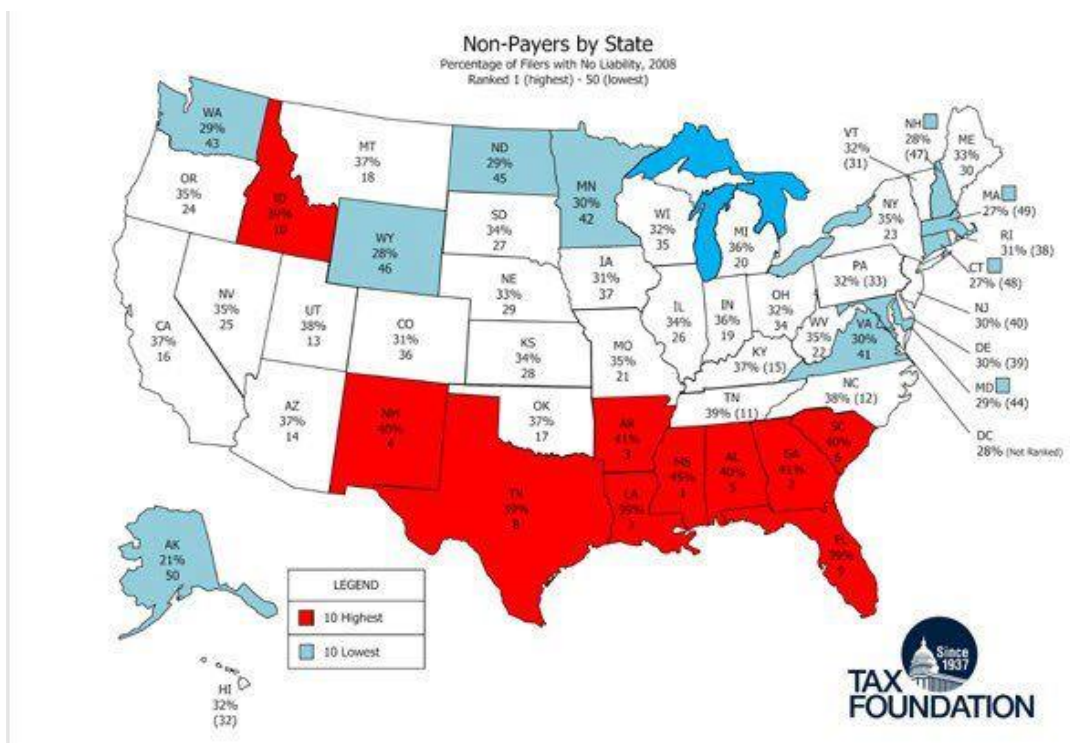
<http://shitmystudentswrite.tumblr.com/>.

Did Aristotle get it wrong?



Quite likely!

It would seem so.



State-by-State Probabilities



In the top map, the red states are those with the highest percentage of people who do not pay federal income tax ("takers" in Republican preferred terminology).

In the bottom map, the red states are those that will likely be carried by Mitt Romney on Tuesday.

Notice any interesting overlaps between the two maps?

Non-Payers by State: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/where-do-the-47-percent-live/>
 Electoral Map: <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/>

"Will Election Day Be a 'Perfect Storm'? Four Nightmare Scenarios for What Could Go Wrong" by Michael Isikoff, NBC News

Nov. 5, 2012, (<http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/04/14923543-will-election-day-be-a-perfect-storm-four-nightmare-scenarios-for-what-could-go-wrong?lite>)

With more than 90 million Americans expected to cast their ballots on Tuesday, election officials across the country are bracing for what some fear will be a "perfect storm" of Election Day problems that could result in tense confrontations at polling stations and a rush to the courthouse to file legal challenges.

The list of actual and potential problems is unusually long this year, ranging from concerns about machine failures to confusion over new rules governing voter ID and provisional ballots.

Another big wild card: the impact of groups such as "True the Vote," a Tea Party off-shoot, that is vowing to swarm polling places with an army of hundreds of thousands of "citizen" poll watchers to look for fraud and challenge ineligible voters.

It's a threat that civil rights groups are vowing to fight with their own rival armies of poll watchers -- to "monitor the monitors," says one activist.

"Our election system has probably never been under as much strain as it is right now -- anything that can go wrong, probably will go wrong," said Victoria Bassetti, a former Senate Judiciary Committee counsel and the author of the new book, *Electoral Dysfunction: A Survival Manual for American Voters*.

Bassetti notes that the camps backing both President Barack Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney have "pre-positioned their legal assets" by deploying thousands of volunteer lawyers to battleground states in order to challenge decisions by election supervisors, in court if necessary.

In Florida, the litigation is already heating up. On Sunday, the Florida Democratic Party filed emergency lawsuits to extend early voting -- challenging GOP governor Rick Scott's refusal to do so -- after some voters were stuck in lines for up to six hours trying to meet Saturday's deadline for early ballots. When the Miami Dade election office reopened to allow in-person absentee balloting, and then temporarily shut it down, frustrated voters started shouting, "Let Us Vote! Let Us Vote!", stirred up by a man wearing an Obama campaign tee shirt.

It could be a preview of what happens Tuesday. "We can expect lots of yelling and screaming- and lawsuits," said Bassetti.

The upshot is that, if the voting is as close as some (but not all) polls suggest, the winner of the presidential election may not be known for days, if not weeks, after Election Day. "We're going to be in sudden death overtime," predicts John Fund, a former *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer and the co-author of "Who's Counting: How Fraudsters and Bureaucrats Put Your Vote at Risk."

To be sure, disputes about voting are hardly new -- and some of the potential problems most frequently cited by advocates on both sides of the political fence could prove to be overblown.

But experts interviewed by NBC News identified a number of so-called "nightmare scenarios" that could complicate the counting of returns on Tuesday.

Here's a look at four of those scenarios:

1. The national vote count for president is thrown into doubt because of the impact of Hurricane Sandy.

The devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy in the Northeast appears likely to hold down vote totals in the region. In New Jersey, hundreds of polling stations may be without power -- late last week nearly half of the 240 locations in Hudson County were out of commission and officials are scrambling to find alternatives.

On Saturday, Gov. Chris Christie's administration announced that it will allow voters to download ballots off a state Website and return them by e-mail -- a system that some experts have warned could lead to tampering by hackers. (A voting group called the Verified Voting Foundation has repeatedly warned about the security risks from Internet voting.)

On Thursday, the state's lieutenant governor, Kim Guardagno, said the state will deploy Defense Department trucks with "Vote Here" signs, protected by National Guard members. But that plan prompted concerns among some Democrats that military trucks could intimidate voters, especially in minority neighborhoods, and there were signs over the weekend that officials may be backing away from it.

"Obviously, this is uncharted water for us -- getting hit with this at this late date just before a huge election," said Michael Harper, the clerk of elections in New Jersey's Hudson County, during a tour of damaged and flooded polling stations on Saturday.

While the hardest hit states like New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut are all considered reliably Democratic and safely in the Obama column, the aftermath of the hurricane could affect the president's total national vote counts -- and raise questions about his mandate or even legitimacy if he loses the popular vote but wins the Electoral College (just as some Democrats questioned President George W. Bush's legitimacy after he lost the popular vote in 2000.)

2. A large number of provisional ballots makes the Electoral College winner impossible to determine on election night.

The situation appears most acute in Ohio, a crucial battleground, where some experts have warned about a counting disaster stemming from what are expected to be as many as 200,000 provisional ballots. The background: in an effort to impose uniformity, GOP Secretary of State Jon Husted over the summer directed that absentee ballot applications be mailed out to all of the state's 6.9 million registered voters -- regardless of whether they had asked for them or not.

About 1.3 million voters filled out those applications and received absentee ballots in the mail. But as of this weekend, 238,678 voters who got absentee ballots had not returned them. If those voters don't return their ballots by mail by tomorrow and try to go to the polls on Tuesday instead, they along with others whose eligibility could be questioned or who show up at the wrong polling station, will have to cast provisional ballots to make sure they haven't vote twice. And under Ohio law, those ballots can't even be counted until Nov. 16, ten days after Election Day.

"There's a realistic chance that we will not know which candidate won the presidential election in Ohio because of the existence of provisional ballots, that we will be in overtime," said Edward Foley, an election law expert and professor of law at Ohio State University.

The issue intensified on Friday when Husted issued a new directive that puts the burden on voters, rather than poll workers, to properly fill out a form recording what ID was presented for provisional ballots -- and instructing election boards to throw out provisional ballots if the forms are incomplete or contain any mistakes. The directive has triggered a last minute law suit by voting rights groups, increasing the likelihood of disputes over the counting of provisional ballots in a pivotal battleground state.

3. Disputes over ballot printing errors, machine errors and a lack of paper trail could bog down the counting in other battleground states.

This problem has already arisen in Florida. About 27,000 absentee ballots in Palm Beach County, Florida -- famous for its "butterfly" ballots and hanging chads during the 2000 Florida recount -- can't be read by voting machines because of a printing error. This forced election officials last week to begin the arduous process of hand-copying those ballots in order to feed them into the machines -- while lawyers from both sides looked on, raising challenges.

An exasperated Susan Bucher, the county's election supervisor, was caught on camera admonishing lawyers over what she termed "frivolous" objections and threatening to eject them.

But questions about machine failures are far broader than that. Last week, lawyers for the Republican National Committee wrote letters to attorneys general in six states asking for investigations after receiving

reports that some voters had complained that machines had recorded their votes for Mitt Romney as being for Obama.

Moreover, sixteen states -- including Virginia and Pennsylvania -- rely to some extent on touch screen voting machines that leave no paper trail that can be verified during a recount.

Two voting experts warned on Saturday "we risk catastrophe" if recounts are required in Virginia and Pennsylvania "because most of their votes will be cast on paperless voting machines that are impossible to recount."

4. Legions of citizen poll watchers on both sides create confusion and even chaos at some polling stations.

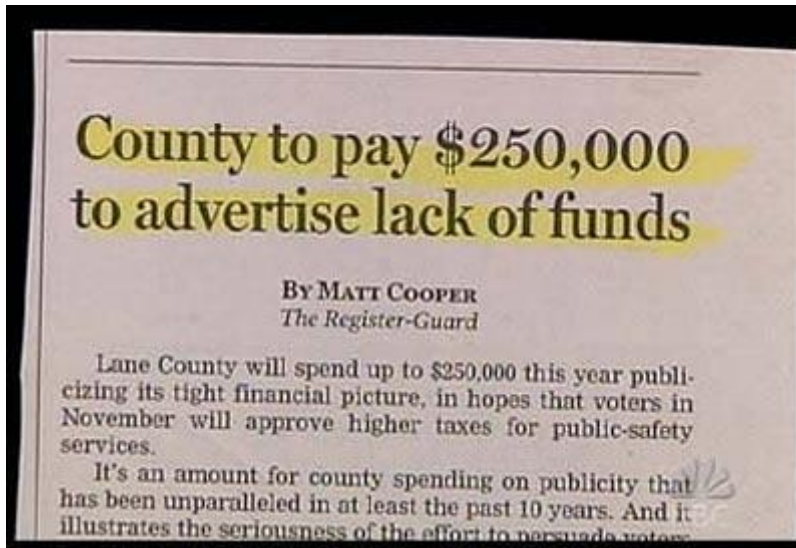
"True the Vote," the Texas-based Tea Party inspired group, has launched an aggressive national effort to root out vote fraud, providing training videos and computer software (that contain data on property records and death indexes) to help volunteers identify ineligible voters who show up at the polls on Tuesday.

Hans Von Spakovsky, a former Federal Election Commissioner who serves as one of the group's advisers, defends the effort, telling NBC News that in a close election "any bogus vote" needs to be stopped. "Anytime you have a close election, a small amount of fraud could make the difference."

But voting rights groups say "True the Vote" and its affiliates threaten to intimidate legitimate voters -- a prospect they aim to combat with their own battalions of citizen poll watchers on Tuesday.

Judith Browne Dianas, co-director of the "Advancement Project," a civil rights group, says her organization has lined up thousands of lawyers and poll watchers in 20 key states to look for "suspicious activity" by True the Vote and its affiliates. "We will also be watching the poll watchers making sure they aren't acting as bullies," she says.





20121105-31 23:58 Tom Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #7



<http://smileysproject.blogspot.com/2010/07/liberty-bell-on-independence-day.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.

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE
NEWSLETTER #264 — NOV. 7, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)



(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 7, 2012)

As we have been saying here at Friends of the Middle for months (years?), there is no lying Republican alternate reality! Well...there is...but it's now been definitely proven not to be true and not to be reality!

No one ever took my months-long \$10,000 bet! Cowards! Now, the next step...**WAKE UP, GOP!!!!!!**

"Barack Obama' Acceptance Speech after Winning the 2012 U.S. Federal Election"

Nov. 7, 2012 (w/ full audio), (<http://www.680news.com/news/world/article/419571--obama-s-acceptance-speech-and-romney-s-concession-speech-audio-and-full-transcript>)

OBAMA: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Tonight, more than 200 years after a former colony won the right to determine its own destiny, the task of perfecting our union moves forward.

It moves forward because of you. It moves forward because you reaffirmed the spirit that has triumphed over war and depression, the spirit that has lifted this country from the depths of despair to the great heights of hope, the belief that while each of us will pursue our own individual dreams, we are an American family and we rise or fall together as one nation and as one people.

Tonight, in this election, you, the American people, reminded us that while our road has been hard, while our journey has been long, we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back, and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America the best is yet to come.

I want to thank every American who participated in this election...

... whether you voted for the very first time or waited in line for a very long time.

By the way, we have to fix that.

Whether you pounded the pavement or picked up the phone...

... whether you held an Obama sign or a Romney sign, you made your voice heard and you made a difference.

I just spoke with Governor Romney and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign.

We may have battled fiercely, but it's only because we love this country deeply and we care so strongly about its future. From George to Lenore to their son Mitt, the Romney family has chosen to give back to America through public service and that is the legacy that we honor and applaud tonight.

In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward.

I want to thank my friend and partner of the last four years, America's happy warrior, the best vice president anybody could ever hope for, Joe Biden.

And I wouldn't be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago.

Let me say this publicly: Michelle, I have never loved you more. I have never been prouder to watch the rest of America fall in love with you, too, as our nation's first lady.

Sasha and Malia, before our very eyes you're growing up to become two strong, smart beautiful young women, just like your mom.

And I'm so proud of you guys. But I will say that for now one dog's probably enough.

To the best campaign team and volunteers in the history of politics...

The best. The best ever. Some of you were new this time around, and some of you have been at my side since the very beginning.

But all of you are family. No matter what you do or where you go from here, you will carry the memory of the history we made together and you will have the life-long appreciation of a grateful president. Thank you for believing all the way, through every hill, through every valley.

You lifted me up the whole way and I will always be grateful for everything that you've done and all the incredible work that you put in.

I know that political campaigns can sometimes seem small, even silly. And that provides plenty of fodder for the cynics that tell us that politics is nothing more than a contest of egos or the domain of special interests. But if you ever get the chance to talk to folks who turned out at our rallies and crowded along a rope line in a high school gym, or saw folks working late in a campaign office in some tiny county far away from home, you'll discover something else.

You'll hear the determination in the voice of a young field organizer who's working his way through college and wants to make sure every child has that same opportunity.

You'll hear the pride in the voice of a volunteer who's going door to door because her brother was finally hired when the local auto plant added another shift.

You'll hear the deep patriotism in the voice of a military spouse whose working the phones late at night to make sure that no one who fights for this country ever has to fight for a job or a roof over their head when they come home.

That's why we do this. That's what politics can be. That's why elections matter. It's not small, it's big. It's important. Democracy in a nation of 300 million can be noisy and messy and complicated. We have our own opinions. Each of us has deeply held beliefs. And when we go through tough times, when we make big decisions as a country, it necessarily stirs passions, stirs up controversy.

That won't change after tonight, and it shouldn't. These arguments we have are a mark of our liberty. We can never forget that as we speak people in distant nations are risking their lives right now just for a chance to argue about the issues that matter, the chance to cast their ballots like we did today.

But despite all our differences, most of us share certain hopes for America's future. We want our kids to grow up in a country where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers.

A country that lives up to its legacy as the global leader in technology and discovery and innovation, with all the good jobs and new businesses that follow.

We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt, that isn't weakened by inequality, that isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet.

We want to pass on a country that's safe and respected and admired around the world, a nation that is defended by the strongest military on earth and the best troops this -- this world has ever known.

But also a country that moves with confidence beyond this time of war, to shape a peace that is built on the promise of freedom and dignity for every human being. We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate

America, in a tolerant America, open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag.

To the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner.

To the furniture worker's child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president -- that's the future we hope for. That's the vision we share. That's where we need to go -- forward.

That's where we need to go.

Now, we will disagree, sometimes fiercely, about how to get there. As it has for more than two centuries, progress will come in fits and starts. It's not always a straight line. It's not always a smooth path.

By itself, the recognition that we have common hopes and dreams won't end all the gridlock or solve all our problems or substitute for the painstaking work of building consensus and making the difficult compromises needed to move this country forward. But that common bond is where we must begin. Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. A long campaign is now over.

And whether I earned your vote or not, I have listened to you, I have learned from you, and you've made me a better president. And with your stories and your struggles, I return to the White House more determined and more inspired than ever about the work there is to do and the future that lies ahead.

Tonight you voted for action, not politics as usual.

You elected us to focus on your jobs, not ours. And in the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward to reaching out and working with leaders of both parties to meet the challenges we can only solve together. Reducing our deficit. Reforming our tax code. Fixing our immigration system. Freeing ourselves from foreign oil. We've got more work to do.

But that doesn't mean your work is done. The role of citizens in our Democracy does not end with your vote. America's never been about what can be done for us. It's about what can be done by us together through the hard and frustrating, but necessary work of self-government. That's the principle we were founded on.

This country has more wealth than any nation, but that's not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military in history, but that's not what makes us strong. Our university, our culture are all the envy of the world, but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores.

What makes America exceptional are the bonds that hold together the most diverse nation on earth.

The belief that our destiny is shared; that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations. The freedom which so many Americans have fought for and died for come with responsibilities as well as rights. And among those are love and charity and duty and patriotism. That's what makes America great.

I am hopeful tonight because I've seen the spirit at work in America. I've seen it in the family business whose owners would rather cut their own pay than lay off their neighbors, and in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see a friend lose a job.

I've seen it in the soldiers who reenlist after losing a limb and in those SEALs who charged up the stairs into darkness and danger because they knew there was a buddy behind them watching their back.

I've seen it on the shores of New Jersey and New York, where leaders from every party and level of government have swept aside their differences to help a community rebuild from the wreckage of a terrible storm.

And I saw just the other day, in Mentor, Ohio, where a father told the story of his 8-year-old daughter, whose long battle with leukemia nearly cost their family everything had it not been for health care reform passing just a few months before the insurance company was about to stop paying for her care.

I had an opportunity to not just talk to the father, but meet this incredible daughter of his. And when he spoke to the crowd listening to that father's story, every parent in that room had tears in their eyes, because we knew that little girl could be our own.

And I know that every American wants her future to be just as bright. That's who we are. That's the country I'm so proud to lead as your president.

And tonight, despite all the hardship we've been through, despite all the frustrations of Washington, I've never been more hopeful about our future.

I have never been more hopeful about America. And I ask you to sustain that hope. I'm not talking about blind optimism, the kind of hope that just ignores the enormity of the tasks ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. I'm not talking about the wishful idealism that allows us to just sit on the sidelines or shirk from a fight.

I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting.

America, I believe we can build on the progress we've made and continue to fight for new jobs and new opportunity and new security for the middle class. I believe we can keep the promise of our founders, the idea that if you're willing to work hard, it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from or what you look like or where you love. It doesn't matter whether you're black or white or Hispanic or Asian or Native American or young or old or rich or poor, able, disabled, gay or straight, you can make it here in America if you're willing to try.

I believe we can seize this future together because we are not as divided as our politics suggests. We're not as cynical as the pundits believe. We are greater than the sum of our individual ambitions, and we remain more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are and forever will be the United States of America.

And together with your help and God's grace we will continue our journey forward and remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, America. God bless you. God bless these United States.



Today...

The Road Not Taken (by Robert Frost)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I marked the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

I have been to that place in New Hampshire the poem refers to...haha.

Actually, I guess I've been to that place—in life—many more times.

And very apropos for this November day. I'd like to see us not make any turns...

"See Which Industries Funneled the Most Cash into Presidential Race" by Rachel Marcus and Andrea Fuller, The Center for Public Integrity/NBC News

Nov. 6, 2012, (<http://openchannel.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/06/14949546-see-which-industries-funneled-the-most-cash-into-presidential-race?lite>)

Despite his vast wealth, Sheldon Adelson was not exactly a household name when the Republican presidential primary campaign got under way. But the casino magnate's multimillion-dollar contributions to a pro-Newt Gingrich super PAC ended that.

Adelson's support was linked to a shared stance with Gingrich as staunch supporters of Israel. Not quite so well publicized was Adelson's financial stake in who wins the presidency.

A second Obama term, thanks to the incumbent's proposed tax policies — could cost Adelson billions if he brought home profits earned at his overseas casinos, according to tax experts.

Since Gingrich flamed out in the primaries, Adelson and his wife Miriam have shifted their allegiance to GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, giving the pro-Romney super PAC Restore Our Future \$20 million.

With Romney as president, Adelson, the billionaire chairman and CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corp., could bring his profits home tax-free.

The Las Vegas Sands' overseas operations account for 86 percent of its revenue from casinos, hotels and shopping, according to its 2011 annual report to the Securities and Exchange Commission. The Sands' most lucrative holdings are in Macau, a special administrative region in China.

Super PACs like Restore Our Future can accept unlimited contributions from billionaires, corporations and unions and spend the money on ads helping their favorite candidates, thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision.

Adelson and family's nearly \$54 million in contributions through Oct. 17 to conservative super PACs puts the gambling industry at second place among super PAC donors' corporate interests, according to the Center for Public Integrity's analysis of data from the Center for Responsive Politics and the Federal Election Commission.

Slideshow: On the campaign trail

With no limits on giving, economic analysis of donations to super PACs are more about a few wealthy individuals' interests than fulfilling an industry's legislative goals.

Adelson and family are responsible for more than 98 percent of all casino industry contributions to super PACs — or \$53.7 million out of \$54.6 million — but his legislative agenda does not necessarily reflect that of the American Gaming Association, which lists as major issues online gambling and visa reform to allow more high rollers to come to American casinos.

Finance industry tops list

The top industry-donor to super PACs in the 2012 election cycle by far has been securities and investments at roughly \$94 million, according to records.

The list of donors is dominated by a relatively small number of extremely wealthy hedge fund and private equity millionaires and billionaires. The top 10 individual donors to this industry are responsible for almost half of its super PAC contributions. Twenty-one people and two corporations have given \$1 million or more.

The average itemized individual contribution to all super PACs is a little more than \$23,000, according to the Center's analysis. The average contribution to a super PAC from the investment industry is more than \$96,000.

The third-leading industry-donor, chemicals and related manufacturing, accounts for \$31 million of all super PAC contributions, and almost \$27 million comes from Harold Simmons, his wife Annette and his company. Contran Corp. controls several subsidiaries involved in chemical manufacturing, waste disposal and other businesses.

Topping Simmons' agenda is minimizing the regulatory reach of government, according to an interview he gave to *The Wall Street Journal* in March. Many of Contran's subsidiaries are subject to environmental regulations that cut into profits.

The fourth-leading donor by industry is real estate at about \$23 million thanks to seven-figure donations from the National Association of Realtors and Harlan Crow and Crow Holdings. The NAR favors access to credit and tax breaks so more people can afford to buy homes.

Fifth is the homebuilding industry with about \$22 million, again a category dominated by a single wealthy individual — Texan Bob Perry. He has given \$21.5 million to conservative super PACs to date.

Perry is perhaps best known for financing the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ads during the 2004 election that helped sink John Kerry's presidential campaign, but he has been a major donor to Texas political campaigns since the 1980s. He favors limiting damages a jury can award plaintiffs in civil suits.

Romney is 'one of them'

The largest donors from the investment industry are not investment banks but an exclusive sub-group known as "alternative investing" — hedge funds and private equity firms.

Among the 26 donors to Restore Our Future who have given \$1 million or more, 11 are in the hedge fund or private equity business.

Among the alternative investment industry's top donors are Robert Mercer, a co-CEO of the hedge fund Renaissance Technologies, who gave \$1 million to Restore Our Future and \$600,000 to Club for Growth Action, which favors eliminating the capital gains tax.

Other top donors include TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, who now runs an investment firm, Paul Singer of Elliott Management, Wyoming investor Foster Friess and John Childs, chairman and CEO of a private equity firm.

Eighty percent of super PAC contributions from the investment community have gone to conservative super PACs, according to the Center's analysis.

James Simons, the founder of Renaissance Technologies, and George Soros*, the chairman of the hedge fund Soros Fund Management, have given a combined \$10.1 million to pro-Obama and pro-Democratic super PACs. Romney himself was a private equity man in his days at Bain Capital, which he co-founded.

"They view (Romney) as one of them," said David Kautter, the director of the Kogod Tax Center at American University. "They tend to view him as someone who accumulated substantial wealth doing what they do, someone who understands what they do and someone who believes that what they do provides substantial value to the economy."

Romney has said he would maintain, lower or eliminate the capital gains rate at various points during the race. Low rates benefit hedge fund and private equity managers, whose compensation comes primarily from investment returns.

Obama supports treating this type of compensation as regular income and subject to income tax rates up to 39.6 percent. In addition, Obama advocates raising the capital gains rate to 20 percent.

Adelson's gamble on Romney

Romney was not Adelson's top choice. Adelson invested \$16.5 million in former House Speaker Gingrich via Winning Our Future, the primary pro-Gingrich super PAC, before the candidate dropped out May 2.

Now the top supporter of Restore Our Future, Adelson has said he is willing to spend \$100 million electing Romney and a Republican Congress. The spending has made him newsworthy.

Adelson's steadfast and occasionally controversial positions on Israel's national security have also increased his profile in the national media and provided fodder for the opposition.

He opposes a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, once calling it a "stepping stone for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people."

He was also once one of the biggest backers of AIPAC — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. But Adelson broke off relations with the group in 2007, when it supported increasing U.S. economic aid to Palestinians.

Adelson shifted his financial support to the Republican Jewish Coalition, where he sits on the board. The politically active nonprofit has reported spending \$4.6 million on ads attacking Obama.

In an op-ed for the JNS News Service, Adelson wrote that American Jews should not trust Obama when it comes to Israel.

"For Obama, the issue is only political; for Israel, it's existential — a matter of survival," he wrote.

On paper, both Obama and Romney have similar positions on Israel — they both are committed to having a "special relationship" with the nation.

"Where they differ is in the way the current president perceives Israel," said Aaron David Miller, an Israel expert at the Woodrow Wilson Center. "Israel is more of a matter of national security interest than it is a values argument."

While Romney has a more "spontaneous, emotional instinct" to identify with Israel, Miller said, Obama seems less emotionally connected.

"In part it's a generational thing," Miller said — Obama came of age after the Israeli occupation. "And in part it's a matter of temperament."

Idealism or self-interest?

It is impossible to say for certain whether Adelson's support of Romney is based on idealism or self-interest or both. Adelson's spokesman refused to comment for this report.

Romney's tax policies and Adelson's financial interests are aligned, especially when it comes to tax treatment of overseas profits.

The Romney-backed "territorial tax system" would allow the Sands to bring its future foreign profits back to the U.S. free from U.S. income tax. Romney's plan also calls for a "tax holiday" that would allow American companies with profits stashed abroad to repatriate them tax-free.

A 2004 tax holiday resulted in the repatriation of one-third of all offshore earnings, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service.

Experts predict a territorial system would have a similar effect.

"I think it is very likely that more foreign earnings will end up back in the U.S. than we would have under the current worldwide system," said Kautter.

Obama opposes the territorial tax system and has proposed a minimum tax for multinational corporations' overseas earnings.

Under the current system, American companies that have operations abroad pay income tax to the country in which they earn the money then pay U.S. income tax when they bring profits home. Income taxes paid to the foreign government are deducted from the U.S. income tax when the money is repatriated; earnings left abroad are not subject to U.S. taxes.

Will McBride, the chief economist at the conservative Tax Foundation, calls the U.S. income tax on foreign profits a "repatriation tax."

"Naturally that discourages business from bringing that money back home," he said.

Obama and others argue that a territorial tax system would encourage American businesses to move overseas.

The Sands holds \$5.6 billion in overseas profits, according to its 2011 annual report. Under Romney's policy, Adelson and his company could repatriate it all for free.

The tax holiday combined with a switch to a territorial tax system would potentially provide a \$1.8 billion tax break to the Sands the first year, according to a study from a liberal think tank, the Center for American Progress.

Adelson himself, as majority owner, stands to benefit.

"By a reasonable but conservative estimate, the tax cut he stands to get from Romney's tax policies over a four-year term would be well over \$2 billion," said Seth Hanlon, the author of the study. "When you consider he's going to spend \$100 million on the presidential race, the return on investment is more than 2000 percent."

(George Soros is the chairman of the Open Society Foundation, which provides funding for the Center for Public Integrity. For a list of Center donors, visit the website: <http://www.publicintegrity.org/about/our-work/supporters>. The Center for Public Integrity is a nonprofit, independent investigative news outlet. For more of its stories go to <http://www.publicintegrity.org>.)

20121106-03	13:26	SteveG	"25 Reasons from 25 People Who Are Voting Obama"
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"25 Reasons from 25 People Who Are Voting Obama" (<http://my.barackobama.com/25-Reasons>)

1. "The Affordable Care Act is saving my daughter's life." [Stacey, Arizona](#).
2. "Obama is for the vets. He helped us wind down in Iraq, he's improved mental health policy with VA benefits." [Joel, Minnesota](#).
3. "Obama stuck his neck out for us, the auto industry. He wasn't going to let it just die, and I'm driving in this morning because of that, because of him." [Brian, Ohio](#).
4. "Osama bin Laden is dead, and General Motors is alive." [Joe Biden, Delaware](#).
5. "Supreme Court Supreme Court Supreme Court." [Andrew, California](#).
6. "Arithmetic." [Bill Clinton, New York](#).
7. "He cares for the 100 percent." [Shana, Texas](#).
8. "When Obama came into office, he successfully renewed our country's place in the community of nations, making cooperation in tackling the world's challenges possible." [Willis, North Carolina](#).
9. "The actions he has taken with respect to protecting us from terrorism have been very, very solid." [Colin Powell, Virginia](#).
10. "I was really very grateful to him for standing up for those kids who are having a really rough time out there because of their orientation." [Jane Lynch, California](#).
11. "For me, President Obama is our best choice because he has a vision of the United States as a place where we are all in this together." [Bruce Springsteen, New Jersey](#).
12. "He has a real plan for rescuing the economy that passes the 'math' test." [Teresa, Virginia](#).
13. "Having someone in office who understands how powerful our voice can be is very important." [Jay Z, New York](#).
14. "I am voting for Barack Obama and Joe Biden because I can trust them to care for the middle class and restore the American dream." [Steven, Florida](#).

15. "The first measure he signed into law after becoming president was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act -- so a female high school counselor or physical education teacher can fight for equal pay for equal work." [Connie Britton, California.](#)
16. "I believe in the America he wants for my grandchildren." [Nancy, Michigan.](#)
17. "We need four more years of repair, of helping the middle class achieve a sustainable economy." [James Taylor, North Carolina.](#)
18. "I've watched him fight for our country, stand by the middle class, the working class, the military, the education of our children, universal health care, women, the environment, and matters of national and domestic security." [Susan, Virginia.](#)
19. "The gifted 12-year-old I taught, whose parents were deported and left her here with her grandmother, will be allowed to stay and finish her education. She's been in the U.S. since age one." [Jamie, North Carolina.](#)
20. "I want our president to place scientific evidence and risk management above electoral politics." [Michael Bloomberg, New York.](#)
21. "I have four children who are under 26 and able to stay on my health care plan. That's been huge." [Amy, Pennsylvania.](#)
22. "He's fighting to defend and better Social Security and Medicare -- because millions of Latino seniors rely on them." [Cristina Saralegui, Florida.](#)
23. "Thanks to the President's efforts to keep student loan rates low, I can expect to save nearly \$1000 as I work to repay my student loans. And I don't have too many of those, thanks to the Federal Pell Grant program." [Sam, Minnesota.](#)
24. "It's been wonderful to have President Obama as a champion for access to health care for all women in this country." [Cecile Richards, New York.](#)
25. "Re-electing Barack Obama would lead to a stronger economic recovery than would be the case were Mitt Romney to win on November 6th." [Jared Bernstein, Washington, D.C.](#)

<u>20121106-05</u> 14:47 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
--

Yep: quite a deal for \$6.50. I had a choice of four kinds of beans; I like the dry, unfatty, lightly seasoned version of refried beans served here; the Mexican rice, too, is surprisingly un-oily and light. (It's seasoned a bit more, as you can tell from its color.)

The tacos, though, were show-stealing, plato-dominating perfection, among the best shrimp tacos I can recall assimilating. Two fresh warmed flour tortillas enrobed half a dozen very crisp, lightly breaded, delicately golden-fried fresh jumbo Gulf shrimp. Each tortilla also contained a generous a generous dollop of smooth, cool avocado-watermelon relish and a tasty blob of zesty cabbage and red onion cole slaw glued together with creamy house-made mayonnaise... sounds pretty tasty, doesn't it?



Shrimp Taco Plate

20121106-06 17:53 SteveB "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney"

"Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" by Alex Pareene, Salon

Nov. 6, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/11/06/why_i_voted_for_mitt_romney/)

(Sure, he's a charlatan and a pathological liar, but Romney may be the only man to save us from the Republican Party.)

I supported Barack Obama in 2008, and expected to find myself doing so again in 2012. The Republican primaries were dispiriting. The party seemed to have learned nothing from its time in the wilderness and taken all the wrong lessons from its return to prominence in 2010. No one seemed to be presenting the Big Ideas Americans know we need to solve our current problems. As the election drew nearer, though, I began to waver. Barack Obama is a good man, who did his best with an awful situation, but elections are about which man has what it takes to lead the country in the future.

Here is why I held my nose, today, and cast a vote for Romney:

As a believer in the urgent necessity of government action to address climate change, I had practically no choice but to support Romney. Romney was a responsible environmentalist as a governor, and I have no reason to doubt that he will once again become one, tomorrow. Plus, only a powerful and well-respected Republican president can strip the partisanship from the issue of global warming, and I am confident that congressional Republicans would soften their opposition to climate science once their beloved party leader gave them political cover to do so. Our best — perhaps only — hope for a carbon tax is a Mitt Romney presidency.

On civil rights for gay and lesbian Americans, the choice is clear: Only Mitt Romney can ensure that gay rights won't be turned into yet another partisan football.

While Romney's current stated position is opposition to same-sex marriage, and while he also opposed allowing gay and lesbian couples to adopt children, and while his church has long led the fight against LGBT rights, he is such a craven, soulless empty husk of a politician that he will probably just not do anything anti-gay while in office, because gay rights are much more popular than they used to be. This will give activists — including LGBT conservatives, long a marginalized voice in the conservative movement — a chance to fundamentally remake their party from the inside. By the end of the Romney presidency, gay rights might be the default position of both major parties. That cannot happen with an Obama victory.

It is true that the modern Republican Party is extremist, irresponsible, reckless and wholly unfit to govern. They campaign with grotesque white populism, stoke bigotry and xenophobia, and shamelessly work to suppress legal votes by poor and minority citizens. In Congress their unprecedented obstruction sabotaged the economic recovery and ground even routine federal business to a standstill.

This, again, is why we must elect Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee for president.

You see, only with a Republican in the White House is the Republican Party willing to occasionally sometimes act somewhat responsibly. With various worldwide economic and military crises likely to require urgent attention in the coming years, we need our Republicans to be only a little bit reckless and stupid, and not apocalyptically so.

While Mitt Romney has surrounded himself with discredited Bush-era foreign policy failures, he doesn't care that much about foreign policy and he might let one of the reasonable old Republicans run stuff.

Obviously I am strong supporter of universal healthcare. I don't want to see Obamacare eliminated. While Mitt Romney has repeatedly and unequivocally promised to repeal it, I don't believe him. He won't. In fact, maybe he will introduce a public option. It's definitely possible.

Once he's in office, I am confident that Romney will embrace the Radical Center, the old Massachusetts Mitt that we loved. He will definitely get along well with Senate Democrats and probably all the Bush tax cuts will be repealed to fix the deficit.

Finally, the most pressing economic issue of our time is the staggering growth of income inequity. Romney may seem an unlikely person to address that festering rot at the heart of modern American capitalism, but Obama didn't fix it with liberal stuff so maybe Romney will fix it with business knowhow.

Mitt Romney is by no means a perfect candidate. He may have no coherent or consistent principles beyond a steadfast belief in his own superhuman competence. He may have surrounded himself with charlatans and liars in his pursuit of power for the sake of flattering his staggering self-importance. His vice-presidential nominee may be a bizarre combination of overgrown adolescent Randian and pious ultra-Catholic misogynist. He may have a sociopathic indifference to the concept of honesty.

But there is still a chance that he will magically decide to do all the things that I like and want him to do once he is office.

Also, maybe he will build high-speed rail, that would be cool. Vote Romney.

20121106-07	18:15	Pam	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Somehow this doesn't make me feel any better.

20121106-08	18:38	SteveB	Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to Pam, above)
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Don't worry. It's not even going to be close.

[20121106-09](#) 18:42 Pam Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to SteveB, above)

I hope you're right. I'm not going to watch a minute of the election coverage. My nerves are shot as it is. What's the view from Bolivia? Do you get an absentee ballot?

[20121106-10](#) 19:00 SteveB Re: "Why I Voted for Mitt Romney" (reply to Pam, above)

Yep, voted long ago and I told Marci, the new US citizen, she had to vote my way or there'd be no sex for her for a long time. Haha

Actually, we agree about almost everything political...and I think we have each done a lot to inform each other's views—we learn from each other.

Funny, how you see exactly the same problems everywhere, but different things are possible everywhere, so that leads to an interesting variety of solutions, often poles apart.

Well...gotta get back to Wolf and the election coverage. The champagne is ready but not yet uncorked.

[20121106-11](#) 21:54 Tom Fw: Follow Immigration Election Results Tonight

from NumbersUSA:

You likely will be frantically switching TV channels and surfing the internet tonight trying to keep up with all the races that most interest and affect you.

But you won't have to surf to find results that have implications for immigration policies over the next few years. NumbersUSA is trying to make life as easy as possible for you on a single web page that we will be updating all through the night.

<http://hub.numbersusa.com/route/7/5099262db8880a6293000000/154355/9>

[20121106-12](#) 22:57 MarthaH "Nonvoters: They're Too Busy, Fed Up, or Say Their Vote Doesn't Count"

"Nonvoters: They're Too Busy, Fed Up, or Say Their Vote Doesn't Count" by Isolde Raftery, NBC News

Nov. 4, 2012, (<http://usnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/04/14837739-nonvoters-theyre-too-busy-fed-up-or-say-their-vote-doesnt-count?lite>)

(For different reasons, Suzann Holland, of Monroe, Wis., Heather Felton, of Parrish, Fla., and Ryan King, of Buffalo, N.Y. will not be voting in the Nov. 6 elections.)

Tabitha Brown, 29, of Oregon, says she won't vote because she finds her ballot too confusing. "I'm just a simple girl," she said. "Dumb it down for us."

In Buffalo, N.Y., Ryan King, 19, said he won't vote because he doesn't know if he's registered. He mailed in a registration form, but no one replied, so he doesn't know where to show up. Further south in the Bronx, Lala, a woman who is staying at a shelter, isn't voting because she thought she needed a state ID, which she can't afford. When she learned she didn't need an ID, it was too late to register.

Political pundits say undecided voters will determine the election, but little is said about people like Brown, King and Lala, who aren't voting. Since the 1960s, voter turnout has steadily declined in the U.S., which already ranks near

the bottom among established democracies. In 2008, 64 percent of voting-age citizens voted, compared with 93 percent in Chile, 86 percent in Germany and 74 percent in Canada.

NBC News recently asked readers via Twitter, Facebook and through NBCNews.com to tell us why they won't cast their ballots. Their responses paralleled those from a 2008 survey by the U.S. Census Bureau: They don't like their choices, they're busy or they're not interested.

Broken down, the least likely voters have the lowest level of education. In fact, the most pronounced voting gap in 2008 was not between young and senior (49 to 72 percent) but between those without a high school degree and those with advanced degrees – 39 percent to 83 percent.

The wealthier are more likely voters -- 52 percent of those whose annual family income is less than \$20,000 voted versus 80 percent among those whose families bring in more than \$100,000. That could be partly because low-income people have more trouble taking time off work to vote.

"Everyone's pressed for time these days and therefore whether or not an employer is actively allowing people to vote the employees may feel time-pressed or constrained to take that legally protected time," said Susan Schoenfeld, senior legal editor for Business & Legal Resources, which provides guidance to employers on human resources issues.

Although some states require that employers give workers time off to vote, human resource experts say those laws are sometimes too confusing for employers and employees to understand.

About 13 percent of those responding to the Census survey said they didn't vote because they didn't like the 2008 candidates. That theme emerged among our readers too – many of them women in their 30s and 40s – who said not voting was itself political. Leaving their forms blank was, in a sense, a vote of no confidence.

"It feels like a third choice," said Suzann Holland, a 41-year-old public library director from Monroe, Wis. "We tend to think we have two choices because third parties are not viable, but there is a third choice – to let other people decide because sometimes either choice goes against everything we believe in."

Holland has voted in the past but this year, she said the debates between President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney "cemented my distaste for both candidates."

Breeanne Findley, 32, of Moline, Ill., is also fed up with Obama and Romney. She and her husband have five children between the two of them; she is a stay-at-home mom and is devoutly Pentecostal.

"I kept going back and forth, I looked online at who else was running for president – the Green Party and some other independent groups – but I didn't like those guys either," Findley said.

Her sister-in-law was appalled, she said. "She says that I'm not allowing my voice to be heard, saying that I should reconsider because my vote matters, there these are things I need to be voting for."

She has decided it doesn't matter who becomes president: "I'm a Christian and I believe that God is in charge. If this guy wins, it's not the end of the world because God is still God."

In Parrish, Fla., Heather Felton, 37, said she found herself lost in the political middle. She is Catholic, opposed to abortion, but also opposed to the death penalty and in favor of gun control. She has nuanced views about immigration.

"I posted to my Facebook page, 'Who should I vote for? Give me a good moral reason,'" she said. "But people aren't giving me a good moral reason. They're presenting negative inflammatory language."

Back in New York, King, a student at Cansius College, is not alone in struggling with registering to vote. Six percent of nonvoters between the ages of 18 and 24 didn't vote in 2008 because they didn't know how or where to sign up, according to the Census data.

After mailing in a voter registration form, he looked online for clues about where he should vote. He asked the College Democrats and the College Republicans at his school, but they told him they didn't know.

Increasingly jaded, King now questions whether his vote would count. (Which lands him in another Census category: Four percent of nonvoters said they didn't register because they didn't believe their vote would make a difference.)

"I just feel so disenfranchised voting in New York," he said. "It doesn't matter anyway. If I voted for Obama, it wouldn't count, so why bother?"

He added: "If you want me to vote so bad, at least meet me halfway."

In the Bronx, Lala was slightly sheepish to find out she didn't need an ID to vote. (She used to live in Georgia, where ID is required.) But mostly, she said, she feels increasingly apathetic. More pressing was food for dinner and ultimately, a job. She checked her wallet – she had \$30 to her name.

She said she read Romney's five-point plan but found it lacking and disjointed.

"As much as I would love to be bitter about living in poverty during the Obama administration, I have to consider that the alternative is a man without a plan," Lala said. Then she grew contemplative.

"All I need is something as simple as a job," she said. "I could have my quality of life back. I don't know how voting is going to meet my immediate needs."

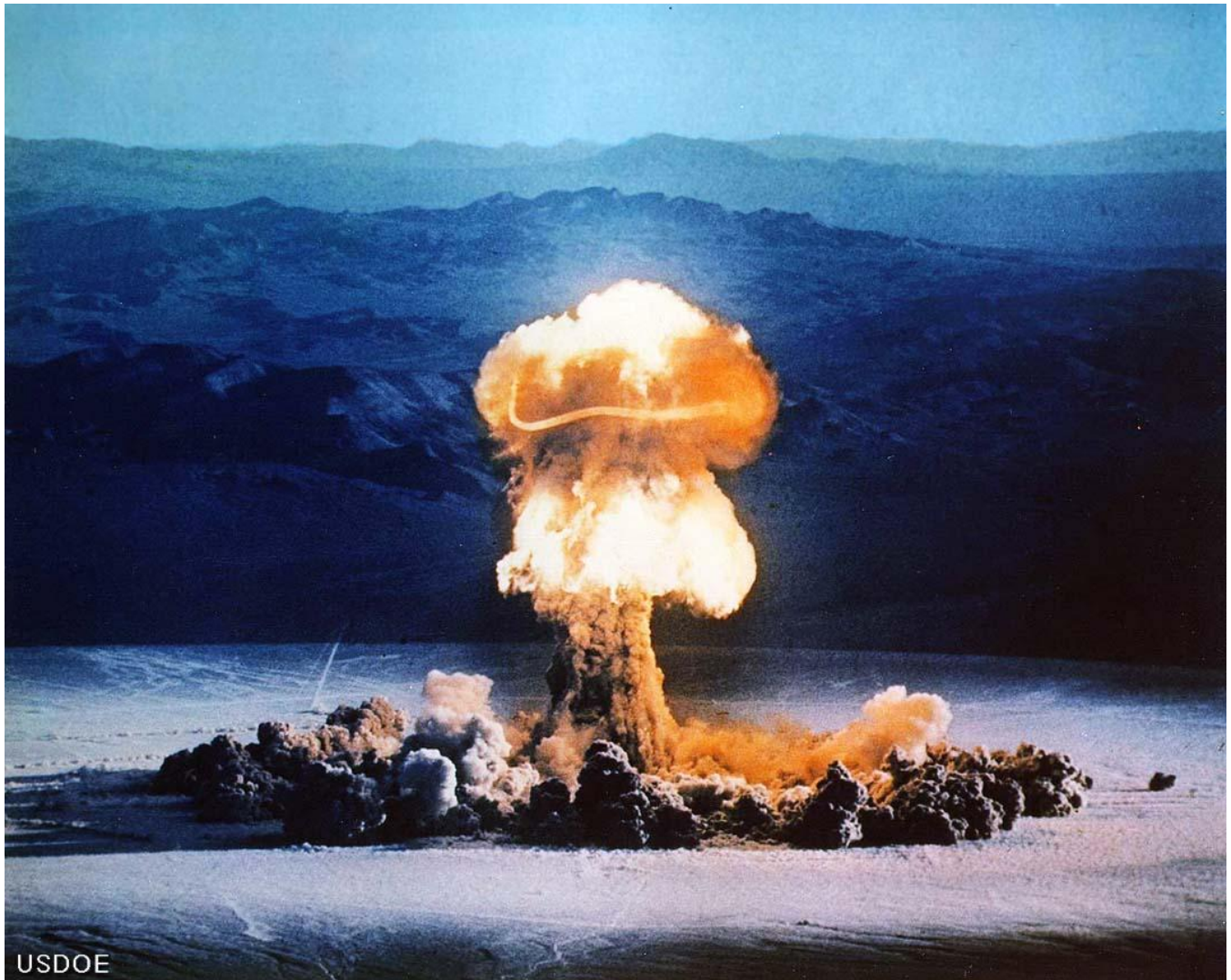
(NBC's Allison Linn contributed reporting to this story.)

20121106-13 23:04 MarthaH Cartoon: Comic Relief #1





<http://magsol.wordpress.com/2012/03/06/a-week-of-scripting/>



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

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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.

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #265 — NOV. 8, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

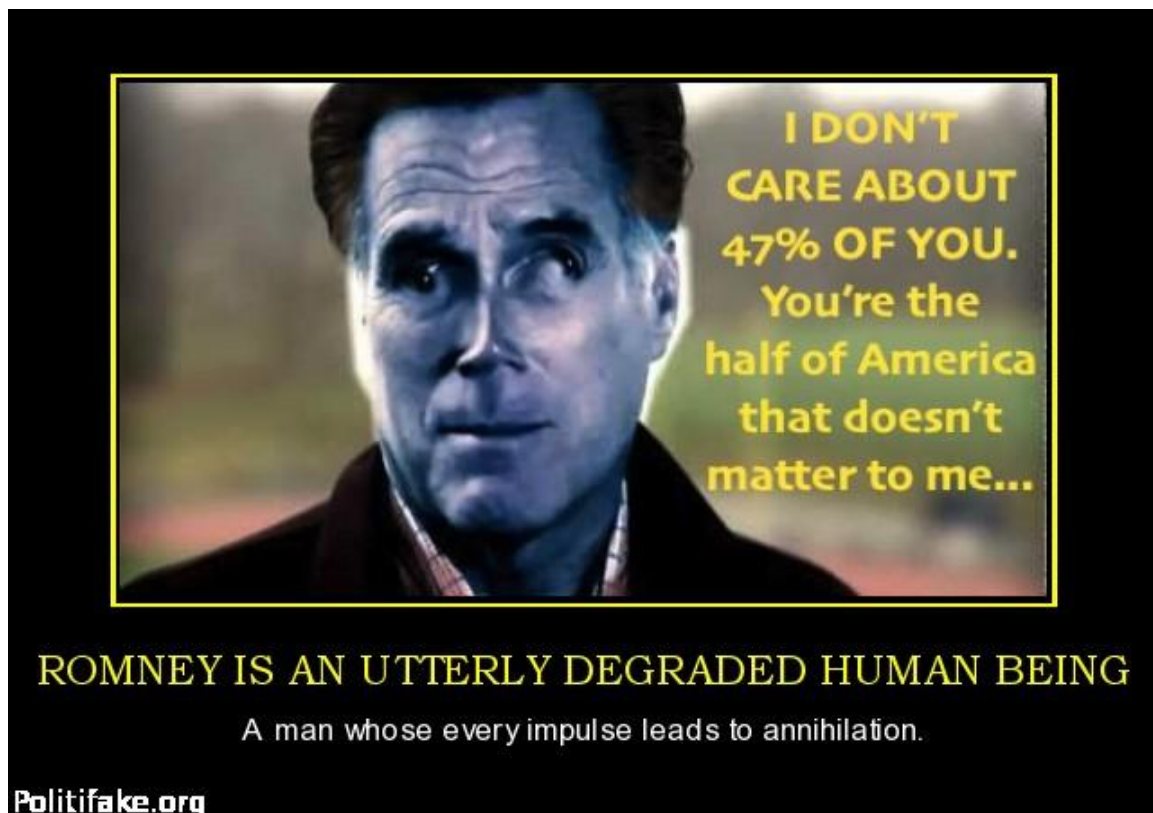
The Zombie Sagas, Part 1: Love Among the 47%

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 8, 2012)

But, of course, there's no "mandate"... I hear so much talk of demographics and right-wing extremism and gaffes, but I wonder if the lies and the essences of the lies came home to roost? An amazing number of Americans didn't seem to mind, but maybe enough did. So happy to see this snake-oil salesman leave the national stage!

"Why Mitt Romney Lost" by Jacob Weisberg, Slate

Nov. 7, 2012, (<http://news.msn.com/politics/why-mitt-romney-lost>)



(Mitt Romney lost the election because he couldn't separate himself from the Republican Party's growing extremism.)

What ought to pain Republicans most about Barack Obama's victory is that 2012 was entirely winnable for them. In European elections over the past few years, voters have thrown out leaders who were in charge during the worst of the financial crisis, whether those leaders deserved the blame or not. Economic indicators in the United States, where an unemployment rate of 8 percent is highly correlated with defeat for the incumbent party, pointed in the same direction. Obama himself had proven a disappointment to many of his former supporters, going from a beloved symbol of generational and social change in 2008 to a detached and remote figure, with limited ability to touch an emotional chord in the electorate.

That Mitt Romney lost nonetheless is in part a tribute to his own weaknesses as a candidate. The Obama campaign put Romney on the defensive early about his work at Bain Capital, and left him there. The Republican nominee made any number of horrendous gaffes. He ran a disastrous GOP convention. He never found a way to talk about himself or his agenda in a way that middle class voters could relate to.

But even a clumsy candidate might have beaten Obama if not for a simple factor that could not be overcome: the GOP's growing extremism. The Republican strategy of making the election a referendum on the president's handling of the economy was perfectly sound. The problem was that the Republican Party couldn't pass the credibility test itself. For many voters disenchanted with Obama, it still was not safe to vote for his opponent.

This failure began with the spectacle of the extended primary season, which was dominated by candidates with views far outside the political mainstream. Rick Santorum rejected the separation of church and state. Newt Gingrich challenged the notion of judicial supremacy. Michele Bachmann claimed the government had been infiltrated by radical Muslims. Donald Trump refused to recognize the validity of Obama's birth certificate. Rick Perry wanted to take down more parts of the federal government than he could successfully name. In the debates, the country saw the GOP talking to itself and sounding like a bizarre fringe party, not a responsible governing one.

Romney is not a right-wing extremist. To win the nomination, though, he had to feign being one, recasting himself as "severely conservative" and eschewing the reasonableness that made him a successful, moderate governor of the country's most liberal state. He had to pass muster with his party's right-wing base on taxes, immigration, climate change, abortion, and gay rights. Many of his statements on these issues were patently insincere, but that was hardly reassuring. Romney's very insincerity and flexibility made it improbable that he would stand up to the GOP's hyper-partisan congressional wing once elected any more than he had during the primaries.

Romney's pandering to the base made it possible for the Obama campaign to portray him as a right-wing radical from the start of the campaign. Fear that he didn't have the base locked down kept Romney from moving smoothly to the center once he had secured the nomination. It further encouraged his choice of Paul Ryan, a popular figure with the Tea Party. And when Romney tried, much too late, to move closer to the center, Republican Senate candidates, like Todd Akin in Missouri and Richard Mourdock in Indiana, kept popping up with disgusting reminders of the GOP's retrograde views on gender issues. For women, Latinos, and young voters tempted to abandon Obama, the old Romney might have been a plausible alternative. The new Romney, fettered by a feverish GOP, was too risky a choice. According to exit poll results, Romney won men as expected, but lost among women by 11 points—too large a gender gap to be overcome.

Demographic change and better economic circumstances stand to make the Republican road back to the White House an even steeper climb in future years. Simply put, the party has to present a more conciliatory and reasonable face to sell itself to swing voters. To do that, it must elevate its own moderate voices, cut loose its theocrats, and liberate itself from the domination of Tea Party know-nothings.

So let the season of Republican recriminations begin. The GOP now faces the challenge of self-examination and internal reform that Democrats began to undertake after losing twice to Ronald Reagan. It desperately needs the kind of centrist reform movement that was led on the other side by the Democratic Leadership Council, which paved the way for the election of a centrist Democrat named Bill Clinton. Without that sort of renewal movement, the 2012 election may come to be seen less as a fluke than a harbinger.

20121107-01 08:38 SandyI Sent Only to Those Who Are Happy This Morning

This is a picture that Greg took in Vermont with the Obama campaign. He didn't post it & didn't boast it. And his sons have a picture signed by the President:



I am so happy that President Obama gets 4 more years and so proud of the integrity and talent of my son. Sorry the picture is so small. Greg's electronic and photographic talent appears not to have been inherited from the female side.

"The best memory is that which forgets nothing but injuries.
Write kindness in marble and write injuries in the dust." —Persian proverb

20121107-02 08:53 MarthaH History Unfolds...

My interim pastor who is standing in for our deployed pastor, in his prayer Sunday, said God knows who the next president is. We just had to wait for the answer. And now we know. Money and all the hatred of the campaign didn't win. The majority crowd celebrating is our country as it should be--colors, creeds, gender, and preferences of all kinds. And those who sent the hateful, nasty emails can SHOVE THEM. In all the votes of my life, I have never felt prouder of US, a majority of Americans who were not bought, despite the dark side of desperate folks. What he stands for is a mirror of us, and I couldn't be prouder... 47%, Jeeps, and all the rest...even Christie's praise...pieces of the puzzle coming together. The only way it could have been better would be a blue Indiana--but we got no Mourdock, :-))))). Hoosiers split their ballots, and it seems they listened to his stupidity and rejected it!!!! Pence can stifle us...Obama lost by 11% in Indiana which seems shockingly close to me, :-). We might have a less reactionary state superintendent if that holds... and through the US Supreme Court will come a less radical majority in the net four years. Ultimately, I see that as the BIG win. Now I will plan my inaugural luncheon to reflect Kenya, Hawaii, and Chicago again. Maybe I will add Michele's winning cookies...:-). Issues await progress. The abyss will require compromise, and we have our parts to do. Bookmark contacts for your members who can calculate solutions.

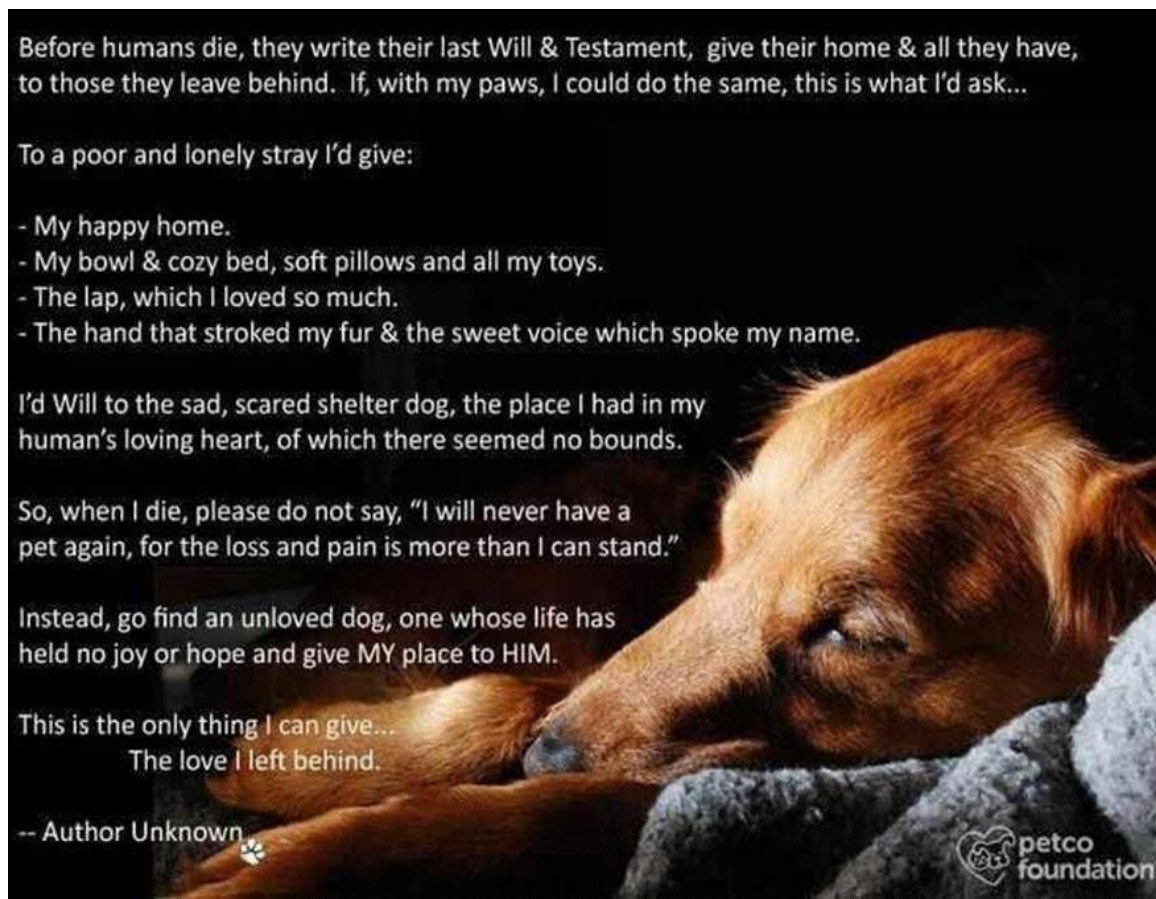
To quote the refrain of one of a favorite hymn:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.

20121107-12 18:38 SteveB Re: History Unfolds... (reply to MarthaH, above)

So happy Mourdock went down to defeat and the way it happened may end up helping all women.

Sorry to say it, but Indiana is solidly red, it would seem...



"High Ambition and Visions of Andean Haute Cuisine" by William Neuman, *The New York Times*

Nov. 6, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/07/world/europe/in-bolivia-high-goals-and-visions-of-haute-cuisine.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0)

(The Danish celebrity chef Claus Meyer is opening a restaurant in La Paz, hoping to start a Bolivian food movement.)



Cooking school students shopped at a market in La Paz. Their school is associated with a restaurant named Gustu and is aimed at creating a new generation of Bolivian chefs.

(LA PAZ, Bolivia) Bolivia has not been kind to foreigners trying to import revolution. The attempt by the Argentine-born Che Guevara to set off a peasant revolt here ended badly. The verdict is still out on the latest foreigner to arrive in this impoverished nation trying to stir things up.

He is a chef, not a Che.

Claus Meyer, a Danish celebrity chef and restaurant entrepreneur, is one of the owners of Noma, a Copenhagen restaurant that is a darling of food critics for its mix of locavore purism and avant-garde cooking methods. *Restaurant* magazine, a trade journal, ranks it the best restaurant in the world.

Now Mr. Meyer is building a restaurant here, an experiment in Andean haute cuisine that comes with hefty side orders of revolution and high ambition.

Mr. Meyer, who came to Bolivia for the first time last year and has been back three times, described the restaurant, Gustu, due to open in January, as much more than a place to get a fancy meal in the continent's poorest country. He and his followers describe it as the start of a Bolivian food movement that will rediscover local ingredients like llama meat, chuños (potatoes dehydrated high in the Andes) and coca, the plant that is used to make cocaine but that has long been used here as a mild stimulant, a tea and a medicinal herb.

Gustu's mission will be to teach Bolivians how to eat in healthier ways, spur economic growth, tourism and exports, support local farmers and turn Bolivian cuisine into the next world food sensation. If all goes well, Mr. Meyer said in a telephone call from Copenhagen, the restaurant will use food "to change the destiny of a country."

The restaurant, being built in the upscale Calacoto neighborhood, hardly looks like a crucible of revolution. On a recent day, workers installed insulation in the roof. The kitchen was stacked with bags of concrete mix and plaster.

Michelangelo Cestari, one of the restaurant's head chefs, said it would be the most advanced restaurant in the country, full of high-tech gadgets of molecular gastronomy that atomize, froth and otherwise transform foods.

The restaurant will serve only ingredients grown or created in Bolivia. Wines will come from the country's handful of wineries and liquor will be limited largely to *singani*, a local grape brandy.

Mr. Cestari pointed to a tall wall where wines will be stored and displayed, although he said there might not be enough Bolivian labels to fill it at first. The idea, he said, is to help create demand for local products.

Mr. Cestari, a pastry chef, is from Venezuela and has worked for years in fine restaurants in Europe. So has his fellow head chef, Kamilla Seidler, who is Danish. The only Bolivian among the restaurant's top cooks is Christian Gómez, the senior sous chef, who worked for years in Spain.

They are keenly aware of the risk of being seen as outsiders. "Perhaps it's arrogant to think we can come here to develop a gastronomy," Mr. Cestari said, "but we hope we can push something."

He said the menu would include items inspired by Bolivian dishes, like a lamb on a cross, made by splaying a whole lamb on an iron cross and cooking it slowly over a smoky fire; or *calapurca*, a soup heated by placing a hot rock in the bowl.

Rather than simply serving typical Bolivian food done well, however, the kitchen will use the method favored by Mr. Meyer in Denmark of focusing on a few basic ingredients and trying to draw out their essence.

"We don't want to do French food or fusion or nouvelle," Mr. Gómez said. "We want to do something new with a Bolivian identity."

Mr. Cestari said that the average dinner tab would be \$50 to \$60 a person, which he said is on par with other top restaurants here but still prompted several Bolivians to gasp. The minimum wage here is about \$143 a month.

Mr. Meyer will address that contradiction soon by opening a bistro and bakery where people can eat more economically. And he said that all profits from the restaurant would go to charitable projects in Bolivia, which he chose partly because it was a developing country with a wide range of unique local ingredients.

The project also includes a cooking school for young Bolivians from poor families, which will provide a trained work force for the restaurant and, Mr. Meyer hopes, create a new generation of experimentally minded chefs.

On a recent morning, students at the school, which is run out of an ornate mansion in central La Paz, buzzed around a cramped kitchen, making pork chops and yucca fries. Then some of them piled into a van for a field trip to a nearby market.

Ms. Seidler, one of the head chefs, said that because she arrived in Bolivia only recently she often finds herself learning from her students. At a market stall, Ms. Seidler and a student, Belén Soria, pored over types of *offal*. Ms. Soria explained how indigenous women prepared a mixture of fried tripe and potatoes that they sell from carts at night.

Ms. Soria, 24, said she grew up helping her grandmother cook and sell *api*, a sweet corn gruel that is a workingperson's inexpensive morning staple.

"Everyone has their own knowledge, things their grandparents told them," she said. But she has less time to help her grandmother now that she is focusing on her studies.

"We're all curious to prepare new things, with our own stamp," Ms. Soria said. "Original things."

20121107-10	13:44	Tom	Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run for the Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial
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Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEPBQGu74oo&feature=youtu.be>.

Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run (<http://ilmotorcyclefreedomrun.org>)

In the rural Illinois town of Marseilles, home to Illinois Valley Cellular, there is a memorial to those who have sacrificed all for freedom.

"Freedom isn't free." - photo of a grieving mother and children holding sign at Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial

IV Cellular is proud to have a role in the Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial. A testament to private citizens and small business working together to do what is right... Honor those who have given all for freedom.

[20121107-11](#)

16:39

Dennis

"To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II"

"To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II"

(<http://www.avolites.com/avo/jokes/queen.htm>)

In light of your failure in recent years to nominate competent candidates for President of the USA and thus to govern yourselves, we hereby give notice of the revocation of your independence, effective immediately.

(You should look up 'revocation' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.)

Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will resume monarchical duties over all states, commonwealths, and territories (except Kansas, which she does not fancy).

Your new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, will appoint a Governor for America without the need for further elections.

Congress and the Senate will be disbanded. A questionnaire may be circulated next year to determine whether any of you noticed.

To aid in the transition to a British Crown dependency, the following rules are introduced with immediate effect:

1. The letter 'U' will be reinstated in words such as 'colour,' 'favour,' 'labour' and 'neighbour.' Likewise, you will learn to spell 'doughnut' without skipping half the letters, and the suffix '-ize' will be replaced by the suffix '-ise.' Generally, you will be expected to raise your vocabulary to acceptable levels. (look up 'vocabulary').
2. Using the same twenty-seven words interspersed with filler noises such as "like' and 'you know' is an unacceptable and inefficient form of communication. There is no such thing as U.S. English. We will let Microsoft know on your behalf. The Microsoft spell-checker will be adjusted to take into account the reinstated letter 'u' and the elimination of '-ize.'
3. July 4th will no longer be celebrated as a holiday.
4. You will learn to resolve personal issues without using guns, lawyers, or therapists. The fact that you need so many lawyers and therapists shows that you're not quite ready to be independent. Guns should only be used for shooting grouse. If you can't sort things out without suing someone or speaking to a therapist, then you're not ready to shoot grouse.
5. Therefore, you will no longer be allowed to own or carry anything more dangerous than a vegetable peeler. Although a permit will be required if you wish to carry a vegetable peeler in public.
6. All intersections will be replaced with roundabouts, and you will start driving on the left side with immediate effect. At the same time, you will go metric with immediate effect and without the benefit of conversion tables. Both roundabouts and metrication will help you understand the British sense of humour.
7. The former USA will adopt UK prices on petrol (which you have been calling gasoline) of roughly \$10/US gallon. Get used to it.

8. You will learn to make real chips. Those things you call French fries are not real chips, and those things you insist on calling potato chips are properly called crisps. Real chips are thick cut, fried in animal fat, and dressed not with catsup but with vinegar.

9. The cold, tasteless stuff you insist on calling beer is not actually beer at all. Henceforth, only proper British Bitter will be referred to as beer, and European brews of known and accepted provenance will be referred to as Lager. South African beer is also acceptable, as they are pound for pound the greatest sporting nation on earth and it can only be due to the beer. They are also part of the British Commonwealth - see what it did for them. American brands will be referred to as Near-Frozen Gnat's Urine, so that all can be sold without risk of further confusion.

10. Hollywood will be required occasionally to cast English actors as good guys. Hollywood will also be required to cast English actors to play English characters. Watching Andie Macdowell attempt English dialogue in Four Weddings and a Funeral was an experience akin to having one's ears removed with a cheese grater.

11. You will cease playing American football. There is only one kind of proper football; you call it soccer. Those of you brave enough will, in time, be allowed to play rugby (which has some similarities to American football, but does not involve stopping for a rest every twenty seconds or wearing full kevlar body armour like a bunch of nancies).

12. Further, you will stop playing baseball. It is not reasonable to host an event called the World Series for a game which is not played outside of America. Since only 2.1% of you are aware there is a world beyond your borders, your error is understandable. You will learn cricket, and we will let you face the South Africans first to take the sting out of their deliveries.

13. You must tell us who killed JFK. It's been driving us mad.

14. An internal revenue agent (i.e. tax collector) from Her Majesty's Government will be with you shortly to ensure the acquisition of all monies due (backdated to 1776).

15. Daily Tea Time begins promptly at 4 p.m. with proper cups, with saucers, and never mugs, with high quality biscuits (cookies) and cakes; plus strawberries (with cream) when in season.

God Save the Queen!

20121107-13	19:00	SteveG	Good News from Florida
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Alan Grayson returns to the House to represent his Florida district after a 2 year absence. Allen West stays home as the first time representative from Florida is defeated. That is a plus 2 for the democrats of Florida.

20121107-14	19:30	SteveB	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveG, above)
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I noticed that. In fact, I heard from Grayson's campaign. But I didn't hear from Allen West's campaign. Darn!

20121107-15	20:03	SteveG	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveB, above)
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Go figure.

20121107-17	21:47	SteveG	Energy Independence?
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In a drive from Washington to Indiana and back we listened to a variety of radio shows – Rush, NPR, comedy channels, oldies, country, etc.

One show stands out in my aging memory banks: In search of energy independence and no importation of oil the cost of US gasoline was compared with Canadian gasoline (which according to NPR does not import oil). When adjusted for currency exchange, taxes, liters to gallons, etc. the cost of Canadian and US gasoline to the customer was the same.

Thought the comparison was interesting.

[20121107-18](#) 22:24 SteveB Re: Energy Independence? (reply to SteveG, above)

Makes sense, it's a truly international market.

Yes, it does work to import oil. Just as it works to have a big deficit.

The former is why I say we should use-up all "their" oil, especially all the Arab oil, before we more seriously tap into our own, which we should try to save for the future as much as we can (without hurting ourselves).

The latter is why I say let's spend China's money while we have the chance!

[20121107-19](#) 23:55 Marci Cool Photos #2 (The Edge of Earth — Bunda Cliffs, Australia)



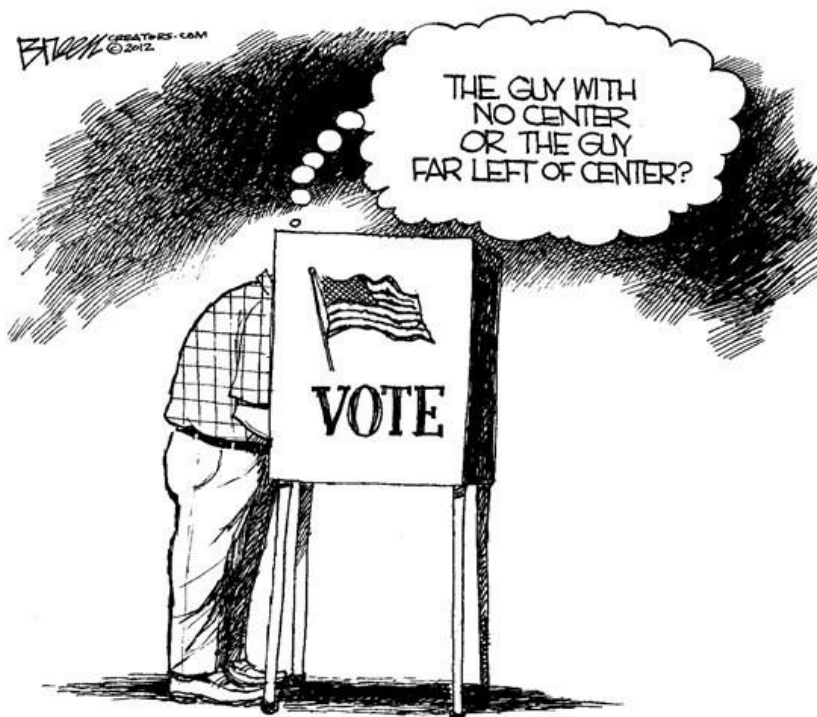
[20121107-20](#) 23:56 Tom There, I Fixed It! #2 (Woody Tires)

It's half-Woody Wagon on its mother's side.



[20121107-21](#) 23:57 GaryF Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #2 (Iron Grill)





<http://www.vagabondish.com/photo-of-the-moment-overlooking-la-paz-bolivia/>



LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #266 — NOV. 9, 2012**

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INDEX: Click here.

The Zombie Sagas, Part 2: The Disconnect from Reality

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 9, 2012)

How and why listening to the conservative media "echo chamber" did not lead the GOP to the truth (or victory)...

"Will Rove Still Be Boss?" by Craig Unger, Salon

Nov. 7, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/11/07/karl_rove_the_other_big_loser/)

(The GOP's vaunted mastermind had a televised freakout -- and might well be the second biggest loser of the night.)



Mitt Romney wasn't the only big loser last night. For Karl Rove, the coup de grâce came in the hour just before midnight.

It began at around 11:18 p.m., when Fox News called the election and posted its gaudy graphic: "Barack Obama Re-elected President." Brit Hume, Megyn Kelly and a host of pundits offered up brief postmortems. Even the house organ of the Republican Party had conceded.

But then, abruptly, at 11:25, the narrative changed dramatically. "I have great respect for our decision desk," said Fox's Chris Wallace, "and I can see that they're very happy [at Obama headquarters] in Chicago, but I have to tell you that the Romney camp has real doubts by the call that has been made by us and by other networks."

Enter Karl Rove — Machiavellian GOP party boss, master numbers cruncher, and Fox News analyst — to challenge the verdict that everyone had anxiously awaited. Wallace got right to the point and asked Rove if he thought Ohio was locked up for Obama.

"No, I don't," Rove said.

"We've got a quarter of the vote," he explained. "Now remember, here is the thing about Ohio. A third of the vote or more is cast early and is won overwhelmingly by the Democrats."

Rove insisted that calling the election was "premature."

"So, maybe not so fast, folks!" Wallace said.

The unthinkable had just happened. Fox had called the election for Obama, but Karl Rove, its Svengali-like analyst, had just disputed his own network's call.

There was an uncomfortable moment of dead air.

Then, Fox anchor Megyn Kelly addressed the situation with understatement. "Well, that's awkward," she said.

To resolve the issue, she hiked, on camera, all the way back to the analysts' bullpen where the Fox decision desk was located. There, several unidentified analysts confidently assured her they had done their homework, crunched the numbers and explained there was no way Romney could take possibly Ohio. They were 99.95 percent certain. They were not backing off. Too many of the remaining precincts that were unreported were in heavily Democratic precincts.

But Rove wouldn't let go.

Next, Fox brought on conservative pundit Michael Barone, a pal of Rove's who had predicted a Romney victory and who is, in Rove's words' "the smartest guy in America when it comes to precinct results" to set him straight.

By this time, Rove was effectively disputing not just Fox News, but *all* the major news outlets in the country that had called the election for Obama. It was nearly midnight. The spectacle had dragged on for 40 minutes, providing an unparalleled spectacle of schadenfreude for Democrats: Karl Rove, stricken, like Humpty-Dumpty after the fall, as Barone patiently explained to him, as one might talk to a child, that Obama really had won Ohio — and the election.

Fox showed a shot of Obama supporters cheering wildly. "They're not listening to Karl," said Megyn Kelly. "They don't care what Karl says."

Ultimately, it was left to Fox's Bret Baier to make a feeble excuse for the chastened Rove. "Maybe we got you a slow computer," he offered weakly.

Rove's defeat did not come from want of trying. Throughout the entire campaign, on the surface, he played the lofty pundit pontificating for Fox and the *Wall Street Journal* as if he had no role whatsoever in the campaign. But whenever one looked closely beneath the surface, one found the Mark of Rove. Under the radar, via his surrogates in the Romney campaign, Boss Rove orchestrated massive, multimillion-dollar political ad campaigns that inundated

the swing states with countless ads funded by his super PACs and “dark money” groups. He drummed up narratives portraying Obama as a latter day failed, weak Jimmy Carter, and reawakened paranoid fantasies that suggested America still lived in the aftermath of 9/11, cringing in fear of the terrorist threat. In more than 30 states there were attempts at voter suppression — Jim Crow 2.0 — in one form or another, a strategy Rove had begun to employ by 2004. In Ohio, Republican Secretary of State Jon Husted, who had worked on Rove’s Ohio campaign in ‘04, did everything he could to limit early voting. Nathan Sproul, a former Rove operative, launched nationwide schemes to disenfranchise Democrats, but was investigated by authorities for electoral misconduct and voter registration fraud. And various electronic voting machine companies were suspected of positioning themselves to rig the vote.

But in the end it was all for naught. Vigilant Democrats, often helped by the courts, had rebuffed him. Astoundingly, no one was cowering in fear of Boss Rove.

What went wrong? For Rove, just about everything. Throughout the entire campaign, the bitter division between the GOP establishment — Rove and his cronies — and the Tea Partiers severely limited his power. Rove’s inability to oust Missouri senatorial candidate Todd “illegitimate rape” Akin played a key role in allowing the Democrats to retain control of the Senate. Mitt Romney’s attempts to straddle the two wings of the party reduced him to an Etch-A-Sketch candidate who did not have a clearly defined narrative. GOP efforts at voter suppression failed to subdue the growing Hispanic vote for the Democrats — a demographic time bomb that will only worsen for Republicans. And ultimately for Rove, running the party by remote control, playing pundit while he secretly pulled the strings, had its limits.

What did Rove get out of it? One can only wonder how much money he made from a campaign in which he controlled the purse strings for hundreds of millions of dollars. What is certain is that it is unlikely that he will ever be forthcoming.

But in the final analysis, it is also certain that the election brought Karl Rove a spectacular defeat. After all, it is unclear what it means to be boss of a political party that is so bitterly divided. Already, Rove and his associates have begun castigating Tea Party candidates such as Todd Akin, Richard Mourdock in Indiana, and others as not ready for prime time. For their part, Tea Party billionaires such as Sheldon Adelson and the Koch brothers may well regret joining forces with Rove at all. Such wounds will not be healed overnight.

Does this mean Karl Rove is gone for good?

Not at all. It is worth remembering Rove has been written off before. In 2007, he was forced out of the White House in disgrace, having narrowly escaped indictment, the target of two of the biggest scandals in the Bush-Cheney era, having barely escaped indictment. The next year, his patron, George W. Bush, left the presidency with a 22 percent approval rating, the lowest in the history of the United States. The Rove brand was tainted irrevocably. Or so it seemed.

All of which means, when it comes to Karl Rove, the Democrats had best play by Chicago rules. “That means when he is dead, you put a stake through his heart,” explained one Democratic operative. “Then you put a bullet through his head. You pour gasoline on him and set him on fire. Then you kill him again. Because he’ll be back.”

[“Romneyworld Reckoning Begins” by James Hohmann and Anna Palmer, Politico](#)

Nov. 7, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1112/83549.html?hp=11>)

(BOSTON) Advisers to Mitt Romney insisted Wednesday that they were surprised by the scale of their loss to President Barack Obama, while big-time GOP donors griped about the campaign’s unflinching confidence in the final stretch.

As results began to stream in Tuesday night, prominent Romney supporters in Boston tried to stay positive, reassuring themselves that there was still a path to the White House. But dejection quickly turned to anger a day after an Electoral College rout that shocked many who had heard self-assured projections about voter enthusiasm and turnout in private conference calls and meetings in the campaign’s final stretch.

"They ran a 20th-century campaign in the 21st century," said one Romney bundler, frustrated that the campaign made assumptions about the youth vote and voter intensity that didn't pan out. "The anger is that they were entrusted to do certain things. It's not like they were paid a \$5,000 retainer to get a few dozen articles in an inside-the-Beltway paper. This is the major leagues."

Another Republican outside the Romney campaign but privy to its thinking described the defeat as a complete pummeling, with Senate losses adding salt to the wound.

Romney supporters point to a series of brash statements made by advisers that seem out of touch with reality in retrospect. Inside-the-Beltway, Republicans trained their fire on senior Romney advisers like Ed Gillespie and political director Rich Beeson for appearances on last weekend's Sunday shows. Gillespie said the electoral map was expanding, and Beeson predicted a 300 electoral vote win for Romney.

"There were a lot of Republicans who were on calls that the campaign was having led to believe we had shots in Pennsylvania and Minnesota," one Republican operative supporting Romney said. "I think Republicans are split right now between confused and shocked, and also I think they are wondering did the Romney campaign have numbers we didn't have."

In starker terms, the source questioned: "Was last week a head fake, or were they just not that smart?"

Multiple Romney sources buzzed about one number in particular: 15 percent. According to exit polls, that's the share of African-Americans who voted in Ohio this year. In 2008, the black percentage of the electorate was 11 percent. In Virginia and Florida, exit polls showed the same share of African-Americans turned out as four years ago, something that GOP turnout models did not anticipate.

"We didn't think they'd turn out more of their base vote than they did in 2008, but they smoked us," said one Romney operative. "It's unbelievable that they turned out more from the African-American community than in 2008. Somehow they got 'em to vote."

African-Americans supported Obama nearly universally, but Obama still won Ohio only by 1.9 percent.

"We just didn't see the enthusiasm with their base," he added. "We had enthusiasm on our side. So we thought, 'Yeah, we're gonna win this.' ... We hit our numbers in rural areas. When Fox called it, we still thought we had a chance based on what we could figure was in and what was still out."

On a rainy and dreary post-Election Day here, as Romney staffers turned in their BlackBerrys at campaign headquarters and huddled for a late-afternoon staff meeting, most were more focused on housekeeping than relitigating strategic decisions. They were disappointed but circumspect, although a more exhaustive review is planned in the next few days.

Inside tight-knit Romneyworld — where many of the GOP nominee's senior aides have worked together since Romney's time as Massachusetts governor — there was a sense Tuesday that the White House was within reach. Over the past few weeks, especially after Romney's strong Denver debate performance, some staffers were openly speculating about jobs they might nab in a Romney administration and discussed the shape of the transition effort. By Wednesday, many were looking for work but taking the long view.

At the Boston convention center where Romney conceded in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, Romney's high command — including Eric Fehrstrom and Kevin Madden — looked glum. Hugs and handshakes were exchanged after Romney spoke for five minutes and then stood on stage with his family and his running mate, Paul Ryan.

After getting some sleep, a senior campaign official praised the skill of his opponents in Chicago, saying Obama's team ran a "technically proficient campaign."

"People really did think we were going to win," he said. "I thought going into yesterday that we could and would win. You've got to give them a lot of credit: They changed the electorate."

Romney bundlers and mega-donors were optimistic Tuesday afternoon as they mingled in the Westin Boston Waterfront hotel lobby, picking up their donor packets and prepping for a private party before what they believed would be a Romney victory.

Romney's team believed that it would be hard to lose if they won independents, but it happened. They said they thought they could perform as well with men as Obama did with women, but they didn't. They thought there would be fewer young voters in 2008, but turnout was roughly on par.

Obama campaign officials noted Wednesday that they had years to build up a field operation that was often not visible to the other side. The director of Obama outreach to African-Americans in Ohio oversaw a barber shop and beauty salon program that helped register new voters and distribute literature. A Congregations Captains Program helped the campaign arm supporters in traditionally African-American congregations with what they needed to mobilize other parishioners.

"Obviously, there was still room to grow," said an Obama campaign official. "We didn't reach 100 percent capacity in 2008."

Internally, Hurricane Sandy received a share of blame. The campaign's messaging mavens say they lost several key days where they couldn't roll out attacks because of the storm. Worse, Romney had been attacking Obama for being small — and his response to the storm made him look big. A key component of Romney's closing argument was that Obama could not work across the aisle, a campaign official said, but then the president wandered around New Jersey with GOP Gov. Chris Christie.

"No one here is expressing any regret," an adviser said. "It's the nature of the game....This was not McCain '08 ... You have an organization with a few hundred people worth a billion dollars. There will be days with disagreement, no doubt ... But there's a sense of camaraderie."

The candidate himself isn't coming out unscathed. Given his background at Bain Capital and reputation as a details and data-driven employer and candidate, many Republicans are also questioning whether Romney was personally engaged enough in key decisions.

Meanwhile, the bundlers and mega-donors who put their reputations on the line — helping raise more than \$1 billion for the Romney operation — continued to praise the finance team as first class. But there is little love lost among them for pollster Neil Newhouse and chief strategist and ad maker Stuart Stevens.

Simply put — many GOP-ers said that when the dust settles, the verdict will be this was an election that Romney should have won.

Fred Malek, who chaired Sen. John McCain's (R-Ariz.) 2008 presidential bid, said that Romney and his campaign team ran a good race, but that in the final weeks all of the breaks were in Obama's favor — from the positive jobs reports to the storm interrupting Romney's momentum coming out of the debate.

"People are going to carp, but many of us are in this for the long term, and probably don't like to lose. It's democracy, and if we want to spend time recriminating or criticizing or going after what could have been, that's not healthy, it's not going to help," he said. "These things ebb and flow a bit, it just happened to ebb at the wrong time for us."

Perhaps the Romney insiders in Boston drank a little too much of their own Kool-Aid. Huge crowds are common for both sides in a campaign's closing days. Romney himself was moved by an unplanned massing of a thousand well-wishers who waited for him at the airport in Pittsburgh Tuesday afternoon.

"You know intellectually I've felt we're going to win this and have felt that for some time, but emotionally just getting off the plane and seeing those people standing there — we didn't tell them we were coming, we didn't notify them when we'd arrive, just seeing people there cheering as they were — connected emotionally with me,"

he told reporters on the flight from Pittsburgh to Boston before polls closed. "I not only think we're going to win intellectually, I feel it as well."

Romney said on that flight that he has no regrets.

"I feel we have put it all on the field," he said. "We left nothing in the locker room. We fought to the very end."



WHY VOTE AT ALL WHEN SOME SAY THE CANDIDATES ARE "THE SAME"?
HERE'S A HANDY COMPARISON.

OBAMA AT HIS WORST	★	ROMNEY AT HIS BEST
DIDN'T PUSH FOR SINGLE PAYER HEALTH INSURANCE		WOULD PUSH 45 MILLION PEOPLE OFF OF HEALTH INSURANCE
CONTINUING THE DRONE STRIKES		MIGHT REFRAIN FROM NUKING IRAN
NOT HARD ENOUGH ON WALL STREET		IS WALL STREET
STILL CLINGS TO "BIPARTISAN" STRATEGY THAT LETS HIM GET STEAMROLLED.		STEAMROLLER RIDE SOMETIMES BUMPY FROM RUNNING OVER REMAINING SPINES OF DEMOCRATS
TOOK A WHILE TO WARM UP TO GAY MARRIAGE		MIGHT TAKE A WHILE TO ANNIHILATE GAY MARRIAGE
TALKS ABOUT "CLEAN COAL"		SEE LOS ANGELES IN "BLADE RUNNER"

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"How a Race in the Balance Went to Obama" by Adam Nagourney, Ashley Parker, Jim Rutenberg, and Jeff Zeleny, *The New York Times*

Nov. 7, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/08/us/politics/obama-campaign-clawed-back-after-a-dismal-debate.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&>)

Seven minutes into the first presidential debate, the mood turned from tense to grim inside the room at the University of Denver where Obama staff members were following the encounter. Top aides monitoring focus groups — voters who registered their minute-by-minute reactions with the turn of a dial — watched as enthusiasm for Mitt Romney spiked. "We are getting bombed on Twitter," announced Stephanie Cutter, a deputy campaign manager, while tracking the early postings by political analysts and journalists whom the Obama campaign viewed as critical in setting debate perceptions.

By the time President Obama had waded through a convoluted answer about health care — "He's not mentioning voucher-care?" someone called out — a pall had fallen over the room. When the president closed by declaring, "This was a terrific debate," his re-election team grimaced. There was the obligatory huddle to discuss how to explain his performance to the nation, and then a moment of paralysis: No one wanted to go to the spin room and speak with reporters.

Mr. Romney's advisers monitored the debate up the hall from the Obama team, as well as at campaign headquarters in Boston. Giddy smiles flashed across their faces as their focus groups showed the same results.

"Boy, the president is off tonight," said Stuart Stevens, the senior Romney strategist, sounding mystified, according to aides in the room. Russ Schriefer, a senior adviser, immediately began planning television spots based entirely on clips from the debate. As it drew to a close, Gail Gitcho, Mr. Romney's communications director in Boston, warned surrogates heading out to television studios: "No chest thumping."

The Oct. 3 debate sharply exposed Mr. Obama's vulnerabilities and forced the president and his advisers to work to reclaim the campaign over a grueling 30 days, ending with his triumph on Tuesday. After a summer of growing confidence, Mr. Obama suddenly confronted the possibility of a loss that would diminish his legacy and threaten his signature achievement, the health care law. He emerged newly combative, newly contrite and newly willing to recognize how his disdain for Mr. Romney had blinded him to his opponent's strengths and ability to inflict damage.

After watching a videotape of his debate performance, Mr. Obama began calling panicked donors and supporters to reassure them he would do better. "This is on me," the president said, again and again.

Mr. Obama, who had dismissed warnings about being caught off guard in the debate, told his advisers that he would now accept and deploy the prewritten attack lines that he had sniffed at earlier. "If I give up a couple of points of likability and come across as snarky, so be it," Mr. Obama told his staff.

As his campaign began an all-out assault on Mr. Romney's credibility and conservative views, the president soon was denouncing Mr. Romney's budget proposals as a "sketchy deal" and charging that the Republican nominee was not telling Americans the truth.

Mr. Obama recognized that to a certain extent, he had walked into a trap that Mr. Romney's advisers had anticipated: His antipathy toward Mr. Romney — which advisers described as deeper than what Mr. Obama had felt for John McCain in 2008 — led the incumbent to underestimate his opponent as he began moving to the center before the debate audience of millions of television viewers.

But as concerned as the White House was during the last 30 days of the campaign, its polls never showed Mr. Obama slipping behind Mr. Romney, aides said. The president was helped in no small part by the tremendous amount of money the campaign built up, which had permitted him to pound his Republican rival before he had ever had a chance to fully introduce himself to the nation.

That was just one of several ways that Mr. Obama's campaign operations, some unnoticed by Mr. Romney's aides in Boston, helped save the president's candidacy. In Chicago, the campaign recruited a team of behavioral scientists to build an extraordinarily sophisticated database packed with names of millions of undecided voters and potential supporters. The ever-expanding list let the campaign find and register new voters who fit the demographic pattern of Obama backers and methodically track their views through thousands of telephone calls every night.

That allowed the Obama campaign not only to alter the very nature of the electorate, making it younger and less white, but also to create a portrait of shifting voter allegiances. The power of this operation stunned Mr. Romney's aides on election night, as they saw voters they never even knew existed turn out in places like Osceola County, Fla. "It's one thing to say you are going to do it; it's another thing to actually get out there and do it," said Brian Jones, a senior adviser.

In the last days of the campaign, Mr. Romney cast himself as the candidate that he may have wanted to be all along: moderate in tone, an agent of change who promised to bring bipartisan cooperation back to Washington, sounding very much like Barack Obama in 2008.

But he could never overcome the harm that Mr. Obama's advertising had done over the summer or the weight of the ideological baggage he carried from the primary. On Tuesday night, a crestfallen Mr. Romney and his family watched as the television networks showed him losing all but one battleground state.

Even as the networks declared Mr. Obama the winner, Mr. Romney, who had earlier told reporters he had written only a victory speech, paused before the walk downstairs from his hotel room in Boston. It was 11:30 p.m., and Romney field teams in Ohio, Virginia and Florida called in, saying the race was too close for the candidate to give up. At least four planes were ready to go, and aides had bags packed for recount battles in narrowly divided states. Bob White, a close Romney friend and adviser, was prepared to tell the waiting crowd that Mr. Romney would not yet concede.

But then, Mr. Romney quietly decided it was over. "It's not going to happen," he said.

As Ann Romney cried softly, he headed down to deliver his speech, ending his second, and presumably last, bid for the White House. Four decades earlier, his father and inspiration, George Romney, a former Michigan governor failed in his own such quest.

By the end of the 30 days, after Air Force One carried Mr. Obama on an almost round-the-clock series of rallies, the president had reverted back to the agent of change battling the forces of the status quo, drawing contrasts between himself and Mr. Romney with an urgency that had been absent earlier in the race. Mr. Obama had returned, if not to the candidate that he was in 2008, as a man hungry for four more years to pursue his agenda in the White House.

A Difficult September

As the summer came to a close, the Romney campaign was stuck in a tense debate over how to rescue a struggling candidacy. On some nights, it did not even bother with the daily tracking poll. Why waste money on more bad news? Mr. Obama's attack on Mr. Romney's role at Bain Capital, the private equity firm he founded, was in full swing, the Democratic convention had been an unequivocal boost for the president, and a videotape had surfaced that caught Mr. Romney at a private fund-raiser saying that 47 percent of the nation did not pay taxes, a line that reinforced Democrats' efforts to portray him as an out-of-touch elitist.

"We had struggled pretty dramatically in September," said Neil Newhouse, Mr. Romney's pollster. "The 47 percent remark came out, and that was on top of the bounce that Obama got from his convention, so needless to say September was not our best month. It showed in our data. It was grim."

There was, advisers decided, one last opportunity on the horizon: the presidential debate in Denver.

Mr. Stevens argued that Mr. Obama's dislike of Mr. Romney would lead the president to underestimate him. "They think there's something intellectually inferior there," he said later. Mr. Romney's advisers also believed that Mr.

Obama had demonized Mr. Romney to such an extent that their candidate would benefit when judged against the caricature.

In August, Mr. Romney began testing out one-liners on friends flying with him on his campaign plane. On issue after issue, Mr. Romney led discussions on how to frame his answers, to move away from the conservative tone of his primary contests in front of the largest audience he would have as a candidate.

Senator Rob Portman of Ohio was recruited to play Mr. Obama, and he embraced the role, even anticipating how the president would open his first debate, which fell on his wedding anniversary. "I've got to tell you, tonight's a really special night," Mr. Portman said, playing Mr. Obama. "I see my sweetie out there, boy, 20 years ago."

(Mr. Romney's advisers broke out in laughter when the real Mr. Obama opened with a similar line, and nodded approvingly when a very prepared Mr. Romney countered with a gracious response that even Democrats said put Mr. Obama off balance.)

Nothing had been left to chance: Mr. Romney put on full makeup and did his final practice in a room set up to replicate, down to the lighting and temperature, the hall where he would meet Mr. Obama.

On the Sunday before the debate, a group of top advisers and elected Republican officials from across the country, calling themselves the War Council, gathered in Boston to reassure Mr. Romney after his rough month — essentially saying "this is a place in the race, but it isn't a destiny" as Beth Myers, a senior adviser, put it — and to boost his confidence. George W. Bush phoned Mr. Romney, too. Pointing to his own history, he predicted that Mr. Obama would fumble, according to aides.

Democrats advising Mr. Obama saw the same peril for the president in the first debate that Mr. Romney's aides did. Ronald A. Klain, a Democratic strategist who has overseen debate preparation for presidential candidates for nearly 20 years, warned Mr. Obama at his very first debate session, a PowerPoint presentation in the Roosevelt Room on a sweltering day in mid-July, that incumbent presidents almost invariably lose their first debate.

"It's easier for a candidate to schedule the time to prepare; it's easy for the challenger to get away; the president has competing needs," Mr. Klain told Mr. Obama, according to aides who witnessed the exchange.

Ken Mehlman, who had managed Mr. Bush's re-election campaign in 2004, ran into one of Mr. Obama's advisers at a party, and warned him that presidents are not used to being challenged, and unlike candidates, are out of practice at verbal jousting. Mr. Romney had gone through 20 debates over the past year.

Mr. Obama showed no interest in watching the Republican debates. But his aides studied them closely, and concluded that Mr. Romney was a powerful debater, hard to intimidate and fast to throw out assertions that would later prove wrong or exaggerated. At one debate, Gov. Rick Perry of Texas criticized Mr. Romney for having praised Arne Duncan, the education secretary, days earlier. Mr. Romney flatly denied it, leaving Mr. Perry speechless.

At the White House, Mr. Obama's communications director, Dan Pfeiffer, took note of that moment, intending to mention it to Mr. Obama. He would later fault himself for failing to fully understand "the magnitude of the challenge" Mr. Romney's debate style presented.

Mr. Obama displayed little concern. When he went to a resort outside Las Vegas for several days of debate preparation in September, his impatience with the exercise was evident when he escaped for an excursion to the Hoover Dam.

Mr. Klain and David Axelrod, a senior strategist, told Mr. Obama that he seemed distracted, but he shrugged them off. "I'll be there on game day," he said. "I'm a game day player."

Shortly after the debate began, Mr. Obama's aides realized they had made their own mistakes in advising Mr. Obama to avoid combative exchanges that might sacrifice the good will many Americans felt toward him. In Mr. Obama's mock debates with Senator John Kerry, a Massachusetts Democrat, Mr. Kerry drew Mr. Obama into a series of intense exchanges, and Mr. Axelrod decided that they were damaging to the president.

In 90 minutes, Mr. Obama crystallized what had been gnawing concerns among many Americans about the president. He came across, as Mr. Obama's advisers told him over the next few days, as professorial, arrogant, entitled and detached from the turmoil tearing the nation. He appeared to be disdainful not only of his opponent but also of the political process itself. Mr. Obama showed no passion for the job, and allowed Mr. Romney to explode the characterization of him as a wealthy, job-destroying venture capitalist that the Obama campaign had spent months creating.

The voter-analysis database back in Chicago noted a precipitous drop in perceptions of Mr. Obama among independent voters, starting that night and lasting for four days, long before the public polls picked it up. Voters who had begun turning to Mr. Obama were newly willing to give Mr. Romney another look.

What was arguably the most dismal night of Mr. Obama's political career could hardly have come at a worse time: Early voting was already under way in some states. Absentee ballots were on voters' coffee tables that very night.

After the debate, Mr. Obama called Mr. Axelrod on his way back to the hotel room. He had read the early reviews on his iPad.

"I guess the consensus is that we didn't have a very good night," Mr. Obama told Mr. Axelrod.

"That is the consensus," Mr. Axelrod said.

For the next 30 days, Mr. Romney and his advisers tried to capitalize on Mr. Obama's mistakes. And Mr. Romney continued his drift toward the center, softening his language on abortion and immigration from the positions that had defined him during the Republican primaries. It was something that the White House had expected he would do. Perhaps most important, the debate gave him a swagger, confidence and presidential bearing that had been absent.

Mr. Romney soon recognized the scope of his accomplishment. He flew from Denver to Virginia for a rally the next day, and as the motorcade headed toward the event, there was so much traffic that Mr. Romney and his top advisers thought there must have been an accident. In fact, the roads were jammed with people on their way to see him.

A Storm's Effect

It was clear that Hurricane Sandy was going to upend Mr. Obama's final week of campaigning, but aides in Chicago were determined to squeeze in one more visit to Florida. It almost became a calamity.

To get ahead of the storm, the president flew to Orlando on Oct. 28, the evening before a morning event. But overnight, the storm intensified and accelerated. Well before dawn, the Air Force One crew told the president's advisers that if he was going to beat the storm back to Washington, he had to leave at once. His aides blanched at the image of Mr. Obama stuck in sunny Florida as the storm roared up the Eastern Seaboard.

The White House announced the change of plans at 6:45 a.m. The president returned to the White House at 11:07 a.m. and went directly into the Situation Room, canceling his political events. The decision was costly to a campaign so dependent on organization: Mr. Obama used his rallies to collect supporters' telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

Once the storm struck, it was more of a problem for Mr. Romney. It put him in the position of struggling to explain the skepticism he had expressed during the Republican primaries about a federal role in disaster relief. Even worse, the hurricane pushed him off the stage at a crucial time.

In Boston, Mr. Romney's aides broke out in a chorus of groans as they watched on television as Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey offered effusive praise of the president's handling of the disaster. They viewed it as a self-serving act of disloyalty from a man whom they had expected to deploy that very weekend on Mr. Romney's behalf. The praise

of Mr. Obama from a Republican governor came at the same time Mr. Romney had been portraying Mr. Obama as partisan and polarizing.

The same week, the president's campaign released an advertisement in which another Republican, Colin Powell, a former secretary of state, endorsed Mr. Obama. The ad, Mr. Obama's aides said, produced a spike of support from independent voters. (Mr. Obama's aides grabbed the clip from a television interview with Mr. Powell, deciding not to chance asking him for permission).

Mr. Romney was finding Ohio, a state central to his victory, a stubborn target, as Mr. Obama benefited from the auto industry rescue he championed and that Mr. Romney had opposed. The Romney campaign sought to undermine Mr. Obama with an advertisement misleadingly implying that Jeep was moving jobs from Ohio to China. By every measure, the ad backfired, drawing attacks by leaders of auto companies that employed many of the blue-collar voters that Mr. Romney was trying to reach.

The futility of that effort was apparent outside the sprawling Jeep assembly plant in Toledo, which had just had a \$500 million renovation for production of a new line of vehicles, a project requiring 1,100 new workers.

"Everyone here knows someone who works at Jeep," Jim Wessel, a supply representative making a sales visit. He said no one would believe the ad. Speaking of Mr. Obama's efforts to rescue the auto industry, he said, "I can just tell you I'm glad he did it."

Mr. Romney was running out of states. He made an impulsive run on Pennsylvania, chasing what his aides said were tightening polls there. Mr. Romney had spent little time or money there before roaring in during the campaign's final hours.

On the last weekend of the race, Mr. Romney scheduled a rally in Bucks County. Supporters began arriving at 2 p.m. But his plane was delayed, and as the hours rolled on — and the temperatures dropped — dozens of people were temporarily blocked by the Secret Service as they sought to leave. Mr. Romney arrived to an unpleasant scene: clusters of angry, cold supporters.

That Tuesday, Mr. Romney lost the state by 5 percentage points and watched Mr. Obama hold a 50,000-vote lead in Florida — a state that he had once been confident of winning.

(Michael Barbaro, Michael D. Shear and Peter Baker contributed reporting.)

20121108-02	07:32	MarthaH	"Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught"
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"Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" by Michael Isikoff, NBC News

Nov. 8, 2012, (<http://openchannel.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/08/15007504-karl-roves-election-debacle-super-pacs-spending-was-nearly-for-naught?lite>)

(Karl Rove's American Crossroads super PAC had big-money backers, but achieved minimal results, according to a study by the Sunlight Foundation.)

Karl Rove was the political genius of the George W. Bush era -- the architect of the last Republican president's two electoral victories. But this week, he may have had the worst election night of anybody in American politics.

Not only did Rove insist on Fox News that Ohio was still winnable for Republican challenger Mitt Romney after all the TV networks had called it for President Barack Obama -- causing anchor Megyn Kelly to march down to the Fox "decision desk" mavens, who assured her on air that they were "99.9 percent" confident in their call -- but his trailblazing "independent" super PAC operation was virtually shut out on election night.

A study Wednesday by the Sunlight Foundation, which tracks political spending, concluded that Rove's super PAC, American Crossroads, had a success rate of just 1 percent on \$103 million in attack ads -- one of the lowest "returns on investment" (ROIs) of any outside spending group in this year's elections.

Money can't buy happiness, or an election

NBC's Michael Isikoff discusses Super PAC spending during the 2012 election and the bang for each donation buck.

American Crossroads spent heavily, not just on Romney, but on attack ads on behalf of GOP Senate candidates in eight states -- thanks to mega contributions from conservative donors like metals magnate Harold Simmons (\$19.5 million), Texas homebuilder Bob Perry (\$7.5 million) and Omni hotel chief Robert Rowling (\$5 million.)

The super donors didn't get much for their money. Six of the eight GOP Senate candidates that American Crossroads spent money to try to elect -- Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin, George Allen in Virginia, Josh Mandel in Ohio, Richard Mourdock in Indiana, Denny Rehberg in Montana and Todd Akin in Missouri -- lost their races, along with Romney. The group did, on the other hand, help to elect Deb Fischer in Nebraska and Dean Heller in Nevada.

(The Sunlight Foundation calculation of "return on investment" was based on the percentage of money it spent on individual races-- and since Crossroads spent the most on the races it lost on, the group earned its low 1 percent "return on investment" or ROI. A sister group, Crossroads GPS, which operates out of the same offices as American Crossroads but does not disclose its donors, fared little better, netting a return on investment of only 13 percent, according to the Sunlight Foundation report.)

Some in his own party also were unimpressed by the performance of Rove's Crossroads operation. Donald Trump posted a message on Twitter saying: "Congrats to @KarlRove on blowing \$400 million cycle. Every race @CrossroadsGPS ran ads in, the Republicans lost. What a waste of money."

Campaign spending by Super PACs in this election cycle topped \$1 billion -- nearly four times the amount spent by such groups in 2008. Former White House Deputy Press Secretary Bill Burton and former RNC Chairman Michael Steele discuss.

Jonathan Collegio, a spokesman for American Crossroads, dismissed the Sunlight Foundation report.

"GOP super PACs helped keep the race close and winnable, despite Obama's massive financial advantage," he wrote in an email to NBC News. "On the Senate races, run the numbers. If you don't count the long-shot self-funders in CT and PA, Senate Democrats outraised their GOP opponents by \$60 (million) this cycle -- and that disparity is greater if you factor out GOP primary fundraising. The DSCC (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee) outraised the NRSC (National Republican Senatorial Committee) by another \$20 (million). Few have reported on this."

"You can't have an accurate view of the role of super PACs without the context of how Democrats leveraged incumbency to outraise their opponents by literally hundreds of millions of dollars," he added.

The American Crossroads debacle was only the most dramatic example of the limits of big money in this election, according to the Sunlight Foundation report. About \$1.3 billion was spent by outside groups overall -- about two-thirds on the Republican side -- and for the most part their returns were equally low. The Chamber of Commerce, for example, spent \$31 million--and had a 5 percent return, according to the Sunlight study. The conservative American Future Fund spent \$23.9 million and also realized a 5 percent return. The National Rifle Association spent \$11 million, and got shut out.

"It may mean people really don't like big money in politics," says Kathy Kiely, the Sunlight Foundation analyst who co-authored the study. "Maybe they prefer it be spent on something else."

[Now I read tthat Carl Rove is claiming victory because all those \$millions kept it close. Close? What good is that? It was victory, and an easy one at that, that was promised. Sorry! --SteveB]

[20121108-06](#) 11:35 Art Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Some good articles in the *Washington Post* on this. They spent hundreds of millions \$ and got very little out of it. Yeah!!!

[20121108-07](#) 11:40 Pam Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to MarthaH & Art, above)

Maybe this is when we hit bottom and begin looking for a way out of this destructive behavior.

[20121108-11](#) 16:08 SandyI Re: "Karl Rove's Election Debacle: Super PAC's Spending Was Nearly for Naught" (reply to all, above)

I am having difficulty not celebrating their losses, both political and financial. But with their bottomless bank accounts, I'm sure they will be back again, more divisive and vindictive than ever. Boehner is out there already and he doesn't sound like a "let us reason together" kind of guy.

"Change will occur in almost every aspect of our lives,
We can learn to embrace it while releasing the past with grace." —Daily OM

[20121108-03](#) 07:38 MarthaH "Money Can't Buy Happiness, or an Election"

When I think of all that money could have done instead, it makes me ashamed for them that they weren't taught better. Power grabbing doesn't trump loving thy neighbor!

"Money Can't Buy Happiness, or an Election" by Rachael Marcus and John Dunbar, The Center for Public Integrity/NBC News

Casino magnate Sheldon Adelson poured \$53 million into the 2012 elections via controversial super PACs to back these candidates. All lost. From left to right, Mitt Romney, Connie Mack, George Allen, Allen West, Joe Kyrillos, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, David Dewhurst and Newt Gingrich. West is demanding a recount, however, claiming 'disturbing irregularities at the polls.'

Money can't buy happiness, nor can it buy an election, apparently.

The top donors to super PACs in 2012 did not fare well — casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, the No. 1 super PAC contributor with more than \$53 million in giving, backed eight losers at this writing.

Adelson was top backer of the pro-Mitt Romney Restore Our Future super PAC, with \$20 million in donations. Romney lost to President Barack Obama. In addition, Adelson's contributions to super PACs backing U.S. Senate candidates in Florida, Virginia and New Jersey were also for naught.

He was not the only conservative billionaire who had a bad night.

Contran Corp. CEO Harold Simmons, (No. 2), homebuilder Bob Perry (No. 3) and TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, (No.4), also bet on Romney. Collectively, the trio gave \$13.4 million to Restore Our Future, and Ricketts' super PAC, Ending Spending Action Fund, spent an additional \$9.9 million helping Romney's failed bid.

Fred Eychaner, founder of Chicago-based alternative-newspaper publisher Newsweb Corp., was the only one of the top five donors to super PACs to back a winner -- President Barack Obama.

The super donor winner of the night was Newsweb Corp. CEO Fred Eychaner (No. 5). Eychaner gave \$3.5 million to pro-Obama super PAC Priorities USA Action through the most recent filing period, which ended Oct. 17, according to Federal Election Commission records.

In Florida, Republican Rep. Connie Mack lost his challenge to the popular Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson, who won with 55 percent of the vote. Adelson gave \$2 million to the pro-Mack super PAC Freedom PAC, and Simmons and Perry gave a combined \$255,000 to the group.

The hotly contested Senate race in Virginia attracted \$2.5 million from Adelson and Perry, both giving to Independence Virginia, the super PAC supporting former Republican Sen. George Allen. His opponent, Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine, won the seat with 52 percent of the vote.

Adelson also invested in the re-election of Rep. Allen West, R-Fla., in Florida's 18th District, who narrowly lost to Democratic newcomer Patrick Murphy. On Wednesday, however, West's campaign called for a recount, citing "disturbing irregularities reported at polls."

The casino billionaire's \$1 million to Patriot Prosperity, a New Jersey-specific super PAC supporting the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, Joe Kyrillos, and the Republican candidate for U.S. House in the state's 9th District, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, did not pay off.

Sheldon Adelson, chairman and CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corp., pumped \$53 million into the election, but apparently backed only one minor winner by helping defeat a Michigan ballot initiative.

During the primary season, Adelson's \$16.5 million in contributions to the super PAC Winning Our Future was not enough guide former House Majority Leader Newt Gingrich to a Republican presidential nomination, though it is credited with keeping him in the race longer than expected. Nor were Adelson's contributions enough to help Texas Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst win the GOP primary for Texas Senate earlier this year, a cause to which gave at least a quarter-million dollars.

Adelson did score one point with his \$2 million contribution that helped sink a Michigan ballot initiative seeking to enshrine collective bargaining in the state's Constitution. Adelson runs the only non-union casinos on the Las Vegas Strip.

Win-Loss Rundown (giving to candidate-specific super PACs in the federal election):

Sheldon Adelson, Republican, \$53.7 million*

- Mitt Romney — loss
- Connie Mack (Florida Senate) — loss
- George Allen (Virginia Senate) — loss
- Allen West (House, Florida's 18th) — too close to call, but leaning toward loss
- Joe Kyrillos (New Jersey Senate) — loss
- Shmuley Boteach (House, New Jersey's 9th) — loss
- Newt Gingrich (GOP presidential primary) — loss
- David Dewhurst (GOP primary, Texas Senate) — loss

Harold Simmons, Republican, \$26.9 million*

- Mitt Romney — loss
- Connie Mack (Florida Senate) — loss
- Rick Santorum (GOP presidential primary) — loss
- Newt Gingrich (GOP presidential primary) — loss
- Rick Perry (GOP presidential primary) — loss

David Dewhurst (GOP primary, Texas Senate) — loss
Orrin Hatch (GOP primary, Utah Senate) — win

Bob Perry, Republican, \$21.5 million*

Mitt Romney — loss
George Allen (Virginia Senate) — loss
Connie Mack (Florida Senate) — loss
Rick Perry (GOP presidential primary) — loss
David Dewhurst (GOP primary, Texas Senate) — loss
Joe Ricketts, Republican, \$12.9 million*
Mitt Romney — loss

Fred Eychaner, Democrat, \$12 million*

Barack Obama — win

Tuesday marked the first presidential election under the new campaign finance regime installed following the 2010 *Citizens United* U.S. Supreme Court decision. The ruling paved the way for super PACs and nonprofits, allowing them to accept unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations and unions, which could be spent on advertising backing or opposing candidates.

*As of Oct. 17, 2012 for the 2011-2012 election cycle. Source: Center for Responsive Politics and Center for Public Integrity analysis of Federal Election Commission records. Totals include contributions from individuals, family members and corporations that are controlled by the individual super donor.

The Center for Public Integrity is a non-profit independent investigative news outlet. For more of its stories visit: <http://www.publicintegrity.org>.

[What I fear is that, in the future, these rich a-holes will figure out how to do a much better job of manipulating public opinion with their, mainly, lies and slander. We badly need election reform, but for this round at least, the people triumphed. —SteveB]

20121108-04	07:51	MarthaH	"Where Do You Fit? The Political Party Quiz"
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I wish I had had this "tool" when I taught! The whole thing won't copy/paste, but it really shows the tendencies. It's strongly disagree--agree strongly mode.

"Where Do You Fit? The Political Party Quiz" by the Pew research Center

date unknown, (<http://www.people-press.org/political-party-quiz/>)

[Wow! I'm really insulted! It said I was a "socialist"! ;-) —SteveB]

20121108-05	10:21	Pam	Re: Good News from Florida (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #265)
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I love Alan Grayson. We've got Elizabeth Warren and Grayson. A dynamic duo!

20121108-08 11:43 Art Re: Energy Independence? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #265)

I'm pretty sure oil is an international commodity and the price is determined by international futures bond and stock traders. Everyone has seemingly forgotten that spike during the last Bush Administration when refined gasoline went up to almost \$5.00 a gallon. If you looked at supply and demand during that period, it had not changed appreciably at all. So the oil was there and the demand was the same and yet prices almost doubled. Why? It begged looking into by the incoming Obama Administration but then got buried in the economic crash at the end of the Bush years.

SteveB makes a good point below but in the end it doesn't matter where you pump it. It will go to whoever pays the highest price.

Another thing that need fixing.

[Art: "It will go to whoever pays the highest price." Yes, now, but maybe not our oil in our future... --SteveB]

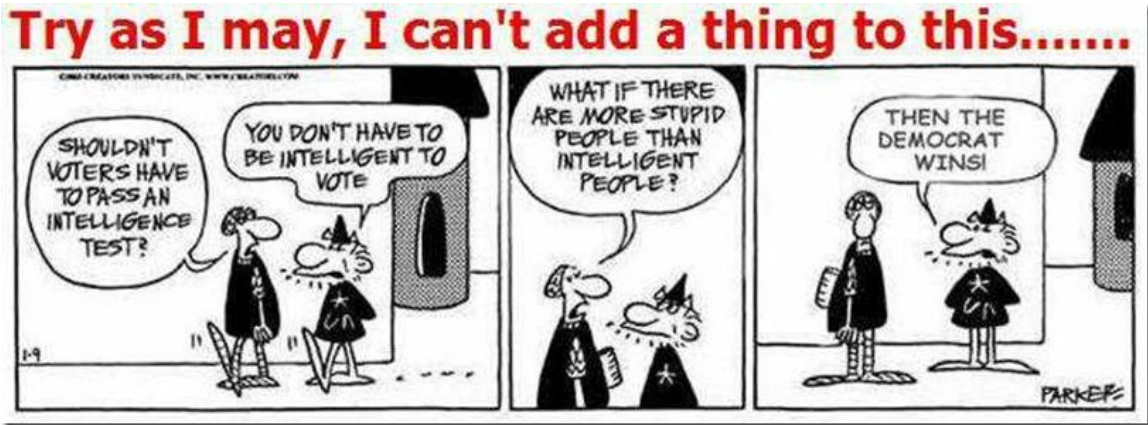
20121108-09 12:26 Art Republican Gerrymandering & FotM Newsletter #265

Great lead in article and the rest also, of course.

Have you noted in the recent election that the only places the Republicans seemed to do well was in the gerrymandered congressional districts. In almost every other case where the electorate was spread across a broad brush of the population, despite spending hundreds of \$ millions, they lost.

Hmmm?

20121108-10 14:58 Tom Cartoon: Democrats



20121108-12 20:30 SteveG "What the Election Means for the Fiscal Showdown"

"What the Election Means for the Fiscal Showdown" by ThinkProgress War Room

Nov. 8, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/progress-report/?mobile=nc>)

President Obama won a decisive victory on Tuesday. He's the first Democrat since FDR to be elected twice with over 50 percent of the vote.

As soon as the election was over, discussion immediately turned to the upcoming fiscal showdown. Over the course of the next few weeks, Congress has to resolve numerous fiscal issues:

- The fate of the Bush tax cuts, particularly those for the wealthiest Americans.
- \$1.1 trillion in automatic cuts to both defense and domestic discretionary spending.
- The debt ceiling, which may be hit as soon as the end of next month.

If nothing is done by the end of the year, the automatic cuts kick in and taxes revert to Clinton-era rates for everyone, not just the wealthy.

Republicans are already indicating that they think the election either didn't mean anything or somehow actually validated their viewpoint. House Speaker John Boehner (R) said yesterday that tax hikes for the wealthy were off the table. He then floated what he called a "compromise," but in reality is basically the same tax plan that Mitt Romney just ran on— and lost. For his part, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R) has already taken the debt ceiling hostage to deep cuts to entitlements and other spending. Cantor also insisted that Obamacare be on the table during negotiations.

Here's why the election provides President Obama with a mandate to push his vision — a balanced approach that invests in the middle class, makes smart spending cuts, and, most importantly, makes the wealthy pay their fair share. Conversely, the election was also a definitive repudiation of the GOP's failed top-down approach.

Candidates Ran on Tax Fairness — And Won

The President made raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans a centerpiece of his campaign, and never wavered from that position. On election night, one of *Politico's* top headlines read: "Exit polls 2012: Most say hike taxes." ***In fact, 6 in 10 voters nationwide say they think taxes should be increased.*** The question of returning the high end tax rates to those during the Clinton era played an even more central role in key Senate races in blue, purple and even deep red states:

- **Wisconsin (D51, R46):** Rep. Tammy Baldwin was the lead sponsor of the Buffett Rule in the House of Representatives and made it a central element of her campaign, including in her advertising. Her opponent, Tommy Thompson, opposed the Buffett Rule, calling it "discriminatory." He also ran on a tax plan that would lower taxes for the wealthy while raising them on the middle class and the poor. American Crossroads, Crossroads GPS and the Chamber of Commerce all spent heavily to define Baldwin as a "tax and spend" liberal; in fact, in the final two months these three groups spent over \$3.6 million to attack Baldwin on her tax plans. Yet, fifty-two percent of Wisconsin voters said that taxes should be increased for those making over \$250,000, according to exit polls (with another 12 percent supporting tax increases for all incomes and 32 percent against tax increases for high earners).
- **Connecticut (D55, R43):** Linda McMahon released a tax plan that was identical to Gov. Romney's proposal and similarly pitched her plan as a tax cut for the middle class even though analysts agreed it would provide massive tax breaks to the wealthy and corporations. Rep. Chris Murphy centered himself as the candidate "on the side of the middle" class, featuring McMahon's tax policy that benefited the richest in multiple ads, declaring "it's time to make the rules fair." According to an analysis of Kantar Media CMAG data by CAP Action, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spent at least \$550,000 in the final week of the election championing McMahon's tax plan and contrasting it with "politicians who raise taxes so they can keep spending more".
- **North Dakota (3,000 votes):** Even in solidly red North Dakota, Heidi Heitkamp championed tax fairness and campaigned in support of the Buffett Rule. She also attacked her opponent, Rep. Rick Berg, for twice voting in favor of the Republican budget, specifically citing its tax cuts for the wealthy. Heitkamp also strenuously defended her support for Obamacare, even turning Berg's support for repealing it into an attack. Crossroads GPS spent heavily against Heitkamp with more than half a million dollars in the final eight weeks used to define Heitkamp on the tax issue.

The American people voted for candidates up and down the ballot that supported getting rid of tax giveaways and special loopholes that favor the richest corporations and individuals.

A Debate Between Two Visions for the Economy

This election across the country was a proxy debate on two competing visions for economic growth: the trickle-down model that suggests that the only job creators are the richest, where it is enough to grow profits without sustaining jobs or wages, and the "middle out" vision of the economy that says the government has a role to play in making prosperity possible for more Americans. And what happened? The middle class as the engine of economic growth won.

- Exit polls show that a majority believes that the economy generally favors the wealthy (55 percent); what's more a majority also said that Romney's policies favor the rich (53 percent). But it wasn't just about Romney's support of policies that benefit the wealthiest; it was that people rejected the basis of his top-down economic theory.
- A poll of 1700 presidential voters the night of the election found that while voters credited President Obama with being better on the economy by only a point, when it came to "restoring the middle class", voters favored Obama by twelve points.
- Joel Benenson, chief pollster for the Obama campaign, wrote for *New York Times* about an 800 person poll they conducted for their own firm, finding: "Spending cuts alone could not address voter concerns — 89 percent of those surveyed agreed that "for my children to have the economic opportunities I've had, we need to make real investments in education, creating world-class schools and making college more affordable." Benenson continued, "And when asked what the key to growing our economy was, nearly two in three voters said it was building a strong middle class over creating a "healthy climate for business."

Americans made clear this week that they are more interested in investing in growth through the middle class than austerity measures that place more of the burden on the middle class. There is broad support for cutting wasteful spending, including tax giveaways that favor the wealthiest, rather than cutting investments in programs that protect social mobility and growth, like education, infrastructure and public health.

As Elizabeth Warren stated in her speech after defeating Sen. Scott Brown, "This victory belongs to you...we're going to fight for a level playing field and we're going to put people back to work."

The Choice

The choices we make over the next few weeks will have huge consequences for the middle class and our economy for a generation to come: will Congress ask the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share, or will they keep the game rigged for the wealthy at the expense of the middle class? One path asks the wealthy to pay a little more in order to reduce the deficit while making investments in the middle class that we need in order to grow the economy over the long-term. A different path asks the middle class and seniors to foot the bill by slashing Medicare and Social Security just to provide another round of tax cuts to the wealthiest – tax cuts that have proven to not create jobs and would effectively preclude investments in energy, education and infrastructure.

As Republicans and Democrats make their case to the American people during the fiscal showdown, they would be wise to look closely at what Americans said loudly and clearly in this election and the brinkmanship and pledges they rejected.

BOTTOM LINE: Republicans made their case to the American people and the American people rejected their approach.



"Lincoln Only Won 39.8 percent of the Popular Vote" by delanceyplace.com

Nov. 6, 2012, (http://delanceyplace.com/view_archives.php?2104)

Review/excerpt: *American History Revisited* by Seymour Morris Jr., Broadway Books, 2010)

In today's selection - Abraham Lincoln only won 39.8 percent of the popular vote in his first presidential victory, and used a questionable tactic to help win his second. In fact, since 1820, the last year an essentially uncontested election was held, most presidential elections have been extremely close. Only four presidents received more than 60 percent of the vote, nine elections saw a candidate win between 55 and 60 percent of the vote, and candidates who received less than 50 percent of the vote have won 18 presidential elections:

He was the luckiest man to run for president: He won with only 39.8 percent of the popular votes cast -- the smallest percentage ever recorded. He had no help from his running mate: he only met his vice president Hannibal Hamlin on Election Day. How did Abraham Lincoln manage to win?

The remaining 60.2 percent was split among three other candidates: Stephen A. Douglas (29 percent), John C. Breckenridge (18 percent), and John Bell (13 percent). Had it not been for the presence of *two* 'third-party' candidates -- Breckenridge and Bell -- Lincoln might not have been elected. (In that year there were four candidates because each of the two parties had nominated an upstart Southern candidate as well as an official Northern one.) Says the historian Jay Winik: Lincoln's victory 'was in many ways a fluke and nothing more.'

Naturally, lacking a strong 'popular mandate,' Lincoln had a difficult time leading the country. In 1864, with the Civil War going badly, Lincoln made preparations to go home, fully expecting General George McClellan to be his successor. ... Observes the historian James McPherson, 'If the election had been held in August 1864 instead of November, Lincoln would have lost.' ...

In the middle of an unexpectedly long war that had -- in Walt Whitman's memo-rable words -- turned the nation into 'one vast central hospital,' the president needed all the help he could get in his fal-tering reelection bid. His primary support came from soldiers and those who contin-ued to believe in the war.

Of the twenty-five states of the Union, only fourteen permitted soldiers to vote in the state they happened to be in while fighting. Soldiers from the remaining eleven states would be out of luck be-cause they were not home. One of the critical states was Indiana. The state's Re-publican governor went to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and told him that without the support of Indiana's fifteen thousand soldiers, Lincoln would lose. How about giving the soldiers 'sick leave' so they could come home to vote?

A letter immediately went out, signed by the president, to General William Tecumseh Sherman: 'Indiana is the only important State victory in October, whose soldiers cannot vote in the field. Anything you can do to let her soldiers, or any part of them, go home to vote at the State election will be greatly in point.' Never in the history of warfare had soldiers been permitted to go home to vote, thought Sherman when he read the letter, but then, this was different. 'Our armies van-ish before our eyes and it is useless to complain,' he wrote his wife, 'because the election is more important than the war.' (He also knew if Lincoln lost, he would be out of a job.) ...

The Democrats were furious when they heard what Lincoln had done, but there was nothing they could do, lest it impugn the patriotism of their fighting men. They became even more frustrated when they saw what happened on Election Day. From every direction, thousands of sol-diers got off the train to vote and sweep Lincoln to victory. Exactly who these thousands of troops were, nobody could be sure. It was, in the words of one histo-rian, 'the day that Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Ohio voted in Indiana.'

20121108-15 23:55 Marci Cool Photos #3 (Up High)





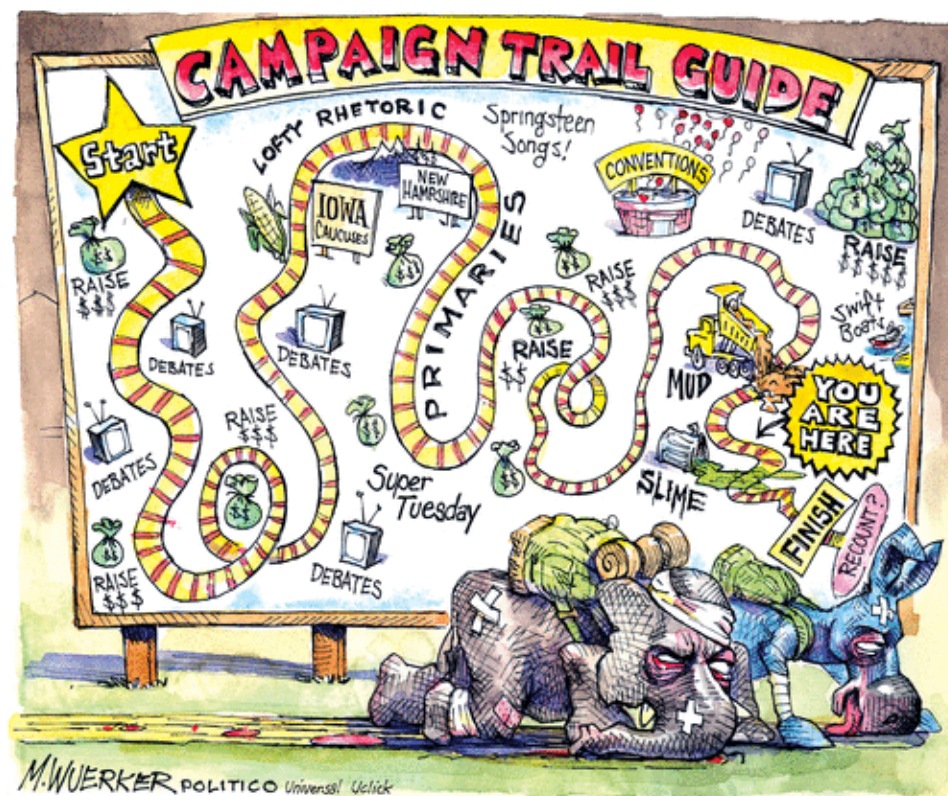
© Caters News Agency

The Devil is Ready to Clean the Greens! I wonder if Dyson will pick up on this all-terrain enhancement.





[Very simple and clever! Ingenious. So often the most obvious things escape us! -SteveB]



<http://www.funny-potato.com/dead-end.html>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #267 — NOV. 12, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Zombie Sagas, Part 3: 'Avalanche on Bullshit Mountain'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 12, 2012)

"There were just too many damn Democrats," —Brian Ries, *Newsweek*

In the final part of this post-election analysis, we look at what the GOP can do to recover from its epic losses—but I don't think they're going to like the medicine that would cure them—THE TRUTH!

"The Republican Party Needs to Ditch Fox News If It Wants to Win" by Erik Kain, MotherJones

Nov. 7, 2012, (<http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2012/11/why-republican-party-needs-ditch-happy-meal-conservatism-if-they-want-win>)



With President Obama's victory over Mitt Romney, many pundits are already engaging in clichéd talk of "soul-searching" for the GOP. What they mean by this phrase differs depending on who says it: Pundits on the left as well

as moderate, reform-oriented Republicans are claiming the party needs to move back to a pragmatist set of policies; tea partiers and others on the right, talk radio, and Fox News are claiming that Mitt Romney, like John McCain before him, was simply too moderate to win, and that only a true, principled conservative can lead the charge to victory.

But what Republicans really need to learn from Romney's defeat is not that their candidate was too weak or too moderate. They need to learn that their candidate was forced to adopt far more extreme policies than he previously held due to a primary process that enslaves pragmatism and electability to a rigid ideology. And at the heart of this rigid ideology is a conservative movement that's become the creature of the right-wing media.

Fox News is often described as little more than a mouthpiece for the Republican Party. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, the reverse is the case, with the Republican Party serving as unwitting puppets of the self-serving right-wing controversy machine. Fox News and the talk radio shock jocks across the country win whether or not conservatives are in power; these purveyors of political entertainment thrive under a Democratic president, perhaps even more so than under their preferred candidates. There's big money in controversy, and controversy is what the Glenn Becks of the world do best.

At some point, Republicans will need to wake up to the current state of affairs and realize they're being held hostage to a powerful, self-sustaining entertainment industry and that the interests of the party and the interests of Fox News are not one and the same.

Indeed, the spinoffs of this conservative movement/media behemoth can be seen far and wide as bloggers like Dean Chambers take up the mantle of "true conservatism" and begin telling Republicans only what they want to hear—even if that means twisting the polling data beyond anything remotely recognizable as the truth.

Even the tea party was largely the result of a concerted effort on the part of conservative media to foment dissatisfaction and resentment. Sure, this may have helped sweep the House to the right in 2010, but more importantly it drove traffic to conservative websites and eyeballs to Fox News. And while Romney may have lost the election last night, Fox is guaranteed a strong viewership through Obama's second term.

This is what conservative writer John Derbyshire described as far back as 2009 as "Happy Meal conservatism," a lowbrow and ultimately harmful approach to rallying the conservative troops. "Reason has been overwhelmed by propaganda," Derbyshire wrote at the time, "ideas by slogans." Happy Meal conservatism, he argued, is one of the major contributors to this state of affairs.

It does so by routinely descending into the ad hominem—Feminazis instead of feminism—and catering to reflex rather than thought. Where once conservatism had been about individualism, talk radio now rallies the mob. "Revolt against the masses?" asked Jeffrey Hart. "Limbaugh is the masses."

Derbyshire trafficked in paranoid, lowbrow, and deeply racist tactics of his own, but his point remains intact nonetheless. And while Derbyshire may have ultimately ignored his own advice, there are others on the right who need to begin the process of distancing themselves from the right-wing media machine that's taken over their movement.

Republicans need to wake up to their damaged brand, and then they need to follow the money. It doesn't take a degree in economics to see how the shock jocks play their audiences. You don't have to listen to many Glenn Beck tirades about going back to the gold standard and their accompanying advertisements about trading in your gold jewelry for cash to see how cynical this act has become. But gold schemes are small potatoes compared to the much larger con being played on the Republican Party.

The problem is one of revolving doors. Failure for Republican politicians doesn't always have to end in tears. Play to the cameras well enough, and you might just land yourself a job at Fox News—that is, if you're not already lined up with a cozy consulting job at a lobbying firm (something politicians across the spectrum are guilty of too often than we'd care to admit.)

And so Happy Meal conservatism becomes as cyclical as it is cynical. It may bite the hands that feed it, but it shares enough of the wealth to keep up appearances.

Meanwhile, conservatives continue to grow more and more dependent on a steady diet of this fast-food political fare, further deepening the "politics of resentment," as libertarian writer Julian Sanchez describes it. Far from being a coherent political philosophy, Sanchez argues that modern conservatism is a "farce currently performing under that marquee [that's] an inferiority complex in political philosophy drag."

But why does this play so well on the right? Even admitting that all human beings have a penchant for the controversial and that all good narrative is driven by conflict—contrived or otherwise—why has Fox News and Rush Limbaugh and the rest of the right-wing bloviators become so enormously powerful?

Sanchez argues that it's a status grievance first and foremost. Conservatives feel under attack and have "internalized the enemy's secular cosmopolitan value set and status hierarchy."

In other words, conservatives have begun to see the writing on the wall as demographics shift and they begin to lose ground in the culture wars. Fox News is banking on this, capitalizing on the unspoken fears this may provoke, and giving those fears voice. They didn't invent fire, they just learned how to stoke it and make sure that it generates far more heat than light.

But as Sanchez points out, this is a doomed project:

Even if conservatives retook power, they wouldn't be able to provide a political solution to a psychological problem, assuming they're not willing to go the Pol Pot route. At the same time, it signals a resignation to impotence on the cultural front where the real conflict lies. It effectively says: We ceded to the bogeyman cultural elites the power of stereotypical definition, so becoming the stereotype more fully and grotesquely is our only means of empowerment.

What Republicans need to realize in the wake of their defeat is that it's not a means to empowerment, it's only a means to one end: making conservative media buckets full of money, come rain or shine.



"Obama's Critics, Repudiated at Last" by LZ Granderson, CNN

Nov. 8, 2012, (http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/07/opinion/granderson-obama-reelection/index.html?hpt=po_r1)

"Take our country back."

Almost as soon as Barack Obama became president four years ago, we began hearing that phrase, as if black folks had stolen the White House. Each time I see one of those "Take Our Country Back" signs on someone's lawn, I want to knock on the door and ask, "from whom?"

From whom are you trying to take this country back?

But I don't, because I already know the answer.

It's the same answer to the question of why so many people still don't believe that President Obama was born in the United States. Or why they continue to question his faith or why Donald Trump feels comfortable insulting the office by promising his pocket change in exchange for Obama's college transcripts, as if the president is a stripper desperate for singles.

He and his kind are so pathetic.

They don't just disagree with him. They disrespect him, because in their minds, he's not supposed to be there. He got a handout. He's not a real American. Something about him ain't...quite...right.

So when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, his critics spent more time discrediting the importance of the award than congratulating him for winning it.

When unemployment fell under 8%, they accused the Obama administration of fixing the numbers.

When the president opted to campaign instead of surveying the damage caused by Hurricane Isaac sooner, he was called selfish. When Obama left the campaign trail to survey the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy, former FEMA Director Michael Brown criticized him for responding too quickly.

Nothing he did was good enough for them.

But on Tuesday, it was good enough for the majority of real Americans.

We watched then-congressman Pete Hoekstra call the stimulus package a failure and then show up for a groundbreaking ceremony for a manufacturing plant made possible by the stimulus. We saw Texas Gov. Rick Perry call the stimulus a waste during debates while quietly using stimulus money to balance his state's budget. Rep. Paul Ryan, the supposed numbers man of the Republican Party, repeatedly called the stimulus a wasteful spending spree, and then we found out he wrote letters asking for stimulus money in his district ([PDF](#)), because according to him, it would "stimulate the local and area economy by creating new jobs."

It was hard for real Americans to take criticism of the Recovery Act seriously when those doing the criticizing were busy talking out of both sides of their anti-Obama mouths.

And that's exactly what we've watched for much of four years: the president's critics being more focused on making him look like a failure than on helping the country succeed.

Some call it politics.

I call it unpatriotic.

Either way, despite the disrespect and the disregard and the attempts to suppress votes or intimidate voters, despite the misguided cry of "take our country back," Obama was re-elected because the majority of the American people saw the truth.

You remember when Ryan stood up in front of nation during the Republican National Convention and blamed the president for a plant closing in Janesville, Wisconsin? Yeah, turns out the closure was planned before Obama even took office. The people in Janesville knew the truth, which is probably why more than 60% of the county it's in voted for Obama.

There is no need to take this country back, because it hasn't gone anywhere ... except forward ... toward a more perfect union where the "All-American look" is getting a little bit harder to define. That may make a lot of people uncomfortable, but personal discomfort isn't a good enough reason to slight 25 consecutive months of job growth, resurgent house prices and corporations seeing record profit. Every president since Theodore Roosevelt has talked about reforming health care, and Obama is the one who got it done -- yet his critics say he's done nothing since he's been in office.

Now, of course, there is still a lot of work ahead. We have a deficit to address, a fiscal cliff that is threatening millions of jobs and a GDP that is limping. And the administration is going to make mistakes. Every administration does.

But now that this election is finally over, maybe more Republicans will be willing to take a page from the book of New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and give Obama some credit for the things he's done right. We can still challenge the president's ideas without asking for his papers or spitting on our highest office.

When I think about where this country was four years ago -- with us losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month, engulfed in two wars and disliked by many of our allies -- I believe Obama has done a lot that's right.

And from the looks of his resounding re-election, the majority of real Americans feel the same way.



[20121109-01](#) 09:46 Pam Re: "Lincoln Only Won 39.8 Percent of the Popular Vote" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #266)

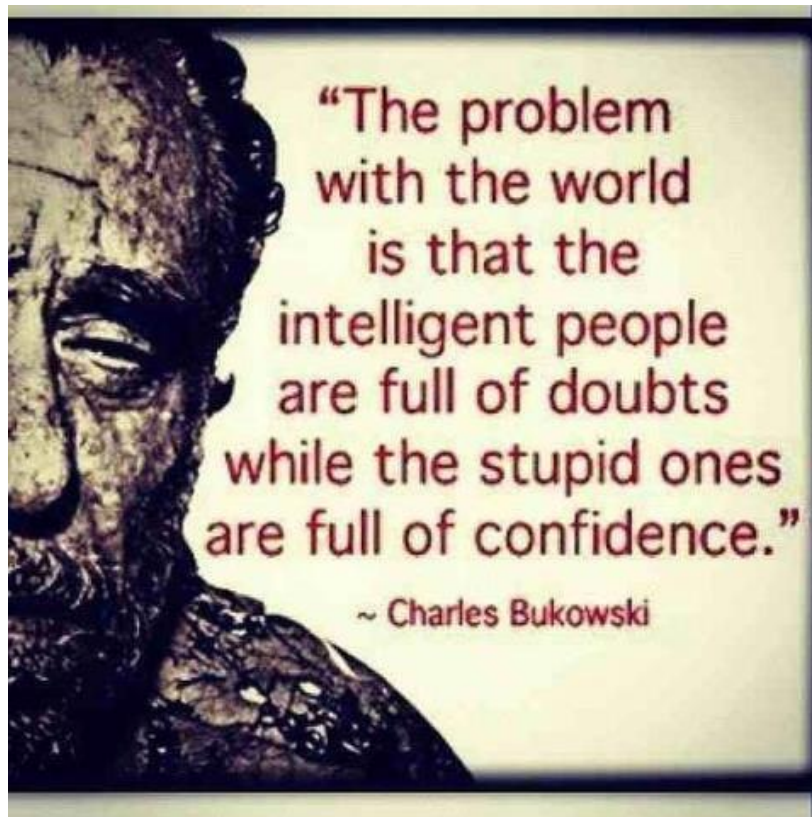
And lots of people really hated him. Even my grandmother, bless her soul, thought there was another side to his story. She had arguments—I can remember her making them when I was a kid—about how slavery was actually a good thing. I'm glad times have changed.

[20121109-02](#) 12:10 Art Re: "Lincoln Only Won 39.8 Percent of the Popular Vote" (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #266)

Great article. Thanks.

[20121109-03](#) 12:14 Art Quote: Charles Bukowski on Intelligent Doubt vs. Stupid Confidence

I continue to be amazed by things like the cartoon. Republicans seem to live in a land of myths and yet they call others who disagree with them stupid. The latest election and their stunned surprise at the outcome couldn't better illustrate the point.



[20121109-04](#) 15:28 Ron Re: FotM Newsletter #266

Any Bama supporter with those tasteless comments is obviously not in the middle. Does the "left" ring a bell?

[20121109-06](#) 16:17 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above)

Thanks for your tasteful comments.

According to the last election, which our Constitution still seems to mandate, I, personally, must be smack dab in the middle.

I would love to continue this dialog with you, though. Every time we try to engage in reasoned discussions with the far right, they always end up fizzling out, calling names, crying, and then running home with their marbles, never to be heard from again. They simply can't stand the light of the truth. Maybe you could do better?

I'm eternally hopeful...

20121109-07	17:35	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above) & "An Inside Look Behind Romney's Loss: An Epic Failure of Its Orca Big-Data 'App'" & Video: "Frum: Republicans Lied to by 'Conservative Entertainment Complex'"
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Here's one of my main points. This year, the GOP, for whatever reason, became the victim of multiple big lies.

They told so many lies, they no longer could recognize truth. They committed the cardinal sin of lying to themselves.

Here's an interesting article which shows a little bit of how the truth was stretched internally... I wonder if Mr. R0mney would have run the country as poorly as he ran his campaign organization? It doesn't seem like his famous business experience was much help...

Now I hear this whopper: "GOP strategist Karl Rove went on Fox News today to argue that President Barack Obama "succeeded by **suppressing the vote**" -- an argument that directly contradicts the conventional wisdom that Romney failed to appeal to non-white and female voters."

This can hardly be called getting at the truth... Lies are a handicap, and they proved to be so for the R0mney campaign.

Below the article is a link to a very interesting video...I mean, all the misconceptions must have come from somewhere...

"An Inside Look Behind Romney's Loss: An Epic Failure of Its Orca Big-Data 'App'" by Preston Gralla, Computerworld

Nov. 9, 2012, (<http://blogs.computerworld.com/governmentindustries/21310/inside-look-behind-romneys-loss-epic-failure-its-orca-big-data-app>)

Many things went wrong with Romney's campaign for president, but one of the biggest was the epic failure of the campaign's big-data app for getting out the vote, called Orca. When the campaign needed it most, Orca was beached.

Politico has an excellent summary of the problems it says that Orca had. Among them were that the Romney campaign kept it secret and didn't beta-test it before it was rolled out on Election Day. That meant that the people who it was designed for -- the thousands of volunteers across the country -- didn't have a chance to learn how to use it before it was launched. And Orca kept crashing throughout the day.

The system was designed to identify likely Romney voters who had not yet voted on Election Day, and then get them to vote. But it continually crashed and people didn't know how to use it. Here's what Politico has to say about the consequences:

The numbers in the interface never moved, leaving officials in Boston and out in the states "flying blind" -- a phrase used by several people. The workers on the ground didn't know what doors to knock on or what

efforts to make with which voter targets who had not yet turned out --- some efforts were made but they were slow and more cumbersome. And the campaign officials also generally didn't know which precincts to send auto-calls into to try to boost turnout -- especially in precincts in Ohio, where there is no party affiliation in the general election. Instead of targeted information, all they really had to work with was the generic raw vote tallies in various counties.

There's an even more damning inside account by John Ekdahl at Ace of Spades, who was involved as a volunteer. He says that he had worries about the system from the beginning:

"Working primarily as a web developer, I had some serious questions. Things like 'Has this been stress tested?', 'Is there redundancy in place?' and 'What steps have been taken to combat a coordinated DDOS attack or the like?', among others. These types of questions were brushed aside (truth be told, they never took one of my questions). They assured us that the system had been relentlessly tested and would be a tremendous success."

Things went downhill from there, by his account. He said, for example, that people were told that Orca was an "app," and so people tried to find it to download it to their smartphones. In fact, though, it was a website. This caused a great deal of confusion among the people who were going to use it:

"For starters, this was billed as an 'app' when it was actually a mobile-optimized website (or "web app"). For days I saw people on Twitter saying they couldn't find the app on the Android Market or iTunes and couldn't download it. Well, that's because it didn't exist. It was a website. This created a ton of confusion. Not to mention that they didn't even turn it on' until 6AM in the morning [on election day], so people couldn't properly familiarize themselves with how it worked on their personal phone beforehand."

His conclusion is an especially bitter one:

"So, the end result was that 30,000+ of the most active and fired-up volunteers were wandering around confused and frustrated when they could have been doing anything else to help. Like driving people to the polls, phone-banking, walking door-to-door, etc. We lost by fairly small margins in Florida, Virginia, Ohio and Colorado. If this had worked could it have closed the gap? I sure hope not for my sanity's sake.

"The bitter irony of this entire endeavor was that a supposedly small government candidate gutted the local structure of GOTV efforts in favor of a centralized, faceless organization in a far off place (in this case, their Boston headquarters). Wrap your head around that."

No matter your politics -- whether you're a Romney supporter or Obama supporter -- you should read the Ace of Spades account as a cautionary tale about how not to deploy a big-data app in politics or business:
<http://ace.mu.nu/archives/334783.php>.

(Preston Gralla is a contributing editor for *Computerworld* and author of more than 40 books, including *Windows 8 Hacks* and *How the Internet Works*.)

Video: "Frum: Republicans Lied to by 'Conservative Entertainment Complex'" by Dylan Byers, Politico

Nov. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2012/11/frum-republicans-lied-to-by-conservative-entertainment-149120.html?hp=r13>)

Conservative columnist David Frum argues that **"Republicans have been fleeced and exploited and lied to by a conservative entertainment complex."**

20121109-08 18:18 Ron Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to SteveB, above)

It's a good thing Obama had Bill Clinton to save his butt. Oh, by the way "I never had sex with that woman"

[20121109-11](#) 19:55 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #266 (reply to Ron, above)

Ya, too bad R0mney didn't have Pres. Bush to save his! ;-)

Hope you have a great Veteran's Day weekend!

[20121109-05](#) 15:56 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Late this morning, I received an unexpected response to my remorse at having missed the scallop dish yesterday. Some remained, so there would be a dozen or so scallop plates available today, not on the menu, first come, first served: be early.

I was.

I arrived at the Bistro line at approximately 11:30:03, but no scallops were to be seen. I greeted Chef Kellie happily, and in response to her query alluded to this special scallop surprise. They weren't quite ready yet, so I had a moment to survey the other offerings. The Coq au Vin was lovely and looked wine-saturated and ready to

These scallops (as you can see below) might have been called the "Boston Stranglers" instead of just "Boston scallops", when listed yesterday. Easily an inch and a half thick and over two inches across, these little monsters were a credit to the species: each whole, fresh, unsullied, vibrantly healthy adductor muscle of the whatever-it-is bivalve was caramelized to a rich golden brown, wee crispy across the top, seasoned lightly and with a hint of ocean saltiness, translucent but on the edge of opacity in the interior, moist, tender, mild... yum. Chef Alex' smooth fluffy carrot puree underneath was brilliant vivid orange velvet, smoothly rich with cream, with a sweet hint of butter and a tang of what I suspect was yuzu, a small Japanese citrus fruit. The vegetable component included sweet, smooth parsnip chunks, roasted just enough to make them smooth and creamy near the surface, with an interior density that preserved the fresh taste nicely; fresh fingerling potato halves, a single golden caramelized sweet flat Italian-named (I cannot remember: ciappino?) onion, and quartered mushrooms sauteed somehow to a fresh, yielding firmness without even a hint of sogginess at the surface. How is this done? It elevates a mushroom!

I love arugula, so the generous dollop of fresh greens across the the top was a perfect flavor and color accent. (I never did find out how this was dressed.) As there were a few remaining scallops when I finished my lunch, I grabbed a second plate for my darling wife as I left.

(Urrp!) I ate it all:



Monster Scallops

20121109-09 18:51 SteveG "General David Petraeus: Soldier, Scholar, Statesman"

Early resignation...

"General David Petraeus: Soldier, Scholar, Statesman" by Robert Burns, AP

Nov. 10, 2012, (<http://news.msn.com/politics/cia-gen-david-petraeus-resigns>)

(Petraeus submitted his resignation due to an extramarital affair with his biographer Paula Broadwell, according to several U.S. officials with knowledge of the situation.)

(WASHINGTON) At the close of his time commanding U.S. forces in Iraq, at the height of a legendary military career, Gen. David Petraeus was lauded by his boss, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates, as "one of our nation's great battle captains."

The depth of admiration for Petraeus' decades of accomplishment in uniform make it all the more remarkable that barely a year after retiring to head the CIA he resigned in disgrace over an extramarital affair.

Often talked about as a potential Republican presidential candidate in the mold of another popular war hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Petraeus built a reputation during 37 years in the Army as a skilled and personable leader with a penchant for publicity.

An ambitious soldier whose childhood nickname was "Peaches," he rose quickly through the ranks after graduating from the West Point military academy in 1974.

Shrewd, articulate, competitive — Petraeus built an exceptional record of accomplishment in the Army.

He retired from the Army to become CIA director in the summer of 2011, shortly after completing 13 months as the top commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

He famously remarked as U.S. forces conquered Baghdad in April 2003 only to face an unforeseen insurgency: "Tell me how this ends." As applied to the brief Washington chapter of his career, few could have foreseen this ending.

He sent a letter to President Barack Obama on Thursday asking that he be allowed to resign, and Obama on Friday said yes.

The "extremely poor judgment" that Petraeus said he exercised stands in sharp contrast to the resume of discipline, dedication, leadership and intellectual firepower that he built during an Army career in which he commanded soldiers at every level.

He earned a master's degree in public affairs in 1985 and a doctorate in international relations in 1987 — both at Princeton University. When the campus newspaper, *The Daily Princetonian*, reported two months ago that Petraeus might be interested in becoming the university's president, he issued a statement in which he did not deny interest but said, "I am living the dream here at CIA."

Petraeus, 60, and his wife, Holly, have two children: a daughter, Anne, and a son, Stephen, who led an infantry platoon in Afghanistan as an Army lieutenant. He and Holly were married in July 1974 in the chapel on the West Point campus.

Petraeus' career was not without its bumps. He survived an M-16 round to the chest during a training exercise at Fort Campbell, Ky., in 1991. After his recovery, Petraeus rose through the ranks in a series of assignments that included executive assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Hugh Shelton, plus stints in Haiti and Bosnia.

In 2000, he shattered his pelvis when his parachute collapsed during a free-fall jump. He was known in his middle age to challenge soldiers half his age to pushup contests — and he would win.

During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, he led the 101st Airborne Division across the desert and won acclaim for stabilizing a sector of northern Iraq that later became a stronghold of al-Qaida's Iraq affiliate. Within one year, freshly promoted to three-star general, he positioned himself as an expert on the complexities of modern warfare and was put in charge of training the new Iraqi army. In July 2004, he graced the cover of *Newsweek* magazine, posing in front of a Black Hawk helicopter with the caption, "Can this man save Iraq?"

In early 2007 Petraeus was sent back to Iraq once again, this time to execute President George W. Bush's "surge" of forces at a time when many in Washington and beyond believed the war had been tragically lost.

Petraeus became the administration's leading ambassador for the Iraq war's progress. He had a close relationship with President George W. Bush and became known for his detailed PowerPoint presentations, burying lawmakers in charts that tracked everything from troop deaths and roadside bombs to power generation and school construction.

In 2007, after he reported progress in the war effort — thumping legislative attempts by congressional Democrats to force troops home — an anti-war group took out a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* that coined a new nickname for Petraeus — "General Betray Us" — and blamed him for "cooking the books for the White House."

But by most accounts, Petraeus' strategy worked for the time being and he was hailed a hero who paved the way for the eventual U.S. exit from Iraq.

When Petraeus took his next assignment, as head of U.S. Central Command, in October 2008, Gates called him the do-it-all general, "the pre-eminent soldier-scholar-statesman of his generation."

[20121110-03](#) 09:11 Pam Re: "General David Petraeus..." (to Art, re. SteveG, FotM Newsletter #266)

Art, what's your take on this? Would you think me a traitor if I said I think the General's private life is nobody else's business? Clinton got away with far more egregious behavior, and he kept his job. There's a painful story behind all this, and I think we should all give this man the benefit of the doubt. If he'd sold secrets to the Russians, that would be a different matter. But he broke no laws and I feel sure he didn't undertake this affair lightly. And don't say I have laissez faire morals, because I don't.

[20121110-07](#) 14:37 Bill Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)

Remember Keeler-Profumo?

[20121110-08](#) 14:49 Dennis Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)

Remember Dwight D. Eisenhower and Kay Summersby during WWII? Didn't hurt Ike's political career.

[20121110-12](#) 15:39 Pam Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Dennis, above)

I don't think LBJ was a paragon of virtue either. Or FDR. Or JFK. It would seem that the more tolerant we become in one area--gay marriage, for example--we go all icky-gooey in another. I wish we could just treat all grown ups like grown ups. If people mess up, why does it have to be a matter for anyone beyond those directly involved?

[20121110-15](#) 16:36 Bill Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Dennis, above)

Christine Keeler was shacking with the Soviet military attaché—if I remember correctly—whereas Kay Summersby wasn't. I happen to think Petraeus is extremely capable, but he made a mistake and admitted it. (Of course, we wouldn't find members of Congress doing so.)

[20121110-09](#) 15:11 SteveG Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to all, above)

Didn't hurt JFK or FDR.

[20121110-11](#) 15:36 Pam Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)

Indeed I do remember the Profumo affair, but wasn't there at least one Russian agent involved? I don't believe anything like that is the case with Petraeus.

[20121110-16](#) 16:40 Bill Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)

We don't know yet. Something tripped the alarm, causing his resignation. I also doubt he compromised security, but who knows?

[20121110-18](#) 17:05 Pam Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Bill, above)

Yeah, I was wondering who ratted him out.

[20121110-19](#) 17:14 SteveG Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)

There is a report in Patreus's instance there was an investigation into his biographer who was trying to get access to his emails – she was the affair lady too.

[20121110-13](#) 16:16 Art Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Pam, above)

Sorry to be so late getting in to this and I see there has been a lot of discussion already. I can only say that the military, especially the Army, tends to look at adultery a little different than the civilian world. It is a court martial offense in the UCMJ and we tend to follow through. Yes, there have been cases of the good ol boy network and people do get away with it, but if it does come to light, particularly as a senior officer, you're toast. There is an additional factor here in that the young lady involved was a junior reserve officer and that adds an extra dimension, fraternization. When I was younger and we were just beginning to bring large numbers of women into the more traditional combat arms areas (they are still not allowed in combat arms assignments, but Signal, MPs etc makes it a pretty moot point, it was the primary cause of the relief of battalion commanders.

So, I think GEN Petraeus followed the only path open to him. I know elected officials have gotten away with it for years, but we hold ourselves to much higher standards.

As a slightly amusing aside, we are just now getting serious about planning our VII Corps 22nd Desert Storm Anniversary Dinner. GEN Franks our Corps commander sent me an e-mail about a week ago asking me what I thought of Petraeus as our dinner speaker. (We've had Bush I, Cheney in the past and recently GEN Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs - so we get some pretty big names) I replied I thought it would be great, if we could get him. Well now I'm tempted to write back, "Well the good news is he will probably be available, but the bad news is..... So far I'm resisting sending that e-mail.

[20121110-14](#) 16:25 Pam Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to Art, above)

Thanks, Art. I didn't realize the ethos of the military precluded extra-marital affairs. I hate to see people ruined for being human. But that's just me. I wonder who you'll get as a speaker now. It all seems very sad to me. I'm sure P. and wife are in agony about this.

[20121110-17](#) 16:48 Bill Re: "General David Petraeus..." (reply to SteveG, above)

In FDR's era, there was a different ethos. JFK did come close to trouble with the woman who was also hanging around Sam Giancana.

Another one for Tom and his little cartoon [in FotM Newsletter #266]:



"Mom Names Twins after Obama, Romney (Mitt Was No. 2)" by Thomas Mukoya, Reuters/NBC News

Nov. 9, 2012, (<http://todayonthehill.com/news/2012/11/09/15052156-mom-names-twins-after-obama-romney-mitt-was-no-2?lite>)

The election has triggered a new generation of Barack Obamas and one Mitt Romney, with parents in Kenya naming their newborns after the newly re-elected president and his defeated rival, Mitt Romney.

At the Nyanza Provincial General Hospital in Kisumu, western Kenya, Obama's ancestral homeland, several mothers named their babies after the first African-American president and Romney, just hours after the official announcement that Obama had been re-elected.

Millicent Awuor, 20, named her newly born twins Barack Obama and Mitt Romney.

"I gave birth to twins, and I decided to name them after Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. I named the first twin Barack and the second one Mitt just the way Obama and Romney performed in the US election," said Awuor, a housewife.

Another mother, Monica Akinyi, said she wanted her baby to grow up to have the same successful traits as Obama.

"I decided to name my child Barack Obama after the president of the U.S. because of his achievements and the developments he has brought here," said Akinyi.

Obama has been elevated to rock star status in the east African nation, which named a beer, "president," after him during the 2008 elections. Before he became president, there was a "senator" beer in his honor.

Obama, who was born in Hawaii to a white mother from Kansas and a Kenyan father, is idolized by many Africans in much the way the Irish revered President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s — as one of their own who succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

Eucabeth, a nurse at Nyanza general hospital, said most parents from that region prefer naming their children after people around the world, and that it was not surprising to see them naming their children Mitt Romney.

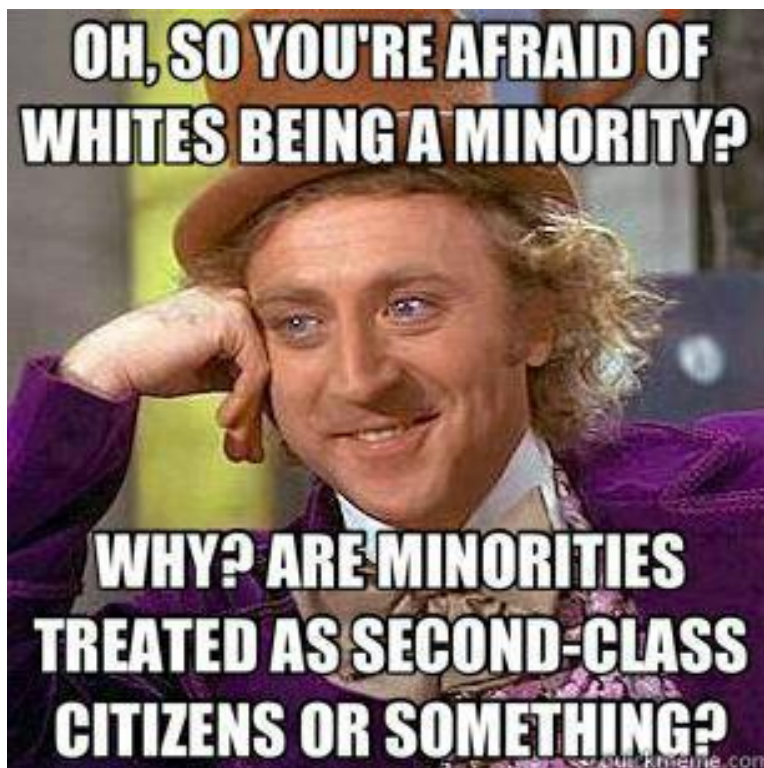
"Traditionally we find mothers naming their babies after famous people, because even in 2008, during the election year some babies were named Barack, [and] others were named Joe Biden. So you find they tend to pick after people who are in high positions in society," said Eucabeth.

The name Barack means "blessed," while Obama was the given name of the president's great-grandfather, which then became his grandfather's surname.

20121110-02 08:29 MarthaH Cartoons: Truths



Election Night



[20121110-04](#) 09:15 Pam Re: Cartoons: Truths (reply to MarthaH, above)

Terrific! Why IS old Lou Dobbs so concerned about whites being a minority? Will we ever get beyond this kind of thinking as a species? Almost certainly not, but we can still try.

[20121110-05](#) 10:19 Art Re: Cartoons: Truths (reply to MarthaH, above)

Perfect!

[20121110-06](#) 13:16 SteveG Re: "To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #265)

The Brits do have a sense of humor after all.

[20121110-10](#) 15:33 Pam Re: "To the Citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #265)

I LOVE this!!

[20121111-01](#) 00:15 SteveG "Vigo County, Indiana, Is Almost Always Right at Picking the President. Here's Why."

"Vigo County, Indiana, Is Almost Always Right at Picking the President. Here's Why." by Robert King, *Indianapolis Star*

Nov. 10, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20121110/NEWS05/211100331/Vigo-County-Indiana-almost-always-right-picking-president-Here-s-why-?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>)

(Since 1892, one Indiana county has voted for a losing presidential candidate just twice. Its winning streak is now 56 years.)

Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett is a Republican in a Democratic county. He says the key to Vigo's bellwether success is common sense and an aversion to extremism. The county's pragmatism goes back to its founder, Francis Vigo, pictured on the mural. Vigo was born in Italy, served the Spanish, traded with the French and the Indians, and served the Americans during the Revolution. / (Robert King/The Star)

(TERRE HAUTE, Indiana) There's the theory that folks here in Vigo County never sway too far from the center.

There's the theory that Vigo, with its farms and colleges, its manufacturers and unions, its coal miners and federal employees, is all of America wrapped up in 410 square miles straddling the Wabash River.

And there's the theory that people here in Vigo -- a Democratic stronghold in a Republican state -- are more willing than most to look beyond party label when picking presidents.

What's indisputable is this:

They sure know how to pick 'em.

Beginning in 1956 -- 15 presidential elections and counting, from Eisenhower to Obama -- the voters in Vigo have selected the winner.

This time it was close -- Obama won by a mere 339 votes here, or less than 1 percent. Close, but correct. Again.

The streak has grown so ridiculous that it makes one wonder why the candidates don't set up headquarters in Downtown Terre Haute, stage their debates at Indiana State University and forget about crisscrossing the country in search of swing state independents.

"It's kind of a microcosm of the country," said Don Nattkemper, a local attorney and former Republican Party chairman. "You can find a little bit of everything in Terre Haute."

That's hard to argue.

Vigo is home to the federal penitentiary where Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was executed. And it's home to the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence, a group of nuns that has held prayer vigils to try to stave off executions. It is home to people who commute to nearby coal mines and professors who teach at one of five local colleges -- Indiana State, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Harrison College and a campus of Ivy Tech.

Heading into this election, TV pundits and media scribes drew circles on digital maps around what they deemed key bellwether counties -- Arapahoe County (suburban Denver) in Colorado, Hamilton County (Cincinnati) in Ohio, Hillsborough County (Tampa) in Florida.

They might just as well have put a giant target on Vigo. Those other counties might be strong swing-state bellwethers but they don't have Vigo's staying power. The Star didn't come across any other county with such a long winning streak Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas and Hidalgo County, N.M., have been perfect since 1972).

Vigo, though, is more than streaky good. Going all the way back to 1892, the county has picked the wrong guy only twice -- Stevenson in '52 and William Jennings Bryan in 1908.

Not surprisingly, people here are proud of their ability to sort the winners from the losers and the most treasured civic virtue seems to be common sense.

No "radical ways"

That's evident at the city's signature intersection -- 7th Street and Wabash Avenue.

It is here, surrounded by a bank, a café, a hotel and a school board office that you can find the original crossroads of America -- the intersection of U.S. 40, the Old National Road that ran from coast to coast, and U.S. 41, once the main artery from Chicago to Florida.

"We're in the heart of the Midwest and we have that Midwest attitude and I don't think we've changed," said Joanne Andree, 77, after finishing lunch with friends at the Crossroads Café, near the intersection. "We don't do things in radical ways."

"I guess it's because, if anything, we're pretty well mainstream. I don't think there are extremists (here)," said Brenda Milliren, 70, and one of Andree's friends in their "lunch bunch," which convenes monthly.

"Middle of the road would perhaps be a term that could apply."

That jibes with the local political landscape.

Vigo is a Democratic county, but even local Republicans say the Democrats here are more conservative than their brethren elsewhere across the country.

Still, there's something uncanny about Vigo's ability to sway back and forth, the same county voting for what seems like American history's polar opposites -- Obama and George W. Bush; Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter; Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy.

State Sen. Tim Skinner, a Democrat, is at a loss to explain the phenomenon." I wish I knew, honestly," he said.

The streak goes back to 1956, when Vigo went for President Dwight Eisenhower when he was up for re-election. Four years earlier, the county dissed Ike for Adlai Stevenson. It hasn't been wrong since.

Duke Bennett, the Republican mayor of Terre Haute, wondered if this election might end the streak. He said nobody was talking much about the election around town. There were few signs up for Obama or Mitt Romney, even among the diehard partisans.

As the national returns began to look good for Obama, Bennett called up the Vigo County results on his computer and saw that the local returns were heading that way too.

"Well," he said to himself, "that tells you all you need to know."

A short while later, the networks -- sizing up the early totals, the exit polls and the votes still out -- called it for Obama. They might have figured it out sooner, as Bennett did.

All they needed to do was just check results from Vigo County.

[Vigo County, Indiana (God's Country) is pretty cool! –SteveB]

20121111-02	08:04	MarthaH	"Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us"
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We won!

When our yard needed tending because of Larry's broken leg, Wilson Martinez graciously stepped in. He is from Latin America and works nights at DPU. We have gotten to know him better, up from waving when he worked for neighbors. Friday he came, so I --the political science major--asked if he voted. He lit up and said, "We won!" I replied "Yes, WE did!" It was the same joy, but with very different backgrounds. I am confident he is a fine citizen, and I am happy for him, too.

Here's an article that attracted me on several levels:

"Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" by James Eng, NBC News

Nov. 9, 2012, (<http://usnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/09/15029245-hispanics-to-obama-we-helped-you-now-you-help-us?lite>)

Hispanic voters, who were instrumental in putting Barack Obama back in the White House, now hope the president will work diligently in his second term to cross some big to-dos off their legislative wish list: jobs, affordable education, health care access and immigration reform.

Hispanic voters, who were instrumental in putting Barack Obama back in the White House, now hope the president will work diligently in his second term to cross some big to-dos off their legislative wish list: jobs, affordable education, health care access and immigration reform.

Hispanics voted for Obama over Mitt Romney by a resounding 71 percent to 27 percent and may have put him over the top in several key swing states. The total number of potential Hispanic voters this year reached a record 23.7 million – up about 80 percent since 2000 – and Hispanics now compose about 10 percent of the total electorate, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

"The Latino electorate arrived Tuesday, there's no question about it," said Rafael Collazo, director of political campaigns for the National Council of La Raza. The organization, which bills itself as the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, says it helped register more than 90,000 new Hispanic voters this year.

"States like Florida, Colorado, Nevada, Pennsylvania, even Ohio -- the Latino vote was a net gain for the preferred candidate and was the deciding factor or at least very, very close to being the decisive factor," Collazo told NBC News.

"The Latino giant is wide awake, cranky and is taking names," labor leader Eliseo Medina, of the Service Employees International Union, told NBC Latino.

With the election behind them, Hispanics now want Obama and Congress to work on issues identified in surveys as their priorities – more jobs, affordable health care, access to higher education and immigration reform.

GOP faces immigration fight after election

The latter issue has been more important for Hispanics than for other U.S. voters, said Mark Hugo Lopez, associate director of the Pew Hispanic Center, a nonpartisan research organization.

Hispanic support for Obama was high even before he announced in June that the government will stop deporting, and begin granting work permits to, some undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children.

"However, when it comes to asking Hispanics which party is more concerned for the Hispanic community, after the deferred action program was announced the (Democratic) share went from 45 to 61 percent – the highest we've measured in Pew Hispanic surveys in 10 years," Lopez said.

"In his acceptance speech, Obama mentioned that comprehensive immigration reform was something that needed to be addressed, and we're going to hold him to that," Collazo told NBC News.

The day after the election, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid promised to introduce an immigration reform package next year. He said if Republicans block the legislation, they would do so "at their peril."

Al Cardenas, chairman of the American Conservative Union and former chairman of the Republican Party in Florida, agreed that the immigration debate has been detrimental for the GOP.

"Across the board generationally and demographically, the immigration issue has become a wedge issue ... because it's become a litmus test of respect and caring in that community," Cardenas said. "My advice for conservatives and the party as a whole is to get bipartisan immigration reform done in next 100 to 200 days."

A survey of Hispanic voters by the firm Latino Decisions found that Hispanics pushed Obama over the top in Colorado, Florida and Nevada, swing states where they turned out in unusually high numbers.

Cardenas said the GOP can't pay short shrift to minority groups if it wants to put a Republican in the White House.

"The so-called mainstream vote is no longer sufficient," he said. "The coalition of all of these minority votes is a priority in these elections today. The Hispanic vote is the most numerically significant of all of these groups. We need to develop a precise, aggressive, winning political game plan to address that community."

The Hispanic community is a diverse one, according to the Pew Center's Lopez:

- Country of origin: Among eligible Hispanic voters, 58 percent are Mexican Americans, 14 percent are Puerto Ricans, and 6 percent are Cubans. (The remainder are from Central and South America). Historically, Cubans have supported Republican candidates more than other Hispanic groups; in Florida this year, 49 percent of Cubans went for Obama and 47 percent for Romney.

- Youth: People ages 18-29 make up about a third of all eligible Hispanic voters, but just 20 percent of all general voters.
- Naturalized U.S. citizens: Among Hispanic eligible voters, 25 percent are immigrants who are naturalized. But among whites, only 3 percent are naturalized U.S. citizens.

Callazo said that despite this diversity, Hispanics displayed a rather consistent, Democratic-leaning voting pattern across many states.

"The numbers of how Latinos voted in Arizona compared to Ohio and Colorado were fairly close," Callazo said.

"Yes, there are differences and nuances ... but if you look at the polling and all the anecdotal work and the outreach we've done over the years, the core issues are very, very similar," he added. "At end of day, Latino voters are voting for the candidate they feel will best reflect their values."

20121111-03	10:05	SteveB	Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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A wonderful story, Martha! Sorry to hear about Larry's broken leg! How did he do that? How's it going?

And, for anyone who dreads more Latinos in the U.S. (or Puerto Rico becoming a state), take a listen and look at these (ah, Salsa and the "forbidden" dance!):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Nx8URjepjo>.

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

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkFOSZ00Pn4>.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgjCpAnzhP0>.

It looks like we won and that we'll continue to win (with these kinds of immigrants), even if we lose some elections!

Welcome, my talented brothers and sisters (hopefully, legally!)

20121111-04	10:45	MarthaH	Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Damp step, slick shoe, BOOM on 4 Oct. Monumental day on Tuesday when he can remove the tall boot to walk around the house...back in two more weeks to possibly eliminate it, but not the long-term swelling...at 74, I think it will take him all winter to bounce back. The good news is that he can see I can do "it"—well, MOST of it. I won't do ladders above two rungs, and I can't carry things like I used to...or start the mower. Hence: Wilson in our lives, the blessing! Let's see...Carl Rove or Wilson Martinez. NO CONTEST...

How is 72,000 a close win for Obama with the 2000 "margin" for Bush? Florida needs me to get their system lined out. HA

Having a spring weekend...before the fall...

...and now to convince the doubters on global warming...and get the ideologues to admit it and stop denial. Hopefully.

20121111-05 11:41 SteveB Re: "Hispanics to Obama: We Helped You, Now You Help Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I wish Larry the best!

The sidewalks here in Santa Cruz are famous for their hazards—holes, things sticking up to trip you, slick tiles, doggie doo-doo, big tree roots, you name it. I've fallen badly a half dozen times, but have always been lucky, though I sometimes got up bloody. Once, I came out of my condo building after a rain. The next thing I knew, I was lying flat on my back looking up at the sky. It happened in about a tenth of a second, I swear. I landed very hard, but was so lucky because I must have landed on my whole body simultaneously, which distributed the force of the fall, even on the back of my stupid head—didn't even have a scratch or, later, any headache.

I'm afraid, one of these times, I'm not going to be so lucky, but I love walking and will keep taking plenty of calcium!

I know what you mean about Wilson. We love our gardener, maid, and handyman like family! They are the sweetest of people and I am lucky to know them.

Global warming is starting to piss me off! Well...actually, almost ever since I first went to Chicago as a kid and we had to drive through the smog and yellow sky that was Lake County, Indiana, I've fought and yearned for a better way to live. It's really all part of the same struggle against greed. I know you know.

20121111-06 14:10 SteveB "Bill Kristol: 'It Won't Kill The Country If We Raise Taxes' On Millionaires"

After all the crying, griping, bitching, yelling, and screaming about raising taxes on billionaires...I find this hilarious!

Republicans are finally going to listen to the will of the people? Republicans are going to accept the Constitution?

Personally, I'm afraid of their "tax code simplification" for working Americans.

"Bill Kristol: 'It Won't Kill The Country If We Raise Taxes' On Millionaires" by Elise Foley, Huffington Post

Nov. 11, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/11/bill-kristol-taxes-millionaires_n_2113671.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

(WASHINGTON) Conservative commentator and *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol said Sunday the Republican Party should accept new ideas, including the much-criticized suggestion by Democrats that taxes be allowed to go up on the wealthy.

"It won't kill the country if we raise taxes a little bit on millionaires," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "It really won't, I don't think. I don't really understand why Republicans don't take Obama's offer."

"Really? The Republican Party is going to fall on its sword to defend a bunch of millionaires, half of whom voted Democratic and half of whom live in Hollywood and are hostile?" he asked.

One of the biggest fights as Congress returns will be over taxes, as cuts put in place by former President George W. Bush are set to expire at the end of the year. Republicans want to extend those tax cuts for all income brackets, while Democrats want to raise revenue by allowing them to expire for wealthy Americans.

Exit polls last week found that six in ten voters supported ending the tax cuts on the wealthy, but House Republicans have remained adamantly opposed to allowing any of the rates to expire, instead supporting other changes to the tax code. House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) indicated on Friday that was unlikely to change.

"By lowering rates and cleaning up the tax code, we know that we're going to get more economic growth," he said at a press conference. "It'll bring jobs back to America. It'll bring more revenue. We also know that if we clean up the code and make it simpler, the tax code will be more efficient. The current code only collects about 85 percent of what's due the government. And it's clear that if you have a simpler, cleaner, fairer tax code, that efficiency -- the effectiveness and efficiency of the tax code increases exponentially."

20121111-07	19:27	SteveG	Book: <i>America, But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto</i>
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Looks like a good book...

Paperback: *America, But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto*, by Chris Cannon and Chris Cannon, Douglas & McIntyre, 2012

http://www.amazon.com/America-But-Better-Canada-Manifesto/dp/1771000627/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top

As the American election increasingly resembles a production of CATS performed by actual cats, U.S. citizens are looking for a new leader. That leader is Canada, and they want your vote for president of the United States.

Since launching their viral video campaign in January, the Canada Party has been covered around the world, including CNN, BBC, the Huffington Post, and German State Television. *America, but Better: the Canada Party Manifesto*, balances the doctrine of American exceptionalism with a dose of Canadian humility and common sense to secure Canada as the new leader of the free world, by proxy.

Their promises: One gay couple will be allowed to marry for every straight couple that gets divorced. The phrase "job creators" will be changed to "job creationists," and they will be given seven days to actually create some. Corporations will still be people, but if they can't provide a birth certificate they will be legally obligated to care for your lawn. Corners will be installed in the Oval Office, and timeouts given to congressmen who can't play nice.

Devoted to restoring America to its former glory, the Canada Party will soon have the whole world chanting, "Yes We Canada."

20121111-08	21:37	Pam	Re: Book: <i>America, But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto</i> (reply to SteveG, above)
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I LOVE Canada. It is the greatest country I have had experience with, and but for the climate, it's just terrific!

20121111-09	23:15	SteveG	"The BIG Donors"
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"The BIG Donors" by CNN Election Center

November, 2012, (http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2012/10/politics/big-donors/index.html?hpt=hp_c1)

More than \$4 billion: That's how much experts anticipate have been spent trying to win your vote. It's the most expensive election in U.S. history. With the Supreme Court ruling on Citizens United in 2010, the floodgates opened, allowing outside groups to spend record amounts: more than \$970 million for this election cycle alone. Who exactly spent this kind of money may surprise you. Election spending doesn't just come from hedge-fund managers and people with big family fortunes anymore. It's an eclectic group: a 21-year-old college student is spending his inheritance on his own conservative super PAC, a man with a species of monkey named for him, an expert in heirloom plants, a speech recognition expert who spends his free time playing with model trains in his basement. Check out these fascinating people and the nonprofits that placed a big bet on this election.

[Continue reading at CNN...](#)

[20121111-10](#)

23:55

Marci

Cool Photos #4 (The Stunning Glass-Winged Butterfly)



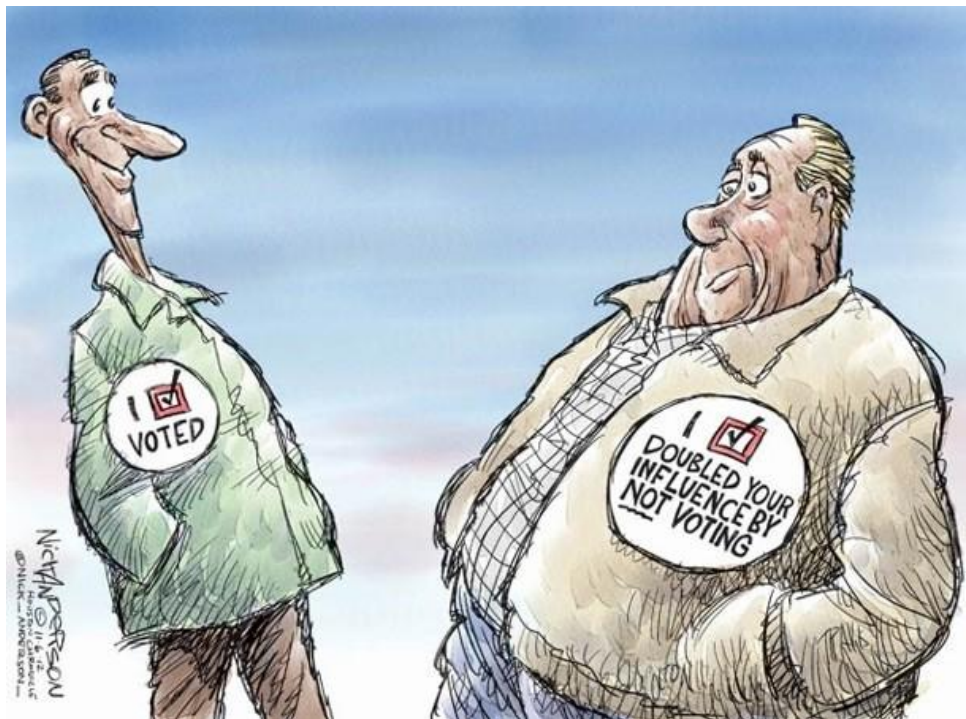
[20121111-11](#)

23:56

Tom

There, I Fixed It! #4 (The Mobile Throne)





<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sX7uY2Zt3mU>



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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #268 — NOV. 13, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

Securing the High Ground

(posted by SandyI and MarthaH, Nov. 13, 2012)

The article below is a very thoughtful piece on how those who supported Romney are feeling now. I believe it is important for those of us who supported Obama to reach out to them, not gloating but letting them know that we know how we would feel if Obama had lost, that the election of Obama is not a vote to change their way of life but a vote to let others "be free to be you and me". In this way, maybe, just maybe we can work together to move the country forward and dampen down the divisiveness and rhetoric started by those who would profit by continued divisiveness. We must let Romney supporters know that we can disagree on many things, but we need to work together to find good solutions to our problems. In this way everyone can win. —SandyI

"GOP's Red America Forced to Rethink What It Knows about the Country" by Eli Saslow, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 11, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/gops-red-america-forced-to-rethink-its-image-of-country/2012/11/11/3bb15fb8-2ab0-11e2-bab2-eda299503684_story.html)



(HENDERSONVILLE, Tennessee) She arrived early to take apart the campaign office piece by piece, just as she felt so many other things about her life were being dismantled. Beth Cox wore a Mitt Romney T-shirt, a cross around her neck and fresh eyeliner, even though she had been crying on and off and knew her makeup was likely to run. A day after the election, she tuned the radio to Glenn Beck and began pulling posters and American flags off the wall.

Her calendar read "Victory Day!!" and she had planned to celebrate in the office by hosting a dance party and selling Romney souvenirs. But instead she was packing those souvenirs into boxes, which would be donated to a charity that sent clothes to South America. Instead a moving company was en route to close down the office in the next 48 hours, and her friends were calling every few minutes to see how she was doing.

"I will be okay," she told one caller. "I just don't think we will be okay."

Here in the heart of Red America, Cox and many others spent last week grieving not only for themselves and their candidate but also for a country they now believe has gone wildly off track. The days after Barack Obama's reelection gave birth to a saying in Central Tennessee: Once was a slip, but twice is a sign.

If, as Obama likes to say, the country has decided to "move forward," it has also decided to move further away from the values and beliefs of a state where Romney won 60 percent of the vote, a county where he won 70 percent, and a town where he won nearly 80.

Among so many Romney voters, perhaps none had been as devoted to the cause — as indefatigable, as confident, as prayerful — as 44-year-old Beth Cox, a member of the school board and a volunteer who had committed to Romney early in the Republican primaries. She had run the small GOP campaign headquarters in Sumner County by herself for six days a week during the last four months. She had been the first in line to vote on the first day of early voting.

Now it was left to her to clean up the aftermath. She stood next to a space heater in a small building in the exurbs of Nashville, taking inventory of what supplies they had left and packing up boxes of red-white-and-blue streamers. She put away the pink Romney shirts, the white Romney-Ryan hats and the GOP bumper stickers with the Tennessee logo. Down came the sign that read: "We Built It!" Down came the elephant flag and the George W. Bush commemorative emblem. Down came the signed picture of Romney, with a typed inscription that read: "This is a great time to be a Republican."

But now Cox was wondering: Was it?

She had devoted her life to causes she believed were at the heart of her faith and at the core of her Republican Party. She counseled young married families at church, spoke about right to life in area schools and became a stay-at-home mom with two daughters.

Now, in a single election night, parts of her country had legalized marijuana, approved gay marriage and resoundingly reelected a president who she worried would "accelerate our decline."

While she took apart the office, a dozen friends and neighbors stopped by to share the same concerns.

"I just don't get it," the county sheriff said.

"I'm worried we won't see another Republican president in our lifetime the way it's going," a GOP volunteer said.

"What country would want more years of this?" asked the newly elected alderman.

Cox shrugged back at them. "I don't know anymore," she said. "What the heck happened to the country? Who are we becoming?"

She turned on her computer and pulled up an electoral map that she had filled out a few days before the election. She had predicted the outcome twice — once coming up with a narrow Romney win and once more with a blowout.

Florida: red.

Colorado: red.

Virginia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin: all red.

Everything in her version of America had confirmed her predictions: the confident anchors on Fox News; the Republican pollsters so sure of their data; the two-hour line outside her voting precinct, where Romney supporters hugged and honked for her handmade signs during a celebration that lasted until the results started coming in after sundown. Romney's thorough defeat had come more as a shock than as a disappointment, and now Cox stared at the actual results on her computer and tried to imagine what the majority of her country believed.

"Virginia went blue? Really?" she said. "Southern-values Virginia?"

"And Colorado? Who the heck is living in Colorado? Do they want drugs, dependency, indulgence? Don't they remember what this country is about?"

It was a country that she had thought she knew. As a kid, she had seen it from the back of a station wagon, traveling to 40 states in a blur of peanut butter crackers and Holiday Inns with a mother who taught U.S. history.

"I am not naïve. I'm not ignorant," Cox said. She had graduated from the University of Kentucky and lived for a few years in California before moving to raise her family in Tennessee. But suddenly the map on her computer depicted a divided country she could barely recognize.

She blamed some of the divisiveness on Republicans. The party had gotten "way too white," she said, and she hoped it would never again run a presidential ticket without including a woman or a minority. The tea party was an extremist movement that needed to be "neutralized," she said, and Romney's campaign had suffered irreparable damage when high-profile Republicans spoke about "crazy immigration talk and legitimate rape."

But many other aspects of the division seemed fundamental and harder to solve. There was the America of increased secularism that legalized marijuana. And there was her America, where her two teenage daughters are not allowed to read "Harry Potter" or "Twilight," and where one of them wrote in a school paper: "God is the center and the main foundation of my family."

There was the America of gay marriage and the America of her Southern Baptist church, where 7,000 came to listen on Sundays, and where church literature described marriage as "the uniting of one man and one woman."

There was the America of Obama and her America in Tennessee, where last week Republicans had won 95 percent of local races and secured a supermajority in the state legislature.

She could sense liberalism creeping closer, and she worried about what Red America would look like after four more years. Nashville itself had gone for Obama, and 400,000 more people in Tennessee had signed up for food stamps in the last five years to further a culture of dependency. The ACLU had sued her school board for allowing youth pastors to visit middle school cafeterias during lunch. Some of her friends had begun to wonder if the country was lost, and if only God could save it.

She closed her computer.

"God put us in the desert," she said. "We are in the desert right now."

Later that night, she left her two-story house in the suburbs and headed to a church a mile outside of town. It was her place of comfort — the place where she always found an answer. She drove onto the church's sprawling

campus, past the children's center, the volleyball courts and techno-lit recreation room for teenagers and parked in front of a small building. Then she walked up to the second floor to lead her weekly prayer group of 25 women.

It was a demographic that, in so many other places, would have voted for Obama: white women, college-educated and in their early-to-mid-20s, most of them upper-middle class. But here they had almost all voted for Romney, and they consoled each other as they entered the room. Cox joined them in the circle and bent her head in prayer.

"Yes, Lord," she said. "We are saying yes to honoring you, but no to the junk of this world, to the wickedness, the self-gratification, the path that we are just saddened by. We choose your path, Lord."

It was a path that had worked for her, providing strength and stability during her parents' rocky divorce, and then helping her transform from a stubbornly independent woman — the "feminist, I-am-woman, hear-me-roar type," she said — into a mother and a wife who respected what she called the "natural order of the household." She had two beautiful daughters who earned A's and a husband who took time off from his job as a pastor for annual family "playcations" to museums and amusement parks. Local Republicans were encouraging her to run for state office, but she didn't want to give up her volunteering, her scrapbooking, her weekend getaways with her daughters — her "Godly life," she said.

It was the same life she wanted for the women in this room — newly married, new to motherhood and beginning to sort out priorities of their own.

"The world will tell you to be so many things," she advised them, and on this night she talked to them about the importance of preserving life, the sanctity of marriage, the advantages of raising children at home and the importance of "relying on family, and on your core values, and not on the government."

"It's not an easy road to be a Christian, and if it was, everybody would be on it," she said. She passed out blank white note cards and asked each woman to write down a worry to surrender to God. Then, before closing, she asked what they wanted to pray for.

"Our president," said one, and the women in the group nodded.

"Our values," said another.

"All people in our country who are lost."

"The soul of America."

"Amen," Cox said.

She came back into the Romney office again the next morning. The moving truck was waiting outside.

"It's so depressing," she said, walking into the office. "Let's just get it done."

They threw out yard signs, hauled office supplies into storage and donated some furniture to Goodwill. Cox swept the floor and then came outside to watch the mover climb on top of his trailer to take down the "Sumner County Republican Party" banner that had hung on the front of the building. Four months of dedication and work — the sale of 1,600 signs, 500 bracelets, 1,200 buttons and a few hundred hats — reduced to nothing in 48 hours.

She stood in the cold and stared at the two-story building. It had belonged to a doctor's practice that had closed, and then to a newspaper that had downsized, and finally to a campaign that had failed to win office based on its vision of America.

She took out her phone and snapped a picture.

"So that's it," she said. "It's all gone."

20121112-05 11:40 Pam Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)

Well said, Sandy. Those folks are genuinely afraid and feel very defensive. Here's another irony: conservatives carry on about the individual, yet what they fear most is an attack on their community, ie., church, family, geographic location. Progressives are ALL ABOUT individual freedom, yet see the value and need for communal action. When I was teaching, I had many, many far-right students. You all know I'm about as liberal as they come, but I tried hard to model a caring, accepting, mellow persona. My conservative students liked me, but I don't think I ever changed anyone's mind. Who knows? I never pushed an agenda in class and tried to let them figure things out for themselves, based on the evidence at hand. It is important that we all see each other as human beings. I find it strange that conservatives hate liberals way more than liberals dislike them.

20121112-06 12:34 SteveB Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)

You're completely right, Sandy.

And, after all the bashing and lies I received from the right this past year or so, I fully intend to work with the assholes to solve our problems as soon as I'm finished gloating!

I'm not convinced they have anything to contribute once racism and sexism are taken off the table.

I guess I don't sound too hopeful...

Besides, we all know the Democrats and Obama rigged the election and committed massive voter fraud, so his presidency has no validity.

20121112-07 14:18 SandyI Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)

And had that darn Hurricane Sandy hit just at the right time for him to ride up on his white horse - mmmmm should that be a horse of a difference color?

"Change will occur in almost every aspect of our lives,
We can learn to embrace it while releasing the past with grace." —Daily OM

20121112-14 18:44 Art Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI, above)

Well, this is all very disconcerting.

20121112-01 08:54 SteveB "Mitt Romney Had Every Chance to Win—But He Blew It"

Are any parts of this untrue? I guess it's hard to deny the guy was fake, fake, fake...and didn't turn out to be extremely competent either (not in running a campaign, certainly).

I guess nobody had much confidence in Mr. Mittens "Lying" R0mney.

No one ever took my \$10,000 bet. Not that I really blame them...

"Mitt Romney Had Every Chance to Win—But He Blew It" by Michael Hirsh, *National Journal*/Yahoo News

Nov. 9, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/mitt-romney-had-every-chance-win-blew-150005282--politics.html>)

Mitt Romney could have won. By Tuesday night, it was certain that 48 percent of the country no longer believed in the portrait of hope and change that Barack Obama offered up in 2008—if any ever had. Like the picture of Dorian Gray, the reality had grown somewhat repugnant to vast numbers of voters unhappy with a stagnant economy, even as Obama continued to portray himself as the good-guy savior (from George W. Bush, that is) in the White House.

But in the end, Obama secured a second historic election victory—in the face of staggering unemployment—largely because the alternative portrait that Romney presented to the country was far too incomplete. By failing to fill in critical details that would have fleshed out both his personality and his policies, the Republican challenger gave the American people a mere pencil sketch of a candidate. It wasn't enough, and it was much too abstract. Too many voters couldn't figure out which Romney would show up in the Oval Office. Would it be the Massachusetts-moderate redux they saw in the last six weeks of the campaign, or the right-wing ideologue from the Republican primaries who embraced a small-government zealot, Rep. Paul Ryan, as his running mate?

That's not to underrate the savvy, and very savage, campaign that the Obama team ran, one that ruthlessly exploited all of these Romney weaknesses and cost the GOP candidate critical blocs of female and Hispanic voters who didn't buy the reality of Moderate Mitt. For all of the fretting about how \$5 billion in campaign spending left the nation with something close to the status quo ante—a Democratic president and Senate, a GOP House—perhaps the most successful chunk of advertising money ever spent in modern American political history was the initial \$50 million or so the Obama team devoted last spring to defining Romney as an exploitative, job-exporting Wall Street plutocrat.

In a dynamic that played out much like 2004, when Democratic challenger John Kerry failed to respond to the Republicans' "Swift Boat" attacks, Romney never responded effectively to the fat-cat charges. And he never overcame that image, as a blanket of Obama ads kept up the attack through Nov. 6 in the battleground states. "I think they were very smart in defining him early. The early ads paid off," says GOP strategist Rick Tyler, who helped Newt Gingrich defeat Romney in the South Carolina primary by portraying him similarly. "I don't think he ever really recovered."

The Obama attack successfully neutralized Romney's main argument that as a businessman and numbers whiz, he was best suited to fix the economy. Postelection polling suggests that even though Romney had slightly higher numbers on economic performance than Obama in some polls, his advantage there was eclipsed by doubts about the soundness of his policies and his evenhandedness. According to pollster John Zogby, while most voters on Tuesday cited the economy as their top issue, as expected, 52 percent said that Romney's policies would favor the wealthy, while a plurality of 43 percent said that Obama's policies more greatly benefit the middle class.

In addition, despite Romney's impressive fundraising record, the Obama campaign was always ahead in organization, especially in maintaining its superb precinct-level ground game from 2008. This produced high turnout in the battleground states, even in the face of economic disillusionment. "It's very tough to take out an incumbent president," Tyler says. "Obama's team just created a firewall in the battleground states." The Obama campaign's computer models also appear to have read the electorate far more accurately than Romney's did.

Finally, Romney kept committing unforced errors, and Obama made very few. Romney's gaffe-strewn tour of Britain and Israel in July; his callous exploitation of Ambassador Chris Stevens's killing in Benghazi, Libya, on the day of his death (Sept. 11, no less); above all, his mind-boggling videotaped dismissal of "47 percent" of the country as bloodsucking government dependents—it all played into the Obama team's portrait of him as a clueless, not-ready-for-prime-time player. By the time the Republican nominee regained his footing with a powerful performance in the first debate on Oct. 3 and began to run a fairly smooth campaign, it was too late to overcome an image of incompetence, aloofness, and lack of definition.

All of this best explains how Obama set a postwar political record by getting himself reelected despite a 7.9 percent jobless rate (no president since FDR had done it with the jobless rate above 7.2 percent), favorable ratings barely hovering at 50 percent, and a majority of Americans saying the country was headed in the wrong direction. The president squeaked into a second term by persuading critical pockets of voters in battleground states who appeared to appreciate his efforts on the economy (especially in the industrial Midwest, which was grateful for the auto bailout), and weren't as bad off as the nation as a whole—such as Virginia, with its 5.9 percent unemployment rate,

and Ohio, a big beneficiary of the auto bailout, with a 7.2 percent jobless rate that was well below the national average.

To be fair, the jumbled nature of Romney's campaign was not entirely his fault. He was also somewhat boxed in by his party. A "small c" conservative who never completely won over the GOP's restive, tea party-driven base, Romney faced one of the stiffest primary challenges in recent history. As a result, he felt pressured to run to the right of GOP rivals Rick Santorum, Rick Perry, and Newt Gingrich, staking out extreme positions on immigration (when he promised to make life so miserable for those here illegally that they would "self-deport") and social issues (pledging to eliminate Planned Parenthood and overturn *Roe v. Wade*) that later fatally cost him those Latino and female votes. Considering the weakness of Romney's primary opponents, and his considerable advantage in money and organization, his decision to lean so far rightward was almost certainly an error. It made the distance he had to travel to get back to the middle just too great, and he didn't leave himself enough time, delaying his "Etch A Sketch" shift to the center until the first debate.

Whether the party itself will recognize all of that, and make the doctrinal adjustment toward the middle and a greater inclusiveness that eluded Romney, is another question. (The most astonishing number: 71 percent of Hispanics, many of whom tend to be conservative, voted for Obama, according to exit polls.) Some Republican pundits, of course, are already beginning the process of casting Romney into the outer darkness as a candidate who was always doomed to failure because he wasn't a true believer, while GOP pragmatists are beginning to reckon with the reality that their party is no longer in touch with the nonwhite coalition that Obama mastered to win. The outcome of that fight will probably be the next big story in American politics.

But, finally, the biggest mistakes of the 2012 election campaign were made by Romney himself. Party politics don't explain why he refused to produce more than two years of tax returns, or to talk forthrightly about how he made his money at Bain Capital, or to provide any details at all about which tax deductions he would eliminate to close the deficit—based on an economic plan that virtually every economist said would instead explode the debt.

Despite the lack of a clear second-term agenda from Obama, Romney's campaign also suffered from a dearth of fresh ideas. His \$5 trillion tax-cut plan rested on a hoary and largely debunked concept from the Reagan years that tax cuts for "wealth creators" boost the economy. The evidence is that they don't. Going back to 1945, the Congressional Research Service says, there is no "clear relationship between the 65-year steady reduction in the top tax rates and economic growth." CRS concluded: "Analysis of such data suggests the reduction in the top tax rates have had little association with saving, investment, or productivity growth." Most recently, the giant Bush tax cuts created zero job growth in the "lost decade" of the 2000s, the slowest 10-year growth in the post-World War II period.

Romney also suffered from a credibility gap on many issues—blatantly misrepresenting his opposition to the Obama bailout that saved Detroit in 2009, for example. Indeed, one reason the election was decided surprisingly early on Tuesday night, even though the popular vote was close nationally, was that Romney, the self-described "car guy" who grew up in Michigan, lost key Midwestern industrial states that benefited from Obama's auto bailout. These included his own native state and Wisconsin, where the jobless rate is only 7.3 percent. Following their near-collapse, the U.S. auto companies have rebounded substantially, adding some 250,000 jobs.

Romney just never found a home in those blue-collar states. Beginning during the GOP primaries, when he awkwardly sought to identify with autoworkers by boasting that his wife "drives a coupla Cadillacs," Romney was bedeviled not only by his aloof, patrician image but also by his infamous 2008 op-ed headlined "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt." Candidate Romney sought to argue that he had favored only a "managed bankruptcy" that depended on private financing, not dissolution of the auto industry. But on Tuesday, voters in the Big Three heartland apparently remembered that private credit was not in the offing in those years; only government money was, as Obama argued.

The Republican made yet another serious misstep in the final days of the election, when his campaign aired a series of flagrantly false ads about the auto bailout suggesting that General Motors and Chrysler were sending jobs to China at the expense of U.S. workers. The ads provoked embarrassing rebuttals from executives of both companies.

That aside, Romney was a very effective campaigner in the final six weeks, even taking the lead in some national polls. Yet his lurch to the middle was so dramatic that his perennial problem of definition came back to haunt him. In the final debate, on foreign policy, after 18 months of ultra-hawkish rhetoric, Romney suddenly began making a case for restraint (typically vague) that was all too Obama-like, saying he would steer clear of military involvement in hot spots such as Iran and Syria. Again and again, Romney retreated from hard lines he had drawn during the GOP primaries. He even appeared to endorse Obama's policy in Afghanistan, saying, "The surge has been successful," and, "We're going to be finished by 2014." But in making this strategic shift, Romney rendered almost moot any serious differences he might have with Obama over foreign policy. And that raised the question: Why replace the man in the Oval Office?

In the final days, Obama was also helped by chance and Mother Nature. The "October Surprise" of this campaign was delivered up by Hurricane Sandy, which helped Obama look very presidential and remarkably bipartisan in the closing days. With New Jersey taking the brunt of the storm, Americans were treated to the remarkable spectacle of Gov. Chris Christie, the keynote speaker at the Republican convention and one of Obama's fiercest critics, embracing and thanking the president in effusive terms.

The so-called superstorm also dramatically resurrected the campaign's buried issue of climate change and reminded voters of Romney's smug mockery in his convention acceptance speech of Obama as the president who "promised to begin to slow the rise of the oceans and heal the planet." Given the role that the rise of the oceans appeared to have played in Sandy's devastating impact, even New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a former Republican and no fan of Obama's, publicly abandoned Romney after that.

In the end, however, the most compelling argument in the president's favor was that neither his opponent's personal profile nor his campaign promises added up to a compelling picture. Despite a powerful performance in the first debate that reassured many people—and produced a huge surge for him in the polls—it came far too late for Romney to lay to rest a legion of doubts about his character and views.

(This article appeared in print as "He Blew It.")

[20121112-02](#) 09:04 Thomas Re: FotM Newsletter #267

Please take me off your list. This kind of tripe from weak people is the most discouraging thing a thinking person can read. As I read this week, "In a land of children, Santa cannot be defeated". People like you are sheep ready to be lead and shorn by anyone with a glib tongue.

[20121112-03](#) 09:10 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #267 (reply to Thomas, above)

Ah, yes, the old glib tongue trick...

No problema.

Yes, we are the "weak sheep"...we who are not led by Rush, Glenn, and Fox News...and we should be ashamed of our weakness.

How discouraging our weak tripe must be to every thinking person. Oh, you already said that...

Well, anyway, we'll keep stumbling around out here in the wilderness, electing presidents, and sending ignorant Congressional candidates like Mourdock and Akin to the woodshed.

And good luck keeping the illegal immigrants, Africans, Muslims, gays, users of contraceptives, and such riff-raff out of America in the future.

Take care. Wishing you the best in your future efforts at communications.

And so many phones come with cameras on both sides...

"PlaceRaider: Virtual Theft in Physical Spaces with Smartphones" by Robert Templeman, Zahid Rahman, David Crandall, and Apu Kapadia, Cornell University

Sept. 26, 2012, (<http://arxiv.org/abs/1209.5982>)

ABSTRACT: As smartphones become more pervasive, they are increasingly targeted by malware. At the same time, each new generation of smartphone features increasingly powerful onboard sensor suites. A new strain of sensor malware has been developing that leverages these sensors to steal information from the physical environment (e.g., researchers have recently demonstrated how malware can listen for spoken credit card numbers through the microphone, or feel keystroke vibrations using the accelerometer). Yet the possibilities of what malware can see through a camera have been understudied. This paper introduces a novel visual malware called PlaceRaider, which allows remote attackers to engage in remote reconnaissance and what we call virtual theft. Through completely opportunistic use of the camera on the phone and other sensors, PlaceRaider constructs rich, three dimensional models of indoor environments. Remote burglars can thus download the physical space, study the environment carefully, and steal virtual objects from the environment (such as financial documents, information on computer monitors, and personally identifiable information). Through two human subject studies we demonstrate the effectiveness of using mobile devices as powerful surveillance and virtual theft platforms, and we suggest several possible defenses against visual malware.

[Kinda scary. -SteveB]

No time to write about it, but the sweet and sour shrimp were a great lunch choice. Never thought of pomegranates in the sweet and sour context before, but the idea worked really well! Wish my iPhone 1 had been better able to reproduce the subtle shade of the fruit.



Sweet and Sour Shrimp

20121112-09 17:28 SteveG CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis?

Found posted on Facebook...

A chilling report circulating in the Kremlin this afternoon released by the Aerospace Defence Forces (VKO) states that Kosmos 2479 detected the firing of two AGM-114 Hellfire missiles from a MQ-1 Predator drone yesterday being operated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) over the United States city of Indianapolis that resulted in a massive explosion [photo 2nd left], and from local US media reports resulted in at least two deaths.

Kosmos 2479 is an early warning satellite launched in 2012 as part of the VKO's Oko programme and monitors the US from geostationary orbit for all possible threats, including the tracking of American airspace for US Air Force and CIA fighter jets, bombers and drones.

The CIA's MQ-1 Predator drones, equipped with two fearsome AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, have been described as President Obama's "*weapon of choice*" and are currently most noted for bringing to Pakistan the same horror that Hitler's doodlebugs inflicted on London during World War II.

According to this report, after the firing of these drone-missiles, two distinct trajectories were recorded which were "*near simultaneously countermanded*" by countermeasures employed by an AN/ALQ-99 airborne electronic warfare system aboard a US Air Force EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft that had been dispatched from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to track this CIA drone that had, apparently, deviated from its assigned flight track.

Most ominous in this VKO report is its stating that the "*intended targets*" of these Hellfire missiles were the US Army Resource Services (PPBES) and the US Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), both located in Indianapolis, Indiana.

20121112-10 17:32 Pam Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to SteveG, above)

What's the source for this? I know there was a big gas explosion in Indianapolis yesterday. Is this supposed to be what that really was? Unless I hear differently from a reliable source, I'm not going to believe a Kremlin rumor.

20121112-11 17:48 SteveG Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to Pam, above)

Scares me that people are posting this on Facebook and that reportedly they have 20+ years experience in the military and others are taking it as gospel.

20121112-12 17:55 Pam Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to SteveG, above)

Art, you're our military expert.

20121112-13 18:41 Art Re: CIA Hellfire Missiles Hit Indianapolis? (reply to all, above)

Sorry been playing golf all day. This is utter BS. Kind of stuff the Tea Party conspiracy wackos love to float out every time something happens.

Come'on, folks.

Or was it a UFO???

"UFO Shot Down in Indianapolis! Two Die in Inferno." posted by Anonymous Coward, GodlikeProductions

Nov. 12, 2012, (<http://www.godlikeproductions.com/forum1/message2048408/pg1>)

This is just the beginning.... They have been chasing them all around the US for days now..Col, CA,

This aerial photo shows the two homes that were leveled and the numerous neighboring homes that were damaged from a massive explosion that sparked a huge fire and killed two people, Sunday. Yahoo News story: <http://news.yahoo.com/deadly-blast-devastates-indianapolis-neighborhood-220044324.html>.





20121112-17

23:57 Tom

There, I Fixed It! #5 (Disc Player Enclosure)



20121112-18

23:58 GaryF

Photo: Trust Me, I'm an Engineer... #5 (Car Door Handle)



<http://www.animalgalleries.org/Birds/Toucan/Toucan+Toucan2007+Ramphastos.jpg.php>



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

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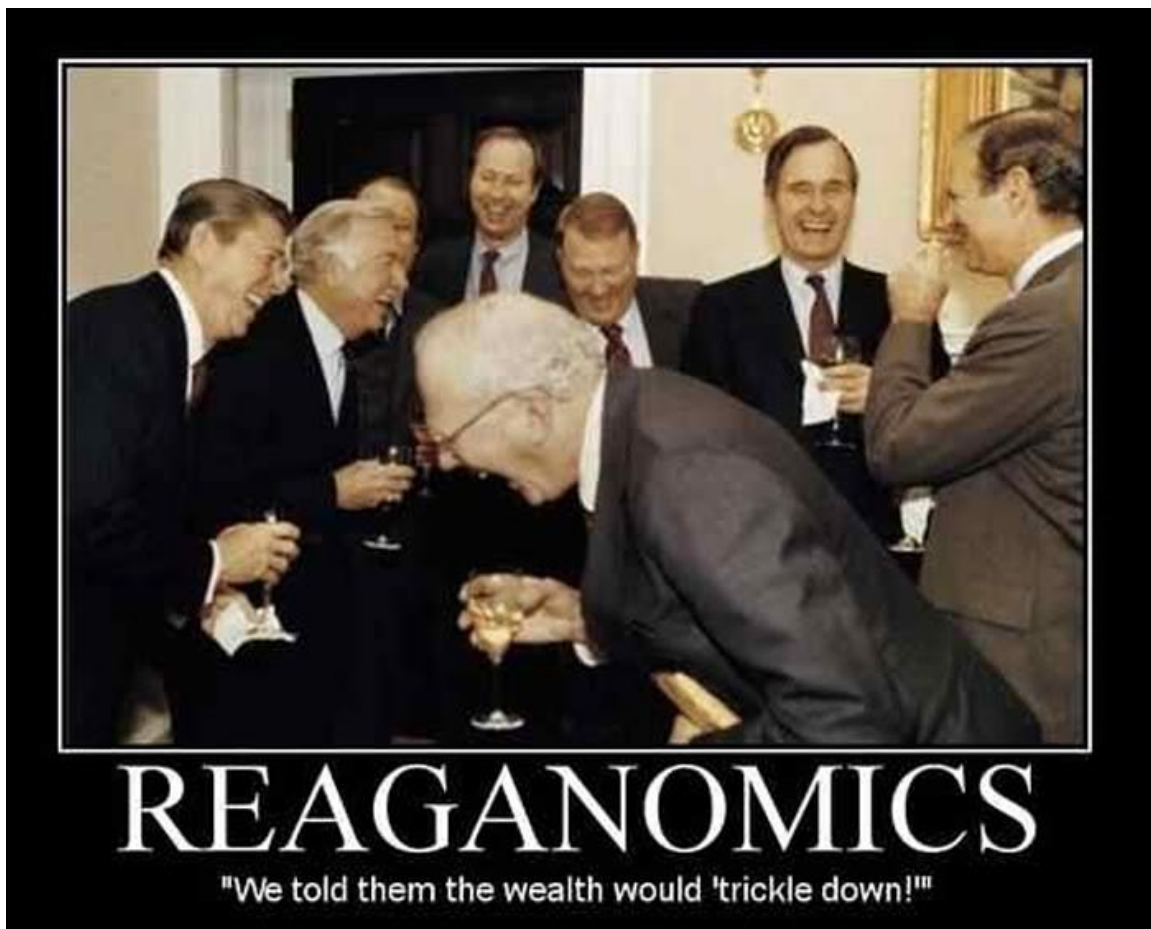
INDEX: Click here.

The Death of Supply-Side Economics

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 14, 2012)

I think the author below makes a very important point that has been overlooked because it seemed almost as if Mitt R0mney didn't run on any issues. I guess Republicans would love for us to forget that he ran on more of the same bankrupt Reaganomics as Bush did!

Notice, it didn't quite work so well this time around. Nobody really believed it. Well, the good old "voter-suppressed" majority certainly didn't. They said "no" to R0mney's tax and pony trick.



"How Mitt Romney Finally Killed Reaganomics" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast

Nov 13, 2012. (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/13/michael-tomasky-on-how-mitt-romney-finally-killed-reaganomics.html>)

(Post-election chatter has focused on demographics, Latinos, and the culture war. But the most significant consequence of the election may be the death of trickle-down economics.)

Here's something that happened in this election that has been largely overlooked but I think is a very big deal indeed. Trickle-down economics died last Tuesday. The post-election chatter has been dominated by demographics, Latinos, women, and the culture war. But economics played a strong and even pivotal role in this election too, and Reaganomics came out a huge loser, while the Democrats have started to wrap their arms around a simple, winning alternative: the idea that government must invest in the middle class and not the rich. It's middle-out economics instead of trickle-down, and it won last week and will keep on winning.

You know the history. Arthur Laffer sketched out his famous curve—whether on a napkin or not is apparently still debated—back in 1974, when the top marginal rate was 90 percent. There is a certain point, Laffer explained, at which rates decrease revenue. Since many of the people to whom he was doing this explaining found themselves to be in or near the top bracket, quite naturally they liked his theory a lot.

Up sprang the nonprofits devoted to getting the little people to buy in to the idea that taxes on the wealthy should be lowered, and soon enough supply-side economics was born. Along came Ronald Reagan to assure everyone that the rising tide would lift all boats. It's never happened quite the way conservatives said it would. Even during the general prosperity of the second Reagan term, income inequality began to expand dramatically, wage stagnation became a permanent feature of American life, and the immiseration of the poor worsened.

So supply side's first shot at governance was at best half a success. Then came the second go-round under George W. Bush, and this of course was an unmitigated disaster. You know the details on that. But as catastrophic as the Bush era was, the fear has always existed that people would vote to go back to that. After all, it's pretty hard to turn down a 20-percent tax cut, right?

Actually, it turned out that most voters were able to turn it down. Mitt Romney was offering people a bigger cut than even Bush had. It was the centerpiece of his campaign, as it had been of Bush's, and it was the central policy issue of this campaign in a way that Bush's tax proposal wasn't in 2000. In other words, **if there was a single policy issue on which people voted this time, it was tax policy—whether everyone should get a massive cut (Romney), or whether the middle class should be held harmless and the wealthy should pay more (Barack Obama)**. It's impossible to imagine a way in which the choice could have been clearer. And it's hard to imagine the voters' response being much clearer, either.

Supply side was rejected. And in its place, voters went for an economic vision that says: don't invest in the wealthy in the hope that they'll decide to spread the wealth around; invest in the middle class, because it's demand from a prosperous middle class that ultimately creates more jobs, and because doing that makes for a healthier society all the way around. Obama embraced this message late last year in his speech in Kansas, and even though I wouldn't say he pressed it consistently for a whole year, he certainly emphasized it in the second debate and spoke regularly about it toward the end. "I believe you grow the economy from the middle out," he said in a key October ad.

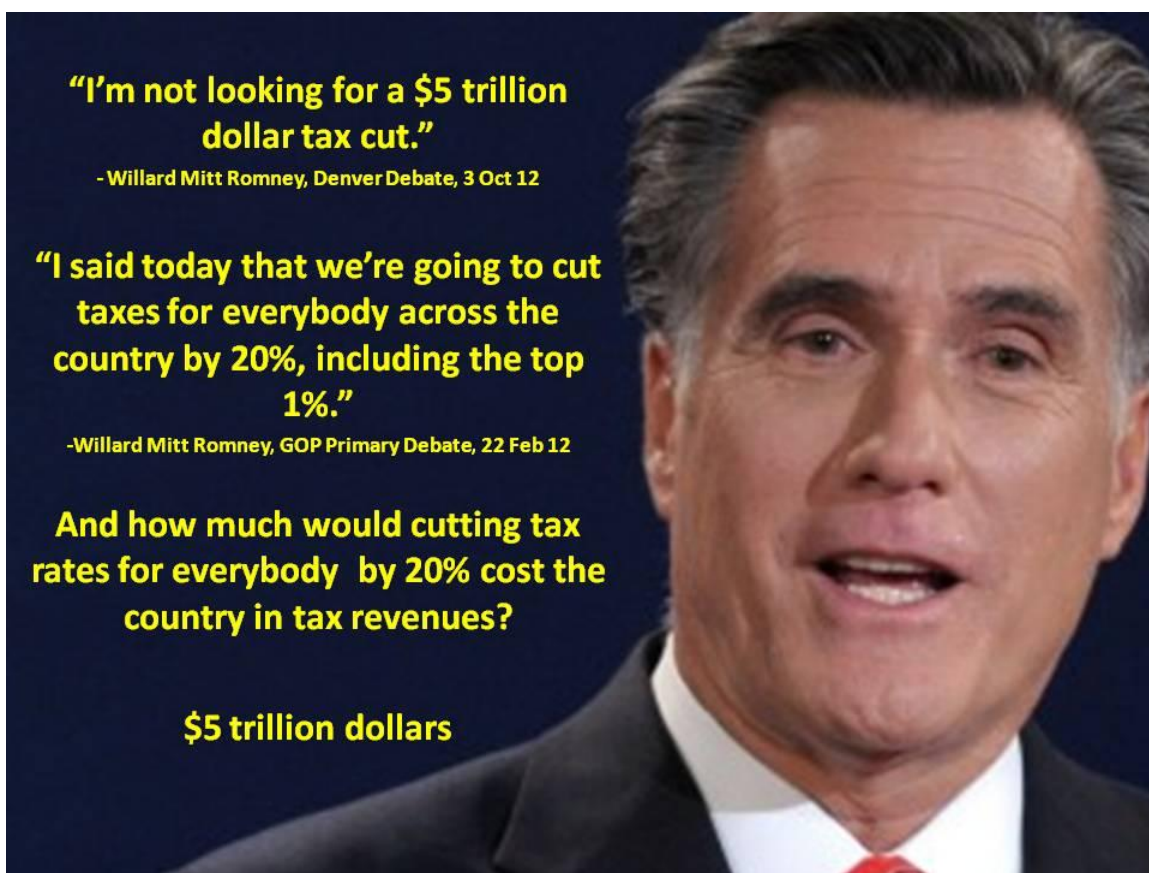
He did not originate the phrase. Writing in *The New York Times* in July, Nick Hanauer and Eric Liu, authors of *The Gardens of Democracy*, wrote: "Lasting growth doesn't trickle down; it emerges from the middle out."

A whole cohort of progressive economists and activists has been at work on middle-class economics since 2009. Robert Reich has been there, as have Hanauer and Liu and the Center for American Progress, especially Heather Boushey and David Madland. I'm proud to add that the journal I edit, *Democracy*, has been in on this crusade too. Hanauer and Liu are advisers to the journal, and in our Spring 2011 issue Madland wrote the first long piece to appear on middle-class economics.

Well, it takes a village, as they say. But middle-out economics is still in formation. It will be up to Obama, those named above, and others to provide more definition over the course of a second term. But even if that isn't yet fully clear, this is: trickle-down economics is over. **There was a time when a promise of a 20-percent tax cut would have ended the whole conversation in Romney's favor. But all it accomplished this time was to raise questions—legitimate and never answered—about how he was going to pay for it.** Romney had nothing to say to the middle class beyond cutting taxes and watching the magic happen. But voters have stopped believing in that magic.

Some conservatives understand this. But it's literally three or four people right now—Ramesh Ponnuru, Ross Douthat, Reihan Salam, and maybe one or two others. The rest of the Republican Party is still in fantasy land. You may have seen a few days before the election that Mitch McConnell killed a Congressional Research Service report on taxes. Its offense? To assert that lowering top tax rates doesn't necessarily produce more revenue and growth.

That's Republican theology. Some time will be needed before any reformation is accepted. But as far as the voters are concerned, that god is dead.



"The GOP Is No Party for Blacks, Latinos and Gays" by Jonathan Capehart, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 12, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/the-gop-is-no-party-for-blacks-latinos-and-gays/2012/11/12/ebfecab2-2c73-11e2-a99d-5c4203af7b7a_blog.html)

The Republican meltdown over its decisive loss at the ballot box in the presidential election has been a sight to behold. Karl Rove flipped out on Fox News. Mary Matalin had a near-meltdown on CNN. And, according to *The Post*, the GOP has begun "an exhaustive review to figure out what went wrong and how to fix it." That's a waste of time and (more) money. Everyone in the reality-based community knows what went wrong.

The coalition President Obama put together in 2008 came out big for him again in 2012. A big chunk of the reason is because African Americans, Latinos, young people, women and more than a few "white guys" like him. But the intemperate remarks of Republican candidates, including presidential nominee Mitt Romney, on a host of issues that many of these groups care about also did them in.

What many Republican leaders fail to understand is that the party is leaving votes on the table that could be theirs. Votes they once were able to attract before they became viewed as a collection of mean, monochromatic and reactionary people clinging to Ronald Reagan's America instead of coming to terms with, if not embracing, the vibrant nation we live in today.

Romney snatched 6 percent of the African American vote away from Obama. That was 2 percent better than Sen. John McCain attracted in 2008. But Romney has nothing on the late President Richard Nixon, who got 18 percent of the black vote in 1972. No Republican has matched that level of support since.

Romney got 27 percent of the Latino vote. But that was 17 points below what President George W. Bush garnered in 2004. No Republican had reached that level of support before him, and none has since. McCain earned 31 percent of the Latino vote, four points more than Romney.

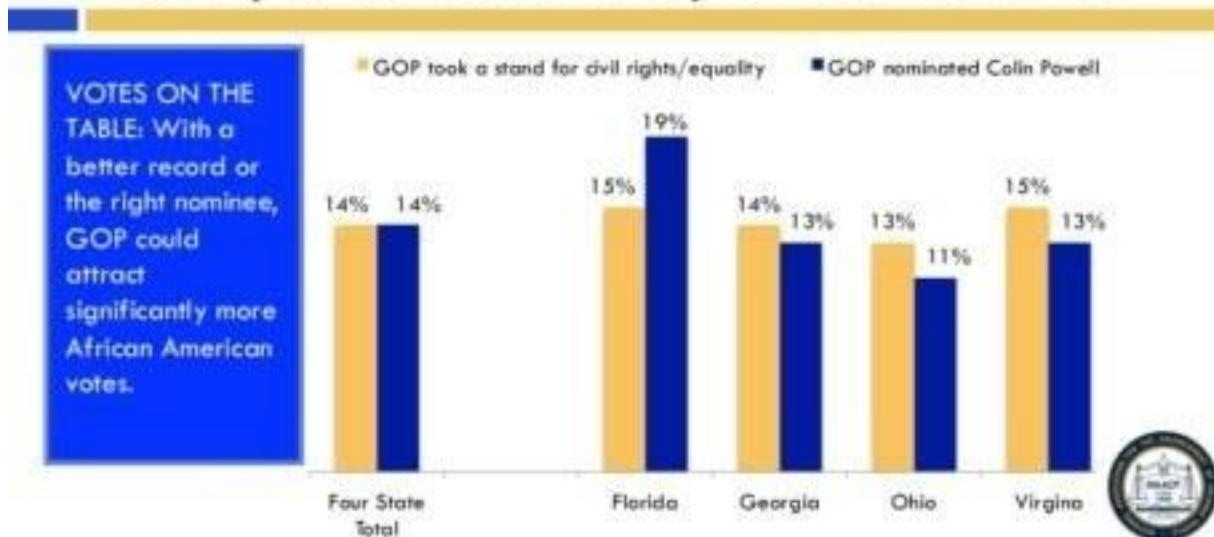
While African Americans and Latinos are reliable voting blocs for Democrats, they certainly are not beyond reach of Republicans. And polls of blacks and Latinos in key swing states show that, had Romney shown a combination of moderation, compassion and interest, he could have won.

An ImpreMedia/Latino Decisions 2012 Latino Election Eve Poll surveyed Hispanic voters in 11 states. When asked if they would be "more likely" or "less likely" to vote GOP "if the Republican Party took a leadership role in supporting comprehensive immigration reform," 31 percent said "more likely." Romney's ridiculous invention of "self-deportation" helped him snuff out the primary challenge from Texas Gov. Rick Perry, but it also killed his appeal to Latino voters.

On the eve of the election, the NAACP asked African American voters in Florida, Georgia, Ohio and Virginia if they would be more likely to vote Republican if the "GOP took a stand for civil rights/equality." The four-state total was 14 percent. In Florida, the percentage went up to 15 percent. The president won the Sunshine State by just 74,000 votes.

The NAACP also asked those same voters if they'd be more likely to vote Republican if the party's nominee were former secretary of state Colin Powell. The four-state total was 14 percent, but in Florida his support shot up to 19 percent. Trying to get black votes while running against the first African American president is tough enough. But when the GOP nominee repeats proven lies about the president's welfare policy, has surrogates calling him the "Food Stamp president" and has fellow Republicans in other states trying to suppress black votes, the task of winning them over was damned near impossible.

Would you be more likely to vote GOP if:



And while we're at it, let me remind you about the gay vote. A Harris Interactive-Logo TV poll of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans released in August showed that Romney was leaving LGBT votes on the table. Romney was pro-gay rights before he was against them. His promise to sign a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and his waffling on support for civil unions and adoption rights were particularly off-putting.

Yet, when asked if Romney "held the same positions on issues related to gay rights" as Obama, 22 percent said they would be "more likely to vote for Romney." Considering that 67 percent expressed support for Obama, a shift in support that big toward Romney would have tied the two for the LGBT vote. That's nothing to sneeze at in an election everyone believed to be close.

Each of these groups has its specific concerns. But the issue that united them was the one that concerned all Americans: the economy and jobs. So the Republican Party needs to spend less time figuring out what went wrong and more time figuring out how to talk to these voters in a way that broadens its appeal rather than insults potential supporters.

[20121113-02](#) 11:35 Art Re: Thomas (FotM Newsletter #268)

And another conservative can't handle the light of day. What was the tripe that so offended him?

[20121113-04](#) 12:51 SteveB Re: Thomas (reply to Art, above)

No idea! Maybe we will learn today...though I rather doubt it...

Always fun when the Right shows-up, though...

[20121113-08](#) 15:18 Thomas Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to SteveB)

Yes I'm in it [*FotM Newsletter #268*] but I sleep well at night. I don't kill babies, you and yours do. Abortion, a woman's right to be a slut. Progressive - Definition of "I have no values". Obama the biggest know nothing ever elected. Constituency of takers and Obama Claus the giver. I guess you people are too slow to understand that sooner or later the gravy train runs out. I have my ducks already set up with the federal government never getting another direct penny from me. I can honestly say I don't care about all the taker groups you listed, like muslims,

mexicans or any other dependent group. We take care of those in need not those that want. How's the government working out for the NE weather victims? Not so well. What is mine is mine for me and my family not for you or any other bullshit group to take and give away. Keep sucking at the Obama tit, he's already thrown your homosexual brethren to the curb i.e. homosexual marriage is not going to be a part of the agenda for the upcoming administration. Keep sucking and someday you may get some nourishment, NOT. Re-elected, so doesn't need them anymore. Unfortunately for you if this country ever gets bad enough you will be the first to go. Weak, no skills and totally without capability of self-defense. Sheep don't last long. Hope you make it.

[20121113-11](#) 17:08 Pam Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to Thomas, above)

This is a perfect example of the kind of thinking we've been decrying--intolerant, narrow-minded, uncharitable. It won't hurt us in the long run, because he and his kind will do nothing to contribute to the actual working of society. He can throw mud at it, but he can't change the tide of history, which is running against him. It must be so hard to live with such bitterness in your heart.

[20121113-15](#) 19:54 Art Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)

Unbelievable. I have Golden Retrievers with more common sense. It's why you cannot have an intelligent conversation with these people. They have no logic and when called upon to present any, revert to this drivell.

As for his martial skills, I doubt he'd last five seconds in a real firefight. Certainly doesn't worry me. Seen these jerks before, they are the first to go.

[20121113-16](#) 20:09 Beth Re: FotM Newsletter #268 (reply to all, above)

Art is absolutely right! What this guy is saying is "don't bother me with the facts. I already know what I think. Whatever Karl, Glenn and Rush say works for me.". Blather!

[20121113-03](#) 12:24 Bill Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SandyI & MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #268)

Thanks to SandyI and MarthaH for conveying an article with reasonable empathy for the red side.

[20121113-05](#) 12:52 SteveB Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to Bill, above)

Screw the red side! :-)

[20121113-06](#) 13:14 Bill Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)

My basic sympathies are like yours, but for the sake of avoiding civil war....

[20121113-07](#) 13:54 SteveB Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to Bill, above)

Maybe we could just let them secede like they want to?

We could have the United States of America and the United States of Christmas Past.

[20121113-10](#) 15:58 Bill Re: Securing the High Ground (reply to SteveB, above)

You're no Lincoln. I knew Lincoln, and you're....

Well, anyway, they're all mixed in with the rest of us. It's probably not practical.

20121113-12 18:47 SteveG Fw: Enlightened States of America?

The other side of Thomas?

[Source of original mail unknown. -SteveB]

Dear Red States:

We're ticked off at your Neanderthal attitudes and politics and we've decided we're leaving.

We in New York intend to form our own country and we're taking the other Blue States with us.

In case you aren't aware that includes California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and the rest of the Northeast.

We believe this split will be beneficial to the nation and especially to the people of the new country of The Enlightened States of America (E.S.A).

To sum up briefly:

You get Texas, Oklahoma and all the slave states.

We get stem cell research and the best beaches.

We get Andrew Cuomo and Elizabeth Warren. You get Bobby Jindal and Todd Akin.

We get the Statue of Liberty. You get OpryLand.

We get Intel and Microsoft. You get WorldCom.

We get Harvard. You get Ole' Miss.

We get 85 percent of America's venture capital and entrepreneurs.

We get two-thirds of the tax revenue. You get to make the red states pay their fair share.

Since our aggregate divorce rate is 22 percent lower than the Christian Coalition's, we get a bunch of happy families. You get a bunch of single moms.

With the Blue States in hand we will have firm control of 80% of the country's fresh water, more than 90% of the pineapple and lettuce, 92% of the nation's fresh fruit, 95% of America's quality wines (you can serve French wines at state dinners) 90% of all cheese, 90 percent of the high tech industry, most of the US low sulfur coal, all living redwoods, sequoias and condors, all the Ivy and Seven Sister schools plus Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Cal Tech and MIT.

With the Red States you will have to cope with 88% of all obese Americans and their projected health care costs, 92% of all US mosquitoes, nearly 100% of the tornadoes, 90% of the hurricanes, 99% of all Southern Baptists, virtually 100% of all televangelists, Rush Limbaugh, Bob Jones University, Clemson and the University of Georgia.

We get Hollywood and Yosemite, thank you.

38% of those in the Red states believe Jonah was actually swallowed by a whale, 62% believe life is sacred unless we're discussing the death penalty or gun laws, 44% say that evolution is only a theory, 53% that Saddam was involved in 9/11 and 61% of you crazy bastards believe you are people with higher morals than we lefties.

We're taking the good weed too. You can have that crap they grow in Mexico.

Sincerely, Citizen of the Enlightened States of America

20121113-13	18:54	Pam	Re: Enlightened States of America? (reply to SteveG, above)
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Fabulous!

20121113-14	19:45	Art	Re: Enlightened States of America? (reply to SteveG, above)
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Really good.

20121113-09	15:37	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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Yep. I saw Chef Patricia about her tilefish, and I am glad I did!

Being early at the cafeteria, as it opens at 11:30, is always interesting. The number of people waiting outside the doors varies with what's going on that day, as well as what's on the menu. If there's a big telecast announcement or meeting, the cafeteria is nearly deserted. Usually, though, there are a couple dozen folks who rush in and pile up on some line that's hit the gong on what people want.

Today, the Gong appears to have gone to Chef Kellie, for ultimate comfort-food chicken pot pie. There were a dozen folks in her line, at least, in the first heartbeat after the door opened. Apple folks appear to crave chicken pot pie, a phenomenon I have noted before.

My goal today was not chicken pot pie.

My eye was for Chef Patricia's Florida Tile Fish over sun-dried tomato polenta with haricots vert. My pan sauteed filets (two of them!) were marvelous, with a crispy, very thin, lightly golden crust over the dense, flaky white fish. Just a gentle poke-and-twist would drop another perfect morsel onto my fork. Chef Patricia's garlic Parmigiano cream sauce was to die for: smooth, velvety smooth, lush, creamy (of course!) and with a garlic level appropriate both for delicate fish and as a complement to Parmesan; the light blend of sage, basil and thyme added a nice nose to the dish. My haricots vert were lightly sauteed in butter (seems to have had some garlic, too!) as my plate was being prepared, and retained that all-important crispness that was a testimony to freshness; I have grown quite fond of what Susette and I call "magic beans", as they are quite flavorful compared to your run-of-the-mill green beans. I thought I'd be lukewarm about the polenta, but no... there were nice chunks of sun-dried tomatoes throughout it, and the polenta itself had evidently been infused with some pureed tomato, as all was suffused with a rich, warm color and flavor. Smooth, augmented with cheese, and rich: I ate every bite.



[20121113-17](#)

23:26

Tom

"Nation Horrified to Learn about War in Afghanistan While Reading Up on Petraeus Sex Scandal"

"Nation Horrified to Learn about War in Afghanistan While Reading Up on Petraeus Sex Scandal" by *The Onion*

Nov. 13, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/nation-horrified-to-learn-about-war-in-afghanistan,30367/?ref=auto>)



(WASHINGTON) As they scoured the Internet for more juicy details about former CIA director David Petraeus' affair with biographer Paula Broadwell, Americans were reportedly horrified today upon learning that a protracted, bloody war involving U.S. forces is currently raging in the nation of Afghanistan. "Oh my God, this is terrible," Allie Lipscomb, 29, said after accidentally stumbling on an article about the war while she tried to ascertain details about what specific sexual acts Petraeus and Broadwell might have engaged in. "According to this, 2,000 American troops have died, 18,000 have been wounded, and more than 20,000 civilians have been killed. Jesus Christ. And it's been happening for, like, 11 years." Sources confirmed that after reading a few paragraphs about the brutal war, the nation quickly became distracted by a headline about Elmo puppeteer Kevin Clash's alleged sexual abuse of a 16-year-old boy

[20121113-18](#) 23:57 Marci Cool Photos #6 (The Hamilton Pool Nature Preserve in Texas)





<http://lucianahervoso.blogspot.com/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #270 — NOV. 15, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Conservatives' War on the Constitution

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 15, 2012)

The cartoon (from 1861) says it all, doesn't it? These radicals are proving to be even stupider than anyone has been willing to give them credit for. So, I want to be among the first, right here and right now, in these very pages, to give the far Right and its media friends credit where credit is due—their gall, arrogance, self-deception, lies, and stupidity are of colossal proportions! Will the Union ever be the same?

"Drudge Goes All In with 'Secession' Meme as the Republican War on the Constitution Escalates" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Nov. 14, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/drudge-goes-all-secession-meme-republican-war-constitution-escalates>)



(There is no greater oxymoron in America's political discourse than the "Constitutional conservative.")

In the wake of Barack Obama's decisive victory over Mitt Romney, we are again reminded that there is no greater oxymoron in America's political discourse than the "Constitutional conservative." Nobody has less respect for the federalism enshrined in that document than today's Tea Party Right.

Matt Drudge – who dignified himself during the race with endless scare-stories warning that African Americans would launch a race war if Obama won – has fully embraced what he calls the "secession movement" (because a bunch of angry Facebook posts and a petition now qualify as a mass movement).

According to the Daily Caller, "Less than a week after a New Orleans suburbanite petitioned the White House to allow Louisiana to secede from the United States, petitions from seven states have collected enough signatures to trigger a promised review from the Obama administration." The report notes that 69 similar petitions have garnered over 675,000 signatures from all 50 states, prompting a "review" that will no doubt consist of junior White House staffers enjoying a good laugh before placing the petitions in their circular file.

Not to be left out of this little cyber-Civil War, someone offered a competing petition urging the administration to "Strip the Citizenship from Everyone who Signed a Petition to Secede and Exile Them."

Mr. President, please sign an executive order such that each American citizen who signed a petition from any state to secede from the USA shall have their citizenship stripped and be peacefully deported.

It's all fun and games when it comes to the White House's petitions page, but this anti-Constitutional secessionist tendency is playing out in far more serious ways in states with hard-right governors and Republican-controlled legislatures.

The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* reports that in Wisconsin – where Governor Scott Walker appears to have been somewhat chastened by the failed attempt to recall him last year – a group of hard-right law-makers are openly flouting the federal government's authority.

As Gov. Scott Walker contemplates whether to create a state health care exchange under Obamacare, he will have to contend in the coming legislative session with nine lawmakers who have said they back a bill to arrest any federal officials who try to implement the health care law....

...Their stance on the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, could cause the most fireworks in the upcoming session. Walker must decide by Friday whether the state will create a health care exchange under the health care law or leave those duties to President Barack Obama's administration.

Rep. Chris Kapenga (R-Delafield) is one of the nine from Wisconsin who told the Campaign for Liberty he would back legislation to declare Obamacare illegal and allow police to arrest federal officials who take steps to implement it in Wisconsin. He said he believes the health care law is unconstitutional, despite the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that it passes constitutional muster.

"Just because Obama was re-elected does not mean he's above the constitution," Kapenga said.

Kapenga appears to believe he is above the Constitution. Article 3 created the Supreme Court and Section 2 gave the court – and only the court -- the power to litigate disputes between the federal government and the states. Several states sued last year, claiming that Obamacare exceeded the federal government's authority. The Supreme Court considered their arguments and rejected them, ruling that the health-care reforms did pass Constitutional muster. Now we have a group of self-anointed "Constitutional conservatives" thumbing their noses at the court and ignoring the Constitution's Supremacy and Commerce clauses.

A number of Republican governors have talked about "nullifying" the new health-care law, based on a wildly erroneous reading of the 10th Amendment (which reserves powers not given to the federal government for the states). Nullification, like secession, is a concept that we litigated during the Civil War.

Brendan Fischer reports for PR Watch that "several Republican governors -- Rick Scott (FL), Bobby Jindal (LA), Sam Brownback (KS), Rick Perry (TX), Nikki Haley (SC), Nathan Deal (GA), Robert McDonnell (VA) and Jay Nixon (MO) -- announced they would... refuse to implement the state-based health care marketplace 'exchanges' that are key to reducing health care costs and expanding access."

Anticipating this kind of intransigence, the Affordable Care Act has a provision that allows the federal government to set up the exchanges in states that refuse to do it themselves. But Fischer notes that the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) – the right-wing corporate front-group – and the Koch-backed libertarian CATO Institute are pushing an obscure legal theory that they say would render the entire health-care scheme inoperable in states that choose not to enact the exchanges.

The online insurance marketplace exchanges are not only where individuals can shop and compare insurance coverage, but also where low-income individuals can qualify for "premium assistance" tax credits from the federal government to offset the costs. Cato's Michael Cannon and Case Western Reserve University School of Law Professor Jonathan Adler have argued the health care law was drafted in such a way that the tax credits are only available through a state-run exchange, but not a federally run exchange -- and without those subsidies, the law would collapse, since many low-income people could not afford coverage.

Additionally, Cannon and Adler argue, because the tax credits trigger the "employer mandate" requiring all companies that employ more than 59 workers to provide insurance, defaulting to a federally run exchange means businesses would not be subject to tax penalties if they fail to purchase coverage for their workers.

The Cannon and Adler position is at odds with that of the IRS, which has interpreted the law to provide tax credits regardless of whether an exchange is run by the states or the federal government.

The State of Oklahoma is relying on Cannon and Adler's theory in a lawsuit challenging those IRS rules and arguing the tax credits are only available for state-run exchanges. Oklahoma's suit has been described as a way for states to "protect job creators from being subject to large and variable penalties." If Oklahoma were to prevail in its suit -- a prospect many scholars believe is unlikely -- the individual mandate could still be in place, but the subsidies for low-income residents would disappear, leaving many individuals in a precarious situation.

This kind of litigation will likely amount to little more than a waste of tax-payer dollars – the chances of this argument surviving judicial scrutiny are slim. But the Supreme Court did give states the ability to opt out of the health-care law's expansion of Medicaid without facing steep penalties. This is where ideology does real damage to real people, as millions of poor people and low-income retirees in deep Red states are at risk of being denied the health-care available to those living elsewhere in the United States.

We've litigated these issues in the past. Consider this description of the view of government that prevails on the Right today:

The progressives believe in strong and effective government that would ensure commercial growth and international prestige; the conservatives saw such goals threatening liberty and preferred local control. The conservatives saw a strong national government as a threat to the liberties of Americans, believing its distance from the people and its extended territory only increased the threat. Not surprising, then, was the fact that progressives tended to reside in coastal areas, where commercial growth was high on the agenda.

But that's not a description of today's ideological debates. It's a paragraph from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill historian John Semonche's monograph on the issues that divided the delegates to the Grand Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. I replaced "Federalists" – who favored the Constitution, with a central government with direct authority over the citizens of the states – with "progressives," and "Anti-Federalists" – who opposed the Constitution – with "conservatives."

As Semonche pointed out, "the opponents of the Constitution were forced on the defensive both in regard to the appellation, Antifederalist, and in regard to the fact that they had no ready alternative to suggest. .. The fact that the Antifederalists lost the battle and the fact that the Constitution quickly became a revered document combined to relegate their cause to the scrap heap of history."

But they didn't go away. They would rear their heads again in 1861, when secessionists prevailed in the South, and they've returned in the early years of the 21st century, personified by those anti-Constitutionalists on the right who claim their fealty to "constitutional government."



The Asia line provided the superb dish below, today. Wish I had more time to talk about it, but -- perfect lightly crusted (I bet on a simple seasoned rice flour dredge, then a quick sear in a hot pan) unbelievably flaky, soft, moist delicate sweet white flesh, a perfect complement to jasmine rice. The red stuff on top I asked about once before; I think it's shaved strands of dried peppers. Veggies included butternut squash, scallions, and eggplant. The eggplant I managed somehow to eat comfortably, paired with other items... from me, this is VERY high praise of eggplant, which I studiously avoid.

A great dish, a classic prep: wonderful lunch!

(This is an iPhone 4s photo. I really DO need a nice camera like this! But, there's no hurry: I can use this one... and it's still true that in electronics, many mass-produced items tend to get better and/or cheaper over time. It's only one example, but the base price on an iPhone is unchanged after over five years, but look how much more you get!)



[Dear FotM members and readers, sorry to have this next to the food! --SteveB]

Remember, years ago, when I invented odor-eating panties and pantyhose and you guys laughed at me? Even though all I ever try to do is make the world a better place for all of us?

Well, laugh no more (though the comments are pretty funny)!

"Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor" by AFP RELAXNEWW, *New York Daily News*

Nov. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/odor-eliminating-pants-hot-seller-japan-article-1.1201110>)

(The company's range has now expanded to 22 items, including socks that prevent feet from smelling and t-shirts that mask the whiff of sweaty armpits.)



Seiren's DEOEST underwear

Underpants which are claimed to neutralize the smell of flatulence are proving a hit in Japan, whose hard-working businessmen seem to like the idea of breaking wind without getting caught.

A Japanese textile company has developed a range of underwear which it says prevent unwelcome odors.

"It took us a few years to develop the first deodorant pants that are comfortable enough to wear in daily life but efficient in quickly eliminating strong smells," said Nami Yoshida, a spokeswoman for the company, Seiren.

"At first we thought about selling them to those who require nursing care and to hospitals.

"But to our surprise, lots of ordinary people, like businessmen who are in positions that require them to see people on a daily basis, bought them," she said.

The underwear is manufactured with niff-absorbing ceramic particles in the material fibers.

Seiren developed the technology after being contacted by a doctor who wanted something to disguise the regular parps emitted by people suffering from irritable bowel syndrome.

The company's range has now expanded to 22 items, including socks that prevent feet from smelling and t-shirts that mask the whiff of sweaty armpits.

20121114-03	17:13	Ben	Re: "Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Um: I think I actually DO remember you saying something about that.

But who's laughing now? Not ME.

20121114-04	18:02	SteveB	Re: "Odor-Eliminating Pants Are Hot Seller in Japan; Undergarments Disguise Smell of Flatulence, Body Odor" (reply to Ben, above)
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Well...@@@...good! I should have gone ahead and done the patent. Oh, well! I have many more world-improving inventions and more work than I need.

20121114-05	23:57	Marci	Cool Photos #7 (Autumn in the Adirondacks)
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<http://twistedgifter.com/2011/11/picture-of-the-day-autumn-in-the-adirondacks/>



This is Egg Reef. World's End Reef is further out (approximately below the point from which where this photo was taken). The Tobago Cays have to be one of my favorite spots on the planet, and the old saying is so completely true...getting there is half the fun!

<http://www.charterworld.com/index.html?sub=The-Tobago-Cays>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #271 — NOV. 16, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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R0mney's 'Gifts' Gaffe

(posted by Friends of the Middle, Nov. 16, 2012)



MarthaH (07:19): I wrote Graham and McCain yesterday and will write my Congressman (soon to be gerrymandered into another "R" district) and Senators today. A weekly reminder that they serve US, not their caucus thugs is in order to get things accomplished. PLEASE join me! We aren't off to a good start with Mitten's election rationalization observations or Ryan's take on voter turnout. SOS—distress call and same old STUFF...Will they not learn? What price do WE pay?

SteveB (10:05): I love your weekly letter idea, Martha! If all citizens who are awake would do that weekly, well...pretty soon we might wake them up to the realization of for whom they work.

Pam (11:51): I suppose it was too much to hope that once the election was over sanity would return to the body politic. This latest issue of states refusing to participate in Obamacare, thus increasing costs to the entire system

and depriving many of their citizens' basic health care, is beyond incredible. The best, cheapest way to deal with health care IMHO would be universal coverage with a single payer. But it's not efficiency or fairness that matters to the Right. No, it's all about some sort of mythic frontier ideology, which is not far off survival of the fittest. There's a new book out about the Victorian workhouse and the Victorian attitude toward poverty generally. Workhouses were the last refuge of the destitute, and they were deliberately most unpleasant in order to discourage people from entering them. Still, the Victorians felt a Christian duty to care for the poor, and that became part of their justification for colonialism. What is the American attitude toward the poor? Do we even have one? I believe the Puritans have a lot to answer for here. If success was a sign of God's grace, then poverty had to be a sign of God's disfavor, and there was nothing to be done about it. And so a work ethic is born. In England you had "noblesse oblige," wherein the rich had a moral responsibility to the less fortunate. In America, the land of great fortunes derived from industry, philanthropy usually meant founding a library or endowing some other institution, like a museum. And who uses libraries and museums? Some of my favorite museums are small, exquisite collections like the Barnes in Philadelphia or the Frick in New York. I don't want to get into an argument about the value of art or books, but I find it telling that we save our most enthusiastic kudos for enterprises that cater to the elite--ballet, opera--rather than alleviate poverty. We give "welfare" grudgingly and are always looking for ways to cut it back even more. We never consider the need and what would be required to meet it adequately. It's no accident that England has National Health Service, and we don't. Speaks volumes.

SteveB (13:18): I just love this writing, Pam.

It's unbelievable to me that these—I want to and don't want to at the same time call them—ass-holes suffer an historic loss at the polls and, instead of learning anything, here they are in the faces of the majority again with their lunacy. Where is any attempt to solve any real problems?

Isn't it permissible for a free society to outlaw behaviors that are destructive to the whole? We do it for many other behaviors, why not for spreading major discontent and insurrection via gigantic lies?

But, no, Mr. Obama was somehow elected illegally, has no legitimacy, let alone a mandate, so the nation must be ripped apart. The majority must suffer. The poor, immigrants, children, students, and women must suffer. If you're black or gay or, heaven forbid, black and gay, you are SOL!

You are so right about charity, Pam. It's been exhaustively proven (even in these pages) that the rich have gotten very much richer since Reagan. If the rich were going to take care of the poor, wouldn't they have done it long before now? They haven't even made a dent in it, though assisted by \$billions in government/tax-payer help, both to the poor and, even more so, to the rich themselves. Give me a GD break!

I, for one, grow weary of their fascist crap that nobody wants to pick-up either end of. (Did I say that right?) Peace and love...

Ref: Graphics [20121115-02](#) (Republican Jesus), below.

Pam: (13:32): Right. If all that wealth is supposed to trickle down and create jobs, why hasn't it? And don't give me "regulation" and "uncertainty" and having to pay for health insurance. It might have said something nice about the Republican party if some of those billions they spent on the election had gone to alleviating some of our worst problems. But Noooooooooo. That would take away our freedom--to be selfish bastards.

SteveB (13:43): The problems come, of course, from the top, as well as from the bottom of the GOP...

Mitt says he's sorry...sorry he didn't win!

He also says of any future Republican presidential nominee – "which, by the way, will not be me."

What, Mitt, you don't have the cajones to run again? Thank God for small favors! Maybe we'll have Newt or Satanorum to kick around... In the meantime, you hold the record for world's worst loser of all time, Mr. Mittens.

Ref: Articles [20121115-03](#) ("Mitt Romney: Obama Won with 'Gifts' to Blacks, Hispanics, Young Voters") and [20121115-04](#) ("The Final Insult: Mitt Romney's Clueless Gift Gaffe"), below.

Pam (13:50): F-----g unbelievable! Excuse my French. This is really beyond belief. Who are these morons anyway? They're like termites, building themselves up at everyone else's expense--and being proud when it works and childish stupid when it doesn't. No matter what, nothing is ever THEIR fault. Aaaaaarrrrghhh!

SteveB (14:05): I guess Mittens isn't listening to his fellow Republicans...

Ref: Article [20121115-05](#) ("Mitt Romney Campaign Did Not Offer Specifics, Say Top Republicans").

Art (16:28) In trying to figure this all at the moment it is like we are dealing with petulant children. I think at least part of the problem and explanation is the tea bags and others told so many lies about President Obama over the past couple of years (he wasn't born in the United State, he wants to destroy the country, he's a communist, a NAZI, a Moslem, a socialist, he doesn't salute the flag and on and on) that they actually began to believe most of what they were saying. Now you can understand this to a degree from the rank and file tea baggers, who from what I've seen are pretty dim bulbs to began with, but the smarter guys at the top should have know better, but apparently they also got lost in the web of lies.

Having convinced themselves that the President was really evil, despite repeated corrections by every fact checker known to man, they then took the noble concept into the election that the Republicans were running against a truly horrible man who no true American could possibly support. In their limited all white little crowds they worked themselves up to a frenzy of beliefs that this was a wave of national expression against evil.

Hence their stunned surprise when they were not just beaten but beaten badly. How could this be? How could the country not see the evil that they so clearly saw. They are still trying to figure it out. Blame minorities, now they blame President Obama for "buying off" certain segments of the population (sort of goes back to that worthless minorities and immigrants thing doesn't it?) blame the stupidity of the liberals for failing to understand the evil they were opposing and on and on. So far none of them, and I really think even the top "thinkers" have failed to grasp that their entire premise was based on a web of lies and that many, many people, like most of us, saw clearly through that.

This little theory would help explain their current actions such as goofy succession petitions and their continued obsession with issues such as Benghazi where they are absolutely convinced they will finally find the evil they just know is there. What are they going to find? It is standard diplomatic practice that the safety and protection of our diplomats relies on the host country. You simply cannot have a big enough army in every country (would we want armed Chinese or Russians patrolling our streets?) to provide perfect protection for our diplomats. Further having American troops gunning down local civilians in the name of security does not win friends or influence people (see parans above). Them's the rules. So I repeat, what are they going to find? I will tell you nothing. Fingers can be pointed claiming we should have had more security but based on what. We all knew Libya was a dicey place. Same line of logic could be used to hold Bush II accountable for 9/11.

Bottom line is they will spend enormous effort and valuable time on this non productive witch hunt because they continue to believe that, up to this point, elusive piece of evidence that will finally prove that they were right all along and evil does rest in the White House, is just around the corner. And meanwhile the important business of government, such as the economy and the deficit, goes un-addressed.

Pam (16:57): Alas, everything you say here, Art, is all too true. Rather than being relieved that Obama is NOT a Muslim or a Nazi or a socialist, as has been proven over and over, they prefer to cling to their skewed world view.

They actually prefer that things be bad, because complaining is so delicious. I find this secessionist idiocy really beyond the pale, but actually no surprise. For many, many folks in the South, the Civil War isn't over; it's just in remission.

SteveB (17:15): I love this. You wrote a really great description of the problem! And it seems that I'm not the only one who agrees with you. This is what some leading Republicans have had to say about R0mney's "gifts" gaffe:

Bobby Jindal (http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1112/83892.html?hp=t1_3)

"No, I think that's absolutely wrong," he said at a press conference that opened the RGA's post-election meeting here. "Two points on that: One, we have got to stop dividing the American voters. We need to go after 100 percent of the votes, not 53 percent. We need to go after every single vote.

"And, secondly, we need to continue to show how our policies help every voter out there achieve the American Dream, which is to be in the middle class, which is to be able to give their children an opportunity to be able to get a great education. ... So, I absolutely reject that notion, that description. I think that's absolutely wrong."

He reiterated the points for emphasis.

"I don't think that represents where we are as a party and where we're going as a party," he said. "That has got to be one of the most fundamental takeaways from this election: If we're going to continue to be a competitive party and win elections on the national stage and continue to fight for our conservative principles, we need two messages to get out loudly and clearly: One, we are fighting for 100 percent of the votes, and secondly, our policies benefit every American who wants to pursue the American dream. Period. No exceptions."

Sen. Marco Rubio (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/on-congress/2012/11/rubio-gently-rebuts-romney-149669.html?hp=f2>)

"I don't want to rebut him point by point," Rubio said of Romney. "I would just say to you, I don't believe that we have millions and millions of people in this country that don't want to work. I'm not saying that's what he said. I think we have millions of people in this country that are out of work and are dependent on the government because they can't find a job."

Joe Scarborough (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/joe-scarborough/2012/11/mitt-romneys-postelection-gaffe-149667.html?hp=r3>)

Mitt Romney proved again that in Washington, a gaffe is when you accidentally say something that you mean. **He also showed why he was ideologically unfit to be the Republican nominee for president.**

For Mr. Romney, the gaffe caught on camera and made public in September was that 47 percent of Americans are victims, grifters and thieves. And in a conference call with supporters on Wednesday, the former Massachusetts governor further exposed just how sheltered his life has been by explaining that these grifters were mostly minorities bought off with "gifts" from Barack Obama.

The conference call underlined what I have been saying for well over a year: that Mr. Romney has no idea what conservatism offers 100 percent of Americans who believe that freedom leads to prosperity and centralized planning is a road to serfdom. That message led Margaret Thatcher to an unlikely victory in 1979 and Ronald Reagan to a historical landslide a year later. And if Mr. Romney believes that message is no longer relevant to Hispanics and African-Americans, he should've stayed in La Jolla to oversee the building of his car elevator.

The future belongs to conservatism. It's time Republicans start electing leaders who actually believe it.

The only problem with these true believers is that their party, as currently configured, offers nothing to anyone but the rich, so the rewards of their conservatism for the 100% are a total myth.

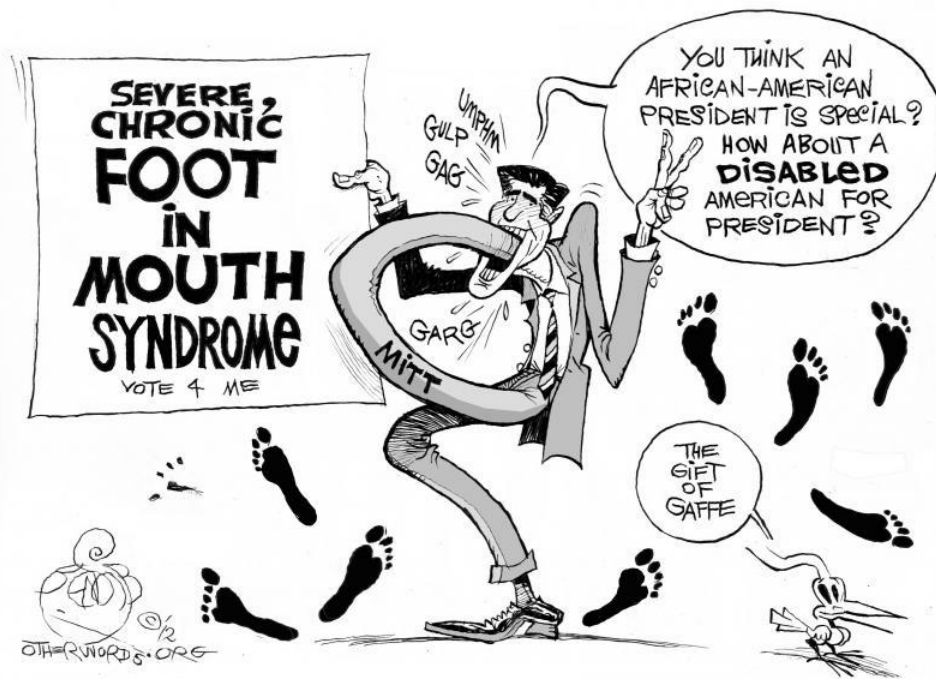
As Art says above, LIES, LIES, LIES, that is the GOP's (and, as a result, our basic problem)! (Well, other than racism and greed and their fruits!) In the Republican sense, that word should be spelled "rascism".

My God, I feel so fortunate Mittens Asshole R0mney was not elected President!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

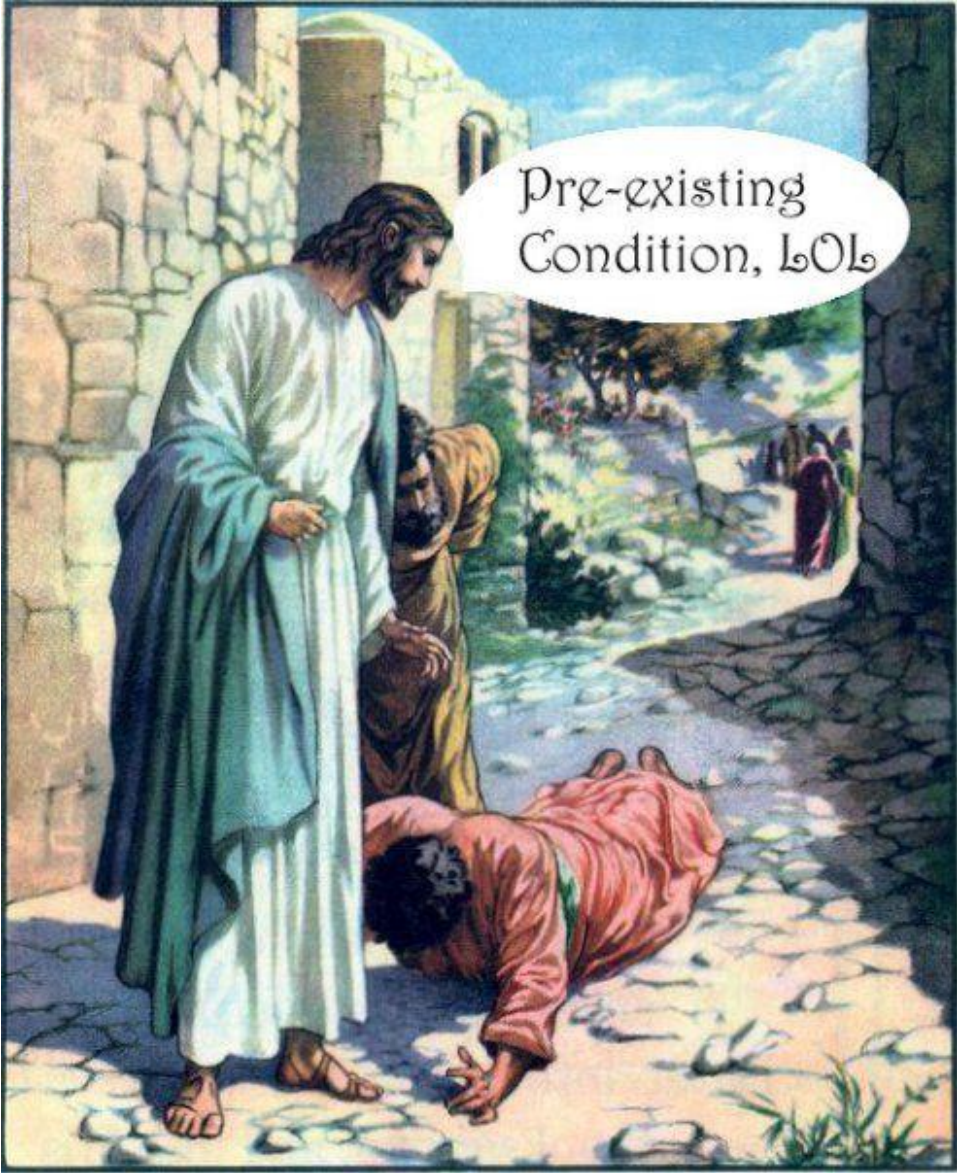
Art (18:40): Ref: Article [20121115-08](#) ("A Few Words for My Republican Friends"), below.

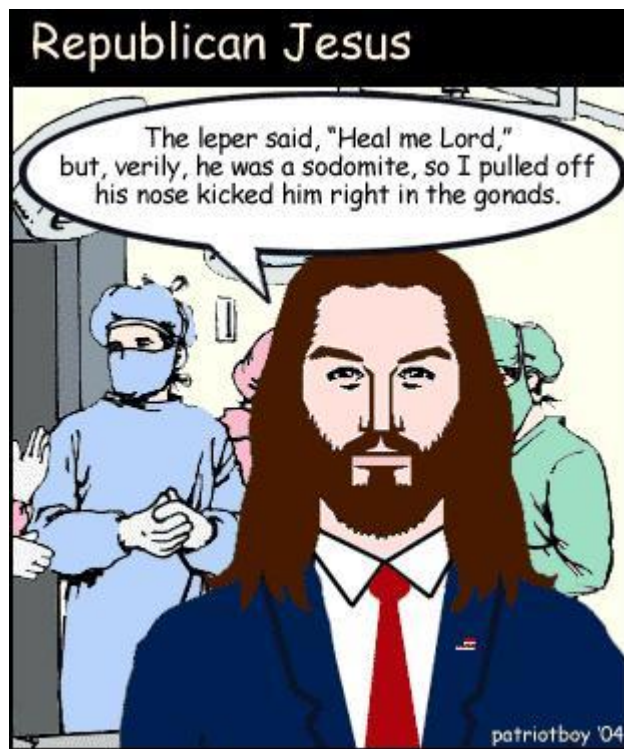
MarthaH (21:18): Facts, not gifts!

Ref: Article [20121115-09](#) ("RNC Report Suggests Other Reasons Why Romney Lost"), below.



Personally, I will take the mountain view to the underwear one!





20121115-03 13:43 SteveB "The Final Insult: Mitt Romney's Clueless Gift Gaffe"

"The Final Insult: Mitt Romney's Clueless Gift Gaffe" by John Avalon, The Daily Beast

Nov. 14, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/14/the-final-insult-mitt-romney-s-clueless-gift-gaffe.html>)

(Speaking to donors, the salesman candidate blamed his loss on the president's pitch with no evident sense of the irony, writes John Avlon.)

Mitt Romney made his final newsworthy post-election pronouncement, explaining to a conference call of big-dollar donors that he had fallen short because President Barack Obama had bribed liberal special interests with expensive gifts.

Here's what he said, according to *The New York Times*:

With regards to the young people, for instance, a forgiveness of college loan interest, was a big gift...Free contraceptives were very big with young college-aged women. And then, finally, Obamacare also made a difference for them, because as you know, anybody now 26 years of age and younger was now going to be part of their parents' plan, and that was a big gift to young people. They turned out in large numbers, a larger share in this election even than in 2008 ... You can imagine for somebody making \$25,000 or \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year, being told you're now going to get free health care, particularly if you don't have it, getting free health care worth, what, \$10,000 per family, in perpetuity, I mean, this is huge ... Likewise with Hispanic voters, free health care was a big plus. But in addition with regards to Hispanic voters, the amnesty for children of illegals, the so-called Dream Act kids, was a huge plus for that voting group.

Romney's comments about his opponent's "old playbook," as he called it, again revived a dystopian scenario conservatives have been warning about since the New Deal, where Democrats "buy" a permanent majority and undermine democracy at the cost of the productive class. Using this old myth to explain his defeat illustrates again Romney's disconnect from modern America. He views growing groups—young voters and particularly young women, and Hispanics—as outside special interests, and not as an essential part of the fabric of America.

And it shows the mind of a man who believes that everything is for sale—including, or especially, votes. This is consistent with what I always felt was the most accurate criticism of Romney: that he approached politics as a salesman, offering every group a different pitch. From that perspective, it's easy to see how he could complain about government as a competing salesman, cobbling together constituencies with "gifts"—which sound perilously close to "bribes" in this context.

A final point: President Obama backing the DREAM Act or contraception coverage is not a nakedly political gesture, it is a matter of policy difference. Addressing the needs and desires of people is not a bribe or a government gift to be exchanged for a vote. It is part of the purpose of representative government as conservative forefather Edmund Burke himself once envisioned: "Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom."

Romney's distance from this perspective about government shows how far the conservative conversation has drifted from original principles. His impulse to rationalize defeat as victory for liberal special-interest bribery shows again that it is probably best for the country that he was not elected president this November.

[20121115-04](#) 13:43 SteveB "Mitt Romney: Obama Won with 'Gifts' to Blacks, Hispanics, Young Voters"

"Mitt Romney: Obama Won with 'Gifts' to Blacks, Hispanics, Young Voters" by AP

Nov. 15, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/14/mitt-romney-obama-gifts_n_2133529.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

(WASHINGTON) Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney is telling top donors that President Barack Obama won re-election because of the "gifts" he had already provided to blacks, Hispanics and young voters and because of the president's effort to paint Romney as anti-immigrant.

"The president's campaign, if you will, focused on giving targeted groups a big gift," Romney said in a call to donors on Wednesday. "He made a big effort on small things."

Romney said his campaign, in contrast, had been about "big issues for the whole country." He said he faced problems as a candidate because he was "getting beat up" by the Obama campaign and that the debates allowed him to come back.

In the call, Romney didn't acknowledge any major missteps, such as his "47 percent" remarks widely viewed as denigrating nearly half of Americans, his lack of support for the auto bailout, his call for illegal immigrants to "self-

deport," or his change in position on abortion, gun control and other issues. He also didn't address the success or failure of the campaign's strategy of focusing on the economy in the face of some improvement in employment and economic growth during the months leading up to Election Day.

Obama won the popular vote by about 3.5 million votes, or 3 percent, and won the Electoral College by a wide margin, 332-206 electoral votes. Exit polls conducted for The Associated Press and television networks showed that Obama led Romney by 11 percentage points among women and won better than 7 of 10 Hispanic voters and more than 9 of 10 black voters.

Romney called his loss to Obama a disappointing result that he and his team had not expected, but he said he believed his team had run a superb campaign. He said he was trying to turn his thoughts to the future, "but, frankly, we're still so troubled by the past, it's hard to put together our plans for the future."

Romney's finance team organized the call to donors. *The Los Angeles Times* first reported Romney's remarks.

Among the "gifts" Romney cited were free health care "in perpetuity," which he said was highly motivational to black and Hispanic voters as well as for voters making \$25,000 to \$35,000 a year.

Romney also said the administration's promise to offer what he called "amnesty" to the children of illegal immigrants – what he termed "the so-called DREAM Act kids" – helped send Hispanics to the polls for Obama.

Young voters, Romney said, were motivated by the administration's plan for partial forgiveness of college loan interest and being able to remain on their parents' health insurance plans. Young women had an additional incentive to vote for Obama because of free contraception coverage under the president's health care plan, he said.

"I'm very sorry that we didn't win," he told donors. "I know that you expected to win. We expected to win. We were disappointed; we hadn't anticipated it."

Romney said he and his team were discussing how his donor group could remain connected and have an influence on the direction of the Republican Party and even the selection of a future nominee – "which, by the way, will not be me."

20121115-05	14:05	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Campaign Did Not Offer Specifics, Say Top Republicans"
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"Mitt Romney Campaign Did Not Offer Specifics, Say Top Republicans" by Philip Elliott, Huffington Post

Nov. 15, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/15/mitt-romney-republicans_n_2135967.html?ref=topbar)

(LAS VEGAS) Top Republicans meeting for the first time since Election Day say the party lost its bid to unseat President Barack Obama because nominee Mitt Romney did not respond to criticism strongly enough or outline a specific agenda with a broad appeal.

In conversations at the Republican Governors Association confab in Las Vegas, a half dozen party leaders predicted the GOP will lose again if it keeps running the same playbook based on platitudes in place of detailed policies. Instead, they asserted, the party needs to learn the lessons from its loss, respect voters' savvy and put forward an agenda that appeals beyond the white, male voters who are its base.

"We need to acknowledge the fact that we got beat," Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal said in an interview. "We clearly got beat and we need to recognize that."

Little more than a week after Romney came up short in his presidential bid, the party elders were looking at his errors and peering ahead to 2016's race. Some of the contenders eyeing a White House run of their own were on hand and quietly considering their chances. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie scheduled a private meeting on the sidelines with Haley Barbour, the former Mississippi governor who is widely seen as one of the GOP's sharpest political operatives.

"We need to have a brutal, brutally honest assessment of everything we did," Barbour said. "We need to take everything apart ... and determine what we did that worked and what we did that didn't work."

Other potential White House contenders such as Jindal, Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker were outlining a vision for the party in coming elections.

"We need to figure out what we did right and what we did wrong, how we can improve our tone, our message, our technology, our turnout – all the things that are required to win elections," McDonnell said. "We are disappointed, but we are not discouraged."

With polls in hand and shifting demographic trends in mind, these Republicans are looking at how best to position the party to make inroads with growing numbers of Hispanic, black and young voters who overwhelmingly voted Democratic last week. The Republicans were still smarting over constant criticism of Romney from Obama and Vice President Joe Biden – and what they saw as Romney's often ineffective response.

"They spent all their time making Mitt Romney unacceptable and making him out to be someone who was untrustworthy and unacceptable to enough of the American people – and it worked," Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad said in an interview.

In the hallways at the conference, the governors and their top advisers uniformly blamed Romney's loss on an uneven communications strategy. They said Romney allowed himself to be branded a corporate raider who put the interests of the wealthy above those of middle-income voters.

"We didn't have effective means by which to counter the attacks the Obama-Biden campaign took against Mitt Romney and his team," Walker said. "I just don't think you can let that go unanswered."

Time and again, the governors pointed to Obama attacks that settled into voters' minds.

"His whole campaign was a fear-and-smear attack to make Romney unacceptable and to blame George Bush for anything that happened while Obama was president," Barbour said. "This was all personal: that Romney is a vulture capitalist who doesn't care about people like you, ships jobs overseas, is a quintessential plutocrat and is married to a known equestrian."

Barbour added, "An attack unanswered is an attack admitted to."

Had the criticism been shown to be false or unfair, the results might have been better, said Bill Bennett, an education secretary in the Reagan administration and an informal adviser to governors.

"We were in a big fight. We came with a knife; they came with a gun," Bennett said. "If Mitt Romney had responded and had we responded on his behalf – and had his campaign pushed back more forcefully – I think it would have been a different result."

[So...are we supposed to believe that Romney and his team and backers didn't do everything they could to win? I thought they put everything "on the field"? But, you know, I guess they just didn't think the election was important enough to even try their best. What BS! –SteveB]

Jindal, however, attributed Romney's loss to a lack of "a specific vision that connected with the American people."

"His campaign was largely about his biography and his experience," Jindal said. "But time and time again, biography and experience is not enough to win an election. You have to have a vision, you have to connect your policies to the aspirations of the American people. I don't think the campaign did that and as a result, this became a contest between personalities and – you know what? – Chicago won that."

Romney cast his loss in a different light, at least in a phone call with top donors Wednesday. He asserted that Obama won re-election because of the "gifts" the president had already provided to blacks, Hispanics and young voters and because of the president's effort to paint Romney as anti-immigrant.

"The president's campaign, if you will, focused on giving targeted groups a big gift," Romney said, citing immigration proposals aimed at Hispanics and free contraception coverage that appealed to young women. "He made a big effort on small things."

White House press secretary Jay Carney disputed Romney's assessment, telling reporters traveling with Obama aboard Air Force One that policies allowing more young people to go to college or stay on their parents' health plans are good for all Americans and the economy as a whole.

"I think that view of the American people or the electorate and the election is at odds with the truth of what happened last week," Carney said.

Romney said his campaign, in contrast, had been about "big issues for the whole country." He said he faced problems as a candidate because he was "getting beat up" by the Obama campaign and said the debates allowed him to come back.

The Republican nominee didn't acknowledge any major missteps and said his team had run a superb campaign.

20121115-08 18:40 Art "A Few Words for My Republican Friends"

"A Few Words for My Republican Friends" by Cass Stivers, Liberals Unite

Nov. 3, 2012, (<http://samuel-warde.com/2012/11/a-few-words-for-my-republican-friends/>)

With the election right around the corner, I thought I would make an apology to those who will be voting Republican this year. So here it goes...

I am sorry that as a person who makes less than \$20K a year at a job I've worked at for over a year, I would like health insurance. I'm sorry that I want access to antibiotics when I'm sick and I want to know why there's blood in my stool and urine. I'm sorry that if I had insurance, I would want to be covered for my pre-existing condition. I'm sorry that I can see other people who are in my position and I think we should all have access to proper healthcare.

I am sorry that I used Medicare for a couple months when I was pregnant, before my miscarriage. I just wanted a healthy baby and I knew a doctor's supervision was necessary. I'm sorry that it was such a waste of your tax dollars.

I am sorry that you want to take away my ability to have an abortion. I'm sorry you complain about having to pay for Medicaid to allow me to have a hopefully healthy child but then also don't want to support me spending my own money to terminate the pregnancy. I'm sorry that you want to force me to have a child, even if I might not be able to afford it.

I am sorry that I don't fit your stereotype of low income people. I let down your expectations of the poor and for that I am truly sorry.

I am sorry that after high school, I decided to work two jobs to help out my family rather than go off to college. I'm sorry for not being born rich or able to find a job that pays more than \$20K a year or one that advances one up to that income.

I am sorry that I am poor and probably will never be anything more. I'm sorry I'm not talented, rich, or have more than a high school diploma. I'm sorry that my hard work hasn't paid off for me.

I am sorry you feel the need to tell me how wrong national healthcare is, despite me being one of the people who need it. I'm sorry you call people like me a lazy bum and I'm not.

I am sorry I don't care if someone is gay. I'm sorry that I see people as people and think everyone should be able to be married. I'm sorry that I don't see how gay marriage affects me in any way and think everyone should be able to do something that makes them happy, especially if it doesn't infringe on my own "pursuit of happiness".

I am sorry that if I was raped, I would not want to keep the baby and only be reminded of my rape every time I looked at my child. I'm sorry that I believe in genetics and their effects on one's personality and behaviors. I'm sorry that my opinion on genetics is backed by science. I'm sorry I don't want to raise a potential rapist. I'm sorry I want to be able to choose to bring a child into my own mess of a life.

I am sorry you hate me so much and don't even realize it's me you hate. I'm sorry you try to shove your opinion down my throat despite me trying to avoid the topic and saying flat out I didn't want to discuss it.

Oh, and last but not least...I'm sorry that you are an ignorant prick.



(Note from the Editor: I wanted to thank Cass for her very first published piece. Congrats. Outstanding job.)

20121115-09 21:18 MarthaH "RNC Report Suggests Other Reasons Why Romney Lost"

"RNC Report Suggests Other Reasons Why Romney Lost" by Mark Murray, NBC News

Nov. 15, 2012, (<http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/15/15192985-rnc-report-suggests-other-reasons-why-romney-lost?lite>)

While Mitt Romney has attributed his defeat, in part, to "gifts" President Obama was able to shower on key constituencies, a Republican National Committee report on the election points to other reasons -- like changing demographics, Hurricane Sandy, George W. Bush, and the failure to win over the middle class.

This RNC report of exit poll data, which NBC News has obtained and which RNC Chair Reince Priebus presented to GOP senators on Wednesday, states that "demographic change" in the United States "is real." It notes that the white share of the electorate has declined from 81% in 2000 to 72% in 2008. And it points out that "3 in 10 voters will be minorities in 2016."

Click here to see the full report:

http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/MSNBC/Sections/A_Politics/Today_Stories_Teases/11142012ChairmansPPTforSenatePolicy.pdf.

In addition, the report (which Politico also has written about) includes data from the exit poll showing that voters -- by a 53%-to-38% margin -- blamed Bush for the state of the economy instead of Obama.

It also observes that Obama's response to Hurricane Sandy "provided a bump" to the president, with 42% saying it was either the "most important" or "an important" factor in their vote. Obama won those voters by more than a 2-to-1 margin.

And the presentation observes that 44% of voters believed Obama's policies favored the middle class, versus 34% who said that of Romney's policies.

But the RNC report also notes the positives from the election:

- Romney outperformed John McCain from 2008, especially in battleground states.
- Fewer than a combined 400,000 votes in Florida, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Virginia separated Romney from the presidency (though even fewer than that amount separated Al Gore and John Kerry from the presidency, too).
- And Romney improved among whites and independents from 2004 and 2008.

At the end of this presentation, the RNC says it will conduct a fuller "deep dive" report into what worked in 2012 and what didn't. That will include conducting a post-election survey, meetings with party leaders, and getting feedback from volunteers.

20121115-06 15:10 Ben Photo: Today's Healthy Beef Lunch at Apple

Mostly with vegetables, which is a Good Thing.

Yep: all fresh; greens were mixed Romaine and Spring Mix, with carrot and cucumber slices, chick-a-peas, egg, cheddar, punkin and sesame seeds, dried cranberries, toasted pecans, and... other stuff. Topped with about 1/8 dipper celery seed vinaigrette, just enough to tell there was something there with a salad flavor. Taco was excellent; I ate it first, and could probably have been done right there...



Taco and a 'Small' Salad

[20121115-07](#) 17:29 SteveB Great Cat Videos!

<http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/11/15/friskies-oscars-for-cat-videos-l-a/>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Q34z5dCmC4M

[20121115-10](#) 23:57 Marci Cool Photos #8 (European Beech Trees of Mariemont, Belgium)





http://titiales.blogspot.com/2011_01_01_archive.html



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #272 — NOV. 19, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Rich and Poor

(posted by Pam McRae and SteveG, Nov. 19, 2012)

This is very important information. Why aren't the Democrats pounding this home at every opportunity? We see commercials all the time about how fracking is going to change our world, provide jobs, clean up the environment, and decrease our dependency on foreign oil. I take that with a grain of salt, but those commercials are ubiquitous. Why can't some Democratic interest groups make some commercials of their own? You have to pound something into people's heads if you want to change attitudes. What ever happened to the public service announcement? Why couldn't there be little 30 sec. bits about the facts cited here? Lots of little bits, lots of the time. Build a ground swell. Why doesn't Al Gore take some of his money and that of his friends and put out slick commercials about global warming etc. etc.? There's a need here that's not being filled. Why doesn't Warren Buffet subsidize some commercials that say, Hire a vet? —Pam McRae



"5 Ways Most Americans Are Blind to How Their Country Is Stacked for the Wealthy" by Paul Bucheit, AlterNet

Nov. 15, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/economy/5-ways-most-americans-are-blind-how-their-country-stacked-wealthy>)

Mitt Romney said he wasn't concerned about the very poor, because they have a safety net. This is typical of the widespread ignorance about inequality in our country. Struggling Americans want jobs, not handouts, and for the most part they've paid for their "safety net." The real problem is at the other end of the wealth gap.

How many people know that **out of 150 countries, we have the fourth-highest wealth disparity? Only Zimbabwe, Namibia and Switzerland are worse.**

It's not just economic inequality that's plaguing our country, it's lack of opportunity. It's a dismissal of poor people as lazy, or as threats to society. More than any other issue over the next four years, we need to address the growing divide in our nation, to tone down our winner-take-all philosophy, to provide job opportunities for people who want to contribute to society.

Here are some of the common misconceptions.

1. Americans believe that the poorest 40 percent own about 10% of the wealth.

Most people greatly underestimate the level of inequality in our country, guessing that the poorest 40 percent own about 10% of the wealth, when in reality they own much less than 1% of the wealth. Out of every dollar, they own a third of a penny.

Factor in race and it gets worse. Much of minority wealth exists in home values. But housing crashed, while the financial wealth owned almost entirely (93% of it) by the richest quintile of Americans has rebounded to lofty pre-recession levels.

As a result, for every dollar of non-home wealth owned by white families, people of color have only 1 cent. Median wealth for a single white woman is over \$40,000. For black and Hispanic women it is a little over \$100.

2. Entitlements are the problem.

No, they're not. The evidence is overwhelming. Social Security is a popular and well-run program. As summarized by Bernie Sanders, "Social Security, which is funded by the payroll tax, has not contributed one nickel to the deficit, and according to its trustees, can pay 100 percent of all benefits owed to every eligible American for the next 21 years." Dean Baker calls it "perhaps the greatest success story of any program in US history."

Medicare, which is largely without the profit motive and the competing sources of billing, is efficiently run, for all eligible Americans. According to the Council for Affordable Health Insurance, medical administrative costs as a percentage of claims are about three times higher for private insurance than for Medicare. And it's just as popular as Social Security.

3. Welfare benefits are a drag on the economy.

Critics bemoan the amounts of aid being lavished on lower-income Americans, making dubious claims about thousands of dollars going to every poor family. But despite an ever-growing need for jobs and basic living necessities, federal spending on poverty programs is a small part of the budget, and it's been that way for almost 50 years, increasing from 0.8 percent of GDP in 1962 to 1.2 percent of GDP in 2007.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has dropped significantly over the past 15 years, leaving benefit levels far below the poverty line for most families. Ninety percent of the available benefits go to the

elderly, the disabled or working households. For each family, current federal budgets pay about \$400 per month for food, housing, and traditional "welfare" programs. Food stamp recipients get \$4.30 a day.

4. The American Dream is still alive, if you just work hard enough.

The Horatio Alger tale has been a popular one for conservatives, but the OECD, the Economic Policy Institute and the *National Journal* all came to the same conclusion: the future earnings of a child in the U.S. is closely correlated to the earnings of his or her parents. This lack of mobility is more prevalent in the U.S. than in almost all other OECD countries.

Only 4 percent of those raised in the bottom quintile make it to the top quintile as adults. Only about 20 percent even make it to the top half.

A big part of the problem is the severe degree of poverty for our nation's children. According to UNICEF, among industrialized countries only Romania has a higher child poverty rate than the United States. Just in the last 10 years the number of impoverished American children increased by 30 percent.

And it's much worse for minorities. While 12 percent of white children live in poverty, 35 percent of Hispanic children and 39% of black children start their lives in conditions that make simple survival more important than the American Dream. Eighty percent of black children who started in or near the top half of U.S. income levels experienced downward mobility later in life.

5. Prison puts away the bad guys.

Despite a falling violent crime rate in the U.S., there are now, as noted by Adam Gopnik, "more people under 'correctional supervision' in America -- more than six million -- than were in the Gulag Archipelago under Stalin at its height."

Almost half of the inmates in federal prisons were jailed for drug offenses. Between 1980 and 2003, the number of drug offenders in prison or jail increased by 1100% from 41,100 in 1980 to 493,800 in 2003. African Americans constituted 53.5 percent of all persons who entered prison because of a drug conviction. In the nation's largest cities, drug arrests for African Americans rose at three times the rate for whites from 1980 to 2003.

In Washington, DC, it is estimated that three out of four young black men will serve time in prison. In New York, with 50,000 marijuana arrests per year, 90% are black or Latino. In Seattle, the 8% black population accounts for 60 percent of the arrests. Over the last 10 years Colorado police have arrested Latinos at 1.5 times the rate of whites, and blacks at over three times the rate of whites. Newly passed marijuana laws reflect the beginnings of a backlash.

Perversely, this is all happening as studies by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration find that both black and Hispanic adolescents use drugs less than the general population. And a study by the National Institute of Health shows that the prevalence of marijuana use in colleges and universities was highest for white students.

The greatest misconception: The rich are being soaked.

Redistribution has not spread the wealth, it has concentrated the wealth. Conservative estimates say the richest 1% have doubled their share of America's income in 30 years. It's worse. From 1980 to 2006, the richest 1% actually tripled their share of after-tax income.

The real problem is tax avoidance: lost revenue from tax expenditures (deferrals and deductions), corporate tax avoidance, and tax haven losses could pay off the entire deficit. But the very rich refuse to pay. They have their own safety net in the House of Representatives.

20121116-01 11:01 Pam Re: "A Few Words for My Republican Friends" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #271)

Did you all see the lame clip of Romney trying to explain that he really does care about the 100%? He doesn't get it, and he never will. And there's Bill O'Reilly and Co. bemoaning the shrinking number of white Americans as compared to immigrants and African Americans. I thought that kind of thinking went out with men wearing spats. The rich really are different from us, and everyone on Fox News is a moron. I just love the list of "giveaways" that Obama presumably used to bribe voters into electing him. Everything on the list is stuff I WANT. So what's the problem? These people have taken selfishness to a whole new level, and you know what they say about pride.

20121116-02 12:48 Ben Fw: Petition: For Austin to Secede from Texas

Make sure you have read this carefully enough...

from Charlie

Please sign this petition to have Austin secede from Texas:

<http://wh.gov/9o7w>.

As of tonite (just now) they have almost 7,500 petitions (need to have 25,000 by Dec 12th) to get the White House to officially respond to the petition:

Austin Texas continues to suffer difficulties stemming from the lack of civil, religious, and political freedoms imposed upon the city by less liberally minded Texans," the petition reads. "It is entirely feasible for Austin to operate as its own state, within the United States, in the event that Texas is successful in the current bid to secede. It is important for Austin to remain in the union as to do so would protect its citizens' standard of living and re-secure their rights and liberties in accordance with the original ideas and beliefs of our founding fathers.

20121116-03 13:36 GaryC Hostess

Hostess is closing its doors. There is a run on all Hostess products at stores. The good news, if you can find them, Twinkies will last for 50 years.

20121116-04 13:39 SteveB Re: Hostess (reply to GaryC, above)

Twinkies lasting 50 years. Haha. I found stale ones a lot, not even expired.

Hostess going out of business??? NO, NO, NO!!!

Why didn't y'all buy more???? Love their products. Always have. Best of kind. (Though it's a weird little chemically kind. Delicious!) Wonder Bread is wonderful!

20121117-03 14:07 SteveB "Petition Wants Obama to Save Twinkies"

"Petition Wants Obama to Save Twinkies" by Byron Tau, Politico

Nov. 16, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/11/petition-wants-obama-to-save-twinkies-149789.html>)



A new White House petition wants President Obama to nationalize the "Twinkie industry," saving the popular junk food from possible extinction.

"We the undersigned, hereby request Barack Obama to immediately Nationalize the Twinkie industry and prevent our nation from losing her sweet creamy center," a petition on the White House "We the People" website requests.

Hostess Brands Inc. — maker of the Twinkie, the Ding Dong and Wonder Bread — is preparing to shutter operations amid a labor strike and rising costs. Unionized workers rejected a major pay and benefit cut, sparking the latest strike.

Labor leaders say the standoff represents "Bain-style" vulture capitalism — a reference to former GOP nominee Mitt Romney's private equity firm.

"What's happening with Hostess Brands is a microcosm of what's wrong with America, as Bain-style Wall Street vultures make themselves rich by making America poor. Crony capitalism and consistently poor management drove Hostess into the ground, but its workers are paying the price," AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka said in a Friday statement.

A full shutdown of the company could result in as many as 18,000 job losses — though it's possible a buyer could be found for some of its dozens of brands.

The White House petition was posted Friday. It needs 25,000 signatures to generate an official White House response.

P.S. Another good reference is this gallery of photos of Hostess products. Yummy!

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/16/hostess-liquidation_n_2146045.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular

20121118-02	09:02	SteveB	"R.I.P., Twinkies"
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"R.I.P., Twinkies" by Daniel Gross, The Daily Beast

Nov. 17, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/11/17/what-really-did-in-america-s-favorite-guilty-pleasure.html>)

(What really did in America's favorite guilty pleasure?)

For anyone who remembers the days before schoolkids ate free-range chicken wraps and kale chips, reading the news Hostess Brands posted on its website Nov. 16 was like watching Howdy Doody get strangled: the 82-year-old company, which makes Wonder Bread, Twinkies, and other triumphs of American food engineering, would shut down immediately and ask a bankruptcy court to let it hold a fire sale on everything it owns.

Hostess CEO Rayburn blamed a labor dispute, but a failure to keep pace with artisanal times helped doom the celebrated snack cakes. (Jonathan Alpeyrie / Polaris)

The proximate cause? The Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union, which represents about 5,000 Hostess Brands workers, wouldn't sign off on the bankrupt company's latest reorganization plan and had gone on strike Nov. 12. Claiming that the company lacked "the financial resources to weather an extended nationwide strike," CEO Gregory F. Rayburn said in a statement that "Hostess Brands will move promptly to lay off most of its 18,500-member workforce and focus on selling its assets to the highest bidders."

At first blush, the brinkmanship over Twinkies—Twinksmanship?—was a case of junk bonds meeting junk food and producing a junky result. The parent company first went into Chapter 11 in 2004, where it stayed for more than four years before emerging under private-equity ownership. Rechristened Hostess Brands, it made a return trip to Chapter 11 in January 2012, laboring under a \$700 million debt load.

The new owners—hedge funds that had purchased the company's debt—brought in Rayburn, who sought to cut employees' wages and reduce pension and 401(k) contributions. In exchange for concessions on work rules, benefits, and compensation, the unions were to receive a 25 percent stake in the company, board representation, and a \$100 million IOU. Several unions, including the Teamsters, signed off. But the bakers held out.

Hostess Brands is a story of what happens when businesses—be they large companies or small firms—focus too much on financial engineering to the detriment of innovation. Hostess, Dolly Madison, Ho Hos, Sno Balls, Twinkies, Wonder Bread—all have a Proustian effect on consumers of a certain age.

But the product line didn't keep up with a change in the zeitgeist. "Now we are in midst of a food revolution focused on local, organic, artisanal, and authentic—the very antithesis of Twinkies," says Marion Nestle, a nutrition expert at New York University.

For many U.S. consumer brands, producing overseas, with local labor and for local tastes, has been a way to change their cost structure, to grow, and to cash in on the rapidly expanding consumer markets of China and India. Yet here again, Hostess was stuck with a 1950s worldview. Even though its products are loaded with preservatives, which means they can endure arduous travel to distant markets, Hostess does very little exporting.

The unwillingness or inability to update its business strategy and products for a changing world was more damaging to Hostess than the brief strike this month. A white-bread manufacturer that focuses solely on the U.S. market in 2012 is a little like a white-bread GOP candidate who focuses only on white voters in 2012.

20121118-05	17:38	Art	"Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay"
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Anybody else note this? And they blame the unions???

"Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" by Annie-Rose Strasser, ThinkProgress

Nov. 16, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/11/16/1203151/why-unions-dont-shoulder-the-blame-for-hostess-downfall/>)

Today, Hostess Brands, Inc. — the company famed for its sickly sweet dessert snacks like Twinkies and Sno Balls — announced they'd be shuttering after more than eighty years of production.

But while headlines have been quick to blame unions for the downfall of the company there's actually more to the story: While the company was filing for bankruptcy, for the second time, earlier this year, it actually tripled its CEO's pay, and increased other executives' compensation by as much as 80 percent.

At the time, creditors warned that the decision signaled an attempt to "sidestep" bankruptcy rules, potentially as a means for trying to keep the executive at a failing company. The Confectionery, Tobacco Workers & Grain Millers International Union pointed this out in their written reaction to the news that the business is closing:

BCTGM members are well aware that as the company was preparing to file for bankruptcy earlier this year, the then CEO of Hostess was awarded a 300 percent raise (from approximately \$750,000 to \$2,550,000) and at least nine other top executives of the company received massive pay raises. One such executive received a pay increase from \$500,000 to \$900,000 and another received one taking his salary from \$375,000 to \$656,256.

Certainly, the company agreed to an out-sized pension debt, but the decision to pay executives more while scorning employee contracts during a bankruptcy reflects a lack of good managerial judgement.

It also follows a trend of rising CEO pay in times of economic difficulty. At the manufacturing company Caterpillar, for example, they froze workers' pay while boosting their CEO's pay to \$17 million. And at Citigroup, CEO Vikram Pandit received \$6.7 million for crashing his company, walking off with \$260 million after the business lost 88 percent of its value.

20121118-08	21:32	SteveG	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Art, above)
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I heard the 300% raise for the CEO, but not the dollar amount or about the others. Did hear that the union gave major concessions during the previous contract negotiations.

20121118-06	20:02	Pam	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Art, above)
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This is obscene and it's going on right in front of our faces. These people have no shame. How on earth do they justify this to themselves? I really thought we were better than this, but, no, we're just the same old greedy, selfish, arrogant people we've always been--going back to the days of the Robber Barons. And they say money doesn't corrupt. We shouldn't have to have laws against this sort of exploitation and greed; people should be more ethical. I've been hearing about how *homo sapiens* annihilated the Neanderthals. Maybe because they were gentler, and we were more rapacious? What good are our big brains if we just use them against each other?

20121118-07	20:14	Art	Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Pam, above)
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It is indeed just all about greed. What is amazing is how the greedy are able to foist it off on someone else. Just amazing.

I continue to be amazed how they Republicans keep trying to make something out of Benghazi. By now they are all focused on what if anything there Administration knew and when. But they warp it in concern for the dead Americans, which they aren't even trying to investigate - because there is nothing there, of course. . What utter hypocrites.

The logical explanation is Romney had one of his Billionaire secret super PAC donors slip a few million to one of the Libyan militias to knock off the Consulate in order to embarrass the President just prior to the election. You may all recall how he cast blame the same evening that the attack occurred. Almost like he already knew. Everyone seems

to have forgotten that now. The fact that the Ambassador was there and got caught up in it was probably coincidental and not part of Romney's original plan.

[20121118-09](#) 21:37 SteveG Re: "Hostess Blames Union for Bankruptcy after Tripling CEO's Pay" (reply to Pam, above)

Ben and Jerry's is one company that maintains an appropriate ratio between the highest paid and the lowest paid staff.

[20121118-10](#) 22:25 SteveG Graphic: Hostess Brands Debt



They really DO do a very nice fried chicken sandwich here.

The week before a vacation is often a slower time at Caffe Macs; as stocks are allowed to run down, the variety diminishes quietly. While Caffe Macs will be open the first three days of next week, it will be with a reduced menu. I am the lone employee holding down our department those first three days, so I may find myself eating out once or twice.

Today, none of the fancy plate lunches socked me 'twixt the eyes, so I fell back on this. Quite delicious, and I felt most virtuous with that huge mound of vegetation alongside. Note that the huge book makes the small salad look smaller than it actually is:



Fried Chicken Sandwich with Small Salad

[Well...I can't see the chicken or the name of the book. What are you reading now? Though it looks thick enough that we should get another shot of it on Monday and the light will be different. Bon appetit! -SteveB]

Sequester, Schmequister. Here are the facts simplified...

"So What the Heck Is That 'Fiscal Cliff' Thing All About, Anyway?" by Linda, MoveOn

Nov. 15, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/so-what-the-heck-is-that-fiscal-cliff-thing-all-about-anyway/>)

If you're following the media story, you might believe the GOP's claims that the world's about to end. But it's all a bunch of political posturing so that they can get what their 1% donors want out of the deal.

That's why we have to spread the truth, so our friends and family don't fall for their shenanigans. We've put together a 5-point guide on what this fiscal showdown is really all about.

5-Point Guide To The Fiscal Showdown

1. The "Fiscal Cliff" Is A Myth. As Paul Krugman put it, "The looming prospect of spending cuts and tax increases isn't a fiscal crisis. It is, instead, a political crisis brought on by the G.O.P.'s attempt to take the economy hostage."¹ Republicans are manufacturing this crisis to pressure Democrats to extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy and accept painful cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

2. The Bush Tax Cuts Finally End December 31. If Congress does nothing, the ax will fall on all the Bush tax cuts on New Year's Eve.² Then, on January 1, the public pressure on John Boehner and House Republicans to extend the middle-class tax cuts (already passed by the Senate and waiting to be signed by President Obama) will become irresistible.³ So the middle-class tax cut will eventually get renewed, and we'll have \$823 billion more revenue from the top 2% to do great things with.⁴

3. The Sequester. The sequester is another political creation, forced on Democrats by Republicans in exchange for lifting the debt ceiling last year to avoid crashing our economy.⁵ It's a set of cuts (50% to a bloated military budget and 50% to important domestic programs) designed to make both Republicans and Democrats hate it so much that they'd never let it happen.⁶ And the cuts can be reversed weeks or months into 2013 without causing damage.

4. The Big Three. Nothing happens to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits on January 1—unless Republicans force painful cuts to beneficiaries in exchange for tax increases on the wealthy, which are going to happen anyway if Congress does NOTHING.⁸ So, there's literally no reason benefits cuts should be part of the discussion right now.

5. We Should Be Talking About Jobs. The real crisis Americans want Congress to fix is getting people back to work. And with just a fraction of that \$823 billion from the wealthiest 2%, we could create jobs for more than 20,000 veterans and pay for the 300,000 teachers and 52,000 first responders, which our communities so desperately need.⁹ That's not to mention jobs from investing in clean energy and our national infrastructure.

Please share this with your friends and family—and talk about it at the dinner table next week. The first step to winning this showdown is making sure we're all armed with the facts.

Sources

¹"Hawks and Hypocrites," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284476>.

²"Bush-Era Tax Cuts," *The New York Times*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284477>.

³"Boehner Is Bluffing," *Slate*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284478>.

⁴"CBO: Ending High-Income Tax Cuts Would Save Almost \$1 Trillion," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 24, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284479>.

⁵"The sequester, explained," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284480>.

⁶Ibid.

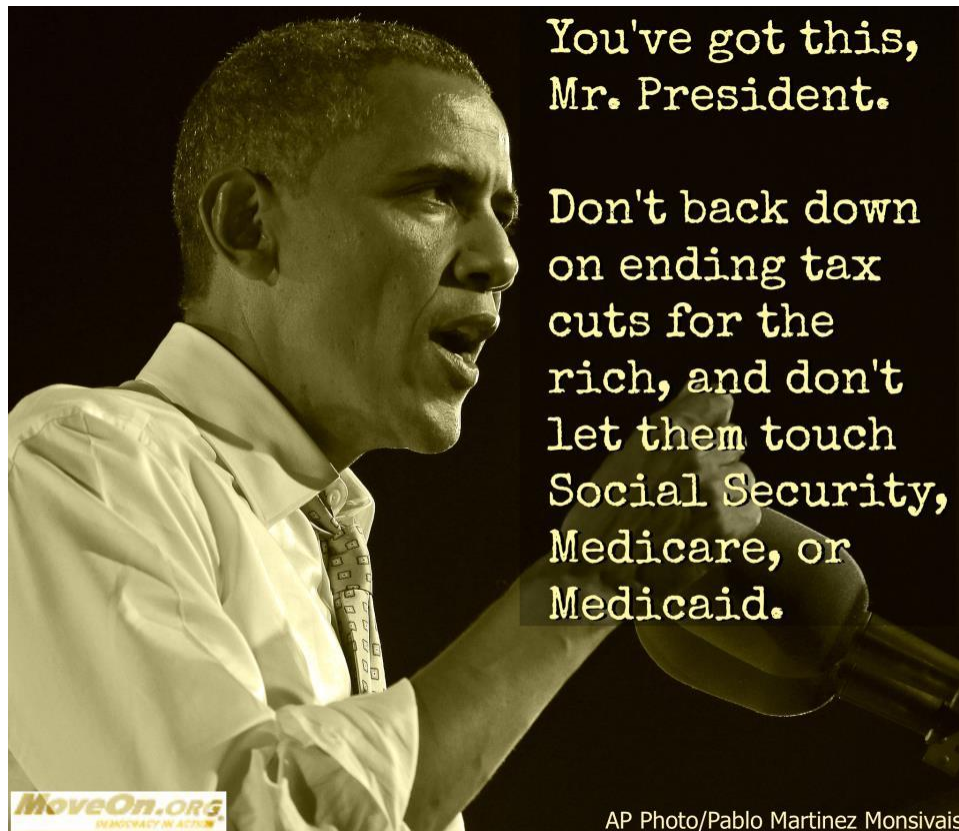
⁷"Let's Not Make a Deal," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284484>.

⁸"How the Across-the-Board Cuts in the Budget Control Act Will Work," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 27, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284489>.

⁹"Veterans' Jobs Bill Blocked in the Senate," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=284488>.

"Jan Schakowsky Announces new Budget Plan with Focus on Jobs," The Huffington Post, August 10, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=263135>.

"Fact Sheet: The American Jobs Act," The White House, September 8, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=264021>.



20121117-02	10:55	Art	Re: "So What the Heck Is That 'Fiscal Cliff' Thing All About, Anyway?" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Good summary. I know some want to get excited over what I am not quite sure about the Benghazi attack but that's history, and seems to me there are more pressing items for the future.

20121117-01	07:45	MarthaH	"No, It's Not Christians' Fault Obama Won"
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For the record:

"No, It's Not Christians' Fault Obama Won" by Domenico Montanaro, NBC News

Nov. 16, 2012, (<http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/16/15219396-no-its-not-christians-fault-obama-won?lite>)

The outspoken Rev. Franklin Graham claimed today that the "majority of Christians" did not vote.

"We know that from the statistics that I've heard that the majority of Christians in this country just did not vote for whatever reason," he told the Christian Broadcasting Network's David Brody. "The vast majority of evangelicals did not go to the polls." He added, "God is in control, and if Christians are upset, they need to be upset at themselves. We need to do a better job of getting our people- the church to vote. Now, I'm not trying to tell you how to vote, you can vote, but vote, my goodness, and vote for candidates that stand for Biblical values."

But Graham's assertion -- and implication that had white Christian evangelicals just showed up in bigger numbers, President Obama would have lost -- is off base.

In fact, white evangelicals/born-again Christians made up the same percentage of the electorate as they did in 2008 -- 26%. They voted for Mitt Romney, a devout Mormon, by a wider margin than they did for Sen. John McCain four years ago.

And, they made up a larger share of the electorate in 2012 than in 2004, when the Christian Right supposedly fueled George W. Bush's reelection. They also voted for Romney with the exact same margin as for Bush in 2004, 78%-21%.

Not to mention, Obama won the 48 percent of the electorate that was Christian and not Protestant or Mormon -- 50%-48% among Catholics (25% of the electorate) and 50%-49% of "Other Christians" (23% of the electorate). In Ohio, they were 1 point more of the electorate than 2008; in Colorado, 4 points higher; in Iowa, up 7 points; in Nevada, up 2.

White evangelical voters in select swing states:

- CO: 25%, 76-22 Romney; 2008: 21%, 76-23 McCain
- FL: 24%, 79-21 Romney; 2008: 24%, 77-21 McCain
- IA: 38%, 64-35 Romney; 2008: 31%, 65-33 McCain
- NV: 18%, 69-28 Romney; 2008: 16%, 72-27 McCain
- OH: 31%, 69-30 Romney; 2008: 30%, 71-27 McCain

They did decline as a share of the electorate in North Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin. But the drops in states like North Carolina (Graham's home state) and Virginia likely have less to do with apathy and more to do with demographic changes -- transplants in North Carolina's Research Triangle and growth in the Washington, D.C., suburbs of Northern Virginia, for example.

The fact is, Virginia and North Carolina are looking less and less like the Old South and more and more like Mid-Atlantic states.

White evangelical voters in the South (where exit polls are available):

- MS: 50%, 95-5 Romney; 2008: 46%, 94-6 McCain
- AL: 47% , 90-10 Romney; 2008: 47%, 92-8 McCain
- NC: 35%, 79-20 Romney; 2008: 44%, 74-25 McCain
- VA: 23%, 83-17 Romney; 2008: 28%, 79-20 McCain

Are there Christian evangelicals who did not vote? Certainly. But that's true every year and of every demographic group.

Evangelicals make up 26 percent of adults in the country, according to a major 2008 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey. They matched that this election.

The U.S. Census says there are more than 311 million people in the United States. If evangelical adults are 26 percent of them, then there would be 80 million potential voters.

So far, 123 million votes have been counted in this election – and that number will get higher by the millions as votes continue to be counted like in 2008. Evangelicals made up 26 percent of them, therefore, about 32 million evangelicals voted – less than half of their population.

But there's a need for context here: (1) They make up just 14 percent of the registered-voter base in the NBC/Wall Street Journal poll. They outpaced that percentage in the presidential election, (2) This is true of every other demographic group in the country as well.

Latinos, for example, according to the U.S. Census, are nearly 17 percent of the country, but only made up 10 percent of the 2012 electorate. They make up just 8 to 9 percent of the registered-voter base of the NBC/WSJ poll.

That would mean just 12 million of the 52 million adult Hispanics voted.

If this was Australia, and the U.S. had compulsory voting, Graham's argument that evangelicals would have tipped the balance would not hold up very well.

20121118-01 07:50 MarthaH "Low Mississippi River Water Levels May Halt Barges"

Having crossed the Miss..iss..i..ppi on stepping stones at Lake Itasca, MN, (ALL should!) and having seen her further down, this article and our conditions last summer ring many bells.

"Low Mississippi River Water Levels May Halt Barges" by Jim Salter and Jim Suhr, AP/ABC News

Nov. 17, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/low-mississippi-river-water-levels-halt-barges-17747643#.UKoL5od9Iih>)

(ST. LOUIS) The gentle whirl of passing barges is as much a part of life in St. Louis as the Gateway Arch and the Cardinals, a constant, almost soothing backdrop to a community intricately intertwined with the Mississippi River.

But next month, those barges packing such necessities as coal, farm products and petroleum could instead be parked along the river's banks. The stubborn drought that has gripped the Midwest for much of the year has left the Mighty Mississippi critically low — and it will get even lower if the Army Corps of Engineers presses ahead with plans to reduce the flow from a Missouri River dam.

Mississippi River interests fear the reduced flow will force a halt to barge traffic at the river's midpoint. They warn the economic fallout will be enormous, potentially forcing job cuts, raising fuel costs and pinching the nation's food supply.

"This could be a major, major impact at crisis level," said Debra Colbert, senior vice president of the Waterways Council, a public policy organization representing ports and shipping companies. "It is an economic crisis that is going to ripple across the nation at a time when we're trying to focus on recovery."

At issue is a plan by the corps to significantly reduce the amount of water released from the Gavins Point Dam near Yankton, S.D., a move to conserve water in the upper Missouri River basin also stung by the drought. The outflow, currently at 36,500 cubic feet per second, is expected to be cut to 12,000 cubic feet per second over several days, starting Friday.

The Missouri flows gently into the Mississippi around a bend just north of St. Louis. From there, about 60 percent of the Mississippi River water typically comes from the Missouri. This year, because of the drought, the Mississippi is even more reliant on Missouri River water — 78 percent of the Mississippi River at St. Louis is water that originated from the Missouri.

The Mississippi is so low there now that if it drops another 5 feet, barge traffic may shut down from St. Louis to the confluence of the Ohio River at Cairo, Ill., perhaps as soon as early December. Barges already are required to carry lighter loads.

Major Gen. John Peabody, commander of the Mississippi Valley Division of the corps, said the reduced Missouri River flow will remove 2-3 feet of depth of the Mississippi at St. Louis. To help offset that, he has authorized an emergency release of water from an upper Mississippi River reservoir in Minnesota. But that will add just 3-6 inches of depth at St. Louis.

Corps officials responsible for the Missouri River say they have no choice but to reduce the flow. A congressionally-authorized document known as the Missouri River Master Manual, completed about a decade ago, requires the corps to protect interests of the Missouri River. What happens on the Mississippi as a result is incidental.

"We don't believe we have the authority to operate for the Mississippi River," said Jody Farhat, chief of the Water Management Division for the corps' Northwest Division.

Farhat said the drought is taking a toll on the upper Missouri River basin. Recreation is being hurt because the water is so shallow, she said. Indian artifacts normally under water are being exposed, making them prone to looters. And if the drought persists into next year as expected, hydropower could be impacted.

As a result, she said, water behind the reservoirs must be conserved rather than released.

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri have all expressed concerns about the plan to cut the flow. An editorial Friday in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch urged Congress to come up with a management plan for the entire ecosystem, not just the Missouri River.

"Until Congress gives a higher priority to the nation's great rivers, and acts as a referee among competing interests, all of us will pay," the editorial read.

The stakes are especially high in St. Louis. The region is home to several barge companies, two of the nation's largest coal companies and countless other businesses that use the Mississippi to move their products both for domestic and international use.

Knight Hawk Coal Co. of the St. Louis-area town of Percy, Ill., uses the river to ship 80 percent of the 4.5 million tons of the black ore it bores out of southern Illinois mines each year. Closure of the river could force the company to consider something it's never done — part with some of its 400 employees.

"If they were to close the river for any significant period, I think we would have to be in a position where we'd have to look at layoffs," said Andrew Carter, a company vice president. "... Level heads need to prevail, and this river needs to stay open."

Commerce on the river always has been subject to nature's whims — ice and floods, in addition to drought, can stop river traffic.

Locks and dams built along the upper Mississippi River starting in the 1930s have helped balance the ups and downs of the waterway. Also, the corps spends months each year dredging the river bottom, adding depth so barges don't scrape. Dredging in the middle-Mississippi began a month early, in July, because of the drought, said Mike Petersen of the corps office in St. Louis.

The corps also plans to use explosives to remove two rock formations on the river bottom in southern Illinois that can impede barges during low-water periods, though that work isn't expected to start until February.

Trade groups for river interests are asking Barack Obama's administration for a presidential declaration that would force the corps to maintain the existing Missouri River flow and expedite removal of the rock formations.

Without a presidential declaration, Farhat said there's little the corps can do given the congressional mandate to work on behalf of the Missouri River basin.

"Basically we have a manual and we're required to follow it," Farhat said. "And there's nothing in that manual that talks about providing support to the Mississippi River."

20121118-03 09:14 SteveB "Petraeus Scandal Puts Four-Star General Lifestyle under Scrutiny"

"Petraeus Scandal Puts Four-Star General Lifestyle under Scrutiny" by Rajiv Chandrasekaran and Greg Jaffe, *The Washington Post*

Nov 17, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/petraeus-scandal-puts-four-star-general-lifestyle-under-scrutiny/2012/11/17/33a14f48-3043-11e2-a30e-5ca76eeec857_story.html)



Then-defense secretary Robert M. Gates stopped bagging his leaves when he moved into a small Washington military enclave in 2007. His next-door neighbor was Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, who had a chef, a personal valet and — not lost on Gates — troops to tend his property.

Gates may have been the civilian leader of the world's largest military, but his position did not come with household staff. So, he often joked, he disposed of his leaves by blowing them onto the chairman's lawn.

"I was often jealous because he had four enlisted people helping him all the time," Gates said in response to a question after a speech Thursday. He wryly complained to his wife that "Mullen's got guys over there who are fixing meals for him, and I'm shoving something into the microwave. And I'm his boss."

Of the many facts that have come to light in the scandal involving former CIA director David H. Petraeus, among the most curious was that during his days as a four-star general, he was once escorted by 28 police motorcycles as he traveled from his Central Command headquarters in Tampa to socialite Jill Kelley's mansion. Although most of his trips did not involve a presidential-size convoy, the scandal has prompted new scrutiny of the imperial trappings that come with a senior general's lifestyle.

The commanders who lead the nation's military services and those who oversee troops around the world enjoy an array of perquisites befitting a billionaire, including executive jets, palatial homes, drivers, security guards and aides

to carry their bags, press their uniforms and track their schedules in 10-minute increments. Their food is prepared by gourmet chefs. If they want music with their dinner parties, their staff can summon a string quartet or a choir.

The elite regional commanders who preside over large swaths of the planet don't have to settle for Gulfstream V jets. They each have a C-40, the military equivalent of a Boeing 737, some of which are configured with beds.

Since Petraeus's resignation, many have strained to understand how such a celebrated general could have behaved so badly. Some have speculated that an exhausting decade of war impaired his judgment. Others wondered if Petraeus was never the Boy Scout he appeared to be. But Gates, who still possesses a modest Kansan's bemusement at Washington excess, has floated another theory.

"There is something about a sense of entitlement and of having great power that skews people's judgment," Gates said last week.

Among the Army's general officer corps, however, there is little support for Gates's hypothesis. "I love the man. I am his biggest supporter. But I strongly disagree," said retired Gen. Peter Chiarelli, who served as Gates's senior military assistant. "I find it concerning that he and others are not focusing on the effect on our guys of fighting wars for 11 years. No one was at it longer than Petraeus."

Other veteran commanders concurred with Gates. David Barno, a retired three-star general who commanded U.S. troops in Afghanistan, warned in an interview that the environment in which the top brass lives has the potential "to become corrosive over time upon how they live their life."

"You can become completely disconnected from the way people live in the regular world — and even from the modest lifestyle of others in the military," Barno said. "When that happens, it's not necessarily healthy either for the military or the country."

Although American generals have long enjoyed many perks — in World War II and in Vietnam, some dined on china set atop linen tablecloths — the amenities afforded to today's military leaders are more lavish than anyone else in government enjoys, save for the president.

The benefits have not generated much attention among a public that has long revered its generals as protectors of the nation and moral beacons. And no general has been revered more than Petraeus, a fact that Mullen remarked upon at his retirement ceremony.

He joked that a woman approached him at a dinner party, eyed his medals and asked him if he was somebody important. "I'm the president's top military adviser," he replied.

"Oh my goodness, General Petraeus," the woman said to Mullen. "I'm so sorry. I just didn't recognize you."

Petraeus cultivated his fame by grasping, before most of his comrades, how the narrative of modern warfare is shaped not just on the battlefield but among the chattering class back home. He invited book authors to accompany him, granted frequent interviews to journalists, fostered close relationships with Washington think tanks and embraced political leaders on both sides of the aisle. When President George W. Bush needed a savior for the foundering war in Iraq, he turned to Petraeus, making him the frontman for the troop surge in Baghdad. In the first six months of 2007, Bush mentioned Petraeus's name 150 times in speeches.

Petraeus did not disappoint. Violence dropped in Iraq after he became the top commander there. He returned home as a celebrity. In 2009, he was asked to flip the coin at the Super Bowl.

He became an A-list guest at Washington parties. His stardom, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a collective guilt among civilians disconnected from the conflicts all helped to raise the profile for his fellow generals. It wasn't just Jill Kelley, the Tampa woman who cultivated close relationships with him and other generals, including Gen. John R. Allen, the top commander in Afghanistan, by throwing lavish parties at her million-dollar house. Hostesses around the nation delighted at the presence of commanders in full-dress uniforms at social events.

The adulation fit their lifestyle.

“Being a four-star commander in a combat theater is like being a combination of Bill Gates and Jay-Z — with enormous firepower added,” said Thomas E. Ricks, the author of “The Generals,” a recently published history of American commanders since World War II.

Many of the gatherings have been genuinely altruistic; community and business leaders have pitched in to help raise money to support wounded troops and military families. But others, it seems, hoped a general or two sprinkled among canape-munching guests would bring elevated social status.

In some cases, the generals, who have spent much of their professional lives in cloistered military bubbles, have not employed the best judgment in cultivating relationships with those who enjoy the sparkle of stars on the shoulder. Allen exchanged hundreds — perhaps even thousands — of e-mails with Kelley over the past four years, a fact discovered in the FBI investigation into harassing messages sent by Petraeus’s former mistress and biographer, Paula Broadwell, to Kelley. The Defense Department is now investigating the messages Allen and Kelley exchanged.

Some retired generals have defended the benefits accorded to their active-duty brethren, noting that many of them work 18-hour days, six to seven days a week. They manage budgets that dwarf those of large multinational companies and are responsible for the lives of thousands of young men and women under their command.

Compared with today’s plutocrats, their pay is modest. In 2013, the base salary for a four-star general with at least 38 years of service will be almost \$235,000, although federal personnel regulations limit their take-home pay to \$179,700. Unlike top civilians in government, top generals also receive free housing and subsidies for food and uniforms. And when they retire, those who have served at least 40 years get an annual pension that is slightly more than active-duty base pay — this year it is \$236,650.

Several generals noted that perks, such as planes, cars and staff aides, are constrained by hundreds of pages of rules designed to ensure that they are used only for government business.

But the frantic search for cuts to reduce the growth of government debt could soon put some of the four-star benefits at risk. When he was at the Pentagon, Gates wanted to trim some of the perks but ran into resistance. It was, he said, the “third rail” of the Defense Department.

“You don’t need a cadre of people at your beck and call in an age of austerity, unless you are a field commander in Iraq or Afghanistan,” a former top aide to Gates said on the condition of anonymity.

The travel practices of two theater commanders, which prompted Pentagon investigations this year, may further jeopardize the perks.

When he was former head of the U.S. Africa Command, Army Gen. William “Kip” Ward spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars for private travel, including using military vehicles to shuttle his wife on shopping trips and to a spa, according to a report by the Defense Department’s inspector general. The report detailed lengthy stays at lavish hotels for Ward, his wife and his staff members — he billed the government for a refueling stop overnight in Bermuda, where the couple stayed in a \$750 suite — and the use of five-vehicle motorcades when he traveled in Washington. The report also said Ward often took longer-than-necessary business trips to the United States, resulting in “exponential” increases in costs.

The current top U.S. commander in Europe, Adm. James Stavridis, also came under the scrutiny of the inspector general for using a military jet to fly to the Burgundy region of France for a dinner organized by an international society of wine enthusiasts. Stavridis defended the trip as an opportunity to meet with French military and business leaders.

He was cleared of wrongdoing by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus this month. Ward, however, was not so fortunate. Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta announced last week that Ward would be demoted and forced to retire at a three-star rank. He also will have to repay the government \$82,000, but he still will receive a \$208,000-a-year pension.

Peter Feaver, a National Security Council official in the Bush administration, defended the generals' need for perks and large staffs, noting that when they entertain foreign dignitaries they are bound by military standards of pageantry and protocol that don't exist in the State Department.

"The military is trapped in an older cultural time warp," Feaver said.

But he worried that the recent high-profile excesses could chip away at the military's credibility. There's a sentiment among the ranks that generals are out of touch, he said.

"This provides fuel for that kind of critique," he said. "It can do damage to the institution."

20121118-04	13:30	SteveB	"Driving America's 85 MPH Toll Road before the Fun Gets Old"
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"Driving America's 85 MPH Toll Road before the Fun Gets Old" by Neal Pollack, Motoramic/Yahoo News

Nov. 14, 2012, (<http://autos.yahoo.com/blogs/motoramic/driving-texas-130-america-fastest-road-fun-gets-002957225.html>)

I went for a little drive the other day. A new section of Texas Tollway 130 had opened two weeks previous to more national attention than regional road ribbon-cuttings usually get. That's because the speed limit on this new road, which runs from Mustang Ridge, a nothing town southeast of Austin to Seguin, a slightly larger nothing town southeast of San Antonio, was to be 85 mph, the highest in North America. The other half of the road, heading north from Mustang Ride up to Waco, already has a speed limit of 80, but that wasn't enough. South Central Texas needed a drag strip, and I needed to run it, especially because after Nov. 11, it would no longer be free.

I wanted my first time to be special. The cars showing up in my driveway didn't suit: The Kia Soul, while peppy enough at 60 mph, threatened to blow apart as you neared 90, and that Mitsubishi crossover was about as fun as a can of Chunky soup. My daily drive, the 2010 Toyota Prius, could have handled the challenge — after all, Al Gore's son once got pulled over in Malibu doing 100-plus in an older model — but that still didn't make it the ideal choice. NASA once popped a monkey into space, too. I wanted a rocket built for humans.

Then it appeared in all its big-shouldered, "Radiant Silver Metallic" glory, a 2013 Cadillac ATS, with a 3.6 liter, 321-hp V-6 engine, barely more than 1,000 miles on the odometer, and "light platinum" leather seats emitting enough off-gassing to kill a canary. This was an American-made sports sedan, built for speed. The next morning, I waited until rush hour ended, strapped myself in, and launched.

Because I knew what was coming, the 20-plus miles on US 183 south to get to Mustang Ridge seemed pedestrian, even with its speed limit of 70 mph. I tapped the gas, not too heavily, just to see how quickly the ATS got to 85. It got there very quickly indeed, but I couldn't stay legally, so I backed off and waited. As the signs for the TX 130 turnoff began to appear, my palms dampened and my stomach fluttered. I felt like Chuck Yeager in The Right Stuff, even though I wasn't anywhere close. I know Germans who drive this fast every day before breakfast.

It grew closer: a mile and a half, a half mile, a quarter mile. I eased into the left lane, put on the turn signal, jacked the transmission into six-speed paddle shift mode, and hit the on ramp going forty. And then I was on the magic highway, doing 65, 70, 75, 80. When I saw the first sign that read "Speed Limit 85," I gave the pedal that little extra nudge and broke into the blue.

The ATS purred gratefully and smoothly, glad to be meeting the challenge for which it was engineered. It felt glorious to be going that fast, without fear of punishment. Naturally, I tested the limits. Wouldn't you? I went 90. And then I went 95. After that, 97 seemed natural. And so did driving 100. Even 110 wasn't out of the question, but when I reached that, I thought about the ticket I'd get if I got caught, not to mention the near-certain death I'd face if I crashed, so I eased back to a leisurely, and almost-legal, 88 mph.

South Central Texas will soon be one long urban megalopolis to rival southern California

But I wasn't going to get caught speeding, or at least probably not, because the road was almost empty, save the occasional truck or boxy, lonely Honda Element shuttling from one nowhere Texas town to another. The road opened before me, brand-new, briefly toll-free, and beautiful, sloping gently up and down, inviting with fresh temptations. Drive me as fast as you want, it seemed to say. I don't mind.

As the exits blurred past, I had plenty of time and space to take in my surroundings. The highway was so new that it contained not one single commercial building. A few mowing crews popped up here and there, and I saw a couple of guys landscaping slope. Other than that, there was nothing to see but trees and fields and open sky. It felt like what highway driving had been meant to be all along, before it became a passionless, endless battle with snack-chip trucks and bloated outlet mall patrons. I hadn't seen a billboard in more than 20 minutes. This was freedom.

I ran that highway in less than half an hour, got off at Seguin, bought a 20-ounce Cherry Coke Zero, and turned around. On the return trip, the 130 showed signs of a dark future. First of all, it was lunchtime, and therefore more crowded. It's one thing to drive 85 and higher when you're the only car on the road, but quite another when you're competing with other drivers who understand lane discipline about as well as they do theoretical physics.

This strip, I realized, would soon lose its innocence. The state of Texas didn't build it as a go-cart track for gas-hogging Caddys. Austin and San Antonio are both booming, and the I-35 corridor connecting them shudders under the weight of extreme population growth. They built the 130 to ease the traffic pressure. It probably will, a bit, but it's also an open invitation to developers. That's some pretty country right there along the San Marcos River. The day is coming when South Central Texas will be one long urban megalopolis to rival southern California. At one end sits a sign that points visitors to the new Circuit Of the Americas race track, and at the other, the entrance to Interstate 10. TX 130, the fastest road in the U.S.A., heralds a kind of lost innocence.

It's also, despite what the quasi-libertarian speed hogs who run this state claim, kind of a death trap. At one point, when I stopped to take pictures along the shoulder, a Corolla full of college kids raced past going way above the substantial speed limit, switching lanes constantly and for no reason, looking like a bee in flight. Some Austin troubadour with better songwriting skills than me is going to write a tribute to living fast and dying young on this road.

There've already been quite a few accidents, four on opening night, in fact, including one car completely totaled. That's because Texas built the 130 in prime feral hog territory. This forced them to put up large digital signs, at 10-mile intervals, reading "WILDLIFE CROSSING." That's all fine and good, but the problem is that wildlife can't read. Just outside Lockhart, I had to swerve fast and violently to avoid a freshly eviscerated coyote carcass. This is going to be a disgusting massacre without end.

How deeply ironic, then, that I pulled off TX 130 on my way home to take a five-minute jog into Lockhart, the barbecue capital of America, and bought a two-pound slab of pork ribs at Smitty's to bring home. What was once a half-day family trip has suddenly become an errand far less time-consuming than a visit to IKEA.

After unhitching the magnificent ATS from its oat bag in the parking lot, I got back in to finish the job on TX 130, the car smelling like deliciously un-feral pork. At the end of the road, a McDonald's loomed, signaling the end of this too-brief visit to Autopia. I transitioned back onto the 183, still going at least 80, and had to brake too suddenly when I barely noticed a low-lying bank of stoplights.

It was time to drive in the slow lane for a while.



<http://writing.upenn.edu/projects/mississippi.php>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #273 — NOV. 20, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Mistress Is a Mentee

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 20, 2012)

Ya, he was "All In" alright! Warning: irony ahead (and behind)!

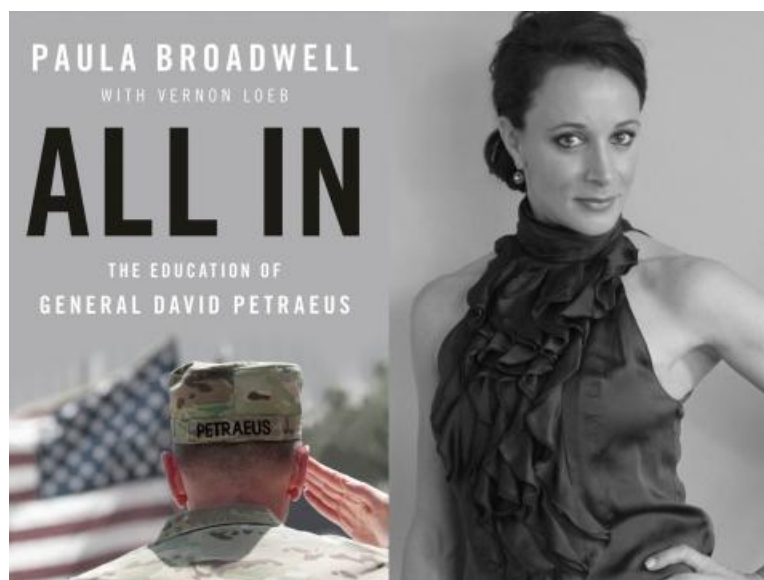
"General David Petraeus's Rules for Living" by Paula Broadwell, The Daily Beast

Nov. 5, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/11/04/general-david-petraeus-s-rules-for-living.html>)



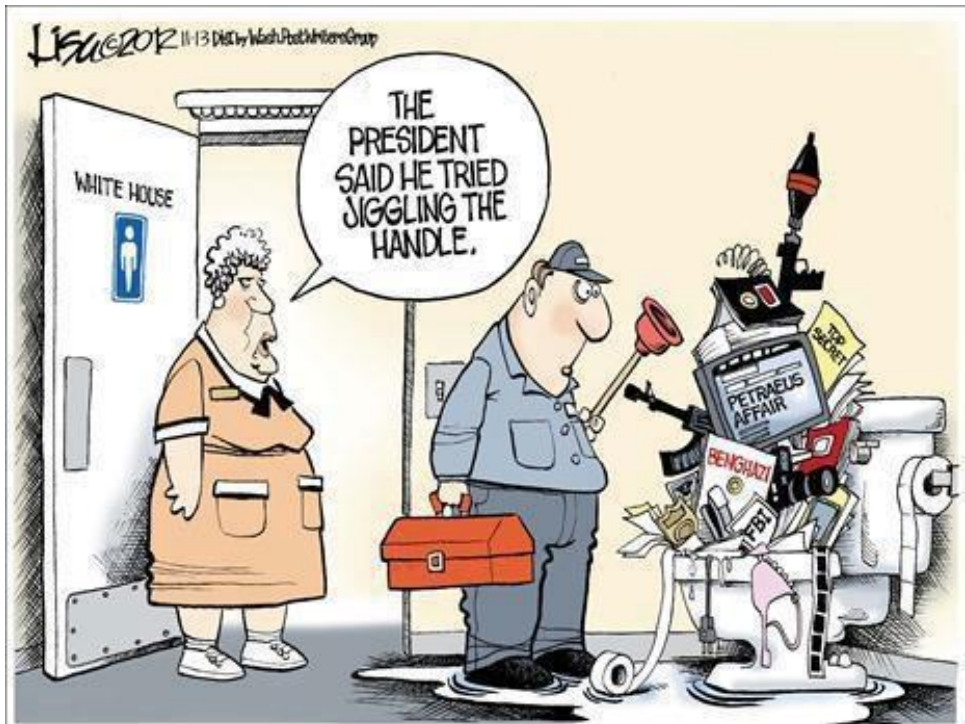
(Lessons on leadership from General David Petraeus.)

1. Lead by example from the front of the formation. Take your performance personally—if you are proud to be average, so too will be your troops.
2. A leader must provide a vision—clear and achievable “big ideas” combined in a strategic concept—and communicate those ideas throughout the entire organization and to all other stakeholders.
3. A leader needs to give energy; don’t be an oxygen thief.
4. There is an exception to every rule, standard operating procedure, and policy; it is up to leaders to determine when exceptions should be made and to explain why they made them.
5. We all will make mistakes. The key is to recognize them and admit them, to learn from them, and to take off the rear-view mirrors—drive on and avoid making them again.
6. Be humble. The people you’ll be leading already have on-the-ground conflict experience. “Listen and learn.”
7. Be a team player. “Your team’s triumphs and failures will, obviously, be yours.” Take ownership of both.
8. Don’t rely on rank. If you rely on rank, rather than on the persuasiveness of your logic, the problem could be you and either your thinking or your communication skills. Likewise, sometimes the best ideas come from bottom-up information sharing (i.e., “Need to share” not “Need to know”). Use “directed telescopes” to improve situational awareness.
9. Leaders should be thoughtful but decisive. Listen to subordinates’ input, evaluate courses of action and second- and third-order effects, but be OK with an “80 per-cent solution.” “There will be many moments when all eyes turn to you for a decision. Be prepared for them. Don’t shrink from them. Embrace them.” Sometimes the best move is the bold move.
10. Stay fit to fight. Your body is your ultimate weapons system. Physical fitness for your body is essential for mental fitness.
11. The only thing better than a little competition is a lot of competition. Set challenges for your subordinates to encourage them to excel.
12. Everyone on the team is mission critical. Instill in your team members a sense of great self-worth—that each, at any given time, can be the most important on the battlefield.



Video: "Call Me Maybe - Troops vs. Cheerleaders" (<http://www.military.com/video/forces/humor/call-me-maybe-troops-vs-cheerleaders/1964153798001/>)

You really got to give these guys credit, watch how the troops match the cheerleaders move for move!



*"Journalism is printing what
someone else does not
want printed.*

*Everything else is
public relations."*

-George Orwell

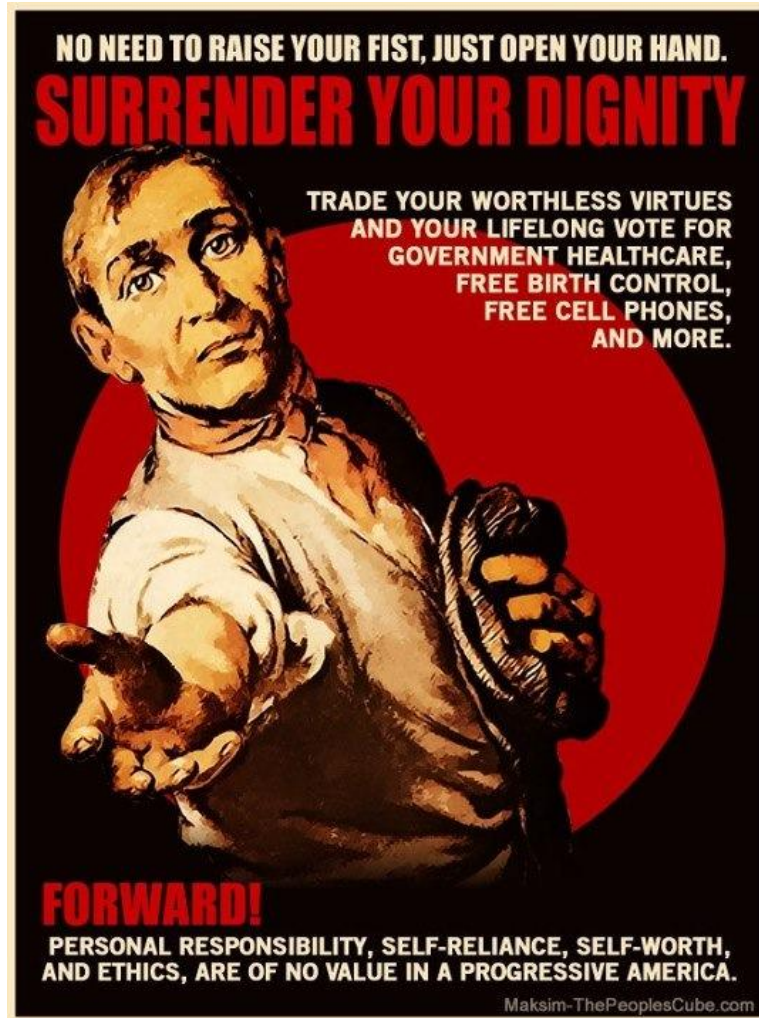
*Thank you **mainstream media**
for 4 years of **"public relations."***

(Public Relations courtesy of Edward Bernays)

20121119-05

04:30 Tom

Graphic: "Personal Responsibility, Self-Reliance, Self-Worth & Ethics Are of No Value in a Progressive America"



20121119-06

05:28 Tom

"Veterans Killed in Texas Train Crash Survived Gunshots, IEDs, Grenades in Iraq, Afghanistan"

This is some tragic story...

"Veterans Killed in Texas Train Crash Survived Gunshots, IEDs, Grenades in Iraq, Afghanistan" by AP

Nov. 17, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/veterans-killed-in-texas-train-crash-survived-gunshots-ieds-grenades-in-iraq-afghanistan/2012/11/17/468c2532-308f-11e2-af17-67abba0676e2_story.html)

The four veterans killed when a freight train barreled into the parade float they were riding on were decorated military men who served on the front lines multiple times in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They survived gunshots, explosions and grenade attacks that left some with brain injuries that slurred their speech and made it difficult to walk.



This combination of undated family photos provided by the Show of Support, Hunt for Heroes committee show, from left: Sgt. Maj. Gary Stouffer, 37; Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Boivin, 47; Army Sgt. Joshua Michael, 34, and Sgt. Maj. William Lubbers, 43, four veterans killed when a parade float they were riding on was struck by a freight train at a crossing Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012, in Midland, Texas.

One had a wife back home battling cancer while he fought through a brain injury in Iraq after an improved explosive device hit his truck.

Another was starting a new career with a defense contractor after more than two decades of military service.

They were husbands and fathers. Soldiers and a Marine. And they made sacrifices for those they loved, including at least one who died after pushing his wife to safety.

The men had traveled to Midland, Texas, from all over the country for a hunting trip organized to honor their service and to spend a weekend with those who would understand them best — their fellow veterans.

Here's a look at them, compiled from interviews with friends and family, along with autobiographies they wrote for the website of Show of Support, the group that organized the parade and hunting trip.

[Continue reading at *The Washington Post*...](#)

20121119-07	11:04	SteveG	"Hard Questions, Tough Answers with Yossi Alpher: The War in Gaza"
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"Hard Questions, Tough Answers with Yossi Alpher: The War in Gaza" by Americans for Peace Now

Nov. 19, 2012,

http://www.peacenow.org/entries/special_edition_hard_questions_tough_answers_with_yossi_alpher_-_november_19_2012#.UKqf24d9Iig

In a Special Edition of "Hard Questions, Tough Answers", Yossi Alpher tackles why Israel chose the current timing to respond with a major military campaign to rocket attacks from Gaza; why Hamas does not take into consideration that Israel has a much stronger military capacity; whether Egypt and the international community are working for a ceasefire; what positions Israel and Hamas are presenting to all these mediators regarding ceasefire conditions and if these demands are achievable; whether Hamas military leader Ahmed Jaabari should have been targeted in Israel's opening salvo; how this operation is different in objectives and its operational profile from the Second Lebanon War in summer 2006 and Cast Lead in 2008-9; whether Hezbollah and Syria are connected to the

current Gaza war; does he feel pessimistic about the long-term effect of anything Israel does against Hamas; and where do Israelis seem to feel this is going?

Readers are also referred to two op-eds by Yossi Alpher published since the war began and available at the following links:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/14/strategic-dimensions-of-attacking-gaza.html>.

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/global/index.html>.

Q: Why did Israel choose the current timing to respond with a major military campaign to rocket attacks from Gaza? Had there been a significant increase in those attacks?

A: In recent months Hamas, after long abdicating the rocket firing to Islamic Jihad and various Salafists, again took the lead in attacking Israel. Not just by rockets, but also through attacks on and through the green line fence into Israel. Some 800 rockets were fired at Israel during 2012 prior to the Israeli response. Repeated Israeli warnings and threats directed toward Hamas were ignored. That's why this campaign is directed specifically at Hamas and its military leadership.

The timing of Israel's response probably also has something to do with Israeli elections, though no government minister will acknowledge this. The situation in southern Israel was becoming unbearable for one million people, and both Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak undoubtedly saw this as a political liability with elections near. Nor could they postpone this until too close to elections, lest that too become a liability.

Another rationale for the timing could be to place the PLO initiative for United Nations General Assembly recognition, scheduled for Nov. 29, in a different perspective. PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) is asking the UN for recognition of a state that includes Gaza, yet he obviously does not control Gaza. Gaza is a warlike quasi-state attacking Israeli civilians--the very opposite of the Palestinian Authority under Abbas.

Q: But if Hamas is launching or consenting to the attacks on Israel, why does it not take into consideration that Israel has a much stronger military capacity? Even with new varieties of rockets, Hamas will never match Israel's capacity to wreak destruction on the Gaza quasi-state.

A: Of course Hamas knows Israel is stronger. But it also knows that Israel won't take the one measure that would close Hamas down once and for all: re-conquering the Gaza Strip, thereby angering the entire world and placing nearly two million civilians under direct Israeli rule. Hamas also likes to play the underdog--guerilla or "resistance" style. It has tens of thousands of cheap rockets to attack the Israeli civilian population. And its fighters ostensibly do not fear martyrdom.

But most of all, Hamas feels empowered to challenge Israel by the tacit support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Hamas--the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood--sees itself, not without reason, as the vanguard of the rise to power of the Brotherhood in the Arab Middle East by democratic vote. Hamas won its vote in early 2006, then took over Gaza by force in mid-2007. Hamas expects its fellow Brothers, led by Egypt, to support it as it fights "their" war. It has been trying for months to persuade Egypt to recognize Gaza as an independent or quasi-independent Palestinian state and to shower economic and military aid on it. But Egypt--even Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood--is wary of taking on Gaza as a protectorate and, in effect, releasing Israel of its "responsibilities" toward the Palestinians.

In this sense, this little war is very much about Egypt. Israel and the United States are testing whether Egypt under the Brotherhood will behave responsibly and opt for peace and quiet by demanding of Hamas a ceasefire, so the Egyptian leadership can set about collecting the billions of dollars it needs to keep Egypt afloat economically. Hamas is testing to what extent Egypt will back it up with threats against Israel, possibly even by radically downgrading relations with Israel. On Saturday, Egyptian PM Kandil led a delegation into Gaza, where he offered lavish verbal support but promised only medical supplies. He apparently also began discussing a ceasefire.

Q: Indeed, aren't Egypt and the international community working for a ceasefire?

A: The Egyptians, Turks, Qataris and Hamas met on Cairo in Sunday precisely toward this end. According to some reports, a senior Israeli official was also there. All four of these Muslim actors, it should be noted, represent the vanguard of political Islam in the Middle East. The Turks and Qataris aren't Muslim Brothers but are close to the movement, with the Turks casting themselves as a role model for Arab regimes and Qatar using its purse-strings to play an independent role that has lately included a royal visit to Gaza and generous financial aid.

Israel and Egypt are also in close touch with the Obama administration and European leaders regarding a ceasefire. President Obama has reportedly placed heavy pressure on Egypt's President Morsi to rein in Hamas. France's foreign minister was in Israel today. And United Nations Secretary General Ban ki-Moon is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Tuesday. All are apparently urging Netanyahu to avoid a ground war in favor of a quick ceasefire.

Q: What positions are Israel and Hamas presenting to all these mediators regarding ceasefire conditions?

A: Broadly speaking, Israel wants a verifiable Hamas commitment to cease all attacks from Gaza--meaning to police other, more extreme organizations' activities as well as its own--and close down its arms importing and indigenous arms production projects. Hamas reportedly wants an end to all aspects of the Israeli blockade of the Strip as well as an end to Israeli preventive security measures on the Gaza side of the border fence. Presumably, both Israel and Hamas are making security and other demands on Egypt as well. And each side wants to end up in a situation where it proclaims victory.

Q: Are these demands achievable?

A: Israel is backing up its demands with escalation. Most recently, it expanded its list of targets for air and naval attacks to include Hamas government institutions (after Hamas fired a rocket in the direction of Jerusalem and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh claimed they were aiming for the Knesset) as well as rocket-firing positions and other military institutions placed by Hamas deliberately in the midst of the Gazan civilian population. By Sunday, Israel was calling up large numbers of reserves and threatening a ground operation.

Hamas was responding with rockets and bravado. Morale appeared to be high in Gaza, uplifted by clips of Tel Avivians running for cover (and reflecting a fundamental misunderstanding of what makes Israel tick; but that's another story). If matters continue this way, at some point, inevitably, a large number of Gazan civilians could become casualties, thus embarrassing Israel and bringing down upon it heavy regional and international pressure.

Hence it's almost certain that at the end of the day, one way or another, this will end in yet another limited ceasefire that falls short of both sides' aspirations.

Q: Some Israelis argue that Hamas military leader Ahmed Jaabari should not have been targeted in Israel's opening salvo; that he was engaged in an attempt to achieve a long-term ceasefire and was a figure of moderation.

A: Obviously, if you oppose the entire notion of targeted assassination with its heavy moral ramifications, the Hamas military leader should not have been targeted. But a succession of Israeli (and American) governments have adopted this tactic and consider it both effective and acceptable in wartime. As for Jaabari himself, even as he was ostensibly involved in ceasefire discussions he was sponsoring escalated Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians and building up a murderous arsenal for use against Israeli civilians. In my view, he was fair game and his death a genuine blow to Hamas.

Q: Apropos the likely outcome, how is this operation, dubbed Pillar of Cloud or Pillar of Defense, different in its objectives and its operational profile from the two previous IDF offensives against neighboring non-state actors, the Second Lebanon War in summer 2006 and Cast Lead in 2008-9?

A: Apropos the names of the operation, note that Pillar of Cloud is a murky name reminiscent of the biblical "pillar of fire", while Pillar of Defense is a more PR-conscious name for use by Israeli public diplomacy. So far, "Pillar" has avoided use of ground forces or artillery, obviously in the hope of reducing highly problematic Palestinian civilian casualties. Air force bombing and rocketing techniques, especially by drones, have been refined admirably toward that same end.

This operation, accordingly, opened with the targeted assassination of a single prominent Hamas military figure, Jaabari, whereas Cast Lead opened with a kind of "shock and awe" approach that featured a controversial attack on a parade of Hamas civilian police. Both Pillar of Defense and the Second Lebanon War opened with a largely successful attempt by the Israel Air Force to eliminate the enemy's stores of long-range rockets so as to limit to the greatest extent possible the geographic extent of the enemy's rocket offensive.

Another difference concerns war aims. Cast Lead of 2008-9 was presented to the Israeli public on several occasions as an attempt to eliminate Hamas rule from Gaza. This corresponded with the declared aim of the economic blockade of Gaza that began in 2007. Not just the Kadima government of the day harbored these aims; prominent Labor supporters from the political left at one point petitioned Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Barak to go all the way, re-conquer Gaza and reinstall the PLO in power there (at the tip of Israeli bayonets, thereby totally discrediting the PLO) in the hope of facilitating a peace process.

Now, war aims are ostensibly more realistic. Accordingly to Barak, then as now defense minister, the objective this time is to cease rocket fire, eliminate Hamas militants and weaponry, and protect Israeli civilians. In other words, Hamas can remain as long as it stops attacking Israelis. Personally, I doubt that under current circumstances even these objectives can be attained and maintained over any period of time.

On the truly positive side, this operation takes place under the "cover" of the Iron Dome anti-rocket missile system, which has effectively reduced Hamas' capacity to really hurt the Israeli civilian rear. This gives IDF war planners breathing room, relatively free of public pressure, to try to achieve their objectives. Accordingly, it may be said to actually relieve the IDF of the need to attack aggressively and seek retribution for Israeli losses.

Amir Peretz, who was minister of defense during the Second Lebanon War and bore much of the criticism for that campaign's seeming failure, deserves great credit for having insisted on developing Iron Dome to protect Israeli civilians from rocket attack despite the opposition of the traditional security community with its emphasis on offense rather than defense. Peretz, former mayor of Sderot and former head of the Histadrut labor union, showed how a "civilian" defense minister with a strong socio-economic background can see things differently, to the benefit of the overall war effort. And two American presidents, Bush 43 and Obama, deserve credit for having helped finance the Iron Dome project.

One final and ironic comparison: the Second Lebanon War, waged by Peretz and PM Ehud Olmert, was roundly criticized in Israel for its indecisive outcome, with Hezbollah, Iran, and the Arab public trumpeting claims of victory over Israel. Yet since that war ended more than six years ago, Hezbollah has not lifted a finger to attack Israel--an apparent tribute to the deterrent success of Israel's war effort. In contrast, Cast Lead was seen as a triumph that rehabilitated Israel's deterrent profile. Yet its deterrent effect lasted barely a few months. Of course the two movements, Hezbollah and Hamas, are different entities operating under very different circumstances, particularly with regard to the "Arab spring": Hezbollah supports Syria in opposing the wave of Sunni Islamist revolution; Hamas is part of that wave.

Q: Apropos Hezbollah and Syria, are they connected to the current Gaza war?

A: Neither Syria nor Hezbollah has in any way intimated they would intervene to support Hamas. Here it's helpful to recall that Hamas has, in recent months, broken with Syria and Iran and moved into the triumphant Muslim Brotherhood orbit with its fellow Sunnis. Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is also firing rockets from Gaza and at times opposes Hamas' weak attempts to exercise control over it, does retain links to Iran and Syria. But PIJ is not a major factor and the only relevant question connected with it is whether and when Hamas will behave in Gaza like the sovereign it aspires to be and take control over all aggressors there.

All in all, at the regional level, the current Gaza conflict is about how the emerging Muslim Brotherhood leadership in Gaza, Egypt and North Africa will deal with Israel. At least until now, it is not about Iran and Syria.

Q: Your assessment seems to reflect a sense of pessimism regarding the long-term effect of anything Israel does against Hamas.

A: Neither Israel nor anyone else confronting a non-state actor motivated by an extremist Islamic outlook has found a viable strategy for dealing with it. Look again at Barak's war objectives (above) and note that they are tactical, not strategic. Israel has to confront the fact that it has no effective strategy for dealing with Hamas: economic blockade has failed; re-occupying the Strip would be hugely counterproductive. The only strategy Israel has not tried is talking to Hamas, which in any case refuses to talk to Israel and proffers outlandish conditions for agreeing merely to a permanent ceasefire (e.g., return to Israel of five million Palestinian refugees). I don't know whether such a strategy of engagement, with the aim of long-term coexistence, has any chance of success, but I still feel it is worth a try.

Note, though, that to engage Hamas directly without preconditions means abandoning the "Oslo" conditions agreed with the United States and European Union. It also means, in effect, telling the PLO in the West Bank, Israel's peace partner, that it is no longer understood to represent Gaza, thereby implying a three-state reality or solution and not a two-state solution. And as noted, such a gambit could very possibly fail, if only due to Hamas' out-and-out rejection of all the elements of peaceful recognition and coexistence established by 20 years of the Oslo process.

With the spread of political Islam on Israel's borders, an attempt at engagement with Hamas may be the best one can hope for by way of a strategy. Obviously, Israel's political leadership, left as well as right, is not there.

Q: Finally, now that rocket attacks have reached the Tel Aviv area where you live, what are your thoughts?

A: First of all, civilian morale is extremely high. I've taken shelter outside my home twice, in each case ending up meeting interesting people for exactly two minutes and going on my way; three grandchildren in Tel Aviv appear to be taking this in stride. But in the Tel Aviv area, the few rocket attacks thus far are more a source of curiosity than anything else. In the south, the accumulated trauma of, for those closest to Gaza, 12 (!!) years of rocket attacks is something else entirely. Thus not surprisingly, Israelis from the northern Negev attach extremely high hopes to this campaign, egged on by government rhetoric to the effect that this is the war against Hamas to end all attacks forever.

As we've seen, that is probably not a realistic aspiration. Already, after over 1,000 targets have been attacked in Gaza, more than 51 Palestinians and three Israelis killed, and at least 270 rockets successfully intercepted, Israelis are inevitably asking where this is going.

20121119-08	11:07	Pam	Re: "R.I.P., Twinkies" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #272)
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My sympathies to those of you whose lives have been blighted by the demise of the Hostess Cupcake Co. Having never been a fan of their sickeningly sweet, light as air, nutritionless comestibles, I don't really understand the alarm at its sudden end, but I feel your pain. R.I.P., Ding Dongs.

20121119-09	14:17	SteveG	"An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore"
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At the bottom is Michael Moore's email – maybe he would like the Friends of the Middle...

"An Open Letter to President Obama" by Michael Moore, MichaelMoore.com

Nov. 19, 2012, (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/mike-friends-blog/open-letter-president-obama>)

Dear President Obama:

Good luck on your journeys overseas this week, and congratulations on decisively winning your second term as our president! The first time you won four years ago, most of us couldn't contain our joy and found ourselves literally in tears over your victory.

This time, it was more like breathing a huge sigh of relief. But, like the smooth guy you are, you scored the highest percentage of the vote of any Democrat since Lyndon Johnson, and you racked up the most votes for a Democratic president in the history of the United States (the only one to receive more votes than you was ... you, in '08!). You are the first Democrat to get more than 50% of the vote twice in a row since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This was truly another historic election and I would like to take a few minutes of your time to respectfully ask that your second term not resemble your first term.

It's not that you didn't get anything done. You got A LOT done. But there are some very huge issues that have been left unresolved and, dammit, we need you to get some fight in you. Wall Street and the uber-rich have been conducting a bloody class war for over 30 years and it's about time they were stopped.

I know it is not in your nature to be aggressive or confrontational. But, please, Barack – DO NOT listen to the pundits who are telling you to make the "grand compromise" or move to the "center" (FYI – you're already there). Your fellow citizens have spoken and we have rejected the crazed ideology of this Republican Party and we insist that you forcefully proceed in bringing about profound change that will improve the lives of the 99%. We're done hoping. We want real change. And, if we can't get it in the second term of a great and good man like you, then really – what's the use? Why are we even bothering? Yes, we're that discouraged and disenchanting.

At your first post-election press conference last Wednesday you were on fire. The way you went all "Taxi Driver" on McCain and company ("You talkin' to me?") was so brilliant and breathtaking I had to play it back a dozen times just to maintain the contact high. Jesus, that look – for a second I thought laser beams would be shooting out of your eyes! MORE OF THAT!! PLEASE!!

In the weeks after your first election you celebrated by hiring the Goldman Sachs boys and Wall Street darlings to run our economy. Talk about a buzzkill that I never fully recovered from. Please – not this time. This time take a stand for all the rest of us – and if you do, tens of millions of us will not only have your back, we will swoop down on Congress in a force so large they won't know what hit them (that's right, McConnell – you're on the retirement list we've put together for 2014).

BUT – first you have to do the job we elected you to do. You have to take your massive 126-electoral vote margin and just go for it.

Here are my suggestions:

1. DRIVE THE RICH RIGHT OFF THEIR FISCAL CLIFF

The "fiscal cliff" is a ruse, an invention by the Right and the rich, to try and keep their huge tax breaks. On December 31, let ALL the tax cuts expire. Then, on January 1, put forth a bill that restores the tax cuts for 98% of the public. I dare the Republicans to vote against that! They can't and they won't. As for the spending cuts, the 2011 agreement states that, for every domestic program dollar the Republicans want to cut, a Pentagon dollar must also be cut. See, you are a genius! No way will the Right vote against the masters of war. And if by some chance they do, you can immediately put forth legislation to restore all the programs we, the majority, approve of. And for God's sake, man – declare Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid untouchable. They're not bankrupt or anywhere near it. If the rich paid the same percentage of Social Security tax on their entire income – the same exact rate everyone else pays – then there will suddenly be enough money in Social Security to last til at least the year 2080!

2. END ALL THE WARS NOW

Do not continue the war in Afghanistan (a thoroughly losing proposition if ever there was one) for two full more years! Why should one single more person have to die FOR NO REASON? Stop it. You know it's wrong. Bin Laden's dead, al Qaeda is decimated and the Afghans have to work out their own problems. Also, end the drone strikes and other covert military activities you are conducting in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Colombia and God knows where else. You think history is going to remember the United States as a great democracy? No, they're going to think of us as a nation that became addicted to war. They'll call us

warlords. They'll say that in the 21st century America was so in need of oil that we'd kill anyone to get it. You know that's where this is going. This has to stop. Now.

3. END THE DRUG WAR

It is not only an abysmal failure, it has returned us to the days of slavery. We have locked up millions of African-Americans and Latinos and now fund a private prison-industrial complex that makes billions for a few lucky rich people. There are other ways to deal with the drugs that do cause harm – ways built around a sense of decency and compassion. We look like a bunch of sadistic racists. Stop it.

4. DECLARE A MORATORIUM ON HOME FORECLOSURES AND EVICTIONS

Millions of people are facing homelessness because of a crooked system enacted by the major banks and Wall Street firms. Put a pause on this and take 12 months to work out a different way (like, restructuring families' mortgages to reflect the true worth of their homes).

5. GET MONEY OUT OF POLITICS

You already know this one. The public is sick of it. Now's the time to act.

6. EXPAND OBAMACARE

Your health care law doesn't cover everyone. It is a cash cow for the insurance industry. Push for a single-payer system – Medicare for All – and include dentistry and mental health. This is the single biggest thing you could do to reduce the country's deficit.

7. RESTORE GLASS-STEAGALL

You must put back all the rigid controls on Wall Street that Reagan, Clinton and the Bushes removed – or else we face the possibility of another, much worse, crash. If they break the law, prosecute them the way you currently go after whistleblowers and medical marijuana dispensaries.

8. REDUCE STUDENT LOAN DEBT

No 22-year-old should have to enter the real world already in a virtual debtors' prison. This is cruel and no other democracy does this like we do. You were right to eliminate the banks as the profit-gouging lenders, but now you have to bring us back to the days when you and I were of college age and a good education cost us little or next to nothing. A few less wars would go a long way to being able to afford this.

9. FREE BRADLEY MANNING

End the persecution and prosecution of an American hero. Bush and Cheney lied to a nation to convince us to go to war. Manning allegedly hacked the war criminals' files and then shared them with the American public (and the world) so that we could learn the truth about Iraq and Afghanistan. Our history is full of such people who "break the law" for the greater good of humanity. Army Specialist Bradley Manning deserves a medal, not prison.

10. ASK US TO DO SOMETHING

One thing is clear: none of the above is going to happen if you don't immediately mobilize the 63,500,000 who voted for you (and the other 40 million who are for you but didn't vote). You can't go this alone. You need an army of everyday Americans who will fight alongside you to make this a more just and peaceful nation. In your 2008 campaign, you were a pioneer in using social media to win the election. Over 15 million of us gave you our cell numbers or email addresses so you could send us texts and emails telling us what needed to be done to win the election. Then, as soon as you won, it was as if you hit the delete button. We never heard from you again. (Until this past year when you kept texting us to send you \$25. Inspiring.)

Whoever your internet and social media people were should have been given their own office in the West Wing – and we should have heard from you. Constantly. Need a bill passed? Text us and we will mobilize! The Republicans are filibustering? We can stop them! They won't approve your choice for Secretary of State? We'll see about that! You say you were a community organizer. Please – start acting like one.

The next four years can be one of those presidential terms that changed the course of America. I'm sure you will want to be judged on how you stood up for us, restored the middle class, ended the s***ting on the poor and made us a friend to the rest of the world instead of a threat. You can do this. We can do it with you. All that stands in the way is your understandable desire to sing "Kumbaya" with the Republicans. Don't waste your breath. Their professed love of America is negated by their profound hatred of you. Don't waste a minute on them. Fix the sad mess we're in. Go back and read this month's election results. We're with you.

P.S. President Obama – my cell number to text me at is 810-522-8398 and my email is MMFlint@MichaelMoore.com. I await my first assignment!

[How is Michael Moore not exactly right about what Mr. Obama must do? –SteveB]

20121119-12	15:23	Pam	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Love it!

20121119-13	16:15	SteveB	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Maybe I'm not supposed to reveal this (though I'm keeping the email a secret), but I'm proud to report that Mr. Moore has subscribed to the *FotM Newsletter* for a long time now. I'm not sure just how long... but he has not contributed, so far.

That is a great letter he has written, above!

20121119-16	18:22	SteveG	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Maybe that is where he is getting a lot of his info?

20121119-18	19:53	SteveB	Re: "An Open Letter to President Obama from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, above)
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That would truly be cool...

20121119-10	14:22	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Macy's vs. Medicare!
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from CREDO Action:

From Miracle on 34th Street to the Thanksgiving Day Parade, Macy's is a powerful symbol of the holidays for many Americans.

But this holiday season, Macy's CEO Terry Lundgren is part of a coalition of ultra-wealthy CEOs who are actively working to undermine the economic security of countless American families.

These CEOs are lobbying Congress to cut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits (not to mention other important safety net programs), all to get themselves and their companies massive tax breaks.

Tell Terry Lundgren, the CEO of Macy's: Stop trying to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

Just last month, Macy's CEO Terry Lundgren kicked off Macy's anti-Medicare advocacy by co-signing a letter to Congress that, as Reuters financial blogger Felix Salmon explained:

....basically just says "please cut our taxes, raise taxes on everybody else, and cut the benefits they get from Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, which are programs we individually don't rely upon." It's gross self-interest masquerading as public statesmanship.¹

And the coalition of CEOs Lundgren is part of will do much more than simply write letters. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*:

The CEOs will play an integral part in a post-election advocacy campaign by raising the issues of long term debt and deficits with members of Congress, holding town halls with their employees and the public, and working with members of Congress to develop policy solutions...²

Tell Terry Lundgren, the CEO of Macy's, to stop trying to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

Macy's has spent vast amounts of money to project a brand image that's entirely incompatible with the deplorable actions of its CEO. And the holiday season is the worst time for the Macy's brand to be embroiled in this kind of controversy. So if enough of us speak out, this is a fight we can win.

Tell Terry Lundgren, the CEO of Macy's, to stop trying to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Click below to automatically sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/macys_vs_medicare/?r=6990819&p=macys_vs_medicare.

Thank you for speaking out.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

Sources

¹"CEOs' Self-serving Deficit Manifesto," Reuters, 10-25-12, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6990821&id=50732-3891339-DqTDG1x&t=12>.

²"Fix the Debt: CEOs launch drive for 'grand bargain.' Is Washington listening?," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10-25-12, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6990822&id=50732-3891339-DqTDG1x&t=13>.

20121119-11 15:02 Ben Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple

Pretty humble stuff, but tasty and nutritious. Tacos were chickpea (!) and chicken (no beef today) and the box contains necessary wadding and a slug of picante. Great book, layers of subtlety interwoven with over-the-top bizarreness.



Taco Taco Chips (chicken, chickpea, corn)

[20121119-14](#) 17:03 MarthaH "Lee Atwater and the GOP's Race Problem" (w/ Video)

"Lee Atwater and the GOP's Race Problem" by Jonathan Weiler, Huffington Post

Nov. 14, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-weiler/legendary-gop-strategist-b_2132029.html)

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=X_8E3ENrKrQ.

It has been the stuff of legend for years now -- an interview that canonized GOP political consultant Lee Atwater gave while he was working in the Reagan White House in 1981. In that sit-down, Atwater explained how the Republican Party had so successfully executed the "Southern Strategy" of convincing large numbers of Southern Whites to vote Republican while navigating a new world in which overt prejudice was no longer politically viable. How? By replacing formerly overtly racist appeals, embodied in the n-word (which, Atwater noted, "you can't say" anymore) with coded language instead. These coded appeals -- "dog-whistles" -- whether about busing or, even more "abstract," as Atwater put it, things like tax cuts and other economic issues, would have the effect of "hurting blacks worse than whites," appealing to the constituencies the GOP was trying to attract, all while affording the party plausible deniability with respect to racism.

Now the full interview, 42 minutes long, has been unearthed by James Carter IV, who dug up the Romney 47 percent tape. As Rick Perlstein wrote over in *The Nation* today in describing the release of the tape, since first being highlighted in a column by Bob Herbert in the *New York Times* in 2005, Atwater's "n-gger, n-gger, n-gger" quote has emerged as a kind of Rosetta Stone for unlocking the political language the American right has been using for decades to siphon off white voters, especially in the South, from their formerly traditional home in the Democratic Party.

One of the striking facts about the just-completed presidential campaign was the degree to which the GOP barely concerned itself with dressing up its appeals in the kinds of camouflaged terms about which Atwater spoke. These included Rick Santorum's unprompted comments about Blacks and welfare in Iowa in January (which he later tried

to dodge by insisting he'd said "blah people"), the Romney campaign's baseless and ongoing insistence that the Obama administration was getting ready to end the work requirements for welfare and repeated over-the-top diatribes from high-profile surrogates, including former New Hampshire Governor and Chief of Staff to President George H. W. Bush, John Sununu (Obama's "lazy and "not that bright,") and former Speaker Newt Gingrich. Of all the racist pabulum that spewed forth this election season, one eruption stood out. In late September, Gingrich (who has arguably done as much as anyone to try to nationalize the Southern Strategy), told Fox News:

You have to wonder what he's doing... I'm assuming that there's some **rhythm** to Barack Obama that the rest of us don't understand. Whether he needs **large amounts of rest**, whether he needs **to go play basketball** for a while or watch ESPN, I mean, I don't quite know what his **rhythm** is, but this is a guy that is a brilliant performer as an orator, who may very well get reelected at the present date, and who, frankly, **he happens to be a partial, part-time president.**

Get it?

Since election day, the standard explanation for the Republican Party's defeat is that they could not overcome their growing demographic problem. In a country that is becoming increasingly non-white, you cannot afford to virtually disqualify yourself among those growing groups of voters and remain viable in presidential elections. One key take-away from Atwater's comments has long been to highlight what Tali Mendelberg, in *The Race Card*, observed was the power of implicit appeals to people's prejudices. She argued that when confronted with direct expressions of racism, most folks would recoil at the notion that they themselves were susceptible to such messaging. But if racially charged arguments could be concealed in some way, they would be much more powerful and effective in winning votes.

The apotheosis of this approach was the Atwater-run Bush campaign of 1988, when Atwater tried to make a convicted killer, Willie Horton, Michael Dukakis' "running mate." Since then, though, Democrats have won the popular vote five times in the past six presidential elections. For the past four years, significant swaths of the American right went well beyond aggressively attacking the president's policy agenda, convinced that Obama was an implacable enemy of America, a foreign-born, anti-colonial socialist, a Muslim or terrorist sympathizer, or all of the above. This feeding frenzy did not go unnoticed. **In too many ways, the GOP of 2012 could not plausibly deny that which has become too plain to ignore -- that it is the party of antipathy to difference and social change.** And it will take more than clever insights into the ways in which people can delude themselves about their own prejudices to overcome that brand.

20121119-15	18:18	SteveG	"10 Reasons the GOP Is Really Messed Up -- According to Republicans"
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Only ten reasons?

"10 Reasons the GOP Is Really Messed Up -- According to Republicans" by Adele M. Stan, AlterNet

Nov. 18, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/10-reasons-gop-really-messed-according-republicans>)

(It's too right-wing. Or not conservative enough. It could be the contempt for voters, or being the Party of Stupid. One thing's for sure: Everybody hates Karl Rove.)

Just as the Republican Party might have contemplated an end to its wound-licking (the better to gin up its scandal-making machine for President Barack Obama's second term), vanquished Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney proved to be -- for liberals, at least -- the gift that keeps on giving.

The president, Romney told a group of campaign donors on a November 14 conference call, won re-election by promising free stuff to his homeboys and women's libbers and brown people who inconveniently declined to self-deport -- or words to that effect.

"What the president -- president's campaign did was focus on certain members of his base coalition, give them extraordinary financial gifts from the government," Romney told his fat cats, apparently unaware that reporters were listening in. Soon that particular cat leapt out of the proverbial bag, and it was the 47 percent all over again -- offering a vision of the majority of the electorate that voted for Obama as a bunch of moochers. The one difference, of course, was that no longer the party's presidential contender, Romney learned that Republicans were free to kick him to the curb, which they did with steel-toed boots.

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Morgan Little wrote that within two short weeks, Romney went from being the party's standard-bearer to being "a punching bag for fellow Republicans..."

The effect of Romney's remarks was to extend for a second week the rounds of public ruminations by Republicans, via the Sunday talk shows, on what went wrong in the presidential election that Republicans were so certain they were poised to win. The Grand Old Party not only lost, but lost big among key demographics, including Latinos, 71 percent of whom voted for Obama, and unmarried women, 68 percent of whom voted for the president.

Here's a sampling of 10 reasons given by some of the Republican Party's leading lights -- including Karl Rove, Newt Gingrich and Meghan McCain -- and why the party failed so miserably, and what it needs to do in order to make a comeback.

1. Bobby Jindal: G.O.P. = "the stupid party"

The Republican governor of Louisiana made a grand show of great offense at Romney's remarks, stating such offense in multiple media outlets over the course of several days, and with a flourish on "Fox News Sunday", where Jindal's consternation seemed as much focused on the bad politics of the Romney comments as it was on the contempt shown by the nominee for everyday Americans. On Fox, Jindal's segment (which also featured Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker) was set up with a snippet of video featuring Jindal saying: "We've got to stop being the stupid party. You know what I mean by that. Certainly, we need to stop making stupid comments."

Interviewed by host Chris Wallace, Jindal elaborated:

If we want people to like us, we have to like them first. And, you don't start to like people by insulting them and saying their votes were bought. We are an aspirational party.

Let the Democratic Party be the party that says demography is destiny, that says we are going to divide people by race, by gender, by class. We as a Republican Party, believe our conservative principles are good for every single voter. It's not just a marketing campaign. It's not just having better PR folks. We're going to go and convince and fight for every single vote, showing them we are the party for the middle class, upward mobility. We don't start winning majorities and winning elections by insulting our voters.

2. Lindsey Graham: "We're in a big hole," and Romney keeps digging.

When he's not busy trying to turn the Benghazi tragedy into a scandal, the U.S. senator from South Carolina apparently spends his down time trying to figure out how to fix his own party. Appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday, Graham offered a laundry list of things the Republicans had gotten wrong -- including anti-immigration rhetoric and the scapegoating of the poor. From the "MTP" transcript:

SEN. GRAHAM: We're in a big hole. We're not getting out of it by comments like that. When you're in a hole, stop digging. He keeps digging. The Hispanic community, 71 percent voted for President Obama, and they're all disappointed in President Obama. There's high unemployment among the Hispanic community. President Obama did not embrace comprehensive immigration reform like he promised. But they voted for him because he's a lesser of two evils. Self-deportation being pushed by Mitt Romney hurt our chances. We're in a death spiral with Hispanic voters because of rhetoric around immigration.

Earlier this week, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., made a trip to Iowa, home of the infamous caucuses that kick off the presidential campaign season, to lay down his marker on what will likely become the G.O.P. position on immigration reform. "People understand that we need to do something to address these issues, and we need to do it in a reasonable and responsible way," Rubio told Politico.

But Graham's critique of Romney and the G.O.P. agenda didn't end with the DREAM Act or border security. Graham went on to slam the party for targeting the poor. He said:

You know, people can be on public assistance and scheme the system. That's real. And these programs are teetering on bankruptcy. But most people...on public assistance don't have a character flaw. They just have a tough life. I want to create more jobs and the focus should be on how to create more jobs, not demonize those who find themselves in hard times. Our party can adjust. Conservatism is an asset. But rhetoric like this keeps digging a hole for the Republican Party and if we don't stop digging, we're never going to get out of it.

But, as Michael Tomasky points out at the Daily Beast, it's hard to see how any truly "conservative" proposal could help those struggling to stay economically afloat. From voucherizing Medicare to privatizing Social Security, the G.O.P. agenda adds up to a life on the economic margins for all but the well-off, and any philosophical retreat from such plans leaves Republicans with little to distinguish them from conservative Democrats.

3. Bill Kristol: "We have a huge middle class problem."

The *Weekly Standard* editor and opinionator got himself into some hot water with fellow right-wingers on November 11 when, in that earlier appearance on "Fox News Sunday", he suggested that Republicans needed to accept that Obama had something of a mandate, and that maybe the world wouldn't end if millionaires were made to pay a higher tax rate than they currently do.

A week later, Kristol showed no sign of backing down, though he did suggest that a minor increase on tax rates for millionaires should be part of a small, stop-gap deal to avoid the automatic spending cuts set to go into effect January 1 if Congress doesn't act, and then negotiate a larger tax-reform deal later on. From the "FNS" transcript for the November 11 show:

I think we have a huge middle class problem. There, the particular nominee Republicans had was, you know, unfortunate in that respect. Four years after a huge Wall Street crisis, you nominate someone from Wall Street.

But I think honest debate, fresh thinking -- leadership in the Republican Party and the leadership in the conservative movement has to pull back, let people float new ideas. Let's have a serious debate. Don't scream and yell what one person says. You know what? It won't kill the country if we raise taxes a little bit on millionaires. It really won't, I don't think.

I don't really understand why Republicans don't take Obama's offer to raise taxes for everyone below \$250,000...

4. Newt Gingrich: Romney "insult[ed] all Americans."

In an interview with KLRU in Austin, Texas, former House speaker and Romney rival Newt Gingrich got his digs in on Romney, and implied that the GOP needed to stop insulting potential voters -- a pretty novel idea coming from a guy, as digby notes, who, throughout the presidential campaign, referred to Obama as "the food stamp president."

During the interview with reporter Evan Smith, Gingrich states that it wasn't just Latinos and blacks Romney that Obama won, but Asian-Americans, as well -- so, if I'm reading Gingrich correctly, he's saying it can't just be the food stamps. But the former speaker doesn't stop there: He goes on to knock Romney and his billionaire superPAC donors (at least one of whom, Sheldon Adelson, began the 2012 campaign as Gingrich's

billionaire superPac donor), suggesting that Romney would have spent their money more wisely had he just used it to buy votes more directly. From the transcript, via Hullabaloo:

NEWT GINGRICH: This is the hardest working and most successful ethnic group in America, okay. They ain't into gifts. Second, it's an insult to all Americans. It reduces us to economic entities who have no passion, no idealism, no dreams, no philosophy, and if it had been that simple, my question would have been "Why didn't you out-bid him?"

EVAN SMITH: Right, "You had the money..." you could be in the gift-giving business if you had elected to be.

NEWT GINGRICH: He had enough billionaire supporters that if buying the electorate was the key, he could have got all of his super PAC friends together and said, "Don't buy ads, give gifts." It'd be like the northwest Indians who have gift giving ceremonies. He could have gone town by town and said, "Come here and let me give you gifts. Here are Republican gifts." They could have an elephant coming in with gifts on it.

5. Raul Labrador: Republicans are defending big business, which loves big government.

While the bigger-deal mouthpieces of the Grand Old Party are suddenly paying lip service to the struggles of the middle class and the dignity of the poor, the Idaho congressman goes one step further, calling out his Republican brethren for their love of big business. Displaying his neo-libertarian streak, Rep. Raul Labrador, as part of the November 18 "Meet the Press" roundtable segment, suggested that the party's problem is that it just talks the small-government, no-handout game, but when it comes to corporations, government and subsidies rule. And voters don't like that, he said.

The issue with Romney, according to Labrador, is that he wasn't really a conservative, and was not convincing trying to play one on TV.

From the "MTP" transcript:

I think the problem that Romney had throughout the campaign is that he couldn't talk about conservatism like conservatives talk. As I heard somebody say, he talked about conservatism as if it was a second language to him. We ...believe in small government, but we also believe in the individual. There are too many Republicans here in Washington, D.C., and they are actually defending big business. They are defending the rich. I didn't become a Republican to defend the rich. And what we need to understand is that big business loves big government, because they get all the goodies from big government. They get ...less competition. The more that government grows, the more that big business actually benefits from the tax code and from the regulations...

6. Peggy Noonan: A kinder, gentler Tea Party needed.

On the November 11 edition of CBS News' "Face the Nation", former Bush 41 speechwriter Peggy Noonan fingered the Tea Party movement as the G.O.P.'s true nemesis, even though she contends that the movement was useful, up to a point. (Noonan is now a columnist for Rupert Murdoch's Wall Street Journal.) Her remarks rankled the Tea Party-heads at Glenn Beck's The Blaze, and Tucker Carlson's The Daily Caller. Noonan's remarks on "Tea Party rage," from the "FTN" transcript:

I think the Tea Party is going to have to look at itself. It's been so helpful to the Republican Party in the past. It saved it by not going third party in 2010, helping the Republicans sweep the House. But the Tea Party-style of rage is not one that wins over converts and makes people lean toward them and say, "I want to listen to you." I think a friendly persuasion has to begin now from the Republican Party to the people of the United States.

7. Ralph Benko: GOP's "Bush Mandarins" ran from Reagan agenda.

Could it be Peggy Noonan whom Benko, a champion of returning U.S. currency to the gold standard, had in mind when he penned his take on his party's woes for *Forbes* -- a magazine run by a Republican presidential also-ran? (Steve Forbes' 1996 and 2000 primary campaigns focused on the notion of a flat tax, in which the same rate would apply to store clerks and billionaires alike.)

Benko's prescription for the restoration of the Republican Party to all its Reaganesque glory was music to the ears of Richard Viguerie, a godfather of the religious right, and the direct-mail kingpin once jokingly known as Reagan's postmaster general. Viguerie loudly touted the Benko article, "The End Of The Karl Rove Death Grip Signals A Reagan Renaissance," on Viguerie's own ConservativeHQ Web site.

The enormity of (and surprise at) the defeat of Romney is a huge setback — and perhaps fatal — to the Bush Mandarins' hegemony over the GOP. If so, the potential re-ascendency of the Reagan wing of the GOP will prove very bad news for liberals and excellent news for the Republican Party. The Reagan wing now can resurge. A resurgence already has begun.

8. Mike Murphy: Demographics add up to "an existential crisis for the Republican Party"

At least as famous for his punditry as for his political consulting prowess, Mike Murphy -- who worked on Mitt Romney's successful gubernatorial campaign in Massachusetts -- is not mincing words. The G.O.P. is doomed because, he said on the November 18 edition of "Meet the Press", "We don't know how to win." And some of the problem there, by Murphy's own estimation, is that, unlike him, a lot of Republican political consultants are not so great. (Are you listening Karl Rove?) From the MTP transcript:

MR. MURPHY: Look, there's a huge donor revolt going on. I mean, we have now lost the popular vote in five of the last six presidential elections. This is an existential crisis for the Republican Party, and we have to have a brutal discussion about it. We alienate young voters because of gay marriage, we have a policy problem. We alienate Latinos -- the fastest growing voter group in the country -- because of our fetish with so-called amnesty when we should be for a path to immigration. And we have lost our connection to middle-class economics. We also have an operative class and unfortunately lot of which is incompetent. We don't know how to win. So, this isn't about new software in the basement of the RNC. It's not about a few Spanish language radio ads. It's a fundamental rethink that begins with policy because the country is changing and if we don't modernize conservatism, we can go extinct. The numbers are the numbers.

9. Karl Rove: The ground game sucked, and consultants made too much money. (Seriously.)

Perhaps the biggest loser in election 2012 -- aside from Romney himself -- is Karl Rove, former presidential aide to George W. Bush, and the man who engineered Bush's 2000 and 2004 electoral strategy. Since leaving government life, Rove has been doing double-duty as both the sugar-daddy front-man for American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS -- the big campaign machine designed, in the post Citizens United world, to funnel tons of money into advertising and other services that ultimately support Republican candidates.

Rove famously melted down before the Fox News television cameras on election night when, in the midst of doing his moonlighting gig as a Fox commentator, he refused to accept the results of the Obama campaign's win in Ohio, where the G.O.P. pulled out all the stops to make voting difficult for people likely to pull the lever for the president.

Now Rove is trying to explain away why the \$390 million forked over by the 1 percent and funneled through Rove's outfits bought, well, not much of anything. But for every media buy Rove's organizations made, political consultants got a cut, and Rove acts as though he had no control over the payment structure.

As Lucy Madison writes at CBSNews.com:

Rove, who essentially created the model for post-*Citizens United* outside donor groups - or so-called "super PACs" - with American Crossroads, the group he co-founded, also conceded that super PAC

money could have been more effectively spent in the 2012 campaign. He argued that too much of that money had gone to consultants, not targets.

Rove's group certainly did not produce the kind of financial return for which it had aimed: According to a study by the Sunlight Foundation just 1.29 percent of the nearly \$104 million American Crossroads spent in the general election ended up going to a winning race.

Kevin Drum, writing at his *Mother Jones* blog, notes the irony:

If conservative billionaires are looking for something else to be mad about, I'd recommend the Romney campaign's apparent habit of paying about 50 percent more for TV spots than the Obama campaign. That helped line the pockets of the consultants who both recommended the buys and got the commissions for placing the spots, but it didn't do much to win the election.

In the end, it turned out that one side ran its campaign like a business, while the other side ran its like a local PTA. Ironically, it was the ex-community organizer who did the former and the ex-CEO of Bain Capital who did the latter.

But, wait -- it gets even better. Rove goes on to complain that the G.O.P. ground game just wasn't up to snuff. As Madison notes, Rove, writing in his November 7 *Wall Street Journal* column, opined:

Tactically, Republicans must rigorously re-examine their '72-hour' ground game and reverse-engineer the Democratic get-out-the-vote effort in order to copy what works. For example, a postelection survey shows that the Democratic campaign ground game was more effective in communicating negative information. It would be good to know why -- and how to counter such tactics in the future.

(Note the use of the third person, as if Rove himself were not a Republican strategist.)

That whole reverse-engineering thing? Rove's old buddy, Ralph Reed, was supposed to be doing just that for the G.O.P. through his Faith and Freedom Coalition, which was believed to have had a budget of tens of millions for the express purpose of applying Obama-style high-tech turnout strategies to drive socially conservative voters to the polls.

After the 2008 election, Reed told a conference of activists last June, he "felt like I had been hit by a truck," and vowed "never to get out-hustled on the ground again." Out-hustled he was, but for every microtargeted communication and fancy app employed by Faith and Freedom Coalition, you can bet a consultant took a cut.

So maybe Reed felt like his was run over by a tank on Nov. 7, 2012 -- or maybe he just repaired to his \$2 million home in Duluth, Ga., and slept soundly.

10. Meghan McCain: Karl Rove sucks.

McCain, daughter of Arizona senator and 2008 Republican presidential nominee John McCain, is a political force in her own right, and a pundit whose birthright is forgiven by the sheer fun of her delivery -- especially post-election. For the Daily Beast, McCain delivered a scathing on-camera commentary (video on last page of this article), complaining of the stupidity of the G.O.P.'s reliance on white men, which she says "is not a demographic anymore," to deliver the goods on election day.

But the worst of her ire is reserved for Rove. "I hate Karl Rove," she says in the video. "I have hated Karl Rove before anybody else hated Karl Rove. I hated Karl Rove when I was, like, 14 years old. I hate -- hate -- Karl Rove. I think he's an idiot, a pretentious blowhard, and I think he ruined a lot of things for the Republican Party during the Bush administration. All these millionaires that keep giving him \$400 million for him to not win one election -- maybe it's not working! Maybe it's not working."

Transcript of Meghan McCain's video, part of her "Stark Raving Meghan" series:

So, Republicans, we lost again. I have voted three times in my life, and I have never voted for a winning candidate. I'm sick of this friction' track record. Everyone knows I'm Republican; I worked very hard trying to get Mitt Romney elected, defending him on television hundreds and hundreds of times. And Republicans, we lost because we were talking about rape and abortion and we can't get behind our gay friends getting married...I don't want everyone to break out the ice cream and Nora Ephron movies, because in all failure, there is opportunity. I am many things, but I am no freakin' pessimist. I think we have a chance to rebuild right now, and I think it can be awesome, and we have another four years. People just have to stop listening to frickin' right-wing lunatics like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity -- 'cause see where it's gotten us? I think losing -- a lot. And losing early.

I frickin' hate it when election nights are called early. I always think it's gonna last all night and then it's called at, like, 11.

I hate Karl Rove. I have hated Karl Rove before anybody else hated Karl Rove. I hated Karl Rove when I was, like, 14 years old. I hate -- hate -- Karl Rove. I think he's an idiot, a pretentious blowhard, and I think he ruined a lot of things for the Republican Party during the Bush administration. All these millionaires that keep giving him \$400 million for him to not win one election -- maybe it's not working! Maybe it's not working.

Give me five freakin' dollars -- I'll tell you for free what we gotta do. You can't keep going and trying to get white men, because they're dying off; it's not a demographic anymore. We need the single women. But you don't care. Seriously, I hate Karl Rove. Karl Rove needs to go away and retire, and just crawl back to the hole he emerged from...Everybody hates Karl Rove; he's like a Bond villain.

[NOW they realize this stuff we've been telling them for years? We'll see... --SteveB]

20121119-17	18:55	SteveB	Fw: The Dawn of Our Homegrown Energy Revolution: Our New Energy Future Can Help Solve Our Debt and Fiscal Crisis (from the USCC)
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This past election, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sucked it's small business members dry, then threw the money away on faulty adds for faulty Republican candidates. They've become much like the NRA—nothing but a mouthpiece for the big money that supports them. Here's their take on "Our New Energy Future".

They have a really big problem with the "Fiscal Cliff". LOL!

from the USCC:

The Dawn of Our Homegrown Energy Revolution: Our New Energy Future Can Help Solve Our Debt and Fiscal Crisis

New investment. Manufacturing back in America. New jobs and economic growth.

All of the above are attainable through domestic energy development.

As you've undoubtedly heard, leaders in Washington are working on avoiding the "fiscal cliff" and addressing two dominant issues impacting our economy: spending and taxes.

But there's a third bucket that should not be ignored. Energy development is an extraordinary opportunity to restore our country's economy, generating growth and helping lower the debt level and deficits.

A growing body of evidence continues to reveal the immense economic opportunities that our domestic energy resources hold. For instance:

- A new study from the U.S. Chamber's Institute for 21st Century Energy finds shale energy development could be responsible for upwards of 3.5 million jobs by 2035.
- This study also projects that by 2035 shale energy development could generate \$2.5 trillion in government revenues and \$5.1 trillion in private sector investment.
- A Wood Mackenzie study found 1 million jobs could be created by 2018 through encouraging the development of new and existing oil and natural gas, especially via the Keystone XL pipeline.

We are faced with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create jobs, grow the economy, cut the deficit, and reduce our dependence on over-seas energy sources.

Most importantly, our elected officials have the power to do it now by including energy policy as this "third bucket" of any negotiations to strike a bargain to avoid the "fiscal cliff."

In the coming days, the U.S. Chamber will release a number of studies and reports outlining the vast potential available through American energy. To read the chamber's report on shale energy and natural gas, click here:

<http://www.energyxxi.org/americas-energy-future>.

The potential is here. The time for action is now.

Sincerely, Rob Engstrom, Senior Vice President and National Political Director, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

20121119-19	21:56	Tom	There, I Fixed It Again!
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He Wanted to Be Buried with It



Thereifixedit.com

Nothing Runs Like a York!

20121119-20	23:17	SteveG	"Maryland, Rutgers Cash In on Their Incompetence with Move to Big Ten"
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I bet the athletic directors and presidents of these universities get a big raise -- any takers?

I guess it doesn't matter if you are a university or some for-profit business -- when will the crap stop?

Oh yeah, go back and watch the "60 Minutes" segment on Michigan football that aired 11/18/12.

"Maryland, Rutgers Cash In on Their Incompetence with Move to Big Ten" by Pat Forde, Yahoo News

Nov. 19, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ncaab--maryland--rutgers-cash-in-on-their-incompetence-with-move-to-big-ten-19541709.html>)

Congratulations, Maryland. You have succeeded in turning a financial mess of an athletic department into a swank new home.

And congratulations to you, too, Rutgers. It appears you're next. Your reward for running up a staggering debt is a huge conference upgrade.

Location, location, location. That's what this latest round of conference realignment is about.

Two largely underachieving, financially irresponsible athletic programs are parlaying their geographic proximity to major metropolitan areas into membership in the Big Ten. They've done very little on the field of competition to deserve it. But that's not what drives conference affiliation these days.

College Sports, Inc., is no meritocracy.

Rutgers and Maryland might as well be the airline and automotive industries. They're losing money left and right, but because they have inherent value (thanks to their TV markets of New York, Washington D.C. and Baltimore), here comes the institutional bailout.

Maryland is facing a \$50 million exit fee from the Atlantic Coast Conference, just months after dropping seven athletic programs in July in an attempt to get itself out of multimillion-dollar debt. The students who worked year-round to compete in those programs – and who tend to graduate at a high rate – were expendable in order for the Terrapins to keep up with the Joneses in revenue sports. If the Under Armour booster cares more about 57 combinations of football uniforms than having a swim team, it's expendable.

In the last decade, Maryland expanded its football stadium to 54,000 and built a palatial basketball arena in order to chase additional glory and cash. It acquired neither. While spending increased 24 percent over the last five years, according to the Washington Post, revenues increased only 15 percent.

The Terrapins missed the NCAA tournament last season under coach Mark Turgeon. (AP) All the money and gear in the world hasn't been able to make the Terrapins anything other than a gridiron embarrassment the past two years. They're 6-17 under Randy Edsall, who is being paid \$2 million a year for that record.

And while Maryland will immediately become the most recent Big Ten school to win a basketball national championship (2002), it hasn't accomplished much recently in the school's signature sport, either. The Terrapins missed the NCAA tournament last season, their first under Mark Turgeon (\$1.9 million annually), and have missed four of the past seven tourneys.

Next up, you can count on Maryland asking the ACC to negotiate a smaller buyout than the \$50 million the league voted on way back in September. And the ACC will probably oblige, for reasons that make no sense to anyone. This is College Sports, Inc., economics at work – where every buyout is just a number on paper and not a commitment.

Whatever the final exit fee is, it's still an expensive proposition for an athletic program swimming in red ink. Of course, Rutgers has been that red-ink pool for so long its fingers are pruned.

It cut six sports programs in 2007, and then proceeded to run up even more debt in the years that followed. The Newark Star-Ledger reported that Rutgers athletics spent \$26.8 million more than it earned in 2010-11 – a staggering display of financial recklessness that was in part foisted on the general student population via additional fees and tuition.

The payoff for that expenditure was exactly zero Big East championships in any sport in 2011-12 – but then again, the conference offered only 35 of them.

Most of that money has been sunk into football, which is the sport that determines everything these days. Until this season, Rutgers had been an AP top-25 program for one week in the last four years. Right now the Scarlet Knights are 9-1 and have a chance to win their first Big East championship with two more victories – but the program's long-term viability remains an unknown after architect Greg Schiano left last winter for the NFL.

So the reward for spending a ton of money and winning nothing is the chance to flee the floundering Big East for the security and profitability of the Big Ten. Everyone in Piscataway should look at the skyline to the East and thank New York for being where it is.

I'm not blaming Maryland or Rutgers for doing what they're doing – although the Terrapins are chucking 60 years of ACC tradition out the window in exchange for fan-friendly trips to Nebraska, Minnesota and Iowa. They need money, and the Big Ten has money. But neither school should act as if they earned this upgrade via excellence on the field.

What does the Big Ten get in return? Nothing in terms of competitive enhancement. It gets a further erosion of its geographic identity (as if that still matters), a toehold in some new recruiting soil and the chance for Jim Delany to tell Mike Slive he can go to 14 schools, too – so there.

The fact that both Maryland and Rutgers are in the American Association of Universities allows the academic folks in the Big Ten to countenance this, but that's just window dressing. Avarice and ego are what drives realignment, at further cost to college sports' soul.

After watching the Pac-10 become the Pac-12, the SEC add two schools, and the Big 12 and ACC both raid the Big East, it was the Big Ten's turn to make another greedy power play. Maryland and Rutgers are the beneficiaries, somehow turning years of reckless spending and faulty leadership into a conference upgrade – all because of location, location, location.

[The sad, sad state of college athletics... Sickening! Money! Greed! –SteveB]

[20121119-21](#) 23:58 Marci Cool Photos #10 (The Great Grey Owl)



<http://nbclatino.com/2012/11/17/will-twinkies-be-reborn-through-new-mexican-ownership/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/19/hostess-union-agreement_n_2160455.html

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qc3HqIE_bXU (My Twinkie Theme Song)





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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #274 — NOV. 21, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

A Truly Evil Though Minor Man

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 21, 2012)

I know, I know...you didn't think the man could even read, let alone write. Well, it turns out you're at least half right.

"I Got Duped by Glenn Beck!" by Sarah Cypher, Salon

Nov. 19, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/11/19/i_get_duped_by_glenn_beck/)

(The pundit bought the creative rights to the dystopian novel I edited, transforming it into right-wing propaganda.)



Two weeks ago I discovered, to my surprise, that I had line-edited an early draft of Glenn Beck's new novel, *Agenda 21*. Glenn Beck! At the time I was working on it, the manuscript belonged to its actual author, a woman named Harriet Parke, who lives a few minutes from my aunt. But a year and a few lawyers later, Glenn Beck purchased the right to call himself its creator, and Ms. Parke agreed to be presented as a ghostwriter.

I would be proud to have my name in the acknowledgments of Ms. Parke's novel. But given that it is printed inside a book bearing Glenn Beck's name, the work I did is now deeply at odds with who I am as an editor. *Agenda 21* is going out into the world on Tuesday, Nov. 20, as something decidedly different from the novel I edited. Yes, the story is the same. So are the concepts, the characters and the writing. But the name in the byline — that changes the book's intent. It changes everything.

If you're not an urban planner, here's a crash course on the novel's eponymous United Nations Agenda 21. It's a 40-chapter behemoth written in 1993. It lays out non-binding guidelines for promoting economic growth, environmental protection and social equality. Basically, it is a recipe for living within our means today, so that we do not pass along to our children a degraded economy, environment and society. It addresses topics as various as toxic waste, biotechnology, conservation and green transportation, all with the goal of helping poor countries develop economies — in large part, by encouraging wealthy countries to dial back in sensible ways on their consumption of resources.

Today, city and regional planners support the concepts that underpin Agenda 21, because they translate the big picture to local efforts to save people time and money. In other words, think globally, act regionally. After all, the planning profession is about supporting a community's efforts to collaboratively make the best of change — such as whether your community is growing or shrinking, or becoming more rural, suburban or urban. Change is inevitable: Brookings reports that "our population exceeded 300 million in 2006, and we are on track to hit 350 million in the next 15 years." And that "America will probably be older, more diverse, more urban — and less equal" than we are today.

Planners help communities find common-sense, constructive ways of using limited resources wisely. It looks for ways to make transportation inexpensive, keep energy plentiful, and help towns and cities avoid the kind of bad economic decisions that lead to eyesores like, say, a half-deserted strip mall anchored to an abandoned Wal-Mart. Thanks to zoning, for instance, which was created in the 1920s to protect property values, no one can come in and inappropriately construct a landfill or a steel mill next to your house.

Glenn Beck and fellow pundits hate Agenda 21, however, because they interpret a few lines from chapter four out of context. Their scare tactic is to say it's the narrow end of a wedge that will insert global UN authority over American towns and cities, allow the government to confiscate private land, reallocate resources by force, and evict people from their single-family homes. Never mind that the law of the land begins with the United States Constitution and that our relationship with the UN can hardly be described as lockstep. Moreover, the United States has no land use laws at the federal level, whatsoever. All land use decision-making authority in the United States lies with the states, who delegate authority to local governments. Relatively speaking, the United States has some of the strictest protections for private property in the world.

Agenda 21 is simply a non-binding, unenforceable menu of guidelines that exists to help any town or city that signs on to it. But when removed from all sensible context and cast forward into a dystopian future, Agenda 21 becomes the novel *Agenda 21*, which tells the story of a post-American settlement where people are forced to ride bikes and walk on treadmills to generate electricity, told whom to marry, raised in communal kibbutz-like nurseries, and forced to swear allegiance to a scary green one-world socialist entity.

My job is to edit stories, not the author's sensibility. Sometimes I edit a manuscript whose politics or sense of the human condition doesn't agree with my own. That was the case with Ms. Parke's draft of *Agenda 21*, which contains a caricature of some things I find highly inoffensive, such as bicycles and feeding squirrels. I am OK with that, personally and professionally, because novels are meant to be read as fiction, as a form of complex entertainment. There is joy, too, in discovering and thinking about the ideas that underpin the plot. And besides, if everybody agreed, we'd live in a dully conformist world indeed. Think of something like Orwell's London in *1984*, which contains a vision of socialism whose simplified specter still haunts berserk right-wing pundits like ... well, like Glenn Beck.

Furthermore — and I must speculate here — the novel's actual author, a retired nurse in western Pennsylvania, has gained income and national recognition for years of hard work. I can't argue with that, either. We writers all want that. The only interesting thing here is that it comes with the sacrifice of her authorship: Her name appears as a "ghostwriter" in small letters on the cover. But she conceived of and wrote the book herself, and I respect the

humility it must take to partially efface one's name from one's own work. In an ideal world, all writers would write anonymously.

If the book had been published under Ms. Parke's name alone, it would remain an entertaining dystopian novel. The writing is capable, the story compelling, and most of its values are to be respected — family, localness, and a good education in history (Beck, and his publishing house, ought to take note of that, by the way). It would be marketed and sold to readers of speculative fiction, which are typically a brainy crowd. Maybe some among them would hold it up as a negative vision of a radical environmental agenda run amok, albeit in a world without Exxon Mobil or Wal-Mart — in fact, one without any wealthy corporations at all, who historically pitch their vast financial resources against environmental regulations.

But mostly, we'd just read it for the story. That's how I read it one year ago, and I enjoyed it. But why publish the novel under Beck's name? What would the book have lost if his publishing company, Mercury Ink, had simply let Ms. Parke call the novel her own? The answer, I think, is that it needs Beck's franchise in order to succeed in a purpose beyond entertainment.

Publishing "Agenda 21" under Glenn Beck's name transforms it, at least temporarily. Glenn Beck is more than just the nice guy whose publishing house is bringing Ms. Parke's work to a national audience. He's also a professional ideologue whose establishment confers the full force of its intellectually and morally irresponsible franchise on a novel that distorts the truth about Agenda 21, which is doing good work in the world. Glenn Beck is not writing as an artist, bound by the conventions of his art, plying his craft on the willing human imagination. Hell, he's not writing at all. He is a brand, with a budget, and with an agenda of his own. Ultimately, by assigning his brand to the novel *Agenda 21*, Beck turns a form of entertainment into a political lie, a tool for politicizing people.

On its own, *Agenda 21* should not work this way: just like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* does not drive women to the polls to keep religion out of politics, nor *The Hunger Games* motivate us to stop seeing war as a form of entertainment, nor *One Hundred Years of Solitude* give a corporation pause before plundering resources from poorer countries. If people show up en masse to vote for or against these things, it is not because spokespeople from NARAL or the NEA or the Union of Concerned Scientists pushed these novels on national TV; it's because people are responding to something provable and real right now.

The novel *Agenda 21* was inspired by Beck's entreaty to his viewers to "do your own research." Well, fine — if you read a single paragraph of a 40-chapter political tract, you can spin it all kinds of ways and call it "research." Beck does as much on his show, and I worry that Beck's many readers will get the wrong idea about the UN Agenda 21. In principle, it is an important part of city and regional planners' work, which involves making sure that people can access things they need: food, education, doctors' offices, stores. It's about making sure those things are even there when you need them. It's about helping people enjoy freedom and mobility, even if they are too poor or too old or too young to have a car. Or just don't want one. It's about the preservation of localness and sense of place instead of genericization, and about maintaining a familiar, comfortable way of life as our population expands from 300 million to over 400 million in my lifetime.

If, like me, you feel concerned about the inevitable population growth, decreased availability of clean water and resources, aging national infrastructure, and upward-trending global temperatures, you might take heart to know that city and regional planners are numerous, bright, well-educated people who devote their careers to finding ways to helping the rest of us enjoy a long-term high standard of living. Or, you can empower obstructionists who make the panicked hoarding of fuel and canned goods seem like the only long-term planning that matters.

There is a precedent for successful social fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* focused public sentiment against slavery because its unstinting realism humanized a gross injustice that was already tinder in the national furnace. For the same reason, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* spurred labor reforms, though arguably it could have been more successful, sooner, if it hadn't slathered so much socialist propaganda onto a realistic portrayal of factory life.

Usually, though, preachy fiction is a brittle failure. I think of an interesting but flimsy environmental novel like Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael*, whose political message overtakes the story. Gore Vidal's fiction suffers for the same reason. I do respect the writer who champions the underdog — the working poor, the immigrant, the father of

hungry children, the ambitious teen who is under-served by an opportunist or parochial education system. Less so, the writer whose vision empowers an avaricious establishment, or obstructs meaningful adaptation to our changing environment. Yet when I suspend my disbelief to read speculative fiction, finding myself preached to at all is an annoying betrayal.

Where that creative betrayal becomes shrill, however, is in the mouth of an ideologue. As a genre, speculative fiction keeps one eye on politics, but its goal is not to preach. It's to make up an entertaining version of reality — an augmentation of social truth, which is not the truth itself. A novel's vision can scare us, inspire us, affirm our emotions, and articulate our fears. It shouldn't, however, serve as a primary political agenda any more than Paul Ryan should be waving "Atlas Shrugged" around on the House floor. In the same way, *Agenda 21* is being delivered as propaganda, and by buying the right to call himself its author, Glenn Beck is diminishing a work of fiction to nothing more than a cheap appeal directed at people who will believe anything.



I just love it! He looks like a homeless guy, but I bet he still doesn't give a damn about the homeless!

Photo: "Mitt Romney Pumps Gas" by Reddit, Huffington Post

Nov. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/20/mitt-romney-gas-photo_n_2165651.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular)

Days after losing the election to President Barack Obama, Mitt Romney is back to pumping his own gas. A photo surfaced on Reddit showing the "tired and washed up" Republican challenger at an undisclosed gas station. **It's a particularly humbling image of a candidate who was known to have trouble connecting with average people.**



"Ten Females Who Cost Mitt Romney the Presidency" by Will Durst, Humor Times

Nov. 12, 2012, (<http://www.humortimes.com/14080/ten-females-cost-romney-presidency/>)

Holey moley catfish! Well, thank god that's finally over. Further thanks that the climax was quick and clean. Almost surgical. Not as long a night as many first thought it might be. Except for Karl Rove, that is, who for all we know is still scribbling numbers to prove the call on Clinton's re-election win in 1996 was premature. And as usual, Florida did all it could to gum things up, but was eventually rendered irrelevant. And long may it remain so. In the end, President Barack Obama trounced, er, battered, um, eked-out a victory — or to be more precise, Mitt Romney lost. Or shall we say, found a thousand ways to lose. Except for one brief, shining moment in the first debate, virtually carrying with him a defeat diviner.

And each and every one of his failures can be traced directly to females. The distaff of life. Single women. Married women. Old women. Young women. Ladies and divas and flappers and baby mamas; duchesses, priestesses, shorties and floozies. So here they are, the top ten females who cost Mitt Romney the presidency, each of them representing one of the myriad factors that helped construct the unelectable mosaic that became Bain's Captain of Industry:

1. **Michele Bachmann**. Mitt had to draft on her right wing to win the primary battle, and when he tried to tack back to the center appeared not to be the Washington Outsider he claimed, but a typical politician with the core values of a hollowed-out chocolate Easter Bunny. With really good hair.
2. Newly elected U.S. Sen. **Elizabeth Warren** from Massachusetts. A state the former governor lost by 23 points. Proof positive the man arouses the enduring passion of a broken garden rake.
3. Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton**, who took foreign policy off the table, making the entire election about the economy which kept getting better, gol darn it. And who can forget her husband. He certainly won't let us.
4. **Sandra Fluke**, who gave a face to the GOP's Paleolithic Bronze Age attitudes towards women, further exacerbated by the fact that no man in the party could seemingly shut up about it.
5. **Michelle Obama**, who is just darn likable. As is her husband. A stark contrast to Romney's cyborg demeanor and obvious discomfort around members of the human species.
6. **Superstorm Sandy**, for providing the opportunity for the president to look presidential and for Obama and Chris Christie to French kiss on Atlantic City's Boardwalk, crystallizing the concept that bipartisanship is not the saddest word. That's "goodbye."
7. **Ann Romney**, who would have made a simply terrific first lady. For Dwight D. Eisenhower.
8. **Candy Crowley**, who single-handedly halted Romney's momentum in the second debate by speaking way above her pay grade. Don't you hate it when the help speaks out of turn?
9. All the **Wal-Mart Moms**, who never really understood that whole Cayman Islands bank account thing marking him not as the poster child for the 1 percent, but as the poster child for the .0001 percent of the 1 percent.
10. And the last female responsible for Romney's loss; **Rafalca** the 15-year old mare who, while wearing the Romney silks in Olympic Dressage, failed to make the medal round and was probably shipped home strapped to the fuselage of a 747. Seriously, Mitt. Dressage?



[I just had to show it again! –SteveB]

20121120-03	11:22	Art	Re: "Maryland, Rutgers Cash In on Their Incompetence with Move to Big Ten" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #273)
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Agree. Good article. What has any of this to do with a college education?

20121120-04	14:05	SteveB	"How Allen West Blew It"
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Poor Allen West! And such a nice guy too!

"How Allen West Blew It" by Alex Isenstadt, Politico

Nov. 20, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1112/84108.html>)

(It wasn't supposed to end this way for Allen West.)

The tea party House freshman had an astonishing \$17 million war chest, sky-high name ID and a Republican-leaning district. His opponent, Patrick Murphy, was a 29-year-old construction company executive who had never sought office before. Even Democrats privately acknowledged late in the campaign that Murphy was probably a little green to be going up against a powerhouse like West.

But on Tuesday morning, it was West, not Murphy, issuing a lengthy concession statement after a two-week recount that confirmed he had fallen a painful 2,000 or so votes short. The congressman's unexpected loss left his advisers, donors and legion of tea party fans searching for answers.

His tight-knit circle of top campaign aides was "shocked," said one Republican close to the incumbent. On the eve of the election, a private survey conducted by West's veteran pollster, Gene Ulm, had the congressman leading by 5 percentage points.



Some Republicans close to the campaign blamed West's bombastic, no-holds-barred style — an approach they said simply didn't work in what was basically a moderate-minded district full of elderly voters. During his brief tenure in Congress, he dished out insults like candy at Halloween — he called Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz "vile, unprofessional and despicable"; dubbed President Barack Obama "probably the dumbest person walking around in America right now," and said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats "should get the hell out of the United States of America."

Behind the scenes, Republicans were urging West to tone it down. Early this year, shortly after launching his reelection campaign, the congressman sought out a surprising figure — former GOP Rep. Mark Foley, who resigned in 2006 amid revelations that he had sent sexually-charged electronic messages to House pages. Foley, who had represented much of the southwestern Florida district, counseled West to run to the middle — advice the congressman didn't take issue with.

Foley thought highly of West — at one point, he even advised the freshman to run for Senate in 2012, reasoning that his fundraising capabilities and national profile would make him a strong contender. But as Foley watched the House race play out, he saw West embracing much of the same conservative rhetoric that he had in his previous races.

And instead of presenting his compelling life story — West rose from an upbringing in the Georgia slums, eventually becoming a military commander before running for Congress — the Republican seemed intent on tearing down Murphy in harshly personal terms. One West TV ad blasted Murphy for his underage drinking arrest a decade ago, showing a mug shot of the intoxicated then-teenager.

"I think Allen might have been a bit too conservative for the district," Foley said in an interview. "The district was extremely center-focused."

Some of the Republicans said West's inability to get beyond the hard-charging image was a function of staff error. Aides, they said, failed to tame the congressman and to warn him that his outbursts — though catnip to his grass-roots backers and good for fundraising — would ultimately damage him. West's congressional office got off to a particularly slow start — his first chief of staff, conservative radio talk show host Joyce Kaufman, resigned just a few days after she was hired.

"This was a congressional operation run amuck. The congressional staff couldn't control it, they failed to manage expectations, to manage the brand," said a Republican source close to West. "When you have something to say on national TV every time something arises, the brand is overused. The brand wasn't carefully constructed or guided."

"Sometimes people don't want controversy," the source said. "They just want a congressman."

West's approach provided Murphy a blank slate, with an opening to brand himself as a nonpartisan. The Democrat promised he would be a quiet, get-it-done type as a member of Congress. In the closing days of the race, Murphy secured a surprise endorsement from Martin County Sheriff Bob Crowder, a moderate Republican who waged an unsuccessful primary bid against West. The nod bolstered Murphy's pitch.

Final vote tallies showed West winning fewer votes than Mitt Romney in two of the district's three counties — an indication that the congressman had bled some GOP support to Murphy, Republicans following the campaign said.

Former Democratic Rep. Ron Klein, whom West unseated in 2010, said Murphy's campaign was aimed at voters who soured on the Republican's style.

"I think by the end of two years, people either really liked [West] or really disliked him," said Klein, who coached Murphy in debate prep. "At the end of the day, more people decided they wanted a congressman who could get something done and were tired of the divisiveness."

"West," Klein said, "beat himself."

Those close to West also said Obama's surprisingly strong performance in South Florida helped to put Murphy over the top. Few of the congressman's advisers anticipated that Obama, who won more than 50 percent of the vote in two of the three counties that comprise the 18th Congressional District, would have a turnout operation so superior to Romney's. Obama's power was particularly pronounced in St. Lucie County, where the president won 53 percent of the vote and Murphy trounced West.

Democrats were surprised, too. In the weeks after his disastrous Denver debate performance, Obama's poll numbers fell in West's district — and that had a ripple effect on Murphy's standing, the candidate acknowledged in an October interview with Politico.

One private poll conducted for a Democratic outside group just prior to the Oct. 3 debate showed Obama and Murphy both leading at 52 percent apiece. When the same pollster surveyed the district on Oct. 7, however, Romney and West both claimed small leads.

"I think Obama was stronger in Florida than any of us expected," Foley said. "Obama's ground game in Florida was better than ours, and I think that had a big impact on the West race."

Then there was redistricting. When Republicans in the Florida Legislature finished redrawing the state's 27 congressional districts, they added Democrats to West's West Palm Beach seat — making his path to reelection significantly steeper. West eventually moved to run for a nearby seat that was vacant, but he had never run there before — meaning that he would have to introduce himself to new voters.

West, a political newcomer who unlike many of his Florida delegation colleagues had never served in the Legislature and had few allies there, had found himself on the losing end of the brutally political line-drawing process. Tallahassee, said one Republican source close to West, had done the congressman no favors.

For weeks, West's backers seethed. On his popular radio show, Rush Limbaugh, an outspoken West ally, accused then-Florida House Speaker-designate Will Weatherford, a Republican, of engineering a plot to destroy the congressman. The Broward County Republican Party started a website dubbed, "Save Allen West."

For West, the question now is what's next. Some Republicans speculate that he could write a book or hit the speaker's circuit — both lucrative options. Others say he could run for Congress in his native Georgia.

And then there are some who suggest he could get his own radio or TV show — perhaps on Fox News, where he's a frequent guest. On Tuesday morning, as he turned out the lights on his congressional career, he chose to make the announcement on a favorite platform, the network's morning broadcast, "Fox and Friends."



<http://ptitmath.canalblog.com/tag/zorro>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #275 — NOV. 22, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

Rubbing It In One More Time

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 22, 2012)

This was just too funny and right-on to resist. Besides, if anything is worthy of celebration and reflection it's history, right? And major history was certainly made that I'm proud to have been a small part of...

"Republicans Seek Sweet '16 Solutions" by Jason Linkins and Sabrina Siddiqui, Huffington Post

Nov. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/20/republicans-sweet-2016-solutions_n_2168278.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)



It's been just two weeks since The Most Important Election In Our Lifetime, and the side that lost is gearing up to be a better competitor by the time the next Most Important Election In Our Lifetime happens, in 2016. But first, there comes a period of soul-searching. What went wrong? And who went the wrongest? How does the Republican Party move forward (but not like, you know ... Obama Forward). Over the past few weeks, various GOP thought-leaders have offered suggestions. Bill Kristol said he thinks the party should go ahead and raise taxes on upper-income earners. David Frum said he thinks that the Republican Party should embrace "cultural modernity." Karl Rove said he wants to return to the "50 State Solution." And lots of people seem to generically agree that the next Republican candidate for president should "do some Hispanic stuff."

But other ideas have drawn a lot more attention, suggesting an amusing step-by-step process that your Huff Post List shall now run down for you.

1. For Starters, Reject Romney Thoroughly.

As Ben Smith pointed out, Mitt Romney is getting disappeared from the GOP ranks faster than a dissident in Milton Friedman's Chile. It's easy to see why. Who wants to be associated with the guy who was just at the receiving end of a shellacking from President Barack Obama, especially after an election that was deemed to have been handed to Republicans on a silver platter. Not only did the party come together to unanimously condemn Romney's "gift" comments (huh, weird how there were mostly crickets when the whole 47 percent debacle went down) -- but now Sen. Marco Rubio is also reiterating his opposition to Romney's "self-deportation" remark made during the GOP primaries. It's true that Rubio has taken issue with Romney's choice of words before, but like most in his party, he spent the last months leading up to the election pivoting to jobs and the economy when asked about his nominee's non-existent position on immigration. No more.

2. Then, I Dunno...Get Better Candidates, I Guess?

Republican party bigwigs will be retconning 2012 for years, wondering what might have been if only Mitch Daniels, or Jeb Bush, or Chris Christie had run for the nomination and won. (You don't think that candidate Christie and President Barack Obama would have bro'ed out in mutual love for one another, do you?)

But the need for better candidates is more painfully felt down-ticket, where -- as Mike McAuliff reports -- memories of the damage done by some of the GOP's leading lowlights remain fresh:

The most remarkable losses were in Indiana and Missouri, where the GOP had been looking at near-certain wins until their right-leaning standard-bearers both took controversial positions on abortion. Missouri Rep. Todd Akin declared women don't get pregnant from "legitimate rape." Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock proclaimed that pregnancy from rape is "something God intended to happen."

3. Or Maybe We Can Just Have the Same Sort of Candidates, Only They Remember to Stop Saying the Stupid Stuff Everybody Hates Out Loud.

After keeping a relatively low profile during the presidential race, Bobby Jindal suddenly has all the answers. The Louisiana governor took to various media outlets to decry the GOP for coming across as the "stupid party", and then again to denounce Romney's 'Obama's policies were gifts to minorities' comments ... and then yet again to urge the Republican Party to go back to the basics. Of course, those "basics" didn't differ in many meaningful ways from Mitt Romney's basics -- Jindal's preferred tax policies aren't a whit different from Romney's. And for all of Jindal's talk about not being the "stupid party," he's the guy who supports creationism.

Besides, I think a lot of Republicans are just going to hear Jindal's admonitions about not being the "stupid party" and think, "Well, that's pretty rich coming from the guy who endorsed Rick Perry."

4. That's a Lot of Work, Can't We Just Run George P. Bush?

Yeah, we get it. He's a Bush, and he's handsome, and he's Hispanic, and he's ready to, like, TOTALLY run for something? Maybe land commissioner? Whatever you got, basically. But it's not actually going to be that easy, reckons Alex Pareene:

There was honestly never much of a reason to expect that Hispanic American voters -- a diffuse group of lots of very different types of voters -- would end up voting as a bloc. But then the Republican Party started encouraging and explicitly campaigning on nativism and ferocious white racial resentments, instead of merely profiting from them. In doing so, Republicans might have served to make the non-white portion of the country liberal for a generation at least, which would be a major problem.

[...]

If that's the case, if the Tea Party and Sheriff Joe have liberalized a generation of Latino voters, the Republican Party's demographics problem will not be fixed simply by embracing individuals like Marco Rubio, who share the same batshit beliefs as the party. (Nominating a white guy did not win the former Confederacy for Democrats in 2004.) But it also might not help that much to nominate a guy like George P. Bush, who merely subscribes to most of the beliefs of modern conservatism. It could take years, and a series of Democratic missteps, to erase the damage done in the last few elections.

5. Screw It, Then, Why Don't We Just Bring Palin Back?

While GOP operatives point to the likes of Chris Christie, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush as potential 2016 frontrunners, conservative columnist Charlotte Allen tossed another name into the mix: Sarah Palin. Cause, remember how well that worked out the last time? "Palin can more than keep up with the Democrats in appealing to voters' emotions," Allen wrote in a column that apparently was not satire. "Hardly anyone could be more blue collar than Palin, out on the fishing boat with her hunky blue-collar husband, Todd." Ha, ha: no. (<http://wonkette.com/490149/charlotte-allens-startling-insight-lots-of-voters-are-idiots-so-sarah-palin-2016>)

6. Wait I Got It!

Remember all those amazing engineers and technologists that Alexis Madrigal profiled in his great post-election article on the Obama campaign and the brilliant geek-savants who built the system that powered the president to victory? Well, can't you guys just pay those nerds triple what Obama was paying them? I mean, you are Republicans, after all.





[Mmmm...thanks, Tom. -SteveB]

This is the way to go...

"Sen. Murray: Dems Would Let Bush-Era Rates Expire before Taking 'Unfair Deal'" by Meghashyam Mali, The Hill

Nov. 11, 2012, (<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/267253-sen-murray-dems-would-let-bush-era-rates-expire-before-taking-unfair-deal>)

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) on Sunday said Democrats were prepared to allow the expiration of all George W. Bush-era tax rates to take place if Republican lawmakers objected to raising taxes on the wealthiest earners.

"We can't accept an unfair deal that piles on the middle class and tell them they have to support it. We have to make sure that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share," said Murray on ABC's "This Week."

Murray said one option would be to let the lower rates expire across the board and then return to the table next year with new talks on a tax-cut package.

"So if the Republicans will not agree with that, we will reach a point at the end of this year where all the tax cuts expire and we'll start over next year. And whatever we do will be a tax cut for whatever package we put together. That may be the way to get past this," said Murray.

The Washington senator is likely to become chairwoman of the Senate Budget Committee, and previously served on the congressional "supercommittee" that failed to finalize a deficit-reduction plan, which will trigger sequestration cuts in January 2013 unless Congress acts to block them.

Economists warn that the tax-rate rises and automatic spending cuts could bring another recession, and both parties have said they hope to avoid the so-called "fiscal cliff."

"Look, no one wants to go off the fiscal cliff. But a fair deal is absolutely critical here," said Murray on Sunday.

President Obama and Democrats have called for raising taxes on the wealthy to pay for the deficit-reduction plan, while Republicans want to extend all the Bush-era rates.

The president will meet with lawmakers next week to begin talks on a deal and said he was "encouraged" last week when House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) said Republicans were open to new revenues in any such deal.

Appearing with Murray, Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) praised Boehner. "I thought he showed great leadership by saying that revenues need to be on the table," said Chambliss.

But Chambliss cautioned that new revenues needed to be matched with measures reforming entitlement programs and said the Bowles-Simpson model could provide a template for negotiators.

"Bowles-Simpson said, look, eliminate all these tax credits and tax deductions. You can generate somewhere \$1 to \$1.2 trillion in additional revenue. You can actually lower tax rates by doing that," said Chambliss.

[20121121-03](#) 10:16 SteveB Bolivia's National Census Day

Today is kind of a strange day in Bolivia. It happens every ten years.

It's National Census Day. As I write, an army of young college students and others are working to knock on every door in the country and count every one and not more of the 10,400,000+ people in the country. They started at one minute after midnight last night and will finish, I guess, by midnight tonight.

In the meantime, no one else in the country can go out of their houses. All businesses are closed, including ours. There's no public transportation and no non-essential vehicles are allowed on the streets or roads. All air traffic has been halted except for a few international arrivals. If you go out, you can be ticketed or arrested (I guess they also count the inmates).

The job gets done fast, with quickly available results, and at little cost, except the rather large hit of an entire day of lost national productivity, which the U.S. avoids.

Interesting the differences in the way things are done in America and Bolivia.

So we're lazing around having a nice mid-week day off. Marci cooked me a rare, big American breakfast, and we're having some of my favorites for lunch. We decided there are going to be a lot of little Bolivians born about nine months from now...

[20121121-06](#) 13:40 Ben Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, above)

Census taking is census building. Nation building, if you will.

[20121121-07](#) 16:04 SteveB Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to Pam & Ben, above)

The nicest young lady came to count us. Census and election duties work a lot like jury duty in the U.S. Here, everyone is expected to help out in some way and young people have to spend a year of military or service duty.

Our Census Taker went to 20 households, filling out a little booklet for each person and finishing before lunch. She will be paid 20 bolivianos (about \$3).

Now, when can we break out of this prison?

[20121121-10](#) 17:25 Pam Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, above)

I can't imagine such a thing happening in the U.S. A mid-week weekend can't be all bad.

[20121121-04](#) 10:19 MarthaH The House Republicans vs. Susan Rice

In a typical right-winged attack on anything they can grasp, the HOUSE has attacked Susan Rice. Well, hunky-dory...What percentage know the House has no responsibility here--but blowing hot air. Can anyone find the list who signed? I haven't been able to do so, and I really want to read it--and their districts of origin? Are they Americans???? :-)...Show me their birth certificates, ha. If they know they have no power here--which should be true--WE know why...on several levels. And we know the underlying issue besides gender. Politics as usual. I am not very happy with them, but what is new!

[20121121-05](#) 13:31 Art Happy Thanksgiving!

Happy Turkey day to all and especially to you, SteveB. Great job on the Newsletter this past year and thanks again for bringing us all together.

[20121121-08](#) 16:52 SteveB Re: Happy Thanksgiving! (reply to Art, above & to all)

Thank you, Art!

It's been such a pleasure for me to get to know all of you a little or a little better, as the case may be!

May your Thanksgiving be full of joy and stuffing!

For us here on the ground in Bolivia, it will be business as usual, but—hey—everyday is like a holiday in paradise...

[20121121-09](#) 17:20 Pam Re: Happy Thanksgiving! (reply to Art, above & to all)

I second that! I'm thankful for so much this year: my new-found son, my family, my friends, and that includes my FotM buddies. Happy Thanksgiving, everybody!

[20121121-11](#) 19:53 Art Fw: Professional Predictions from Experts

Just goes to show you.

Best wishes for Thanksgiving to all. Glad for the cease fire for my Israeli and Arab friends.

Professional Predictions...

"Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances."

—Dr. Lee DeForest, 'Father of Radio & Grandfather of Television.'

"The bomb will never go off. I speak as an expert in explosives."

—Admiral William Leahy, commenting on the US Atomic Bomb Project

"There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom."

—Robert Millikan, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1923.

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."

—Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949. [Date??? –SteveB]

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."

—Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943. [Date??? –SteveB]

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year."

—The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957.

"But what is it good for?"

—Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.

"640K ought to be enough for anybody."

—Bill Gates, 1981.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us,"

—Western Union internal memo, 1876.

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?"

—David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

"The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible."

—A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

"I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper,"

—Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in *Gone with the Wind*.

"A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make."

—Response to Debbi Fields' idea of starting Mrs. Fields' Cookies.

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."

—Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."

—Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895.

"If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this."

—Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3M "Post-It" Notepads.

"Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy!"
—Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.

"Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau."
—Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value."
—Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre , France.

"Everything that can be invented has been invented."
—Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, US Office of Patents, 1899.

"The super computer is technologically impossible. It would take all of the water that flows over Niagara Falls to cool the heat generated by the number of vacuum tubes required."
—Professor of Electrical Engineering, New York University

"I don't know what use any one could find for a machine that would make copies of documents. It certainly couldn't be a feasible business by itself."
—The head of IBM, refusing to back the idea, forcing the inventor to found Xerox.

"Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction."
—Pierre Pachtet, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872.

"The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon."
—Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873.

And last but not least...

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."
—Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977.

20121121-12 21:40 SteveB "Study Finds Mammograms Lead to Unneeded Treatment"
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"Study Finds Mammograms Lead to Unneeded Treatment" by Marilyn Marchione, MSN News

Nov. 21, 2012, (<http://news.msn.com/science-technology/study-finds-mammograms-lead-to-unneeded-treatment>)

Mammograms have done surprisingly little to catch deadly breast cancers before they spread, a big U.S. study finds.

More than a million women have been treated for cancers that never would have threatened their lives, researchers estimate.

Up to one-third of breast cancers, or 50,000 to 70,000 cases a year, don't need treatment, the study suggests.

It's the most detailed look yet at overtreatment of breast cancer, and it adds fresh evidence that screening is not as helpful as many women believe. Mammograms are still worthwhile, because they do catch some deadly cancers and save lives, doctors stress. And some of them disagree with conclusions the new study reached.

But it spotlights a reality that is tough for many Americans to accept: Some abnormalities that doctors call "cancer" are not a health threat or truly malignant. There is no good way to tell which ones are, so many women wind up getting treatments like surgery and chemotherapy that they don't really need.

Men have heard a similar message about PSA tests to screen for slow-growing prostate cancer, but it's relatively new to the debate over breast cancer screening.

"We're coming to learn that some cancers — many cancers, depending on the organ — weren't destined to cause death," said Dr. Barnett Kramer, a National Cancer Institute screening expert. However, "once a woman is diagnosed, it's hard to say treatment is not necessary."

He had no role in the study, which was led by Dr. H. Gilbert Welch of Dartmouth Medical School and Dr. Archie Bleyer of St. Charles Health System and Oregon Health & Science University. Results are in Thursday's *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Breast cancer is the leading type of cancer and cause of cancer deaths in women worldwide. Nearly 1.4 million new cases are diagnosed each year. Other countries screen less aggressively than the U.S. does. In Britain, for example, mammograms are usually offered only every three years and a recent review there found similar signs of overtreatment.

The dogma has been that screening finds cancer early, when it's most curable. But screening is only worthwhile if it finds cancers destined to cause death, and if treating them early improves survival versus treating when or if they cause symptoms.

Mammograms also are an imperfect screening tool — they often give false alarms, spurring biopsies and other tests that ultimately show no cancer was present. The new study looks at a different risk: Overdiagnosis, or finding cancer that is present but does not need treatment.

Researchers used federal surveys on mammography and cancer registry statistics from 1976 through 2008 to track how many cancers were found early, while still confined to the breast, versus later, when they had spread to lymph nodes or more widely.

The scientists assumed that the actual amount of disease — how many true cases exist — did not change or grew only a little during those three decades. Yet they found a big difference in the number and stage of cases discovered over time, as mammograms came into wide use.

Mammograms more than doubled the number of early-stage cancers detected — from 112 to 234 cases per 100,000 women. But late-stage cancers dropped just 8 percent, from 102 to 94 cases per 100,000 women.

The imbalance suggests a lot of over-diagnosis from mammograms, which now account for 60 percent of cases that are found, Bleyer said. If screening were working, there should be one less patient diagnosed with late-stage cancer for every additional patient whose cancer was found at an earlier stage, he explained.

"Instead, we're diagnosing a lot of something else — not cancer" in that early stage, Bleyer said. "And the worst cancer is still going on, just like it always was."

Researchers also looked at death rates for breast cancer, which declined 28 percent during that time in women 40 and older — the group targeted for screening. Mortality dropped even more — 41 percent — in women under 40, who presumably were not getting mammograms.

"We are left to conclude, as others have, that the good news in breast cancer — decreasing mortality — must largely be the result of improved treatment, not screening," the authors write.

The study was paid for by the study authors' universities.

"This study is important because what it really highlights is that the biology of the cancer is what we need to understand" in order to know which ones to treat and how, said Dr. Julia A. Smith, director of breast cancer screening at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York. Doctors already are debating whether DCIS, a type of early tumor confined to a milk duct, should even be called cancer, she said.

Another expert, Dr. Linda Vahdat, director of the breast cancer research program at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York, said the study's leaders made many assumptions to reach a conclusion about over-diagnosis that "may or may not be correct."

"I don't think it will change how we view screening mammography," she said.

A government-appointed task force that gives screening advice calls for mammograms every other year starting at age 50 and stopping at 75. The American Cancer Society recommends them every year starting at age 40.

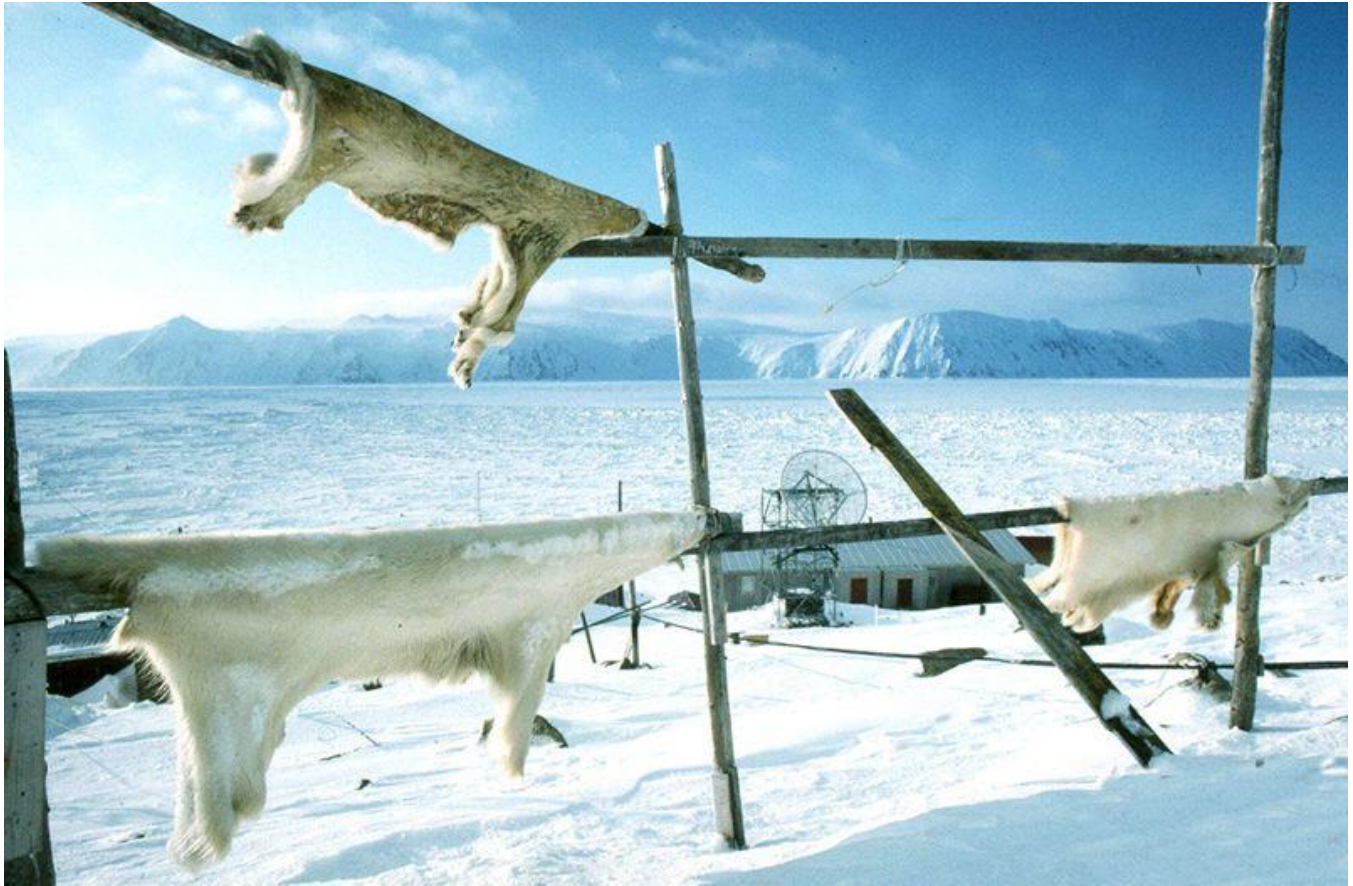
Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, the cancer society's deputy chief medical officer, said the study should not be taken as "a referendum on mammography," and noted that other high-quality studies have affirmed its value. Still, he said over-diagnosis is a problem, and it's not possible to tell an individual woman whether her cancer needs treated.

"Our technology has brought us to the place where we can find a lot of cancer. Our science has to bring us to the point where we can define what treatment people really need," he said.

20121121-13 23:58 Marci Cool Photos #12 (The Cloud Covered Island of Litla Dimun)



<http://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2080507/posts>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #276 — NOV. 23, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Vampire That Is Walmart

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 23, 2012)

Something to think about this year as you shop, shop, shop... Aren't store workers worth a living wage? What is the true definition of slavery?

"Why You Shouldn't Shop at Walmart on Black Friday" by Robert Reich, TruthDig

Nov. 21, 2012, (http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/why_you_shouldnt_shop_at_walmart_on_friday_20121121/)



A half century ago America's largest private-sector employer was General Motors, whose full-time workers earned an average hourly wage of around \$50, in today's dollars, including health and pension benefits.

Today, America's largest employer is Walmart, whose average employee earns \$8.81 an hour. A third of Walmart's employees work less than 28 hours per week and don't qualify for benefits.

There are many reasons for the difference – including globalization and technological changes that have shrunk employment in American manufacturing while enlarging it in sectors involving personal services, such as retail.

But one reason, closely related to this seismic shift, is the decline of labor unions in the United States. In the 1950s, over a third of private-sector workers belonged to a union. Today fewer than 7 percent do. As a result, the typical American worker no longer has the bargaining clout to get a sizeable share of corporate profits.

At the peak of its power and influence in the 1950s, the United Auto Workers could claim a significant portion of GM's earnings for its members.

Walmart's employees, by contrast, have no union to represent them. So they've had no means of getting much of the corporation's earnings.

Walmart earned \$16 billion last year (it just reported a 9 percent increase in earnings in the third quarter of 2012, to \$3.6 billion), the lion's share of which went instead to Walmart's shareholders — including the family of its founder, Sam Walton, who earned on their Walmart stock more than the combined earnings of the bottom 40 percent of American workers.

Is this about to change? Despite decades of failed unionization attempts, Walmart workers are planning to strike or conduct some other form of protest outside at least 1,000 locations across the United States this Friday – so-called "Black Friday," the biggest shopping day in America when the Christmas holiday buying season begins.

At the very least, the action gives Walmart employees a chance to air their grievances in public – not only lousy wages (as low as \$8 an hour) but also unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, excessive hours, and sexual harassment. The result is bad publicity for the company exactly when it wants the public to think of it as Santa Claus. And the threatened strike, the first in 50 years, is gaining steam.

The company is fighting back. It has filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board to preemptively ban the Black Friday strikes. The complaint alleges that the pickets are illegal "representational" picketing designed to win recognition for the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) union. Walmart's workers say they're protesting unfair labor practices rather than acting on behalf of the UFCW. If a court sides with Walmart, it could possibly issue an injunction blocking Black Friday's pickets.

What happens at Walmart will have consequences extending far beyond the company. Other big box retailers are watching carefully. Walmart is their major competitor. Its pay scale and working conditions set the standard.

More broadly, the widening inequality reflected in the gap between the pay of Walmart workers and the returns to Walmart investors, including the Walton family, haunts the American economy.

Consumer spending is 70 percent of economic activity, but consumers are also workers. And as income and wealth continue to concentrate at the top, and the median wage continues to drop – it's now 8 percent lower than it was in 2000 – a growing portion of the American workforce lacks the purchasing power to get the economy back to speed. Without a vibrant and growing middle class, Walmart itself won't have the customers it needs.

Most new jobs in America are in personal services like retail, with low pay and bad hours. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the average full-time retail worker earns between \$18,000 and \$21,000 per year.

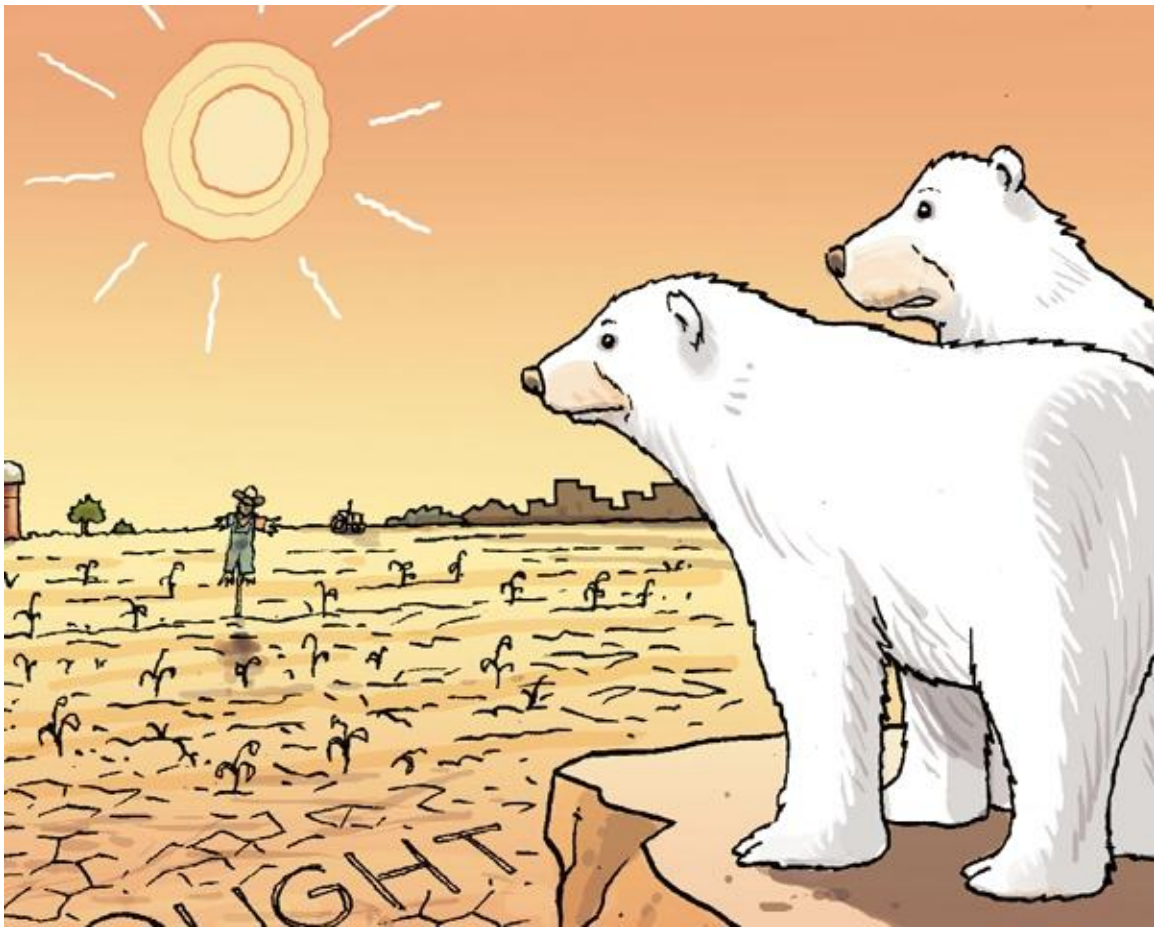
But if retail workers got a raise, would consumers have to pay higher prices to make up for it? A new study by the think tank Demos reports that raising the salary of all full-time workers at large retailers to \$25,000 per year would lift more than 700,000 people out of poverty, at a cost of only a 1 percent price increase for customers.

And, in the end, retailers would benefit. According to the study, the cost of the wage increases to major retailers would be \$20.8 billion — about one percent of the sector's \$2.17 trillion in total annual sales. But the study also

estimates the increased purchasing power of lower-wage workers as a result of the pay raises would generate \$4 billion to \$5 billion in additional retail sales.

This seems like a good deal all around.





I have never seen a better nature film, and considering the holiday....Online are interview questions, too, when I googled turkeys on Nature...ENJOY

Video: *My Life as a Turkey* airs Nov. 21, 2012 at 8/7c on PBS (check local listings).

Watch a preview of the PBS Nature film *My Life as a Turkey*: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/my-life-as-a-turkey/introduction/7268/>.

"Had I known what was in store—the difficult nature of the study and the time I was about to invest—I would have been hard pressed to justify such an intense involvement. But, fortunately, I naively allowed myself to blunder into a two-year commitment that was at once exhausting, often overwhelming, enlightening, and one of the most inspiring and satisfying experiences of my life." —Joe Hutto, *Illumination in the Flatwoods*

After a local farmer left a bowl of eggs on Joe Hutto's front porch, his life was forever changed. Hutto, possessing a broad background in the natural sciences and an interest in imprinting young animals, incubated the eggs and waited for them to hatch. As the chicks emerged from their shells, they locked eyes with an unusual but dedicated mother.

Deep in the wilds of Florida's Flatlands, Hutto spent each day living as a turkey mother, taking on the full-time job of raising sixteen turkey chicks. Hutto dutifully cared for his family around the clock, roosting with them, taking them foraging, and immersing himself in their world. In the process, they revealed their charming curiosity and

surprising intellect. There was little he could teach them that they did not already know, but he showed them the lay of the land and protected them from the dangers of the forest as best he could. In return, they taught him how to see the world through their eyes.

Based on his true story, *My Life as a Turkey* chronicles Hutto's remarkable and moving experience of raising a group of wild turkey hatchlings to adulthood. *My Life as a Turkey* premiered Wednesday, November 16, 2011.

20121122-03	13:33	SteveG	"How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP"
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Let them be together forever...

Destruction could be contagious. If so....Pffft, the problem is solved!

"How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP" by Eric Boehlert, AlterNet

Nov. 21, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/how-fox-news-destroying-gop>)

(An unhealthy relationship explains why Republicans are in trouble.)

Poor Mitt Romney has become a Republican punching bag as leaders within the party denounce his post-election comments about how President Obama won re-election by promising government-funded "gifts" to minority groups and young voters. As Republicans jab Romney though, they're missing the larger, more pressing point: They don't have a Mitt Romney problem. They have a Fox News problem.

Romney's "gifts" put-down echoed the infamous claim Romney made during the campaign that 47 percent of Americans see themselves as "victims" and are overly dependent on the government. With the campaign concluded, lots of fellow Republicans now feel free to bash Romney:

- "It's nuts," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.
- "I absolutely reject what he said," announced Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal.
- "When you're in a hole, stop digging. He keeps digging," complained Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC).

Though prominent conservatives are now lashing out at the former presidential candidate, the truth is Fox News has loudly championed the divisive philosophy behind Romney's "47 percent" and "gifts" comments for months and practically authored them for the Republican candidate. Last week Fox talkers cheered Romney's "gifts" post-election critique, treating it as a universal truth. (According to Fox Business host Stuart Varney, Obama was "buying votes with taxpayer money. Handouts all over the place.")

And it's not just a Fox News problem. Republicans have an even more expansive right-wing media problem (television, radio, Internet, etc.), which now doubles as the face and voice of the GOP and which celebrates the kind of toxic "47 percent" and "gifts" rhetoric that's being condemned within the party. The far-right press is convinced Obama won re-election by "offering" voters a "check" in exchange for their support.

As Media Matters noted:

Fox host Bill O'Reilly said that voters feel economic anxiety and just "want stuff," while Fox host Eric Bolling said Obama is a "maker versus taker guy." Fox contributor Monica Crowley said that the election showed that "more people now are dependent on government than not." Rush Limbaugh compared the president to Santa Claus, saying that "small things beat big things" in the election and "people are not going to vote against Santa Claus."

In fact, O'Reilly and Limbaugh rushed to take credit for Romney's "gifts" comments last week, since both of them had been pushing the "maker vs. taker" narrative in the wake of Romney's election loss.

The split over Romney's "gifts" remark highlights the larger divide within the conservative movement between two distinct camps: activists and politicians who want to get more Republicans elected vs. right-wing media players who want to grow their audience.

Note that after the Republican flop on Election Day, talk radio's Laura Ingraham dismissed conservative hand-wringers who worried about the political future by stressing that "talk radio continues to thrive while moderate Republicans like John McCain and to some extent Mitt Romney continue to lose presidential elections." That's how hosts like Ingraham view the political landscape. That's how they determine success and failure, not by tallying the wins and losses posted by Republicans candidates, but by counting up the number of radio stations that carry their syndicated show.

The same is true with Daily Caller editor Tucker Carlson. Asked why the conservative media completely failed in their attempt to "vet" Obama, who easily won re-election despite four years of hysterical, far-right claims about him, Carlson told BuzzFeed his publication's work had been a success because traffic to the site was up. (Carlson also blamed the "legacy media" for being hostile to his site's supposed "journalism.")

I'm sure that's comforting news to RNC leadership. And I'm sure the Daily Caller chasing inane, anti-Obama conspiracy theories for the next four years will put the Republican Party on firm footing for 2016.

For now, it's easy to blame Romney. That's what losing parties often do after an election, they pile-on the vanquished candidate. The part that would take some guts and fortitude would be calling out the right-wing media that are generating the type of hate rhetoric that Romney embraced and routinely used during the campaign.

Republicans won't because they're intimidated by the right-wing media's power. That's why New Jersey Governor Chris Christie quickly got on the phone with Fox News owner Rupert Murdoch after Murdochtweeted that Christie, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and his bipartisan appearances with Obama, needed to re-endorse Romney or "take the blame" for the president's re-election.

Murdoch: Jump! Republicans: How high?

That unhealthy relationship is the reason why, when it comes to the simple question of whether America is divided between "makers and takers," and if the 62 million Americans who voted for Obama represent a decaying nation of moochers in search of handouts, there's a wide gulf within the conservative movement. The right-wing media consider the claim to be a central tenet, while Republican leaders think saying it out loud is completely batty and a prescription for an electoral losing streak.

So yes, those are conspicuous handcuffs the GOP is wearing: Fox News has hijacked the party's communications apparatus and is pushing the type of paranoid, blame-the-voter rhetoric that loses elections, and the type of rhetoric Romney's now being blamed for. But the GOP can't turn it off. In fact, most Republicans can't even work up enough courage to ask Fox News to turn down the volume.

Unwilling to acknowledge the GOP's future poses a long-term media problem (the topic is not to be discussed), Republicans pretend they have a short-term Romney one.

20121122-05	17:16	Art	Re: "How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Good article. Thanks.

20121122-08	20:59	Bill	Re: "How Fox News Is Destroying the GOP" (reply to Art & SteveG, above)
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Amen, Art.

Great article, although I don't know if we can let Romney off so easily.

20121122-04	15:47	SteveG	"A Thanksgiving Day Note" (from Michael Moore)
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"A Thanksgiving Day Note" by Michael Moore, Here Comes Trouble

Nov. 22, 2012, (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/mike-friends-blog/thanksgiving-day-note>)

As tough as times still are, I hope you can join me today in giving thanks that our country seems to have turned a corner – away from politicians who win with hate and fear, and toward a future where we can be the best of who we are. It's a good day to heed the wise words of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 on his first Thanksgiving in office:

May we ask guidance in more surely learning the ancient truth that greed and selfishness and striving for undue riches can never bring lasting happiness or good to the individual or to his neighbors. May we be grateful for the passing of dark days ... for the brighter day to which we can win through by seeking the help of God in a more unselfish striving for the common bettering of mankind.

Since then it's always been two steps forward and one step back ... or sometimes it's felt like 200 steps forward and 199 steps back. But today I'm thankful we're moving in the right direction and picking up speed.

(Also, I'm not saying there's a connection, but in 1934, just one year after FDR spoke of the "common bettering of mankind," the Lions moved from Portsmouth, Ohio to Detroit and established the Thanksgiving Day Classic so that on this special day, before we sit down with loved ones to give thanks, we get to watch the Lions lose. Pass the turkey!)

P.S. If you can, please support the amazing efforts of #OccupySandy to help people on the East Coast still struggling this Thanksgiving to recover from last month's terrible hurricane.

20121122-06	17:42	SteveB	"Big Sugar's Sweet Little Lies"
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"Big Sugar's Sweet Little Lies" by Gary Taubes and Cristin Kearns Couzens, *Mother Jones*

Nov./Dec. 2012 Issue (<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2012/10/sugar-industry-lies-campaign>)

(How the industry kept scientists from asking: Does sugar kill?)

On a brisk spring Tuesday in 1976, a pair of executives from the Sugar Association stepped up to the podium of a Chicago ballroom to accept the Oscar of the public relations world, the Silver Anvil award for excellence in "the forging of public opinion." The trade group had recently pulled off one of the greatest turnarounds in PR history. For nearly a decade, the sugar industry had been buffeted by crisis after crisis as the media and the public soured on sugar and scientists began to view it as a likely cause of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Industry ads claiming that eating sugar helped you lose weight had been called out by the Federal Trade Commission, and the Food and Drug Administration had launched a review of whether sugar was even safe to eat. Consumption had declined 12 percent in just two years, and producers could see where that trend might lead. As John "JW" Tatem Jr. and Jack O'Connell Jr., the Sugar Association's president and director of public relations, posed that day with their trophies, their smiles only hinted at the coup they'd just pulled off.

Their winning campaign, crafted with the help of the prestigious public relations firm Carl Byoir & Associates, had been prompted by a poll showing that consumers had come to see sugar as fattening, and that most doctors suspected it might exacerbate, if not cause, heart disease and diabetes. With an initial annual budget of nearly \$800,000 (\$3.4 million today) collected from the makers of Dixie Crystals, Domino, C&H, Great Western, and other sugar brands, the association recruited a stable of medical and nutritional professionals to allay the public's fears,

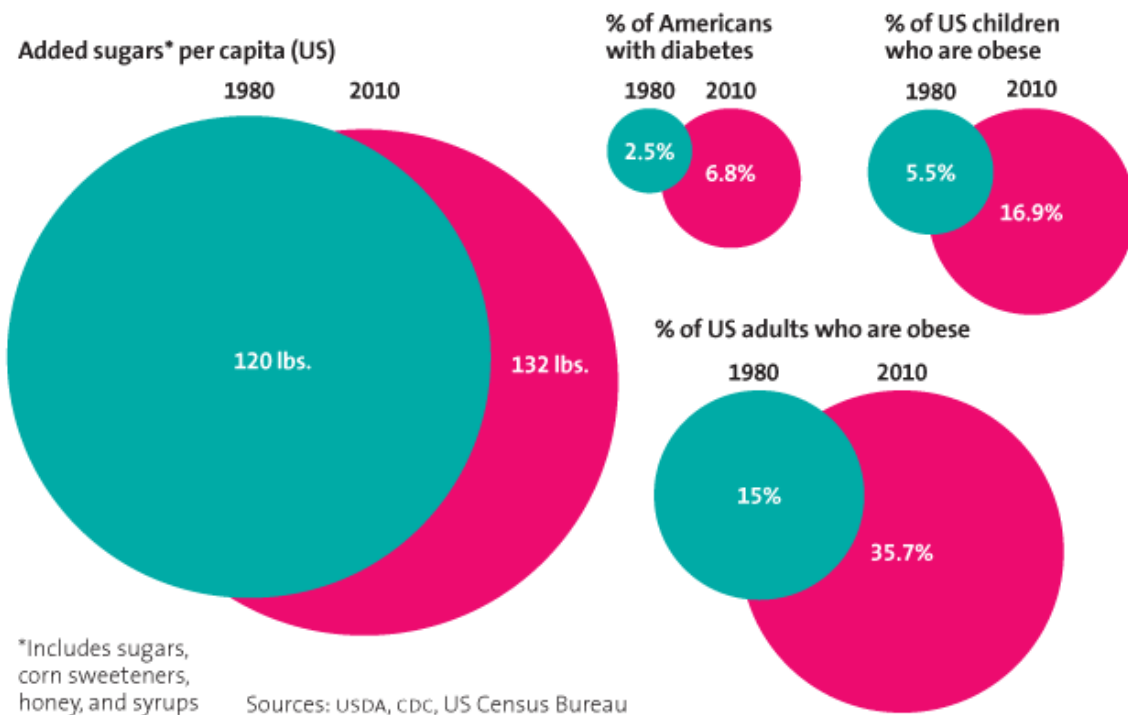
brought snack and beverage companies into the fold, and bankrolled scientific papers that contributed to a "highly supportive" FDA ruling, which, the Silver Anvil application boasted, made it "unlikely that sugar will be subject to legislative restriction in coming years."



The story of sugar, as Tatem told it, was one of a harmless product under attack by "opportunists dedicated to exploiting the consuming public." Over the subsequent decades, it would be transformed from what the *New York Times* in 1977 had deemed "a villain in disguise" into a nutrient so seemingly innocuous that even the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association approved it as part of a healthy diet. Research on the suspected links between sugar and chronic disease largely ground to a halt by the late 1980s, and scientists came to view such pursuits as a career dead end. So effective were the Sugar Association's efforts that, to this day, no consensus exists about sugar's potential dangers. The industry's PR campaign corresponded roughly with a significant rise in Americans' consumption of "caloric sweeteners," including table sugar (sucrose) and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). This increase was accompanied, in turn, by a surge in the chronic diseases increasingly linked to sugar. Since 1970, obesity rates in the United States have more than doubled, while the incidence of diabetes has more than tripled. (The chart below uses sugar "availability" numbers rather than the USDA's speculative new consumption figures.)

SUCROSE FOR COMFORT

As Americans eat more sugar, diabetes and obesity have soared.



Mother Jones

Precisely how did the sugar industry engineer its turnaround? The answer is found in more than 1,500 pages of internal memos, letters, and company board reports we discovered buried in the archives of now-defunct sugar companies as well as in the recently released papers of deceased researchers and consultants who played key roles in the industry's strategy. They show how Big Sugar used Big Tobacco-style tactics to ensure that government agencies would dismiss troubling health claims against their products. Compared to the tobacco companies, which knew for a fact that their wares were deadly and spent billions of dollars trying to cover up that reality, the sugar industry had a relatively easy task. With the jury still out on sugar's health effects, producers simply needed to make sure that the uncertainty lingered. But the goal was the same: to safeguard sales by creating a body of evidence companies could deploy to counter any unfavorable research.

This decades-long effort to stack the scientific deck is why, today, the USDA's dietary guidelines only speak of sugar in vague generalities. ("Reduce the intake of calories from solid fats and added sugars.") It's why the FDA insists that sugar is "generally recognized as safe" despite considerable evidence suggesting otherwise. It's why some scientists' urgent calls for regulation of sugary products have been dead on arrival, and it's why—absent any federal leadership—New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg felt compelled to propose a ban on oversized sugary drinks that passed in September.

In fact, a growing body of research suggests that sugar and its nearly chemically identical cousin, HFCS, may very well cause diseases that kill hundreds of thousands of Americans every year, and that these chronic conditions would be far less prevalent if we significantly dialed back our consumption of added sugars. Robert Lustig, a leading authority on pediatric obesity at the University of California-San Francisco (whose arguments Gary explored in a 2011 *New York Times Magazine* cover story), made this case last February in the prestigious journal *Nature*. In an article titled "The Toxic Truth About Sugar," Lustig and two colleagues observed that sucrose and HFCS are addictive in much the same way as cigarettes and alcohol, and that overconsumption of them is driving worldwide epidemics of obesity and type 2 diabetes (the type associated with obesity). Sugar-related diseases are costing America around \$150 billion a year, the authors estimated, so federal health officials need to step up and consider regulating the stuff.

The Sugar Association dusted off what has become its stock response: The Lustig paper, it said, "lacks the scientific evidence or consensus" to support its claims, and its authors were irresponsible not to point out that the full body of science "is inconclusive at best." This inconclusiveness, of course, is precisely what the Sugar Association has worked so assiduously to maintain. "In confronting our critics," Tatem explained to his board of directors back in 1976, "we try never to lose sight of the fact that no confirmed scientific evidence links sugar to the death-dealing diseases. This crucial point is the lifeblood of the association."

The Sugar Association's earliest incarnation dates back to 1943, when growers and refiners created the Sugar Research Foundation to counter World War II sugar-rationing propaganda—"How Much Sugar Do You Need? None!" declared one government pamphlet. In 1947, producers rechristened their group the Sugar Association and launched a new PR division, Sugar Information Inc., which before long was touting sugar as a "sensible new approach to weight control." In 1968, in the hope of enlisting foreign sugar companies to help defray costs, the Sugar Association spun off its research division as the International Sugar Research Foundation. "Misconceptions concerning the causes of tooth decay, diabetes, and heart problems exist on a worldwide basis," explained a 1969 ISRF recruiting brochure.

As early as 1962, internal Sugar Association memos had acknowledged the potential links between sugar and chronic diseases, but at the time sugar executives had a more pressing problem: Weight-conscious Americans were switching in droves to diet sodas—particularly Diet Rite and Tab—sweetened with cyclamate and saccharin. From 1963 through 1968, diet soda's share of the soft-drink market shot from 4 percent to 15 percent. "A dollar's worth of sugar," ISRF vice president and research director John Hickson warned in an internal review, "could be replaced with a dime's worth" of sugar alternatives. "If anyone can undersell you nine cents out of 10," Hickson told the *New York Times* in 1969, "you'd better find some brickbat you can throw at him."

By then, the sugar industry had doled out more than \$600,000 (about \$4 million today) to study every conceivable harmful effect of cyclamate sweeteners, which are still sold around the world under names like Sugar Twin and Sucaryl. In 1969, the FDA banned cyclamates in the United States based on a study suggesting they could cause bladder cancer in rats. Not long after, Hickson left the ISRF to work for the Cigar Research Council. He was described in a confidential tobacco industry memo as a "supreme scientific politician who had been successful in condemning cyclamates, on behalf of the [sugar industry], on somewhat shaky evidence." It later emerged that the evidence suggesting that cyclamates caused cancer in rodents was not relevant to humans, but by then the case was officially closed. In 1977, saccharin, too, was nearly banned on the basis of animal results that would turn out to be meaningless in people.

Meanwhile, researchers had been reporting that blood lipids—cholesterol and triglycerides in particular—were a risk factor in heart disease. Some people had high cholesterol but normal triglycerides, prompting health experts to recommend that they avoid animal fats. Other people were deemed "carbohydrate sensitive," with normal cholesterol but markedly increased triglyceride levels. In these individuals, even moderate sugar consumption could cause a spike in triglycerides. John Yudkin, the United Kingdom's leading nutritionist, was making headlines with claims that sugar, not fat, was the primary cause of heart disease.

In 1967, the Sugar Association's research division began considering "the rising tide of implications of sucrose in atherosclerosis." Before long, according to a confidential 1970 review of industry-funded studies, the newly formed ISRF was spending 10 percent of its research budget on the link between diet and heart disease. Hickson, the ISRF's vice president, urged his member corporations to keep the results of the review under wraps. Of particular concern was the work of a University of Pennsylvania researcher on "sucrose sensitivity," which sugar executives feared was "likely to reveal evidence of harmful effects." One ISRF consultant recommended that sugar companies get to the truth of the matter by sponsoring a full-on study. In what would become a pattern, the ISRF opted not to follow his advice. Another ISRF-sponsored study, by biochemist Walter Pover of the University of Birmingham, in England, had uncovered a possible mechanism to explain how sugar raises triglyceride levels. Pover believed he was on the verge of demonstrating this mechanism "conclusively" and that 18 more weeks of work would nail it down. But instead of providing the funds, the ISRF nixed the project, assessing its value as "nil."

The industry followed a similar strategy when it came to diabetes. By 1973, links between sugar, diabetes, and heart disease were sufficiently troubling that Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota convened a hearing of his

Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs to address the issue. An international panel of experts—including Yudkin and Walter Mertz, head of the Human Nutrition Institute at the Department of Agriculture—testified that variations in sugar consumption were the best explanation for the differences in diabetes rates between populations, and that research by the USDA and others supported the notion that eating too much sugar promotes dramatic population-wide increases in the disease. One panelist, South African diabetes specialist George Campbell, suggested that anything more than 70 pounds per person per year—about half of what is sold in America today—would spark epidemics.

In the face of such hostile news from independent scientists, the ISRF hosted its own conference the following March, focusing exclusively on the work of researchers who were skeptical of a sugar/diabetes connection. "All those present agreed that a large amount of research is still necessary before a firm conclusion can be arrived at," according to a conference review published in a prominent diabetes journal. In 1975, the foundation reconvened in Montreal to discuss research priorities with its consulting scientists. Sales were sinking, Tatem reminded the gathered sugar execs, and a major factor was "the impact of consumer advocates who link sugar consumption with certain diseases."

Following the Montreal conference, the ISRF disseminated a memo quoting Errol Marliss, a University of Toronto diabetes specialist, recommending that the industry pursue "well-designed research programs" to establish sugar's role in the course of diabetes and other diseases. "Such research programs *might* produce an answer that sucrose is bad in certain individuals," he warned. But the studies "should be undertaken in a sufficiently comprehensive way as to produce results. A gesture rather than full support is unlikely to produce the sought-after answers."

A gesture, however, is what the industry would offer. Rather than approve a serious investigation of the purported links between sucrose and disease, American sugar companies quit supporting the ISRF's research projects. Instead, via the Sugar Association proper, they would spend roughly \$655,000 between 1975 and 1980 on 17 studies designed, as internal documents put it, "to maintain research as a main prop of the industry's defense." Each proposal was vetted by a panel of industry-friendly scientists and a second committee staffed by representatives from sugar companies and "contributing research members" such as Coca-Cola, Hershey's, General Mills, and Nabisco. Most of the cash was awarded to researchers whose studies seemed explicitly designed to exonerate sugar. One even proposed to explore whether sugar could be shown to boost serotonin levels in rats' brains, and thus "prove of therapeutic value, as in the relief of depression," an internal document noted.

At best, the studies seemed a token effort. Harvard Medical School professor Ron Arky, for example, received money from the Sugar Association to determine whether sucrose has a different effect on blood sugar and other diabetes indicators if eaten alongside complex carbohydrates like pectin and psyllium. The project went nowhere, Arky told us recently. But the Sugar Association "didn't care."

In short, rather than do definitive research to learn the truth about its product, good or bad, the association stuck to a PR scheme designed to "establish with the broadest possible audience—virtually everyone is a consumer—the safety of sugar as a food." One of its first acts was to establish a Food & Nutrition Advisory Council consisting of a half-dozen physicians and two dentists willing to defend sugar's place in a healthy diet, and set aside roughly \$60,000 per year (more than \$220,000 today) to cover its cost.

Working to the industry's recruiting advantage was the rising notion that cholesterol and dietary fat—especially saturated fat—were the likely causes of heart disease. (Tatem even suggested, in a letter to the *Times Magazine*, that some "sugar critics" were motivated merely by wanting "to keep the heat off saturated fats.") This was the brainchild of nutritionist Ancel Keys, whose University of Minnesota laboratory had received financial support from the sugar industry as early as 1944. From the 1950s through the 1980s, Keys remained the most outspoken proponent of the fat hypothesis, often clashing publicly with Yudkin, the most vocal supporter of the sugar hypothesis—the two men "shared a good deal of loathing," recalled one of Yudkin's colleagues.

So when the Sugar Association needed a heart disease expert for its Food & Nutrition Advisory Council, it approached Francisco Grande, one of Keys' closest colleagues. Another panelist was University of Oregon nutritionist William Connor, the leading purveyor of the notion that it is dietary cholesterol that causes heart disease. As its top diabetes expert, the industry recruited Edwin Bierman of the University of Washington, who

believed that diabetics need not pay strict attention to their sugar intake so long as they maintained a healthy weight by burning off the calories they consumed. Bierman also professed an apparently unconditional faith that it was dietary fat (and being fat) that caused heart disease, with sugar having no meaningful effect.

It is hard to overestimate Bierman's role in shifting the diabetes conversation away from sugar. It was primarily Bierman who convinced the American Diabetes Association to liberalize the amount of carbohydrates (including sugar) it recommended in the diets of diabetics, and focus more on urging diabetics to lower their fat intake, since diabetics are particularly likely to die from heart disease. Bierman also presented industry-funded studies when he coauthored a section on potential causes for a National Commission on Diabetes report in 1976; the document influences the federal diabetes research agenda to this day. Some researchers, he acknowledged, had "argued eloquently" that consumption of refined carbohydrates (such as sugar) is a precipitating factor in diabetes. But then Bierman cited five studies—two of them bankrolled by the ISRF—that were "inconsistent" with that hypothesis. "A review of all available laboratory and epidemiologic evidence," he concluded, "suggests that the most important dietary factor in increasing the risk of diabetes is total calorie intake, irrespective of source."

The point man on the industry's food and nutrition panel was Frederick Stare, founder and chairman of the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health. Stare and his department had a long history of ties to Big Sugar. An ISRF internal research review credited the sugar industry with funding some 30 papers in his department from 1952 through 1956 alone. In 1960, the department broke ground on a new \$5 million building funded largely by private donations, including a \$1 million gift from General Foods, the maker of Kool-Aid and Tang.

By the early 1970s, Stare ranked among the industry's most reliable advocates, testifying in Congress about the wholesomeness of sugar even as his department kept raking in funding from sugar producers and food and beverage giants such as Carnation, Coca-Cola, Gerber, Kellogg, and Oscar Mayer. His name also appears in tobacco documents, which show that he procured industry funding for a study aimed at exonerating cigarettes as a cause of heart disease.

The first act of the Food & Nutrition Advisory Council was to compile "Sugar in the Diet of Man," an 88-page white paper edited by Stare and published in 1975 to "organize existing scientific facts concerning sugar." It was a compilation of historical evidence and arguments that sugar companies could use to counter the claims of Yudkin, Stare's Harvard colleague Jean Mayer, and other researchers whom Tatem called "enemies of sugar." The document was sent to reporters—the Sugar Association circulated 25,000 copies—along with a press release headlined "Scientists dispel sugar fears." The report neglected to mention that it was funded by the sugar industry, but internal documents confirm that it was.

The Sugar Association also relied on Stare to take its message to the people: "Place Dr. Stare on the AM America Show" and "Do a 3 ½ minute interview with Dr. Stare for 200 radio stations," note the association's meeting minutes. Using Stare as a proxy, internal documents explained, would help the association "make friends with the networks" and "keep the sugar industry in the background." By the time Stare's copious conflicts of interest were finally revealed—in *Professors on the Take*, a 1976 exposé by the Center for Science in the Public Interest—Big Sugar no longer needed his assistance. The industry could turn to an FDA document to continue where he'd left off.

While Stare and his colleagues had been drafting "Sugar in the Diet of Man," the FDA was launching its first review of whether sugar was, in the official jargon, generally recognized as safe (GRAS), part of a series of food-additive reviews the Nixon administration had requested of the agency. The FDA subcontracted the task to the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology, which created an 11-member committee to vet hundreds of food additives from acacia to zinc sulfate. While the mission of the GRAS committee was to conduct unbiased reviews of the existing science for each additive, it was led by biochemist George W. Irving Jr., who had previously served two years as chairman of the scientific advisory board of the International Sugar Research Foundation. Industry documents show that another committee member, Samuel Fomon, had received sugar-industry funding for three of the five years prior to the sugar review.

The FDA's instructions were clear: To label a substance as a potential health hazard, there had to be "credible evidence of, or reasonable grounds to suspect, adverse biological effects"—which certainly existed for sugar at the time. But the GRAS committee's review would depend heavily on "Sugar in the Diet of Man" and other work by its authors. In the section on heart disease, committee members cited 14 studies whose results were "conflicting," but

6 of those bore industry fingerprints, including Francisco Grande's chapter from "Sugar in the Diet of Man" and 5 others that came from Grande's lab or were otherwise funded by the sugar industry.

The diabetes chapter of the review acknowledged studies suggesting that "long term consumption of sucrose can result in a functional change in the capacity to metabolize carbohydrates and thus lead to diabetes mellitus," but it went on to cite five reports contradicting that notion. All had industry ties, and three were authored by Ed Bierman, including his chapter in "Sugar in the Diet of Man."

In January 1976, the GRAS committee published its preliminary conclusions, noting that while sugar probably contributed to tooth decay, it was not a "hazard to the public." The draft review dismissed the diabetes link as "circumstantial" and called the connection to cardiovascular disease "less than clear," with fat playing a greater role. The only cautionary note, besides cavities, was that all bets were off if sugar consumption were to increase significantly. The committee then thanked the Sugar Association for contributing "information and data." (Tatem would later remark that while he was "proud of the credit line...we would probably be better off without it.")

The committee's perspective was shared by many researchers, but certainly not all. For a public hearing on the draft review, scientists from the USDA's Carbohydrate Nutrition Laboratory submitted what they considered "abundant evidence that sucrose is one of the dietary factors responsible for obesity, diabetes, and heart disease." As they later explained in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, some portion of the public—perhaps 15 million Americans at that time—clearly could not tolerate a diet rich in sugar and other carbohydrates. Sugar consumption, they said, should come down by "a minimum of 60 percent," and the government should launch a national campaign "to inform the populace of the hazards of excessive sugar consumption." But the committee stood by its conclusions in the final version of its report presented to the FDA in October 1976.

For the sugar industry, the report was gospel. The findings "should be memorized" by the staff of every company associated with the sugar industry, Tatem told his membership. "In the long run," he said, the document "cannot be sidetracked, and you may be sure we will push its exposure to all corners of the country."

The association promptly produced an ad for newspapers and magazines exclaiming "Sugar is Safe!" It "does not cause death-dealing diseases," the ad declared, and "there is no substantiated scientific evidence indicating that sugar causes diabetes, heart disease or any other malady...The next time you hear a promoter attacking sugar, beware the ripoff. Remember he can't substantiate his charges. Ask yourself what he's promoting or what he is seeking to cover up. If you get a chance, ask him about the GRAS Review Report. Odds are you won't get an answer. Nothing stings a nutritional liar like scientific facts."

The Sugar Association would soon get its chance to put the committee's sugar review to the test. In 1977, McGovern's select committee—the one that had held the 1973 hearings on sugar and diabetes—blindsided the industry with a report titled "Dietary Goals for the United States," recommending that Americans lower their sugar intake by 40 percent (PDF). The association "hammered away" at the McGovern report using the GRAS review "as our scientific Bible," Tatem told sugar executives.

McGovern held fast, but Big Sugar would prevail in the end. In 1980, when the USDA first published its own set of dietary guidelines, it relied heavily on a review written for the American Society of Clinical Nutrition by none other than Bierman, who used the GRAS committee's findings to bolster his own. "Contrary to widespread opinion, too much sugar does not seem to cause diabetes," the USDA guidelines concluded. They went on to counsel that people should "avoid too much sugar," without bothering to explain what that meant.

In 1982, the FDA once again took up the GRAS committee's conclusion that sugar was safe, proposing to make it official. The announcement resulted in a swarm of public criticism, prompting the agency to reopen its case. Four years later, an agency task force concluded, again leaning on industry-sponsored studies, that "there is no conclusive evidence...that demonstrates a hazard to the general public when sugars are consumed at the levels that are now current." (Walter Glinsmann, the task force's lead administrator, would later become a consultant to the Corn Refiners Association, which represents producers of high-fructose corn syrup.)

The USDA, meanwhile, had updated its own dietary guidelines. With Fred Stare now on the advisory committee, the 1985 guidelines retained the previous edition's vague recommendation to "avoid too much" sugar but stated

unambiguously that "too much sugar in your diet does not cause diabetes." At the time, the USDA's own Carbohydrate Nutrition Laboratory was still generating evidence to the contrary and supporting the notion that "even low sucrose intake" might be contributing to heart disease in 10 percent of Americans.

By the early 1990s, the USDA's research into sugar's health effects had ceased, and the FDA's take on sugar had become conventional wisdom, influencing a generation's worth of key publications on diet and health. Reports from the surgeon general and the National Academy of Sciences repeated the mantra that the evidence linking sugar to chronic disease was inconclusive, and then went on to equate "inconclusive" with "nonexistent." They also ignored a crucial caveat: The FDA reviewers had deemed added sugars—those in excess of what occurs naturally in our diets—safe at "current" 1986 consumption levels. But the FDA's consumption estimate was 43 percent lower than that of its sister agency, the USDA. By 1999, the average American would be eating more than double the amount the FDA had deemed safe—although we have cut back by 13 percent since then.

Asked to comment on some of the documents described in this article, a Sugar Association spokeswoman responded that they are "at this point historical in nature and do not necessarily reflect the current mission or function" of the association. But it is clear enough that the industry still operates behind the scenes to make sure regulators never officially set a limit on the amount of sugar Americans can safely consume. The authors of the 2010 USDA dietary guidelines, for instance, cited two scientific reviews as evidence that sugary drinks don't make adults fat. The first was written by Sigrid Gibson, a nutrition consultant whose clients included the Sugar Bureau (England's version of the Sugar Association) and the World Sugar Research Organization (formerly the ISRF). The second review was authored by Carrie Ruxton, who served as research manager of the Sugar Bureau from 1995 to 2000.

The Sugar Association has also worked its connections to assure that the government panels making dietary recommendations—the USDA's Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, for instance—include researchers sympathetic to its position. One internal newsletter boasted in 2003 that for the USDA panel, the association had "worked diligently to achieve the nomination of another expert wholly through third-party endorsements."

In the few instances when governmental authorities have sought to reduce people's sugar consumption, the industry has attacked openly. In 2003, after an expert panel convened by the World Health Organization recommended that no more than 10 percent of all calories in people's diets should come from added sugars—nearly 40 percent less than the USDA's estimate for the average American—current Sugar Association president Andrew Briscoe wrote the WHO's director general warning that the association would "exercise every avenue available to expose the dubious nature" of the report and urge "congressional appropriators to challenge future funding" for the WHO. Larry Craig (R-Idaho, sugar beets) and John Breaux (D-La., sugarcane), then co-chairs of the Senate Sweetener Caucus, wrote a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, urging his "prompt and favorable attention" to prevent the report from becoming official WHO policy. (Craig had received more than \$36,000 in sugar industry contributions in the previous election cycle.) Thompson's people responded with a 28-page letter detailing "where the US Government's policy recommendations and interpretation of the science differ" with the WHO report. Not surprisingly, the organization left its experts' recommendation on sugar intake out of its official dietary strategy.

In recent years the scientific tide has begun to turn against sugar. Despite the industry's best efforts, researchers and public health authorities have come to accept that the primary risk factor for both heart disease and type 2 diabetes is a condition called metabolic syndrome, which now affects more than 75 million Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Metabolic syndrome is characterized by a cluster of abnormalities—some of which Yudkin and others associated with sugar almost 50 years ago—including weight gain, increased insulin levels, and elevated triglycerides. It also has been linked to cancer and Alzheimer's disease. "Scientists have now established causation," Lustig said recently. "Sugar causes metabolic syndrome."

Newer studies from the University of California-Davis have even reported that LDL cholesterol, the classic risk factor for heart disease, can be raised significantly in just two weeks by drinking sugary beverages at a rate well within the upper range of what Americans consume—four 12-ounce glasses a day of beverages like soda, Snapple, or Red Bull. The result is a new wave of researchers coming out publicly against Big Sugar.

During the battle over the 2005 USDA guidelines, an internal Sugar Association newsletter described its strategy toward anyone who had the temerity to link sugar consumption with chronic disease and premature death: "Any disparagement of sugar," it read, "will be met with forceful, strategic public comments and the supporting science." But since the latest science is anything but supportive of the industry, what happens next?

"At present," Lustig ventures, "they have absolutely no reason to alter any of their practices. The science is in—the medical and economic problems with excessive sugar consumption are clear. But the industry is going to fight tooth and nail to prevent that science from translating into public policy."

Like the tobacco industry before it, the sugar industry may be facing the inexorable exposure of its product as a killer—science will ultimately settle the matter one way or the other—but as Big Tobacco learned a long time ago, even the inexorable can be held up for a very long time.

20121122-07	18:56	SteveG	"Watch: The Disenfranchisement of Native Americans Continues Today"
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A very good video about us...

Aren't we wonderful...

"Watch: The Disenfranchisement of Native Americans Continues Today" by Megan Carpentier, The Raw Story

Nov. 22, 2012, (<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2012/11/22/watch-the-disenfranchisement-of-native-americans-continues-today/>)

Though the story of the first American Thanksgiving in which the Pilgrims host a great banquet to thank Native Americans who helped them survive the first winter, there is a darker history to the encounter.

The man behind that generosity, Tisquantum (Anglicized as Squanto), had been kidnapped by a British seafarer named Thomas Hunt in 1614 while Hunt was serving under Captain John Smith (he of Jamestown and the story of Pocahontas). Hunt sold Tisquantum — a Patuxet nation member, which was a part of the Wampanoag confederacy — into slavery in Spain, from which he eventually escaped. Tisquantum then signed up as an interpreter for a Newfoundland-bound ship, and made his way back to New England only to find that he was the sole survivor of a smallpox epidemic that claimed every other Patuxet. He is nonetheless credited with teaching basic survival skills, like planting and fishing, to the Pilgrims and helping them survive the harsh conditions, which was the reason for the November 1621 feast Americans now celebrate as Thanksgiving.

Tisquantum died in 1622, of smallpox.

"Reclaiming Their Voices: The Native American Vote in New Mexico" is an award-winning documentary film by Dorothy Fadiman that looks at the historical roots of the modern-day disenfranchisement of another Native people: the Laguna Pueblo. In it, she traces the historical roots of their oppression at the hands of Spanish colonists and their early efforts — led by Popé, depicted above — to overthrow their oppressors, as well as their modern-day fight for the right to vote and the freedom to access the polls, which Native Americans are still often denied.

Watch it in its entirety, courtesy of Dorothy Fadiman and Concentric Media, below.

Video: <http://vimeo.com/concentricmedia/reclaiming-their-voice>.



<http://www.cibando.com/blog/2012/11/16/thanksgiving-la-festa-del-ringraziamento.html>



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

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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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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #277 — NOV. 26, 2012

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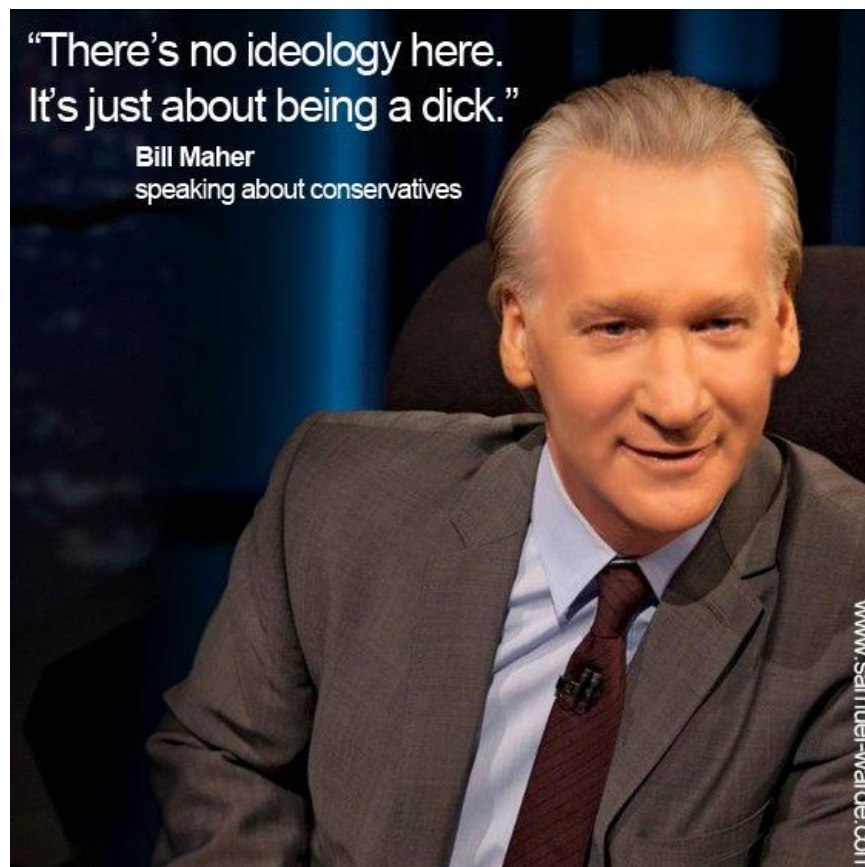
Now, Let's Get Something Done!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 26, 2012)

Where do you think we should start? The Republicans are already passing Immigration Reform. LOL!

"Won Direction" by Bill Maher, Huffington Post

Nov. 21, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-maher/won-direction_b_2174227.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)



New Rule: Now that he's been reelected, President Obama must get back at all those right wing hacks who tried to paint him as an angry black man pushing a liberal agenda by becoming an angry black man who's pushing a liberal agenda.

Now, I have been mostly holding my tongue about the president this past season, because I didn't want to muddy the waters in a country where you only get two choices, but Mr. President, there are two ways to look at your 51 to 48 percent victory: One is, we love you. The other is, we like you three percent better than Mitt Romney. And by the way, let us never speak that name again... Mitt... let it be a dark and buried memory of a close call with a creature equal parts pure evil and excellent posture, like getting dry humped in a crowded subway by Roger Moore.

I like this president. In all those secret strategy meetings we had, with me and him and George Soros and The New Black Panthers, I found him to be very agreeable, Allah be praised. But it's now the job of progressives to hold his feet to the fire for causes important to us. If not now, when?

There's no third term, Mr. President, so you may as well throw caution to the wind, 'cause it's not like we're using it to produce energy. Yes, clean energy, that's just one of many issues, like civil liberties, the drug war, the drone war, the war war, gun control -- that have been on my mind these last four years, and let's just say I've been waiting to exhale. And by that I mean, I've been holding my nose.

But you're free now -- with no more elections to win, you are free to never again have to kiss the ass of coal miners and say the words "clean coal." There is no such thing as "clean coal." It's like saying "Internet Privacy" or "Tea Party Intellectual." Or "Fox News Journalist."

Another priority should be cutting the defense budget -- we're the home of the brave, let's prove it by getting by with one less submarine. Yes, we were involved in a struggle against a radical enemy bent on our destruction -- but the election is over, and we need to recognize that America has the same problem with the defense budget that Mrs. Petraeus has with her husband's penis: it's swollen, and we can't bring ourselves to touch it.

And as far as Afghanistan goes, I know you said we're leaving in 2014, but look at it this way: enemies are always on guard for a surprise attack, but they'd never suspect a surprise retreat. Really. We can leave right away. Because we've figured out something the Afghans haven't: air travel.

And as long as we're ending wars, how about the War on Drugs? Two states, Colorado and Washington, have actually legalized pot now, which gives you as president the rare opportunity to improve the world by doing... absolutely nothing. Just tell Eric Holder to stay the hell out of Boulder, and if the conservatives bitch about it, throw states' rights back in their face -- isn't that their big theme, send it back to the states, the will of the people? Well, this is the people who, in those two states on election day, got up off the couch and drove their 1987 Toyota Tercel with the "Visualize World Peace" sticker on the back to the polls, and voted to stop the drug war. And then drove home and got back on the couch.

And finally, instead of rewriting Social Security, how about rewriting the Patriot Act? How about another look at rendition, and warrantless searches and wire taps? And how about stop listening in on our phone calls and reading our e-mails. I'm not a teenager and you're not my mom, ok? And besides, there's a better way to confirm your suspicions that I'm smoking weed and hanging around the wrong people: just watch my show.

Lest we forget...

"The Ghosts of Muranow: A Journalist's Mission to Illuminate Poland's Haunted Past" by Donald Snyder, NBC News

Nov. 23, 2012, (<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/23/15340725-the-ghosts-of-muranow-a-journalists-mission-to-illuminate-polands-haunted-past?lite>)

Journalist Beata Chomatowska's new book, *Stacja Muranow*, recounts the history of Muranow, a district in Warsaw where thousands of Jews were buried underneath the ruins of World War II.

When Polish journalist Beata Chomatowska walks the streets of Muranow, she can't stop thinking about the horrible things that happened there.

"It's a daily trauma," she said.

Present-day Muranow, a district of Warsaw, Poland, is built on rubble and the remains of Jews who perished there during World War II, but many residents are ignorant of the area's past.

So Chomatowska started a website to educate them called *Stacja Muranow*, which means "Muranow Stop." And in October she published a book by the same name, chronicling the haunted past of the former Jewish ghetto.



Photos of Jews who died during World War II adorn one of the few remaining buildings on Prozna Street in this picture taken during October of 2011 in Poland's Muranow district. (Courtesy of Adam Galica)

"It's a metaphor for Poland after the war, which largely erased the memory of its Jews," said Chomatowska, 35, who is not Jewish but has long been fascinated by the history of Jews in Poland. A native of Krakow, she moved to Muranow in 2005 to start working at Rzeczpospolita (The Republic), a leading Polish newspaper, and was shocked by the silence and emptiness of her new neighborhood.

"How do people live in houses made of ghetto bricks?" she asked. "The houses looked artificial and so did the hills. It was scary."

During World War II, the Germans packed 400,000 Jews into the 1.3 square-mile area that became known as the Warsaw Ghetto, where Muranow is located.

Some 300,000 Jews were deported to the killing center at Treblinka. The final deportation, on April 19, 1943, became the prearranged signal for an armed uprising against German forces. After the Jewish resistance was crushed on May 16, 1943, most of the remaining Jews were sent to death camps and the Germans razed the ghetto. Thousands were buried in the ruins. Many hid in cellars and were killed when the buildings were flattened.

Poland's post-war communist rulers, who were faced with the challenge of building housing for its many citizens left homeless by the war, found the rubble of the ghetto too extensive to clear. Buildings were constructed on the ruins using bricks from the ghetto. Built on this rubble, the street levels are uneven and often hilly.

Communist rulers touted Muranow as a utopia for workers and purposefully erased its Jewish history, leaving subsequent generations in the dark. In her book, Chomatowska tells the stories of some of the Jewish dead and laments the fact that most of today's Muranow residents know little of the neighborhood's history.



The ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto right after World War II.

That is starting to change. Thirty residents have joined Chomatowska's Muranow education project, meeting in an unfurnished office with no hint of the past. She's particularly proud of one of the murals painted by members of the group in the entry way of an apartment building. It features prominent Jews who lived in Muranow before the war, such as the creator of Esperanto, Ludwik Zamenhoff, who hoped his universal language would unite people of different cultures.

In her book, which is in Polish, Chomatowska tells the stories of former Muranow residents such as Jakub Wisnia, a Warsaw Ghetto fighter who survived the Holocaust.

After researching Wisnia's life, she described what he saw in August 1942 when Jews were being herded into trains destined for the Treblinka death camp.

One passage reads: "The streets of the ghetto were hell. Women wept. Children held their mothers tightly, and the men clenched their teeth nervously, looking for a moment when they could escape. Anyone who stepped out of line was beaten unconscious, or shot."

Wisnia fought alongside fellow Jews during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising until the Germans arrested him and sentenced him to death. The Polish underground rescued him, and in August 1944, he joined Poles, Jews and non-Jews, in their abortive revolt against German rule. He avoided arrest by hiding in the city's rubble for 108 days. He lived into his 80s, and was buried in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery in 1983.

The area's tragic past have led to claims of ghosts and feelings of dread. For example, Audrey Mallet, a French researcher who wrote a paper on Muranow, said some current inhabitants fear that Jews will come back and kill them.

Holocaust historian Barbara Engelking moved out of Muranow because she said she was haunted by its past.

"It was not like living in a graveyard," she said during an interview with NBC News at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw in October 2011. "It was like living with ghosts, and my research made them real."

Muranow residents should not be mired in the past, Chomatowska says, but it should inform their view of the present.

Her book, centered on the oblivion surrounding Muranow, is about "how people forget," she said. "And how the place doesn't let them forget."

20121123-02	12:54	Art	"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged"
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Interesting statistics...

As far as I know these numbers seem correct.

"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams

Nov. 19, 2012, (<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/11/19-3>)

(The numbers reveal the deadening effects of inequality in our country, and confirm that tax avoidance, rather than a lack of middle-class initiative, is the cause.)

1. Only THREE PERCENT of the very rich are entrepreneurs.

According to both Marketwatch and economist Edward Wolff, over 90 percent of the assets owned by millionaires are held in a combination of low-risk investments (bonds and cash), personal business accounts, the stock market, and real estate. Only 3.6 percent of taxpayers in the top .1% were classified as entrepreneurs based on 2004 tax returns. A 2009 Kauffman Foundation study found that the great majority of entrepreneurs come from middle-class backgrounds, with less than 1 percent of all entrepreneurs coming from very rich or very poor backgrounds.

2. Only FOUR OUT OF 150 countries have more wealth inequality than us.

In a world listing compiled by a reputable research team (which nevertheless prompted double-checking), the U.S. has greater wealth inequality than every measured country in the world except for Namibia, Zimbabwe, Denmark, and Switzerland.

3. An amount equal to ONE-HALF the GDP is held untaxed overseas by rich Americans.

The Tax Justice Network estimated that between \$21 and \$32 trillion is hidden offshore, untaxed. With Americans making up 40% of the world's Ultra High Net Worth Individuals, that's \$8 to \$12 trillion in U.S. money stashed in far-off hiding places.

Based on a historical stock market return of 6%, up to \$750 billion of income is lost to the U.S. every year, resulting in a tax loss of about \$260 billion.

4. Corporations stopped paying HALF OF THEIR TAXES after the recession.

After paying an average of 22.5% from 1987 to 2008, corporations have paid an annual rate of 10% since. This represents a sudden \$250 billion annual loss in taxes.

U.S. corporations have shown a pattern of tax reluctance for more than 50 years, despite building their businesses with American research and infrastructure. They've passed the responsibility on to their workers. For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 22 cents.

5. Just TEN Americans made a total of FIFTY BILLION DOLLARS in one year.

That's enough to pay the salaries of over a million nurses or teachers or emergency responders.

That's enough, according to 2008 estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN's World Food Program, to feed the 870 million people in the world who are lacking sufficient food.

For the free-market advocates who say "they've earned it": Point #1 above makes it clear how the wealthy make their money.

6. Tax deductions for the rich could pay off 100 PERCENT of the deficit.

Another stat that required a double-check. Based on research by the Tax Policy Center, tax deferrals and deductions and other forms of tax expenditures (tax subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, capital gains, and loopholes), which largely benefit the rich, are worth about 7.4% of the GDP, or about \$1.1 trillion.

Other sources have estimated that about two-thirds of the annual \$850 billion in tax expenditures goes to the top quintile of taxpayers.

7. The average single black or Hispanic woman has about \$100 IN NET WORTH.

The Insight Center for Community Economic Development reported that median wealth for black and Hispanic women is a little over \$100. That's much less than one percent of the median wealth for single white women (\$41,500).

Other studies confirm the racially-charged economic inequality in our country. For every dollar of NON-HOME wealth owned by white families, people of color have only one cent.

8. Elderly and disabled food stamp recipients get \$4.30 A DAY FOR FOOD.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has dropped significantly over the past 15 years, serving only about a quarter of the families in poverty, and paying less than \$400 per month for a family of three for housing and other necessities. Ninety percent of the available benefits go to the elderly, the disabled, or working households.

Food stamp recipients get \$4.30 a day.

9. Young adults have lost TWO-THIRDS OF THEIR NET WORTH since 1984.

21- to 35-year-olds: Your median net worth has dropped 68% since 1984. It's now less than \$4,000.

That \$4,000 has to pay for student loans that average \$27,200. Or, if you're still in school, for \$12,700 in credit card debt.

With an unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds of almost 50%, two out of every five recent college graduates are living with their parents. But your favorite company may be hiring. Apple, which makes a profit of \$420,000 per employee, can pay you about \$12 per hour.

10. The American public paid about FOUR TRILLION DOLLARS to bail out the banks.

That's about the same amount of money made by America's richest 10% in one year. But we all paid for the bailout. And because of it, we lost the opportunity for jobs, mortgage relief, and educational funding.

Bonus for the super-rich: A QUADRILLION DOLLARS in securities trading nets ZERO sales tax revenue for the U.S.

The world derivatives market is estimated to be worth over a quadrillion dollars (a thousand trillion). At least \$200 trillion of that is in the United States. In 2011 the Chicago Mercantile Exchange reported a trading volume of over \$1 quadrillion on 3.4 billion annual contracts.

A quadrillion dollars. A sales tax of ONE-TENTH OF A PENNY on a quadrillion dollars could pay off the deficit. But the total sales tax was ZERO.

It's not surprising that the very rich would like to fudge the numbers, as they have the nation.

20121124-01

05:54

SteveB

"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (to Pam)

I read this and thought of your concerns in this area, Pam. WHAT A PROBLEM! How can they pay instructors so little, yet college cost so much?

"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" by Wynton Hall, Breitbart.com

Nov. 21, 2012, (<http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2012/11/21/Surprise-PA-College-Slashes-Hours-To-Avoid-Obamacare>)

Pennsylvania's Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is slashing the hours of 400 adjunct instructors, support staff, and part-time instructors to dodge paying for Obamacare.

"It's kind of a double whammy for us because we are facing a legal requirement [under the new law] to get health care and if the college is reducing our hours, we don't have the money to pay for it," said adjunct biology professor Adam Davis.

On Tuesday, CCAC employees were notified that Obamacare defines full-time employees as those working 30 hours or more per week and that on Dec. 31 temporary part-time employees will be cut back to 25 hours. The move will save an estimated \$6 million.

"While it is of course the college's preference to provide coverage to these positions, there simply are not funds available to do so," said CCAC spokesperson David Hoover. "Several years of cuts or largely flat funding from our government supporters have led to significant cost reductions by CCAC, leaving little room to trim the college's budget further."

The solution, says United Steelworkers representative Jeff Cech, is that adjunct professors should unionize in an attempt to thwart schools seeking similar cost-savings efforts from avoiding Obamacare.

"They may be complying with the letter of the law, but the letter of law and the spirit of the law are two different things," said Mr. Cech. "If they are doing it at CCAC, it can't be long before they do it other places."

Under the new CCAC policy, adjunct professors will only be allowed to teach 10 credit hours a semester. Adjuncts are paid \$730 per credit hour.

"We all know we are expendable," said Mr. Davis, "and there are plenty of people out there in this economy who would be willing to have our jobs."

20121125-03	14:30	Pam	Re: "Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Alas, I am all too familiar with this, one reason I favor a government-run plan that covers everyone, no matter what. Universal coverage, single payer, problem solved.

20121124-02	10:07	SteveB	"We're Living the Dream; We Just Don't Realize It"
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"We're Living the Dream; We Just Don't Realize It" by Steven Johnson, CNN

Nov. 24, 2012, (http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/24/opinion/johnson-progress-overlooked/index.html?hpt=hp_c1)



Steven Johnson says that too often, we don't open our eyes to the progress the world has seen.

(Editor's note: Steven Johnson is the bestselling author of eight books, including *Where Good Ideas Come From* and *The Ghost Map*. His latest book, *Future Perfect: The Case for Progress in a Networked Age*, was published this fall by Riverhead.)

We've finally emerged from the season in which Americans were asked by the pollsters and politicians: "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" But sometimes it's important to contemplate the question of progress from a longer view: How are we doing on the scale of a generation?

To answer that question, take this brief quiz:

Over the past two decades, what have the U.S. trends been for the following important measures of social health: high school dropout rates, college enrollment, juvenile crime, drunken driving, traffic deaths, infant mortality, life expectancy, per capita gasoline consumption, workplace injuries, air pollution, divorce, male-female wage equality, charitable giving, voter turnout, per capita GDP and teen pregnancy?

The answer for all of them is the same: The trend is positive. Almost all those varied metrics of social wellness have improved by more than 20% over the past two decades. And that's not counting the myriad small wonders of modern medicine that have improved our quality of life as well as our longevity: the anti-depressants and insulin pumps and quadruple bypasses.

Many Americans, for instance, are convinced that "half of all marriages end in divorce," though that hasn't been the case since the early 1980s, when divorce rates peaked at just over 50%. Since then, they have declined by almost a third.

Americans enjoy longer, healthier lives in more stable families and communities than we did 20 years ago.

This is not merely a story of success in advanced industrial countries. The quality-of-life and civic health trends in the developing world are even more dramatic.

Even though the world's population has doubled over the past 50 years, the percentage living in poverty has declined by 50% over that period. Infant mortality and life expectancy have improved by more than 40% in Latin America since the early 1990s. No country in history has improved its average standard of living faster than China has over the past two decades.

Of course, not all the arrows point in a positive direction, particularly after the past few years. The number of Americans living in poverty has increased over the past decade, after a long period of decline. Wealth inequality has returned to levels last seen in the roaring '20s.

Today, the U.S. unemployment rate is still just under 8%, higher than its average over the past two decades. Household debt soared over the past 20 years, though it has dipped slightly thanks to the credit crunch of the last few years. And while the story of water and air pollution over that period is a triumphant one, the long-term trends for global warming remain bleak.

We are much more likely to hear about these negative trends than the positive ones for two primary reasons.

First, we tend to assume that innovation and progress come from big technology breakthroughs, from new gadgets and communications technologies, most of them created by the private sector. But the positive trends in our social health are coming from a more complex network of forces: from government intervention, public service announcements, demographic changes, the shared wisdom of life experiences passed along through generations and the positive effects of rising affluence. The emphasis on private sector progress is no accident; it is the specific outcome of the way public opinion is shaped within the current media landscape.

The public sector doesn't have billions of dollars to spend on marketing campaigns to trumpet its successes. A multinational corporation invents a slightly better detergent, and it will spend a legitimate fortune to alert the world that the product is now "new and improved." But no one takes out a prime-time ad campaign to tout the remarkable decrease in air pollution that we have seen over the past few decades, even though that success story is far more important than a trivial improvement in laundry soap.

That blind spot is compounded by the deeper lack of interest in stories of incremental progress. Curmudgeons, doomsayers, utopians and declinists all have an easier time getting our attention than opinion leaders who want to celebrate slow and steady improvement.

The most striking example of this can be seen in the second half of the 1990s, a period in which both economic and social trends were decisively upbeat: The stock market was surging, but inequality was in fact on the decline; crime, drug use, welfare dependence, poverty -- all were trending in an encouraging direction.

With a Democrat in the White House, you might assume that the op-ed pages of The Washington Post would be bursting with pride over the state of the nation, given the paper's center-left leanings. But you would be wrong. Over the course of 1997, in the middle of the greatest peacetime economic boom in U.S. history (and before the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke), 71% of all editorials published in the Post that expressed an opinion on some aspect of the country's current state focused on a negative trend. Less than 5% of the total number of editorials concentrated on a positive development. Even the boom years are a bummer.

I suspect, in the long run, the media bias against incremental progress may be more damaging than any bias the media display toward the political left or right. The media are heavily biased toward extreme events, and they are slightly biased toward negative events -- though in their defense, that bias may just be a reflection of the human brain's propensity to focus more on negative information than positive, a trait extensively documented by neuroscience and psychology studies.

The one positive social trend that did generate a significant amount of coverage -- the extraordinary drop in the U.S. crime rate since the mid-'90s -- seems to have been roundly ignored by the general public. The violent crime rate (crimes per thousand people) dropped from 51 to 15 between 1995 and 2010, truly one of the most inspiring stories of societal progress in our lifetime. And yet according to a series of Gallup polls conducted over the past 10 years, more than two-thirds of Americans believe that crime has been getting worse, year after year.

Whether these biases come from media distortions or our human psychology, they result in two fundamental errors in the popular mind: We underestimate the amount of steady progress that continues around us, and we misunderstand where that progress comes from. We should celebrate these stories of progress, not so we can rest on our laurels but instead so we can inspire the next generation to build on that success.

20121125-01 06:12 SteveB "Rejecting President Obama"
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I can get behind this!

"Rejecting President Obama" by Christopher Hahn, Fox News contributor, Huffington Post

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/arena/?hp=ar>)

Those of you who know anything about me know I love a good debate. I love intelligent conversation about politics and the issues facing the nation. Today I am drawing a line in the sand that shouldn't even be necessary. If you insist on questioning the legitimacy of President Obama I will no longer respond to you. Enough is enough. Go away, you have no place in the national conversation.

This includes referring to him as follows: "Your President," "The Democrats' President" or using the conservatives' weird illiterate slur calling him the "Democrat Party President" and any other attempt to say he's not legitimately our president. Let me give a special shoutout to the "president" that I've been getting a lot on Facebook and Twitter. That one has to stop for a variety of reasons. I understand that conservatives hate science and math, but do they also oppose grammar?

Get over it conservatives. He was elected by a majority of the popular vote twice. The last president to accomplish that was Ronald Reagan and he did that even after he raised taxes twice in his first term. For the record, Obama has never raised taxes on anyone. President Obama won nine of 10 competitive contests. His party picked up seats in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. He won, he's the president. If you want to argue with me about Obamacare, Benghazi, or sequester, then have at it. But save your quotes for appropriate purposes. "I've had it!"

Look, I know you're upset that the 2010 election of conservative governors in swing states didn't help keep Obama voters from the polls in 2012. I'm sure you thought long lines would deter lazy liberals. I know you had your heart set on Donald Trump's October surprise. I bet you thought the tea party was an enduring movement and that voter

ID laws would scare Latinos and students. It turns out the only state that worked in was Texas, and Texas wasn't in play this year. It will be in 2016, I hope you enjoy fighting for that one; it's blue by 2020 unless you make drastic changes to your platform.

So here's my advice to my many conservative friends, family and followers: get over it. Acceptance is the final stage of grief and its time you come to terms with the election of our president and the end of your party as a national force. The sooner you do that, the quicker you can rebuild. America needs at least two parties having a legitimate debate on the issues. The ridiculous demonization of the president's legitimacy hurts everyone. Please stop.

[20121125-02](#)

06:51

SteveB

"How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" & "Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points & CIA, FBI Signed Off"

Tell me John McCain is not getting a little 'long in the tooth' if not downright senile... The author, below, doesn't even bother to point out that McCain conveniently missed the two-hour intelligence briefing on Benghazi he was invited to, a meeting where he could have learned the truth he didn't care about. But Republican heroes don't care about truth.

And this stupid Republican Benghazi charade has been ridiculous ever since the Mitt stuck his foot in his mouth about it the first time...again! Truth!

Truth! Please at least try to find a little of it, Right.

These attempts upon Susan Rice are McCarthy era stuff...attempts to destroy the good name of a good public servant with no evidence of any wrongdoing whatsoever, and no wrongdoing whatsoever. What—Republicans don't believe in the Constitution's "due process" clause?

And, actually, this all makes it even more amazing that the President used the word "terrorism" the first time he publically spoke of the incident, bravely doing the very thing Mitt blamed him for NOT doing, the very thing the CIA and FBI did NOT want him to do. Brave President, indeed!

["How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast](#)

Nov. 25, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/25/michael-tomasky-on-how-john-mccain-humiliated-himself-on-susan-rice.html>)

(A new report appears to exonerate Susan Rice for public statements following the Benghazi attack. Will John McCain apologize for his reckless crusade against her? Don't bet on it.)

We don't yet really know as a society what a person has to do to completely and utterly cancel out a record of war heroism, but we may be about to find out. If this CBS News report [See below. –SteveB] is even close to accurate, John McCain's arguments of the last few weeks about Susan Rice are thrashingly demolished. He has, or should have, zero credibility now on this issue. It will be fascinating to see if he emerges from the holiday weekend subtly chastened, attempting to shift gears a bit, or whether he keeps the pedal to the paranoid metal. He's getting toward the sunset of what was once a reasonably distinguished career, a career (if we count his time in Vietnam) that began in the highest honor and has now descended into the darkest farce.

The CBS report found the following. It was the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that took the words "al Qaeda" and "terrorism" out of Rice's talking points for those Sept. 16 talk shows. It found also that both the CIA and the FBI approved of these edits, following standard operating procedure. The report states emphatically: "The White House or State Department did not make those changes." One source told the network's Margaret Brennan that the controversy over the word choice employed by Rice has come to the intel world as "a bit of a surprise."

Another source said that there were "legitimate intelligence and legal issues to consider, as is almost always the case when explaining classified assessments publicly."

There's one bit of irony introduced to the saga by all these details, which is that this report crystallizes the fact that Rice did indeed hide some information from the public on Sept. 16—but it's the kind of information that has always been concealed from public consumption, for the kinds of national-security-related reasons that the Washington establishment has always agreed upon. Historically, of course, if any person or persons have objected to this kind of filtering, they've typically been on the left. Think Daniel Ellsberg first and foremost. The right always defended this practice, on the grounds that making possibly sensitive information public too soon without the proper running of all the intelligence traps could only provide aid and comfort to the commies or the terrorists, as the case may be.

McCain certainly comes from this school. But this, you see, was different. Different from what, and different how, are both good questions. Different from those dozen or so attacks on American embassies while George W. Bush was president? It's true that no Americans died in those raids, let alone an ambassador, and that obviously does raise the stakes. But it hardly means that our intelligence agencies should alter their procedures to meet the political demands of one party, or one senator, or one cable "news" channel. If anything, it means dramatically the opposite, and one has no trouble at all picturing, if Benghazi had happened in the heat of a presidential campaign in which a Republican president was seeking reelection, an unctuous McCain standing before the cameras and lambasting Democrats in highly moralistic language for politicizing such a sensitive tragedy.

Well, live by the moral sword, die by it. In the same way conservatives couldn't see that Mitt Romney was going to lose because they believed only themselves and their own self-reinforcing propaganda, I think McCain probably isn't aware right now of what a joke he's becoming. He probably only goes to constituent meetings where they cheer on his desperate antics. I notice from cruising the Arizona papers that they're not really laying into him yet—just a few guarded criticisms and expressions of disappointment in the letter columns and such. Most importantly of all, establishment Washington has adored him. As long as those shields are there, he can ignore people like me and the MSNBC crowd.

But how long will they be there? McCain, because of what he endured 45 years ago, is permitted more than three strikes. But how many more? In 2008, he foisted Sarah Palin upon an unsuspecting nation. After losing that race, he then turned his back on legislating as he faced a primary challenge from his right in 2010, switching from being one of the few senators who actually took his work seriously enough to try to be a leader on compromise to becoming one of the body's chief obstructionists and windbags across a range of issues. And now, 2012, has found him slandering his country's ambassador to the United Nations on the basis of no evidence, creating circumstances that have forced U.S. intelligence agencies to defend their usually private methods in public, and of course laid the groundwork for future and wholly spurious impeachment proceedings. So this last one alone is three strikes, plus probably a couple others I'm not remembering.

Just as conservatives couldn't see that Romney was losing because they believed their own propaganda, I think McCain probably isn't aware right now of what a joke he's become.

McCain is maybe entitled to four or five strikes. But not six or seven. Will he stand down now from this embarrassing crusade? A McCain of a few years ago might have been capable of acknowledging error and saying that if Rice is nominated to be secretary of state, he is now prepared to confirm her, provided she addresses certain concerns to his satisfaction at her hearings. Can today's McCain do any such thing?

And will tomorrow's McCain go back to endorsing bipartisan immigration reform? With Republicans rushing to adopt this position, one would think that it would be a natural for McCain—to become, as he was in 2005, the lead Republican on any such legislation. But is he even interested in that anymore? Once you've hopped on the Crooked Talk Express, detrainning isn't easy.

["Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points, and CIA, FBI Signed Off" by CBS News](#)

Nov. 20, 2012, (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505263_162-57552328/sources-office-of-the-dni-cut-al-qaeda-reference-from-benghazi-talking-points-and-cia-fbi-signed-off/)

(WASHINGTON) CBS News has learned that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) cut specific references to "al Qaeda" and "terrorism" from the unclassified talking points given to Ambassador Susan Rice on the Benghazi consulate attack - with the agreement of the CIA and FBI. The White House or State Department did not make those changes.

There has been considerable discussion about who made the changes to the talking points that Rice stuck to in her television appearances on Sept. 16 (video), five days after the attack that killed American Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens, and three other U.S. nationals.

Republicans have accused her of making misleading statements by referring to the assault as a "spontaneous" demonstration by extremists. Some have suggested she used the terminology she did for political reasons.

However, an intelligence source tells CBS News correspondent Margaret Brennan the links to al Qaeda were deemed too "tenuous" to make public, because there was not strong confidence in the person providing the intelligence. CIA Director David Petraeus, however, told Congress he agreed to release the information -- the reference to al Qaeda -- in an early draft of the talking points, which were also distributed to select lawmakers.

"The intelligence community assessed from the very beginning that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack." DNI spokesman Shawn Turner tells CBS News. That information was shared at a classified level -- which Rice, as a member of President Obama's cabinet, would have been privy to.

An intelligence source says the talking points were passed from the CIA to the DNI, where the substantive edits were made, and then to FBI, which made more edits as part of "standard procedure."

The head of the DNI is James Clapper, an Obama appointee. He ultimately did review the points, before they were given to Ambassador Rice and members of the House intelligence committee on Sept. 14. They were compiled the day before.

Brennan says her source wouldn't confirm who in the agency suggested the final edits which were signed off on by all intelligence agencies.

Another source, a senior U.S. official familiar with the drafting of the talking points, tells CBS News the "controversy this word choice has caused came as a surprise."

"The points were not, as has been insinuated by some, edited to minimize the role of extremists, diminish terrorist affiliations, or play down that this was an attack," the official tells CBS News, adding that there were "legitimate intelligence and legal issues to consider, as is almost always the case when explaining classified assessments publicly."

"Most people understand that saying 'extremists' were involved in a direct assault on the mission isn't shying away from the idea of terrorist involvement," added the official. "Because of the various elements involved in the attack, the term extremist was meant to capture the range of participants."

A spokeswoman for House Intelligence Committee chairman Mike Rogers suggested today that the DNI's explanation is different than what the committee was told behind closed doors last week.

"The statement released Monday evening by the DNI's spokesman regarding how the Intelligence Community's talking points were changed gives a new explanation that differs significantly from information provided in testimony to the Committee last week," House Intelligence Committee spokeswoman Susan Phalen told CBS News. "Chairman Rogers looks forward to discussing this new explanation with Director Clapper as soon as possible to understand how the DNI reached this conclusion and why leaders of the Intelligence Community testified late last week that they were unaware of who changed the talking points."

Several militant groups have been eyed as likely culprits, including the Islamic extremist militia Ansar al Sharia, which was based in Eastern Libya and enjoyed huge power in Benghazi before the attack. Gen. Carter Ham, chief of

the U.S. Africa Command, said recently that there were "linkages" between al Qaeda and some of the people who attacked the consulate and the CIA annex about a mile away.

CBS News senior correspondent John Miller, himself a former Deputy Director of the DNI's analysis division, explained on "CBS This Morning" in the weeks after the Benghazi attack why it has been so difficult for American intelligence agents to clearly identify and label the suspects in the assault.

"We want a wiring diagram," Miller said. "We want an organized picture: 'It was al Qaeda who ordered it, it was Ansar al Sharia who carried it out, it was this group that assisted. The problem is, the lines have blurred between those groups and their members. Ansar al Sharias are popping up in places like Benghazi, but also in Yemen, also in Tunisia, in all these countries -- and they're not al Qaeda, but they are reading from the al Qaeda narrative and they are being influenced by people who are formerly influential extremists in al Qaeda."

"The actual truth is, the picture isn't that clear, but we can piece it together, and that's not satisfying to people who are used to saying, 'You can attach this attack to that group,'" said Miller.

20121125-04	16:46	MarthaH	"Republicans Face Unexpected Challenges in Coastal South Amid Shrinking White Vote"
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No surprise here...

"Republicans Face Unexpected Challenges in Coastal South Amid Shrinking White Vote" by Douglas A. Blackmon, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 24. 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/republicans-face-unexpected-challenges-in-coastal-south-amid-shrinking-white-vote/2012/11/23/02cbda58-336a-11e2-bb9b-288a310849ee_story.html)

(OXFORD, Miss.) Late on election night, a small melee erupted at the University of Mississippi here when a group of white students frustrated by the reelection of President Obama marched outside and began shouting racial slurs at African American students. Several hundred people gathered to watch as two white students were arrested.

"Mississippi still has a lot of work to do in race relations," said Kimbrelly Dandridge, an African American Obama supporter and president of the student body.

Yet even as that incident evoked ugly memories of an earlier era, Election Day in the South told a newer and more surprising story: The nation's first black president finished more strongly in the region than any other Democratic nominee in three decades, underscoring a fresh challenge for Republicans who rely on Southern whites as their base of national support.

Obama won Virginia and Florida and narrowly missed victory in North Carolina. But he also polled as well in Georgia as any Democrat since Jimmy Carter, grabbed 44 percent of the vote in deep-red South Carolina and just under that in Mississippi — despite doing no substantive campaigning in any of those states.

Much of the post-election analysis has focused on the demographic crisis facing Republicans among Hispanic voters, particularly in Texas. But the results across other parts of the South, where Latinos remain a single-digit minority, point to separate trends among blacks and whites that may also have big implications for the GOP's future.

The results show a region cleaving apart along new electoral fault lines. In the region's center, clustered along the Mississippi River — where Bill Clinton polled most strongly — the GOP remains largely unchallenged and the voting divide between blacks and whites is deepening. Nearly nine of 10 of white voters in Mississippi, for instance, went for Republican nominee Mitt Romney this year, according to exit polls. About 96 percent of black voters in the state supported Obama.

The pattern is markedly different in the five states that hug the Atlantic coast from Virginia to Florida, which together hold 82 of the South's 160 electoral votes. A combination of a growing black population, urban expansion, oceanfront development and in-migration from other regions has opened up increasing opportunities for Democrats in those states.

"Georgia is an achievable target for Democrats in 2016," said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, a frequent Obama surrogate during the campaign. "What you're going to see is the Democratic Party making a drive through the geography from Virginia to Florida."

That will be easier said than done — particularly when the Democratic nominee is not Obama — but powerful forces in the region are clearly eroding GOP dominance. The trends pose difficulties for a Republican Party that has been shifting toward Dixie since the "Southern strategy" of the Nixon era, which sought to encourage white flight from the Democratic Party.

In every Southern state except Louisiana, the population of African Americans grew substantially faster than that of whites over the past decade. The growth is fueled by black retirees from the north and rising numbers of young, well-educated blacks in prosperous cities such as Atlanta, Norfolk, Charlotte and Charleston, S.C.

The influx also includes fast-growing, but smaller, Hispanic populations and an infusion of less-conservative outsiders attracted to popular coastal areas. Together, the shifts are making the electoral landscape from Virginia and the Carolinas look increasingly like the swing state of Florida.

Obama's 2012 numbers in the Southeastern coastal states outperformed every Democratic nominee since Carter and significantly narrowed past gaps between Democratic and Republican candidates. The lone possible exception is Georgia in 1996, which gave Arkansas native Bill Clinton 45.8 percent in 1996; Obama fell 0.4 percent short of that mark in tentative 2012 results, but ongoing revisions could close the gap.

The proportion of white voters in the South is also shrinking. Southern whites voted overwhelmingly for Romney, but in six Southern states, far fewer of them appear to have gone to the polls on Nov. 6 than the number who voted for Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) in 2008.

In Florida, the share of votes cast by whites this year fell to 66 percent, down from 73 percent in 2000. In Georgia, the number of white voters declined while African American registration increased nearly 6 percent and Hispanic voters grew by 36 percent.

"Republicans can focus all they want on Hispanics," said John Anzalone, a Montgomery, Ala., pollster who helped analyze swing states for the Obama campaign. "But they also have a problem with whites, in this election cycle, just showing up."

Many Republican leaders in the South say the lower turnout by whites in some areas simply reflected lower enthusiasm for Romney as a candidate, and doesn't signal a longer term decline in GOP strength.

Prominent conservatives in the region are acutely aware of the danger posed by the trends. "We've got to go out and sell our ideas not just to the choir, but the whole church," said Henry Barbour, a Republican National Committee member from Mississippi and a top Romney fundraiser (and nephew of former governor Haley Barbour). "We're not going to get 25 percent of the black vote in four years, but we've got to figure out which African Americans share our core beliefs."

Some Republicans had hoped to make at least small inroads among black voters in 2012 given lower African American turnout in the 2010 midterms, high black unemployment and the modest success of presidential candidate Herman Cain in the Republican primaries. They reasoned that winning over just a small percentage of black voters in key states such as Virginia, North Carolina and Florida could alter the outcome of the race.

The Rev. C.L. Bryant, an African American tea party activist from DeSoto Parish, La., helped lead a spirited effort by some of the most conservative GOP-aligned groups to use Obama's support for gay marriage as an opening to appeal to socially conservative black voters.

He produced a feature-length film titled *Runaway Slave* that urged blacks to flee the Democratic Party. It was shown in more than 20 cities, while he and other conservative African Americans toured the country to blast Obama's support for abortion rights and gay issues.

But the issues had little apparent impact on Obama's support within the black community. Black pastors — some of whom had preached against gay marriage in the past — rallied to the president. Romney also hit a number of sour notes with minorities during the campaign, including his apparent suggestion that blacks who support Obama want "more free stuff" from government.

"Romney was real disrespectful," said Rodney Collier, 58, a black stylist at Haywood's Hair Images in Richmond. "How can you be so negative and nasty to a sitting president?"

By the closing stage of the campaign, gay marriage had largely disappeared from the conversation among black voters. "We don't see any of that," said Tiara Moore, 23, a biology student, after a day of canvassing before the election at historically black Hampton University in Virginia. "They talk about health care and student loans."

Contrary to the expectations of many Republican pollsters, black voters came out in droves on Election Day and voted overwhelmingly for Obama — near or above 95 percent in most parts of the South.

"We were all basically stunned at the results," Bryant said. "It is very clear that the direction of the Republican Party — the conservative movement — is necessarily going to have to include the changing face of America and address the concerns of minorities, blacks, Latinos, and even younger white women, all young people.... It has to happen or we're going to be insignificant."

(Danielle Fisher contributed to this report.)

20121125-05	17:37	SteveG	"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned"
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"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned" by Brentin Mock, AlterNet/Colorlines

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/rights-voters-got-lot-attention-12-here-are-10-things-we-learned>)

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(Not since 1965 have the rights of voters gotten so much attention.)

A little over a week after the presidential election has ended, many voting rights watchers are reflecting on all that we learned through this year's campaigns: what went right, what went wrong, and the unresolved challenges that remain ahead. As for the overall takeaway, Advancement Project director Judith Browne-Dianis wraps it up nicely, saying, "The national conversation around voting rights was amplified like we haven't seen since 1965."

This year, more Americans arguably learned more about the voting process than any year in recent memory. Civil rights and election protection campaigns made people aware of things like the difference between a poll watcher and a poll observer; how people use data to purge voters; and what voters' general rights are while standing in poll lines. On a more nuanced level, the discussion around voter ID laws gave Americans a greater understanding of not only how many people don't have government-issued ID, but also the reasons why.

Probably most importantly, though, many Americans learned—or at least were reminded—about the history of our democracy, of how civil rights heroes helped the nation realize that democracy, by forcing an expansion of the electorate, which at core is an expansion of citizenship. "Americans began to recognize that democracy was under

assault,” says Browne-Dianis of the past year. “And rather than concede to this partisan effort to restrict their vote as an insurmountable setback, they saw it as a challenge to be met.”

The effort to meet that challenge produced both victories and some remaining battles, but there are some specific lessons we can take away from each.

1. Data helps win elections, but it’s not everything.

The Obama campaign has well demonstrated how to identify and target new voters, while the Romney campaign has learned that data, like science, is actually necessary. But data only takes get-out-the-vote efforts so far, because someone has to actually get people to the polls. Black churches and NAACP chapters in Ohio and Florida turned out record-high black voters through their “Souls to the Polls” campaigns, by shuttling and busing people straight from church services to voting booths. These campaigns, which were enormously successful in 2008 as well, have been a primary target of those who insist, beyond all proof to the contrary, that voter fraud is a problem. Defending them—or, the early voting rules that enable them—proved crucial in 2012 to increasing the number of black people who participate in democracy.

Meanwhile, sometimes the data just failed to identify voters of color in the first place. In Minnesota, Hana Worku of Voices for Voting Rights told Colorlines that most of the voters they made contact with were not people circulating in voter databanks. Rather, they reached “voters in low-income and communities of color that would not have been contacted otherwise.” In Tampa, I spent time doing “Knock n’ Grabs”—going door-to-door asking people if they’ve voted, and if not, taking them to the polls—with NAACP organizers. They ended up shedding their canvassing lists and instead cruising the streets literally picking up voters off of stoops, porches and corners because they knew the people on the data sheets likely weren’t home.

2. Voters of color were invisible, to their advantage.

In some ways, the fact that voters of color weren’t turning up in databases was a good thing. It kept people who may not have had their best interests in mind from targeting them, while throwing off Republican pollsters who thought they had the election in the bag. Campaign aides to Mitt Romney have said their calculations about possibly winning Florida were thrown off because “they saw voters they never even knew existed turn out in places like Osceola, Fla.,” which is predominantly Puerto Rican, Latino and African American. In Maine, there was massive black voter turnout, but according to the Republican Party chair: “Nobody in town knew them.”

3. The need for early voting was evident.

Among the 2012 election’s legacies will be photos of long lines at polling locations across the nation, like a reprised version of “Eyes on the Prize.” It didn’t need to be that way. Proper targeting of resources and voting machines could have streamlined voting. In Tampa, the lines held up because there were 11 constitutional amendments on the ballots, some of which voters said were indecipherable. Long lines ruled the day in Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland as well. Our community journalist Hermelinda Cortes reported about how the lack of early and absentee voting opportunities hurt Virginia. Wrote Cortes: “The state doesn’t make it easy to vote early. Unlike other states, Virginia demands that early voters meet one of more than a dozen qualifications and sign a sworn statement.”

In Florida, election law expert Dan Smith studied the early voting cutbacks from this year and concluded, “It appears that fewer days of early voting—especially the elimination of the final Sunday prior to Election Day—have led to fewer opportunities for some voters to turn out to vote. Moreover, it is certainly arguable based on the evidence presented here that the reduction of early voting days caused by House Bill 1355 has had a differential effect on racial and ethnic minorities in Florida, specifically blacks.”

4. Right wing poll watchers played themselves.

Our Voting Rights Watch project sounded the alarm early on about the plans of poll-watching groups like True the Vote. Earlier this year, True the Vote said it would have an army of a million people to make voters

feel like they were “driving and seeing the police follow” them. The Republican Party also launched efforts to marshal a massive poll watcher showing. But most of these efforts were deflated, mainly because media outlets and voting rights advocates put them on blast and thus drew close scrutiny. But they were also undone through their own incompetence.

Our reporter Aura Bogado, for instance, caught one poll watcher in Colorado reporting “high concentrations of people of color” in a voting location, as if that was against the law. In Ohio, poll watchers from True the Vote were banned from one county’s precincts because they didn’t register properly. In general, True the Vote aligned itself with so many right wing extremists and racists that their non-partisan claims were rendered pure folly. Meanwhile, poll watcher manuals from both True the Vote and the Republican Party showed false information. All of this significantly undermined their relationships with election officials and their credibility in the eyes of the news media.

5. Election Protection works.

Some people are saying that pre-election voter suppression threats were overhyped. Maybe. Or maybe there was enough of a counter-movement through Election Protection lawyers who were on the scene in such bulk that their presence thwarted voter harassment, or fended it off when it appeared. I personally saw Election Protection lawyers intervene when poll watchers got rambunctious, while also helping older people get through long lines and mitigate voter confusion, which was prevalent. Our community journalist Hillary Abe wrote about how one team not only helped deflect voter suppression efforts targeting Native Americans, but also how they mobilized this year to expand their political power, fighting off voter ID proposals in the process.

6. Grassroots organizers can turn out voters on shoestring budgets—but that’s not a good thing.

In Orlando, Miami and Tampa, I spent time with get-out-the-vote advocates who were working on the flimsiest of budgets, if they had budgets at all. Many of the organizers were themselves unemployed and doing volunteer work. I learned that this was also true elsewhere. In Minnesota, Hana Worku tells us that “organizers in communities of color were scrambling just to find materials, translation, and funding to pay for their work, even part-time.” In Pittsburgh, organizer Celeste Taylor was somewhat positive about it, telling me, “It is so important to understand that the success of nonprofits, nonpartisan and effective community based organizing work is that they utilize a lot of volunteers, which includes folks like myself who were being paid for part-time work and worked nearly all the time—many 12-to-18 hour days! It was a huge sacrifice to earn so little and work so much, but the payoff was seeing how the people in our communities appreciated the information and turned out to vote!” True, but there’s no reason why putting in 60-plus hours of work shouldn’t be adequately compensated. If it’s bad for Wal-Mart, it’s bad for voter work.

7. People of color were self-motivated to vote, not just motivated by Obama.

As I wrote previously, people didn’t wait hours in line just to vote in the guy known for deporting the most immigrants or failing to make a dent in black unemployment. There was a deeper dedication at play. Our community journalist Noni Grant said that while in the field she asked several people why they felt it was important to vote. The overwhelming response was “black folks have fought and died for the right to vote.” The history of civil rights and voting rights in America is still within the active memory of many people of color, and so this was a civic-duty calling, especially in the face of such a vocal and overt suppression effort.

8. A lot of people didn’t vote, because they couldn’t, because of felonies.

In Florida and Virginia alone, felony disenfranchisement kept almost two million people from voting this November. And even though the process in Virginia for restoring rights to those with felonies was streamlined by the governor, it is still cumbersome enough that many weren’t able to apply for rights restoration in time. Rosana Cruz, of New Orleans-based Voices Of The Ex-offender wrote about this problem saying, “Nearly half a million people in the five Gulf states didn’t vote today, because as formerly incarcerated people, people on probation and parole, or currently incarcerated people, they’ve been denied

that right. That number doesn't count the Formerly Incarcerated People who don't even know if they have the right to vote, because the laws blocking voting rights vary from state to state."

9. Hundreds of thousands of votes still haven't been counted.

In Arizona, Florida and Pennsylvania, there are still outstanding ballots to be counted. Many voters in these states got to the polls only to find that their names were not listed, even though they were certainly registered. In Arizona, hundreds of thousands of people are wondering where their registration, or their vote went. In Philadelphia, it's the same deal. Philadelphia City Paper has attempted to get to the bottom of what happened to the disappearing votes, and was not able to come up with anything. Like President Obama said, "We have to fix that."

10. Gerrymandering and redistricting caused confusion.

This is probably the most under-reported story in the country. Following the 2010 Census, new voting district lines were drawn, which changed where many people go to vote. If you've moved since the Census came out, then there's even more room for confusion. In Philadelphia, a lot of the mysterious vanishing voters are suspected to be a result of newly drawn lines and a failure by county commissioners to alert voters of their new voting districts.

Trupania Bonner, of Moving Forward Gulf Coast, Inc., was able to get communities in Louisiana not only educated about the redistricting process, but also taught them how to get involved in it. Says Bonner: "No one really understands what redistricting is, and how when gerrymandering occurs you see how the Southern Manifesto and those types of ideologies progress from that. So for us, we learned the process of redistricting and then also how to draw districts ourselves. We then bought the software used by legislators to do redistricting, and taught residents how to do it too. What all communities need to fully understand is how our rights are protected by learning and engaging in the census and redistricting process."

20121125-06	17:42	SteveG	"Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy"
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"Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy" by Leo Gerard, Truthout

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/12926-party-of-entitled-rich-threatens-economy>)

Republicans, the party of the nation's entitled rich, are holding a knife to the throat of America's frail recovery.

The GOP sore losers have America up against a wall. Republicans don't care that the majority of the country voted for a candidate who promised to raise taxes on the rich. Republicans don't care that an even larger majority – 60 percent – told election day pollsters they wanted those taxes raised. Republicans don't care about majority-rule democracy at all. They're demanding ransom – extension of tax cuts for the rich. If Americans don't submit, Republicans will slash the nation's economy.

"Back away from your Social Security, your Medicare, your Medicaid," the Republicans are ordering. The GOP insists those crucial social insurance programs be sacrificed to prevent the entitled rich from once again paying the income tax rates that they did during the boom years of Bill Clinton. The party that lost the Presidency, lost seats in the House and lost seats in the Senate is willing to take down the economy, to eviscerate programs like the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration rather than require the entitled rich pull their weight as citizens of the country that enabled them to live lives of unprecedented luxury.

The candidate Republicans chose as their presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, stated the party's position loud and clear last spring and reiterated it during a phone call last week with his millionaire financiers. Romney told funders in May that he had no intention of "worrying about" 47 percent of Americans who he described as moochers, citizens he slandered with the allegation that they refuse to "take personal responsibility."

In the phone call last week, Romney claimed that the Americans he referred to as government moochers all voted for President Obama because the Democrat gave them "gifts." Romney, a quarter-billionaire, described the administration's plan for partial forgiveness of college loan interest as a "gift" to students. The Republican candidate born into wealth and pampered in private schools characterized as a "gift" the requirement in Obamacare that health insurance companies provide prescription contraceptives without co-payments.

The rich boy said President Obama bought women's votes for \$10 co-pay forgiveness. But for Republicans, it's never the other way around. Romney and the GOP don't think they were buying the votes of the rich with their promise to add another 20 percent break on top of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest.

That's because they believe they're entitled. They derisively refer to the social safety net programs that prevent the nation's poor and elderly from being reduced to eating cat food as "entitlements." But it's the entitled rich – Romney, the Koch Brothers, Sheldon Adelson and their ilk – who demand that America give them "stuff" like tax breaks for sending jobs overseas, like tax loopholes for hoarding their assets in the Caymans, like government-paid roads and sewers and rail lines to their businesses.

The entitled rich and their political party don't seem to get the fact that they lost the election. Eighty CEOs have ponied up \$37 million to make sure the so-called fiscal cliff problem is resolved their way. They're saying, basically, they're willing to give up one of the "couple of Cadillacs" they drive if the middle class just accepts cat food as its meat course. The CEOs, calling themselves the "Fix the Debt" coalition, claim they'll pay a secret amount more in taxes if the 99 percent suffers cuts to its social safety net and endures slashed government programs.

Republicans in Congress won't even go that far. Their legislation would give more to the rich and less to everyone else. They've proposed, for example, extending the estate tax cuts that benefit the richest 0.3 percent of American families when their millionaire relatives die, an estimated 7,000 people in 2013. At the same time, Republicans are demanding an end to child tax credit and earned income tax credit enhancements that help 13 million families get by, families that include 26 million children. Those 7,000 entitled rich people and their Republican representatives believe 26 million kids can always join the grandmas dining on cat food. Tastes like chicken, right?

Congress and the President are confronted with a deadline in these hostage negotiations. On Jan. 1, half a trillion in tax increases and across-the-board spending cuts are scheduled to take effect for the remainder of fiscal year 2013. It's called the fiscal cliff because many economists believe the combined effect during a weak recovery would shove the economy back down into recession.

Democrats don't want to risk damaging the economy. They've proposed extending the tax cuts for the 98 percent right now. The richest two percent would benefit from these breaks as well, receiving them on the first \$250,000 of their earnings. Everybody gets something. This proposal passed the Democratic-controlled Senate. The Republican-controlled House refuses to even vote on it.

Republicans aren't talking about extending tax breaks for the 98 percent. Instead, they're threatening the economic life of the country if they don't get what they want – tax breaks for people who don't need them. Law enforcement experts discourage paying off blackmailers and kidnapers.

President Obama is right to take that advice and refuse to pay the ransom Republicans are demanding to appease the entitled rich.



<http://www.exploregeorgia.org/TheGeorgiaCoast>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #278 — NOV. 27, 2012

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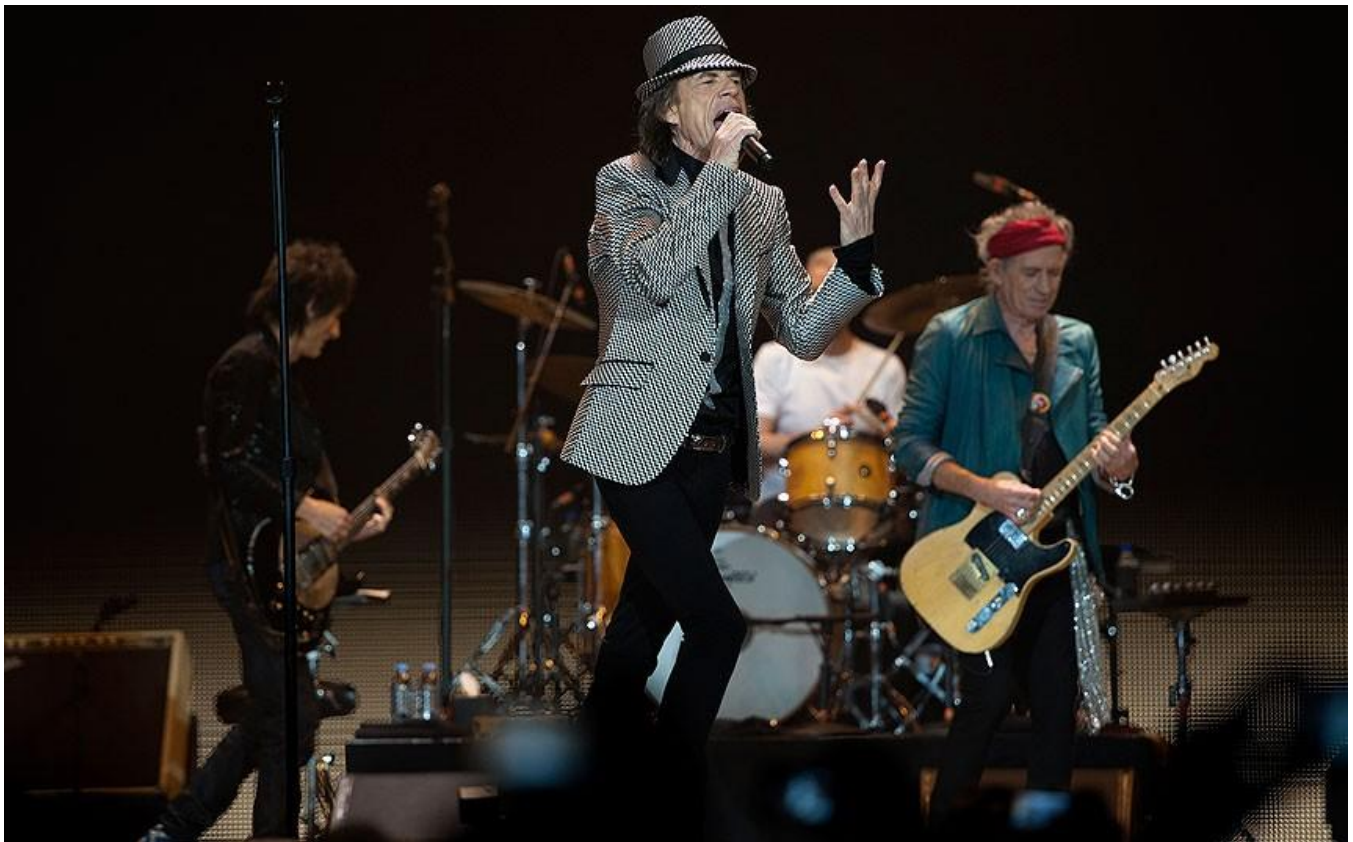
Stones Play London

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 27, 2012)

"The Rolling Stones Celebrate 50 Years with Sold-Out O2 Show" by *The London Telegraph*

The Rolling Stones take to the stage at London's O2 arena after a five-year hiatus to celebrate their golden jubilee as one of the most successful and enduring bands in rock and roll history.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/celebritynews/9702302/The-Rolling-Stones-50th-anniversary-gig-at-Londons-O2-Arena.html#?frame=2409494>



Video: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturevideo/musicvideo/9702488/The-Rolling-Stones-celebrate-50-years-with-sold-out-O2-show.html>



"The Myth of the Obama Cave-In" by David Corn, Mother Jones

Nov. 26, 2012, (<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/11/obama-fiscal-cliff-budget-deal-bush-tax-cuts>)

(With the "fiscal cliff" looming, the conventional wisdom is that the president capitulated during the last tax cut fight. Here's what really happened.)

At President Barack Obama's first press conference after winning reelection, CNN's Jessica Yellin posed a saucy question: "Mr. President, on the fiscal cliff, two years ago, sir, you said that you wouldn't extend the Bush-era tax cuts, but at the end of the day, you did. So, respectfully, sir, why should the American people and the Republicans believe that you won't cave again this time?"

With this pointed query, Yellin was reviving a notion that took root within the mainstream media and progressive circles: Obama surrendered in the lame-duck session of late 2010, when he and the Republicans tussled over continuing George W. Bush's tax breaks for the well-heeled. In this view, weeks after the president's party was trounced in the midterm congressional elections and weeks before the tea partyized GOPers were to take control of the House, Obama, who had vowed during the 2008 campaign to kill those tax cuts, acceded to Republican demands for continuing tax relief for those pocketing more than \$250,000 a year. The establishment media reported that Obama had lost the showdown; liberal House Democrats and progressives off Capitol Hill complained Obama had turned his back on his promise and blinked. There was grousing that Obama either had no taste for a political battle or no spine (or both) and that he had sold out a fundamental principle.

The ghost of that narrative haunts the current moment, for as Obama heads into a similar dustup—those Bush tax cuts are again set to expire at the end of the year, just as automatic across-the-board budget cuts are scheduled to kick in, and another debt ceiling fight looms—members of the politirati (such as Yellin) are suggesting that Obama might once more turn tail and betray his promise to say no to another extension of these tax breaks for the rich.

But that narrative was wrong when it emerged—and it is not the key to predicting what Obama will do in the present predicament. Obama didn't wave the white flag in 2010. He turned a face-off over the Bush tax cuts into an opportunity to enact a second stimulus that he otherwise could not get past Senate Republicans. His failure at that time was not that he mustered insufficient mettle; he failed to convey to the world that he had jujitsued the GOPers.

For months prior to that tussle, the conventional view was accurate: The main issue was whether the tax cuts for the wealthy would continue. All the Bush tax cuts were due to evaporate at the end of 2010. (Bush had set that expiration date to diminish the tax cuts' impact on the long-term deficit.) During the 2008 campaign, Obama had promised not to raise taxes on middle-class earners and not to keep those Bush tax cuts for the top 2 percent. So he and his Democratic allies wanted to decouple the tax cuts for the rich from those for the rest—and extend only those for the bottom 98 percent.

The Republicans balked at that notion. They contended this would amount to a tax increase—if only on those in the upper brackets. They threatened to block any move to continue only the tax breaks for the middle. And with the filibuster in the Senate, they were positioned to do so. Moreover, they signaled they would fiercely attack Democrats who voted to extend only some of the tax cuts as tax hikers (though these Democrats would merely be supporting a return to the rates of the Clinton years). A game of chicken was on. Obama and the Democrats claimed the Republicans were holding tax cuts for the middle class hostage. (No tax breaks for the rich, then no tax breaks for anyone else.) And the GOPers were daring Obama to stick to his position, see all the tax cuts perish, and end up being blamed for a rise in taxes for everyone.

There was solidarity on the GOP side, but not among the Democrats. In the summer of 2010, as the midterms approached, several Democratic Senate candidates told Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and the White House they preferred not to vote on any legislation that would keep only the middle-class tax cuts alive. They feared the GOP effort to brand them tax raisers—which would be backed by unregulated special-interest campaign cash

unleashed by the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision—would work. If there were a vote on decoupling the Bush taxes, White House aides figured, it was indeed possible that the president could not hold his side together.

In the White House, Obama and his aides gamed out various scenarios. With the economy sputtering in the second half of 2010, they worried that if the GOPers were hell bent on winning this game of chicken, taxes would go up for all at the start of 2011—as unemployment benefits were ending (for the Republicans were blocking an extension of those, as well)—and this would lead to a decrease in consumer demand that would roil the fragile economy. Lawrence Summers, the head of Obama's National Economic Council, fretted about a double-dip recession. Obama and his aides felt boxed in. The president had political promises to keep; he also had to prevent the economy from taking another downward turn.

In the fall of 2010—both before and after the midterm elections—Obama and his aides cooked up a different script. Fretting that the slow recovery was bottoming out, they had been searching for ways to juice up the economy. But they knew the notion of additional stimulus was a political nonstarter. Though Obama's original stimulus had worked, raising employment levels by millions of jobs (according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office), Obama had lost that message war. The idea of government spending to boost the economy had become discredited. (See the tea party victories in the congressional elections.)

Obama's aides, though, also knew that by the end of the year there would be some legislation regarding the Bush tax cuts—however that knotty issue was to be resolved—and they came up with a plan to turn this measure into something of a Trojan horse that could contain (or hide) various stimulative measures. Before the midterm elections, Obama's economic team began compiling a list of possibilities, including a payroll tax cut and various tax credits.

At a postelection meeting with labor leaders and progressive activists, several of whom were itching for a tax cut fight with the Republicans, White House aides were blunt. To win these stimulative shots, Summers told them, we're going to have to give up on killing the tax cuts for the rich. "Getting more for our people is more important than getting less for their people," he said at the meeting.

Many House Democrats, though, were leaning on the White House to mount a battle royal. "We heard Democrats say, 'Let's make them vote over and over again on tax cuts for the rich,'" David Axelrod, a top Obama adviser, told me afterward. "'Go until January or February and people will know that's what the Republicans stand for.' We were flabbergasted. They missed the overall point that taxes would go up and unemployment insurance would be lost by 2 million. Obama was determined to get something done." Especially now that unemployment was near 10 percent and economic forecasts were worrisome.

Weeks after the election, as Democrats on the Hill and progressives in the trenches continued to urge Obama to engage in a shoot-out with the congressional Republicans over the tax breaks for the well-to-do, the White House began (secretly at first) negotiating a deal with Senate Republicans, with Vice President Joe Biden and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell haggling. Obama was willing to eschew the fight his Democratic comrades yearned for in order to win something bigger and better: more stimulus to aid the ailing economy.

The president was also reluctant to see the game of chicken conclude with a crash that would result in taxes going up for the middle class and out-of-work Americans seeing the end to unemployment benefits. That could cause hardship for these Americans—and hinder the entire economy. And he, Biden, and others in the White House assumed that come the new year, the Republicans, with control of the House, would have an advantage. If Obama now stared down the GOPers and the Rs didn't blink, all the Bush tax cuts would disappear on December 31, 2010. Yet, presumably, the new Republican-controlled House would soon pass a bill extending all of the tax breaks. That legislation would move to the Senate, and the White House didn't trust Senate Democrats to hold the line against a measure cutting taxes for both the middle class and the high-end earners. So any major fight in December could well conclude with a Pyrrhic victory. Obama could stop the continuation of the tax breaks for millionaires, yet quite possibly only until the new Congress came to town—and there would be no new stimulus to boost the flagging economy.

There was another important factor affecting the president's thinking. Obama was looking to rack up other accomplishments during this lame-duck session, before the House would be in the hands of tea partiers. He was

hoping to end the Pentagon's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, to ratify the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty, and pass the DREAM Act reforming immigration law. If he went DEFCON-1 on taxes with the Republicans, there would be no opportunity to steer these other measures through Congress in the holiday season, as it was wrapping up its business. It was quite clear: a bare-knuckles brawl on taxes would mean no more stimulus and no chance to abolish Don't Ask, Don't Tell, ratify that treaty, or pass any other legislation.

So Obama went after a deal. And what Biden cooked up with McConnell was pretty good for the White House. The package would extend the Bush tax cuts for all taxpayers for two years and would reduce estate taxes for the wealthy (a move many Democrats couldn't stand), but it also included a payroll tax cut, a child tax credit, additional unemployment insurance, renewable energy grants, and other stimulative measures. A White House chart noted that Obama had won \$238 billion of stimulus in return for yielding on \$114 billion in high-income tax cuts.

In a way, Obama had sacrificed a stand of principle to push a second stimulus through Congress and provide a much-needed boost to the economy. It was a tough call. As I reported in my book, *Showdown: The Inside Story of How Obama Battled the GOP to Set Up the 2012 Election*, there were moments when Obama nearly walked away from the deal. But he succeeded in achieving his No. 1 priority: passing legislation that would produce economic assistance. The price, though, had been to yield to the Republicans on the upper-income tax breaks and the estate tax.

In policy terms, Obama clearly had gotten the better deal. The trouble was that the political world and the public had been conditioned to see this episode as primarily a clash over the top-tier tax cuts—and on that Obama had not gotten what he wanted. Consequently, the media depicted the compromise as a loss for Obama, and progressive Democrats squawked mightily about the continuation of the tax cuts. At a White House press conference following the deal's announcement, Ben Feller of the Associated Press challenged the president: "You've been telling the American people all along that you oppose extending the tax cuts for the wealthier Americans...So what I'm wondering is when you take a stand like you had, why should the American people believe that you're going to stick with it? Why should the American people believe that you're not going to flip-flop?" Moments later, Chuck Todd of NBC News noted that the Republicans had forced Obama "to capitulate."

This was not full capitulation. It was a strategic retreat to accomplish a bigger mission. Obama, however, never told this story. Throughout that lame-duck session, few in the media and few in Democratic congressional circles had realized what Obama was trying to pull off. When the deal was done, many of Obama's own political allies did not immediately recognize what he had won. To many on the outside, it did seem as if he had folded. As with the stimulus, the health care bill, and the middle-class tax cuts he had passed in his first year, Obama had neglected to convince the public of the value of his victory. And with 2010 coming to an end, and all eyes trained on the newly triumphant tea party, there was not much political space for this particular counternarrative. It didn't help that Summers, Axelrod, and other senior aides were not allowed to admit in public that the president had slyly achieved a second stimulus, for the S-word remained in disrepute.

Two years later, Obama still does not tell the story of that period well. In response to Yellin's question, he did not take explicit issue with her cave-in characterization:

Well, two years ago, the economy was in a different situation. We were still very much in the early parts of recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And ultimately, we came together not only to extend the Bush tax cuts, but also a wide range of policies that were going to be good for the economy at that point—unemployment insurance extensions, payroll tax extension—all of which made a difference, and is part of the reason why what we've seen now is 32 consecutive months of job growth and over 5.5 million jobs created and the unemployment rate coming down.

Yet Obama is right: the current circumstances are different, and after his reelection he is in a better position to do battle on the tax-cut front. He told Yellin:

[W]hat I said at the time is what I meant, which is this was a one-time proposition. And what I have told leaders privately as well as publicly is that we cannot afford to extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. What we can do is make sure that middle-class taxes don't go up.

In a recent White House meeting with labor leaders and progressive activists, Obama signaled he is ready to fight the GOPers—and this time dare the Republicans to block continuing the tax cuts for the middle class. But no one ought to forget that Obama, a progressive in his policy preferences, remains a pragmatist. What happened two years ago is not an indication that Obama is likely to yield in the new face-off, but that he will be assessing the political dynamics in gridlocked Washington and be willing to bargain hard for a good deal with true benefits. That's not caving in. It's governing.

[20121126-02](#) 13:44 Marci I Don't Understand This Joke...

I very quietly confided to my best friend that I was having an affair.

She turned to me and asked, "Are you having it catered?"

And that, my friend, is the sad definition of "OLD"!

[20121126-03](#) 14:38 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell the SEC: Don't Let Corporations Hide Their Political Spending!"

from CREDO Action:

The U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling has allowed corporate CEOs to unleash a torrent of secret corporate spending into our political system. Indefensibly, CEOs are able to keep both the public and their own shareholders in the dark about the use of company funds for political ends.

This gives CEOs free rein to make political expenditures that they would never be able to justify publicly — including campaigns so toxic they would inevitably tarnish the company's brand were the funding source made public. And the results have been absolutely corrosive to our democracy.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which is a federal agency, can require publicly traded companies to disclose the money they spend on politics. And they are accepting public comments on the merits of doing so.

[Click here to submit a public comment and tell the SEC: Don't let corporations hide their political spending.](#)

To be clear, what we really need is to get all corporate money out of politics, to roll back *Citizens United*, end corporate personhood and institute public financing of elections. And we are working hard toward those long term goals.

But in the short term, given how corrupt the system is, disclosure of corporate political spending would be a meaningful, though small, step forward. And it's one we can achieve.

While the likes of the *Wall Street Journal's* Editorial Board are opposed to this idea, it's actually a commonsense idea that is not especially ideological.

In fact, nearly 60% of the S&P 100 companies already voluntarily disclose their political spending to investors. And of the remaining S&P 100 corporations, 50 had shareholder votes about political issues in 2011.

Already one SEC Commissioner has come out in favor of the idea. We just need two more to agree.

Earlier this year, 100,000 CREDO members signed a petition telling the Securities and Exchange Commission to require publicly traded companies to disclose their political spending.

And recently, a *Wall Street Journal* blogger reported that agency officials were evaluating whether to recommend precisely such a rule.

In part, this process was due to, according to one high-level SEC staff member, "the large number of comments and strong interest..."

That means we're having an impact, and we can't stop now.

Tell the SEC: Don't let corporations hide their political spending. Click the link below to submit a public comment:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/sec_political_spending/?r=6883064&p=sec_political_spending.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager

20121126-08	17:13	SteveG	Fw: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge!
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from MoveOn/SignOn:

End the Norquist Pledge (by endthenorquistpledge)

To be delivered to: The United States House of Representatives, The United States Senate, and President Barack Obama:

Petition Statement:

"End lobbyist Grover Norquist's hold on the GOP and, therefore, his influence on US economic policy. Tell your Representatives and President Obama to renounce the Grover Norquist pledge, to name every elected leader who has signed the pledge, and include the option of increased revenue in discussions regarding economic policy."

Sign here: <http://signon.org/sign/end-the-norquist-pledge?source=mo.mp>.

Petition Background

Since the mid 1980s, Republican leaders and politicians at every level of government have signed a pledge organized by lobbyist Grover Norquist to refuse to raise taxes under any circumstances. This pledge gives an unelected lobbyist unprecedented power over the GOP. There is a reason Republicans only want to cut spending, but won't consider revenue increases to reduce the deficit, pay for programs that help the needy, or make our environment safer. The reason is that Norquist will fund primary candidates against any Republican who votes to raise taxes. Yet the American people re-elected President Obama and Democrats who consider tax revenue part of solving our budget deficit and our economic problems. We must end the hold Norquist has over the GOP so that every option, including tax increases, is on the table when discussing solutions to America's economic woes and the federal budget.

20121126-09	19:58	Art	Re: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge! (reply to SteveG, above)
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I just signed and put on FACEBOOK. This whole oath thing to a lobbyist is outrageous

20121126-10	20:30	SteveG	Re: MoveOn/SignOn Petition: End the Norquist Pledge! (reply to Art, above) & "About Americans for Tax Reform"
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Agree whole heartedly. Below fact or fiction?

[I wonder if this blind, unflinching monstrosity is what Reagan envisioned? –SteveB]

"About Americans for Tax Reform" (<http://www.atr.org/about>)

Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) opposes all tax increases as a matter of principle.

We believe in a system in which taxes are simpler, flatter, more visible, and lower than they are today. The government's power to control one's life derives from its power to tax. We believe that power should be minimized.

ATR was founded in 1985 by Grover Norquist at the request of President Reagan.

The flagship project of Americans for Tax Reform is the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, a written promise by legislators and candidates for office that commits them to oppose any effort to increase income taxes on individuals and businesses. Since ATR first sponsored the Pledge in 1986, hundreds of U.S. Representatives, more than fifty U.S. Senators and every successful Republican Presidential candidate have all signed the Pledge. In the 112th Congress, 236 U.S. Representatives and 41 U.S. Senators have taken the Pledge never to raise income taxes.

Americans for Tax Reform began promoting the Taxpayer Protection Pledge on the state-level in the early 1990s.

ATR works with state taxpayer coalitions in all 50 states to ask candidates for state legislature and constitutional office to sign the State Taxpayer Protection Pledge, which reads:

"I _____ pledge to the taxpayers of the _____ district, of the state of _____, and to all the people of this state, that I will oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes."

Additionally, Americans for Tax Reform works with state-based center-right groups to help replicate ATR's national Wednesday Meeting in the states. Currently, there are over 50 meetings in 45 states. These meetings bring together a broad cross section of the center-right community- taxpayer groups, social conservative groups, business groups, legislators, etc., to promote limited government ideals.

Realizing that Americans not only need to be protected from higher taxes, but from higher spending; Americans for Tax Reform created the Center for Fiscal Accountability (CFA) in 2008. CFA focuses on all central issues related to fiscal responsibility and accountability, especially spending restraint and the promotion of a more transparent and accountable government on the local, state, and federal level through easily searchable online spending and contract databases.

Americans for Tax Reform and Americans for Tax Reform Foundation also sponsor the annual calculation of Cost of Government Day (COGD), the day on which Americans stop working to pay the costs of taxation, deficit spending, and regulations by federal and state governments.

ATR is a nonprofit, 501(c)(4) lobbying organization. Contributions to Americans for Tax Reform are not tax deductible. The Americans for Tax Reform Foundation is a 501(c)(3) research and educational organization. All contributions to the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation are tax deductible to the extent provided for in federal law.

20121126-05	15:09	SteveG	"Grover Norquist Warns Dems, GOP: Anti-Tax Pledge Will Hold"
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"Grover Norquist Warns Dems, GOP: Anti-Tax Pledge Will Hold" by David Daley, Salon

Nov. 24, 2012,

(http://www.salon.com/2012/11/24/grover_norquist_warns_dems_gop_the_anti_tax_pledge_will_hold/)

(The anti-tax zealot says Republicans will not cave, and won't be fooled by Democrats into raising taxes.)



Grover Norquist (Credit: AP/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

Grover Norquist has a warning for anyone who thinks the influential anti-tax advocate has lost power in Washington.

"No one is caving," the head of the Americans for Tax Reform told the *Wall Street Journal*, in a wide-ranging weekend interview.

Norquist — who built his power by getting hundreds of House Republicans and Congressional candidates to sign a pledge vowing to never raise taxes — has been perceived to be on the defensive since House Speaker John Boehner and even Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell suggested they would be open to new revenues in a compromise to avoid the so-called "fiscal cliff."

In the weeks since the election, as talks centered around a compromise, fear of violating Norquist's pledge appeared to diminish.

But Norquist insists that the power dynamic has not changed, despite the re-election of President Obama and the apparent willingness of the GOP leadership to work with him to head off mandatory defense spending cuts and the expiration of the Bush tax cuts.

"For 20 years Democrats have tried over and over to trick Republicans into breaking the pledge. It hasn't happened. This isn't my first rodeo," Norquist told the *Journal*.

"Nothing has changed on the chess board since Barack Obama agreed to extend all the Bush tax cuts two years ago. Exactly the same players. Republicans still control the House and Democrats still control the White House and the Senate."

Norquist admits that a few politicians who signed his pledge are now having "impure thoughts," worried that Republicans will be blamed for running the country over that "fiscal cliff." However, he adds, "the media keeps interviewing the same five or so Republicans in Congress who want to cut a deal."

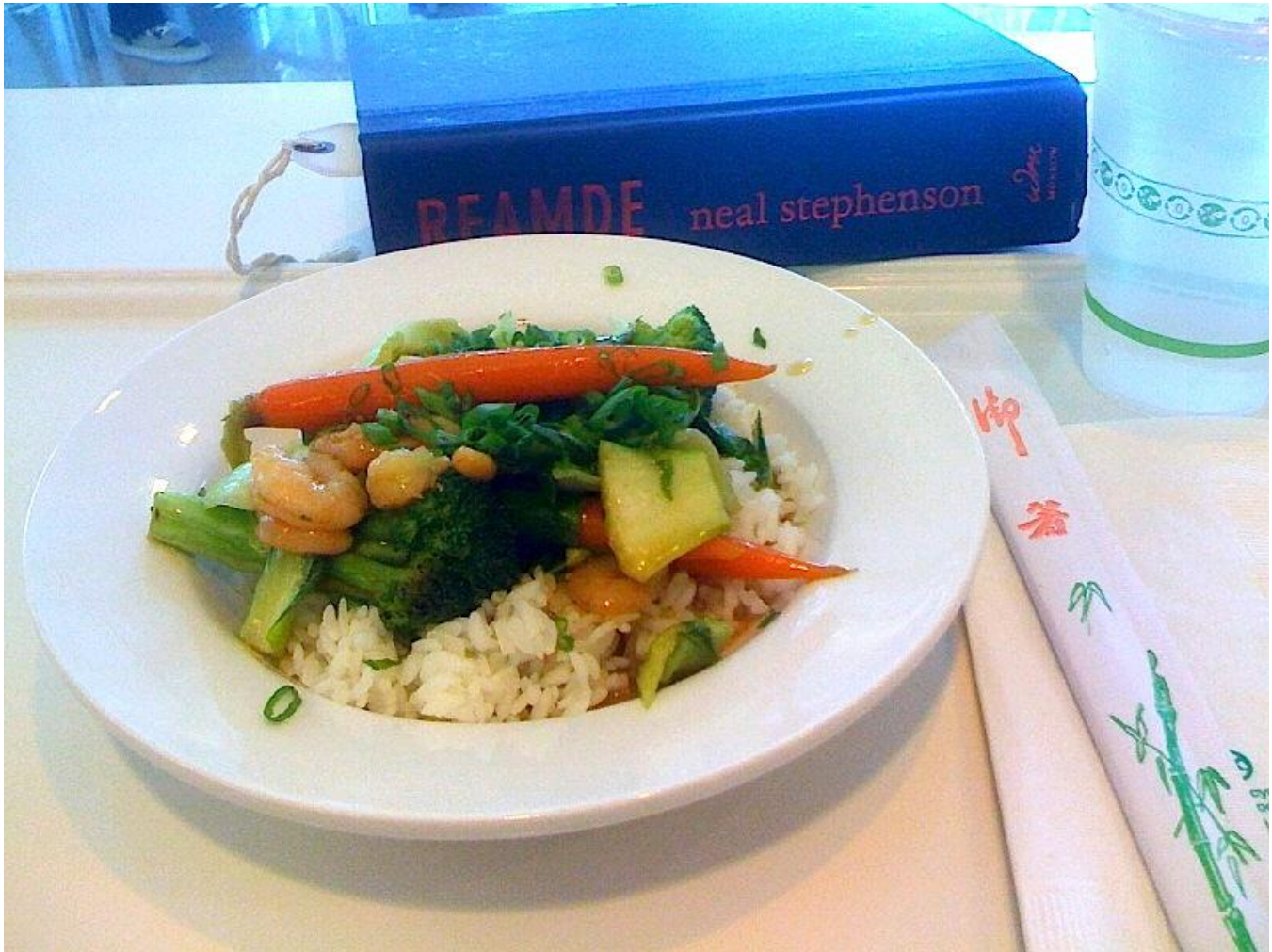
He's urging his troops to hold tight: "Even more than getting more revenues, (Democrats) want Republican fingerprints on tax increases so they can smash Republicans in the next series of elections."

20121126-04 14:44 Bill Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (to all)

Outstanding issue.

20121126-06 15:28 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Delicious stir-fry from the Far East line. Regrettably, too busy to talk about, but it's great to get yummy fresh vegetables and succulent seafood for lunch again! The book is, of course (consider the author) quite fabulous.



Shrimp Stir-fry in Light Brown Sauce

20121126-07 16:19 Art "How Political Campaign Spending Brought Down the Roman Republic"

History repeats itself?

Good read for those that are interested. The only thing we seem to learn from history is that we never learn anything from history.

"How Political Campaign Spending Brought Down the Roman Republic" by Rob Goodman and Jimmy Soni, Slate

Nov. 26, 2012,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/11/citizens_united_massive_political_campaign_donations_during_the_roman_republic.html)

(If Cato, Cicero, or Julius Caesar were here today, they would recognize the danger posed by *Citizens United*?)



Roman luminaries Cato, Cicero, and Caesar. (Wikimedia Commons)

Two years after the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, which allowed unlimited corporate and union money into American politics, there is one line that continues to echo: "The appearance of influence or access ... will not cause the electorate to lose faith in our democracy."

That line lasts because it's a testable prediction. It's not a question of precedent or constitutional interpretation, but of public opinion—and as such, we all feel competent to judge it. Loss of faith, the Supreme Court allowed, is itself an argument against our increasingly unregulated campaign spending regime.

Of course, democratic faith is a slippery concept. But it is always on display in an election's aftermath. In the best case, the election's winners and losers have a shared, if grudging, agreement about the fairness of the process and its outcome. In the worst case, the winner's legitimacy is just one more "fact" to disagree about.

Does massive campaign spending move us closer to the worst case? One view of the 2012 election holds that super PACs proved far less effective than feared. "But ultimately," argues Nicholas Confessore in the *New York Times*, "Mr. Obama did not beat the super PACs; he joined them." His re-election, therefore, doesn't settle the question raised by the Supreme Court; it simply postpones it.

Rather than letting the *Citizens United* experiment in confidence play out over the next several elections, we can find evidence now, by looking to political history. How has the "appearance of influence" affected faith in other elected governments? History tells us that such faith is far easier to tear down than to rebuild. And one of the best examples of this faith under strain comes from one of the earliest experiments in elected government: the Roman Republic.

Our political culture is saturated with historical appeals to the founders, but when the founders themselves wanted to make such appeals, they turned overwhelmingly to Rome. As inspiration and as practical example, that republic's history is written into our own. For Alexander Hamilton, the republic represented "the utmost height of human greatness." The authors of the Federalist Papers cited the republic as an influence on the American Constitution 14 separate times. In early America, Rome before Caesar served as the quintessential republic of virtue; its collapse was the ultimate cautionary tale of political corruption.

A crucial part of that story was the corrosive influence of money in politics. To be sure, Rome was never a true democracy; its elections were always designed to heavily favor the wealthy and well-born. Further, the kind of money that consumed Roman politics—personal spending by wealthy candidates—isn't the prime source of controversy in our time. Nevertheless, the last generation of the Republic's politics was dominated by two trends: universal complaints about money's corrupting effect on politics and near universal unwillingness to do anything about it.

Ancient politicians were just as skilled as modern ones at identifying and exploiting loopholes in election law. In Rome, the key loophole lay in the fuzzy distinction between *ambitus* (electoral bribery) and mere *benignitas* (generosity). Roman elections were often won on the strength of free food, drinks, entertainment, and sometimes hard cash offered directly to voters and financed by private fortunes. In fact, Roman campaign slogans were sometimes inscribed on the bottom of commemorative wine cups—you could drain the cup and find out whom to vote for. Most of the Roman elite relied on the gentleman's agreement that the line between bribery and generosity would not be strictly patrolled. At worst, rank vote-buying was something your opponents engaged in; you, on the other hand, were simply being a good neighbor.

That explains the curious fact that continually rising penalties for corruption had almost no deterrent effect. Toward the republic's end, the penalty for *ambitus* had risen to 10 years' exile. The general Pompey, who presented himself as a clean-government advocate when he wasn't buying elections for his allies, even proposed raising the statute of limitations for corruption charges to two decades, meaning that virtually no Roman politician would be safe.

Yet the money continued to flow: Politicians able to afford the massive bribes were usually able to afford protection after the fact. Worse, with no enforceable limits on spending and a heavy premium on one-upsmanship, the price of elections skyrocketed. Five years before the republic collapsed, Cicero made an astonishing claim: The wealthy had injected so much cash into election season that the interest rate in Rome temporarily doubled.

Nor could the power of money be confined to election season—its influence spread throughout the republic's government. Rome had long sent politicians to govern a province after their year in office; ultimately, they felt entitled to fleece those provinces in order to recoup their election losses, a practice that spread deep resentment of the capital. The biographer Plutarch records bribery of civil servants, who were paid off to erase debts owed to the public purse. Jury verdicts, too, were regularly bought and paid for.

Julius Caesar, who brought the republic to an end, walked a path to power paved by charisma and military accomplishments—and his mastery of Roman campaign-finance practices. He won his first election to Rome's highest office with the backing of a single wealthy donor (who, in exchange, planned to serve beside Caesar). And if there was a moment when civil war between Caesar and the conservative Roman Senate became inevitable, it was probably the day Caesar paid off the debts of Gaius Scribonius Curio. Curio, an up-and-coming conservative, had won election as a tribune of the people, and with it the tribune's power to veto any law. But he had heavily indebted himself along the way. Caesar satisfied his creditors, but only on the condition that Curio switch sides. From that point, Caesar, who already had an army, owned a veto in the Roman government. Political deadlock was assured.

Caesar's fiercest personal enemy was also Rome's most consistent enemy of electoral corruption. Marcus Porcius Cato, a Stoic and Senate conservative, made his name denouncing the influence of money on private and public life. Yet Cato failed, just as other would-be reformers did. He obsessively cast corruption as a failing of personal morality rather than a systemic crisis, which dramatically understated both the scope of the problem and the means needed to control it. As a result, Cato's proposed remedies were usually ad hoc, and they predictably fell short.

In one instance, he managed to persuade a group of candidates to appoint him as an informal election judge, with the power to investigate bribery and publicly expose any candidate he found guilty. Each pledged to forfeit money to Cato if he was caught breaking the deal. Days before the vote, an enthusiastic Cicero wrote, "If the election proves free, as it is thought it will, Cato alone can do more than all the laws and all the judges."

On the day of the election, Cato stood before the Roman people and duly announced that one of the candidates had cheated. The rivals huddled and came to their own decision: The guilty man should be let off with no further penalty, and he should keep his money. That's how deep corruption ran in the culture of the Roman elite.

Even as *ambitus* weakened the republic, each member of the governing class preferred a strategy of maximizing his own gains in a broken system. Vote-buying made sense for individual politicians at the same time as it undermined the elite as a whole. Cicero, for instance, passed a strong anti-corruption law and even named it after himself—and then, he secured the acquittal of the very first man charged under the law because he was a political ally.

Several years later, an ex-governor was tried for extorting money from his province to finance a campaign for higher office. Six different lawyers, drawn from the cream of the Senate—the equivalent of a Roman legal Dream Team—rose to defend him. The corrupt former official was acquitted with ease.

By the end, chronic election-buying had helped grind down all faith in republican government. Why was Caesar able to dissolve the republic and set Rome on a course to one-man rule? Because, in large part, enough people believed that the republic was too rotten to be worth saving. And while most classical sources dwell on the aristocracy, there's also strong evidence that ordinary Romans grew increasingly alienated from politics during the final years. Radical leaders like Catiline and Clodius drew massive followings with their attacks on a corrupt elite; their riots, in turn, helped convince much of that elite that Rome was in grave need of a strongman.

Unlimited money in politics certainly doesn't guarantee riots and civil war. Nor does "the appearance of influence" always undermine republican government. But legitimacy matters, and it rests on a delicate understanding: the belief that those who govern have a right to govern. It's devilishly hard to measure or quantify, but (to paraphrase the Supreme Court again) we know it when we see it.

How much democratic faith do Americans have today? How many liberals think George W. Bush won in 2004 because of electronic voting shenanigans in Ohio? How many conservatives think Barack Obama won in 2008 thanks to ACORN, or in 2012 because of handouts to the 47 percent? Unlimited money in politics adds one more cause for doubt, perhaps the most powerful of all, to a list that has grown in recent years. How long until we have a presidential election in which a dangerous percentage of Americans view the final result as illegitimate on account of money?

On some level, *Citizens United* was right. It's not bought influence that's deadliest to our politics—it's the appearance of influence. We can debate dueling First Amendment readings and the real power of super PACs all we'd like; but here is a case where public opinion, on its own, should be decisive. If a loss of faith becomes wide and deep enough, the question of whether or not we are right to lose faith becomes academic. The loss is destructive either way. Just ask Rome.



<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturepicturegalleries/9691046/Salvador-Dali-retrospective-in-pics.html?frame=2404289#?frame=2404270>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #279 — NOV. 28, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

A Shady Tale from Sunny Florida

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 28, 2012)

The nasty problem of how America's electoral system works is that it doesn't work well, it doesn't stand up to the scrutiny of accountability with which we challenge, say, teachers, and it doesn't work fairly and simply across the board. In the land of the free, why can't we do something about this? (Hey, of course, we can't. There is a blocking force at work known as the G.O.l.d.P.!)

"Jim Greer, Ex-Florida GOP Chair, Claims Republican Voting Laws Focused on Suppression, Racism" by Ian Gray, Huffington Post

Nov. 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/26/jim-greer-florida-voting-laws_n_2192802.html)



Jim Greer, the former head of the Florida Republican Party, recently claimed that a law shortening the early voting period in the state was deliberately designed to suppress voting among groups that tend to support Democratic candidates, the *Palm Beach Post* reports.

"The Republican Party, the strategists, the consultants, they firmly believe that early voting is bad for Republican Party candidates," Greer told the *Post*. "It's done for one reason and one reason only... We've got to cut down on early voting because early voting is not good for us."

The HB 1355 law, which was passed by Florida's Republican legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Scott (R) in Nov. 2011, cut the number of early voting days from 14 to eight. It was publicly sold as an effort to reduce voter fraud and to save money, but Greer says that this was simply a "marketing ploy."

Greer served as Florida's GOP chairman from 2006 until 2010 when he was forced to resign after allegedly stealing money from the party. He was arrested and his case is pending.

Scott's predecessor, Republican-turned-Independent Charlie Crist, resisted efforts from Republicans to shorten the state's early voting period, citing reasons that mesh with Greer's claims.

In an interview with The Huffington Post earlier this month, Crist said the new law is clearly aimed at curbing turnout among Democrats.

"The only thing that makes any sense as to why this is happening and being done is voter suppression," he said.

Crist added, "People have fought and died for our right to vote, and unfortunately our legislature and this governor have decided they want to make early voting less available to Floridians rather than more available ... It's hard for me as an American to comprehend why you don't make democracy as easy as possible to exercise for the people of our state. It's frankly unconscionable."

Greer also acknowledged that the effort to restrict early voting would directly affect turnout among Florida's African Americans, a demographic that consistently supports Democrats.

"The sad thing about that is yes, there is prejudice and racism in the party but the real prevailing thought is that they don't think minorities will ever vote Republican," he told the *Post*.

Greer went on to suggest that there was "absolutely nothing" state Republicans wouldn't do in following their "absolute obsession with retaining power."

Parts of HB 1355 were overturned by a panel of federal judges in August, partially due to its anticipated impact on minority turnout. The three judge panel ruled that a "dramatic reduction in the form of voting that is disproportionately used by African-Americans would make it materially more difficult for some minority voters to cast a ballot than under the benchmark law."

The court's ruling, however, only affected five of Florida's 67 counties -- those covered by the section of the Voting Rights Act cited by the court in its ruling. The vast majority of Florida voters were subject to the shortened voting period.

Despite lines as long as nine hours on Election Day in Florida, Scott said he stands by the new law. "Well I'm very comfortable that the right thing happened," he told WKMG Orlando after the election. He later promised to order a review of electoral issues.

"The Infernal Machine: From Powder to Dust" by Roddy Boyd, The Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation

Nov. 19, 2012, (<http://www.sirf-online.org/2012/11/the-infernal-machine-from-powder-to-dust/>)

(To understand why a company called ViSalus is the fastest-growing company of its size in the United States, just watch cofounder Nick Sarnicola in action at one of the company's periodic sales conferences:

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

In the video that ViSalus posted on YouTube of a July conference in Miami, Sarnicola's turbocharged pitch inside a packed 18,000-seat arena has people on their feet, pumping fists, clapping, waving, even dancing. A politician or entertainer can only dream of an audience response like this.

People don't usually pay good money to travel to Miami in sweltering summer heat and then readily wedge themselves into a packed arena to see someone strut around and talk on a hastily assembled theatrical stage — about a company whose major product is powder for a weight-loss shake.

Sarnicola is an unlikely standard-bearer. He has no real college training in health care or any related field; briefly he was a salesman for a collapsed telecom company. Though he is the author of an evangelistic tome about becoming rich by age 25, he was evicted just a few years shy of that for not paying his apartment's rent.

To this audience, however, Sarnicola is a superstar. No one sells more products for ViSalus; the sales group he and his wife founded is responsible for 75% of its revenue.

Rich, good-looking and with an attractive spouse, Sarnicola is proof to the throng that through ceaseless effort and unyielding commitment, they too can live a glamorous lifestyle like he does.

Called a "global ambassador," a sales rank only he and his wife hold, Sarnicola did not deliver his Miami speech to impart hard-won sales tips. He was giving a sermon designed to morally validate a congregation where salvation is found through selling ViSalus' weight-loss and nutrition products to networks of their friends, relatives, neighbors and colleagues.

ViSalus is a multilevel marketing company that promises ordinary folks a shot at financial success based solely on their skill at building a sales group that essentially draws on personal social circles: A distributor must recruit customers (usually starting with friends, neighbors, relatives) who are asked to enroll still others as customers, who are then encouraged to bring in more new members to the sales group.

The Miami sales conference was designed to reinforce the secular theology of economic independence and self-help advocated by ViSalus — and other multilevel marketing enterprises. For 60 years, such companies have used their sales gatherings to dangle the prospect of a path away from corporate drudgery or limited means.

During Sarnicola's dramatic closing speech in Miami, where surrounded by fellow ViSalus cofounders Blake Mallen and Ryan Blair, he embarked on a riff reminiscent of a thousand 12-step meetings and evangelical pulpits: He confessed his imperfection and weaknesses, pledging an authentic and single-minded focus to help them in the hunt for health and prosperity.

Every multilevel marketing firm, including industry leaders like Nu Skin, Herbalife and Amway, relies on a variation of this appeal. Most multilevel marketing presentations contain so much language about independence that they could be backdrops for a small town's Fourth of July celebration. But ViSalus has a different, thoroughly modern approach.

ViSalus wants its freelance distributors to party like rock stars and look like models. While Amway appeals to the Norman Rockwell-like sensibilities of faith, country and community, ViSalus is in your face, bringing in wrestlers like Hulk Hogan and rappers such as Master P and Lil Romeo to pitch its products.

So not only does Sarnicola's somewhat erratic personal background fail to detract from his appeal with members of his adoring audience; it's proof that their own imperfections can be forgiven. If they buy into the philosophy and sell like mad, they, too, can live in a Miami beachfront penthouse like Sarnicola, fly in a corporate jet like Mallen or build a home in the Hollywood Hills like Blair. ViSalus, in other words, is a corporate version of the French Foreign Legion, where one's past is forgotten as long as the present is dedicated to the cause.

What the thousands of applauding people in that Miami arena and the other halls and hotel ballrooms ViSalus fills for its confabs are dedicating themselves to, however, has every indication of being a classic pyramid scheme.

Sarnicola, Mallen and Blair are making out like bandits, living precisely the type of life they claim can be had through a total commitment to ViSalus. Yet its corporate filings tell a very different story: Despite plenty of hard work and expense — which often end up being much more than the company lets on — ViSalus' army of believers are probably in for a big letdown.

Those flocking to the arenas and ballrooms are likely to be fleeced as ViSalus' management team and corporate owners reap the rewards of a remarkably effective promotional and marketing effort fronted by Sarnicola. (And while most multilevel marketing executives run from any mention of the word pyramid, ViSalus embraces it. Indeed Sarnicola, his wife and a few others recently even created their own online reality show about ViSalus sales, which they brazenly titled "That Pyramid Thing.")

There's nothing new about the risks of losing gobs of money and time in a pyramid scheme: Voluminous research has documented the astronomical failure and dropout rates of participants in dozens of multilevel marketing companies. Seen in a cold light, ViSalus is just another fast-growing player in a field that has seen dozens rapidly emerge, only to fade quickly.

What makes ViSalus stand out is its highly unusual relationship with its corporate parent, Blyth, a publicly traded marketing and catalog company based in Greenwich, Conn. Blyth owns most of ViSalus and has come to depend on the subsidiary's rapid growth to sustain it.

And that's a very big risk for Blyth's investors. Because as ViSalus' fortunes fall to Earth, Blyth will undoubtedly fall much further and much faster.

ViSalus Mixes It Up

In the pantheon of Michigan companies, ViSalus doesn't quite command the level of brand awareness that Ford, General Motors or even Domino's Pizza enjoy, but those companies would surely love to have a fraction of the growth rate registered by ViSalus. In a recent filing, sales figures for ViSalus' main product, a powdered meal-replacement shake that is part of a 90-day weight loss and marketing initiative it calls Body by Vi, suggest annual growth so massive that Americans appear to be skipping meals with ViSalus shakes in the same numbers that they download music through iTunes.

For the first half of this year, ViSalus' weight-management unit logged a 482% rate of growth, compared with the first half of last year. It wasn't just that one unit either that had spectacular results; the entire company's sales mushroomed 451% over the same period.

ViSalus took in \$327.3 million in sales this year through June 30, with about \$222 million of that derived from its weight-management unit. As any analyst knows, it's vastly more difficult to realize a spike in growth rate of that magnitude when the sales numbers are in that range.

The sales figures seem to indicate that the ViSalus shake mix isn't just a popular product but that a paradigm shift in American behavior is under way.

The Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation tried to find any company with a remotely comparable growth rate. We searched publicly traded companies also headquartered in the United States and with at least \$1 million in annual revenue and a compound yearly growth rate of 300%. (The search excluded companies in the

pharmaceutical, biotech and energy exploration and development sectors whose fortunes hinge on external factors like regulatory approvals and geopolitics.)

The result: Among companies of its size, ViSalus stands alone in a category of one.

Plus, ViSalus is posting astronomical growth rates while operating as a multilevel marketing business. This is a hard road to travel: ViSalus competes against the established products and sales networks of multilevel marketing giants like Herbalife as well as the well-located niche retail stores like GNC's and universally distributed brands like Slim-Fast with deep-pocketed corporate parents.

Having tons of established competition usually prompts a bitter price war in which only the fittest — and most ruthless — survive, not the shattering of sales records.

But that's ViSalus in a nutshell: It seems to defy the laws of marketplace math.

At least that's what its company executives want outsiders believe.

But some cracks in the carefully constructed veneer are already starting to show. An IPO for ViSalus announced in August was pulled in September because, as Blyth's chief executive said in a conference call, ViSalus' growth wasn't being "properly valued."

What a corporate statement like that probably means is that ViSalus' bankers at Jefferies told Blyth no one was willing to pay the price being asked for the stock. (ViSalus CEO Ryan Blair hosted a chat on Facebook on Sept. 26 during which he claimed that it was his idea to cancel the IPO, Blyth management deserved credit for listening to him and that he was overjoyed. Blyth, in other words, spent \$4.7 million in fees prepping an IPO of a subsidiary even though its CEO was dead set against it.)

When audited 450% growth rates can't attract a proper bid from the same investor universe that happily gobbled up shares from Merrill Lynch, Fannie Mae and AIG in 2008, something has to be amiss.

A good place to start looking for the real reason the IPO was grounded is the prospectus filed by ViSalus' holding company, FVA Ventures. In the columns of numbers and buried in the footnotes, a pattern emerges: Neither management skill nor the soundness of its products has anything to do with ViSalus' record-breaking growth.

Blyth's Makes 'Folksy' Pay

The key to understanding what makes ViSalus tick is to know just how different it is from its corporate parent — and onetime rescuer — Blyth.

Founded in 1977 and cobbled together from half a dozen different candle, potpourri and gourmet food companies, Blyth has made money by dispensing with conventional wisdom. As much of the consumer business world has leaped onto various digital sales platforms, Blyth's main business unit has persisted with its relatively folksy, old-fashioned method of enlisting sales consultants to host house parties where they sell candles and home fragrances to friends and acquaintances.

Don't let the low-tech approach fool you, though; Blyth's tactics have been every bit as effective as the slickest Madison Avenue marketing campaign. Research shows that in a slow economy consumers will hold off on a new car or fancier wardrobe, but when a neighbor five doors down whose daughter is on the same soccer team as yours invites your wife to a "product party," there is a statistically excellent chance the checkbook will open for a few holiday-themed candles or gourmet jellies.

In recent years, many American businesses have undergone transformation in ways big and small, but Blyth didn't seem to need to. As Amazon's Kindle scotched interest in bookstores and Apple's iPod killed stereo companies, people still continued to fork over \$25 and \$35 at a steady clip to have Blyth candles for the living room and den and potpourri for the downstairs bathroom.

Largely disengaged from the typical Wall Street promotional hype, Blyth takes its nondescript low-key approach to extremes, eschewing public relations and operating out of a modest office building in Greenwich, Conn. The company's treasurer doubles as the investor relations representative. Even so, Blyth's stock spent years above the \$50 mark and Robert Goergen Sr., the former investment banker who founded Blyth, became seriously rich along the way. There have been richer and flashier CEOs, to be sure, but for investors who respected results, Goergen made betting against Blyth a dicey proposition.

That is, until 2008, when Blyth's world came crashing down. The staggering decline in household discretionary spending, Blyth's microeconomic lifeblood, was a knife directly aimed at its heart.

According to Blyth's 10-K annual report, from 2010 to 2011, U.S. sales at its direct-selling PartyLite unit — traditionally the core of Blyth's revenue — declined 22% and the number of independent consultants hawking products to the public fell 11%. Over the same span a year prior, sales at PartyLite's U.S. operations plummeted 25% and the number of consultants dropped 17%.

There's a grim playbook for management at publicly traded companies facing full-bore decline: radical cost-cutting, immediate asset sales and eventually a sale to a stronger competitor or bankruptcy.

Yet Blyth had an ace up its sleeve.

In August 2008, in a little-noticed move, Blyth bought a 43.6% stake in ViSalus, for \$13 million. (Blyth later increased its ownership to 72.7%.) Perhaps Blyth's thinking behind the investment resembled that of the veteran horseplayer who ignores the handicapper's advice and on a hunch lays down \$100 on the leggy long shot in the fourth race. The move paid off handsomely, and it seemed that for a while, ViSalus might have been one of the greatest investments in recent corporate history.

The year it inked the purchase agreement, Blyth recorded \$1.16 billion in sales. Last year, factoring in ViSalus' \$230.1 million in sales, Blyth managed to post just \$888.3 million in revenue. Without ViSalus, more than 50% of Blyth's revenue since 2008 would have been gone, and to be frank, companies losing half their sales in less than five years usually exist only in the memories of the people who used to work there.

But unlike in horse racing, where the bet either pays or it doesn't, the ViSalus acquisition was not a zero-sum game: Blyth got to live to fight another day, but it also committed to buy the final chunk of the company by the end of this year at a price that, because of ViSalus' incredible growth, eventually became extraordinarily steep.

By this past summer, coughing up the sum of \$271 million for ViSalus by the holidays seemed impossible for Blyth. (The final price Blyth pays could be \$30 million higher, based on something ViSalus called the "Equity Incentive Plan," allowing its distributors to get a cut of the purchase price.)

An IPO was an elegant solution for the company, allowing Blyth to sell a majority share of ViSalus, while retaining a minority stake and keeping control through the board of directors. Nonetheless, Blyth pulled the offering on Sept. 26, offering only a terse "market conditions" as the reason.

At Blyth, sporadic asset sales had taken place over the past four or so years but sinking home decor brands are not fetching many bids these days. Writing a check was out of the equation; Blyth had about \$167 million in cash apart from ViSalus and once Moody's Investors Service became aware of the company's dire financial straits, it acted swiftly on Sept. 20 to change its outlook on the company to negative, closing the door on Blyth's ability to borrow money below loan shark rates.

On Oct. 1, in a press release light on details, Blyth announced that its purchase of the final share of ViSalus would take place in April 2014 and that ViSalus' founders agreed to have new employment contracts drawn up.

Blyth effectively took a cue from the U.S. government and pushed forward the day of fiscal reckoning 18 months. Management perhaps hopes that the shelved IPO can be relaunched when investors have forgotten what's in the prospectus. The reality is that Blyth's leadership bought a little more than a year and a half to devise Plan B.

Regardless, even if consumer spending swells, it is difficult to imagine Blyth's being able to generate enough cash to buy the remaining ViSalus stake.

A Merger of Opposites

The relationship between ViSalus and Blyth has its roots in a routine wireless Internet installation job in 2002 at a ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif. Over the course of the installation, the property owner, private equity veteran Frederick Warren, struck up a conversation with Ryan Blair, the chief of the company doing the job, SkyPipeline.

Outside of that chance meeting, a conversation between the two was perhaps unlikely. Warren is a well-established executive in the private equity and venture capital worlds, deeply involved with his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania. In contrast, Blair had been a violent gang member in Los Angeles who had spent time in jail until his stepfather led him out of that life and interested him in business, as Blair explains at length in his book, *Nothing to Lose, Everything to Gain*.

Blair's wireless Internet service provider was a young company in search of cash, according to his book, and Warren, presumably always on the hunt for a new opportunity, was looking to better understand the possibilities in the wireless market.

Warren ultimately became convinced that Blair's company had potential. He happened to be an outside adviser to Ropart Asset Management, a private equity fund owned and run by Robert Goergen Sr., the founder of Blyth. Warren suggested that Ropart invest in SkyPipeline and Ropart took the advice. In 2004 when NextWeb bought SkyPipeline for \$25 million, both Blair and Ropart made out nicely.

The SkyPipeline sale gave Blair his first real money. At the time, Blair didn't make such great decisions, as his book describes; he spent his windfall on a sports car and plenty of fun with girlfriends who had expensive tastes. Indeed one thing Blair omitted from the book designed to be a "warts and all" account of his entrepreneurial life, including peeks at his playboy lifestyle, is his declaration of a Chapter 7 bankruptcy in October 2005. His bankruptcy filing listed \$125,000 in credit card debt and just \$500 in assets; he was living in a Marina del Rey, Calif., condo leased by his stepfather. (ViSalus' IPO prospectus does mention the bankruptcy.)

Still, in 2005 after Blair did a leveraged buyout to buy a company called ViSalus Science (later ViSalus) and needed some cash, he found a ready ear at Ropart. Blair retained the previous sales chief, Nick Sarnicola, and chief marketing officer, Blake Mallen, and in six months ViSalus' sales grew 200%, according to Blair's book. Traveling to Ropart's Greenwich, Conn., offices, Blair met with Robert Goergen Sr. and his son Todd, the managing partner.

The pitch worked. Robert Goergen Sr. personally gave the go-ahead to invest \$1.5 million in the ViSalus venture.

But there was a hook: Blair was prohibited from disclosing the role of the Goergen family or Blyth in the investment.

The anecdote suggests a recurring theme: the Ropart fund-Blyth Inc.-Goergen family nexus. Though Ropart and Blyth are two legally distinct entities, in practice they and the Goergen family form separate sides of one triangle, a mix of investments and personnel so fluid one needs a scorecard to track whose interests come first.

Then again, it was probably designed that way.

Consider this: Robert Goergen Sr., a former Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette banker and McKinsey partner, founded Blyth in 1976, serves as its chairman and CEO, and personally owns 30% of its shares. He also founded Ropart Asset Management, which his family completely owns. His son Todd, the managing partner of Ropart, is Blyth's former head of mergers and acquisitions. Ropart Asset Management's offices are inside Blyth's headquarters. Todd's brother Robert Jr. is the head of Blyth's PartyLite unit and an outside adviser to Ropart. For good measure, their mother, Pamela Goergen, is a long-serving Blyth board member.

Ropart Asset Management owns more than 576,000 shares of Blyth, part of the 3.4 million shares controlled by the Goergen family.

The Goergens are hardly the only family to practice corner office nepotism and everything listed above has been disclosed in one filing or another. The conflicts of interest involved in the Goergens' running ViSalus as an ATM for themselves are another matter.

When Blyth struck a deal in August 2008 to buy ViSalus in stages, the Goergen family used shareholder capital to buy out Ropart's private investment in the firm at what Blair's book indicates was 10 times forward earnings. So far the Ropart Asset Management Funds (and thus the Goergen family) have netted \$15 million from the ongoing buyout. It is fair to wonder what — if any — incentives existed for Blyth to aggressively negotiate the sale price lower when Goergen family members were the sole beneficiaries.

Soon after the August 2008 deal, Goergen family members started landing board or executive roles at ViSalus, with Todd serving as chief strategy officer. It's not unheard of for private equity executives to temporarily assume management roles in companies they invest in, but usually this is for the short term. They claim to be experts in managing assets, after all, not operations.

Todd Goergen's situation illustrates just how lucrative wearing two hats can be. Todd has kept his Ropart job, while collecting a \$500,000 annual salary as ViSalus' chief strategy officer; he is eligible for a performance bonus of as much as \$1 million. If an IPO is completed, Todd will receive 2.05% of the company's shares in options and restricted stock.

The blurring of the lines between the Goergens' personal investments and professional obligations seems to be by deliberate design, not accident, and part of their strategy for ViSalus. Ropart owns 4% of ViSalus and its funds charge ViSalus \$8,500 a month for management services. The incentive for the Goergen family to complete an IPO is obvious: Based on Blyth's \$1 billion valuation of ViSalus, the shares held by Ropart should be worth at least \$40 million, with Todd holding another \$20 million stake. Whether the IPO happens is, of course, up to the market. In the meantime, family members are being paid while they wait; other Blyth shareholders are not.

Through Ropart, members of the Goergen family also own minority stakes in some of ViSalus' key vendors. As of June, ViSalus had paid FragMob LLC \$1.7 million in fees this year for services, including development of an app for mobile phones, as well as some credit card swipers, and \$800,000 to iCentris, a maker of direct-selling software. Todd Goergen is a member of FragMob's board and ViSalus' founders own stakes in both these companies.

Credit the Goergens for their patience, though. When ViSalus stumbled some in 2009 and Blyth was forced to write down many of the assets in its investment to zero, it did not exercise its right to walk away from the deal. Only beginning in 2010 did ViSalus begin the growth that would prove such a double-edged sword.

Then again, the Goergens have direct experience with the darker side of network marketing companies. In 2006, shortly after putting cash into ViSalus, Ropart also took a stake in iMergent, a Utah-based software company cofounded by legendary stock promoter Shelly Singhal. (In 2010 Singhal was indicted for his role in a securities fraud; the charges were reduced to mail fraud last summer.)

From the minute Ropart made its investment, iMergent's management was embroiled in a pitched battle with short sellers who derided iMergent's software as worthless and its business model as that of a poorly disguised multilevel marketing company.

In keeping with the Blyth-Ropart-Goergen family tradition of interlocking ownership, Neal Goldman, a Blyth board member since 1991, was the largest holder of iMergent stock and its most vocal defender. He accused the short sellers of illegal tactics and fraudulent claims. Eventually the company sued short seller Andrew Left (a court tossed out the suit two years later with iMergent paying his legal fees).

Goldman probably should have kept his mouth shut. After numerous state attorneys general sued iMergent for making misleading claims, its CEO unceremoniously left the organization in 2008 when the board found he had violated disclosure rules. Then Todd Goergen took over the reins. The company moved its headquarters to Arizona, entered the Internet services business and changed its name to Crexendo. After the company's stock price peaked at \$29 a share in early 2007, the shares now trade at just a tad over \$2.

Shake Economic\$

What the Goergens and Blyth are involved in with ViSalus is as conceptually different from Blyth's neighborhood candle and potpourri parties as Pat Boone is from Motley Crüe.

The type of selling done for Blyth's PartyLite unit is what a management expert might call "high touch," since the emphasis is on social gatherings of friends and neighbors who personally view and sample the products. While the process is fruitful over the long haul, it can be time-consuming and imprecise. Someone attending an initial sales party might buy a single product and wait months or a year before really opening her wallet. Over time, though, that customer might host a sales party and bring in 20 new customers, a few of whom might organize additional parties.

The entry point for the ViSalus consumer experience is the Body by Vi challenge, a 90-day period during which a person picks a weight-loss goal and tries to achieve it using the Vi-Shape shake mix and supplements. Distributors — or "promoters" as they are called — are supposed to stage "challenge parties" to market the product.

ViSalus' fast sales growth might seem to indicate that its products work. The truth isn't so cut and dry.

The company claims to have engineered "millions of pounds lost" and prominently features online pictures of customers made sexier and slimmer from consuming its shakes.

But to evaluate the products' true effectiveness, the Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation asked two independent experts to examine ViSalus' 90-day challenge and the ingredients of the Vi-Shape shake mix: Dr. Melina Jampolis, a nutrition specialist and author of *The Calendar Diet*, and dietician Keri Gans, author of *The Small Change Diet: 10 Steps to a Thinner, Healthier You*.

Gans was blunt. "Do they work? Absolutely [shakes] will help you lose weight over a 30-day period." But she added, "They will absolutely guarantee you gain it all back, if not more." Since ViSalus provides no instructions for how a person should modify his behavior and does not help introduce changes in how he relates to food (what to eat more of and what to consume less of), the old eating habits remain, Gans argued. Plus, the minute a person exits any shake plan, weight gain inevitably results, she said.

"When the weight comes back, it's really devastating," Gans said about shake diets in general and their users. "They simply give up and remain unhappy and unhealthy, or double down, with the same results. I've never seen shakes work for anyone wanting permanent weight change."

Dr. Jampolis was more circumspect. "My concerns are more nutritional and about the marketing than the program," she said. "Shakes are proven to be an effective first step as someone begins a permanent shift in approach to food. It's not clear to me, however, that enough emphasis is placed on nutrition after the shake program ends."

"The cost is much higher than it needs to be," Dr. Jampolis added. "You could very easily make a much lower-priced shake with ground chia fiber, for instance, and other higher-quality ingredients." (Diet products and vitamins are two staples of the multilevel marketing universe because they are inexpensive for a company to source and are often in high demand.)

The doctor is right that a Vi-Shape regimen is not cheap; 30 days' worth of product in ViSalus' Transformation Kit runs about \$249. So figure that a three-month setup costs \$750, not including shipping fees. (At least one enterprising ViSalus skeptic managed to put together a nutritionally similar shake for about two-thirds less per serving.)

The back-and-forth between shake opponents and supporters about the alleged nutritional value of ViSalus products is playing out on numerous websites. See the comments from readers here and here, as well as this video critique of ViSalus' marketing presentation. Nonetheless, ViSalus makes a seductive appeal to consumer psychology: It sells a quick fix to a thorny problem on an installment plan. Skeptics are left to play the role of Cassandra, citing the stern medicine of long-term behavioral and lifestyle changes.

ViSalus asserts numerous claims about the remarkable scientific basis of the products behind its sales success. The company has spared no effort to brand its products as the nutritional heir to the meal-replacement shakes around in one form or other since the 1970s. Until the company updated its website after the name change to ViSalus Inc. from ViSalus Sciences, it declared, "Comprehensive research and development (R&D) is critical to the success of ViSalus' products" and that it is "dedicated to bringing the best minds together with the best science to deliver cutting edge nutraceuticals."

That's a mighty tall order for a company whose scientific advisory board consists of just two people: Dr. Michael Seidman and Steven Witherly. ViSalus' product development expenses of \$1 million were paid entirely to Dr. Seidman for product royalties and consulting fees. He earns another \$180,000 a year for appearances at promoter conferences.

And ViSalus conferences extol massive enthusiasm for anything to do with science. Dr. Seidman is regularly given a rock star's welcome — replete with an entrance song — when he makes his jargon-dense presentations to ViSalus promoters about Vi-Pak, a vitamin and mineral supplement that he developed. Audience members, hanging on every word, eat it up. What they might not know, however, is, speaking skills aside, there is nothing very special about what Dr. Seidman does for ViSalus, according to the company's filings: "We believe that the products covered by the [Seidman] license are replaceable in the event that the license is not renewed ... and do not believe that ... the non-renewal of the license would have a material impact on our results of operations and cash flows."

Dr. Seidman is an ear, nose and throat specialist with an extensive research background in hearing loss. He frequently mentions that he holds several patents in his appearances before ViSalus distributors, but only one of his patents is for vitamins; the rest pertain to hearing loss. Dr. Seidman owns the Body Language Vitamin Co., serves as a staff hearing and throat surgeon for the Henry Ford Health System in West Bloomfield, Mich., acts as a paid endorser of an herbal remedy for tinnitus and edits several academic journals dealing with hearing loss. ViSalus prominently features a White Papers tab on its website, to proudly display a series of Dr. Seidman's papers — mostly dealing with hearing loss.

Witherly is a nutritionist with a doctorate from Michigan State University. His career is more of a pure play at the intersection between nutraceuticals and direct sales; he has held research positions at Herbalife and a unit of Amway. He is now CEO of Technical Products Inc., a Valencia, Calif., consultancy that has advised companies whose formulations include supplements for erectile dysfunction and hangovers. Though Witherly generally has a lower profile within ViSalus, as a multilevel marketing veteran, he displays a level of enthusiasm and a hyped sales approach in his presentations in keeping with the concert-like aspect of promoter conferences.

That Pyramid Thing, for Real

In the 1980s the Federal Trade Commission laid out guidelines for multilevel marketers concerning acceptable business practices. At a minimum, they have to move away from "inventory loading" (obligating distributors to buy a certain amount of product each month) and have retail sales operations, through which distributors sell to a public customer base, not just to one another.

Yet as long as multilevel marketers have described their compensation structure in a way that addresses these issues, they have largely been left alone and can retain a pyramid structure. While trade and securities regulators have scrambled to bring about compliance — and have sent the occasional message — multilevel marketing companies have become legally sanctioned outposts within the American economy.

In its prospectus, ViSalus bluntly assured would-be investors that the company is not running a pyramid scheme, but an analysis of the details of its operation as explained on its website and in the prospectus suggests an entirely separate reality.

ViSalus directly addressed the pyramid structure issue in the prospectus as follows: "Our individual promoters are paid by commissions based on sales of our products and services to bona fide purchasers, and for this and other reasons we do not believe that we are subject to laws regulating pyramid schemes." ViSalus also pointed out that its distributors are not required to buy products monthly.

Written this way, ViSalus is in the clear. And, to be fair, consumer sales account for 66% of ViSalus' revenue, with distributors' purchases making up for the rest. Yet the company's prospectus shows that on average for the first six months of this year the typical customer spent \$240 versus \$1,286 by distributors. This seems odd if ViSalus is claiming its distributors are not required to buy products.

Most ViSalus' kits for promoters come with individual sample packets to give to prospective clients, so a promoter would have no reason to hold any inventory beyond a personal supply. Moreover, company filings say products are shipped directly to a customer. It's hard to conclude anything other than that promoters are buying product to improve their sales performance or to maintain their perks.

While ViSalus' promoters do not have to buy a fixed monthly allotment of products, they do spend money — often a lot. Corporate policy requires every promoter to buy at least a \$49 "basic" membership, essentially providing a packet of marketing materials and three shake samples. Yet ViSalus' entire marketing and training program is geared toward directing promoters toward buying one of two options: a \$499 Executive Success System package, with promotional materials, videos and free samples, or a \$999 offering, basically two Executive Success System packages.

Without the Executive Success System package, according to ViSalus materials, promoters cannot participate in a weekly revenue sharing pool and the ViSalus Bimmer Club. (For those in the Bimmer Club, ViSalus pays \$600 toward the lease of a ViSalus-branded black BMW, as long as the promoter's sales network brings in \$12,500 a month in revenue; if sales fall under that figure, the lease becomes the promoter's obligation.)

In other words, good luck to distributors trying to get ahead at ViSalus without shelling out at least \$499.

ViSalus further emphasizes in its prospectus its pyramid avoidance through its manner of sales compensation, stating unequivocally that ViSalus pays "individual promoters commissions based on product sales, not recruiting."

Narrowly cast, this is correct: A promoter can earn a commission for selling a single bag of shake mix to a customer. But a close read of ViSalus' compensation plan makes it very clear that life as a ViSalus promoter is built on recruiting additional promoters.

If a promoter sells to a consumer, he earns a commission of at least 10% that can rise to 25%, based on the order's dollar volume. To earn a respectable living, he would have to sign up customers multiple times a day, every day of the year, with few of them dropping out. Selling a \$249 Transformation Kit, for example, brings in slightly less than \$25 in commission.

But if a promoter immediately turns new buyers into promoters and builds a network right away, the income can potentially skyrocket. When a promoter adds three customers to her network, she receives a month's supply of product. If this is done within her first 30 days of joining the Body by Vi Challenge, she becomes eligible for a whole new tier of rewards called Rising Star: a share of the weekly enrollers' commission pool (2% of ViSalus' sales). But she must also enroll three other promoters during those first 30 days with a minimum of \$2,000 in total product sales.

See how ViSalus tries to have its cake and eat it too? Its filings meet the letter of the law by allowing a participant to earn some money selling to a customer but the spirit of all its programs is clear: Bigger payoffs come from immediately turning a customer into a promoter who is part of an actively expanding network.

In a video posted to YouTube of another ViSalus national sales training seminar this past summer in Miami (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pv30FDmFIY&feature=youtu.be&t=5m45s>), Sarnicola underscores the underlying goal to a room full of promoters who have achieved the vaunted status of director: "So I want you guys to make a distinction here between what the marketing message is and what the business model is. The marketing message is 'challenge, challenge, challenge.' But once you've got somebody in as a promoter, it's 'director, director, director.'" No elaboration here about nutrition or the process of weight loss.

Yet, being a ViSalus distributor is a risky proposition. Though the company does not disclose the dropout or "churn" rate for promoters, the Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation pieced together this rate from annual filings

and the prospectus: 197.1% for last year. This year through June, on an annualized basis, the churn rate was 194.2%. (In contrast, Herbalife, whose churn rate has been a major headache for its company, has about a 51% turnover among its distributor ranks.)

Perhaps ViSalus' high churn rate can be explained by additional Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation analysis from data disclosed in the prospectus: This year through June, the typical distributor for ViSalus bought on average \$1,286 in products but earned only \$1,638 in commissions, netting \$352.

Promoter churn becomes even more significant because it appears that ViSalus is able to count recently dropped-out promoters in its much touted customer total, which it claimed was as high as 1,058,000 in June. Read the fine print below to see how this is possible.

ViSalus defines a customer as "[a]nyone who has purchased products from us at least once in the previous 12 months, other than any purchaser who qualifies as an individual promoter on the measurement date." Under that definition, ViSalus could include its customer tally promoters who bought items within the past year but who are no longer active and so can't be considered "*individual* promoters." That's because ViSalus defines an "individual promoter" as a "person eligible to receive a commission within the ViSalus promoter compensation plan on the measurement date." And to qualify for a commission, a promoter must have booked \$125 or more in monthly automatically shipped sales.

So if one assumes the (very) conservative estimate of about 150,000 promoter dropouts in the past year, ViSalus' 1,058,000 customer figure — more than 1 out of every 300 U.S. residents — is greatly inflated by the inclusion of promoters who are no longer active.

Waning Health

Blyth's third quarter 10-Q document filed Nov. 7 shows it is a company in poor health, with every page of the filing indicating that the subsidiary is propping up the corporate parent.

Most important, Blyth's liquidity situation is becoming dire, according to this chart, whose figures were culled from the recent filing. With \$85.4 million of 5.5% bonds due in November 2013 against \$80.2 million in readily accessible cash, the company has reached panic button time. Fortunately for Blyth, it was able to sell its Sterno unit for \$23.5 million last month to build its cash reserve back up to almost \$103.8 million.

The sale of the Sterno unit is a good example of how ugly things have become for Blyth: As a profitable unit entering its busiest part of the year, Sterno is the type of division any healthy company would ordinarily hold onto.

Blyth's non-ViSalus businesses remain in free fall, with sales dropping 16% in the third quarter, to just under \$99 million. PartyLite's revenue declined 21%, with the unit posting an operating loss of \$10.7 million. (PartyLite's big season is the holidays, so the fourth quarter may show improved sales.)

ViSalus is Blyth's saving grace, bringing in \$169.9 million in revenue for the quarter, a 132% increase from the same period the prior year. ViSalus earned \$27.4 million for the first nine months of this year, allowing Blyth to turn a profit.

Which is why the Goergens should be feeling worse than ever.

ViSalus, the only thing standing between them and heartbreak, appears to be beginning to wind down its era of unprecedented growth. To be clear, ViSalus' posting a 132% sales increase in the third quarter over the same period last year is remarkable, but the company looks a lot closer to Earth than it did when posting 451% revenue growth. Unlike PartyLite, diet product companies tend to do their worst in the fourth quarter.

On Nov. 7, for the first time, ViSalus announced that its number of promoters shrank from the second quarter to the third, from 114,000 to 110,000. A few days later, on Nov. 12, ViSalus posted a video on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwRSF7nyExE&feature=youtu.be>), explaining how it is sharply increasing the cash rewards for promoters moving by March to the upper ranks of distributors. Increasing promoter commissions

might help boost or stabilize sales, but it will definitely weigh on profits. And Blyth's management needs every penny of ViSalus' profit to make up for its own losses.

In another first, on Nov. 21, Blyth announced Visalus' inaugural dividend payout — some \$22 million in total, with almost \$16 million going to Blyth. Naturally, the Goergens shared in the good fortune, with their Ropart fund collecting \$880,000 for its 4% stake. Like the Sterno sale, this is another clear sign of weakening financial health: If the goal is to ultimately consolidate ViSalus into Blyth, paying taxes on a dividend makes little sense unless the cash is desperately needed. And no manager would pull capital out of a business growing at 100% or more annually to reinvest it in a shrinking business unless it was to stave off a collapse.

It would be interesting to hear what Blyth's management, the Goergens and the crew at ViSalus have to say about all this, but they ignored all questions posed them by the Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation. For the record, more than a dozen attempts were made via email, phone, Twitter and overnight mail to get someone at Blyth, ViSalus or Ropart to answer questions about liquidity, promoter churn and whether ViSalus is a pyramid scheme. (We even sent emails to Blyth's outside legal counsel and its board of directors but received no reply.)

Blyth's stock price is now about \$15. Perhaps once investors saw the prospectus and examined the figures, they began to run. For those doing their homework, it's easy to see why: epic churn, an unsustainable business model and a weak corporate parent that can't readily make good on a deal to finish buying ViSalus.

The trio of Ryan Blair, Nick Sarnicola and Blake Mallen are slick opportunists who have built the latest infernal multilevel marketing machine, promising everything to the desperate and gullible, if only they buy in.

It will undoubtedly end badly for most, if not all, who rely on peddling shake powder. For ViSalus' leaders sitting atop the pyramid in the Hollywood Hills and Miami, there's plenty of cash on hand for now — until they figure out how to make their next fortune.

What no one saw back in 2008 was that it would end so badly for Blyth. Then again, with multilevel marketing — as in life itself — very few ever see the end coming.

[20121127-02](#) 05:25 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #278)

Thanks, William! You home now? Working?

[20121127-03](#) 07:31 Bill Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to SteveB, above)

Yes, at home. Work? Well, work has been raking leaves the last couple of weeks. Hard labor to rake and bag. Chilly, clear weather makes it a pleasure to be outside, but I'm a tad sore. As to gainful labor, I have only one client now, and there hasn't been much activity lately—which doesn't bother me in the least.

How's the cookie biz?

[20121127-15](#) 18:59 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to Bill, above) & Bolivia Bakery Biz

Glad to hear you're kicking back.

Ah, the fall chill in God's prime country...truly a pleasure...

Any business is interesting...at least any that I've ever been involved with. This one, to me, is particularly so.

First, I have two partners, Marci and her sister, Patti (actually, Patricia). Before I invested in this venture I did quite a bit of research, thinking, planning, and writing.

I knew, to make money, we had to do A and B in this way for this price. I even knew where all the furniture had to be, almost.

And we followed that plan the best we possibly could. If we had kept following it, though, I think we might already be out of business. And that's the thing about a business. It has to be alive. It has to know when and where it is failing and where it is succeeding. Sometimes these are things we don't even want to know, because of various ego things, and that leads some businesses to fail to, or at least some managers.

So things I grew very attached to had to fall away, at least for now, to be replaced by new growth. That's business.

For instance, my vision always relied on having a cadre of street vendors...probably, hopefully, independent businesspeople...giving out samples, distributing literature, selling cookies throughout the city. This has so far proven to be a problem. Though there are many street vendors in Santa Cruz, at the present moment, we don't have one, though it is not for a lack of trying. I'm at a distinct disadvantage here. In English, I think I can talk to just about anybody about anything and effectively either pick their brain or impart information to them if I want to do either. To hire or inspire someone takes a fluency in Spanish that I lack. It's hard for me to converse very deeply in Spanish with people who don't know me. But I have a lot of confidence in my partners, so I think we will eventually lick the problem. For now, we have shifted gears.

Another issue was a very basic cookie one—the size of the cookies. After a lot of experimentation, market research, tasting, etc., we determined that 50 gram cookies for about a dollar would work well all around. To me, that was the most satisfying size, the size I wanted to eat and have just one, normally. We knew what we could make them for. We knew how to package them. They're about the size and price our few, weak competitors make.

But, stumbling around, we found that something different works better in the street and in the store—a 25 gram cookie that we sell for about two for a dollar. Who would have guessed?

This also gave us a cookie that we could more easily give away for free in our Grand Year's (or World's) End Oferta in combination with our new product that is one of the other big course adjustments we have made...salteñas!

The promotion was my idea. (I'm the marketing and facilities guy, Marci is mainly production and public relations, Patti is sales, Lucero takes care of the kitchen and cleaning up all our messes, and Teresa is available for back-up duty.) The salteñas were Marci's idea, one of very many strokes of genius she has contributed, making me very happy to work with her, even when she proves me wrong, haha. So, it being Bolivia, we were easily able to obtain the franchise on the best salteñas in all of South America—Potosinas, the ones that were already our favorites and that we were eating almost daily.

<http://xn--salteaspotosinas-bub.com/>

So now we are a panaderia and a salteñaria and we also have ice cream and all kinds of stuff to drink and lots of interesting people stopping by. We're looking at other ways besides vendors to get cookies all over the city. The salteñas are delivered to us frozen and, we are told, will keep about a week in our big (-10 F) freezer, though I suspect it's more like a month. But, anyway, we could also ship frozen cookie dough balls to places with ovens all over town, like the salteña company does with, well, salteñas. Our three specialties—cookies, salteñas, and coffee—all benefit from being extremely fresh! Or we might distribute cookies in jars to places all over town. Instead of packaging most of our cookies in plastic, we now keep them fresh longer and better in tightly sealed glass cookie jars that also make a nice display for customers.

As my Mom used to tell me, there's more than one way to skin a cat. I think a better saying might be that it's always good to be agile like a cat. Even if you are, you still might end-up getting skinned!

20121127-17	20:24	Bill	Re: FotM Newsletter #277 (reply to SteveB, above) & Bolivia Bakery Biz
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Gotta be flexible. So good you have your partners to make the cultural connection. I had to use the URL to find out what saltenas are. I could come into your store now and have a whole meal: drink, main course, and dessert.

Thanks for the narration on your business. I'll take some lessons from it. Too late, though, for Hostess, so there'll be a drought of nasty snack foods until the brands are sold to some other producer.

Best wishes for prosperity in Santa Cruz.

20121127-04	10:49	Art	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #278)
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Hi, SteveG, I dunno but sounds about right. Of course, one of the big questions is who is paying for all this. A lot of money goes into Americans for Tax Reform but no disclosure as to it's source. The other thing is it ignores things like the deficit and exactly how you pay for things like wars. I want to say Republican wars but guess that is another issue. Equally it is totally one sided. Wants smaller government but doesn't want to address how you fund national projects like interstate highways, CDC, NASA and on and on.

20121127-06	12:04	SteveG	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to Art, above)
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Throw in that most states are refusing to establish the health exchanges for the affordable health care act forcing the federal government to do it – another argument will start because of Obama wanting big government when the states refused to do their part.

20121127-07	12:09	Art	Re: "About Americans for Tax Reform" (reply to SteveG, above)
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You can see it coming.

20121127-13	18:37	SteveG	"Grover Norquist's Budget Is Largely Financed by Just Two Billionaire-Backed Nonprofits"
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Backed by billionaires...are you surprised?

"Grover Norquist's Budget Is Largely Financed by Just Two Billionaire-Backed Nonprofits" by Lee Fang, *The Nation*

Nov. 27, 2012, (<http://www.thenation.com/blog/171475/grover-norquists-budget-largely-financed-just-two-billionaire-backed-nonprofits#>)

Grover Norquist's iron grip over much of the Republican Party is somewhat puzzling. Why should Senators and other lawmakers listen to a guy caught laundering money for Jack Abramoff?

But consider Norquist's tax pledge and political power another way: that he's just a proxy for the powerful interest groups that finance him. In the nineties, it was big tobacco that used Norquist's tax pledge as a cover to lobby lawmakers against cigarette taxes (Norquist still uses an e-mail system donated to him by Altria to send out Tea Party action alerts against tobacco taxes). Now, big PhRMA and other industry groups provide grants to Norquist while his foundation endorses other giveaways, like protectionist support against importing cheaper drugs from Canada and the classification of tax subsidies to refineries as "tax cuts" that must not be cut.

I took a look at the last available budget numbers for Americans for Tax Reform, Norquist's group. Though they do not reveal their donors, we can cobble together much of Norquist's donors using foundations and other nonprofits that donate money to him.

The disclosures show that only two billionaire-backed groups have provided over 66 percent of Norquist's funding:

- The Center to Protect Patients Rights donated \$4,189,000 to Americans for Tax Reform in 2010, 34 percent of the group's budget that year. The Center to Protect Patients Rights is the foundation used by the billionaire clique led by the Koch brothers to distribute grants to allied groups. In 2010, wealthy moguls like Steve Bechtel of Bechtel Corporation and Steve Schwarzman of the Blackstone Group met behind closed doors to help lend money to these types of efforts.
- Crossroads GPS donated \$4,000,000 to Americans for Tax Reform in 2010, 32.46 percent of the group's budget that year. Crossroads GPS is the undisclosed group run by Karl Rove. The only known donors are folks like Paul Singer, the "vulture" hedge fund king who benefits enormously from tax strategies like the carried interest loophole. Norquist's pledge largely benefits billionaires like Singer and Schwarzman, who pay almost nothing in payroll taxes and likely pay a lower rate than their secretaries.

When Norquist promises consequences for the few GOP members willing to break with his pledge, what he's really saying is that his donor network will retaliate with attack ads and money for primary challenges.

So as our country descends into a position where now 1 percent of society owns more than one-third of the wealth, it should be no surprise that the guy preventing any equitable tax system is fully financed by the privileged few at the top.

20121127-14	18:42	Pam	Re: "Grover Norquist's Budget Is Largely Financed by Just Two Billionaire-Backed Nonprofits" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Not a bit surprised. Disgusted, yes.

20121127-05	10:59	Pam	Re: "How Political Campaign Spending Brought Down the Roman Republic" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #278)
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I liked the piece in FotM about Rome. It certainly seems to me as if history is repeating itself. If you went through the past and made a list of everything human beings have ever fought about, how many items would there be, I wonder? I'd bet it's a limited number of things: water, land, oil, pride, women, religion (!), political hegemony, economic advantage, various natural resources. Offhand I can't think of any other categories; even so, this is a pretty short list, so it stands to reason that over the centuries man has repeated himself over and over when it comes to reasons to fight. In that sense, history really does repeat itself. Sadly, one of the things that seems eternal is our inability to learn from it. I read an article about how Exxon-Mobil has essentially taken over the world. It's a very successful company, run by honest people who play by the rules and put safety first. That said, this most successful company, because of its success, is destroying the world. They know it, everyone knows it, but nothing changes--not enough to make a difference. Jimmy Carter called the oil shortage of the 'seventies "the equivalent of war." Our global environmental crisis is going to make that look like a sneeze. It's not just "evil triumphs when good men do nothing," it's "evil triumphs when good men do evil."

20121127-08	14:48	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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...sweet potato puree (creamy, smooth, delicious, sweet), a bulgur wheat salad (wonderfully toothsome, with the chewiness praised by Al the Dentist - that would be Al Fresco's associate), and roasted "Mohawk" actual baby carrots; these were actual fresh young carrots with a Mohawk 'do, not those scraps tossed into the auto-peeler. The cod was perfectly basted in brown butter, forming a thin pellicle with no breading, so the delicately flavored, robustly flaky cod had the thinnest skin, like a concentrated film of flavor. A fork, lightly used, pared off bite-size, cod-proportionate flakes of translucent, perfect mild cod flesh. Little wonder that cod was the fish targeted by the Basques 'way back when in the first bursts of commercial fishing: it's still one of the best! Chef Kelli's lovely plate was graced with a smooth, delicious, honey-sweet, sweet potato puree, which was in turn garnished with roasted squash seeds that added little microburts of complementary flavors and texture. The bulgur wheat was slightly chewy, as it should be, and laced lightly with currants and capers and little bits of shallot.

You should have it so good! I sure did... I sat down to a plate that looked like this:, and it's all gone, now...



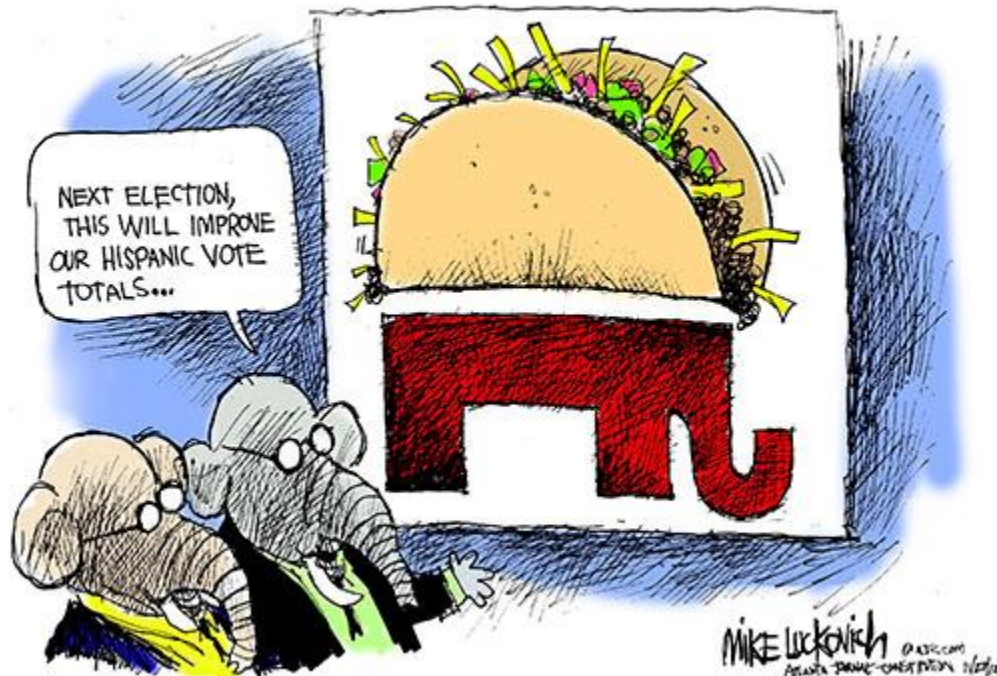
Brown Butter Cod over Bulgar Wheat Salad, with...

20121127-09

15:31

SteveB

Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote'



20121127-10

15:56

Ben

Re: Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote' (reply to SteveB, above)

Deep thought processes of the GOP... loved it.

20121127-11

16:09

Art

Re: Cartoon: New GOP Strategy to 'Get Out the Spic Vote' (reply to SteveB, above)

Sounds about right.

20121127-12

16:27

SteveB

"GOP Senators Criticize Susan Rice after Meeting"

I guess, unlike I implied in yesterday's *FotM Newsletter* #278, we still haven't heard the end of this Benghazi nothingness... These Republicans—McCain, Graham, and Ayotte—are starting to p*ss me off!

"GOP Senators Criticize Susan Rice after Meeting" by Oren Dorell, *USA Today*

(U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice met Tuesday with GOP lawmakers on Capitol Hill on the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Libya.)

November 27, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/11/27/ambassador-susan-rice-biography-benghazi/1728985/>)

(WASHINGTON) After meeting with U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice on Tuesday, three GOP lawmakers said their concerns have only grown about misleading statements Rice made concerning the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Libya that left Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans dead.

Rice's meeting with Sens. John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte on Capitol Hill came as the White House signaled it may nominate Rice to replace Hillary Rodham Clinton as secretary of State.

McCain, R-Ariz., has said he may oppose her nomination because she should have known her statements on the Sept. 11 attack were false.

Rice said in a round of interviews days after the deadly incident that the attack may have emerged from a protest outside the consulate in response to an anti-Islam video produced in the USA. It was later learned there was no protest and the attack was a well-organized terror plot likely timed for the anniversary of 9/11.

"It is clear the information she gave the American people was incorrect when she said that it was a spontaneous demonstration triggered by a hateful video," McCain told reporters after the meeting with Rice. "It was not, and there was compelling evidence at the time that that was certainly not the case."

"The bottom line is that I'm more disturbed than I was before...about how four Americans died in Benghazi, Libya," Graham said.

In a statement, Rice said she and acting CIA director Michael Morell, who joined her for the meeting with lawmakers, reiterated to the senators that her misstatements made on several Sunday talk shows on Sept. 16 were based on talking points provided by the intelligence community.

Former CIA director David Petraeus told lawmakers in a closed-door session earlier this month that the CIA's draft talking points written in response to the assault had referred to it as a terrorist attack. But he also said the reference was removed from the final version.

"While we certainly wish that we had had perfect information just days after the terrorist attack, as is often the case, the intelligence assessment has evolved," Rice said. "We stressed that neither I nor anyone else in the administration intended to mislead the American people at any stage in this process, and the administration updated Congress and the American people as our assessments evolved."

President Obama has defended Rice, who rose up through Democratic circles to advise presidential candidates on international issues. Under President Clinton, she weighed in on key foreign policy decisions, some of which remain controversial.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said questions about Rice's role have been answered, and the focus of congressional inquiry should be on who attacked the consulate and how to assure security at all U.S. facilities. Carney decried what he called a seeming Republican "obsession" over Rice's comments, calling it "misplaced."

But that explanation did not seem to wash with Graham.

"The American people got bad information on 16 September, they got bad information from President Obama days after," Graham said. "The question is: Should they have been giving the information at all It's unjustified to give the scenario as presented by Ambassador Rice and President Obama three weeks before an election."

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA operations officer and now an analyst at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a conservative think tank, says Rice's performance after the Benghazi attack raises a red flag.

"These officials are supposed to assess these things for themselves," Gerecht said. "If you see a situation where a consulate safe house is being attacked by mortars and organized teams, that should tell you this was planned before that video came out."

Rice knew the narrative that would satisfy the White House, Gerecht said. Included in that narrative is that al-Qaeda is losing ground, public sentiments toward the United States are improving in the Middle East, and the attack was not connected to U.S. foreign policy. But she still would have had access numerous news reports that contradicted that narrative, he said.

Ayotte, R-N.H., said she remained disturbed about the Benghazi episode.

"I have many more questions that have to be answered," Ayotte said.

Rice, 48, was born in Washington, D.C., to scholar parents who were themselves involved in policy circles. Her father, Emmett Rice, was the second black governor of the Federal Reserve System; her mother, Lois Dickson Fitt, is an education expert at the Brookings Institution.

Rice received a degree in history at Stanford University in 1986 and attended Oxford before becoming a foreign policy aide to former Democratic Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis during his 1988 presidential run against George H.W. Bush.

After his unsuccessful campaign, Rice became a consultant at McKinsey & Company, a global consulting firm.

In 1993 she joined the administration of President Clinton, serving at the National Security Council. She held various positions, including director for International Organizations and Peacekeeping, special assistant to the president and senior director for African Affairs.

She was a policy adviser during the genocide in Rwanda and also at a time when the Clinton administration was determining how to handle the emergence of al-Qaeda as a terror threat.

Clinton and his foreign policy staff were criticized for failing to intervene in a serious way to stop the 1994 genocide in which more than 500,000 people were killed, a decision that Clinton would say was the worst mistake of his presidency.

Clinton's foreign policy staff had to fend off criticism it failed to do more to nab al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden prior to Sept. 11, 2001. According to former ambassador to Sudan, Timothy Carney, when the Sudan offered to help the United States capture bin Laden, Rice and counter-terrorism czar Richard Clarke advised against it. Later, the 9/11 Commission said no credible evidence existed that Sudan would have made good on its offer.

Following the election of Republican George W. Bush, Rice joined Brookings in 2002 as a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy and Global Economy and Development program, where she offered analyses on failing states and global hunger.

In 2004 she served as an adviser to the presidential campaign of John Kerry. In 2008 she was asked to advise then-Sen. Barack Obama on foreign policy matters.

In January 2009, Rice was confirmed President Obama's permanent representative to the United Nations.

(Contributing: Aamer Madhani and David Jackson.)

20121127-16	19:25	SteveB	More Benghazi: "Fox Says Ricks Apologized, Ricks Disputes"
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Wow! Fox News operating as a wing of the GOP? Now, what would make someone think that? Read below...

And, of course, Fox must be telling the 'fair and balanced' truth about their side of the dispute... LOL!

To me, if Fox disputes something, what they dispute must be true! What a bunch of clowns and buffoons!

"Fox Says Ricks Apologized, Ricks Disputes" by Mackenzie Weinger, Politico

Nov. 27, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2012/11/fox-says-ricks-apologized-ricks-disputes-150376.html>)

Fox News has hit back at author Tom Ricks for blasting the network during an on-air interview as **“operating as a wing of the Republican Party” and accusing it of hyping the Benghazi attack**, saying he “apologized in our offices afterward but doesn’t have the strength of character to do that publicly.”

Michael Clemente, Fox’s executive vice president of news, told *The Hollywood Reporter* on Monday Ricks was only seeking publicity with his guest appearance. Ricks, he said, ignored the interview question, “When you have four people dead, including the first U.N. ambassador in more than 30 years, how do you call that hype?”, in order to promote his new book — but later apologized.

“When Mr. Ricks ignored the anchor’s question, it became clear that his goal was to bring attention to himself -- and his book,” Clemente told *THR* in an e-mail. “He apologized in our offices afterward but doesn’t have the strength of character to do that publicly.”

Ricks, however, told *The Hollywood Reporter* he never apologized.

UPDATE: Ricks tells POLITICO Clemente is "making it up" that he apologized.

“Please ask Mr. Clemente what the words of my supposed apology were. I’d be interested to know,” he wrote in an e-mail to *THR*. “Frankly, I don’t remember any such apology.”

Asked about the discrepancy, Clemente referred POLITICO to Fox News communications representative Dana Klinghoffer, who has yet to respond. Ricks also has yet to respond to a request for additional comment.

Earlier on Monday, Ricks said he told a Fox News producer before he went on air he felt the network had “hyped” the Benghazi story and “it should have been no surprise when I said it.”

During Monday’s interview, Ricks — who writes a blog for *Foreign Policy* magazine and is a best-selling author of books such as *Fiasco* and *The Generals* — told Fox News’s Jon Scott “that **Benghazi generally was hyped, by this network especially.**” **When Scott pushed back, Ricks asked the anchor if he knew how many security contractors died in Iraq. When Scott replied he did not, Ricks said, “no, nobody does, because nobody cared.”**

“We know that several hundred died, but there was never an official count done of security contractors dead in Iraq. So when I say this focus on what was essentially a small fire-fight, I think, number one, I’ve covered a lot of fire-fights, it is impossible to figure out what happens in them sometimes,” Ricks said Monday on Fox News. “And second, I think that the emphasis on Benghazi has been extremely political, partly because Fox was operating as a wing of the Republican Party.”

[This last part is pretty much as Art has already written in these pages on the Benghazi situation. –SteveB]

from the Roadfood Team:

Today is National Bavarian Cream Pie Day!

Pizza with Everything except Anchovies Day	Diwali	National Pickle Day
19	20	21
National Carbonated Beverage with Caffeine Day	National Peanut Butter Fudge Day	Gingerbread Day
26	27	28
National Cake Day	National Bavarian Cream Pie Day	National French Toast Day

How do we know that? By checking our Roadfood Calendar!

You lived through another insane Black Friday; you waded through an inbox filled with Cyber Monday offers; and there are *still* people for whom you have yet to get a present. What could be a more appropriate gift for your food-loving friends and family than the brand new 2013 Roadfood Calendar?



[Place your order here.](#) (Note that the picture above is a low resolution photo of the calendar. The actual calendar photos are of much higher quality.)

Don't dance, just fight! Enjoy!

Video: "Bolivian Kick Boxer Meets U.S. Marine" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxRKGiXoMb4&sns=em>).

[It looks like that marine had better get away from that crowd quickly. I'm not sure what part of Bolivia this is from. Usually, we use blockades, knives, guns, or roosters here to settle disputes. This video reminds me of one of the Indiana Jones movies. Some Indian shows Indiana a bunch of threatening fighting moves. He's tired and irritated, so he just shoots the guy. -SteveB]

This is so true!



[Tom, I'm wondering how it is that this is "so true" when it's never happened in the history of the world? Are you really worried about doctors, even under the dreaded Obamacare? Methinks thy concern be misplaced. And does being a Walmart greeter suck only lately, since they've started unionizing? Before, it didn't suck? Man, if they'd just get rid of those stinking unions, American millionaire doctors would be applying for those jobs like crazy, now that Obamacare is going to make them poor anyway! -SteveB]



<http://www.fireworksarcade.co.uk/world-pyro-olympics-a-delight-for-the-eyes/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #280 — NOV. 29, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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INDEX: Click here.

A Jump Off the Alleged 'Cliff'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 29, 2012)

The Lie Machines keep turning out their only product, which would be...well...lies...

"The 'Fiscal Cliff' Deal Is Wall Street's Latest Scam" by Richard Eskow, Huffington Post

Nov. 28, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rj-eskow/the-fiscal-cliff-deal-is_b_2205058.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)



It's like a *Woodstock* for plutocrats, or an *Avengers* for the avaricious: The CEOs of America's largest corporations have banded together to lecture us on the importance of debt reduction. And despite their lack of qualifications and their very obvious self-interest, the media can't get enough of them.

Why? They're not experts in economic policy. Quite the opposite, in fact. Many of them got where they are by persuading people to buy overpriced crap that's bad for them. So a better way to look at this seemingly endless PR campaign would be to say: There they go again.

And yet their cynical campaign continues to capture national venues like 60 Minutes and conduct local blitzes in areas like Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Reporters are even hounding Warren Buffett -- a CEO with much deeper economic knowledge -- with the words of a less-informed and more self-interested colleague.

Think of it as Wall Street's latest scam. If you liked toxic investments and the 2008 financial crisis, you'll love their deficit deal.

The Economy's Most Wanted

The list of "Fix the Debt" CEOs includes executives from Wall Street's largest and most notorious bad actors. These banks have committed serial fraud and gotten away with no criminal penalties and only nominal fines -- fines paid by shareholders, and not the misbehaving bankers themselves.

GE's Jeffrey Immelt is there, seemingly unashamed of GE Capital's fiscal and legal record. So's the CEO of Morgan Stanley, where bankers would boastfully shout "I ripped his face off!" after selling a worthless investment -- *to their own clients*. Erskine Bowles, co-author of the "Simpson Bowles" plan the CEOs are promoting, is on the Morgan Stanley Board.

The gang's all there: JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon? Check. Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan? Check. Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein? Check.

In fact, Blankfein's become something of a spokesperson for the group, working to sell the public on a package of cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, combined with nominal tax increases that would primarily target the middle class.

Returning to the Scene of the Crime

Some spokesman. Blankfein's institution paid the largest SEC fine in history for fraudulently deceiving investors about mortgage-backed securities which it sold while knowing full well that these securities were toxic -- a fact it concealed from its clients.

The list of deceived investors includes many of the large pension funds that provide financial security to working Americans when they retire. Now that Wall Street's struck these private-sector funds, they're targeting public retirement programs, too.

"Deficit reduction" and the "fiscal cliff:" They're this year's mortgage-backed securities.

Their Real Business

Most of these CEOs aren't bankers. But today, in a very real way, everyone who runs a giant U.S. corporation is a "Wall Street CEO." As Warren Buffett and others have rightfully observed, modern corporate leaders no longer care about long-term value. They only care about making their quarterly numbers -- by any means necessary -- so they can get their promised bonuses and options. That won't change until we change the way we pay CEOs.

Whatever industries they represent, these CEOs are primarily in the relationship business. And some of their most valuable relationships are political. That's why the companies on this list paid nearly one billion dollars in lobbying and campaign contributions in the last four years alone.

It has a Dr. Evil ring to it: *One billion dollars*. The lion's share (57 percent) went to Republicans, but the remainder went to friendly Democrats, which undoubtedly helps lend a "bipartisan" gloss to all this "deficit" talk. And a lot of it was *your* money, especially the lordly sums that Blankfein and his pals threw around after we bailed them out.

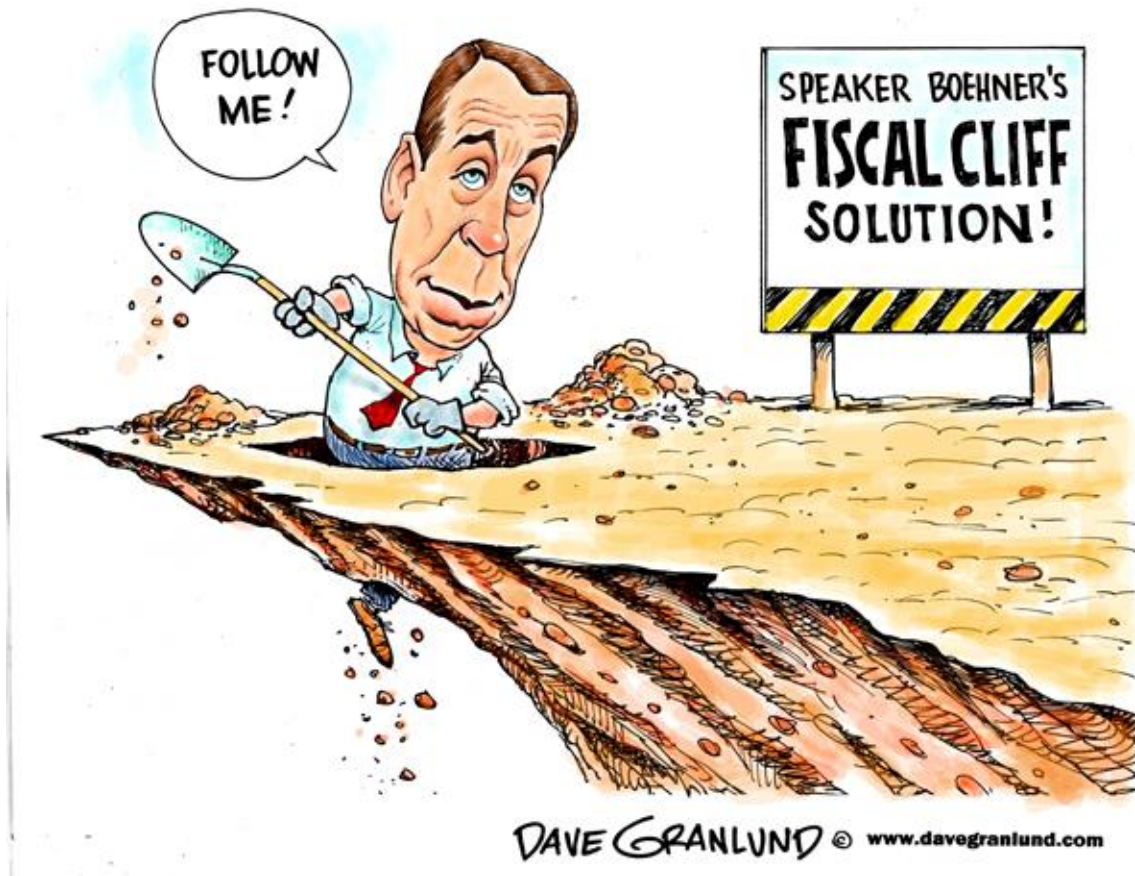
Seeing Scorpions

Don't be angry. It's like that old fable about the scorpion and the frog: They're doing this because it's their nature.

But let's be clear: These CEOs don't really care about the deficit. If they did they'd propose much higher taxes for themselves, a major jobs program to get our economy moving again, investment in our crumbling infrastructure, and expanded education funding to build the middle class of the future. And they'd be demanding that we do it *now*, while international bond markets are essentially paying our government to lend it money rather than the other way around.

They'd also focus on health care costs -- not by proposing to cut Medicare and Medicaid benefits, but by removing the greed factor which makes our medical costs so much greater than that of any other developed nation. But they're not likely to do that -- not when some of them represent the for-profit health industry and others reap big profits from health care investments.

What these CEOs *really* care about is bigger tax breaks -- for themselves and their corporations. That's why they've come together to use what may be their greatest collective talent: selling crap that's bad for you. Let's hope that this time nobody's buying.



Dear Senator:

In teaching about political philosophies and governance, I explained that one takes one's philosophy from one angle but governs from the middle. It's not about personal issues--as in style of ties or shoes. It's about the WHOLE of our legislative branch and way past time to do the honorable thing for ALL.

Please take this to your caucus and explain it to them:

Compromise defined:

1. A settlement of differences by mutual concessions; an agreement reached by adjustment of conflicting or opposing claims, principles, etc., by reciprocal modification of demands.
2. The result of such a settlement.
3. Something intermediate between different things: The split-level is a compromise between a ranch house and a multistoried house.
4. **An endangering**, especially of reputation; exposure to danger, suspicion, etc.: a compromise of one's integrity.

Thank you for your service. I found a signed copy of your last book and my pastor, serving in Kuwait with the Guard, was delighted to receive it. I also sent him Adlai Stevenson's speeches among other books!

Red Ryder steps it up a notch!



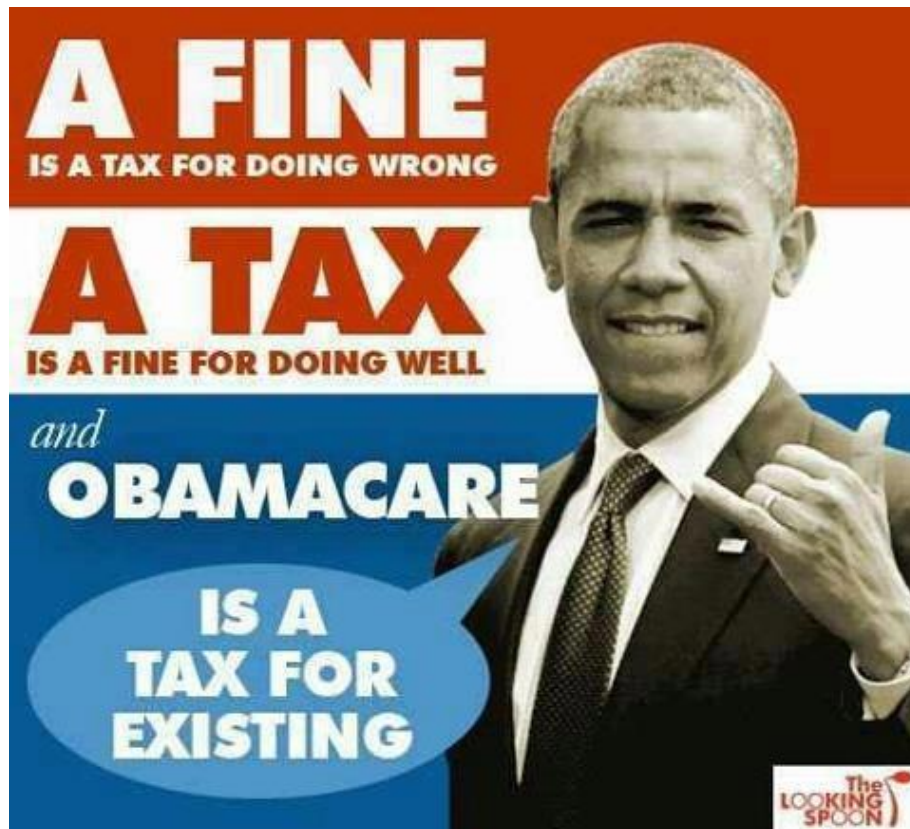
[Tom, this is how it starts—with Daisy! I miss my BB gun! My Mom was always worried about our eyes, but our eyes survived to see a future world awash in guns. Are we any safer? —SteveB]

20121128-03

14:13

Tom

Graphic: Obamacare Is a Tax...



20121128-04

14:26

Trudy

Re: Bolivia's National Census Day (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #275)

That was interesting—life somewhere else! Thanks.

20121128-05

14:57

Art

"New Scientist Special Report: 7 Reasons Climate Change Is 'Even Worse Than We Thought'"

While the Republicans try to focus on really important issues like whether Susan Rice had a hamburger for lunch before she went on the air a month ago, spaceship earth has a really big hole below the waterline.

(I am not trivializing Benghazi, but this witch hunt is all a very silly waste of time. We now have a virtually complete picture of the sequence of events in Benghazi. (The Republicans aren't even really focusing on that, because other than using the death of four Americans to hide behind, they don't really care about that part of it and are focused on who said what to who back here in the following days. Just read.) The security of US diplomats in overseas assignments has always been the responsibility of the host country – period. Maybe many of you have more personal experience than mine, but I did serve two embassy tours in NA and the ME, one in Morocco and one in Oman. Additionally, I have visited probably over 70 US Embassies and Consulates throughout the world including our Embassy in Tripoli. Beckie and I once visited our Consulate in Oran, Algeria in the late 70s during the Camp David discussions. It consisted of one person, not even married, so he was really all alone. We call these "Mom and Pop Consulates". We have a lot of them. Assignments to countries like Libya always have been dicey but that's part of the job. We've actually still have had more American embassy personnel killed in Europe post WW II than the ME, I believe.)

Back to real issues: The fiscal cliff is important but for me at least, I say let's go over it. This myth that the rich shouldn't pay taxes, when 1% control 46% of the wealth of this country, is ridiculous. On 1 Jan, the Democrats can offer a tax proposal that lowers taxes for 95% of Americans and the Republicans can tell their real boss, Grover Norquist, that they are not voting to increase taxes. Everyone is happy.

What is going to get all of us and cost trillions is the climate. We are already seeing the beginning. One of the new things to worry about now is the release of Methane gas from the melting ice. Just read a stat that said something like over 11,000 climate scientists agree humans are causing global warming and only 24 see it another way. That's pretty conclusive to me. The article below is worth a look:

["New Scientist Special Report: 7 Reasons Climate Change Is 'Even Worse Than We Thought'" by Joe Romm, ThinkProgress](#)

Nov. 26, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2012/11/26/1219981/new-scientist-7-reasons-climate-change-is-even-worse-than-we-thought/?mobile=nc>)

The *NY Times* isn't the only major publication going apocalyptic on climate change. *New Scientist* has a new dedicated issue that makes the *Times*' stories seem down-right Pollyannish.

Nearly 3 years ago, the late William R. Freudenburg discussed in an AAAS presentation how new scientific findings since the 2007 IPCC report are found to be more than twenty times as likely to indicate that global climate disruption is "worse than previously expected," rather than "not as bad as previously expected." As he said at the time:

Reporters need to learn that, if they wish to discuss 'both sides' of the climate issue, the scientifically legitimate 'other side' is that, if anything, global climate disruption is likely to be significantly worse than has been suggested in scientific consensus estimates to date.

So it's good to see *New Scientist* make just that point in its special issue on climate change:

Five years ago, the last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change painted a gloomy picture of our planet's future. As climate scientists gather evidence for the next report, due in 2014, Michael Le Page gives seven reasons why things are looking even grimmer.



The 7 reasons are below, with links to their respective articles. Since they are all behind a paywall, I'll provide links to Climate Progress articles on the same subject:

- 1. The thick sea ice in the Arctic Ocean was not expected to melt until the end of the century. If current trends continue, summer ice could be gone in a decade or two.** [Read more](#) (or see "[Death Spiral Watch: Experts Warn 'Near Ice-Free Arctic In Summer' In A Decade If Volume Trends Continue](#)").
- 2. We knew global warming was going to make the weather more extreme. But it's becoming even more extreme than anyone predicted.** [Read more](#) (or see "[NOAA Bombshell: Warming-Driven Arctic Ice Loss Is Boosting Chance of Extreme U.S. Weather](#)").
- 3. Global warming was expected to boost food production. Instead, food prices are soaring as the effects of extreme weather kick in.** [Read more](#) (or see "[Oxfam Warns Climate Change And Extreme Weather Will Cause Food Prices To Soar](#)" and links therein).
- 4. Greenland's rapid loss of ice mean we're in for a rise of at least 1 metre by 2100, and possibly much more.** [Read more](#) (or see "[Greenland Ice Sheet Melt Nearing Critical 'Tipping Point'](#)" and links therein).
- 5. The planet currently absorbs half our CO₂ emissions. All the signs are it won't for much longer.** [Read more](#) (or see "[Carbon Feedback From Thawing Permafrost Will Likely Add 0.4°F – 1.5°F To Total Global Warming By 2100](#)" and "[Drying Peatlands and Intensifying Wildfires Boost Carbon Release Ninefold](#)").
- 6. If we stopped emitting CO₂ tomorrow, we might be able to avoid climate disaster. In fact we are still increasing emissions.** [Read more](#) (or see "[The IEA And Others Warn Of Some 11°F Warming by 2100 on Current Emissions Path](#)")
- 7. If the worst climate predictions are realised, vast swathes of the globe could become too hot for humans to survive.** [Read more](#) (or see "[An Illustrated Guide to the Science of Global Warming Impacts](#)")

And people say Climate Progress has too much gloom and doom! Still, if we didn't add that all of the above impacts will be happening simultaneously and "largely irreversible for 1000 years," then we wouldn't be true to our name, would we? [Note to self: Look up "progress" in dictionary.]

It's too bad the articles are behind a paywall, but at least the accompanying editorial plea, "Obama should fulfill his 2008 climate promises," isn't. The editors' bottom line is inarguable:

What's needed is very clear: emissions cuts, and soon. The best way to do that is to change our economic systems to reflect the true long-term cost of fossil fuels. That means ending the \$1 trillion of annual subsidies for fossil fuels and imposing carbon taxes instead.

20121128-06	15:20	Ben	Photos: Today's Seafood Lunch & Dinner at Apple
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Never forget to check the Pasta station... never forget to check the Pasta station... never forget to check the Pasta station...

Following yesterday's fine cod lunch and unexpected sumptuous lobster dinner (see 'way below), I was drifting through Seafood Heaven as I slogged through my Tuesday evening Marathon match. I figured I'd shot the odds on more seafood today in the foot, statistically, after a score like that. So my expectations were pretty neutral as I paged through the menu before heading down to Caffe Macs, figuring maybe the Indian-spiced Madras shrimp, but glanced down at the Pasta offerings.

Chef Patricia had it for me: wahoo! Wahoo (Ono in Hawaii) is a very fast predator; it looks like a super-streamlined mackerel on speed, with long, narrow, muscular tapered body, trim sleek dorsal and ventral fins, and tall, slender, nearly vertical tail fins. It looks like a fish-dart, and can grow to nearly 200 pounds. It's delicious fish, although like swordfish, care must be taken not to over-cook it. Chef Patricia took that care: my thick filet was moist all the way

through, just at the edge beyond rare where it first reaches opacity. The flesh is very dense, so it doesn't flake almost by itself like cod does, but separates almost as easily into bundles defined by the path of your fork. Chef's searing created a tasty pellicle around the filet which was served with her deliciously minty spinach-basil pesto over awesomely tasty creamy-buttery-garlicky Pamigiano polenta. (I avoid pasta too often not because I do not like it, rather because I do...) Patricia further rewarded me with a scoop of her sauteed eggplant-tomato-peppers-zucchini side, which was a perfect way to round out an already lovely meal.

Urp!

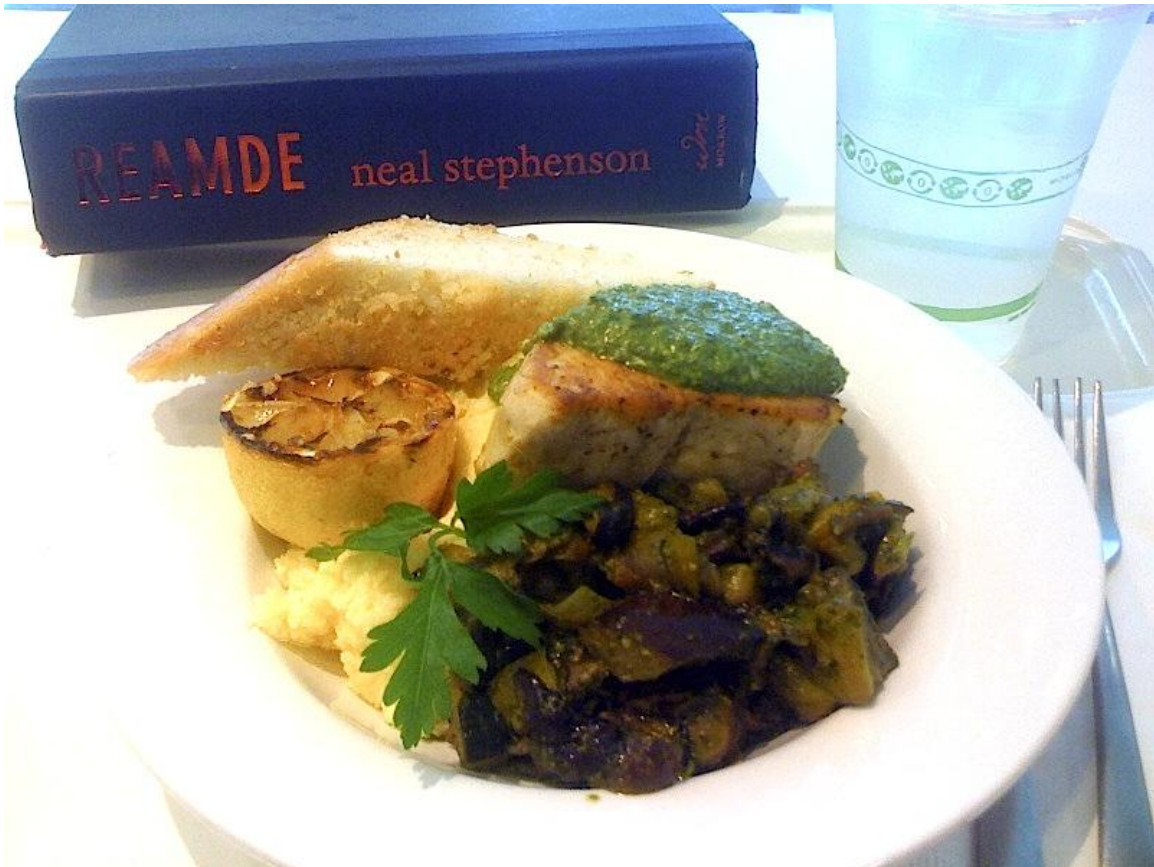


Photo #1 -- Lunch today -- Wahoo

Last night, Chris Smith commented about an hour before I thought I'd be leaving, that Caffe Macs had an unusual dinner offering. I had to check it out, and with no hesitation at all, bought two go-boxes so Susette and I could enjoy lobster with drawn butter at home. As mine were To Go, I persuaded the gal in line in front of me (who was quite incredulous at the offering) to let me snap a quick photo of hers, as presented on a china plate:



Photo #2 -- Dinner yesterday -- Hot Buttered Lobster

20121128-07 16:57 SteveG "Private Prison Company Used in Drug Raids at Public High School"

Arizona...Land of Wonder...and Insanity...

"Private Prison Company Used in Drug Raids at Public High School" by Beau Hodal, AlterNet

Nov. 28, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/drugs/private-prison-company-used-drug-raids-public-high-school>)

(Corrections Corporation of America used in drug sweeps of public school students in Arizona.)

In Arizona an unsettling trend appears to be underway: the use of private prison employees in law enforcement operations.

The state has graced national headlines in recent years as the result of its cozy relationship with the for-profit prison industry. Such controversies have included the role of private prison corporations in SB 1070 and similar anti-immigrant legislation disseminated in other states; a 2010 private prison escape that resulted in two murders and a nationwide manhunt; and a failed bid to privatize nearly the entire Arizona prison system.

And now, recent events in the central Arizona town of Casa Grande show the hand of private corrections corporations reaching into the classroom, assisting local law enforcement agencies in drug raids at public schools.

Trick or Treat

At 9 a.m. on the morning of October 31, 2012, students at Vista Grande High School in Casa Grande were settling in to their daily routine when something unusual occurred.

Vista Grande High School Principal Tim Hamilton ordered the school -- with a student population of 1,776 -- on "lock down," kicking off the first "drug sweep" in the school's four-year history. According to Hamilton, "lock down" is a state in which, "everybody is locked in the room they are in, and nobody leaves -- nobody leaves the school, nobody comes into the school."

"Everybody is locked in, and then they bring the dogs in, and they are teamed with an administrator and go in and out of classrooms. They go to a classroom and they have the kids come out and line up against a wall. The dog goes in and they close the door behind, and then the dog does its thing, and if it gets a hit, it sits on a bag and won't move."

While such "drug sweeps" have become a routine matter in many of the nation's schools, along with the use of metal detectors and zero-tolerance policies, one feature of this raid was unusual. According to Casa Grande Police Department (CGPD) Public Information Officer Thomas Anderson, four "law enforcement agencies" took part in the operation: CGPD (which served as the lead agency and operation coordinator), the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Gila River Indian Community Police Department, and Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

It is the involvement of CCA -- the nation's largest private, for-profit prison corporation -- that causes this high school "drug sweep" to stand out as unusual; CCA is not, despite CGPD's evident opinion to the contrary, a law enforcement agency.

"To invite for-profit prison guards to conduct law enforcement actions in a high school is perhaps the most direct expression of the 'schools-to-prison pipeline' I've ever seen," said Caroline Isaacs, program director of the Tucson office of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a Quaker social justice organization that advocates for criminal justice reform.

"All the research shows that CCA doesn't properly train its staff to do the jobs they actually have. They most certainly do not have anywhere near the training and experience--to say nothing of the legal authority--to conduct a drug raid on a high school," Isaacs added. "It is chilling to think that any school official would be willing to put vulnerable students at risk this way."

Welcome to Prison Town, U.S.A.

CCA, the nation's largest for-profit prison/immigrant detention center operator, with more than 92,000 prison and immigrant detention "beds" in 20 states and the District of Columbia, reported \$1.7 billion in gross revenue last year. This revenue is derived almost exclusively from tax payer-funded government (county, state, federal) contracts through which the corporation is paid per-diem, per-prisoner rates for the warehousing of prisoners and immigrant detainees.

And, CCA has a substantial presence in Casa Grande and throughout Arizona's Pinal County (Casa Grande is the largest town in Pinal County). The corporation owns and operates a total of six correctional/detention facilities in the county, distributed through the towns of Florence and Eloy.

These facilities hold a mixture of prisoners from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Hawaii Department of Public Safety Division of Corrections, TransCor (a detainee/prisoner transportation subsidiary of CCA), the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, the U.S. Air Force, the Vermont Department of Corrections, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. In September of this year, CCA was awarded a contract with the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) to house 1,000 medium security prisoners at the corporation's Red Rock Correctional Center in Eloy.

In 2009, the Central Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation listed CCA as the largest non-governmental employer in Pinal County. To boot, CCA is a "Board Level" member of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a powerful trade/lobby organization, and is active in the Eloy, Florence, and Casa Grande chambers of commerce. (For more on CCA's political influence in Arizona, see *Brownskins and Greenbacks*, DBA Press, June 2010.)

This CCA presence, coupled with the location of two correctional facilities operated by GEO Group (the nation's second largest for-profit prison/immigrant detention center contractor) in the county, as well as two ADC-run prison complexes, makes Pinal County -- which once cited mining and agriculture as its economic bedrock -- a de facto prison industry community.

Despite the obvious differences between CCA and actual law enforcement agencies, those involved in the Vista Grande High School drug sweep seem unable to differentiate between CCA employees and law enforcement officers.

"CCA is like a skip and a hop away from us-- as far as the one in Florence," said Anderson. "We work pretty closely with all surrounding agencies, whatever kind of law enforcement they are-- be they police, or immigration and naturalization, or the prison systems. So, yeah, this seems pretty regular to me."

For his part, Hamilton seems equally unable to differentiate between law enforcement officers and employees of a for-profit prison corporation. "To be honest with you, I couldn't tell if they were Casa Grande Police, Pinal County police, Gila River, the sheriff's department-- they all look the same," said Hamilton.

But they are not the same.

Questions of Legality

Aside from the fact that CCA is a private corporation that derives its profits from the incarceration of human beings -- such as minimum and medium security drug offenders -- Arizona Administrative Code provides that, in order for any individual to engage in the duties of a "peace officer," that individual must obtain certification from the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board. Arizona Revised Statutes defines "peace officer" to include such law enforcement personnel as: municipal police officers, constables, marshals, Department of Public Safety personnel, and community college/university police.

The POST Board is comprised of the Arizona Attorney General, the director of the Arizona Department of Corrections, the director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, municipal police department chiefs, county sheriffs, state university personnel, and other public safety/law enforcement personnel. POST's essential purpose, as defined by Arizona law is to "prescribe reasonable minimum qualifications for officers to be appointed to enforce the laws of this state and the political subdivisions of this state and certify officers in compliance with these qualifications."

And, Arizona Administrative Code is very clear on this point: "a person who is not certified by the Board or whose certified status is inactive shall not function as a peace officer or be assigned the duties of a peace officer by an agency..."

According to POST Executive Director Lyle Mann, POST provides two types of certification: standards and training certification for "peace officers," and standards and training certification for correctional officers. Arizona Administrative Code mandates that ADC officers be POST certified. However, according to Mann, employees of private prison contractors are exempt from this standards and training requirements. As such, said Mann, no CCA employee is POST certified -- as either a "peace officer" or a correctional officer.

It is important to note that Arizona Administrative Code explicitly states that non-regular "peace officers" -- secondary parties engaging in certain limited aspects of law enforcement under the command/supervision of regular peace officers -- must also be POST certified.

According to Arizona Administrative Code, a "limited-authority peace officer" is defined as "a peace officer who is certified to perform the duties of a peace officer only in the presence and under the supervision of a full-authority peace officer." The Code goes on to state that duties which may be performed by a "limited-authority peace officer" in the presence of a "full-authority peace officer" include: "investigative activities performed to detect, prevent, or suppress crime, or to enforce criminal or traffic laws of the state, county, or municipality."

This definition seems to fit the description -- with the exception that CCA employees aiding CGPD "peace officers" are not POST certified -- of what occurred at Vista Grande High School on the morning of October 31, 2012.

According to Officer Anderson and Principal Hamilton, the raid was organized and conducted at Hamilton's request.

"We need to keep drugs off our campus," said Hamilton when asked why he requested the raid. "We wanted to make sure our campus...we wanted to send a message to kids that we don't want that stuff on our campus."

Hamilton stated that, outside from this desire to send a "message to kids," he had no knowledge of any particular drug use problem on his school's campus.

CGPD then issued a request for assistance to what it considered to be other local law enforcement agencies -- including CCA.

According to Anderson, CCA provided two canine units (handlers and dogs) to aid in the high school "drug sweep." These CCA canine units worked under the command of the lead CGPD canine unit.

According to Anderson, there is no contract or formal agreement for such services extant between CGPD and CCA. Rather, said Anderson, CCA simply agreed to participate in the raid when approached by CGPD "K-9" officers. Anderson stated that he does not know whether CGPD ever contacted POST-certified correctional canine units at either of the two nearby ADC-operated prisons.

As to the general role canine units play in such school "drug sweeps," Anderson stated that the dogs and their handlers are typically utilized to detect the presence of illicit materials in classrooms and school parking lots.

This activity, as was conducted by CCA employees, would seem to fall squarely under the Arizona Administrative Code description of duties performed by "limited-authority peace officers" -- officers who may perform "investigative activities" for the purpose of detecting, preventing, or suppressing criminal activity, and who are only authorized to do so while in the presence of "full-authority peace officers," such as CGPD. Such "limited-authority peace officers" are required to be POST certified.

Regardless, according to both Anderson and Hamilton, this type of activity has been going on for years in Pinal County.

According to Anderson, a similar "drug sweep" -- utilizing CCA canine units -- was conducted at Casa Grande's Union High School in 2011. Anderson has been unable to provide further details relating to this event.

According to Anderson, the Vista Grande High School raid is unlikely to be the last instance of CCA partnership with local law enforcement, as he assumed CGPD would use the corporation's canine teams again, if needed.

And, according to Hamilton, he requested and had executed "drug sweeps" utilizing CCA canine units "two or three times a year," while serving as principal at Coolidge High School in Coolidge, Arizona -- also located in Pinal County, roughly ten miles from the private prison mecca of Florence. Hamilton was principal at Coolidge High School from 2003 through 2007.

CCA did not respond to multiple requests for comment regarding their involvement in law enforcement operations at public schools in Pinal County.

Conflict of Interest: From the Cradle to the Cell

According to Anderson, three students were arrested as a result of the October 31 Vista Grande raid: two female students, ages 15 and 17, as well as one 15-year-old male. According to Anderson, the 15-year-old female was found in possession of .10 grams of marijuana; the 15-year-old male student was found in possession of .50 grams of marijuana; and the 17-year-old female was found in possession of 10 ounces of marijuana. According to Anderson, this last quantity was "individually packaged."

According to Anderson, the students were referred to the juvenile division of Pinal County Superior Court. All students were then released to their parents/legal guardians. According to Hamilton, the school will commence expulsion hearings against all students arrested.

It is worth noting that, while (as of November 12, 2012) charges have yet to be filed against students arrested in the October 31 Vista Grande drug raid, it is possible, under Arizona law, for the 17-year-old female allegedly found to be in possession of 10 ounces of "individually packaged" marijuana to be sentenced as an adult if charged with possession with intent to distribute -- a felony which would could carry a prison sentence.

In addition, it is important to note that, under Arizona law, individuals arrested for illicit activity/possession of illicit substances on or near school grounds may face "drug-free school zone" sentencing enhancements. Those convicted of drug (including marijuana) offenses in Arizona courts, and sentenced through the stringent criteria of "drug-free school zone" sentencing enhancements, lose the possibility of sentence suspension, parole, or probation (which would rule out the possibility of a deferral or diversion). This sentencing enhancement also adds a mandatory year to any prison sentence handed down by the court.

While the recently-awarded 1,000 CCA Arizona prison beds have yet to come into operation, it is exactly this kind of low risk, minimum to medium security prisoner that corporations such as CCA derive much of their profit from.

Furthermore, according to Anderson, the Vista Grande High School marijuana arrests have sparked a broader, ongoing investigation.

Given the fact that such high school raids may serve as the foundation for larger narcotics investigations which may net additional adult offenders -- and given the tremendous pressure for information a prosecutor may exert on a student through discretionary use of "drug-free school zone" sentencing enhancements -- concerned citizens say that CCA's involvement in such raids constitutes a clear conflict of interest.

"They're [CCA] not the criminal justice system. They are benefactors of the criminal justice system," said correctional specialist and prison reform advocate, Carl Toersbijns.

Toersbijns, now retired (he retired in 2010), served as a deputy warden of operations at ADC-operated Arizona State Prison (ASP) Eyeman, as a deputy warden of operations at ASP Safford, as a deputy warden of operations at New Mexico Department of Corrections-operated Western New Mexico Correctional Facility (Grants, New Mexico), and as an associate warden at the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (at Los Lunas, New Mexico). Collectively, Toersbijns' career in corrections has spanned over 25 years in both Arizona and New Mexico. Such work, said Toersbijns, has entailed everything from details with prison canine units, to prison gang units.

"They [CCA] use the criminal justice system as a means of making income -- for profit," added Toersbijns. "So, their interest in the criminal justice system is totally opposite of the police officer. The police officer is public safety. The primary interest for CCA and associated entities is profit. So, there most definitely is a conflict of interest."

Profit-Driven Roadmap to the Present: "Tough-on-Crime" Mania and the Introduction of the "War on Drugs" to the Classroom

As some opponents of prison privatization attest, CCA embodies the worst pitfalls of public-private partnerships, in that the corporation has worked in the past to advance criminal justice legislation that has contributed to both a swell in U.S. prison/detention center populations and, consequently, CCA's bottom line.

For example, CCA was active (both as a co-chair and member) in the American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC) Public Safety and Elections Task Force (formerly the ALEC Criminal Justice Task Force) through the 1990s, to the end of 2010.

ALEC bills itself as "the nation's largest, non-partisan, individual public-private membership association of state legislators," working toward the advancement of the "Jeffersonian ideals" of limited federal government. In reality, ALEC is almost entirely funded by corporations and sources other than legislative dues, and it is overwhelmingly comprised of Republican state lawmakers and an untold number of large corporations and influential law/lobby

firms (although at least 41 companies have announced they have stopped funding ALEC in the wake of public exposure of its activities). ALEC's primary objective is to adopt and disseminate "model legislation," much of which is drafted entirely by its private sector members. ALEC boasts that nearly 20 percent of this "model legislation" introduced in state legislatures nationwide is passed into law annually.

In the wake of reporting outlining CCA's involvement with ALEC and the spread of immigration law based on SB 1070, CCA told the Arizona Republic, in September 2011, that the corporation left ALEC at an undisclosed time in 2010.

Records obtained by DBA Press show the direct sponsorship of both CCA and of Management and Training Corporation ("MTC," currently the nation's third largest for-profit prison/immigrant detention center operator) of the August 2010 ALEC Annual Meeting, as well as the likely involvement of lobbyists employed by both CCA, MTC and GEO Group in the December, 2010 ALEC "States and Nation Policy Summit".

Arizona lobby reports also show clear GEO Group involvement with ALEC during the December, 2009 ALEC States and Nation Policy Summit -- the meeting at which then-Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce introduced legislation (that would later be introduced in the Arizona legislature as SB 1070) for adoption as a piece of ALEC Public Safety and Elections Task Force "model legislation." Subsequently, copycat legislation similar to this ALEC model bill -- the "No More Sanctuary Cities for Illegal Immigrants Act" -- began appearing in state legislatures throughout the nation.

Furthermore, the ALEC Public Safety and Elections Task Force was instrumental, during the years of CCA's membership and leadership, in proliferating such 'tough-on-crime' legislation as: "three strikes," "truth in sentencing" and "mandatory minimum" sentencing guidelines.

And ALEC also advanced the model "Private Correctional Facilities Act," which allowed private corporations to operate state prisons.

These guidelines and pieces of "model legislation" (including the "Private Correctional Facilities Act") were advanced by ALEC in partnership with CrimeStrike, a division of the National Rifle Association ("NRA," a longtime ALEC private sector member), throughout the first half of the 1990s. Critics of this effort saw CrimeStrike largely as a response to the Clinton administration's desire to strengthen firearms violence prevention laws. As such, the CrimeStrike campaign spawned the saying, "guns don't kill people, people kill people"-- and posited that the solution to crime would be found through the use of greater criminal penalties. This strategy took advantage of, and perpetuated, the "tough-on-crime" sentiments of the day.

Largely as a result of model laws/sentencing guidelines advanced by the ALEC/NRA CrimeStrike partnership, the United States experienced a boom in the number of incarcerated individuals (in state and federal prisons, as well as in jails)-- from just over 1.1 million incarcerated in 1990, to nearly 2.3 million in 2010.

During the years of CCA's Criminal Justice/Public Safety and Elections Task Force involvement, ALEC also advanced and advocated "model legislation" that not only resulted in greater drug law enforcement presence on public school campuses, but that also mandated tough sentencing enhancements for drug offenses committed in "drug-free school zones."

The ALEC "Drug-Free Schools Act" called for the use of federal funds provided through the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 for "enhanced apprehension, prevention and education efforts" in joint cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local school districts.

Multiple ALEC publications (including the ALEC "Sourcebook for American State Legislation 1993-94," which lists CCA among the organization's private sector members and advisors), along with the ALEC "Use of a Minor in Drug Operations Act" reference the "model Drug-Free School Zone Act," although it is unclear whether this "model" bill originated with ALEC.

It is clear, however, that the model "Drug-Free School Zone Act," which establishes "drug-free school zones" and carries sentencing enhancements similar to the enhancements codified in Arizona law, was promoted by a broad coalition of public interests groups during the 'tough-on-crime' fervor of the early-to-mid 1990s. The model bill

enjoyed such support that the 1992 National Office of Drug Control Policy (NODCP) established federal assistance in establishing "drug-free school zones," as well as mandatory sentencing enhancements nationwide.

Interestingly enough, this NODCP initiative, which was set forth in a report discussing the agency's "national priorities" for 1992, advocated state adoption of several other known pieces of ALEC model legislation, such as the "Use of a Minor in a Drug Operations Act," as well as other ALEC "models" calling for the suspension or revocation of occupational licenses for professionals convicted of drug crimes, the eviction of drug offenders from public housing, and the use of "mandatory minimum" sentencing guidelines.

Not surprisingly, ALEC, along with several other public policy groups, was credited by the NODCP as having been "especially helpful in the formulation of this strategy."

In April of 2012, following widespread criticism and loss of corporate sponsorship due to such pieces of "model legislation" disseminated by the Public Safety and Elections Task Force as the "Stand Your Ground Act," the "Voter ID Act" and the "No More Sanctuary Cities for Illegal Immigrants Act," ALEC announced that it would disband the task force (an announcement that PRWatch has critiqued as a "PR" maneuver).

Unfortunately, as the October 31 Vista Grande High School drug raid illustrates, the purported discontinuation of this task force comes only after the damage of two decades of private prison industry influence in the legislative process has taken its toll.

Is Any of this Right?

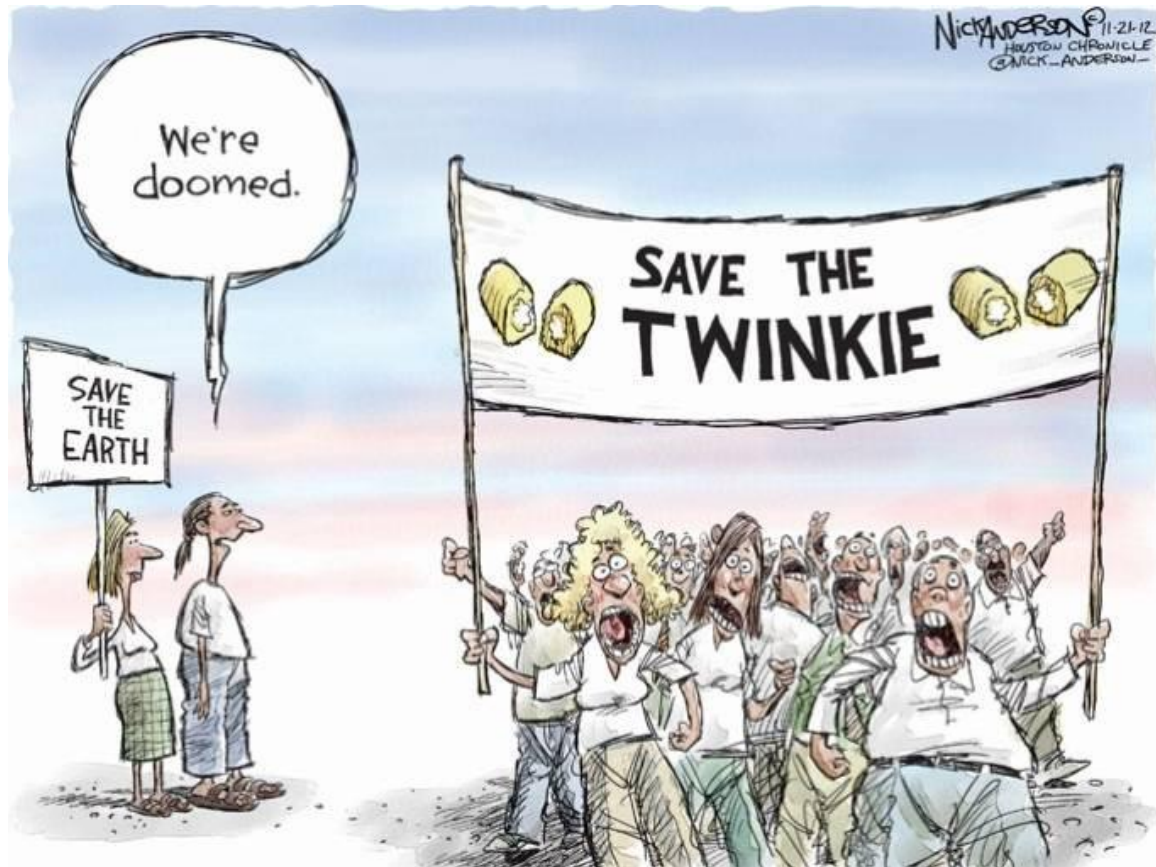
Vast differences between law enforcement agencies and private, for-profit corrections corporations aside, former ADC deputy warden and corrections specialist Carl Toersbijns said he sees a greater underlying problem in the practice of using any prison -- public or private -- personnel in school drug raids.

The simple fact is this: correctional officers -- people who work on a continual basis around adult criminal offenders -- have a much different mentality than a teacher, principal, or police officer. This mentality, he believes, may not be the most suitable mentality to subject school children to.

Children are different -- they don't act like adults, and I don't think you ought to use corrections officers around children," said Toersbijns. "It's a different culture, it's a different setting, it's a different approach. It's inappropriate." For example, the term "lockdown," said Toersbijns, may mean an entirely different thing to a corrections officer than it means to school personnel, students, or police.

They use that terminology, 'lock down,' in the police department too. When they've got something going on in the neighborhood -- a robbery suspect in the neighborhood -- they lock the schools down... If you have a group there, that you've called in to do a job, and some of them are correctional officers, and they hear the words 'lock down,' it has a different meaning -- it has a total different meaning... You don't tell a correctional officer 'this school's on lock down,' because the mentality is: 'oh, I can go anywhere I want and tear up anything I want and grab anything that I want. That's the mentality we use in prison. Prisoners don't have rights -- you and I both know that -- when it comes to search and seizure, they don't have no rights. Children have rights.

(Thanks to Alex Friedmann, associate editor of *Prison Legal News* (<http://www.prisonlegalnews.org>) for his contribution to this article. CMD staffers Rebekah Wilce and Alex Oberley also contributed to this article.)



Read and wrote this on Benghazi today. Can you believe the minds of Republicans are so twisted that now the alleged (fantasy) cover-up CAUSED the deaths? Geez!

from GOPUSA:

Benghazi: The Making of a Scandal

On Tuesday, U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice -- **a key figure in the political cover-up that resulted in the murder of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya** -- met with GOP senators to discuss her original ill-worded statements. The senators came away with more questions than answers (go figure), and the American people are left wondering why a president of the United States would put politics ahead of the very lives he swore to defend.

<http://www.gopusa.com/theloft/2012/11/28/benghazi-the-making-of-a-scandal/?subscriber=1>

reply to GOPUSA:

This is as big a lie as I have ever seen in my life! You should be ashamed!

"U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice -- a key figure in the political cover-up that resulted in the murder of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya..."

What BS! There was no cover-up that resulted in any murder, no matter how you cut it. Not even your radical-right Senators are making any such claim. Any cover-up would have come after, right? Or are you telling me they

covered-up beforehand? Before they would have known they needed to cover-up? Maybe they covered-up in advance, just in case? Ludicrous! Isn't it the words that were spoken/written after the incident that you are alleging is a cover-up? How could those be the cause of the incident?

GOPUSA is a bunch of liars! Otherwise, let's see your proof that some alleged cover-up caused the deaths.

[20121128-10](#) 19:48 Art Re: Benghazi: Too Many Damned Lies (reply to SteveB, above)

They somehow have long ago stopped caring about what is real. They've told so many lies about the President they no longer know how to stop.

I want this kind of quality craftsmanship. Check this site out! You can put this on my wish list....

<http://powning.com/jake/swords/>

GALDRGRIMM

2012

Pattern-welded Viking sword with mammen style ornamentation

Length - 83.5cm
Weight - 1.105kg



BY JAKE POWNING

©2012 JAKE POWNING

[I love my two antique samurai swords, though they're in my storage area in Indiana and I miss them... --SteveB]



<http://www.taiwanrock.50webs.com/pictures.html>



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

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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.

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #281 — NOV. 30, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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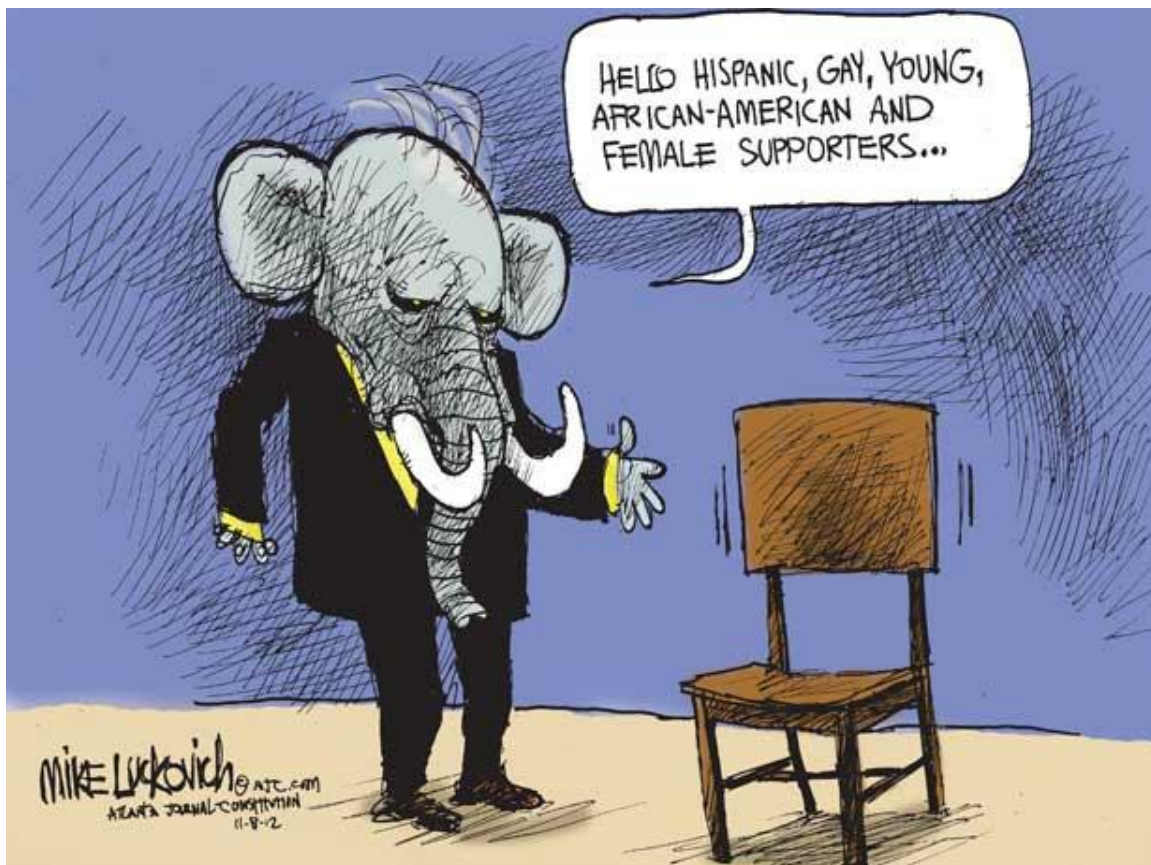
INDEX: Click here.

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.

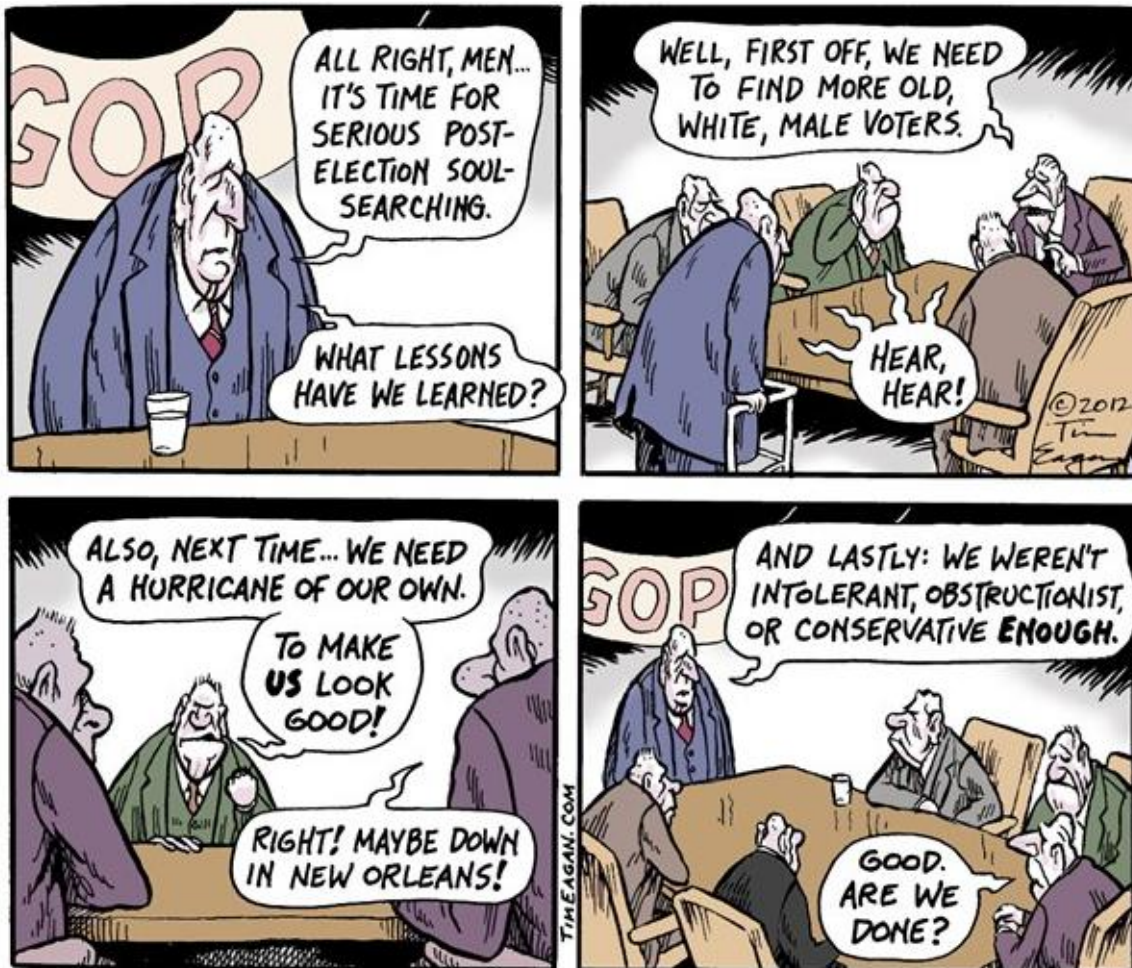
Republican compromise here would represent some measure of change. But that too wouldn't be enough. The fourth reality is a technological gap in voter mobilization; more accurately the gap is a chasm. Karl Rove now talks of imitating Howard Dean's 50-state strategy, which widened the electoral landscape 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.



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.

[20121129-02](#) 16:15 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

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

[20121129-03](#) 17:11 SteveB My Own Cable Channel

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)
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Still, brilliant idea!

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