



CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

*The "Bold Colors" Conservative
Voice in Washington*

From the Battle Line

[Teddy Roosevelt Obama](#)

by Donald Devine

[UAW Organizes Boardrooms](#)

by Vincent Vernuccio

[Feds Dollar Binge](#)

by Matthew Melchiorre

Media Pass in Review

[Media Hit U.S. Generosity](#)

by Paul Wilson

[Cultural Winners and Losers](#)

by Brent Bozell

[Years' Worst Journalism](#)

by Bret Baker

Government Maneuvers

[Less Care, More Health in U.S.](#)

by John Goodman

[Eliminate Housing Distortions](#)

by Nakid Anarakie

[EPA Mercury Myths](#)

by Craig Rucker

Culture Wars

[Communitarian Limits](#)

by S.T. Karnick

[Columbus Cause Ice Age?](#)

by Dennis Avery

[Charter School Accountability](#)

by Jeanne Allen

Political Front

[A Republican Establishment?](#)

by Angelo Codevilla

[2012 Forecast](#)

by Alan Caruba

[Christian Libertarians?](#)

by Norman Horn

Reader Backfire

[Ban Our Lightbulbs?](#)

by Amy Ridenour

[How Big Is \\$15 Trillion?](#)

by Francis Russell

[Reader Comments](#)

Teddy Roosevelt Obama

by Donald Devine

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

When President Barack Obama gave his highly-hyped remarks on December 6 at the site of President Theodore Roosevelt's legendary 1912 "New Nationalism" speech and compared himself to the former chief executive many conservatives were annoyed the president would claim Teddy as his own.



Unfortunately those conservatives were uninformed and Mr. Obama was right on the money. Think about it. Where did conservatives get the idea TR was one of them? From their teachers, of course, who realized that even crazy right-wingers need heroes and it was better to give them a progressive than the real thing.

Doubt it? The fact is Teddy's speech took place when he had accepted the Progressive Party nomination for president after losing the Republican Party nod. He proudly labeled himself "a man of the left" and in fact set the tone of his presidency by using its "bully pulpit" primarily to attack "special interest" Wall Street bankers and other businessmen. Sound familiar? Barack Obama could have written the New Nationalism speech. They are two peas in a pod. Indeed, the progressive message has not changed in a century, which is why it cannot solve the problems today that it has created since then.

"I believe in a strong executive, I believe in power"; Roosevelt proclaimed, "I don't think that any harm comes from the concentration of power in one man's hands," as long as it goes back to the people after his term. That same speech demanded that "we work in a spirit of broad and far-reaching nationalism" which "is impatient of the utter confusion that results from local legislatures attempting to treat national issues as local issues. It is still more impatient of the impotence which springs from over-division of governmental powers, the impotence which makes it possible for local selfishness or for legal cunning, hired by wealthy special interests, to bring national activities to a deadlock."



Woodrow Wilson

TR, like his progressive opponent in 1912, Woodrow Wilson, had no regard for legislatures, federalism or checks-and-balances. Both men were proud eugenicists as the means to improve the race. Teddy so anticipated Wilson's regulatory state that one scholar insisted his laws nationalizing transportation, drug, food and meat inspection from the states, his setting maximum rates able to be charged by railroads, his arbitrarily settlement of labor disputes, and his vigorous enforcement of vague anti-trust laws, "might well be considered as marking the birth of the modern regulatory state."

Roosevelt was the first to claim the "active presidency" was the central institution of American government, demeaning the traditional role of Congress as the central institution of a democracy, exemplified by the Founders granting it first status in the Constitution and by allocating "all legislative power" to it. Roosevelt was the first to use Executive Orders and regulations as the normal course of lawmaking, evading Congressional initiation. When he invoked the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1903 and enforced a treaty with the Dominican Republic without waiting for Senate approval, he was the first president to do so since 1817 and that president eventually submitted his Order to the Senate before enforcing it. Teddy's most famous defiance happened when

Congress refused to appropriate funds for sending the navy around the world and he threatened to send it half way to force them to pay to get it back.

President Obama has learned well about using presidential power. Indeed a columnist for the way-left *The Nation* magazine specifically suggested this course of action to him. John Nichols titled his article “Teddy Roosevelt Would Recess-Appoint Cordray as Wall Street Watchdog” and less than a month later the president did precisely that by recess appointing Richard Cordray as Consumer Financial Protection Bureau head after being denied it by the Senate. To make his point further President Obama appointed three members to the National Labor Relations Board, making both his anti-business and pro-labor pals happy in one deft move.

The president has the power to make appointments when Congress is in recess. The problem was that Congress had not recessed. According to Article 1, Section 5 of the Constitution, the House and Senate cannot adjourn for more than three days without the consent of the other chamber. The House did not consent to such an adjournment resolution by the Senate and both have held pro-forma meetings every three days since active legislation had last been enacted. Pro-forma meetings were actually invented by the Democrats in the Senate while the president served there. No president has claimed Congress was not in session simply because they were not then passing legislation before Mr. Obama’s lawyers (who bypassed the Department of Justice to do so). As commentator John Berlau asked, “What’s next, appointing nominees when the Senate takes a bathroom break”?



President Obama actually had a legal window the day previously in the few seconds between the first and second session of Congress that might have given him a lame but arguable opportunity to make such appointments. Incredibly, the president did not exercise it and proceeded on pure bluff making his contempt of Congress manifest. As one newspaper headline put it, “Obama Picks Nominee Fight” and another that “Obama Defies Senate.” Of course, that was the whole point. Congress is even more unpopular than he is and with the economy in the dumps his whole reelection rests on making the case that it is all Congress’ fault. What is a Constitutional provision when it comes to exercising executive power to achieve re-election?

The contempt expressed in these particular appointments is fascinating. Cordray was the former Democratic Attorney General of Ohio who was defeated for re-election at least partially for his close association with the East Side Organizing Project, known best for storming banks and throwing plastic sharks on the lawns of businessmen they did not like. Notably, its community organizer executive director told Bloomberg news that Cordray told them when he met with them that he approved of these tactics. Apparently his fellow community organizer in the White House did too. The very same day as this nomination, Investor’s Business Daily found a provision hidden in Obama’s Bank of America discrimination case settlement providing that the bank was required to turn over “excess funds” from the settlement to community organizing groups.

The NLRB appointments were likewise aimed at making political points. The first appointee, Sharon Block, was a former staffer for liberal icon Sen. Teddy Kennedy. The second, Richard Griffin was the first member in the entire history of the NLRB to be nominated directly from a labor union. The third, Terence Flynn, was assistant to the current Republican NLRB member, the one who had refused requests to resign from the Board to deny it the ability to issue regulations that Congress refused to pass as law and contravened long-standing Board practice. While the White House had used the excuse that the Senate

had not acted on Cordray, the NLRB nominees were not submitted by the president until December 15, 2011 which did not allow time for preliminary investigations or hearings to be conducted.



In his desire to emulate TR, President Obama has been the most aggressive prosecutor of supposed anti-trust and regulatory infractions since Teddy's progressive cousin Franklin Roosevelt. Indeed, when President Obama originally gave his "I am Roosevelt" speech he invoked both earlier presidents. Listening to the speech *Wall Street Journal* columnist Daniel Henninger said he could not help thinking about "The Godfather" with Mr. Obama "slapping around the 'wealthy' [actually those earning over \$250,000] for about a half hour," even if only metaphorically, targeting them as "enemies of the middle class."

The *Journal* headline claimed "The president sounds more like a Corleone than a Roosevelt." Well, maybe somewhat more-so than the progressive Roosevelts but Teddy and Franklin had more than a bit of Corleone too.

Donald Devine, the editor of ConservativeBattleline Online, was the director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management from 1981 to 1985 under Ronald Reagan and is Senior Scholar at The Fund for American Studies.

**E-mail the
Editor**

UAW Organizes Boardrooms

by F. Vincent Vernuccio

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

United Auto Workers President Bob King announced a change in strategy earlier in December, saying that his union would not target specific automakers in right-to-work states for unionization. Instead, King claims that the UAW will use a more diplomatic, less adversarial approach to organizing employees at these plants.



But in fact, union leaders are beginning to realize that a head-on organizational drive will not work. Workers have consistently rejected UAW efforts at unionization. The union has repeatedly failed to organize employees at factories owned by Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Hyundai Motor Co, Kia, Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz.

In a recent interview, King said, “We are not going to announce a target at all. ... We are not going to create a fight.” Later in the interview, he acknowledged the difficult spot he and his union find themselves in — and a way out of it. “It really is ultimately up to the companies,” he said.

Therein lies the rub. The union knows the workers do not want to join it, so they need to muscle their way in though the boardroom. In pursuing that strategy, the UAW remains as aggressive as ever, even as it claims to change its tone.

Early in 2011, the UAW unveiled its Principles for Fair Union Elections. Chief among the Principles is taking away the secret ballot from workers via card-check elections. Companies that seek to protect the privacy of workers incur the wrath of violating the UAW’s Principles. The punishment for not agreeing to the Principles is to attack the company’s reputation and increase public and financial pressure until the company bows to the union’s demands.

In January, King said that if companies resist his union’s organizing efforts, the UAW “will launch a global campaign to brand that company a human-rights violator.”

For all of King’s current civil tone, the UAW remains committed to attack companies that resist its organizing efforts. The same day that King stated his illusory shift in strategy, he also attacked an automaker, saying “There are some real concerns we have with human rights and civil rights with Nissan.”

If the tactics of the UAW seem desperate, that is because they are. The union’s total membership has dropped to 377,000 down from a high of about 1.5 million in 1979. As King himself has bluntly stated, “If we don’t organize these transnationals, I don’t think there’s a long-term future for the UAW — I really don’t.”

Even with its membership plunging, the UAW remains a formidable force. It has more than \$1 billion in assets that it can bring to bear on an organizing campaign. Indeed, the UAW has been busy on that front. It reported spending \$642,000 to target Toyota in 2010, including brochures, banners and other campaign expenses.

Actions speak louder than words. For all of King’s nice-guy talk, the UAW’s strategy of confrontation will continue, at the expense of both business and workers.

F. Vincent Vernuccio is labor policy counsel at the Competitive Enterprise Institute in Washington. This first appeared in The Tennessean.

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Fed Dollar Binge

by Matthew Melchiorre

Issue 195 – January 11, 2011

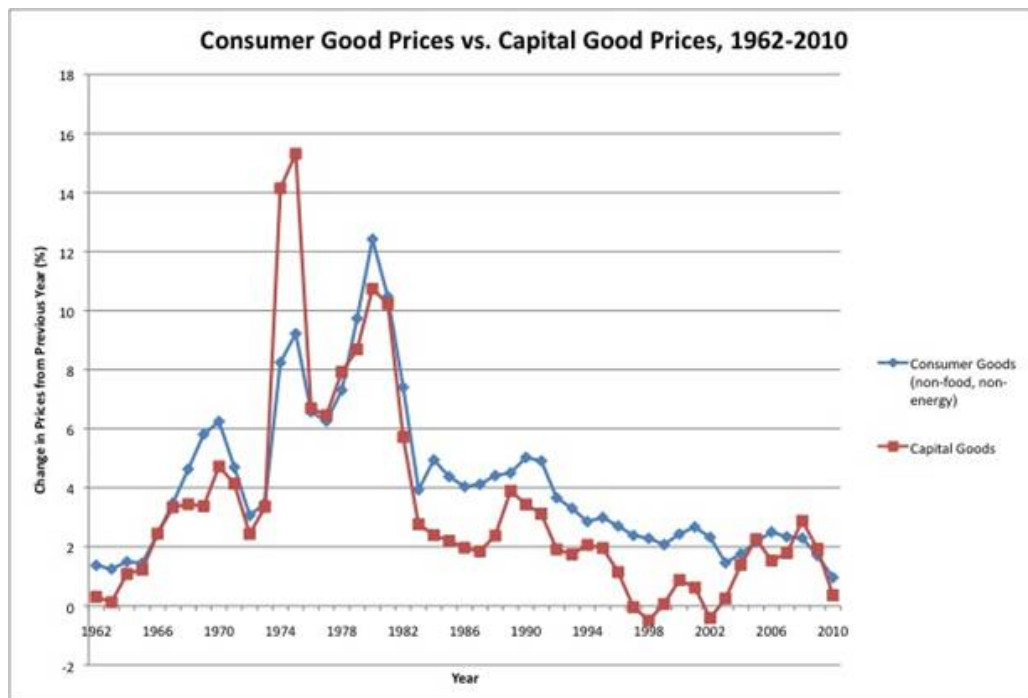
Given the Fed's continued actions to keep interest rates low and its reported plans to keep them that way beyond 2014, now seems a good time to revisit the deleterious effects that monetary expansion has on the economy.

The data makes all too apparent the relevance of the Austrian Business Cycle in explaining the results of years of easy money.

Loose central bank policy fuels artificial credit expansion—economists like Bernanke would say this is the point of his policies, but he ignores the problems that cheap money creates. Fed-induced cheap credit fuels an artificial boom—that is to say, consumers and producers have access to liquidity that they otherwise wouldn't had the central bank not intervened. However, artificially low interest rates distort both consumption and investment from their efficient market allocation.

As interest rates plummet, firms shift production from present to future as long-term investment becomes less expensive to finance. But consumers haven't changed their consumption-saving patterns—meaning that they still consume and save at the same levels as before the Fed altered interest rates. Consumers still prefer to consume today while firms plan as if they instead demand to consume tomorrow. Monetary expansion effectively decouples investment from consumer time preferences of consumption. And the interest rate thereby ceases to serve its equilibrating function between the two.

This very process was at work in the two largest American recessions over the past 60 years. Before economic turmoil took hold in the mid-'70's and the late 2000's, prices for capital goods—those that firms buy when undertaking long-term investment—had skyrocketed in the preceding years. Consumer prices also increased—though by a smaller amount—as firms invested in long-term projects instead of producing for present consumption, thereby reducing supply for present consumption goods among an unaltered demand.



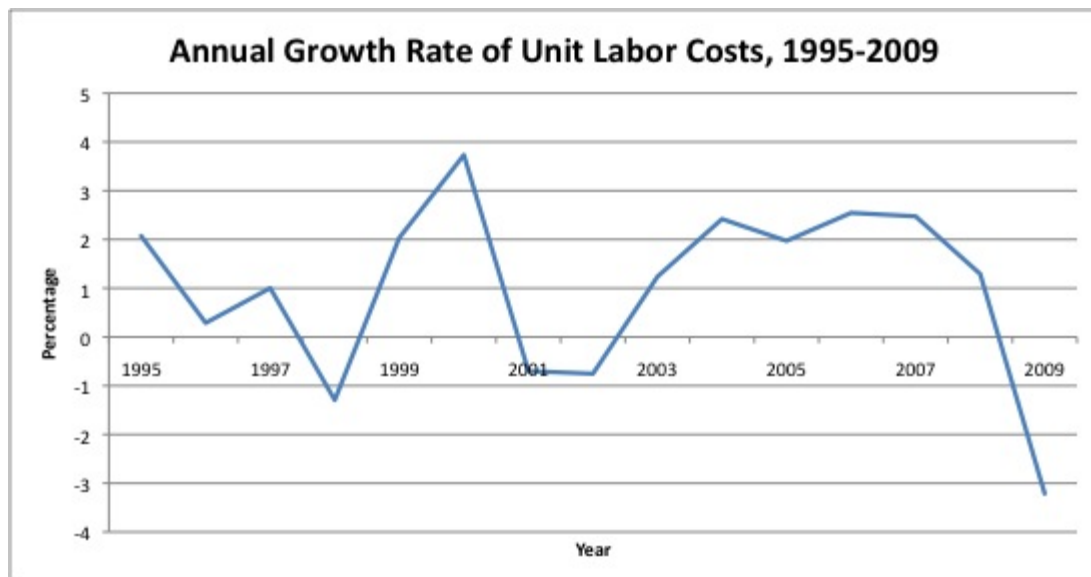
Below is an enlargement of the 1995-2010 period of the graph, without the double-digit inflation of the Carter years augmenting the increments of the vertical axis. After the recession in the early 2000's (also during which there was higher demand for capital goods—but not as much as in the other deeper recessions), the Fed kept interest rates low and fueled inflation in capital goods until the beginning of the crisis in 2008.



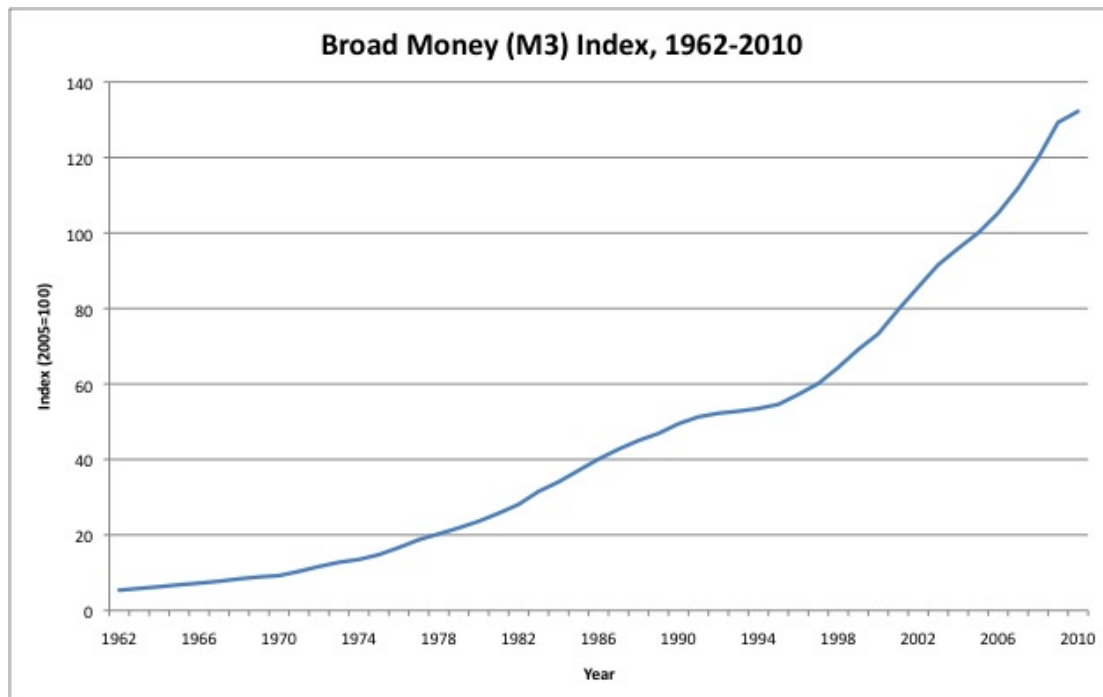
Firms face growing unit labor costs as a result of the higher wages being paid out from the increased demand in capital goods. But because low interest rates signal an increase in future demand, employers believe they will make up the increased costs with increased sales. This is yet another mirage of easy money. In the run-up to the busts of the '70's, early 2000's, and late 2000's, unit labor costs climb before bottoming out. You will notice that labor cost increases lag inflation in the capital goods market by about 1 year. This is normal, as wages do not adjust to market conditions as fast as prices do.



Below is a 1995-2009 blow-up of the previous graph to again factor out the inflation of the '70's from distorting the vertical axis.



Increases in the money supply correspond to these periods of Fed-driven boom. Broad money (M3) was increasing before stagflation in the '70's and had been increasing at record levels since 1995— fueling the dot com bubble and the 2008 crisis.



As firms continue to invest in new projects and hire new workers, people are led to believe the economy is booming. Unfortunately, this is an illusion. Total savings—the source of credit and the driver of the interest rate—hasn't increased. Instead of being the result of more savings, lower interest rates are the consequence of newly minted money.

The whole charade comes crashing down once markets realize the unprofitability of business investments predicated on artificially low interest rates. Triggers of this revelation range from bursting asset bubbles à la 2008 to the Fed shutting out the lights on its free money binge party

Enter the bust.

Firms take losses and layoff employees, causing artificially inflated prices and wages to plummet back to levels commensurate with market proportions of consumption-saving.

The painful adjustment is necessary to restore levels of consumption, saving, and investment that correspond to one another—thereby restoring the equilibrating mechanisms of the market to proper function. But as long as the Fed delays this process by continuing to dope up markets on freshly printed money, it perpetuates the cycle of boom and bust and sows the seeds for yet more economic disaster in the near future.

Matthew Melchiorre blogs at the Competitive Enterprise Institute's OpneMarket.org.

**All data is from the OECD iLibrary.*

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Editor**

Media Hit U.S. Generosity

by Paul Wilson

Issue 195 – January 11, 201

The media and liberals tend to portray Americans as selfish Scrooges, only interested in their own gain – why else would taxes be unpopular? But America has [shown its generosity](#) time and again. In fact, a recent [report](#) from the Charities Aid Foundation America, the World Giving Index 2011, finds that the United States is the most generous country in the world.

The World Giving Index 2011 measures generosity on three levels: giving money as a percentage of income, giving time, and helping strangers. Only the United States ranked in the top 10 nations of the world in each category. Charities Aid Foundation director Richard Harrison [praised](#) American charitable giving: “This research confirms that when we look at giving in a rounded way, including the extent to which we volunteer and help strangers, America is the most generous country in the world. America is the only country that ranks in the top ten globally on each of these three perspectives, and this first place ranking should be seen as source of real pride for people across America.”

But American generosity is rarely acknowledged by the media. Instead, America is usually attacked by the media as not being generous enough, and American donations of time, money, and effort to countries are ignored or even scorned by liberal journalists.

On May 22, 2011, former New York Times economic reporter Eduardo Porter [complained](#) in a New York Times editorial that America was the “least generous” of industrial nations – by which he meant Americans were not being taxed enough to fund extensive government social programs. The networks refused to cover [the extensive contributions](#) of private faith-based charities when a tsunami devastated Japan in March 2011, and similarly ignored coverage of [corporate donations](#) when a destructive earthquake struck Haiti in Jan 2010.

This is because for the mainstream media, government social programs, fueled by taxation, are the only form of effective charity. At times, the media has even attacked private charity, because money given to private charity is not given to government programs. (This attack on private charity [might be rooted](#) in the fact that conservatives tend to be far more generous with their time and money than liberals.)

The New York Times’ Stephanie Strom bizarrely [blasted private charity](#) in 2007 because it took money away from the government, declaring that “The rich are giving more to charity than ever, but people like Mr. Broad are not the only ones footing the bill for such generosity. For every three dollars they give away, the federal government typically gives up a dollar or more in tax revenue, because of the charitable tax deduction and by not collecting estate taxes.”

In Nov. 2010, the Washington Post’s Ezra Klein advocated giving to politically active think tanks as [more effective](#) than traditional gifts to charity.

Apparently, the “forced charity” of government social programs, fueled by higher taxes, is the only worthwhile form of charity, according to liberals. This is one explanation for the consistent media gripe that Americans are not generous, despite the mountain of evidence that suggests otherwise.

Paul Wilson blogs at Culture and Media Institute, where this first appeared.

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Editor**

Cultural Winners and Losers

by Brent Bozell

Issue 195 – January 11, 2011

The depravity of our popular culture and our eagerness to shred traditional values manifests itself every day so it is almost impossible to pick the worst. But here is my best guesses for the past year. The good news is there were some cultural heroes too. Both deserve recognition. Here they are.

Loser: “The Book of Mormon,” the ghastly hit Broadway musical from the perpetually immature makers of “South Park.” Most media outlets celebrated it as “brilliant” – so spouted so-called drama critic Jake Tapper on ABC. But Wall Street Journal critic Terry Teachout put it best. “It’s flabby, amateurish, and very, very safe.” Safe? Trashing the Mormons? Yes. “Making fun of Mormons in front of a Broadway crowd is like shooting trout in a demitasse cup...on the subject of imitation courage, let it be duly noted that if the title of this show were ‘The Quran,’ it wouldn’t have opened.”



Brent Bozell

Winner: Disney and its reissue of “The Lion King” in theaters as a 3-D feature. Seventeen years after its screen debut, it opened in mid-September and grossed more money in ticket receipts in its first rerun weekend (more than \$30 million) than the three genuine new releases combined. It grossed more than \$94 million in its three-month revisitation, despite many families already owning it on DVD.

Loser: The Fox show “Glee,” which seems to be losing all its popularity in only its third season. After its 3-D concert movie came in 123rd for the year (with a gross of less than \$12 million, about 12 percent of the take of the “The Lion King” remake), its third season lowlight was a preachy episode about the loathsome and overrated idea of virginity in these modern, enlightened times.

Loser: NBC’s “The Playboy Club” and MTV’s “Skins.” Both shows promised to scandalize audiences and bring in younger viewers by the truckload. Both of them were so badly made they turned off viewers as well as advertisers by the truckload. Both shows have been deposited at the town dump.

Winner: Ben Shapiro, for his book “Primetime Propaganda,” which laid out a long history of Hollywood’s propagandizing (and censorship of conservative actors and producers) that he mastered despite being only 27 years old. Shapiro’s stories of leftist intolerance (actors like Fred Thompson aren’t exactly welcomed on the set of TV shows like “Law & Order”) was eye-opening.

Winner: Fifteen-year-old high school wrestler Joel Northrup, who caused a national controversy for taking the old-fashioned position that it was disrespectful to enter a wrestling ring with a girl at the state tournament in Iowa. Although he entered the tournament with a commanding 35-4 record, Joel forfeited rather than violate his religious principles against Cassy Herkelman. This conflict could repeat itself in a few months, and no one should doubt he will make the same stand.

Loser: Adam Mansbach, the author of the children’s picture book titled “Go the F*** to Sleep.” Designed to make underslept parents laugh, it makes “comedians” like Mansbach sound desperate for a cheap laugh. Barnes & Noble helpfully recommended to buyers other tomes in this genre. They hope you’ll also enjoy other literary works of high art like “S— My Dad Says,” “Farts,” and “[A-Words] Finish First.”

Winner: Emilio Estevez, for stepping outside the Tinseltown comfort zone to make a love letter of a film called “The Way.” No studio chief was going to green-light a movie about Christian pilgrims hiking the “camino” to the shrine of the apostle James in northwestern Spain. But Estevez made the film anyway, and cast his father Martin Sheen in the lead role.

Estevez told the EWTN network that “Hollywood is a very difficult place to be earnest and be heartfelt. And I am not interested in making films that are anything but. There’s a lot of vulgarity in films. There’s a lot of violence, casual sex – things that make me uncomfortable watching – and I’m not interested in perpetuating that message.”

That actually deserves a standing ovation.

L. Brent Bozell III is president of the Media Research Center.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Year's Worst Journalism

by Brent Baker

Issue 195 – January 11, 2011

Each year the Media Research Center recognized the worst journalism of the year. The [“Best Notable Quotables of 2011: The Twenty-Fourth Annual Awards for the Year’s Worst Reporting”](#) is now available for review. The page linked above also has links for the text of the entire issue in [MS Word](#), [OpenOffice Writer](#) or [WordPerfect](#) formats. You can also download a colorful and easily read-able [PDF version](#).

To determine this year’s winners, a panel of 48 radio talk show hosts, magazine editors, columnists, editorial writers, and expert media observers each selected their choices for the first, second and third best quote from a slate of five to eight quotes in each category. First place selections were awarded three points, second place choices two points, with one point for the third place selections. Point totals are listed alongside each quote. Each judge was also asked to choose a “Quote of the Year” denoting the most outrageous quote of 2011.

The MRC’s Michelle Humphrey distributed the ballots and was assisted in their tabulation by Melissa Lopez. Alex Fitzsimmons helped produce the numerous audio and video clips included in the Web-posted version. Rich Noyes and Brent Baker assembled this issue and Brad Ash posted the entire package to the MRC’s Web site. The list of the judges, who were generous with their time, is [posted online](#).

A short selection of the most outrageous media reporting follows.

[The Obama-Love Award](#)

“Can we just enjoy Obama for a moment? Before the policy choices have to be weighed and the hard decisions have to be made, can we just take a month or two to contemplate him the way we might contemplate a painting by Vermeer or a guitar lick by the early-seventies Rolling Stones or a Peyton Manning pass or any other astounding, ecstatic human achievement? Because twenty years from now, we’re going to look back on this time as a glorious idyll in American politics, with a confident, intelligent, fascinating president riding the surge of his prodigious talents from triumph to triumph....’I am large, I contain multitudes,’ Walt Whitman wrote, and Obama lives that lyrical prophecy....Barack Obama is developing into what Hegel called a ‘world-historical soul,’ an embodiment of the spirit of the times. He is what we hope we can be.”

— *Esquire’s Stephen Marche in a column for the magazine’s August 2011 issue: “How Can We Not Love Obama? Because Like It or Not, He Is All of Us.” [85 points]*

[The Tea Party Terrorists Award](#)

“We don’t have proof yet that this was political, but the odds are that it was. She’s been the target of violence before....Her father says that ‘the whole Tea Party’ was her enemy. And yes, she was on Sarah Palin’s infamous ‘crosshairs’ list. Just yesterday, Ezra Klein remarked that opposition to health reform was getting scary. Actually, it’s been scary for quite a while, in a way that already reminded many of us of the climate that preceded the Oklahoma City bombing....Violent acts are what happen when you create a climate of hate. And it’s long past time for the GOP’s leaders to take a stand against the hate-mongers.”

— *New York Times columnist Paul Krugman in a 3:22pm ET January 8 blog posting, less than two hours after news broke of Gabrielle Giffords’ shooting. [91 points]*

[Flunk the Founding Fathers Award](#)

“The framers were not gods and were not infallible. Yes, they gave us, and the world, a blueprint for the protection of democratic freedoms — freedom of speech, assembly, religion — but they also gave us the idea that a black person was three-fifths of a human being, that women were not allowed to vote and that

South Dakota should have the same number of Senators as California, which is kind of crazy....If the Constitution was intended to limit the federal government, it sure doesn't say so."
— *Time* managing editor Richard Stengel in the magazine's July 4 edition, which featured a picture of the U.S. Constitution going through a shredder with the headline, "Does It Still Matter?" [75 points]

[The Poison Tea Pot Award for Smearing the Anti-Obama Rabble](#)

"Tea Party budget-slashers....were like cannibals, eating their own party and leaders alive. They were like vampires, draining the country's reputation, credit rating and compassion. They were like zombies, relentlessly and mindlessly coming back again and again to assault their unnerved victims, Boehner and President Obama. They were like the metallic beasts in Alien flashing mouths of teeth inside other mouths of teeth, bursting out of Boehner's stomach every time he came to a bouquet of microphones."
— *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, August 3 column. [78 points]

[The Ku Klux Con Job Award for Smearing Conservatives with Phony Racism Charges](#)

Clip from RNC ad: "Stop Obama and his union bosses today. The Republican National Committee is responsible for the content of this advertising."

Host Lawrence O'Donnell: "The Republican Party is saying that the President of the United States has bosses, that the union bosses this President around, the unions boss him around. Does that sound to you like they are trying to consciously or subconsciously deliver the racist message that, of course, of course a black man can't be the real boss?"

Ex-Governor Jennifer Granholm (D-MI): "Wow, I hadn't thought about the racial overtones...."
— *MSNBC's The Last Word*, February 25. [63 points]

[Refusing to Acknowledge the Obvious Award for Denying Liberal Media Bias](#)

"Hardball is absolutely non-partisan."
— *MSNBC's Chris Matthews* in an interview with local Washington, D.C. host Carol Joynt, as quoted by *The Politico's Patrick Gavin* in a December 9, 2010 article. [80 points]

[The Barbra Streisand Political IQ Award for Celebrity Vapidity](#)

"You have what I call the 'Get the N-word out of the White House party,' the Tea Party.... At the end of the day, there's a big bubble coming out of their heads saying, you know, 'Can we just lynch him?'"
— Actor Sean Penn on *CNN's Piers Morgan Tonight*, October 14. [70 points]

[Quote of the Year](#)

"What happened after 9/11 — and I think even people on the right know this, whether they admit it or not — was deeply shameful. [The] atrocity should have been a unifying event, but instead it became a wedge issue. Fake heroes like Bernie Kerik, Rudy Giuliani, and, yes, George W. Bush raced to cash in on the horror. And then the attack was used to justify an unrelated war the neo-cons wanted to fight, for all the wrong reasons....The memory of 9/11 has been irrevocably poisoned; it has become an occasion for shame. And in its heart, the nation knows it."
— *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman in a September 11 posting to his *NYTimes.com* blog.

Brent Baker is Vice President for Research and Publications at the Media Research Center.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Less Care, More Health in U.S.

by John Goodman

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

The conventional wisdom in health policy is that the United States spends far more than any other country and enjoys mediocre health outcomes. This judgment is repeated so often and so forcefully that you will almost never see it questioned. And yet it may not be true.

Indeed, the reverse may be true. We may be spending less and getting more.

The case for the critics was bolstered recently by a new [OECD report](#) that concluded:



John Goodman

The United States spends two-and-a-half times more than the OECD average health expenditure per person ... It even spends twice as much as France, for example, a country which is generally accepted as having very good health services. At 17.4% of GDP in 2009, U.S. health spending is half as much again as any other country, and nearly twice the average.

Similar claims were made recently in *The New York Times* by former White House health advisor, [Zeke Emanuel](#), who added that we are not getting better health care as a result. The same charge was aired at the [Health Affairs blog](#) the other day by Obama Social Security Advisory Board appointee Henry Aaron and health economist Paul Ginsburg. It is standard fare at [Ezra Klein's blog](#), at [The Incidental Economist](#) and at the [Commonwealth Fund](#). It is also unquestioned dogma for *New York Times* columnist, [Paul Krugman](#).

What are all these people missing? On the spending side, they are overlooking one of the most basic concepts in all of economics.

When you and I buy something, the cost to us is the price we pay for it. But that is not necessarily true for society as a whole. The social cost of something may be a whole lot more or a whole lot less than what people actually spend on it; and that is [especially true in health care](#).

In the United States and throughout the developed world, the market for medical care has been so systematically suppressed that no one ever sees a real price for anything. Patients never see the real price of the care they receive; doctors never receive a real price for the care they deliver; employees never see a real premium for their health insurance, etc.

In the United States, for example, a typical doctor is paid one fee by Medicare, a different fee by Medicaid, and a third fee by BlueCross. Moreover, there are different fees for all the other insurers and for all the employer plans. These fees do not count as real market prices, however. Instead, they are artificial payments that often reflect the bargaining power of the various payer bureaucracies. When government accountants sum up all the spending on health care, therefore, they are adding artificial price times quantity, for all the separate transactions, to arrive at a grand spending total.

Here is the kicker: since each separate purchase involves an artificial price, no one knows what the aggregate number really means. To make matters worse, other countries are more aggressive than we are at shifting costs and hiding costs. They use their buying power to suppress the incomes of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel much more than the United States does, for example. In addition, formal accounting ignores the cost of rationing in other countries. In Greece, [patients spend nearly as much on](#)

[bribes](#) and other “informal” payments as they do on “formal” costs such as insurance co-pays. Yet these bribes do not show up in the official statistics. Bottom line: in comparing international spending totals, we are usually comparing apples and oranges.

Let’s take doctor incomes and government health care programs. One way to pay doctors is to pay market prices — whatever fees are necessary in order to induce them to voluntarily provide medical services. Another way is to draft them and pay them little more than a minimum wage — as the government has done in the past in times of war. Obviously, the second method involves a lot lower spending figure. But to economists, the social cost is the same in both cases.

The reason? To economists, the social cost of having one more man or woman become a doctor is the next best use of that person’s talents. Instead of becoming a doctor, the pre-med student might have become an engineer, say, or an architect. So what society as a whole must give up in order to have one more doctor is the loss of the engineering or architectural goods and services the young man or woman would otherwise have produced. This cost, called “[opportunity cost](#),” is independent of how much doctors actually get paid.

The principle also applies to other medical personnel and to buildings and equipment. The opportunity cost of a hospital, for example, is the value of a commercial office building or some other use to which those same resources could be put.

The concept of opportunity cost allows us to see that if we don’t trust spending totals in the international accounts, there is another way to assess the cost of health care. We can count up the real resources being used. Other things equal, a country that has more doctors per capita, more hospital beds, etc., is devoting more of its real income to health care than one that uses fewer resources — regardless of its reported spending.

On this score, the [United States looks really good](#). As the table below (from the [latest OECD report](#)) shows, the U.S. has fewer doctors, fewer physician visits, fewer hospital beds, fewer hospital stays and less time in the hospital than the OECD average. We’re not just a little bit lower. We are among the lowest in the developed world. In fact, about the only area where we “spend” more is on technology (MRI and CT scans, for example), as is reflected in the second table.

Table 2. Where the United States health system does LESS than other countries

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Rank compared with OECD countries</i>	<i>OECD average</i>
Practising physicians	2.4 per 1 000 population	26 th	3.1 per 1 000 population
Doctor consultations	3.9 per capita	29 th	6.5 per capita
Hospital beds	3.1 per 1 000 population	29 th	4.9 per 1 000 population
Hospital discharges	130.9 per 1 000 population	26 th	158.1 per 1 000 population
Average length of stay in hospitals	4.9 days	29 th	7.2 days

Source: OECD Health Data 2011.

Table 3. Where the United States health system does MORE than other countries

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Rank compared with OECD countries</i>	<i>OECD average</i>
MRI units	25.9 per million population	2 nd	12.2 per million population
MRI exams	91.2 per 1 000 population	2 nd	46.6 per 1 000 population
CT scanners	34.3 per million population	5 th	22.8 per million population
CT exams	227.9 per 1 000 population	2 nd	131.8 per 1 000 population
Tonsillectomy	254.4 per 100 000 population	2 nd	133.8 per 100 000 population
Coronary angioplasty	377.2 per 100 000 population	3 rd	187.6 per 100 000 population
Knee replacements	212.5 per 100 000 population	1 st	118.4 per 100 000 population
Caesarean sections	32.3 per 100 live births	8 th	25.8 per 100 live births

Source: OECD Health Data 2011.

Almost a decade ago, [Mark Pauly](#) estimated the cost of health care across different countries based on the use of labor (doctors, nurses, etc.) alone. The finding: The U.S. spends a lot less than such northern European countries as Iceland, Sweden and Norway and even less than Germany and France!

What about outcomes? Do we get more and better care for the resources we devote? Here the evidence is mixed. As the second table shows, we replace more knees per capita than any other country and it's hard to believe that any of these are unnecessary procedures. On the other hand, if you think that there are too many tonsillectomies and Caesarean births, our ranking there (2nd and 8th, respectively), may be less admirable. [Avik Roy](#) has a nice presentation of cancer survival rates. The U.S. basically leads the world.

What about life expectancy statistics — a favorite of the critics, since Americans don't score very high? It turns out that when you remove outcomes doctors have almost no impact on — death from fatal injuries (car accidents, violent crime, etc.) — [U.S. life expectancy jumps from 19th in the world to number one!](#)

This isn't to say we don't have problems. There is a lot of evidence of waste and inefficiency in U.S. health care. Still, it's not clear that we have any reason to feel inferior to the rest of the world.

John Goodman is President and CEO/Kellye Wright Fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Eliminate Housing Distortions

by Nahid Anaraki

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

The government-sponsored Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac mortgage companies were created by Congress to make mortgages cheaper.



A forthcoming study by The Heritage Foundation demonstrates how federal intervention in the housing market by Fannie and Freddie over the past 10 years actually slightly increased home prices. In addition, the Heritage analysis shows that home prices are influenced not by mortgage interest rates and down payments—which are subsidized in mortgages sold to Fannie and Freddie—but by household assets, personal income, and effective tax rates. Therefore, liquidating these government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) would slightly lower housing prices. At the same time, liquidation would re-establish market forces and return clarity to pricing mechanisms, which would increase stability and return the housing market into equilibrium.

Heritage's analysis of the effects of Fannie and Freddie's subsidized interest rates and low down payment requirements on median single-family home prices (using quarterly data that reaches back over 30 years) demonstrate that:

- Conventional mortgage interest rates have a small negative impact on home prices.
- Other things being equal, an increase in the mortgage interest rate leads to a slight decrease in home prices. For example, a 25-basis-point increase in the interest rate, as discussed in an economic study by Scott Frame and Lawrence J. White, yields housing prices that are 2.25 percent lower than they would be otherwise.
- Down payments are associated with lower home prices when property tax rates are included. Based on our results, a 25-basis-point increase in down payments leads to housing prices that are 1.5 percent lower than they would be otherwise. However, the association between down payments and home prices is not robust because in four other model specifications the relationship is statistically insignificant.
- Contrary to the expectations of policymakers, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's policy since 1996 of easing requirements for homeownership was associated with a rise in housing prices, though the effect was relatively small. Results overall indicate that home prices are mainly influenced by household assets, personal income, and tax treatment of the households.
- Lastly, government intervention in the market leads to huge inefficiencies. Low interest rates from monetary stimulus may temporarily benefit those borrowers who refinance existing mortgages at lower interest rates, but market distortion and asymmetric information between GSEs and consumers may bring that benefit to a rude halt.

Lawmakers should heed these results. After at least a decade of policy mismanagement, they continue to double down on these previous mistakes. Recently enacted into law, the latest terrible policy idea is enabling the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), to insure mortgages of up to \$729,750 instead of the current ceiling of \$625,000. Though the law does not call for an increase in the limits on mortgages held by Fannie and Freddie, it increases the role of the FHA in housing markets and, thus, may produce harmful effects for society as a whole.

The FHA is responsible for insuring mortgage loans in the housing market. The problem is that it is currently leveraged at 300 to one, with only \$2.6 billion in its reserves to cover its \$1.1 trillion in liabilities. Moreover, there is a 50 percent chance that it will need a bailout from the U.S. Treasury. Given

that the minimum down payment for an FHA loan is only 3.5 percent, this law will likely enhance the possibility of further foreclosures, since most borrowers will have little equity in their homes. Yet Congress somehow thinks that it is a good idea to enable the FHA to become even more overextended, ensuring that taxpayers are strapped with more financial obligations if it requires a future bailout.

Whatever the underlying causes of the bubble, it is evident that excessive expansion in credit to the housing sector fueled by financial institutions—most notably Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—increased demand for real estate and caused housing prices to overheat, distorting the natural market equilibrium.

Just as Fannie and Freddie's credit expansion distorted the market, FHA's mortgage limit increase would likely create similar distortions. In addition, Fannie and Freddie were originally established to develop a secondary mortgage market to increase homeownership among underprivileged groups and underserved areas. However, over the years, they became involved in profiteering and mortgage-backed securities. There is no reason to believe that the FHA would not engage in similar

The fact that GSEs distort the market, inflate economic bubbles, and create general economic disequilibrium should provide guidance going forward. It is disheartening that Congress passed a law that only further extends the reach of government, which has leveled much economic damage thus far.

An economically sound policy is to phase out GSEs and replace them with a private-sector housing finance system, which would eliminate distortions in the housing market and empower people to pursue homeownership according to market forces. In turn, this would create a stationary development trend in the housing market. Congress has to learn from past failed policies.

Nahid Kalbasi Anaraki is a Visiting Fellow at the Heritage Foundation for special projects, where this first appeared. She has published many articles in refereed different topics including stock markets, economic growth, and financial crisis.

**E-mail the
Editor**

EPA Mercury Myths

by Craig Rucker

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

The Environmental Protection Agency claims its “final proposed” Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) rules will eliminate toxic pollution from electrical generating units, bring up to \$140 billion in annual health benefits, and prevent thousands of premature deaths yearly – all for “only” \$11 billion a year in compliance costs.

This may be true in the virtual reality of EPA computer models, linear extrapolations, cherry-picked health studies and statistics, government press releases and agency-generated public comments. However, in the real world inhabited by families, employers and other energy users, the new rules will bring few benefits, but will impose extensive costs that the agency chose to minimize or ignore in its analysis.

Emissions of mercury and other air toxics from power plants have been declining steadily for decades, as older generating units have been replaced with more efficient, less polluting systems or retrofitted with better pollution control technologies. While a few older plants still violate EPA’s draconian proposed rules – the new rules are not based on credible scientific and epidemiological studies.

As independent natural scientist Dr. Willie Soon and CFACT policy advisor Paul Driessen pointed out in their [Wall Street Journal](#) and [Investor’s Business Daily](#) articles, and in Dr. Soon’s 85-page critique of EPA’s draft rules, US power plants account for only 0.5% of the mercury in US air. Thus, even if EPA’s new rules eventually do eliminate 90% of mercury from power plant emission streams, that’s still only 90% of 0.5% – ie, almost zero reduction. The rest of the mercury in US air comes from natural and foreign sources, such as forest fires, Chinese power plants and the cremation of human remains (from tooth fillings that contain mercury and silver).

EPA fails to recognize that mercury is abundant in the earth’s crust. It is absorbed by trees through their roots – and released into the atmosphere when the trees are burned in forest fires, fireplaces and wood-burning stoves. In fact, US forest fires annually emit as much mercury as all US coal-burning electrical power plants. Mercury and other “pollutants” are also released by geysers, volcanoes and subsea vents, which tap directly into subsurface rock formations containing these substances.

The agency compounds these errors by claiming fish contain dangerous levels of mercury that threatens the health and mental acuity of babies and children. In making this claim, the agency commits four more grievous errors. First, it ignores the fact that selenium in fish tissue is strongly attracted to mercury molecules and thus protects people against buildups of methylmercury, mercury’s more toxic form.

Second, EPA based its toxicity claims on a study of Faroe Islanders, who eat few fruits and vegetables, but feast on pilot whale meat and blubber that is high in mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) – but very low in selenium. Third, it ignored a 17-year Seychelles Islands evaluation, which found “no measurable cognitive or behavioral effects” in children who eat five to twelve servings of fish per week.

Fourth, it used computer models to generate linear extrapolations from known or assumed toxic levels down to much lower levels. Not only is this method contrary to sound science and epidemiology; it resulted in politicized “safety” levels that are twice as restrictive as Canadian and World Health Organization mercury standards, three times more restrictive than US Agency for Toxic Substances and



Disease Registry, and four times tougher than US Food and Drug Administration recommendations. No wonder the Centers for Disease Control says blood mercury levels in US women and children are already well below excessively “safe” levels set by EPA.

Simply put, EPA grossly exaggerated the health benefits of its proposed mercury rules – and then claimed additional mercury benefits based on double counting of reductions in *particulate matter*. It also ignored the *adverse effects* that its rules will inflict. Not only is EPA’s anti-mercury campaign scaring mothers and children into not eating nutritious fish that is rich in Omega-3 fatty acids. It is also raising electricity heating, air conditioning and food costs, impairing electrical reliability, costing jobs, and thereby harming the health and welfare of countless Americans.

Energy analyst Roger Bezdek has calculated that utilities will have to spend \$130 billion to retrofit older plants – and another \$30 billion a year to operate, maintain and power the energy-intensive pollution control equipment they will be forced to install. Moreover, under its MACT rules, EPA intends to micromanage every aspect of power plant operations. It will now cite companies for violations even if emissions fully comply with air quality standards, if operators merely deviate from new agency “work practice standards” and “operational guidelines,” even under unusual weather conditions or equipment malfunctions that are beyond the operators’ control.

The agency recruited, guided and financed activist groups that promoted its rulemaking. Over the past decade, it gave nearly \$4 billion to the American Lung Association and other advocacy organizations and various “environmental justice” groups, according to a Heritage Foundation study. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and members of her staff also visited historically black and other colleges – giving speeches about “toxic emissions,” providing templates for scare-mongering posters and postcards, and making it easy for students to send pro-rulemaking comments via click-and-submit buttons on websites.

This EPA action does nothing to improve environmental quality or human health. In fact, by advancing President Obama’s goal of shutting down power plants and raising electricity costs, it impairs job creation, economic recovery, and public health and welfare. It is intrusive government at its worst.

Craig Rucker is CEO of the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Communitarian Limits

by S.T. Karnick

Issue 195 – January 11, 201

If you want to understand an important trend in political thinking, I recommend the latest [New York Times column by David Brooks](#). Brooks, the paper's resident conservative, writes about his friend Rod Dreher, of "Crunchy Conservative" fame. (Crunchy conservatism, or communitarian conservatism, is a movement among traditionalist conservatives who venerate the values of small-town American life and want government policies to encourage the mindset they believe that sort of lifestyle represents. It's a good deal simpler than I've made it sound.)



S. T. Karnick

Brooks does a good job of telling the story (h/t to Francis Beckwith):

Rod Dreher grew up in St. Francisville, La., a town of about 1,700 people 30 minutes northwest of Baton Rouge. He left for college and then lived in Washington, New York, Miami, Dallas and Philadelphia, working as a writer for various magazines, a newspaper and a foundation.

His younger sister, Ruthie, went to L.S.U., returned to St. Francisville as a middle-school teacher and married an Iraq war veteran who worked as a fireman. On Feb. 22, 2010, Ruthie, who was 40 then, was diagnosed with a virulent form of cancer. . . .

As Ruthie's illness worsened, Dreher's grief would be mixed with something else. "The outpouring — an eruption, really — of goodness and charity from the people of our town has been quite simply stunning," he blogged. "The acts of aid and comfort have been ceaseless, often reducing our parents to tears of shock and awe."

She died on Sept. 15 this year. More than 1,000 people signed the guest book at the funeral, Dreher reported. Mike, her husband who had wrenched his back trying to perform C.P.R. on her, stood for hours by the open coffin as people filed past. Since Ruthie liked to go barefoot, the pallbearers took off their shoes, rolled up their pants and carried the coffin to the grave in bare feet.

These events so affected Dreher and his wife that they decided to move their family to St. Francisville. Brooks conveys their thinking as follows:

They wanted to be enmeshed in a tight community. They wanted to be around Ruthie's daughters, and they wanted their kids to be able to go deer hunting with Mike. They wanted to be where the family had been for five generations and participate in the rituals ranging from Mardi Gras to L.S.U. football. They decided to accept the limitations of small-town life in exchange for the privilege of being a part of a community.

Anyone with a decent capacity for human sympathy will be happy that Dreher and his wife have finally found the life they really want. As any adult knows, that can be a very difficult process.

As a political columnist, however, Brooks is not content to stop there. He uses this story to argue for Dreher's crunchy conservatism, which shares with Brooks's conservatism a desire for more government intervention in the economy:

Dreher is a writer for *The American Conservative* and is part of a communitarian conservative tradition that goes back to thinkers like Russell Kirk and Robert Nisbet. Forty years ago, Kirk led one of the two great poles of conservatism. It existed in creative tension with the other great pole, Milton Friedman's free-market philosophy.

In recent decades, the communitarian conservatism has become less popular while the market conservatism dominates. But that doesn't make Kirk's insights into small towns, traditions and community any less true, as Rod Dreher so powerfully rediscovered.

As is confirmed by the writings of both Dreher and Brooks as well as those of their illustrious precursors, this communitarian conservative agenda is not about just praising a particular set of values and sentiments and then leaving people free to discover what's best for them, as Dreher was fortunate enough to do (aided, one might note, by the economic freedom achieved by his *market-based* success as a writer). Dreher and Brooks are both intent on making people better by using government to "incentivize" good behavior, in great part by using regulation to "remedy" the value-destruction they believe is caused by market capitalism.

This is to be done, of course, by restricting economic activities that they perceive as corroding respect for marriage, child-rearing, hard work, religious faith, and the like. Good-bye WalMart, hello high-priced, under-supplied local general store. This, as Brooks notes, was the agenda of Kirk and Nisbet in prior decades.

The values these men promulgate are perfectly laudable, and all government policies that undermine them should be abolished unless to do so would risk people's lives. Otherwise, yes, out with them.

But that is not what traditionalists argue for. They call for positive government action to strengthen these values throughout the society. As appealing as these values may be, however, Kirk and Nisbet were wrong then, and their followers are wrong now. Interestingly, in describing the two main "poles" of conservatism, Brooks fails to mention [Frank S. Meyer, whose writings established the modern "fusionist" conservatism and demolished the logical and philosophical foundations of statism of the traditionalist, conservative, communitarian, crunchy variety](#). Meyer was in fact Kirk's and Nisbet's *bete noir*, and his book [In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo](#) leaves their arguments with no credibility whatsoever. (For this offense Meyer was condemned with the hated label of libertarian, a characterization that entirely missed the mark.)

I shall leave it to you to read Meyer for the full refutation of this brand of conservatism, an activity which I highly recommend, and for now I'll mention just two big problems with Brooks's and Dreher's reasoning.

One is the suggestion (not stated explicitly, but clearly suggested) that lifestyle simplicity and small-town life are intrinsically better than urban life and sophistication. That is simply false. Some people go nuts in small towns, others find big cities terrifying, and still others aren't happy living anywhere but the White House or a mansion in Malibu. Small towns, cities, suburbs, rural areas, resort towns—any of these can suit you perfectly or horrify you, depending on what you enjoy and want out of life.

In addition, Brooks's characterization of small-town life suffers from the fallacy of special pleading. People are charitable to one another in big cities just as they are in small towns, and they can be just as cruel, selfish, and ignorant in small towns as anywhere else. Not every small town matches Brooks's description of St. Francisville, and not every big city is like Detroit. In fact, there are probably parts of St.

Francisville that don't match Brooks's idyllic description, and big cities present a wide variety of ways of life and neighborhood environments.

And if the communitarians' complaint is the more limited claim that market freedom destroys the preferred environment for those who do like small towns and the values they believe such an environment fosters with unique facility, and should thus be suppressed so that traditionalists will have an environment conducive to their desires, that brings us to the second big problem with their reasoning—and in my view the more important criticism from a political-economy perspective.

It is this: no amount of perceived sweetness and light constitutes justification for additional incursions of Our Enemy, the State, into individuals' lives. You may believe that a certain kind of life is best for everybody, or that preserving a particular set of values and customs is greatly to be desired, but to use force to "encourage" these outcomes is a political scheme with which we're all too familiar. It has gone under many names (discarding each one as it is discredited by the awfulness of the mindset it describes): liberalism, progressivism, socialism, egalitarianism, etc. In all of its manifestations it is simply statism, the trampling of individual liberties in the vain pursuit of some perceived good.

Despite its claims of respect for the market economy, traditionalist conservatism in all of its forms must ultimately place the state over the individual. This, to me, is the problem with all traditionalist conservatism: the great leap from "should" to "must." The "should" is dubious, the "must" reprehensible, in my view. Thus I prefer to make my home elsewhere.

S.T. Karnick is editor of The American Culture <http://stkarnick.com/culture>, where this first appeared.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Columbus Cause Ice Age?

by Dennis Avery

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

In a remarkable example of human-centeredness, Stanford University geochemist Richard Nevle blames Christopher Columbus for a sharp reduction in atmospheric CO₂ during the 16th and 17th centuries. It seems that man-made warming believers never tire of telling us how powerful humans are, usually for the worse, in our ability to change nature.

Nevle claims that the deaths of American Indians, due to the sudden spread of European diseases after Columbus landed, would have stopped the Indians from burning so many forests to enhance their hunting. He says this would naturally lead to re-forestation of a land area at least as big as California. He estimates the billions of tons of CO₂ withdrawn from the atmosphere as the new trees grew should just about explain a sudden drop in atmospheric CO₂ during the years from 1500 to 1700 AD—as measured in the Antarctic ice cores.



Dennis Avery

If Dr. Nevle can “read” the deaths of the American Indians in the Antarctic ice record, has he checked for the impact of the Black Death in Europe and the Near East during the 14th century? Roughly half the population of Europe died then, along with vast numbers of people across the Near East. It is on the record that huge tracts of European land were allowed to revert from farm to forest during this period. The Near East got 300 years of persistent drought in the same time frame. Even the scruffy environment in North Africa and Syria is capable of changing the earth’s reflectance of sunlight if its people die of plague and the vegetation dries up.

I would think a geochemist, especially one from Stanford, would understand that the oceans hold about 70 times more CO₂ than does the atmosphere. He would also understand that when water gets colder, it absorbs more gas from its surroundings. Thus, if a weakening sun suddenly put less heat into the earth’s oceans, the oceans would take more CO₂ from that air. That CO₂ reduction would register in the Antarctic ice cores and in temperatures around the globe.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the middle of the Little Ice Age, the sun had two extremely long “quiet periods” with very few sunspots. During these minima, the earth’s temperatures were slammed down to their lowest levels since the last big Ice Age. The Sporer Minimum lasted from 1460 to 1550, and dropped the temperatures in the subtropical Sargasso Sea by 2 degrees C. The Maunder Minimum lasted from 1645 to 1715 and dropped the Sargasso temperatures by 3 degrees C. In all, it meant nearly 200 years of declining temperatures in zillions of tons of water around the world, which then dutifully sucked CO₂ out of the Antarctic air.

We’ve known about the Dansgaard-Oeschger 1500-year solar cycle of warming and cooling since 1984, and we’ve now found its evidence in ice cores, cave stalagmites, seabed sediments and fossil pollen—worldwide. The cycle is so strong that it persists even during the big Ice Ages that hit every 100,000 years and drops Antarctic temperatures by nearly 10 degrees C.

Could it be that Dr. Nevle is again over-estimating humanity’s importance? Should we be paying more attention to our currently very quiet sun? Maybe the lack of warming over the past 15 years is trying to

tell him that CO2 is a minor trace gas—whose correlation with our temperatures over the past 160 years is a puny 22 percent.

Dennis T. Avery, a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., is an environmental economist. He was formerly a senior analyst for the Department of State. He is co-author, with S. Fred Singer of Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1500 Years.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Charter School Accountability

by Jeanne Allen

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

All too often, supporters and opponents of charter schools claim that bad charter schools don't close. The truth is charter schools that don't measure up are closing at a rate of 15 percent. That is real accountability to the students and parents that support them. Regrettably, the same can't be said for traditional public schools.



Refuting assumptions and statements by opponents and proponents alike about the state of America's charter schools, The Center for Education Reform has just released an unprecedented analysis of and data documenting the high level of accountability that marks the nation's charter schools. The report *The State of Charter Schools: What We Know – and What We Do Not – About Performance and Accountability* finds that charter schools historically have experienced a 15 percent closure rate.

The report is the first-ever national analysis regarding the number of charter schools that have closed since 1992, the basis by which authorizers ensure performance-based accountability.

ADDITIONAL REPORT FINDINGS:

- Of the approximately 6,700 charter schools that have ever opened across the United States, 1,036 have closed since 1992. There are 500 additional charter schools that have been consolidated back into the district or received a charter but were unable to open.
- There are five primary reasons for charter closures – financial (41.7 percent), mismanagement (24 percent), academic (18.6 percent), district obstacles (6.3 percent) and facilities (4.6 percent).
- Most charter schools that close for financial or operational deficiencies do so within the first five years, or within their first charter contract. Failing to produce audits, or conduct basic, required oversight is a sure sign that the charter school leaders are not capable of leading a strong organization. Academic closures usually take longer because it takes the whole charter term to gather enough sound data and make proper comparisons.
- The correlation between strong charter school laws, accountability and effective charter schools cannot be emphasized enough. Independent authorizers have full control over how they evaluate charter schools and have their own staff and funding streams. This enables them to create streamlined, effective tools to manage their portfolio of charter schools and close those that are not living up to their contract.

The quality of charter schools in the U.S. is not as simple as saying 'there are too many bad charters out there. The real story about charter school closures and accountability is that strong state charter laws and strong authorizers give schools a better chance at success because they hold them accountable and can offer them tools to succeed.

Jeanne Allen, is president of The Center for Education Reform.

**E-mail the
Editor**

A Republican Establishment?

by Angelo Codevilla

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

Is there a Republican Establishment that differs from and is antagonistic to people who vote Republican?

Whether such a thing existed before, say, 1950, is problematic. But since about that time it has manifested itself undeniably. Consider.

Beginning circa 1940, Robert Taft of Ohio rebuilt the Republican Party's credit with the American people. He spoke of smaller government at home and the pursuit of the national interest abroad- including opposition equally to Communists and Nazis. Wars were for winning. But the Party's machinery and money were in New York. J. D. Rockefeller, Wendell Wilkie, John Foster Dulles, and Thomas Dewey, supported heavily by old money, were Progressives in the mold of Herbert Hoover and Woodrow Wilson. They believed that they could bring the world together onto the path of progress and improve America by tweaking FDR's New Deal. Wilkie and Dewey lost.



Angelo M. Codevilla

By 1952 the party was almost unanimously for Taft. But the Republican Progressives bought and stole delegates to the '52 convention, especially in the South where delegates had no voters who could hold them accountable. When that did not work, they used the Credentials committee to exclude the elected Texas delegation and replaced it with one formed by them. Dwight Eisenhower was a great man. But he was foisted on the party – not picked by it.

In 1960 Barry Goldwater of Arizona took up Taft's role of representing the majority of Republican voters against the Party bosses. Remarkably (see campaign chairman William J. Middendorf's memoirs) Goldwater did almost nothing to advance his candidacy. Nevertheless, by 1964 some three fourths of Republican convention delegates were Goldwaterites. The Establishment struck back. Led by Nelson Rockefeller (and including Michigan Governor George Romney aided by his son Willard, AKA Mitt) the Establishment savaged Goldwater far more brutally than Lyndon Johnson ever did. Fascist, racist, warmonger, insane, extremist, were what the Republican Party called Goldwater. I recall that after his nomination, Republican Party headquarters in my town were closed and draped in black. *Not for the last time, the Republican Establishment made common cause with the Democratic Establishment.* The Goldwater campaign never had a chance.

In those days, there was only one national print outlet – no broadcast ones – that supported what the vast majority of Republican voters supported: William Buckley's National Review. (Since Buckley turned it over and the original cast of NR died or was pushed out, NR's management went with the money and became part of the Establishment. Whereas Buckley ran against silk-stocking John Lindsay, his successors at NR are the very image of Lindsay). Of necessity however, the Goldwater campaign spawned alternative means of mass communication – prominently direct mail. In the 1970s a few breaks took place in the Establishment's control of the Media. Bob Bartley made the Wall Street Journal into something of an advocate of Goldwater's positions on Social Security, etc. (Since Bartley's death, the Journal has taken several steps back to the Establishment). Norman Podhoretz and William Kristol made Taft-Goldwater positions on foreign affairs palatable to many Democrats. New small magazines popped up all over, bypassing the united Establishment.

By his October 1964 speech for Goldwater, Ronald Reagan became the Republican rank and file's representative against the party's Establishment. Reagan's strength came from campaigning against both the Republican and Democratic Establishments. He took voters away from both. But from 1964 until he left office in 1989 Reagan was the object of obloquy from both, in terms as strong, and more derisive, than those used against Goldwater. I can't think of any prominent Republican prior to the 1980 election who had a kind, or accurate word about Reagan. Those of us who worked with him were described as nuts. In the Senate, where I worked for eight years, maybe six out of forty eight Republicans were for him. The rest were for George Bush or John Anderson.

Reagan was supposedly going to lose badly because he appealed only to Conservatives and was just too far out of the mainstream. When Reagan was nominated in Detroit, the Party Establishment, including Senators, governors, and above all donors, threatened to do to him what they had done to Goldwater unless he named Gerald Ford as a Vice President who would be a "co-President." Reagan refused, but agreed to name George Bush, and to name his chief lieutenant, Jim Baker, as his chief of staff. Still, to make sure Reagan would lose, the Party ran Anderson against Reagan in the general election. I can assure you, and so can everybody else who dealt at a certain level in Washington, that Baker continued to work for Bush to shut out, minimize non Establishment people throughout his tenure.

When George Bush replaced Reagan in 1989 the personnel transition between two wings of the Republican Party was considerably more brutal and vengeful than transitions between parties – as everyone who witnessed it can tell you.

Consider the Bush 41 and 43 Administrations. What separates them from those of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama? I recall writing my senator's debate against Phil Gramm, who was championing 41's and John Sununu's famous tax increase (which led to 41 being ridden out of office on a fast rail). The pro tax arguments were like today's, and like today's mixed with condescension. What is the difference between 43's Secretary of the Treasury's Henry Paulson and Obama's Tim Geithner? None.

The most revealing moment of our time, the defining event of our Establishment, came in September-October 2008, when everybody who was anybody agreed solemnly that some \$800 billion to purchase big banks' "toxic assets" would save the US economy. Three fourths of Americans disagreed. National Review and The Wall Street Journal joined Barack Obama and John McCain in deeming them Neanderthals. But once the money was appropriated, the united geniuses changed their minds and used the cash for bailouts of favorite banks and industries.

In sum, these and similar worthies have agreed, *mutatis mutandis*, to the policies of the last generation that have given us a bloated public sector at home and no-win wars abroad.

Want names? Just google attacks on Newt Gingrich. Gingrich is neither Goldwater nor Reagan. But he is the only person left standing to challenge the certainty that, as the New York Times' Bill Keller put it, the 2012 elections will be held between two "certifiably sane" people (Obama and Romney). The folks who come up on your google search deem themselves the arbiters of sanity. It does not occur to them that the American people have the right to decide for themselves between COMPETING VERSIONS of sanity.

Today as in the last two generations, the Republican Establishment's message for Republican voters is something like "shut up and do as you're told."

A lot of us don't like that

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Editor**

2012 Forecast

by Alan Caruba

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

Election years tend to create a level of frenzy concerning the selection of the nominees and the outcome. The media feed this in order to keep readers reading and viewers viewing. The history of American elections has always been one of vituperation between the parties, so there is nothing new about this. Indeed, since so much depends on it, the political free-for-all is a healthy exercise.

It can, however, make for a difficult environment in which to go about one's life; the air filled with charge and counter-charge, polls going up and down, and a general sense that something is very wrong with the way the government functions.



Alan Caruba

On the bright side, a gridlocked Congress may bring a measure of relief to everyone. Writing about gridlock in January 2011, Marcus E. Ethridge, a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, noted that “By fostering gridlock, the U.S. Constitution increases the likelihood that policies will reflect broad, unorganized interests instead of the interests of narrow, organized groups.” In 2011, we saw what happens when advocates of “renewable energy”, wind and solar power, or electric cars, get priority over the needs of most Americans for reliable energy and transportation.

At the heart of the 2012 election will be the recognition that the economy is still not recovering, that government is seeking to extend and expand its control over our lives, and, even among former supporters of Barack Obama, that he has been a failure of historic proportions.

A recent Rasmussen Reports said that “Voters right now give the edge to Republicans when asked which political party is likely to win the White House and control both the House of Representatives and the Senate in next November's election”, adding that “a lot of voters are undecided.” Those voters may actually wait until entering the polls to cast their vote.

Another bad piece of news for President Obama is a new comparative analysis of current voter registration data in key electoral states of Nevada and North Carolina. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, there has been “a drastic drop from 2008 levels when a record-high proportion of young Americans turned out overwhelmingly to cast their votes to elect Barack Obama as President.” This is significant because more than two-thirds of young voters supported the Obama/Biden ticket in 2008.

The President had a low moment following the passage of Obamacare that transformed itself into the Tea Party movement and an even worse one in 2010 when it propelled a large number of Republicans into the House of Representatives, causing its control to change hands. He has had, in fact, only one truly high moment and that occurred when he announced the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011. At the time, he typically took complete credit. In a speech at Fort Bragg to returning troops from Iraq, the word “victory” was never spoken.

Americans are not unmindful that the downgrade of the rating of the nation's sovereign debt, the first in the nation's history, was announced on Obama's watch. The rate of “official” unemployment has receded to 8.6% but most Americans are well aware that it is far closer to 11% or more. America continues to experience that longest period of long-term unemployment since the 1930s.

For these and a myriad of other reasons, there is little reason to conclude that President Obama has any chance whatever of being reelected. The widespread contempt for Congress is also a hopeful sign for change. These are reasons to remain calm amidst the din of electioneering in the months ahead.

There is, however, all manner of troubles brewing in the world. Europe will have to find a solution to what will happen if its southern tier of nations elects to default on their sovereign debt. Cracks in the European Union are evident. If it falls apart, it will be very messy, but Europe existed before the EU and would if it disbands.

The Middle East is in the midst of a huge struggle between its fanatical Muslim faction and a population unhappy enough with former dictators to have forced out several in 2011 with the prospect that Syria's Bashar Assad will fall in 2012.

Iran remains the wild card and its nuclear dreams will likely end with a well-timed and well-executed attack by Israel. Israel saved the world from a nuclear Iraq in 1981 and a nuclear Syria in 2007. An attack on Iranian nuclear and military facilities could trigger an internal movement to overthrow the mullahs.

There are other wild cards in the Middle East. The Palestinians show no indication of giving up their dream of destroying Israel. That will not happen. Without Iranian support, both Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza will be set adrift. Muslim atrocities in nations such as Nigeria where Christian churches were bombed on Christmas Day will contribute to a growing movement against Islamic terrorism. It will not happen overnight, but it will happen.

Even the Russians show signs of tiring of their post-Soviet ruling class led by Vladimir Putin.

America faces a long period of restructuring the socialist programs that began in the 1930s and reached their peak in the 1960s. Should the GOP gain control of Congress and Obama is defeated, real change will occur.

Two other factors signal better times ahead. They are the failure of the global warming hoax and the disdain the "Occupy" movement engendered.

In 2012 Americans will take steps to end the scandals and deprecations of the Obama administration.

We shall ignore the anticipated shouts of racism.

We shall see the Supreme Court disembowel Obamacare or set in motion its repeal by a GOP controlled Congress.

We will select a President and a Congress to put things right.

Alan Caruba's commentaries are posted daily at "Warning Signs" and shared on dozens of news and opinion websites. His blog recently passed more than one million page views. If you love to read, visit his monthly report on new books at Bookviews. For information on his professional skills, Caruba Editorial Services is the place to go! You can find me on both Facebook and Twitter as well.

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Christian Libertarians?

by Norman Horn

Issue 195 – January 11, 2011

Some Christians have argued that God endorses the political agenda of Republicans or Democrats, but is there a third way to think about the relationship between God and government?

Christians from the left and the right are increasingly turning to libertarianism not because it is a “middle ground,” but because it is an entirely different way of thinking about government and power.

The core of libertarianism is the non-aggression principle: that the initiation of force against person and property is immoral, and it is in many respects a kind of political corollary to the Golden Rule. Thus, Christian libertarians think that government power should be limited, sound money and truly free markets should return, aggressive war must cease and civil liberties must be preserved. Despite objections raised by other Christians, many Christian libertarians have found a friend in Texas congressional representative, presidential candidate, and lifelong Christian [Dr. Ron Paul](#), because he also believes in these important principles.

Libertarianism treats man’s sinful nature realistically. James Madison famously quipped that if men were angels no government would be necessary. Christian libertarians take this a step further, saying that it is precisely because men are not angels that government must have extraordinarily limited powers. God does not show favoritism nor does he give special privileges of position. Everyone is accountable to the moral law in the same way. When governments and politicians extend their power so that they can abridge people’s natural rights with impunity, they have crossed the line into immorality. Rep. Paul’s message is that the United States government has been far across this line for decades and the remedy is to follow the Constitution. The Founders created the boldest attempt in history to limit state power, yet presidents and congresses, both Republican and Democratic, have repeatedly refused to adhere to their own rules. True, lasting change can only be found in reducing the power of the federal government.

Libertarians talk a lot about economics, and rightfully so. Money is central to a healthy economy. Christians are also concerned about money; in fact God talks frequently about money in the Bible. God’s warning against unjust “weights and measures” in Leviticus 19 is a warning not to tamper with the market ecosystem of money and trade. Rep. Paul acknowledges the Bible’s concern for honest money as well in [End the Fed](#): “The Bible is clear that altering the quality of money is an immoral act... It is dishonesty in money that has been a major source of evil throughout history.” If the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, as 1 Timothy 6:10 says, how much more seriously ought we to take how our society views the control over the supply of money? If it is true, as many libertarians contend, that the Federal Reserve is the primary cause of the economic crisis we have today, then the only solution is to restore honest, sound commodity money, free from political machinations and special interests.

It is truly unfortunate that modern American churches seem to think the state’s means of “spreading democracy” through aggressive war is more important than spreading the peaceful message of the Gospel of Christ. Jesus came to bring “peace on earth, good will to men,” and by extension the Christian’s goal ought to be the same. Rep. Paul wrote in [Liberty Defined](#): “It’s a far stretch and a great distortion to use Christianity in any way to justify aggression and violence.” War kills the innocent, destroys property, and bankrupts nations. Christian libertarians believe that a non-interventionist foreign policy of peace, commerce, and honest friendship is more consistent with how God expects us to interact with world neighbors.

Libertarians think that everyone should be free to do as they will provided they do not infringe upon the rights of others. Christians can recognize the importance of this principle by simply observing history, recognizing how often that other Christians have been prevented from practicing their religion as their conscience requires of them. If we do not afford others the freedom to live their lives as they choose, how can we expect to receive the same freedom to do as we choose? Rep. Paul explains that government does not make people good in [The Revolution](#): “The law cannot make a wicked person virtuous... God’s grace alone can accomplish such a thing.” God created us to be free to carry out the dictates of conscience. We cannot continue to demand state control to restrict people’s personal activity and yet assume our liberty is safe.

Through libertarianism, many Christians have found a way to move past their previous beliefs about politics and embrace a more consistent, more biblical political philosophy. The message of abolishing government power is powerful on its own. In Ron Paul, many Christian libertarians see a leader who points to principles that conservatives and liberals have long forgotten: “A system of government without limit, if unchecked, will destroy production and impoverish the nation. The only answer is to better understand economics and monetary systems, as well as social and foreign policies, with the hope that they will change once it becomes clear that government policies are a threat to all of us.” Whatever Mr. Paul’s merits, libertarianism is not going away, and it surely will take an increasingly prominent place in the political discussion of Christians for years to come.

Norman Horn is the founder and editor of [LibertarianChristians.com](#). This first appeared in The Washington Post’s blog “On Faith.”

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Editor**

Ban Our Lightbulbs?

by Amy Ridenour

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

There was one positive light when the House and Senate negotiators reached an agreement to fund the U.S. government in 2012. The Bill included a one-year prohibition on the enforcement of the infamous defacto light bulb ban.

But it did not stop angry businessmen who are frustrated at the idea that the federal government is – only temporarily — not going to ban them from selling a popular product.

And Greenwire reported that ‘dozens of lighting manufacturers, efficiency groups and environmentalists’ sent a letter to Senators before the vote containing this audacious whine: ‘Eliminating funding for light bulb efficiency standards is especially poor policy as it would leave the policy in place but make it impossible to enforce, undercutting domestic manufacturers who have invested millions of dollars in U.S. plants to make new incandescent bulbs that meet the standards.’

Welcome to the insanity of Crony Capitalism, in which Big Business spends millions to lobby Congress to force it to stop selling its own products, and then throws a hissy fit when their previously-satisfied customers revolt and the ban gets delayed.

Sorry you wasted your money, boys, but you started this.

General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt, whose own company is one of the top three — the others being Phillips and Osram Sylvania — identified as having lobbied for the defacto bulb ban when it was adopted in 2007, wondered aloud to CBS’s Lesley Stahl in October why any American wouldn’t want GE to be successful. Immelt told Stahl, ‘I want you to root for me. You know, everybody in Germany roots for Siemens. Everybody in Japan roots for Toshiba. Everybody in China roots for China South Rail. I want you to say, ‘Win, G.E.’”

To Immelt, we say: We want GE and all American businesses to win when they aren’t undermining our freedoms. Stop running General Electric like a modern version of the East India Tea Company — which served up a large serving of government regulations along with its core product — and most Americans will be behind you.

In the meantime, stop lobbying to ban our bulbs.

Amy Ridenour, is chairman of the National Center for Public Policy Research. She has written op-eds on the de facto light bulb ban that appeared in over 35 newspapers and blogs in 2011 and is a frequent talk radio guest on the topic. Her most recent writing on the subject includes “[Opponents of Light Bulb Ban Win a Big Round, But Battle Far from Over](#)” and “[Five Myths About the Federal Incandescent Light Bulb Ban](#).” She and her son Jonathan were featured in a January front-page New York Times article on the bulb ban. Jonathan is subject to seizures, which can be exacerbated by compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), a main alternative to incandescents.



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How Big Is 15 Trillion?

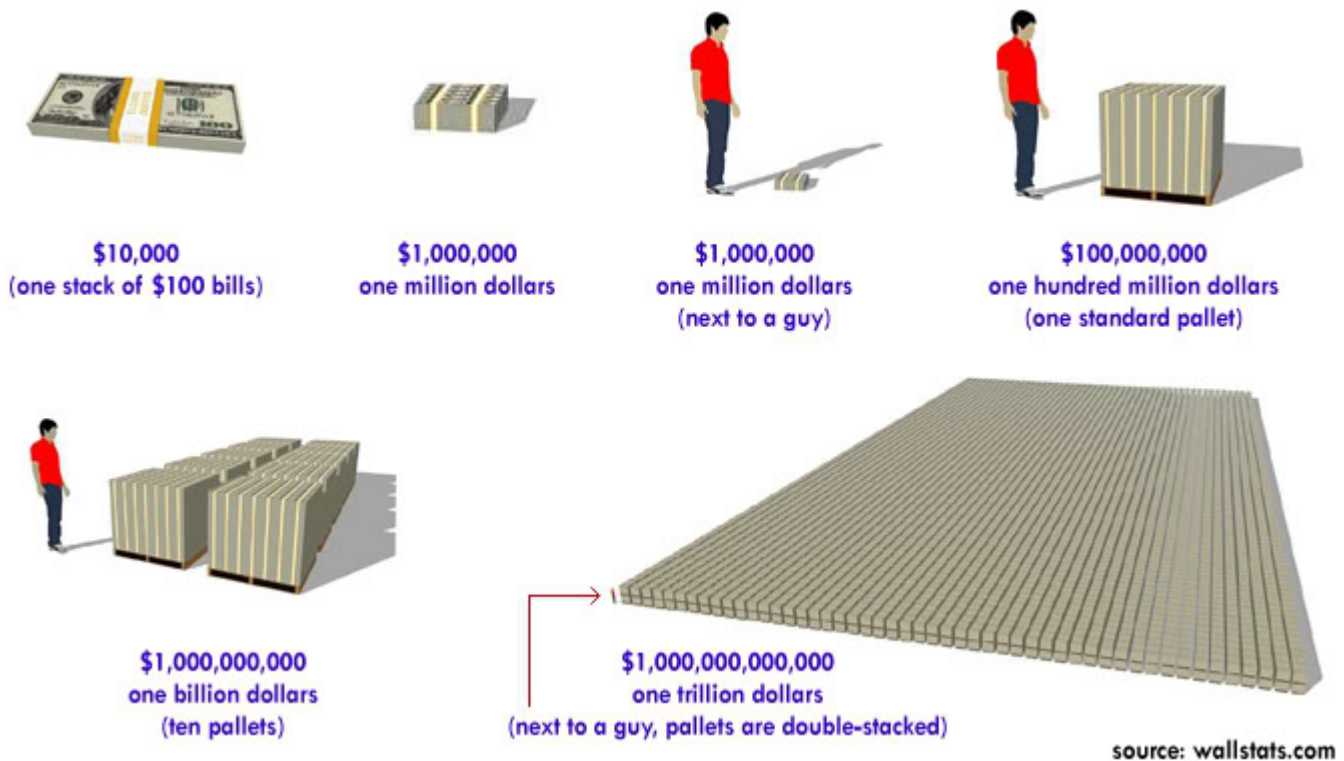
by Frank Russell

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

Our national debt is approaching \$15 trillion Dollars. How the blazes big is a number like 15 trillion? The distance between the Earth and the Sun “averages” 93 million miles. 15 trillion miles would cover 80,645 and 1/6th round trips between the Earth and the Sun. And that \$15 trillion dollar debt doesn’t include the accumulated debt of the States, countys and local governments. How much debt is too much debt???? It’s about time that we think about it!!!! We ignore it at our peril.

Time to pick-up our Income Tax booklets at our local Post Office.

The more you learn; the more you learn there is to learn!



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Reader Comments

Issue 195 – January 11, 2012

**CONSERVATIVE
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Editor: In your editorial “Christianity Triumph?” what is the source of the 41% of the world’s population is Christian? I can find no references that put the number that high. 30-33% is the number that I most often see and that number is even suspect since it has numbers of Christians in the US at someplace between 78 and 85%. I do not think that overstating statistics does our cause any good. Regards, Bill Sell

Editor: Regarding your editorial “Christianity Triumph?” The Pew Research Center says the percentage of Christians is only 32 percent. Tim Sullivan

[Editor responds: As noted in the editorial the source of the data is the Gallup World Poll, certainly a reliable organization with no obvious axe to grind. On the other hand, Pew is a sound organization too. They use different methodologies and none is perfect. Pew uses estimates from organized religious bodies and Gallup uses surveys asking people what they are. Not surprisingly many more people say they are Christian than belong to a Christian organization. That is one explanation among many for the different estimates. In places where Christianity is suppressed or treated as second class citizens (which represents a large part of Asia and Africa) the numbers of Christians allowed to or willing to answer a survey or otherwise admit their affiliation probably underestimates the actual number of Christians.]

Editor: Your editorial “Christianity Triumph?” brought to mind a recent rant I saw where Bill Maher proved himself a hateful, anti-Christians bigot. He would probably consider that a compliment. HBO, like the rest of the far left media, should remove him and his ilk from the air immediately & permanently. He has also praised bin-Laden and al-Qaeda for their “brave” attack on 9/11/01. HBO & the rest of the far left media will respond that their anti-God beliefs are just humor — “it’s all just a joke folks; funny comedy stuff.” If that is true, why is the “comedy” always targeted at Christians? Why isn’t Mohammad/Muslims the Big Joke? Why does the far-left wage verbal war against faithful followers of Jesus, like Tim Tebow? Why do they do all in their power to remove the word God in schools & even public places? Respectfully submitted, Rich Byman, Pompano Beach, FL.

Editor: Dennis Avery’s “Ancient Warm Arctic” is a good article. I went along with Admiral Bird to the Arctic on Operation Deep Freeze. I was on the ice breaker East Wind with the US Coast Guard. We were braking ice 20 f.t deep. We were told then that this area had been tropical at one time. Sincerely, Carl Thomas

Editor: In his article “”Divided Conservatives,” Scott Johnson says that the choice for our next president, among the Republicans, isn’t obvious. I believe it’s staring us in the face: choose the most conservative of those in the running. The idea that a candidate needs to “move to the center” to get independent voters is the view of pundits and “strategists” who don’t understand marketing and sales. They seem instead to be beltway hangers-on, who live by the need to be seen – and accepted – socially in Washington as a simple matter of employment. Also, they seem dependent upon keeping huge entrenched interests – General Electric, for example – inured from “change” or upset. That’s where the silly idea of “too big to fail” was born. “Too important to the beltway elites of both parties to fail”, is more the correct analysis. It’s why we must distance ourselves from Mitt Romney or any other “big government” Republican, because there must be a strong retreat from the past twenty to forty-five years of public policy. That will upset some boats so no “big government” president is going to allow it or lead in such policy. As for winning the election in 2012, independents didn’t so much run to Republicans in the landslide 2010 elections as they did run away from Barak Obama and his socialist administration and its policies. That election was a rejection of everything Obama and the Democrat leadership stand for. And what’s Obama going to run on? His record? A strong conservative in the general election will run over Obama and we’ll have a president guided by constitutional principles and a love of individual liberty. As for “can they do the job”? C’mon. There are thousands of people in the USA today who could do that job well and none of the present front-runners are in any way “weak”. Does Mr. Johnson presume that one must be a celebrity to win the office? There are professionals in all the cabinet agencies to advise the president and run those departments. No one – not even Bill Clinton – knows everything. What we need is a philosophical conservative with a track record of making good decisions and a love of freedom and the American way of life. Given that president, we’ll do just fine. There are several in the running who fit that description. Mitt Romney isn’t one of them. Jeffery S. Dover

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