



CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

The "Bold Colors" Conservative Voice in Washington

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

[Russian Realities](#)

From the Battle Line

[Russian Realities](#)

by Donald Devine

[Russia in NATO?](#)

by Paul Weyrich

[America in Decline?](#)

by Gary Becker

Media Pass in Review

[Novak: Masterful Muckraker](#)

by Timothy Carney

[Dark Batman](#)

by Spencer Warren

[Media Nominate Obama](#)

by Media Research Center

Government Maneuvers

[Deregulate Housing](#)

by John Berlau

[Single-Payer Pet Care?](#)

by John Goodman

[Turn Off Electricity?](#)

by Alan Caruba

Culture Wars

[Muslims on Obama](#)

by Daniel Pipes

[Cap-and-Trade Flaws](#)

by Matt Varvaro

[Stop Green War on Poor](#)

by Niger Innis

Political Front

[Electrifying Palin](#)

by David Keene

[Obama End Oil Age?](#)

by Dennis Avery

[Polling Ignorance](#)

by Mark Rhoads

Reader Backfire

[Packaging Obama](#)

by Lisa Fabrizio

[Stepdads Better?](#)

by McCormick & Sacks

[Reader Comments](#)

Russia Realities

by Donald Devine

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Only one country in the world can annihilate the United States: Russia.

Russia has 5,669 active nuclear warheads and 9,300 in reserve or 15,000 total. Of these, 3,339 are strategic nuclear weapons that can do enormous damage to widespread areas of the American homeland and kill millions of people. Of these, 1,800 nuclear bombs are mounted on Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles against which there is no defense. Russia can destroy the United States of America and much of its population.

Why does this basic fact elude most discussions of U.S./Russia relations? Should this not be a major, even the first consideration?



Of course, the U.S. has 5,163 active nuclear warheads and 4,775 in reserve and can strike back. This basic fact of mutual assured destruction had much to do with keeping the Cold War from becoming hot. But we now know there were some close calls. When tempers run hot, people do foolish things. No one really wanted World War I either but it ended up decimating a whole generation of Europeans anyway and provided the grievances for a repeat in World War II. The U.S. has the missiles to threaten but it cannot do anything to stop Russian ones once launched.

There is simply no comparison to the potential damage from a ragtag army of terrorists and what Russia could do to the U.S. The former can blow up a few buildings and kill a few thousand. Russia could kill tens or hundreds of millions of Americans. The relative dangers are very different and demand different policies.

With so many Americans now living in the sanitary suburbs, simple lessons of life are lost. Growing up in 1950's Brooklyn, one quickly learned that poking big guys in the eye was not a smart idea even if you were a bit larger. Even if you won, the cost could be very high. It was smart to give some toughs wide passage and to avoid some neighborhoods.



Mikheil Saakashvili

Russia's invasion of Georgia provides many examples. The White House first criticized Russia – but immediately conceded it would not respond militarily. Is there a better way to encourage a bully? Well, we could go to the UN. But Russia has a veto. We could throw them out of the NATO-Russia Council. But after NATO merely canceled its next meeting, Russia ended its cooperation with NATO. Remove Russia from the G-8 alliance of democracies? But the U.S.'s closest ally Great Britain says no. Sanctions? The just-concluded European Union meeting declined to do so. Deny World Trade Organization membership. But Russia trades plenty now without it and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin responded he sees "no advantages" to joining WTO. Boycott the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi? That would really intimidate them!

That is the full range of responses suggested even by the most aggressive neocons. All agree the U.S. is not going to war with Russia over Georgia. Even the official U.S. Assistant Secretary of State in charge, Daniel Fried, concedes that Georgia initiated the hostilities on August 7th. Yes, Russia provided provocations. But, having misread America's mixed signals, including a state visit by

President Bush, it was President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia who acted to restore the breakaway enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgian control. Russia certainly wanted to reassert itself in the region, but Saakashvili gave it the opportunity. Moreover, South Ossetia and Abkhazia clearly do not want to be part of Georgia.

In fact, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza made multiple trips to the Georgian capital to warn that the U.S. would not intervene if Georgia acted. Saakashvili did anyway, hoping to force U.S. hands. Well, Georgia is a democracy so must be supported by the U.S.? It is a one party state. Secretary Fried is clear on this:

Georgia is a flawed democracy, a democracy in construction. You don't help them by whitewashing their problems or defending a bad decision. But you don't want it crushed.



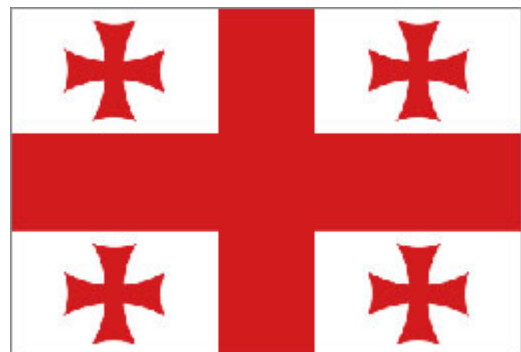
The Russians will not withdraw totally? They still say they will. But did those complaining about this not read the cease-fire agreement? There is a reason the Georgians did not want to sign. It is all there in Article V. Russia is granted the right to "implement additional security measures" within Georgia. And the U.S. encouraged Saakashvili to sign it. Russia has now recognized the two breakaway regions? They have been autonomous since Georgia itself became independent anyway. It is a distinction without a difference.

For years, the U.S. has insisted that existing international boundaries were inviolate, indeed citing this again to dissuade Russia from dismembering Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia. But Makhail Margelov, chairman of the foreign affairs committee of Russia's upper house, responded that the desire of South Ossetia and Abkhazia for independence is "historically and actually much more legitimate than Kosovo's." Yes, the U.S. did make an exception for Kosovo, in fact was the leading proponent. Is Russia totally paranoid when it sees we make exceptions against the interests of what it sees in Serbia as a fellow Slav people?

OK but the Russians are paranoid? For months, the U.S. has belittled Russia's fear of the interceptor system it wants to install in Poland and the Czech Republic to protect Europe from an Iranian missile attack. It is not arraigned against a Russian attack we insisted. Yet, immediately following Russia's Georgia invasion, Poland said it was ready to agree to U.S. interceptors on its soil. If anyone missed the connection, the Secretary of State herself immediately flew to Poland to ink the deal. If you were in Moscow, would you think the missile system had nothing to do with Russia?

Russia's real beef is that the U.S. supported Georgia's admission into NATO, the military alliance created to block the Soviet Union. Russia sees itself surrounded by former satellites that still fear and dislike it for its former regime's abuses, many of whom are now members of a military alliance aimed at its homeland. Its fear may border on paranoia, although as they say "even paranoids may have enemies." In any event, Russia may have achieved its goal. NATO member Italy's foreign minister Franco Frattini responded, "Today Georgia's entry [into NATO] is more complicated. It doesn't behoove us to pit ourselves against Russia. Russia is a strategic partner."

Former Italian ambassador to NATO Sergio Romano was blunt. "In the minds of the Western European countries, Georgia has been rash. This will harden attitudes" in Italy, France and Germany.



Can tough words from the U.S. alone win the day? When Senators Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham announced a series of actions to "blunt" Russia and

support Georgia's "tiny democracy," they had the temerity to add "We must above all reaffirm our conviction that Russia need not be a competitor or adversary." Above all, after poking them in the eye? The White House did put aside a pending U.S./Russia civilian nuclear deal but only temporarily. Even if the U.S. wanted, it does not have enough troops to invade Georgia given the demands of Iraq and Afghanistan. What else can be done? Certainly, America does not want Russian invasions of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the rest, to say nothing of NATO members Poland, Latvia and the other former satellites.

There is a way. It is bold but if it had been adopted when Edward Lozansky, President of the American University in Moscow and the old Soviet Parliamentarian, Arkady Murachev, [among others](#), suggested it in the early post Cold War years, there would not have been a Georgia invasion today. But it was rejected by the first Bush Administration. Lozansky's solution was to admit all of the former Soviet states in Europe – and Russia too! Members of NATO must not only agree to come to the aid of attacked fellow members, they must agree not to invade fellow members. A NATO Russia would be a more secure Russia. A non-NATO Russia is fearful and a threat to world peace – and to itself.

Donald Devine, the editor of Conservative Battleline Online, was the director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management from 1981 to 1985 and is the director of the [Federalist Leadership Center](#) at Bellevue University.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Russia in NATO?

by Paul Weyrich

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Surveying the wreckage in Georgia where more than 100,000 people were without homes, running water and food and many others killed or wounded the question remains: what could have been done to divert this disaster? There was a solution promoted by a number of us soon after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Knowing that historically Russia has been nervous about its borders, we foresaw the possibility that not only Georgia but Armenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine would be vulnerable to Russian aggression. A number of us proposed that Russia be made a part of NATO. If Russia were in NATO it would not be in a position to attack its neighbors. But just as important, if its neighbors tried to provoke Russia, NATO would be required to put down any such provocation.



Paul M. Weyrich

The first to broach that idea was Edward (Ed) Lozansky, President of the American University in Moscow. He discussed the idea with me and my colleague, William S. (Bill) Lind, who thought it was an excellent idea which would solve a myriad of problems.

In Moscow, the director of the interregional group in the old Soviet Parliament, Arkady Murachev, also supported the idea. In due course it was put to Boris Yeltsin, the first freely elected President of Russia. He was open to the idea. So why did it go nowhere? Because cold warriors, who have made careers of fighting the Russians and justified ever increasing defense budgets accordingly, put an end to it.

If Russia were in NATO and bound by its requirements it no longer would be considered our enemy. That was not useful to those who had spent a lifetime in Cold War activities. President George H. W. Bush's advisors were absolutely against this idea. If he had had the foresight to disregard their counsel and push for our idea how different history very probably would be today.

I recall visiting with Bush in the Oval Office after Dr. Robert (Bob) Kriebel and I returned from Moscow, where we had found that Mikhail Gorbachev, the political rage at the time over here, was not popular in Russia. Yeltsin was much more popular. I told President Bush that if Gorbachev were replaced his replacement could be someone more to our liking. Bush said he wished he could have believed that, but told me, "I live every day in fear that Gorbachev will be replaced by a Stalinist-type figure." That information was incorrect. And when the idea of admitting Russia to NATO came up the advice Bush received continued to be incorrect.

What now? Clearly, not just Georgia but the Baltic states and Ukraine are worried. They all are concerned because they have democratically elected governments, which Moscow doesn't regard highly. Are we to rush to make Georgia and Ukraine a part of NATO? Could American soldiers be sent to defend Georgia against Russia? In the long run I don't think this would work. Is it now impossible for us to start over? Must Russia be our enemy? If it were, would we be prepared to fight another war? I don't have the answers but it seems to me we must begin to think outside the box. Surely we must have new advisors with new thinking. The alternative is to risk sinking into the abyss of a new war with Russia. Do we need this? No.

Paul M. Weyrich is Chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation.

**E-mail the
Editor**

America in Decline?

by Gary Becker

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Articles about whether America is in decline is a cyclical industry that rises and falls over about a twenty-year cycle. The previous cycle started with Paul Kennedy's bestseller of 1986 "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers", and was vigorously discussed during the next decade. It was finally dismissed after starting in the early years of the Reagan presidency there was more than twenty-five years of vigorous growth in GDP-much faster than in Western Europe- declines in unemployment to very low levels, and the complete absence of any inflationary pressure.



Gary Becker

This gloom and doom industry has begun to grow again during the past few years. Kennedy had attributed his projected decline of the United States to its role as the world's policeman, and the resulting spending on defense and military manpower and equipment. Yet, defense spending did not account for more than six percent of GDP, and some of the military spending went for military R&D and training that had carryover to civilian products and services, such as the development of the Internet, and the training of pilots. The new pessimists continue to blame America's role as policeman, and in particular its protracted involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. They also see possible doom in the debacle in the US housing market, the high price of oil, and the current economic slowdown in income growth, and declines in employment. Much emphasis too is placed on the growth of China and India, and also Brazil, and the shift of the world's attention toward these large rapidly developing nations. Some members of the doom school claim in addition that the United States is getting "old", like old Europe, and is suffering from ailments that afflict old nations.

I generally do not subscribe to this gloom and doom school concerning America. I do agree that being the world's policeman does take resources that could be producing civilian output, and countries in Europe and elsewhere free ride off of America's efforts, but when done right this policeman's role also makes the world a safer place in the future. However, the resources spent on military manpower and equipment is not large enough to have a serious effect on the growth of US civilian output. The economy and housing market will before long recover from their current difficulties. The rapid expansion of China, India, and a few other large nations does mean that the share of world GDP produced by the United States has begun to decline, and is likely to continue to decline over the next decade and longer. After all, these two huge nations, along with Brazil, comprise over forty percent of the world's population, so their rapid growth must lead to a decline in America's share of world GDP. But the success of other nations should not be taken per se an indication that America is in decline.

Moreover, and on the whole, the growth of these other nations will help US growth prospects. The United States has been for several decades the world's leader in technological innovation, so that other nations have been able to free ride to some extent over US investments in new ideas and technologies. With the rapid growth of China and others, they too will begin to make considerable innovations, and the US will now be able to take advantage of their technological advances. In other words, in the future, America will become more of an importer as well as continuing to be an exporter of new ideas and innovations.

The expansion of exports from China and other poorer nations has not benefited all nations, especially those that compete with exports of similar products. However, it has greatly benefited the US and other developed countries because the rich countries can import amazingly cheap consumer goods, and these developing countries provide a market for the industrial goods and advanced services of richer nations. As the rapidly developing countries get richer, the mix of their products and services will change, and some of them will compete directly with those of richer nations. Yet the evidence is strong that trade is stronger in general between countries of similar levels rather

than different levels of economic development, but is mutually beneficial to both sides. I see no reason why this should not continue as China's, India's, and Brazil's economic development become much closer to that of the US, Japan, and Western Europe.

Another argument made by the America is declining camp is that as countries continue to get richer, individuals lose their motivation and begin to sharply cut their hours of work and ambitions regarding further accumulation of wealth and income. In a celebrated article published in 1931 called, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren", the great economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that as incomes continued to grow, then adults in Europe and the United States would by the year 2030 be working about 15 hours per week, and they would spent most of their time in leisure pursuits. Keynes' predictions about the long-term rates of growth of income were surprisingly quite accurate, despite the worldwide depression then in effect, but his predictions about how people would spend their growing wealth were way off the mark. He did not appreciate that higher hourly earnings could lead people to work more hours even though their incomes were higher, and that the continuing development of new products, such as computers and television, would increase people's desire for more spending power. These effects were magnified by the interest in relative economic position since that induces men and women to strive for higher incomes in order to move ahead of their peers (on all this, see the article by Luis Rayo and me "Why Keynes Underestimated Consumption and Overestimated Leisure for the Long Run", in the recent collection of essays, "Revisiting Keynes").

I am an optimist about the future prospects of America; that is, I believe the individuality, entrepreneurship, and drive in this country will continue to propel the economy and society forward at a good pace. The biggest risk to America's continuing success lies not in the considerations already discussed, but in the expansion of government regulations and controls that can throttle the dynamic energies of its competitive private sector. Clearly, various forms of government spending and regulation, such as spending on police and the military, on schools and other infrastructure, are crucial to any prosperous society. However, the tendency during the past half-century has been to go further than is warranted as different interest groups look to the government for help. Governments now often decide what consumer goods can be produced, subsidize housing and other goods, and regulate who can be fired and hired (especially in many European countries but also increasingly in the US). Governments also are placing greater stress on equality as opposed to opportunity and efficiency, and pay for medical spending, provide retirement incomes, and often impose heavy taxes on persons who earn more than average.

So far, this expansion of the role of government has not been a crucial deterrent to entrepreneurship and private energies in the United States-a much greater expansion of government has had much more harmful effects in countries like Italy and France. Although I remain optimistic, I do fear that interest group pressures toward a much larger role of government in the United States may become much harder to resist in the future, and that this could eventually kill, or at least badly wound, the free market-entrepreneurial goose that has been laying the golden eggs.

Gary Becker is an American economist and a Nobel laureate who blogs at <http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/>

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Editor**

Novak: Masterful Muckraker

by Timothy Carney

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

The hardest-working man I have ever known has retired. Privileged to call him my boss for half my (admittedly brief) career, I suffer an incalculable loss as Bob Novak sets down his pen, but millions of his readers are also saddened.

While only the Internet's puerile purveyors of uninformed vitriol celebrate his retirement, there is another class of people in this town who — even if they admire the man — benefit from the end of Novak's column: The politicians, lobbyists, bureaucrats and operatives who want to work in peace and quiet, out of the public view.

What we've lost is not primarily a conservative voice — Novak was one of many who clearly and consistently articulated the call for limited government and, later in his life, also the protection of the unborn.

What we've lost primarily is a reporter who cast a cynical eye on the best-laid plans of bureaucrats, who took the same level of skepticism to his coverage of both political parties, and who was motivated, above all, by the desire to unearth information that powerful people would prefer remained buried.

To the detriment of the republic, there is now one fewer skeptic calling around Capitol Hill until he gets the real dirt; there is one fewer sleuth — freed by his spot on the opinion pages from what Novak calls the "deaf-dumb-blind" sort of impartiality that often makes news reporting worthless — exposing the true machinations in the government. This can be a cause for relief for many powerful people.

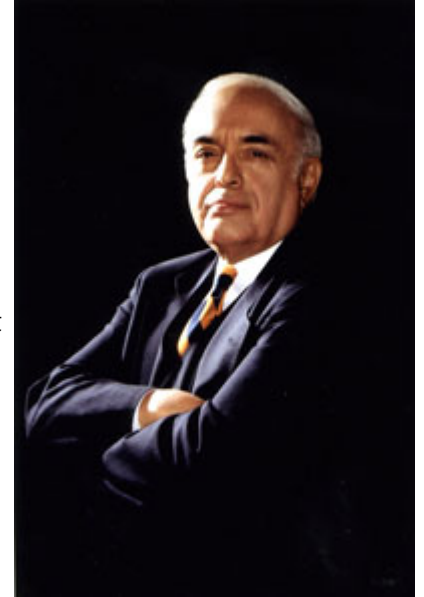
Novak regularly expresses wonder at the Internet's effect — both positive and negative — on journalism and discourse in this country. He has often asked me to explain why bloggers and online writers would be willing to attach their names to the nasty, personal and unfounded vitriol poured forth from both Left and Right on the Web.

Novak became a favorite target of many on the Left who could see little more than conservative or liberal — who imagine every writer is wearing a Red jersey or a Blue jersey.

This partisan lens through which TV and the blogosphere casts much of politics is actually a boon to the politicians of both parties. As long as it's Red vs. Blue, then campaign contributions keep flowing, politicians are immune to criticism from their own base, and actual ideas — which are pretty annoying things for many politicians — take a back seat.

Novak was one of the journalists — and, thankfully, there are still many others of all political stripes — who did not align with either party, and, as Fred Barnes put it, was harsher on the GOP, with whom he agrees more.

Thanks to fate's unfair hand, Novak will be remembered by many as the man who revealed Valerie Plame Wilson as a CIA employee. Thanks to the ignorance of many bloggers and television commentaries — and their willingness to write on what they know nothing about — his role in this affair is presented as his doing the hatchet work of a Bush White House scrambling to defend the Iraq War.



This false account is ironic on two fronts. First, what Novak did in this case to earn such ire from the Left was publish something that a CIA spokesman (without much of an explanation) asked him not to print.

Publishing things the government doesn't want you to publish — when you have been given no reason to suspect it will endanger a life or compromise national security — is what Washington reporters should do.

The second irony is that the conversation that led to Novak's disclosure about Mrs. Wilson (a throw-away line, almost) was a chat between two Iraq War opponents — Novak and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

I remember riding the elevator with Novak one day, discussing how one Republican congresswoman had just named Teddy Roosevelt as a hero. Novak, never a T.R. fan, pointed out to me that Roosevelt had coined the term "muckraker" as a term of reproach.

Roosevelt had also argued that the "critic" doesn't "count." These are convenient arguments for a man in power to make — and they are dangerous arguments for our country if we listen to them.

Novak has hung up his rake, but just as many damning facts lie buried beneath the muck. Here's hoping more journalists — on our news pages, opinion pages, and even our blogs — continue Novak's work of making uneasy the men and women in power. I know I'll try.

Examiner Columnist Timothy P. Carney is editor of the Evans-Novak Political Report. His Examiner column appears on Fridays. This first appeared in The Washington Examiner

**E-mail the
Editor**

Dark Batman

by Spencer Warren

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Little could Bob Kane, the creator of the Batman comic strip in 1939, have imagined how his simple tales of the dark superhero would become inflated more than half a century later into blockbuster movies featuring scenes of mayhem beyond his wildest dreams. In those days children and young teenagers read the comic strips with the elemental pictures; today their adult grandchildren and their children flock to the movies to be inundated nonstop for two hours or more by speeding chases and collisions; daredevil escape after daredevil escape; one explosion louder and more lethal, igniting a bigger fireball, than the one before; and by shattering windows and collapsing office towers and hospitals. Killing is heaped upon more killing. Given the record-setting box-office of the latest Batman movie, *The Dark Knight*, it appears that what was intended for juveniles in the 1930s, '40s and '50s has become mainstream. Chalk this movie up as another example of our cultural decline.



The movie is not viewed this way by some leading critics, it goes almost without saying. Time, Rolling Stone and the New York Times, to name a few, find profound moral conflict in the epic struggle between Batman/Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale), who is troubled that he is seen as a vigilante, and the uniquely evil Joker. (The latter is most effectively played to the last drop with vivid smacking of his blood-red – and bloodied – lips by the late Heath Ledger). The Joker is a combination of Osama bin Laden's dreams of mass destruction (all of Gotham) and Quentin Tarantino's (*Kill Bill*, *Pulp Fiction*) nihilistic mania for cinematic killing done with "imagination." Thus, the Joker prefers knives to guns: knives are his scalpel, shall we say.

Yet the examples of profundity found by such critics are merely single lines sprinkled here and there, evidently to make the film seem "significant." In violation of the basics of screenwriting 101, they are not dramatized story lines, which would reduce time for all the mayhem. Just about everyone who enjoys the film most likely does so for its rapid-fire action and pulp characters. Nevertheless, Richard Corliss of Time finds the movie "turns pulp into dark poetry." Corliss also writes that the transformation of the heroic District Attorney, Harvey Dent/Two Face (Aaron Eckhart), into another wanton mass killer after the police rescue him from the Joker's murder scheme but fail to save the life of his girlfriend, Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal) "has the poignance of class tragedy," though what class has to do with it Corliss does not explain. It does not occur to him that the plot reversal for Harvey, which also comes after one side of his face is horribly disfigured courtesy of the Joker (the make-up department has a field day in grossing out the audience with Harvey's new mouth, now filling two levels of his face), is just another contrivance to pile on more bloodshed and add the macabre disfigurement. It also allows young director Chris Nolan and his co-screenwriter brother, Jonathan, to add a scene where the deranged Harvey, now Two Face, threatens first the wife and then the little son of the stalwart detective Lt. Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) with a gun to their heads, the rest of the family watching in terror.

This sort of sadistic exploitation, not to mention all the other violence and the extremely malign character of the Joker, did not prevent the film earning a PG-13 rating, which permits children under age 13 to attend the movie without an accompanying parent or adult guardian. The difference from PG is only that parents are urged to investigate the film more carefully. Once again we see the ratings system works not to protect children but as a cover for the greed of the motion picture industry as it dumps ever more sewage into society.

Rolling Stone, an organ of the counter-culture, finds the movie portrays “essentials of the human condition” and is “haunting and visionary,” which is quite a feat for a movie whose characters are made of cardboard. And that media leader of Cultural Marxism, the New York Times, enthuses that the film is filled with “thrilling moments of pure cinema,” as critic Manohla Dargis writes. The Times’s radical agenda is made apparent in the first paragraph: the Batman superhero is now made “postheroic” “largely by embracing an ambivalence.” Here is the radical left’s post-modernist cultural agenda of relativism – there are no truths, but only ambiguity, except, of course, where “diversity” and “multiculturalism” (the “multi-cult”), and the evils of the U.S. and the West generally, are concerned. Ms. Dargis immediately goes on to give away the left’s anti-American aims by writing with approval that Batman’s new ambivalence shows that “truth, justice and the American way don’t cut it any more.” Here she is dismissing the famous ethos of Superman, the comic book hero who preceded Batman. Is there a greater pop culture symbol of objective good – “truth, justice and the American way” --than Superman? For the left, Superman must be relegated to the past as out-dated.

Thus, puffing up this juvenile razzle-dazzle action movie by attributing to it pretentious, deep meaning advances the left’s anti-American, anti-tradition agenda. In truth, however, the ambiguity belongs to the left, which lays some of the fault for the 9/11 attack (the Joker is frequently called a terrorist in the film), as well as just about every other wrong in the world, on the U.S. If the U.S. were not at some fault at least, it would mean we were unambiguously better than our enemies. The left can’t allow that, for it would make us superior to, and thus not equal to, certain others in the world. Such “equality” is a basic precept of Cultural Marxists. (For another example of left-wing “ambiguity,” see Clint Eastwood’s historical travesties about World War II, *Flags of our Fathers* and *Letters from Iwo Jima*, which draw moral equivalence between the U.S. and our barbaric Japanese enemy. See my review essays at [here](#) and [here](#).)

Further, Ms. Dargis even identifies personally with the Joker’s nihilistic evil. (The left prides itself on always being contrarian, which it thinks makes it superior to the rest of us, with our outdated conventions born of prejudice or male domination.) Thus, she ends her review writing that “it is hard not to fall for a film that makes room for a shot of the Joker leaning out the window of a stolen police car and laughing into the wind, the city’s colored lights gleaming behind him like jewels. He’s just a clown in black velvet, but he’s also some kind of masterpiece.” This “masterpiece,” the Joker, is trying to overthrow civilized order from the platform of a police car, a symbol of lawful authority. Here, in a movie review, we see how the left’s contrarianism typically turns into an embrace of nihilism: anything that is the enemy of my enemy is my friend, shall we say.

Just as the Nolans sprinkle a little superficial moral ambiguity on their confection, they also add some topical relevance for the politically minded. Thus, the Gotham authorities and Batman often complain they have to abide by rules, unlike the terrorist Joker. The scientist behind Batman’s technological weapons, Dr. Fox (the always superb and weighty Morgan Freeman), has qualms about Batman’s new inspiration that will allow him to know everything that is going on in Gotham all the time. No one man should have such power, Dr. Fox insists, in an apparent swipe at the Patriot Act.

The Dark Knight, like much in contemporary entertainment, exemplifies a society much of which thrives on excess, having thrown off the bad old concept of self-discipline, of orderliness. Thus, in addition to the film’s endless violence, it builds up to its climax a bit more than halfway through its two and a half hours, then pulls a reversal (via a bomb that has been surgically placed in the stomach of one of the Joker’s gang) that allows all the mayhem to proceed as anti-climax for perhaps another forty minutes. This is self-defeating, even taking the film on its own terms. It is more of a cinematic special effects construction project that exploits the audience than an entertainment like, say, the self-aware, not too serious Steven Spielberg Indiana Jones movies – which are suitable for children under age 13.

This movie is just a waste of one’s time. It lacks soul and is not healthy entertainment, especially for teenagers and children.

Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline's media critic.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Media Nominate Obama

by Media Research Center

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It was the closest nomination contest in a generation, with just one-tenth of a percentage point — 41,622 votes out of more than 35 million cast — separating Barack Obama from Hillary Clinton when the Democratic primaries ended in June. Obama's margin among elected delegates was almost as thin, just 51 to 48 percent.

But Barack Obama had a crucial advantage over his rivals this year: the support of the national media, especially the three broadcast networks. At every step of his national political career, network reporters showered the Illinois Senator with glowing media coverage, building him up as a political celebrity and exhibiting little interest in investigating his past associations or exploring the controversies that could have threatened his campaign.



These are the key findings of the Media Research Center's exhaustive analysis of ABC, CBS and NBC evening news coverage of Barack Obama — every story, every soundbite, every mention — from his first appearance on a network broadcast in May 2000 through the end of the Democratic primaries in June 2008, a total of 1,365 stories. MRC analysts found that the networks' coverage — particularly prior to the formal start of Obama's presidential campaign — bordered on giddy celebration of a political "rock star" rather than objective newsgathering. Key Findings:

- The three broadcast networks treated Obama to nearly seven times more good press than bad — 462 positive stories (34% of the total), compared with only 70 stories (just 5%) that were critical.
- *NBC Nightly News* was the most lopsided, with 179 pro-Obama reports (37%), more than ten times the number of anti-Obama stories (17, or 3%). The *CBS Evening News* was nearly as skewed, with 156 stories spun in favor of Obama (38%), compared to a mere 21 anti-Obama reports (5%). ABC's *World News* was the least slanted, but still tilted roughly four-to-one in Obama's favor (127 stories to 32, or 27% to 7%).
- Barack Obama received his best press when it mattered most, as he debuted on the national scene. All of the networks lavished him with praise when he was keynote speaker at the 2004 Democratic Convention, and did not produce a single negative story about Obama (out of 81 total reports) prior to the start of his presidential campaign in early 2007.
- The networks downplayed or ignored major Obama gaffes and scandals. Obama's relationship with convicted influence peddler Tony Rezko was the subject of only two full reports (one each on ABC and NBC) and mentioned in just 15 other stories. CBS and NBC also initially downplayed controversial statements from Obama's longtime pastor Jeremiah Wright, but heavily praised Obama's March 18 speech on race relations.
- While Obama's worst media coverage came during the weeks leading up to the Pennsylvania primary on April 22, even then the networks offered two positive stories for every one that carried a negative spin (21% to 9%). Obama's best press of the year came after he won the North Carolina primary on May 6 — after that, 43 percent of stories were favorable to Obama, compared to just one percent that were critical.
- The networks minimized Obama's liberal ideology, only referring to him as a "liberal" 14 times in four years. In contrast, reporters found twice as many occasions (29) to refer to Obama as either a "rock star," "rising star" or "superstar" during the same period.
- In covering the campaign, network reporters highlighted voters who offered favorable opinions about Obama. Of 147 average citizens who expressed an on-camera opinion about Obama, 114 (78%) were pro-Obama, compared to just 28 (19%) that had a negative view, with the remaining five offering a mixed opinion.

Perhaps if he had faced serious journalistic scrutiny instead of media cheerleading, Barack Obama might still have won his party's nomination. But the tremendously positive coverage that the networks bestowed upon his campaign was of incalculable value. The early celebrity coverage helped make Obama a nationally-known figure with a near-perfect media image. The protectiveness that reporters showed during the early primaries made it difficult for his rivals to effectively criticize him. And when it came to controversies such as the Wright affair, network reporters acted more as defenders than as journalists in an adversarial relationship. If the media did not actually win the Democratic nomination for Barack Obama, they surely made it a whole lot easier.

The mission of the Media Research Center is to bring balance to the news media. Leaders of America's conservative movement have long believed that within the national news media a strident liberal bias existed that influenced the public's understanding of critical issues.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Deregulate Housing

by John Berlau

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Congress just got through with passing a multi-billion dollar bailout to the government-sponsored housing enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which own half of America's mortgage debt. Fannie was created as a government agency in 1937 as part of the New Deal, and despite it and Freddie's restructuring some 40 years ago, it still maintained government privileges and other implicit subsidies (which have now been made explicit.)



**John
Berlau**

Yet amazingly, despite these two government-created behemoths at the center of the housing storm, many are gaining traction arguing that the housing mess somehow shows the failure of the "free market." What "free market?" The fact is that despite the partial deregulation of past decades, financial services remained one of the sectors most controlled by the state. The politicians now pointing their fingers at lenders making high-risk loans are the same ones who just a few years ago were chiding banks for not making enough loans to poorer borrowers who carried higher risks, and passing laws like the Community Reinvestment Act to pressure banks to chuck underwriting standards.

I delved into these issues a few months ago in an international online debate hosted by the Economist magazine. Against the backdrop of the Bear Stearns collapse in March, I had the task of arguing in favor of the proposition, "By intervening to regulate business and financial risks, governments have made things worse." I ended up getting 49 percent of reader's votes, losing to my opponent's 51 percent by a wafer-thin margin. These are the closest results so far in the Economist's series of policy debates, and in the words of Economist Executive Editor Daniel Franklin, "there is no doubt that the clash of values and philosophies on view granted many of us a broader understanding of the issues at hand."

Here is my closing statement in the debate. I started by saying that I shared the antipathy toward bailouts and corporate welfare, which my boss, CEI President Fred Smith often calls the "privatization of profits and socialization of losses." I then pointed out that financial innovation during the housing boom did indeed produce tangible benefits that will outlast the bubble's bursting. Home ownership increased in all sectors, and it is still the case that "the vast majority of borrowers in all demographic categories do not face foreclosure." The foreclosure rate and number of foreclosures have certainly been on the upswing, as we all know, but the overall rate of U.S. mortgages in foreclosure is still around 2 percent.

In the three-part debate, I brought up government regulation that hindered private risk management, including the Community Reinvestment Act and the blocking of competitors to the two dominant credit rating agencies. The rating agencies had turned out to be spectacularly wrong about the soundness of many mortgage-backed securities, yet there was an over reliance on these ratings in substantial part because the federal government would not accredit rival firms that may have had differing assessments.

Another big factor in the mortgage mess was the limits on short-selling imposed on ordinary investment vehicles such as mutual funds. Hedge funds, by contrast, had this ability and many weathered the subprime storm and even prospered by shorting banks' mortgage securities. But regulators, ironically, considered this useful risk-management technique too "risky" for retail investment vehicles. So ordinary mutual fund and 401(k) investors lost out. That's why, in the essay, I call for "a second stage of deregulation" that would let mutual and exchange-traded funds engage in some of the same financial management techniques for ordinary folks that hedge funds do for their super-wealthy investors.

We don't want a world without risk, for that is also a world without opportunity. But eliminating market-distorting corporate subsidies and regulation -- not to mention preventing new ones being touted as "cures" -- could greatly reduce financial volatility.

These are trying times, to say the least. But I sense in the comments, both pro and con, a deeper and legitimate concern about equity in the world of risk. Do the poor and those outside the system really benefit from innovation? There is also an antipathy which I share towards corporate welfare—what is often referred to as the privatization of profits and the socialization of losses—which we witnessed last week in the bail-out of Bear Stearns' creditors in the US (and which I opposed).

But the benefits of new financial products flow to the masses in the same way all innovation does, and government-imposed restrictions on this innovation risks limiting opportunities for precisely those it is trying to protect. And one does not have to be a political conservative or free-marketeer to see that this is the case. Writing recently on the housing boom and bust, the former senator George McGovern, forever a hero to the American political left for his spirited challenge to Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election, had this to say about what he calls the worrisome new trend of "economic paternalism":

"With liberalized credit rules, many people with limited income could access a mortgage and choose, for the first time, if they wanted to own a home. And most of those who chose to do so are hanging on to their mortgages ... If the tub is more baby than bathwater, we should think twice about dumping everything out.

One can believe, as Mr McGovern does, in progressive taxation policy and government spending on antipoverty programmes, and yet still be skeptical about governmental micromanagement of business transactions. I am pleased to see that even Mr Moore says he favours "a set of regulatory policies which allow for the taking of risk, innovation and flexibility". But when in the next sentence of his rebuttal he calls for "constant and active governmental regulation and intervention", I am afraid he is the one who is acting naively. It was the mortgage innovations spurred by the partial deregulation of banking in the US and the UK that led both countries to have record homeownership levels in many demographic sectors. This was a quintessentially progressive outcome that previous "progressive" governments had never achieved.

Indeed, when looked at in terms of distribution, the housing boom's benefits may have been even more widely dispersed than those of the tech boom. Nearly 70% of US families and close to one-half of American black and Latino families now own the homes in which they live. And the vast majority of borrowers in all demographic categories do not face foreclosure. There have indeed been "record numbers" of foreclosures, but these correspond with a "record number" of homeowners. The overall rate of US mortgages in foreclosure, according to the latest National Delinquency Survey that tracks the last quarter of 2007, is 2.04%.

Cycles of innovation spur many inventions and technologies that will survive a boom and a bust and better everyone's lives. Yet these cycles also undoubtedly cause pain that is often spread unevenly. While there will always be some dislocation in a dynamic economy, volatility can be much reduced through the introduction of what we should call a second stage of deregulation. Let us deregulate private risk management, as we have risk-taking, for ordinary investors as well as hedge-fund fat cats.

Take short-selling, for instance. In 2007, many hedge funds weathered the subprime storm and even prospered because they had shorted mortgage-backed securities and the banks that held them. Yet decades-old regulations in the US and European countries limited the ability of mutual funds or pension plans to engage in these same strategies on behalf of ordinary investors.

Had retail investment vehicles the same ability to use short-selling or other investment strategies as hedge funds, there likely would have been two results that would have made the mortgage crisis

less severe. First would have been the immediate gains to the portfolios of ordinary folks that would have mirrored those which hedge-fund investors are realising now.

The second, and almost more important benefit, would have been that a larger number of short positions would likely have sent the market a stronger signal that something in the mortgage industry was wrong. As a *New Yorker* correspondent, James Surowiecki, observes in his brilliant book, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, if the price of a security "represents a weighted average of investors' judgments, it's more likely to be accurate if those investors aren't all cut from the same cloth". He adds that limiting short-selling increases vastly the chances that if a price "gets out of whack, it will really get out of whack".

Here, I am pleased to report that the new European Union UCITS 3 (Undertaking for Collective Investments in Transferable Securities) directive greatly liberalises the ability of retail portfolio managers to utilise shorting strategies with financial products such as derivatives. The US should follow suit.

There is plenty of other deregulation that could bring the benefits of competitive risk management to ordinary homeowners, investors and savers. Lifting these barriers to risk hedging, rather than reinstating failed old regulations, would maintain the US and the UK's prosperity while reducing volatility significantly.

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**E-mail the
Editor**

Single-Payer Pet Care?

by John Goodman

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Did you know that almost anything doctors can do for humans they can do for our furry friends? MRI scans, renal dialysis, medication for arthritis, you name it-what's good enough for us is good enough for Fido. Eli Lilly is even marketing a new drug called Reconcile, which is Prozac for pets.

Pet care is big business. Americans spend about \$50 billion a year on their pets and one-third of that amount is for health care. Further, most dogs and cats have health problems. Three-fourths of dog owners and more than half of all cat owners are giving their pets some sort of medication. (See [NYT article](#))



John Goodman

So here is the obvious question:

Why does the market for pet care seem to work so much better than the market for human care? Not that I pay a great deal of attention to such things, but I believe it's fair to say that:

- No one is saying the market for pet care is "broken" or in "crisis."
- No one is saying that the market cannot work for pet care.
- No one is calling for mandatory pet health insurance.
- No one is calling for single-payer health insurance for pets.

But why not?

The answer is not obvious. Most pet owners view their pets as a member of the family.

They agonize over health care decisions for a pet as much as they might agonize over similar decisions for a child. End-of-life decisions can be painful and difficult for anyone.

Yet, if we agree that the veterinary market works better, could it be used as a model to reform the human care system?

John Goodman is President of the National Center for Policy Analysis

Post Script: [Here are estimates](#) of how many pets there are and how much we spend on them.

Turn Off Electricity?

by Alan Caruba

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Electricity is so commonplace that no one gives any thought to not having access to it. Few give any consideration to how it is generated, but we are now being inundated with the most virulent nonsense about how wind or solar power is “clean” and practically “free.” Every week there’s some new proposal to cover the nation with wind farms and solar panels.

The problem for everyone who wants to get rich with these energy sources or those who think they are the answer to our energy needs is that neither wind, nor solar can ever power anything more than relatively small projects like a farm or a local stadium. A nation of more than three hundred million people, however, needs a lot of generation capacity.

All the razzle-dazzle of television advertising and public relations propaganda cannot justify the building of massive wind or solar farms. They are simply inadequate to the production of the electricity the nation requires now and in the future. The weird thing about T. Boone Pickens’s pitch is that he talks about oil dependency to justify wind power, but vehicles are not powered by wind. Nor are they likely to be powered by liquefied natural gas as Pickens suggests.

By contrast, the July edition of Energy Tribune devoted some of its pages to the comeback of nuclear power in America. What jumped out at me was co-editor, Robert Bryce’s citation of the fact that, “The U.S. government has spent some \$7 billion building a repository for nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada” and that Senate Majority Leader, Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) has declared that it “is never going to open” and is “not the answer to nuclear waste storage.”

Sen. Reid recently said that “Coal is making us sick. Oil is making us sick” and then went on to blather insanely about global warming.

According to Bryce, “On June 3, the Department of Energy submitted an 8,600-page application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeking approval of the Yucca Mountain site for waste storage. Just one day later, Nevada urged the agency to reject the application.” This is a glaring example of how to make sure America lacks the electrical energy it needs.

Throughout the debate over energy use the Big Lie has been that industrial and other activities generate carbon dioxide emissions that, in turn, are causing global warming. Ergo, we have to radically alter every aspect of modern life to avoid the Earth’s destruction.

The problem with that is a decade-old cooling period that the Earth entered in 1998 and which is getting colder, not warmer. The other problem is the fact that the Earth has passed through periods in which the levels of CO² in our atmosphere were much higher than they are today.

Since it is getting colder, we are going to need more electricity and other sources of energy to keep us warm in our homes, offices, schools, et cetera. We are going to have to burn coal, currently the major source of power to generate electricity as well as the cheapest and most abundant. We will continue to use natural gas as well. All the hydroelectric sources have been identified and are in use at present.

That leaves nuclear. An Energy Tribune article by William E. Burchill serves up lots of information about the nuclear production of electrical energy. Worldwide 441 nuclear reactors are providing electricity to one billion people. Presently it provides twenty percent of America’s electricity needs thanks to the 104 nuclear plants operating in the U.S.



Alan Caruba

Here's something to keep in mind. "No U.S. plant worker or member of the public has ever been injured or killed by an accident caused by nuclear power." Moreover, amidst the frenzy over CO², nuclear is "an emissions-free source of electricity."

There is a literal renaissance of nuclear energy in America and this is a good thing. The U.S. Department of Energy forecasts that, by 2030, U.S. demand will increase by 30 percent. This increase reflects a worldwide trend. Currently, China, India, Russia, South Korea, Pakistan, and Japan are in the process of building a total of thirty-five nuclear plants and other nations have announced plans.

The worldwide demand for more electricity is growing right along with population growth and the spurt of industrialization occurring in nations that have looked at the Western model and are now beginning to compete in the process called globalization. By mid-century, the demand for electricity will double or triple.

The elected leaders of America have been largely deaf and blind to our national needs, opposing electrical generation no matter what source is used. Resistance to nuclear energy was part of the environmental agenda, but these days their cries and lies are mostly about what they now call "dirty fuels", oil and coal.

What can Americans do when we have loonies like Sen. Harry Reid or House Speaker Nancy Pelosi spouting nonsense and blocking efforts to meet current and future energy needs? One answer is almost too obvious. They and others can and should be voted out of office. They can be replaced!

Or maybe you want to wait while wind power, currently 0.77 percent of the sources of electricity energy, or solar power, about 0.01 percent, replaces coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric power. Bundle up! You're going to be very cold

Alan Caruba writes a weekly column posted on the Internet site of The National Anxiety Center, www.anxietycenter.com. He blogs daily at <http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com>.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Muslims on Obama

by Daniel Pipes

Issue 114 - August 20, 2008

How do Muslims see Barack Hussein Obama? They have three choices: either as he presents himself – someone who has "[never been a Muslim](#)" and has "[always been a Christian](#)"; or as a fellow Muslim; or as an apostate from Islam.

Reports suggests that while Americans generally view the Democratic candidate having had no religion before converting at Reverend Jeremiah Wright's hands at age 27, Muslims the world over rarely see him as Christian but usually as either Muslim or ex-Muslim.



Daniel Pipes

Lee Smith of the Hudson Institute [explains why](#): "Barack Obama's father was Muslim and therefore, according to Islamic law, so is the candidate. In spite of the Quranic verses explaining that there is no compulsion in religion, a Muslim child takes the religion of his or her father. ... for Muslims around the world, non-American Muslims at any rate, they can only ever see Barack Hussein Obama as a Muslim." In addition, his [school record](#) from Indonesia lists him as a Muslim

Thus, an Egyptian newspaper, [Al-Masri al-Youm](#), refers to his "Muslim origins." Libyan ruler [Mu'ammr al-Qaddafi](#) referred to Obama as "a Muslim" and a person with an "African and Islamic identity." One Al-Jazeera analysis calls him a "[non-Christian man](#)," a second refers to his "[Muslim Kenyan](#)" father, and a third, by [Naseem Jamali](#), notes that "Obama may not want to be counted as a Muslim but Muslims are eager to count him as one of their own."

A [conversation in Beirut](#), quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, captures the puzzlement. "He has to be good for Arabs because he is a Muslim," observed a grocer. "He's not a Muslim, he's a Christian," replied a customer. Retorted the grocer: "He can't be a Christian. His middle name is Hussein." Arabic discussions of Obama sometimes [mention his middle name](#) as a code, with no further comment needed.

"The symbolism of a major American presidential candidate with the middle name of Hussein, who went to elementary school in Indonesia," reports Tamara Cofman Wittes of the Brookings Institution from a [U.S.-Muslim conference in Qatar](#), "that certainly speaks to Muslims abroad." Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* found that [Egyptians](#) "don't really understand Obama's family tree, but what they do know is that if America — despite being attacked by Muslim militants on 9/11 — were to elect as its president some guy with the middle name 'Hussein,' it would mark a sea change in America-Muslim world relations."

Some American Muslim leaders also perceive Obama as Muslim. The president of the Islamic Society of North America, [Sayyid M. Syeed](#), told Muslims at a [conference in Houston](#) that whether Obama wins or loses, his candidacy will reinforce that Muslim children can "become the presidents of this country." The Nation of Islam's [Louis Farrakhan](#) called Obama "the hope of the entire world" and compared him to his religion's founder, Fard Muhammad.

But this excitement also has a dark side – suspicions that Obama is a traitor to his birth religion, an apostate (*murtadd*) from Islam. [Al-Qaeda](#) has prominently featured Obama's stating "I am not a Muslim" and one analyst, [Shireen K. Burki](#) of the University of Mary Washington, sees Obama as "bin Laden's dream candidate." Should he become U.S. commander in chief, she believes, Al-Qaeda would likely "exploit his background to argue that an apostate is leading the global war on terror ... to galvanize sympathizers into action."

Mainstream Muslims tend to tiptoe around this topic. An Egyptian supporter of Obama, [Yasser Khalil](#), reports that many Muslims react "with bewilderment and curiosity" when Obama is described as a

Muslim apostate; Josie Delap and Robert Lane Greene of the *Economist* even claim that the Obama-as-apostate theme "has been notably absent" among [Arabic-language columnists and editorialists](#).

That latter claim is inaccurate, for [the topic is indeed discussed](#). At least one Arabic-language newspaper published [Burki's article](#). *Kuwait's Al-Watan* referred to Obama as "a born Muslim, an apostate, a convert to Christianity." Writing in the *Arab Times*, Syrian liberal [Nidal Na'isa](#) repeatedly called Obama an "apostate Muslim."

In sum, Muslims puzzle over Obama's present religious status. They resist his self-identification as a Christian while they assume a baby born to a Muslim father and named "Hussein" began life a Muslim. Should Obama become president, differences in Muslim and American views of religious affiliation will create problems.

Mr. Pipes (www.DanielPipes.org) is director of the Middle East Forum and Taube distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Cap-and-Trade Flaws

by Matt Varvaro

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

The popular "cap and trade" system of regulating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has attracted the support of many conservatives because it relies on the capitalist principle of economic incentives and avoids direct government mandates. Senator John McCain, a proponent of cap and trade, describes the idea as "market-based" on his campaign website. However, when one considers the costs of its implementation and its overall economic consequences, it becomes clear that the proposal is nothing of the sort. Instead, it promotes inept centralized planning and massive bureaucratic inefficiency.



John McCain

Essentially, under this system, the federal government would distribute permits indicating the amount of GHG that a company is permitted to emit into the atmosphere, for which they have a certain number of "credits." If a company wishes to emit more GHG than its permit specifies, it must purchase more credits from other companies. This creates an incentive to emit less GHG, because if a company requires less GHG emissions than they have credits for, they can sell their unused credits and make money; those who emit a lot of GHG, on the other hand, are financially punished. This may sound like a logical process, but two important factors clearly illustrate the flaws of this scheme and undermine the misplaced optimism that surrounds cap and trade.

The first is the tremendous economic strain that it would inflict upon the United States' economy over the next few decades. One revealing study was conducted by Arthur Laffer, who popularized the "Laffer Curve" and was a member of Ronald Reagan's Economic Policy Advisory Board. Along with co-writer Wayne Winegarden, Dr. Laffer warns that "the U.S. economy could be 5.2 percent smaller in 2020 compared to what would otherwise be expected if cap-and-trade regulations are imposed. This equates to a potential income loss of about \$10,800 for a family of four for the initial Kyoto GHG reduction target." The causes of this economic damage are further outlined in the report: "Fossil fuels, (oil, coal and natural gas) provide 86 percent of our current energy needs. It is not currently feasible for the alternative energy sources to significantly expand their energy contribution sufficiently in the near-term to substitute for the demand growth...Consequently, a GHG cap could effectively become an energy production cap - or an energy supply shock." The authors cite similar energy supply shocks of 1974-75, 1979-81, and 1991-91, during which "the economy declined, unemployment rose, and the stock market declined in value." Some proponents of cap and trade simply fail to take these costs into account, while many others acknowledge them but regard them as necessary sacrifices toward our goal of "energy independence." It is unlikely, however, that most Americans would be willing to make such a sacrifice, especially if it will cost them an excess of \$10,000 over the next dozen years.

The second and most obvious case against cap and trade is the complete failure that has characterized its tenure in Europe. In early August, Businessweek commented on the effects of the European Union Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS), which has been in place since 2005: "Now, three years on, the environmental benefits from the EU ETS remain unclear: The continent's CO2 output actually rose 1.1% last year." Considering that the ultimate and primary purpose of such a program is to decrease CO2 output, the numbers indicate that the cap and trade scheme has been a flop.

Moreover, the Center for American Progress, a liberal think-tank that supports cap and trade, reported the following EU ETS fiasco: "The market price of emission allowances took a serious hit when it became apparent in mid-2006 that the number of allowances had actually exceeded total emissions, thus undermining the cap altogether. Allowances exceeded emissions by around 80

million MTCO_{2e} [metric tons of CO₂], or about 4 percent of a total market of 2 billion MTCO_{2e}. This mistake was caused by a combination of incomplete and inaccurate EU emissions registries and individual governments showing way too much latitude in their allocations to politically-connected polluters." In other words, the governments handed out more credits for emissions than the actual amount of CO₂ that was being emitted, which caused the prices to plummet to the point that each credit was practically worthless. The report then provides that laughable description of the bureaucratic miscues that caused this dilemma but then, astonishingly, adds, "These problems are not inherent flaws in a cap-and-trade system."

This is where the report gets it exactly wrong. Indeed, these problems are inherent flaws in cap and trade, as they are inherent in any such centralized, national planning scheme. What proponents of cap and trade fail to understand is that, in order for this system to succeed, the federal government will have to know how many credits to hand out, what the cap should be, and how and when to adjust these figures - at all times. As we saw in Europe, any slight miscalculation can cause significant harm to the system and to the overall economy.

What must be understood, and what should be fairly obvious at this point in history, is that no government is capable of handling such a responsibility and that matters such as these are best left to the market. Conservatives, of all people, should be aware of this reality and should realize that a program like this is doomed to failure.

Matt Varvaro is a high school student in Port Washington, New York.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Stop Green War on Poor

by Niger Innis

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

America is repeatedly being told that we must transform our economy to "green" energy.

Our future is in wind and solar, liberal environmental activists insist. Oil, gas, coal and nuclear must go.

American citizens vigorously disagree. They know fossil and nuclear fuels built this country and created health and living standards unprecedented in history. Over two-thirds support increased drilling.



Niger Innis

They know world energy demand is surging, while US production continues to fall. They realize anti-drilling policies don't just cause unemployment and cost us billions in lost lease bonus, royalty and tax revenues.

Those policies are an immoral war on poor families. They erode civil rights gains, and force minority and elderly households to choose between food, fuel and medicine.

Since 2006, the cost of driving a 25-mpg car 10,000 miles has risen \$600. Heating and air-conditioning costs – and the price of everything we eat, wear and do – continue to soar. While higher income families spend a nickel of every dollar on energy, families at the bottom of our economic scale spend up to half of their incomes on gasoline, heating and cooling.

This is intolerable and unnecessary. We have centuries' worth of oil, gas, oil shale, coal and uranium – and we can develop them without harming the environment.

But environmental radicals in and out of Congress refuse to let us do so. They want to force us to switch to renewables, even though there is a yawning chasm between 0.5% of US energy produced by wind and solar power – and 93% produced with hydrocarbon and nuclear power.

The eventual switch to alternative energy is obviously decades away. Meanwhile, we are sending nearly \$700 billion a year to oil-rich oligarchs, while actions by Russia, Iran and Venezuela underscore our own and Europe's national security vulnerability.

People are angry that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refuses to allow a debate or vote on ending congressional drilling bans. The only "energy" bills she supports would open few areas, while adding more taxes, regulations, lawsuits, delays, price hikes, and renewable-energy mandates and subsidies.

They will produce little or no new energy. Wind farms with hundreds of gargantuan, unreliable turbines have to be located where the wind actually blows, usually hundreds of miles from cities.

That means long transmission lines, often through forests and scenic areas. And that means opposition, delays and lawsuits from the same environmentalists who "support" wind and oppose power plants that actually produce abundant, reliable, affordable energy. As the *Wall Street Journal* notes, greens are already blocking transmission lines in a dozen states.

It's increasingly obvious that the only power environmentalist pressure groups and their congressional allies want is the power to control our lives, and curtail our energy use and economic growth.

Their latest ploy involves claims that the greatest threat facing minority families is climate change. Not drugs, teen pregnancy, absent fathers, gangs, murders, AIDS, cfrighting dropout rates or skyrocketing energy and food prices. Climate change.

“Our very health and economic well-being are at stake,” claims the president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The Center has teamed up with the Natural Resource Defense Council and other extreme environmental groups to convince minorities that “costly” global warming will have “disproportionate impacts” on minorities.

Temperatures are higher in cities, they argue, due to the “urban heat island effect” – and air-conditioning use among black families is half the rate for white Americans. Therefore, global warming will cause more heat-related deaths among minority families, they claim.

This attempt to justify anti-energy policies by promoting climate change hysteria is embarrassing nonsense.

The disparity in heat-related deaths has nothing to do with climate change, and everything to do with the inability of poor families to afford air-conditioning and electricity. The disparity in cold-related deaths is even more striking, and likewise due to energy affordability.

Lock up our energy, take away fossil fuel and nuclear power, impose cap-and-trade policies – and you drive prices even higher. You make heat and electricity less affordable. You force more people to depend on unreliable, nonexistent wind power. You force more to choose between heating and eating. You cause more to die.

But radical greens *want* to reduce access to the fuels that produce 93% of our energy. They *want* to increase energy costs.

They call this “energy conservation.” I call it “economic enslavement” – and worse.

Moreover, global temperatures have barely risen for 10 years, even as global CO2 levels soared. Many experts say we are heading for a period of *falling* temperatures, because of declining solar intensity. Over 31,000 scientists say there is no credible evidence that carbon dioxide emissions cause climate change, much less global warming disasters. And China and India are not about to end *their* fossil fuel use.

Punishing poor families in the name of speculative climate chaos is insane.

We need to bring sanity and compassion back to our energy policies. Drill, mine and use American energy. And demand that Speaker Pelosi and Senator Harry Reid end their war on poor families, and have a real debate and vote on our energy and economic future.

Niger Innis is national spokesman for the Congress of Racial Equality (www.CORE-online.org) and co-chairman of the national “Stop the War on the Poor” campaign (www.StopWarOnPoor.org)

**E-mail the
Editor**

Electrifying Palin

by David Keene

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

As the word that Sen. John McCain was about to name Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin as his running mate began to leak out early last Friday, conservatives were ecstatic and the mood of those converging on St. Paul began to change.

Many of those arriving to attend this year's Republican National Convention were less than enthusiastic about their nominee for president. But they headed home ready to work their hearts out for him and Palin.

The conventional wisdom is that few people vote for or against a candidate for president because of the vice presidential candidate. The last time a running mate made the winning difference was arguably 1960 when Lyndon Johnson tipped the scales in favor of John F. Kennedy by delivering Texas "the old-fashioned way."

This year might be different, however, as Palin has not only energized the Republican base, but has come out of the box swinging. Who she is and what she represents could very well change the nature of this fall's contest.

Palin's formidable oratorical talent was on display as she delivered one of the most electrifying convention speeches since Ronald Reagan took the podium in Kansas City in 1976.

She wowed those in the hall and the 37 million Americans watching her on television with a performance that was all the more impressive to those who knew what had gone on behind the scenes.

National party conventions are scripted and planned to the minute and this year's GOP convention was no exception, but things started going wrong when former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani began speaking.

Giuliani had agreed to a time limit imposed on him by convention officials and gave them a script to be loaded on the teleprompter that complied with their parameters, but he had no intention of stopping when his time was up.

Convention managers were forced to improvise. They dropped the video biography of Palin scheduled to precede her speech, but then discovered that the "hard" or typed copy of her speech was back at her hotel.

As Giuliani went on, they hurried to get it to the hall and finally handed it to Palin just as Giuliani wrapped up and pushed her out onto the stage. Here, they discovered that Palin's speech text wouldn't load into the teleprompter properly.

This was her big test and everything around the governor seemed to be coming unglued, but few in the hall ever knew it. She worked from the text, improvised and threw in a few things on her own and began to wow the crowd even before the teleprompter came back on line.

Those backstage who knew what was going on were even more impressed with her performance than the audience. One of them said later almost in awe of her handling of situation said, "She really is the real deal."



Indeed she is. What's more, she changes the game. The expected race between a tired but more experienced Republican ticket against a far more energetic Democratic campaign promising "change" has been transformed into something far different.

Now, it's a team of proven Republican reformers against two Democrats who talk a good game but have accomplished little. It's a contest that renders ridiculous the Democratic charge that a Republican win would mean "four more years of Bush."

What's more, Palin stands in stark contrast to the widely perceived elitism of a Democratic candidate posturing as a champion of the middle class, but who comes across as more patronizing than compassionate.

Many middle class voters are put off by candidates who seek their votes, but are disdainful of their faith, values and culture. They have a hard time trusting politicians who denigrate small town America.

Palin's reception by those outside the media was traceable to her performance, her beliefs and the fact that those who saw her speak realized that at last their candidate doesn't have to talk academically about middle Americans because she shares their concerns as one of them. She stands in stark contrast to politicians who like everything about average Americans as a group but don't particularly like them as people.

Palin's importance to McCain and to this race is that between now and Election Day millions upon millions of voters are going to agree with the conclusion of that fellow who viewed her acceptance speech from behind the curtains: Sarah Palin "really is the real deal."

David Keene is chairman of the American Conservative Union. This originally appeared in the Washington Examiner.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Obama End Oil Age?

by Dennis Avery

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Barack Obama says the U.S. must “end the age of oil in our time,” with “real results by the end of my first term in office.”

Duff Badgley, the Green candidate for governor in Washington State, goes only a bit further: he’d immediately convert the Boeing factory from building jetliners to making solar panels and wind turbines. He’d ration your carbon emissions, right down to your lawn mower. He’d outlaw single-occupancy vehicles, and spend carbon tax money to ensure there would be a bus you could ride—but rural dwellers would mostly have to walk.



Both Obama and Badgley would make perfect sense if the earth was suffering rapid global warming caused by human CO² emissions. Fortunately, that isn’t happening.

- The net global warming from 1940 to 1998 was a tiny 0.2 degrees C, during nearly 70 years of the first, and theoretically most powerful, surge of human-emitted CO².
- Since 1998, temperatures haven’t risen at all, and over the past 18 months, the thermometers and satellites both report a sharp global cooling. Earth’s temperatures are now about where they were in 1900.
- NASA admits the oceans “stopped warming 4–5 years ago,” and the earth can’t warm if the oceans don’t.
- The Jason satellite confirms the Northern Pacific has entered a cooling phase that is likely to dictate cooler global temperatures over the next 25 years.

How long will it take us to realize that the CO² explanation for our warming was wrong? I’d guess another three years.

The planet’s only runaway warming today is inside the global computer models. They’ve consistently predicted far more warming we’ve gotten. Now they’re predicting warming when we’re getting cooling.

What sort of policies does a 25-year cooling recommend for the U.S.? Should we quickly outlaw the coal-burning that provides half of our electricity, as Duff Badgley thinks we should? Should we outlaw nitrogen fertilizer and grow all our food organically, even if this means one-third of the world’s people starve? Should we drill safely along the Pacific Coast as we do the Gulf Coast and the North Sea, to bring down oil prices? Badgley thinks gas prices should be far higher than they are, so no one will be tempted to drive a personal auto and risk the planet’s future.

One of the biggest questions for our energy future is about the trillions of barrels of oil in the “tar sands” —in places like Canada, Venezuela, and eastern Utah. The Environmental Defense group says that the Athabasca tar sands oil production is “the most destructive project on earth.” That’s because mining the tar sands releases three times more CO² per gallon than burning conventional oil. But history says the CO² doesn’t matter much. Earth has had seven previous global warmings since the last Ice Age, and none of them involved burning fossil fuels.

The problem for voters in 2008 is that John McCain isn’t much more realistic than Obama. McCain now approves of drilling “anywhere but ANWR,” but still believes that more human-emitted CO² will mean dangerous global warming—even though CO² has never demonstrated any correlation with our temperatures.

Both major candidates seem to have hired the Wizard of Oz as their energy consultant.

Dennis T. Avery is a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC and is the Director for the Center for Global Food Issues. (www.cgfi.org) 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 Hundred Years.

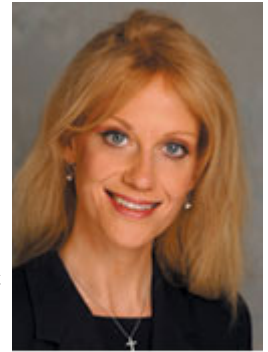
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Editor**

Polling Ignorance

by Mark Rhoads

Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

Many campaign managers in both parties agree that one of the nicest people in the polling business is Kellyanne Fitzpatrick Conway. She sticks to the facts without spin and she is very smart. She was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Oxford. I interviewed Kellyanne recently for another article and I asked this question. If the approval ratings for Congress hover at only 19 percent--ten points below President Bush, and if Congress has been led by Democrats in both houses for two years, how come Democrats are preferred over Republicans by an average of 11 points on the generic ballot question?



**Kellyanne
Fitzpatrick
Conway**

She gave me some reasons and then I asked, do pollsters ever ask if the person being polled even knows which party controls Congress? Kellyanne blew me away. Yes she said that question is sometimes asked as a screen question and 38 percent of the respondents admit that they are not sure which party is in charge of Congress! With all we hear and read about Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Harry Reid, apparently well over a third and approaching almost forty percent of Americans are "not sure" which party these people belong to.

Polls measuring the horse race between Sen. Obama and Sen. McCain have been fairly stable for seven weeks and the margin is often inside the margin of error. The Aug. 15 Gallup Tracking poll has the race tied at 44 percent each. While Obama has had a slight lead of about three points on average, this race is very competitive and often within the margin of error. There is a reliable pattern. If you want to show the best lead for Obama, then take a small sample of **registered** voters. If you want to show the best lead for McCain, take a large sample of **likely** voters.

Should we trust polls? If you read many of them and watch their methodology, you can rely on the fact that they reflect general trends and movements over a period of several days. But an honest pollster will admit to the limitations of polls. It is getting harder all the time to get good samples and takes more time and effort to reach enough people for a good sample. Kellyanne Conway still thinks it is possible to get a good sample with people who own land phone lines in their homes but she admits that it now takes four nights instead of three to reach enough people for a good sample. When asked about the problem of nonpublished cell phone numbers, she admits that makes it very hard to get the best samples and might soon make it impossible to get good samples even with random digit dialing methods.

Polls cannot correct for people who lie, people who do not want to take the 20 minutes to answer questions when a favorite evening TV show is on, and they cannot correct for the kind of civic ignorance that is demonstrated by the fact that almost forty percent are not sure which party controls the Congress. In fact, it is amazing that pollsters do as good a job as they often do but when events move quickly and the calendar gets close to an actual decision.

If you follow politics, you follow polls. But don't fool yourself into thinking you are observing anything close to an exact science in measuring public opinion. At best, you can hope to spot early trends and wonder how much of the commercial messages are getting through.

Mark Rhoads

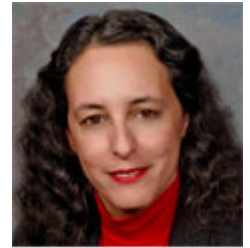
One post-script : Pollsters do not as a rule call only registered voters who are listed on county or city records of voters. They call up people who are land line subscribers and hope they are being honest when they say they are registered to vote. Also, they hope people are being honest when they say they are likely to vote. The best samples are the most expensive to get because they require so much time and many calls and so many screen questions. That is why pollsters do not go to that expense unless they really have to or have a client willing to pay for the most accurate results.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Packaging Obama

by Lisa Fabrizio

Issue 114 - August 20, 2008



Lisa Fabrizio

The powers that be at the New York Times, acting in their unofficial capacity as mouth organ for the Democratic Party, published what amounted to the playbook for the presentation of Barack Obama at the convention. And as usual, it is in tonally perfect accord with the liberal mindset and its overall game plan. The title of the piece, "[For Convention, Obama's Image Is All-American](#)," gives the game away. Most people in possession of a dictionary would see the use of the word 'image' as the desire to present an illusion rather than an actuality; kind of like they do in Hollywood.

And indeed, following a trend that began with Bill Clinton and his buds Harry and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason--who, not coincidentally, produced the video which preceded Hillary's convention address--the Dems tapped Davis Guggenheim to create a film which seeks to address what the Times calls Obama's "otherness." Mr. Guggenheim, as you may remember, was the director and producer of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth," so he is no stranger to the art of truth-defying imagery.

But he and the rest of the gang at the DNC have their work cut out for them. The problem, as the Times so helpfully points out in their piece, is that liberals and the rest of the country have two decidedly different ideas of what is meant by the term "all-American." For example, a great many folks in this country take exception to the Obama campaign using what [appears to be](#) an upside down American flag on the back of their INVESCO Field tickets. A spokesman said, "'The DNCC community credentials incorporate patriotic design elements. They do not depict an actual American flag.'" Perish the thought.

In their last attempt at morphing a liberal elitist into a 'regular' guy, Democrat operatives sent their man to the mountains of Sun Valley before he reported for duty at the 2004 convention. As I [observed](#) at the time:

John F. Kerry descended this week from the mountaintops and pleasure palaces of Idaho, doffed his designer ski duds, boarded his private jet and resumed his quest to be elected president on the 'common man' ticket...From surfing to bicycling to Camelot-like football tossing, this JFK is out to prove he's no wonkish wimp.

This time however, they are stuck with a man who really does come off as a wonkish wimp; messianic comparisons aside. One can understand the effort to soften the image of a rich patrician like Kerry or bring a little beige into the comparatively colorless world of Al Gore. These are attempts at marketing the candidate to one segment of society or another. But why in the world would a candidate for the presidency need to be sold as an American? "Because," the Times explains, "of his race and questions about his patriotism, values and faith that Republicans have already vigorously sought to raise and exploit."

What a surprise, that the dastardly GOP is responsible for the shortcomings of the great Barack; as if they advised him not to reverence the National Anthem or wear a flag pin; as if they created Jeremiah Wright and told Obama to attend his church for 20 years and listen to his bizarre ramblings. But of course, to the left, the motivation behind this all comes down to race:

"I'm asking a lot of the American people, and I know that," Mr. Obama said in an interview last month, acknowledging that his burden to win over many voters was greater because he is black. "My biography is not typical of a modern American president."

It's obvious that the left feels that this whole charade of packaging Obama as a black Jack Armstrong is necessitated by the ignorant prejudices of the vast majority of typical white bigots. And so, we were treated to a convention of a party who hypocritically wrapped itself in the American flag for a few days in the hopes of reaching the majority of Americans who are not ashamed of that flag the rest of the year.

You'd think that their last failed attempt at making their candidate seem presidential by sending him overseas would have taught them something about the American people, but thankfully, it has not.

[Lisa Fabrizio](#) is a columnist who hails from Connecticut.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Stepdads Better?

by Mike McCormick and Glenn Sacks
Issue 115 - September 10, 2008

"Stepdads beat biological fathers in parenting, study says." "Stepdads do better than real dads in 'fragile' families." "Stepfathers make better parents." This is how dozens of major newspapers and media outlets are reporting a new study published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* which compares stepfathers to biological fathers.

Conventional wisdom says that biological fathers are more committed to their children than stepfathers are to their stepchildren. While media accounts of the study claim that research contradicts this wisdom, a closer look at the study shows that this simply isn't true. Moreover, the study's misconstrued findings could have a harmful impact on family law and child custody cases.

For one, the researchers did not study fathers as a whole, but only a limited cohort--"fragile families," defined as "low-income urban families prone to nonmarital births." Also, fathers were not studied independently—all assessments of them were based entirely on the children's mothers' reports.

Moreover, the study did not find that stepdads were generally superior to biological dads. What researchers found was that stepfathers were more "cooperative" with mothers than biological fathers. To say this makes stepdads "better" than biological fathers is questionable, to say the least.

"Cooperation" with mothers can be a great thing. It can also mean nothing more than that things are being done mom's way. This is no surprise—stepfathers have a much more tentative, fragile role in children's lives than biological fathers. It follows that they would generally be more "cooperative."

Conflict over parenting methods and strategies within couples is often a positive for children, not a negative. Having two different, competing viewpoints weeds out bad ideas and helps preserve good ones. One reason why children in single parent homes don't do as well as children who live with both parents is that in single parent homes ideas and parenting strategies are implemented without consultation.

Numerous studies document maternal gate-keeping--mothers' belief that their parenting style should be shared and followed by the children's father. Psychologist Ron Taffel says that when fathers feel "supervised and judged" by mothers, they tend to back away from their children. Yet fathers' styles are just as important for children as mothers'. When dad feels he can only do it mom's way—as is more common with stepfathers than with biological fathers—children miss out on valuable male parenting.

Another of the study's limitations is that researchers studied families where the children were only five-years-old. This greatly skews the data in favor of stepdads.

In each one of these cases, the mothers endured a fairly recent breakup with their children's biological father. Most feel disappointed or hurt or angry with them. Many have been or still are in the middle of contentious battles over child custody and child support.

Into this hurt and disappointment comes stepdad. After mom and dad split, mom thought she was going to have to raise the kids herself—she is understandably grateful for stepdad's unexpected help. Moreover, the relationship is newer and happier.

**WORLD'S
GREATEST
STEP
DAD**

By contrast, mothers married to their children's biological fathers have higher expectations of them, and thus are more likely to be disappointed in their spouses, or to find them less cooperative or helpful than they had expected.

It is not surprising that grateful mothers gave stepdads positive marks—what's surprising is that the study's results don't lean even more towards stepdads.

The dad vs. stepdad debate is no mere academic question, but instead an issue which has serious ramifications in family law. Advocates of sole or primary custody for mothers often insist that children do fine with "father-figures" instead of their fathers. For example, on the hotly-debated relocation/move-away issue in family law, they claim there should be no obstacles to custodial mothers who wish to relocate children to other states. After all, the kids may miss dad, but they'll still have mom and the "father figure" that mom provides.

In family court, judges have wide powers to fashion custody arrangements that are in "the best interests of the child." This study—or at least the media reports of it—will be used to mislead courts into believing that biological fathers are easily replaceable, and are not central to children's best interests.

Mike McCormick is the Executive Director of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children. Their website is www.acfc.org. Glenn Sacks' columns on men's and fathers' issues have appeared in dozens of the largest newspapers in the United States. He invites readers to visit his website at www.GlennSacks.com. This first appeared in the Tacoma News-Tribune (8/13/08)

**E-mail the
Editor**

Reader Comments*Issue 115 - September 10, 2008***CONSERVATIVE
BATTLELINE
ONLINE**

Editor: Your article on "Judges Ignore the Real Constitution" confirms you as the great demythifier in the battle between conservatives and the judges. Your emphasis on political science and checks-and-balances is to the point and will allow conservatives to focus on a variety of approaches to the issue as against setting up a straw man. Of course, the latter is easier to battle. In your editorial "Small Government Failure" no doubt the gentlemen you quote are trying to justify even larger government by saying that the immense bureaucracy generated by Bush has failed to deliver. The bigger the problem, the more generalized, the bigger the constituency. Breaking the mega-entitlements into smaller groupings might allow for weaker coalitions of interested parties. Sunset laws could help in making aware the boondoggles of bureaucracy and their control of government if we follow through by enumerating what they are. These aren't solutions, just small strategies to deal with a big problem, Chip away! Carlos E. Chardon

Editor: Your article "Small Government Failure?" may make some sense to some but Star Parker tells Mark Larson that 65% of blacks work for some form of government. Selling government employees on smaller government is like trying to explain rocket science to a person who has the vacuum cleaner going. Al Lemon Grove

Editor: Great to read "Small Government Failure?" I hope the country can hear more from you. Judy N

Editor: As "Small Government Failure?" makes clear, there is nothing conservative happening on the Republican side of things so you really need to report on the Bob Barr campaign. Clay Dalton

Editor: First, I agree with everything you have said in "Small Government Failure?" One thing that is missing is something that hardly anyone talks about. Something that has to be repaired before the Congress can be turned around to return to pre '60's politics. That was when a Democrat was a Democrat and a Republican was a Republican. Today, a Democrat is a Liberal and a Republican is a Democrat. Here is the proof. There are about 52 Democrats in the Senate today. They are all Liberals. They hardly ever vote with the Republicans on a Republican issue. There are about 48 Republicans in the Senate today and only 33 are Republicans. The other 15 are Republican Rhinos. Liberals in disguise. Even if there were 55 Republicans in the Senate today and 45 Democrats, 15 Republicans Rhinos would vote with the Democrats for a total of $45+15=60$ to keep a clean conservative bill from obtaining cloture to bring the bill to the floor. The Republicans had a majority in the late 90's and you saw what happened!? They could not pass a bill without all kinds of Liberal spending amendments attached. If we would rid ourselves of the RINO's then they will not be on the Republican committee's. However, we must vote out all 11 of the Democrats that are running in November too. Then when the Rhinos come up for election (3 this time) we can vote them out and we should be in the majority every election, and over time, obtain our 60 vote majority to vote the "nuclear bill" out to allow majority rule and stop their obstruction. Paul W. Miles

Editor: "Small Government Failure?" and "Abortion an Issue?" by Sharon Hughes have more in common than one might first think. Much has been made about why women should be allowed to circumvent personal responsibility through the brutality of abortion. The fact is there is a disconnect between those who wish for an abortion status quo and people who believe every child conceived has a right to live. We argue this incessantly because of Roe V Wade, a decision that had no basis in fact, but through judicial tyranny imposed a false freedom, an easy out, for irresponsible people. And now we fight every election for the life of a child we do not know. Unfortunately progressives, liberals and Democrats - even some Republicans are trying to defeat us another way, through the growth of government. Through large government the population finds itself in competition with the government - in commerce, faith-based organizations and the individual. If they cannot change our minds, they will financially force our children into public schools where they can be indoctrinated so that decades from now there will be no religious right. Thought you had or could have freedom under a Democrat controlled government? Think again. Loss of responsibility is also a loss of freedom. Best regards, Lisa Miller

Editor: Regarding "Abortion an Issue?" by Sharon Hughes, I am pro choice. I am an independent and have been voting Republican all the time. I do share most of the Republican issues but cringe over school prayer and abortion. Yet I vote Republican always but only because the Democrat alternatives give me even greater angst. Please stop calling fetus's babies. They are as much a baby as an Acorn is an Oak tree. Fetuses are not persons, they are potential persons. Believing otherwise is not logic but religious teaching. And that does not belong in a pluralistic society and fosters national division. Just as the Democrat Party had been taken over by the far left, the Republican Party had been taken over by the far right. Neither is where the center of American political interest rests. It was that huge Centrist body that secured McCain's nomination. I am certain that if McCain would select a pro choice VP, he would win. Just as I had swallowed CROW voting for anti-abortion Republicans I would rather vote for a person when you do not know what they believe on the issue. I love Rush, O'Reilly and Sean but now they are all foaming in the mouth over the party possibly choosing a pro-choice VP candidate. People are fed up with all the holy talk. If I wanted to live in a religious society where civil law is the same as religious law I would move to Saudi Arabia. Religion is a personal matter. Leave it as a personal matter. Although President Reagan is deservedly honored, keep in mind his first election victory was not won because of the "moral issues." He won over the disgust that people had with Carter's destructive, socialist economy. Burt Trattner

Editor: Although I champion drilling anywhere possible as does Alan Caruba in "True Energy Security," some places are easier and less costly. The Bakken field in Montana is also huge. The most recent USGS report (8/10/08) also has not made the front page of any media. If this was a sane country, you would think that this disclosure would cause celebration in the streets. Where can I buy stock in "pitchfork" makers? When the people find this out, they will be buying them up. Please get McCain to spread this information. Burt Trattner

Editor: I agree with Alan Caruba in "True Energy Security." The U.S. must explore and drill our oil resources and expand our refining capacity as quickly as possible. Mike Glynn

Editor: Regarding Dennis Avery's "Warming Consensus Shattered." please enter me as one of the plaintiffs in a class action suite against scam artist Al Gore who has made huge profits in the carbon credit racket. Philip S. Allen, Port Hueneme CA