

CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE



The "Bold Colors" Conservative Voice in Washington

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

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Victims of Flight 1549?

by Donald Devine

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

The picture of US Airways Flight 1549 passengers on the wings of their airplane slowly sinking into the icy Hudson River on January 15, 2009 was as dramatic as it gets, a scene difficult to forget. The fact that all 155 passengers and crew were rescued was truly miraculous but it also required help from some individuals here below.



The very instant the rescued passengers were being returned to the docks, at an hastily-arranged nationally-televised news conference, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Gov. David Paterson and a host of police, fire and other government top officials were claiming credit for saving the helpless victims. Yes, if they had perished, the usual got'ya media would have blamed the politicians so one understands their taking a bow for a change. But this does not change the fact that the help did not come from the officials. While the implicit point of the media event was, we, the government saved them, in fact, the pols had almost nothing to do with it. The rescued were not even helpless victims.

Even the politicians had to give hesitating credit to pilot Chesley B. Sullenberger III. They faltered because they were media-savvy enough to know that deference to the National Transportation Safety Board "experts" to make his heroics official was what the zeitgeist demanded. Only the national government can speak authoritatively in a crisis, of course. The local officials would not even take it on their own responsibility to say it was geese damage to the engines that caused the crash, even though the pilot had confirmed this. The NTBS experts had not as yet spoken (indeed, they had not as yet left Washington) so the supposed community leaders were timidly mum.

Unlike the pols, the real of victimhood. The pilot – fashion mainline one hero of the day. He just landed the airplane professionally to wait for was too non-political and generally knew he was beginning; everyone,



The passengers deserve department. Critically, stewardesses did panic), this modern age, as one women and children first." What happened to sexual equality? These were not even sophisticated enough to worry about potential discrimination prosecutions for such prohibited behavior. Three – are we allowed to say this – *men* rescued, respectively, an almost-abandoned infant, an elderly woman normally confined to a wheelchair and a younger woman in heels who slipped off the wing into the cold water (the latter at great risk to himself). They did not need a government order to act. Each did it all on his own, individually.

heroes of the occasion did not speak the language with his wonderful Bush-like "III rd" and his out-of-establishment name – was the undisputed number did not wait for NTSB or any other instruction but in the river. Yet, even he was warned the experts before he spoke to the public. His wife proud to be silenced. She and ordinary people the hero and everyone said so from the very that is, except the timorous government officials.

second billing to the pilot in the non-victim they did not panic (several mentioned that the walking off the plane calmly and, of all things in survivor politically-incorrectly put it, "allowing

The final heroes were the boatmen who plucked the passengers and crew from the airplane on the frigid water. None of these worked for the government either, or was any kind of safety expert,

although many had rescue training. They worked for private sector ferries plowing the busy river, specifically the Hudson Circle Line and New York Waterways (which is even family owned) and several independent tugboat captains. None waited for orders from higher authority. As the Washington Post reported what happened:

Before police and Coast Guard vessels could respond, the Hudson's commercial flotilla converged on the scene. Ferry, tour boat and tugboat crews tossed life vests to the stranded passengers and began hoisting them up ladders.

It is a good thing the government did not arrive first. The Feds have created a National Incident Management System to credential "first responders" to enter security and emergency sites. Just a few days before the accident – not surprisingly ignored by the public due to its bureaucratically-correct release on Christmas Eve – the Federal Emergency Management Agency issued its proposed "National Incident Management System Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel" to set rules regarding access to such situations. The rules were proposed to remedy the "processing and being processed" delays in admitting rescuers in the wake of the Katrina hurricane. The document is specifically directed to government officials and secondarily to private organizations to pre-certify their personnel so that onsite government officials will know whom they can "trust" to be admitted efficiently into different emergency situations.

The way they are to do this is through a secure electronic photo identification card compatible with electronic databases that are in contact with appropriate emergency officials. State and local governments are asked to provide badges for their employees who potentially would respond in emergency situations. The rules recognize that the private sector has the most emergency resources and they are given the responsibility of credentialing their own personnel and reporting them to the government. The proposed rules do recognize that "it is most likely not practical" to recognize all who might be called upon to use such identification. This, indeed, is the hole in this bureaucratic nightmare. The rule itself recognizes that it cannot work. All it can do in response is to ask all to be "flexible." Small firms and voluntary aid groups will never be able to comply, much less random individuals near the site.



Rather than fix the bottlenecks of the Katrina disaster when voluntary aid was already kept out of the area by security officials – including the president's own brother, who as governor of Florida had attempted to send supplies and medicine – no one will get through the security net without a first responders badge the next time. If the Coast Guard – like FEMA part of the massive Department of Homeland Security – had arrived first and the regulations were in force, would they have admitted the ferry and tug personnel? How long would it have taken? Perhaps the rescues would have been timely, if they were "flexible" enough – that is, if they ignored their own department's rules. The government saved Flight 1549 only in the sense that its Guidelines were not yet in effect.

This is how government bureaucracy operates. It treats everyone as a victim or client – a dependent or follower - and expects them to fall into line obeying the rules. Reality is not that simple. In fact, the overwhelming majority will not even know the rules. Many who do will not be able to or wish to follow them. The rules themselves defy human nature expecting that everyone is listening and following. America historically has relied on people to respond freely and locally in a manner that made sense to individuals and groups, as its best observer Alexis de Tocqueville described so well. Volunteers have always been the first, largest and most effective responders to emergencies, as the bureaucrats' own rules recognized. But the rules get in the way, as Katrina proved, the first major outing of FEMA under the control and mission of the DHS.

Mr. Obama called for an “era of responsibility” in his inaugural address but it is clear from the programs in the so-called stimulus bill that he or his party or both cannot break their old ways. But he could make responsibility more than rhetoric if he actually turned responsibility back to individuals from the government in at least one area where he should not be too inhibited politically. The National Incident Credentialing Guidelines present the perfect target. He can even do it administratively, without Congress.

The regulations themselves demonstrate that they cannot work. The rules restrict prompt action in an emergency and stifle the local voluntary activity that must be preeminent even by their own reckoning. The US Airways rescue proves that individuals can meet even severe challenges if potential assistance is free enough of government restrictions and supposed “help” to solve their problems by themselves or with their neighbors. If it is impossible for the president to adopt the principle of responsibility generally at least cutting through this bureaucratic monster is somewhere to start.

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.

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Editor**

Did the New Deal Work?

by Gerald O'Driscoll

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

I must enter the debate concerning whether the New Deal really worked or not, especially Thomas Ferguson's statement that his "main point" about Franklin Roosevelt's policy "is that everybody thinks getting off gold was important to recovery. "

The post-World War I monetary system was not a classical gold standard, but a Ricardian gold-exchange standard. It was a complete mish-mash. It mixed central-bank discretion with the trappings of a gold standard. The Europeans, the British especially, would not accommodate themselves to their reduced circumstances (in real terms). It didn't mean that a classical gold standard was not an excellent system. Why did gold work in the 19th century and not the 20th? Answer: it wasn't the same system!



Franklin D. Roosevelt

Importantly, there was no recovery after everyone got off the gold standard. Henry Morgenthau lamented that unemployment at the end of the 1930s was where it was when the Roosevelt Administration assumed power. He knew the New Deal had failed. Markets are resilient and Roosevelt thwarted them at every turn (a process begun by Hoover, for which Roosevelt properly criticized him in his campaign). The danger is that Barack Obama will follow George W. Bush and do the same (repeating Roosevelt's mistake in raising the ante on Hoover's interventionism).

Again, recovery only began when the New Deal began to unwind. No other depression in modern history lasted so long because never had a government intervened so much. The "cure" was worse than the disease.

Years ago at a now-forgotten monetary conference, J. R. T. Hughes gave a brilliant presentation on why all attempts at explaining the Great Depression failed. Robert Lucas reportedly has told his students much the same thing, and said they might as well read Rothbard's *America's Great Depression* to understand it. If true, a very radical proposition for a Nobel laureate.

On contemporary mainline monetary historians, I prefer Michael Bordo overall. Peter Temin's critique of real business cycle theory is devastating.

We are now faced with a bursting of a bubble caused by excessive monetary ease, low interest rates (negative in real terms), and all sorts of artificial stimulus to housing and consumption. The "solution" is to replicate all the policies that produced the crisis, and then add some new ones. A recession is the adjustment an economy goes through as a result of bad policy. The current one is especially severe because the policies were so bad.

We are all poorer than we thought we were. How can government policy eliminate that fact? It can transfer resources to favored groups from politically weak groups. That may partially insulate the former groups at the expense of the latter. I know of no system of morality in which that is justified.

Gerald O'Driscoll is a Senior Fellow at the CATO Institute and a widely quoted expert on banking and monetary policy. Previously the director of the Center for International Trade and Economics at the Heritage Foundation, O'Driscoll was senior editor of the annual Index of Economic Freedom, co-published by Heritage and The Wall Street Journal. He has also served as vice president and director of policy analysis at Citigroup, and vice president and economic advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

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Editor**

Banana Republic Deficit

by Robert Higgs

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The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) now reports "the [federal budget] deficit this year will total \$1.2 trillion, or 8.3 percent of GDP" ([report](#)). This seems about right for a banana republic. The bad news is that neither commercial banana cultivation nor a republican form of government has proved viable in this country.

Bananas, of course, must be imported into this country from Latin America and other places where their commercial cultivation has proved profitable.

The CBO's projection does not take into account any addition to the federal budget deficit that may arise from enactment of a "stimulus" bill after the Obama gang takes charge of administering the empire. If the magnitudes now being discussed for this so-called stimulus should prove to be in the right range, the deficit for fiscal year 2009 may turn out to be not \$1.2 trillion, but something in the neighborhood of \$2 trillion, perhaps 15 percent of GDP. If so, the deficit will be as large in amount as the entire federal budget was as recently as 2002. This prospect may be what cranky commentators such as yours truly have in mind when they speak of "out-of-control federal spending."

The 2009 deficit arises in part from the CBO's taking into account outlays of \$238 billion as the net subsidy costs for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, plus \$18 billion of cash infusions from the Treasury to Freddie and Fannie. It is entirely possible that the estimated net present value of Fannie and Freddie's future earnings will prove to be too large, and therefore that the subsidy will be greater than projected and the overall federal budget also greater by that extra amount.

With little fanfare, the CBO report ventures to mention that "foreign lenders, who have recently been willing to lend to the U.S. government on very advantageous terms, may become less willing to do so in the future, which would tend to raise interest rates in this country." To be sure. Indeed, if the Japanese, Chinese, and Arabs, who have been carrying a major part of the load in covering the federal deficits in recent years, should substantially reevaluate the risk of dollar depreciation (or even U.S. repudiation of its debt) and greatly reduce their purchases of U.S. Treasury securities, then drastically higher interest rates and, in response, hyperinflation (with or without price and wage controls) might well be the next chapter of this unpleasant story.

Meanwhile, my advice is: eat bananas while they are still available from producers who will accept U.S. dollars in exchange for them. If the U.S. dollar is totally destroyed, as recent and impending government actions suggest it might be, then we may be reduced to barter, at least for a while. I wonder if we can trade Hollywood films for bananas. And, most important, I wonder whether I can get a job in the movie business, perhaps as an extra for the crowd scenes. I think I have the talent needed for that role.

Robert Higgs is a Senior Fellow at the Independent Institute

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Editor**

At the Movies" Idiocy

by S. T. Karnick

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The decline of the mainstream media—a very good thing—is the real story behind [an interesting L. A. Times article](#) about Ben Lyons, a film critic on the syndicated TV show *At the Movies*. Critics and movie buffs alike both have nothing but contempt for the 27-year-old Lyons, son of former host and newspaper film critic Jeffrey Lyons.

Jeffrey Lyons was never any great thinker, or even a good one, but Ben Lyons makes him look like Samuel Johnson by comparison. The younger Lyons strikes the viewer as an ignoramus and a jackass, and the producers of *At the Movies* clearly made a horrendous mistake in hiring him.

Apparently they hoped to get frat boys and other *Sports Center* fans to watch the show, which only further confirms major stupidity on the producers of *At the Movies*.

The hiring of Lyons thus exemplifies the cluelessness of the mainstream media and their failure to connect with their audiences. Both of these are outcomes of decades of arrogance brought on by a lack of serious competition among the oligopolists who own the mainstream media outlets.

Instead of realizing this, however, the *L. A. Times* writer sees the Lyons hire as part of a huge, general "dumbing down" of society caused by the loss of brilliant gatekeepers such as Lyons's father:

[All of this] would be of hardly any consequence were it not for the drastic transformation of film criticism. Long gone are the times when a vaunted single critic such as the New Yorker's [Pauline Kael](#) could inject a film into the national consciousness with a single positive review. These days, moviegoers are just as apt to check a movie's rating at Rotten Tomatoes, the popular movie-review aggregating website, as to read an actual review from a major news organization.

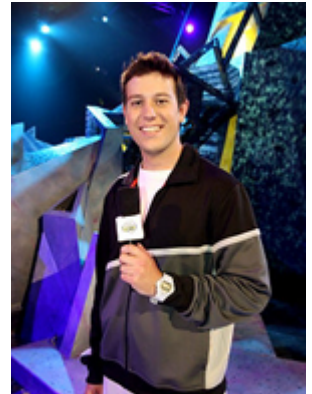
Worse, with readership plummeting, newspapers and magazines have had to drastically thin their ranks of critics. In recent months, the Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, Newsweek, Newsday, the Village Voice and The Times, among other outlets, have let critics go. Meanwhile, movie marketing has never been more pervasive, and many studio summer blockbusters are now described as "critic proof," meaning that negative reviews do nothing to affect the box office.

In this light, Lyons' ascension to the "throne" of televised film criticism has come to represent something more than just the changing of the guard—many view it as yet another example of the dumbing down of media and of celebrity triumphing over substance.

Personally, I'm delighted that the odious Ms. Kael and her demon spawn are no longer able to dominate the discussion of movies and other important subjects. Their hold over the American culture was uniformly deleterious.

If the alternative is that Ben Lyons will be hired to run *At the Movies* the rest of the way off of television while people make their choices from a wider variety of sources such as [The American Culture](#), then I endorse that alternative enthusiastically.

S. T. Karnick edits *The American Culture* at stkarnick.com



Ben Lyons

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Editor**

Anti-Coulter Hypocrisy

by Brent Bozell

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Ann Coulter's new book "Guilty" is out and two things are certain: It will surely be another best-seller, and she will once again drive the Left bonkers. No institution will be more offended than the national press. Prepare to witness their meltdown.

The Drudge Report caused a firestorm when anonymous NBC insiders leaked the word that Coulter had been "banned for life" from that network. CBS featured her on "The Early Show" and a combative Harry Smith tried to insult her to the extreme. He called her "goofy," "simplistic," "sophomoric," and a "whiner." "You should have a cross," he said dismissively. "You should put yourself up on a cross." Why are they so upset?

The so-called "objective" media clearly feel threatened because they are the very liberals Coulter is attacking. If they weren't liberals, none of her mockery of liberals would bother them. Oh, they might not appreciate her style, as some conservatives don't. But they wouldn't have pitched debates inside their walls about how they will savage her in interviews – and I defy the networks to deny this – or how they would remove her from their airwaves altogether.

Those rumored bans have been demanded by the leftist lobbyists for the Censorship Doctrine – people who say they oppose "conservative misinformation," but clearly want conservatives tossed from the radio and TV airwaves before "misinformation" or just plain conservative thought spills out. They have pressured the networks to stop helping Coulter sell books. Freedom of speech is truly a dangerous concept when conservatives exercise it.

But liberals who claim to oppose "inflammatory rhetoric" on television when it comes from conservatives have no problem with uncivil liberalism. Or 100 percent hate-filled left-wing character assassination. Take NBC, which could not look sillier if it ever seriously banned Coulter for being hyperbolic, when vicious, hyperbolic liberals (Olbermann, Maddow, and Matthews) dominate MSNBC.

It's easy to run down a list of inflammatory liberals who are welcomed on the TV morning shows. Start with Kitty Kelley's wild "investigative" books on the Reagans or the Bushes. Or Michael Moore's kooky conspiracy theories. Or Al Franken suggesting Karl Rove and Scooter Libby should be executed over Plamegate. (NBC's Matt Lauer and his off-camera crew laughed at that.)

Or recall Bill Maher on his HBO show in 2007 suggesting Arianna Huffington shouldn't ban commenters on her website wishing Dick Cheney had died in a terrorist attack in Afghanistan. "That's a funny joke," Maher said. "If this isn't China, shouldn't you be able to say that?" He added that Cheney's death by suicide bomber might be a public service: "I'm just saying if he did die, other people, more people would live. That's a fact."

Harry Smith hosted Maher on CBS just months ago on his faith-mocking movie "Religulous" and didn't say one discouraging word to him about his caustic remarks about Cheney or his hateful anti-Christian bigotry. Not one word.

But when Ann Coulter speaks, the brass knuckles come out. In 2007, Coulter was heavily criticized for joking that she couldn't talk about John Edwards, since an ABC actor was forced to apologize for saying "faggot" at the Golden Globes. Liberals were furious. Coulter responded by saying next time, she'd echo Bill Maher and just wish Edwards died in a terrorist attack. Elizabeth Edwards then denounced Coulter for suggesting she wanted her husband dead. Harry Smith invited Mrs. Edwards on CBS, offered her brief softballs and let her verbally whack Coulter with a bat.



Brent Bozell

Smith is an enormous hypocrite. He completely ignored vicious remarks by Mrs. Edwards just days before, in accepting a "Rage for Justice" award, that the Bush administration was waging a class war that compared to slaughters in Darfur:

The White House has led the charge against working people, in their own class war. The late, great Molly Ivins once wrote: "If there was class warfare, that war was long over. And it was a massacre... a genocide to which there have been words of acknowledgment, as there have in Darfur, but as with Darfur, no meaningful action.

But when Ann Coulter comes on the set with Smith, the gloves come off.

Ann Coulter's liberal-bashing columns and books and television appearances are fun for conservatives, simply because there's nothing funnier for the right than witnessing CBS putting up on its own screen a Coulter quote about Ted Kennedy and CBS: "Kennedy may be a drunken slob, but unlike CBS News anchors, he is not certifiably insane."

Call Coulter outrageous, call her a bomb-thrower, even state she goes beyond the pale of civility, if that's your read. But do not assign that label to Coulter and then present your on-air love and kisses and giggles to all the public leftist hate-spewing that far exceeds any perceived incivility by Coulter. That is utterly transparent liberalism, and utterly transparent hypocrisy.

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

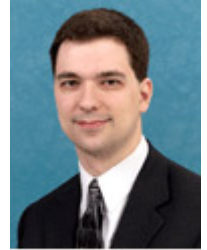
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Historic Spending Surge

by Brian Riedl

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The recent Congressional Budget Office budget projections show a truly historic increase in spending and debt threatening long-run health of the US economy. The CBO baseline – after making some adjustments to make the numbers more realistic – shows a budget deficit of \$1.220 trillion in 2009 and \$1.477 trillion by 2019—even before any additional economic “stimulus” bills by President Barack Obama are enacted.



Brian Riedl

Its highlights include:

- The 20 percent spending increase projected for 2009 represents the largest government expansion since the 1952 height of the Korean War (adjusted for inflation).
- In 2009, federal spending is projected to reach 25 percent of GDP—the highest level in American history outside of World War II. The next economic “stimulus” package would push this total even higher.
- From 2001 through 2008, federal spending surged 60 percent—6.9 percent per year, on average. Had spending increases been limited to 35 percent—4.4 percent annually—the 2008 budget would have been in balance.
- The projected 2009 budget deficit of 8.6 percent of GDP would shatter the postwar record. The next economic “stimulus” package could push the budget deficit above 10 percent of GDP.
- By 2019, the budget forecasts a \$1.5 trillion annual budget deficit, a public debt of 78 percent of GDP, and annual net interest spending of \$761 billion.
- Since World War II, the public debt has ranged from 23 percent of GDP to 49 percent of GDP. Large deficits are estimated to drive the debt ratio to 50 percent in 2009, and 78 percent of GDP by 2019—a peacetime record.
- The public national debt—\$5.8 trillion as of 2008—is projected to double by 2015 and nearly triple by 2019.

The study is called “CBO Budget Baseline Shows Historic Surge in Spending and Debt” and it contains dozens of bullet point observations on today’s new budget numbers. It can be found at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Budget/wm2193.cfm> (click print this page for the pdf version).

The full study is well worth reading for anyone seriously interested in America’s economic future.

Brian Riedl is Grover M. Hermann Fellow for Federal Budgetary Affairs at The Heritage Foundation

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Editor**

No "Preventive" Health Savings?

by John Goodman

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently lowered the boom on a set of health reform ideas by confirming what everyone should already have known anyway: You can't change the practice of medicine with demand-side reforms.

This is devastating. At least it's devastating if you're a member of the Obama health team. During the election, Obama's health advisors said they could save the average American household \$2,500 a year through such reforms as coordinated care, preventive care, evidenced-based care, pay-for-performance care, electronic medical records and a slew of similar ideas. The CBO response? These reforms will save about 1% of what the Obama team projects, and maybe nothing at all. They may even increase costs!



John Goodman

Before you lament the fact that the CBO waited until after the election to tell us this bad news, know that John McCain endorsed the same reforms - as did almost every presidential candidate (without the ridiculous claims about monetary savings). They also have been endorsed by what I call the "new consensus" folks: left and right, business and academic, government and nongovernment, public and private sectors - including employer groups and third-party payers of all sorts. (I'll withhold the names out of respect for the families.)

The CBO report will come as no surprise to wonks who know that Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) has already been trying out all these ideas through pilot projects. As reported previously, these experiments have been hugely disappointing. No money is being saved. Contractors are pulling out. And CMS is considering cancelling some projects in mid-course.

So why did anybody ever think these ideas would work? Because they already are working in isolated spots, within the third-party payer system and with systematic regularity outside the system. But where they work, they are invariably supply-side, not demand-side, innovations.

So why do people cling to an approach to reform that doesn't work? Because it's impossible for them to do otherwise. Basically, there are two ways to think about health care: the technical (engineering) approach and the economic approach. People in the first group invariably want to tell doctors how to practice medicine. To them, doctors are the problem. The solution is to induce, incentivize, cajole, bully, intimidate, coerce, command, etc. doctors into practicing medicine in predetermined ways.

People in the second group understand that no one person, agency, etc. knows the best way to produce medical care. Instead, the best ideas come from the interaction of 800,000 doctors and 300 million patients. To allow those ideas to emerge, we need to liberate doctors, not impose more controls on them.

John Goodman is President of the National Center for Policy Analysis. For the CBO reports see, <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9925/12-18-HealthOptions.pdf> and <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9924/12-18-KeyIssues.pdf>

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The Bush Legacy

by Paul Weyrich

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As President George W. Bush leaves office a review of his eight years as the Nation's chief executive is in order. While the end of his presidency has been overshadowed by economic problems and angry calls from the left about various aspects of the war against radical Islam, Bush did have some success which should be recognized.

Bush's greatest success in office came when he remained faithful to his principles—namely, his belief in the sanctity of human life. When, in 2001, the issue of scientific research on embryonic life came to the forefront, Bush wisely held the line on Federal funding for the destruction of human embryos not already in use, in spite of calls from many that he was "anti-science." Six years later he vetoed the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which would have permitted public financing of human embryonic stem cell research.



Paul M. Weyrich

When vacancies appeared on the Supreme Court Bush was able to find nominees who were highly qualified and who respected the Constitution, as written, to be the law of the land. Chief Justice John J. Roberts, Jr. and Justice Samuel A. Alito have proven to be sound scholars, as well as serious and thoughtful Justices who respect the limits placed upon their branch of government by the Constitution. In other words, they have not tried to legislate ideologically from the bench nor attempt some sort of social or cultural engineering through the law.

One other success stands out. Bush frequently and consistently supported faith-based non-profits and voluntary organizations within American society. He recognized that the role they play in local communities, at the State and national levels forms part of the bedrock of America. This is a theme as old as the country itself, but after the secularist assault on faith in the 20th Century, many of these groups struggled. Now more people recognize the services and resources these organizations contribute to those in need and, especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, how valuable they are.

In spite of the positive impact of these Presidential decisions, there were others which adversely have affected the country. The most prominent of these is Bush's recklessness in fiscal policy. He did not veto a single budget bill in his first term, though many were saddled with pork and unnecessary spending. He did not begin to veto spending bills until 2007. In fact, in his entire eight years Bush only used his veto power twelve times. Compare this to his three predecessors: Ronald W. Reagan vetoed 78 bills, George H. W. Bush vetoed 44, and William J. (Bill) Clinton used his veto 37 times. As a result, both the Federal deficit and the national debt have ballooned to unsustainable levels.

Along the same lines, Bush enacted No Child Left Behind, legislation intended to standardize and improve American education but which in fact removed much of what remained of local control and oversight and instead threw millions of taxpayer dollars at public schools which need serious restructuring, not more money. While some States have improved student test scores, the means of achieving such results often have been devious and cunning.

Bush also signed the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act into law in 2003. The program, which provides prescription drugs for the elderly on Medicare, is another massive entitlement program that we cannot afford. The cost of the first ten years of the program has been estimated at \$1.2 trillion and counting. And since few government programs, once created, ever decrease in size, one can expect the costs of Medicare prescription drugs to rise much higher in the future, unfairly straining the finances of future American generations.

Finally, in recent months Bush has overseen one of the largest federal interventions into the marketplace in modern memory. His administration has nationalized banks and other parts of the financial services and housing industries and seriously has considered nationalizing parts of the automobile industry. Because of the precedent this has set, others now are trying to grab a piece of the Federal pie. Most prominent among these are States which do not want to face the difficult political decision of balancing their budgets, though some cities have moved in on the act as well.

The one question hanging over President Bush's legacy is the result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It certainly is true that since going into both countries the United States has not been attacked by radical Islamic terrorists, and Bush deserves credit for this. However, both wars are unresolved. Until they are it is impossible to determine whether each country will be better off than it was beforehand or whether we will have disrupted al Qaeda's network enough to prevent another attack upon U.S. soil. President Barack H. Obama must see that we do not leave either country as we did Vietnam, abandoning our allies and without anything positive to show for our involvement and loss of life. We must win and establish capable governments in our wake, though the sooner this is accomplished the better.

President Bush's legacy, then, is a mixed one. On the fundamental issues of human life and freedom of religion he has been a great leader. On economic and education issues the record is rather unflattering. And on the major foreign policy issue of his presidency history has yet to write the final chapter.

The late Paul M. Weyrich was Chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation.

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Editor**

Save Planet or Economy?

by Dennis Avery

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It's a new administration, and we must look beyond the mess of sub-prime mortgages and unfunded auto pensions—toward the markets where American citizens have to invest their private capital for the next decade.

Problem 1: If there hadn't been buyers for the sub-prime mortgages, they wouldn't have been written. The buyers were named Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and they're still buying mortgages with our money—after a \$200 billion bailout.



Dennis T. Avery

Problem 2: The auto bailout has been in the making since Japanese companies started hiring American workers at competitive non-union wages 20-odd years ago. The wrongheaded grandeur of the United Auto Workers' Big Three auto contracts looks stunning, even decades later. But now the auto recovery is complicated by impending constraints on fossil fuels, with the radical Carol Browner as White House "energy czar." Come to think of it, Obama's own campaign pledge to make energy costs "skyrocket" in order to fight global warming is pretty radical itself.

But the nation is now entering its third straight harsher winter, triggered says NASA by a shift to the Pacific Ocean's 25–30 year cold phase. Only a fool would escalate energy prices in a recession while global temperatures are trending down.

The new President will thus have to dance the same federal minuet as Kevin Rudd, the new Australian Prime Minister—also elected on a Green platform to "save the planet." Rudd is promising a tiny 5 percent cut in greenhouse emissions—trying to keep his base without scaring investors away from Australia's manufacturing and its big farming and coal industries. The dance leaves no one happy, most certainly not millions of Australian investors.

In Germany, Angela Merkel has transformed herself from "Eco-leader" to "Stability leader," promising to protect the country's autos, steel, cement and aluminum from high carbon emissions fees. She realizes the number of highly-touted "green jobs" is tiny compared with the number of "old jobs" that might flee to China or India. She's building 26 new brown-coal power plants in case Russian gas exports are cut off.

This energy question pervades the investment outlook. U.S. judges are banning new coal plants while Europe, China and India burn more coal. The UK has made no decisions on how to replace the upcoming loss of 40 percent of its electricity--except 7,000 new wind turbines that will produce tiny amounts of power erratically.

Yet somehow the world in the next decade must increase its food production by another 50 percent, supply homes and transport for another billion people, and educate a new generation of highly-skilled workers for info-tech jobs. It's a bigger economic dilemma than any since World War II rescued Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" from the Great Depression.

If American policy is to cut energy to "save the planet" will most of the growth investments then be made in Third World countries? Who will buy stock in GM or Boeing? Will cement for Obama's public works projects triple with emission fees? Will air travel be penalized for burning fossil fuels? Will Fannie and Freddie be reined in? Will we have no choice but to hazard the Chinese stock market?

It is up to President Obama.

Dennis Avery is an environmental economist, and a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC. 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, Readers may write him at PO Box 202, Churchville, VA 24421

**E-mail the
Editor**

Santa Barbara Blowout?

by Paul Driessen

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

Plummeting stock and housing prices have triggered a painful recession, America's worst job losses since 1945, and trillions in lost national wealth.

California is grappling with a \$42-billion budget deficit. That's more than the GDP of 112 countries. Maryland, Virginia, New York and other states likewise face billion-dollar budget shortfalls.

Congress and the White House want a \$1-trillion "stimulus" for the banking, auto and steel industries, roads, bridges and ports, and "worthy" projects like water parks, parking garages and fitness centers.

At the same time, in the middle of an historic economic crisis, they support expanded renewable energy programs that will require tens of billions in subsidies and tax breaks – but provide intermittent electricity and deliver only 5-15% of their "rated capacity" during peak summer demand periods.

Many states have oil, gas, coal uranium and other energy and mineral resources, within their borders or off their coasts. Development would produce critically needed energy, reduce oil and gas imports, create millions of jobs, buttress our national security, and generate trillions of dollars in lease bonus, rent, royalty and tax revenues, to help pay these bills.

California could nearly double its offshore oil production within 12-18 months, without installing a single new platform, by using directional drilling technology to bore more wells from existing platforms.

But environmentalists vigorously oppose development. Many states increasingly restrict exploration and production. The US Senate is considering bills that would place even more energy prospects off limits. Many legislators want a permanent lock on billions of barrels of oil beneath Alaska's North Slope and America's Outer Continental Shelf – despite support for drilling by two-thirds of voters.

Onshore, the usual justification is speculative or exaggerated impacts on wildlife, habitats and groundwater from drilling and production. Offshore, the most common rationale is the infamous oil blowout that occurred forty years ago this month, off Santa Barbara.

That spill is the only one in over 45,000 US offshore wells where significant amounts of oil reached our coasts. And it never would have happened, if it weren't for the incompetence of a few federal regulators and oil company officials.

The guilty well was being drilled into brittle, highly fractured rock formations which sit atop a more stable zone that holds billions of gallons of gooey crude oil, mixed with natural gas under high pressure. It's the same oil that's been seeping out of the shallow formations and washing up on California beaches since long before Spanish explorers used it to waterproof their galleons.

But having drilled several wells without incident, company officials requested a waiver from normal regulations. Unbelievably, it was granted. The drill crew was allowed to install minimal well casing – steel pipes that go into well bores to prevent blowouts.

When oil and gas began to erupt out of the deep drill hole, the crew's quick response stopped it only temporarily. Because the casing didn't go deep enough, the pressurized goo surged into the brittle



Paul Driessen

rocks, creating huge gashes that sent gushers of oil out around the platform. For six days, favorable winds kept the oil slick offshore. Then the wind shifted.

Oil inundated Santa Barbara's gorgeous beaches. Thousands of sea birds died, along with seals and countless other marine animals. The anti-oil environmental movement was born.

Thankfully, dire predictions of permanent damage were wrong. Bird, crab, lobster, seal and other populations soon rebounded. Under the platform, the magnificent artificial reef ecosystem returned.

Enormous mussels, scallops and barnacles again cover the huge scaffold that holds the production platform above the waves. Gorging on shellfish, and having to move mere inches for their next meal, starfish grow to three feet across. Oriental carpets of white, pink and lavender sponges and sea anemones create firework displays of color, while crabs scamper about and thousands of mackerel, sardines and other fish cruise by.

I know this, because I've been there, up close and in person, in scuba gear, beneath that very platform and a dozen others in the Santa Barbara Channel and Gulf of Mexico. I joined biologists, wrote professional papers, and produced a documentary film about these towering steel reefs.

Even more important, the technologies, regulations and enforcement programs have changed. Today, instruments monitor temperature and pressure in wells 24/7. Blowout preventers, pipeline shutoff valves and other devices on or beneath the sea floor control the flow of oil and gas. Offshore operators conduct regular accident training and safety exercises. The efforts have paid off.

In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita pounded the Gulf of Mexico's 3,000 drilling rigs and production platforms. Over 200 were damaged or destroyed. But virtually no oil or gas escaped.

In fact, according to the US Minerals Management Service (where I used to work), oil companies produced nearly 12 billion barrels of oil from OCS leases between 1980 and 2007. Only 102,000 barrels were spilled: 3,780 barrels a year, on average. That's a 99.999% safety record.

By contrast, natural seeps like the ones off California leak 620,000 barrels of oil *per year* into US waters. America's oil industry has a pollution record 164 times better than Mother Nature's!

And producing more US offshore oil has an added bonus. It means there is less seepage, and thus less oil in our oceans and on our beaches.

Our energy policies should recognize these facts.

We need the energy, jobs and revenues that offshore (and onshore) oil and gas development can provide. We can no longer afford to "just say no" to domestic petroleum, during the long transition to future energy technologies that we cannot begin to envision – any more than even Jules Verne could have foreseen the wondrous energy and other technologies that creative minds have made a reality today.

That's the kind of change we can believe in. The kind America needs.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Congress of Racial Equality and Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, and author of Eco-Imperialism: Green power · Black death.

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Editor**

Immigration Wedge?

by Rich Nadler

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

I have just completed a study of immigration and the 2008 election that every conservative must read. It is titled "The Edge of the Wedge: Immigration and the Congressional Races of 2008" [and the full document can be assessed by clicking here](#). It describes in painful detail how "enforcement only" has hollowed out the conservative movement, wrecking it in the Southwest, West, and Northeast, and weakening it everywhere.

The reason I obsess over "comprehensive immigration reform" is simple: unless it is enacted soon, the conservative "night" we are entering will last a generation rather than 8 years.

There are three interests involved in immigration:

1) Advocates of border security – anti-terror, anti-crime, and (for a totally different reason) opponents of an open labor market.

2) Business – 7 million illegals (5% of the workforce) are employed, and their employers want to keep them. I'm talking about high tech and low tech; I'm talking about hoteliers, food processors, farmers, foresters, ranchers, miners, restaurateurs, home builders, landscapers, and heavy constructors. (What genius came up with the idea that the same people who WANT immigrant laborers are going to cheerfully become the deportation cops?)

3) "Immigrants rights" supporters – Their demand is: legalize the status of illegal aliens. This group includes not only the nutty left groups, but the tens of millions of friends, family, and sympathizers of illegals, plus the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. There are 30 million Hispanic citizens in this country. Roughly 40% of these citizens fear a deportation action against a friend or family member.

"Comprehensive immigration reform" means, simply, that you sit these three groups at a table, and reach a compromise.

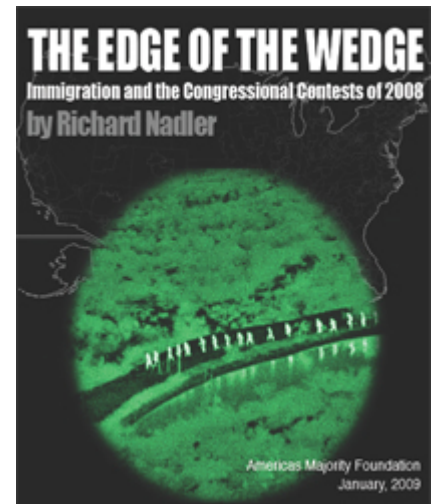
The conservative movement has behaved as though the latter two interests don't exist, or (worse) that they are idiots or traitors.

And guess what? They're reciprocating, en masse. As the study attached illustrates, Democrats are softening their anti-business image by acceding to guest worker demands, while Republicans are ruining their pro-business credentials, ignoring these legitimate requests in favor of Marxist labor theory (i.e., that government will put a floor under wages, and restrict the labor supply.)

We lost 10% from the Hispanic vote this cycle, with the most pro-Hispanic candidate we could have nominated. If you think THAT attrition is over, you'd better read what my study shows regarding the effect of Hispanic population distribution on congressional outcomes involving "enforcement only" candidates. You ain't seen nothing yet.

The loser in all of this is the CONSERVATIVE movement. We are trashing our businesses alliances, sector by sector, county by county, in congressional districts all over the country.

And we are losing credibility with the most pro-life group in the nation, and the most prolific -- namely Hispanics.



These trends will not be reversed until conservative leaders find the guts to publicly confront and defeat those in the movement who want to deport 12 million illegals.

Rich Nadler heads America's Majority Foundation

**E-mail the
Editor**

Target Talk Radio?

by Brent Littlefield

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

In my youth I worked for radio stations.

I am just old enough, and the stations were just “economically challenged” enough, to have used old radio dial control boards and meters. Back then, those of us who held FCC licenses would dutifully check readings to ensure our stations did not emit a signal that would interfere with another station’s broadcast signal miles away.

This was important for commerce. Stations were selling ad time and federal regulations properly required we stay within our limits.



Now some activists are trying to revive another antiquated and unnecessary system: a so-called “Fairness Doctrine” that has nothing to do with fairness or ensuring the free flow of commerce.

A senior advisor to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told [one magazine](#) last year, “Conservative radio is a huge threat and political advantage for Republicans and we have had to find a way to limit it.” Senator Chuck Schumer of New York stated on a live cable news show on Election Day his support for a new Fairness Doctrine so, as he said, we could truly be “fair and balanced” under his definition. Obama’s political confidant, Senator [Dick Durbin of Illinois, said](#), “It’s time to reinstitute the Fairness Doctrine.”

And just this week, Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA), a prominent member of the House Subcommittee that may take up the Fairness Doctrine next year, said that she wanted to [bring it back](#). “I still believe in it,” Eshoo told the *Daily Post* in Palo Alto.

Why do they say it’s needed? They claim the federal government must ensure local stations fully cover local news and topics of the day. However, those promoting the new Fairness Doctrine come from the politically correct left, which is incensed that conservative-minded talk show hosts have large ratings, large audiences, and big paychecks.

Liberal activists want the federal government to determine if a station is balanced and providing politically correct programming in our neighborhoods. Just imagine, if you will, a federal bureaucrat hops on a plane and travels from Washington to a local rural radio station. That bureaucrat then walks in to tell a station manager what to put on the air.

Yes, Virginia, they would be coming from the government and they would only be there to help. Or so the activists promoting the Fairness Doctrine want you to believe.

The original doctrine was in place at a time when radio was king. Radio stations were a main point of information. Now we receive news and information via our PDA, Blackberry, laptops, and desktops by visiting blogs, texting, and reading news sites. Digital cable boxes sit in our homes. We listen to music on digital recorders and we even get our news from satellite radio.

Radio stations have become merely one channel we can turn to for entertainment or news, not the only channel in town. Some would say this alone negates the need for a so-called Fairness Doctrine.

Others could point to history and note our nation’s early newspapers were neither fair nor balanced.

Just like in those days, people today can choose not to purchase a paper, watch a television show, read a blog, or even tune to a radio station in which they are not interested. Our citizens actually vote with their feet and vote with their ears when they choose from which medium they wish to gather information.

However, those promoting the Fairness Doctrine want us to believe that people should not have the right to make choices in determining what is fair on their dial.

Those who wrongfully supported the Fairness Doctrine back in the 1940s claimed the regulation would ensure local station owners' opinions could not dominate local policy discussions. They thought it would encourage lively debate. However, it did just the opposite.

When it was in place, political opponents used the Fairness Doctrine as a tool to harass stations and encourage them to take shows they did not like off the air. They used it to intimidate stations into avoiding topics. This seems to be exactly the type of "fairness" the current proponents are interested in.

Steve Rendall, who is affiliated with the left leaning Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting organization (FAIR), makes the case for the need of the Fairness Doctrine by citing the airing by Sinclair Broadcast Group's of what was perceived as a critical documentary of John Kerry.

Mr. Rendall does not cite the liberal media bias noted in studies from the [Center for Media and Public Affairs](#) at George Mason University and [UCLA](#). Nor does he cite the ongoing multi-year reports from [Pew Research Center](#) for the People and the Press that demonstrate journalists are much more liberal than conservative. He only cites perceived conservative bias.

But his own research shows that Sinclair Broadcast Group dialed back their plans to air the documentary in 2004 because of a negative reaction on their stock value. Rendall's own research seems to indicate that the FCC's decision in 1987 was correct in removing the Fairness Doctrine because voters and citizens can discern what is important to them and vote with their ears, their eyes, and now their keyboards.

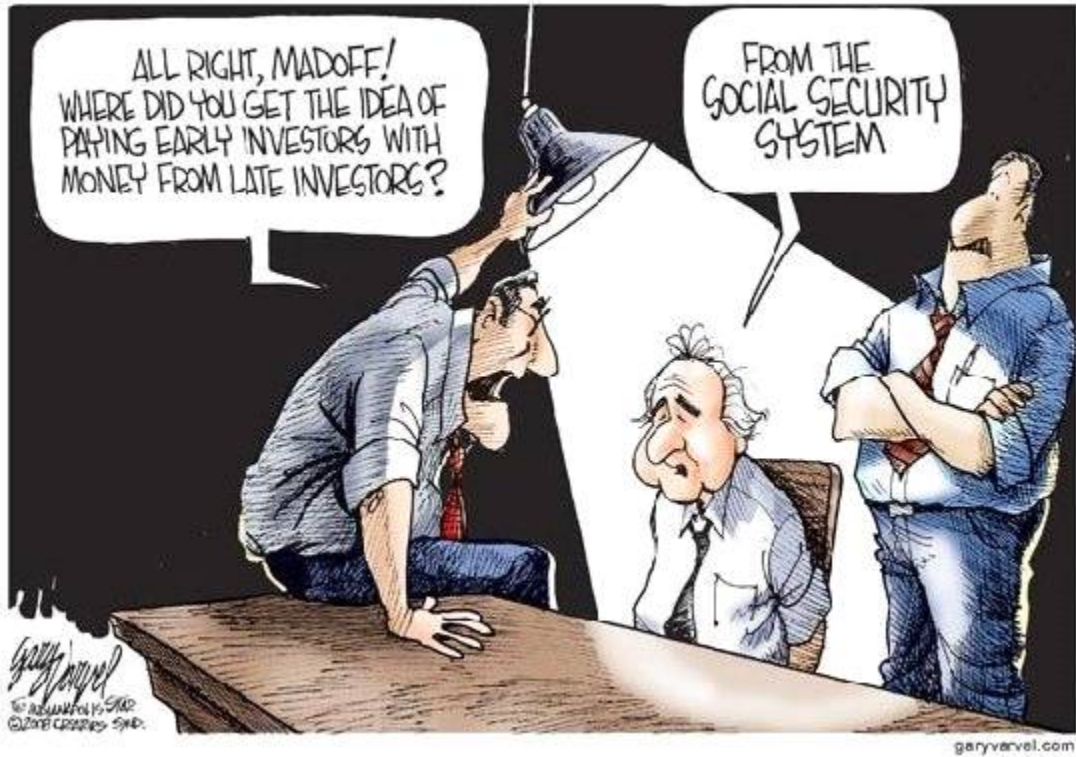
Taken together, many believe, the Fairness Doctrine should end up where those old dial radio station control boards reside — on the scrap heap of history.

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Editor**

Madoff's Ponzi Model

by Gary Varvel

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009



Gary Varvel is editorial cartoonist for the Indianapolis Star

Reader Comments

Issue 125 - February 4, 2009

Editor: Regarding "Obama Last New Dealer?" I've got to tell you, I still believe in free market capitalism (I guess to a degree now - with as small a regulation as required?). What is Alan Greenspan saying with regard to the free market system? Do we as conservatives still preach free markets and globalism? I want to say yes, but I'm wondering if people (most people) would say I've lost my marbles. We know that over-regulation stifles growth. We know that people left to spend their own money will re-invest it to make more cool things (once their personal lifestyle needs are reached). But I feel like we've left the world economy in the hands of the socialists. Don't we dislike communism? Are we allowing the Dems to form into cells (community organizing) to take over the country like the Viet Minh did to the French? Where is our leadership? Who's standing up? Where is the re-tool, re-fit and re-building in the party taking place? Is it taking place? The Dems only got 53% of the vote, that's not 75%. So where is the fight in the party? We need to be organizing block by block (like the Dems did). We need a platform to preach. We need to bring in new people. We need to define Republican and Conservative in the new world we have found ourselves in. I'm very interested in who will lead this charge. Do you know of anyone standing up? Craig Snodgrass

Editor: Thanks for the fabulous article on the New Deal and Barack Hussein, "Obama Last New Dealer". I lived through the last so-called Progressive and am dreading the newest version. God help our country under the present leftists. Dorothy O'Neal Sierra Vista, AZ.

Editor: Regarding "Obama Last New Dealer?" first of all, let's dispense with the euphemisms. 'Progressive' means liberal and to more and more in America today, it represents socialism. Next, we must recognize one stark fact: Barack Hussein Obama and all but a couple of Democrats are interested in one thing and that's putting their hands on as many levers of power as possible and ensuring their continued control over more and more aspects of our lives. Not for a moment can it be believed that these people have the best interests of the country in mind, otherwise they wouldn't be inclined to pander for votes from the least productive sectors of society while looting from the most productive. FDR deliberately expanded the recession he inherited to become the Great Depression in order to make the people dependent on Democrat government. In the current crisis, that seems to be the aim. It's interesting to note that the Great Panic in the 1890s was far more destructive than either of these crises, with massive unemployment and starvation. The federal government barely took notice and the country bounced back in a relatively short period of time. The difference between FDR's plan and Obama's is that the former relied solely on bribes to chosen sectors and the latter wants it all, including a seat at the table in telling business how it should be run. The frightening thing is that he may succeed but it is we who will suffer. The latest report is that \$3-trillion in investment capital has already fled from America and that will double by June. A very sobering thought in a \$14-trillion economy. James C. McAlister, Tampa, FL

Editor: Regarding "Obama Last New Dealer?" you must realize that I have worked for over 50 years and paid into the Social Security Program. Do you not think that I am entitled to my Social Security Checks each month? If the government would like to give me one check to buy me out of the Social Security Program, that would be one thing, but to cut my benefit's after all of the years I have paid into the system would surely result in a lot of law suits. Social Security was established to provide security for the aged in their retirement years. People are living longer now and the government has utilized the Social Security Funds for social programs, medical for illegal aliens (20 million +), wars

and many other purposes. I hold the government accountable for my Social Security!!! Thanks you, Jake Nugent

Editor: Regarding "Obama Last New Dealer?" it is true that Obama has recommended many acceptable nominees in his administration. As a conservative and while I land right of center, I politically disagree with most of Obama's nominees. However, it appears America has spoken and most of Obama's nominees must go forward. One nominee, Eric Holder, however, should be rejected as Attorney General, based on his history of supporting political and financial cronyism, as well as those involved in terrorism, the same terrorism America is fighting around the world. He recommended a "pardon" to Marc Rich, the Financier, once on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list; Marc Rich, a billionaire who fled our country denouncing his citizenship, rather than face federal tax evasion charges. Eric Holder also says he does not regret Clinton's "pardon" of 16 FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation) Puerto Rican terrorists in 1999. The FALN members had, according to the FBI, been linked to "more than 130 bombings, several armed robberies, six slayings and injury to hundreds of others," reported The Baltimore Sun. Third, Eric Holder "represented" the AUC and FARC who are responsible for kidnapping and murdering thousands of Colombians and Americans alike. Finally, he calls waterboarding torture and wants to close the Guantanamo Bay prison. Based on these issues, I humbly request each member of the US Senate; Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, to reject Eric Holder as Attorney General of the United States. Oscar Y. Harward

Editor: Brian S. Westbury and Robert Stein's "More Fed Inflation?" is a useful discussion of Federal Reserve policy. But it repeats the mistaken view, that "mark-to-market accounting can undermine the value of assets." Mark-to-market accounting is the requirement that asset values reflect their market price (the markets view of their most likely value) on company balance sheets. Thus MTM accounting does nothing to asset values. It merely reflects them. Of course, the market's assessment can be and has often been wrong, but there is no more objective source of such information as long as God chooses not to discuss such things directly with most of us. Warren Coats

Editor: I just finished reading the article by Dennis Avery, "Real Climate History." Can you direct me to websites where I will find other writers/articles that support the views of those of us who do not believe in the dire predictions of the "alarmists"? I have read a half a dozen books in the last two years that debunk their theories, including the Avery/Singer book, and am looking for more. Thanks for your help. Dick Hanson

Editor: Regarding Lisa Fabrizio's "Social Issues Dead?" would it suffice to say that both China and India do not have a significant "teen pregnancy" rate. Also, they do not have "sex ed" in the schools, which, in America, is code for sexual indoctrination. This is actually the beginning of the debate. It is just getting started. Unfortunately, the kids being indoctrinated are our future leaders. Not to mention they are being told lies about the efficacy of "birth control and safe sex" while in fact this fallacious advice is a threat to their lives. Does anyone care about this issue? Ruth Kade

Editor: Regarding Daniel Pipes' "Israel's Strategic Blunder," despite repeated promises to cut off funds for Hamas, international aid organizations and many countries kept on sending money to Gaza, purportedly for humanitarian aid. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the U.N.

agency for Palestinian refugees, raises money for Gaza through its Web site, with payments going through WorldPay (part of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group), the Arab Bank PLC in Gaza and HSBC in Amman, Jordan. Those funds come in addition to UNRWA's annual budget of \$400 million. Much is appropriated by Hamas for its radical and terrorist agenda. Roy Gillinson

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