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From: "Blinken, Tony" <antony_j._blinken@ovp.eop.gov>
To: robinware456@gmail.com
Subject: FW: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, July 13, 2012
VPNewsClips120713.doc
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Doesn't get much better than this! Amazing coverage of yesterday.

Antony Blinken
Deputy Assistant to the President
National Security Advisor to the Vice President
202-456-9501

-----Original Message-----
From: Bulletin News [mailto:VP-Editors@BulletinNews.com]
Sent: Friday, July 13, 2012 6:20 AM
To: Nesi, Andrew; Cerda, Jose; Thompson, Kenny; Bianchi, Sarah; Feldman, Stefanie G.; VP-editors@bulletinnews.com
Cc: Everett, Aaron; FOIA-6 Escudero, Adrian V.; Kahan, Alex; Kimball, Astri B.; Hoffman, Alan L.; Hornbrook, Alex; Bernal, Anthony R.; Blinken, Tony; Doorenbos, Bobbi J.; Brown, Bobby E.; Reed, Bruce N.; Woyak, Brian J.; Levine, Brian S.; Russell, Catherine M.; Bolduc, Chad; Fromstein, Charles; Gallagher , Clare E.; Hogan, Cynthia C.; Borrin, Danielle; Cloud, Donald; Loewe, Dylan; Hire, Elisabeth; Allen, Liz; Ryan, Evan; Person, Fran; Freeman, Tristen; Finer, Jonathan J.; Hallman, Jennifer; Leinwand, Jessica; Messenger, Jane; Montoya, Jordan; Tejeda, Jose; Prescott, Jeffrey; Smith, Julie; Berner, Kate; Trotter, Kingsley; Barkoff, Kendra; Chung, Kathy; O'Connor, Kevin C; White, Kirsten; McNellis, Kerry; Suber, Kellen C.; Hildner, Laura; McPhail, Mary; membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil; Flynn, Mike; Smith, Michele; Kaye, Melanie; Tracey-Mooney, Maureen; Hill, Patty; Timko, Rachel; Eaton, Sarah; Rosenthal, Lynn; Rosenthal, Lynn; Murray, Shailagh; Myers, Sam A.; Ricchetti, Steven; McNulty, Thomas P.; Williams, Tonya; Dirksen, Ward
Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, July 13, 2012

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2012 -- 6:15 AM EDT

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

BIDEN TELLS NAACP ROMNEY, REPUBLICANS THREATEN CIVIL RIGHTS (ABC)
By Devin Dwyer
ABC, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe Biden got a hero's welcome today at the NAACP Convention in Houston, one day after rival Mitt Romney was booed during remarks before the same group.
And while the VP did not directly address treatment of the presumptive GOP nominee, he suggested the frosty reception was not misguided, warning that Romney and Republicans are threats to the group's reason for existence.
"On civil rights, your raison d'etre, the reason for our existence," Biden said, "I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember, remember what this [organization], at its core, was all about... It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."
"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he questioned, alluding to efforts by Republicans to impose more stringent voting requirements in states around the country.
"I didn't think we'd be back. I remember working with Republicans - and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party - remember working with Republicans on motor-voter, on expanding the franchise on early voting, on voting by mail. Some of these were Republican ideas. But this is not the Republican Party here today, nor Romney's.
Get more pure politics at ABC News.com/Politics and a lighter take on the news at OTUSNews.com
"They see a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier," he said, "where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."
"Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," Biden concluded before the adoring crowd.
Biden used his address, billed as a campaign speech, to energize the African-American constituency that overwhelmingly backs Obama and Democrats and may play a crucial role in a handful of battleground states in November.
He offered a full-throated defense of the administration's signature accomplishments, hailing the 2009 auto bailout as "not popular but it was critical"; the call to target Osama bin Laden as a "bold decision with profound risks;" and the health care law that "required [Obama] early on to use up all of his political capital" but which led to historic benefits for African-Americans.
The VP also suggested there has been a conspiracy to obstruct Obama from the beginning of his term, citing the lack of Republican support for the Recovery Act, the health care law, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the debt ceiling debate last summer.
"Their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama," he said. "He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. Folks, in the end, that's what the presidency is all about."
President Obama, who had faced some criticism for not attending the convention, delivered a video message, telling NAACP members, "I stand on your shoulders. And at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise, that idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try."

BIDEN TAKES ON VOTING RIGHTS ISSUES AT NAACP CONVENTION (CNN)
By Ashley Killough
CNN, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden delivered a rousing address to the NAACP in Houston on Thursday, bolstering support for President Barack Obama and drawing sharp contrasts with the Republican Party on civil rights issues.
On the heels of recent voter identification disputes, Biden strayed from his typical campaign speech to zero in on voting rights, arguing that Republicans were making it more difficult for certain group to vote.
By implementing laws requiring voters to present official identification at the voting booth, Biden said, the GOP sees "a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier."
Democrats have said that such laws are politically motivated and intended to suppress minority voting, given that fewer people in minority groups carry government-issued IDs. Republicans, meanwhile, make the case that such laws prevent fraud and protect the integrity of the system.
The issue was a hot topic this week at the NAACP convention, where Attorney General Eric Holder spoke Tuesday and lambasted states that have considered or attempted to implement such laws, including Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Appealing to the group's founding, Biden on Thursday urged the crowd to "remember what (the NAACP) at its core was all about."
"It was about the right to vote, because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said.
He called on the crowd to imagine what the Justice Department would look like under a Mitt Romney administration.
"Imagine the recommendations and who he's likely to pick for attorney general or head of the civil rights division," he said, drawing scorn from the audience.
The vice president also touched on a number of other issues, including energy, health care, women's issues and education. In each instance, he compared Obama's policies with those of the Republican Party.
He particularly faulted the GOP for obstructing what he considers key legislation since Obama took office.
"Their discipline is amazing, they have never let up," Biden said, referring to congressional Republicans. "But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions."
This was Biden's first time addressing the convention as vice president, the NAACP said.
"The vice president is a longtime friend to the NAACP," said Roslyn Brock, the group's chairwoman. "He has been a strong advocate for justice and equality over his decades of service in the Senate and the White House."
The president will miss the event because of a "scheduling conflict," his campaign said.
"We declined a few weeks ago, and (the) NAACP was pleased (Vice President Joe Biden) was able to attend," an Obama-Biden campaign official told CNN.
The president's schedule for Thursday initially appeared wide open, but a senior administration official confirmed Thursday morning that Obama and the first lady will give an interview to CBS during the day.
However, the president did make a brief appearance in a pre-taped video that ran before the vice president appeared.
"If you keep standing with me ... I know we can arrive there together," the president said after delivering a few lines from his typical stump speech on helping middle-class Americans.
Hilary Shelton, the NAACP Washington Bureau director and a senior vice president in the organization, said the White House never confirmed a visit.
"They were trying to work out something," Shelton said.
As to why Obama could not attend, he added, "It was that something could not be moved. Something was crucial. And unfortunately, they couldn't move it in a way they could get him here this week."
Obama addressed the convention in 2009. Last year, first lady Michelle Obama spoke to the group.
Biden's speech Thursday came one day after Romney was booed during his own remarks at the NAACP convention, when the Republican vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Obama's signature health care law.
In comparison, Biden drew thunderous applause after trumpeting health care reform and emphasized that the law ensures coverage to "8 million black Americans who never would have had insurance."
The one time the crowd gave a negative reaction occurred when Biden began to close his remarks. He received a standing ovation from about half the audience at the end.
Meanwhile, Romney said the negative reaction he experienced Wednesday didn't come as a surprise.
"I think we expected that," he said on Fox Business Network. "I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country, which is that Obamacare is killing jobs."
Two African-American members of the House of Representatives found themselves split after Romney's appearance.
"He gets credit for attendance," Rep. Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana Democrat, said on CNN's "The Situation Room." "But perfect attendance doesn't qualify you to be class president. I thought it was a good gesture to go, but I thought his content was lacking."
Rep. Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina, also said on "The Situation Room" that he

expects Romney to get about 10% of the black vote come November, suggesting the GOP candidate's focus should be on unemployment and home foreclosures.
"African-American unemployment since 2008 is up 40%," Scott said. "Home closures 25%. So what we have is the same message that works for the rest of America, works for the black community, too."
Romney draws boos from NAACP, support from conservatives
CNN's Dan Lothian, Shawna Shepherd, Shannon Travis and Ed Payne and contributed to this report.

AT NAACP, BIDEN BOOED -- FOR ENDING HIS SPEECH (CBS)
By Lucy Madison
CBS, July 13, 2012
Just like Mitt Romney the day before, Vice President Joe Biden was booed at the NAACP convention. Unlike Romney, however, he wasn't booed because the crowd was upset but because they didn't want Biden to stop talking.
In an animated speech Thursday, Biden painted a stark contrast between Democrat and Republican visions for the future - and urged the historical civil rights organization to "close your eyes and imagine" what the country would look like under a Mitt Romney presidency.
Biden, whose presence was met with a response so enthusiastic it resulted in boos when he said he'd be wrapping up his remarks, emphasized his belief that the presumptive Republican nominee is a "fine family man." But his vision for America's future, he argued, is "so fundamentally different" than "how we view the future of America."
Underscoring issues like education, women's rights, health care, and civil rights in general, Biden targeted the current state of the Republican Party as "obstructionist" by design, and regressive by nature.
"This guy's vision of the future of American foreign policy is mired in the Cold War -- and the Cold War is over," he said of Romney.
To loud cheers from the audience, he also referenced ongoing battles over voter ID laws throughout the country, asking the audience: "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"
"We see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered," he said. "[Republicans] see a different future -- where voting is made harder, not easier."
"This ain't your father's Republican party," he added.
The longtime lawmaker - who described himself as a "lifetime member of the NAACP" and spent a few minutes name-checking individual audience members before launching into his speech - appeared at ease among the crowd. His presentation represented something of a contrast to that of Romney, whose Wednesday remarks were interrupted by boos from the audience on several occasions.
Romney said after his speech that he'd "expected" such a reaction to some of his positions, including his pledge to repeal health care, and some argue the negative reception on such issues is actually good for his candidacy. According to CBS News political director John Dickerson, the boos "offered a chance for a candidate criticized for his malleability to look principled in the face of opposition."
"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country," Romney told Fox News yesterday following his speech.
He also took the opportunity to point out to the NAACP that he, and not Mr. Obama, was speaking there this year. "If I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes," he said during his remarks.
Mr. Obama's office cited scheduling conflicts in his decision not to attend the NAACP, but he had little on his public schedule Thursday other than an interview with CBS News' Charlie Rose. He did tape a video message that aired before Biden's remarks, apologizing for his absence and sending his "deepest regards."
Twiala Dotson, an attendee at the conference, said Thursday she had "no qualms" about the fact that the president hadn't made an appearance.
"He has nothing to prove to me," she said. "President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe Biden, being the pitt bull that he is, he was the man that

needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said."
Precious Byrd, another attendee, told CBS Wednesday she was actually more interested in seeing Romney speak at the convention.
"I know his standing," she said of Mr. Obama. "Actually, I wanted to see Mitt Romney. I wanted to see if he had something to say, because I do consider myself to have an open mind."
Despite her commitment to keeping an open mind, Byrd said Wednesday that Romney hadn't been able to win her over.
"You know, I'm not just automatically one way or the other. I buy into what Obama says. I know what Biden's going to say. So I was really curious as to what Romney would say, you know," she said. "I mean who knows, he might have said something that was like 'Oh my God.' But it didn't happen for me."
Sarah Huisenga and Rodney Hawkins contributed reporting to this story.

BIDEN KNOCKS ROMNEY IN ADDRESS TO NAACP (MSNBC)
By Carrie Dann
MSNBC, July 13, 2012
HOUSTON -- The same audience that booed Mitt Romney yesterday chided Vice President Joe Biden today, but only for ending a laundry list of the Obama administration's accomplishments.
When Biden said he was wrapping up these accomplishments, the audience of a few thousand delegates at the NAACP's annual convention shouted "No!" -- capping off a warmly received address, which warned that a Romney presidency would mean voter suppression, health care "controlled by the insurance companies," and tax hikes on millions of African American families.
Biden, who spoke in lieu of an address from the first black president himself, urged delegates to envision the Justice Department under a Romney administration and warned that advances in civil rights would be erased if Republicans prevail in November.
"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork," Biden said, invoking the conservative Supreme Court nominee he famously battled against in the Senate. "Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general."
"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Biden asked.
Eric Holder, the first African American to hold the position as the nation's top law enforcement officer, spoke to the group earlier this week. Biden said that Holder and the president - unlike Republicans - want voting rights to be "expanded not diminished."
Citing Romney's proposed elimination of some tax breaks as a part of his fiscal plan, Biden claimed that a Romney presidency would result in bigger checks to the IRS out of African Americans' wallets.
"He eliminates college tuition tax credit. The earned income tax credit and the child tax credit are cut," Biden said. "The result: 2.2 million African Americans working families will see a tax increase if he succeeds. That's a fact."
Obama did not address the group due to scheduling concerns, according to the campaign, although he has no public events today. The president did appear in the form of a taped video before Biden's speech.
The large convention center ballroom was only about two-thirds full for Biden's speech. Organizers blamed the empty seats on early morning flash flooding that affected delegates' transportation to the event venue.
Attendees praised both Biden and Romney for addressing the mostly Democratic-leaning organization.
"It was a family affair, a family connection," said community development officer Alan Watkins of Houston, who said he did not fault Obama for not appearing in person. "I completely understand that the president is busy, The fact that he sent his next person in line was great."
Charles Warfield, an NAACP chapter president for Kalamazoo, Mich., said that Biden served as an effective emissary precisely because he is not African-American.
"He probably was a better choice for this convention because it would have made Barack look like, because he's black and we're black that we are in sync with everything," Warfield said. "But Vice President Biden hit every nail on the head."
Warfield lauded Romney for speaking to the group yesterday, despite broadly disagreeing with the

GOP presidential nominee's agenda.
That sentiment was echoed by Marcus Barnum, a Houston financial adviser.
"I applaud his effort coming to an event such as this, because we need to hear from him," Barnum said. "I think it's important for him to try to win our vote as well."

THE OVAL: BIDEN TO NAACP: IMAGINE A ROMNEY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT (USAT)
By David Jackson
USA Today, July 12, 2012
Following up on Mitt Romney's speech to the NAACP, Vice President Biden told the organization today to think about what a Republican administration would do with civil rights cases.
"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Biden told the NAACP convention in Houston.
"Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency," the vice president said.
Biden noted that Romney's advisory team includes Robert Bork, the conservative jurist whose 1987 nomination to the Supreme Court was rejected in part because of his past criticism of some civil rights laws.
Biden also cast the Obama-Romney election as "a fight for the heart and soul of America."
Romney made his case to the NAACP on Wednesday. While applauding him at points, some members of the crowd booed Romney when he proposed a repeal of President Obama's health care law.
Obama, the nation's first African-American president, spoke to the NAACP convention via video.
"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said.

BIDEN TELLS NAACP THE ELECTION IS A FIGHT FOR 'HEART' OF AMERICA (LAT)
By Christi Parsons
Los Angeles Times, July 13, 2012
WASHINGTON -- Vice President Joe Biden warned of a gloomy four years for civil rights if he and President Obama are not reelected, summing it up in ominous tones by uttering two words: Robert Bork.
Speaking to the NAACP at their convention Thursday, Biden asked delegates to close their eyes and picture an administration under Republican Mitt Romney -- and then led them straight to the conservative jurist whose proposed appointment to the Supreme Court by then-President Reagan many of them fought to defeat.
Imagine the Supreme Court after four years of Romney appointments, Biden told the crowd.
"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Biden said. "Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork."
Earlier this year, Romney named Bork to head his Justice Advisory Committee, thrilling the party base with his choice of the conservative standard bearer.
But at the convention of the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, Biden's mere mention of the name drew groans. Old-guard activists remember the defeat of the Bork nomination in 1987 as a highlight of the movement.
A day after Romney was booed by the NAACP, Biden urged them to turn their concern into action. A failure of black voters to turnout in large numbers, as they did in 2008, would be a blow to Obama's chances of reelection.
This is a "fight for the heart and soul of America," Biden told the crowd in Houston on Thursday.
"These guys aren't bad guys," he said of the Republicans, "they just have a fundamentally different view," elongating the word "fundamentally."
christi.parsons@latimes.com

BLOG: BIDEN'S STAR TURN AT NAACP (WP)
By 7/12/2012
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
The nation's first black president has a secret weapon when it comes to turning out black and Latino votes: An old white guy.
Vice President Biden, for the second time in three days, delivered a stemwinder in front of a group

of minority voters that had the crowd eating it up. On Tuesday, it was his keynote address to the National Council of La Raza in Las Vegas, and on Thursday it was his speech in front of the NAACP convention in Houston.
Biden's rapport with the NAACP crowd was evident from the outset Thursday. He began things by noting that he was a lifetime member of the group, was once the "only white guy on the east side," and giving a shout-out to an NAACP official he affectionately called "Mouse."
From there, he pivoted between talking about the successful mission to kill Osama bin Laden, Republican obstructionism, Obama's health-care law and Republican efforts on Voter ID.
By the end of the speech, Biden could feel the moment.
"There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," Biden said. He then began to wrap up his remarks, and got booed for doing so; the crowd clearly wanted more.
Biden's star turn in front of the NAACP crowd tells us a couple things.
First, it shows that he's a valuable asset when it comes to the Obama campaign's efforts to turn out minority voters. Yes, it was a friendly crowd to begin with, but enthusiasm matters.
Polls have shown Obama leading by wide margins among both black and Latino voters, and it's a foregone conclusion that African-American voters, in particular, will continue to vote in lockstep for the first black president (preaching to the choir, indeed).
The question, though, is how these normally low-turnout demographics turn out in the 2012 election. Latinos, in particular, concern Democrats because they have shown a willingness to stay home and they have fallen out of love, to some degree, with Obama.
Obama has also shown plenty of rapport with these groups, of course, but having a No. 2 that you can trust to stand in is a tremendous luxury. And Biden's easy speech in front of the NAACP crowd showed that he's not just going to be an attack dog (the more traditional role of the vice president), but also a pretty formidable cheerleader for a president who badly needs someone to pump up the crowd.
Secondly, it's hard to look at the speech Biden gave Thursday and not see a 2016 presidential candidate.
The fact is that Biden has always struggled because people didn't see him as a real presidential contender. While generally well-regarded in his party and by the media (in spite of his gaffes), Biden's real problem in the 2008 campaign was that he was never able to get a real shot at the main stage.
As a sitting vice president, though, and having delivered speeches like this, it's going to force people to reevaluate his fortitude and whatever presidential aspirations he might have.
This is not to say that he's going to be a front-runner for the Democratic nomination in 2016 or even that he will run (though it seems like he wants to). But it does show what Biden can do when he's at his best. He's a talented politician, and when he puts it together, it works.
Biden's speech Thursday will definitely change some people's minds about his role in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns.

IN APPEAL TO NAACP, BIDEN WARNS OF REFIGHTING CIVIL RIGHTS BATTLES UNDER ROMNEY (WP)
By David Nakamura
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
Vice President Biden made an impassioned appeal Thursday to members of the nation's oldest civil rights group to rally behind President Obama and reject a Republican vision for the country that Biden said would roll back progress for minorities.
Speaking at the NAACP conference in Houston a day after presumptive GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney appeared there, Biden delivered a sharp rebuttal to Romney's contention that his policies would be better for black families than Obama's have been at a time when unemployment among African Americans is 14.4 percent.
Biden sketched out what he said is the Republican Party's hostile position toward the middle and working classes on voting rights, health care, taxes and education to argue that a Romney administration would be detrimental to blacks.
The vice president played to the crowd, sending a shout out to friends in the Delaware delegation and recalling his work on voting rights during his time on the Senate Judiciary Committee.
"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he said. "I didn't think we'd be back. I

remember working with Republicans - and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party - on "Motor Voter" [legislation], expanding the [voting] franchise. Some of these were Republican ideas. This is not the Republican Party's view today, nor Romney's. They see a different future in which voting is harder [rather] than easier."
Biden added, "There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir."
Indeed it was. Polls show that black voters overwhelmingly support Obama, even if they are frustrated by the economy and the unemployment rate, which is far higher among African Americans than the general population.
Whereas Romney drew three sets of boos from the same audience, Biden received a warm welcome and applause throughout. When he said he would wrap up his speech, some in the audience shouted, "No!"
Before Biden spoke, Obama addressed the audience via video message. The president, echoing his campaign stump speech, told the crowd that his administration is committed to a country where "no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is a place where you can make it if you try."
On Wednesday, Romney had told the NAACP that Obama has failed in his bid to restore prosperity and security.
"If you want a president who will make things better in the African American community, you are looking at him," Romney said, drawing boos.
Ticking through a list of Obama's accomplishments - bailing out the auto industry, signing health-care reform legislation, ordering the killing of Osama bin Laden - Biden argued that the president achieved those feats despite Republican obstructionism.
"They were seas of obstruction," he said. "Their discipline was amazing. They never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama. He hasn't given up."
Biden linked Romney directly to Capitol Hill Republicans, including House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Va.) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), and argued that under a Romney administration, they would collude to undo critical reforms.
"Close your eyes and imagine - imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," Biden said, drawing shouts of "No!" from the crowd. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency.
"This election, in my view, is a fight for the heart and soul of America," he continued, adding of Republicans: "These guys aren't bad guys, they just have a fundamentally different view."

BLOG: ROMNEY DECLARES INDEPENDENCE FROM BIRTHERS AT NAACP CONVENTION (WP)
By Jonathan Capehart
Washington Post, July 12, 2012
Vice President Biden got the reception we all thought he would get at the NAACP convention. Warm and effusive, compared to the cool and respectful (with the occasional booing) that greeted Mitt Romney's hollow speech yesterday.
Biden ripped apart Romney's address and warned the audience about what a President Romney might do. "Close your eyes and imagine - imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," he said. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." Even though Romney's conservative street cred is thin among conservatives, there's no question his election would mean an abrupt change in philosophy compared to President Obama.
But there's another thing in Romney's speech I want to highlight as a Romney declaration of independence from the conspiratorial wack-o wing of the Republican Party.
Visit msnbc.com for breaking news, world news, and news about the economy Now, if someone had told us in the 1950s or 1960s that a black citizen would serve as the forty-fourth president of the United States, we would have been proud and many would have been surprised.
Did you catch that? "[B]lack citizen"? The racist birther movement centers on the conspiracy theory that Obama was born not in Hawaii but in Kenya. Therefore, he is not an American citizen and is illegitimately occupying the Oval Office. Republican leaders and those who aspired to be

such allowed the rumor to fester or egged it on.
To his credit, Romney never really dabbled in those fetid waters. Yesterday, in one phrase, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee disavowed the birther craziness. Of course, conspiracy theories never die. But every little bit helps.

BIDEN GETS WARM NAACP RECEPTION (WSJ)
By Jared A. Favole
Wall Street Journal, July 13, 2012
Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

BIDEN DEFENDS HEALTH CARE REFORM AND DECRIES VOTER ID LAWS (NYT)
By Rebecca Berg
New York Times, July 13, 2012
One day after Mitt Romney was booed at the N.A.A.C.P. convention when he said he would repeal the Affordable Care Act if he were elected president, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. defended the health care reform law in his remarks to the convention Thursday.
The crowd was predictably receptive to Mr. Biden's speech, applauding heartily as he lauded President Obama for his success in getting the law passed.
"This man prevailed where no president had before," Mr. Biden said. "And he was right, he was right."
Mr. Biden hailed health care reform, one of a number of issues he used to illustrate the two political parties' divergent visions for the country's future, and accused Republicans of blocking that and other pieces of legislation backed by Democrats as part of a premeditated "plan."
"Obstructionism was a plan from the outset," Mr. Biden said, to which the crowd responded with cries of, "Yeah!"
"Folks, their discipline is amazing," he said of Republicans. "They have not given up. But neither has my guy, Barack Obama. He has never given up."
Mr. Biden also touched on the president's plan, announced this week, to seek a temporary extension of tax cuts on income below $250,000.
When Mr. Biden circled back to the issue of health care later in his speech, he received a standing ovation. The crowd also rose to their feet when the vice president decried racial profiling and what he called "voter suppression" efforts by Republicans, likely a reference to some Republicans' support of voter-ID laws.
"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Mr. Biden said. The question was met with a collective, "No!"
Mr. Obama continues to receive overwhelming support from the African-American share of the electorate in polls, and Mr. Biden conceded that his remarks were tantamount to "preaching to the choir."
The mood was not so fraternal at the convention Wednesday, when Mr. Romney spoke to a less-receptive audience.
"If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him," he said, drawing boos (but some light applause) from the convention crowd.
In an interview with Fox News after his speech, Mr. Romney said, "I expect to get African-American votes."
That assertive tone stood in sharp contrast to John McCain's address to the N.A.A.C.P. as the presumptive Republican nominee for president in 2008, when he focused on the less contentious topic of education and complimented Mr. Obama.
"Don't tell him I said this, but he is an impressive fellow in many ways," Mr. McCain said. "He has inspired a great many Americans, some of whom had wrongly believed that a political campaign could hold no purpose or meaning for them."

BIDEN PAINTS OMINOUS PICTURE OF ROMNEY PRESIDENCY (AP)
By Juan A. Lozano And Ken Thomas
Associated Press, July 13, 2012
HOUSTON (AP) - Vice President Joe Biden rallied support for President Barack Obama before the

nation's largest civil rights organization on Thursday, declaring that Republican challenger Mitt Romney's election-year agenda would hurt - not help - working families in the black community. Biden, appearing before the NAACP's annual convention one day after Romney addressed the group, offered what amounted to a rebuttal of the Republican rival as both campaigns sought support from a key constituency in several swing states.

The vice president did not specifically cite Romney's argument to the NAACP on Wednesday that he could serve African-Americans better than Obama, the nation's first black president. Romney was booed when he said he'd repeal Obama's sweeping health care reform law but otherwise got a polite reception as he reached out to a traditionally Democratic voting bloc.

Biden predictably drew a far more rousing reception as he outlined differences between Obama and Romney on health care, education, energy, women's rights and research, saying the two rivals had "fundamentally different visions."

Biden offered a rundown of Obama's first term, pointing to a landmark health care law, launching the mission that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and the decision to rescue the financial system and U.S. automakers General Motors and Chrysler.

"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision. And it will not surprise you - I don't think it's even a close call," Biden said. "So it's time, it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done ... To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."

Obama did not speak to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People this year, appearing instead in a taped video message. In the brief remarks, Obama said: "I stand on your shoulders and at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise." He reiterated many of the themes of his re-election campaign, saying the nation needs to "build an economy where everyone can have the confidence that the hard work will also pay off."

The president said he was sorry he couldn't be there in person. Obama had no public events scheduled Thursday but was to be interviewed at the White House, along with first lady Michelle Obama, by Charlie Rose of CBS News.

White House officials noted that Obama spoke to the NAACP convention during the 2008 presidential campaign and in 2009, while Mrs. Obama addressed the group in 2010. The president is scheduled to address the National Urban League in New Orleans on July 25.

Black voters are a key part of Obama's re-election strategy, with about 95 percent supporting him in 2008. Polls have shown black voters supporting Obama at comparable levels this year but Romney could undercut the president in states with large black communities, such as North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and Florida, if he can persuade some black voters to support him or if they stay home on Election Day.

Romney said Wednesday that much more must be done to improve education in the nation's cities and noted that the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among blacks is higher than the 8.2 percent national average.

"If you understood who I truly am in my heart, and if it were possible to fully communicate what I believe is in the real, enduring best interest of African-American families, you would vote for me for president," Romney said.

In Obama's absence, Biden offered a fiery defense of administration policies while warning of what a Romney presidency would bring to civil rights. He asked attendees to "imagine" what the Justice Department would be like under a Romney administration and "imagine when his senior adviser on the Constitution is Robert Bork," the Republican Supreme Court nominee who was defeated by Democrats in 1987. Biden was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the time.

Biden received sustained applause throughout his address. When he spoke about civil rights and administration efforts to expand voting rights and not diminish them, the crowd stood and loudly cheered. When Biden said, "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" people in the crowd answered in unison, "No."

Biden said there was a lot more he could say on protecting voting rights but that he was "preaching to the choir." "Say it, say it," many in the crowded responded. As Biden was wrapping up, he said, "Let me close, my friends," prompting members of the audience to boo and yell, "No!"

Thomas reported from Washington.

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US BLACK LEADERSHIP HAILS BARNSTORMING BIDEN (AFP)
By Tangi Quemener
AFP, July 12, 2012
WASHINGTON - US Vice President Joe Biden received a rapturous welcome Thursday at a conference of black civil rights leaders that one day earlier had jeered Republican White House challenger Mitt Romney.
"It's good to be home," he declared, to cheers from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ahead of a speech in which he drew sharp comparisons between his boss President Barack Obama and Romney.
Romney had been subjected to a chorus of boos on Wednesday when he told the same Houston meeting that he plans to repeal the president's signature health reform bill, and Biden was applauded when he defended the Democratic incumbent.
Biden contrasted the values of Obama, the country's first African-American president, to those of Romney, a multimillionaire businessman and investor who once served as Republican governor of Massachusetts.
Biden praised Obama as a leader "who has the character of his convictions," adding that "almost never since we have taken office during this entire time did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help."
And he reminded the crowd that but for the landmark Affordable Care Act, which survived a Supreme Court challenge last month, there are "eight million black Americans who never would have had insurance."
"The best way to sum up the president's view, my view, and I think your view, is we see America where, in the words of the scripture, 'what you do unto the least of my brethren you do unto me'," the vice president declared.
"As I said, I believe this election will come down to character, conviction, and vision and will not surprise you, I don't think it's even a close call," he added, to thunderous applause and shouts of acclamation.
Blacks voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008 and, even with black unemployment at 14.4 percent -- more than six points higher than the national average -- Romney faces an uphill battle to win over black voters in November.
Biden, by contrast, scored easy points by pointing out Obama's record on education, social legislation and health care, and won more cheers when he turned to the Republican's stance on women's rights issues.
Biden said Romney was a bad fit for black voters and skewered Romney on everything from abortion rights to health care and other social legislation.
"Governor Romney and his allies in the Congress see a different future for women in America," he said.
"The governor isn't sure what his position is on the Violence Against Women Act," Biden said.
"But he is certain of what his position is on Roe V. Wade -- overturn it," the vice president said of the landmark abortion rights case in which the US Supreme Court ruled that abortion is legal.
Obama -- who introduced Biden in a brief pre-recorded statement to the meeting -- will face off against Romney in the November presidential poll. Biden is expected to be his running mate.

JOE BIDEN FIRES UP NAACP. WHERE WAS PRESIDENT OBAMA? (CSM)
The NAACP crowd booed Mitt Romney, and polls say that the president could win at least 95 percent of the African-American vote. Still, Obama may need that and more in key states.
By Peter Grier
Christian Science Monitor, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday delivered a fiery speech defending Obama administration priorities to the NAACP annual meeting in Houston. His basic theme: For working-class black families, President Obama's agenda is better than challenger Mitt Romney's.
"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," said Mr. Biden.
For instance, education does not play a central role in Mr. Romney's vision of the US, while it does

for Mr. Obama, charged Biden. Romney opposes government support for the development of renewable-energy sources and efforts to equalize pay between men and women.
Biden drew perhaps his most enthusiastic crowd response when he said that the incumbent administration wants to expand voting rights, not diminish them. In a number of states, Republicans have led efforts to require that voters produce identification – a requirement that Attorney General Eric Holder has derided as a "poll tax" designed to suppress minority votes.
"Folks, there is a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," said Biden, stating the obvious as the audience applauded.
Polls show that Obama should win upwards of 95 percent of the African American vote, so in many ways Biden's reception was foreordained. The pastor who led the invocation to open the day's proceedings listed how the NAACP had been "blessed" to hear from a number of prominent individuals, but left that word out when referring to the presumptive GOP nominee, saying only that "we've heard also from Mitt Romney."
The NAACP crowed booed Romney on Wednesday when he vowed that if elected he'd repeal Obama's health care law. The audience did applaud some Romney pronouncements, such as his statement of opposition to gay marriage, and gave him a polite standing ovation at his end.
Given this context, one question stands out: Where was the president himself? If his challenger was willing to appear before the NAACP and be booed, why couldn't Obama bestir himself to meet live with his most committed supporters?
Conservative commentators defending Romney were quick to make this comparison.
"Hey, one Presidential candidate cared enough about the African-American vote to show up to the NAACP's annual convention in this election year. Too bad it wasn't the Democrat," wrote conservative talk show host Ed Morrissey on the website Hot Air.
Republicans noted that CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer agreed with them. On his Situation Room show on Wednesday, Mr. Blitzer said that Romney did the "right thing" by appearing and that Obama, who was in Washington with no public meetings on his schedule, should have appeared as well.
"He's got meetings. I assume those meetings are very important, but he could have found the time to pay his respects to the NAACP," said Blitzer.
It's true that most blacks will vote Democratic. But in swing states such as Virginia, Obama needs every single vote – and an energized African-American electorate could help him, said Blitzer.
Obama did appear at the NAACP via video just prior to Biden's speech. "I stand on your shoulders," he said, to polite but not overwhelming applause.

JOE BIDEN: MITT ROMNEY A THREAT TO NAACP (POLITCO)
By Reid J. Epstein
Politico, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden came to the NAACP Thursday with a booming message: President Barack Obama needs their help, and Mitt Romney and the Republicans in Congress will hurt them.
Speaking in Houston to the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization's annual convention a day after Romney told the NAACP that the Republican candidate later acknowledged was full of statements the crowd didn't want to hear, Biden delivered his own speech, built, as the vice president told them, around "preaching to the choir."
"Remember what this at its core was all about, why this organization at its core was all about," Biden said, after touting the Obama administration's record on African-Americans. "It was about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."
Biden then reminded the crowd that embattled Attorney General Eric Holder, held in contempt by the GOP-controlled House for not releasing documents related to Fast & Furious, is fighting to protect voting rights while Republicans seek to place hurdles before ballot access. Tuesday, members passed an emergency resolution in support of Holder and his position on voting rights.
He urged attendees to "imagine" what Romney's Justice Department would look like and who he would appoint to the Supreme Court.
"And we, the president and I and Eric and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," Biden said. "Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Where there are no distinctions made on the basis of race or gender and access to housing and lending. So much more. Did you think we'd be

fighting these battles again?"
The crowd, which had cheered and applauded Biden at points through the speech, booed at his characterization of a Romney administration.
After defending Obama policies ranging from the health care reforms to the stimulus to the auto bailout, Biden told the NAACP that Republicans have, from his first day in office, sought to tear him down.
"Almost never since he's taken office did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help," Biden said, citing the Robert Draper book "Do Not Ask What Good We Do" as evidence of a GOP conspiracy to oppose Obama on everything he did.
The Republicans' plan, Biden said, was "not to get us out of this recession, not to promote jobs, not to do the things that needed to be done, but to make Barack Obama a one–term president."
He continued: "Folks, their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues, he continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. And folks, in the end, that's what the president is all about."
Biden's NAACP appearance, which began with acknowledgments of old Delaware friends like "Mousey" – whom an aide identified as Richard Smith, a Delaware NAACP official – came the day after Romney was booed during his appearance for repeating his call to repeal Obama's health care reform and suggesting that he would be a better president for African Americans than has been Obama.
Romney took his booing as a badge of honor, telling donors at a Montana fundraiser Wednesday night that he would not pander to the audience in front of him.
"I don't give different speeches to different audiences, all right," Romney told the donors. "I gave them the same speech. When I mentioned I am going to get rid of Obamacare they weren't happy, I didn't get the same response. That's OK, I want people to know what I stand for and if I don't stand for what they want, go vote for someone else, that's just fine."
Obama - who spoke to the group in 2008 and 2009 - did not attend, instead delivering a two-minute pre-taped video address, reminding the group that "I stand on your shoulders."
Read more: http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78443_Page2.html#ixzz20UiuzuMW

RUSH LIMBAUGH: 'UNCLE SAM'S CABIN' BUILT BY DEMOCRATS (POLITCO)
By William Bergstrom
Politico, July 13, 2012
Rush Limbaugh accused the Democratic Party on Thursday of trying "to keep blacks on the dependency plantation" - of "Uncle Sam's Cabin."
"The Democrats of old fought to keep blacks living on the plantation, Uncle Tom's Cabin," Limbaugh said on his show, referring to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. "We need to revise that. Now the Democrats fight to keep blacks on the dependency plantation. Uncle Tom's Cabin, no. It's now Uncle Sam's Cabin."
The conservative radio host applauded Mitt Romney for telling the NAACP at its annual convention that he plans to repeal Obamacare - a statement that drew boos from the crowd - and he attacked Vice President Joe Biden, who was booed for ending his speech, for "lying" to them.
"[Romney] got booed for telling the truth," Limbaugh said, according to a transcript. "Biden got booed because he stopped lying. Biden's speech was a lie. He ends his speech, they boo. The audience wanted Biden to keep lying to 'em."
Limbaugh added that the "NAACP has become an organization expressly devoted to keep blacks from voting for Republicans. Pure and simple. That's all it exists for, to make sure they don't vote for Republicans."

BOEHNER DOWNPLAYS ROMNEY BOOS (POLITCO)
By Tomer Ovadia
Politico, July 13, 2012
House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday played down the boos and jeers that Mitt Romney received while speaking to the NAACP this week.
"There was that one moment, but if you look at the broader speech there were a number of times when he got a very resounding applause," Boehner said. "I congratulate Governor Romney for

going and accepting the invitation to speak. Governor Romney is running for president of the United States to represent all Americans, so he ought to be congratulated on reaching out to all of them."
The NAACP crowd responded negatively several times to Romney's claim that he would "make things better in the African-American community" and that he would repeal Obama's health care law.
Boehner was accurate in stating that while several of Romney's comments did not play well, the audience applauded politely during much of his speech.
Boehner's comments came after Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told Bloomberg TV Wednesday she thought "it was a calculated move on [Romney's] part to get booed at the NAACP convention."
President Obama was invited to speak to the NAACP but declined, citing a scheduling conflict. Vice President Joe Biden spoke to the organization Thursday morning.

STENY HOYER: OK FOR PRESIDENT OBAMA TO SKIP NAACP (POLITCO)
By Kevin Robillard
Politico, July 13, 2012
Rep. Steny Hoyer said Thursday it was OK for President Barack Obama to send Vice President Joe Biden in his place to the NAACP's annual convention in Houston, dismissing conservatives who argued it was insulting.
"I think the vice president is clearly representing the president and himself," said Hoyer, the House Minority Whip. Conservatives, including Rush Limbaugh, had portrayed the first black president's decision to bypass the convention as a snub to a group of voters Obama is expected to win overwhelmingly in the fall. Biden is speaking to the convention this afternoon.
Hoyer, whose Maryland district is a little over one-third black, also said Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney expected an "adverse" reaction when he called for the elimination of the president's health care reform law. He did not go as far as House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who said Romney wanted to get boos from the convention crowd.
"I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction," Hoyer said on CNN's "Starting Point." "The African-American community feels very strongly that the Obamacare bill ... is a very important piece of legislation, not only for them but for all Americans."
According to Romney, Hoyer is right. "I think we expected that," Romney said in an Fox Business Channel interview that aired Wednesday night.

BIDEN TRIES TO DERAIL ROMNEY'S CHARTER-SCHOOL PITCH TO NAACP (CALLER)
By Neil Munro
Daily Caller, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden's used his red-meat speech at the NAACP convention to deride Gov. Mitt Romney's promise to push for charter schools, which are strongly supported by many lower-income African-American parents.
Biden's jibes are significant because they're a tacit admission that Romney's promise may attract a significant number of African-American votes and may reduce November turnout for Obama.
"Look, education doesn't play a central role in the Romney Republican vision of the future of America," Biden told the NAACP's annual convention July 12.
"It's on the back burner, it's not a priority," he claimed to the audience of African-Americans, who are vital to Obama's prospects in November.
Biden's dig came one day after Romney pushed his charter school plan to the NAACP attendees, many of whom are employed in local schools.
"In Boston, in Harlem, in Los Angeles, and all across the country, charter schools are giving children a chance, children that otherwise could be locked in failing schools," Romney declared.
While Massachusetts Democrats tried to stop charter schools, "I vetoed the bill [and] joined with the Black Legislative Caucus, and their votes helped preserve my veto, which meant that new charter schools, including some in urban neighborhoods, would be opened," he declared, prompting some applause.
He also was applauded when he announced his support for marriage. That statement was a contrast with Obama, who has alienated some African-Americans by calling for child-oriented

marriage to be refined to encompass single-sex partnerships.
Romney's evocation of religious faith and his support for racial equality also prompted applause from the audience, which gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech.
Romney' aides dismissed Biden's comments about charter schools.
"As governor, Mitt Romney worked with the Massachusetts Black Caucus to uphold his veto on a charter school moratorium," said spokesman Ryan Williams. "He believes that it is important to expand access to high quality public charter schools."
The NAACP speech was the second time that Romney has highlighted his support of charter schools - and the second time that Democrats have rushed to denounce it.
In May, Romney visited Bluford Charter School, a charter school in Philadelphia to highlight his support for charter schools to African-Americans. Most of the students in the school are African-American, and the school is run by a charter-school firm, Universal Companies.
That was an aggressive move, because it was aimed at Obama's base in the largest city in swing-state Pennsylvania.
Multiple polls shows that African-Americans are the strongest supporters of charter schools.
A July poll of 528 registered voters in swing-state North Carolina showed that 70 percent of state residents - but 85 percent of African-Americans - support charter schools. The poll was conducted by the Center for Education Reform.
An April 2011 poll of New Jersey residents by Rutgers-Eagleton showed that 31 percent of whites and 52 percent of African-Americans support charter schools.
A November 2011 poll in California showed that 52 percent of registered voters had a favorable view of charter schools. "African American respondents expressed the most support for charter schools," said a Los Angeles Times article about the poll of 1,057 registered voters, which was conducted by a Democratic polling firm, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.
In response, Democratic Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter brought his Democratic allies into the neighborhood to heckle the May Romney event, and also to hold a press conference where he could slam Romney's offer.
"Romney has always opposed investing in our children's education ... which is why I don't understand why he is here today," Nutter claimed.
Romney's push for charter schools follows the successful GOP effort to restore federal funding for charter schools in D.C.
That effort was led by House Speaker John Boehner. Most of the D.C. charter-school students are African-American, and their parents protested vigorously when Obama nearly eliminated the program in 2009.
Obama sends his two children to Sidwell Friends School in D.C., at an annual cost of roughly $30,000 each.

BLOG: JOE BIDEN BACKS UP A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (CALLER)
By Jim Treacher
Daily Caller, July 12, 2012
I'm just not sure which one.
Biden spoke at the NAACP convention earlier today, because Obama couldn't make it. (Barry's so busy today that they didn't have time to write any of it down in the official White House schedule.) Apparently, after it was patiently explained to ol' Sheriff Joe that the event has nothing to do with college sports, he tore up his prepared speech and just winged it. Here's a little piece:
"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."
Well... yeah. That's the whole point. Every day, more and more people are imagining those very things. They don't like what's going on in those institutions and want to fix them. What they don't imagine is that Obama is a good president.
Again and again, those poor slobs in the Obama campaign put Biden out there. Again and again, he manages to undercut his own team in the most entertainingly unpredictable ways. Is he just a garrulous, well-meaning oaf, or is there something else going on there?
Did Joe switch sides? Is he a sleeper agent? Is he trying to get the other guy elected?

Reminds me of something I wrote a few weeks before the 2008 election. Not to brag or anything, but I think I called it pretty well...

Biden Clarifies Earlier Remarks on His Dread of an Obama Administration

Richmond, VA, Oct. 22 - At a campaign stop in a Richmond-area Denny's earlier today, Delaware Senator and Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joe Biden followed up on his controversial claim last Sunday that within the first six months of an Obama administration, America would "have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

Biden's statement to the press:

"Ya know, I kinda put my foot in my mouth the other day... [chuckle] You folks know how I can get, with the words and the talking and the babbling and the yammering and so forth. But I just wanted to clarify those remarks. I know I speak for Obama when I say that we are ready to lead. Come what may, we are gonna be out there in front. Because I gotta tell ya, when this great man, this fantastic young African-American kid who I'm proud to call my closest friend, when he becomes president, the American people need to know that you are all gonna be grabbin' your ankles every April 15 for the rest of your probably-shortened lives.

"I mean, the taxes, they're gonna be unbelievable. Holy f***. So we'll need your help with that. You're gonna have to pay 'em. There's no way we can repel a full-scale nationwide tax revolt without resorting to nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, at least in the scenarios they've shown me, so we're countin' on you to do the right thing.

"And I'd say to America, this land that I love: You've all seen what an agent of change Barack Obama is. He's brought together people from all walks of life. He's inspired every single person in this country, no matter who you are or what you look like or even if you're into, y'know, the funny stuff. [chuckle] Which is gonna be a great comfort when the Obama administration strangles the U.S. economy and sets off a long, terrifying race war.

"It is gonna suck beyond anything you could ever imagine. I'm not even kidding. I have a great fondness and admiration for the African-American people, I think they've done some great work over the years, but when push comes to shove, I know which side I'm on. You follow me?

"But Obama is gonna be there, and he's gonna learn the ropes, probably. It'll be really hard for you guys to survive in the nightmarish, decaying wasteland he'll make of this great nation, but those are the sorts of experiences that shape a man. And I know he's gonna come through it okay, at least in terms of his own personal safety."

Before being escorted out of the restaurant by frenzied campaign aides, Biden added, "And don't forget Iran! They know he's a pushover. Which is one of the things I love about the guy, he's a pussycat, but these animals? Boy oh boy. Can you say 'suitcase nuke'? I don't know for sure which city, but I'm guessing one of the smaller Midwest towns we're not watching that closely, maybe Omaha or Akron or one of those deals. You should probably start evacuating now.

"Okay, whoa, looks like my time's up. Easy on the threads, fellas, it's a rental. [chuckle]"

BIDEN DEFENDS OBAMA AT NAACP (DAYBEST)

The Daily Beast, July 13, 2012

A day after Mitt Romney was booed at the NAACP convention, Vice President Joe Biden charmed the same audience on Thursday with a spirited speech outlining the successes of the Obama administration. Biden denounced the voter-ID laws taking root across the country that many believe will keep minorities from the polls. And he encouraged the crowd to vote. "When you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said. He also told the audience that a Romney administration could roll back the gains the black community has made over the past several decades.

BIDEN AND ROMNEY DUCK TOUGH ISSUES, JUST DIFFERENT ONES (NATJO)

By Rebecca Kaplan

National Journal, July 13, 2012

Drawing a stark contrast with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday vigorously defended President Obama's first term in office and showered a friendly audience at the NAACP annual convention with references to issues like voting rights that Romney deftly sidestepped the day before.

But Biden also avoided some uncomfortable subjects for the Democratic administration, including

making no mention of the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among African-Americans, something Romney highlighted in his speech to the convention audience the day before. Nonetheless, Biden's remarks sparked loud applause and whistles of appreciation from the liberal audience, much different than the tepid reception and booing that greeted Romney on Wednesday.

"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," Biden said, as he keyed up a round of policy comparisons that included education, taxes, and health care. Romney's vision, he said, is "basically a throwback to the 50s," - a biting reference to the decade before the civil-rights movement liberated black Americans from institutionalized segregation.

Biden, who is playing the role of attack dog in Obama's reelection campaign, devoted the most time to criticizing the Republicans' stance on civil rights, alluding to the passage of a series of voter-identification laws supported by GOP state legislatures around the country that Democrats say are designed to disenfranchise minority voters. The issue is the main topic of civil-rights organization's 103rd convention, taking place in Houston.

The vice president said that Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder "see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Shouts of "No!" came from the crowd. A Romney Justice Department would be guided by someone like Robert Bork, the Reagan-era Supreme Court nominee who was rejected in part because of opposition from civil-rights and women's groups, he said.

"This ain't your father's Republican Party," Biden said. "They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier. Where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."

Romney did not bring up the voter-ID laws in his speech on Wednesday, training his focus on the still sour economy, joblessness and the unemployment rate among African Americans, which is far higher than the national average of 8.1 percent. Romney won applause from the crowd for many of his points on the economy, but was booed when he vowed to repeal President Obama's health care law.

Biden offered a full-throated defense of the law's popular provisions, such as coverage for children on their parents' policies until age 26 and a ban on preexisting condition denials, and claimed that the Republican health care proposals would be "controlled by insurance companies."

He also accused House Republicans of a concerted campaign of obstructionism with the goal of making sure Obama's first term failed. "It was on the easy, obvious things where we got no cooperation," Biden said, noting efforts to extend the payroll-tax cut, help ensure equal pay for women, and raise the debt ceiling as examples.

Obama did not appear in person at the convention, citing scheduling conflicts. Instead, he recorded a short video message for the audience in which he urged them to "keep standing with me."

"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said in the video, which preceded Biden's speech. "At the NAACP, you have always believed in the American promise. That idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try.

"That's why you fought so hard for good jobs, and a quality education, and a justice system that treats everybody fairly. That's why you helped make health care reform a reality. That's why you're still fighting today, because you know that our mission right now is not just to recover from the recession, it is to reclaim the security that so many Americans have lost," Obama said.

Obama addressed the organization four years ago during his first presidential campaign. Twiala Dotson, 43, a Houston teacher who was at that event, said she thinks it's a good idea that Biden was sent this time around because he could aggressively defend the president's record.

"President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe Biden, being the pit bull that he is, he was the man that needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said," Dotson said.

Biden was booed only once -- when he said he was about to end his speech.

BIDEN RALLIES BLACKS TO OBAMA AT NAACP (HILL)
By Jonathan Easley

The Hill, July 13, 2012
Vice President Biden rallied black voters to President Obama's cause during an address Thursday to the NAACP.
Biden came in place of President Obama, who excused himself with a scheduling conflict. But that did not appear to disappoint the audience, which cheered Biden with vigor one day after booing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney.
The vice president played to the crowd, remarking on its history as a civil rights group and suggesting Romney and Republicans would work against the organization on issues ranging from voter rights to racial profiling.
The future, Biden said, will be one where voter rights are expanded and racial profiling disappears - and he suggested that would not be the case without Democrats in power.
"We see the future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," Biden continued. "Where racial profiling is a thing from the past, where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. ... Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again? We went through these battles, I didn't think we'd be back."
Democrats have been highlighting voter rights and allegations of suppression by Republicans as they work to keep turnout by black voters high this fall. High turnout by blacks would help Obama, who carried the black vote in a landslide in 2008 and leads Romney 92 percent to 2 among black voters, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released on Wednesday.
The Department of Justice and the state of Florida are suing one another over Florida Gov. Rick Scott's attempt to purge voter rolls of ineligible voters in his state. Attorney General Eric Holder also highlighted voter rights in an address earlier this week to the NAACP.
Romney was booed Wednesday after vowing to repeal "ObamaCare," which Biden championed in his speech. He said the president had pushed the healthcare law despite political risk and said it would increase insurance coverage for blacks.
"It required him early on to use up almost all of his political capitol," Biden said, "but he was right, he cut $100 billion from the federal debt over the next 10 years, providing access to ... 8 million black Americans who would never have had insurance."
Romney in his speech noted high black unemployment and vowed that blacks would be better off with him in the White House than Obama. He also highlighted his father's work in the civil rights era.
Obama, who last addressed the convention in 2009, sent a video message that played ahead of Biden. Some questioned the move, but the crowd responded emphatically to Biden, booing him only when he said he was close to ending his speech.
Biden closed by turning to the courts, which through the Brown vs. the Board of Education case and other cases in the civil rights era, hold a deep meaning with the NAACP audience.
"Close your eyes and imagine what the Romney justice department will look like [if Romney is president]," Biden said. "Imagine who is likely to be picked as attorney general, the head of civil rights division.
"Imagine, this to me is one of the most critical issues, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency. I believe this election will come down to character and conviction ... and I don't think it's even a close call. It's time for the NAACP to ... inspire a generation," he said.

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC WHIP DEFENDS OBAMA'S ABSENCE FROM NAACP CONVENTION (HILL)
By Geneva Sands
The Hill, July 13, 2012
House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (Md.) defended the White House on Thursday for selecting Vice President Biden to speak at the annual NAACP convention instead of President Obama.
"I think the vice president clearly is representing the president and himself, is going to talk about the policies that this administration has put forward to try to turn the recession around that they inherited," said Hoyer on CNN's "Starting Point."

The top Democrat said the president and vice president are both "well-known" to the NAACP and the African-American community.

"I think those policies are going to be supported by that organization and by, frankly, Americans across the country that understand how hard the president and vice president have been working to get this economy moving," Hoyer said.
Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who spoke at the event in Houston on Wednesday, took what appeared to be a dig at Obama's absence from the convention during his speech, telling the audience that if elected president he would say "yes" to attending next year's event.
"I can't promise that you and I will agree on every issue. But I do promise that your hospitality to me today will be returned. We will know one another, and work to common purposes. I will seek your counsel," said Romney during his speech. "And if I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes."
The GOP hopeful received boos from the crowd when he promised to repeal President Obama's signature healthcare law.
"If our goal is jobs, we must, must stop spending over a trillion dollars more than we earn. To do this, I will eliminate expensive non-essential programs like ObamaCare," said Romney to a chorus of booing.
Hoyer joined other Democrats and Romney himself in acknowledging that criticism of the repealing the healthcare law was to be expected at the convention.
"Clearly, I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction. The African-American community feels very strongly that the ObamaCare bill, the Affordable Care Act that will provide access to affordable, quality healthcare to all Americans, is a very important piece of legislation," Hoyer said.
Hoyer was on CNN promoting the Democrats' refurbished "Make It in America" package, intended to create jobs and promote exports by strengthening trade enforcement, hiking infrastructure spending and eliminating tax benefits for companies that move jobs overseas.
The Democratic whip accused the Republican leadership of refusing to bring the bill to the House floor.
"In my opinion, had they put President Obama's agenda on the floor, had we passed that, had the president signed it, we would have created 1 to 2 million additional jobs in this country," he said.

BLOG: BIDEN TO NAACP: 'THIS IS PREACHING TO THE CHOIR' (WEEKSTAN)
By Daniel Halper
Weekly Standard, July 12, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden told a NAACP meeting in Houston, Texas that he had to cut his remarks short "but this is preaching to the choir."
"The House of Representatives Republicans voted affirmatively to prevent the Justice Department from even investigating whether or not there was voter suppression, " Biden said. "Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir. Let me close, my friends, by saying, I mean this sincerely, just close your eyes and imagine. Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like."
Biden, CBS reporter Mark Knoller reports, exited the stage with Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" playing in the background.
President Obama did not attend the conference, but delivered a video address to the group. Republican Mitt Romney delivered a speech there yesterday.

ROMNEY PLAYS THE RACE CARD (TIME)
By Touré
Time, July 13, 2012
Mitt Romney went to the NAACP's National Convention planning to get booed. It was no mistake. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi told Bloomberg TV she believes "it was a calculated move on his part to get booed at the NAACP convention." When Romney called the Affordable Care Act "Obamacare," he purposely used a term that would not work with the audience in the room. When he said, "If you want a President who'll make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him. Take a look!" he was virtually taunting them the way a pro wrestler who's playing a villain eggs on the crowd saying things he knows will elicit boos.
Why would he bother going to the NAACP convention to get booed? Because the real audience

wasn't in the room. He wanted to be booed by that black audience so that white conservatives - who still don't see him as one of them - and white undecideds would see that he's unafraid to talk down to black people, to offend them, to be their villain, to make them boo. The result is that he comes off looking tough or gains sympathy. Either way, he gets a soundbite that will bounce through the cable news echo chamber and elicit an emotional reaction from white voters. Romney's performance wasn't intended to win more black votes, it was intended to help win more white votes.

Tim Alberta of the conservative-leaning National Journal read Romney's performance in heroic terms rarely applied to this candidate. "With the critical eyes of the political world resting squarely upon him, Romney marched defiantly into the lion's den and delivered a speech that was direct, assertive and dispassionate," Alberta wrote. So blacks, in this analogy, are ferocious wild animals who should be feared, only tameable by the most fearless of men, which, Romney supposedly proved he is by facing them down and talking tough.

Republicans don't always treat the NAACP this way. When George W. Bush went to the convention in 2000 as a candidate for president he said respectfully, "The party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln," addressing why the GOP is not loved by black voters while nodding to the party's greatest racial justice achievement. Bush said, "Racism, despite all our progress, still exists," and spoke of racial profiling by police. He spoke to the people in the room, not using them to help himself - just as Joe Biden did a day after Romney's speech.

Romney's campaign is built around the idea that as a successful businessman he understands how to shape the economy to aid business and create jobs that will get this country going again. Okay, so why not tailor that message to lay out a plan to combat the black unemployment rate, which is 14.4%, almost double the white unemployment rate? He has said nothing about that. His Mormon faith is central to who he is, so why not speak to the Mormon Church's history of excluding blacks from the priesthood until 1978 when Romney was 31?

Romney did tell the NAACP, "Always in both parties there have been men and women of integrity, decency and humility who have called injustice by its name. Someone who set a standard of conduct and made us better by their example. For me that man is my father." Romney's father, Michigan Governor George Romney, was unquestionably progressive on racial issues. He marched with civil rights activists in 1963, agitated for a civil rights plank in the GOP party platform in 1964, rejected the 1964 presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater because of Goldwater's regressive position on civil rights, and fought housing discrimination as Nixon's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. When Mitt Romney goes to the NAACP to play politics and use those black attendees as props meant to help amplify his message with white voters outside the room, he reminds us that he is not living up to the standard of integrity and decency set by his beloved father.

AT NAACP, BIDEN HITS ROMNEY ADVISER BORK OVER CIVIL RIGHTS (WT)

By Dave Boyer

Washington Times, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joseph R. Biden on Thursday attacked former Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, an adviser to GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, for plotting to roll back civil rights gains if Mr. Romney defeats President Obama in November.

"Just close your eyes and imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Mr. Biden said at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's annual gathering in Houston. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general or the head of the Civil Rights Division."

Mr. Bork, a former solicitor general in the Nixon administration who was rejected by the Senate in 1987 for a seat on the Supreme Court, is a co-chairman of the Romney campaign's justice advisory committee.

The vice president said a Romney administration would make voting "harder, not easier," and added that the election "is a fight for the heart and soul of America."

The emphasis on control of the Justice Department drew an enthusiastic response from the delegates, who approved an "emergency resolution" Tuesday denouncing the House's bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. in criminal and civil contempt of Congress. The

resolution called the votes against Mr. Holder, under fire from lawmakers over his handling of the botched "Fast and Furious" gunrunning operation, as a "travesty of justice."
The NAACP said the resolution was intended to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."
Mr. Romney spoke at the NAACP convention a day earlier, saying he is the candidate who will improve the economic condition of blacks in America. The audience booed Mr. Romney when he pledged to repeal "Obamacare," although many in the audience did give him a standing ovation when he finished his remarks.
Mr. Biden, by contrast, was greeted with cheers throughout his address, and often with calls of affirmation as he listed the differences between President Obama and the Republicans.
With black unemployment at 14.4 percent, the vice president didn't talk much about jobs, instead focusing on themes of economic fairness and opportunity.
"We see education as the single most important criteria for minority children," Mr. Biden said, claiming that education "doesn't play a central role" in Mr. Romney's agenda.
"It's on the back burner," he said.
Mr. Obama chose not to speak at the civil rights group's meeting this year. His campaign said he had a scheduling conflict. But the president had a light schedule at the White House on Thursday before embarking for campaign trips in Virginia on Friday and Saturday.
The president did send greetings to the convention through a taped video address that was played in the main hall.
In 2008, Mr. Obama received 95 percent of the black vote.
"I'm sorry I can't be here in person with you this year," Mr. Obama said. "I stand on your shoulders. I'm proud of all that you do."
Mr. Obama did speak to the group in 2009; first lady Michelle Obama addressed the conference last year.
The president is scheduled to speak to the National Urban League on July 25.
Mr. Biden outlined differences between the Obama administration and Mr. Romney's agenda on health care, energy and women's rights.
"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision," Mr. Biden said. "And it will not surprise you - I don't think it's even a close call. So it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done ... To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."
Mr. Romney told the convention that his policies would help "families of any color more than the policies and leadership of President Obama."
"I have no hidden agenda," Mr. Romney said. "If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him."

BIDEN TO NAACP: ROMNEY MIGHT SUPPORT RACIAL PROFILING, TAKE AWAY VOTING RIGHTS (WASHEX)
By Joel Gehrke
Washington Examiner, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden suggested that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was trying to re-fight the battles of the civil rights era, as he indicated that a Justice Department run by Romney might support racial profiling and support voter suppression.
"We, the president and I and Eric [Holder] and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished; where racial profiling is a thing of the past; where access to the ballot is expanded, and unencumbered;where there are no distinctons made on the basis of race or gender in access to housing and lending; and so much more," Biden told the NAACP today. "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"
Moments later, he suggested that Romney opposed all those civil rights. "Just close your eyes and imagine - imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like." Biden told the crowd. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork? Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as Attorney General or head of the Civil Rights division?"

BIDEN TO NAACP: 'IMAGINE WHAT A ROMNEY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WOULD LOOK LIKE'

(CALLER)
By Tthew Boyle
Daily Caller, July 13, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden pushed NAACP convention attendees to contrast President Barack Obama's Department of Justice with a potential Mitt Romney DOJ.
"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Biden told the NAACP audience on Thursday. "Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."
The Biden comment likely sits well with NAACP members as, on Tuesday, the NAACP unanimously passed an "emergency resolution" calling the bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric Holder in criminal and civil contempt of Congress a "travesty of justice." The resolution is meant for the NAACP to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."
As the resolution passed, Holder got rock-star treatment, walking around shaking the hands of many of those in attendance.
During his speech at the NAACP on Wednesday, Romney avoided justice issues to focus instead on the economy and education.
Romney hasn't said much on what his DOJ would look like if he wins the November election, but he has criticized Obama's DOJ, especially Holder. "There's not very much that Eric Holder does that I agree with," Romney said at a campaign event late in 2011 in New Hampshire. "I have to wonder how it is that the president continues to support him, and the answer must be the president agrees with him."
"Eric Holder would be long gone by the time I came around [as president of the United States]," he added.
Romney has called for Holder's resignation over Operation Fast and Furious, too. He joins 130 House members, eight U.S. senators and two sitting governors in demanding Holder's resignation over the scandal. (SEE ALSO: TheDC's complete Fast and Furious coverage)
"Either Mr. Holder himself should resign or the president should ask for his resignation or remove him," Romney said in early December 2011. "It's not acceptable for him to continue in that position given the fact that he has misled Congress and entirely botched the investigation of the Fast and Furious program."
Romney also supports voter ID laws - something Holder and Obama's administration vehemently oppose.
The former Massachusetts governor has also made Obama's decision to assert executive privilege over Fast and Furious documents a bit of a campaign issue lately. On Sean Hannity's radio program and on Neil Cavuto's Fox News Channel show this week, Romney responded to Obama's "transparency" attacks on him by pointing out how the president is concealing Fast and Furious documents.
Romney campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul didn't immediately respond to The Daily Caller's request for comment in response to Biden's remarks.

IT'S ALL POLITICS: BIDEN SAYS IT, SO OBAMA DOESN'T HAVE TO (NPR)
By Liz Halloran
NPR, July 12, 2012
President Obama may have disappointed the NAACP by appearing only via brief video message Thursday at the civil rights group's annual gathering - especially after Mitt Romney had personally taken the stage a day earlier.
But sending in Vice President Biden to stir things up, just 24 hours after Romney was booed while delivering a conservative message meant to resonate beyond the walls of the Houston convention center, seemed to work out just fine for Obama.
Biden in recent days has offered up some of the Obama campaign's most pointed criticisms of the Republican challenger: "Mitt Romney wants you to show your papers, but he won't show us his," he told a Hispanic civil rights group on Tuesday, referring in one sound bite both to Romney's immigration stance and his refusal to make public several years' tax returns.

So Biden has the leeway to be more political, more incendiary than a sitting president.
Case in point:
The president, in Thursday's video message, served up generalities like this: "No matter who you are or what you look like, or where you come from, America is the place you can make it if you try."
The vice president, facing a raucously supportive crowd, served up red meat like this: "Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." (Earlier this week, Biden at another event used the same line, but asked supporters to "imagine what it will look like for women with six [Justice Antonin] Scalias on the bench.")
We listened Thursday to Biden, who characterized the coming election as a "fight for the heart and soul of America," with an ear toward what he had to say that Obama, as president, likely couldn't, or maybe wouldn't say at such an event at this point in the campaign.
Here are some highlights:
On voting rights, in light of Republican-led efforts to pass state voter ID laws
"I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember. Remember what [the NAACP], at its core, was all about. It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"
On the Republican Party
"I remember working with Republicans - and, by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party - remember working with Republicans on 'motor voter,' on expanding the franchise, on early voting, on voting by mail. They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier."
On civil rights
"Close your eyes and imagine - imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like. Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division."
Biden, long known for his verbosity, drew some of his own boos, and cries of "no" - but, surprisingly, not for going on too long, but for indicating he was about to wrap up.
As he exited the stage, the Stevie Wonder song "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" blared from the public address system. And, in what's likely a rare moment for Biden, he left behind an adoring audience that appeared to want more.

THE TWO-WAY: CHEERS FOR BIDEN AT NAACP CONVENTION AS HE CONTRASTS OBAMA AND ROMNEY (NPR)
By Korva Coleman
NPR, July 12, 2012
A day after Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke to the nation's oldest civil right organization, Vice President Joe Biden appeared at the NAACP's annual convention. He quickly tackled one issue that drew Romney sustained boos â€" the 2010 health care overhaul.
Biden appeared in place of President Obama, who made a brief videotaped address thanking the group for its work. He walked out to warm applause, and several of his remarks were interrupted by shouts of agreement.
When he mentioned what he sees as the benefits of the health care law, the shouts changed to roars of approval. Biden declared that 8 million black Americans now have health care insurance under the new law, and thanked Obama for his leadership.
Biden spelled out further differences between Obama's campaign and Romney's on health care, the environment, equal pay for women and education. He claimed Romney's tax reforms are skewed for the wealthy at the expense of domestic programs that help less affluent people. Biden asserted more than 2 million black Americans will see their taxes go up under the tax plan Romney is proposing.
As NPR's Liz Halloran reports, when Romney yesterday said President Obama blamed the rich for economic problems and contrasted his own efforts as helping the middle class: "The audience reaction? Crickets."
But Biden's hugest response came on voter ID laws, a subject the civil rights group is keenly tracking. Romney did not address the matter yesterday. After discussing the NAACP's long history of fighting for African Americans' right to vote, Biden queried, "did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

Biden said ballot access should be "expanded and unencumbered". Then he recalled his years in the Senate, where he worked with the GOP on voting issues like motor voter, early voting and voting by mail. But times have changed, he said, adding: "This ain't your father's Republican party."
The vice president concluded by urging convention delegates to imagine a changed Justice Department under a President Romney. And he warned Romney would make substantial changes to the Supreme Court.

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS:

EDITORIAL: THE FED ON THE SPOT (WP)
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
THE U.S. ECONOMY is in the doldrums, as June's disappointing employment figures showed. Europe and China, the world's other two economic engines, are also sputtering. Time for the Federal Reserve to administer another dose of monetary stimulus, to head off a potentially disastrous global downturn?
That's the advice of many experts, including the presidents of the Chicago, Boston and San Francisco Federal Reserve banks. The Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee holds its next policy-making meeting at the end of this month: Chairman Ben S. Bernanke will be under some pressure to heed the calls for a third round of "quantitative easing." His problem is that it's not clear whether that's the right course.
To be sure, the risk of inflation in the short run is minimal, as pro-QE3 economists argue. Yet it is also true that the economy is achieving paltry growth despite having absorbed a phenomenal amount of stimulus, fiscal and monetary, since the crisis hit in 2008. The annual federal deficit has averaged more than 9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over the past three years. It is on course to be 7 percent of GDP in fiscal 2012. The Fed has cut interest rates to near zero and purchased $2 trillion in mortgage-backed securities and Treasury debt, a figure equal to roughly 13 percent of GDP. And last month the Fed expanded its so-called "twist" program, announcing that it would hold down long-term interest rates by swapping an additional $267 billion in short-term notes for long-term bonds.
As Mr. Bernanke himself has said many times, these policy innovations, while necessary, also put the Fed in uncharted territory; the risks and benefits of the actions already taken, let alone those of further balance-sheet expansion, are hard to specify. The Fed may also need to save ammunition to help deal with a financial collapse in Europe.
If QE3 works at all, it would be by reducing the cost of investment capital and by boosting asset prices, so as to make consumers feel wealthier - and thus more free-spending. Yet with well over $1 trillion sitting on corporate balance sheets and mortgage rates at all-time lows, it's not clear that the economy's problem is a lack of cheap money. Rather, slow growth may reflect structural factors, such as the huge household debt burden, which is declining but still equal to 83.6 percent of GDP. Then there's the federal government's out-of-whack tax and entitlement policies, and the uncertainty they generate.
By effectively transferring much private and government debt onto its own balance sheet, the Fed bought time for the U.S. economy to rebalance under relatively benign conditions. Companies and households have used the time so far to deleverage significantly. More monetary easing now might buy the economy even more time to heal. But soon it will be government's turn to adjust; the Fed can prop up growth, not engineer a permanent escape from fiscal reality.

EDITORIAL: PENN STATE'S AWFUL TRUTHS (WP)
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
ON THURSDAY - after seven months, 400 interviews and some 3.5 million documents - the results of the investigation into the Penn State sexual abuse scandal were finally released. The university's board of trustees was right to launch this inquest, led by Louis Freeh, the former FBI director and now a private investigator. A full-scale, public inquiry into the Jerry Sandusky scandal was the necessary first step toward rebuilding a fractured community.
In a news conference Thursday, Mr. Freeh condemned the university's leadership - including Joe

Paterno, the school's legendary head football coach who died in January - for failing to protect the innocent children Mr. Sandusky assaulted. "Our most saddening and sobering finding," Mr. Freeh said, "is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims. The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children who Sandusky victimized."

It had become clear as the scandal unfolded that these men - Graham Spanier, Penn State's former president; Gary Schultz, former vice president; Tim Curley, former athletic director; and Mr. Paterno - avoided taking aggressive action even when they received reports of Mr. Sandusky's abuses. Mr. Schultz and Mr. Curley have been charged with perjury and failing to report what they knew. The Freeh investigation, however, sheds sickening light on the extent to which these men actively pursued a cover-up at the expense of Mr. Sandusky's victims.

Among the most remarkable revelations in the report is the role that Mr. Paterno played in the scandal. Although e-mails leaked late in the investigation revealed that the coach was influential in the group's decision not to report Mr. Sandusky after a 2001 incident, it appears that he also lied before a grand jury about whether he was aware of a 1998 incident involving Mr. Sandusky. As the investigation showed, Mr. Paterno was well aware of that incident and took no action, "even though Sandusky had been a key member of his coaching staff for almost 30 years and had an office just steps away from Mr. Paterno's."

Unfortunately, that is far from the investigation's worst discovery. As if allowing an adult to continue sexually abusing children for more than a decade wasn't bad enough, these officials somehow managed to put Mr. Sandusky's victims at even greater risk. In 2001, for instance, after an assistant reported seeing Mr. Sandusky in the shower sexually assaulting a boy, the only person these men alerted was Mr. Sandusky himself, the only one who knew the boy's identity. That Penn State's administrators and coaches would actively engage in a cover-up is unconscionable, but their "striking lack of empathy" for the victims is horrifying.

In the end, the root of the problem seems to be what the report calls Penn State's "culture of reverence for the football program that is ingrained at all levels of the campus community." This culture is ultimately what silenced janitors from reporting what they witnessed and university officials from fulfilling their obvious moral obligation to the children Mr. Sandusky attacked. The Freeh investigation should serve as a red flag for any similar environment in which the powerful are unquestioned and protected, all for the sake of a game.

EDITORIAL: D.C. COUNCIL OVERREACHES - AGAIN - INTO SCHOOL PRIORITIES (WP)
Washington Post, July 13, 2012

EVER SINCE RESPONSIBILITY for D.C. schools was switched to the mayor, D.C. Council members have struggled with what role they have to play. When Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) chaired the council, the tendency was to hector and second-guess then-chancellor Michelle A. Rhee. Former council chairman Kwame R. Brown (D) flitted from issue to issue, trying to distract attention from the legal troubles that eventually forced his resignation. Now comes newly named chairman Phil Mendelson (D-At Large), and it's not a good sign that one of his first moves is to call a hearing to set educational priorities - a hearing from which Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson is excluded.

The committee of the whole, the council's de facto education committee, will meet to "receive testimony regarding the important issues confronting public education" so as to help establish priorities. We would assume it would be important to include in that conversation the professionals charged with educational policy, but a spokeswoman for Mr. Mendelson told us the chancellor wasn't invited because the aim was to hear the public's complaints and comments about the school system. If past hearings are any indication, expect a gripe session in which individual problems - "My child got an unfair report card," "I got a bad teacher evaluation" - will be trotted out.

Mr. Mendelson, selected by his colleagues to replace Mr. Brown, pending November's special election for council chairman, has made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the schools. "I'm disappointed with the pace of reform," he told WAMU's Kojo Nnamdi last month shortly after taking over the council's leadership. Mr. Mendelson, who voted against the 2007 takeover of schools engineered by then-mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D), said, "What we've seen is a lot of controversy regarding test results and still an enormous disparity between the very good schools and the rest of the school system. So I think there's a lot more work to be done."

We think Mr. Mendelson should give more credit to the progress that has occurred with reforms by Ms. Rhee and Ms. Henderson. But there is no denying that he is right about the poor quality of education still being received by too many students. Nor will he get any argument from Ms. Henderson, who is clearheaded about the problems; she has laid out an ambitious agenda for school improvement in a five-year strategic plan that, to our mind, should be the starting point for any discussion of education priorities.

Instead of trying to set itself up as a newly constituted school board, interested only in litigating individual complaints or looking out for parochial ward interests, the council should help establish broad priorities, ensure that money is well spent and hold school officials accountable for results.

COLUMN: ROMNEY CAN GAIN UPPER HAND ON ECONOMIC POLICY BY FOCUSING ON CLASS (WP)

By Michael Gerson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

On economic policy, Barack Obama has left Mitt Romney an opening. The president has responded to a severe, continuing labor market slump with a four-year-old, marginally counterproductive tax increase proposal. His current economic agenda has little relevance to anything except his current political requirements: picking a political fight on tax-code equity to distract attention from his economic stewardship. It is the triumph of tactics and the surrender of seriousness.

In response, Romney put a single, characteristically hesitant toe through the opening. His NAACP speech Wednesday featured rich themes of promoting "equal opportunity," building "human capital" and lifting people from poverty. But Romney's supporting policies - on health care, energy, education reform - were resolutely untailored and uncreative.

"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP," Romney said, "that I give across the country." Apparently convinced that even a generic Republican can defeat President Obama, Romney seems intent on running as one.

To fill out an opportunity agenda, the Romney campaign might start by perusing a new report by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts, which offers some challenging instruction across the political spectrum.

The Pew report analyzes how the incomes of families today compare to those of their parents' generation. The good news: On every rung of the economic ladder, median income has gone up - not equally, but significantly. Even among the bottom 20 percent, income rose 74 percent between the two generations. Liberals need to accommodate the fact that the poor have not gotten poorer. The benefits of economic growth have been shared.

But relative mobility - the chance of rising to a higher income quintile - is stalled, particularly near the bottom. Even though many earn a bit more than their parents did, they aren't moving up the income ladder. About 36 percent of families have actually fallen behind in relative terms, which drags America's overall level of mobility to below that of many European countries.

Conservatives must take seriously that America's poor are starting lower and rising less easily than in other developed nations - a problem often related to educational attainment and family structure. Income is not the only thing that matters. In the absence of mobility, inequality hardens into class division. The American ideal requires a realistic prospect of turning ability into achievement.

Witnessing a serious political discussion on the topic of mobility would require a plane ticket to London. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's recent speech to the Sutton Trust indicted an economic system characterized by "entitlement at one end and exclusion at the other" and touted a series of interesting policies to close the educational attainment gap between rich and poor. Labor Party leader Ed Miliband countered, in typical Labor fashion, that leveling equality is more important than opportunity. Along the way, Miliband delivered this trans-Atlantic taunt: "If you want the American Dream - go to Finland."

Clegg bluntly raises the issue of social class, including his own - hanging a lantern on his privileged, Cambridge-educated background. "I know some people will say that I should keep quiet about social mobility," he says. "That my birth, my education and my opportunities mean I have no right to speak up. I couldn't disagree more. If people who've benefited from the system don't speak up, we'll never get anywhere. . . . I was lucky. But it shouldn't be a question of luck."

The topic of class comes more naturally to British than to American politicians. But the United States has a class problem, as does Romney. And Romney could help himself by addressing both.

As a governing matter, encouraging social mobility could eventually be a unifying, bipartisan goal. As a political matter, it would provide Romney a particular advantage. Obama's message is now in full Labor Party mode: Soak the rich. But the smartest Republican response is not to defend the rich. It is to defend a fluid society in which everyone has the possibility of becoming richer. Economic redistribution is not the answer, but economic growth is not sufficient, either. Upward mobility requires the broad diffusion of skills and social capital.

Romney, while disarmingly recognizing his own advantages, should demonstrate some market-oriented innovation in extending advantages to others: promoting early-childhood education, high school completion, college attendance and graduation, parenting skills and wealth-building among the disadvantaged. It would be a powerful political message, addressing a serious need, in a manner consistent with conservative ideals.

COLUMN: THE ISLAMIST ASCENDANCY (WP)
By Charles Krauthammer
Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Post-revolutionary Libya appears to have elected a relatively moderate pro-Western government. Good news, but tentative because Libya is less a country than an oil well with a long beach and myriad tribes. Popular allegiance to a central national authority is weak. Yet even if the government of Mahmoud Jibril is able to rein in the militias and establish a functioning democracy, it will be the Arab Spring exception. Consider:

Tunisia and Morocco, the most Westernized of all Arab countries, elected Islamist governments. Moderate, to be sure, but Islamist still. Egypt, the largest and most influential, has experienced an Islamist sweep. The Muslim Brotherhood didn't just win the presidency. It won nearly half the seats in parliament, while more openly radical Islamists won 25 percent. Combined, they command more than 70 percent of parliament - enough to control the writing of a constitution (which is why the generals hastily dissolved parliament).

As for Syria, if and when Bashar al-Assad falls, the Brotherhood will almost certainly inherit power. Jordan could well be next. And the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing (Hamas) already controls Gaza. What does this mean? That the Arab Spring is a misnomer. This is an Islamist ascendancy, likely to dominate Arab politics for a generation.

It constitutes the third stage of modern Arab political history. Stage I was the semicolonial-monarchic rule, dominated by Britain and France, of the first half of the 20th century. Stage II was the Arab nationalist era - secular, socialist, anti-colonial and anti-clerical - ushered in by the 1952 Free Officers Revolt in Egypt.

Its vehicle was military dictatorship, and Gamal Nasser led the way. He raised the flag of pan-Arabism, going so far as changing Egypt's name to the United Arab Republic and merging his country with Syria in 1958. That absurd experiment - it lasted exactly three years - was to have been the beginning of a grand Arab unification, which, of course, never came. Nasser also fiercely persecuted Islamists - as did his nationalist successors, down to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and the Baathists, Iraqi (Saddam Hussein) and Syrian (the Assads) - as the reactionary antithesis to Arab modernism.

But the self-styled modernism of the Arab-nationalist dictators proved to be a dismal failure. It produced dysfunctional, semi-socialist, bureaucratic, corrupt regimes that left the citizenry (except where papered over by oil bounties) mired in poverty, indignity and repression.

Hence the Arab Spring, serial uprisings that spread east from Tunisia in early 2011. Many Westerners naively believed the future belonged to the hip, secular, tweeting kids of Tahrir Square. Alas, this sliver of Westernization was no match for the highly organized, widely supported, politically serious Islamists who effortlessly swept them aside in national elections.

This was not a Facebook revolution but the beginning of an Islamist one. Amid the ruins of secular nationalist pan-Arabism, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to solve the conundrum of Arab stagnation and marginality. "Islam is the answer," it preached and carried the day.

But what kind of political Islam? On that depends the future. The moderate Turkish version or the radical Iranian one?

To be sure, Recep Erdogan's Turkey is no paragon. The increasingly authoritarian Erdogan has broken the military, neutered the judiciary and persecuted the press. There are more journalists in prison in Turkey than in China. Nonetheless, for now, Turkey remains relatively pro-Western (though unreliably so) and relatively democratic (compared to its Islamic neighborhood).

For now, the new Islamist ascendancy in Arab lands has taken on the more benign Turkish aspect. Inherently so in Morocco and Tunisia; by external constraint in Egypt, where the military sees itself as guardian of the secular state, precisely as did Turkey's military in the 80 years from Ataturk to Erdogan.

Genuinely democratic rule may yet come to Arab lands. Radical Islam is the answer to nothing, as demonstrated by the repression, social backwardness and civil strife of Taliban Afghanistan, Islamist Sudan and clerical Iran.

As for moderate Islamism, if it eventually radicalizes, it too will fail and bring on yet another future Arab Spring where democracy might actually be the answer (as it likely would have been in Iran, had the mullahs not savagely crushed the Green Revolution). Or it might adapt to modernity, accept the alternation of power with secularists and thus achieve by evolution an authentic Arab-Islamic democratic norm.

Perhaps. The only thing we can be sure of today, however, is that Arab nationalism is dead and Islamism is its successor. This is what the Arab Spring has wrought. The beginning of wisdom is facing that difficult reality.

letters@charleskrauthammer.com

COLUMN: JOE PATERNO'S SHAME (WP)

By Eugene Robinson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Outside the Penn State football stadium stands a statue of legendary coach Joe Paterno, his arm raised in victory. Right next to it, university officials should erect another figure in bronze: a young boy crying out in anguish and being coldly ignored.

Penn State's Board of Trustees commissioned former FBI director Louis Freeh to investigate how child molester Jerry Sandusky - for years one of Paterno's most trusted and loyal assistants - could have committed his awful crimes under the noses of university officials. The answer is simple and shocking: Those officials simply looked the other way.

"The most saddening finding by the Special Investigative Counsel is the total and consistent disregard by the most senior leaders at Penn State for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims," the report states. "Four of the most powerful people at The Pennsylvania State University . . . failed to protect against a child sexual predator harming children for over a decade."

Those four powerful officials include Paterno, who died earlier this year of lung cancer. Almost literally a sainted figure in the world of big-time, big-money college sports, Paterno became aware of seriously inappropriate behavior by Sandusky with young boys at least 14 years ago, according to Freeh's report. Paterno's inaction was shameful.

Most damning is Freeh's finding that in 2001, after an assistant coach saw Sandusky sexually assaulting a young boy in the showers of a Penn State locker room, an intervention by Paterno was apparently instrumental in convincing university officials to sweep the incident under the rug.

The other three men allegedly involved in the cover-up - former athletic director Tim Curley and former vice president Gary Schultz, both of whom face perjury charges, and former university president Graham Spanier - had decided to notify state child-welfare officials, according to Freeh, who had access to private e-mails and notes.

But before any action was taken, Curley wrote to Schultz and Spanier that "after giving it more thought and talking it over with Joe," he had decided he would be more "comfortable" meeting with Sandusky, counseling him to get professional help and telling him "his guests are not permitted to use our facilities."

Note the word "guests," which may be one of the most chilling euphemisms I've ever heard.

University officials didn't even follow through on the inadequate response of cutting off Sandusky's access to Penn State facilities. According to Freeh's report, Sandusky "was allowed to have a key for, and continued to work out in" the athletic complex until November of last year. "If university leaders had not granted Sandusky full use of Penn State's football facilities and supported his ways to 'work with young people through Penn State,' sexual assaults of several young boys on

the Penn State campus might have been prevented."
It goes without saying that Paterno's legacy is forever tarnished. He was head coach at Penn State for 46 years until being fired last year after Sandusky was arrested and the charges against him made public. Paterno's 409 wins are the most of any NCAA Division I coach. His Nittany Lions won two national championships and made 37 bowl appearances. He was especially proud of his football program's record as a model: Penn State avoided the recruiting scandals that involved so many other schools with top-ranked athletic programs, and his football players graduated at an admirable rate.
In a letter he wrote before his death, apparently intended as an op-ed piece, Paterno argued that whatever people might think of his actions in the Sandusky matter, "this is not a football scandal." But that's precisely what it is.
Imagine that an assistant coach of, say, the chess team were caught showering with an 11-year-old boy, as Sandusky was in 1998. Would that chess coach still be around three years later? If he were caught in the act of abusing another young boy in 2001, would the top officials of the university dither and fret for days - without making the slightest attempt to identify and locate the victim? Would the head chess coach be able to convince his superiors that there was no need to call state welfare officials, let alone the police?
The truth is that Joe Paterno was more powerful at Penn State than any athletic director, more powerful even than the university's president. And the reputation of the football program was more important than the safety and well-being of innocent young boys.
eugenerobinson@washpost.com

COLUMN: MISDIAGNOSING ROMNEY'S CAMPAIGN (WP)
By E.J. Dionne Jr.
Washington Post, July 12, 2012
Could it be that Mitt Romney is correct from a strategic point of view to tell us little about what he'd do as president?
There are, of course, excellent civic reasons for a candidate to say where he or she would lead the country. But the debate raging right now in Republican circles is about politics, not civics. Conservatives, including the editors of the Wall Street Journal's canonical editorial page, are telling Romney that his "insular staff and strategy . . . are slowly squandering an historic opportunity." In the Weekly Standard, William Kristol fumed: "Is it too much to ask Mitt Romney to get off autopilot and actually think about the race he's running?"
There are grounds for such skepticism. This week's Washington Post/ABC News poll found the race dead even but gave President Obama a 12-point advantage among registered voters on the matter of which candidate has a clearer plan for dealing with the economy. After several months of disappointing jobs numbers, Romney is behind Obama in other national surveys and tends to lag in the swing states.
Far be it from me to get in the way of internecine Republican bickering, but Romney's GOP critics are wrong in seeing his specifics-lite approach as his core problem. His difficulties lie elsewhere.
A defense of Romney's minimalism starts with the matter of timing. The best rationale I've heard for the current Romney strategy came from former U.S. representative Vin Weber, a Romney adviser who noted in an interview that the very first question voters have to answer in a reelection race is whether there is "a compelling reason to remove the incumbent from office."
"There's a broader indictment of the incumbent that's necessary before the country decides to replace him," Weber argued. Only when a majority has reached this decision can a challenger begin to present himself as a plausible alternative. Only then is the country prepared to listen.
Viewed this way, the relentlessly negative approach of the Romney campaign so far (summarized in top adviser Stuart Stevens's favorite slogan, "Obama isn't working") is the essential first step toward opening the electorate to the idea of changing leadership. If Romney wins, Weber said, hindsight might suggest that this tipping point was reached this month with the latest jobs report.
Moreover, those calling on Romney to be more specific tend to be staunch conservatives who are absolutely convinced that the country would respond to a full-throated right-of-center agenda. Here, they are allowing their philosophical commitments to cloud their political judgment.
Romney's economic recovery strategy is rooted in the same old conservative ideas that have been around for more than 30 years: lower taxes on the wealthy and economic deregulation. These

nostrums are wildly popular with the Republican base - especially very rich donors - but not with swing voters. More details about a largely unpopular program would not do Romney much good.
Conservatives are forever fond of pointing back to Ronald Reagan for having run a highly principled campaign in 1980. But Reagan's most effective line was the decidedly non-ideological question: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" That is the Romney campaign in a nutshell.
Now to the drawbacks with the Romney campaign's theory. Operatives in both parties are surprised that Obama has been allowed to tell a negative story about Romney that is moving poll numbers without any competition from positive ads building Romney up. Romney could be rendered unacceptable before he has a chance to make his case.
And David Winston, a Republican pollster, has asked one of the campaign's most interesting survey questions. He found that only 32 percent of voters said that "the economy is not getting better at all." At the other end, 26 percent thought it was getting better at an "acceptable" rate. Fully 40 percent said "the economy is getting better, but the rate of progress is still unacceptable."
Romney's argument is aimed squarely at the third of the electorate that feels the economy is in disastrous shape. Obama's messaging, on the other hand, is directed toward those "better but not good enough" voters - and it is members of this group who will decide the election. The problem with Romney's campaign thus lies less in his lack of policy beef than in his failure to talk enough to the right voters. A message of economic pessimism will keep Romney close. But barring another major downturn, it won't close the deal.

OP-ED: OBAMACARE IS AN UNHEALTHY PRESCRIPTION (WP)
By Scott Walker
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
Scott Walker, a Republican, is the governor of Wisconsin.
Since the Supreme Court upheld President Obama's health-care mandate, there has been exhaustive discussion about the philosophical basis of this federal law. As Election Day approaches, debate will surely grow about the proper role of our federal government.
But while much attention has focused on Congress's intention to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act, too few are studying the law's practical impact. The best place to see the effects of the law is in our nation's laboratories, the states. Although the Supreme Court has ruled on the constitutionality of the act, Wisconsin shows that it is bad policy.
The budget I signed into law last year increased state taxpayer spending on Medicaid by $1.2 billion in our biennial budget, which works out to be one of the largest annual increases in the country. While many states slashed Medicaid funding to deal with budget deficits, we made the biggest investment in the program in Wisconsin's history.
By putting in place the long-term structural changes needed to make our budget sustainable, we ensured that those who truly need assistance would continue to have access to affordable and quality health care well into the future.
The good news is that responsible budgeting has put our state in a fairly unique position: Nearly 91 percent of Wisconsin residents have health insurance. According to the latest nationally available data, only three states have higher rates of coverage.
The bad news is that, from a practical standpoint, Obamacare will devastate Wisconsin. An actuarial study commissioned by my predecessor, a Democrat, and completed last year found that if Obamacare is implemented in Wisconsin:
? 100,000 people will be dropped by their employer-sponsored health insurance;
?59 percent of people who buy their own health insurance will experience an average premium increase of 31 percent;
?150,000 people will stop buying health insurance in the private sector and will instead become dependent on the government and taxpayers;
?Between 2014 and 2019, Obamacare could cost Wisconsin taxpayers $1.12 billion; after all federal aid and tax credits are applied, the state's portion of the bill will be $433 million; and
?Approximately 122,000 parents, caretakers and pregnant women with an income of more than 133 percent of the federal poverty level will no longer be eligible for Medicaid.
It's important to go beyond these facts and understand what they really mean for those of us who live in the Badger State. Young people will be hit hard with premium increases. Those between 19

and 29 years old who have individual insurance will experience an average premium increase of $1,631 per year. A family of four that does not qualify for a subsidy can expect a 28 percentincrease - from $8,528 to $10,912. For those who are covered by the small-employer group market, the average premium increase will be 15 percent.
These are just the law's effects on individuals. There are also statewide implications. In Wisconsin, 46 percent of residents who would receive assistance through Obamacare would have already had insurance coverage. That would result in taxpayers spending millions of dollars without providing new coverage.
The law has also raised serious philosophical questions: Should the federal government force people to buy a product? What is the proper relationship between federal and state governments? Even setting aside those legitimate issues, one practical concern remains. I look at the effects that full implementation would have on my state, and I can't help but conclude that Obamacare punishes Wisconsin for budgeting responsibly and providing access to affordable and quality health care. It punishes young people, those who have responsibly purchased individual insurance, employers and employees of small businesses.
In Wisconsin, the data show that Obamacare will increase the cost of health care for most residents. That is not a prescription for positive change. Other states will face similar situations. We can do better.
Overall our federal government should be working to replicate the successes of states like Wisconsin - particularly focusing on those with high rates of coverage. And from a practical standpoint, the federal government should give Medicaid block grants to states. This would allow states to maximize the efficient use of tax dollars and increase private-sector competition while still providing care for those in need.
Increasing access to health care won't come through mandates, taxes or penalties. Truly improving access for families will require costs to go down. Unfortunately, Obamacare moves in the opposite direction by making insurance more expensive.

OP-ED: PREPARING FOR THE NEXT OUTAGE (WP)
By Newt Gingrich
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
Newt Gingrich, a former speaker of the House and a Republican candidate for president, lives in McLean with his wife, Callista.
Callista and I live in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, and, like many in the region, we lost power in the recent storms. The blackout, combined with a record heat wave, made homes nearly uninhabitable. The storm and heat were this region's greater leveler: Rich or poor, urban or suburban, six-figure income or just barely getting by, we were all cast on the same strange shores. Without power, the comforts of home become worthless. You sit in the sweltering heat, realizing you are living in a box that, without electricity, is a trap. You pray for the "juice" to return before your groceries go bad. You either make do in the heat or find refuge with friends who have electricity.
I write this now because of my concern for national security and our power grid, which are susceptible to doomsday-level damage if hit by an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) strike or a major solar storm.
It is almost unthinkable, yet possible, that an enemy could detonate a nuclear weapon over the atmosphere over the continental United States, triggering an electromagnetic pulse. This would short-circuit our power grid, taking power off-line for months, perhaps even years.
A similar crisis could be sparked by a solar storm like the Carrington Event of 1859, a type of geomagnetic disturbance that occurs about every 75 years. Statistically, we are long overdue for such a storm. There have been some recent examples of the potential impact, such as the millions in Quebec who lost power for several hours in 1989 as a result of a space storm.
Our nation's communications infrastructure, modes of transportation and many fundamentals of survival all rely on a power grid that is vulnerable. The current system lacks safety features needed to prevent damage to critical electrical infrastructure.

In 2009, my friend - and sometimes co-author - William R. Forstchen published a truly frightening book, "One Second After." (I wrote the foreword.) The story is fiction but based on hard facts. It is

a cautionary tale about the threat of EMP strikes and major solar storms, known as coronal mass ejections.
William turned to bipartisan congressional studies published in 2004 and 2008 and interviewed many experts. His book made the New York Times bestseller list and helped to trigger what some call the "prepper" movement.
During the recent power outage, William and I talked about what would have happened if this had been an EMP attack or a strong solar storm.
Suppose that, rather than being a temporary disruption in our lives, the power outage lasted weeks or months, or even years. Consider what state all of us, from the richest to the poorest, would be in if we were still literally in the dark. Millions could be trapped in houses or apartments that were never designed for this climate without air conditioning. No cool air; months with no food shipments and every pharmacy shut down - no refills for life-sustaining medications.
In a crisis, many in the Washington area could not even flee because the impact of an EMP attack would disable most cars and public transportation. The water supply would go dry without electricity to pump water from rivers and wells.
Imagine if you could find a bottle of potable water for, say, your children. How much would you pay? What would you pay with if every bank and ATM were shut down?
Public safety? Forget it. No power means no police cars, no communications and no 911 emergency service. For criminals, it would be time to run rampant.
Could such a scenario be in our nation's future? It might, if we do not learn from this experience. Preparation begins with demanding that our governments - local, state and federal - prepare as well.
The technology exists to harden at least part of the national electric grid against an EMP attack or major solar storm. Two years ago, in a time of political deadlock, the House approved the Grid Reliability and Infrastructure Defense Act with bipartisan support. It would put in place protections such as fortified bunkers for the national power grid - but this effort stalled in the Senate.
I challenge the president and Congress to picture what it would be like if the power in the nation's capital were still off - or, far worse, if the entire nation were without power for months.
I asked William what he thought of the recent outage. He said: "Maybe it will wake up those on Capitol Hill and the White House that we just had a taste of a nightmare future, if we do not prepare now."
I second his motion.
The region's power has been restored. The air conditioning hums, and our food and medicines are safe. We think life is back to normal. But what if this had been more than a brief interruption?

OP-ED: MEDICINE THAT IS MORE PLACEBO THAN CURE (WP)
By Roger Bate
Washington Post, July 13, 2012
Roger Bate is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of "Phake: The Deadly World of Falsified and Substandard Medicines." His research is published in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.
Some drugs that the World Health Organization (WHO) has approved for distribution to the world's poor are of inferior quality - shoddy products that hurt people who urgently need medicine - and some of the manufacturers, predominantly Chinese and Indian firms, may be knowingly producing them. This is the conclusion of my research teams' studies, published this week in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.
We purchased, off the shelf from local pharmacies, about 2,600 drugs to treat malaria, tuberculosis and bacterial infections in low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, Turkey, India and China. We then tested these drugs to see how much active pharmaceutical ingredient - the chemical that performs the drug's lifesaving function - they contained.
Drugs made by Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indian manufacturers performed quite badly - sometimes a fifth of them failed basic quality-control tests. Most worryingly, more than 15 percent of the Chinese drugs approved by the WHO failed to include adequate amounts of active pharmaceutical ingredient.
To add insult to injury, some of the drugs we tested had been bought through Western donor

programs, funded by taxpayers, and steered through aid programs to African markets.
Some of these drugs were likely outright fakes. Others were real but badly manufactured, perhaps to cut corners.
How do we know? Poor-quality drugs can have either too little or too much of the active pharmaceutical ingredient. We tested many different batches of the same drug produced by the same manufacturer and found that a few were consistently under-dosed. We didn't find any drugs with too much of the active ingredient.
By exposing people to insufficient doses of the active ingredient, the drugs may also accelerate drug resistance and cause tremendous harm to whole populations in the long run. Here's how: When a person takes a drug containing too little of the active ingredient, some of the parasites or bacteria are killed. But the strongest germs survive, mutating and evolving into more resilient strains. Drug resistance is already making it difficult - in rare cases, impossible - to treat malaria and tuberculosis, diseases that kill millions of people each year. And our governments, which spend billions on aid programs designed to stop them, may inadvertently be causing harm by increasing access to substandard treatments.
To be clear, these donors did not knowingly buy bad medicine. As a rule, they purchase only drugs approved by a respected regulator, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or the WHO. But testing the actual drugs sold on the market, as we did in our studies, is a rare exercise.
In the United States, the President's Malaria Initiative conducts some testing, but many other donors don't. Bernard Nahlen, deputy coordinator of the initiative, said it had bought drugs for distribution but sent them back to the manufacturers because of quality issues. "There need to be checkpoints throughout that system," he said.
However, regulators in poor countries such as Angola or Kenya - where we found many substandard drugs - have few resources to pick up the slack.
The reality is that once a manufacturer gets the green light to sell its drugs in Africa - sometimes through the lucrative donor programs - there are often no consequences for failing to maintain a high standard of quality.
The Chinese and Indian manufacturers making substandard drugs are often significant producers, certainly capable of making high-quality products - they did so to obtain WHO approval. But given available, albeit limited, data, they are not doing so consistently.
With little or no oversight, these companies may be cutting corners in the manufacturing process - or worse, watering down the active ingredient in their drugs, perhaps when the price of the raw material spikes and supply becomes harder to obtain. The drug most often with too low a dose in our samplings, for instance, involved the hard-to-get-artemisinin, a key antimalarial ingredient.
The WHO has launched an investigation into the product failures we've reported, but it lacks the resources to do much more. Even if Beijing tries to bring the hammer down on its lucrative pharmaceutical industry, it is unlikely to properly address the corner-cutting found in so much of Chinese production. So the burden must fall on Western governments. After all, their citizens' tax dollars - and the lives of millions they purport to help - are on the line.
Donor governments should urgently step up post-market surveillance and increase penalties for repeat offenders. If three product failures occur from the same manufacturer in a given year, that company should lose approval status with the WHO - and across all of its registered products.
If donor governments took drug quality as seriously in Africa as they do in their own countries, they could save lives and increase the impact of the public health programs taxpayers fund.

EDITORIAL: PENN STATE'S PART (NYT)
New York Times, July 13, 2012
The factual conclusions of the investigation of Pennsylvania State University's cover-up of serial sex crimes by one of its former football coaches are searing enough: the university's leaders did nothing for nearly a decade and a half - from the late-1990s until just recently - while a predator trawled for children in their midst, using the school's football program as a lure. Worse than that, the report says, the school's leaders worked diligently to conceal significant facts about the case from the authorities, the board of trustees, the university community and the broader public.
But the exhaustive investigation by Louis J. Freeh, a former federal judge and F.B.I. director, goes much further. It shows how slavish devotion to some institutional imperative can trump everything, including the law, basic human decency and the bedrock obligation we all have to protect

defenseless children from harm. At Penn State, the imperative was protecting a storied football program and its legendary coach. In another huge institution betraying children under its protection, the Roman Catholic Church, it was the sanctity of the priesthood.

Last month, Jerry Sandusky, a former assistant football coach at Penn State, was convicted of sexually assaulting 10 boys over a period of many years. All of the boys had come from disadvantaged homes and had been drawn to Mr. Sandusky because of his access to the football program, which dominates society in central Pennsylvania.

Penn State fired its longtime president, Graham Spanier, and head football coach, Joe Paterno, who died in January before Mr. Freeh's investigators could speak with him. Criminal charges are still pending against Gary Schultz, who was in charge of campus police, and Tim Curley, who was athletic director at the time. The seven-and-a-half-month investigation, which involved more than 400 interviews and 3.5 million documents, described a disturbing pattern of communication among the four leaders dating as far back as 1998, when Mr. Sandusky had inappropriate contact with an 11-year-old boy in the showers at the football building on campus.

The victim's mother reported that to the campus police. Mr. Schultz reported an investigation to Mr. Spanier and Mr. Curley. Mr. Schultz, who appears to have understood that a crime may have been committed, wrote in his confidential notes at the time that Mr. Sandusky's behavior was "at best inappropriate" and at "worst sexual improprieties," further noting concern about "other children." The district attorney declined to bring charges, even after Mr. Sandusky admitted that he had showered with the boy and "had done this with other children in the past."

Mr. Sandusky was allowed to continue coaching and received a generous retirement package the following year. This included an unusual "emeritus" rank, which carried several privileges, including access to university recreational facilities. In 1999, he is said to have assaulted another young victim at the Alamo Bowl in Texas.

A year later, in 2000, the report says a janitor saw him assaulting a child in the football building shower but failed to report it out of fear that he would be fired, not an irrational fear. In 2001, the pattern repeated itself and a graduate assistant, Mike McQueary, witnessed another assault on a boy in the showers. He reported it to Mr. Paterno, who failed to call the police.

According to the Freeh report, Mr. Spanier, Mr. Curley and Mr. Schultz then concocted a plan that involved encouraging Mr. Sandusky to seek professional help and barring him from bringing children alone to the football building. (They incongruously described this as "humane.") Later that same year, Mr. Sandusky is said to have assaulted yet another victim in the football building showers.

As Mr. Freeh noted on Thursday: "The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children Sandusky victimized." He said they "never demonstrated, through actions or words, any concern for the safety and well-being of Sandusky's victims" until after he was arrested in 2011.

Penn State's leaders bear most of the blame for giving the university's imprimatur to the body-and-soul-damaging abuse that Mr. Sandusky committed. But the report shows that the entire university system - the police, the trustees, the athletic department - failed at just about every level. As the assaults were taking place in 2001, for example, Penn State was out of compliance with the federal Clery Act of 1990, which requires the college to compile and report crime statistics related to specific offenses, including sexual offenses. The university's Clery Act policy was still in draft form in 2011 and had never been implemented.

The Freeh report lays out more than 100 recommendations for what the university needs to do to prevent anything like this from happening again - essentially requiring the university to rebuild its leadership system from the ground up. There should also be substantial penalties imposed under the Clery Act and state law. Laws without consequence are not laws at all.

EDITORIAL: THE FOLLY OF SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

When South Sudan declared independence from Sudan one year ago, it was well understood that the struggle to build a functioning new state would be long and hard. What was not understood was how much both countries would do to sabotage each other - and themselves - in a destructive game of cross-border attacks and economic showdowns.

With independence, South Sudan inherited most of the former country's oil fields. But South

Sudan is landlocked and Sudan controls the pipeline needed to get that oil - the lifeblood for both governments - to market. In January, South Sudan shut down oil production in a dispute with Sudan over how much it should pay to transport its crude oil through Sudan's pipeline.
In the months since, the two countries still have not agreed on a formula to share oil profits and each seems to be waiting for the other to blink - a fool's game if there ever was one. South Sudan's economy was weak to begin with, and Sudan's is now in free fall. Hunger is getting worse in both places, and so is political instability.
Deprived of oil income, Sudan last month announced that it could no longer subsidize gas, sending prices for fuel and other goods soaring. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is having trouble paying his army. And over the past few weeks, thousands of protesters have demonstrated against the government, prompting a crackdown.
In South Sudan, the government has begun to get tougher about collecting income taxes to finance basic services. People are understandably reluctant to pay when the government is known for rampant mismanagement and corruption. President Salva Kiir recently urged officials to return $4 billion in "stolen" government money. Officials also suggested that any budget shortfall would be filled by international donors. So far, that doesn't seem to be happening, and shouldn't. South Sudan, along with Sudan, created this crisis, and they have the means to fix it.
The two sides fought a civil war that killed more than two million people before a peace deal in 2005. In the past year, they barely avoided a return to all-out conflict. Violence continues in Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, a rebel-held area where the Khartoum government is trying to bomb and starve the people into submission. Thousands have been displaced.
In April, South Sudan's army occupied an oil-producing region claimed by Sudan and brought the countries close to a new war. South Sudan backed off after the United Nations threatened sanctions.
The joy that accompanied South Sudan's hard-won freedom has faded. The United States and other countries that advocated independence need to keep working with both sides to resolve disputes over oil, borders and protections for minorities. There's no changing the reality that these two nations are mutually dependent, now and long into the future.

EDITORIAL: TAMMY DUCKWORTH'S RIVAL (NYT)
New York Times, July 13, 2012
Joe Walsh is a freshman congressman from Illinois, a Tea Party Republican who has a reputation for saying outrageous things very loudly. If you see the videos of him yelling at constituents and interviewers who dare to disagree with him, you may conclude that he is best ignored.
But then he started attacking his Democratic opponent, Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat who also happens to be a National Guard helicopter pilot who lost her legs and the use of her right arm when she was shot down in Iraq. "Female, wounded veteran ... ehhh," Mr. Walsh told Politico. "She is nothing more than a handpicked Washington bureaucrat."
Mr. Walsh could have dropped it there but didn't, and, in recent videos, he can be seen mocking Ms. Duckworth and belittling her sacrifice again. "Now I'm running against a woman who, my God, that's all she talks about," he said in a town-hall meeting on July 1. "Our true heroes, it's the last thing in the world they talk about."
Mr. Walsh later said his point was simply that Ms. Duckworth has been avoiding the issues. But the fixation on his opponent's war record seems to be Mr. Walsh's problem, not hers.
As for issues, there are several in Mr. Walsh's record that are worth discussing - like his being the only member of the Illinois Congressional delegation to vote against this year's transportation bill, even though he represents a district, west and north of Chicago, that includes parts of O'Hare Airport and many of the city's and region's most important highway and railroad networks. Or that he has spent his time championing oddball bills that have gone nowhere - measures to abolish the Office of Polar Programs of the National Science Foundation, to forbid the use of the word "Palestine" in government documents and to support "Israel's right to annex Judea and Samaria." He is also sponsor of the Save Christmas Act.
Ms. Duckworth has done far more than her share in serving her country. Against that record, Mr. Walsh's comments were deplorable.

COLUMN: WHY OUR ELITES STINK (NYT)

By David Brooks
New York Times, July 13, 2012

Through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Protestant Establishment sat atop the American power structure. A relatively small network of white Protestant men dominated the universities, the world of finance, the local country clubs and even high government service.

Over the past half–century, a more diverse and meritocratic elite has replaced the Protestant Establishment. People are more likely to rise on the basis of grades, test scores, effort and performance.

Yet, as this meritocratic elite has taken over institutions, trust in them has plummeted. It's not even clear that the brainy elite is doing a better job of running them than the old boys' network. Would we say that Wall Street is working better now than it did 60 years ago? Or government? The system is more just, but the outcomes are mixed. The meritocracy has not fulfilled its promise.

Christopher Hayes of MSNBC and The Nation believes that the problem is inherent in the nature of meritocracies. In his book, "Twilight of the Elites," he argues that meritocratic elites may rise on the basis of grades, effort and merit, but, to preserve their status, they become corrupt. They create wildly unequal societies, and then they rig things so that few can climb the ladders behind them. Meritocracy leads to oligarchy.

Hayes points to his own elite training ground, Hunter College High School in New York City. You have to ace an entrance exam to get in, but affluent parents send their kids to rigorous test prep centers and now few poor black and Latino students can get in.

Baseball players get to the major leagues through merit, but then some take enhancement drugs to preserve their status. Financiers work hard to get jobs at the big banks, but then some rig the game for their own mutual benefit.

Far from being the fairest of all systems, he concludes, the meritocracy promotes gigantic inequality and is fundamentally dysfunctional. No wonder institutional failure has been the leitmotif of our age.

It's a challenging argument but wrong. I'd say today's meritocratic elites achieve and preserve their status not mainly by being corrupt but mainly by being ambitious and disciplined. They raise their kids in organized families. They spend enormous amounts of money and time on enrichment. They work much longer hours than people down the income scale, driving their kids to piano lessons and then taking part in conference calls from the waiting room.

Phenomena like the test-prep industry are just the icing on the cake, giving some upper-middle-class applicants a slight edge over other upper-middle-class applicants. The real advantages are much deeper and more honest.

The corruption that has now crept into the world of finance and the other professions is not endemic to meritocracy but to the specific culture of our meritocracy. The problem is that today's meritocratic elites cannot admit to themselves that they are elites.

Everybody thinks they are countercultural rebels, insurgents against the true establishment, which is always somewhere else. This attitude prevails in the Ivy League, in the corporate boardrooms and even at television studios where hosts from Harvard, Stanford and Brown rail against the establishment.

As a result, today's elite lacks the self-conscious leadership ethos that the racist, sexist and anti-Semitic old boys' network did possess. If you went to Groton a century ago, you knew you were privileged. You were taught how morally precarious privilege was and how much responsibility it entailed. You were housed in a spartan 6-foot-by-9-foot cubicle to prepare you for the rigors of leadership.

The best of the WASP elites had a stewardship mentality, that they were temporary caretakers of institutions that would span generations. They cruelly ostracized people who did not live up to their codes of gentlemanly conduct and scrupulosity. They were insular and struggled with intimacy, but they did believe in restraint, reticence and service.

Today's elite is more talented and open but lacks a self-conscious leadership code. The language of meritocracy (how to succeed) has eclipsed the language of morality (how to be virtuous). Wall Street firms, for example, now hire on the basis of youth and brains, not experience and character. Most of their problems can be traced to this.

If you read the e-mails from the Libor scandal you get the same sensation you get from reading the e-mails in so many recent scandals: these people are brats; they have no sense that they are

guardians for an institution the world depends on; they have no consciousness of their larger social role.

The difference between the Hayes view and mine is a bit like the difference between the French Revolution and the American Revolution. He wants to upend the social order. I want to keep the current social order, but I want to give it a different ethos and institutions that are more consistent with its existing ideals.

COLUMN: WHO'S VERY IMPORTANT? (NYT)
By Paul Krugman
New York Times, July 13, 2012

"Is there a V.I.P. entrance? We are V.I.P." That remark, by a donor waiting to get in to one of Mitt Romney's recent fund-raisers in the Hamptons, pretty much sums up the attitude of America's wealthy elite. Mr. Romney's base - never mind the top 1 percent, we're talking about the top 0.01 percent or higher - is composed of very self-important people.

Specifically, these are people who believe that they are, as another Romney donor put it, "the engine of the economy"; they should be cherished, and the taxes they pay, which are already at an 80-year low, should be cut even further. Unfortunately, said yet another donor, the "common person" - for example, the "nails ladies" - just doesn't get it.

O.K., it's easy to mock these people, but the joke's really on us. For the "we are V.I.P." crowd has fully captured the modern Republican Party, to such an extent that leading Republicans consider Mr. Romney's apparent use of multimillion-dollar offshore accounts to dodge federal taxes not just acceptable but praiseworthy: "It's really American to avoid paying taxes, legally," declared Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina. And there is, of course, a good chance that Republicans will control both Congress and the White House next year.

If that happens, we'll see a sharp turn toward economic policies based on the proposition that we need to be especially solicitous toward the superrich - I'm sorry, I mean the "job creators." So it's important to understand why that's wrong.

The first thing you need to know is that America wasn't always like this. When John F. Kennedy was elected president, the top 0.01 percent was only about a quarter as rich compared with the typical family as it is now - and members of that class paid much higher taxes than they do today. Yet somehow we managed to have a dynamic, innovative economy that was the envy of the world. The superrich may imagine that their wealth makes the world go round, but history says otherwise.

To this historical observation we should add another note: quite a few of today's superrich, Mr. Romney included, make or made their money in the financial sector, buying and selling assets rather than building businesses in the old-fashioned sense. Indeed, the soaring share of the wealthy in national income went hand in hand with the explosive growth of Wall Street.

Not long ago, we were told that all this wheeling and dealing was good for everyone, that it was making the economy both more efficient and more stable. Instead, it turned out that modern finance was laying the foundation for a severe economic crisis whose fallout continues to afflict millions of Americans, and that taxpayers had to bail out many of those supposedly brilliant bankers to prevent an even worse crisis. So at least some members of the top 0.01 percent are best viewed as job destroyers rather than job creators.

Did I mention that those bailed-out bankers are now overwhelmingly backing Mr. Romney, who promises to reverse the mild financial reforms introduced after the crisis?

To be sure, many and probably most of the rich do, in fact, contribute positively to the economy. However, they also receive large monetary rewards. Yet somehow $20 million-plus in annual income isn't enough. They want to be revered, too, and given special treatment in the form of low taxes. And that is more than they deserve. After all, the "common person" also makes a positive contribution to the economy. Why single out the rich for extra praise and perks?

What about the argument that we must keep taxes on the rich low lest we remove their incentive to create wealth? The answer is that we have a lot of historical evidence, going all the way back to the 1920s, on the effects of tax increases on the rich, and none of it supports the view that the kinds of tax-rate changes for the rich currently on the table - President Obama's proposal for a modest rise, Mr. Romney's call for further cuts - would have any major effect on incentives. Remember when all the usual suspects claimed that the economy would crash when Bill Clinton raised taxes in 1993?

Furthermore, if you're really concerned about the incentive effects of public policy, you should be focused not on the rich but on workers making $20,000 to $30,000 a year, who are often penalized for any gain in income because they end up losing means-tested benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. I'll have more to say about that in another column. By the way, in 2010, the average annual wage of manicurists - "nails ladies," in Romney-donor speak - was $21,760.

So, are the very rich V.I.P.? No, they aren't - at least no more so than other working Americans. And the "common person" will be hurt, not helped, if we end up with government of the 0.01 percent, by the 0.01 percent, for the 0.01 percent.

OP-ED: HOW PENSIONS VIOLATE FREE SPEECH (NYT)

By Benjamin I. Sachs

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Cambridge, Mass.

A CENTRAL principle of American political life is that everyone gets to choose which candidates to support. The idea that the government could force us to support those we oppose is anathema. But this unacceptable state of affairs is one of the unintended consequences of the Supreme Court's decision in the 2010 Citizens United case.

That's because the vast majority of people who work in the public sector - state, local and federal employees - are required to make contributions to a pension plan. Nearly all states make participation in a pension plan mandatory and a "condition of employment" for public employees. To get and keep your job with the government, you have to give some of your paycheck to the pension plan.

Public pensions, moreover, are so-called defined benefit plans, which means that employees don't have a say in how their mandatory contributions are invested. The employees cannot request, for example, that their money be used only to buy government bonds or that it be invested only in certain mutual funds or only in select corporations.

Instead, the employees' money is invested according to whatever decisions the pension plan's trustee makes. And, not surprisingly, pension plans invest heavily in corporate securities: in 2008, public pensions held about $1.15 trillion in corporate stock.

Here's the problem. In its Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court held that companies have a First Amendment right to make electoral expenditures with general corporate treasuries. And they've done so, with relish, pouring millions into the political system.

What Citizens United failed to account for, however, is that a significant portion of the money that corporations are spending on politics is financed by equity capital provided by public pension funds - capital contributions that the government requires public employees to finance with their paychecks.

This consequence of Citizens United is perverse: requiring public employees to finance corporate electoral spending amounts to compelled political speech and association, something the First Amendment flatly forbids.

Contrast this situation with how the court treats political spending by unions. In many states, public employees are required to pay dues to a labor union. If the public employees union were to spend any of the money raised through dues on politics, the court has ruled, the dues requirement would amount to forced political speech and association. To prevent this First Amendment violation, the court has held that no union may use an employee's dues for political purposes if the employee objects.

The same should be true for pension funds and corporate politics. In a world where corporations can use their general treasuries for political spending, no government should be allowed to require employees to finance the purchase of corporate securities through a pension plan, unless the government provides those employees with a meaningful way to object to financing corporate politics.

The good news is that the rules governing union dues and political spending provide a road map for restructuring public pensions in order to bring them back into conformity with the First Amendment.

Here's one way it could work: Pension plans would determine the number of employees that object to financing corporate political spending. They would then negotiate "opt out" rights with the corporations in which they invest. These corporations would calculate the percentage of their

annual expenditures that go to politics and promise to return to the pension plan an amount equal to the objecting employee's pro rata share of the corporation's political budget.
Whatever the route to reform, however, public pension plans need to ensure that employees are not compelled to finance corporate political speech. Until they do, these pension funds will be vulnerable to the challenge that they are violating the First Amendment.
Benjamin I. Sachs is a professor at Harvard Law School.

OP-ED: ETHNIC CLEANSING IN MYANMAR (NYT)
By Moshahida Sultana Ritu
New York Times, July 13, 2012
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh -- LAST spring, a flowering of democracy in Myanmar mesmerized the world. But now, three months after the democracy activist Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won a parliamentary seat, and a month after she traveled to Oslo to belatedly receive the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, an alarm bell is ringing in Myanmar. In the villages of Arakan State, near the Bangladeshi border, a pogrom against a population of Muslims called the Rohingyas began in June. It is the ugly side of Myanmar's democratic transition - a rotting of the flower, even as it seems to bloom.
Cruelty toward the Rohingyas is not new. They have faced torture, neglect and repression in the Buddhist-majority land since it achieved independence in 1948. Its constitution closes all options for Rohingyas to be citizens, on grounds that their ancestors didn't live there when the land, once called Burma, came under British rule in the 19th century (a contention the Rohingyas dispute). Even now, as military rulers have begun to loosen their grip, there is no sign of change for the Rohingyas. Instead, the Burmese are trying to cast them out.
The current violence can be traced to the rape and killing in late May of a Buddhist woman, for which the police reportedly detained three Muslims. That was followed by mob attacks on Rohingyas and other Muslims that killed dozens of people. According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, state security forces have now conducted mass arrests of Muslims; they destroyed thousands of homes, with the impact falling most heavily on the Rohingyas. Displaced Rohingyas have tried to flee across the Naf River to neighboring Bangladesh; some have died in the effort.
The Burmese media have cited early rioting by Rohingyas and have cast them as terrorists and traitors. In mid-June, in the name of stopping such violence, the government declared a state of emergency. But it has used its border security force to burn houses, kill men and evict Rohingyas from their villages. And on Thursday, President Thein Sein suggested that Myanmar could end the crisis by expelling all of its Rohingyas or by having the United Nations resettle them - a proposal that a United Nations official quickly rejected.
This is not sectarian violence; it is state-supported ethnic cleansing, and the nations of the world aren't pressing Myanmar's leaders to stop it. Even Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has not spoken out.
In mid-June, after some Rohingyas fled by boat to villages in Bangladesh, they told horrifying stories to a team of journalists whom I accompanied to this city near the border. They said they had come under fire from a helicopter and that three of six boats were lost. Some children drowned during the four-day trip; others died of hunger. Once in Bangladesh, they said, the families faced deportation back to Myanmar. But some children who had become separated from their parents made their way to the houses of villagers for shelter; other children may even now be starving in hide-outs or have become prey for criminal networks. Border guards found an abandoned newborn on a boat; after receiving medical treatment, the infant was left in the temporary care of a local fisherman.
Why isn't this pogrom arousing more international indignation? Certainly, Myanmar has become a destination for capital investment now that the United States, the European Union and Canada have accepted the government's narrative of democratic transition and have largely lifted the economic sanctions they began applying after 1988 (measures that did not prevent China, India, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and multinational oil companies from doing business with the Burmese). Still, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Myanmar late last year and welcomed its first steps toward democratization, she also set down conditions for strengthening ties, including an end to ethnic violence.
The plight of the Rohingyas begins with their statelessness - the denial of citizenship itself, for

which Myanmar is directly responsible. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, though not as powerful as the military officers who control Myanmar's transition, should not duck questions about the Rohingyas, as she has done while being feted in the West. Instead, she should be using her voice and her reputation to point out that citizenship is a basic right of all humans. On July 5, the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, appealed to her to speak up to help end the violence.

To be sure, Bangladesh can do more. Its river border with Myanmar is unprotected; thousands of Rohingyas have been rowing or swimming it at night. But even though Bangladesh has sheltered such refugees in the past - hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas live here now, legally or illegally - it has been reluctant so far this year to welcome them, out of fear of encouraging an overwhelming new influx. Already, such fears have aroused anti-Rohingya sentiment among some Bangladeshis, and initially Bangladesh's government tried to force the refugees back without assisting them. After some villagers risked arrest by sheltering refugees in their homes, the government began to offer humanitarian aid, before sending them back on their boats. Bangladesh should shelter the refugees as it has in years past, as the international community is urging.

But the world should be putting its spotlight on Myanmar. It should not so eagerly welcome democracy in a country that leaves thousands of stateless men and women floating in a river, their corpses washing up on its shores, after they have been reviled in, and driven from, a land in which their families have lived for centuries.

Moshahida Sultana Ritu, an economist, teaches at the University of Dhaka, in Bangladesh.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

MITT ROMNEY'S WIFE ANN TO VISIT DELAWARE (WILNJ)
By Jonathan Starkey
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Ann Romney, the wife of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, will be in Delaware this month – reportedly for a July 18 fundraiser at the Greenville home of prominent Delaware Republican Michele Rollins, sources say.

A spokeswoman for Ann Romney confirmed that a Delaware trip is planned but has not confirmed additional details, except to say it will be closed to the media.

Rollins' sister Monika "Nikki" Metrinko recently died, and funeral services were held earlier this week.

Reached soon thereafter, Rollins said a plan to host Ann Romney had been in the works.

WILMINGTON OFFICIALS: OCCUPY DELAWARE TO LEAVE PLAZA BY SEPT. 10 (WILNJ)
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Occupy Delaware will leave Spencer Plaza by Sept. 10 as Wilmington prepares for a $1.2 million renovation of the park the protesters have called home since November, according to a city news release.

The city and Occupy Delaware agreed to the terms of a proposed court order that was presented to Chancery Court today, according to the release.

"All the court has to do is bless it, if you will, and issue it as an order," said John Rago, deputy chief of staff for Mayor James M. Baker.

A court order would set aside an Aug. 20 court hearing regarding the city's attempt to remove Occupy Delaware from Spencer Plaza, the city said.

SHOWDOWN OVER CABLE APPROACHES (WILNJ)
City, Comcast battling over franchise renewal
By Andrew Staub
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

Taking the podium in Wilmington's City Council chambers last month, Ruth Baker uttered a war cry against Comcast, blasting the country's largest cable provider for dragging out negotiations over the renewal of its franchise agreement with the city.

Baker, president of the Leased Access Producers Association, warned that her group could

organize a "groundswell of support" to defy a company she said has taken the stance that it cannot be challenged.

"They don't have respect for us because many people think the city of Wilmington and the people in the city of Wilmington are weak and easily malleable," Baker said. "They need to understand that that's not the fact."

Indeed, Wilmington is preparing for a legal fight against the city's lone cable provider after more than two years of informal negotiations failed to yield an agreement. That's left the city pursuing a little-used formal procedure available under the federal Cable Communications Act.

The Wilmington Cable Video and Television Commission has already recommended that City Council preliminarily deny Comcast's latest proposal, saying the company has failed to meet the community's future cable-related needs and interests.

If the council agrees with the commission tonight, it would trigger an administrative law hearing to decide whether Comcast has satisfied the federal requirements for renewal of its franchise agreement.

A hearing officer appointed by the city would offer a recommendation to the council. If Wilmington ultimately denies Comcast's proposal, the cable company could appeal in federal court.

Nicholas Miller, a Washington, D.C., attorney who specializes in cable television regulation, advised the city's commission last week that reaching this stage of the formal process is rare.

"There are typically two or three renewals in the whole country that go to this point in any given year," Miller said. "Even fewer get to the point where there is an ultimate decision at the end of the hearing."

Most municipalities reach agreement with their providers through informal talks. Comcast alone has about 6,600 franchises and renews hundreds each year with little or no controversy.

That's not been the case in Wilmington.

After conducting a survey and issuing a report outlining the city's future cable-related needs and interests, Wilmington has sought a more modern agreement with Comcast.

Officials have asked Comcast to provide an institutional network that would connect city buildings and save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars, and to commit to system upgrades over the duration of the agreement, which Comcast is proposing to be 12 years.

Comcast has committed to neither, according to city documents, and has also balked at the city's request for stronger customer service requirements. The two sides also have been unable to agree on funding levels for its government-access and leased-access channels.

Wilmington officials have also bristled at Comcast's move to narrowly define the gross revenue derived from its franchise agreement, which could reduce the city's annual franchise fee of about $1 million by as much as 50 percent, Miller told the commission.

Comcast has budged little during negotiations, said Miller, who theorized the company has made a decision to "hardball" current franchise renewals, perhaps to set a precedent for larger franchises up for renewal soon.

Jeff Alexander, a Comcast spokesman, declined to address the city's specific concerns, but released a statement saying the company has been a "good corporate citizen who has served the city for more than a decade." The company employs more than 350 Wilmington residents, he said.

"We value our positive relationship with the city of Wilmington and its residents and have offered very generous terms to help reach an agreement that is beneficial and fair for the city, the community and the company," Alexander said.

Sue Buske, president of a California consulting firm that deals with franchise renewals, said the situation "is unusual, but it happens." She helped guide Brunswick, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, through the same process in the 1990s, she said.

Franchise negotiations have become more difficult as cable companies "push things all the way to the edge" in the hope municipalities will back down rather than spend money on litigation, Buske said. Federal law also favors cable companies by placing the burden on municipalities to prove why a franchise should not be renewed, she noted.

Ultimately, cable companies are trying to reduce the "rent" they pay cities to use the public rights-of-way, Buske said.

"The cable companies have a great deal to gain financially by getting these franchises renewed," she said. "They really don't want to be obligated to pay much back to the community as rent for these rights-of-way."

If Wilmington has done its "homework" in building a case for what its requesting of Comcast, the city could be in a good position heading into the formal procedure, said Ken Fellman, whose Colorado law firm represents local governments in telecommunications cases.
"If the city is serious about pursuing it, it can often lead to the cable operator finding a little bit more flexibility in their negotiating positions," he said.
The legal wrangling will not affect residents' cable service, Miller said. Even if its franchise renewal is denied, Comcast cannot withdraw from the city until Wilmington has made arrangements with another cable operator.
Comcast has had the franchise since 2000. It expired in October 2010.
The cable company has been negotiating in "good faith" with the city and is willing to continue to do so, Alexander said. But that statement, Council President Norman D. Griffiths said, hasn't been reflected in Comcast's proposal to Wilmington.
"I couldn't say the response met the good-faith test in terms of responding to what our needs are," Griffiths said.

BLOG: MEAT AND GREET WITH THE TECHNOLOGY FORUM OF DELAWARE (WILNJ)
By Cori Anne Natoli
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012
The Technology Forum of Delaware is throwing a dress-down summer social and networking barbecue.
The event is expected to begin at 5:30 p.m., July 18th, at Deerfield Golf and Tennis Club, 507 Thompson Station Road in Newark.
"We're providing the barbecue so all you have to do is bring the party," the Forum wrote in a press release.
Casual attire is recommended. Register to save your spot at www.techforumde.org
The Forum's goal is to serve "technology markets throughout the Delaware Valley" and assist business leaders in establishing the right relationships and resources for success.

BLOG: SEU TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF PROGRAMS (WILNJ)
By Ron Nathans
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012
The Sustainable Energy Utility oversight board is set to have a discussion about the future of its programs next week. The SEU board will meet for a "retreat workshop" at the Buena Vista State Conference Center, 661 S. DuPont Hwy., New Castle, starting at 9 a.m. on Thursday. The main item on the agenda is "discussion of future programs" – an important discussion, because most of the SEU's residential energy efficiency programs are currently dormant.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

EDITORIAL: TOO MANY PEOPLE AT PSU COWERED IN FEAR (WILNJ)
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012
If anything, former FBI Director Louis Freeh's report on the Penn State child sex abuse scandals reveals how much very powerful university administrators and those in its much lauded football program had in common with the victims.
Both cowered in a tragic silence for years, allowing the heinous crimes of adults with stellar public reputations to go uninterrupted for more than a decade, as they savaged the emotional lives of young people taught to revere them as protectors of their future well-being. Most of the adults did so by refusing to report what they suspected or witnessed. Even those with the courage to sound the alarm, grew timid about repeatedly doing so loudly enough for it to reverberate and cause Penn State's Trustees to take swift and corrective action.
The incredible "lack of empathy" of these adults seeped to the lowest levels of school personnel. Even janitors, who witnessed or heard of the savage assaults on young male teens, lured to the campus by former assistant football coach – and now deservedly imprisoned – Jerry Sandusky, failed to speak up.
"They witnessed what I think in the report is probably the most horrific rape that's described,"

Freeh told reporters Friday of one rape in the university's former Child Care Center. "And what do they do? They panic."
One janitor, a Korean War veteran, said it was "the worst thing he's ever seen." Yet they secured their continued pay checks with their silence.
"They said the university would circle around it. It was like going against the president of the United States. ... If that's the culture on the bottom, God help the culture at the top," Freeh wrote.
His team of lawyers, former prosecutors and former law enforcement officials, conducted 430 interviews, and pored through 3.5 million emails and documents. And they assign blame where it belongs – to high-ranking school officials who have since lost their jobs and, revered football coach Joe Paterno who died unrepentant for any contributing role within six months of the allegations.

OP-ED: LOOK TO NYC, THE PAST FOR POSSIBLE POLICING SOLUTIONS (WILNJ)
By Mike Cannatelli
Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012
A possible solution to the crime spree in the city is the "Giuliani" solution. New Castle County police and Wilmington police should team up and coordinate their efforts and crack down on all laws including the nuisance crimes in both the county and the city simultaneously.
The Giuliani solution would send a real wake-up call that from now on the laws, all laws will be enforced. Then do it.
The idea is to chase those drug distributors, dealers, mules, etc., out of both the county and city. Let them relocate to Chester, or somewhere else out of Delaware. They'll move on to the path of least resistance along I-95. So what that tells me is as of now Wilmington and NCCo are that path of least resistance. Time to change that.
Today New York City has a lower crime rate, per capita, based on things I've read, than Wilmington. How pitiful is that.
Enough talk and fooling around. Start enforcing aggressive driving, speeding, tailgating, pedestrians on median strips at intersections panhandling, panhandling on sidewalks or in front of stores, pedestrians crossing highways not at crosswalks or crossing when the Don't Walk light is flashing, or pedestrians walking in the street where a sidewalk is available, driving on road shoulders, spitting on sidewalks, loitering, littering, music blasting so loud from a car that even with your windows closed you can hear it quite well, graffiti, etc.
Make it so the criminals will go somewhere else, since we'll never be successful in ending the drug trade. (There's far too much money to be made.) It's time to retake the land.
Make paperwork for cops less a hassle and burden so they have an incentive to go after nuisance crimes rather than look the other way. Also if it's not an emergency they must do the speed limit. They should be a good example for all others when responding to a police call of some sort.
The community policing thing is also needed in Wilmington, whether it's cops on foot or on horse, plus the car patrols. This way the on-foot/horse cops get to know people in their neighborhood and the people there get to know them.
Maybe city folks there will start to trust the cops again, which is part of the problem. People in high crime areas don't trust the cops, so they tell them very little (the criminals are counting on that). If they trusted the cops, they'd be the eyes and ears and would help in catching some of the crime.
Maybe have less white cops and more minority cops in those inner city neighborhoods that generally are more minority heavy in population, especially the on-foot/horse cops would help in this.
There's a couple of real suggestions. One has already been done in NYC with great results. The other is old-school beat foot cop patrols from the 1930s and '40s. It worked well then as folks got to know their local cop and trusted him, and that approach should work again today. Lord knows what we're doing now isn't working.
Now will anyone with any authority take a serious look at either of these ideas? Probably not, because to do so means what they've been doing hasn't worked.
Most folks in the city are not criminals, and shouldn't have to be in fear of getting shot.
Those of us in the suburbs shouldn't have to fear those same criminals moving out to the suburbs either, but make no mistake they have. It's only a matter of time before we start hearing of gunshots in the glorious suburbs, too.

Mike Cannatelli lives in New Castle.

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Biden Tells NAACP Romney, Republicans Threaten Civil Rights (ABC)

By Devin Dwyer

ABC, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** got a hero's welcome today at the NAACP Convention in Houston, one day after rival Mitt Romney was booed during remarks before the same group.

And while the VP did not directly address treatment of the presumptive GOP nominee, he suggested the frosty reception was not misguided, warning that Romney and Republicans are threats to the group's reason for existence.

"On civil rights, your raison d'etre, the reason for our existence," **Biden** said, "I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember, remember what this [organization], at its core, was all about… It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he questioned, alluding to efforts by Republicans to impose more stringent voting requirements in states around the country.

"I didn't think we'd be back. I remember working with Republicans — and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — remember working with Republicans on motor-voter, on expanding the franchise on early voting, on voting by mail. Some of these were Republican ideas. But this is not the Republican Party here today, nor Romney's.

Get more pure politics at ABC News.com/Politics and a lighter take on the news at OTUSNews.com

"They see a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier," he said, "where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."

"Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," **Biden** concluded before the adoring crowd.

Biden used his address, billed as a campaign speech, to energize the African-American constituency that overwhelmingly backs Obama and Democrats and may play a crucial role in a handful of battleground states in November.

He offered a full-throated defense of the administration's signature accomplishments, hailing the 2009 auto bailout as "not popular but it was critical"; the call to target Osama bin Laden as a "bold decision with profound risks;" and the health care law that "required [Obama] early on to use up all of his political capital" but which led to historic benefits for African-Americans.

The VP also suggested there has been a conspiracy to obstruct Obama from the beginning of his term, citing the lack of Republican support for the Recovery Act, the health care law, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the debt ceiling debate last summer.

"Their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama," he said. "He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. Folks, in the end, that's what the presidency is all about."

President Obama, who had faced some criticism for not attending the convention, delivered a video message, telling NAACP members, “I stand on your shoulders. And at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise, that idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try.”

Biden Takes On Voting Rights Issues At NAACP Convention (CNN)

By Ashley Killough

CNN, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** delivered a rousing address to the NAACP in Houston on Thursday, bolstering support for President Barack Obama and drawing sharp contrasts with the Republican Party on civil rights issues.

On the heels of recent voter identification disputes, **Biden** strayed from his typical campaign speech to zero in on voting rights, arguing that Republicans were making it more difficult for certain group to vote.

By implementing laws requiring voters to present official identification at the voting booth, **Biden** said, the GOP sees "a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier."

Democrats have said that such laws are politically motivated and intended to suppress minority voting, given that fewer people in minority groups carry government-issued IDs. Republicans, meanwhile, make the case that such laws prevent fraud and protect the integrity of the system.

The issue was a hot topic this week at the NAACP convention, where Attorney General Eric Holder spoke Tuesday and lambasted states that have considered or attempted to implement such laws, including Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Appealing to the group's founding, **Biden** on Thursday urged the crowd to "remember what (the NAACP) at its core was all about."

"It was about the right to vote, because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said.

He called on the crowd to imagine what the Justice Department would look like under a Mitt Romney administration.

"Imagine the recommendations and who he's likely to pick for attorney general or head of the civil rights division," he said, drawing scorn from the audience.

The vice president also touched on a number of other issues, including energy, health care, women's issues and education. In each instance, he compared Obama's policies with those of the Republican Party.

He particularly faulted the GOP for obstructing what he considers key legislation since Obama took office.

"Their discipline is amazing, they have never let up," **Biden** said, referring to congressional Republicans. "But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions."

This was **Biden**'s first time addressing the convention as vice president, the NAACP said.

"The vice president is a longtime friend to the NAACP," said Roslyn Brock, the group's chairwoman. "He has been a strong advocate for justice and equality over his decades of service in the Senate and the White House."

The president will miss the event because of a "scheduling conflict," his campaign said.

"We declined a few weeks ago, and (the) NAACP was pleased (Vice President Joe **Biden**) was able to attend," an Obama-**Biden** campaign official told CNN.

The president's schedule for Thursday initially appeared wide open, but a senior administration official confirmed Thursday morning that Obama and the first lady will give an interview to CBS during the day.

However, the president did make a brief appearance in a pre-taped video that ran before the vice president appeared.

"If you keep standing with me ... I know we can arrive there together," the president said after delivering a few lines from his typical stump speech on helping middle-class Americans.

Hilary Shelton, the NAACP Washington Bureau director and a senior vice president in the organization, said the White House never confirmed a visit.

"They were trying to work out something," Shelton said.

As to why Obama could not attend, he added, "It was that something could not be moved. Something was crucial. And unfortunately, they couldn't move it in a way they could get him here this week."

Obama addressed the convention in 2009. Last year, first lady Michelle Obama spoke to the group.

Biden's speech Thursday came one day after Romney was booed during his own remarks at the NAACP convention, when the Republican vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Obama's signature health care law.

In comparison, **Biden** drew thunderous applause after trumpeting health care reform and emphasized that the law ensures coverage to "8 million black Americans who never would have had insurance."

The one time the crowd gave a negative reaction occurred when **Biden** began to close his remarks. He received a standing ovation from about half the audience at the end.

Meanwhile, Romney said the negative reaction he experienced Wednesday didn't come as a surprise.

"I think we expected that," he said on Fox Business Network. "I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country, which is that Obamacare is killing jobs."

Two African-American members of the House of Representatives found themselves split after Romney's appearance.

"He gets credit for attendance," Rep. Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana Democrat, said on CNN's "The Situation Room." "But perfect attendance doesn't qualify you to be class president. I thought it was a good gesture to go, but I thought his content was lacking."

Rep. Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina, also said on "The Situation Room" that he expects Romney to get about 10% of the black vote come November, suggesting the GOP candidate's focus should be on unemployment and home foreclosures.

"African-American unemployment since 2008 is up 40%," Scott said. "Home closures 25%. So what we have is the same message that works for the rest of America, works for the black community, too."

Romney draws boos from NAACP, support from conservatives

CNN's Dan Lothian, Shawna Shepherd, Shannon Travis and Ed Payne and contributed to this report.

At NAACP, Biden Booed -- For Ending His Speech (CBS)

By Lucy Madison

CBS, July 13, 2012

Just like Mitt Romney the day before, Vice President Joe **Biden** was booed at the NAACP convention. Unlike Romney, however, he wasn't booed because the crowd was upset but because they didn't want **Biden** to stop talking.

In an animated speech Thursday, **Biden** painted a stark contrast between Democrat and Republican visions for the future - and urged the historical civil rights organization to "close your eyes and imagine" what the country would look like under a Mitt Romney presidency.

Biden, whose presence was met with a response so enthusiastic it resulted in boos when he said he'd be wrapping up his remarks, emphasized his belief that the presumptive Republican nominee is a "fine family man." But his vision for America's future, he argued, is "so fundamentally different" than "how we view the future of America."

Underscoring issues like education, women's rights, health care, and civil rights in general, **Biden** targeted the current state of the Republican Party as "obstructionist" by design, and regressive by nature.

"This guy's vision of the future of American foreign policy is mired in the Cold War -- and the Cold War is over," he said of Romney.

To loud cheers from the audience, he also referenced ongoing battles over voter ID laws throughout the country, asking the audience: "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

"We see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered," he said. "[Republicans] see a different future -- where voting is made harder, not easier."

"This ain't your father's Republican party," he added.

The longtime lawmaker - who described himself as a "lifetime member of the NAACP" and spent a few minutes name-checking individual audience members before launching into his speech - appeared at ease among the crowd. His presentation represented something of a contrast to that of Romney, whose Wednesday remarks were interrupted by boos from the audience on several occasions.

Romney said after his speech that he'd "expected" such a reaction to some of his positions, including his pledge to repeal health care, and some argue the negative reception on such issues is actually good for his candidacy. According to CBS News political director John Dickerson, the boos "offered a chance for a candidate criticized for his malleability to look principled in the face of opposition."

"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country," Romney told Fox News yesterday following his speech.

He also took the opportunity to point out to the NAACP that he, and not Mr. Obama, was speaking there this year. "If I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes," he said during his remarks.

Mr. Obama's office cited scheduling conflicts in his decision not to attend the NAACP, but he had little on his public schedule Thursday other than an interview with CBS News' Charlie Rose. He did tape a video message that aired before **Biden**'s remarks, apologizing for his absence and sending his "deepest regards."

Twiala Dotson, an attendee at the conference, said Thursday she had "no qualms" about the fact that the president hadn't made an appearance.

"He has nothing to prove to me," she said. "President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe **Biden**, being the pitt bull that he is, he was the man that needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said."

Precious Byrd, another attendee, told CBS Wednesday she was actually more interested in seeing Romney speak at the convention.

"I know his standing," she said of Mr. Obama. "Actually, I wanted to see Mitt Romney. I wanted to see if he had something to say, because I do consider myself to have an open mind."

Despite her commitment to keeping an open mind, Byrd said Wednesday that Romney hadn't been able to win her over.

"You know, I'm not just automatically one way or the other. I buy into what Obama says. I know what **Biden**'s going to say. So I was really curious as to what Romney would say, you know," she said. "I mean who knows, he might have said something that was like 'Oh my God.' But it didn't happen for me."

Sarah Huisenga and Rodney Hawkins contributed reporting to this story.

Biden Knocks Romney In Address To NAACP (MSNBC)

By Carrie Dann

MSNBC, July 13, 2012

HOUSTON -- The same audience that booed Mitt Romney yesterday chided Vice President Joe **Biden** today, but only for ending a laundry list of the Obama administration's accomplishments.

When **Biden** said he was wrapping up these accomplishments, the audience of a few thousand delegates at the NAACP's annual convention shouted "No!" -- capping off a warmly received address, which warned that a Romney presidency would mean voter suppression, health care "controlled by the insurance companies," and tax hikes on millions of African American families.

Biden, who spoke in lieu of an address from the first black president himself, urged delegates to envision the Justice Department under a Romney administration and warned that advances in civil rights would be erased if Republicans prevail in November.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork," **Biden** said, invoking the conservative Supreme Court nominee he famously battled against in the Senate. "Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general."

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" **Biden** asked.

Eric Holder, the first African American to hold the position as the nation's top law enforcement officer, spoke to the group earlier this week. **Biden** said that Holder and the president - unlike Republicans - want voting rights to be "expanded not diminished."

Citing Romney's proposed elimination of some tax breaks as a part of his fiscal plan, **Biden** claimed that a Romney presidency would result in bigger checks to the IRS out of African Americans' wallets.

"He eliminates college tuition tax credit. The earned income tax credit and the child tax credit are cut," **Biden** said. "The result: 2.2 million African Americans working families will see a tax increase if he succeeds. That's a fact."

Obama did not address the group due to scheduling concerns, according to the campaign, although he has no public events today. The president did appear in the form of a taped video before **Biden**'s speech.

The large convention center ballroom was only about two-thirds full for **Biden**'s speech. Organizers blamed the empty seats on early morning flash flooding that affected delegates' transportation to the event venue.

Attendees praised both **Biden** and Romney for addressing the mostly Democratic-leaning organization.

"It was a family affair, a family connection," said community development officer Alan Watkins of Houston, who said he did not fault Obama for not appearing in person. "I completely understand that the president is busy, The fact that he sent his next person in line was great."

Charles Warfield, an NAACP chapter president for Kalamazoo, Mich., said that **Biden** served as an effective emissary precisely because he is not African-American.

"He probably was a better choice for this convention because it would have made Barack look like, because he's black and we're black that we are in sync with everything," Warfield said. "But Vice President **Biden** hit every nail on the head."

Warfield lauded Romney for speaking to the group yesterday, despite broadly disagreeing with the GOP presidential nominee's agenda.

That sentiment was echoed by Marcus Barnum, a Houston financial adviser.

"I applaud his effort coming to an event such as this, because we need to hear from him," Barnum said. "I think it's important for him to try to win our vote as well."

The Oval: Biden To NAACP: Imagine A Romney Justice Department (USAT)

By David Jackson

USA Today, July 12, 2012

Following up on Mitt Romney's speech to the NAACP, Vice President **Biden** told the organization today to think about what a Republican administration would do with civil rights cases.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," **Biden** told the NAACP convention in Houston.

"Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency," the vice president said.

Biden noted that Romney's advisory team includes Robert Bork, the conservative jurist whose 1987 nomination to the Supreme Court was rejected in part because of his past criticism of some civil rights laws.

Biden also cast the Obama-Romney election as "a fight for the heart and soul of America."

Romney made his case to the NAACP on Wednesday. While applauding him at points, some members of the crowd booed Romney when he proposed a repeal of President Obama's health care law.

Obama, the nation's first African-American president, spoke to the NAACP convention via video.

"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said.

Biden Tells NAACP The Election Is A Fight For 'Heart' Of America (LAT)

By Christi Parsons

Los Angeles Times, July 13, 2012

WASHINGTON -- Vice President Joe **Biden** warned of a gloomy four years for civil rights if he and President Obama are not reelected, summing it up in ominous tones by uttering two words: Robert Bork.

Speaking to the NAACP at their convention Thursday, **Biden** asked delegates to close their eyes and picture an administration under Republican Mitt Romney -- and then led them straight to the conservative jurist whose proposed appointment to the Supreme Court by then-President Reagan many of them fought to defeat.

Imagine the Supreme Court after four years of Romney appointments, **Biden** told the crowd.

“Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like,” **Biden** said. “Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork.”

Earlier this year, Romney named Bork to head his Justice Advisory Committee, thrilling the party base with his choice of the conservative standard bearer.

But at the convention of the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, **Biden**'s mere mention of the name drew groans. Old-guard activists remember the defeat of the Bork nomination in 1987 as a highlight of the movement.

A day after Romney was booed by the NAACP, **Biden** urged them to turn their concern into action. A failure of black voters to turnout in large numbers, as they did in 2008, would be a blow to Obama's chances of reelection.

This is a "fight for the heart and soul of America," **Biden** told the crowd in Houston on Thursday. "These guys aren't bad guys," he said of the Republicans, "they just have a fundamentally different view," elongating the word "fundamentally."

christi.parsons@latimes.com

Blog: Biden's Star Turn At NAACP (WP)

By 7/12/2012

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

The nation's first black president has a secret weapon when it comes to turning out black and Latino votes: An old white guy.

Vice President **Biden**, for the second time in three days, delivered a stemwinder in front of a group of minority voters that had the crowd eating it up. On Tuesday, it was his keynote address to the National Council of La Raza in Las Vegas, and on Thursday it was his speech in front of the NAACP convention in Houston.

Biden's rapport with the NAACP crowd was evident from the outset Thursday. He began things by noting that he was a lifetime member of the group, was once the "only white guy on the east side," and giving a shout-out to an NAACP official he affectionately called "Mouse."

From there, he pivoted between talking about the successful mission to kill Osama bin Laden, Republican obstructionism, Obama's health-care law and Republican efforts on Voter ID.

By the end of the speech, **Biden** could feel the moment.

"There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," **Biden** said. He then began to wrap up his remarks, and got booed for doing so; the crowd clearly wanted more.

Biden's star turn in front of the NAACP crowd tells us a couple things.

First, it shows that he's a valuable asset when it comes to the Obama campaign's efforts to turn out minority voters. Yes, it was a friendly crowd to begin with, but enthusiasm matters.

Polls have shown Obama leading by wide margins among both black and Latino voters, and it's a foregone conclusion that African-American voters, in particular, will continue to vote in lockstep for the first black president (preaching to the choir, indeed).

The question, though, is how these normally low-turnout demographics turn out in the 2012 election. Latinos, in particular, concern Democrats because they have shown a willingness to stay home and they have fallen out of love, to some degree, with Obama.

Obama has also shown plenty of rapport with these groups, of course, but having a No. 2 that you can trust to stand in is a tremendous luxury. And **Biden**'s easy speech in front of the NAACP crowd showed that he's not just going to be an attack dog (the more traditional role of the vice president), but also a pretty formidable cheerleader for a president who badly needs someone to pump up the crowd.

Secondly, it's hard to look at the speech **Biden** gave Thursday and not see a 2016 presidential candidate.

The fact is that **Biden** has always struggled because people didn't see him as a real presidential contender. While generally well-regarded in his party and by the media (in spite of his gaffes), **Biden**'s real problem in the 2008 campaign was that he was never able to get a real shot at the main stage.

As a sitting vice president, though, and having delivered speeches like this, it's going to force people to reevaluate his fortitude and whatever presidential aspirations he might have.

This is not to say that he's going to be a front-runner for the Democratic nomination in 2016 or even that he will run (though it seems like he wants to). But it does show what **Biden** can do when he's at his best. He's a talented politician, and when he puts it together, it works.

Biden's speech Thursday will definitely change some people's minds about his role in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns.

In Appeal To NAACP, Biden Warns Of Refighting Civil Rights Battles Under Romney (WP)

By David Nakamura

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Vice President **Biden** made an impassioned appeal Thursday to members of the nation's oldest civil rights group to rally behind President Obama and reject a Republican vision for the country that **Biden** said would roll back progress for minorities.

Speaking at the NAACP conference in Houston a day after presumptive GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney appeared there, **Biden** delivered a sharp rebuttal to Romney's contention that his policies would be better for black families than Obama's have been at a time when unemployment among African Americans is 14.4 percent.

Biden sketched out what he said is the Republican Party's hostile position toward the middle and working classes on voting rights, health care, taxes and education to argue that a Romney administration would be detrimental to blacks.

The vice president played to the crowd, sending a shout out to friends in the Delaware delegation and recalling his work on voting rights during his time on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he said. "I didn't think we'd be back. I remember working with Republicans — and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — on "Motor Voter" [legislation], expanding the [voting] franchise. Some of these were Republican ideas. This is not the Republican Party's view today, nor Romney's. They see a different future in which voting is harder [rather] than easier."

Biden added, "There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir."

Indeed it was. Polls show that black voters overwhelmingly support Obama, even if they are frustrated by the economy and the unemployment rate, which is far higher among African Americans than the general population.

Whereas Romney drew three sets of boos from the same audience, **Biden** received a warm welcome and applause throughout. When he said he would wrap up his speech, some in the audience shouted, "No!"

Before **Biden** spoke, Obama addressed the audience via video message. The president, echoing his campaign stump speech, told the crowd that his administration is committed to a country where "no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is a place where you can make it if you try."

On Wednesday, Romney had told the NAACP that Obama has failed in his bid to restore prosperity and security.

"If you want a president who will make things better in the African American community, you are looking at him," Romney said, drawing boos.

Ticking through a list of Obama's accomplishments — bailing out the auto industry, signing health-care reform legislation, ordering the killing of Osama bin Laden — **Biden** argued that the president achieved those feats despite Republican obstructionism.

"They were seas of obstruction," he said. "Their discipline was amazing. They never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama. He hasn't given up."

Biden linked Romney directly to Capitol Hill Republicans, including House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Va.) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), and argued that under a Romney administration, they would collude to undo critical reforms.

"Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," **Biden** said, drawing shouts of "No!" from the crowd. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency.

"This election, in my view, is a fight for the heart and soul of America," he continued, adding of Republicans: "These guys aren't bad guys, they just have a fundamentally different view."

Blog: Romney Declares Independence From Birthers At NAACP Convention (WP)

By Jonathan Capehart

Washington Post, July 12, 2012

Vice President **Biden** got the reception we all thought he would get at the NAACP convention. Warm and effusive, compared to the cool and respectful (with the occasional booing) that greeted Mitt Romney's hollow speech yesterday.

Biden ripped apart Romney's address and warned the audience about what a President Romney might do. "Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," he said. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." Even though Romney's conservative street cred is thin among conservatives, there's no question his election would mean an abrupt change in philosophy compared to President Obama.

But there's another thing in Romney's speech I want to highlight as a Romney declaration of independence from the conspiratorial wack-o wing of the Republican Party.

Visit msnbc.com for breaking news, world news, and news about the economy Now, if someone had told us in the 1950s or 1960s that a black citizen would serve as the forty-fourth president of the United States, we would have been proud and many would have been surprised.

Did you catch that? "[B]lack citizen"? The racist birther movement centers on the conspiracy theory that Obama was born not in Hawaii but in Kenya. Therefore, he is not an American citizen and is illegitimately occupying the Oval Office. Republican leaders and those who aspired to be such allowed the rumor to fester or egged it on.

To his credit, Romney never really dabbled in those fetid waters. Yesterday, in one phrase, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee disavowed the birther craziness. Of course, conspiracy theories never die. But every little bit helps.

Biden Gets Warm NAACP Reception (WSJ)

By Jared A. Favole

Wall Street Journal, July 13, 2012

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Biden Defends Health Care Reform And Decries Voter ID Laws (NYT)

By Rebecca Berg

New York Times, July 13, 2012

One day after Mitt Romney was booed at the N.A.A.C.P. convention when he said he would repeal the Affordable Care Act if he were elected president, Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr. defended the health care reform law in his remarks to the convention Thursday.

The crowd was predictably receptive to Mr. **Biden**'s speech, applauding heartily as he lauded President Obama for his success in getting the law passed.

"This man prevailed where no president had before," Mr. **Biden** said. "And he was right, he was right."

Mr. **Biden** hailed health care reform, one of a number of issues he used to illustrate the two political parties' divergent visions for the country's future, and accused Republicans of blocking that and other pieces of legislation backed by Democrats as part of a premeditated "plan."

"Obstructionism was a plan from the outset," Mr. **Biden** said, to which the crowd responded with cries of, "Yeah!"

"Folks, their discipline is amazing," he said of Republicans. "They have not given up. But neither has my guy, Barack Obama. He has never given up."

Mr. **Biden** also touched on the president's plan, announced this week, to seek a temporary extension of tax cuts on income below $250,000.

When Mr. **Biden** circled back to the issue of health care later in his speech, he received a standing ovation. The crowd also rose to their feet when the vice president decried racial profiling and what he called "voter suppression" efforts by Republicans, likely a reference to some Republicans' support of voter-ID laws.

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Mr. **Biden** said. The question was met with a collective, "No!"

Mr. Obama continues to receive overwhelming support from the African-American share of the electorate in polls, and Mr. **Biden** conceded that his remarks were tantamount to "preaching to the choir."

The mood was not so fraternal at the convention Wednesday, when Mr. Romney spoke to a less-receptive audience.

"If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him," he said, drawing boos (but some light applause) from the convention crowd.

In an interview with Fox News after his speech, Mr. Romney said, "I expect to get African-American votes."

That assertive tone stood in sharp contrast to John McCain's address to the N.A.A.C.P. as the presumptive Republican nominee for president in 2008, when he focused on the less contentious topic of education and complimented Mr. Obama.

"Don't tell him I said this, but he is an impressive fellow in many ways," Mr. McCain said. "He has inspired a great many Americans, some of whom had wrongly believed that a political campaign could hold no purpose or meaning for them."

Biden Paints Ominous Picture Of Romney Presidency (AP)

By Juan A. Lozano And Ken Thomas

Associated Press, July 13, 2012

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Joe **Biden** rallied support for President Barack Obama before the nation's largest civil rights organization on Thursday, declaring that Republican challenger Mitt Romney's election-year agenda would hurt — not help — working families in the black community.

Biden, appearing before the NAACP's annual convention one day after Romney addressed the group, offered what amounted to a rebuttal of the Republican rival as both campaigns sought support from a key constituency in several swing states.

The vice president did not specifically cite Romney's argument to the NAACP on Wednesday that he could serve African-Americans better than Obama, the nation's first black president. Romney was booed when he said he'd repeal Obama's sweeping health care reform law but otherwise got a polite reception as he reached out to a traditionally Democratic voting bloc.

Biden predictably drew a far more rousing reception as he outlined differences between Obama and Romney on health care, education, energy, women's rights and research, saying the two rivals had "fundamentally different visions."

Biden offered a rundown of Obama's first term, pointing to a landmark health care law, launching the mission that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and the decision to rescue the financial system and U.S. automakers General Motors and Chrysler.

"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision. And it will not surprise you — I don't think it's even a close call," **Biden** said. "So it's time, it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done ... To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."

Obama did not speak to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People this year, appearing instead in a taped video message. In the brief remarks, Obama said: "I stand on your shoulders and at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise." He reiterated many of the themes of his re-election campaign, saying the nation needs to "build an economy where everyone can have the confidence that the hard work will also pay off."

The president said he was sorry he couldn't be there in person. Obama had no public events scheduled Thursday but was to be interviewed at the White House, along with first lady Michelle Obama, by Charlie Rose of CBS News.

White House officials noted that Obama spoke to the NAACP convention during the 2008 presidential campaign and in 2009, while Mrs. Obama addressed the group in 2010. The president is scheduled to address the National Urban League in New Orleans on July 25.

Black voters are a key part of Obama's re-election strategy, with about 95 percent supporting him in 2008. Polls have shown black voters supporting Obama at comparable levels this year but Romney could undercut the president in states with large black communities, such as North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and Florida, if he can persuade some black voters to support him or if they stay home on Election Day.

Romney said Wednesday that much more must be done to improve education in the nation's cities and noted that the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among blacks is higher than the 8.2 percent national average.

"If you understood who I truly am in my heart, and if it were possible to fully communicate what I believe is in the real, enduring best interest of African-American families, you would vote for me for president," Romney said.

In Obama's absence, **Biden** offered a fiery defense of administration policies while warning of what a Romney presidency would bring to civil rights. He asked attendees to "imagine" what the Justice Department would be like under a Romney administration and "imagine when his senior adviser on the Constitution is Robert Bork," the Republican Supreme Court nominee who was defeated by Democrats in 1987. **Biden** was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the time.

Biden received sustained applause throughout his address. When he spoke about civil rights and administration efforts to expand voting rights and not diminish them, the crowd stood and loudly cheered. When **Biden** said, "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" people in the crowd answered in unison, "No."

Biden said there was a lot more he could say on protecting voting rights but that he was "preaching to the choir." "Say it, say it," many in the crowded responded. As **Biden** was wrapping up, he said, "Let me close, my friends," prompting members of the audience to boo and yell, "No!"

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Thomas reported from Washington.

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US Black Leadership Hails Barnstorming Biden (AFP)

By Tangi Quemener

AFP, July 12, 2012

WASHINGTON — US Vice President Joe **Biden** received a rapturous welcome Thursday at a conference of black civil rights leaders that one day earlier had jeered Republican White House challenger Mitt Romney.

"It's good to be home," he declared, to cheers from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ahead of a speech in which he drew sharp comparisons between his boss President Barack Obama and Romney.

Romney had been subjected to a chorus of boos on Wednesday when he told the same Houston meeting that he plans to repeal the president's signature health reform bill, and **Biden** was applauded when he defended the Democratic incumbent.

Biden contrasted the values of Obama, the country's first African-American president, to those of Romney, a multimillionaire businessman and investor who once served as Republican governor of Massachusetts.

Biden praised Obama as a leader "who has the character of his convictions," adding that "almost never since we have taken office during this entire time did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help."

And he reminded the crowd that but for the landmark Affordable Care Act, which survived a Supreme Court challenge last month, there are "eight million black Americans who never would have had insurance."

"The best way to sum up the president's view, my view, and I think your view, is we see America where, in the words of the scripture, 'what you do unto the least of my brethren you do unto me'," the vice president declared.

"As I said, I believe this election will come down to character, conviction, and vision and will not surprise you, I don't think it's even a close call," he added, to thunderous applause and shouts of acclamation.

Blacks voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008 and, even with black unemployment at 14.4 percent -- more than six points higher than the national average -- Romney faces an uphill battle to win over black voters in November.

Biden, by contrast, scored easy points by pointing out Obama's record on education, social legislation and health care, and won more cheers when he turned to the Republican's stance on women's rights issues.

Biden said Romney was a bad fit for black voters and skewered Romney on everything from abortion rights to health care and other social legislation.

"Governor Romney and his allies in the Congress see a different future for women in America," he said.

"The governor isn't sure what his position is on the Violence Against Women Act," **Biden** said.

"But he is certain of what his position is on Roe V. Wade -- overturn it," the vice president said of the landmark abortion rights case in which the US Supreme Court ruled that abortion is legal.

Obama -- who introduced **Biden** in a brief pre-recorded statement to the meeting -- will face off against Romney in the November presidential poll. **Biden** is expected to be his running mate.

Joe Biden Fires Up NAACP. Where Was President Obama? (CSM)

The NAACP crowd booed Mitt Romney, and polls say that the president could win at least 95 percent of the African-American vote. Still, Obama may need that and more in key states.

By Peter Grier

Christian Science Monitor, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** on Thursday delivered a fiery speech defending Obama administration priorities to the NAACP annual meeting in Houston. His basic theme: For working-class black families, President Obama's agenda is better than challenger Mitt Romney's.

"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," said Mr. **Biden**.

For instance, education does not play a central role in Mr. Romney's vision of the US, while it does for Mr. Obama, charged **Biden**. Romney opposes government support for the development of renewable-energy sources and efforts to equalize pay between men and women.

Biden drew perhaps his most enthusiastic crowd response when he said that the incumbent administration wants to expand voting rights, not diminish them. In a number of states, Republicans have led efforts to require that voters produce identification – a requirement that Attorney General Eric Holder has derided as a "poll tax" designed to suppress minority votes.

"Folks, there is a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," said **Biden**, stating the obvious as the audience applauded.

Polls show that Obama should win upwards of 95 percent of the African American vote, so in many ways **Biden**'s reception was foreordained. The pastor who led the invocation to open the day's proceedings listed how the NAACP had been "blessed" to hear from a number of prominent individuals, but left that word out when referring to the presumptive GOP nominee, saying only that "we've heard also from Mitt Romney."

The NAACP crowed booed Romney on Wednesday when he vowed that if elected he'd repeal Obama's health care law. The audience did applaud some Romney pronouncements, such as his statement of opposition to gay marriage, and gave him a polite standing ovation at his end.

Given this context, one question stands out: Where was the president himself? If his challenger was willing to appear before the NAACP and be booed, why couldn't Obama bestir himself to meet live with his most committed supporters?

Conservative commentators defending Romney were quick to make this comparison.

"Hey, one Presidential candidate cared enough about the African-American vote to show up to the NAACP's annual convention in this election year. Too bad it wasn't the Democrat," wrote conservative talk show host Ed Morrissey on the website Hot Air.

Republicans noted that CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer agreed with them. On his Situation Room show on Wednesday, Mr. Blitzer said that Romney did the "right thing" by appearing and that Obama, who was in Washington with no public meetings on his schedule, should have appeared as well.

"He's got meetings. I assume those meetings are very important, but he could have found the time to pay his respects to the NAACP," said Blitzer.

It's true that most blacks will vote Democratic. But in swing states such as Virginia, Obama needs every single vote – and an energized African-American electorate could help him, said Blitzer.

Obama did appear at the NAACP via video just prior to **Biden**'s speech. "I stand on your shoulders," he said, to polite but not overwhelming applause.

Joe Biden: Mitt Romney A Threat To NAACP (POLITCO)

By Reid J. Epstein

Politico, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** came to the NAACP Thursday with a booming message: President Barack Obama needs their help, and Mitt Romney and the Republicans in Congress will hurt them.

Speaking in Houston to the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization's annual convention a day after Romney told the NAACP that the Republican candidate later acknowledged was full of statements the crowd didn't want to hear, **Biden** delivered his own speech, built, as the vice president told them, around "preaching to the choir."

"Remember what this at its core was all about, why this organization at its core was all about," **Biden** said, after touting the Obama administration's record on African-Americans. "It was about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."

Biden then reminded the crowd that embattled Attorney General Eric Holder, held in contempt by the GOP-controlled House for not releasing documents related to Fast & Furious, is fighting to protect voting rights while Republicans seek to place hurdles before ballot access. Tuesday, members passed an emergency resolution in support of Holder and his position on voting rights.

He urged attendees to "imagine" what Romney's Justice Department would look like and who he would appoint to the Supreme Court.

"And we, the president and I and Eric and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," **Biden** said. "Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Where there are no distinctions made on the basis of race or gender and access to housing and lending. So much more. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

The crowd, which had cheered and applauded **Biden** at points through the speech, booed at his characterization of a Romney administration.

After defending Obama policies ranging from the health care reforms to the stimulus to the auto bailout, **Biden** told the NAACP that Republicans have, from his first day in office, sought to tear him down.

"Almost never since he's taken office did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help," **Biden** said, citing the Robert Draper book "Do Not Ask What Good We Do" as evidence of a GOP conspiracy to oppose Obama on everything he did.

The Republicans' plan, **Biden** said, was "not to get us out of this recession, not to promote jobs, not to do the things that needed to be done, but to make Barack Obama a one–term president."

He continued: "Folks, their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues, he continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. And folks, in the end, that's what the president is all about."

Biden's NAACP appearance, which began with acknowledgments of old Delaware friends like "Mousey" – whom an aide identified as Richard Smith, a Delaware NAACP official – came the day after Romney was booed during his appearance for repeating his call to repeal Obama's health care reform and suggesting that he would be a better president for African Americans than has been Obama.

Romney took his booing as a badge of honor, telling donors at a Montana fundraiser Wednesday night that he would not pander to the audience in front of him.

"I don't give different speeches to different audiences, all right," Romney told the donors. "I gave them the same speech. When I mentioned I am going to get rid of Obamacare they weren't happy, I didn't get the same response. That's OK, I want people to know what I stand for and if I don't stand for what they want, go vote for someone else, that's just fine."

Obama — who spoke to the group in 2008 and 2009 — did not attend, instead delivering a two-minute pre-taped video address, reminding the group that "I stand on your shoulders."

Read more: http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78443_Page2.html#xzz20UiuzuMW

Rush Limbaugh: 'Uncle Sam's Cabin' Built By Democrats (POLITCO)

By William Bergstrom

Politico, July 13, 2012

Rush Limbaugh accused the Democratic Party on Thursday of trying "to keep blacks on the dependency plantation" — of "Uncle Sam's Cabin."

"The Democrats of old fought to keep blacks living on the plantation, Uncle Tom's Cabin," Limbaugh said on his show, referring to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. "We need to revise that. Now the Democrats fight to keep blacks on the dependency plantation. Uncle Tom's Cabin, no. It's now Uncle Sam's Cabin."

The conservative radio host applauded Mitt Romney for telling the NAACP at its annual convention that he plans to repeal Obamacare — a statement that drew boos from the crowd — and he attacked Vice President Joe **Biden**, who was booed for ending his speech, for "lying" to them.

"[Romney] got booed for telling the truth," Limbaugh said, according to a transcript. "**Biden** got booed because he stopped lying. **Biden**'s speech was a lie. He ends his speech, they boo. The audience wanted **Biden** to keep lying to 'em."

Limbaugh added that the "NAACP has become an organization expressly devoted to keep blacks from voting for Republicans. Pure and simple. That's all it exists for, to make sure they don't vote for Republicans."

Boehner Downplays Romney Boos (POLITCO)

By Tomer Ovadia

Politico, July 13, 2012

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday played down the boos and jeers that Mitt Romney received while speaking to the NAACP this week.

"There was that one moment, but if you look at the broader speech there were a number of times when he got a very resounding applause," Boehner said. "I congratulate Governor Romney for going and accepting the invitation to speak. Governor Romney is running for president of the United States to represent all Americans, so he ought to be congratulated on reaching out to all of them."

The NAACP crowd responded negatively several times to Romney's claim that he would "make things better in the African-American community" and that he would repeal Obama's health care law.

Boehner was accurate in stating that while several of Romney's comments did not play well, the audience applauded politely during much of his speech.

Boehner's comments came after Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told Bloomberg TV Wednesday she thought "it was a calculated move on [Romney's] part to get booed at the NAACP convention."

President Obama was invited to speak to the NAACP but declined, citing a scheduling conflict. Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke to the organization Thursday morning.

Steny Hoyer: OK For President Obama To Skip NAACP (POLITCO)

By Kevin Robillard

Politico, July 13, 2012

Rep. Steny Hoyer said Thursday it was OK for President Barack Obama to send Vice President Joe **Biden** in his place to the NAACP's annual convention in Houston, dismissing conservatives who argued it was insulting.

"I think the vice president is clearly representing the president and himself," said Hoyer, the House Minority Whip. Conservatives, including Rush Limbaugh, had portrayed the first black president's decision to bypass the convention as a snub to a group of voters Obama is expected to win overwhelmingly in the fall. **Biden** is speaking to the convention this afternoon.

Hoyer, whose Maryland district is a little over one-third black, also said Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney expected an "adverse" reaction when he called for the elimination of the president's health care reform law. He did not go as far as House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who said Romney wanted to get boos from the convention crowd.

"I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction," Hoyer said on CNN's "Starting Point." "The African-American community feels very strongly that the Obamacare bill … is a very important piece of legislation, not only for them but for all Americans."

According to Romney, Hoyer is right. "I think we expected that," Romney said in an Fox Business Channel interview that aired Wednesday night.

Biden Tries To Derail Romney's Charter-school Pitch To NAACP (CALLER)

By Neil Munro

Daily Caller, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden**'s used his red-meat speech at the NAACP convention to deride Gov. Mitt Romney's promise to push for charter schools, which are strongly supported by many lower-income African-American parents.

Biden's jibes are significant because they're a tacit admission that Romney's promise may attract a significant number of African-American votes and may reduce November turnout for Obama.

"Look, education doesn't play a central role in the Romney Republican vision of the future of America," **Biden** told the NAACP's annual convention July 12.

"It's on the back burner, it's not a priority," he claimed to the audience of African-Americans, who are vital to Obama's prospects in November.

Biden's dig came one day after Romney pushed his charter school plan to the NAACP attendees, many of whom are employed in local schools.

"In Boston, in Harlem, in Los Angeles, and all across the country, charter schools are giving children a chance, children that otherwise could be locked in failing schools," Romney declared.

While Massachusetts Democrats tried to stop charter schools, "I vetoed the bill [and] joined with the Black Legislative Caucus, and their votes helped preserve my veto, which meant that new charter schools, including some in urban neighborhoods, would be opened," he declared, prompting some applause.

He also was applauded when he announced his support for marriage. That statement was a contrast with Obama, who has alienated some African-Americans by calling for child-oriented marriage to be refined to encompass single-sex partnerships.

Romney's evocation of religious faith and his support for racial equality also prompted applause from the audience, which gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech.

Romney' aides dismissed **Biden**'s comments about charter schools.

"As governor, Mitt Romney worked with the Massachusetts Black Caucus to uphold his veto on a charter school moratorium," said spokesman Ryan Williams. "He believes that it is important to expand access to high quality public charter schools."

The NAACP speech was the second time that Romney has highlighted his support of charter schools — and the second time that Democrats have rushed to denounce it.

In May, Romney visited Bluford Charter School, a charter school in Philadelphia to highlight his support for charter schools to African-Americans. Most of the students in the school are African-American, and the school is run by a charter-school firm, Universal Companies.

That was an aggressive move, because it was aimed at Obama's base in the largest city in swing-state Pennsylvania.

Multiple polls shows that African-Americans are the strongest supporters of charter schools.

A July poll of 528 registered voters in swing-state North Carolina showed that 70 percent of state residents — but 85 percent of African-Americans — support charter schools. The poll was conducted by the Center for Education Reform.

An April 2011 poll of New Jersey residents by Rutgers-Eagleton showed that 31 percent of whites and 52 percent of African-Americans support charter schools.

A November 2011 poll in California showed that 52 percent of registered voters had a favorable view of charter schools. "African American respondents expressed the most support for charter schools," said a Los Angeles Times article about the poll of 1,057 registered voters, which was conducted by a Democratic polling firm, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.

In response, Democratic Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter brought his Democratic allies into the neighborhood to heckle the May Romney event, and also to hold a press conference where he could slam Romney's offer.

"Romney has always opposed investing in our children's education … which is why I don't understand why he is here today," Nutter claimed.

Romney's push for charter schools follows the successful GOP effort to restore federal funding for charter schools in D.C.

That effort was led by House Speaker John Boehner. Most of the D.C. charter-school students are African-American, and their parents protested vigorously when Obama nearly eliminated the program in 2009.

Obama sends his two children to Sidwell Friends School in D.C., at an annual cost of roughly $30,000 each.

Blog: Joe Biden Backs Up A Presidential Candidate (CALLER)

By Jim Treacher

Daily Caller, July 12, 2012

I'm just not sure which one.

Biden spoke at the NAACP convention earlier today, because Obama couldn't make it. (Barry's so busy today that they didn't have time to write any of it down in the official White House schedule.) Apparently, after it was patiently explained to ol' Sheriff Joe that the event has nothing to do with college sports, he tore up his prepared speech and just winged it. Here's a little piece:

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."

Well… yeah. That's the whole point. Every day, more and more people are imagining those very things. They don't like what's going on in those institutions and want to fix them. What they don't imagine is that Obama is a good president.

Again and again, those poor slobs in the Obama campaign put **Biden** out there. Again and again, he manages to undercut his own team in the most entertainingly unpredictable ways. Is he just a garrulous, well-meaning oaf, or is there something else going on there?

Did Joe switch sides? Is he a sleeper agent? Is he trying to get the other guy elected?

Reminds me of something I wrote a few weeks before the 2008 election. Not to brag or anything, but I think I called it pretty well…

Biden Clarifies Earlier Remarks on His Dread of an Obama Administration

Richmond, VA, Oct. 22 — At a campaign stop in a Richmond-area Denny's earlier today, Delaware Senator and Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joe **Biden** followed up on his controversial claim last Sunday that within the first six months of an Obama administration, America would "have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

Biden's statement to the press:

"Ya know, I kinda put my foot in my mouth the other day… [chuckle] You folks know how I can get, with the words and the talking and the babbling and the yammering and so forth. But I just wanted to clarify those remarks. I know I speak for Obama when I say that we are ready to lead. Come what may,

we are gonna be out there in front. Because I gotta tell ya, when this great man, this fantastic young African-American kid who I'm proud to call my closest friend, when he becomes president, the American people need to know that you are all gonna be grabbin' your ankles every April 15 for the rest of your probably-shortened lives.

"I mean, the taxes, they're gonna be unbelievable. Holy f***. So we'll need your help with that. You're gonna have to pay 'em. There's no way we can repel a full-scale nationwide tax revolt without resorting to nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, at least in the scenarios they've shown me, so we're countin' on you to do the right thing.

"And I'd say to America, this land that I love: You've all seen what an agent of change Barack Obama is. He's brought together people from all walks of life. He's inspired every single person in this country, no matter who you are or what you look like or even if you're into, y'know, the funny stuff. [chuckle] Which is gonna be a great comfort when the Obama administration strangles the U.S. economy and sets off a long, terrifying race war.

"It is gonna suck beyond anything you could ever imagine. I'm not even kidding. I have a great fondness and admiration for the African-American people, I think they've done some great work over the years, but when push comes to shove, I know which side I'm on. You follow me?

"But Obama is gonna be there, and he's gonna learn the ropes, probably. It'll be really hard for you guys to survive in the nightmarish, decaying wasteland he'll make of this great nation, but those are the sorts of experiences that shape a man. And I know he's gonna come through it okay, at least in terms of his own personal safety."

Before being escorted out of the restaurant by frenzied campaign aides, **Biden** added, "And don't forget Iran! They know he's a pushover. Which is one of the things I love about the guy, he's a pussycat, but these animals? Boy oh boy. Can you say 'suitcase nuke'? I don't know for sure which city, but I'm guessing one of the smaller Midwest towns we're not watching that closely, maybe Omaha or Akron or one of those deals. You should probably start evacuating now.

"Okay, whoa, looks like my time's up. Easy on the threads, fellas, it's a rental. [chuckle]"

Biden Defends Obama At NAACP (DAYBEST)

The Daily Beast, July 13, 2012

A day after Mitt Romney was booed at the NAACP convention, Vice President Joe **Biden** charmed the same audience on Thursday with a spirited speech outlining the successes of the Obama administration. **Biden** denounced the voter-ID laws taking root across the country that many believe will keep minorities from the polls. And he encouraged the crowd to vote. "When you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said. He also told the audience that a Romney administration could roll back the gains the black community has made over the past several decades.

Biden And Romney Duck Tough Issues, Just Different Ones (NATJO)

By Rebecca Kaplan

National Journal, July 13, 2012

Drawing a stark contrast with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Vice President Joe **Biden** on Thursday vigorously defended President Obama's first term in office and showered a friendly audience at the NAACP annual convention with references to issues like voting rights that Romney deftly sidestepped the day before.

But **Biden** also avoided some uncomfortable subjects for the Democratic administration, including making no mention of the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among African-Americans, something Romney highlighted in his speech to the convention audience the day before. Nonetheless, **Biden**'s remarks sparked loud applause and whistles of appreciation from the liberal audience, much different than the tepid reception and booing that greeted Romney on Wednesday.

"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," **Biden** said, as he keyed up a round of policy comparisons that included education, taxes, and health care. Romney's vision, he said, is "basically a throwback to the 50s," — a biting reference to the decade before the civil-rights movement liberated black Americans from institutionalized segregation.

Biden, who is playing the role of attack dog in Obama's reelection campaign, devoted the most time to criticizing the Republicans' stance on civil rights, alluding to the passage of a series of voter-identification laws supported by GOP state legislatures around the country that Democrats say are designed to disenfranchise minority voters. The issue is the main topic of civil-rights organization's 103rd convention, taking place in Houston.

The vice president said that Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder "see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Shouts of "No!" came from the crowd. A Romney Justice Department would be guided by someone like Robert Bork, the Reagan-era Supreme Court nominee who was rejected in part because of opposition from civil-rights and women's groups, he said.

"This ain't your father's Republican Party," **Biden** said. "They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier. Where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."

Romney did not bring up the voter-ID laws in his speech on Wednesday, training his focus on the still sour economy, joblessness and the unemployment rate among African Americans, which is far higher than the national average of 8.1 percent. Romney won applause from the crowd for many of his points on the economy, but was booed when he vowed to repeal President Obama's health care law.

Biden offered a full-throated defense of the law's popular provisions, such as coverage for children on their parents' policies until age 26 and a ban on preexisting condition denials, and claimed that the Republican health care proposals would be "controlled by insurance companies."

He also accused House Republicans of a concerted campaign of obstructionism with the goal of making sure Obama's first term failed. "It was on the easy, obvious things where we got no cooperation," **Biden** said, noting efforts to extend the payroll-tax cut, help ensure equal pay for women, and raise the debt ceiling as examples.

Obama did not appear in person at the convention, citing scheduling conflicts. Instead, he recorded a short video message for the audience in which he urged them to "keep standing with me."

"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said in the video, which preceded **Biden**'s speech. "At the NAACP, you have always believed in the American promise. That idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try.

"That's why you fought so hard for good jobs, and a quality education, and a justice system that treats everybody fairly. That's why you helped make health care reform a reality. That's why you're still

fighting today, because you know that our mission right now is not just to recover from the recession, it is to reclaim the security that so many Americans have lost," Obama said.

Obama addressed the organization four years ago during his first presidential campaign. Twiala Dotson, 43, a Houston teacher who was at that event, said she thinks it's a good idea that **Biden** was sent this time around because he could aggressively defend the president's record.

"President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe **Biden**, being the pit bull that he is, he was the man that needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said," Dotson said.

Biden was booed only once -- when he said he was about to end his speech.

Biden Rallies Blacks To Obama At NAACP (HILL)

By Jonathan Easley

The Hill, July 13, 2012

Vice President **Biden** rallied black voters to President Obama's cause during an address Thursday to the NAACP.

Biden came in place of President Obama, who excused himself with a scheduling conflict. But that did not appear to disappoint the audience, which cheered **Biden** with vigor one day after booing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

The vice president played to the crowd, remarking on its history as a civil rights group and suggesting Romney and Republicans would work against the organization on issues ranging from voter rights to racial profiling.

The future, **Biden** said, will be one where voter rights are expanded and racial profiling disappears — and he suggested that would not be the case without Democrats in power.

"We see the future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," **Biden** continued. "Where racial profiling is a thing from the past, where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. ... Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again? We went through these battles, I didn't think we'd be back."

Democrats have been highlighting voter rights and allegations of suppression by Republicans as they work to keep turnout by black voters high this fall. High turnout by blacks would help Obama, who carried the black vote in a landslide in 2008 and leads Romney 92 percent to 2 among black voters, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released on Wednesday.

The Department of Justice and the state of Florida are suing one another over Florida Gov. Rick Scott's attempt to purge voter rolls of ineligible voters in his state. Attorney General Eric Holder also highlighted voter rights in an address earlier this week to the NAACP.

Romney was booed Wednesday after vowing to repeal "ObamaCare," which **Biden** championed in his speech. He said the president had pushed the healthcare law despite political risk and said it would increase insurance coverage for blacks.

"It required him early on to use up almost all of his political capitol," **Biden** said, "but he was right, he cut $100 billion from the federal debt over the next 10 years, providing access to ... 8 million black Americans who would never have had insurance."

Romney in his speech noted high black unemployment and vowed that blacks would be better off with him in the White House than Obama. He also highlighted his father's work in the civil rights era.

Obama, who last addressed the convention in 2009, sent a video message that played ahead of **Biden**. Some questioned the move, but the crowd responded emphatically to **Biden**, booing him only when he said he was close to ending his speech.

Biden closed by turning to the courts, which through the Brown vs. the Board of Education case and other cases in the civil rights era, hold a deep meaning with the NAACP audience.

"Close your eyes and imagine what the Romney justice department will look like [if Romney is president]," **Biden** said. "Imagine who is likely to be picked as attorney general, the head of civil rights division.

"Imagine, this to me is one of the most critical issues, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency. I believe this election will come down to character and conviction ... and I don't think it's even a close call. It's time for the NAACP to ... inspire a generation," he said.

House Democratic Whip Defends Obama's Absence From NAACP Convention (HILL)

By Geneva Sands

The Hill, July 13, 2012

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (Md.) defended the White House on Thursday for selecting Vice President **Biden** to speak at the annual NAACP convention instead of President Obama.

"I think the vice president clearly is representing the president and himself, is going to talk about the policies that this administration has put forward to try to turn the recession around that they inherited," said Hoyer on CNN's "Starting Point."

The top Democrat said the president and vice president are both "well-known" to the NAACP and the African-American community.

"I think those policies are going to be supported by that organization and by, frankly, Americans across the country that understand how hard the president and vice president have been working to get this economy moving," Hoyer said.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who spoke at the event in Houston on Wednesday, took what appeared to be a dig at Obama's absence from the convention during his speech, telling the audience that if elected president he would say "yes" to attending next year's event.

"I can't promise that you and I will agree on every issue. But I do promise that your hospitality to me today will be returned. We will know one another, and work to common purposes. I will seek your counsel," said Romney during his speech. "And if I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes."

The GOP hopeful received boos from the crowd when he promised to repeal President Obama's signature healthcare law.

"If our goal is jobs, we must, must stop spending over a trillion dollars more than we earn. To do this, I will eliminate expensive non-essential programs like ObamaCare," said Romney to a chorus of booing.

Hoyer joined other Democrats and Romney himself in acknowledging that criticism of the repealing the healthcare law was to be expected at the convention.

"Clearly, I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction. The African-American community feels very strongly that the ObamaCare bill, the Affordable Care Act that will provide access to affordable, quality healthcare to all Americans, is a very important piece of legislation," Hoyer said.

Hoyer was on CNN promoting the Democrats' refurbished "Make It in America" package, intended to create jobs and promote exports by strengthening trade enforcement, hiking infrastructure spending and eliminating tax benefits for companies that move jobs overseas.

The Democratic whip accused the Republican leadership of refusing to bring the bill to the House floor.

"In my opinion, had they put President Obama's agenda on the floor, had we passed that, had the president signed it, we would have created 1 to 2 million additional jobs in this country," he said.

Blog: Biden To NAACP: 'This Is Preaching To The Choir' (WEEKSTAN)

By Daniel Halper

Weekly Standard, July 12, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** told a NAACP meeting in Houston, Texas that he had to cut his remarks short "but this is preaching to the choir."

"The House of Representatives Republicans voted affirmatively to prevent the Justice Department from even investigating whether or not there was voter suppression, " **Biden** said. "Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir. Let me close, my friends, by saying, I mean this sincerely, just close your eyes and imagine. Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like."

Biden, CBS reporter Mark Knoller reports, exited the stage with Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" playing in the background.

President Obama did not attend the conference, but delivered a video address to the group. Republican Mitt Romney delivered a speech there yesterday.

Romney Plays The Race Card (TIME)

By Touré

Time, July 13, 2012

Mitt Romney went to the NAACP's National Convention planning to get booed. It was no mistake. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi told Bloomberg TV she believes "it was a calculated move on his part to get booed at the NAACP convention." When Romney called the Affordable Care Act "Obamacare," he purposely used a term that would not work with the audience in the room. When he said, "If you want a President who'll make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him. Take a look!" he was virtually taunting them the way a pro wrestler who's playing a villain eggs on the crowd saying things he knows will elicit boos.

Why would he bother going to the NAACP convention to get booed? Because the real audience wasn't in the room. He wanted to be booed by that black audience so that white conservatives — who still don't see him as one of them — and white undecideds would see that he's unafraid to talk down to black people, to offend them, to be their villain, to make them boo. The result is that he comes off looking tough or gains sympathy. Either way, he gets a soundbite that will bounce through the cable news echo chamber and elicit an emotional reaction from white voters. Romney's performance wasn't intended to win more black votes, it was intended to help win more white votes.

Tim Alberta of the conservative-leaning National Journal read Romney's performance in heroic terms rarely applied to this candidate. "With the critical eyes of the political world resting squarely upon him, Romney marched defiantly into the lion's den and delivered a speech that was direct, assertive and dispassionate," Alberta wrote. So blacks, in this analogy, are ferocious wild animals who should be

feared, only tameable by the most fearless of men, which, Romney supposedly proved he is by facing them down and talking tough.

Republicans don't always treat the NAACP this way. When George W. Bush went to the convention in 2000 as a candidate for president he said respectfully, "The party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln," addressing why the GOP is not loved by black voters while nodding to the party's greatest racial justice achievement. Bush said, "Racism, despite all our progress, still exists," and spoke of racial profiling by police. He spoke to the people in the room, not using them to help himself — just as Joe **Biden** did a day after Romney's speech.

Romney's campaign is built around the idea that as a successful businessman he understands how to shape the economy to aid business and create jobs that will get this country going again. Okay, so why not tailor that message to lay out a plan to combat the black unemployment rate, which is 14.4%, almost double the white unemployment rate? He has said nothing about that. His Mormon faith is central to who he is, so why not speak to the Mormon Church's history of excluding blacks from the priesthood until 1978 when Romney was 31?

Romney did tell the NAACP, "Always in both parties there have been men and women of integrity, decency and humility who have called injustice by its name. Someone who set a standard of conduct and made us better by their example. For me that man is my father." Romney's father, Michigan Governor George Romney, was unquestionably progressive on racial issues. He marched with civil rights activists in 1963, agitated for a civil rights plank in the GOP party platform in 1964, rejected the 1964 presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater because of Goldwater's regressive position on civil rights, and fought housing discrimination as Nixon's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. When Mitt Romney goes to the NAACP to play politics and use those black attendees as props meant to help amplify his message with white voters outside the room, he reminds us that he is not living up to the standard of integrity and decency set by his beloved father.

At NAACP, Biden Hits Romney Adviser Bork Over Civil Rights (WT)

By Dave Boyer

Washington Times, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** on Thursday attacked former Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, an adviser to GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, for plotting to roll back civil rights gains if Mr. Romney defeats President Obama in November.

"Just close your eyes and imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Mr. **Biden** said at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's annual gathering in Houston. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general or the head of the Civil Rights Division."

Mr. Bork, a former solicitor general in the Nixon administration who was rejected by the Senate in 1987 for a seat on the Supreme Court, is a co-chairman of the Romney campaign's justice advisory committee.

The vice president said a Romney administration would make voting "harder, not easier," and added that the election "is a fight for the heart and soul of America."

The emphasis on control of the Justice Department drew an enthusiastic response from the delegates, who approved an "emergency resolution" Tuesday denouncing the House's bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. in criminal and civil contempt of Congress. The resolution

called the votes against Mr. Holder, under fire from lawmakers over his handling of the botched "Fast and Furious" gunrunning operation, as a "travesty of justice."

The NAACP said the resolution was intended to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."

Mr. Romney spoke at the NAACP convention a day earlier, saying he is the candidate who will improve the economic condition of blacks in America. The audience booed Mr. Romney when he pledged to repeal "Obamacare," although many in the audience did give him a standing ovation when he finished his remarks.

Mr. **Biden**, by contrast, was greeted with cheers throughout his address, and often with calls of affirmation as he listed the differences between President Obama and the Republicans.

With black unemployment at 14.4 percent, the vice president didn't talk much about jobs, instead focusing on themes of economic fairness and opportunity.

"We see education as the single most important criteria for minority children," Mr. **Biden** said, claiming that education "doesn't play a central role" in Mr. Romney's agenda.

"It's on the back burner," he said.

Mr. Obama chose not to speak at the civil rights group's meeting this year. His campaign said he had a scheduling conflict. But the president had a light schedule at the White House on Thursday before embarking for campaign trips in Virginia on Friday and Saturday.

The president did send greetings to the convention through a taped video address that was played in the main hall.

In 2008, Mr. Obama received 95 percent of the black vote.

"I'm sorry I can't be here in person with you this year," Mr. Obama said. "I stand on your shoulders. I'm proud of all that you do."

Mr. Obama did speak to the group in 2009; first lady Michelle Obama addressed the conference last year.

The president is scheduled to speak to the National Urban League on July 25.

Mr. **Biden** outlined differences between the Obama administration and Mr. Romney's agenda on health care, energy and women's rights.

"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision," Mr. **Biden** said. "And it will not surprise you — I don't think it's even a close call. So it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done … To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."

Mr. Romney told the convention that his policies would help "families of any color more than the policies and leadership of President Obama."

"I have no hidden agenda," Mr. Romney said. "If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him."

Biden To NAACP: Romney Might Support Racial Profiling, Take Away Voting Rights (WASHEX)

By Joel Gehrke

Washington Examiner, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** suggested that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was trying to re-fight the battles of the civil rights era, as he indicated that a Justice Department run by Romney might support racial profiling and support voter suppression.

"We, the president and I and Eric [Holder] and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished; where racial profiling is a thing of the past; where access to the ballot is expanded, and unencumbered;where there are no distinctons made on the basis of race or gender in access to housing and lending; and so much more," **Biden** told the NAACP today. "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

Moments later, he suggested that Romney opposed all those civil rights. "Just close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like." **Biden** told the crowd. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork? Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as Attorney General or head of the Civil Rights division?"

Biden To NAACP: 'Imagine What A Romney Justice Department Would Look Like' (CALLER)

By Tthew Boyle

Daily Caller, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** pushed NAACP convention attendees to contrast President Barack Obama's Department of Justice with a potential Mitt Romney DOJ.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," **Biden** told the NAACP audience on Thursday. "Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."

The **Biden** comment likely sits well with NAACP members as, on Tuesday, the NAACP unanimously passed an "emergency resolution" calling the bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric Holder in criminal and civil contempt of Congress a "travesty of justice." The resolution is meant for the NAACP to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."

As the resolution passed, Holder got rock-star treatment, walking around shaking the hands of many of those in attendance.

During his speech at the NAACP on Wednesday, Romney avoided justice issues to focus instead on the economy and education.

Romney hasn't said much on what his DOJ would look like if he wins the November election, but he has criticized Obama's DOJ, especially Holder. "There's not very much that Eric Holder does that I agree with," Romney said at a campaign event late in 2011 in New Hampshire. "I have to wonder how it is that the president continues to support him, and the answer must be the president agrees with him."

"Eric Holder would be long gone by the time I came around [as president of the United States]," he added.

Romney has called for Holder's resignation over Operation Fast and Furious, too. He joins 130 House members, eight U.S. senators and two sitting governors in demanding Holder's resignation over the scandal. (SEE ALSO: TheDC's complete Fast and Furious coverage)

"Either Mr. Holder himself should resign or the president should ask for his resignation or remove him," Romney said in early December 2011. "It's not acceptable for him to continue in that position given the fact that he has misled Congress and entirely botched the investigation of the Fast and Furious program."

Romney also supports voter ID laws — something Holder and Obama's administration vehemently oppose.

The former Massachusetts governor has also made Obama's decision to assert executive privilege over Fast and Furious documents a bit of a campaign issue lately. On Sean Hannity's radio program and on Neil Cavuto's Fox News Channel show this week, Romney responded to Obama's "transparency" attacks on him by pointing out how the president is concealing Fast and Furious documents.

Romney campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul didn't immediately respond to The Daily Caller's request for comment in response to **Biden**'s remarks.

It's All Politics: Biden Says It, So Obama Doesn't Have To (NPR)

By Liz Halloran

NPR, July 12, 2012

President Obama may have disappointed the NAACP by appearing only via brief video message Thursday at the civil rights group's annual gathering — especially after Mitt Romney had personally taken the stage a day earlier.

But sending in Vice President **Biden** to stir things up, just 24 hours after Romney was booed while delivering a conservative message meant to resonate beyond the walls of the Houston convention center, seemed to work out just fine for Obama.

Biden in recent days has offered up some of the Obama campaign's most pointed criticisms of the Republican challenger: "Mitt Romney wants you to show your papers, but he won't show us his," he told a Hispanic civil rights group on Tuesday, referring in one sound bite both to Romney's immigration stance and his refusal to make public several years' tax returns.

So **Biden** has the leeway to be more political, more incendiary than a sitting president.

Case in point:

The president, in Thursday's video message, served up generalities like this: "No matter who you are or what you look like, or where you come from, America is the place you can make it if you try."

The vice president, facing a raucously supportive crowd, served up red meat like this: "Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." (Earlier this week, **Biden** at another event used the same line, but asked supporters to "imagine what it will look like for women with six [Justice Antonin] Scalias on the bench.")

We listened Thursday to **Biden**, who characterized the coming election as a "fight for the heart and soul of America," with an ear toward what he had to say that Obama, as president, likely couldn't, or maybe wouldn't say at such an event at this point in the campaign.

Here are some highlights:

On voting rights, in light of Republican-led efforts to pass state voter ID laws

"I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember. Remember what [the NAACP], at its core, was all about. It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

On the Republican Party

"I remember working with Republicans — and, by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — remember working with Republicans on 'motor voter,' on expanding the franchise, on early voting, on voting by mail. They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier."

On civil rights

"Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like. Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division."

Biden, long known for his verbosity, drew some of his own boos, and cries of "no" — but, surprisingly, not for going on too long, but for indicating he was about to wrap up.

As he exited the stage, the Stevie Wonder song "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" blared from the public address system. And, in what's likely a rare moment for **Biden**, he left behind an adoring audience that appeared to want more.

The Two-Way: Cheers For Biden At NAACP Convention As He Contrasts Obama And Romney (NPR)

By Korva Coleman

NPR, July 12, 2012

A day after Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke to the nation's oldest civil right organization, Vice President Joe **Biden** appeared at the NAACP's annual convention. He quickly tackled one issue that drew Romney sustained boos â€" the 2010 health care overhaul.

Biden appeared in place of President Obama, who made a brief videotaped address thanking the group for its work. He walked out to warm applause, and several of his remarks were interrupted by shouts of agreement.

When he mentioned what he sees as the benefits of the health care law, the shouts changed to roars of approval. **Biden** declared that 8 million black Americans now have health care insurance under the new law, and thanked Obama for his leadership.

Biden spelled out further differences between Obama's campaign and Romney's on health care, the environment, equal pay for women and education. He claimed Romney's tax reforms are skewed for the wealthy at the expense of domestic programs that help less affluent people. **Biden** asserted more than 2 million black Americans will see their taxes go up under the tax plan Romney is proposing.

As NPR's Liz Halloran reports, when Romney yesterday said President Obama blamed the rich for economic problems and contrasted his own efforts as helping the middle class: "The audience reaction? Crickets."

But **Biden**'s hugest response came on voter ID laws, a subject the civil rights group is keenly tracking. Romney did not address the matter yesterday. After discussing the NAACP's long history of fighting for African Americans' right to vote, **Biden** queried, "did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

Biden said ballot access should be "expanded and unencumbered". Then he recalled his years in the Senate, where he worked with the GOP on voting issues like motor voter, early voting and voting by mail. But times have changed, he said, adding: "This ain't your father's Republican party."

The vice president concluded by urging convention delegates to imagine a changed Justice Department under a President Romney. And he warned Romney would make substantial changes to the Supreme Court.

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS

Editorial: The Fed On The Spot (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

THE U.S. ECONOMY is in the doldrums, as June's disappointing employment figures showed. Europe and China, the world's other two economic engines, are also sputtering. Time for the Federal

Reserve to administer another dose of monetary stimulus, to head off a potentially disastrous global downturn?

That's the advice of many experts, including the presidents of the Chicago, Boston and San Francisco Federal Reserve banks. The Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee holds its next policy-making meeting at the end of this month: Chairman Ben S. Bernanke will be under some pressure to heed the calls for a third round of "quantitative easing." His problem is that it's not clear whether that's the right course.

To be sure, the risk of inflation in the short run is minimal, as pro-QE3 economists argue. Yet it is also true that the economy is achieving paltry growth despite having absorbed a phenomenal amount of stimulus, fiscal and monetary, since the crisis hit in 2008. The annual federal deficit has averaged more than 9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over the past three years. It is on course to be 7 percent of GDP in fiscal 2012. The Fed has cut interest rates to near zero and purchased $2 trillion in mortgage-backed securities and Treasury debt, a figure equal to roughly 13 percent of GDP. And last month the Fed expanded its so-called "twist" program, announcing that it would hold down long-term interest rates by swapping an additional $267 billion in short-term notes for long-term bonds.

As Mr. Bernanke himself has said many times, these policy innovations, while necessary, also put the Fed in uncharted territory; the risks and benefits of the actions already taken, let alone those of further balance-sheet expansion, are hard to specify. The Fed may also need to save ammunition to help deal with a financial collapse in Europe.

If QE3 works at all, it would be by reducing the cost of investment capital and by boosting asset prices, so as to make consumers feel wealthier — and thus more free-spending. Yet with well over $1 trillion sitting on corporate balance sheets and mortgage rates at all-time lows, it's not clear that the economy's problem is a lack of cheap money. Rather, slow growth may reflect structural factors, such as the huge household debt burden, which is declining but still equal to 83.6 percent of GDP. Then there's the federal government's out-of-whack tax and entitlement policies, and the uncertainty they generate.

By effectively transferring much private and government debt onto its own balance sheet, the Fed bought time for the U.S. economy to rebalance under relatively benign conditions. Companies and households have used the time so far to deleverage significantly. More monetary easing now might buy the economy even more time to heal. But soon it will be government's turn to adjust; the Fed can prop up growth, not engineer a permanent escape from fiscal reality.

Editorial: Penn State's Awful Truths (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

ON THURSDAY — after seven months, 400 interviews and some 3.5 million documents — the results of the investigation into the Penn State sexual abuse scandal were finally released. The university's board of trustees was right to launch this inquest, led by Louis Freeh, the former FBI director and now a private investigator. A full-scale, public inquiry into the Jerry Sandusky scandal was the necessary first step toward rebuilding a fractured community.

In a news conference Thursday, Mr. Freeh condemned the university's leadership — including Joe Paterno, the school's legendary head football coach who died in January — for failing to protect the innocent children Mr. Sandusky assaulted. "Our most saddening and sobering finding," Mr. Freeh said, "is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims. The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children who Sandusky victimized."

It had become clear as the scandal unfolded that these men — Graham Spanier, Penn State's former president; Gary Schultz, former vice president; Tim Curley, former athletic director; and Mr. Paterno — avoided taking aggressive action even when they received reports of Mr. Sandusky's abuses. Mr. Schultz and Mr. Curley have been charged with perjury and failing to report what they knew. The Freeh investigation, however, sheds sickening light on the extent to which these men actively pursued a cover-up at the expense of Mr. Sandusky's victims.

Among the most remarkable revelations in the report is the role that Mr. Paterno played in the scandal. Although e-mails leaked late in the investigation revealed that the coach was influential in the group's decision not to report Mr. Sandusky after a 2001 incident, it appears that he also lied before a grand jury about whether he was aware of a 1998 incident involving Mr. Sandusky. As the investigation showed, Mr. Paterno was well aware of that incident and took no action, "even though Sandusky had been a key member of his coaching staff for almost 30 years and had an office just steps away from Mr. Paterno's."

Unfortunately, that is far from the investigation's worst discovery. As if allowing an adult to continue sexually abusing children for more than a decade wasn't bad enough, these officials somehow managed to put Mr. Sandusky's victims at even greater risk. In 2001, for instance, after an assistant reported seeing Mr. Sandusky in the shower sexually assaulting a boy, the only person these men alerted was Mr. Sandusky himself, the only one who knew the boy's identity. That Penn State's administrators and coaches would actively engage in a cover-up is unconscionable, but their "striking lack of empathy" for the victims is horrifying.

In the end, the root of the problem seems to be what the report calls Penn State's "culture of reverence for the football program that is ingrained at all levels of the campus community." This culture is ultimately what silenced janitors from reporting what they witnessed and university officials from fulfilling their obvious moral obligation to the children Mr. Sandusky attacked. The Freeh investigation should serve as a red flag for any similar environment in which the powerful are unquestioned and protected, all for the sake of a game.

Editorial: D.C. Council Overreaches — Again — Into School Priorities (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

EVER SINCE RESPONSIBILITY for D.C. schools was switched to the mayor, D.C. Council members have struggled with what role they have to play. When Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) chaired the council, the tendency was to hector and second-guess then-chancellor Michelle A. Rhee. Former council chairman Kwame R. Brown (D) flitted from issue to issue, trying to distract attention from the legal troubles that eventually forced his resignation. Now comes newly named chairman Phil Mendelson (D-At Large), and it's not a good sign that one of his first moves is to call a hearing to set educational priorities — a hearing from which Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson is excluded.

The committee of the whole, the council's de facto education committee, will meet to "receive testimony regarding the important issues confronting public education" so as to help establish priorities. We would assume it would be important to include in that conversation the professionals charged with educational policy, but a spokeswoman for Mr. Mendelson told us the chancellor wasn't invited because the aim was to hear the public's complaints and comments about the school system. If past hearings are any indication, expect a gripe session in which individual problems — "My child got an unfair report card," "I got a bad teacher evaluation" — will be trotted out.

Mr. Mendelson, selected by his colleagues to replace Mr. Brown, pending November's special election for council chairman, has made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the schools. "I'm disappointed with the pace of reform," he told WAMU's Kojo Nnamdi last month shortly after taking over the council's leadership. Mr. Mendelson, who voted against the 2007 takeover of schools engineered by then-mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D), said, "What we've seen is a lot of controversy regarding test results and still an enormous disparity between the very good schools and the rest of the school system. So I think there's a lot more work to be done."

We think Mr. Mendelson should give more credit to the progress that has occurred with reforms by Ms. Rhee and Ms. Henderson. But there is no denying that he is right about the poor quality of education still being received by too many students. Nor will he get any argument from Ms. Henderson, who is clearheaded about the problems; she has laid out an ambitious agenda for school improvement in a five-year strategic plan that, to our mind, should be the starting point for any discussion of education priorities.

Instead of trying to set itself up as a newly constituted school board, interested only in litigating individual complaints or looking out for parochial ward interests, the council should help establish broad priorities, ensure that money is well spent and hold school officials accountable for results.

Column: Romney Can Gain Upper Hand On Economic Policy By Focusing On Class (WP)

By Michael Gerson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

On economic policy, Barack Obama has left Mitt Romney an opening. The president has responded to a severe, continuing labor market slump with a four-year-old, marginally counterproductive tax increase proposal. His current economic agenda has little relevance to anything except his current political requirements: picking a political fight on tax-code equity to distract attention from his economic stewardship. It is the triumph of tactics and the surrender of seriousness.

In response, Romney put a single, characteristically hesitant toe through the opening. His NAACP speech Wednesday featured rich themes of promoting "equal opportunity," building "human capital" and lifting people from poverty. But Romney's supporting policies — on health care, energy, education reform — were resolutely untailored and uncreative.

"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP," Romney said, "that I give across the country." Apparently convinced that even a generic Republican can defeat President Obama, Romney seems intent on running as one.

To fill out an opportunity agenda, the Romney campaign might start by perusing a new report by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts, which offers some challenging instruction across the political spectrum.

The Pew report analyzes how the incomes of families today compare to those of their parents' generation. The good news: On every rung of the economic ladder, median income has gone up — not equally, but significantly. Even among the bottom 20 percent, income rose 74 percent between the two generations. Liberals need to accommodate the fact that the poor have not gotten poorer. The benefits of economic growth have been shared.

But relative mobility — the chance of rising to a higher income quintile — is stalled, particularly near the bottom. Even though many earn a bit more than their parents did, they aren't moving up the income ladder. About 36 percent of families have actually fallen behind in relative terms, which drags America's overall level of mobility to below that of many European countries.

Conservatives must take seriously that America's poor are starting lower and rising less easily than in other developed nations — a problem often related to educational attainment and family structure. Income is not the only thing that matters. In the absence of mobility, inequality hardens into class division. The American ideal requires a realistic prospect of turning ability into achievement.

Witnessing a serious political discussion on the topic of mobility would require a plane ticket to London. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's recent speech to the Sutton Trust indicted an economic system characterized by "entitlement at one end and exclusion at the other" and touted a series of interesting policies to close the educational attainment gap between rich and poor.

Labor Party leader Ed Miliband countered, in typical Labor fashion, that leveling equality is more important than opportunity. Along the way, Miliband delivered this trans-Atlantic taunt: "If you want the American Dream — go to Finland."

Clegg bluntly raises the issue of social class, including his own — hanging a lantern on his privileged, Cambridge-educated background. "I know some people will say that I should keep quiet about social mobility," he says. "That my birth, my education and my opportunities mean I have no right to speak up. I couldn't disagree more. If people who've benefited from the system don't speak up, we'll never get anywhere. . . . I was lucky. But it shouldn't be a question of luck."

The topic of class comes more naturally to British than to American politicians. But the United States has a class problem, as does Romney. And Romney could help himself by addressing both.

As a governing matter, encouraging social mobility could eventually be a unifying, bipartisan goal. As a political matter, it would provide Romney a particular advantage. Obama's message is now in full Labor Party mode: Soak the rich. But the smartest Republican response is not to defend the rich. It is to defend a fluid society in which everyone has the possibility of becoming richer. Economic redistribution is not the answer, but economic growth is not sufficient, either. Upward mobility requires the broad diffusion of skills and social capital.

Romney, while disarmingly recognizing his own advantages, should demonstrate some market-oriented innovation in extending advantages to others: promoting early-childhood education, high school completion, college attendance and graduation, parenting skills and wealth-building among the disadvantaged. It would be a powerful political message, addressing a serious need, in a manner consistent with conservative ideals.

Column: The Islamist Ascendancy (WP)

By Charles Krauthammer

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Post-revolutionary Libya appears to have elected a relatively moderate pro-Western government. Good news, but tentative because Libya is less a country than an oil well with a long beach and myriad tribes. Popular allegiance to a central national authority is weak. Yet even if the government of Mahmoud Jibril is able to rein in the militias and establish a functioning democracy, it will be the Arab Spring exception. Consider:

Tunisia and Morocco, the most Westernized of all Arab countries, elected Islamist governments. Moderate, to be sure, but Islamist still. Egypt, the largest and most influential, has experienced an Islamist sweep. The Muslim Brotherhood didn't just win the presidency. It won nearly half the seats in parliament, while more openly radical Islamists won 25 percent. Combined, they command more than 70 percent of parliament — enough to control the writing of a constitution (which is why the generals hastily dissolved parliament).

As for Syria, if and when Bashar al-Assad falls, the Brotherhood will almost certainly inherit power. Jordan could well be next. And the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing (Hamas) already controls Gaza.

What does this mean? That the Arab Spring is a misnomer. This is an Islamist ascendancy, likely to dominate Arab politics for a generation.

It constitutes the third stage of modern Arab political history. Stage I was the semicolonial-monarchic rule, dominated by Britain and France, of the first half of the 20th century. Stage II was the Arab nationalist era — secular, socialist, anti-colonial and anti-clerical — ushered in by the 1952 Free Officers Revolt in Egypt.

Its vehicle was military dictatorship, and Gamal Nasser led the way. He raised the flag of pan-Arabism, going so far as changing Egypt's name to the United Arab Republic and merging his country with Syria in 1958. That absurd experiment — it lasted exactly three years — was to have been the beginning of a grand Arab unification, which, of course, never came. Nasser also fiercely persecuted Islamists — as did his nationalist successors, down to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and the Baathists, Iraqi (Saddam Hussein) and Syrian (the Assads) — as the reactionary antithesis to Arab modernism.

But the self-styled modernism of the Arab-nationalist dictators proved to be a dismal failure. It produced dysfunctional, semi-socialist, bureaucratic, corrupt regimes that left the citizenry (except where papered over by oil bounties) mired in poverty, indignity and repression.

Hence the Arab Spring, serial uprisings that spread east from Tunisia in early 2011. Many Westerners naively believed the future belonged to the hip, secular, tweeting kids of Tahrir Square. Alas, this sliver of Westernization was no match for the highly organized, widely supported, politically serious Islamists who effortlessly swept them aside in national elections.

This was not a Facebook revolution but the beginning of an Islamist one. Amid the ruins of secular nationalist pan-Arabism, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to solve the conundrum of Arab stagnation and marginality. "Islam is the answer," it preached and carried the day.

But what kind of political Islam? On that depends the future. The moderate Turkish version or the radical Iranian one?

To be sure, Recep Erdogan's Turkey is no paragon. The increasingly authoritarian Erdogan has broken the military, neutered the judiciary and persecuted the press. There are more journalists in prison in Turkey than in China. Nonetheless, for now, Turkey remains relatively pro-Western (though unreliably so) and relatively democratic (compared to its Islamic neighborhood).

For now, the new Islamist ascendancy in Arab lands has taken on the more benign Turkish aspect. Inherently so in Morocco and Tunisia; by external constraint in Egypt, where the military sees itself as guardian of the secular state, precisely as did Turkey's military in the 80 years from Ataturk to Erdogan.

Genuinely democratic rule may yet come to Arab lands. Radical Islam is the answer to nothing, as demonstrated by the repression, social backwardness and civil strife of Taliban Afghanistan, Islamist Sudan and clerical Iran.

As for moderate Islamism, if it eventually radicalizes, it too will fail and bring on yet another future Arab Spring where democracy might actually be the answer (as it likely would have been in Iran, had the mullahs not savagely crushed the Green Revolution). Or it might adapt to modernity, accept the alternation of power with secularists and thus achieve by evolution an authentic Arab-Islamic democratic norm.

Perhaps. The only thing we can be sure of today, however, is that Arab nationalism is dead and Islamism is its successor. This is what the Arab Spring has wrought. The beginning of wisdom is facing that difficult reality.

letters@charleskrauthammer.com

Column: Joe Paterno's Shame (WP)

By Eugene Robinson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Outside the Penn State football stadium stands a statue of legendary coach Joe Paterno, his arm raised in victory. Right next to it, university officials should erect another figure in bronze: a young boy crying out in anguish and being coldly ignored.

Penn State's Board of Trustees commissioned former FBI director Louis Freeh to investigate how child molester Jerry Sandusky — for years one of Paterno's most trusted and loyal assistants — could have committed his awful crimes under the noses of university officials. The answer is simple and shocking: Those officials simply looked the other way.

"The most saddening finding by the Special Investigative Counsel is the total and consistent disregard by the most senior leaders at Penn State for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims," the report states. "Four of the most powerful people at The Pennsylvania State University . . . failed to protect against a child sexual predator harming children for over a decade."

Those four powerful officials include Paterno, who died earlier this year of lung cancer. Almost literally a sainted figure in the world of big-time, big-money college sports, Paterno became aware of seriously inappropriate behavior by Sandusky with young boys at least 14 years ago, according to Freeh's report. Paterno's inaction was shameful.

Most damning is Freeh's finding that in 2001, after an assistant coach saw Sandusky sexually assaulting a young boy in the showers of a Penn State locker room, an intervention by Paterno was apparently instrumental in convincing university officials to sweep the incident under the rug.

The other three men allegedly involved in the cover-up — former athletic director Tim Curley and former vice president Gary Schultz, both of whom face perjury charges, and former university president Graham Spanier — had decided to notify state child-welfare officials, according to Freeh, who had access to private e-mails and notes.

But before any action was taken, Curley wrote to Schultz and Spanier that "after giving it more thought and talking it over with Joe," he had decided he would be more "comfortable" meeting with Sandusky, counseling him to get professional help and telling him "his guests are not permitted to use our facilities."

Note the word "guests," which may be one of the most chilling euphemisms I've ever heard.

University officials didn't even follow through on the inadequate response of cutting off Sandusky's access to Penn State facilities. According to Freeh's report, Sandusky "was allowed to have a key for, and continued to work out in" the athletic complex until November of last year. "If university leaders had not granted Sandusky full use of Penn State's football facilities and supported his ways to 'work with young people through Penn State,' sexual assaults of several young boys on the Penn State campus might have been prevented."

It goes without saying that Paterno's legacy is forever tarnished. He was head coach at Penn State for 46 years until being fired last year after Sandusky was arrested and the charges against him made

public. Paterno's 409 wins are the most of any NCAA Division I coach. His Nittany Lions won two national championships and made 37 bowl appearances. He was especially proud of his football program's record as a model: Penn State avoided the recruiting scandals that involved so many other schools with top-ranked athletic programs, and his football players graduated at an admirable rate.

In a letter he wrote before his death, apparently intended as an op-ed piece, Paterno argued that whatever people might think of his actions in the Sandusky matter, "this is not a football scandal."

But that's precisely what it is.

Imagine that an assistant coach of, say, the chess team were caught showering with an 11-year-old boy, as Sandusky was in 1998. Would that chess coach still be around three years later? If he were caught in the act of abusing another young boy in 2001, would the top officials of the university dither and fret for days — without making the slightest attempt to identify and locate the victim? Would the head chess coach be able to convince his superiors that there was no need to call state welfare officials, let alone the police?

The truth is that Joe Paterno was more powerful at Penn State than any athletic director, more powerful even than the university's president. And the reputation of the football program was more important than the safety and well-being of innocent young boys.

eugenerobinson@washpost.com

Column: Misdiagnosing Romney's Campaign (WP)

By E.J. Dionne Jr.

Washington Post, July 12, 2012

Could it be that Mitt Romney is correct from a strategic point of view to tell us little about what he'd do as president?

There are, of course, excellent civic reasons for a candidate to say where he or she would lead the country. But the debate raging right now in Republican circles is about politics, not civics. Conservatives, including the editors of the Wall Street Journal's canonical editorial page, are telling Romney that his "insular staff and strategy . . . are slowly squandering an historic opportunity." In the Weekly Standard, William Kristol fumed: "Is it too much to ask Mitt Romney to get off autopilot and actually think about the race he's running?"

There are grounds for such skepticism. This week's Washington Post/ABC News poll found the race dead even but gave President Obama a 12-point advantage among registered voters on the matter of which candidate has a clearer plan for dealing with the economy. After several months of disappointing jobs numbers, Romney is behind Obama in other national surveys and tends to lag in the swing states.

Far be it from me to get in the way of internecine Republican bickering, but Romney's GOP critics are wrong in seeing his specifics-lite approach as his core problem. His difficulties lie elsewhere.

A defense of Romney's minimalism starts with the matter of timing. The best rationale I've heard for the current Romney strategy came from former U.S. representative Vin Weber, a Romney adviser who noted in an interview that the very first question voters have to answer in a reelection race is whether there is "a compelling reason to remove the incumbent from office."

"There's a broader indictment of the incumbent that's necessary before the country decides to replace him," Weber argued. Only when a majority has reached this decision can a challenger begin to present himself as a plausible alternative. Only then is the country prepared to listen.

Viewed this way, the relentlessly negative approach of the Romney campaign so far (summarized in top adviser Stuart Stevens's favorite slogan, "Obama isn't working") is the essential first step toward opening the electorate to the idea of changing leadership. If Romney wins, Weber said, hindsight might suggest that this tipping point was reached this month with the latest jobs report.

Moreover, those calling on Romney to be more specific tend to be staunch conservatives who are absolutely convinced that the country would respond to a full-throated right-of-center agenda. Here, they are allowing their philosophical commitments to cloud their political judgment.

Romney's economic recovery strategy is rooted in the same old conservative ideas that have been around for more than 30 years: lower taxes on the wealthy and economic deregulation. These nostrums are wildly popular with the Republican base — especially very rich donors — but not with swing voters. More details about a largely unpopular program would not do Romney much good. Conservatives are forever fond of pointing back to Ronald Reagan for having run a highly principled campaign in 1980. But Reagan's most effective line was the decidedly non-ideological question: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" That is the Romney campaign in a nutshell.

Now to the drawbacks with the Romney campaign's theory. Operatives in both parties are surprised that Obama has been allowed to tell a negative story about Romney that is moving poll numbers without any competition from positive ads building Romney up. Romney could be rendered unacceptable before he has a chance to make his case.

And David Winston, a Republican pollster, has asked one of the campaign's most interesting survey questions. He found that only 32 percent of voters said that "the economy is not getting better at all." At the other end, 26 percent thought it was getting better at an "acceptable" rate. Fully 40 percent said "the economy is getting better, but the rate of progress is still unacceptable."

Romney's argument is aimed squarely at the third of the electorate that feels the economy is in disastrous shape. Obama's messaging, on the other hand, is directed toward those "better but not good enough" voters — and it is members of this group who will decide the election. The problem with Romney's campaign thus lies less in his lack of policy beef than in his failure to talk enough to the right voters. A message of economic pessimism will keep Romney close. But barring another major downturn, it won't close the deal.

Op-Ed: Obamacare Is An Unhealthy Prescription (WP)

By Scott Walker

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Scott Walker, a Republican, is the governor of Wisconsin.

Since the Supreme Court upheld President Obama's health-care mandate, there has been exhaustive discussion about the philosophical basis of this federal law. As Election Day approaches, debate will surely grow about the proper role of our federal government.

But while much attention has focused on Congress's intention to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act, too few are studying the law's practical impact. The best place to see the effects of the law is in our nation's laboratories, the states. Although the Supreme Court has ruled on the constitutionality of the act, Wisconsin shows that it is bad policy.

The budget I signed into law last year increased state taxpayer spending on Medicaid by $1.2 billion in our biennial budget, which works out to be one of the largest annual increases in the country. While many states slashed Medicaid funding to deal with budget deficits, we made the biggest investment in the program in Wisconsin's history.

By putting in place the long-term structural changes needed to make our budget sustainable, we ensured that those who truly need assistance would continue to have access to affordable and quality health care well into the future.

The good news is that responsible budgeting has put our state in a fairly unique position: Nearly 91 percent of Wisconsin residents have health insurance. According to the latest nationally available data, only three states have higher rates of coverage.

The bad news is that, from a practical standpoint, Obamacare will devastate Wisconsin. An actuarial study commissioned by my predecessor, a Democrat, and completed last year found that if Obamacare is implemented in Wisconsin:

? 100,000 people will be dropped by their employer-sponsored health insurance;

?59 percent of people who buy their own health insurance will experience an average premium increase of 31 percent;

?150,000 people will stop buying health insurance in the private sector and will instead become dependent on the government and taxpayers;

?Between 2014 and 2019, Obamacare could cost Wisconsin taxpayers $1.12 billion; after all federal aid and tax credits are applied, the state's portion of the bill will be $433 million; and

?Approximately 122,000 parents, caretakers and pregnant women with an income of more than 133 percent of the federal poverty level will no longer be eligible for Medicaid.

It's important to go beyond these facts and understand what they really mean for those of us who live in the Badger State. Young people will be hit hard with premium increases. Those between 19 and 29 years old who have individual insurance will experience an average premium increase of $1,631 per year. A family of four that does not qualify for a subsidy can expect a 28 percentincrease — from $8,528 to $10,912. For those who are covered by the small-employer group market, the average premium increase will be 15 percent.

These are just the law's effects on individuals. There are also statewide implications. In Wisconsin, 46 percent of residents who would receive assistance through Obamacare would have already had insurance coverage. That would result in taxpayers spending millions of dollars without providing new coverage.

The law has also raised serious philosophical questions: Should the federal government force people to buy a product? What is the proper relationship between federal and state governments?

Even setting aside those legitimate issues, one practical concern remains. I look at the effects that full implementation would have on my state, and I can't help but conclude that Obamacare punishes Wisconsin for budgeting responsibly and providing access to affordable and quality health care. It punishes young people, those who have responsibly purchased individual insurance, employers and employees of small businesses.

In Wisconsin, the data show that Obamacare will increase the cost of health care for most residents. That is not a prescription for positive change. Other states will face similar situations. We can do better.

Overall our federal government should be working to replicate the successes of states like Wisconsin — particularly focusing on those with high rates of coverage. And from a practical standpoint, the federal government should give Medicaid block grants to states. This would allow states to maximize the efficient use of tax dollars and increase private-sector competition while still providing care for those in need.

Increasing access to health care won't come through mandates, taxes or penalties. Truly improving access for families will require costs to go down. Unfortunately, Obamacare moves in the opposite direction by making insurance more expensive.

Op-Ed: Preparing For The Next Outage (WP)

By Newt Gingrich

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Newt Gingrich, a former speaker of the House and a Republican candidate for president, lives in McLean with his wife, Callista.

Callista and I live in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, and, like many in the region, we lost power in the recent storms. The blackout, combined with a record heat wave, made homes nearly uninhabitable. The storm and heat were this region's greater leveler: Rich or poor, urban or suburban, six-figure income or just barely getting by, we were all cast on the same strange shores.

Without power, the comforts of home become worthless. You sit in the sweltering heat, realizing you are living in a box that, without electricity, is a trap. You pray for the "juice" to return before your groceries go bad. You either make do in the heat or find refuge with friends who have electricity.

I write this now because of my concern for national security and our power grid, which are susceptible to doomsday-level damage if hit by an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) strike or a major solar storm.

It is almost unthinkable, yet possible, that an enemy could detonate a nuclear weapon over the atmosphere over the continental United States, triggering an electromagnetic pulse. This would short-circuit our power grid, taking power off-line for months, perhaps even years.

A similar crisis could be sparked by a solar storm like the Carrington Event of 1859, a type of geomagnetic disturbance that occurs about every 75 years. Statistically, we are long overdue for such a storm. There have been some recent examples of the potential impact, such as the millions in Quebec who lost power for several hours in 1989 as a result of a space storm.

Our nation's communications infrastructure, modes of transportation and many fundamentals of survival all rely on a power grid that is vulnerable. The current system lacks safety features needed to prevent damage to critical electrical infrastructure.

In 2009, my friend — and sometimes co-author — William R. Forstchen published a truly frightening book, "One Second After." (I wrote the foreword.) The story is fiction but based on hard facts. It is a cautionary tale about the threat of EMP strikes and major solar storms, known as coronal mass ejections.

William turned to bipartisan congressional studies published in 2004 and 2008 and interviewed many experts. His book made the New York Times bestseller list and helped to trigger what some call the "prepper" movement.

During the recent power outage, William and I talked about what would have happened if this had been an EMP attack or a strong solar storm.

Suppose that, rather than being a temporary disruption in our lives, the power outage lasted weeks or months, or even years. Consider what state all of us, from the richest to the poorest, would be in if we were still literally in the dark. Millions could be trapped in houses or apartments that were never designed for this climate without air conditioning. No cool air; months with no food shipments and every pharmacy shut down — no refills for life-sustaining medications.

In a crisis, many in the Washington area could not even flee because the impact of an EMP attack would disable most cars and public transportation. The water supply would go dry without electricity to pump water from rivers and wells.

Imagine if you could find a bottle of potable water for, say, your children. How much would you pay? What would you pay with if every bank and ATM were shut down?

Public safety? Forget it. No power means no police cars, no communications and no 911 emergency service. For criminals, it would be time to run rampant.

Could such a scenario be in our nation's future? It might, if we do not learn from this experience. Preparation begins with demanding that our governments — local, state and federal — prepare as well.

The technology exists to harden at least part of the national electric grid against an EMP attack or major solar storm. Two years ago, in a time of political deadlock, the House approved the Grid Reliability and Infrastructure Defense Act with bipartisan support. It would put in place protections such as fortified bunkers for the national power grid — but this effort stalled in the Senate.

I challenge the president and Congress to picture what it would be like if the power in the nation's capital were still off — or, far worse, if the entire nation were without power for months.

I asked William what he thought of the recent outage. He said: "Maybe it will wake up those on Capitol Hill and the White House that we just had a taste of a nightmare future, if we do not prepare now."

I second his motion.

The region's power has been restored. The air conditioning hums, and our food and medicines are safe. We think life is back to normal. But what if this had been more than a brief interruption?

Op-Ed: Medicine That Is More Placebo Than Cure (WP)

By Roger Bate

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Roger Bate is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of "Phake: The Deadly World of Falsified and Substandard Medicines." His research is published in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.

Some drugs that the World Health Organization (WHO) has approved for distribution to the world's poor are of inferior quality — shoddy products that hurt people who urgently need medicine — and some of the manufacturers, predominantly Chinese and Indian firms, may be knowingly producing them. This is the conclusion of my research teams' studies, published this week in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.

We purchased, off the shelf from local pharmacies, about 2,600 drugs to treat malaria, tuberculosis and bacterial infections in low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, Turkey, India and China. We then tested these drugs to see how much active pharmaceutical ingredient — the chemical that performs the drug's lifesaving function — they contained.

Drugs made by Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indian manufacturers performed quite badly — sometimes a fifth of them failed basic quality-control tests. Most worryingly, more than 15 percent of the Chinese drugs approved by the WHO failed to include adequate amounts of active pharmaceutical ingredient.

To add insult to injury, some of the drugs we tested had been bought through Western donor programs, funded by taxpayers, and steered through aid programs to African markets.

Some of these drugs were likely outright fakes. Others were real but badly manufactured, perhaps to cut corners.

How do we know? Poor-quality drugs can have either too little or too much of the active pharmaceutical ingredient. We tested many different batches of the same drug produced by the same manufacturer and found that a few were consistently under-dosed. We didn't find any drugs with too much of the active ingredient.

By exposing people to insufficient doses of the active ingredient, the drugs may also accelerate drug resistance and cause tremendous harm to whole populations in the long run. Here's how:

When a person takes a drug containing too little of the active ingredient, some of the parasites or bacteria are killed. But the strongest germs survive, mutating and evolving into more resilient strains. Drug resistance is already making it difficult — in rare cases, impossible — to treat malaria and tuberculosis, diseases that kill millions of people each year. And our governments, which spend billions on aid programs designed to stop them, may inadvertently be causing harm by increasing access to substandard treatments.

To be clear, these donors did not knowingly buy bad medicine. As a rule, they purchase only drugs approved by a respected regulator, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or the WHO. But testing the actual drugs sold on the market, as we did in our studies, is a rare exercise.

In the United States, the President's Malaria Initiative conducts some testing, but many other donors don't. Bernard Nahlen, deputy coordinator of the initiative, said it had bought drugs for distribution but sent them back to the manufacturers because of quality issues. "There need to be checkpoints throughout that system," he said.

However, regulators in poor countries such as Angola or Kenya — where we found many substandard drugs — have few resources to pick up the slack.

The reality is that once a manufacturer gets the green light to sell its drugs in Africa — sometimes through the lucrative donor programs — there are often no consequences for failing to maintain a high standard of quality.

The Chinese and Indian manufacturers making substandard drugs are often significant producers, certainly capable of making high-quality products — they did so to obtain WHO approval. But given available, albeit limited, data, they are not doing so consistently.

With little or no oversight, these companies may be cutting corners in the manufacturing process — or worse, watering down the active ingredient in their drugs, perhaps when the price of the raw material spikes and supply becomes harder to obtain. The drug most often with too low a dose in our samplings, for instance, involved the hard-to-get-artemisinin, a key antimalarial ingredient.

The WHO has launched an investigation into the product failures we've reported, but it lacks the resources to do much more. Even if Beijing tries to bring the hammer down on its lucrative pharmaceutical industry, it is unlikely to properly address the corner-cutting found in so much of Chinese production. So the burden must fall on Western governments. After all, their citizens' tax dollars — and the lives of millions they purport to help — are on the line.

Donor governments should urgently step up post-market surveillance and increase penalties for repeat offenders. If three product failures occur from the same manufacturer in a given year, that company should lose approval status with the WHO — and across all of its registered products.

If donor governments took drug quality as seriously in Africa as they do in their own countries, they could save lives and increase the impact of the public health programs taxpayers fund.

Editorial: Penn State's Part (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

The factual conclusions of the investigation of Pennsylvania State University's cover-up of serial sex crimes by one of its former football coaches are searing enough: the university's leaders did nothing for nearly a decade and a half — from the late-1990s until just recently — while a predator trawled for children in their midst, using the school's football program as a lure. Worse than that, the report says, the school's leaders worked diligently to conceal significant facts about the case from the authorities, the board of trustees, the university community and the broader public.

But the exhaustive investigation by Louis J. Freeh, a former federal judge and F.B.I. director, goes much further. It shows how slavish devotion to some institutional imperative can trump everything, including the law, basic human decency and the bedrock obligation we all have to protect defenseless children from harm. At Penn State, the imperative was protecting a storied football program and its legendary coach. In another huge institution betraying children under its protection, the Roman Catholic Church, it was the sanctity of the priesthood.

Last month, Jerry Sandusky, a former assistant football coach at Penn State, was convicted of sexually assaulting 10 boys over a period of many years. All of the boys had come from disadvantaged homes and had been drawn to Mr. Sandusky because of his access to the football program, which dominates society in central Pennsylvania.

Penn State fired its longtime president, Graham Spanier, and head football coach, Joe Paterno, who died in January before Mr. Freeh's investigators could speak with him. Criminal charges are still pending against Gary Schultz, who was in charge of campus police, and Tim Curley, who was athletic director at the time. The seven-and-a-half-month investigation, which involved more than 400 interviews and 3.5 million documents, described a disturbing pattern of communication among the four leaders dating as far back as 1998, when Mr. Sandusky had inappropriate contact with an 11-year-old boy in the showers at the football building on campus.

The victim's mother reported that to the campus police. Mr. Schultz reported an investigation to Mr. Spanier and Mr. Curley. Mr. Schultz, who appears to have understood that a crime may have been committed, wrote in his confidential notes at the time that Mr. Sandusky's behavior was "at best inappropriate" and at "worst sexual improprieties," further noting concern about "other children." The district attorney declined to bring charges, even after Mr. Sandusky admitted that he had showered with the boy and "had done this with other children in the past."

Mr. Sandusky was allowed to continue coaching and received a generous retirement package the following year. This included an unusual "emeritus" rank, which carried several privileges, including access to university recreational facilities. In 1999, he is said to have assaulted another young victim at the Alamo Bowl in Texas.

A year later, in 2000, the report says a janitor saw him assaulting a child in the football building shower but failed to report it out of fear that he would be fired, not an irrational fear. In 2001, the pattern repeated itself and a graduate assistant, Mike McQueary, witnessed another assault on a boy in the showers. He reported it to Mr. Paterno, who failed to call the police.

According to the Freeh report, Mr. Spanier, Mr. Curley and Mr. Schultz then concocted a plan that involved encouraging Mr. Sandusky to seek professional help and barring him from bringing children alone to the football building. (They incongruously described this as "humane.") Later that same year, Mr. Sandusky is said to have assaulted yet another victim in the football building showers.

As Mr. Freeh noted on Thursday: "The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children Sandusky victimized." He said they "never demonstrated, through actions

or words, any concern for the safety and well-being of Sandusky's victims" until after he was arrested in 2011.

Penn State's leaders bear most of the blame for giving the university's imprimatur to the body-and-soul-damaging abuse that Mr. Sandusky committed. But the report shows that the entire university system — the police, the trustees, the athletic department — failed at just about every level. As the assaults were taking place in 2001, for example, Penn State was out of compliance with the federal Clery Act of 1990, which requires the college to compile and report crime statistics related to specific offenses, including sexual offenses. The university's Clery Act policy was still in draft form in 2011 and had never been implemented.

The Freeh report lays out more than 100 recommendations for what the university needs to do to prevent anything like this from happening again — essentially requiring the university to rebuild its leadership system from the ground up. There should also be substantial penalties imposed under the Clery Act and state law. Laws without consequence are not laws at all.

Editorial: The Folly Of Sudan And South Sudan (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

When South Sudan declared independence from Sudan one year ago, it was well understood that the struggle to build a functioning new state would be long and hard. What was not understood was how much both countries would do to sabotage each other — and themselves — in a destructive game of cross-border attacks and economic showdowns.

With independence, South Sudan inherited most of the former country's oil fields. But South Sudan is landlocked and Sudan controls the pipeline needed to get that oil — the lifeblood for both governments — to market. In January, South Sudan shut down oil production in a dispute with Sudan over how much it should pay to transport its crude oil through Sudan's pipeline.

In the months since, the two countries still have not agreed on a formula to share oil profits and each seems to be waiting for the other to blink — a fool's game if there ever was one. South Sudan's economy was weak to begin with, and Sudan's is now in free fall. Hunger is getting worse in both places, and so is political instability.

Deprived of oil income, Sudan last month announced that it could no longer subsidize gas, sending prices for fuel and other goods soaring. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is having trouble paying his army. And over the past few weeks, thousands of protesters have demonstrated against the government, prompting a crackdown.

In South Sudan, the government has begun to get tougher about collecting income taxes to finance basic services. People are understandably reluctant to pay when the government is known for rampant mismanagement and corruption. President Salva Kiir recently urged officials to return $4 billion in "stolen" government money. Officials also suggested that any budget shortfall would be filled by international donors. So far, that doesn't seem to be happening, and shouldn't. South Sudan, along with Sudan, created this crisis, and they have the means to fix it.

The two sides fought a civil war that killed more than two million people before a peace deal in 2005. In the past year, they barely avoided a return to all-out conflict. Violence continues in Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, a rebel-held area where the Khartoum government is trying to bomb and starve the people into submission. Thousands have been displaced.

In April, South Sudan's army occupied an oil-producing region claimed by Sudan and brought the countries close to a new war. South Sudan backed off after the United Nations threatened sanctions.

The joy that accompanied South Sudan's hard-won freedom has faded. The United States and other countries that advocated independence need to keep working with both sides to resolve disputes over oil, borders and protections for minorities. There's no changing the reality that these two nations are mutually dependent, now and long into the future.

Editorial: Tammy Duckworth's Rival (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Joe Walsh is a freshman congressman from Illinois, a Tea Party Republican who has a reputation for saying outrageous things very loudly. If you see the videos of him yelling at constituents and interviewers who dare to disagree with him, you may conclude that he is best ignored.

But then he started attacking his Democratic opponent, Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat who also happens to be a National Guard helicopter pilot who lost her legs and the use of her right arm when she was shot down in Iraq. "Female, wounded veteran ... ehhh," Mr. Walsh told Politico. "She is nothing more than a handpicked Washington bureaucrat."

Mr. Walsh could have dropped it there but didn't, and, in recent videos, he can be seen mocking Ms. Duckworth and belittling her sacrifice again. "Now I'm running against a woman who, my God, that's all she talks about," he said in a town-hall meeting on July 1. "Our true heroes, it's the last thing in the world they talk about."

Mr. Walsh later said his point was simply that Ms. Duckworth has been avoiding the issues. But the fixation on his opponent's war record seems to be Mr. Walsh's problem, not hers.

As for issues, there are several in Mr. Walsh's record that are worth discussing — like his being the only member of the Illinois Congressional delegation to vote against this year's transportation bill, even though he represents a district, west and north of Chicago, that includes parts of O'Hare Airport and many of the city's and region's most important highway and railroad networks. Or that he has spent his time championing oddball bills that have gone nowhere — measures to abolish the Office of Polar Programs of the National Science Foundation, to forbid the use of the word "Palestine" in government documents and to support "Israel's right to annex Judea and Samaria." He is also sponsor of the Save Christmas Act.

Ms. Duckworth has done far more than her share in serving her country. Against that record, Mr. Walsh's comments were deplorable.

Column: Why Our Elites Stink (NYT)

By David Brooks

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Protestant Establishment sat atop the American power structure. A relatively small network of white Protestant men dominated the universities, the world of finance, the local country clubs and even high government service.

Over the past half–century, a more diverse and meritocratic elite has replaced the Protestant Establishment. People are more likely to rise on the basis of grades, test scores, effort and performance.

Yet, as this meritocratic elite has taken over institutions, trust in them has plummeted. It's not even clear that the brainy elite is doing a better job of running them than the old boys' network. Would we say that Wall Street is working better now than it did 60 years ago? Or government? The system is more just, but the outcomes are mixed. The meritocracy has not fulfilled its promise.

Christopher Hayes of MSNBC and The Nation believes that the problem is inherent in the nature of meritocracies. In his book, "Twilight of the Elites," he argues that meritocratic elites may rise on the basis of grades, effort and merit, but, to preserve their status, they become corrupt. They create wildly unequal societies, and then they rig things so that few can climb the ladders behind them. Meritocracy leads to oligarchy.

Hayes points to his own elite training ground, Hunter College High School in New York City. You have to ace an entrance exam to get in, but affluent parents send their kids to rigorous test prep centers and now few poor black and Latino students can get in.

Baseball players get to the major leagues through merit, but then some take enhancement drugs to preserve their status. Financiers work hard to get jobs at the big banks, but then some rig the game for their own mutual benefit.

Far from being the fairest of all systems, he concludes, the meritocracy promotes gigantic inequality and is fundamentally dysfunctional. No wonder institutional failure has been the leitmotif of our age.

It's a challenging argument but wrong. I'd say today's meritocratic elites achieve and preserve their status not mainly by being corrupt but mainly by being ambitious and disciplined. They raise their kids in organized families. They spend enormous amounts of money and time on enrichment. They work much longer hours than people down the income scale, driving their kids to piano lessons and then taking part in conference calls from the waiting room.

Phenomena like the test-prep industry are just the icing on the cake, giving some upper-middle-class applicants a slight edge over other upper-middle-class applicants. The real advantages are much deeper and more honest.

The corruption that has now crept into the world of finance and the other professions is not endemic to meritocracy but to the specific culture of our meritocracy. The problem is that today's meritocratic elites cannot admit to themselves that they are elites.

Everybody thinks they are countercultural rebels, insurgents against the true establishment, which is always somewhere else. This attitude prevails in the Ivy League, in the corporate boardrooms and even at television studios where hosts from Harvard, Stanford and Brown rail against the establishment.

As a result, today's elite lacks the self-conscious leadership ethos that the racist, sexist and anti-Semitic old boys' network did possess. If you went to Groton a century ago, you knew you were privileged. You were taught how morally precarious privilege was and how much responsibility it entailed. You were housed in a spartan 6-foot-by-9-foot cubicle to prepare you for the rigors of leadership.

The best of the WASP elites had a stewardship mentality, that they were temporary caretakers of institutions that would span generations. They cruelly ostracized people who did not live up to their codes of gentlemanly conduct and scrupulosity. They were insular and struggled with intimacy, but they did believe in restraint, reticence and service.

Today's elite is more talented and open but lacks a self-conscious leadership code. The language of meritocracy (how to succeed) has eclipsed the language of morality (how to be virtuous). Wall Street firms, for example, now hire on the basis of youth and brains, not experience and character. Most of their problems can be traced to this.

If you read the e-mails from the Libor scandal you get the same sensation you get from reading the e-mails in so many recent scandals: these people are brats; they have no sense that they are guardians for an institution the world depends on; they have no consciousness of their larger social role.

The difference between the Hayes view and mine is a bit like the difference between the French Revolution and the American Revolution. He wants to upend the social order. I want to keep the current social order, but I want to give it a different ethos and institutions that are more consistent with its existing ideals.

Column: Who's Very Important? (NYT)

By Paul Krugman

New York Times, July 13, 2012

"Is there a V.I.P. entrance? We are V.I.P." That remark, by a donor waiting to get in to one of Mitt Romney's recent fund-raisers in the Hamptons, pretty much sums up the attitude of America's wealthy elite. Mr. Romney's base — never mind the top 1 percent, we're talking about the top 0.01 percent or higher — is composed of very self-important people.

Specifically, these are people who believe that they are, as another Romney donor put it, "the engine of the economy"; they should be cherished, and the taxes they pay, which are already at an 80-year low, should be cut even further. Unfortunately, said yet another donor, the "common person" — for example, the "nails ladies" — just doesn't get it.

O.K., it's easy to mock these people, but the joke's really on us. For the "we are V.I.P." crowd has fully captured the modern Republican Party, to such an extent that leading Republicans consider Mr. Romney's apparent use of multimillion-dollar offshore accounts to dodge federal taxes not just acceptable but praiseworthy: "It's really American to avoid paying taxes, legally," declared Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina. And there is, of course, a good chance that Republicans will control both Congress and the White House next year.

If that happens, we'll see a sharp turn toward economic policies based on the proposition that we need to be especially solicitous toward the superrich — I'm sorry, I mean the "job creators." So it's important to understand why that's wrong.

The first thing you need to know is that America wasn't always like this. When John F. Kennedy was elected president, the top 0.01 percent was only about a quarter as rich compared with the typical family as it is now — and members of that class paid much higher taxes than they do today. Yet somehow we managed to have a dynamic, innovative economy that was the envy of the world. The superrich may imagine that their wealth makes the world go round, but history says otherwise.

To this historical observation we should add another note: quite a few of today's superrich, Mr. Romney included, make or made their money in the financial sector, buying and selling assets rather than building businesses in the old-fashioned sense. Indeed, the soaring share of the wealthy in national income went hand in hand with the explosive growth of Wall Street.

Not long ago, we were told that all this wheeling and dealing was good for everyone, that it was making the economy both more efficient and more stable. Instead, it turned out that modern finance was laying the foundation for a severe economic crisis whose fallout continues to afflict millions of Americans, and that taxpayers had to bail out many of those supposedly brilliant bankers to prevent an even worse crisis. So at least some members of the top 0.01 percent are best viewed as job destroyers rather than job creators.

Did I mention that those bailed-out bankers are now overwhelmingly backing Mr. Romney, who promises to reverse the mild financial reforms introduced after the crisis?

To be sure, many and probably most of the rich do, in fact, contribute positively to the economy. However, they also receive large monetary rewards. Yet somehow $20 million-plus in annual income isn't enough. They want to be revered, too, and given special treatment in the form of low taxes. And that is more than they deserve. After all, the "common person" also makes a positive contribution to the economy. Why single out the rich for extra praise and perks?

What about the argument that we must keep taxes on the rich low lest we remove their incentive to create wealth? The answer is that we have a lot of historical evidence, going all the way back to the 1920s, on the effects of tax increases on the rich, and none of it supports the view that the kinds of tax-rate changes for the rich currently on the table — President Obama's proposal for a modest rise, Mr. Romney's call for further cuts — would have any major effect on incentives. Remember when all the usual suspects claimed that the economy would crash when Bill Clinton raised taxes in 1993?

Furthermore, if you're really concerned about the incentive effects of public policy, you should be focused not on the rich but on workers making $20,000 to $30,000 a year, who are often penalized for any gain in income because they end up losing means-tested benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. I'll have more to say about that in another column. By the way, in 2010, the average annual wage of manicurists — "nails ladies," in Romney-donor speak — was $21,760.

So, are the very rich V.I.P.? No, they aren't — at least no more so than other working Americans. And the "common person" will be hurt, not helped, if we end up with government of the 0.01 percent, by the 0.01 percent, for the 0.01 percent.

Op-Ed: How Pensions Violate Free Speech (NYT)

By Benjamin I. Sachs

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Cambridge, Mass.

A CENTRAL principle of American political life is that everyone gets to choose which candidates to support. The idea that the government could force us to support those we oppose is anathema. But this unacceptable state of affairs is one of the unintended consequences of the Supreme Court's decision in the 2010 Citizens United case.

That's because the vast majority of people who work in the public sector — state, local and federal employees — are required to make contributions to a pension plan. Nearly all states make participation in a pension plan mandatory and a "condition of employment" for public employees. To get and keep your job with the government, you have to give some of your paycheck to the pension plan.

Public pensions, moreover, are so-called defined benefit plans, which means that employees don't have a say in how their mandatory contributions are invested. The employees cannot request, for example, that their money be used only to buy government bonds or that it be invested only in certain mutual funds or only in select corporations.

Instead, the employees' money is invested according to whatever decisions the pension plan's trustee makes. And, not surprisingly, pension plans invest heavily in corporate securities: in 2008, public pensions held about $1.15 trillion in corporate stock.

Here's the problem. In its Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court held that companies have a First Amendment right to make electoral expenditures with general corporate treasuries. And they've done so, with relish, pouring millions into the political system.

What Citizens United failed to account for, however, is that a significant portion of the money that corporations are spending on politics is financed by equity capital provided by public pension funds — capital contributions that the government requires public employees to finance with their paychecks.

This consequence of Citizens United is perverse: requiring public employees to finance corporate electoral spending amounts to compelled political speech and association, something the First Amendment flatly forbids.

Contrast this situation with how the court treats political spending by unions. In many states, public employees are required to pay dues to a labor union. If the public employees union were to spend any of the money raised through dues on politics, the court has ruled, the dues requirement would amount to forced political speech and association. To prevent this First Amendment violation, the court has held that no union may use an employee's dues for political purposes if the employee objects.

The same should be true for pension funds and corporate politics. In a world where corporations can use their general treasuries for political spending, no government should be allowed to require employees to finance the purchase of corporate securities through a pension plan, unless the government provides those employees with a meaningful way to object to financing corporate politics.

The good news is that the rules governing union dues and political spending provide a road map for restructuring public pensions in order to bring them back into conformity with the First Amendment.

Here's one way it could work: Pension plans would determine the number of employees that object to financing corporate political spending. They would then negotiate "opt out" rights with the corporations in which they invest. These corporations would calculate the percentage of their annual expenditures that go to politics and promise to return to the pension plan an amount equal to the objecting employee's pro rata share of the corporation's political budget.

Whatever the route to reform, however, public pension plans need to ensure that employees are not compelled to finance corporate political speech. Until they do, these pension funds will be vulnerable to the challenge that they are violating the First Amendment.

Benjamin I. Sachs is a professor at Harvard Law School.

Op-Ed: Ethnic Cleansing In Myanmar (NYT)

By Moshahida Sultana Ritu

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh -- LAST spring, a flowering of democracy in Myanmar mesmerized the world. But now, three months after the democracy activist Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won a parliamentary seat, and a month after she traveled to Oslo to belatedly receive the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, an alarm bell is ringing in Myanmar. In the villages of Arakan State, near the Bangladeshi border, a pogrom against a population of Muslims called the Rohingyas began in June. It is the ugly side of Myanmar's democratic transition — a rotting of the flower, even as it seems to bloom.

Cruelty toward the Rohingyas is not new. They have faced torture, neglect and repression in the Buddhist-majority land since it achieved independence in 1948. Its constitution closes all options for Rohingyas to be citizens, on grounds that their ancestors didn't live there when the land, once called Burma, came under British rule in the 19th century (a contention the Rohingyas dispute). Even now, as military rulers have begun to loosen their grip, there is no sign of change for the Rohingyas. Instead, the Burmese are trying to cast them out.

The current violence can be traced to the rape and killing in late May of a Buddhist woman, for which the police reportedly detained three Muslims. That was followed by mob attacks on Rohingyas and other Muslims that killed dozens of people. According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, state security forces have now conducted mass arrests of Muslims; they destroyed thousands of homes, with the impact falling most heavily on the Rohingyas. Displaced Rohingyas have tried to flee across the Naf River to neighboring Bangladesh; some have died in the effort.

The Burmese media have cited early rioting by Rohingyas and have cast them as terrorists and traitors. In mid-June, in the name of stopping such violence, the government declared a state of emergency. But it has used its border security force to burn houses, kill men and evict Rohingyas from their villages. And on Thursday, President Thein Sein suggested that Myanmar could end the crisis by expelling all of its Rohingyas or by having the United Nations resettle them — a proposal that a United Nations official quickly rejected.

This is not sectarian violence; it is state-supported ethnic cleansing, and the nations of the world aren't pressing Myanmar's leaders to stop it. Even Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has not spoken out.

In mid-June, after some Rohingyas fled by boat to villages in Bangladesh, they told horrifying stories to a team of journalists whom I accompanied to this city near the border. They said they had come under fire from a helicopter and that three of six boats were lost. Some children drowned during the four-day trip; others died of hunger. Once in Bangladesh, they said, the families faced deportation back to Myanmar. But some children who had become separated from their parents made their way to the houses of villagers for shelter; other children may even now be starving in hide-outs or have become prey for criminal networks. Border guards found an abandoned newborn on a boat; after receiving medical treatment, the infant was left in the temporary care of a local fisherman.

Why isn't this pogrom arousing more international indignation? Certainly, Myanmar has become a destination for capital investment now that the United States, the European Union and Canada have accepted the government's narrative of democratic transition and have largely lifted the economic sanctions they began applying after 1988 (measures that did not prevent China, India, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and multinational oil companies from doing business with the Burmese). Still, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Myanmar late last year and welcomed its first steps toward democratization, she also set down conditions for strengthening ties, including an end to ethnic violence.

The plight of the Rohingyas begins with their statelessness — the denial of citizenship itself, for which Myanmar is directly responsible. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, though not as powerful as the military officers who control Myanmar's transition, should not duck questions about the Rohingyas, as she has done while being feted in the West. Instead, she should be using her voice and her reputation to point out that citizenship is a basic right of all humans. On July 5, the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, appealed to her to speak up to help end the violence.

To be sure, Bangladesh can do more. Its river border with Myanmar is unprotected; thousands of Rohingyas have been rowing or swimming it at night. But even though Bangladesh has sheltered such refugees in the past — hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas live here now, legally or illegally — it has been reluctant so far this year to welcome them, out of fear of encouraging an overwhelming new influx. Already, such fears have aroused anti-Rohingya sentiment among some Bangladeshis, and initially Bangladesh's government tried to force the refugees back without assisting them. After some villagers risked arrest by sheltering refugees in their homes, the government began to offer humanitarian aid,

before sending them back on their boats. Bangladesh should shelter the refugees as it has in years past, as the international community is urging.

But the world should be putting its spotlight on Myanmar. It should not so eagerly welcome democracy in a country that leaves thousands of stateless men and women floating in a river, their corpses washing up on its shores, after they have been reviled in, and driven from, a land in which their families have lived for centuries.

Moshahida Sultana Ritu, an economist, teaches at the University of Dhaka, in Bangladesh.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

Mitt Romney's Wife Ann To Visit Delaware (WILNJ)

By Jonathan Starkey

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Ann Romney, the wife of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, will be in Delaware this month – reportedly for a July 18 fundraiser at the Greenville home of prominent Delaware Republican Michele Rollins, sources say.

A spokeswoman for Ann Romney confirmed that a Delaware trip is planned but has not confirmed additional details, except to say it will be closed to the media.

Rollins' sister Monika "Nikki" Metrinko recently died, and funeral services were held earlier this week.

Reached soon thereafter, Rollins said a plan to host Ann Romney had been in the works.

Wilmington Officials: Occupy Delaware To Leave Plaza By Sept. 10 (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Occupy Delaware will leave Spencer Plaza by Sept. 10 as Wilmington prepares for a $1.2 million renovation of the park the protesters have called home since November, according to a city news release.

The city and Occupy Delaware agreed to the terms of a proposed court order that was presented to Chancery Court today, according to the release.

"All the court has to do is bless it, if you will, and issue it as an order," said John Rago, deputy chief of staff for Mayor James M. Baker.

A court order would set aside an Aug. 20 court hearing regarding the city's attempt to remove Occupy Delaware from Spencer Plaza, the city said.

Showdown Over Cable Approaches (WILNJ)

City, Comcast battling over franchise renewal

By Andrew Staub

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

Taking the podium in Wilmington's City Council chambers last month, Ruth Baker uttered a war cry against Comcast, blasting the country's largest cable provider for dragging out negotiations over the renewal of its franchise agreement with the city.

Baker, president of the Leased Access Producers Association, warned that her group could organize a "groundswell of support" to defy a company she said has taken the stance that it cannot be challenged.

"They don't have respect for us because many people think the city of Wilmington and the people in the city of Wilmington are weak and easily malleable," Baker said. "They need to understand that that's not the fact."

Indeed, Wilmington is preparing for a legal fight against the city's lone cable provider after more than two years of informal negotiations failed to yield an agreement. That's left the city pursuing a little-used formal procedure available under the federal Cable Communications Act.

The Wilmington Cable Video and Television Commission has already recommended that City Council preliminarily deny Comcast's latest proposal, saying the company has failed to meet the community's future cable-related needs and interests.

If the council agrees with the commission tonight, it would trigger an administrative law hearing to decide whether Comcast has satisfied the federal requirements for renewal of its franchise agreement.

A hearing officer appointed by the city would offer a recommendation to the council. If Wilmington ultimately denies Comcast's proposal, the cable company could appeal in federal court.

Nicholas Miller, a Washington, D.C., attorney who specializes in cable television regulation, advised the city's commission last week that reaching this stage of the formal process is rare.

"There are typically two or three renewals in the whole country that go to this point in any given year," Miller said. "Even fewer get to the point where there is an ultimate decision at the end of the hearing."

Most municipalities reach agreement with their providers through informal talks. Comcast alone has about 6,600 franchises and renews hundreds each year with little or no controversy.

That's not been the case in Wilmington.

After conducting a survey and issuing a report outlining the city's future cable-related needs and interests, Wilmington has sought a more modern agreement with Comcast.

Officials have asked Comcast to provide an institutional network that would connect city buildings and save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars, and to commit to system upgrades over the duration of the agreement, which Comcast is proposing to be 12 years.

Comcast has committed to neither, according to city documents, and has also balked at the city's request for stronger customer service requirements. The two sides also have been unable to agree on funding levels for its government-access and leased-access channels.

Wilmington officials have also bristled at Comcast's move to narrowly define the gross revenue derived from its franchise agreement, which could reduce the city's annual franchise fee of about $1 million by as much as 50 percent, Miller told the commission.

Comcast has budged little during negotiations, said Miller, who theorized the company has made a decision to "hardball" current franchise renewals, perhaps to set a precedent for larger franchises up for renewal soon.

Jeff Alexander, a Comcast spokesman, declined to address the city's specific concerns, but released a statement saying the company has been a "good corporate citizen who has served the city for more than a decade." The company employs more than 350 Wilmington residents, he said.

"We value our positive relationship with the city of Wilmington and its residents and have offered very generous terms to help reach an agreement that is beneficial and fair for the city, the community and the company," Alexander said.

Sue Buske, president of a California consulting firm that deals with franchise renewals, said the situation "is unusual, but it happens." She helped guide Brunswick, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, through the same process in the 1990s, she said.

Franchise negotiations have become more difficult as cable companies "push things all the way to the edge" in the hope municipalities will back down rather than spend money on litigation, Buske said. Federal law also favors cable companies by placing the burden on municipalities to prove why a franchise should not be renewed, she noted.

Ultimately, cable companies are trying to reduce the "rent" they pay cities to use the public rights-of-way, Buske said.

"The cable companies have a great deal to gain financially by getting these franchises renewed," she said. "They really don't want to be obligated to pay much back to the community as rent for these rights-of-way."

If Wilmington has done its "homework" in building a case for what its requesting of Comcast, the city could be in a good position heading into the formal procedure, said Ken Fellman, whose Colorado law firm represents local governments in telecommunications cases.

"If the city is serious about pursuing it, it can often lead to the cable operator finding a little bit more flexibility in their negotiating positions," he said.

The legal wrangling will not affect residents' cable service, Miller said. Even if its franchise renewal is denied, Comcast cannot withdraw from the city until Wilmington has made arrangements with another cable operator.

Comcast has had the franchise since 2000. It expired in October 2010.

The cable company has been negotiating in "good faith" with the city and is willing to continue to do so, Alexander said. But that statement, Council President Norman D. Griffiths said, hasn't been reflected in Comcast's proposal to Wilmington.

"I couldn't say the response met the good-faith test in terms of responding to what our needs are," Griffiths said.

Blog: Meat And Greet With The Technology Forum Of Delaware (WILNJ)

By Cori Anne Natoli

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

The Technology Forum of Delaware is throwing a dress-down summer social and networking barbecue.

The event is expected to begin at 5:30 p.m., July 18th, at Deerfield Golf and Tennis Club, 507 Thompson Station Road in Newark.

"We're providing the barbecue so all you have to do is bring the party," the Forum wrote in a press release.

Casual attire is recommended. Register to save your spot at www.techforumde.org

The Forum's goal is to serve "technology markets throughout the Delaware Valley" and assist business leaders in establishing the right relationships and resources for success.

Blog: SEU To Discuss Future Of Programs (WILNJ)

By Ron Nathans

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

The Sustainable Energy Utility oversight board is set to have a discussion about the future of its programs next week. The SEU board will meet for a "retreat workshop" at the Buena Vista State Conference Center, 661 S. DuPont Hwy., New Castle, starting at 9 a.m. on Thursday. The main item on the agenda is "discussion of future programs" – an important discussion, because most of the SEU's residential energy efficiency programs are currently dormant.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Editorial: Too Many People At PSU Cowered In Fear (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

If anything, former FBI Director Louis Freeh's report on the Penn State child sex abuse scandals reveals how much very powerful university administrators and those in its much lauded football program had in common with the victims.

Both cowered in a tragic silence for years, allowing the heinous crimes of adults with stellar public reputations to go uninterrupted for more than a decade, as they savaged the emotional lives of young people taught to revere them as protectors of their future well-being. Most of the adults did so by refusing to report what they suspected or witnessed. Even those with the courage to sound the alarm, grew timid about repeatedly doing so loudly enough for it to reverberate and cause Penn State's Trustees to take swift and corrective action.

The incredible "lack of empathy" of these adults seeped to the lowest levels of school personnel. Even janitors, who witnessed or heard of the savage assaults on young male teens, lured to the campus by former assistant football coach – and now deservedly imprisoned – Jerry Sandusky, failed to speak up.

"They witnessed what I think in the report is probably the most horrific rape that's described," Freeh told reporters Friday of one rape in the university's former Child Care Center. "And what do they do? They panic."

One janitor, a Korean War veteran, said it was "the worst thing he's ever seen." Yet they secured their continued pay checks with their silence.

"They said the university would circle around it. It was like going against the president of the United States. … If that's the culture on the bottom, God help the culture at the top," Freeh wrote.

His team of lawyers, former prosecutors and former law enforcement officials, conducted 430 interviews, and pored through 3.5 million emails and documents. And they assign blame where it belongs – to high-ranking school officials who have since lost their jobs and, revered football coach Joe Paterno who died unrepentant for any contributing role within six months of the allegations.

Op-Ed: Look To NYC, The Past For Possible Policing Solutions (WILNJ)

By Mike Cannatelli

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

A possible solution to the crime spree in the city is the "Giuliani" solution. New Castle County police and Wilmington police should team up and coordinate their efforts and crack down on all laws including the nuisance crimes in both the county and the city simultaneously.

The Giuliani solution would send a real wake-up call that from now on the laws, all laws will be enforced. Then do it.

The idea is to chase those drug distributors, dealers, mules, etc., out of both the county and city.

Let them relocate to Chester, or somewhere else out of Delaware. They'll move on to the path of least resistance along I-95. So what that tells me is as of now Wilmington and NCCo are that path of least resistance. Time to change that.

Today New York City has a lower crime rate, per capita, based on things I've read, than Wilmington. How pitiful is that.

Enough talk and fooling around. Start enforcing aggressive driving, speeding, tailgating, pedestrians on median strips at intersections panhandling, panhandling on sidewalks or in front of stores, pedestrians crossing highways not at crosswalks or crossing when the Don't Walk light is flashing, or pedestrians walking in the street where a sidewalk is available, driving on road shoulders, spitting on sidewalks, loitering, littering, music blasting so loud from a car that even with your windows closed you can hear it quite well, graffiti, etc.

Make it so the criminals will go somewhere else, since we'll never be successful in ending the drug trade. (There's far too much money to be made.) It's time to retake the land.

Make paperwork for cops less a hassle and burden so they have an incentive to go after nuisance crimes rather than look the other way. Also if it's not an emergency they must do the speed limit. They should be a good example for all others when responding to a police call of some sort.

The community policing thing is also needed in Wilmington, whether it's cops on foot or on horse, plus the car patrols. This way the on-foot/horse cops get to know people in their neighborhood and the people there get to know them.

Maybe city folks there will start to trust the cops again, which is part of the problem. People in high crime areas don't trust the cops, so they tell them very little (the criminals are counting on that). If they trusted the cops, they'd be the eyes and ears and would help in catching some of the crime.

Maybe have less white cops and more minority cops in those inner city neighborhoods that generally are more minority heavy in population, especially the on-foot/horse cops would help in this.

There's a couple of real suggestions. One has already been done in NYC with great results. The other is old-school beat foot cop patrols from the 1930s and '40s. It worked well then as folks got to know their local cop and trusted him, and that approach should work again today. Lord knows what we're doing now isn't working.

Now will anyone with any authority take a serious look at either of these ideas? Probably not, because to do so means what they've been doing hasn't worked.

Most folks in the city are not criminals, and shouldn't have to be in fear of getting shot.

Those of us in the suburbs shouldn't have to fear those same criminals moving out to the suburbs either, but make no mistake they have. It's only a matter of time before we start hearing of gunshots in the glorious suburbs, too.

Mike Cannatelli lives in New Castle.

VICE PRESIDENTIAL *NEWS CLIPS*

PRODUCED FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

TO: **THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF**

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Biden Tells NAACP Romney, Republicans Threaten Civil Rights (ABC)

By Devin Dwyer

ABC, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** got a hero's welcome today at the NAACP Convention in Houston, one day after rival Mitt Romney was booed during remarks before the same group.

And while the VP did not directly address treatment of the presumptive GOP nominee, he suggested the frosty reception was not misguided, warning that Romney and Republicans are threats to the group's reason for existence.

"On civil rights, your raison d'etre, the reason for our existence," **Biden** said, "I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember, remember what this [organization], at its core, was all about… It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he questioned, alluding to efforts by Republicans to impose more stringent voting requirements in states around the country.

"I didn't think we'd be back. I remember working with Republicans — and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — remember working with Republicans on motor-voter, on expanding the franchise on early voting, on voting by mail. Some of these were Republican ideas. But this is not the Republican Party here today, nor Romney's.

Get more pure politics at ABC News.com/Politics and a lighter take on the news at OTUSNews.com

"They see a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier," he said, "where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."

"Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," **Biden** concluded before the adoring crowd.

Biden used his address, billed as a campaign speech, to energize the African-American constituency that overwhelmingly backs Obama and Democrats and may play a crucial role in a handful of battleground states in November.

He offered a full-throated defense of the administration's signature accomplishments, hailing the 2009 auto bailout as "not popular but it was critical"; the call to target Osama bin Laden as a "bold decision with profound risks;" and the health care law that "required [Obama] early on to use up all of his political capital" but which led to historic benefits for African-Americans.

The VP also suggested there has been a conspiracy to obstruct Obama from the beginning of his term, citing the lack of Republican support for the Recovery Act, the health care law, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the debt ceiling debate last summer.

“Their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama,” he said. “He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. Folks, in the end, that’s what the presidency is all about.”

President Obama, who had faced some criticism for not attending the convention, delivered a video message, telling NAACP members, “I stand on your shoulders. And at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise, that idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try.”

Biden Takes On Voting Rights Issues At NAACP Convention (CNN)

By Ashley Killough

CNN, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** delivered a rousing address to the NAACP in Houston on Thursday, bolstering support for President Barack Obama and drawing sharp contrasts with the Republican Party on civil rights issues.

On the heels of recent voter identification disputes, **Biden** strayed from his typical campaign speech to zero in on voting rights, arguing that Republicans were making it more difficult for certain group to vote.

By implementing laws requiring voters to present official identification at the voting booth, **Biden** said, the GOP sees "a different future, where voting is made harder, not easier."

Democrats have said that such laws are politically motivated and intended to suppress minority voting, given that fewer people in minority groups carry government-issued IDs. Republicans, meanwhile, make the case that such laws prevent fraud and protect the integrity of the system.

The issue was a hot topic this week at the NAACP convention, where Attorney General Eric Holder spoke Tuesday and lambasted states that have considered or attempted to implement such laws, including Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Appealing to the group's founding, **Biden** on Thursday urged the crowd to "remember what (the NAACP) at its core was all about."

"It was about the right to vote, because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said.

He called on the crowd to imagine what the Justice Department would look like under a Mitt Romney administration.

"Imagine the recommendations and who he's likely to pick for attorney general or head of the civil rights division," he said, drawing scorn from the audience.

The vice president also touched on a number of other issues, including energy, health care, women's issues and education. In each instance, he compared Obama's policies with those of the Republican Party.

He particularly faulted the GOP for obstructing what he considers key legislation since Obama took office.

"Their discipline is amazing, they have never let up," **Biden** said, referring to congressional Republicans. "But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues to be driven by the character of his convictions."

This was **Biden**'s first time addressing the convention as vice president, the NAACP said.

"The vice president is a longtime friend to the NAACP," said Roslyn Brock, the group's chairwoman. "He has been a strong advocate for justice and equality over his decades of service in the Senate and the White House."

The president will miss the event because of a "scheduling conflict," his campaign said.

"We declined a few weeks ago, and (the) NAACP was pleased (Vice President Joe **Biden**) was able to attend," an Obama-**Biden** campaign official told CNN.

The president's schedule for Thursday initially appeared wide open, but a senior administration official confirmed Thursday morning that Obama and the first lady will give an interview to CBS during the day.

However, the president did make a brief appearance in a pre-taped video that ran before the vice president appeared.

"If you keep standing with me ... I know we can arrive there together," the president said after delivering a few lines from his typical stump speech on helping middle-class Americans.

Hilary Shelton, the NAACP Washington Bureau director and a senior vice president in the organization, said the White House never confirmed a visit.

"They were trying to work out something," Shelton said.

As to why Obama could not attend, he added, "It was that something could not be moved. Something was crucial. And unfortunately, they couldn't move it in a way they could get him here this week."

Obama addressed the convention in 2009. Last year, first lady Michelle Obama spoke to the group.

Biden's speech Thursday came one day after Romney was booed during his own remarks at the NAACP convention, when the Republican vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Obama's signature health care law.

In comparison, **Biden** drew thunderous applause after trumpeting health care reform and emphasized that the law ensures coverage to "8 million black Americans who never would have had insurance."

The one time the crowd gave a negative reaction occurred when **Biden** began to close his remarks. He received a standing ovation from about half the audience at the end.

Meanwhile, Romney said the negative reaction he experienced Wednesday didn't come as a surprise.

"I think we expected that," he said on Fox Business Network. "I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country, which is that Obamacare is killing jobs."

Two African-American members of the House of Representatives found themselves split after Romney's appearance.

"He gets credit for attendance," Rep. Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana Democrat, said on CNN's "The Situation Room." "But perfect attendance doesn't qualify you to be class president. I thought it was a good gesture to go, but I thought his content was lacking."

Rep. Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina, also said on "The Situation Room" that he expects Romney to get about 10% of the black vote come November, suggesting the GOP candidate's focus should be on unemployment and home foreclosures.

"African-American unemployment since 2008 is up 40%," Scott said. "Home closures 25%. So what we have is the same message that works for the rest of America, works for the black community, too."

Romney draws boos from NAACP, support from conservatives

CNN's Dan Lothian, Shawna Shepherd, Shannon Travis and Ed Payne and contributed to this report.

At NAACP, Biden Booed -- For Ending His Speech (CBS)

By Lucy Madison

CBS, July 13, 2012

Just like Mitt Romney the day before, Vice President Joe **Biden** was booed at the NAACP convention. Unlike Romney, however, he wasn't booed because the crowd was upset but because they didn't want **Biden** to stop talking.

In an animated speech Thursday, **Biden** painted a stark contrast between Democrat and Republican visions for the future - and urged the historical civil rights organization to "close your eyes and imagine" what the country would look like under a Mitt Romney presidency.

Biden, whose presence was met with a response so enthusiastic it resulted in boos when he said he'd be wrapping up his remarks, emphasized his belief that the presumptive Republican nominee is a "fine family man." But his vision for America's future, he argued, is "so fundamentally different" than "how we view the future of America."

Underscoring issues like education, women's rights, health care, and civil rights in general, **Biden** targeted the current state of the Republican Party as "obstructionist" by design, and regressive by nature.

"This guy's vision of the future of American foreign policy is mired in the Cold War -- and the Cold War is over," he said of Romney.

To loud cheers from the audience, he also referenced ongoing battles over voter ID laws throughout the country, asking the audience: "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

"We see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered," he said. "[Republicans] see a different future -- where voting is made harder, not easier."

"This ain't your father's Republican party," he added.

The longtime lawmaker - who described himself as a "lifetime member of the NAACP" and spent a few minutes name-checking individual audience members before launching into his speech - appeared at ease among the crowd. His presentation represented something of a contrast to that of Romney, whose Wednesday remarks were interrupted by boos from the audience on several occasions.

Romney said after his speech that he'd "expected" such a reaction to some of his positions, including his pledge to repeal health care, and some argue the negative reception on such issues is actually good for his candidacy. According to CBS News political director John Dickerson, the boos "offered a chance for a candidate criticized for his malleability to look principled in the face of opposition."

"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP that I give across the country," Romney told Fox News yesterday following his speech.

He also took the opportunity to point out to the NAACP that he, and not Mr. Obama, was speaking there this year. "If I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes," he said during his remarks.

Mr. Obama's office cited scheduling conflicts in his decision not to attend the NAACP, but he had little on his public schedule Thursday other than an interview with CBS News' Charlie Rose. He did tape a video message that aired before **Biden**'s remarks, apologizing for his absence and sending his "deepest regards."

Twiala Dotson, an attendee at the conference, said Thursday she had "no qualms" about the fact that the president hadn't made an appearance.

"He has nothing to prove to me," she said. "President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe **Biden**, being the pitt bull that he is, he was the man that needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said."

Precious Byrd, another attendee, told CBS Wednesday she was actually more interested in seeing Romney speak at the convention.

"I know his standing," she said of Mr. Obama. "Actually, I wanted to see Mitt Romney. I wanted to see if he had something to say, because I do consider myself to have an open mind."

Despite her commitment to keeping an open mind, Byrd said Wednesday that Romney hadn't been able to win her over.

"You know, I'm not just automatically one way or the other. I buy into what Obama says. I know what **Biden**'s going to say. So I was really curious as to what Romney would say, you know," she said. "I mean who knows, he might have said something that was like 'Oh my God.' But it didn't happen for me."

Sarah Huisenga and Rodney Hawkins contributed reporting to this story.

Biden Knocks Romney In Address To NAACP (MSNBC)

By Carrie Dann

MSNBC, July 13, 2012

HOUSTON -- The same audience that booed Mitt Romney yesterday chided Vice President Joe **Biden** today, but only for ending a laundry list of the Obama administration's accomplishments.

When **Biden** said he was wrapping up these accomplishments, the audience of a few thousand delegates at the NAACP's annual convention shouted "No!" -- capping off a warmly received address, which warned that a Romney presidency would mean voter suppression, health care "controlled by the insurance companies," and tax hikes on millions of African American families.

Biden, who spoke in lieu of an address from the first black president himself, urged delegates to envision the Justice Department under a Romney administration and warned that advances in civil rights would be erased if Republicans prevail in November.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork," **Biden** said, invoking the conservative Supreme Court nominee he famously battled against in the Senate. "Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general."

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" **Biden** asked.

Eric Holder, the first African American to hold the position as the nation's top law enforcement officer, spoke to the group earlier this week. **Biden** said that Holder and the president - unlike Republicans - want voting rights to be "expanded not diminished."

Citing Romney's proposed elimination of some tax breaks as a part of his fiscal plan, **Biden** claimed that a Romney presidency would result in bigger checks to the IRS out of African Americans' wallets.

"He eliminates college tuition tax credit. The earned income tax credit and the child tax credit are cut," **Biden** said. "The result: 2.2 million African Americans working families will see a tax increase if he succeeds. That's a fact."

Obama did not address the group due to scheduling concerns, according to the campaign, although he has no public events today. The president did appear in the form of a taped video before **Biden**'s speech.

The large convention center ballroom was only about two-thirds full for **Biden**'s speech. Organizers blamed the empty seats on early morning flash flooding that affected delegates' transportation to the event venue.

Attendees praised both **Biden** and Romney for addressing the mostly Democratic-leaning organization.

"It was a family affair, a family connection," said community development officer Alan Watkins of Houston, who said he did not fault Obama for not appearing in person. "I completely understand that the president is busy, The fact that he sent his next person in line was great."

Charles Warfield, an NAACP chapter president for Kalamazoo, Mich., said that **Biden** served as an effective emissary precisely because he is not African-American.

"He probably was a better choice for this convention because it would have made Barack look like, because he's black and we're black that we are in sync with everything," Warfield said. "But Vice President **Biden** hit every nail on the head."

Warfield lauded Romney for speaking to the group yesterday, despite broadly disagreeing with the GOP presidential nominee's agenda.

That sentiment was echoed by Marcus Barnum, a Houston financial adviser.

"I applaud his effort coming to an event such as this, because we need to hear from him," Barnum said. "I think it's important for him to try to win our vote as well."

The Oval: Biden To NAACP: Imagine A Romney Justice Department (USAT)

By David Jackson

USA Today, July 12, 2012

Following up on Mitt Romney's speech to the NAACP, Vice President **Biden** told the organization today to think about what a Republican administration would do with civil rights cases.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," **Biden** told the NAACP convention in Houston.

"Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency," the vice president said.

Biden noted that Romney's advisory team includes Robert Bork, the conservative jurist whose 1987 nomination to the Supreme Court was rejected in part because of his past criticism of some civil rights laws.

Biden also cast the Obama-Romney election as "a fight for the heart and soul of America."

Romney made his case to the NAACP on Wednesday. While applauding him at points, some members of the crowd booed Romney when he proposed a repeal of President Obama's health care law.

Obama, the nation's first African-American president, spoke to the NAACP convention via video.

"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said.

Biden Tells NAACP The Election Is A Fight For 'Heart' Of America (LAT)

By Christi Parsons

Los Angeles Times, July 13, 2012

WASHINGTON -- Vice President Joe **Biden** warned of a gloomy four years for civil rights if he and President Obama are not reelected, summing it up in ominous tones by uttering two words: Robert Bork.

Speaking to the NAACP at their convention Thursday, **Biden** asked delegates to close their eyes and picture an administration under Republican Mitt Romney -- and then led them straight to the conservative jurist whose proposed appointment to the Supreme Court by then-President Reagan many of them fought to defeat.

Imagine the Supreme Court after four years of Romney appointments, **Biden** told the crowd.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," **Biden** said. "Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork."

Earlier this year, Romney named Bork to head his Justice Advisory Committee, thrilling the party base with his choice of the conservative standard bearer.

But at the convention of the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, **Biden**'s mere mention of the name drew groans. Old-guard activists remember the defeat of the Bork nomination in 1987 as a highlight of the movement.

A day after Romney was booed by the NAACP, **Biden** urged them to turn their concern into action. A failure of black voters to turnout in large numbers, as they did in 2008, would be a blow to Obama's chances of reelection.

This is a "fight for the heart and soul of America," **Biden** told the crowd in Houston on Thursday. "These guys aren't bad guys," he said of the Republicans, "they just have a fundamentally different view," elongating the word "fundamentally."

christi.parsons@latimes.com

Blog: Biden's Star Turn At NAACP (WP)

By 7/12/2012

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

The nation's first black president has a secret weapon when it comes to turning out black and Latino votes: An old white guy.

Vice President **Biden**, for the second time in three days, delivered a stemwinder in front of a group of minority voters that had the crowd eating it up. On Tuesday, it was his keynote address to the National Council of La Raza in Las Vegas, and on Thursday it was his speech in front of the NAACP convention in Houston.

Biden's rapport with the NAACP crowd was evident from the outset Thursday. He began things by noting that he was a lifetime member of the group, was once the "only white guy on the east side," and giving a shout-out to an NAACP official he affectionately called "Mouse."

From there, he pivoted between talking about the successful mission to kill Osama bin Laden, Republican obstructionism, Obama's health-care law and Republican efforts on Voter ID.

By the end of the speech, **Biden** could feel the moment.

"There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," **Biden** said. He then began to wrap up his remarks, and got booed for doing so; the crowd clearly wanted more.

Biden's star turn in front of the NAACP crowd tells us a couple things.

First, it shows that he's a valuable asset when it comes to the Obama campaign's efforts to turn out minority voters. Yes, it was a friendly crowd to begin with, but enthusiasm matters.

Polls have shown Obama leading by wide margins among both black and Latino voters, and it's a foregone conclusion that African-American voters, in particular, will continue to vote in lockstep for the first black president (preaching to the choir, indeed).

The question, though, is how these normally low-turnout demographics turn out in the 2012 election. Latinos, in particular, concern Democrats because they have shown a willingness to stay home and they have fallen out of love, to some degree, with Obama.

Obama has also shown plenty of rapport with these groups, of course, but having a No. 2 that you can trust to stand in is a tremendous luxury. And **Biden**'s easy speech in front of the NAACP crowd showed that he's not just going to be an attack dog (the more traditional role of the vice president), but also a pretty formidable cheerleader for a president who badly needs someone to pump up the crowd.

Secondly, it's hard to look at the speech **Biden** gave Thursday and not see a 2016 presidential candidate.

The fact is that **Biden** has always struggled because people didn't see him as a real presidential contender. While generally well-regarded in his party and by the media (in spite of his gaffes), **Biden**'s real problem in the 2008 campaign was that he was never able to get a real shot at the main stage.

As a sitting vice president, though, and having delivered speeches like this, it's going to force people to reevaluate his fortitude and whatever presidential aspirations he might have.

This is not to say that he's going to be a front-runner for the Democratic nomination in 2016 or even that he will run (though it seems like he wants to). But it does show what **Biden** can do when he's at his best. He's a talented politician, and when he puts it together, it works.

Biden's speech Thursday will definitely change some people's minds about his role in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns.

In Appeal To NAACP, Biden Warns Of Refighting Civil Rights Battles Under Romney (WP)

By David Nakamura

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Vice President **Biden** made an impassioned appeal Thursday to members of the nation's oldest civil rights group to rally behind President Obama and reject a Republican vision for the country that **Biden** said would roll back progress for minorities.

Speaking at the NAACP conference in Houston a day after presumptive GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney appeared there, **Biden** delivered a sharp rebuttal to Romney's contention that his policies would be better for black families than Obama's have been at a time when unemployment among African Americans is 14.4 percent.

Biden sketched out what he said is the Republican Party's hostile position toward the middle and working classes on voting rights, health care, taxes and education to argue that a Romney administration would be detrimental to blacks.

The vice president played to the crowd, sending a shout out to friends in the Delaware delegation and recalling his work on voting rights during his time on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" he said. "I didn't think we'd be back. I remember working with Republicans — and by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — on "Motor Voter" [legislation], expanding the [voting] franchise. Some of these were Republican ideas. This is not the Republican Party's view today, nor Romney's. They see a different future in which voting is harder [rather] than easier."

Biden added, "There's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir."

Indeed it was. Polls show that black voters overwhelmingly support Obama, even if they are frustrated by the economy and the unemployment rate, which is far higher among African Americans than the general population.

Whereas Romney drew three sets of boos from the same audience, **Biden** received a warm welcome and applause throughout. When he said he would wrap up his speech, some in the audience shouted, "No!"

Before **Biden** spoke, Obama addressed the audience via video message. The president, echoing his campaign stump speech, told the crowd that his administration is committed to a country where "no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is a place where you can make it if you try."

On Wednesday, Romney had told the NAACP that Obama has failed in his bid to restore prosperity and security.

"If you want a president who will make things better in the African American community, you are looking at him," Romney said, drawing boos.

Ticking through a list of Obama's accomplishments — bailing out the auto industry, signing health-care reform legislation, ordering the killing of Osama bin Laden — **Biden** argued that the president achieved those feats despite Republican obstructionism.

"They were seas of obstruction," he said. "Their discipline was amazing. They never let up. But neither has my guy, neither has Barack Obama. He hasn't given up."

Biden linked Romney directly to Capitol Hill Republicans, including House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Va.) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), and argued that under a Romney administration, they would collude to undo critical reforms.

"Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," **Biden** said, drawing shouts of "No!" from the crowd. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency.

"This election, in my view, is a fight for the heart and soul of America," he continued, adding of Republicans: "These guys aren't bad guys, they just have a fundamentally different view."

Blog: Romney Declares Independence From Birthers At NAACP Convention (WP)

By Jonathan Capehart

Washington Post, July 12, 2012

Vice President **Biden** got the reception we all thought he would get at the NAACP convention. Warm and effusive, compared to the cool and respectful (with the occasional booing) that greeted Mitt Romney's hollow speech yesterday.

Biden ripped apart Romney's address and warned the audience about what a President Romney might do. "Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like," he said. "Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division. Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." Even though Romney's conservative street cred is thin among conservatives, there's no question his election would mean an abrupt change in philosophy compared to President Obama.

But there's another thing in Romney's speech I want to highlight as a Romney declaration of independence from the conspiratorial wack-o wing of the Republican Party.

Visit msnbc.com for breaking news, world news, and news about the economy Now, if someone had told us in the 1950s or 1960s that a black citizen would serve as the forty-fourth president of the United States, we would have been proud and many would have been surprised.

Did you catch that? "[B]lack citizen"? The racist birther movement centers on the conspiracy theory that Obama was born not in Hawaii but in Kenya. Therefore, he is not an American citizen and is illegitimately occupying the Oval Office. Republican leaders and those who aspired to be such allowed the rumor to fester or egged it on.

To his credit, Romney never really dabbled in those fetid waters. Yesterday, in one phrase, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee disavowed the birther craziness. Of course, conspiracy theories never die. But every little bit helps.

Biden Gets Warm NAACP Reception (WSJ)

By Jared A. Favole

Wall Street Journal, July 13, 2012

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Biden Defends Health Care Reform And Decries Voter ID Laws (NYT)

By Rebecca Berg

New York Times, July 13, 2012

One day after Mitt Romney was booed at the N.A.A.C.P. convention when he said he would repeal the Affordable Care Act if he were elected president, Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr. defended the health care reform law in his remarks to the convention Thursday.

The crowd was predictably receptive to Mr. **Biden**'s speech, applauding heartily as he lauded President Obama for his success in getting the law passed.

"This man prevailed where no president had before," Mr. **Biden** said. "And he was right, he was right."

Mr. **Biden** hailed health care reform, one of a number of issues he used to illustrate the two political parties' divergent visions for the country's future, and accused Republicans of blocking that and other pieces of legislation backed by Democrats as part of a premeditated "plan."

"Obstructionism was a plan from the outset," Mr. **Biden** said, to which the crowd responded with cries of, "Yeah!"

"Folks, their discipline is amazing," he said of Republicans. "They have not given up. But neither has my guy, Barack Obama. He has never given up."

Mr. **Biden** also touched on the president's plan, announced this week, to seek a temporary extension of tax cuts on income below $250,000.

When Mr. **Biden** circled back to the issue of health care later in his speech, he received a standing ovation. The crowd also rose to their feet when the vice president decried racial profiling and what he called "voter suppression" efforts by Republicans, likely a reference to some Republicans' support of voter-ID laws.

"Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Mr. **Biden** said. The question was met with a collective, "No!"

Mr. Obama continues to receive overwhelming support from the African-American share of the electorate in polls, and Mr. **Biden** conceded that his remarks were tantamount to “preaching to the choir.”

The mood was not so fraternal at the convention Wednesday, when Mr. Romney spoke to a less-receptive audience.

“If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him,” he said, drawing boos (but some light applause) from the convention crowd.

In an interview with Fox News after his speech, Mr. Romney said, “I expect to get African-American votes.”

That assertive tone stood in sharp contrast to John McCain’s address to the N.A.A.C.P. as the presumptive Republican nominee for president in 2008, when he focused on the less contentious topic of education and complimented Mr. Obama.

“Don’t tell him I said this, but he is an impressive fellow in many ways,” Mr. McCain said. “He has inspired a great many Americans, some of whom had wrongly believed that a political campaign could hold no purpose or meaning for them.”

Biden Paints Ominous Picture Of Romney Presidency (AP)

By Juan A. Lozano And Ken Thomas

Associated Press, July 13, 2012

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Joe **Biden** rallied support for President Barack Obama before the nation's largest civil rights organization on Thursday, declaring that Republican challenger Mitt Romney's election-year agenda would hurt — not help — working families in the black community.

Biden, appearing before the NAACP's annual convention one day after Romney addressed the group, offered what amounted to a rebuttal of the Republican rival as both campaigns sought support from a key constituency in several swing states.

The vice president did not specifically cite Romney's argument to the NAACP on Wednesday that he could serve African-Americans better than Obama, the nation's first black president. Romney was booed when he said he'd repeal Obama's sweeping health care reform law but otherwise got a polite reception as he reached out to a traditionally Democratic voting bloc.

Biden predictably drew a far more rousing reception as he outlined differences between Obama and Romney on health care, education, energy, women's rights and research, saying the two rivals had "fundamentally different visions."

Biden offered a rundown of Obama's first term, pointing to a landmark health care law, launching the mission that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and the decision to rescue the financial system and U.S. automakers General Motors and Chrysler.

"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision. And it will not surprise you — I don't think it's even a close call," **Biden** said. "So it's time, it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done ... To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."

Obama did not speak to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People this year, appearing instead in a taped video message. In the brief remarks, Obama said: "I stand on your shoulders and at the NAACP you have always believed in the American promise." He reiterated many of the themes of his re-election campaign, saying the nation needs to "build an economy where everyone can have the confidence that the hard work will also pay off."

The president said he was sorry he couldn't be there in person. Obama had no public events scheduled Thursday but was to be interviewed at the White House, along with first lady Michelle Obama, by Charlie Rose of CBS News.

White House officials noted that Obama spoke to the NAACP convention during the 2008 presidential campaign and in 2009, while Mrs. Obama addressed the group in 2010. The president is scheduled to address the National Urban League in New Orleans on July 25.

Black voters are a key part of Obama's re-election strategy, with about 95 percent supporting him in 2008. Polls have shown black voters supporting Obama at comparable levels this year but Romney could undercut the president in states with large black communities, such as North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and Florida, if he can persuade some black voters to support him or if they stay home on Election Day.

Romney said Wednesday that much more must be done to improve education in the nation's cities and noted that the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among blacks is higher than the 8.2 percent national average.

"If you understood who I truly am in my heart, and if it were possible to fully communicate what I believe is in the real, enduring best interest of African-American families, you would vote for me for president," Romney said.

In Obama's absence, **Biden** offered a fiery defense of administration policies while warning of what a Romney presidency would bring to civil rights. He asked attendees to "imagine" what the Justice Department would be like under a Romney administration and "imagine when his senior adviser on the Constitution is Robert Bork," the Republican Supreme Court nominee who was defeated by Democrats in 1987. **Biden** was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the time.

Biden received sustained applause throughout his address. When he spoke about civil rights and administration efforts to expand voting rights and not diminish them, the crowd stood and loudly cheered. When **Biden** said, "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" people in the crowd answered in unison, "No."

Biden said there was a lot more he could say on protecting voting rights but that he was "preaching to the choir." "Say it, say it," many in the crowded responded. As **Biden** was wrapping up, he said, "Let me close, my friends," prompting members of the audience to boo and yell, "No!"

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Thomas reported from Washington.

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US Black Leadership Hails Barnstorming Biden (AFP)

By Tangi Quemener

AFP, July 12, 2012

WASHINGTON — US Vice President Joe **Biden** received a rapturous welcome Thursday at a conference of black civil rights leaders that one day earlier had jeered Republican White House challenger Mitt Romney.

"It's good to be home," he declared, to cheers from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ahead of a speech in which he drew sharp comparisons between his boss President Barack Obama and Romney.

Romney had been subjected to a chorus of boos on Wednesday when he told the same Houston meeting that he plans to repeal the president's signature health reform bill, and **Biden** was applauded when he defended the Democratic incumbent.

Biden contrasted the values of Obama, the country's first African-American president, to those of Romney, a multimillionaire businessman and investor who once served as Republican governor of Massachusetts.

Biden praised Obama as a leader "who has the character of his convictions," adding that "almost never since we have taken office during this entire time did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help."

And he reminded the crowd that but for the landmark Affordable Care Act, which survived a Supreme Court challenge last month, there are "eight million black Americans who never would have had insurance."

"The best way to sum up the president's view, my view, and I think your view, is we see America where, in the words of the scripture, 'what you do unto the least of my brethren you do unto me'," the vice president declared.

"As I said, I believe this election will come down to character, conviction, and vision and will not surprise you, I don't think it's even a close call," he added, to thunderous applause and shouts of acclamation.

Blacks voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008 and, even with black unemployment at 14.4 percent -- more than six points higher than the national average -- Romney faces an uphill battle to win over black voters in November.

Biden, by contrast, scored easy points by pointing out Obama's record on education, social legislation and health care, and won more cheers when he turned to the Republican's stance on women's rights issues.

Biden said Romney was a bad fit for black voters and skewered Romney on everything from abortion rights to health care and other social legislation.

"Governor Romney and his allies in the Congress see a different future for women in America," he said.

"The governor isn't sure what his position is on the Violence Against Women Act," **Biden** said.

"But he is certain of what his position is on Roe V. Wade -- overturn it," the vice president said of the landmark abortion rights case in which the US Supreme Court ruled that abortion is legal.

Obama -- who introduced **Biden** in a brief pre-recorded statement to the meeting -- will face off against Romney in the November presidential poll. **Biden** is expected to be his running mate.

Joe Biden Fires Up NAACP. Where Was President Obama? (CSM)

The NAACP crowd booed Mitt Romney, and polls say that the president could win at least 95 percent of the African-American vote. Still, Obama may need that and more in key states.

By Peter Grier

Christian Science Monitor, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** on Thursday delivered a fiery speech defending Obama administration priorities to the NAACP annual meeting in Houston. His basic theme: For working-class black families, President Obama's agenda is better than challenger Mitt Romney's.

"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," said Mr. **Biden**.

For instance, education does not play a central role in Mr. Romney's vision of the US, while it does for Mr. Obama, charged **Biden**. Romney opposes government support for the development of renewable-energy sources and efforts to equalize pay between men and women.

Biden drew perhaps his most enthusiastic crowd response when he said that the incumbent administration wants to expand voting rights, not diminish them. In a number of states, Republicans have led efforts to require that voters produce identification – a requirement that Attorney General Eric Holder has derided as a "poll tax" designed to suppress minority votes.

"Folks, there is a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir," said **Biden**, stating the obvious as the audience applauded.

Polls show that Obama should win upwards of 95 percent of the African American vote, so in many ways **Biden**'s reception was foreordained. The pastor who led the invocation to open the day's proceedings listed how the NAACP had been "blessed" to hear from a number of prominent individuals, but left that word out when referring to the presumptive GOP nominee, saying only that "we've heard also from Mitt Romney."

The NAACP crowed booed Romney on Wednesday when he vowed that if elected he'd repeal Obama's health care law. The audience did applaud some Romney pronouncements, such as his statement of opposition to gay marriage, and gave him a polite standing ovation at his end.

Given this context, one question stands out: Where was the president himself? If his challenger was willing to appear before the NAACP and be booed, why couldn't Obama bestir himself to meet live with his most committed supporters?

Conservative commentators defending Romney were quick to make this comparison.

"Hey, one Presidential candidate cared enough about the African-American vote to show up to the NAACP's annual convention in this election year. Too bad it wasn't the Democrat," wrote conservative talk show host Ed Morrissey on the website Hot Air.

Republicans noted that CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer agreed with them. On his Situation Room show on Wednesday, Mr. Blitzer said that Romney did the "right thing" by appearing and that Obama, who was in Washington with no public meetings on his schedule, should have appeared as well.

"He's got meetings. I assume those meetings are very important, but he could have found the time to pay his respects to the NAACP," said Blitzer.

It's true that most blacks will vote Democratic. But in swing states such as Virginia, Obama needs every single vote – and an energized African-American electorate could help him, said Blitzer.

Obama did appear at the NAACP via video just prior to **Biden**'s speech. "I stand on your shoulders," he said, to polite but not overwhelming applause.

Joe Biden: Mitt Romney A Threat To NAACP (POLITCO)

By Reid J. Epstein

Politico, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** came to the NAACP Thursday with a booming message: President Barack Obama needs their help, and Mitt Romney and the Republicans in Congress will hurt them.

Speaking in Houston to the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization's annual convention a day after Romney told the NAACP that the Republican candidate later acknowledged was full of

statements the crowd didn't want to hear, **Biden** delivered his own speech, built, as the vice president told them, around "preaching to the choir."

"Remember what this at its core was all about, why this organization at its core was all about," **Biden** said, after touting the Obama administration's record on African-Americans. "It was about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things."

Biden then reminded the crowd that embattled Attorney General Eric Holder, held in contempt by the GOP-controlled House for not releasing documents related to Fast & Furious, is fighting to protect voting rights while Republicans seek to place hurdles before ballot access. Tuesday, members passed an emergency resolution in support of Holder and his position on voting rights.

He urged attendees to "imagine" what Romney's Justice Department would look like and who he would appoint to the Supreme Court.

"And we, the president and I and Eric and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," **Biden** said. "Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Where there are no distinctions made on the basis of race or gender and access to housing and lending. So much more. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

The crowd, which had cheered and applauded **Biden** at points through the speech, booed at his characterization of a Romney administration.

After defending Obama policies ranging from the health care reforms to the stimulus to the auto bailout, **Biden** told the NAACP that Republicans have, from his first day in office, sought to tear him down.

"Almost never since he's taken office did the Republican Congress reach across the aisle to help," **Biden** said, citing the Robert Draper book "Do Not Ask What Good We Do" as evidence of a GOP conspiracy to oppose Obama on everything he did.

The Republicans' plan, **Biden** said, was "not to get us out of this recession, not to promote jobs, not to do the things that needed to be done, but to make Barack Obama a one–term president."

He continued: "Folks, their discipline is amazing. They have never let up. But neither has my guy. Neither has President Barack Obama. He has not given up. He continues, he continues to be driven by the character of his convictions. And folks, in the end, that's what the president is all about."

Biden's NAACP appearance, which began with acknowledgments of old Delaware friends like "Mousey" – whom an aide identified as Richard Smith, a Delaware NAACP official – came the day after Romney was booed during his appearance for repeating his call to repeal Obama's health care reform and suggesting that he would be a better president for African Americans than has been Obama.

Romney took his booing as a badge of honor, telling donors at a Montana fundraiser Wednesday night that he would not pander to the audience in front of him.

"I don't give different speeches to different audiences, all right," Romney told the donors. "I gave them the same speech. When I mentioned I am going to get rid of Obamacare they weren't happy, I didn't get the same response. That's OK, I want people to know what I stand for and if I don't stand for what they want, go vote for someone else, that's just fine."

Obama — who spoke to the group in 2008 and 2009 — did not attend, instead delivering a two-minute pre-taped video address, reminding the group that "I stand on your shoulders."

Read more: http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78443_Page2.html#ixzz20UiuzuMW

Rush Limbaugh: 'Uncle Sam's Cabin' Built By Democrats (POLITCO)

By William Bergstrom

Politico, July 13, 2012

Rush Limbaugh accused the Democratic Party on Thursday of trying "to keep blacks on the dependency plantation" — of "Uncle Sam's Cabin."

"The Democrats of old fought to keep blacks living on the plantation, Uncle Tom's Cabin," Limbaugh said on his show, referring to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. "We need to revise that. Now the Democrats fight to keep blacks on the dependency plantation. Uncle Tom's Cabin, no. It's now Uncle Sam's Cabin."

The conservative radio host applauded Mitt Romney for telling the NAACP at its annual convention that he plans to repeal Obamacare — a statement that drew boos from the crowd — and he attacked Vice President Joe **Biden**, who was booed for ending his speech, for "lying" to them.

"[Romney] got booed for telling the truth," Limbaugh said, according to a transcript. "**Biden** got booed because he stopped lying. **Biden**'s speech was a lie. He ends his speech, they boo. The audience wanted **Biden** to keep lying to 'em."

Limbaugh added that the "NAACP has become an organization expressly devoted to keep blacks from voting for Republicans. Pure and simple. That's all it exists for, to make sure they don't vote for Republicans."

Boehner Downplays Romney Boos (POLITCO)

By Tomer Ovadia

Politico, July 13, 2012

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday played down the boos and jeers that Mitt Romney received while speaking to the NAACP this week.

"There was that one moment, but if you look at the broader speech there were a number of times when he got a very resounding applause," Boehner said. "I congratulate Governor Romney for going and accepting the invitation to speak. Governor Romney is running for president of the United States to represent all Americans, so he ought to be congratulated on reaching out to all of them."

The NAACP crowd responded negatively several times to Romney's claim that he would "make things better in the African-American community" and that he would repeal Obama's health care law.

Boehner was accurate in stating that while several of Romney's comments did not play well, the audience applauded politely during much of his speech.

Boehner's comments came after Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told Bloomberg TV Wednesday she thought "it was a calculated move on [Romney's] part to get booed at the NAACP convention."

President Obama was invited to speak to the NAACP but declined, citing a scheduling conflict. Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke to the organization Thursday morning.

Steny Hoyer: OK For President Obama To Skip NAACP (POLITCO)

By Kevin Robillard

Politico, July 13, 2012

Rep. Steny Hoyer said Thursday it was OK for President Barack Obama to send Vice President Joe **Biden** in his place to the NAACP's annual convention in Houston, dismissing conservatives who argued it was insulting.

"I think the vice president is clearly representing the president and himself," said Hoyer, the House Minority Whip. Conservatives, including Rush Limbaugh, had portrayed the first black president's decision to bypass the convention as a snub to a group of voters Obama is expected to win overwhelmingly in the fall. **Biden** is speaking to the convention this afternoon.

Hoyer, whose Maryland district is a little over one-third black, also said Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney expected an "adverse" reaction when he called for the elimination of the president's health care reform law. He did not go as far as House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who said Romney wanted to get boos from the convention crowd.

"I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction," Hoyer said on CNN's "Starting Point." "The African-American community feels very strongly that the Obamacare bill … is a very important piece of legislation, not only for them but for all Americans."

According to Romney, Hoyer is right. "I think we expected that," Romney said in an Fox Business Channel interview that aired Wednesday night.

Biden Tries To Derail Romney's Charter-school Pitch To NAACP (CALLER)

By Neil Munro

Daily Caller, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden**'s used his red-meat speech at the NAACP convention to deride Gov. Mitt Romney's promise to push for charter schools, which are strongly supported by many lower-income African-American parents.

Biden's jibes are significant because they're a tacit admission that Romney's promise may attract a significant number of African-American votes and may reduce November turnout for Obama.

"Look, education doesn't play a central role in the Romney Republican vision of the future of America," **Biden** told the NAACP's annual convention July 12.

"It's on the back burner, it's not a priority," he claimed to the audience of African-Americans, who are vital to Obama's prospects in November.

Biden's dig came one day after Romney pushed his charter school plan to the NAACP attendees, many of whom are employed in local schools.

"In Boston, in Harlem, in Los Angeles, and all across the country, charter schools are giving children a chance, children that otherwise could be locked in failing schools," Romney declared.

While Massachusetts Democrats tried to stop charter schools, "I vetoed the bill [and] joined with the Black Legislative Caucus, and their votes helped preserve my veto, which meant that new charter schools, including some in urban neighborhoods, would be opened," he declared, prompting some applause.

He also was applauded when he announced his support for marriage. That statement was a contrast with Obama, who has alienated some African-Americans by calling for child-oriented marriage to be refined to encompass single-sex partnerships.

Romney's evocation of religious faith and his support for racial equality also prompted applause from the audience, which gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech.

Romney' aides dismissed **Biden**'s comments about charter schools.

"As governor, Mitt Romney worked with the Massachusetts Black Caucus to uphold his veto on a charter school moratorium," said spokesman Ryan Williams. "He believes that it is important to expand access to high quality public charter schools."

The NAACP speech was the second time that Romney has highlighted his support of charter schools — and the second time that Democrats have rushed to denounce it.

In May, Romney visited Bluford Charter School, a charter school in Philadelphia to highlight his support for charter schools to African-Americans. Most of the students in the school are African-American, and the school is run by a charter-school firm, Universal Companies.

That was an aggressive move, because it was aimed at Obama's base in the largest city in swing-state Pennsylvania.

Multiple polls shows that African-Americans are the strongest supporters of charter schools.

A July poll of 528 registered voters in swing-state North Carolina showed that 70 percent of state residents — but 85 percent of African-Americans — support charter schools. The poll was conducted by the Center for Education Reform.

An April 2011 poll of New Jersey residents by Rutgers-Eagleton showed that 31 percent of whites and 52 percent of African-Americans support charter schools.

A November 2011 poll in California showed that 52 percent of registered voters had a favorable view of charter schools. "African American respondents expressed the most support for charter schools," said a Los Angeles Times article about the poll of 1,057 registered voters, which was conducted by a Democratic polling firm, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.

In response, Democratic Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter brought his Democratic allies into the neighborhood to heckle the May Romney event, and also to hold a press conference where he could slam Romney's offer.

"Romney has always opposed investing in our children's education … which is why I don't understand why he is here today," Nutter claimed.

Romney's push for charter schools follows the successful GOP effort to restore federal funding for charter schools in D.C.

That effort was led by House Speaker John Boehner. Most of the D.C. charter-school students are African-American, and their parents protested vigorously when Obama nearly eliminated the program in 2009.

Obama sends his two children to Sidwell Friends School in D.C., at an annual cost of roughly $30,000 each.

Blog: Joe Biden Backs Up A Presidential Candidate (CALLER)

By Jim Treacher

Daily Caller, July 12, 2012

I'm just not sure which one.

Biden spoke at the NAACP convention earlier today, because Obama couldn't make it. (Barry's so busy today that they didn't have time to write any of it down in the official White House schedule.) Apparently, after it was patiently explained to ol' Sheriff Joe that the event has nothing to do with college sports, he tore up his prepared speech and just winged it. Here's a little piece:

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like. Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."

Well… yeah. That's the whole point. Every day, more and more people are imagining those very things. They don't like what's going on in those institutions and want to fix them. What they don't imagine is that Obama is a good president.

Again and again, those poor slobs in the Obama campaign put **Biden** out there. Again and again, he manages to undercut his own team in the most entertainingly unpredictable ways. Is he just a garrulous, well-meaning oaf, or is there something else going on there?

Did Joe switch sides? Is he a sleeper agent? Is he trying to get the other guy elected?

Reminds me of something I wrote a few weeks before the 2008 election. Not to brag or anything, but I think I called it pretty well…

Biden Clarifies Earlier Remarks on His Dread of an Obama Administration

Richmond, VA, Oct. 22 — At a campaign stop in a Richmond-area Denny's earlier today, Delaware Senator and Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joe **Biden** followed up on his controversial claim last Sunday that within the first six months of an Obama administration, America would "have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

Biden's statement to the press:

"Ya know, I kinda put my foot in my mouth the other day… [chuckle] You folks know how I can get, with the words and the talking and the babbling and the yammering and so forth. But I just wanted to clarify those remarks. I know I speak for Obama when I say that we are ready to lead. Come what may, we are gonna be out there in front. Because I gotta tell ya, when this great man, this fantastic young African-American kid who I'm proud to call my closest friend, when he becomes president, the American people need to know that you are all gonna be grabbin' your ankles every April 15 for the rest of your probably-shortened lives.

"I mean, the taxes, they're gonna be unbelievable. Holy f***. So we'll need your help with that. You're gonna have to pay 'em. There's no way we can repel a full-scale nationwide tax revolt without resorting to nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, at least in the scenarios they've shown me, so we're countin' on you to do the right thing.

"And I'd say to America, this land that I love: You've all seen what an agent of change Barack Obama is. He's brought together people from all walks of life. He's inspired every single person in this country, no matter who you are or what you look like or even if you're into, y'know, the funny stuff. [chuckle] Which is gonna be a great comfort when the Obama administration strangles the U.S. economy and sets off a long, terrifying race war.

"It is gonna suck beyond anything you could ever imagine. I'm not even kidding. I have a great fondness and admiration for the African-American people, I think they've done some great work over the years, but when push comes to shove, I know which side I'm on. You follow me?

"But Obama is gonna be there, and he's gonna learn the ropes, probably. It'll be really hard for you guys to survive in the nightmarish, decaying wasteland he'll make of this great nation, but those are the sorts of experiences that shape a man. And I know he's gonna come through it okay, at least in terms of his own personal safety."

Before being escorted out of the restaurant by frenzied campaign aides, **Biden** added, "And don't forget Iran! They know he's a pushover. Which is one of the things I love about the guy, he's a pussycat, but these animals? Boy oh boy. Can you say 'suitcase nuke'? I don't know for sure which city, but I'm guessing one of the smaller Midwest towns we're not watching that closely, maybe Omaha or Akron or one of those deals. You should probably start evacuating now.

"Okay, whoa, looks like my time's up. Easy on the threads, fellas, it's a rental. [chuckle]"

Biden Defends Obama At NAACP (DAYBEST)

The Daily Beast, July 13, 2012

A day after Mitt Romney was booed at the NAACP convention, Vice President Joe **Biden** charmed the same audience on Thursday with a spirited speech outlining the successes of the Obama administration. **Biden** denounced the voter-ID laws taking root across the country that many believe will keep minorities from the polls. And he encouraged the crowd to vote. "When you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things," he said. He also told the audience that a Romney administration could roll back the gains the black community has made over the past several decades.

Biden And Romney Duck Tough Issues, Just Different Ones (NATJO)

By Rebecca Kaplan

National Journal, July 13, 2012

Drawing a stark contrast with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Vice President Joe **Biden** on Thursday vigorously defended President Obama's first term in office and showered a friendly audience at the NAACP annual convention with references to issues like voting rights that Romney deftly sidestepped the day before.

But **Biden** also avoided some uncomfortable subjects for the Democratic administration, including making no mention of the 14.4 percent unemployment rate among African-Americans, something Romney highlighted in his speech to the convention audience the day before. Nonetheless, **Biden**'s remarks sparked loud applause and whistles of appreciation from the liberal audience, much different than the tepid reception and booing that greeted Romney on Wednesday.

"I think Mitt Romney is a fine family man. I believe he's driven by what he believes. But the differences are so basic about how we view the future of America," **Biden** said, as he keyed up a round of policy comparisons that included education, taxes, and health care. Romney's vision, he said, is "basically a throwback to the 50s," — a biting reference to the decade before the civil-rights movement liberated black Americans from institutionalized segregation.

Biden, who is playing the role of attack dog in Obama's reelection campaign, devoted the most time to criticizing the Republicans' stance on civil rights, alluding to the passage of a series of voter-identification laws supported by GOP state legislatures around the country that Democrats say are designed to disenfranchise minority voters. The issue is the main topic of civil-rights organization's 103rd convention, taking place in Houston.

The vice president said that Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder "see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished. Where racial profiling is a thing of the past. Where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?" Shouts of "No!" came from the crowd. A Romney Justice Department would be guided by someone like Robert Bork, the Reagan-era Supreme Court nominee who was rejected in part because of opposition from civil-rights and women's groups, he said.

"This ain't your father's Republican Party," **Biden** said. "They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier. Where the Justice Department is even prohibited from challenging any of those efforts to suppress votes."

Romney did not bring up the voter-ID laws in his speech on Wednesday, training his focus on the still sour economy, joblessness and the unemployment rate among African Americans, which is far higher

than the national average of 8.1 percent. Romney won applause from the crowd for many of his points on the economy, but was booed when he vowed to repeal President Obama's health care law.

Biden offered a full-throated defense of the law's popular provisions, such as coverage for children on their parents' policies until age 26 and a ban on preexisting condition denials, and claimed that the Republican health care proposals would be "controlled by insurance companies."

He also accused House Republicans of a concerted campaign of obstructionism with the goal of making sure Obama's first term failed. "It was on the easy, obvious things where we got no cooperation," **Biden** said, noting efforts to extend the payroll-tax cut, help ensure equal pay for women, and raise the debt ceiling as examples.

Obama did not appear in person at the convention, citing scheduling conflicts. Instead, he recorded a short video message for the audience in which he urged them to "keep standing with me."

"I stand on your shoulders," Obama said in the video, which preceded **Biden**'s speech. "At the NAACP, you have always believed in the American promise. That idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from, America is the place where you can make it if you try.

"That's why you fought so hard for good jobs, and a quality education, and a justice system that treats everybody fairly. That's why you helped make health care reform a reality. That's why you're still fighting today, because you know that our mission right now is not just to recover from the recession, it is to reclaim the security that so many Americans have lost," Obama said.

Obama addressed the organization four years ago during his first presidential campaign. Twiala Dotson, 43, a Houston teacher who was at that event, said she thinks it's a good idea that **Biden** was sent this time around because he could aggressively defend the president's record.

"President Obama would have had to have been probably a little bit congenial, but Joe **Biden**, being the pit bull that he is, he was the man that needed to be here to say what he said in the way that it needed to been said," Dotson said.

Biden was booed only once -- when he said he was about to end his speech.

Biden Rallies Blacks To Obama At NAACP (HILL)

By Jonathan Easley

The Hill, July 13, 2012

Vice President **Biden** rallied black voters to President Obama's cause during an address Thursday to the NAACP.

Biden came in place of President Obama, who excused himself with a scheduling conflict. But that did not appear to disappoint the audience, which cheered **Biden** with vigor one day after booing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

The vice president played to the crowd, remarking on its history as a civil rights group and suggesting Romney and Republicans would work against the organization on issues ranging from voter rights to racial profiling.

The future, **Biden** said, will be one where voter rights are expanded and racial profiling disappears — and he suggested that would not be the case without Democrats in power.

"We see the future where those rights are expanded, not diminished," **Biden** continued. "Where racial profiling is a thing from the past, where access to the ballot is expanded and unencumbered. ... Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again? We went through these battles, I didn't think we'd be back."

Democrats have been highlighting voter rights and allegations of suppression by Republicans as they work to keep turnout by black voters high this fall. High turnout by blacks would help Obama, who carried the black vote in a landslide in 2008 and leads Romney 92 percent to 2 among black voters, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released on Wednesday.

The Department of Justice and the state of Florida are suing one another over Florida Gov. Rick Scott's attempt to purge voter rolls of ineligible voters in his state. Attorney General Eric Holder also highlighted voter rights in an address earlier this week to the NAACP.

Romney was booed Wednesday after vowing to repeal "ObamaCare," which **Biden** championed in his speech. He said the president had pushed the healthcare law despite political risk and said it would increase insurance coverage for blacks.

"It required him early on to use up almost all of his political capitol," **Biden** said, "but he was right, he cut $100 billion from the federal debt over the next 10 years, providing access to ... 8 million black Americans who would never have had insurance."

Romney in his speech noted high black unemployment and vowed that blacks would be better off with him in the White House than Obama. He also highlighted his father's work in the civil rights era.

Obama, who last addressed the convention in 2009, sent a video message that played ahead of **Biden**. Some questioned the move, but the crowd responded emphatically to **Biden**, booing him only when he said he was close to ending his speech.

Biden closed by turning to the courts, which through the Brown vs. the Board of Education case and other cases in the civil rights era, hold a deep meaning with the NAACP audience.

"Close your eyes and imagine what the Romney justice department will look like [if Romney is president]," **Biden** said. "Imagine who is likely to be picked as attorney general, the head of civil rights division.

"Imagine, this to me is one of the most critical issues, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency. I believe this election will come down to character and conviction ... and I don't think it's even a close call. It's time for the NAACP to ... inspire a generation," he said.

House Democratic Whip Defends Obama's Absence From NAACP Convention (HILL)

By Geneva Sands

The Hill, July 13, 2012

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (Md.) defended the White House on Thursday for selecting Vice President **Biden** to speak at the annual NAACP convention instead of President Obama.

"I think the vice president clearly is representing the president and himself, is going to talk about the policies that this administration has put forward to try to turn the recession around that they inherited," said Hoyer on CNN's "Starting Point."

The top Democrat said the president and vice president are both "well-known" to the NAACP and the African-American community.

"I think those policies are going to be supported by that organization and by, frankly, Americans across the country that understand how hard the president and vice president have been working to get this economy moving," Hoyer said.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who spoke at the event in Houston on Wednesday, took what appeared to be a dig at Obama's absence from the convention during his speech, telling the audience that if elected president he would say "yes" to attending next year's event.

"I can't promise that you and I will agree on every issue. But I do promise that your hospitality to me today will be returned. We will know one another, and work to common purposes. I will seek your counsel," said Romney during his speech. "And if I am elected president, and you invite me to next year's convention, I would count it as a privilege, and my answer will be yes."

The GOP hopeful received boos from the crowd when he promised to repeal President Obama's signature healthcare law.

"If our goal is jobs, we must, must stop spending over a trillion dollars more than we earn. To do this, I will eliminate expensive non-essential programs like ObamaCare," said Romney to a chorus of booing.

Hoyer joined other Democrats and Romney himself in acknowledging that criticism of the repealing the healthcare law was to be expected at the convention.

"Clearly, I don't think Romney was surprised that he was going to get an adverse reaction. The African-American community feels very strongly that the ObamaCare bill, the Affordable Care Act that will provide access to affordable, quality healthcare to all Americans, is a very important piece of legislation," Hoyer said.

Hoyer was on CNN promoting the Democrats' refurbished "Make It in America" package, intended to create jobs and promote exports by strengthening trade enforcement, hiking infrastructure spending and eliminating tax benefits for companies that move jobs overseas.

The Democratic whip accused the Republican leadership of refusing to bring the bill to the House floor.

"In my opinion, had they put President Obama's agenda on the floor, had we passed that, had the president signed it, we would have created 1 to 2 million additional jobs in this country," he said.

Blog: Biden To NAACP: 'This Is Preaching To The Choir' (WEEKSTAN)

By Daniel Halper

Weekly Standard, July 12, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** told a NAACP meeting in Houston, Texas that he had to cut his remarks short "but this is preaching to the choir."

"The House of Representatives Republicans voted affirmatively to prevent the Justice Department from even investigating whether or not there was voter suppression, " **Biden** said. "Folks, there's a lot more to say, but this is preaching to the choir. Let me close, my friends, by saying, I mean this sincerely, just close your eyes and imagine. Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like."

Biden, CBS reporter Mark Knoller reports, exited the stage with Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" playing in the background.

President Obama did not attend the conference, but delivered a video address to the group. Republican Mitt Romney delivered a speech there yesterday.

Romney Plays The Race Card (TIME)

By Touré

Time, July 13, 2012

Mitt Romney went to the NAACP's National Convention planning to get booed. It was no mistake. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi told Bloomberg TV she believes "it was a calculated move on his

part to get booed at the NAACP convention." When Romney called the Affordable Care Act "Obamacare," he purposely used a term that would not work with the audience in the room. When he said, "If you want a President who'll make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him. Take a look!" he was virtually taunting them the way a pro wrestler who's playing a villain eggs on the crowd saying things he knows will elicit boos.

Why would he bother going to the NAACP convention to get booed? Because the real audience wasn't in the room. He wanted to be booed by that black audience so that white conservatives — who still don't see him as one of them — and white undecideds would see that he's unafraid to talk down to black people, to offend them, to be their villain, to make them boo. The result is that he comes off looking tough or gains sympathy. Either way, he gets a soundbite that will bounce through the cable news echo chamber and elicit an emotional reaction from white voters. Romney's performance wasn't intended to win more black votes, it was intended to help win more white votes.

Tim Alberta of the conservative-leaning National Journal read Romney's performance in heroic terms rarely applied to this candidate. "With the critical eyes of the political world resting squarely upon him, Romney marched defiantly into the lion's den and delivered a speech that was direct, assertive and dispassionate," Alberta wrote. So blacks, in this analogy, are ferocious wild animals who should be feared, only tameable by the most fearless of men, which, Romney supposedly proved he is by facing them down and talking tough.

Republicans don't always treat the NAACP this way. When George W. Bush went to the convention in 2000 as a candidate for president he said respectfully, "The party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln," addressing why the GOP is not loved by black voters while nodding to the party's greatest racial justice achievement. Bush said, "Racism, despite all our progress, still exists," and spoke of racial profiling by police. He spoke to the people in the room, not using them to help himself — just as Joe **Biden** did a day after Romney's speech.

Romney's campaign is built around the idea that as a successful businessman he understands how to shape the economy to aid business and create jobs that will get this country going again. Okay, so why not tailor that message to lay out a plan to combat the black unemployment rate, which is 14.4%, almost double the white unemployment rate? He has said nothing about that. His Mormon faith is central to who he is, so why not speak to the Mormon Church's history of excluding blacks from the priesthood until 1978 when Romney was 31?

Romney did tell the NAACP, "Always in both parties there have been men and women of integrity, decency and humility who have called injustice by its name. Someone who set a standard of conduct and made us better by their example. For me that man is my father." Romney's father, Michigan Governor George Romney, was unquestionably progressive on racial issues. He marched with civil rights activists in 1963, agitated for a civil rights plank in the GOP party platform in 1964, rejected the 1964 presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater because of Goldwater's regressive position on civil rights, and fought housing discrimination as Nixon's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. When Mitt Romney goes to the NAACP to play politics and use those black attendees as props meant to help amplify his message with white voters outside the room, he reminds us that he is not living up to the standard of integrity and decency set by his beloved father.

At NAACP, Biden Hits Romney Adviser Bork Over Civil Rights (WT)

By Dave Boyer

Washington Times, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** on Thursday attacked former Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, an adviser to GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, for plotting to roll back civil rights gains if Mr. Romney defeats President Obama in November.

"Just close your eyes and imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," Mr. **Biden** said at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's annual gathering in Houston. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as attorney general or the head of the Civil Rights Division."

Mr. Bork, a former solicitor general in the Nixon administration who was rejected by the Senate in 1987 for a seat on the Supreme Court, is a co-chairman of the Romney campaign's justice advisory committee.

The vice president said a Romney administration would make voting "harder, not easier," and added that the election "is a fight for the heart and soul of America."

The emphasis on control of the Justice Department drew an enthusiastic response from the delegates, who approved an "emergency resolution" Tuesday denouncing the House's bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. in criminal and civil contempt of Congress. The resolution called the votes against Mr. Holder, under fire from lawmakers over his handling of the botched "Fast and Furious" gunrunning operation, as a "travesty of justice."

The NAACP said the resolution was intended to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."

Mr. Romney spoke at the NAACP convention a day earlier, saying he is the candidate who will improve the economic condition of blacks in America. The audience booed Mr. Romney when he pledged to repeal "Obamacare," although many in the audience did give him a standing ovation when he finished his remarks.

Mr. **Biden**, by contrast, was greeted with cheers throughout his address, and often with calls of affirmation as he listed the differences between President Obama and the Republicans.

With black unemployment at 14.4 percent, the vice president didn't talk much about jobs, instead focusing on themes of economic fairness and opportunity.

"We see education as the single most important criteria for minority children," Mr. **Biden** said, claiming that education "doesn't play a central role" in Mr. Romney's agenda.

"It's on the back burner," he said.

Mr. Obama chose not to speak at the civil rights group's meeting this year. His campaign said he had a scheduling conflict. But the president had a light schedule at the White House on Thursday before embarking for campaign trips in Virginia on Friday and Saturday.

The president did send greetings to the convention through a taped video address that was played in the main hall.

In 2008, Mr. Obama received 95 percent of the black vote.

"I'm sorry I can't be here in person with you this year," Mr. Obama said. "I stand on your shoulders. I'm proud of all that you do."

Mr. Obama did speak to the group in 2009; first lady Michelle Obama addressed the conference last year.

The president is scheduled to speak to the National Urban League on July 25.

Mr. **Biden** outlined differences between the Obama administration and Mr. Romney's agenda on health care, energy and women's rights.

"I believe this election will come down to character, conviction and vision," Mr. **Biden** said. "And it will not surprise you — I don't think it's even a close call. So it's time for the NAACP to do what it's always done … To stand up. Make our case. Stand our ground. And make real our vision for America."

Mr. Romney told the convention that his policies would help "families of any color more than the policies and leadership of President Obama."

"I have no hidden agenda," Mr. Romney said. "If you want a president who will make things better in the African-American community, you are looking at him."

Biden To NAACP: Romney Might Support Racial Profiling, Take Away Voting Rights (WASHEX)

By Joel Gehrke

Washington Examiner, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** suggested that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was trying to re-fight the battles of the civil rights era, as he indicated that a Justice Department run by Romney might support racial profiling and support voter suppression.

"We, the president and I and Eric [Holder] and all of us, we see a future where those rights are expanded, not diminished; where racial profiling is a thing of the past; where access to the ballot is expanded, and unencumbered;where there are no distinctons made on the basis of race or gender in access to housing and lending; and so much more," **Biden** told the NAACP today. "Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

Moments later, he suggested that Romney opposed all those civil rights. "Just close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like." **Biden** told the crowd. "Imagine when his senior adviser on constitutional issues is Robert Bork? Imagine the recommendations for who is likely to be picked as Attorney General or head of the Civil Rights division?"

Biden To NAACP: 'Imagine What A Romney Justice Department Would Look Like' (CALLER)

By Tthew Boyle

Daily Caller, July 13, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden** pushed NAACP convention attendees to contrast President Barack Obama's Department of Justice with a potential Mitt Romney DOJ.

"Imagine what the Romney Justice Department will look like," **Biden** told the NAACP audience on Thursday. "Imagine when his senior advisor on constitutional issues is Robert Bork. Imagine those incredibly important positions of justice. Imagine, and I mean this, this to me is one of the most critical issues in this election, imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency."

The **Biden** comment likely sits well with NAACP members as, on Tuesday, the NAACP unanimously passed an "emergency resolution" calling the bipartisan votes to hold Attorney General Eric Holder in criminal and civil contempt of Congress a "travesty of justice." The resolution is meant for the NAACP to "express their outrage at the treatment of the first African-American and one of the best attorney generals in history."

As the resolution passed, Holder got rock-star treatment, walking around shaking the hands of many of those in attendance.

During his speech at the NAACP on Wednesday, Romney avoided justice issues to focus instead on the economy and education.

Romney hasn't said much on what his DOJ would look like if he wins the November election, but he has criticized Obama's DOJ, especially Holder. "There's not very much that Eric Holder does that I agree with," Romney said at a campaign event late in 2011 in New Hampshire. "I have to wonder how it is that the president continues to support him, and the answer must be the president agrees with him."

"Eric Holder would be long gone by the time I came around [as president of the United States]," he added.

Romney has called for Holder's resignation over Operation Fast and Furious, too. He joins 130 House members, eight U.S. senators and two sitting governors in demanding Holder's resignation over the scandal. (SEE ALSO: TheDC's complete Fast and Furious coverage)

"Either Mr. Holder himself should resign or the president should ask for his resignation or remove him," Romney said in early December 2011. "It's not acceptable for him to continue in that position given the fact that he has misled Congress and entirely botched the investigation of the Fast and Furious program."

Romney also supports voter ID laws — something Holder and Obama's administration vehemently oppose.

The former Massachusetts governor has also made Obama's decision to assert executive privilege over Fast and Furious documents a bit of a campaign issue lately. On Sean Hannity's radio program and on Neil Cavuto's Fox News Channel show this week, Romney responded to Obama's "transparency" attacks on him by pointing out how the president is concealing Fast and Furious documents.

Romney campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul didn't immediately respond to The Daily Caller's request for comment in response to **Biden**'s remarks.

It's All Politics: Biden Says It, So Obama Doesn't Have To (NPR)

By Liz Halloran

NPR, July 12, 2012

President Obama may have disappointed the NAACP by appearing only via brief video message Thursday at the civil rights group's annual gathering — especially after Mitt Romney had personally taken the stage a day earlier.

But sending in Vice President **Biden** to stir things up, just 24 hours after Romney was booed while delivering a conservative message meant to resonate beyond the walls of the Houston convention center, seemed to work out just fine for Obama.

Biden in recent days has offered up some of the Obama campaign's most pointed criticisms of the Republican challenger: "Mitt Romney wants you to show your papers, but he won't show us his," he told a Hispanic civil rights group on Tuesday, referring in one sound bite both to Romney's immigration stance and his refusal to make public several years' tax returns.

So **Biden** has the leeway to be more political, more incendiary than a sitting president.

Case in point:

The president, in Thursday's video message, served up generalities like this: "No matter who you are or what you look like, or where you come from, America is the place you can make it if you try."

The vice president, facing a raucously supportive crowd, served up red meat like this: "Imagine what the Supreme Court will look like after four years of a Romney presidency." (Earlier this week, **Biden** at

another event used the same line, but asked supporters to "imagine what it will look like for women with six [Justice Antonin] Scalias on the bench.")

We listened Thursday to **Biden**, who characterized the coming election as a "fight for the heart and soul of America," with an ear toward what he had to say that Obama, as president, likely couldn't, or maybe wouldn't say at such an event at this point in the campaign.

Here are some highlights:

On voting rights, in light of Republican-led efforts to pass state voter ID laws

"I want to remind everybody of one thing: Remember. Remember what [the NAACP], at its core, was all about. It was all about the franchise. It was about the right to vote. Because when you have the right to vote, you have the right to change things. Did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

On the Republican Party

"I remember working with Republicans — and, by the way, this ain't your father's Republican Party — remember working with Republicans on 'motor voter,' on expanding the franchise, on early voting, on voting by mail. They see a different future where voting is made harder, not easier."

On civil rights

"Close your eyes and imagine — imagine what the Romney Justice Department would look like. Imagine who he'd recommend to be the attorney general or head of the civil rights division."

Biden, long known for his verbosity, drew some of his own boos, and cries of "no" — but, surprisingly, not for going on too long, but for indicating he was about to wrap up.

As he exited the stage, the Stevie Wonder song "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" blared from the public address system. And, in what's likely a rare moment for **Biden**, he left behind an adoring audience that appeared to want more.

The Two-Way: Cheers For Biden At NAACP Convention As He Contrasts Obama And Romney (NPR)

By Korva Coleman

NPR, July 12, 2012

A day after Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke to the nation's oldest civil right organization, Vice President Joe **Biden** appeared at the NAACP's annual convention. He quickly tackled one issue that drew Romney sustained boos â€" the 2010 health care overhaul.

Biden appeared in place of President Obama, who made a brief videotaped address thanking the group for its work. He walked out to warm applause, and several of his remarks were interrupted by shouts of agreement.

When he mentioned what he sees as the benefits of the health care law, the shouts changed to roars of approval. **Biden** declared that 8 million black Americans now have health care insurance under the new law, and thanked Obama for his leadership.

Biden spelled out further differences between Obama's campaign and Romney's on health care, the environment, equal pay for women and education. He claimed Romney's tax reforms are skewed for the wealthy at the expense of domestic programs that help less affluent people. **Biden** asserted more than 2 million black Americans will see their taxes go up under the tax plan Romney is proposing.

As NPR's Liz Halloran reports, when Romney yesterday said President Obama blamed the rich for economic problems and contrasted his own efforts as helping the middle class: "The audience reaction? Crickets."

But **Biden**'s hugest response came on voter ID laws, a subject the civil rights group is keenly tracking. Romney did not address the matter yesterday. After discussing the NAACP's long history of fighting for African Americans' right to vote, **Biden** queried, "did you think we'd be fighting these battles again?"

Biden said ballot access should be "expanded and unencumbered". Then he recalled his years in the Senate, where he worked with the GOP on voting issues like motor voter, early voting and voting by mail. But times have changed, he said, adding: "This ain't your father's Republican party."

The vice president concluded by urging convention delegates to imagine a changed Justice Department under a President Romney. And he warned Romney would make substantial changes to the Supreme Court.

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS

Editorial: The Fed On The Spot (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

THE U.S. ECONOMY is in the doldrums, as June's disappointing employment figures showed. Europe and China, the world's other two economic engines, are also sputtering. Time for the Federal Reserve to administer another dose of monetary stimulus, to head off a potentially disastrous global downturn?

That's the advice of many experts, including the presidents of the Chicago, Boston and San Francisco Federal Reserve banks. The Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee holds its next policy-making meeting at the end of this month: Chairman Ben S. Bernanke will be under some pressure to heed the calls for a third round of "quantitative easing." His problem is that it's not clear whether that's the right course.

To be sure, the risk of inflation in the short run is minimal, as pro-QE3 economists argue. Yet it is also true that the economy is achieving paltry growth despite having absorbed a phenomenal amount of stimulus, fiscal and monetary, since the crisis hit in 2008. The annual federal deficit has averaged more than 9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over the past three years. It is on course to be 7 percent of GDP in fiscal 2012. The Fed has cut interest rates to near zero and purchased $2 trillion in mortgage-backed securities and Treasury debt, a figure equal to roughly 13 percent of GDP. And last month the Fed expanded its so-called "twist" program, announcing that it would hold down long-term interest rates by swapping an additional $267 billion in short-term notes for long-term bonds.

As Mr. Bernanke himself has said many times, these policy innovations, while necessary, also put the Fed in uncharted territory; the risks and benefits of the actions already taken, let alone those of further balance-sheet expansion, are hard to specify. The Fed may also need to save ammunition to help deal with a financial collapse in Europe.

If QE3 works at all, it would be by reducing the cost of investment capital and by boosting asset prices, so as to make consumers feel wealthier — and thus more free-spending. Yet with well over $1 trillion sitting on corporate balance sheets and mortgage rates at all-time lows, it's not clear that the economy's problem is a lack of cheap money. Rather, slow growth may reflect structural factors, such as the huge household debt burden, which is declining but still equal to 83.6 percent of GDP. Then there's the federal government's out-of-whack tax and entitlement policies, and the uncertainty they generate.

By effectively transferring much private and government debt onto its own balance sheet, the Fed bought time for the U.S. economy to rebalance under relatively benign conditions. Companies and households have used the time so far to deleverage significantly. More monetary easing now might buy the economy even more time to heal. But soon it will be government's turn to adjust; the Fed can prop up growth, not engineer a permanent escape from fiscal reality.

Editorial: Penn State's Awful Truths (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

ON THURSDAY — after seven months, 400 interviews and some 3.5 million documents — the results of the investigation into the Penn State sexual abuse scandal were finally released. The university's board of trustees was right to launch this inquest, led by Louis Freeh, the former FBI director and now a private investigator. A full-scale, public inquiry into the Jerry Sandusky scandal was the necessary first step toward rebuilding a fractured community.

In a news conference Thursday, Mr. Freeh condemned the university's leadership — including Joe Paterno, the school's legendary head football coach who died in January — for failing to protect the innocent children Mr. Sandusky assaulted. "Our most saddening and sobering finding," Mr. Freeh said, "is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims. The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children who Sandusky victimized."

It had become clear as the scandal unfolded that these men — Graham Spanier, Penn State's former president; Gary Schultz, former vice president; Tim Curley, former athletic director; and Mr. Paterno — avoided taking aggressive action even when they received reports of Mr. Sandusky's abuses. Mr. Schultz and Mr. Curley have been charged with perjury and failing to report what they knew. The Freeh investigation, however, sheds sickening light on the extent to which these men actively pursued a cover-up at the expense of Mr. Sandusky's victims.

Among the most remarkable revelations in the report is the role that Mr. Paterno played in the scandal. Although e-mails leaked late in the investigation revealed that the coach was influential in the group's decision not to report Mr. Sandusky after a 2001 incident, it appears that he also lied before a grand jury about whether he was aware of a 1998 incident involving Mr. Sandusky. As the investigation showed, Mr. Paterno was well aware of that incident and took no action, "even though Sandusky had been a key member of his coaching staff for almost 30 years and had an office just steps away from Mr. Paterno's."

Unfortunately, that is far from the investigation's worst discovery. As if allowing an adult to continue sexually abusing children for more than a decade wasn't bad enough, these officials somehow managed to put Mr. Sandusky's victims at even greater risk. In 2001, for instance, after an assistant reported seeing Mr. Sandusky in the shower sexually assaulting a boy, the only person these men alerted was Mr. Sandusky himself, the only one who knew the boy's identity. That Penn State's administrators and coaches would actively engage in a cover-up is unconscionable, but their "striking lack of empathy" for the victims is horrifying.

In the end, the root of the problem seems to be what the report calls Penn State's "culture of reverence for the football program that is ingrained at all levels of the campus community." This culture is ultimately what silenced janitors from reporting what they witnessed and university officials from fulfilling their obvious moral obligation to the children Mr. Sandusky attacked. The Freeh investigation should

serve as a red flag for any similar environment in which the powerful are unquestioned and protected, all for the sake of a game.

Editorial: D.C. Council Overreaches — Again — Into School Priorities (WP)

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

EVER SINCE RESPONSIBILITY for D.C. schools was switched to the mayor, D.C. Council members have struggled with what role they have to play. When Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) chaired the council, the tendency was to hector and second-guess then-chancellor Michelle A. Rhee. Former council chairman Kwame R. Brown (D) flitted from issue to issue, trying to distract attention from the legal troubles that eventually forced his resignation. Now comes newly named chairman Phil Mendelson (D-At Large), and it's not a good sign that one of his first moves is to call a hearing to set educational priorities — a hearing from which Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson is excluded.

The committee of the whole, the council's de facto education committee, will meet to "receive testimony regarding the important issues confronting public education" so as to help establish priorities. We would assume it would be important to include in that conversation the professionals charged with educational policy, but a spokeswoman for Mr. Mendelson told us the chancellor wasn't invited because the aim was to hear the public's complaints and comments about the school system. If past hearings are any indication, expect a gripe session in which individual problems — "My child got an unfair report card," "I got a bad teacher evaluation" — will be trotted out.

Mr. Mendelson, selected by his colleagues to replace Mr. Brown, pending November's special election for council chairman, has made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the schools. "I'm disappointed with the pace of reform," he told WAMU's Kojo Nnamdi last month shortly after taking over the council's leadership. Mr. Mendelson, who voted against the 2007 takeover of schools engineered by then-mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D), said, "What we've seen is a lot of controversy regarding test results and still an enormous disparity between the very good schools and the rest of the school system. So I think there's a lot more work to be done."

We think Mr. Mendelson should give more credit to the progress that has occurred with reforms by Ms. Rhee and Ms. Henderson. But there is no denying that he is right about the poor quality of education still being received by too many students. Nor will he get any argument from Ms. Henderson, who is clearheaded about the problems; she has laid out an ambitious agenda for school improvement in a five-year strategic plan that, to our mind, should be the starting point for any discussion of education priorities.

Instead of trying to set itself up as a newly constituted school board, interested only in litigating individual complaints or looking out for parochial ward interests, the council should help establish broad priorities, ensure that money is well spent and hold school officials accountable for results.

Column: Romney Can Gain Upper Hand On Economic Policy By Focusing On Class (WP)

By Michael Gerson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

On economic policy, Barack Obama has left Mitt Romney an opening. The president has responded to a severe, continuing labor market slump with a four-year-old, marginally counterproductive tax increase proposal. His current economic agenda has little relevance to anything except his current political requirements: picking a political fight on tax-code equity to distract attention from his economic stewardship. It is the triumph of tactics and the surrender of seriousness.

In response, Romney put a single, characteristically hesitant toe through the opening. His NAACP speech Wednesday featured rich themes of promoting "equal opportunity," building "human capital" and lifting people from poverty. But Romney's supporting policies — on health care, energy, education reform — were resolutely untailored and uncreative.

"I am going to give the same message to the NAACP," Romney said, "that I give across the country." Apparently convinced that even a generic Republican can defeat President Obama, Romney seems intent on running as one.

To fill out an opportunity agenda, the Romney campaign might start by perusing a new report by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts, which offers some challenging instruction across the political spectrum.

The Pew report analyzes how the incomes of families today compare to those of their parents' generation. The good news: On every rung of the economic ladder, median income has gone up — not equally, but significantly. Even among the bottom 20 percent, income rose 74 percent between the two generations. Liberals need to accommodate the fact that the poor have not gotten poorer. The benefits of economic growth have been shared.

But relative mobility — the chance of rising to a higher income quintile — is stalled, particularly near the bottom. Even though many earn a bit more than their parents did, they aren't moving up the income ladder. About 36 percent of families have actually fallen behind in relative terms, which drags America's overall level of mobility to below that of many European countries.

Conservatives must take seriously that America's poor are starting lower and rising less easily than in other developed nations — a problem often related to educational attainment and family structure. Income is not the only thing that matters. In the absence of mobility, inequality hardens into class division. The American ideal requires a realistic prospect of turning ability into achievement.

Witnessing a serious political discussion on the topic of mobility would require a plane ticket to London. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's recent speech to the Sutton Trust indicted an economic system characterized by "entitlement at one end and exclusion at the other" and touted a series of interesting policies to close the educational attainment gap between rich and poor.

Labor Party leader Ed Miliband countered, in typical Labor fashion, that leveling equality is more important than opportunity. Along the way, Miliband delivered this trans-Atlantic taunt: "If you want the American Dream — go to Finland."

Clegg bluntly raises the issue of social class, including his own — hanging a lantern on his privileged, Cambridge-educated background. "I know some people will say that I should keep quiet about social mobility," he says. "That my birth, my education and my opportunities mean I have no right to speak up. I couldn't disagree more. If people who've benefited from the system don't speak up, we'll never get anywhere. . . . I was lucky. But it shouldn't be a question of luck."

The topic of class comes more naturally to British than to American politicians. But the United States has a class problem, as does Romney. And Romney could help himself by addressing both.

As a governing matter, encouraging social mobility could eventually be a unifying, bipartisan goal. As a political matter, it would provide Romney a particular advantage. Obama's message is now in full Labor Party mode: Soak the rich. But the smartest Republican response is not to defend the rich. It is to defend a fluid society in which everyone has the possibility of becoming richer. Economic redistribution is not the answer, but economic growth is not sufficient, either. Upward mobility requires the broad diffusion of skills and social capital.

Romney, while disarmingly recognizing his own advantages, should demonstrate some market-oriented innovation in extending advantages to others: promoting early-childhood education, high school completion, college attendance and graduation, parenting skills and wealth-building among the disadvantaged. It would be a powerful political message, addressing a serious need, in a manner consistent with conservative ideals.

Column: The Islamist Ascendancy (WP)

By Charles Krauthammer

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Post-revolutionary Libya appears to have elected a relatively moderate pro-Western government. Good news, but tentative because Libya is less a country than an oil well with a long beach and myriad tribes. Popular allegiance to a central national authority is weak. Yet even if the government of Mahmoud Jibril is able to rein in the militias and establish a functioning democracy, it will be the Arab Spring exception. Consider:

Tunisia and Morocco, the most Westernized of all Arab countries, elected Islamist governments. Moderate, to be sure, but Islamist still. Egypt, the largest and most influential, has experienced an Islamist sweep. The Muslim Brotherhood didn't just win the presidency. It won nearly half the seats in parliament, while more openly radical Islamists won 25 percent. Combined, they command more than 70 percent of parliament — enough to control the writing of a constitution (which is why the generals hastily dissolved parliament).

As for Syria, if and when Bashar al-Assad falls, the Brotherhood will almost certainly inherit power. Jordan could well be next. And the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing (Hamas) already controls Gaza.

What does this mean? That the Arab Spring is a misnomer. This is an Islamist ascendancy, likely to dominate Arab politics for a generation.

It constitutes the third stage of modern Arab political history. Stage I was the semicolonial-monarchic rule, dominated by Britain and France, of the first half of the 20th century. Stage II was the Arab nationalist era — secular, socialist, anti-colonial and anti-clerical — ushered in by the 1952 Free Officers Revolt in Egypt.

Its vehicle was military dictatorship, and Gamal Nasser led the way. He raised the flag of pan-Arabism, going so far as changing Egypt's name to the United Arab Republic and merging his country with Syria in 1958. That absurd experiment — it lasted exactly three years — was to have been the beginning of a grand Arab unification, which, of course, never came. Nasser also fiercely persecuted Islamists — as did his nationalist successors, down to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and the Baathists, Iraqi (Saddam Hussein) and Syrian (the Assads) — as the reactionary antithesis to Arab modernism.

But the self-styled modernism of the Arab-nationalist dictators proved to be a dismal failure. It produced dysfunctional, semi-socialist, bureaucratic, corrupt regimes that left the citizenry (except where papered over by oil bounties) mired in poverty, indignity and repression.

Hence the Arab Spring, serial uprisings that spread east from Tunisia in early 2011. Many Westerners naively believed the future belonged to the hip, secular, tweeting kids of Tahrir Square. Alas, this sliver of Westernization was no match for the highly organized, widely supported, politically serious Islamists who effortlessly swept them aside in national elections.

This was not a Facebook revolution but the beginning of an Islamist one. Amid the ruins of secular nationalist pan-Arabism, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to solve the conundrum of Arab stagnation and marginality. "Islam is the answer," it preached and carried the day.

But what kind of political Islam? On that depends the future. The moderate Turkish version or the radical Iranian one?

To be sure, Recep Erdogan's Turkey is no paragon. The increasingly authoritarian Erdogan has broken the military, neutered the judiciary and persecuted the press. There are more journalists in prison in Turkey than in China. Nonetheless, for now, Turkey remains relatively pro-Western (though unreliably so) and relatively democratic (compared to its Islamic neighborhood).

For now, the new Islamist ascendancy in Arab lands has taken on the more benign Turkish aspect. Inherently so in Morocco and Tunisia; by external constraint in Egypt, where the military sees itself as guardian of the secular state, precisely as did Turkey's military in the 80 years from Ataturk to Erdogan.

Genuinely democratic rule may yet come to Arab lands. Radical Islam is the answer to nothing, as demonstrated by the repression, social backwardness and civil strife of Taliban Afghanistan, Islamist Sudan and clerical Iran.

As for moderate Islamism, if it eventually radicalizes, it too will fail and bring on yet another future Arab Spring where democracy might actually be the answer (as it likely would have been in Iran, had the mullahs not savagely crushed the Green Revolution). Or it might adapt to modernity, accept the alternation of power with secularists and thus achieve by evolution an authentic Arab-Islamic democratic norm.

Perhaps. The only thing we can be sure of today, however, is that Arab nationalism is dead and Islamism is its successor. This is what the Arab Spring has wrought. The beginning of wisdom is facing that difficult reality.

letters@charleskrauthammer.com

Column: Joe Paterno's Shame (WP)

By Eugene Robinson

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Outside the Penn State football stadium stands a statue of legendary coach Joe Paterno, his arm raised in victory. Right next to it, university officials should erect another figure in bronze: a young boy crying out in anguish and being coldly ignored.

Penn State's Board of Trustees commissioned former FBI director Louis Freeh to investigate how child molester Jerry Sandusky — for years one of Paterno's most trusted and loyal assistants — could have committed his awful crimes under the noses of university officials. The answer is simple and shocking: Those officials simply looked the other way.

"The most saddening finding by the Special Investigative Counsel is the total and consistent disregard by the most senior leaders at Penn State for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims," the report states. "Four of the most powerful people at The Pennsylvania State University . . . failed to protect against a child sexual predator harming children for over a decade."

Those four powerful officials include Paterno, who died earlier this year of lung cancer. Almost literally a sainted figure in the world of big-time, big-money college sports, Paterno became aware of seriously inappropriate behavior by Sandusky with young boys at least 14 years ago, according to Freeh's report. Paterno's inaction was shameful.

Most damning is Freeh's finding that in 2001, after an assistant coach saw Sandusky sexually assaulting a young boy in the showers of a Penn State locker room, an intervention by Paterno was apparently instrumental in convincing university officials to sweep the incident under the rug.

The other three men allegedly involved in the cover-up — former athletic director Tim Curley and former vice president Gary Schultz, both of whom face perjury charges, and former university president Graham Spanier — had decided to notify state child-welfare officials, according to Freeh, who had access to private e-mails and notes.

But before any action was taken, Curley wrote to Schultz and Spanier that "after giving it more thought and talking it over with Joe," he had decided he would be more "comfortable" meeting with Sandusky, counseling him to get professional help and telling him "his guests are not permitted to use our facilities."

Note the word "guests," which may be one of the most chilling euphemisms I've ever heard.

University officials didn't even follow through on the inadequate response of cutting off Sandusky's access to Penn State facilities. According to Freeh's report, Sandusky "was allowed to have a key for, and continued to work out in" the athletic complex until November of last year. "If university leaders had not granted Sandusky full use of Penn State's football facilities and supported his ways to 'work with young people through Penn State,' sexual assaults of several young boys on the Penn State campus might have been prevented."

It goes without saying that Paterno's legacy is forever tarnished. He was head coach at Penn State for 46 years until being fired last year after Sandusky was arrested and the charges against him made public. Paterno's 409 wins are the most of any NCAA Division I coach. His Nittany Lions won two national championships and made 37 bowl appearances. He was especially proud of his football program's record as a model: Penn State avoided the recruiting scandals that involved so many other schools with top-ranked athletic programs, and his football players graduated at an admirable rate.

In a letter he wrote before his death, apparently intended as an op-ed piece, Paterno argued that whatever people might think of his actions in the Sandusky matter, "this is not a football scandal."

But that's precisely what it is.

Imagine that an assistant coach of, say, the chess team were caught showering with an 11-year-old boy, as Sandusky was in 1998. Would that chess coach still be around three years later? If he were caught in the act of abusing another young boy in 2001, would the top officials of the university dither and fret for days — without making the slightest attempt to identify and locate the victim? Would the head chess coach be able to convince his superiors that there was no need to call state welfare officials, let alone the police?

The truth is that Joe Paterno was more powerful at Penn State than any athletic director, more powerful even than the university's president. And the reputation of the football program was more important than the safety and well-being of innocent young boys.

eugenerobinson@washpost.com

Column: Misdiagnosing Romney's Campaign (WP)

By E.J. Dionne Jr.

Washington Post, July 12, 2012

Could it be that Mitt Romney is correct from a strategic point of view to tell us little about what he'd do as president?

There are, of course, excellent civic reasons for a candidate to say where he or she would lead the country. But the debate raging right now in Republican circles is about politics, not civics. Conservatives, including the editors of the Wall Street Journal's canonical editorial page, are telling Romney that his "insular staff and strategy . . . are slowly squandering an historic opportunity." In the Weekly Standard, William Kristol fumed: "Is it too much to ask Mitt Romney to get off autopilot and actually think about the race he's running?"

There are grounds for such skepticism. This week's Washington Post/ABC News poll found the race dead even but gave President Obama a 12-point advantage among registered voters on the matter of which candidate has a clearer plan for dealing with the economy. After several months of disappointing jobs numbers, Romney is behind Obama in other national surveys and tends to lag in the swing states.

Far be it from me to get in the way of internecine Republican bickering, but Romney's GOP critics are wrong in seeing his specifics-lite approach as his core problem. His difficulties lie elsewhere.

A defense of Romney's minimalism starts with the matter of timing. The best rationale I've heard for the current Romney strategy came from former U.S. representative Vin Weber, a Romney adviser who noted in an interview that the very first question voters have to answer in a reelection race is whether there is "a compelling reason to remove the incumbent from office."

"There's a broader indictment of the incumbent that's necessary before the country decides to replace him," Weber argued. Only when a majority has reached this decision can a challenger begin to present himself as a plausible alternative. Only then is the country prepared to listen.

Viewed this way, the relentlessly negative approach of the Romney campaign so far (summarized in top adviser Stuart Stevens's favorite slogan, "Obama isn't working") is the essential first step toward opening the electorate to the idea of changing leadership. If Romney wins, Weber said, hindsight might suggest that this tipping point was reached this month with the latest jobs report.

Moreover, those calling on Romney to be more specific tend to be staunch conservatives who are absolutely convinced that the country would respond to a full-throated right-of-center agenda. Here, they are allowing their philosophical commitments to cloud their political judgment.

Romney's economic recovery strategy is rooted in the same old conservative ideas that have been around for more than 30 years: lower taxes on the wealthy and economic deregulation. These nostrums are wildly popular with the Republican base — especially very rich donors — but not with swing voters. More details about a largely unpopular program would not do Romney much good. Conservatives are forever fond of pointing back to Ronald Reagan for having run a highly principled campaign in 1980. But Reagan's most effective line was the decidedly non-ideological question: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" That is the Romney campaign in a nutshell.

Now to the drawbacks with the Romney campaign's theory. Operatives in both parties are surprised that Obama has been allowed to tell a negative story about Romney that is moving poll numbers without any competition from positive ads building Romney up. Romney could be rendered unacceptable before he has a chance to make his case.

And David Winston, a Republican pollster, has asked one of the campaign's most interesting survey questions. He found that only 32 percent of voters said that "the economy is not getting better at all." At the other end, 26 percent thought it was getting better at an "acceptable" rate. Fully 40 percent said "the economy is getting better, but the rate of progress is still unacceptable."

Romney's argument is aimed squarely at the third of the electorate that feels the economy is in disastrous shape. Obama's messaging, on the other hand, is directed toward those "better but not good

enough" voters — and it is members of this group who will decide the election. The problem with Romney's campaign thus lies less in his lack of policy beef than in his failure to talk enough to the right voters. A message of economic pessimism will keep Romney close. But barring another major downturn, it won't close the deal.

Op-Ed: Obamacare Is An Unhealthy Prescription (WP)

By Scott Walker

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Scott Walker, a Republican, is the governor of Wisconsin.

Since the Supreme Court upheld President Obama's health-care mandate, there has been exhaustive discussion about the philosophical basis of this federal law. As Election Day approaches, debate will surely grow about the proper role of our federal government.

But while much attention has focused on Congress's intention to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act, too few are studying the law's practical impact. The best place to see the effects of the law is in our nation's laboratories, the states. Although the Supreme Court has ruled on the constitutionality of the act, Wisconsin shows that it is bad policy.

The budget I signed into law last year increased state taxpayer spending on Medicaid by $1.2 billion in our biennial budget, which works out to be one of the largest annual increases in the country. While many states slashed Medicaid funding to deal with budget deficits, we made the biggest investment in the program in Wisconsin's history.

By putting in place the long-term structural changes needed to make our budget sustainable, we ensured that those who truly need assistance would continue to have access to affordable and quality health care well into the future.

The good news is that responsible budgeting has put our state in a fairly unique position: Nearly 91 percent of Wisconsin residents have health insurance. According to the latest nationally available data, only three states have higher rates of coverage.

The bad news is that, from a practical standpoint, Obamacare will devastate Wisconsin. An actuarial study commissioned by my predecessor, a Democrat, and completed last year found that if Obamacare is implemented in Wisconsin:

? 100,000 people will be dropped by their employer-sponsored health insurance;

?59 percent of people who buy their own health insurance will experience an average premium increase of 31 percent;

?150,000 people will stop buying health insurance in the private sector and will instead become dependent on the government and taxpayers;

?Between 2014 and 2019, Obamacare could cost Wisconsin taxpayers $1.12 billion; after all federal aid and tax credits are applied, the state's portion of the bill will be $433 million; and

?Approximately 122,000 parents, caretakers and pregnant women with an income of more than 133 percent of the federal poverty level will no longer be eligible for Medicaid.

It's important to go beyond these facts and understand what they really mean for those of us who live in the Badger State. Young people will be hit hard with premium increases. Those between 19 and 29 years old who have individual insurance will experience an average premium increase of $1,631 per year. A family of four that does not qualify for a subsidy can expect a 28 percentincrease — from $8,528 to

$10,912. For those who are covered by the small-employer group market, the average premium increase will be 15 percent.

These are just the law's effects on individuals. There are also statewide implications. In Wisconsin, 46 percent of residents who would receive assistance through Obamacare would have already had insurance coverage. That would result in taxpayers spending millions of dollars without providing new coverage.

The law has also raised serious philosophical questions: Should the federal government force people to buy a product? What is the proper relationship between federal and state governments?

Even setting aside those legitimate issues, one practical concern remains. I look at the effects that full implementation would have on my state, and I can't help but conclude that Obamacare punishes Wisconsin for budgeting responsibly and providing access to affordable and quality health care. It punishes young people, those who have responsibly purchased individual insurance, employers and employees of small businesses.

In Wisconsin, the data show that Obamacare will increase the cost of health care for most residents. That is not a prescription for positive change. Other states will face similar situations. We can do better.

Overall our federal government should be working to replicate the successes of states like Wisconsin — particularly focusing on those with high rates of coverage. And from a practical standpoint, the federal government should give Medicaid block grants to states. This would allow states to maximize the efficient use of tax dollars and increase private-sector competition while still providing care for those in need.

Increasing access to health care won't come through mandates, taxes or penalties. Truly improving access for families will require costs to go down. Unfortunately, Obamacare moves in the opposite direction by making insurance more expensive.

Op-Ed: Preparing For The Next Outage (WP)

By Newt Gingrich

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Newt Gingrich, a former speaker of the House and a Republican candidate for president, lives in McLean with his wife, Callista.

Callista and I live in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, and, like many in the region, we lost power in the recent storms. The blackout, combined with a record heat wave, made homes nearly uninhabitable. The storm and heat were this region's greater leveler: Rich or poor, urban or suburban, six-figure income or just barely getting by, we were all cast on the same strange shores.

Without power, the comforts of home become worthless. You sit in the sweltering heat, realizing you are living in a box that, without electricity, is a trap. You pray for the "juice" to return before your groceries go bad. You either make do in the heat or find refuge with friends who have electricity.

I write this now because of my concern for national security and our power grid, which are susceptible to doomsday-level damage if hit by an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) strike or a major solar storm.

It is almost unthinkable, yet possible, that an enemy could detonate a nuclear weapon over the atmosphere over the continental United States, triggering an electromagnetic pulse. This would short-circuit our power grid, taking power off-line for months, perhaps even years.

A similar crisis could be sparked by a solar storm like the Carrington Event of 1859, a type of geomagnetic disturbance that occurs about every 75 years. Statistically, we are long overdue for such a

storm. There have been some recent examples of the potential impact, such as the millions in Quebec who lost power for several hours in 1989 as a result of a space storm.

Our nation's communications infrastructure, modes of transportation and many fundamentals of survival all rely on a power grid that is vulnerable. The current system lacks safety features needed to prevent damage to critical electrical infrastructure.

In 2009, my friend — and sometimes co-author — William R. Forstchen published a truly frightening book, "One Second After." (I wrote the foreword.) The story is fiction but based on hard facts. It is a cautionary tale about the threat of EMP strikes and major solar storms, known as coronal mass ejections.

William turned to bipartisan congressional studies published in 2004 and 2008 and interviewed many experts. His book made the New York Times bestseller list and helped to trigger what some call the "prepper" movement.

During the recent power outage, William and I talked about what would have happened if this had been an EMP attack or a strong solar storm.

Suppose that, rather than being a temporary disruption in our lives, the power outage lasted weeks or months, or even years. Consider what state all of us, from the richest to the poorest, would be in if we were still literally in the dark. Millions could be trapped in houses or apartments that were never designed for this climate without air conditioning. No cool air; months with no food shipments and every pharmacy shut down — no refills for life-sustaining medications.

In a crisis, many in the Washington area could not even flee because the impact of an EMP attack would disable most cars and public transportation. The water supply would go dry without electricity to pump water from rivers and wells.

Imagine if you could find a bottle of potable water for, say, your children. How much would you pay? What would you pay with if every bank and ATM were shut down?

Public safety? Forget it. No power means no police cars, no communications and no 911 emergency service. For criminals, it would be time to run rampant.

Could such a scenario be in our nation's future? It might, if we do not learn from this experience. Preparation begins with demanding that our governments — local, state and federal — prepare as well.

The technology exists to harden at least part of the national electric grid against an EMP attack or major solar storm. Two years ago, in a time of political deadlock, the House approved the Grid Reliability and Infrastructure Defense Act with bipartisan support. It would put in place protections such as fortified bunkers for the national power grid — but this effort stalled in the Senate.

I challenge the president and Congress to picture what it would be like if the power in the nation's capital were still off — or, far worse, if the entire nation were without power for months.

I asked William what he thought of the recent outage. He said: "Maybe it will wake up those on Capitol Hill and the White House that we just had a taste of a nightmare future, if we do not prepare now."

I second his motion.

The region's power has been restored. The air conditioning hums, and our food and medicines are safe. We think life is back to normal. But what if this had been more than a brief interruption?

Op-Ed: Medicine That Is More Placebo Than Cure (WP)

By Roger Bate

Washington Post, July 13, 2012

Roger Bate is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of "Phake: The Deadly World of Falsified and Substandard Medicines." His research is published in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.

Some drugs that the World Health Organization (WHO) has approved for distribution to the world's poor are of inferior quality — shoddy products that hurt people who urgently need medicine — and some of the manufacturers, predominantly Chinese and Indian firms, may be knowingly producing them. This is the conclusion of my research teams' studies, published this week in the journal Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine.

We purchased, off the shelf from local pharmacies, about 2,600 drugs to treat malaria, tuberculosis and bacterial infections in low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, Turkey, India and China. We then tested these drugs to see how much active pharmaceutical ingredient — the chemical that performs the drug's lifesaving function — they contained.

Drugs made by Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indian manufacturers performed quite badly — sometimes a fifth of them failed basic quality-control tests. Most worryingly, more than 15 percent of the Chinese drugs approved by the WHO failed to include adequate amounts of active pharmaceutical ingredient.

To add insult to injury, some of the drugs we tested had been bought through Western donor programs, funded by taxpayers, and steered through aid programs to African markets.

Some of these drugs were likely outright fakes. Others were real but badly manufactured, perhaps to cut corners.

How do we know? Poor-quality drugs can have either too little or too much of the active pharmaceutical ingredient. We tested many different batches of the same drug produced by the same manufacturer and found that a few were consistently under-dosed. We didn't find any drugs with too much of the active ingredient.

By exposing people to insufficient doses of the active ingredient, the drugs may also accelerate drug resistance and cause tremendous harm to whole populations in the long run. Here's how:

When a person takes a drug containing too little of the active ingredient, some of the parasites or bacteria are killed. But the strongest germs survive, mutating and evolving into more resilient strains. Drug resistance is already making it difficult — in rare cases, impossible — to treat malaria and tuberculosis, diseases that kill millions of people each year. And our governments, which spend billions on aid programs designed to stop them, may inadvertently be causing harm by increasing access to substandard treatments.

To be clear, these donors did not knowingly buy bad medicine. As a rule, they purchase only drugs approved by a respected regulator, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or the WHO. But testing the actual drugs sold on the market, as we did in our studies, is a rare exercise.

In the United States, the President's Malaria Initiative conducts some testing, but many other donors don't. Bernard Nahlen, deputy coordinator of the initiative, said it had bought drugs for distribution but sent them back to the manufacturers because of quality issues. "There need to be checkpoints throughout that system," he said.

However, regulators in poor countries such as Angola or Kenya — where we found many substandard drugs — have few resources to pick up the slack.

The reality is that once a manufacturer gets the green light to sell its drugs in Africa — sometimes through the lucrative donor programs — there are often no consequences for failing to maintain a high standard of quality.

The Chinese and Indian manufacturers making substandard drugs are often significant producers, certainly capable of making high-quality products — they did so to obtain WHO approval. But given available, albeit limited, data, they are not doing so consistently.

With little or no oversight, these companies may be cutting corners in the manufacturing process — or worse, watering down the active ingredient in their drugs, perhaps when the price of the raw material spikes and supply becomes harder to obtain. The drug most often with too low a dose in our samplings, for instance, involved the hard-to-get-artemisinin, a key antimalarial ingredient.

The WHO has launched an investigation into the product failures we've reported, but it lacks the resources to do much more. Even if Beijing tries to bring the hammer down on its lucrative pharmaceutical industry, it is unlikely to properly address the corner-cutting found in so much of Chinese production. So the burden must fall on Western governments. After all, their citizens' tax dollars — and the lives of millions they purport to help — are on the line.

Donor governments should urgently step up post-market surveillance and increase penalties for repeat offenders. If three product failures occur from the same manufacturer in a given year, that company should lose approval status with the WHO — and across all of its registered products.

If donor governments took drug quality as seriously in Africa as they do in their own countries, they could save lives and increase the impact of the public health programs taxpayers fund.

Editorial: Penn State's Part (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

The factual conclusions of the investigation of Pennsylvania State University's cover-up of serial sex crimes by one of its former football coaches are searing enough: the university's leaders did nothing for nearly a decade and a half — from the late-1990s until just recently — while a predator trawled for children in their midst, using the school's football program as a lure. Worse than that, the report says, the school's leaders worked diligently to conceal significant facts about the case from the authorities, the board of trustees, the university community and the broader public.

But the exhaustive investigation by Louis J. Freeh, a former federal judge and F.B.I. director, goes much further. It shows how slavish devotion to some institutional imperative can trump everything, including the law, basic human decency and the bedrock obligation we all have to protect defenseless children from harm. At Penn State, the imperative was protecting a storied football program and its legendary coach. In another huge institution betraying children under its protection, the Roman Catholic Church, it was the sanctity of the priesthood.

Last month, Jerry Sandusky, a former assistant football coach at Penn State, was convicted of sexually assaulting 10 boys over a period of many years. All of the boys had come from disadvantaged homes and had been drawn to Mr. Sandusky because of his access to the football program, which dominates society in central Pennsylvania.

Penn State fired its longtime president, Graham Spanier, and head football coach, Joe Paterno, who died in January before Mr. Freeh's investigators could speak with him. Criminal charges are still pending against Gary Schultz, who was in charge of campus police, and Tim Curley, who was athletic director at the time. The seven-and-a-half-month investigation, which involved more than 400 interviews and 3.5

million documents, described a disturbing pattern of communication among the four leaders dating as far back as 1998, when Mr. Sandusky had inappropriate contact with an 11-year-old boy in the showers at the football building on campus.

The victim's mother reported that to the campus police. Mr. Schultz reported an investigation to Mr. Spanier and Mr. Curley. Mr. Schultz, who appears to have understood that a crime may have been committed, wrote in his confidential notes at the time that Mr. Sandusky's behavior was "at best inappropriate" and at "worst sexual improprieties," further noting concern about "other children." The district attorney declined to bring charges, even after Mr. Sandusky admitted that he had showered with the boy and "had done this with other children in the past."

Mr. Sandusky was allowed to continue coaching and received a generous retirement package the following year. This included an unusual "emeritus" rank, which carried several privileges, including access to university recreational facilities. In 1999, he is said to have assaulted another young victim at the Alamo Bowl in Texas.

A year later, in 2000, the report says a janitor saw him assaulting a child in the football building shower but failed to report it out of fear that he would be fired, not an irrational fear. In 2001, the pattern repeated itself and a graduate assistant, Mike McQueary, witnessed another assault on a boy in the showers. He reported it to Mr. Paterno, who failed to call the police.

According to the Freeh report, Mr. Spanier, Mr. Curley and Mr. Schultz then concocted a plan that involved encouraging Mr. Sandusky to seek professional help and barring him from bringing children alone to the football building. (They incongruously described this as "humane.") Later that same year, Mr. Sandusky is said to have assaulted yet another victim in the football building showers.

As Mr. Freeh noted on Thursday: "The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children Sandusky victimized." He said they "never demonstrated, through actions or words, any concern for the safety and well-being of Sandusky's victims" until after he was arrested in 2011.

Penn State's leaders bear most of the blame for giving the university's imprimatur to the body-and-soul-damaging abuse that Mr. Sandusky committed. But the report shows that the entire university system — the police, the trustees, the athletic department — failed at just about every level. As the assaults were taking place in 2001, for example, Penn State was out of compliance with the federal Clery Act of 1990, which requires the college to compile and report crime statistics related to specific offenses, including sexual offenses. The university's Clery Act policy was still in draft form in 2011 and had never been implemented.

The Freeh report lays out more than 100 recommendations for what the university needs to do to prevent anything like this from happening again — essentially requiring the university to rebuild its leadership system from the ground up. There should also be substantial penalties imposed under the Clery Act and state law. Laws without consequence are not laws at all.

Editorial: The Folly Of Sudan And South Sudan (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

When South Sudan declared independence from Sudan one year ago, it was well understood that the struggle to build a functioning new state would be long and hard. What was not understood was how much both countries would do to sabotage each other — and themselves — in a destructive game of cross-border attacks and economic showdowns.

With independence, South Sudan inherited most of the former country's oil fields. But South Sudan is landlocked and Sudan controls the pipeline needed to get that oil — the lifeblood for both governments — to market. In January, South Sudan shut down oil production in a dispute with Sudan over how much it should pay to transport its crude oil through Sudan's pipeline.

In the months since, the two countries still have not agreed on a formula to share oil profits and each seems to be waiting for the other to blink — a fool's game if there ever was one. South Sudan's economy was weak to begin with, and Sudan's is now in free fall. Hunger is getting worse in both places, and so is political instability.

Deprived of oil income, Sudan last month announced that it could no longer subsidize gas, sending prices for fuel and other goods soaring. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is having trouble paying his army. And over the past few weeks, thousands of protesters have demonstrated against the government, prompting a crackdown.

In South Sudan, the government has begun to get tougher about collecting income taxes to finance basic services. People are understandably reluctant to pay when the government is known for rampant mismanagement and corruption. President Salva Kiir recently urged officials to return $4 billion in "stolen" government money. Officials also suggested that any budget shortfall would be filled by international donors. So far, that doesn't seem to be happening, and shouldn't. South Sudan, along with Sudan, created this crisis, and they have the means to fix it.

The two sides fought a civil war that killed more than two million people before a peace deal in 2005. In the past year, they barely avoided a return to all-out conflict. Violence continues in Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, a rebel-held area where the Khartoum government is trying to bomb and starve the people into submission. Thousands have been displaced.

In April, South Sudan's army occupied an oil-producing region claimed by Sudan and brought the countries close to a new war. South Sudan backed off after the United Nations threatened sanctions.

The joy that accompanied South Sudan's hard-won freedom has faded. The United States and other countries that advocated independence need to keep working with both sides to resolve disputes over oil, borders and protections for minorities. There's no changing the reality that these two nations are mutually dependent, now and long into the future.

Editorial: Tammy Duckworth's Rival (NYT)

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Joe Walsh is a freshman congressman from Illinois, a Tea Party Republican who has a reputation for saying outrageous things very loudly. If you see the videos of him yelling at constituents and interviewers who dare to disagree with him, you may conclude that he is best ignored.

But then he started attacking his Democratic opponent, Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat who also happens to be a National Guard helicopter pilot who lost her legs and the use of her right arm when she was shot down in Iraq. "Female, wounded veteran ... ehhh," Mr. Walsh told Politico. "She is nothing more than a handpicked Washington bureaucrat."

Mr. Walsh could have dropped it there but didn't, and, in recent videos, he can be seen mocking Ms. Duckworth and belittling her sacrifice again. "Now I'm running against a woman who, my God, that's all she talks about," he said in a town-hall meeting on July 1. "Our true heroes, it's the last thing in the world they talk about."

Mr. Walsh later said his point was simply that Ms. Duckworth has been avoiding the issues. But the fixation on his opponent's war record seems to be Mr. Walsh's problem, not hers.

As for issues, there are several in Mr. Walsh's record that are worth discussing — like his being the only member of the Illinois Congressional delegation to vote against this year's transportation bill, even though he represents a district, west and north of Chicago, that includes parts of O'Hare Airport and many of the city's and region's most important highway and railroad networks. Or that he has spent his time championing oddball bills that have gone nowhere — measures to abolish the Office of Polar Programs of the National Science Foundation, to forbid the use of the word "Palestine" in government documents and to support "Israel's right to annex Judea and Samaria." He is also sponsor of the Save Christmas Act.

Ms. Duckworth has done far more than her share in serving her country. Against that record, Mr. Walsh's comments were deplorable.

Column: Why Our Elites Stink (NYT)

By David Brooks

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Protestant Establishment sat atop the American power structure. A relatively small network of white Protestant men dominated the universities, the world of finance, the local country clubs and even high government service.

Over the past half–century, a more diverse and meritocratic elite has replaced the Protestant Establishment. People are more likely to rise on the basis of grades, test scores, effort and performance.

Yet, as this meritocratic elite has taken over institutions, trust in them has plummeted. It's not even clear that the brainy elite is doing a better job of running them than the old boys' network. Would we say that Wall Street is working better now than it did 60 years ago? Or government? The system is more just, but the outcomes are mixed. The meritocracy has not fulfilled its promise.

Christopher Hayes of MSNBC and The Nation believes that the problem is inherent in the nature of meritocracies. In his book, "Twilight of the Elites," he argues that meritocratic elites may rise on the basis of grades, effort and merit, but, to preserve their status, they become corrupt. They create wildly unequal societies, and then they rig things so that few can climb the ladders behind them. Meritocracy leads to oligarchy.

Hayes points to his own elite training ground, Hunter College High School in New York City. You have to ace an entrance exam to get in, but affluent parents send their kids to rigorous test prep centers and now few poor black and Latino students can get in.

Baseball players get to the major leagues through merit, but then some take enhancement drugs to preserve their status. Financiers work hard to get jobs at the big banks, but then some rig the game for their own mutual benefit.

Far from being the fairest of all systems, he concludes, the meritocracy promotes gigantic inequality and is fundamentally dysfunctional. No wonder institutional failure has been the leitmotif of our age.

It's a challenging argument but wrong. I'd say today's meritocratic elites achieve and preserve their status not mainly by being corrupt but mainly by being ambitious and disciplined. They raise their kids in organized families. They spend enormous amounts of money and time on enrichment. They work much longer hours than people down the income scale, driving their kids to piano lessons and then taking part in conference calls from the waiting room.

Phenomena like the test-prep industry are just the icing on the cake, giving some upper-middle-class applicants a slight edge over other upper-middle-class applicants. The real advantages are much deeper and more honest.

The corruption that has now crept into the world of finance and the other professions is not endemic to meritocracy but to the specific culture of our meritocracy. The problem is that today's meritocratic elites cannot admit to themselves that they are elites.

Everybody thinks they are countercultural rebels, insurgents against the true establishment, which is always somewhere else. This attitude prevails in the Ivy League, in the corporate boardrooms and even at television studios where hosts from Harvard, Stanford and Brown rail against the establishment.

As a result, today's elite lacks the self-conscious leadership ethos that the racist, sexist and anti-Semitic old boys' network did possess. If you went to Groton a century ago, you knew you were privileged. You were taught how morally precarious privilege was and how much responsibility it entailed. You were housed in a spartan 6-foot-by-9-foot cubicle to prepare you for the rigors of leadership.

The best of the WASP elites had a stewardship mentality, that they were temporary caretakers of institutions that would span generations. They cruelly ostracized people who did not live up to their codes of gentlemanly conduct and scrupulosity. They were insular and struggled with intimacy, but they did believe in restraint, reticence and service.

Today's elite is more talented and open but lacks a self-conscious leadership code. The language of meritocracy (how to succeed) has eclipsed the language of morality (how to be virtuous). Wall Street firms, for example, now hire on the basis of youth and brains, not experience and character. Most of their problems can be traced to this.

If you read the e-mails from the Libor scandal you get the same sensation you get from reading the e-mails in so many recent scandals: these people are brats; they have no sense that they are guardians for an institution the world depends on; they have no consciousness of their larger social role.

The difference between the Hayes view and mine is a bit like the difference between the French Revolution and the American Revolution. He wants to upend the social order. I want to keep the current social order, but I want to give it a different ethos and institutions that are more consistent with its existing ideals.

Column: Who's Very Important? (NYT)

By Paul Krugman

New York Times, July 13, 2012

"Is there a V.I.P. entrance? We are V.I.P." That remark, by a donor waiting to get in to one of Mitt Romney's recent fund-raisers in the Hamptons, pretty much sums up the attitude of America's wealthy elite. Mr. Romney's base — never mind the top 1 percent, we're talking about the top 0.01 percent or higher — is composed of very self-important people.

Specifically, these are people who believe that they are, as another Romney donor put it, "the engine of the economy"; they should be cherished, and the taxes they pay, which are already at an 80-year low, should be cut even further. Unfortunately, said yet another donor, the "common person" — for example, the "nails ladies" — just doesn't get it.

O.K., it's easy to mock these people, but the joke's really on us. For the "we are V.I.P." crowd has fully captured the modern Republican Party, to such an extent that leading Republicans consider Mr. Romney's apparent use of multimillion-dollar offshore accounts to dodge federal taxes not just acceptable

but praiseworthy: “It’s really American to avoid paying taxes, legally,” declared Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina. And there is, of course, a good chance that Republicans will control both Congress and the White House next year.

If that happens, we’ll see a sharp turn toward economic policies based on the proposition that we need to be especially solicitous toward the superrich — I’m sorry, I mean the “job creators.” So it’s important to understand why that’s wrong.

The first thing you need to know is that America wasn’t always like this. When John F. Kennedy was elected president, the top 0.01 percent was only about a quarter as rich compared with the typical family as it is now — and members of that class paid much higher taxes than they do today. Yet somehow we managed to have a dynamic, innovative economy that was the envy of the world. The superrich may imagine that their wealth makes the world go round, but history says otherwise.

To this historical observation we should add another note: quite a few of today’s superrich, Mr. Romney included, make or made their money in the financial sector, buying and selling assets rather than building businesses in the old-fashioned sense. Indeed, the soaring share of the wealthy in national income went hand in hand with the explosive growth of Wall Street.

Not long ago, we were told that all this wheeling and dealing was good for everyone, that it was making the economy both more efficient and more stable. Instead, it turned out that modern finance was laying the foundation for a severe economic crisis whose fallout continues to afflict millions of Americans, and that taxpayers had to bail out many of those supposedly brilliant bankers to prevent an even worse crisis. So at least some members of the top 0.01 percent are best viewed as job destroyers rather than job creators.

Did I mention that those bailed-out bankers are now overwhelmingly backing Mr. Romney, who promises to reverse the mild financial reforms introduced after the crisis?

To be sure, many and probably most of the rich do, in fact, contribute positively to the economy. However, they also receive large monetary rewards. Yet somehow $20 million-plus in annual income isn’t enough. They want to be revered, too, and given special treatment in the form of low taxes. And that is more than they deserve. After all, the “common person” also makes a positive contribution to the economy. Why single out the rich for extra praise and perks?

What about the argument that we must keep taxes on the rich low lest we remove their incentive to create wealth? The answer is that we have a lot of historical evidence, going all the way back to the 1920s, on the effects of tax increases on the rich, and none of it supports the view that the kinds of tax-rate changes for the rich currently on the table — President Obama’s proposal for a modest rise, Mr. Romney’s call for further cuts — would have any major effect on incentives. Remember when all the usual suspects claimed that the economy would crash when Bill Clinton raised taxes in 1993?

Furthermore, if you’re really concerned about the incentive effects of public policy, you should be focused not on the rich but on workers making $20,000 to $30,000 a year, who are often penalized for any gain in income because they end up losing means-tested benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. I’ll have more to say about that in another column. By the way, in 2010, the average annual wage of manicurists — “nails ladies,” in Romney-donor speak — was $21,760.

So, are the very rich V.I.P.? No, they aren’t — at least no more so than other working Americans. And the “common person” will be hurt, not helped, if we end up with government of the 0.01 percent, by the 0.01 percent, for the 0.01 percent.

Op-Ed: How Pensions Violate Free Speech (NYT)

By Benjamin I. Sachs

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Cambridge, Mass.

A CENTRAL principle of American political life is that everyone gets to choose which candidates to support. The idea that the government could force us to support those we oppose is anathema. But this unacceptable state of affairs is one of the unintended consequences of the Supreme Court's decision in the 2010 Citizens United case.

That's because the vast majority of people who work in the public sector — state, local and federal employees — are required to make contributions to a pension plan. Nearly all states make participation in a pension plan mandatory and a "condition of employment" for public employees. To get and keep your job with the government, you have to give some of your paycheck to the pension plan.

Public pensions, moreover, are so-called defined benefit plans, which means that employees don't have a say in how their mandatory contributions are invested. The employees cannot request, for example, that their money be used only to buy government bonds or that it be invested only in certain mutual funds or only in select corporations.

Instead, the employees' money is invested according to whatever decisions the pension plan's trustee makes. And, not surprisingly, pension plans invest heavily in corporate securities: in 2008, public pensions held about $1.15 trillion in corporate stock.

Here's the problem. In its Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court held that companies have a First Amendment right to make electoral expenditures with general corporate treasuries. And they've done so, with relish, pouring millions into the political system.

What Citizens United failed to account for, however, is that a significant portion of the money that corporations are spending on politics is financed by equity capital provided by public pension funds — capital contributions that the government requires public employees to finance with their paychecks.

This consequence of Citizens United is perverse: requiring public employees to finance corporate electoral spending amounts to compelled political speech and association, something the First Amendment flatly forbids.

Contrast this situation with how the court treats political spending by unions. In many states, public employees are required to pay dues to a labor union. If the public employees union were to spend any of the money raised through dues on politics, the court has ruled, the dues requirement would amount to forced political speech and association. To prevent this First Amendment violation, the court has held that no union may use an employee's dues for political purposes if the employee objects.

The same should be true for pension funds and corporate politics. In a world where corporations can use their general treasuries for political spending, no government should be allowed to require employees to finance the purchase of corporate securities through a pension plan, unless the government provides those employees with a meaningful way to object to financing corporate politics.

The good news is that the rules governing union dues and political spending provide a road map for restructuring public pensions in order to bring them back into conformity with the First Amendment.

Here's one way it could work: Pension plans would determine the number of employees that object to financing corporate political spending. They would then negotiate "opt out" rights with the corporations in which they invest. These corporations would calculate the percentage of their annual expenditures that

go to politics and promise to return to the pension plan an amount equal to the objecting employee's pro rata share of the corporation's political budget.

Whatever the route to reform, however, public pension plans need to ensure that employees are not compelled to finance corporate political speech. Until they do, these pension funds will be vulnerable to the challenge that they are violating the First Amendment.

Benjamin I. Sachs is a professor at Harvard Law School.

Op-Ed: Ethnic Cleansing In Myanmar (NYT)

By Moshahida Sultana Ritu

New York Times, July 13, 2012

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh -- LAST spring, a flowering of democracy in Myanmar mesmerized the world. But now, three months after the democracy activist Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won a parliamentary seat, and a month after she traveled to Oslo to belatedly receive the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, an alarm bell is ringing in Myanmar. In the villages of Arakan State, near the Bangladeshi border, a pogrom against a population of Muslims called the Rohingyas began in June. It is the ugly side of Myanmar's democratic transition — a rotting of the flower, even as it seems to bloom.

Cruelty toward the Rohingyas is not new. They have faced torture, neglect and repression in the Buddhist-majority land since it achieved independence in 1948. Its constitution closes all options for Rohingyas to be citizens, on grounds that their ancestors didn't live there when the land, once called Burma, came under British rule in the 19th century (a contention the Rohingyas dispute). Even now, as military rulers have begun to loosen their grip, there is no sign of change for the Rohingyas. Instead, the Burmese are trying to cast them out.

The current violence can be traced to the rape and killing in late May of a Buddhist woman, for which the police reportedly detained three Muslims. That was followed by mob attacks on Rohingyas and other Muslims that killed dozens of people. According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, state security forces have now conducted mass arrests of Muslims; they destroyed thousands of homes, with the impact falling most heavily on the Rohingyas. Displaced Rohingyas have tried to flee across the Naf River to neighboring Bangladesh; some have died in the effort.

The Burmese media have cited early rioting by Rohingyas and have cast them as terrorists and traitors. In mid-June, in the name of stopping such violence, the government declared a state of emergency. But it has used its border security force to burn houses, kill men and evict Rohingyas from their villages. And on Thursday, President Thein Sein suggested that Myanmar could end the crisis by expelling all of its Rohingyas or by having the United Nations resettle them — a proposal that a United Nations official quickly rejected.

This is not sectarian violence; it is state-supported ethnic cleansing, and the nations of the world aren't pressing Myanmar's leaders to stop it. Even Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has not spoken out.

In mid-June, after some Rohingyas fled by boat to villages in Bangladesh, they told horrifying stories to a team of journalists whom I accompanied to this city near the border. They said they had come under fire from a helicopter and that three of six boats were lost. Some children drowned during the four-day trip; others died of hunger. Once in Bangladesh, they said, the families faced deportation back to Myanmar. But some children who had become separated from their parents made their way to the houses of villagers for shelter; other children may even now be starving in hide-outs or have become prey for

criminal networks. Border guards found an abandoned newborn on a boat; after receiving medical treatment, the infant was left in the temporary care of a local fisherman.

Why isn't this pogrom arousing more international indignation? Certainly, Myanmar has become a destination for capital investment now that the United States, the European Union and Canada have accepted the government's narrative of democratic transition and have largely lifted the economic sanctions they began applying after 1988 (measures that did not prevent China, India, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and multinational oil companies from doing business with the Burmese). Still, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Myanmar late last year and welcomed its first steps toward democratization, she also set down conditions for strengthening ties, including an end to ethnic violence.

The plight of the Rohingyas begins with their statelessness — the denial of citizenship itself, for which Myanmar is directly responsible. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, though not as powerful as the military officers who control Myanmar's transition, should not duck questions about the Rohingyas, as she has done while being feted in the West. Instead, she should be using her voice and her reputation to point out that citizenship is a basic right of all humans. On July 5, the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, appealed to her to speak up to help end the violence.

To be sure, Bangladesh can do more. Its river border with Myanmar is unprotected; thousands of Rohingyas have been rowing or swimming it at night. But even though Bangladesh has sheltered such refugees in the past — hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas live here now, legally or illegally — it has been reluctant so far this year to welcome them, out of fear of encouraging an overwhelming new influx. Already, such fears have aroused anti-Rohingya sentiment among some Bangladeshis, and initially Bangladesh's government tried to force the refugees back without assisting them. After some villagers risked arrest by sheltering refugees in their homes, the government began to offer humanitarian aid, before sending them back on their boats. Bangladesh should shelter the refugees as it has in years past, as the international community is urging.

But the world should be putting its spotlight on Myanmar. It should not so eagerly welcome democracy in a country that leaves thousands of stateless men and women floating in a river, their corpses washing up on its shores, after they have been reviled in, and driven from, a land in which their families have lived for centuries.

Moshahida Sultana Ritu, an economist, teaches at the University of Dhaka, in Bangladesh.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

Mitt Romney's Wife Ann To Visit Delaware (WILNJ)

By Jonathan Starkey

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Ann Romney, the wife of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, will be in Delaware this month – reportedly for a July 18 fundraiser at the Greenville home of prominent Delaware Republican Michele Rollins, sources say.

A spokeswoman for Ann Romney confirmed that a Delaware trip is planned but has not confirmed additional details, except to say it will be closed to the media.

Rollins' sister Monika "Nikki" Metrinko recently died, and funeral services were held earlier this week.

Reached soon thereafter, Rollins said a plan to host Ann Romney had been in the works.

Wilmington Officials: Occupy Delaware To Leave Plaza By Sept. 10 (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

Occupy Delaware will leave Spencer Plaza by Sept. 10 as Wilmington prepares for a $1.2 million renovation of the park the protesters have called home since November, according to a city news release.

The city and Occupy Delaware agreed to the terms of a proposed court order that was presented to Chancery Court today, according to the release.

"All the court has to do is bless it, if you will, and issue it as an order," said John Rago, deputy chief of staff for Mayor James M. Baker.

A court order would set aside an Aug. 20 court hearing regarding the city's attempt to remove Occupy Delaware from Spencer Plaza, the city said.

Showdown Over Cable Approaches (WILNJ)

City, Comcast battling over franchise renewal

By Andrew Staub

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

Taking the podium in Wilmington's City Council chambers last month, Ruth Baker uttered a war cry against Comcast, blasting the country's largest cable provider for dragging out negotiations over the renewal of its franchise agreement with the city.

Baker, president of the Leased Access Producers Association, warned that her group could organize a "groundswell of support" to defy a company she said has taken the stance that it cannot be challenged.

"They don't have respect for us because many people think the city of Wilmington and the people in the city of Wilmington are weak and easily malleable," Baker said. "They need to understand that that's not the fact."

Indeed, Wilmington is preparing for a legal fight against the city's lone cable provider after more than two years of informal negotiations failed to yield an agreement. That's left the city pursuing a little-used formal procedure available under the federal Cable Communications Act.

The Wilmington Cable Video and Television Commission has already recommended that City Council preliminarily deny Comcast's latest proposal, saying the company has failed to meet the community's future cable-related needs and interests.

If the council agrees with the commission tonight, it would trigger an administrative law hearing to decide whether Comcast has satisfied the federal requirements for renewal of its franchise agreement.

A hearing officer appointed by the city would offer a recommendation to the council. If Wilmington ultimately denies Comcast's proposal, the cable company could appeal in federal court.

Nicholas Miller, a Washington, D.C., attorney who specializes in cable television regulation, advised the city's commission last week that reaching this stage of the formal process is rare.

"There are typically two or three renewals in the whole country that go to this point in any given year," Miller said. "Even fewer get to the point where there is an ultimate decision at the end of the hearing."

Most municipalities reach agreement with their providers through informal talks. Comcast alone has about 6,600 franchises and renews hundreds each year with little or no controversy.

That's not been the case in Wilmington.

After conducting a survey and issuing a report outlining the city's future cable-related needs and interests, Wilmington has sought a more modern agreement with Comcast.

Officials have asked Comcast to provide an institutional network that would connect city buildings and save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars, and to commit to system upgrades over the duration of the agreement, which Comcast is proposing to be 12 years.

Comcast has committed to neither, according to city documents, and has also balked at the city's request for stronger customer service requirements. The two sides also have been unable to agree on funding levels for its government-access and leased-access channels.

Wilmington officials have also bristled at Comcast's move to narrowly define the gross revenue derived from its franchise agreement, which could reduce the city's annual franchise fee of about $1 million by as much as 50 percent, Miller told the commission.

Comcast has budged little during negotiations, said Miller, who theorized the company has made a decision to "hardball" current franchise renewals, perhaps to set a precedent for larger franchises up for renewal soon.

Jeff Alexander, a Comcast spokesman, declined to address the city's specific concerns, but released a statement saying the company has been a "good corporate citizen who has served the city for more than a decade." The company employs more than 350 Wilmington residents, he said.

"We value our positive relationship with the city of Wilmington and its residents and have offered very generous terms to help reach an agreement that is beneficial and fair for the city, the community and the company," Alexander said.

Sue Buske, president of a California consulting firm that deals with franchise renewals, said the situation "is unusual, but it happens." She helped guide Brunswick, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, through the same process in the 1990s, she said.

Franchise negotiations have become more difficult as cable companies "push things all the way to the edge" in the hope municipalities will back down rather than spend money on litigation, Buske said. Federal law also favors cable companies by placing the burden on municipalities to prove why a franchise should not be renewed, she noted.

Ultimately, cable companies are trying to reduce the "rent" they pay cities to use the public rights-of-way, Buske said.

"The cable companies have a great deal to gain financially by getting these franchises renewed," she said. "They really don't want to be obligated to pay much back to the community as rent for these rights-of-way."

If Wilmington has done its "homework" in building a case for what its requesting of Comcast, the city could be in a good position heading into the formal procedure, said Ken Fellman, whose Colorado law firm represents local governments in telecommunications cases.

"If the city is serious about pursuing it, it can often lead to the cable operator finding a little bit more flexibility in their negotiating positions," he said.

The legal wrangling will not affect residents' cable service, Miller said. Even if its franchise renewal is denied, Comcast cannot withdraw from the city until Wilmington has made arrangements with another cable operator.

Comcast has had the franchise since 2000. It expired in October 2010.

The cable company has been negotiating in "good faith" with the city and is willing to continue to do so, Alexander said. But that statement, Council President Norman D. Griffiths said, hasn't been reflected in Comcast's proposal to Wilmington.

"I couldn't say the response met the good-faith test in terms of responding to what our needs are," Griffiths said.

Blog: Meat And Greet With The Technology Forum Of Delaware (WILNJ)

By Cori Anne Natoli

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

The Technology Forum of Delaware is throwing a dress-down summer social and networking barbecue.

The event is expected to begin at 5:30 p.m., July 18th, at Deerfield Golf and Tennis Club, 507 Thompson Station Road in Newark.

"We're providing the barbecue so all you have to do is bring the party," the Forum wrote in a press release.

Casual attire is recommended. Register to save your spot at www.techforumde.org

The Forum's goal is to serve "technology markets throughout the Delaware Valley" and assist business leaders in establishing the right relationships and resources for success.

Blog: SEU To Discuss Future Of Programs (WILNJ)

By Ron Nathans

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 12, 2012

The Sustainable Energy Utility oversight board is set to have a discussion about the future of its programs next week. The SEU board will meet for a "retreat workshop" at the Buena Vista State Conference Center, 661 S. DuPont Hwy., New Castle, starting at 9 a.m. on Thursday. The main item on the agenda is "discussion of future programs" – an important discussion, because most of the SEU's residential energy efficiency programs are currently dormant.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Editorial: Too Many People At PSU Cowered In Fear (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

If anything, former FBI Director Louis Freeh's report on the Penn State child sex abuse scandals reveals how much very powerful university administrators and those in its much lauded football program had in common with the victims.

Both cowered in a tragic silence for years, allowing the heinous crimes of adults with stellar public reputations to go uninterrupted for more than a decade, as they savaged the emotional lives of young people taught to revere them as protectors of their future well-being. Most of the adults did so by refusing to report what they suspected or witnessed. Even those with the courage to sound the alarm, grew timid about repeatedly doing so loudly enough for it to reverberate and cause Penn State's Trustees to take swift and corrective action.

The incredible "lack of empathy" of these adults seeped to the lowest levels of school personnel. Even janitors, who witnessed or heard of the savage assaults on young male teens, lured to the campus by former assistant football coach – and now deservedly imprisoned – Jerry Sandusky, failed to speak up.

"They witnessed what I think in the report is probably the most horrific rape that's described," Freeh told reporters Friday of one rape in the university's former Child Care Center. "And what do they do? They panic."

One janitor, a Korean War veteran, said it was "the worst thing he's ever seen." Yet they secured their continued pay checks with their silence.

"They said the university would circle around it. It was like going against the president of the United States. … If that's the culture on the bottom, God help the culture at the top," Freeh wrote.

His team of lawyers, former prosecutors and former law enforcement officials, conducted 430 interviews, and pored through 3.5 million emails and documents. And they assign blame where it belongs – to high-ranking school officials who have since lost their jobs and, revered football coach Joe Paterno who died unrepentant for any contributing role within six months of the allegations.

Op-Ed: Look To NYC, The Past For Possible Policing Solutions (WILNJ)

By Mike Cannatelli

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, July 13, 2012

A possible solution to the crime spree in the city is the "Giuliani" solution. New Castle County police and Wilmington police should team up and coordinate their efforts and crack down on all laws including the nuisance crimes in both the county and the city simultaneously.

The Giuliani solution would send a real wake-up call that from now on the laws, all laws will be enforced. Then do it.

The idea is to chase those drug distributors, dealers, mules, etc., out of both the county and city.

Let them relocate to Chester, or somewhere else out of Delaware. They'll move on to the path of least resistance along I-95. So what that tells me is as of now Wilmington and NCCo are that path of least resistance. Time to change that.

Today New York City has a lower crime rate, per capita, based on things I've read, than Wilmington. How pitiful is that.

Enough talk and fooling around. Start enforcing aggressive driving, speeding, tailgating, pedestrians on median strips at intersections panhandling, panhandling on sidewalks or in front of stores, pedestrians crossing highways not at crosswalks or crossing when the Don't Walk light is flashing, or pedestrians walking in the street where a sidewalk is available, driving on road shoulders, spitting on sidewalks, loitering, littering, music blasting so loud from a car that even with your windows closed you can hear it quite well, graffiti, etc.

Make it so the criminals will go somewhere else, since we'll never be successful in ending the drug trade. (There's far too much money to be made.) It's time to retake the land.

Make paperwork for cops less a hassle and burden so they have an incentive to go after nuisance crimes rather than look the other way. Also if it's not an emergency they must do the speed limit. They should be a good example for all others when responding to a police call of some sort.

The community policing thing is also needed in Wilmington, whether it's cops on foot or on horse, plus the car patrols. This way the on-foot/horse cops get to know people in their neighborhood and the people there get to know them.

Maybe city folks there will start to trust the cops again, which is part of the problem. People in high crime areas don't trust the cops, so they tell them very little (the criminals are counting on that). If they trusted the cops, they'd be the eyes and ears and would help in catching some of the crime.

Maybe have less white cops and more minority cops in those inner city neighborhoods that generally are more minority heavy in population, especially the on-foot/horse cops would help in this.

There's a couple of real suggestions. One has already been done in NYC with great results. The other is old-school beat foot cop patrols from the 1930s and '40s. It worked well then as folks got to know their local cop and trusted him, and that approach should work again today. Lord knows what we're doing now isn't working.

Now will anyone with any authority take a serious look at either of these ideas? Probably not, because to do so means what they've been doing hasn't worked.

Most folks in the city are not criminals, and shouldn't have to be in fear of getting shot.

Those of us in the suburbs shouldn't have to fear those same criminals moving out to the suburbs either, but make no mistake they have. It's only a matter of time before we start hearing of gunshots in the glorious suburbs, too.

Mike Cannatelli lives in New Castle.