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From: "Allen, Liz" <elizabeth_m._allen@ovp.eop.gov>
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----- Original Message -----
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Sent: Saturday, July 28, 2012 06:04 AM
To: Nesi, Andrew; Cerda, Jose; Thompson, Kenny; Bianchi, Sarah; Feldman, Stefanie G.; VP-editors@bulletinnews.com <VP-editors@bulletinnews.com>
Cc: Everett, Aaron; P6/(b)(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 <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; Tennant, Thomas M; McNulty, Thomas P.; Williams, Tonya; Dirksen, Ward
Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Saturday, July 28, 2012

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 28, 2012 -- 7:30 AM EDT

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

THE BIDEN FAMILY BUSINESS (NYPOST)
By Michelle Malkin
New York Post, July 28, 2012
Vice President Joe Biden, America's textbook Beltway barnacle, still labors under the illusion that he's America's middle-class Everyman. And now, he's gone and dragged his adult children into the land of Democratic make-believe. This is a BFD: a Biden Fabulist Dud.
As usual with White House class-warfare demagoguery, reality doesn't fit the wealth-bashing narrative.
In Philadelphia on Wednesday, Biden stoked passive-aggressive resentment of the 1 percenters. "The wealthy," he sniveled. "God bless 'em," he snarked. "I wish my kids would become wealthy," he sighed before railing against tax relief for all those evil, privileged rich people earning more than $250,000 a year.
Does Biden have kids we don't know about? Because his three children with wife Dr. Jill Biden all appear to be, well, doing just fine. Way more than just fine.
Daughter Ashley, a social worker in the Delaware state bureaucracy, graduated from Tulane and has a master's from the University of Pennsylvania. Her husband is a plastic surgeon at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals in Philadelphia. Along the way, he also racked up a PhD and snagged a slot as an assistant professor of otolaryngology/head and neck surgery and as a director of the Herbert Kean Center for Facial Aesthetics.
Not exactly Occupier-level poverty in that line of business.
Oldest son Beau is the attorney general of Delaware, a former Justice Department official and federal prosecutor, a former partner in the Wilmington law firm Bifferato, Gentilotti, Biden and Balick and a career beneficiary of the Biden dynasty.
Then there's younger son Hunter. Vice President Biden, meet your well-heeled and wildly successful lobbyist/lawyer offspring.
Hunter Biden now fronts Eudora Global, "a uniquely organized growth and acquisition firm focused on purchasing and accelerating the development of high potential enterprises in industries that meet its selective investment profile." He co-founded the firm with Jeffrey Cooper. Who is Jeffrey

Cooper?
Cooper helped build one of the biggest asbestos-litigation firms in the country. SimmonsCooper, based in Madison County, Ill., has donated a whopping $196,050 to the senior Biden's campaigns since 2003, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. In that same time frame, the firm poured $6.5 million into lobbying against a key tort-reform bill - which Sen. Biden worked hard to defeat. Cooper also donated to Beau Biden's first attorney general campaign and paid Beau for legal work on Delaware asbestos litigation cases.
Hunter Biden was previously a top official at PARADIGM Global Advisors, a hedge-fund holding company founded with Vice President Biden's brother, James, and marketed by convicted finance fraudster Allen Stanford. As Paradigm chairman, Hunter Biden oversaw half a billion dollars of client money invested in hedge funds while remaining a lobbyist. Cooper chipped in $2 million for the ill-fated venture, which went down in flames amid nasty fraud lawsuits.
Before all that, Hunter Biden was a senior vice president at MBNA America Bank, one of his dad's wealthiest corporate campaign donors. An MBNA bank official helped facilitate an eyebrow-raising real-estate deal for Daddy Biden that paved the way for the acquisition of a custom-built house in Delaware's ritziest Chateau Country neighborhood.
While raking in consultant payments at MBNA, Hunter Biden also served as a founding partner in DC lobbying shop Oldaker, Biden and Belair. His lobbying brought in nearly $4 million in 2007 alone.
Nice Beltway influence-peddling work if you can get it. As I noted in my book "Culture of Corruption," one client seeking federal government earmarks told The Washington Post, "Biden's parentage was a selling point."
Nepotism has its privileges - and the Biden children, despite Papa Joe's lamentations, have enjoyed far more than their fair share.

SECURITY TIGHT FOR BIDEN ARRIVAL AT PORTER COUNTY AIRPORT (MUNT)
Munster (IN) Times, July 28, 2012
Several members of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Northwest Indiana chapter got a bonus Friday afternoon.
The group has been camped at the Porter County Municipal Airport for more than a week to greet pilots headed to the annual air show in Oshkosh, Wis. They sell freshly grilled hot dogs, hamburger and brats along with turkey sandwiches and drinks for the pilots while they get refueled.
"We're always at the mercy of the weather, but seldom at the mercy of the vice president," said chapter President Ed Hanson, of Crown Point.
The group learned Tuesday that a VIP was expected at the airport Friday, and Hanson said they could tell by the air space restrictions it probably was Vice President Joe Biden. Air Force 2, with Biden and several others aboard, landed about 3:45 p.m. and taxied to the terminal building, where everyone was quickly whisked away by the Secret Service.
Airport manager Kyle Kuebler said he was told Monday to expect an important visitor, and the airport has been working with the White House security detail to make sure everything went smoothly. Protective measures included stationing snipers on the roof of the terminal and restricting access to the terminal to security personnel only.
A member of the cleaning crew arriving for work at the building next to the terminal said she never had seen the terminal entrance blocked off before. Kuebler said it was the first time in his 22 years at the airport such a high-ranking official landed at Porter County, although a former president landed there once.
"It's normal operations for us," he said. "It's an airplane, and it landed."
For the EAA members, it actually was a bit of a hindrance. The group uses the money raised from food sales to support its activities, and the visit meant the airport was off limits for regular traffic for more than an hour. And neither Biden nor anyone else on the plane bought even a hot dog.
The group had only about 10 planes stop by Friday afternoon, and Hanson said they've had as many as 35 in the past. The Oshkosh show goes through the weekend, but the EAA will be at the airport through Wednesday to greet pilots and visitors for the Collins Foundation Wings of Freedom Tour.
The Wings of Freedom planes arrive Monday, and visitors can tour the planes and go for rides.

Tuesday will be the big day, Hanson said.
"We'll sell a lot of ice cream on Tuesday," he predicted.
It's expected Biden will depart the airport Sunday after speaking to the American Federation of Teachers convention in Detroit. It's unknown if he likes ice cream.

LOCAL POLICE TO ASSIST AT DNC (LEXDIS)
By Nash Dunn
Lexington (NC) Dispatch, July 28, 2012
A handful of local law enforcement officers will assist policing the 2012 Democratic National Convention this fall in Charlotte.
Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to descend upon Charlotte for the convention, which is scheduled for Sept. 3-6.
Lexington Police Department will send 10 officers to assist Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department with controlling the crowds and various events. The officers will be in Charlotte for about a week, said Capt. Mark Sink, of the Lexington Police Department.
"They'll be helping with whatever Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs us to assist with," Sink said, adding that local officers will be responsible for a variety of safety and security roles.
Sink said LPD was initially contacted last fall to assist with the convention. They decided earlier this year that they would help.
"We have always assisted other departments on a regular basis, but this is definitely on a larger scale," Sink said. "This is a bigger event for North Carolina, and we are proud to be helping out with it."
While the department will be down 10 officers during the convention, Sink said LPD will still be able to maintain its normal level of officers throughout the city.
"We always have plenty to do, and we will make due," Sink said. "We planned for this sometime back, so we wouldn't have any officers out of town or on vacation."
Davidson County Sheriff David Grice said his department will not be sending any officers to Charlotte. The Davidson County Sheriff's Office was contacted for help, Grice said.
"We are pretty well covered up with our responsibilities here," Grice said. "They do pay overtime, but it's hard to let people go."
The sheriff's office has assisted with large events in the past, reserving as much as 60 officers when prominent political figures like Joe Biden and Bill Clinton visited the region. Those events were a little closer, though, and Grice said he can't afford to send dozens of officers to Charlotte for a week.
Nearby, Guilford County Sheriff's Office will send 40 deputies to the DNC, while Forsyth County Sheriff's Office will reserve 11 deputies for the event. High Point Police Department is sending 45 officers to the convention, and Greensboro Police Department has agreed to send 150 officers and 18 vehicles.
"Those departments just simply have more numbers and more people than we do," Grice said.
Thomasville Police Department did not respond to phone calls by press time on Friday.
September's DNC will be the first time North Carolina has hosted a major party convention.
While it's unclear exactly how many people will attend the convention, police officials say they will be ready for an influx of crowds and the potential for protestors.
The convention will kick off on Labor Day with CarolinaFest 2012, a family friendly celebration in Uptown Charlotte. Convention events will be held throughout the week, all leading up to President Barack Obama's acceptance speech inside Bank of America Stadium on the night of Sept. 6.
For more information on the convention, visit www.charlottein2012.com.

IS ISRAEL MITT ROMNEY'S NEW SWING STATE? (DAYBEST)
His visit to Jerusalem could be a turning point for the GOP. Why a tide of super PAC funds and Obama's shaky diplomatic relations might loosen Democrats' grip on Jewish voters.
By Eli Lake
The Daily Beast, July 28, 2012
On the eve of Mitt Romney's trip to Israel, America's Jewish vote may be in play in ways that it has not been in the past. Traditionally, most Jewish Americans have voted for Democrats. In 2008, President Obama got between 74 and 78 percent of the Jewish vote. But 2012 might be different.

"It would be difficult for Republicans to get 35 percent of the Jewish vote, but it's not impossible," said Mik Moore, the treasurer of the Jewish Council for Education and Research, the super PAC that produced and financed the Web video in which comedienne Sarah Silverman offers to allow billionaire casino-executive Sheldon Adelson an evening of lesbian-style sex known as "scissoring" if he pulls his support for Romney.

Adelson has promised to spend $100 million of his own fortune to defeat Obama. He will be with Romney in Israel and will help host a fundraiser for the candidate while he's there.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he thought more Jewish votes were in play this year. "I think there is probably 15 to 20 percent of the Jewish community that is realistically undecided and conflicted at this point and this is what we are all fighting for," he said. A Gallup poll released Friday found Jewish registered voters favored Obama over Romney by 68 percent to 25 percent.

Mitt Romney will arrive in Israel on Saturday afternoon to make a bid for both undecided Jewish voters but also the evangelical Christians, who are a key Republican constituency and are strong supporters of Israel.

While in Israel, Romney will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as key members of his national-security cabinet on Sunday. He will also meet with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who is seen by Republicans and Democrats as a reformer, but not with the Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority. Romney on Sunday evening will attend a dinner at Netanyahu's home to mark the breaking of the Jewish fast of Tisha B'av, a holiday that commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples of the biblical Israelites.

Netanyahu is scheduled on Sunday also to deliver a speech on the U.S.-Israel relationship. Briefing reporters on a conference call Friday, Dan Senor, a senior adviser on the campaign, said the speech will highlight how "the challenges and threats to Israel are challenges and threats to America. And the opportunities awaiting Israel are opportunities awaiting America."

The symbolism of the trip is important for Romney. To start, President Obama has not visited the Jewish state since coming into office despite multiple trips to the region, including Israel's neighbor, Egypt, and Israel's former ally, Turkey. But the trip is also important as a contrast between Obama's relationship with Netanyahu and Romney's relationship with Netanyahu. Romney has known the Israeli leader since 1976, when both were corporate advisers for the Boston Consulting Group. Netanyahu's chief of staff, Ron Dermer, is a protégé of Republican pollster Frank Luntz.

Obama has had a notoriously chilly relationship with Netanyahu. During a visit to Washington in May 2011, Netanyahu famously lectured Obama during a photo opportunity on how Israel could not withdraw to its borders before the 1967 war. A year before that, Obama was furious after an Israeli housing authority announced new settlement construction in an Arab neighborhood of East Jerusalem during a visit from Vice President Biden. More recently, Obama spokespeople have declined to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in press conferences. Since the 1990s, Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have promised to move the U.S. embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. In office however, President Clinton, President Bush, and now President Obama have stuck by a policy that considers the status of Jerusalem to be something that must be negotiated in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

These snubs and disagreements will be amplified in the 2012 election cycle because of a tide of unregulated and undisclosed money following the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision, which overturned independent expenditure limits in U.S. campaign-finance laws.

Those independent expenditures include a new $6.5 million campaign from the Republican Jewish Coalition targeting Jewish voters. Adelson is one of the financial backers of the campaign.

A new group called the Emergency Committee for Israel has launched a series of ads in Jewish newspapers this week attacking Obama's record on Israel, claiming that he has placed undue pressure on the Jewish state. A new Web and television ad from the group contrasts Obama's 2008 speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee,l where he said he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, with recent statements from White House spokesman Jay Carney declining to answer the question of where the administration believes Israel's capital is.

"I don't want to see Obama get 78 percent of the Jewish vote again and the RJC and the Emergency Committee are important parts of the conversation and they hold the president

accountable for what has been a bad record on Israel," said Mark Isakowitz, a member of the Romney finance committee and a board member of the Republican Jewish Coalition.
Alan Solow, a national co-chairman of the Obama-Biden reelection campaign, said he is expecting to be hit hard with these kinds of independent expenditures.
"We are anticipating that they will spend a lot of money to try to mischaracterize the president's record on Israel," Solow said. "The reason they have to spend so much money is that they don't have a case. Rather than stick to the facts and look at what the president has accomplished, they will spend a lot of money to convince people of an alternative reality and we believe they will fail."
The Obama campaign will highlight a series of moves the president has taken to strengthen support for Israel's defenses, such as a special aid package to help finance the development of Iron Dome, a missile-defense system designed to shoot down portable short-range rockets. Under Obama, U.S. diplomats have helped defeat the Palestinian campaign for recognition by the U.N. On Friday, Obama signed into law the U.S.-Israel Enhanced Cooperation Act, a bill that extends loan guarantees for Israel and authorizes more spending on Israeli defense.
Solow said the Obama campaign is just getting started to make this case to Jewish voters in swing states and to donors. At the same time, he acknowledged that Obama's initial efforts at making peace between Israel and the Palestinians have not been successful.
"We have been trying to solve this problem since 1948-no president has been 100 percent successful in achieving peace between Israel and its neighbors," he said. "I give President Obama lots of credit in trying to untie this knot. He tried some things that didn't work, and in response to things that didn't work, he made adjustments to his policy."
For now however, Obama will be making this case without the benefit of a major new lobby group, J Street, whose executive director in 2009 said it would be Obama's "blocking back" in Congress and supported Obama's more confrontational approach with Netanyahu in 2009 and 2010. "We have many supporters from across the Jewish spectrum including some who are affiliated with J Street," Solow said. "J Street as an organization does not play a role in the campaign." Jessica Rosenblum, J Street's director of communications, confirmed that her organization was not playing a role in the reelection campaign. "Our work is focused on advocating for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our political action committee focuses on House and Senate races."

ROMNEY'S GAFFE JOINS QUAYLE'S POTATOE ON GORE'S INTERNET (BLOOM)
By Julie Hirschfeld Davis
Bloomberg News, July 27, 2012
Was this Mitt Romney's "potatoe" moment?
The presumed Republican presidential nominee's brief stay in London came off more like a blooper reel than a statesman's first audition on the international stage.
The visit recalled candidate slip-ups of years past - from Dan Quayle's misspelling of potato to Al Gore's claim of inventing the Internet - questioning whether Romney's could do lasting damage to his image and electoral prospects.
"From the point of view of diplomacy and the original intent and nature of the trip, it looks like a real foot-in-the- mouth moment for Romney," said Michael Silverstein, a professor of anthropology, linguistics and psychology at the University of Chicago who co-wrote a forthcoming book about communication in presidential politics. "It's really a question of how this will continue - or not - to reverberate, and what are its consequences?"
U.S. political history is rife with embarrassing tales of candidate slips that took on lives of their own, sometimes forming lasting tropes about the politician in question.
There was former President George H.W. Bush's much- lampooned moment of amazement when he encountered a supermarket scanner at a 1992 grocer's convention. It opened him to ridicule as out of touch with American life outside the cloistered confines of the White House.
Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, drew ridicule for ordering a Philadelphia cheese steak sandwich with Swiss cheese and dressing in head-to- toe camouflage for a campaign trail photo-opportunity going goose-hunting. Both were seen as Kerry's tin-eared efforts to portray himself as something he was not.
Quayle, who served with Bush, couldn't shake his reputation as an intellectual lightweight after he corrected a sixth grader during a visit to a Trenton, New Jersey, school, saying the child had left

the "e" off the end of the word "potato."
Quayle would later write in his autobiography that it was "a defining moment of the worst kind imaginable."
Enter Romney, who had scarcely been on the ground in London a few hours when he came under withering criticism from leaders and media there for having cast doubt on the success of the summer Olympic games.
"You know, it's hard to know just how well it will turn out," Romney told NBC in an interview, adding that reports of security problems were "disconcerting."
The comments prompted a tart retort by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who noted that, "Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere" - an implicit reference to the games Romney chaired in 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah.
London Mayor Boris Johnson worked a crowd of 80,000 into a lather referring to the candidate as "a guy called Mitt Romney" who was questioning whether his city could handle the games. "Are we ready? Yes we are!" he yelled.
Romney, wrote The Telegraph newspaper, "is perhaps the only politician who could start a trip that was supposed to be a charm offensive by being utterly devoid of charm and mildly offensive." The Sun tabloid labeled him "Mitt the Twit."
It wasn't over yet. In damage-control mode, Romney slipped again yesterday, as he tried to praise London's management of the Olympics in an interview with NBC, calling it "impressive" that spectators could watch events from downtown.
"You're going to be able to be just in the backside of 10 Downing Street for beach volleyball," Romney said.
The mistakes may not have much shelf-life, given that they occurred overseas and will soon be overtaken by the Olympic Games, said political science professor Steven Frantzich.
"The ones that are damaging are ones that really reflect a candidate's character or ability, and particularly ones that are repeated so that it becomes a storyline of its own," said Frantzich, who teaches at U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and has written a book about political gaffes.
"At this point, I don't think we're going to look back and say, 'That was the moment in which Mitt Romney lost the election.'" Frantzich said. "Now, if there is a longer series of missteps, there may be a story that this carefully managed campaign could be coming apart at the seams."
The former Massachusetts governor's allies say Americans couldn't care less about perceived insults and mistakes in England.
"We're not worried about overseas headlines - we're worried about voters back here at home in America," Louisiana Republican Governor Bobby Jindal told reporters during a conference call July 26.
Still, one top aide did try to change the subject. Beth Myers, who is heading Romney's vice presidential search, tantalized reporters and others by taking to the social media site Twitter urging them to follow politicians believed to be on the short list - and then she listed 13 names, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a prospective pick that no party strategist considers serious.
Still, some gaffes - however silly or overblown - can help dash presidential hopes. When Gerald Ford fell down the stairs of Air Force One while waving to supporters, he was satirized by Chevy Chase on "Saturday Night Live" as clumsy and dim, doing lasting damage to his reputation.
Vice President Joe Biden, a Democrat, has had his share of bloopers - such as when he asked a wheelchair-bound man at a campaign event to, "Stand up - let 'em see you!" --yet the miscues are rarely seen as a major liability.
"Since virtually all of his over-speakings are of the genial, hail-fellow-well-met sort, he gets away with it," Silverstein said.
That's not the case for Romney, he added, in part because of how tightly his campaign manages media and public access to the candidate.
"The strategy seems to involve large clumps of silence or avoidance, and that's never really a good way of trying to fashion an image or personality," Silverstein said. "When gaffes are taken to be little breakthrough windows into the real self, then you have a problem."

TAYLOR MORRIS GIVEN PURPLE HEART (WATCEDFA)

By Pat Kinney
Waterloo and Cedar Falls (IA) Courier, July 28, 2012
WASHINGTON, D.C. --- A Cedar Falls sailor who lost portions of all four limbs in a May bomb blast in Afghanistan was personally awarded the Purple Heart by President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden at the White House on Thursday.
Obama and Biden presented the medal to Taylor Morris in the company of his girlfriend, Danielle Kelly, his mother, Juli Morris, and sister Claire Morris during a White House tour for about 40 "wounded warriors" and their families.
Kelly said the foursome were posing for a group photo with other tour members when they were taken aside an escorted into a private room. Obama and Biden walked in.
Kelly said she originally thought the president was simply stopping for a quick hello, having met Taylor twice previously at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at a July 4 White House picnic.
"He (Obama) said 'Taylor Morris. I'm going to have to buy a cot for you at the White House, I've got something for you"" Kelly recalled. The president then pulled out a case containing a Purple Heart, as Biden read the official citiation relating how Morris earned the medal.
The Purple Heart is given to military personnel wounded in combat. Morris, a bomb disposal expert was accompanying a unit of U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers, clearing explosive ordnance, when one went off under him.
Kelly said she and Taylor were totally surprised. Officials told Juli Morris in advanced but asked her to keep the event a surprise for the couple.
The bittersweet part of the event, Juli said, is that Dan Morris, was unable to attend due to the short notice. In fact, Taylor had just completed a morning workout and was wearing a T-shirt, shorts and a headband.
Kelly said Taylor continues his recovery and improving his mobility and use of artificial limbs.
A mid-October fundraising event is planned in Cedar Falls. Kelly said it's one of Taylor's goals to be home for that.

NEW PROGRAM TO TRAIN SOCIAL WORKERS TO HELP TROOPS (AP)
Associated Press, July 27, 2012
WASHINGTON - A new program is being launched to train thousands of social workers on how to aid troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.
First lady Michelle Obama's "Joining Forces" campaign says the training will help workers spot problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse and the danger signs for homelessness and suicide.
Mrs. Obama's partner in the campaign, Jill Biden, the vice president's wife, says social workers are "uniquely positioned" to help vets and military families.
The program – being run by a social workers' professional association – includes online courses and new standards and credentialing. It's being offered to 650,000 social workers nationwide.

JOINING FORCES EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS, DIRECTOR SAYS (AFPS)
By Lisa Daniel
American Forces Press Service, July 28, 2012
When First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden started the "Joining Forces" campaign 15 months ago, they did so with the goal of creating impactful and lasting health, education and employment support for military families.
The campaign had two significant achievements this week that its director, Navy Capt. Brad Cooper, told me hit both of those marks.
First, North Carolina became the 26th state to pass a law making it easier for military spouses to transfer their professional licenses. (Read more.) South Carolina and Hawaii passed similar laws in recent weeks, potentially affecting tens of thousands of military spouses, Cooper said. With similar legislation pending in California, Ohio and New Jersey, the campaign is "exceeding our expectations" in getting laws passed in all 50 states by the end of 2014, he said.
"As I take step back and look this – and my dad was an Army officer – this signals a pretty remarkable cultural shift," Cooper said. "I remember my mother - as well as my wife, spouses of my friends - were reluctant even to indicate they were military spouses" to prospective employers, he said.

Second, the National Association of Social Workers, at its annual convention here this week, announced it is launching a free, online training course for all social workers to better understand the unique needs of military families. It also is providing a set of standards for working with veterans and military families, and is creating a professional Credential for Social Work with Veterans and Military Families. (Read more.)
Social workers are considered the nation's frontline mental health services providers, and they practice in every county in the country. The NASW represents 650,000 of them. Its pledge to Joining Forces follows that of the four largest nursing associations, representing 3 million nurses, and the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, with 105 and 25 schools, respectively, in training doctors to serve military families and veterans. The Association of Marriage and Therapy Therapists also has signed on, as well as associations representing psychiatrists, psychologists and surgeons.
"This really represents, to me, not just the impactful piece, but the sustaining piece," Cooper said.
Spouses' and veterans' employment also has made major strides, Cooper said. More than 2,000 companies have signed on already hiring 25,000 spouses and 65,000 veterans, and pledging to hire another 175,000 in the next two years, helping bring down the veterans' unemployment rate, he said.
"This really is the largest outreach and advocacy efforts we've had on behalf of veterans and their families for years," Cooper said.
Joining Forces has been successful, he said, because "we've been able to breach through years and years of bureaucracy and bring people together and focus them on the effort." All they needed was leadership and direction, he added.
"People, generally, want to be helpful," Cooper said. "They don't always know what they can do. Our objective is to steer them to meaningful action."
Joining Forces' efforts have caught the attention of military spouses.
This entry was posted on July 27, 2012, 5:55 pm and is filed under Family Matters. You can follow any responses to this entry through RSS 2.0. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS:

THE LONG, UPHILL BATTLE AGAINST AIDS (NYT)
New York Times, July 28, 2012
The international AIDS conference in Washington has already made two points clear. There is no prospect that scientists will any time soon find the ultimate solutions to the AIDS epidemic, namely a vaccine that would prevent infection with the AIDS virus or a "cure" for people already infected with the virus. Even so, health care leaders already have many tools that have been shown in rigorous trials to prevent transmission of the virus, making it feasible to talk of controlling the epidemic within the foreseeable future. The only question is whether the nations of the world are willing to put up enough money and make the effort to do it.
An estimated 34.2 million people around the world are currently infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. According to the United Nations agency that tracks the disease, some 23.5 million of these live in sub-Saharan Africa and another 4.2 million in India and Southeast Asia. About 1.1 million live in the United States.
This conference is the first in more than two decades to be held in the United States. It became possible only when a benighted policy that prohibited entry visas for people suffering from AIDS or infected with H.I.V. was finally overturned in 2009. It was "a bad policy, based on faulty science, that ran contrary to America's deepest values," Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, told the conference.
There has been optimistic talk at the conference about accelerating the search for a "cure" that would allow people to eventually stop taking the drugs that have prolonged many lives for decades - and about developing a truly effective vaccine. But Dr. Anthony Fauci, the American government's top AIDS expert, made clear just how difficult those tasks will be. He told the conference that a cure was "way upstream" and depends on future research breakthroughs, and he called the most successful vaccine trial to date "humbling" because it showed only a modest degree of efficacy.

Instead of waiting for these future possibilities, Dr. Fauci and other health leaders are proposing the broad adoption of other available tools to reduce the spread of the virus so as to produce an "AIDS-free generation," a goal enunciated last year by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. In her talk at the conference this week, Mrs. Clinton anticipated a time when virtually no child anywhere would be born with the virus, teenagers and young adults would have much less risk of becoming infected and those that do become infected would have access to treatments to prevent them from developing full-fledged AIDS or passing the virus on to others.

She cited the importance of condoms, counseling and testing; voluntary circumcision to protect males from becoming infected by a female partner; treating mothers to prevent transmission to their babies; and treating infected people with antiviral drugs as early as possible to enhance their own health and lessen the likelihood they will spread the virus to others. Studies also show that people at high risk of infection can protect themselves by taking an antiviral pill daily.

All that will take money. There is a widespread misconception that donors from well-heeled international organizations, rich countries and charitable foundations are the main source of money to combat the global epidemic. The share provided by international donors has, in fact, stagnated while the share provided by low- and middle-income countries to fight the epidemic on their own turf has been growing rapidly. Last year, the poorer countries invested $8.6 billion of their own money while international financing remained at $8.2 billion, the 2008 level, according to a report from the United Nations AIDS agency. Both groups will need to expand their contributions to meet ambitious treatment and prevention goals set for coming years.

Mrs. Clinton announced additional financing for AIDS programs, but perhaps her most important pledge was that the United States will issue a blueprint by Dec. 1 setting forth a road map for how to achieve an AIDS-free generation. To be effective, it will need to set priorities and define specific health outcomes and coverage targets and require detailed annual reports on the progress being made. It is unacceptable that millions of people sick enough to need treatment are not getting it.

PAYDAY PROFITS (NYT)

New York Times, July 28, 2012

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which failed to control the reckless mortgage lending that helped cause the financial crisis, is widely regarded as a pushover among federal regulators. But the agency showed some welcome muscle and concern for consumer protection during a House hearing this week when it vigorously opposed a bill that would accelerate the growth of payday-style lenders who peddle predatory loans that can carry interest rates of 400 percent or more.

The bill would dilute the power of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which currently has authority over these lenders, by shifting primary oversight to the comptroller's office, whose central mission does not involve consumer protection. The bill would pre-empt state licensing and most consumer protection laws, allowing the payday-loan industry to expand even in states that have restricted it in the past to protect their citizens from abusive lending policies.

Payday loans are advertised as a convenient, short-term option for people who need a small loan that they quickly repay in full, often two weeks later. But the industry relies for its considerable profits on the fact that it can easily turn these short-term loans into long-term debt.

Struggling workers who borrow a few hundred dollars at a time are frequently unable to pay on time, which means they must borrow again right away or pay extension fees that enrich the lender but are not applied to principal. After four months, for example, a customer who has borrowed $400 for a fee of $60 will have paid about $480 - and will still owe the original $400.

In some cases, people might take out more than a dozen loans in a year, or borrow from one payday lender to pay another, digging themselves ever deeper into debt. Beyond that, studies have shown that payday-loan customers are more likely than others to default on credit card debt, file for bankruptcy protection or lose bank accounts for abusing overdraft policies.

According to a new study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, many states have either disallowed payday lending or set price caps so low that the lenders go elsewhere. Under the bill in the House, however, the comptroller's office would issue charters to the lenders, overriding state laws that now regulate the terms of a loan. Worse still, the bill is disingenuously cast as a compassionate measure that would help the very poor and "unbanked" citizens who would be most hurt by it.

Speaking at a House Financial Services subcommittee hearing this week, Grovetta Gardineer, the

deputy comptroller for compliance policy, demolished this pretense, noting that the industry was "based on a business model that is not sustainable from the perspective of low- and moderate-income customers - high fees, repetitive use, high defaults and severely weak legal compliance." Indeed, she said, the lending encouraged by the bill had already been found by the comptroller's office "to be unsafe and unsound and unfair to consumers."

THE TIME FOR PATIENCE IN SYRIA IS OVER (WP)
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
AMERICA'S LONG paralysis in responding to the conflict in Syria is coming home to roost. Outside Aleppo, one of the oldest cities in the world, Syrian forces are massing for a possible assault on opposition fighters. President Bashar al-Assad has sent fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters and armored columns, threatening tens of thousands of terrified civilians.
When peaceful protest broke out in Syria last year, there was hope for a transition that would be turbulent but not violent. Mr. Assad chose instead to open fire on the protesters. President Obama called on Mr. Assad to leave office, a proper reaction to the brutality. But Mr. Obama has not backed his words with actions that might help them come true.
For a long while, the administration tried to give diplomacy a chance, saying it hoped to bring Russia, Syria's ally, into the effort. It was never realistic to expect autocrat Vladi-mir Putin to assist in the overthrow of a fellow autocrat, and Russia predictably refused.
Another argument for remaining on the sidelines was that the opposition is fractured or ineffective and includes unknown or extremist elements. But if the administration is committed to Mr. Assad's downfall, those weaknesses argue for more, not less, U.S. involvement, to get a better read on opposition forces and to encourage those less inclined toward sectarianism.
"We cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy," Mr. Obama said when civilians in another Arab city - Libya's Benghazi - were threatened as Aleppo's are now. There are important distinctions between the conflict in Syria and the conflict in Libya, in which the United States, European allies and Arab states intervened. Mr. Assad's forces are better armed. Syria has three times Libya's population. There was stronger international support for action in Libya. But the broad challenge to the United States remains the same. Are we going to stand back and watch Aleppo turn into a shooting gallery?
No one is arguing for a Libyan-style intervention into Syria at this point. But the United States and its NATO allies could begin contingency planning for a no-fly zone, now that Mr. Assad is deploying aircraft against the opposition. Instead of providing only non-lethal support, such as medical supplies and communications gear, America could help supply weapons to the outgunned opposition fighters. It could work with Turkey and other allies to set up havens for them.
All of these moves contain risks. But those must be weighed against the danger of inaction - a long civil war that could spill across Syria's borders.
Yes, this is an election season, and Americans are fatigued from a decade of war. But global leadership does not take a timeout, and sometimes it has to lead toward a consensus, not wait for one to form. "The United States has been, and will remain, the one indispensable nation in world affairs," the president declared in a speech last week. Fine words.

IS THE US CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM DYSFUNCTIONAL? (WP)
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
NO GOVERNMENT can function without secrets. In national security, they are necessary to protect military operations, intelligence sources and methods, and sensitive deliberations and communications. The United States has created a system that gives about 4.8 million people, both government employees and contractors, access to classified materials, labeled confidential, secret or top secret.
J. William Leonard knows this system well. He served in the Defense Department, where in the 1990s he had responsibility for policies on classified information, and from 2002 to 2008 he was the director of the Information Security Oversight Office, the "classification czar."
Mr. Leonard was hoping to be an expert witness at the trial of Thomas Drake, a former National Security Agency official charged in 2010 with 10 felony counts for passing information to a Baltimore Sun reporter in 2006 and 2007. The case collapsed in June 2011; Mr. Drake agreed to plead guilty to a single misdemeanor of exceeding the authorized use of his government computer.

As a result, Mr. Leonard never got to testify. But he had something important to say about the system of keeping secrets at a time when so much concern is being expressed about leaks.
A document at the center of the Drake case was a classified e-mail summarizing an agency meeting. The e-mail was titled "What a Wonderful Success." It is an innocuous, self-congratulatory message to a team for its presentation to the director, Gen. Keith Alexander. Two paragraphs were classified "secret." Now that the e-mail has been released, everyone can see what was so sensitive. One of the paragraphs included the hush-hush fact - be careful if you finish reading this sentence - that Gen. Alexander left a conference room and greeted people in a lab who had worked to make sure the demonstration was a success.
According to an affidavit by Mr. Leonard, the e-mail "contained no information which met the standards of the classification system." He added, "I have seen many equally egregious examples of inappropriate assignment of classification controls to information that does not meet the standards for classification; however, I was prepared to testify that I have never seen a more willful example."
He subsequently told Ellen Nakashima of The Post that the episode underscores how our classification system is becoming "dysfunctional." Mr. Leonard added, "Specifically, the system clearly lacks the ability to differentiate between trivial information and that which can truly damage our nation's well-being." He pointed out that while people with clearances are being punished for disclosing supposedly classified information, almost no one is ever punished for over-classification.
The more that classification is used to hide the trivial, inconvenient or embarrassing, the less useful it is for genuine national security secrets. A democracy needs to balance secrecy with openness. While leaks can be damaging, excessive concealment is also corrosive, undermining trust and credibility in the very policies that the government seeks to protect.

MR. CUCCINELLI'S ABORTION CRUSADE (WP)
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
KEN CUCCINELLI II, the most overtly partisan attorney general in Virginia's history, has waged war on Obamacare, harassed climate-change scientists, sanctioned discrimination against homosexuals and embraced Arizona's (now mostly gutted) immigration law. He has clung to his post after declaring his candidacy for governor, thereby parting ways with past attorneys general, Republicans and Democrats alike, who resigned to run rather than entangle the office in politics.
Now, true to this record, Mr. Cuccinelli (R) has given a boost to the crusade to limit abortion rights, a cause he championed for years as a legislator: He refused to certify draft regulations governing abortion clinics, which had been watered down by the state Board of Health last month.
The move is classic Cuccinelli: ideological activism masquerading as professional legal "advice." It was accompanied by his office's usual disclaimer, issued by a spokesman who insisted that Mr. Cuccinelli's personal views had not colored his legal opinion. The merits suggest otherwise.
Mr. Cuccinelli's intervention is not the last word. The dispute will be kicked upstairs to Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R), who, despite his own anti-abortion views, has been somewhat more circumspect about foisting his conservative agenda on a politically moderate state.
Mr. McDonnell signed legislation last year to classify abortion clinics like hospitals, which are subject to exacting standards governing the size of treatment rooms, the width of hallways and doorways, the number of parking spaces and so forth. The purpose of the legislation, which does not apply to other outpatient clinics performing plastic or oral surgery, was to force the closure of most of the state's 21 abortion clinics, which could ill afford the costly retrofitting the regulations would -require.
But the governor left the details of implementation to the Board of Health. Last month the board ruled that the state's existing clinics are exempt from the new regulations, which would apply only to new clinics.
Mr. Cuccinelli argues that the law covers existing clinics. But as the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups have pointed out, Virginia law has not been generally interpreted to mandate that existing facilities meet new construction standards. When the Board of Health amended in 2006 its regulations covering hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient surgical facilities, it made clear that the rules applied to new construction, not existing structures.
Advocates of the legislation insist its intent is to protect women's health. But they offered no

evidence to suggest that the state's clinics, where most of Virginia's 25,000 abortions annually are performed, are dangerous, unsanitary or slipshod in any way.
The law's real purpose is to use extrajudicial means to roll back abortion rights, conferred by the Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade, by making the procedure inaccessible to most women in the commonwealth. The Board of Health has taken a courageous stand to ensure that women retain that access. Rather than further politicize the issue, Mr. McDonnell should let the board's decision stand.

WHERE'S THE OUTRAGE? (NYT)
By Charles M. Blow
New York Times, July 28, 2012
Are too many Democratic voters sleepwalking away from our democracy this election cycle, not nearly outraged enough about Big Money's undue influence and Republican state legislatures changing the voting rules?
It seems so.
A Gallup poll released this week found that: "Democrats are significantly less likely now (39 percent) than they were in the summers of 2004 and 2008 to say they are 'more enthusiastic about voting than usual' in the coming presidential election." Republicans are more enthusiastic than they were before the last election.
Some of that may be the effect of having a Democratic president in office; it's sometimes easier to marshal anger against an incumbent than excitement for him. Whatever the reason, this lack of enthusiasm at this critical juncture in the election is disturbing for Democrats.
First, there's the specter of the oligarchy lingering over this election, which disproportionately benefits Republicans. According to a report by Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont, "So far this year, 26 billionaires have donated more than $61 million to super PACs, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. And that's only what has been publicly disclosed." That didn't include "about $100 million that Sheldon Adelson has said that he is willing to spend to defeat President Obama; or the $400 million that the Koch brothers have pledged to spend during the 2012 election season."
During a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on Tuesday, Sanders put it this way: "What the Supreme Court did in Citizens United is to say to these same billionaires and the corporations they control: 'You own and control the economy; you own Wall Street; you own the coal companies; you own the oil companies. Now, for a very small percentage of your wealth, we're going to give you the opportunity to own the United States government.' "
Then, of course, there's the widespread voter suppression mostly enacted by Republican-led legislatures.
According to the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, at least 180 restrictive voting bills were introduced since the beginning of 2011 in 41 states, and "16 states have passed restrictive voting laws that have the potential to impact the 2012 election" because they "account for 214 electoral votes, or nearly 79 percent of the total needed to win the presidency."
A provision most likely to disenfranchise voters is a requirement that people show photo identification to vote. Millions of Americans don't have these forms of ID, and many can't easily obtain them, even when states say they'll offer them free, because getting the documentation to obtain the "free" ID takes time and money.
This is a solution in search of a problem. The in-person voter ID requirements only prevent someone from impersonating another voter at the polls, an occurrence that the Brennan Center points out is "more rare than being struck by lightning."
The voting rights advocates I've talked to don't resist all ID requirements (though they don't say they are all necessary, either). They simply say that multiple forms of identification like student ID and Social Security cards should also be accepted, and that alternate ways for people without IDs to vote should be included. Many of these laws don't allow for such flexibility.
Make no mistake about it, these requirements are not about the integrity of the vote but rather the disenfranchisement of voters. This is about tilting the table so that more of the marbles roll to the Republican corner.
Look at it this way: We have been moving toward wider voter participation for a century. States

began to issue driver's licenses more than a century ago and began to include photos on those licenses decades ago. Yet, as the Brennan Center points out, "prior to the 2006 election, no state required its voters to show government-issued photo ID at the polls (or elsewhere) in order to vote."
Furthermore, most voter laws have emerged in the last two years. What is the difference between previous decades and today? The election of Barack Obama. It is no coincidence that some of the people least likely to have proper IDs to vote are the ones that generally vote Democratic and were strong supporters of Obama last election: young people, the poor and minorities.
Republicans are leveraging the deep pockets of anti-Obama billionaires and sinister voter suppression tactics that harken back to Jim Crow to wrest power from the hands of docile Democrats.
There is little likely to be done about the Big Money before the election, and, although some of the voter suppression laws are being challenged in court, the outcome of those cases is uncertain.
These elements are not within voters' control, but two things are: energy and alertness.
If Democrats don't wake up soon, this election might not just be won or lost, it could be bought or stolen.

LAND OF THE MEGA-VOTERS (NYT)
By Gail Collins
New York Times, July 28, 2012
"No! No! No!" cried Heidi Heitkamp. She's the Democratic senatorial candidate in North Dakota. I had just asked her whether residents of her state think it's unfair that, in the Senate, each North Dakota voter has the clout of approximately 50 Californians.
She doesn't.
That was the top thing I had always wondered about the politics of North Dakota, whose two U.S. senators serve a population of around 680,000. (Campaign-wise, it resembles the Iowa caucuses. Voters expect to have met the candidates personally. Sometimes they seem to expect the candidates to invite them home for dinner.)
I was wandering around the state this week, mulling its Senate race. Really, we can't possibly focus on Barack Obama and Mitt Romney for another three months without an occasional reprieve.
So, North Dakota. Heitkamp, a former attorney general, is running against Representative Rick Berg, the state's sole member of the House. In the beginning, the national Democrats wrote this one off as a long shot at best, but Heitkamp seems to have, at minimum, pulled even. On the campaign trail, she's a happy warrior with the endless energy you'd need if you were running for office in a state where there's a two-hour drive between even the smaller clumps of voters. She also has a dramatic story that centers on the year 2000, when she ran for governor and was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer, but she stayed in the race, campaigning even while she had chemotherapy and her trademark red hair fell out. She lost but seems to have made an indelible imprint on the public.
(The other happy Senate surprise for the Democrats is Arizona, where the party somehow came up with a Hispanic physician who is a disabled Vietnam veteran and former surgeon general for the Bush administration, as well as the hero of several dramatic rescues, during one of which he shot a deranged suspected murderer. I believe I speak for all the political hopefuls in America when I say that the bar for a potential upset win is being set unacceptably high.)
As soon as the North Dakota Senate race began, Republican super PACs began beating Heitkamp with the health care mallet. "Heidi endorsed Obamacare," says one much-aired ad that features a very brief tape of Heitkamp saying, with no apparent enthusiasm, "It actually is a budget saver." In response, she almost always brings the discussion back to her own story. Her next ad began with Heitkamp discussing her bout with cancer and adding, "When you live through that, political attack ads seem silly."
"I have a pretty well-known pre-existing condition," she says dryly.
My second big North Dakota question was why, if the voters were really obsessed about the economy and jobs, jobs, jobs, the state wasn't tilting toward Obama. True, North Dakota hasn't gone for a Democratic presidential candidate since Lyndon Johnson. But things are great! The unemployment rate is around 3 percent and close to zero in the areas around the booming oil

industry. The farmers weren't hit by the drought, and their crops are going to be worth a fortune at harvest time.
Much of this good news occurred on the president's watch. Does he get credit? The answer, once again, is no, no, no.
"If Heidi is elected, I won't lose sleep. She'll do a great job," said E. Ward Koeser, the mayor of the oil-boom town of Williston, a Republican who has endorsed Berg. "If Barack Obama gets elected, I'll lose sleep."
"Leadership means you take people who are polarized and get them together. I don't think he was that good at building relations," said Heitkamp, trying to explain her state's antipathy toward Obama. "When people are mad at me, I always try to stand next to them for 20 minutes. They can't stay mad."
We will not try to envision the president using that tactic on John Boehner. But Heitkamp says she'll be voting for Obama in November - because Mitt Romney supports the House Republican budget.
"People ask me why, and I point to that budget," she says.
In 2010, North Dakota voters were furious about the national debt and the horrors they'd heard about Obamacare, and they tossed out virtually every Democratic incumbent they could get their hands on. Now Heitkamp is betting that the House budget, with its Medicare restructuring and dramatic program cuts will seem even more radical to the emotionally conservative North Dakotans than the stimulus or health care law. "There's $180 billion in farm cuts in there," she said, launching into a litany of government aid it would strip away from North Dakota.
Berg says the House budget is thrifty and represents the "North Dakota way of doing things." We shall see. It's up to the North Dakota voters. A very small number of North Dakota voters.
Eat your heart out, California.

ADDRESSING POVERTY IN SCHOOLS (NYT)
By Joe Nocera
New York Times, July 28, 2012
About two years ago, Dr. Pamela Cantor gave a speech at a Congressional retreat put together by the Aspen Institute. Her talk was entitled "Innovative Designs for Persistently Low-Performing Schools."
Cantor is a psychiatrist who specializes in childhood trauma. After 9/11, her organization, the Children's Mental Health Alliance, was asked by New York City's Department of Education to assess the impact of the attack on the city's public school children. What she found were plenty of traumatized children - but less because of the terrorist attack than because of the simple fact that so many of them were growing up in poverty.
"If children are under stress, the ways they respond are remarkably similar," she says. "They get sad, distracted, aggressive, and tune out." That is what she saw in the high-poverty schools she visited. Chaos reigned. The most disruptive children dominated the schools. Teachers didn't have control of their classrooms - in part because nothing in their training had taught them how to deal with traumatized children. Too many students had no model of what school was supposed to mean. "These were schools that were not ready to be schools," she said.
The traditional therapist's response, of course, is to recommend therapy for traumatized children. But that's an impossible solution in a big-city school of 1,000 or more students. Still, Dr. Cantor wondered, would it be possible to design schools that could, in her words, "address the issues poverty poses as they present in the classroom?" She came to the belief that the answer was yes, and, in 2002, she founded a new organization, Turnaround for Children. It's what she's been doing ever since.
Part of the reason this work strikes me as so important is the obvious: there are an immense number of children growing up in poverty - one out of three in New York City alone. The good charter schools can take only a tiny fraction of those children; the rest are in public school, far too many of which are dysfunctional.
The second reason, though, is that Turnaround is trying to bridge an important divide. Part of the debate over school reform is about poverty itself, with the reformers taking the view that a great teacher can overcome the barriers poverty poses, while the other side says that the problems of public schools can't be solved until poverty itself is alleviated. Cantor is suggesting an alternative

way of thinking - that students in public schools can do well if the issues they face are dealt with head-on, instead of sidestepped.
I have space to give only the barest outline of how it works. A three-person Turnaround team embeds in a group of schools for three to five years. One works with the principal to create a positive, disciplined culture, where students come to believe they can succeed in school. One works with teachers, showing them tools, for instance, that will allow them to handle disruptions while keeping the other students on track. The third is a social worker who helps train the school social workers to help with the psychological and emotional needs of children in poverty, while identifying the most troubled students, the ones who can drive the entire school. Instead of suspending them, or expelling them, though, Turnaround contracts with mental health organizations to provide them with services. That sends an important signal to the other students.
I should stress that even after a decade, Turnaround is still an experiment, and relatively small. In 2008, it underwent an independent evaluation by the American Institutes for Research, which showed that its schools had far fewer disruptions and were generally calmer, safer, indeed, happier places. But that same evaluation suggested that Turnaround needed to put more emphasis on improving the academic environment in the classroom. That is what Dr. Cantor and her team are implementing now.
Which brings me back to that speech she gave a few years ago. In it, she laid out her ideas about the importance of facing poverty squarely in schools. They struck a chord. Since then, she has spent a great deal of time in Washington, where officials both in Congress and the White House have been receptive to these ideas. In May, a group of White House officials visited a Turnaround school in Washington, where they were impressed by what they saw. Ultimately, if Dr. Cantor's ideas gain enough momentum in Washington, they could become part of what the federal government - and school districts across the country - expect from schools.
By refusing to accept the status quo, school reformers kicked off an important movement, long overdue. Although I happen to think there is an overemphasis on test scores, the demand for teacher accountability has also been an important step.
Creating schools that are designed from the start to deal with the predicable challenges of poverty - it is the most important thing we can do next.

THE POLITICS OF HORSE BALLET (WP)
By Dana Milbank
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
The animal kingdom has been inhospitable to Mitt Romney in this election cycle.
First there was the damaging story of Seamus, the Irish setter he strapped to the roof of the Romneys' car on a family trip.
Now it seems that, when it comes to Romney's political aspirations, Seamus may not be the most dangerous animal in the family menagerie. This past week belonged to Rafalca, the dancing horse.
Rafalca, a 15-year-old Oldenburg mare owned in part by the Romneys, qualified as a member of the U.S. Olympic team and will compete in London in the dressage competition - a form of ballet for horses and their riders in which the animals do pirouettes and serpentines. They also do piaffes, which, according to the International Equestrian Federation, is a "highly collected, cadenced, elevated diagonal movement" in which "the haunches with active hocks are well engaged." Rafalca, after qualifying, flew across the Atlantic on a FedEx jet (no, they didn't strap her to the roof) and reportedly dined on an in-flight meal of watermelon.
Understandably, Romney was wary about discussing dressage when NBC's Brian Williams asked him in London on Wednesday about his equine Olympian. "You actually have a horse in the race. What's that gonna be like?"
"Well," Romney replied. "It's - a big - exciting experience for my wife and - and for the person that she's worked with, the trainer of the horse who's riding the horse. And - obviously, it's fun to be part of the Olympics in any way you can be part of them."
Williams followed up: "When is the event, and for those of us who don't follow the sport, what happens? Are there rounds that - of competition? Is there just one chance? What happens?"
Romney pleaded ignorance. "I have to tell you, this is Ann's sport. I'm not even sure which day the sport goes on. She will get the chance to see it, I will not - be - watching - the event. I hope - her

horse does well."
It was arguably Romney's worst interview since Chris Wallace asked him about Seamus. The flustered candidate went on to disparage the British preparation for the Olympics, setting off an international incident.
It's understandable that Romney would be reluctant to discuss dressage. Seamus may have made him look odd, or insensitive. Rafalca makes him look like a super-rich playboy.
John Kerry was made to look effete in 2004 by Republican mockery of his windsurfing, his Turnbull & Asser shirts and his French fluency. Now Democrats have a chance to do something similar to Romney, with his Swiss bank account, his Grand Cayman and Bermuda tax havens, his multiple homes, his $10,000 bet, his friends who own NASCAR teams, and now the six-figure horses his wife imports from Europe. Nothing says "man of the people" quite like horse ballet.
Ann Romney takes umbrage at the criticism, saying that dressage has helped with her multiple sclerosis. That was enough to get the Democratic National Committee to back away from a video campaign showing Rafalca spliced with Mitt Romney "dancing around" questions about his tax returns.
While it's heartening that Ann Romney has been helped by the horses, most MS sufferers don't have the luxury of importing $100,000 horses from Europe. And the candidate's disavowal of dressage as "Ann's sport" isn't quite right.
In an interview with the Web site Chronicle of the Horse, Rafalca's trainer, Jan Ebeling, said Mitt Romney selected the music for the horse's routine at an international competition; Ebeling, in another interview, said the former Massachusetts governor, inspired by his wife, "really enjoys the horses." Romney joined his wife at an Olympic qualifying dressage event in April 2008, and the couple declared a $77,731 loss on their 2010 tax returns for their share of Rafalca's care.
That's a lot of hay (and another possible reason for the candidate's disinclination to release more tax returns), but consider what the Romneys get for their money: a horse that can do not only a Reinback, a Shoulder-in and a Travers, but a Flying Change of Leg, a Renvers and a Half-Pass.
"The object of Dressage is the development of the Horse into a happy Athlete through harmonious education," the equestrian federation explains. "As a result, it makes the Horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen."
Sounds as if this is worth seeing. For the record, the dressage events begin Aug. 2 at Greenwich Park. You can bet Mitt Romney won't be there.

BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON THE FEDERAL LEVIATHAN (WP)
By George F. Will
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
The huge humpback whale whose friendliness precipitated a surreal seven-year - so far - federal hunt for criminality surely did not feel put upon. Nevertheless, our unhinged government, with an obsession like that of Melville's Ahab, has crippled Nancy Black's scientific career, cost her more than $100,000 in legal fees - so far - and might sentence her to 20 years in prison. This Kafkaesque burlesque of law enforcement began when someone whistled.
Black, 50, a marine biologist who also captains a whale-watching ship, was with some watchers in Monterey Bay in 2005 when a member of her crew whistled at the humpback that had approached her boat, hoping to entice the whale to linger. Back on land, another of her employees called the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ask if the whistling constituted "harassment" of a marine mammal, which is an "environmental crime." NOAA requested a video of the episode, which Black sent after editing it slightly to highlight the whistling. NOAA found no harassment - but got her indicted for editing the tape, calling this a "material false statement" to federal investigators, which is a felony under the 1863 False Claims Act, intended to punish suppliers defrauding the government during the Civil War.
A year after this bizarre charge - that she lied about the interaction with the humpback that produced no charges - more than a dozen federal agents, led by one from NOAA, raided her home. They removed her scientific photos, business files and computers. Call this a fishing expedition.
She has also been charged with the crime of feeding killer whales when she and two aides were in a dinghy observing them feeding on strips of blubber torn from their prey - a gray whale.
To facilitate photographing the killers' feeding habits, she cut a hole in one of the floating slabs of

blubber and, through the hole, attached a rope to stabilize the slab while a camera on a pole recorded the whales' underwater eating.
So she is charged with "feeding" killer whales that were already feeding on a gray whale they had killed. She could more plausibly be accused of interfering with the feeding.
Never mind. This pursuit of Black seems to have become a matter of institutional momentum, an agent-driven case. Perhaps NOAA, or the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section, has its version of Victor Hugo's obsessed Inspector Javert.
In any event, some of the federal government's crime-busters seem to know little about whales - hence the "whistle-as-harassment" nonsense.
Six years ago, NOAA agents, who evidently consider the First Amendment a dispensable nuisance, told Black's scientific colleagues not to talk to her and to inform them if they were contacted by her or her lawyers. Since then she has not spoken with one of her best friends.
To finance her defense she has cashed out her life's savings, which otherwise might have purchased a bigger boat. The government probably has spent millions. It delivered an administrative subpoena to her accountant, although no charge against her has anything to do with finances.
In 1980, federal statutes specified 3,000 criminal offenses; by 2007, 4,450. They continue to multiply. Often, as in Black's case, they are untethered from the common-law tradition of mens rea, which holds that a crime must involve a criminal intent - a guilty mind. Legions of government lawyers inundate targets like Black with discovery demands, producing financial burdens that compel the innocent to surrender in order to survive.
The protracted and pointless tormenting of Black illustrates the thesis of Harvey Silverglate's invaluable 2009 book, "Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent." Silverglate, a civil liberties lawyer in Boston, chillingly demonstrates how the mad proliferation of federal criminal laws - which often are too vague to give fair notice of what behavior is proscribed or prescribed - means that "our normal daily activities expose us to potential prosecution at the whim of a government official." Such laws, which enable government zealots to accuse almost anyone of committing three felonies in a day, do not just enable government misconduct, they incite prosecutors to intimidate decent people who never had culpable intentions. And to inflict punishments without crimes.
By showing that Kafka was a realist, Black's misfortune may improve the nation: The more Americans learn about their government's abuse of criminal law for capricious bullying, the more likely they are to recoil in a libertarian direction and put Leviathan on a short leash.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN WEEDING OUT D.C. CORRUPTION (WP)
By Colbert I. King
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
The names alone were enough to keep readers glued to the newspaper: Roger W. "Whitetop" Simkins, Curtis "Bozo" Taylor, Albert "Real Estate" Smith, Charles "Geechie" Anderson, William "Snags" Lewis, James M. "Jim Yellow" Roberts, Abe "Jewboy Dietz" Plisco, Randolph "Catfish" Turner, Herbert "Bucklejaws" Johnson.
It's fair to say I got my formal introduction to D.C. crime courtesy of these characters. All were convicted operators of illegal lotteries in the District, commonly called "the numbers" - except for Jim Yellow Roberts and Catfish Turner, who were drug kingpins. All of them became household names in the early '50s, thanks to celebrated criminal trials and televised hearings of the Senate District Crime Subcommittee, which delved into crime and corruption in our nation's capital. I recall rushing home from Francis Junior High School to catch the tail end of the hearings.
The crime figures, however, weren't the only Washingtonians to make the spotlight. The hearings revealed that the D.C. Police Department had several dirty cops, and not those officers walking a beat.
A onetime head of the police gambling division and later commanding officer of the 12th Precinct was sentenced to up to five years in jail. A probationary detective got a sentence of up to four years. A deputy chief was officially reprimanded for accepting Christmas gifts from a known gambler. One chief was forced into retirement.
So District newcomers, the current probe into city corruption is nothing new.
True, the scope of investigations by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. is unprecedented in the

era of home rule. But even before Congress gave the District a measure of self-government, some in the city were stinking up the joint with their nefarious behavior.
That dark era in the '50s should serve as a reminder that corruption is not a one-time affair. It takes hold quietly, slowly, when no one's looking. The corrupt are always there, watching and waiting for the chance to score. They are aided and abetted by a climate of indifference.
The Post captured that climate in a 1951 editorial, "Respectable Racketeers." Ironically, the editorial took note of a deficiency that exists to this day.
Observing that an amateur detective uncovered the large-scale gambling operations, The Post asked, "Why was it necessary for an amateur - who turned out to be more professional than the professionals - to do the work that law enforcement agencies should have been doing?"
The editorial pointed out that the little success achieved fighting corruption was "more through the work of the United States Attorney than through the work of the police."
Isn't that true today?
Where in the world, it must be asked, were the D.C. inspector general, the city's Office of Campaign Finance and the D.C. Council while our city was being politically and criminally corrupted?
Are you telling me that no one in the District government had an inkling that a council member was misusing earmarks and lining his pocket, or that campaign contribution limits and spending rules were being violated with impunity?
A federal grand jury is investigating the award of the D.C. lottery contract. But ask council members and city agencies what the investigation is about - as I have - and they adopt the classic D.C. leader position: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.
The Post's 1951 editorial, referring to lottery corruption and the fact that one of those involved was operating "under a cloak of respectability and legitimate business" (why do I think of Jeffrey Thompson?), asked: "How many other[s]. . . are there in similar circumstances?"
"Every Washington newspaperman is aware of reports that higher-ups . . . are really the bosses," The Post observed. "No newspaper," it said, "has either the staff or the privileges to compel testimony in order to conduct an investigation.
"But from the recurrent seepages of evidence which contradict the bland assurances that there is no big crime here, it is obvious," the editorial continued, "that no investigation of crime in Washington has yet gotten at the roots."
That, indeed, is our unfinished business - even today.
Now, as was true in the '50s, all the facts must be laid out. We need an exhaustive investigation that fully exposes the corrupt activities of the "respectable" figures seemingly behind the disreputable acts.
Only then can we kill corruption at its roots and stand guard against the recurrence that is sure to come.

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT AIDS (NYT)
By Danielle Ofri
New York Times, July 28, 2012
THE beginning of the end of AIDS? The article with that title jumped out at me last week, as I did my weekly table-of-contents scan of The New England Journal of Medicine. I wasn't prepared for the flood of emotion that overcame me. The beginning of the end? Could it really be?
For those of us who did our medical training in the late '80s and early '90s, AIDS saturated our lives. The whole era had a medieval feel, with visceral suffering and human decimation all around. Death was vivid, brutal and omnipresent.
Bellevue Hospital, where I trained, was one of those city hospitals that felt like ground zero for the plague. Every third admission seemed to be a patient in his mid-20s who looked as if he'd arrived from Dachau or Biafra, with nary a T-cell to his name. Horrific Kaposi's sarcoma ulcerated these patients' bodies. P.C.P., a brutal form of pneumonia, strangled their breathing. Fevers and infections plundered every organ system. What few defenses their bodies mustered were pummeled into insignificance.
The utter relentlessness of the disease pummeled the doctors-in-training as well. It felt as if we were slogging knee-deep in death, with a horizon that was a monochrome of despair. Witnessing your own generation dying off is not for the faint of heart.

The 17 West AIDS ward in Bellevue was always full to capacity, so H.I.V. patients overflowed into the general medical wards, and of course swamped the prison ward, the tuberculosis ward, the pediatric ward and the emergency room. We even had a "spillover" ward, 12 East, reserved for the "actively dying." The hospital had carved out a ward of private rooms - otherwise unheard-of in a city hospital - so that these patients could have a modicum of privacy in their final days. Needless to say, 12 East was also full to capacity, with a line of patients waiting for a room to "open up."

If you'd grabbed a random intern toward the end of my residency in 1995, and asked her if she could envision the headline "The Beginning of the End of AIDS" in less than 20 years, she would have simply stared uncomprehendingly at you with bleary eyes. More than 50,000 Americans died of AIDS that year. By 2009, the number had edged under 20,000.

In the worlds of both medicine and metaphor, the narrative arc of AIDS has almost no peer. The transformation from hopelessness to pragmatic optimism is - scientifically speaking - nothing short of miraculous. Potent combinations of antiviral medications that brought patients off their deathbeds and back to life, viral load testing and H.I.V. genotyping that helped tailor treatment regimens, screening of the blood supply, aggressive public health campaigns, prevention of maternal-fetal transmission - we could hardly have envisioned the pace of development.

After years of disappointments, H.I.V. vaccine research is heating up again, as breakthroughs in the understanding of H.I.V. immunology have identified nearly two dozen potential vaccine candidates. The apparent H.I.V. cure as a result of a bone-marrow transplant in a man known as the "Berlin patient" has stimulated tantalizing gene therapy research.

The staggering progress of these past two decades leaves me breathless, and to be honest, almost teary-eyed. For nearly every other category of disease that afflicts my patients, the treatments are largely the same as when I was an intern. Yes, we have fancier stents for our cardiac patients, and more targeted chemotherapy for our cancer patients, but the overall paradigms have shifted only incrementally.

H.I.V. has been easier to target, in part, because it is caused by a single infectious agent - as opposed to the diverse factors that influence cardiovascular disease and cancer. And then there was the avalanche of resources and the galvanizing of public activism that served to concentrate scientific efforts in a manner never seen before. By no means do I wish to belittle the impressive advances in other fields of medicine, but our oncology wards and cardiac wards still do a brisk business.

AIDS patients in the hospital are a rarity now - they are more likely to be admitted for an ulcer or a heart attack than for an H.I.V.-related illness. The overwhelming majority receive their medical care in outpatient settings, like everyone else who is living with a disease rather than dying of a disease. AIDS has settled in next to hypertension and diabetes as one of those chronic conditions that patients deal with over the course of a lifetime.

"Over the course of a lifetime." Now there's a concept we never thought about back then.

There is still a long way to go, of course. The 19th annual International AIDS Conference just ended on Friday, and no one is underestimating the gravity of the challenges that remain, particularly in developing countries. But to even contemplate, however tentatively, the beginning of the end is something that my peers and I never imagined happening in our lifetimes.

I often think about grim days we spent doing rounds on 17 West and 12 East. I remember the slow and tortured deaths of our patients, their emaciated bodies disintegrating into nothingness before our eyes. More tears were shed on those wards than any I've worked in since.

And what happened? The 17 West AIDS ward became a regular medical ward. The 12 East dying ward was turned into offices. And then, this month, the inpatient AIDS service at Bellevue closed down entirely. If that doesn't signify the beginning of the end, I don't know what does.

Danielle Ofri, an associate professor at New York University School of Medicine, is the editor of the Bellevue Literary Review and the author, most recently, of "Medicine in Translation: Journeys With My Patients."

WHAT DRIVES THE OBAMA DOUBTERS AND HATERS? (WP)

By David Maraniss

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

There are Obama doubters and haters out there who claim with righteous anger that they are "vetting" the president, something they say the mainstream media never did. Some of them have

said that my new biography - unwittingly, they argue, for I am too dumb to understand what my research has unearthed - proves that Barack Obama's defining memoir is phony and that his entire life is a fraud. My intent is not to defend Obama or his book; he can take care of himself, and I have my own questions about "Dreams From My Father," which I make clear in my book. But when comparing the liberties Obama took with composite characters and compressed chronology - which he acknowledged in the introduction to his memoir - to the stretches his most virulent detractors have taken in building their various conspiracies, I believe that they are the frauds and fabricators.

Not all of them are "birthers," but the notion that the president was not born in the United States remains at the epicenter of the anti-Obama mythology. Here is the conspiracy that would have had to exist if Barack Hussein Obama II were not born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Aug. 4, 1961:

First, the local newspapers would have had to have been in on the scheme, because they ran notices of his birth among all the other local births that week. Second, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would have had to have been covering something up, because INS officials were closely tracking Barack Obama Sr. when he was at the University of Hawaii on a student visa from Kenya. They thought that he was a bigamist - which he was, having married a woman in Kenya before coming to the States - and a womanizer, which he also was. INS documents in the weeks and months before and after the son's birth clearly establish the father's whereabouts and the birth of his son. Finally, the name of Obama's mother, Stanley Ann, was unusual enough that doctors and nurses in Honolulu remembered it and her giving birth. One prominent doctor was asked by a young journalist if anything interesting had happened in the medical world that week, and he responded, "Well, Stanley had a baby!"

In tandem with the birther notion comes the idea that Obama is a secret Muslim. His Kenyan grandfather, Hussein Onyango, was Muslim; his Indonesian stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, was Muslim; as a boy he was instructed in Islam at a school in Jakarta; and many of his college friends were Muslim. None of this adds up to Obama being Muslim, except in the minds of conspiratorialists. Obama never met his Kenyan grandfather. After infancy, he spent time with his Kenyan father only once, and in any case Barack Obama Sr. was an atheist. The truth is that Muslims had nothing to do with the rise of the Obamas of Kenya and that conservative evangelical Christians were essential every step of the way.

It was proselytizing Seventh-day Adventists who first came to the Obamas' villages out near Lake Victoria at the start of the 20th century. They taught English and Western ways to the first wave of young boys from the Luo tribe, including Hussein Onyango. His son, the president's father, was also educated at a missionary school. Later, as a young adult, Barack Obama Sr. was mentored by a remarkable evangelical Christian, Betty Mooney, whose grandfather was one of the founders of Texas Christian University. Mooney, who went to Kenya in the late 1950s to spread the gospel and literacy, met Obama Sr. in Nairobi and hired him to translate some of her literacy books into the Luo tribal language. She encouraged and helped sponsor his coming to the United States and specifically to the University of Hawaii, where he met Stanley Ann Dunham. One can say that President Obama would not exist except for evangelical Christians.

While living in Jakarta from ages 6 through 9, young Obama temporarily took the last name of his stepfather, Soetoro, for school purposes. He was listed as a Muslim on school documents because students were listed in the religion of their fathers. Lolo was not particularly religious; Stanley Ann was spiritual but not part of any formal religion. For most of his three-plus years in Indonesia, Obama attended a Catholic grade school. When his family moved to a better neighborhood in his final year, he went to the local grade school, one of the best in the city. The central doctrine taught at S.D. Besuki was not Islam but Pancasila, or five principles, of modern Indonesia, which evoked the unity of the islands on the vast archipelago, social justice and a belief in one God. Conservative Muslims detested Pancasila (a Sanskrit word revealing Indonesia's Hindu heritage), insisting that it was too liberal and open to too many religions and interpretations.

In both the issues of Obama's birth and of his religion, documents and common sense lead in one direction. Obama's doubters run the other way: His birth certificates must be fake; his espoused Christianity must be a cover. Another group of right-wing doubters hold on to the notion that Obama is a closet socialist, some sort of Manchurian candidate, an idea that his every move as a pragmatic liberal politician over the past 16 years has utterly disproved. Some others maintain that he was not smart enough to get into Occidental, Columbia and Harvard Law, and too inept to write

his own memoir, which one particularly obsessed conspiratorialist claims was penned by the former radical Bill Ayers. What about the well-written letters from Obama that are published in my book? Those, too, must be frauds slipped to me by the Obama administration.
In the introduction to my book, I took note of a sick political culture where "facts are so easily twisted for political purposes and where strange armies of ideological pseudo-historians roam the biographical fields in search of stray ammunition." That sentence is now cited on right-wing Web sites as evidence that I hold them in contempt. True enough, one of the few accurate things that I've read from them. I do hold some of them in contempt, not because of their politics, nor because of their dislike of Obama. Political debate and disagreement are the lifeblood of American democracy. No, I hold them in contempt for the way they disregard facts and common sense and undermine the role of serious history as they concoct conspiracy theories that portray the president as dangerous, alien and less than American.
What drives them? Some of it can be attributed to the give-and-take of today's harsh ideological divide. Some of it can be explained by the way misinformation spreads virally to millions of like-minded people, reinforcing preconceptions. And some of it, I believe, arises out of fears of demographic changes in this country, and out of racism.

IF OBAMA LOSES THE ELECTION, HERE'S WHY (WP)
By Drew Westen
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
With 100 days left in the presidential campaign, perhaps the two most vexing questions in American politics are: How could President Obama possibly lose? And, how could he possibly win?
Americans are scared, angry and struggling. They used to talk about job satisfaction; now they talk about just holding on to their jobs. No incumbent since FDR has ever won reelection with unemployment numbers remotely resembling today's. What voters feel about their lives and dreams in the months leading up to an election tends to stick to the president when they enter the voting booth. And right now what's sticking to Obama isn't good.
But it sure helps to face a candidate as uncomfortable in his own skin, as likely to say by accident what he really means and as wrong for the times as Mitt Romney. In an era when even conservatives are populists, enraged about the favors granted the rich and well-connected, Romney is running as a CEO who thinks his taxes are too high. Voters just aren't warming up to a guy who enjoys firing people and attempts to woo the people of Michigan by referring to his wife's "couple of Cadillacs." If Obama offers what well-paid elites call a "jobless recovery," Romney offers the only thing worse: a promise to restore the policies that led to the joblessness that made a recovery necessary.
So, beyond the anemic economy, why do the latest polls show the former Massachusetts governor in a dead heat with the president? Because Obama's administration made three crucial errors that enabled the Republican obstructionism that has tied his hands for the past two years, with GOP leaders shooting down any idea - even if it's one of their own - that might have helped the president strengthen the economy. And those mistakes have made possible what was unimaginable in January 2009: that a private-equity baron lacking a sense of noblesse oblige, and preaching the gospel of deregulation and lower taxes for the rich, might actually win the presidency four years after those policies led to the collapse of the U.S. economy.
Obama's first mistake was inviting the Republicans to the table. The GOP had just decimated the economy and had been repudiated by voters to such an extent that few Americans wanted to admit that they were registered Republicans. Yet Obama, with his penchant for unilateral bipartisanship, refused to speak ill of what they had done. The American people wanted the perpetrators of the Great Recession held accountable, and they wanted the president and Congress to enact legislation to prevent Wall Street bankers from ever destroying the lives of so many again. Instead they saw renewed bonuses - and then they saw red. Republicans learned very quickly that they could attack Obama and his agenda with impunity. Only at election time, or when he's up against the ropes, does this president ever tell a story with a villain.
The second mistake was squandering the goodwill that Americans felt toward the new president and their anxiety about an economy hemorrhaging three-quarters of a million jobs a month. That combination gave Obama, at the beginning of his term, a power to shape public policy that no one

since Franklin Roosevelt had held. But instead of designing a stimulus that reflected the thinking of the country's best economic minds, he cut their recommended numbers by a third and turned another third into inert tax cuts designed to appease Republican legislators whose primary aim was to defeat him. He stimulated the economy - but just enough to leave the results open to interpretation, rendering questionable what should have been an uncontested success.

Obama compounded the problem a year into his presidency, when corporate profits were on the rise while job creation wasn't. The Senate was considering a jobs program much like one the House had passed. But Obama refused to throw his support behind it. To do so, he would have had to articulate a vision in which government sets the conditions for the private sector to create prosperity and jobs, and steps in when the private sector can't - or when it works against the interests of ordinary Americans. It's a vision in which leadership means knowing when to step up and when to step back, not simply passively riding the waves of market failures, business cycles and bubbles - the vision that unites Herbert Hoover, George W. Bush and Romney.

But Obama chose neither to offer that vision nor to take action to put Americans back to work directly, rebuilding our broken roads, our bridges, our crumbling schools. The stimulus was a good start, but its flaws were already apparent. Instead, he began using Republican language about how the government, like ordinary families, needs to tighten its belt, as if that were a solution for people whose belts couldn't get any tighter. "Government has to start living within its means, just like families do," he said in a weekly Web and radio address. Words like these not only undercut the vision behind the stimulus - the whole point of which was to spark a sputtering economy with deficit spending - but they came as bankers were loosening their belts, making average Americans angrier.

The third way the administration created opportunities for Republican obstructionism will someday become a business-school case study: It let a popular idea - a family doctor for every family - be recast as a losing ideological battle between intrusive government and freedom. In the 2008 election, the American people were convinced that families should never have to choose between putting food on the table and taking the kids to the doctor. They were adamant that neither they nor their aging parents should have to choose between their medicine and their mortgage.

How did the administration manage to turn one of the most popular campaign issues of 2008 into one of the major causes of Democrats' "shellacking" at the polls two years later?

In keeping with the most baffling habit of one of our most rhetorically gifted presidents, Obama and his team just didn't bother explaining what they were doing and why. To them, their actions were self-evident. But nothing is self-evident when your opponents are spending millions of dollars to defeat you. Instead, the White House blundered around with memorable phrases such as "bending the cost curve," which didn't speak to the values underlying the need for health-care reform. Republicans, in contrast, offered a coherent story: Democrats think the government knows what you need better than you do; you should be able to make your own choices, not have some bureaucrat stand between you and your doctor. The White House could have counterpunched, but instead it dropped its gloves.

The president acknowledged as much this month in an interview with Charlie Rose for CBS. When asked about the biggest mistake of his first term, he replied it was his belief that "this job was just about getting the policy right. And that's important. But the nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times."

To his credit, Obama has been telling a much better story over the past several months about the challenges ahead and why he deserves a second term. "We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by," he declares in his new campaign message, "or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules."

But the problems of health-care reform were not just about selling it - they were substantive as well.

There was no way to tell the story of why the government couldn't negotiate prices for drugs with the big drug companies, the way the Department of Veterans Affairs already does, without admitting either that the administration was buying off the pharmaceutical industry or that the industry was buying off the administration. There was no way to explain why Americans who saw how much their parents or grandparents liked Medicare couldn't have at least one option not

controlled by the insurance industry - without admitting that the administration had made a deal with the industry that guaranteed it 30 million new customers with no government competition. As Ron Suskind reported in his book "Confidence Men," that decision ended any possibility of a "public option" a year before the president announced, without explanation, that the public option had died on the operating table.

Whereas the House, under the leadership of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), put forward a sensible health-care bill in the early days of the new administration, the White House and congressional Democrats ultimately crafted a bill whose greatest benefits would become apparent only years later, giving Republicans all the time in the world to galvanize public opinion against it. Democrats frequently point out that most of the elements of the law are extremely popular, even though the law as a whole remains unpopular. They're absolutely right. But that's like saying people pick a spouse based on the person's nose, mouth, shoulders, hair, job, personality and earning potential, when in fact it's the totality of the person that either does or doesn't make our hearts flutter.

One of the most popular elements of the health-care law, and the one that matters most to middle-class Americans, is the end to insurance companies' ban on people with "preexisting conditions." That part of the law came online in 2010 for children, an enormous achievement. But our bodies generally start falling apart in our 40s and 50s (trust me on that), and nothing could have been more important for the success of the legislation - and the party and president who made it the law of the land - than for Obama to have been able to pronounce as he signed the bill, "With this stroke of my pen, never again will any American ever see the words from an insurance company, 'Rejected: preexisting condition.' " Try repealing that.

By delaying that part of the law until 2014, along with provisions designed to cover 30 million more people (unless Republican governors refuse federal funding to extend Medicaid), the Democrats lost the message war. Nothing blunts the fierce urgency of now like the soft promise of later.

Obama has every reason to feel underappreciated. Both the stimulus and health-care reform were kinda-sorta the right policies. The stimulus was not, as conservatives have convinced many of their fellow Americans, big government on steroids; it was Keynesian economics on birth control. It did not restore the 8 million jobs lost to the crash of 2008 or provide the 200,000 jobs a month needed for new entrants into the labor market, but it did prevent a second Great Depression. The health-care law was no more a prelude to a long march to European-style socialism than the similar bill Richard Nixon proposed 40 years ago - or the law Romney enacted as his greatest legacy to the people of Massachusetts.

So how did the White House make mistakes of this magnitude, which have breathed new life into Republicanism and made a Romney administration a possibility?

One factor is the tyranny of money in our nation's politics. That two administrations - one Republican, one Democratic - bailed out the banks instead of the people on whom they were foreclosing is an outrage that reflects the legalized bribery we call campaign financing. The bottom line for corporate executives is "return on investment," and the return on Wall Street's bundling and lobbying has more than made up for the failures of its bundling of toxic assets.

But just as important is the tyranny of timidity. If self-interest and self-righteousness are at the heart of the Republican Party today, cowardice lies too close to the spine of the Democrats. While Republicans show extraordinary hubris by harnessing minority rule on virtually every issue with just the threat of a filibuster, Senate Democrats show extraordinary fearfulness in enabling them.

In the past, Democrats spoke openly of poverty, a word seldom heard today even though Americans of every race and color are sharing a rapid descent down the economic ladder. While the president has begun to speak effectively in the past several months about the economic distress of working- and middle-class families, on the major issues he too often uses the bully pulpit to bully the truth.

That was most apparent in the first three years of his administration, but you don't have to look further than the past three weeks. The nation has experienced climate change firsthand, with Americans witnessing extreme weather, drought, wildfires, floods and harvests destroyed by the scorched-earth policies of the oil and coal industries. But Obama, like his challenger, has simply turned up his air conditioner, refusing to connect the dots between the devastation people can see and the causes they are finally ready to accept.

And a week ago, the nation was in shock after yet another mass shooting, allegedly carried out by

yet another troubled young man who had purchased weapons that should not be legal. The first day, Obama and Romney issued the usual comforting platitudes about how our prayers are with the victims' families. But in its public statements, the White House seemed more concerned with reassuring the National Rifle Association than with giving voice to the desire of a bullet-ridden nation to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens - those who want guns to hunt or protect their families and homes, as well as those who want to go to the movies, church, school or a shopping mall without fear. To his credit, Obama gave a speech Wednesday before the Urban League calling for "common sense" steps to prevent gun violence, although it was long on hope and short on change.

Obama may be reelected by a public that has nowhere else to turn. Perhaps freed of the constraints imposed by having to raise a billion dollars to finance his campaign, he will reveal a true self of which we've seen glimmers. One who will speak forthrightly to the American public and be unafraid to take on the perpetrators of economic crimes that have devastated American families; the perpetrators of myths about "clean coal," which the president instead repeats even as the industry rains fire on America's breadbasket; or the perpetrators of the record foreclosures on longtime homeowners who have become collateral damage in the war on the middle class.

We can only hope that in his heart, Obama can truly feel the pain, sadness and fear of ordinary Americans, because it's not hard to imagine that inside the chest of his opponent is a cavity waiting to be filled.

Drew Westen is a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Emory University and the author of "The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation." He is the founder of Westen Strategies, a consulting firm.

ROMNEY ISN'T OUT TO MAKE THE WORLD SWOON (WP)

By Fouad Ajami

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The itinerary for the overseas trip that Mitt Romney is taking - Britain, Poland and Israel - is brilliantly chosen. These countries contrast greatly with candidate Barack Obama's 2008 foreign tour, which included stops in Afghanistan and Jordan. That journey aimed to show that he would strengthen America's bonds with countries that aren't always our staunchest allies - and that Obama was the opposite of President George W. Bush. Huge crowds swooned over Obama in Paris and Berlin, a reception that was a boon to his campaign at home.

The former Massachusetts governor, however, neither seeks nor generates this sort of delirium. He is a sober man who promises reliable management and a foreign policy that recognizes that the world is beset with dangers to America's welfare and liberty.

Thanks to Romney's speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Reno, Nev., on Tuesday, we now have the broad outlines of how his foreign policy would differ from Obama's. There would be a break, the Republican candidate indicated, from policies that have "exposed the military to cuts that no one can justify, compromised our national security secrets and, in dealings with other nations, given trust where it is not earned, insult where it is not deserved and apology where it is not due."

Romney is an old-fashioned, unstylish man whose views hark back to a time when America was confident in itself and less worried about the judgments of other nations. We have grown anxious in the past decade or so, seeing our country in the mirror held up beyond our shores. There is a yearning for that self-confidence. And Romney promises to call back those older, simpler American verities.

Just as Obama sought to distance himself from Bush's legacy, Romney's overseas itinerary is meant to draw a contrast with the current president. Israel, Poland and Britain are resolutely pro-American societies, choices that play it safe politically and suggest that a Romney presidency would as well.

The "special relationship" with Britain calls for no commentary; this is the Anglo-Saxon world, as it was once unapologetically called. Campaigns don't always follow the script, of course. Romney's gaffe Wednesday about potential troubles at the London Olympics is a reminder that, even when dealing with close allies, a few ill-chosen words can ruffle feathers.

Israel is of the West but not in it, a besieged democracy. Obama has not visited there since his 2008 trip, and Israelis have wondered about his fidelity to their country.

Poland, too, imparts meaning: Its people have paid dearly for their liberty, daring to defy the Soviet Union and casting their fate with the West. Poland still stands sentry against Russia. And Romney's previous characterization of Russia as the United States' "number one geopolitical foe" is music to Polish ears.

And Poland has had its own disappointment with Obama: Bush proposed a missile-defense system to be based in Poland and the Czech Republic. Obama has reconfigured it, proposing a system more acceptable to Russia and, he contends, more effective in warding off potential missile attacks from Iran and North Korea.

Before his VFW remarks, Romney was largely reticent on foreign policy, and his campaign concentrated on the economy. But he is not running for Treasury secretary. Even in a time of economic distress and high unemployment, foreign policy cannot be ignored.

The Obama campaign has made much of the president's presumed mastery of that domain. In 2008, he promised that he would bring the war in Iraq to an end, and he has done so. Osama bin Laden and American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki have been hunted down and killed on Obama's watch.

In his own speech to the VFW on Monday, Obama trumpeted his record on fighting terrorism. He had made it a priority, he said, "to take out the terrorists who had attacked us on 9/11. . . . Since I took office, we've worked with our allies and our partners to take out more top al-Qaeda leaders than any time since 9/11."

Presidential campaigns are, of course, not about truth. And a candidate's ambitious promises are generally cast aside once he assumes the burdens of office. As a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy, it should be recalled, promised to close the missile gap with the Soviet Union. But for the United States, there was no gap to close. It was the Soviets who were at a huge disadvantage, a paltry three scores of missiles for an American arsenal of more than 2,000. In the same vein, candidate Obama vowed to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, repair "brand America" abroad, drain anti-Americanism from the Islamic world and build trust between Pakistan and the United States.

But these promises have been largely forgotten in the exercise of power. Guantanamo is still open, and anti-Americanism in the Islamic world did not dissipate when Bush left the White House. In a supreme note of irony, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which was once held up as proof of Bush's poor standing in foreign lands, recently bore bad tidings for Obama:

"In a number of strategically important Muslim nations," the June report says, "America's image has not improved during the Obama presidency. In fact, America's already low 2008 ratings have slipped even further in Jordan and Pakistan."

The Romney campaign is not out to win hearts and minds in Karachi and Cairo; that sort of public diplomacy is of no interest to the candidate and his bid for the presidency.

"I do not view America as just one more point on the strategic map, one more power to be balanced," Romney said Tuesday, emphasizing American exceptionalism - probably because Obama has often equivocated about it.

"I believe in American exceptionalism," the president said in France in 2009, "just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." The world was changing, Obama observed; nations the world over were contending for influence, and no single power could deem itself superior to others.

This difference is of no small importance. Ideology has been played down in Obama's foreign policy. By the early signs, there would be more of it under Romney. But continuity would probably carry the day on Afghanistan and Iran.

"As president," Romney said Tuesday, "my goal in Afghanistan will be to complete a successful transition to Afghan security forces by the end of 2014." Obama has given up on his early view that Afghanistan could be reformed. We are headed for the exits, whoever wins in November.

Iran has frustrated American presidents since its 1979 revolution. Neither carrots nor threats of military action have altered the behavior of Tehran's theocracy. "Sanctions must be enforced without exception, cutting off the regime's sources of wealth,"Romney asserted Tuesday.

That view comes directly from Obama's playbook. After his early infatuation with the idea of "engaging" Iran, entertaining the illusion that he could succeed where other presidents had failed, Obama has become a realist. By now, he has recognized that the ruling mullahs are bent on acquiring nuclear weapons and have no interest in accommodation with the United States.

Romney is without illusions about Iran, but he, too, would not take up the sword against the theocracy. The American people show no taste for a new war in the Persian Gulf.
Under Romney, would there be a difference on the "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians? The tone might improve, as the bonds between Romney and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are strong; in contrast, there is an obvious estrangement between Obama and the Israeli leader. But that conflict will not yield to an American president's power. From Harry Truman till the present, that primordial struggle has frustrated U.S. leaders. No matter how close the U.S.-Israeli relationship is, the United States cannot dictate the terms of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Any grand historical accommodation must be the work of the protagonists themselves.
The late Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington once sketched three visions of the United States' place in the world: nationalist, cosmopolitan and imperial. In the nationalist view, America defends her interests in the world and marks ideological borders and differences with other nations. In the cosmopolitan view, the foreign world and globalization reshape America, erasing the differences that separate it from other countries. In the imperial vision, America remakes the world by remaking foreign lands.
An imperial push can't be sustained; the United States lacks the resources and the drive for such grand ambitions. So we are down to a more realistic distinction. Obama embodies the cosmopolitan aspiration, and Romney the nationalist idea. We have already seen Obama's worldview at work; it probably wouldn't change in a second term. Romney's stewardship would dawn without trumpets and drums. It would have the sobriety of Gerald Ford's and George H.W. Bush's leadership. But there would be an ideological edge, illustrated in Romney's VFW address: "Like a watchman in the night, we must remain at our post - and keep guard of the freedom that defines and ennobles us and our friends."

WHY KILLING IS A PROFITABLE ENTERPRISE (WP)
By Michael F. Mcnulty
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
It is easy to ignore the issue of gun control, given the perfect leaderlessness it enjoys in Congress. Then again, it becomes harder to ignore when your relatives or friends are murdered in the company of someone you idolize, which describes thousands of us in Tucson.
I have owned guns, continuously, since I was 6. I still own my grandfather's pump-action Winchester, carried for decades in a scabbard behind his saddle as he rode the range where he ranched, in Wikieup, Ariz. All the guns I've owned have been what are quaintly called long guns. I began my brief assault on local fauna at age 12, and I had "taken" four white-tailed deer, a couple of javelina and innumerable quail and dove by the time I got my driver's license at 16. A driver's license is a far greater liberator than a hunting license, and thereafter, trekking around in the wilderness killing things lost its luster. It has been decades since I engaged in those adventures.
There are, today, few who hunt with handguns or assault rifles equipped with 100-clip magazines. There are even fewer reasons to do so. But the National Rifle Association's principal focus has evolved mostly to those. It is news to no one that the NRA has abandoned the sportsman in every practical sense; if the group were honest, it would change its name. Speaking as a rifleman, I think it's an embarrassment.
The NRA not only dependably opposes limits on assault-rifle sales but even opposes reporting bulk sales of assault rifles. Last year, the NRA went to the mat to prevent anyone from cross-checking the names of those on the terrorist watch list against the names of those buying guns. These two actions clarify beyond argument that the safety and welfare of you and yours have simply dropped from the NRA's list of priorities. The NRA represents gun manufacturers, end of story.
Now, handguns excel at certain things. They are unequaled at killing people at close range: quite useful for law enforcement officers and drug dealers. They're genuine security in a drawer for those who have received unambiguous threats, like my friend Gabby Giffords. They're even a useful, if dubious, tool to defend yourself from murderers and rapists breaking in at 2 a.m. That hasn't happened to me in the past 60 years, but maybe your experience is different. NRA President Wayne LaPierre thinks it may happen to you tonight: If you search YouTube for "The NRA's Circus of Fear," you'll find a collection of LaPierre's reasons why he lives in fear, and his arguments as to why you should, too. Personally, I think that "living in fear" is inconsistent with

being an American, and I'm not going to play.
But how else are the gun manufacturers going to "grow the market," to sell more than the 3 million handguns they already do per year? Fear is a great motivator; mass murder is great for the gun business.
Just days ago a dozen citizens were murdered and about five dozen plugged with slugs from a trinity of firearms. Setting aside the shotgun, it bears mentioning that the Glock and assault rifle James Holmes is suspected of firing in an Aurora, Colo., movie theater were being used for the purpose for which they were designed, manufactured and sold. But the gun makers have no product-liability litigation to worry about, because in 2005 Congress approved and President George W. Bush signed into law legislation providing immunity for gun manufacturers from the foreseeable consequence of building instruments of murder. Every year three times as many people are murdered with guns in the United States as were murdered on Sept. 11, 2001. But blessed be the gun makers, for they are pardoned in advance.
It strikes me that the NRA is pretty comfortable when debates over mass murder devolve into intellectual discussions relating to civility vs. demagoguery, insanity vs. impressionability, and freedom vs. the tyranny of gun zealots. The more abstract, the better. In the end, however, it's simple: The NRA shills for gun makers who profit from the murder of American citizens. If you think the country's policies are shaped by Judeo-Christian values, you're not paying attention.

WHY GUN CONTROL ISN'T A LOST CAUSE (WP)
By Matt Bennett And Jonathan Cowan
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
Dozens of college students murdered in their classrooms; a member of Congress shot at point-blank range; innocents gunned down in a movie theater. Then, in the aftermath of a mass gun crime, the same ritual: national shock and anger, traumatized communities asking how this could happen, followed by . . . nothing. At least, no progress on gun safety.
In a speech to the Urban League on Wednesday, President Obama called for a conversation on youth violence and more steps to keep guns away from criminals and the mentally ill. But everyone, including Obama, has been pretty frank about it: No major new gun laws will result. However, in Washington, nothing is ever as immovable as it seems.
The key is to understand how intractable problems are ultimately dislodged - not by a single, seismic event, but by a slow shift in politics.
Consider three categories of such issues and the forces that have gotten them unstuck.
When the problem gets too big
One reason for paralysis is that politicians fear the consequences of taking on powerful, well-financed organizations such as, when it comes to guns, the National Rifle Association. The gun lobby dramatically outspends gun-control advocates and has a long record of successfully opposing politicians who cross it.
Still, even a heavyweight institution can be sidelined when a problem becomes too large. The AARP has long been regarded as an invincible opponent of Social Security reform. But in the early 1980s, Social Security was nearing collapse. In 1981, its trustees issued a report warning that the system would be "unable to make benefit payments on time beginning in the latter half of 1982" and that it would run out of money by the middle of 1983. A bipartisan group of lawmakers began to explore the idea of making changes to Social Security, but the AARP stood firm.
A commission led by Alan Greenspan recommended fixes to Social Security in January 1983, and the AARP fought the proposals vigorously. The group argued that rather than change benefits or payroll taxes, Congress should raise other taxes and give that revenue to Social Security. It ran ads and urged its thousands of volunteer leaders to swamp Congress with letters, calls and visits. But the scale and immediacy of the problem moved President Ronald Reagan and congressional Democrats to take on the matter squarely, cut a deal on reforms and put in place a long-term fix.
When experts can't be ignored
Sometimes a consensus of experts raises an alarm, but Washington tunes them out. In the case of guns, the experts are police chiefs and mayors in cities plagued with gun crime, who almost uniformly support tougher gun laws, to little avail in Congress.
But expert voices can start to ring louder on Capitol Hill when the data move into the public's consciousness. In the 1960s, a small band of scientists began to notice the impact of acid rain -

pollutants emitted by power plants, most in the Midwest, were being carried by winds to the Northeast, where they were damaging waterways and forests.

This problem was hard for the nonexpert to spot. Only scientists understood that there were rising levels of hydrogen ions in the rain. They saw the trends and understood the significance, even if the public did not - like a minor cough that seems innocuous but to a doctor's ear could be an early sign of lung disease.

The scientists' warnings were ignored in the policy debate. No one did anything for more than a decade. But their concerns eventually began to move from academic journals and niche magazines into the mainstream. The public finally took notice of reports showing that many lakes in New England were so acidic, they no longer could support fish and other wildlife. And they connected the dots between lakes in New Hampshire and power plants in Ohio.

This steady accumulation of the scientific consensus ultimately became too big for politicians to ignore. Congress and the president responded, and in 1990, they enacted amendments to the Clean Air Act instituting a cap-and-trade system to control acid rain pollutants. The system has worked, and acid rain has been dramatically reduced.

When public opinion shifts

Perhaps the most obvious reason for stasis in Washington is when public opinion runs counter to a policy change. Few elected officials will risk the wrath of voters on controversial issues.

In the gun debate, large majorities of voters favor particular changes to laws, such as banning assault weapons or high-capacity ammunition magazines. But polls also show that they're skeptical that such changes would affect the right people or reduce gun crime. A Washington Post poll last year found that 57 percent of Americans thought that tougher enforcement of existing laws was a better way to reduce gun crime, vs. 29 percent who favored passing new laws. And focus groups have long found that many voters are turned off by elected officials who call for new gun laws. So politicians are generally right to think that gun control makes bad politics.

Yet voters reserve the right to change their minds. When he ran for president in 1992, Bill Clinton vowed that he would lift the ban on gay men and women serving openly in the military, and upon taking office, he tried to do it. But he met opposition in the Pentagon and in Congress, fueled by polls showing that the public opposed the change. Clinton was forced into a face-saving compromise - "don't ask, don't tell" - that kept the ban in place.

Over time, though, the politics of gay rights began to shift. By 2010, when Obama persuaded Congress to scrap "don't ask, don't tell" and lift the ban, a majority of voters said they supported its repeal. And even members of Congress who opposed the move mounted only a halfhearted campaign when the measure came up for a vote.

What this recent history shows is that Washington is rarely shocked into action. Galvanizing events can change the tone briefly: Congress adopted bipartisan seating at the State of the Union address after the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), for instance. But even really big surprises rarely lead to major political change. We no longer see many Sputnik moments.

Rather, change is slow and cumulative. It takes time for a problem to boil over, for expert consensus to pierce the fog of denial, for public opinion to shift decisively.

We see this process today on the same issues: Social Security, the environment and gay rights. The AARP still opposes significant changes to Social Security, but as the potential for catastrophic fiscal failure becomes more real, the prospects for reform are improving. The scientific consensus is solid on global warming, and as the weather grows more destructive, demands for action are likely to become too loud to ignore. And even though the public has voted in 31 states to ban same-sex marriage, the national mood is changing, raising the odds that the Defense of Marriage Act eventually will be swept away.

So too on guns. It may be that nothing revolutionary or evolutionary will soon alter the gun debate. There are nearly 300 million guns in private hands in this country, and the Supreme Court has affirmed that the Second Amendment confers the right to own guns on most law-abiding adults. And the power of the NRA is real.

But when we ran a group called Americans for Gun Safety, we found reason for hope. We worked with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) following the Columbine tragedy, because he was tired of doing nothing to prevent gun deaths. Together, we wrote legislation that would close a loophole allowing people to obtain firearms without background checks at gun shows. It reached the Senate floor in 2004 and passed as an amendment to another bill, but it was scuttled by NRA supporters.

McCain took a lot of grief for his stance. After he appeared in our television ads in Colorado promoting changes to close that state's gun show loophole, the NRA featured him on the cover of its magazine drawn as the devil.
Sadly, when McCain ran for president again in 2008, he reverted to the NRA's point of view. He knew it would be virtually impossible for him to win the GOP nomination if he was opposed by the most powerful interest group in conservative politics.
McCain's heresy on guns was short-lived. But rather than see it as a depressing truth about the power of the NRA, we see it as proof that virtually nothing is impossible in American politics. Even mountains will eventually be moved, but it will take the work of years, not a moment of shock or pain.
Matt Bennett is a co-founder and senior vice president of Third Way. Jonathan Cowan is a co-founder and president of Third Way. Previously, they served as director of communications and president, respectively, of Americans for Gun Safety.

WE WON'T KNOW THE CAUSE OF GUN VIOLENCE UNTIL WE LOOK FOR IT (WP)
By Jay Dickey And Mark Rosenberg
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
A few years ago, one of us came across a young woman who had just been hit by a car. She was the mother of two young children and one of Atlanta's star runners. I found her unconscious and bleeding profusely from a severe head injury. She died in my arms while I tried to resuscitate her. Her death was tragic, but it wasn't "senseless." In scientific terms, it was explicable. The runner, who had competed in 15 marathons and broken many records, wore no lights or reflective vest in the early-morning darkness; she crossed the street within crosswalk lines that had faded to near-invisibility; there were no speed bumps on this wide, flat street to slow cars down.
Scientists don't view traffic injuries as "senseless" or "accidental" but as events susceptible to understanding and prevention. Urban planners, elected officials and highway engineers approach such injuries by asking four questions: What is the problem? What are the causes? Have effective interventions been discovered? Can we install these interventions in our community?
The federal government has invested billions to understand the causes of motor vehicle fatalities and, with that knowledge, has markedly reduced traffic deaths in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, research has inspired such interventions as child restraints, seat belts, frontal air bags, a minimum drinking age and motorcycle helmets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009.
Through the same scientific, evidence-based approach, our country has made progress understanding and preventing violence. Once upon a time, law-abiding citizens believed that violence generated by evil always had existed and always would exist. By the mid-20th century, that sense of fatalism was yielding to discoveries by social scientists, physicians and epidemiologists. Now a body of knowledge exists that makes it clear that an event such as the mass shooting in Aurora, Colo., was not a "senseless" occurrence as random as a hurricane or earthquake but, rather, has underlying causes that can be understood and used to prevent similar mass shootings.
We also recognize different types of violence, including child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, elder abuse, suicide and economically and politically motivated violence. Like motor vehicle injuries, violence exists in a cause-and-effect world; things happen for predictable reasons. By studying the causes of a tragic - but not senseless - event, we can help prevent another.
Recently, some have observed that no policies can reduce firearm fatalities, but that's not quite true. Research-based observations are available. Childproof locks, safe-storage devices and waiting periods save lives.
But it's vital to understand why we know more and spend so much more on preventing traffic fatalities than on preventing gun violence, even though firearm deaths (31,347 in 2009, the most recent year for which statistics are available) approximate the number of motor vehicle deaths (32,885 in 2010).
From 1986 to 1996, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored high-quality, peer-reviewed research into the underlying causes of gun violence. People who kept guns in their homes did not - despite their hopes - gain protection, according to research published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Instead, residents in homes with a gun faced a 2.7-fold

greater risk of homicide and a 4.8-fold greater risk of suicide. The National Rifle Association moved to suppress the dissemination of these results and to block funding of future government research into the causes of firearm injuries.

One of us served as the NRA's point person in Congress and submitted an amendment to an appropriations bill that removed $2.6 million from the CDC's budget, the amount the agency's injury center had spent on firearms-related research the previous year. This amendment, together with a stipulation that "None of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control," sent a chilling message.

Since the legislation passed in 1996, the United States has spent about $240 million a year on motor vehicle safety research, but there has been almost no publicly funded research on firearm injuries.

As a consequence, U.S. scientists cannot answer the most basic question: What works to prevent firearm injuries? We don't know whether having more citizens carry guns would decrease or increase firearm deaths; or whether firearm registration and licensing would make inner-city residents safer or expose them to greater harm. We don't know whether a ban on assault weapons or large-capacity magazines, or limiting access to ammunition, would have saved lives in Aurora or would make it riskier for people to go to a movie. And we don't know how to effectively restrict access to firearms by those with serious mental illness.

What we do know is that firearm injuries will continue to claim far too many lives at home, at school, at work and at the movies until we start asking and answering the hard questions. "Such violence, such evil is senseless," President Obama said last week. What is truly senseless is to decry these deaths as senseless when the tools exist to understand causes and to prevent these deadly effects.

We were on opposite sides of the heated battle 16 years ago, but we are in strong agreement now that scientific research should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners. The same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of deaths and injuries from gun violence.

Most politicians fear talking about guns almost as much as they would being confronted by one, but these fears are senseless. We must learn what we can do to save lives. It is like the answer to the question "When is the best time to plant a tree?" The best time to start was 20 years ago; the second-best time is now.

THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO NEEDS A LATE-TERM ABORTION (WP)

By Christy Zink

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Introduce me to the woman who has an abortion after 20 weeks because she is cruel and heartless. Introduce me to the lazy gal who gets knocked up and ignores her condition until, more than halfway through her pregnancy, she ends it because it has become too darn inconvenient for her selfish lifestyle.

If such a woman exists, I have never met her. Sadly, however, she appears to have influenced the thinking of even savvy, politically informed people in this country. Otherwise, how could they argue that carrying to term is always the right decision late in pregnancy? In fact, the myth of such callous women has been compelling enough to push along a bill that would ban abortion in the District after 20 weeks of pregnancy; the bill was approved this month by the House Judiciary Committee, moving it forward for consideration by the full House, perhaps as soon as Tuesday.

Believing this fabrication of the radical right depends on one's ability to conjure at once a perfectly unfeeling woman and a perfectly healthy child, a stand-in for the much more tragic and complex reality. Meet, instead, a real live, breathing woman who terminated a much-wanted pregnancy at almost 22 weeks, when her baby was found to have severe fetal anomalies of the brain.

My son's condition could not have been detected earlier in the pregnancy. Far from lazy, I was conscientious about prenatal care. I received excellent medical attention from my obstetrician, one of the District's best. Only at our 20-week sonogram were there warning signs, and only with a high-powered MRI did we discover the devastating truth of our son's condition. He was missing the

corpus callosum, the central connecting structure of the brain, and essentially one side of his brain.

If he survived the pregnancy and birth, the doctors told us, he would have been born into a life of continuous seizures and near-constant pain. He might never have left the hospital. To help control the seizures, he would have needed surgery to remove more of what little brain matter he had. That was the reality for me and for my family.

Meet, too, the many real women I know who belong to one of the saddest groups in the world: those carrying babies for whom there was no real hope and who made the heartbreaking decision to end their pregnancies for medical reasons. Meet the women among this group who had gotten, they thought, safely to the middle of pregnancy, who had been planning nurseries and filling baby registries, only to find they would need to plan a memorial service and to build, somehow, a life in aftermath.

We are not reckless, ruthless creatures. Our hearts hurt each day for our losses. We mourn. We speak the names and nicknames of each other's babies to one another; we hold each other up on the anniversaries of our losses, and we celebrate new babies and new accomplishments, all bittersweet because they arrive in the wake of grief. We extend our arms to the women who must join our community, and we lament that our numbers rise every day.

Medical research from the Guttmacher Institute shows that post-21-week terminations make up less than 2 percent of all abortions in this country. Women like me can seem an exception. You also rarely hear stories like mine, because they involve intensely private sorrow and because there is no small amount of shame still associated with terminating a pregnancy, no matter how medically necessary.

The consequences of the House bill, if it becomes law, will be inhumane. If the restrictions in this bill had been the law of the land when my husband and I received our diagnosis, I would have had to carry to term and give birth to a baby who the doctors concurred had no chance of a real life and who would have faced severe, continual pain. The decision my husband and I made to terminate the pregnancy was made out of love - to spare my son pain and suffering.

The ugly politics in this Congress and the sheer number of Republicans mean that this bill will likely pass in the House. I understand any citizen's hesitancy when the issue of the right to middle-term to late-term abortion arises. But I also know from my own experience that this bill would have calamitous ramifications for real women and real families, and that the women it would most affect could never imagine they would need their right to abortion protected in this way.

Women and their families must be able to trust their doctors and retain their access to medical care when they most need it. To make sure that happens, members of the Senate and ordinary people across this country must see through the stereotype of the late-term aborter and see, instead, the true face of a woman who has been in this situation. I extend my hand; it is an honor to make your acquaintance.

HOW CONSERVATIVES MISREAD AND MISUSE MILTON FRIEDMAN (WP)

By Nicholas Wapshott

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Milton Friedman, the combative, impish free-market economist, died in 2006, too early to witness and diagnose the financial crisis of 2008 and the long economic slump we've experienced since. But that doesn't mean he's absent from the debate over how to handle it.

"I wish we could find Milton Friedman again," Mitt Romney lamented in an October debate during the Republican primary campaign, when asked if he had any candidates in mind to run the Federal Reserve instead of Chairman Ben Bernanke. And speaking at a University of Chicago forum this spring, Romney enlisted Friedman in his side of the political fight over economic policy.

"Milton Friedman understood what, frankly, our president, President Obama, I don't think has learned even after three years and hundreds of billions of dollars in federal spending," Romney said. "And that is: Government does not create prosperity. Free markets and free people create prosperity."

Tuesday will mark the 100th anniversary of Friedman's birth in New York. In the midst of a global economic slump and a U.S. presidential campaign focused almost entirely on the economy, it is worth considering what he might really think of our economic troubles.

Friedman burst onto the national stage when, in pioneering work with Anna Schwartz, he rewrote

the history of the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. The pair concluded that, by imposing high interest rates when disaster struck, the Federal Reserve did not funnel enough money into the economy, turning the crash into a depression. If the Fed had provided plentiful cheap money, Friedman argued, the slump would have lasted a couple of years, not a decade.
Friedman leveraged this insight into a cure for "stagflation" - that crippling combination of inflation and feeble economic growth that took hold in the United States in the mid-1970s. He believed that inflation resulted from too much government spending on Keynesian stimulus programs, which led to too much money chasing too few goods. His remedy was "a steady rate of monetary growth at a moderate level," providing "a framework under which a country can have little inflation and much growth." In short, close control of interest rates would stabilize prices.
Paul Volcker, the Fed chairman appointed by President Jimmy Carter and kept on by Ronald Reagan to cure stagflation, took Friedman's advice and rebooted the economy, provoking a recession and purging hyperinflation by raising interest rates. Inflation came down, and economic growth resumed.
On the face of it, there are enough similarities between the financial crises of 1929 and 2008 for Friedman to remain relevant. Before the Great Depression, ample supplies of cheap money fueled a stock market bubble. Attempting to curb such rampant speculation by tightening the money supply, the Fed plunged the economy into destructive deflation. Seventy years on, Alan Greenspan's cheap money policy as Fed chief at the turn of the century stoked a housing bubble based on reckless lending. A stock market crash, the financial freeze, panic in the banks, George W. Bush's "troubled asset" rescue and Obama's near-trillion-dollar Keynesian stimulus followed in short order.
For followers of Friedman, Greenspan's policy of keeping interest rates too low for too long was sure to lead to trouble. By happy chance, the person in charge of the Fed when the economy finally ran off the rails was Bernanke, a distinguished student of the Great Depression and a Friedman disciple. At a conference on the occasion of Friedman's 90th birthday in 2002, Bernanke said to Freidman and Schwartz: "Regarding the Great Depression, you're right. We [the Fed] did it. We're very sorry. But, thanks to you, we won't do it again."
Bernanke seemed like the right man at the right time, and his response to the financial turmoil was to follow Friedman's advice and open the faucets wide, pumping money into the system through "quantitative easing" that provided long-term low interest rates to bolster business confidence. But Bernanke's actions, while they followed Friedman's advice to the letter, have brought opprobrium on the Fed chairman from his erstwhile conservative supporters.
Indeed, despite their frequent invocations of Friedman, conservatives have long since abandoned the principles of his Chicago School remedies in favor of more stern solutions advocated by Austrian economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. They want to reduce the size of the state as fast as possible by slashing government spending, paying off public debt quickly, cutting taxes and removing regulations from business.
Faced with a lifeless economy, would Friedman have taken Obama's lead in demanding from Congress a new Keynesian spending stimulus? Unlikely. Friedman thought big government was economically inefficient and stood in the way of the private sector. He was "in favor of cutting taxes under any circumstances and for any excuse, for any reason, whenever it's possible" because "the only effective way I think to hold [public spending] down is to hold down the amount of income the government has."
But his devotion to cutting taxes is not enough for today's conservatives, who have adopted a near-nihilistic view of the state. Friedman believed that the Fed has a right to manage the national economy and, contrary to Romney's oversimplified depiction, that government has a role in making markets operate fairly. "The existence of a free market does not of course eliminate the need for government," he wrote. "On the contrary, government is essential both as a forum for determining the 'rules of the game' and as an umpire to interpret and enforce the rules decided on."
Today, Friedman has been left out in the cold. His belief in an ordered, managed economy through interest rates runs counter to prevailing conservative orthodoxies. It was his certainty - and the wit with which he delivered his message - that helped popularize his views around the globe. But the fact that he did not adopt absolutist positions on the size of the state and the evils of government has made his true views irrelevant among those he used to lead.

George Shultz, an economist and a former secretary of labor, Treasury and state, once joked that "everybody loves to argue with Milton, particularly when he isn't there." Alas, now that Friedman is truly gone, it seems that no one cares to grapple with his vision anymore.
Nicholas Wapshott is the author of "Keynes Hayek: The Clash That Defined Modern Economics."

MY FRIEND SALLY RIDE'S FINAL MISSION: MAKING SCIENCE COOL (WP)
By Susan Okie
Washington Post, July 28, 2012
Sally Ride seized the chance to go to space because she wanted to find out what it would feel like. Sally loved testing the limits of her brain and body - solving the puzzles in Scientific American as a teenager, running five miles a day while doing research in physicsat Stanford University, winning tournament tennis matches, learning to fly a NASA T-38 jet.
After she blasted off to become America's first woman in space, the support crew at Mission Control asked Sally how she'd enjoyed being launched on a rocket. She gave it Disneyland's top rating: "Definitely an E ticket." Looking back at her first spaceflight years later, she called it "the most fun I'll ever have in my life."
When we were best friends and high school classmates in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, Sally told me that she wanted to be famous, but she wanted to achieve that goal by winning a Nobel Prize. A ninth-grade science teacher had introduced her to physics and astronomy, and she intended to study the stars. After her retirement from NASA and academia, Sally, who died this past week at 61, turned her focus back to teachers - like the one she always credited with planting the seed that eventually got her to space. She hoped to motivate a new generation of teachers who might impart a love of science to their students.
It wasn't until 1977, when she was completing her graduate work in physics at Stanford, that Sally spotted a notice in the university's student newspaper announcing that NASA was recruiting young scientists - for the first time including women - to become astronauts. She knew instantly that this was what she wanted to do. I was thrilled, but not surprised, when she called early one morning in 1978 to tell me that she was one of six women selected.
Sally easily fitted into the mostly male, can-do engineering culture of NASA. It was a culture that valued level-headedness and good judgment; the operative slogan was "don't screw up."
Assigned to the team helping to design the space shuttle's computer-operated mechanical arm, which would be used to deploy and recover satellites, Sally threw herself into the job and proved adept at manipulating the arm. That skill, as well as her coolness under pressure while assigned to a key job at Mission Control, impressed veteran astronaut Robert Crippen, who was to command the shuttle's seventh flight, scheduled for the first half of 1983.
Before offering Sally a spot on Crippen's crew, Christopher Kraft, director of Houston's Johnson Space Center, warned her that she would become a historic figure and the focus of worldwide attention. "I think he wanted to give me a chance to back out," she later recalled.
When I visited the space center several months before the flight, I watched her go from demanding sessions in a shuttle simulator - practicing for every possible mishap- to a photo shoot for the cover of Ms. magazine. Wearing a crisp blue flight suit, Sally rolled her eyes when a makeup artist applied blush and the photographer requested "a restless, smug half-smile."
Still, she refused to worry about the pressures of becoming a national hero. "I have great confidence in my ability not to go nuts," she told me.
Those pressures proved greater than she expected. Sally's historic flight was front-page news all over the world. For almost half a year, her days were a succession of public appearances, goodwill trips, speeches and interviews. She couldn't go to the grocery store without being asked for an autograph. She told me that the only time she felt she could be alone was when she was standing at a lectern, preparing to deliver a speech.
When talking about science or the space shuttle, Sally was a natural teacher - enthusiastic, engaging and clear - but she detested personal questions. Married then to fellow astronaut Steven Hawley, she was determined to keep her private life to herself. Eventually, public excitement waned, and she returned to the relatively anonymous routine of an astronaut. "Fortunately, I have an extremely forgettable face," she quipped.
But she always enjoyed speaking with children. Kids asked questions that adults were embarrassed to ask - how the space shuttle's toilet worked, how to make a peanut-butter-and-jelly

sandwich while weightless. Sally realized that elementary and middle-school students were endlessly curious about space travel and that sharing her experience was a way to get them excited about science and engineering.

When she proposed writing a book about a shuttle flight, half a dozen publishers were enthusiastic - until they learned that what Sally had in mind was a children's book, not her life story. "To Space and Back" (which I co-authored), published in 1986, was the first of seven science books that Ride wrote for children. The others were written with her longtime partner, Tam O'Shaughnessy. It's characteristic of Sally's love of privacy that their 27-year relationship did not become publicly known until the announcement of her death.

When the space shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986, killing seven astronauts, including schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, the disaster stunned the nation - and put an end to NASA's prospects of sending more teachers into space. Ride served as a member of the presidential commission investigating the accident. A few days after the disaster, she called me in a fury because, as one of the reporters helping to cover the disaster for The Washington Post, I had called space center employees whom I had met through her. It took years for our friendship to recover from what she saw as a betrayal.

In the years after Sally left NASA in 1987 and became a physics professor at the University of California at San Diego, she seemed to grow comfortable with her place as a hero - particularly as a role model for girls. In 2001, she started her own company, Sally Ride Science, to create books for students on key scientific concepts and careers, and to sponsor science festivals for girls in elementary and middle school. The media-shy former astronaut now regularly donned her NASA flight suit to speak at day-long festivals on university campuses that still attract hundreds of girls in the fifth through eighth grades.

At one such festival in Northern Virginia, I watched her spend more than an hour sitting at a card table in the hot sun, signing autographs and answering questions from a long line of excited girls, many of whom hoped to grow up to be astronauts.

I last saw her about 18 months ago. We met for breakfast at her favorite seaside inn in San Diego. She was enthusiastic about the recent direction of her company, which had shifted its focus from engaging middle school students to engaging their teachers. She believed that students' natural interest in science was too often snuffed out by stereotypes about what scientists do and by subtle messages from teachers, parents and peers. She said that teachers too often offer students a heavy diet of facts instead of a chance to experiment and have fun.

"When I was growing up," she recalled in a 2009 speech, "science and engineering were really cool." Kids dreamed of becoming rocket designers or studying moon rocks. "That's generally not the case today," she said. "And that's a problem."

With funding from industry, her company creates research-based professional-development curricula and brings elementary and middle school teachers from across the country to attend four-day trainings. The sessions have been shown to be effective in changing teacher practices and student attitudes.

Sally had a new mission: She was determined to reach as many science teachers as she could - and through them, the girls and boys they teach - to help make the study of science interesting and meaningful to kids. Her own science teachers did that for her. Sally is gone, but let's hope that the countless teachers and students she inspired will carry on with the task.

Susan Okie is a physician, a former medical reporter for The Washington Post and a clinical assistant professor of family medicine at Georgetown University.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR PENN STATE (WP)

By Rodney A. Erickson

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Since the news about Jerry Sandusky broke last fall, the most challenging chapter in Penn State's history has unfolded in the glare of the national spotlight. Those of us in leadership roles at Penn State have faced questions for which there is no playbook. I have spent many nights - and many more with our leadership team - considering the actions we must take to ensure that this university endures as an institution of which we can all be proud and one that learns from the past to be a brighter light for the future.

I knew when I accepted the position of president in November - and the Board of Trustees strongly

agreed - that, for Penn State to move forward, we would need to uncover and expose the full scope of the university's knowledge of Sandusky's actions. We could not wait for courts to bring evidence to light. So, knowing that we would need to accept accountability for whatever was discovered, the board asked former FBI director Louis Freeh to lead an independent investigation. The Freeh report revealed that those in positions of authority had failed to protect children. The Board of Trustees and my administration have accepted responsibility for this breakdown of leadership.

Since the report was published, accepting responsibility has come to take on an additional meaning. This week the NCAA imposed -unprecedented penalties on the university. These include a $60 million fine, the loss of football scholarships, a ban on postseason play and the forfeiture of all wins between 1998 and 2011. Many have questioned how I could agree to such sanctions. Let me be clear that I did not suggest this punishment, and I do not take its repercussions lightly. But I believe that the alternative - a multi-year ban on football - would have been far more detrimental to the healing process of our students and alumni.

With this penalty, it is true that all of us in some way now shoulder the burden for the wrongdoings of others. Students, faculty, staff and alumni who had no involvement, or even knowledge of who Jerry Sandusky was, now share in the responsibility of leaders who failed. To many, it is simply unfair.

I think, however, that acceptance of this responsibility will be essential to our ability to lay a new foundation and integral to the long-term character of our institution. In the face of this adversity, I am proud of the many students, faculty and alumni who have banded together with grace, humility and determination.

In a larger sense, the past year's events have brought into focus the pain experienced by victims as well as the insidious crime of child sexual abuse. We owe it to them, and it is our social responsibility, to make the prevention of child sexual abuse a part of our university's mission of teaching, research and service. We have already begun to mobilize our university community to support and work with organizations that prevent and detect child abuse and help victims recover. We have established the Center for the Protection of Children at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, and national experts are scheduled to gather on our campus in October for a two-day conference about the many facets of child sexual abuse. We have partnered with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to expand public awareness, provide training for our employees and advise us on future initiatives.

Some will still find it hard to imagine a new chapter in Penn State's history, to see beyond a football program without postseason play or the story of a school that fell from a pedestal. I urge the skeptics to look harder and see what I see today: an institution that will emerge stronger than ever before, one that will be made great not because of the reputations of a few but because of the resolve, compassion and talents of many. From the headlines alone, it would be forgivable - though wrong - to think that Penn State is little more than an ordinary university with a tradition of athletic success. More than 150 years of tremendous accomplishments in teaching, research and service suggest otherwise. Penn State graduates are among the most successful leaders in science, engineering, medicine, public policy, the arts and business. Many were the first in their families to go to college. They came and still come from near and far - and they continue to succeed.

So as I look ahead, I see a university that ultimately prevails. I see a community that has learned from this experience in the most painful and personal of ways - a story that is more than just our story but that of humanity in all its fallibility. Irrevocably changed by the lessons of the past, the community joins together to become a passionate voice for the victims of child sexual abuse and for the courage in each of us to stand up to protect society's most vulnerable.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

A NEW WAY OF LIFE PROMISED IN DEWEY (WILNJ)
Council accepts prodding to be more forthcoming
By James Fisher
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

DEWEY BEACH - The Dewey Town Council said Friday it will change the ways it publishes its meeting agendas, stung by an Attorney General's Office letter that said the town routinely violated the Freedom of Information Act.

But as they took some licks, commissioners objected to the tone of the attorney general's letter. The letter said Dewey frequently put out meeting agendas that were too vague and failed to make it clear to residents what would be discussed. This "fell far short" of FOIA rules, the letter said, and it described "obvious and blatant" violations that were "clearly unlawful." It demanded the council make changes to avoid litigation over FOIA infractions, saying "extraordinary violations require extraordinary and rigorous remedies."

"I think they should change the language in the opinion not to be so degrading to the council," Mayor Diane Hanson said. The council passed a motion asking the state to "consider revising the language of the opinion to more accurately reflect the good faith of this town council. "

The criticism of the Attorney General's Office was one in a series of problems to plague Dewey Beach this summer.

The most recent setback was the sudden resignation of the town's newly hired manager. The town had conducted a lengthy search for its new town manager before settling on Bob Stickels, who had nearly 20 years of experience as a Sussex County administrator under his belt. He started work in April, but after four months of Dewey's roiling politics, announced he was leaving for "personal reasons."

Stickels has not elaborated on the reasons for his departure, and could not be reached Friday. Hanson, at the night's meeting, said she didn't know why he resigned but suggested he was dismayed by a deluge of FOIA requests and by "bad publicity."

Some of that publicity concerned push back from bar and restaurant owners against what they say is a too-restrictive noise ordinance approved by council early this summer.

Hanson, who has been upfront about wanting to nudge Dewey closer to the family-friendly model of beach resorts and away from the bar-and-party model, has been the focus of much of the criticism – and more. She recently learned, according to The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times, that her face had been printed on urinal cakes left in bar bathrooms.

Bar owners adamantly denied approving that unorthodox political speech, but fought for changes to a noise ordinance they said threatened bars with multiple offenses with loss of their business licenses. The council agreed Friday to remove that punishment from the code. Hanson also said the council would consider making the maximum noise limit in town higher near well-trafficked Highway One than at properties near the water.

Dewey also found itself in the spotlight earlier this summer when media attention focused on the first murder in the town's history. A Pennsylvania woman found in a hotel was the victim of an apparent murder-suicide, but it led town officials to take steps to bring in additional manpower to provide security and offer reassurance to residents and tourists. At Friday's meeting, police reported to the council that aside from public urination, both petty crime and serious crime rates are lower this year than in the recent past.

Last night, first on the agenda was the discussion of how to respond to the attorney general's accusations of FOIA infractions. Dewey's leaders took care to walk the right side of the FOIA law, with a specifically worded agenda posted on the town's website noting the council would talk in closed session about how to respond.

As it happened, the council voted to talk about responding to the FOIA letter in open session. Only Hanson and commissioner Martin Seitz voted for closed-door talks.

The council voted to take some of the steps the attorney general requested. Its members agreed to remove a sentence from agendas that allows changes with only 48 hours notice, and committed to put on each agenda's front page the date it was publicly posted.

The council declined, though, to give the attorney general copies of its meeting agendas 10 days in advance for at least a year, one remedy suggested in the letter.

"I don't want to do that," Hanson said, and commissioner Anna Legates said, "I thought that was very strict."

All of the commissioners pledged to run government in public view.

"I ran on a platform of open government, and I'm very distressed to find us in this situation," Joy Howell said. "What comforts me is we acted in good faith."

"We need to get back to the basics of having open and honest communication in town

government, and transparency," said Denise Campbell, an activist in Dewey civic life who's announced she'll run for town council in September. "At the end of the day, the attorney general's office is just asking us to follow the law."

CONSPIRACY OR A CASE OF CROSSED WIRES? (WILNJ)
Teenager sued over alleged prank calls
By Sean O'Sullivan
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
To most, a prank phone call – asking unsuspecting victims if their refrigerator is running, then advising them, "Well, you better go and catch it" – is either a rite of passage or a byproduct of a misspent youth.
To one Utah-based company, it is a weapon of corporate espionage.
In January, Newark-area resident Dan Smith opened a letter from attorneys that accused his 15-year-old son of being part of a corporate conspiracy to bring down 1-800 CONTACTS, a contact lens supplier, with prank phone calls.
"It took me by surprise," said Dan Smith, adding that his son, Dennis, a soft-spoken full-time student going into his senior year, is a good kid who is not the type to make prank calls. "I know it wasn't Dennis."
But 1-800 CONTACTS says otherwise. According to the suit, Dennis Smith – along with 19 other named defendants from New Jersey, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada, and some 30 additional unknown individuals – made thousands of prank phone calls to the company's customer service line.
The lawsuit claimed the phone callers were paid and their prank call campaign was coordinated by competitors that it identifies only as John Does 1 through 5.
"The true identities of Does 1 through 5 are currently unknown to the plaintiff," wrote attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS in the civil lawsuit filed in Utah state court. "When Plaintiff discovers the true identities of Does 1 through 5, plaintiff will amend this ... complaint to allege their true identities."
Attorney Jefferson Gross, of Utah, who is representing 1-800 CONTACTS, refused to answer questions about the lawsuit. "Our client has no comment at the present about the litigation," he said in an email.
The suit says Dennis Smith and the other defendants were employed as part of a competitor's plan "to flood plaintiff's sales line with numerous calls to interfere with plaintiff's employees' efforts to fulfill legitimate orders," thereby injuring the business.
The suit alleges that between February and March 2011 alone, more than 3,000 prank calls were made to 1-800 CONTACTS, an average of about 100 a day. These calls included silence, "talking in strange voices, laughing and harassment of sales line staff."
The lawsuit asks for a restraining order against the still unknown corporate defendants and punitive and compensatory damages.
In a separate document, attorneys accuse Dennis Smith of making 2,800 prank calls to 1-800 CONTACTS over a year and a half. The lawsuit doesn't say how the company traced the calls to Dennis Smith. It says the alleged prank callers used Skype, an application that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet, to conceal the origins of the calls.
Dennis Smith, now 16, said while he is a regular user of Skype, he has never made a prank phone call and has not come near making 2,800 calls to anyone.
Dan Smith said that based on a list provided to him, it is impossible for his son to have made some of the calls because he was in school on some of the days and times when the calls were made. And he said he's not seen any evidence of his son suddenly throwing around cash from mystery corporate backers.
Dan Smith believes 1-800 CONTACTS is using the litigation as some kind of fishing expedition. He showed off a plastic bin full of hundreds of pages of legal documents that he has been sent since the suit was filed.
"It has been harassment," Dan Smith said, adding, "This thing is driving me crazy. It is insane."
Dan Smith said attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS tried to get a default judgment entered against his son because he – not an attorney – responded to the lawsuit. Dan Smith said he cannot afford an attorney, and the judge ruled that as a parent, he can represent his son.
Smith also said the lawsuit has made a stressful time for his family even more so. Smith's wife,

Deborah, was diagnosed with breast cancer in late 2010 and was undergoing treatment at the time the lawsuit arrived. She died this year, just before Easter.
At least two other Delawareans are named in the suit, but they could not be reached for comment.
Smith said he has tried to write to attorneys and the company to resolve the issue, but so far, he has gotten nowhere.
"I'm fed up," he said. "I'm so mad, I'd like to countersue but it is not worth it. I just want it to go away."

FIRE DISPLACES FOUR BUSINESSES (WILNJ)
One injured in accidental blaze
By Jesse Paul And Terri Sanginiti
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
Eric Martin paced around nervously watching flames consume the building that housed his business, Lost Motion Automotives, in an industrial park near the north end of the St. Georges Bridge.
His repair shop was uninsured.
"That was my livelihood in there," said Martin, 23, of Bear, as he tried to choke back his emotions. "One hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment and my only source of income … This is just a bad dream. I'm waiting to wake up."
Three other businesses also located in the building in the St. Georges Industrial Park were lost in the fire that broke out just before 11 a.m. Friday in the 1600 block of S. DuPont Highway . One man had minor injuries, police said.
Firefighters arrived to find the building engulfed in flames as thick, black smoke billowed from the roof. Neighbors, business owners, employees and passers-by watched as crews attacked the fire. Smoke could be seen for miles rising above the St. Georges Bridge on U.S. 13 and the nearby Roth Bridge on Del. 1. U.S. 13 was closed from Cox Neck Road to the south entrance of the bridge as crews worked to put out the flames.
The fire marshal's office ruled the fire accidental and said it caused an estimated $500,000 in damages. The cause of the fire was determined to be from fuel vapors being siphoned from a tank that ignited surrounding combustibles.
The injured man was identified as a 22-year-old employee of FNJ Enterprises. He sustained first- and second- degree burns to his arms trying to extinguish the fire and was treated by New Castle County paramedics before being transported to Christiana Hospital.
FNJ Enterprises, Lost Motion Automotive, Quality Automotive Enterprises and Monoghan Fence were all lost in the flames, according to business owners and employees. Little of the building was left by the time flames were mostly extinguished at about 1 p.m.
The fire originated in a part of the building that housed a salvage garage, according to the fire marshal.
Dave Laird, 28, was working inside his garage at Quality Automotive Enterprises when he heard a scream from outside. Less than 5 seconds later, flames erupted through the opening of the shop, he said.
"I tried to drag out as much as I could," said Laird, who was visibly shaken.
Keith Goodman, 48, watched the fire from his home across the highway, and said he saw multiple small explosions come from the blaze. At one point, he said, a large explosion "flipped up" part of the roof and expelled a large fireball.
"I saw the smoke when I was coming home and my heart started to drop," said Goodman. "I thought it was my house. It was pretty scary, pretty intense. I could feel the heat from over here on the other side of the road."

UP TO $50,000 OFFERED FOR INFO ON ASSAULT OF POSTAL CARRIER (WILNJ)
Two men still sought in March attack in Bear
By Robin Brown
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
Fliers have been posted throughout the Bear post office, advertising a reward of up to $50,000 in an unsolved armed assault in March that seriously injured a carrier.
"We believe it was an attempted robbery," U.S. Postal Inspector Alex Sylvester told The News

Journal on Friday night.
Such crimes occur "pretty close to almost never," Sylvester said, partly due to severe penalties for attacking federal workers.
Another reason is that robbing a carrier is pointless if money is the object: "They don't carry any currency," Sylvester said, and no mail is known to have been stolen.
The attack occurred at about 11:30 a.m. March 16 in the densely residential area off Rivers End Drive in the Smalleys Dam area of Bear, west of Del. 7 and north of U.S. 40.
The longtime carrier – delivering mail on foot at Stephanie Drive and Silver Run Terrace off Rivers End Drive on her regular route when attacked – suffered a significant head injury but recovered and returned to work, Sylvester said.
She told police the suspects were both 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 9 inches tall, and one had a handgun. One was thin and athletic looking, but she couldn't estimate his age. The other appeared to be in his mid-20s and stocky. He had a goatee and was smoking a thin cigar, she told police.
They may have had a vehicle nearby, Sylvester said.
The U.S. Postal Inspection Service reward offers up to $50,000 for information leading to the men's arrest and conviction. Tips may be given confidentially at (877) 876-2455, option 2, Sylvester said. Tips given locally also will be eligible for the reward, he said.
New Castle County Cpl. John Weglarz Sr. said Friday tips may be given at www.nccpd.com or www.tipsubmit.com, sent by text to 847411 (TIP411) starting with NCCPD or called in to Delaware Crime Stoppers, (800) TIP-3333.
County police handled the investigation at first, but the case shifted to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to pursue and prosecute because the victim was a postal employee on duty, Weglarz said. Tips will be relayed to the federal enforcement agency, he said.
"Even though it happened several months ago, any information would be greatly appreciated," Sylvester said. "We'll track any leads we get."

DAN GAFFNEY JOINS NEW SUSSEX TALK RADIO STATION (WILNJ)
By Earl Holland
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
A new talk radio station will hit the airwaves this fall in Sussex County.
On Sept. 4, Delmarva Broadcasting Co. will flip the switch on "Delaware 105.9." The FM station's mission will be to provide local, regional, national and international news to the lower Sussex County area.
The station will begin with a familiar voice as longtime local radio personality Dan Gaffney will be its anchor. Gaffney resigned last week from Georgetown-based WGMD-FM, where he was the morning show host and the station's program director.
"It's a huge positive for our company to start a station and to get a personality who is well-liked, popular and highly regarded in the Southern Delaware area like Dan," said Mike Kazala, Delmarva Broadcasting regional general manager. "We've been talking about doing something like this for some time and there's been a lot of planning involved with and a lot more to go."
Gaffney's inclusion is just one of several additions planned for the new station. Kazala, who said he could not divulge further information on additional personnel, said his hope is to be able to have further announcements about staffing within a few weeks.
"We intend to have live and local personalities on the air all day long," Kazala said. "We want to be live, local and pertinent."
In preparation for the start of the station, a new studio is being built at Delmarva Broadcasting's location west of Milford. The facility is also home to Eagle 97.7, COOL 101.3 and Spanish language station La Exitosa 930 AM.
The 105.9 station, which currently simulcasts Cat Country, has a signal that covers the Lewes, Milford and Milton areas. Kazala said the change from Cat Country to talk radio will not have an effect on the listeners of the country radio station as its 97.5 signal covers all of Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties and much of Sussex.
Kazala said his hope is that Delaware 105.9 will follow in the path of Delmarva Broadcasting's other news station, Wilmington-based WDEL.
"Part of it is the success we have had with our news talk at WDEL," he said. "We wanted to have a dialogue with people in the lower Sussex area about things that matter to them. We feel we'll be

putting a powerful product on the radio."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

TELL A PARENT: SUMMER IS A TIME FOR LEARNING (WILNJ)
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
"Making Summer Count" is aptly named a recent report from the Rand Corporation on the educational losses children suffer from the time school lets in early June and reopens in late August. On average, the report tells us, students lose about a month's worth of learning. That's bad enough as an average. But a closer look at what is happening to young students is that educationally at-risk children – those who least afford it – lose even more.
In plain words, poorer children regress more than richer children do. The best answer is intellectual and physical stimulation. Children are natural learning machines. That they lose any of the educational progress that made during the school year is a social crime. The nation can't afford that loss. Neither can Delaware. And the children themselves will suffer for it.
Part of the problem is to find programs to keep the children learning. There are quite a few available. There are camps and library programs. Schools and churches add a hand as well. Some special programs such as the mentored chess games at Thomas Edison Charter School are good examples.
The first challenge is to get more students in those programs. Scholarships often are available for science and math camps, for example.
The second, and greater, challenge is to get parents and guardians to recognize the child's need to learn. Too often spots in programs are left vacant because parents can't get the forms in on time or they simply fail to recognize their importance. One way to meet this challenge is for civic and church groups to play mentor to the parents.
Get the parents on track to help their children. Progress will follow.

FOLLOWING THE "STORYLINE" OF THE WORLD'S ATHLETES (WILNJ)
Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012
Pick your athlete, or your team, or even your nation. And then go ahead and root for an Olympic victory. Much of the world is watching London as the Summer Games are underway.
Forget the silly controversies of what Mitt Romney said or meant. Instead, pay attention to the athletes and their feats on the fields, in the pools and in the gyms.
In fact, television has gotten us into the "back story" of the athletes so much that smart programmers are offering storylines for readers and viewers to follow. For example, how about the swimmer Michael Phelps' final quest for even more Olympic gold? Or the South African Oscar Pistorius, an amputee, who will be running in the 400-meter dash? He runs on carbon fiber prosthetic legs.
You don't have to be a sports fan to recognize the implications of Mr. Pistorius' participation. For one, it is a tremendously dramatic story of human determination. For another, it is a harbinger of what a combination of sports and technology will bring in the future.
Already some critics have objected to Mr. Pistorius' participation, saying the carbon fiber legs give him an unfair advantage over athletes. For the time being, let's stick with the story of Mr. Pistorius and his determination to succeed. We can leave the debate for another day.
Some observers deplore the nationalistic aspect to the Olympics. They scoff at the American media's preoccupation with medal counts. We should, the critics insist, applaud the best athlete no matter where he or she comes from. That, of course, is the ideal. In reality, we all need someone to root for. That's an important part of the storyline.

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TO: **THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF**

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS

The Biden Family Business

By Michelle Malkin

New York Post, July 28, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden**, America's textbook Beltway barnacle, still labors under the illusion that he's America's middle-class Everyman. And now, he's gone and dragged his adult children into the land of Democratic make-believe. This is a BFD: a **Biden** Fabulist Dud.

As usual with White House class-warfare demagoguery, reality doesn't fit the wealth-bashing narrative.

In Philadelphia on Wednesday, **Biden** stoked passive-aggressive resentment of the 1 percenters. "The wealthy," he sniveled. "God bless 'em," he snarked. "I wish my kids would become wealthy," he sighed before railing against tax relief for all those evil, privileged rich people earning more than $250,000 a year.

Does **Biden** have kids we don't know about? Because his three children with wife Dr. Jill **Biden** all appear to be, well, doing just fine. Way more than just fine.

Daughter Ashley, a social worker in the Delaware state bureaucracy, graduated from Tulane and has a master's from the University of Pennsylvania. Her husband is a plastic surgeon at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals in Philadelphia. Along the way, he also racked up a PhD and snagged a slot as an assistant professor of otolaryngology/head and neck surgery and as a director of the Herbert Kean Center for Facial Aesthetics.

Not exactly Occupier-level poverty in that line of business.

Oldest son Beau is the attorney general of Delaware, a former Justice Department official and federal prosecutor, a former partner in the Wilmington law firm Bifferato, Gentilotti, **Biden** and Balick and a career beneficiary of the **Biden** dynasty.

Then there's younger son Hunter. Vice President **Biden**, meet your well-heeled and wildly successful lobbyist/lawyer offspring.

Hunter **Biden** now fronts Eudora Global, "a uniquely organized growth and acquisition firm focused on purchasing and accelerating the development of high potential enterprises in industries that meet its selective investment profile." He co-founded the firm with Jeffrey Cooper. Who is Jeffrey Cooper?

Cooper helped build one of the biggest asbestos-litigation firms in the country. SimmonsCooper, based in Madison County, Ill., has donated a whopping $196,050 to the senior **Biden**'s campaigns since 2003, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. In that same time frame, the firm poured $6.5 million into lobbying against a key tort-reform bill — which Sen. **Biden** worked hard to defeat. Cooper also donated to Beau **Biden**'s first attorney general campaign and paid Beau for legal work on Delaware asbestos litigation cases.

Hunter **Biden** was previously a top official at PARADIGM Global Advisors, a hedge-fund holding company founded with Vice President **Biden**'s brother, James, and marketed by convicted finance fraudster Allen Stanford. As Paradigm chairman, Hunter **Biden** oversaw half a billion dollars of client money invested in hedge funds while remaining a lobbyist. Cooper chipped in $2 million for the ill-fated venture, which went down in flames amid nasty fraud lawsuits.

Before all that, Hunter **Biden** was a senior vice president at MBNA America Bank, one of his dad's wealthiest corporate campaign donors. An MBNA bank official helped facilitate an eyebrow-raising real-estate deal for Daddy **Biden** that paved the way for the acquisition of a custom-built house in Delaware's ritziest Chateau Country neighborhood.

While raking in consultant payments at MBNA, Hunter **Biden** also served as a founding partner in DC lobbying shop Oldaker, **Biden** and Belair. His lobbying brought in nearly $4 million in 2007 alone.

Nice Beltway influence-peddling work if you can get it. As I noted in my book "Culture of Corruption," one client seeking federal government earmarks told The Washington Post, "**Biden**'s parentage was a selling point."

Nepotism has its privileges — and the **Biden** children, despite Papa Joe's lamentations, have enjoyed far more than their fair share.

Security Tight For Biden Arrival At Porter County Airport

Munster (IN) Times, July 28, 2012

Several members of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Northwest Indiana chapter got a bonus Friday afternoon.

The group has been camped at the Porter County Municipal Airport for more than a week to greet pilots headed to the annual air show in Oshkosh, Wis. They sell freshly grilled hot dogs, hamburger and brats along with turkey sandwiches and drinks for the pilots while they get refueled.

"We're always at the mercy of the weather, but seldom at the mercy of the vice president," said chapter President Ed Hanson, of Crown Point.

The group learned Tuesday that a VIP was expected at the airport Friday, and Hanson said they could tell by the air space restrictions it probably was Vice President Joe **Biden**. Air Force 2, with **Biden** and several others aboard, landed about 3:45 p.m. and taxied to the terminal building, where everyone was quickly whisked away by the Secret Service.

Airport manager Kyle Kuebler said he was told Monday to expect an important visitor, and the airport has been working with the White House security detail to make sure everything went smoothly. Protective measures included stationing snipers on the roof of the terminal and restricting access to the terminal to security personnel only.

A member of the cleaning crew arriving for work at the building next to the terminal said she never had seen the terminal entrance blocked off before. Kuebler said it was the first time in his 22 years at the airport such a high-ranking official landed at Porter County, although a former president landed there once.

"It's normal operations for us," he said. "It's an airplane, and it landed."

For the EAA members, it actually was a bit of a hindrance. The group uses the money raised from food sales to support its activities, and the visit meant the airport was off limits for regular traffic for more than an hour. And neither **Biden** nor anyone else on the plane bought even a hot dog.

The group had only about 10 planes stop by Friday afternoon, and Hanson said they've had as many as 35 in the past. The Oshkosh show goes through the weekend, but the EAA will be at the airport through Wednesday to greet pilots and visitors for the Collins Foundation Wings of Freedom Tour.

The Wings of Freedom planes arrive Monday, and visitors can tour the planes and go for rides. Tuesday will be the big day, Hanson said.

"We'll sell a lot of ice cream on Tuesday," he predicted.

It's expected **Biden** will depart the airport Sunday after speaking to the American Federation of Teachers convention in Detroit. It's unknown if he likes ice cream.

Local Police To Assist At DNC

By Nash Dunn

Lexington (NC) Dispatch, July 28, 2012

A handful of local law enforcement officers will assist policing the 2012 Democratic National Convention this fall in Charlotte.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to descend upon Charlotte for the convention, which is scheduled for Sept. 3-6.

Lexington Police Department will send 10 officers to assist Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department with controlling the crowds and various events. The officers will be in Charlotte for about a week, said Capt. Mark Sink, of the Lexington Police Department.

"They'll be helping with whatever Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs us to assist with," Sink said, adding that local officers will be responsible for a variety of safety and security roles.

Sink said LPD was initially contacted last fall to assist with the convention. They decided earlier this year that they would help.

"We have always assisted other departments on a regular basis, but this is definitely on a larger scale," Sink said. "This is a bigger event for North Carolina, and we are proud to be helping out with it."

While the department will be down 10 officers during the convention, Sink said LPD will still be able to maintain its normal level of officers throughout the city.

"We always have plenty to do, and we will make due," Sink said. "We planned for this sometime back, so we wouldn't have any officers out of town or on vacation."

Davidson County Sheriff David Grice said his department will not be sending any officers to Charlotte. The Davidson County Sheriff's Office was contacted for help, Grice said.

"We are pretty well covered up with our responsibilities here," Grice said. "They do pay overtime, but it's hard to let people go."

The sheriff's office has assisted with large events in the past, reserving as much as 60 officers when prominent political figures like Joe **Biden** and Bill Clinton visited the region. Those events were a little closer, though, and Grice said he can't afford to send dozens of officers to Charlotte for a week.

Nearby, Guilford County Sheriff's Office will send 40 deputies to the DNC, while Forsyth County Sheriff's Office will reserve 11 deputies for the event. High Point Police Department is sending 45 officers to the convention, and Greensboro Police Department has agreed to send 150 officers and 18 vehicles.

"Those departments just simply have more numbers and more people than we do," Grice said.

Thomasville Police Department did not respond to phone calls by press time on Friday.

September's DNC will be the first time North Carolina has hosted a major party convention.

While it's unclear exactly how many people will attend the convention, police officials say they will be ready for an influx of crowds and the potential for protestors.

The convention will kick off on Labor Day with CarolinaFest 2012, a family friendly celebration in Uptown Charlotte. Convention events will be held throughout the week, all leading up to President Barack Obama's acceptance speech inside Bank of America Stadium on the night of Sept. 6.

For more information on the convention, visit www.charlottein2012.com.

Is Israel Mitt Romney's New Swing State?

His visit to Jerusalem could be a turning point for the GOP. Why a tide of super PAC funds and Obama's shaky diplomatic relations might loosen Democrats' grip on Jewish voters.

By Eli Lake

The Daily Beast, July 28, 2012

On the eve of Mitt Romney's trip to Israel, America's Jewish vote may be in play in ways that it has not been in the past. Traditionally, most Jewish Americans have voted for Democrats. In 2008, President Obama got between 74 and 78 percent of the Jewish vote. But 2012 might be different.

"It would be difficult for Republicans to get 35 percent of the Jewish vote, but it's not impossible," said Mik Moore, the treasurer of the Jewish Council for Education and Research, the super PAC that produced and financed the Web video in which comedienne Sarah Silverman offers to allow billionaire casino-executive Sheldon Adelson an evening of lesbian-style sex known as "scissoring" if he pulls his support for Romney.

Adelson has promised to spend $100 million of his own fortune to defeat Obama. He will be with Romney in Israel and will help host a fundraiser for the candidate while he's there.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he thought more Jewish votes were in play this year. "I think there is probably 15 to 20 percent of the Jewish community that is realistically undecided and conflicted at this point and this is what we are all fighting for," he said. A Gallup poll released Friday found Jewish registered voters favored Obama over Romney by 68 percent to 25 percent.

Mitt Romney will arrive in Israel on Saturday afternoon to make a bid for both undecided Jewish voters but also the evangelical Christians, who are a key Republican constituency and are strong supporters of Israel.

While in Israel, Romney will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as key members of his national-security cabinet on Sunday. He will also meet with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who is seen by Republicans and Democrats as a reformer, but not with the Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority. Romney on Sunday evening will attend a dinner at Netanyahu's home to mark the breaking of the Jewish fast of Tisha B'av, a holiday that commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples of the biblical Israelites.

Netanyahu is scheduled on Sunday also to deliver a speech on the U.S.-Israel relationship. Briefing reporters on a conference call Friday, Dan Senor, a senior adviser on the campaign, said the speech will highlight how "the challenges and threats to Israel are challenges and threats to America. And the opportunities awaiting Israel are opportunities awaiting America."

The symbolism of the trip is important for Romney. To start, President Obama has not visited the Jewish state since coming into office despite multiple trips to the region, including Israel's neighbor, Egypt, and Israel's former ally, Turkey. But the trip is also important as a contrast between Obama's relationship with Netanyahu and Romney's relationship with Netanyahu.

Romney has known the Israeli leader since 1976, when both were corporate advisers for the Boston Consulting Group. Netanyahu's chief of staff, Ron Dermer, is a protégé of Republican pollster Frank Luntz.

Obama has had a notoriously chilly relationship with Netanyahu. During a visit to Washington in May 2011, Netanyahu famously lectured Obama during a photo opportunity on how Israel could not withdraw to its borders before the 1967 war. A year before that, Obama was furious after an Israeli housing authority announced new settlement construction in an Arab neighborhood of East Jerusalem during a visit from Vice President **Biden**. More recently, Obama spokespeople have declined to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in press conferences. Since the 1990s, Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have promised to move the U.S. embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. In office however, President Clinton, President Bush, and now President Obama have stuck by a policy that considers the status of Jerusalem to be something that must be negotiated in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

These snubs and disagreements will be amplified in the 2012 election cycle because of a tide of unregulated and undisclosed money following the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision, which overturned independent expenditure limits in U.S. campaign-finance laws.

Those independent expenditures include a new $6.5 million campaign from the Republican Jewish Coalition targeting Jewish voters. Adelson is one of the financial backers of the campaign.

A new group called the Emergency Committee for Israel has launched a series of ads in Jewish newspapers this week attacking Obama's record on Israel, claiming that he has placed undue pressure on the Jewish state. A new Web and television ad from the group contrasts Obama's 2008 speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee,I where he said he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital,

with recent statements from White House spokesman Jay Carney declining to answer the question of where the administration believes Israel's capital is.

"I don't want to see Obama get 78 percent of the Jewish vote again and the RJC and the Emergency Committee are important parts of the conversation and they hold the president accountable for what has been a bad record on Israel," said Mark Isakowitz, a member of the Romney finance committee and a board member of the Republican Jewish Coalition.

Alan Solow, a national co-chairman of the Obama-**Biden** reelection campaign, said he is expecting to be hit hard with these kinds of independent expenditures.

"We are anticipating that they will spend a lot of money to try to mischaracterize the president's record on Israel," Solow said. "The reason they have to spend so much money is that they don't have a case. Rather than stick to the facts and look at what the president has accomplished, they will spend a lot of money to convince people of an alternative reality and we believe they will fail."

The Obama campaign will highlight a series of moves the president has taken to strengthen support for Israel's defenses, such as a special aid package to help finance the development of Iron Dome, a missile-defense system designed to shoot down portable short-range rockets. Under Obama, U.S. diplomats have helped defeat the Palestinian campaign for recognition by the U.N. On Friday, Obama signed into law the U.S.-Israel Enhanced Cooperation Act, a bill that extends loan guarantees for Israel and authorizes more spending on Israeli defense.

Solow said the Obama campaign is just getting started to make this case to Jewish voters in swing states and to donors. At the same time, he acknowledged that Obama's initial efforts at making peace between Israel and the Palestinians have not been successful.

"We have been trying to solve this problem since 1948—no president has been 100 percent successful in achieving peace between Israel and its neighbors," he said. "I give President Obama lots of credit in trying to untie this knot. He tried some things that didn't work, and in response to things that didn't work, he made adjustments to his policy."

For now however, Obama will be making this case without the benefit of a major new lobby group, J Street, whose executive director in 2009 said it would be Obama's "blocking back" in Congress and supported Obama's more confrontational approach with Netanyahu in 2009 and 2010. "We have many supporters from across the Jewish spectrum including some who are affiliated with J Street," Solow said. "J Street as an organization does not play a role in the campaign." Jessica Rosenblum, J Street's director of communications, confirmed that her organization was not playing a role in the reelection campaign. "Our work is focused on advocating for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our political action committee focuses on House and Senate races."

Romney's Gaffe Joins Quayle's Potatoe On Gore's Internet

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

Bloomberg News, July 27, 2012

Was this Mitt Romney's "potatoe" moment?

The presumed Republican presidential nominee's brief stay in London came off more like a blooper reel than a statesman's first audition on the international stage.

The visit recalled candidate slip-ups of years past — from Dan Quayle's misspelling of potato to Al Gore's claim of inventing the Internet — questioning whether Romney's could do lasting damage to his image and electoral prospects.

"From the point of view of diplomacy and the original intent and nature of the trip, it looks like a real foot-in-the- mouth moment for Romney," said Michael Silverstein, a professor of anthropology, linguistics and psychology at the University of Chicago who co-wrote a forthcoming book about communication in presidential politics. "It's really a question of how this will continue — or not — to reverberate, and what are its consequences?"

U.S. political history is rife with embarrassing tales of candidate slips that took on lives of their own, sometimes forming lasting tropes about the politician in question.

There was former President George H.W. Bush's much- lampooned moment of amazement when he encountered a supermarket scanner at a 1992 grocer's convention. It opened him to ridicule as out of touch with American life outside the cloistered confines of the White House.

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, drew ridicule for ordering a Philadelphia cheese steak sandwich with Swiss cheese and dressing in head-to- toe camouflage for a campaign trail photo-opportunity going goose-hunting. Both were seen as Kerry's tin-eared efforts to portray himself as something he was not.

Quayle, who served with Bush, couldn't shake his reputation as an intellectual lightweight after he corrected a sixth grader during a visit to a Trenton, New Jersey, school, saying the child had left the "e" off the end of the word "potato."

Quayle would later write in his autobiography that it was "a defining moment of the worst kind imaginable."

Enter Romney, who had scarcely been on the ground in London a few hours when he came under withering criticism from leaders and media there for having cast doubt on the success of the summer Olympic games.

"You know, it's hard to know just how well it will turn out," Romney told NBC in an interview, adding that reports of security problems were "disconcerting."

The comments prompted a tart retort by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who noted that, "Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere" — an implicit reference to the games Romney chaired in 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

London Mayor Boris Johnson worked a crowd of 80,000 into a lather referring to the candidate as "a guy called Mitt Romney" who was questioning whether his city could handle the games. "Are we ready? Yes we are!" he yelled.

Romney, wrote The Telegraph newspaper, "is perhaps the only politician who could start a trip that was supposed to be a charm offensive by being utterly devoid of charm and mildly offensive." The Sun tabloid labeled him "Mitt the Twit."

It wasn't over yet. In damage-control mode, Romney slipped again yesterday, as he tried to praise London's management of the Olympics in an interview with NBC, calling it "impressive" that spectators could watch events from downtown.

"You're going to be able to be just in the backside of 10 Downing Street for beach volleyball," Romney said.

The mistakes may not have much shelf-life, given that they occurred overseas and will soon be overtaken by the Olympic Games, said political science professor Steven Frantzich.

"The ones that are damaging are ones that really reflect a candidate's character or ability, and particularly ones that are repeated so that it becomes a storyline of its own," said Frantzich, who teaches at U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and has written a book about political gaffes.

"At this point, I don't think we're going to look back and say, 'That was the moment in which Mitt Romney lost the election.'" Frantzich said. "Now, if there is a longer series of missteps, there may be a story that this carefully managed campaign could be coming apart at the seams."

The former Massachusetts governor's allies say Americans couldn't care less about perceived insults and mistakes in England.

"We're not worried about overseas headlines — we're worried about voters back here at home in America," Louisiana Republican Governor Bobby Jindal told reporters during a conference call July 26.

Still, one top aide did try to change the subject. Beth Myers, who is heading Romney's vice presidential search, tantalized reporters and others by taking to the social media site Twitter urging them to follow politicians believed to be on the short list — and then she listed 13 names, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a prospective pick that no party strategist considers serious.

Still, some gaffes — however silly or overblown — can help dash presidential hopes. When Gerald Ford fell down the stairs of Air Force One while waving to supporters, he was satirized by Chevy Chase on "Saturday Night Live" as clumsy and dim, doing lasting damage to his reputation.

Vice President Joe **Biden**, a Democrat, has had his share of bloopers — such as when he asked a wheelchair-bound man at a campaign event to, "Stand up — let 'em see you!" --yet the miscues are rarely seen as a major liability.

"Since virtually all of his over-speakings are of the genial, hail-fellow-well-met sort, he gets away with it," Silverstein said.

That's not the case for Romney, he added, in part because of how tightly his campaign manages media and public access to the candidate.

"The strategy seems to involve large clumps of silence or avoidance, and that's never really a good way of trying to fashion an image or personality," Silverstein said. "When gaffes are taken to be little breakthrough windows into the real self, then you have a problem."

Taylor Morris Given Purple Heart

By Pat Kinney

Waterloo and Cedar Falls (IA) Courier, July 28, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. --- A Cedar Falls sailor who lost portions of all four limbs in a May bomb blast in Afghanistan was personally awarded the Purple Heart by President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe **Biden** at the White House on Thursday.

Obama and **Biden** presented the medal to Taylor Morris in the company of his girlfriend, Danielle Kelly, his mother, Juli Morris, and sister Claire Morris during a White House tour for about 40 "wounded warriors" and their families.

Kelly said the foursome were posing for a group photo with other tour members when they were taken aside an escorted into a private room. Obama and **Biden** walked in.

Kelly said she originally thought the president was simply stopping for a quick hello, having met Taylor twice previously at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at a July 4 White House picnic.

"He (Obama) said 'Taylor Morris. I'm going to have to buy a cot for you at the White House, I've got something for you'" Kelly recalled. The president then pulled out a case containing a Purple Heart, as **Biden** read the official citiation relating how Morris earned the medal.

The Purple Heart is given to military personnel wounded in combat. Morris, a bomb disposal expert was accompanying a unit of U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers, clearing explosive ordnance, when one went off under him.

Kelly said she and Taylor were totally surprised. Officials told Juli Morris in advanced but asked her to keep the event a surprise for the couple.

The bittersweet part of the event, Juli said, is that Dan Morris, was unable to attend due to the short notice. In fact, Taylor had just completed a morning workout and was wearing a T-shirt, shorts and a headband.

Kelly said Taylor continues his recovery and improving his mobility and use of artificial limbs.

A mid-October fundraising event is planned in Cedar Falls. Kelly said it's one of Taylor's goals to be home for that.

New Program To Train Social Workers To Help Troops

Associated Press, July 27, 2012

WASHINGTON — A new program is being launched to train thousands of social workers on how to aid troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

First lady Michelle Obama's "Joining Forces" campaign says the training will help workers spot problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse and the danger signs for homelessness and suicide.

Mrs. Obama's partner in the campaign, Jill **Biden**, the vice president's wife, says social workers are "uniquely positioned" to help vets and military families.

The program – being run by a social workers' professional association – includes online courses and new standards and credentialing. It's being offered to 650,000 social workers nationwide.

Joining Forces Exceeds Expectations, Director Says

By Lisa Daniel

American Forces Press Service, July 28, 2012

When First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill **Biden**, wife of Vice President Joe **Biden** started the "Joining Forces" campaign 15 months ago, they did so with the goal of creating impactful and lasting health, education and employment support for military families.

The campaign had two significant achievements this week that its director, Navy Capt. Brad Cooper, told me hit both of those marks.

First, North Carolina became the 26th state to pass a law making it easier for military spouses to transfer their professional licenses. (Read more.) South Carolina and Hawaii passed similar laws in recent weeks, potentially affecting tens of thousands of military spouses, Cooper said. With similar legislation pending in California, Ohio and New Jersey, the campaign is "exceeding our expectations" in getting laws passed in all 50 states by the end of 2014, he said.

"As I take step back and look this – and my dad was an Army officer – this signals a pretty remarkable cultural shift," Cooper said. "I remember my mother — as well as my wife, spouses of my friends — were reluctant even to indicate they were military spouses" to prospective employers, he said.

Second, the National Association of Social Workers, at its annual convention here this week, announced it is launching a free, online training course for all social workers to better understand the unique needs of military families. It also is providing a set of standards for working with veterans and military families, and is creating a professional Credential for Social Work with Veterans and Military Families. (Read more.)

Social workers are considered the nation's frontline mental health services providers, and they practice in every county in the country. The NASW represents 650,000 of them. Its pledge to Joining Forces follows that of the four largest nursing associations, representing 3 million nurses, and the

Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, with 105 and 25 schools, respectively, in training doctors to serve military families and veterans. The Association of Marriage and Therapy Therapists also has signed on, as well as associations representing psychiatrists, psychologists and surgeons.

"This really represents, to me, not just the impactful piece, but the sustaining piece," Cooper said.

Spouses' and veterans' employment also has made major strides, Cooper said. More than 2,000 companies have signed on already hiring 25,000 spouses and 65,000 veterans, and pledging to hire another 175,000 in the next two years, helping bring down the veterans' unemployment rate, he said.

"This really is the largest outreach and advocacy efforts we've had on behalf of veterans and their families for years," Cooper said.

Joining Forces has been successful, he said, because "we've been able to breach through years and years of bureaucracy and bring people together and focus them on the effort." All they needed was leadership and direction, he added.

"People, generally, want to be helpful," Cooper said. "They don't always know what they can do. Our objective is to steer them to meaningful action."

Joining Forces' efforts have caught the attention of military spouses.

This entry was posted on July 27, 2012, 5:55 pm and is filed under Family Matters. You can follow any responses to this entry through RSS 2.0. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

New York Times And Washington Post Op-Eds

The Long, Uphill Battle Against AIDS

New York Times, July 28, 2012

The international AIDS conference in Washington has already made two points clear. There is no prospect that scientists will any time soon find the ultimate solutions to the AIDS epidemic, namely a vaccine that would prevent infection with the AIDS virus or a "cure" for people already infected with the virus. Even so, health care leaders already have many tools that have been shown in rigorous trials to prevent transmission of the virus, making it feasible to talk of controlling the epidemic within the foreseeable future. The only question is whether the nations of the world are willing to put up enough money and make the effort to do it.

An estimated 34.2 million people around the world are currently infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. According to the United Nations agency that tracks the disease, some 23.5 million of these live in sub-Saharan Africa and another 4.2 million in India and Southeast Asia. About 1.1 million live in the United States.

This conference is the first in more than two decades to be held in the United States. It became possible only when a benighted policy that prohibited entry visas for people suffering from AIDS or infected with H.I.V. was finally overturned in 2009. It was "a bad policy, based on faulty science, that ran contrary to America's deepest values," Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, told the conference.

There has been optimistic talk at the conference about accelerating the search for a "cure" that would allow people to eventually stop taking the drugs that have prolonged many lives for decades — and about developing a truly effective vaccine. But Dr. Anthony Fauci, the American government's top AIDS expert, made clear just how difficult those tasks will be. He told the conference that a cure was

"way upstream" and depends on future research breakthroughs, and he called the most successful vaccine trial to date "humbling" because it showed only a modest degree of efficacy.

Instead of waiting for these future possibilities, Dr. Fauci and other health leaders are proposing the broad adoption of other available tools to reduce the spread of the virus so as to produce an "AIDS-free generation," a goal enunciated last year by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. In her talk at the conference this week, Mrs. Clinton anticipated a time when virtually no child anywhere would be born with the virus, teenagers and young adults would have much less risk of becoming infected and those that do become infected would have access to treatments to prevent them from developing full-fledged AIDS or passing the virus on to others.

She cited the importance of condoms, counseling and testing; voluntary circumcision to protect males from becoming infected by a female partner; treating mothers to prevent transmission to their babies; and treating infected people with antiviral drugs as early as possible to enhance their own health and lessen the likelihood they will spread the virus to others. Studies also show that people at high risk of infection can protect themselves by taking an antiviral pill daily.

All that will take money. There is a widespread misconception that donors from well-heeled international organizations, rich countries and charitable foundations are the main source of money to combat the global epidemic. The share provided by international donors has, in fact, stagnated while the share provided by low- and middle-income countries to fight the epidemic on their own turf has been growing rapidly. Last year, the poorer countries invested $8.6 billion of their own money while international financing remained at $8.2 billion, the 2008 level, according to a report from the United Nations AIDS agency. Both groups will need to expand their contributions to meet ambitious treatment and prevention goals set for coming years.

Mrs. Clinton announced additional financing for AIDS programs, but perhaps her most important pledge was that the United States will issue a blueprint by Dec. 1 setting forth a road map for how to achieve an AIDS-free generation. To be effective, it will need to set priorities and define specific health outcomes and coverage targets and require detailed annual reports on the progress being made. It is unacceptable that millions of people sick enough to need treatment are not getting it.

Payday Profits

New York Times, July 28, 2012

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which failed to control the reckless mortgage lending that helped cause the financial crisis, is widely regarded as a pushover among federal regulators. But the agency showed some welcome muscle and concern for consumer protection during a House hearing this week when it vigorously opposed a bill that would accelerate the growth of payday-style lenders who peddle predatory loans that can carry interest rates of 400 percent or more.

The bill would dilute the power of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which currently has authority over these lenders, by shifting primary oversight to the comptroller's office, whose central mission does not involve consumer protection. The bill would pre-empt state licensing and most consumer protection laws, allowing the payday-loan industry to expand even in states that have restricted it in the past to protect their citizens from abusive lending policies.

Payday loans are advertised as a convenient, short-term option for people who need a small loan that they quickly repay in full, often two weeks later. But the industry relies for its considerable profits on the fact that it can easily turn these short-term loans into long-term debt.

Struggling workers who borrow a few hundred dollars at a time are frequently unable to pay on time, which means they must borrow again right away or pay extension fees that enrich the lender but are not applied to principal. After four months, for example, a customer who has borrowed $400 for a fee of $60 will have paid about $480 — and will still owe the original $400.

In some cases, people might take out more than a dozen loans in a year, or borrow from one payday lender to pay another, digging themselves ever deeper into debt. Beyond that, studies have shown that payday-loan customers are more likely than others to default on credit card debt, file for bankruptcy protection or lose bank accounts for abusing overdraft policies.

According to a new study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, many states have either disallowed payday lending or set price caps so low that the lenders go elsewhere. Under the bill in the House, however, the comptroller's office would issue charters to the lenders, overriding state laws that now regulate the terms of a loan. Worse still, the bill is disingenuously cast as a compassionate measure that would help the very poor and "unbanked" citizens who would be most hurt by it.

Speaking at a House Financial Services subcommittee hearing this week, Grovetta Gardineer, the deputy comptroller for compliance policy, demolished this pretense, noting that the industry was "based on a business model that is not sustainable from the perspective of low- and moderate-income customers — high fees, repetitive use, high defaults and severely weak legal compliance." Indeed, she said, the lending encouraged by the bill had already been found by the comptroller's office "to be unsafe and unsound and unfair to consumers."

The Time For Patience In Syria Is Over

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

AMERICA'S LONG paralysis in responding to the conflict in Syria is coming home to roost. Outside Aleppo, one of the oldest cities in the world, Syrian forces are massing for a possible assault on opposition fighters. President Bashar al-Assad has sent fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters and armored columns, threatening tens of thousands of terrified civilians.

When peaceful protest broke out in Syria last year, there was hope for a transition that would be turbulent but not violent. Mr. Assad chose instead to open fire on the protesters. President Obama called on Mr. Assad to leave office, a proper reaction to the brutality. But Mr. Obama has not backed his words with actions that might help them come true.

For a long while, the administration tried to give diplomacy a chance, saying it hoped to bring Russia, Syria's ally, into the effort. It was never realistic to expect autocrat Vladi-mir Putin to assist in the overthrow of a fellow autocrat, and Russia predictably refused.

Another argument for remaining on the sidelines was that the opposition is fractured or ineffective and includes unknown or extremist elements. But if the administration is committed to Mr. Assad's downfall, those weaknesses argue for more, not less, U.S. involvement, to get a better read on opposition forces and to encourage those less inclined toward sectarianism.

"We cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy," Mr. Obama said when civilians in another Arab city — Libya's Benghazi — were threatened as Aleppo's are now. There are important distinctions between the conflict in Syria and the conflict in Libya, in which the United States, European allies and Arab states intervened. Mr. Assad's forces are better armed. Syria has three times Libya's population. There was stronger international support for action in Libya. But the broad challenge to the United States remains the same. Are we going to stand back and watch Aleppo turn into a shooting gallery?

No one is arguing for a Libyan-style intervention into Syria at this point. But the United States and its NATO allies could begin contingency planning for a no-fly zone, now that Mr. Assad is deploying aircraft against the opposition. Instead of providing only non-lethal support, such as medical supplies and communications gear, America could help supply weapons to the outgunned opposition fighters. It could work with Turkey and other allies to set up havens for them.

All of these moves contain risks. But those must be weighed against the danger of inaction — a long civil war that could spill across Syria's borders.

Yes, this is an election season, and Americans are fatigued from a decade of war. But global leadership does not take a timeout, and sometimes it has to lead toward a consensus, not wait for one to form. "The United States has been, and will remain, the one indispensable nation in world affairs," the president declared in a speech last week. Fine words.

Is The US Classification System Dysfunctional?

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

NO GOVERNMENT can function without secrets. In national security, they are necessary to protect military operations, intelligence sources and methods, and sensitive deliberations and communications. The United States has created a system that gives about 4.8 million people, both government employees and contractors, access to classified materials, labeled confidential, secret or top secret.

J. William Leonard knows this system well. He served in the Defense Department, where in the 1990s he had responsibility for policies on classified information, and from 2002 to 2008 he was the director of the Information Security Oversight Office, the "classification czar."

Mr. Leonard was hoping to be an expert witness at the trial of Thomas Drake, a former National Security Agency official charged in 2010 with 10 felony counts for passing information to a Baltimore Sun reporter in 2006 and 2007. The case collapsed in June 2011; Mr. Drake agreed to plead guilty to a single misdemeanor of exceeding the authorized use of his government computer.

As a result, Mr. Leonard never got to testify. But he had something important to say about the system of keeping secrets at a time when so much concern is being expressed about leaks.

A document at the center of the Drake case was a classified e-mail summarizing an agency meeting. The e-mail was titled "What a Wonderful Success." It is an innocuous, self-congratulatory message to a team for its presentation to the director, Gen. Keith Alexander. Two paragraphs were classified "secret." Now that the e-mail has been released, everyone can see what was so sensitive. One of the paragraphs included the hush-hush fact — be careful if you finish reading this sentence — that Gen. Alexander left a conference room and greeted people in a lab who had worked to make sure the demonstration was a success.

According to an affidavit by Mr. Leonard, the e-mail "contained no information which met the standards of the classification system." He added, "I have seen many equally egregious examples of inappropriate assignment of classification controls to information that does not meet the standards for classification; however, I was prepared to testify that I have never seen a more willful example."

He subsequently told Ellen Nakashima of The Post that the episode underscores how our classification system is becoming "dysfunctional." Mr. Leonard added, "Specifically, the system clearly lacks the ability to differentiate between trivial information and that which can truly damage our nation's well-being." He pointed out that while people with clearances are being punished for disclosing supposedly classified information, almost no one is ever punished for over-classification.

The more that classification is used to hide the trivial, inconvenient or embarrassing, the less useful it is for genuine national security secrets. A democracy needs to balance secrecy with openness. While leaks can be damaging, excessive concealment is also corrosive, undermining trust and credibility in the very policies that the government seeks to protect.

Mr. Cuccinelli's Abortion Crusade

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

KEN CUCCINELLI II, the most overtly partisan attorney general in Virginia's history, has waged war on Obamacare, harassed climate-change scientists, sanctioned discrimination against homosexuals and embraced Arizona's (now mostly gutted) immigration law. He has clung to his post after declaring his candidacy for governor, thereby parting ways with past attorneys general, Republicans and Democrats alike, who resigned to run rather than entangle the office in politics.

Now, true to this record, Mr. Cuccinelli (R) has given a boost to the crusade to limit abortion rights, a cause he championed for years as a legislator: He refused to certify draft regulations governing abortion clinics, which had been watered down by the state Board of Health last month.

The move is classic Cuccinelli: ideological activism masquerading as professional legal "advice." It was accompanied by his office's usual disclaimer, issued by a spokesman who insisted that Mr. Cuccinelli's personal views had not colored his legal opinion. The merits suggest otherwise.

Mr. Cuccinelli's intervention is not the last word. The dispute will be kicked upstairs to Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R), who, despite his own anti-abortion views, has been somewhat more circumspect about foisting his conservative agenda on a politically moderate state.

Mr. McDonnell signed legislation last year to classify abortion clinics like hospitals, which are subject to exacting standards governing the size of treatment rooms, the width of hallways and doorways, the number of parking spaces and so forth. The purpose of the legislation, which does not apply to other outpatient clinics performing plastic or oral surgery, was to force the closure of most of the state's 21 abortion clinics, which could ill afford the costly retrofitting the regulations would -require.

But the governor left the details of implementation to the Board of Health. Last month the board ruled that the state's existing clinics are exempt from the new regulations, which would apply only to new clinics.

Mr. Cuccinelli argues that the law covers existing clinics. But as the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups have pointed out, Virginia law has not been generally interpreted to mandate that existing facilities meet new construction standards. When the Board of Health amended in 2006 its regulations covering hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient surgical facilities, it made clear that the rules applied to new construction, not existing structures.

Advocates of the legislation insist its intent is to protect women's health. But they offered no evidence to suggest that the state's clinics, where most of Virginia's 25,000 abortions annually are performed, are dangerous, unsanitary or slipshod in any way.

The law's real purpose is to use extrajudicial means to roll back abortion rights, conferred by the Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade, by making the procedure inaccessible to most women in the commonwealth. The Board of Health has taken a courageous stand to ensure that women retain that access. Rather than further politicize the issue, Mr. McDonnell should let the board's decision stand.

Where's The Outrage?

By Charles M. Blow

New York Times, July 28, 2012

Are too many Democratic voters sleepwalking away from our democracy this election cycle, not nearly outraged enough about Big Money's undue influence and Republican state legislatures changing the voting rules?

It seems so.

A Gallup poll released this week found that: "Democrats are significantly less likely now (39 percent) than they were in the summers of 2004 and 2008 to say they are 'more enthusiastic about voting than usual' in the coming presidential election." Republicans are more enthusiastic than they were before the last election.

Some of that may be the effect of having a Democratic president in office; it's sometimes easier to marshal anger against an incumbent than excitement for him. Whatever the reason, this lack of enthusiasm at this critical juncture in the election is disturbing for Democrats.

First, there's the specter of the oligarchy lingering over this election, which disproportionately benefits Republicans. According to a report by Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont, "So far this year, 26 billionaires have donated more than $61 million to super PACs, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. And that's only what has been publicly disclosed." That didn't include "about $100 million that Sheldon Adelson has said that he is willing to spend to defeat President Obama; or the $400 million that the Koch brothers have pledged to spend during the 2012 election season."

During a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on Tuesday, Sanders put it this way: "What the Supreme Court did in Citizens United is to say to these same billionaires and the corporations they control: 'You own and control the economy; you own Wall Street; you own the coal companies; you own the oil companies. Now, for a very small percentage of your wealth, we're going to give you the opportunity to own the United States government.' "

Then, of course, there's the widespread voter suppression mostly enacted by Republican-led legislatures.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, at least 180 restrictive voting bills were introduced since the beginning of 2011 in 41 states, and "16 states have passed restrictive voting laws that have the potential to impact the 2012 election" because they "account for 214 electoral votes, or nearly 79 percent of the total needed to win the presidency."

A provision most likely to disenfranchise voters is a requirement that people show photo identification to vote. Millions of Americans don't have these forms of ID, and many can't easily obtain them, even when states say they'll offer them free, because getting the documentation to obtain the "free" ID takes time and money.

This is a solution in search of a problem. The in-person voter ID requirements only prevent someone from impersonating another voter at the polls, an occurrence that the Brennan Center points out is "more rare than being struck by lightning."

The voting rights advocates I've talked to don't resist all ID requirements (though they don't say they are all necessary, either). They simply say that multiple forms of identification like student ID and Social Security cards should also be accepted, and that alternate ways for people without IDs to vote should be included. Many of these laws don't allow for such flexibility.

Make no mistake about it, these requirements are not about the integrity of the vote but rather the disenfranchisement of voters. This is about tilting the table so that more of the marbles roll to the Republican corner.

Look at it this way: We have been moving toward wider voter participation for a century. States began to issue driver's licenses more than a century ago and began to include photos on those licenses decades ago. Yet, as the Brennan Center points out, "prior to the 2006 election, no state required its voters to show government-issued photo ID at the polls (or elsewhere) in order to vote."

Furthermore, most voter laws have emerged in the last two years. What is the difference between previous decades and today? The election of Barack Obama. It is no coincidence that some of the people least likely to have proper IDs to vote are the ones that generally vote Democratic and were strong supporters of Obama last election: young people, the poor and minorities.

Republicans are leveraging the deep pockets of anti-Obama billionaires and sinister voter suppression tactics that harken back to Jim Crow to wrest power from the hands of docile Democrats.

There is little likely to be done about the Big Money before the election, and, although some of the voter suppression laws are being challenged in court, the outcome of those cases is uncertain.

These elements are not within voters' control, but two things are: energy and alertness.

If Democrats don't wake up soon, this election might not just be won or lost, it could be bought or stolen.

Land Of The Mega-Voters

By Gail Collins

New York Times, July 28, 2012

"No! No! No!" cried Heidi Heitkamp. She's the Democratic senatorial candidate in North Dakota. I had just asked her whether residents of her state think it's unfair that, in the Senate, each North Dakota voter has the clout of approximately 50 Californians.

She doesn't.

That was the top thing I had always wondered about the politics of North Dakota, whose two U.S. senators serve a population of around 680,000. (Campaign-wise, it resembles the Iowa caucuses. Voters expect to have met the candidates personally. Sometimes they seem to expect the candidates to invite them home for dinner.)

I was wandering around the state this week, mulling its Senate race. Really, we can't possibly focus on Barack Obama and Mitt Romney for another three months without an occasional reprieve.

So, North Dakota. Heitkamp, a former attorney general, is running against Representative Rick Berg, the state's sole member of the House. In the beginning, the national Democrats wrote this one off as a long shot at best, but Heitkamp seems to have, at minimum, pulled even. On the campaign trail, she's a happy warrior with the endless energy you'd need if you were running for office in a state where there's a two-hour drive between even the smaller clumps of voters. She also has a dramatic story that centers on the year 2000, when she ran for governor and was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer, but she stayed in the race, campaigning even while she had chemotherapy and her trademark red hair fell out. She lost but seems to have made an indelible imprint on the public.

(The other happy Senate surprise for the Democrats is Arizona, where the party somehow came up with a Hispanic physician who is a disabled Vietnam veteran and former surgeon general for the Bush administration, as well as the hero of several dramatic rescues, during one of which he shot a deranged suspected murderer. I believe I speak for all the political hopefuls in America when I say that the bar for a potential upset win is being set unacceptably high.)

As soon as the North Dakota Senate race began, Republican super PACs began beating Heitkamp with the health care mallet. "Heidi endorsed Obamacare," says one much-aired ad that features a very brief tape of Heitkamp saying, with no apparent enthusiasm, "It actually is a budget saver." In response, she almost always brings the discussion back to her own story. Her next ad began with Heitkamp discussing her bout with cancer and adding, "When you live through that, political attack ads seem silly."

"I have a pretty well-known pre-existing condition," she says dryly.

My second big North Dakota question was why, if the voters were really obsessed about the economy and jobs, jobs, jobs, the state wasn't tilting toward Obama. True, North Dakota hasn't gone for a Democratic presidential candidate since Lyndon Johnson. But things are great! The unemployment rate is around 3 percent and close to zero in the areas around the booming oil industry. The farmers weren't hit by the drought, and their crops are going to be worth a fortune at harvest time.

Much of this good news occurred on the president's watch. Does he get credit? The answer, once again, is no, no, no.

"If Heidi is elected, I won't lose sleep. She'll do a great job," said E. Ward Koeser, the mayor of the oil-boom town of Williston, a Republican who has endorsed Berg. "If Barack Obama gets elected, I'll lose sleep."

"Leadership means you take people who are polarized and get them together. I don't think he was that good at building relations," said Heitkamp, trying to explain her state's antipathy toward Obama. "When people are mad at me, I always try to stand next to them for 20 minutes. They can't stay mad."

We will not try to envision the president using that tactic on John Boehner. But Heitkamp says she'll be voting for Obama in November — because Mitt Romney supports the House Republican budget.

"People ask me why, and I point to that budget," she says.

In 2010, North Dakota voters were furious about the national debt and the horrors they'd heard about Obamacare, and they tossed out virtually every Democratic incumbent they could get their hands on. Now Heitkamp is betting that the House budget, with its Medicare restructuring and dramatic program cuts will seem even more radical to the emotionally conservative North Dakotans than the stimulus or health care law. "There's $180 billion in farm cuts in there," she said, launching into a litany of government aid it would strip away from North Dakota.

Berg says the House budget is thrifty and represents the "North Dakota way of doing things." We shall see. It's up to the North Dakota voters. A very small number of North Dakota voters.

Eat your heart out, California.

Addressing Poverty In Schools

By Joe Nocera

New York Times, July 28, 2012

About two years ago, Dr. Pamela Cantor gave a speech at a Congressional retreat put together by the Aspen Institute. Her talk was entitled "Innovative Designs for Persistently Low-Performing Schools."

Cantor is a psychiatrist who specializes in childhood trauma. After 9/11, her organization, the Children's Mental Health Alliance, was asked by New York City's Department of Education to assess the impact of the attack on the city's public school children. What she found were plenty of traumatized children — but less because of the terrorist attack than because of the simple fact that so many of them were growing up in poverty.

"If children are under stress, the ways they respond are remarkably similar," she says. "They get sad, distracted, aggressive, and tune out." That is what she saw in the high-poverty schools she visited.

Chaos reigned. The most disruptive children dominated the schools. Teachers didn't have control of their classrooms — in part because nothing in their training had taught them how to deal with traumatized children. Too many students had no model of what school was supposed to mean. "These were schools that were not ready to be schools," she said.

The traditional therapist's response, of course, is to recommend therapy for traumatized children. But that's an impossible solution in a big-city school of 1,000 or more students. Still, Dr. Cantor wondered, would it be possible to design schools that could, in her words, "address the issues poverty poses as they present in the classroom?" She came to the belief that the answer was yes, and, in 2002, she founded a new organization, Turnaround for Children. It's what she's been doing ever since.

Part of the reason this work strikes me as so important is the obvious: there are an immense number of children growing up in poverty — one out of three in New York City alone. The good charter schools can take only a tiny fraction of those children; the rest are in public school, far too many of which are dysfunctional.

The second reason, though, is that Turnaround is trying to bridge an important divide. Part of the debate over school reform is about poverty itself, with the reformers taking the view that a great teacher can overcome the barriers poverty poses, while the other side says that the problems of public schools can't be solved until poverty itself is alleviated. Cantor is suggesting an alternative way of thinking — that students in public schools can do well if the issues they face are dealt with head-on, instead of sidestepped.

I have space to give only the barest outline of how it works. A three-person Turnaround team embeds in a group of schools for three to five years. One works with the principal to create a positive, disciplined culture, where students come to believe they can succeed in school. One works with teachers, showing them tools, for instance, that will allow them to handle disruptions while keeping the other students on track. The third is a social worker who helps train the school social workers to help with the psychological and emotional needs of children in poverty, while identifying the most troubled students, the ones who can drive the entire school. Instead of suspending them, or expelling them, though, Turnaround contracts with mental health organizations to provide them with services. That sends an important signal to the other students.

I should stress that even after a decade, Turnaround is still an experiment, and relatively small. In 2008, it underwent an independent evaluation by the American Institutes for Research, which showed that its schools had far fewer disruptions and were generally calmer, safer, indeed, happier places. But that same evaluation suggested that Turnaround needed to put more emphasis on improving the academic environment in the classroom. That is what Dr. Cantor and her team are implementing now.

Which brings me back to that speech she gave a few years ago. In it, she laid out her ideas about the importance of facing poverty squarely in schools. They struck a chord. Since then, she has spent a great deal of time in Washington, where officials both in Congress and the White House have been receptive to these ideas. In May, a group of White House officials visited a Turnaround school in Washington, where they were impressed by what they saw. Ultimately, if Dr. Cantor's ideas gain enough momentum in Washington, they could become part of what the federal government — and school districts across the country — expect from schools.

By refusing to accept the status quo, school reformers kicked off an important movement, long overdue. Although I happen to think there is an overemphasis on test scores, the demand for teacher accountability has also been an important step.

Creating schools that are designed from the start to deal with the predicable challenges of poverty — it is the most important thing we can do next.

The Politics Of Horse Ballet

By Dana Milbank

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The animal kingdom has been inhospitable to Mitt Romney in this election cycle.

First there was the damaging story of Seamus, the Irish setter he strapped to the roof of the Romneys' car on a family trip.

Now it seems that, when it comes to Romney's political aspirations, Seamus may not be the most dangerous animal in the family menagerie. This past week belonged to Rafalca, the dancing horse.

Rafalca, a 15-year-old Oldenburg mare owned in part by the Romneys, qualified as a member of the U.S. Olympic team and will compete in London in the dressage competition — a form of ballet for horses and their riders in which the animals do pirouettes and serpentines. They also do piaffes, which, according to the International Equestrian Federation, is a "highly collected, cadenced, elevated diagonal movement" in which "the haunches with active hocks are well engaged." Rafalca, after qualifying, flew across the Atlantic on a FedEx jet (no, they didn't strap her to the roof) and reportedly dined on an in-flight meal of watermelon.

Understandably, Romney was wary about discussing dressage when NBC's Brian Williams asked him in London on Wednesday about his equine Olympian. "You actually have a horse in the race. What's that gonna be like?"

"Well," Romney replied. "It's — a big — exciting experience for my wife and — and for the person that she's worked with, the trainer of the horse who's riding the horse. And — obviously, it's fun to be part of the Olympics in any way you can be part of them."

Williams followed up: "When is the event, and for those of us who don't follow the sport, what happens? Are there rounds that — of competition? Is there just one chance? What happens?"

Romney pleaded ignorance. "I have to tell you, this is Ann's sport. I'm not even sure which day the sport goes on. She will get the chance to see it, I will not — be — watching — the event. I hope — her horse does well."

It was arguably Romney's worst interview since Chris Wallace asked him about Seamus. The flustered candidate went on to disparage the British preparation for the Olympics, setting off an international incident.

It's understandable that Romney would be reluctant to discuss dressage. Seamus may have made him look odd, or insensitive. Rafalca makes him look like a super-rich playboy.

John Kerry was made to look effete in 2004 by Republican mockery of his windsurfing, his Turnbull & Asser shirts and his French fluency. Now Democrats have a chance to do something similar to Romney, with his Swiss bank account, his Grand Cayman and Bermuda tax havens, his multiple homes, his $10,000 bet, his friends who own NASCAR teams, and now the six-figure horses his wife imports from Europe. Nothing says "man of the people" quite like horse ballet.

Ann Romney takes umbrage at the criticism, saying that dressage has helped with her multiple sclerosis. That was enough to get the Democratic National Committee to back away from a video campaign showing Rafalca spliced with Mitt Romney "dancing around" questions about his tax returns.

While it's heartening that Ann Romney has been helped by the horses, most MS sufferers don't have the luxury of importing $100,000 horses from Europe. And the candidate's disavowal of dressage as "Ann's sport" isn't quite right.

In an interview with the Web site Chronicle of the Horse, Rafalca's trainer, Jan Ebeling, said Mitt Romney selected the music for the horse's routine at an international competition; Ebeling, in another interview, said the former Massachusetts governor, inspired by his wife, "really enjoys the horses." Romney joined his wife at an Olympic qualifying dressage event in April 2008, and the couple declared a $77,731 loss on their 2010 tax returns for their share of Rafalca's care.

That's a lot of hay (and another possible reason for the candidate's disinclination to release more tax returns), but consider what the Romneys get for their money: a horse that can do not only a Reinback, a Shoulder-in and a Travers, but a Flying Change of Leg, a Renvers and a Half-Pass.

"The object of Dressage is the development of the Horse into a happy Athlete through harmonious education," the equestrian federation explains. "As a result, it makes the Horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen."

Sounds as if this is worth seeing. For the record, the dressage events begin Aug. 2 at Greenwich Park. You can bet Mitt Romney won't be there.

Blowing The Whistle On The Federal Leviathan

By George F. Will

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The huge humpback whale whose friendliness precipitated a surreal seven-year — so far — federal hunt for criminality surely did not feel put upon. Nevertheless, our unhinged government, with an obsession like that of Melville's Ahab, has crippled Nancy Black's scientific career, cost her more than $100,000 in legal fees — so far — and might sentence her to 20 years in prison. This Kafkaesque burlesque of law enforcement began when someone whistled.

Black, 50, a marine biologist who also captains a whale-watching ship, was with some watchers in Monterey Bay in 2005 when a member of her crew whistled at the humpback that had approached her boat, hoping to entice the whale to linger. Back on land, another of her employees called the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ask if the whistling constituted "harassment" of a marine mammal, which is an "environmental crime." NOAA requested a video of the episode, which Black sent after editing it slightly to highlight the whistling. NOAA found no harassment — but got her indicted for editing the tape, calling this a "material false statement" to federal investigators, which is a felony under the 1863 False Claims Act, intended to punish suppliers defrauding the government during the Civil War.

A year after this bizarre charge — that she lied about the interaction with the humpback that produced no charges — more than a dozen federal agents, led by one from NOAA, raided her home. They removed her scientific photos, business files and computers. Call this a fishing expedition.

She has also been charged with the crime of feeding killer whales when she and two aides were in a dinghy observing them feeding on strips of blubber torn from their prey — a gray whale.

To facilitate photographing the killers' feeding habits, she cut a hole in one of the floating slabs of blubber and, through the hole, attached a rope to stabilize the slab while a camera on a pole recorded the whales' underwater eating.

So she is charged with "feeding" killer whales that were already feeding on a gray whale they had killed. She could more plausibly be accused of interfering with the feeding.

Never mind. This pursuit of Black seems to have become a matter of institutional momentum, an agent-driven case. Perhaps NOAA, or the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section, has its version of Victor Hugo's obsessed Inspector Javert.

In any event, some of the federal government's crime-busters seem to know little about whales — hence the "whistle-as-harassment" nonsense.

Six years ago, NOAA agents, who evidently consider the First Amendment a dispensable nuisance, told Black's scientific colleagues not to talk to her and to inform them if they were contacted by her or her lawyers. Since then she has not spoken with one of her best friends.

To finance her defense she has cashed out her life's savings, which otherwise might have purchased a bigger boat. The government probably has spent millions. It delivered an administrative subpoena to her accountant, although no charge against her has anything to do with finances.

In 1980, federal statutes specified 3,000 criminal offenses; by 2007, 4,450. They continue to multiply. Often, as in Black's case, they are untethered from the common-law tradition of mens rea, which holds that a crime must involve a criminal intent — a guilty mind. Legions of government lawyers inundate targets like Black with discovery demands, producing financial burdens that compel the innocent to surrender in order to survive.

The protracted and pointless tormenting of Black illustrates the thesis of Harvey Silverglate's invaluable 2009 book, "Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent." Silverglate, a civil liberties lawyer in Boston, chillingly demonstrates how the mad proliferation of federal criminal laws — which often are too vague to give fair notice of what behavior is proscribed or prescribed — means that "our normal daily activities expose us to potential prosecution at the whim of a government official." Such laws, which enable government zealots to accuse almost anyone of committing three felonies in a day, do not just enable government misconduct, they incite prosecutors to intimidate decent people who never had culpable intentions. And to inflict punishments without crimes.

By showing that Kafka was a realist, Black's misfortune may improve the nation: The more Americans learn about their government's abuse of criminal law for capricious bullying, the more likely they are to recoil in a libertarian direction and put Leviathan on a short leash.

Unfinished Business In Weeding Out D.C. Corruption

By Colbert I. King

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The names alone were enough to keep readers glued to the newspaper: Roger W. "Whitetop" Simkins, Curtis "Bozo" Taylor, Albert "Real Estate" Smith, Charles "Geechie" Anderson, William "Snags" Lewis, James M. "Jim Yellow" Roberts, Abe "Jewboy Dietz" Plisco, Randolph "Catfish" Turner, Herbert "Bucklejaws" Johnson.

It's fair to say I got my formal introduction to D.C. crime courtesy of these characters. All were convicted operators of illegal lotteries in the District, commonly called "the numbers" — except for Jim Yellow Roberts and Catfish Turner, who were drug kingpins. All of them became household names in the early '50s, thanks to celebrated criminal trials and televised hearings of the Senate District Crime Subcommittee, which delved into crime and corruption in our nation's capital. I recall rushing home from Francis Junior High School to catch the tail end of the hearings.

The crime figures, however, weren't the only Washingtonians to make the spotlight. The hearings revealed that the D.C. Police Department had several dirty cops, and not those officers walking a beat.

A onetime head of the police gambling division and later commanding officer of the 12th Precinct was sentenced to up to five years in jail. A probationary detective got a sentence of up to four years. A deputy chief was officially reprimanded for accepting Christmas gifts from a known gambler. One chief was forced into retirement.

So District newcomers, the current probe into city corruption is nothing new.

True, the scope of investigations by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. is unprecedented in the era of home rule. But even before Congress gave the District a measure of self-government, some in the city were stinking up the joint with their nefarious behavior.

That dark era in the '50s should serve as a reminder that corruption is not a one-time affair. It takes hold quietly, slowly, when no one's looking. The corrupt are always there, watching and waiting for the chance to score. They are aided and abetted by a climate of indifference.

The Post captured that climate in a 1951 editorial, "Respectable Racketeers." Ironically, the editorial took note of a deficiency that exists to this day.

Observing that an amateur detective uncovered the large-scale gambling operations, The Post asked, "Why was it necessary for an amateur — who turned out to be more professional than the professionals — to do the work that law enforcement agencies should have been doing?"

The editorial pointed out that the little success achieved fighting corruption was "more through the work of the United States Attorney than through the work of the police."

Isn't that true today?

Where in the world, it must be asked, were the D.C. inspector general, the city's Office of Campaign Finance and the D.C. Council while our city was being politically and criminally corrupted?

Are you telling me that no one in the District government had an inkling that a council member was misusing earmarks and lining his pocket, or that campaign contribution limits and spending rules were being violated with impunity?

A federal grand jury is investigating the award of the D.C. lottery contract. But ask council members and city agencies what the investigation is about — as I have — and they adopt the classic D.C. leader position: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

The Post's 1951 editorial, referring to lottery corruption and the fact that one of those involved was operating "under a cloak of respectability and legitimate business" (why do I think of Jeffrey Thompson?), asked: "How many other[s]. . . are there in similar circumstances?"

"Every Washington newspaperman is aware of reports that higher-ups . . . are really the bosses," The Post observed. "No newspaper," it said, "has either the staff or the privileges to compel testimony in order to conduct an investigation.

"But from the recurrent seepages of evidence which contradict the bland assurances that there is no big crime here, it is obvious," the editorial continued, "that no investigation of crime in Washington has yet gotten at the roots."

That, indeed, is our unfinished business — even today.

Now, as was true in the '50s, all the facts must be laid out. We need an exhaustive investigation that fully exposes the corrupt activities of the "respectable" figures seemingly behind the disreputable acts.

Only then can we kill corruption at its roots and stand guard against the recurrence that is sure to come.

Imagine A World Without AIDS

By Danielle Ofri

New York Times, July 28, 2012

THE beginning of the end of AIDS? The article with that title jumped out at me last week, as I did my weekly table-of-contents scan of The New England Journal of Medicine. I wasn't prepared for the flood of emotion that overcame me. The beginning of the end? Could it really be?

For those of us who did our medical training in the late ’80s and early ’90s, AIDS saturated our lives. The whole era had a medieval feel, with visceral suffering and human decimation all around. Death was vivid, brutal and omnipresent.

Bellevue Hospital, where I trained, was one of those city hospitals that felt like ground zero for the plague. Every third admission seemed to be a patient in his mid-20s who looked as if he’d arrived from Dachau or Biafra, with nary a T-cell to his name. Horrific Kaposi’s sarcoma ulcerated these patients’ bodies. P.C.P., a brutal form of pneumonia, strangled their breathing. Fevers and infections plundered every organ system. What few defenses their bodies mustered were pummeled into insignificance.

The utter relentlessness of the disease pummeled the doctors-in-training as well. It felt as if we were slogging knee-deep in death, with a horizon that was a monochrome of despair. Witnessing your own generation dying off is not for the faint of heart.

The 17 West AIDS ward in Bellevue was always full to capacity, so H.I.V. patients overflowed into the general medical wards, and of course swamped the prison ward, the tuberculosis ward, the pediatric ward and the emergency room. We even had a “spillover” ward, 12 East, reserved for the “actively dying.” The hospital had carved out a ward of private rooms — otherwise unheard-of in a city hospital — so that these patients could have a modicum of privacy in their final days. Needless to say, 12 East was also full to capacity, with a line of patients waiting for a room to “open up.”

If you’d grabbed a random intern toward the end of my residency in 1995, and asked her if she could envision the headline “The Beginning of the End of AIDS” in less than 20 years, she would have simply stared uncomprehendingly at you with bleary eyes. More than 50,000 Americans died of AIDS that year. By 2009, the number had edged under 20,000.

In the worlds of both medicine and metaphor, the narrative arc of AIDS has almost no peer. The transformation from hopelessness to pragmatic optimism is — scientifically speaking — nothing short of miraculous. Potent combinations of antiviral medications that brought patients off their deathbeds and back to life, viral load testing and H.I.V. genotyping that helped tailor treatment regimens, screening of the blood supply, aggressive public health campaigns, prevention of maternal-fetal transmission — we could hardly have envisioned the pace of development.

After years of disappointments, H.I.V. vaccine research is heating up again, as breakthroughs in the understanding of H.I.V. immunology have identified nearly two dozen potential vaccine candidates. The apparent H.I.V. cure as a result of a bone-marrow transplant in a man known as the “Berlin patient” has stimulated tantalizing gene therapy research.

The staggering progress of these past two decades leaves me breathless, and to be honest, almost teary-eyed. For nearly every other category of disease that afflicts my patients, the treatments are largely the same as when I was an intern. Yes, we have fancier stents for our cardiac patients, and more targeted chemotherapy for our cancer patients, but the overall paradigms have shifted only incrementally.

H.I.V. has been easier to target, in part, because it is caused by a single infectious agent — as opposed to the diverse factors that influence cardiovascular disease and cancer. And then there was the avalanche of resources and the galvanizing of public activism that served to concentrate scientific efforts in a manner never seen before. By no means do I wish to belittle the impressive advances in other fields of medicine, but our oncology wards and cardiac wards still do a brisk business.

AIDS patients in the hospital are a rarity now — they are more likely to be admitted for an ulcer or a heart attack than for an H.I.V.-related illness. The overwhelming majority receive their medical care in outpatient settings, like everyone else who is living with a disease rather than dying of a disease. AIDS

has settled in next to hypertension and diabetes as one of those chronic conditions that patients deal with over the course of a lifetime.

"Over the course of a lifetime." Now there's a concept we never thought about back then.

There is still a long way to go, of course. The 19th annual International AIDS Conference just ended on Friday, and no one is underestimating the gravity of the challenges that remain, particularly in developing countries. But to even contemplate, however tentatively, the beginning of the end is something that my peers and I never imagined happening in our lifetimes.

I often think about grim days we spent doing rounds on 17 West and 12 East. I remember the slow and tortured deaths of our patients, their emaciated bodies disintegrating into nothingness before our eyes. More tears were shed on those wards than any I've worked in since.

And what happened? The 17 West AIDS ward became a regular medical ward. The 12 East dying ward was turned into offices. And then, this month, the inpatient AIDS service at Bellevue closed down entirely. If that doesn't signify the beginning of the end, I don't know what does.

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What Drives The Obama Doubters And Haters?

By David Maraniss

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

There are Obama doubters and haters out there who claim with righteous anger that they are "vetting" the president, something they say the mainstream media never did. Some of them have said that my new biography — unwittingly, they argue, for I am too dumb to understand what my research has unearthed — proves that Barack Obama's defining memoir is phony and that his entire life is a fraud. My intent is not to defend Obama or his book; he can take care of himself, and I have my own questions about "Dreams From My Father," which I make clear in my book. But when comparing the liberties Obama took with composite characters and compressed chronology — which he acknowledged in the introduction to his memoir — to the stretches his most virulent detractors have taken in building their various conspiracies, I believe that they are the frauds and fabricators.

Not all of them are "birthers," but the notion that the president was not born in the United States remains at the epicenter of the anti-Obama mythology. Here is the conspiracy that would have had to exist if Barack Hussein Obama II were not born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Aug. 4, 1961:

First, the local newspapers would have had to have been in on the scheme, because they ran notices of his birth among all the other local births that week. Second, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would have had to have been covering something up, because INS officials were closely tracking Barack Obama Sr. when he was at the University of Hawaii on a student visa from Kenya. They thought that he was a bigamist — which he was, having married a woman in Kenya before coming to the States — and a womanizer, which he also was. INS documents in the weeks and months before and after the son's birth clearly establish the father's whereabouts and the birth of his son. Finally, the name of Obama's mother, Stanley Ann, was unusual enough that doctors and nurses in Honolulu remembered it and her giving birth. One prominent doctor was asked by a young journalist if anything interesting had happened in the medical world that week, and he responded, "Well, Stanley had a baby!"

In tandem with the birther notion comes the idea that Obama is a secret Muslim. His Kenyan grandfather, Hussein Onyango, was Muslim; his Indonesian stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, was Muslim; as a

boy he was instructed in Islam at a school in Jakarta; and many of his college friends were Muslim. None of this adds up to Obama being Muslim, except in the minds of conspiratorialists. Obama never met his Kenyan grandfather. After infancy, he spent time with his Kenyan father only once, and in any case Barack Obama Sr. was an atheist. The truth is that Muslims had nothing to do with the rise of the Obamas of Kenya and that conservative evangelical Christians were essential every step of the way.

It was proselytizing Seventh-day Adventists who first came to the Obamas' villages out near Lake Victoria at the start of the 20th century. They taught English and Western ways to the first wave of young boys from the Luo tribe, including Hussein Onyango. His son, the president's father, was also educated at a missionary school. Later, as a young adult, Barack Obama Sr. was mentored by a remarkable evangelical Christian, Betty Mooney, whose grandfather was one of the founders of Texas Christian University. Mooney, who went to Kenya in the late 1950s to spread the gospel and literacy, met Obama Sr. in Nairobi and hired him to translate some of her literacy books into the Luo tribal language. She encouraged and helped sponsor his coming to the United States and specifically to the University of Hawaii, where he met Stanley Ann Dunham. One can say that President Obama would not exist except for evangelical Christians.

While living in Jakarta from ages 6 through 9, young Obama temporarily took the last name of his stepfather, Soetoro, for school purposes. He was listed as a Muslim on school documents because students were listed in the religion of their fathers. Lolo was not particularly religious; Stanley Ann was spiritual but not part of any formal religion. For most of his three-plus years in Indonesia, Obama attended a Catholic grade school. When his family moved to a better neighborhood in his final year, he went to the local grade school, one of the best in the city. The central doctrine taught at S.D. Besuki was not Islam but Pancasila, or five principles, of modern Indonesia, which evoked the unity of the islands on the vast archipelago, social justice and a belief in one God. Conservative Muslims detested Pancasila (a Sanskrit word revealing Indonesia's Hindu heritage), insisting that it was too liberal and open to too many religions and interpretations.

In both the issues of Obama's birth and of his religion, documents and common sense lead in one direction. Obama's doubters run the other way: His birth certificates must be fake; his espoused Christianity must be a cover. Another group of right-wing doubters hold on to the notion that Obama is a closet socialist, some sort of Manchurian candidate, an idea that his every move as a pragmatic liberal politician over the past 16 years has utterly disproved. Some others maintain that he was not smart enough to get into Occidental, Columbia and Harvard Law, and too inept to write his own memoir, which one particularly obsessed conspiratorialist claims was penned by the former radical Bill Ayers. What about the well-written letters from Obama that are published in my book? Those, too, must be frauds slipped to me by the Obama administration.

In the introduction to my book, I took note of a sick political culture where "facts are so easily twisted for political purposes and where strange armies of ideological pseudo-historians roam the biographical fields in search of stray ammunition." That sentence is now cited on right-wing Web sites as evidence that I hold them in contempt. True enough, one of the few accurate things that I've read from them. I do hold some of them in contempt, not because of their politics, nor because of their dislike of Obama. Political debate and disagreement are the lifeblood of American democracy. No, I hold them in contempt for the way they disregard facts and common sense and undermine the role of serious history as they concoct conspiracy theories that portray the president as dangerous, alien and less than American.

What drives them? Some of it can be attributed to the give-and-take of today's harsh ideological divide. Some of it can be explained by the way misinformation spreads virally to millions of like-minded

people, reinforcing preconceptions. And some of it, I believe, arises out of fears of demographic changes in this country, and out of racism.

If Obama Loses The Election, Here's Why

By Drew Westen

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

With 100 days left in the presidential campaign, perhaps the two most vexing questions in American politics are: How could President Obama possibly lose? And, how could he possibly win?

Americans are scared, angry and struggling. They used to talk about job satisfaction; now they talk about just holding on to their jobs. No incumbent since FDR has ever won reelection with unemployment numbers remotely resembling today's. What voters feel about their lives and dreams in the months leading up to an election tends to stick to the president when they enter the voting booth. And right now what's sticking to Obama isn't good.

But it sure helps to face a candidate as uncomfortable in his own skin, as likely to say by accident what he really means and as wrong for the times as Mitt Romney. In an era when even conservatives are populists, enraged about the favors granted the rich and well-connected, Romney is running as a CEO who thinks his taxes are too high. Voters just aren't warming up to a guy who enjoys firing people and attempts to woo the people of Michigan by referring to his wife's "couple of Cadillacs." If Obama offers what well-paid elites call a "jobless recovery," Romney offers the only thing worse: a promise to restore the policies that led to the joblessness that made a recovery necessary.

So, beyond the anemic economy, why do the latest polls show the former Massachusetts governor in a dead heat with the president? Because Obama's administration made three crucial errors that enabled the Republican obstructionism that has tied his hands for the past two years, with GOP leaders shooting down any idea — even if it's one of their own — that might have helped the president strengthen the economy. And those mistakes have made possible what was unimaginable in January 2009: that a private-equity baron lacking a sense of noblesse oblige, and preaching the gospel of deregulation and lower taxes for the rich, might actually win the presidency four years after those policies led to the collapse of the U.S. economy.

Obama's first mistake was inviting the Republicans to the table. The GOP had just decimated the economy and had been repudiated by voters to such an extent that few Americans wanted to admit that they were registered Republicans. Yet Obama, with his penchant for unilateral bipartisanship, refused to speak ill of what they had done. The American people wanted the perpetrators of the Great Recession held accountable, and they wanted the president and Congress to enact legislation to prevent Wall Street bankers from ever destroying the lives of so many again. Instead they saw renewed bonuses — and then they saw red. Republicans learned very quickly that they could attack Obama and his agenda with impunity. Only at election time, or when he's up against the ropes, does this president ever tell a story with a villain.

The second mistake was squandering the goodwill that Americans felt toward the new president and their anxiety about an economy hemorrhaging three-quarters of a million jobs a month. That combination gave Obama, at the beginning of his term, a power to shape public policy that no one since Franklin Roosevelt had held. But instead of designing a stimulus that reflected the thinking of the country's best economic minds, he cut their recommended numbers by a third and turned another third into inert tax cuts designed to appease Republican legislators whose primary aim was to defeat him. He stimulated the economy — but just enough to leave the results open to interpretation, rendering questionable what should have been an uncontested success.

Obama compounded the problem a year into his presidency, when corporate profits were on the rise while job creation wasn't. The Senate was considering a jobs program much like one the House had passed. But Obama refused to throw his support behind it. To do so, he would have had to articulate a vision in which government sets the conditions for the private sector to create prosperity and jobs, and steps in when the private sector can't — or when it works against the interests of ordinary Americans. It's a vision in which leadership means knowing when to step up and when to step back, not simply passively riding the waves of market failures, business cycles and bubbles — the vision that unites Herbert Hoover, George W. Bush and Romney.

But Obama chose neither to offer that vision nor to take action to put Americans back to work directly, rebuilding our broken roads, our bridges, our crumbling schools. The stimulus was a good start, but its flaws were already apparent. Instead, he began using Republican language about how the government, like ordinary families, needs to tighten its belt, as if that were a solution for people whose belts couldn't get any tighter. "Government has to start living within its means, just like families do," he said in a weekly Web and radio address. Words like these not only undercut the vision behind the stimulus — the whole point of which was to spark a sputtering economy with deficit spending — but they came as bankers were loosening their belts, making average Americans angrier.

The third way the administration created opportunities for Republican obstructionism will someday become a business-school case study: It let a popular idea — a family doctor for every family — be recast as a losing ideological battle between intrusive government and freedom. In the 2008 election, the American people were convinced that families should never have to choose between putting food on the table and taking the kids to the doctor. They were adamant that neither they nor their aging parents should have to choose between their medicine and their mortgage.

How did the administration manage to turn one of the most popular campaign issues of 2008 into one of the major causes of Democrats' "shellacking" at the polls two years later?

In keeping with the most baffling habit of one of our most rhetorically gifted presidents, Obama and his team just didn't bother explaining what they were doing and why. To them, their actions were self-evident. But nothing is self-evident when your opponents are spending millions of dollars to defeat you. Instead, the White House blundered around with memorable phrases such as "bending the cost curve," which didn't speak to the values underlying the need for health-care reform.

Republicans, in contrast, offered a coherent story: Democrats think the government knows what you need better than you do; you should be able to make your own choices, not have some bureaucrat stand between you and your doctor. The White House could have counterpunched, but instead it dropped its gloves.

The president acknowledged as much this month in an interview with Charlie Rose for CBS. When asked about the biggest mistake of his first term, he replied it was his belief that "this job was just about getting the policy right. And that's important. But the nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times."

To his credit, Obama has been telling a much better story over the past several months about the challenges ahead and why he deserves a second term. "We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by," he declares in his new campaign message, "or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules."

But the problems of health-care reform were not just about selling it — they were substantive as well.

There was no way to tell the story of why the government couldn't negotiate prices for drugs with the big drug companies, the way the Department of Veterans Affairs already does, without admitting either that the administration was buying off the pharmaceutical industry or that the industry was buying off the administration. There was no way to explain why Americans who saw how much their parents or grandparents liked Medicare couldn't have at least one option not controlled by the insurance industry — without admitting that the administration had made a deal with the industry that guaranteed it 30 million new customers with no government competition. As Ron Suskind reported in his book "Confidence Men," that decision ended any possibility of a "public option" a year before the president announced, without explanation, that the public option had died on the operating table.

Whereas the House, under the leadership of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), put forward a sensible health-care bill in the early days of the new administration, the White House and congressional Democrats ultimately crafted a bill whose greatest benefits would become apparent only years later, giving Republicans all the time in the world to galvanize public opinion against it. Democrats frequently point out that most of the elements of the law are extremely popular, even though the law as a whole remains unpopular. They're absolutely right. But that's like saying people pick a spouse based on the person's nose, mouth, shoulders, hair, job, personality and earning potential, when in fact it's the totality of the person that either does or doesn't make our hearts flutter.

One of the most popular elements of the health-care law, and the one that matters most to middle-class Americans, is the end to insurance companies' ban on people with "preexisting conditions." That part of the law came online in 2010 for children, an enormous achievement. But our bodies generally start falling apart in our 40s and 50s (trust me on that), and nothing could have been more important for the success of the legislation — and the party and president who made it the law of the land — than for Obama to have been able to pronounce as he signed the bill, "With this stroke of my pen, never again will any American ever see the words from an insurance company, 'Rejected: preexisting condition.' " Try repealing that.

By delaying that part of the law until 2014, along with provisions designed to cover 30 million more people (unless Republican governors refuse federal funding to extend Medicaid), the Democrats lost the message war. Nothing blunts the fierce urgency of now like the soft promise of later.

Obama has every reason to feel underappreciated. Both the stimulus and health-care reform were kinda-sorta the right policies. The stimulus was not, as conservatives have convinced many of their fellow Americans, big government on steroids; it was Keynesian economics on birth control. It did not restore the 8 million jobs lost to the crash of 2008 or provide the 200,000 jobs a month needed for new entrants into the labor market, but it did prevent a second Great Depression. The health-care law was no more a prelude to a long march to European-style socialism than the similar bill Richard Nixon proposed 40 years ago — or the law Romney enacted as his greatest legacy to the people of Massachusetts.

So how did the White House make mistakes of this magnitude, which have breathed new life into Republicanism and made a Romney administration a possibility?

One factor is the tyranny of money in our nation's politics. That two administrations — one Republican, one Democratic — bailed out the banks instead of the people on whom they were foreclosing is an outrage that reflects the legalized bribery we call campaign financing. The bottom line for corporate executives is "return on investment," and the return on Wall Street's bundling and lobbying has more than made up for the failures of its bundling of toxic assets.

But just as important is the tyranny of timidity. If self-interest and self-righteousness are at the heart of the Republican Party today, cowardice lies too close to the spine of the Democrats. While Republicans show extraordinary hubris by harnessing minority rule on virtually every issue with just the threat of a filibuster, Senate Democrats show extraordinary fearfulness in enabling them. In the past, Democrats spoke openly of poverty, a word seldom heard today even though Americans of every race and color are sharing a rapid descent down the economic ladder. While the president has begun to speak effectively in the past several months about the economic distress of working- and middle-class families, on the major issues he too often uses the bully pulpit to bully the truth.

That was most apparent in the first three years of his administration, but you don't have to look further than the past three weeks. The nation has experienced climate change firsthand, with Americans witnessing extreme weather, drought, wildfires, floods and harvests destroyed by the scorched-earth policies of the oil and coal industries. But Obama, like his challenger, has simply turned up his air conditioner, refusing to connect the dots between the devastation people can see and the causes they are finally ready to accept.

And a week ago, the nation was in shock after yet another mass shooting, allegedly carried out by yet another troubled young man who had purchased weapons that should not be legal. The first day, Obama and Romney issued the usual comforting platitudes about how our prayers are with the victims' families. But in its public statements, the White House seemed more concerned with reassuring the National Rifle Association than with giving voice to the desire of a bullet-ridden nation to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens — those who want guns to hunt or protect their families and homes, as well as those who want to go to the movies, church, school or a shopping mall without fear. To his credit, Obama gave a speech Wednesday before the Urban League calling for "common sense" steps to prevent gun violence, although it was long on hope and short on change.

Obama may be reelected by a public that has nowhere else to turn. Perhaps freed of the constraints imposed by having to raise a billion dollars to finance his campaign, he will reveal a true self of which we've seen glimmers. One who will speak forthrightly to the American public and be unafraid to take on the perpetrators of economic crimes that have devastated American families; the perpetrators of myths about "clean coal," which the president instead repeats even as the industry rains fire on America's breadbasket; or the perpetrators of the record foreclosures on longtime homeowners who have become collateral damage in the war on the middle class.

We can only hope that in his heart, Obama can truly feel the pain, sadness and fear of ordinary Americans, because it's not hard to imagine that inside the chest of his opponent is a cavity waiting to be filled.

Drew Westen is a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Emory University and the author of "The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation." He is the founder of Westen Strategies, a consulting firm.

Romney Isn't Out To Make The World Swoon

By Fouad Ajami

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The itinerary for the overseas trip that Mitt Romney is taking — Britain, Poland and Israel — is brilliantly chosen. These countries contrast greatly with candidate Barack Obama's 2008 foreign tour, which included stops in Afghanistan and Jordan. That journey aimed to show that he would strengthen America's bonds with countries that aren't always our staunchest allies — and that Obama was the

opposite of President George W. Bush. Huge crowds swooned over Obama in Paris and Berlin, a reception that was a boon to his campaign at home.

The former Massachusetts governor, however, neither seeks nor generates this sort of delirium. He is a sober man who promises reliable management and a foreign policy that recognizes that the world is beset with dangers to America's welfare and liberty.

Thanks to Romney's speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Reno, Nev., on Tuesday, we now have the broad outlines of how his foreign policy would differ from Obama's. There would be a break, the Republican candidate indicated, from policies that have "exposed the military to cuts that no one can justify, compromised our national security secrets and, in dealings with other nations, given trust where it is not earned, insult where it is not deserved and apology where it is not due."

Romney is an old-fashioned, unstylish man whose views hark back to a time when America was confident in itself and less worried about the judgments of other nations. We have grown anxious in the past decade or so, seeing our country in the mirror held up beyond our shores. There is a yearning for that self-confidence. And Romney promises to call back those older, simpler American verities.

Just as Obama sought to distance himself from Bush's legacy, Romney's overseas itinerary is meant to draw a contrast with the current president. Israel, Poland and Britain are resolutely pro-American societies, choices that play it safe politically and suggest that a Romney presidency would as well.

The "special relationship" with Britain calls for no commentary; this is the Anglo-Saxon world, as it was once unapologetically called. Campaigns don't always follow the script, of course. Romney's gaffe Wednesday about potential troubles at the London Olympics is a reminder that, even when dealing with close allies, a few ill-chosen words can ruffle feathers.

Israel is of the West but not in it, a besieged democracy. Obama has not visited there since his 2008 trip, and Israelis have wondered about his fidelity to their country.

Poland, too, imparts meaning: Its people have paid dearly for their liberty, daring to defy the Soviet Union and casting their fate with the West. Poland still stands sentry against Russia. And Romney's previous characterization of Russia as the United States' "number one geopolitical foe" is music to Polish ears.

And Poland has had its own disappointment with Obama: Bush proposed a missile-defense system to be based in Poland and the Czech Republic. Obama has reconfigured it, proposing a system more acceptable to Russia and, he contends, more effective in warding off potential missile attacks from Iran and North Korea.

Before his VFW remarks, Romney was largely reticent on foreign policy, and his campaign concentrated on the economy. But he is not running for Treasury secretary. Even in a time of economic distress and high unemployment, foreign policy cannot be ignored.

The Obama campaign has made much of the president's presumed mastery of that domain. In 2008, he promised that he would bring the war in Iraq to an end, and he has done so. Osama bin Laden and American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki have been hunted down and killed on Obama's watch.

In his own speech to the VFW on Monday, Obama trumpeted his record on fighting terrorism. He had made it a priority, he said, "to take out the terrorists who had attacked us on 9/11. . . . Since I took office, we've worked with our allies and our partners to take out more top al-Qaeda leaders than any time since 9/11."

Presidential campaigns are, of course, not about truth. And a candidate's ambitious promises are generally cast aside once he assumes the burdens of office. As a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy, it should be recalled, promised to close the missile gap with the Soviet Union. But for the United States, there was no gap to close. It was the Soviets who were at a huge disadvantage, a paltry three scores of missiles for an American arsenal of more than 2,000. In the same vein, candidate Obama vowed to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, repair "brand America" abroad, drain anti-Americanism from the Islamic world and build trust between Pakistan and the United States.

But these promises have been largely forgotten in the exercise of power. Guantanamo is still open, and anti-Americanism in the Islamic world did not dissipate when Bush left the White House. In a supreme note of irony, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which was once held up as proof of Bush's poor standing in foreign lands, recently bore bad tidings for Obama:

"In a number of strategically important Muslim nations," the June report says, "America's image has not improved during the Obama presidency. In fact, America's already low 2008 ratings have slipped even further in Jordan and Pakistan."

The Romney campaign is not out to win hearts and minds in Karachi and Cairo; that sort of public diplomacy is of no interest to the candidate and his bid for the presidency.

"I do not view America as just one more point on the strategic map, one more power to be balanced," Romney said Tuesday, emphasizing American exceptionalism — probably because Obama has often equivocated about it.

"I believe in American exceptionalism," the president said in France in 2009, "just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." The world was changing, Obama observed; nations the world over were contending for influence, and no single power could deem itself superior to others.

This difference is of no small importance. Ideology has been played down in Obama's foreign policy. By the early signs, there would be more of it under Romney. But continuity would probably carry the day on Afghanistan and Iran.

"As president," Romney said Tuesday, "my goal in Afghanistan will be to complete a successful transition to Afghan security forces by the end of 2014." Obama has given up on his early view that Afghanistan could be reformed. We are headed for the exits, whoever wins in November.

Iran has frustrated American presidents since its 1979 revolution. Neither carrots nor threats of military action have altered the behavior of Tehran's theocracy. "Sanctions must be enforced without exception, cutting off the regime's sources of wealth,"Romney asserted Tuesday.

That view comes directly from Obama's playbook. After his early infatuation with the idea of "engaging" Iran, entertaining the illusion that he could succeed where other presidents had failed, Obama has become a realist. By now, he has recognized that the ruling mullahs are bent on acquiring nuclear weapons and have no interest in accommodation with the United States. Romney is without illusions about Iran, but he, too, would not take up the sword against the theocracy. The American people show no taste for a new war in the Persian Gulf.

Under Romney, would there be a difference on the "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians? The tone might improve, as the bonds between Romney and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are strong; in contrast, there is an obvious estrangement between Obama and the Israeli leader. But that conflict will not yield to an American president's power. From Harry Truman till the present, that primordial struggle has frustrated U.S. leaders. No matter how close the U.S.-Israeli

relationship is, the United States cannot dictate the terms of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Any grand historical accommodation must be the work of the protagonists themselves.

The late Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington once sketched three visions of the United States' place in the world: nationalist, cosmopolitan and imperial. In the nationalist view, America defends her interests in the world and marks ideological borders and differences with other nations. In the cosmopolitan view, the foreign world and globalization reshape America, erasing the differences that separate it from other countries. In the imperial vision, America remakes the world by remaking foreign lands.

An imperial push can't be sustained; the United States lacks the resources and the drive for such grand ambitions. So we are down to a more realistic distinction. Obama embodies the cosmopolitan aspiration, and Romney the nationalist idea. We have already seen Obama's worldview at work; it probably wouldn't change in a second term. Romney's stewardship would dawn without trumpets and drums. It would have the sobriety of Gerald Ford's and George H.W. Bush's leadership. But there would be an ideological edge, illustrated in Romney's VFW address: "Like a watchman in the night, we must remain at our post — and keep guard of the freedom that defines and ennobles us and our friends."

Why Killing Is A Profitable Enterprise

By Michael F. Mcnulty

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

It is easy to ignore the issue of gun control, given the perfect leaderlessness it enjoys in Congress. Then again, it becomes harder to ignore when your relatives or friends are murdered in the company of someone you idolize, which describes thousands of us in Tucson.

I have owned guns, continuously, since I was 6. I still own my grandfather's pump-action Winchester, carried for decades in a scabbard behind his saddle as he rode the range where he ranched, in Wikieup, Ariz. All the guns I've owned have been what are quaintly called long guns. I began my brief assault on local fauna at age 12, and I had "taken" four white-tailed deer, a couple of javelina and innumerable quail and dove by the time I got my driver's license at 16. A driver's license is a far greater liberator than a hunting license, and thereafter, trekking around in the wilderness killing things lost its luster. It has been decades since I engaged in those adventures.

There are, today, few who hunt with handguns or assault rifles equipped with 100-clip magazines. There are even fewer reasons to do so. But the National Rifle Association's principal focus has evolved mostly to those. It is news to no one that the NRA has abandoned the sportsman in every practical sense; if the group were honest, it would change its name. Speaking as a rifleman, I think it's an embarrassment.

The NRA not only dependably opposes limits on assault-rifle sales but even opposes reporting bulk sales of assault rifles. Last year, the NRA went to the mat to prevent anyone from cross-checking the names of those on the terrorist watch list against the names of those buying guns. These two actions clarify beyond argument that the safety and welfare of you and yours have simply dropped from the NRA's list of priorities. The NRA represents gun manufacturers, end of story.

Now, handguns excel at certain things. They are unequaled at killing people at close range: quite useful for law enforcement officers and drug dealers. They're genuine security in a drawer for those who have received unambiguous threats, like my friend Gabby Giffords. They're even a useful, if dubious, tool to defend yourself from murderers and rapists breaking in at 2 a.m. That hasn't happened to me in the past 60 years, but maybe your experience is different. NRA President Wayne LaPierre thinks it may

happen to you tonight: If you search YouTube for "The NRA's Circus of Fear," you'll find a collection of LaPierre's reasons why he lives in fear, and his arguments as to why you should, too. Personally, I think that "living in fear" is inconsistent with being an American, and I'm not going to play.

But how else are the gun manufacturers going to "grow the market," to sell more than the 3 million handguns they already do per year? Fear is a great motivator; mass murder is great for the gun business.

Just days ago a dozen citizens were murdered and about five dozen plugged with slugs from a trinity of firearms. Setting aside the shotgun, it bears mentioning that the Glock and assault rifle James Holmes is suspected of firing in an Aurora, Colo., movie theater were being used for the purpose for which they were designed, manufactured and sold. But the gun makers have no product-liability litigation to worry about, because in 2005 Congress approved and President George W. Bush signed into law legislation providing immunity for gun manufacturers from the foreseeable consequence of building instruments of murder. Every year three times as many people are murdered with guns in the United States as were murdered on Sept. 11, 2001. But blessed be the gun makers, for they are pardoned in advance.

It strikes me that the NRA is pretty comfortable when debates over mass murder devolve into intellectual discussions relating to civility vs. demagoguery, insanity vs. impressionability, and freedom vs. the tyranny of gun zealots. The more abstract, the better. In the end, however, it's simple: The NRA shills for gun makers who profit from the murder of American citizens. If you think the country's policies are shaped by Judeo-Christian values, you're not paying attention.

Why Gun Control Isn't A Lost Cause

By Matt Bennett And Jonathan Cowan

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Dozens of college students murdered in their classrooms; a member of Congress shot at point-blank range; innocents gunned down in a movie theater. Then, in the aftermath of a mass gun crime, the same ritual: national shock and anger, traumatized communities asking how this could happen, followed by . . . nothing. At least, no progress on gun safety.

In a speech to the Urban League on Wednesday, President Obama called for a conversation on youth violence and more steps to keep guns away from criminals and the mentally ill. But everyone, including Obama, has been pretty frank about it: No major new gun laws will result.

However, in Washington, nothing is ever as immovable as it seems.

The key is to understand how intractable problems are ultimately dislodged — not by a single, seismic event, but by a slow shift in politics.

Consider three categories of such issues and the forces that have gotten them unstuck.

When the problem gets too big

One reason for paralysis is that politicians fear the consequences of taking on powerful, well-financed organizations such as, when it comes to guns, the National Rifle Association. The gun lobby dramatically outspends gun-control advocates and has a long record of successfully opposing politicians who cross it.

Still, even a heavyweight institution can be sidelined when a problem becomes too large. The AARP has long been regarded as an invincible opponent of Social Security reform. But in the early 1980s, Social Security was nearing collapse. In 1981, its trustees issued a report warning that the system would be "unable to make benefit payments on time beginning in the latter half of 1982" and that it would run out of money by the middle of 1983. A bipartisan group of lawmakers began to explore the idea of making changes to Social Security, but the AARP stood firm.

A commission led by Alan Greenspan recommended fixes to Social Security in January 1983, and the AARP fought the proposals vigorously. The group argued that rather than change benefits or payroll taxes, Congress should raise other taxes and give that revenue to Social Security. It ran ads and urged its thousands of volunteer leaders to swamp Congress with letters, calls and visits. But the scale and immediacy of the problem moved President Ronald Reagan and congressional Democrats to take on the matter squarely, cut a deal on reforms and put in place a long-term fix.

When experts can't be ignored

Sometimes a consensus of experts raises an alarm, but Washington tunes them out. In the case of guns, the experts are police chiefs and mayors in cities plagued with gun crime, who almost uniformly support tougher gun laws, to little avail in Congress.

But expert voices can start to ring louder on Capitol Hill when the data move into the public's consciousness. In the 1960s, a small band of scientists began to notice the impact of acid rain — pollutants emitted by power plants, most in the Midwest, were being carried by winds to the Northeast, where they were damaging waterways and forests.

This problem was hard for the nonexpert to spot. Only scientists understood that there were rising levels of hydrogen ions in the rain. They saw the trends and understood the significance, even if the public did not — like a minor cough that seems innocuous but to a doctor's ear could be an early sign of lung disease.

The scientists' warnings were ignored in the policy debate. No one did anything for more than a decade. But their concerns eventually began to move from academic journals and niche magazines into the mainstream. The public finally took notice of reports showing that many lakes in New England were so acidic, they no longer could support fish and other wildlife. And they connected the dots between lakes in New Hampshire and power plants in Ohio.

This steady accumulation of the scientific consensus ultimately became too big for politicians to ignore. Congress and the president responded, and in 1990, they enacted amendments to the Clean Air Act instituting a cap-and-trade system to control acid rain pollutants. The system has worked, and acid rain has been dramatically reduced.

When public opinion shifts

Perhaps the most obvious reason for stasis in Washington is when public opinion runs counter to a policy change. Few elected officials will risk the wrath of voters on controversial issues.

In the gun debate, large majorities of voters favor particular changes to laws, such as banning assault weapons or high-capacity ammunition magazines. But polls also show that they're skeptical that such changes would affect the right people or reduce gun crime. A Washington Post poll last year found that 57 percent of Americans thought that tougher enforcement of existing laws was a better way to reduce gun crime, vs. 29 percent who favored passing new laws. And focus groups have long found that many voters are turned off by elected officials who call for new gun laws. So politicians are generally right to think that gun control makes bad politics.

Yet voters reserve the right to change their minds. When he ran for president in 1992, Bill Clinton vowed that he would lift the ban on gay men and women serving openly in the military, and upon taking office, he tried to do it. But he met opposition in the Pentagon and in Congress, fueled by polls showing that the public opposed the change. Clinton was forced into a face-saving compromise — "don't ask, don't tell" — that kept the ban in place.

Over time, though, the politics of gay rights began to shift. By 2010, when Obama persuaded Congress to scrap "don't ask, don't tell" and lift the ban, a majority of voters said they supported its

repeal. And even members of Congress who opposed the move mounted only a halfhearted campaign when the measure came up for a vote.

What this recent history shows is that Washington is rarely shocked into action. Galvanizing events can change the tone briefly: Congress adopted bipartisan seating at the State of the Union address after the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), for instance. But even really big surprises rarely lead to major political change. We no longer see many Sputnik moments.

Rather, change is slow and cumulative. It takes time for a problem to boil over, for expert consensus to pierce the fog of denial, for public opinion to shift decisively.

We see this process today on the same issues: Social Security, the environment and gay rights. The AARP still opposes significant changes to Social Security, but as the potential for catastrophic fiscal failure becomes more real, the prospects for reform are improving. The scientific consensus is solid on global warming, and as the weather grows more destructive, demands for action are likely to become too loud to ignore. And even though the public has voted in 31 states to ban same-sex marriage, the national mood is changing, raising the odds that the Defense of Marriage Act eventually will be swept away.

So too on guns. It may be that nothing revolutionary or evolutionary will soon alter the gun debate. There are nearly 300 million guns in private hands in this country, and the Supreme Court has affirmed that the Second Amendment confers the right to own guns on most law-abiding adults. And the power of the NRA is real.

But when we ran a group called Americans for Gun Safety, we found reason for hope. We worked with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) following the Columbine tragedy, because he was tired of doing nothing to prevent gun deaths. Together, we wrote legislation that would close a loophole allowing people to obtain firearms without background checks at gun shows. It reached the Senate floor in 2004 and passed as an amendment to another bill, but it was scuttled by NRA supporters.

McCain took a lot of grief for his stance. After he appeared in our television ads in Colorado promoting changes to close that state's gun show loophole, the NRA featured him on the cover of its magazine drawn as the devil.

Sadly, when McCain ran for president again in 2008, he reverted to the NRA's point of view. He knew it would be virtually impossible for him to win the GOP nomination if he was opposed by the most powerful interest group in conservative politics.

McCain's heresy on guns was short-lived. But rather than see it as a depressing truth about the power of the NRA, we see it as proof that virtually nothing is impossible in American politics. Even mountains will eventually be moved, but it will take the work of years, not a moment of shock or pain.

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We Won't Know The Cause Of Gun Violence Until We Look For It

By Jay Dickey And Mark Rosenberg

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

A few years ago, one of us came across a young woman who had just been hit by a car. She was the mother of two young children and one of Atlanta's star runners. I found her unconscious and bleeding profusely from a severe head injury. She died in my arms while I tried to resuscitate her.

Her death was tragic, but it wasn't "senseless." In scientific terms, it was explicable. The runner, who had competed in 15 marathons and broken many records, wore no lights or reflective vest in the early-

morning darkness; she crossed the street within crosswalk lines that had faded to near-invisibility; there were no speed bumps on this wide, flat street to slow cars down.

Scientists don't view traffic injuries as "senseless" or "accidental" but as events susceptible to understanding and prevention. Urban planners, elected officials and highway engineers approach such injuries by asking four questions: What is the problem? What are the causes? Have effective interventions been discovered? Can we install these interventions in our community?

The federal government has invested billions to understand the causes of motor vehicle fatalities and, with that knowledge, has markedly reduced traffic deaths in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, research has inspired such interventions as child restraints, seat belts, frontal air bags, a minimum drinking age and motorcycle helmets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009.

Through the same scientific, evidence-based approach, our country has made progress understanding and preventing violence. Once upon a time, law-abiding citizens believed that violence generated by evil always had existed and always would exist. By the mid-20th century, that sense of fatalism was yielding to discoveries by social scientists, physicians and epidemiologists. Now a body of knowledge exists that makes it clear that an event such as the mass shooting in Aurora, Colo., was not a "senseless" occurrence as random as a hurricane or earthquake but, rather, has underlying causes that can be understood and used to prevent similar mass shootings.

We also recognize different types of violence, including child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, elder abuse, suicide and economically and politically motivated violence. Like motor vehicle injuries, violence exists in a cause-and-effect world; things happen for predictable reasons. By studying the causes of a tragic — but not senseless — event, we can help prevent another.

Recently, some have observed that no policies can reduce firearm fatalities, but that's not quite true. Research-based observations are available. Childproof locks, safe-storage devices and waiting periods save lives.

But it's vital to understand why we know more and spend so much more on preventing traffic fatalities than on preventing gun violence, even though firearm deaths (31,347 in 2009, the most recent year for which statistics are available) approximate the number of motor vehicle deaths (32,885 in 2010).

From 1986 to 1996, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored high-quality, peer-reviewed research into the underlying causes of gun violence. People who kept guns in their homes did not — despite their hopes — gain protection, according to research published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Instead, residents in homes with a gun faced a 2.7-fold greater risk of homicide and a 4.8-fold greater risk of suicide. The National Rifle Association moved to suppress the dissemination of these results and to block funding of future government research into the causes of firearm injuries.

One of us served as the NRA's point person in Congress and submitted an amendment to an appropriations bill that removed $2.6 million from the CDC's budget, the amount the agency's injury center had spent on firearms-related research the previous year. This amendment, together with a stipulation that "None of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control," sent a chilling message.

Since the legislation passed in 1996, the United States has spent about $240 million a year on motor vehicle safety research, but there has been almost no publicly funded research on firearm injuries.

As a consequence, U.S. scientists cannot answer the most basic question: What works to prevent firearm injuries? We don't know whether having more citizens carry guns would decrease or increase firearm deaths; or whether firearm registration and licensing would make inner-city residents safer or expose them to greater harm. We don't know whether a ban on assault weapons or large-capacity magazines, or limiting access to ammunition, would have saved lives in Aurora or would make it riskier for people to go to a movie. And we don't know how to effectively restrict access to firearms by those with serious mental illness.

What we do know is that firearm injuries will continue to claim far too many lives at home, at school, at work and at the movies until we start asking and answering the hard questions. "Such violence, such evil is senseless," President Obama said last week. What is truly senseless is to decry these deaths as senseless when the tools exist to understand causes and to prevent these deadly effects.

We were on opposite sides of the heated battle 16 years ago, but we are in strong agreement now that scientific research should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners. The same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of deaths and injuries from gun violence.

Most politicians fear talking about guns almost as much as they would being confronted by one, but these fears are senseless. We must learn what we can do to save lives. It is like the answer to the question "When is the best time to plant a tree?" The best time to start was 20 years ago; the second-best time is now.

The Kind Of Woman Who Needs A Late-Term Abortion

By Christy Zink

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Introduce me to the woman who has an abortion after 20 weeks because she is cruel and heartless. Introduce me to the lazy gal who gets knocked up and ignores her condition until, more than halfway through her pregnancy, she ends it because it has become too darn inconvenient for her selfish lifestyle.

If such a woman exists, I have never met her. Sadly, however, she appears to have influenced the thinking of even savvy, politically informed people in this country. Otherwise, how could they argue that carrying to term is always the right decision late in pregnancy? In fact, the myth of such callous women has been compelling enough to push along a bill that would ban abortion in the District after 20 weeks of pregnancy; the bill was approved this month by the House Judiciary Committee, moving it forward for consideration by the full House, perhaps as soon as Tuesday.

Believing this fabrication of the radical right depends on one's ability to conjure at once a perfectly unfeeling woman and a perfectly healthy child, a stand-in for the much more tragic and complex reality. Meet, instead, a real live, breathing woman who terminated a much-wanted pregnancy at almost 22 weeks, when her baby was found to have severe fetal anomalies of the brain.

My son's condition could not have been detected earlier in the pregnancy. Far from lazy, I was conscientious about prenatal care. I received excellent medical attention from my obstetrician, one of the District's best. Only at our 20-week sonogram were there warning signs, and only with a high-powered MRI did we discover the devastating truth of our son's condition. He was missing the corpus callosum, the central connecting structure of the brain, and essentially one side of his brain.

If he survived the pregnancy and birth, the doctors told us, he would have been born into a life of continuous seizures and near-constant pain. He might never have left the hospital. To help control the

seizures, he would have needed surgery to remove more of what little brain matter he had. That was the reality for me and for my family.

Meet, too, the many real women I know who belong to one of the saddest groups in the world: those carrying babies for whom there was no real hope and who made the heartbreaking decision to end their pregnancies for medical reasons. Meet the women among this group who had gotten, they thought, safely to the middle of pregnancy, who had been planning nurseries and filling baby registries, only to find they would need to plan a memorial service and to build, somehow, a life in aftermath.

We are not reckless, ruthless creatures. Our hearts hurt each day for our losses. We mourn. We speak the names and nicknames of each other's babies to one another; we hold each other up on the anniversaries of our losses, and we celebrate new babies and new accomplishments, all bittersweet because they arrive in the wake of grief. We extend our arms to the women who must join our community, and we lament that our numbers rise every day.

Medical research from the Guttmacher Institute shows that post-21-week terminations make up less than 2 percent of all abortions in this country. Women like me can seem an exception. You also rarely hear stories like mine, because they involve intensely private sorrow and because there is no small amount of shame still associated with terminating a pregnancy, no matter how medically necessary.

The consequences of the House bill, if it becomes law, will be inhumane. If the restrictions in this bill had been the law of the land when my husband and I received our diagnosis, I would have had to carry to term and give birth to a baby who the doctors concurred had no chance of a real life and who would have faced severe, continual pain. The decision my husband and I made to terminate the pregnancy was made out of love — to spare my son pain and suffering.

The ugly politics in this Congress and the sheer number of Republicans mean that this bill will likely pass in the House. I understand any citizen's hesitancy when the issue of the right to middle-term to late-term abortion arises. But I also know from my own experience that this bill would have calamitous ramifications for real women and real families, and that the women it would most affect could never imagine they would need their right to abortion protected in this way.

Women and their families must be able to trust their doctors and retain their access to medical care when they most need it. To make sure that happens, members of the Senate and ordinary people across this country must see through the stereotype of the late-term aborter and see, instead, the true face of a woman who has been in this situation. I extend my hand; it is an honor to make your acquaintance.

How Conservatives Misread And Misuse Milton Friedman

By Nicholas Wapshott

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Milton Friedman, the combative, impish free-market economist, died in 2006, too early to witness and diagnose the financial crisis of 2008 and the long economic slump we've experienced since. But that doesn't mean he's absent from the debate over how to handle it.

"I wish we could find Milton Friedman again," Mitt Romney lamented in an October debate during the Republican primary campaign, when asked if he had any candidates in mind to run the Federal Reserve instead of Chairman Ben Bernanke. And speaking at a University of Chicago forum this spring, Romney enlisted Friedman in his side of the political fight over economic policy.

"Milton Friedman understood what, frankly, our president, President Obama, I don't think has learned even after three years and hundreds of billions of dollars in federal spending," Romney said. "And that is: Government does not create prosperity. Free markets and free people create prosperity."

Tuesday will mark the 100th anniversary of Friedman's birth in New York. In the midst of a global economic slump and a U.S. presidential campaign focused almost entirely on the economy, it is worth considering what he might really think of our economic troubles.

Friedman burst onto the national stage when, in pioneering work with Anna Schwartz, he rewrote the history of the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. The pair concluded that, by imposing high interest rates when disaster struck, the Federal Reserve did not funnel enough money into the economy, turning the crash into a depression. If the Fed had provided plentiful cheap money, Friedman argued, the slump would have lasted a couple of years, not a decade.

Friedman leveraged this insight into a cure for "stagflation" — that crippling combination of inflation and feeble economic growth that took hold in the United States in the mid-1970s. He believed that inflation resulted from too much government spending on Keynesian stimulus programs, which led to too much money chasing too few goods. His remedy was "a steady rate of monetary growth at a moderate level," providing "a framework under which a country can have little inflation and much growth." In short, close control of interest rates would stabilize prices.

Paul Volcker, the Fed chairman appointed by President Jimmy Carter and kept on by Ronald Reagan to cure stagflation, took Friedman's advice and rebooted the economy, provoking a recession and purging hyperinflation by raising interest rates. Inflation came down, and economic growth resumed.

On the face of it, there are enough similarities between the financial crises of 1929 and 2008 for Friedman to remain relevant. Before the Great Depression, ample supplies of cheap money fueled a stock market bubble. Attempting to curb such rampant speculation by tightening the money supply, the Fed plunged the economy into destructive deflation. Seventy years on, Alan Greenspan's cheap money policy as Fed chief at the turn of the century stoked a housing bubble based on reckless lending. A stock market crash, the financial freeze, panic in the banks, George W. Bush's "troubled asset" rescue and Obama's near-trillion-dollar Keynesian stimulus followed in short order.

For followers of Friedman, Greenspan's policy of keeping interest rates too low for too long was sure to lead to trouble. By happy chance, the person in charge of the Fed when the economy finally ran off the rails was Bernanke, a distinguished student of the Great Depression and a Friedman disciple. At a conference on the occasion of Friedman's 90th birthday in 2002, Bernanke said to Freidman and Schwartz: "Regarding the Great Depression, you're right. We [the Fed] did it. We're very sorry. But, thanks to you, we won't do it again."

Bernanke seemed like the right man at the right time, and his response to the financial turmoil was to follow Friedman's advice and open the faucets wide, pumping money into the system through "quantitative easing" that provided long-term low interest rates to bolster business confidence. But Bernanke's actions, while they followed Friedman's advice to the letter, have brought opprobrium on the Fed chairman from his erstwhile conservative supporters.

Indeed, despite their frequent invocations of Friedman, conservatives have long since abandoned the principles of his Chicago School remedies in favor of more stern solutions advocated by Austrian economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. They want to reduce the size of the state as fast as possible by slashing government spending, paying off public debt quickly, cutting taxes and removing regulations from business.

Faced with a lifeless economy, would Friedman have taken Obama's lead in demanding from Congress a new Keynesian spending stimulus? Unlikely. Friedman thought big government was economically inefficient and stood in the way of the private sector. He was "in favor of cutting taxes under any circumstances and for any excuse, for any reason, whenever it's possible" because "the only

effective way I think to hold [public spending] down is to hold down the amount of income the government has."

But his devotion to cutting taxes is not enough for today's conservatives, who have adopted a near-nihilistic view of the state. Friedman believed that the Fed has a right to manage the national economy and, contrary to Romney's oversimplified depiction, that government has a role in making markets operate fairly. "The existence of a free market does not of course eliminate the need for government," he wrote. "On the contrary, government is essential both as a forum for determining the 'rules of the game' and as an umpire to interpret and enforce the rules decided on."

Today, Friedman has been left out in the cold. His belief in an ordered, managed economy through interest rates runs counter to prevailing conservative orthodoxies. It was his certainty — and the wit with which he delivered his message — that helped popularize his views around the globe. But the fact that he did not adopt absolutist positions on the size of the state and the evils of government has made his true views irrelevant among those he used to lead.

George Shultz, an economist and a former secretary of labor, Treasury and state, once joked that "everybody loves to argue with Milton, particularly when he isn't there." Alas, now that Friedman is truly gone, it seems that no one cares to grapple with his vision anymore.

Nicholas Wapshott is the author of "Keynes Hayek: The Clash That Defined Modern Economics."

My Friend Sally Ride's Final Mission: Making Science Cool

By Susan Okie

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Sally Ride seized the chance to go to space because she wanted to find out what it would feel like. Sally loved testing the limits of her brain and body — solving the puzzles in Scientific American as a teenager, running five miles a day while doing research in physicsat Stanford University, winning tournament tennis matches, learning to fly a NASA T-38 jet.

After she blasted off to become America's first woman in space, the support crew at Mission Control asked Sally how she'd enjoyed being launched on a rocket. She gave it Disneyland's top rating: "Definitely an E ticket." Looking back at her first spaceflight years later, she called it "the most fun I'll ever have in my life."

When we were best friends and high school classmates in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, Sally told me that she wanted to be famous, but she wanted to achieve that goal by winning a Nobel Prize. A ninth-grade science teacher had introduced her to physics and astronomy, and she intended to study the stars. After her retirement from NASA and academia, Sally, who died this past week at 61, turned her focus back to teachers — like the one she always credited with planting the seed that eventually got her to space. She hoped to motivate a new generation of teachers who might impart a love of science to their students.

It wasn't until 1977, when she was completing her graduate work in physics at Stanford, that Sally spotted a notice in the university's student newspaper announcing that NASA was recruiting young scientists — for the first time including women — to become astronauts. She knew instantly that this was what she wanted to do. I was thrilled, but not surprised, when she called early one morning in 1978 to tell me that she was one of six women selected.

Sally easily fitted into the mostly male, can-do engineering culture of NASA. It was a culture that valued level-headedness and good judgment; the operative slogan was "don't screw up."

Assigned to the team helping to design the space shuttle's computer-operated mechanical arm, which would be used to deploy and recover satellites, Sally threw herself into the job and proved adept at manipulating the arm. That skill, as well as her coolness under pressure while assigned to a key job at Mission Control, impressed veteran astronaut Robert Crippen, who was to command the shuttle's seventh flight, scheduled for the first half of 1983.

Before offering Sally a spot on Crippen's crew, Christopher Kraft, director of Houston's Johnson Space Center, warned her that she would become a historic figure and the focus of worldwide attention. "I think he wanted to give me a chance to back out," she later recalled.

When I visited the space center several months before the flight, I watched her go from demanding sessions in a shuttle simulator — practicing for every possible mishap— to a photo shoot for the cover of Ms. magazine. Wearing a crisp blue flight suit, Sally rolled her eyes when a makeup artist applied blush and the photographer requested "a restless, smug half-smile."

Still, she refused to worry about the pressures of becoming a national hero. "I have great confidence in my ability not to go nuts," she told me.

Those pressures proved greater than she expected. Sally's historic flight was front-page news all over the world. For almost half a year, her days were a succession of public appearances, goodwill trips, speeches and interviews. She couldn't go to the grocery store without being asked for an autograph. She told me that the only time she felt she could be alone was when she was standing at a lectern, preparing to deliver a speech.

When talking about science or the space shuttle, Sally was a natural teacher — enthusiastic, engaging and clear — but she detested personal questions. Married then to fellow astronaut Steven Hawley, she was determined to keep her private life to herself. Eventually, public excitement waned, and she returned to the relatively anonymous routine of an astronaut. "Fortunately, I have an extremely forgettable face," she quipped.

But she always enjoyed speaking with children. Kids asked questions that adults were embarrassed to ask — how the space shuttle's toilet worked, how to make a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich while weightless. Sally realized that elementary and middle-school students were endlessly curious about space travel and that sharing her experience was a way to get them excited about science and engineering.

When she proposed writing a book about a shuttle flight, half a dozen publishers were enthusiastic — until they learned that what Sally had in mind was a children's book, not her life story. "To Space and Back" (which I co-authored), published in 1986, was the first of seven science books that Ride wrote for children. The others were written with her longtime partner, Tam O'Shaughnessy. It's characteristic of Sally's love of privacy that their 27-year relationship did not become publicly known until the announcement of her death.

When the space shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986, killing seven astronauts, including schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, the disaster stunned the nation — and put an end to NASA's prospects of sending more teachers into space. Ride served as a member of the presidential commission investigating the accident. A few days after the disaster, she called me in a fury because, as one of the reporters helping to cover the disaster for The Washington Post, I had called space center employees whom I had met through her. It took years for our friendship to recover from what she saw as a betrayal.

In the years after Sally left NASA in 1987 and became a physics professor at the University of California at San Diego, she seemed to grow comfortable with her place as a hero — particularly as a role model for girls. In 2001, she started her own company, Sally Ride Science, to create books for

students on key scientific concepts and careers, and to sponsor science festivals for girls in elementary and middle school. The media-shy former astronaut now regularly donned her NASA flight suit to speak at day-long festivals on university campuses that still attract hundreds of girls in the fifth through eighth grades.

At one such festival in Northern Virginia, I watched her spend more than an hour sitting at a card table in the hot sun, signing autographs and answering questions from a long line of excited girls, many of whom hoped to grow up to be astronauts.

I last saw her about 18 months ago. We met for breakfast at her favorite seaside inn in San Diego. She was enthusiastic about the recent direction of her company, which had shifted its focus from engaging middle school students to engaging their teachers. She believed that students' natural interest in science was too often snuffed out by stereotypes about what scientists do and by subtle messages from teachers, parents and peers. She said that teachers too often offer students a heavy diet of facts instead of a chance to experiment and have fun.

"When I was growing up," she recalled in a 2009 speech, "science and engineering were really cool." Kids dreamed of becoming rocket designers or studying moon rocks. "That's generally not the case today," she said. "And that's a problem."

With funding from industry, her company creates research-based professional-development curricula and brings elementary and middle school teachers from across the country to attend four-day trainings. The sessions have been shown to be effective in changing teacher practices and student attitudes.

Sally had a new mission: She was determined to reach as many science teachers as she could — and through them, the girls and boys they teach — to help make the study of science interesting and meaningful to kids. Her own science teachers did that for her. Sally is gone, but let's hope that the countless teachers and students she inspired will carry on with the task.

Susan Okie is a physician, a former medical reporter for The Washington Post and a clinical assistant professor of family medicine at Georgetown University.

The Way Forward For Penn State

By Rodney A. Erickson

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Since the news about Jerry Sandusky broke last fall, the most challenging chapter in Penn State's history has unfolded in the glare of the national spotlight. Those of us in leadership roles at Penn State have faced questions for which there is no playbook. I have spent many nights — and many more with our leadership team — considering the actions we must take to ensure that this university endures as an institution of which we can all be proud and one that learns from the past to be a brighter light for the future.

I knew when I accepted the position of president in November — and the Board of Trustees strongly agreed — that, for Penn State to move forward, we would need to uncover and expose the full scope of the university's knowledge of Sandusky's actions. We could not wait for courts to bring evidence to light. So, knowing that we would need to accept accountability for whatever was discovered, the board asked former FBI director Louis Freeh to lead an independent investigation.

The Freeh report revealed that those in positions of authority had failed to protect children. The Board of Trustees and my administration have accepted responsibility for this breakdown of leadership.

Since the report was published, accepting responsibility has come to take on an additional meaning. This week the NCAA imposed -unprecedented penalties on the university. These include a $60 million fine, the loss of football scholarships, a ban on postseason play and the forfeiture of all wins between 1998 and 2011. Many have questioned how I could agree to such sanctions. Let me be clear that I did not suggest this punishment, and I do not take its repercussions lightly. But I believe that the alternative — a multi-year ban on football — would have been far more detrimental to the healing process of our students and alumni.

With this penalty, it is true that all of us in some way now shoulder the burden for the wrongdoings of others. Students, faculty, staff and alumni who had no involvement, or even knowledge of who Jerry Sandusky was, now share in the responsibility of leaders who failed. To many, it is simply unfair.

I think, however, that acceptance of this responsibility will be essential to our ability to lay a new foundation and integral to the long-term character of our institution. In the face of this adversity, I am proud of the many students, faculty and alumni who have banded together with grace, humility and determination.

In a larger sense, the past year's events have brought into focus the pain experienced by victims as well as the insidious crime of child sexual abuse. We owe it to them, and it is our social responsibility, to make the prevention of child sexual abuse a part of our university's mission of teaching, research and service. We have already begun to mobilize our university community to support and work with organizations that prevent and detect child abuse and help victims recover. We have established the Center for the Protection of Children at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, and national experts are scheduled to gather on our campus in October for a two-day conference about the many facets of child sexual abuse. We have partnered with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to expand public awareness, provide training for our employees and advise us on future initiatives.

Some will still find it hard to imagine a new chapter in Penn State's history, to see beyond a football program without postseason play or the story of a school that fell from a pedestal. I urge the skeptics to look harder and see what I see today: an institution that will emerge stronger than ever before, one that will be made great not because of the reputations of a few but because of the resolve, compassion and talents of many. From the headlines alone, it would be forgivable — though wrong — to think that Penn State is little more than an ordinary university with a tradition of athletic success. More than 150 years of tremendous accomplishments in teaching, research and service suggest otherwise. Penn State graduates are among the most successful leaders in science, engineering, medicine, public policy, the arts and business. Many were the first in their families to go to college. They came and still come from near and far — and they continue to succeed.

So as I look ahead, I see a university that ultimately prevails. I see a community that has learned from this experience in the most painful and personal of ways — a story that is more than just our story but that of humanity in all its fallibility. Irrevocably changed by the lessons of the past, the community joins together to become a passionate voice for the victims of child sexual abuse and for the courage in each of us to stand up to protect society's most vulnerable.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

A New Way Of Life Promised In Dewey

Council accepts prodding to be more forthcoming

By James Fisher

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

DEWEY BEACH — The Dewey Town Council said Friday it will change the ways it publishes its meeting agendas, stung by an Attorney General's Office letter that said the town routinely violated the Freedom of Information Act.

But as they took some licks, commissioners objected to the tone of the attorney general's letter. The letter said Dewey frequently put out meeting agendas that were too vague and failed to make it clear to residents what would be discussed. This "fell far short" of FOIA rules, the letter said, and it described "obvious and blatant" violations that were "clearly unlawful." It demanded the council make changes to avoid litigation over FOIA infractions, saying "extraordinary violations require extraordinary and rigorous remedies."

"I think they should change the language in the opinion not to be so degrading to the council," Mayor Diane Hanson said. The council passed a motion asking the state to "consider revising the language of the opinion to more accurately reflect the good faith of this town council. "

The criticism of the Attorney General's Office was one in a series of problems to plague Dewey Beach this summer.

The most recent setback was the sudden resignation of the town's newly hired manager. The town had conducted a lengthy search for its new town manager before settling on Bob Stickels, who had nearly 20 years of experience as a Sussex County administrator under his belt. He started work in April, but after four months of Dewey's roiling politics, announced he was leaving for "personal reasons."

Stickels has not elaborated on the reasons for his departure, and could not be reached Friday. Hanson, at the night's meeting, said she didn't know why he resigned but suggested he was dismayed by a deluge of FOIA requests and by "bad publicity."

Some of that publicity concerned push back from bar and restaurant owners against what they say is a too-restrictive noise ordinance approved by council early this summer.

Hanson, who has been upfront about wanting to nudge Dewey closer to the family-friendly model of beach resorts and away from the bar-and-party model, has been the focus of much of the criticism – and more. She recently learned, according to The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times, that her face had been printed on urinal cakes left in bar bathrooms.

Bar owners adamantly denied approving that unorthodox political speech, but fought for changes to a noise ordinance they said threatened bars with multiple offenses with loss of their business licenses. The council agreed Friday to remove that punishment from the code. Hanson also said the council would consider making the maximum noise limit in town higher near well-trafficked Highway One than at properties near the water.

Dewey also found itself in the spotlight earlier this summer when media attention focused on the first murder in the town's history. A Pennsylvania woman found in a hotel was the victim of an apparent murder-suicide, but it led town officials to take steps to bring in additional manpower to provide security and offer reassurance to residents and tourists. At Friday's meeting, police reported to the council that aside from public urination, both petty crime and serious crime rates are lower this year than in the recent past.

Last night, first on the agenda was the discussion of how to respond to the attorney general's accusations of FOIA infractions. Dewey's leaders took care to walk the right side of the FOIA law, with a specifically worded agenda posted on the town's website noting the council would talk in closed session about how to respond.

As it happened, the council voted to talk about responding to the FOIA letter in open session. Only Hanson and commissioner Martin Seitz voted for closed-door talks.

The council voted to take some of the steps the attorney general requested. Its members agreed to remove a sentence from agendas that allows changes with only 48 hours notice, and committed to put on each agenda's front page the date it was publicly posted.

The council declined, though, to give the attorney general copies of its meeting agendas 10 days in advance for at least a year, one remedy suggested in the letter.

"I don't want to do that," Hanson said, and commissioner Anna Legates said, "I thought that was very strict."

All of the commissioners pledged to run government in public view.

"I ran on a platform of open government, and I'm very distressed to find us in this situation," Joy Howell said. "What comforts me is we acted in good faith."

"We need to get back to the basics of having open and honest communication in town government, and transparency," said Denise Campbell, an activist in Dewey civic life who's announced she'll run for town council in September. "At the end of the day, the attorney general's office is just asking us to follow the law."

Conspiracy Or A Case Of Crossed Wires?

Teenager sued over alleged prank calls

By Sean O'Sullivan

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

To most, a prank phone call – asking unsuspecting victims if their refrigerator is running, then advising them, "Well, you better go and catch it" – is either a rite of passage or a byproduct of a misspent youth.

To one Utah-based company, it is a weapon of corporate espionage.

In January, Newark-area resident Dan Smith opened a letter from attorneys that accused his 15-year-old son of being part of a corporate conspiracy to bring down 1-800 CONTACTS, a contact lens supplier, with prank phone calls.

"It took me by surprise," said Dan Smith, adding that his son, Dennis, a soft-spoken full-time student going into his senior year, is a good kid who is not the type to make prank calls. "I know it wasn't Dennis."

But 1-800 CONTACTS says otherwise. According to the suit, Dennis Smith – along with 19 other named defendants from New Jersey, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada, and some 30 additional unknown individuals – made thousands of prank phone calls to the company's customer service line.

The lawsuit claimed the phone callers were paid and their prank call campaign was coordinated by competitors that it identifies only as John Does 1 through 5.

"The true identities of Does 1 through 5 are currently unknown to the plaintiff," wrote attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS in the civil lawsuit filed in Utah state court. "When Plaintiff discovers the true identities of Does 1 through 5, plaintiff will amend this ... complaint to allege their true identities."

Attorney Jefferson Gross, of Utah, who is representing 1-800 CONTACTS, refused to answer questions about the lawsuit. "Our client has no comment at the present about the litigation," he said in an email.

The suit says Dennis Smith and the other defendants were employed as part of a competitor's plan "to flood plaintiff's sales line with numerous calls to interfere with plaintiff's employees' efforts to fulfill legitimate orders," thereby injuring the business.

The suit alleges that between February and March 2011 alone, more than 3,000 prank calls were made to 1-800 CONTACTS, an average of about 100 a day. These calls included silence, "talking in strange voices, laughing and harassment of sales line staff."

The lawsuit asks for a restraining order against the still unknown corporate defendants and punitive and compensatory damages.

In a separate document, attorneys accuse Dennis Smith of making 2,800 prank calls to 1-800 CONTACTS over a year and a half. The lawsuit doesn't say how the company traced the calls to Dennis Smith. It says the alleged prank callers used Skype, an application that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet, to conceal the origins of the calls.

Dennis Smith, now 16, said while he is a regular user of Skype, he has never made a prank phone call and has not come near making 2,800 calls to anyone.

Dan Smith said that based on a list provided to him, it is impossible for his son to have made some of the calls because he was in school on some of the days and times when the calls were made. And he said he's not seen any evidence of his son suddenly throwing around cash from mystery corporate backers.

Dan Smith believes 1-800 CONTACTS is using the litigation as some kind of fishing expedition. He showed off a plastic bin full of hundreds of pages of legal documents that he has been sent since the suit was filed.

"It has been harassment," Dan Smith said, adding, "This thing is driving me crazy. It is insane."

Dan Smith said attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS tried to get a default judgment entered against his son because he – not an attorney – responded to the lawsuit. Dan Smith said he cannot afford an attorney, and the judge ruled that as a parent, he can represent his son.

Smith also said the lawsuit has made a stressful time for his family even more so. Smith's wife, Deborah, was diagnosed with breast cancer in late 2010 and was undergoing treatment at the time the lawsuit arrived. She died this year, just before Easter.

At least two other Delawareans are named in the suit, but they could not be reached for comment.

Smith said he has tried to write to attorneys and the company to resolve the issue, but so far, he has gotten nowhere.

"I'm fed up," he said. "I'm so mad, I'd like to countersue but it is not worth it. I just want it to go away."

Fire Displaces Four Businesses

One injured in accidental blaze

By Jesse Paul And Terri Sanginiti

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Eric Martin paced around nervously watching flames consume the building that housed his business, Lost Motion Automotives, in an industrial park near the north end of the St. Georges Bridge.

His repair shop was uninsured.

"That was my livelihood in there," said Martin, 23, of Bear, as he tried to choke back his emotions. "One hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment and my only source of income … This is just a bad dream. I'm waiting to wake up."

Three other businesses also located in the building in the St. Georges Industrial Park were lost in the fire that broke out just before 11 a.m. Friday in the 1600 block of S. DuPont Highway . One man had minor injuries, police said.

Firefighters arrived to find the building engulfed in flames as thick, black smoke billowed from the roof. Neighbors, business owners, employees and passers-by watched as crews attacked the fire. Smoke could be seen for miles rising above the St. Georges Bridge on U.S. 13 and the nearby Roth Bridge on Del. 1. U.S. 13 was closed from Cox Neck Road to the south entrance of the bridge as crews worked to put out the flames.

The fire marshal's office ruled the fire accidental and said it caused an estimated $500,000 in damages. The cause of the fire was determined to be from fuel vapors being siphoned from a tank that ignited surrounding combustibles.

The injured man was identified as a 22-year-old employee of FNJ Enterprises. He sustained first- and second- degree burns to his arms trying to extinguish the fire and was treated by New Castle County paramedics before being transported to Christiana Hospital.

FNJ Enterprises, Lost Motion Automotive, Quality Automotive Enterprises and Monoghan Fence were all lost in the flames, according to business owners and employees. Little of the building was left by the time flames were mostly extinguished at about 1 p.m.

The fire originated in a part of the building that housed a salvage garage, according to the fire marshal.

Dave Laird, 28, was working inside his garage at Quality Automotive Enterprises when he heard a scream from outside. Less than 5 seconds later, flames erupted through the opening of the shop, he said.

"I tried to drag out as much as I could," said Laird, who was visibly shaken.

Keith Goodman, 48, watched the fire from his home across the highway, and said he saw multiple small explosions come from the blaze. At one point, he said, a large explosion "flipped up" part of the roof and expelled a large fireball.

"I saw the smoke when I was coming home and my heart started to drop," said Goodman. "I thought it was my house. It was pretty scary, pretty intense. I could feel the heat from over here on the other side of the road."

Up To $50,000 Offered For Info On Assault Of Postal Carrier

Two men still sought in March attack in Bear

By Robin Brown

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Fliers have been posted throughout the Bear post office, advertising a reward of up to $50,000 in an unsolved armed assault in March that seriously injured a carrier.

"We believe it was an attempted robbery," U.S. Postal Inspector Alex Sylvester told The News Journal on Friday night.

Such crimes occur "pretty close to almost never," Sylvester said, partly due to severe penalties for attacking federal workers.

Another reason is that robbing a carrier is pointless if money is the object: "They don't carry any currency," Sylvester said, and no mail is known to have been stolen.

The attack occurred at about 11:30 a.m. March 16 in the densely residential area off Rivers End Drive in the Smalleys Dam area of Bear, west of Del. 7 and north of U.S. 40.

The longtime carrier – delivering mail on foot at Stephanie Drive and Silver Run Terrace off Rivers End Drive on her regular route when attacked – suffered a significant head injury but recovered and returned to work, Sylvester said.

She told police the suspects were both 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 9 inches tall, and one had a handgun. One was thin and athletic looking, but she couldn't estimate his age. The other appeared to be in his mid-20s and stocky. He had a goatee and was smoking a thin cigar, she told police. They may have had a vehicle nearby, Sylvester said.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service reward offers up to $50,000 for information leading to the men's arrest and conviction. Tips may be given confidentially at (877) 876-2455, option 2, Sylvester said. Tips given locally also will be eligible for the reward, he said.

New Castle County Cpl. John Weglarz Sr. said Friday tips may be given at www.nccpd.com or www.tipsubmit.com, sent by text to 847411 (TIP411) starting with NCCPD or called in to Delaware Crime Stoppers, (800) TIP-3333.

County police handled the investigation at first, but the case shifted to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to pursue and prosecute because the victim was a postal employee on duty, Weglarz said. Tips will be relayed to the federal enforcement agency, he said.

"Even though it happened several months ago, any information would be greatly appreciated," Sylvester said. "We'll track any leads we get."

Dan Gaffney Joins New Sussex Talk Radio Station

By Earl Holland

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

A new talk radio station will hit the airwaves this fall in Sussex County.

On Sept. 4, Delmarva Broadcasting Co. will flip the switch on "Delaware 105.9." The FM station's mission will be to provide local, regional, national and international news to the lower Sussex County area.

The station will begin with a familiar voice as longtime local radio personality Dan Gaffney will be its anchor. Gaffney resigned last week from Georgetown-based WGMD-FM, where he was the morning show host and the station's program director.

"It's a huge positive for our company to start a station and to get a personality who is well-liked, popular and highly regarded in the Southern Delaware area like Dan," said Mike Kazala, Delmarva Broadcasting regional general manager. "We've been talking about doing something like this for some time and there's been a lot of planning involved with and a lot more to go."

Gaffney's inclusion is just one of several additions planned for the new station. Kazala, who said he could not divulge further information on additional personnel, said his hope is to be able to have further announcements about staffing within a few weeks.

"We intend to have live and local personalities on the air all day long," Kazala said. "We want to be live, local and pertinent."

In preparation for the start of the station, a new studio is being built at Delmarva Broadcasting's location west of Milford. The facility is also home to Eagle 97.7, COOL 101.3 and Spanish language station La Exitosa 930 AM.

The 105.9 station, which currently simulcasts Cat Country, has a signal that covers the Lewes, Milford and Milton areas. Kazala said the change from Cat Country to talk radio will not have an effect on the listeners of the country radio station as its 97.5 signal covers all of Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties and much of Sussex.

Kazala said his hope is that Delaware 105.9 will follow in the path of Delmarva Broadcasting's other news station, Wilmington-based WDEL.

"Part of it is the success we have had with our news talk at WDEL," he said. "We wanted to have a dialogue with people in the lower Sussex area about things that matter to them. We feel we'll be putting a powerful product on the radio."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Tell A Parent: Summer Is A Time For Learning

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

"Making Summer Count" is aptly named a recent report from the Rand Corporation on the educational losses children suffer from the time school lets in early June and reopens in late August. On average, the report tells us, students lose about a month's worth of learning. That's bad enough as an average. But a closer look at what is happening to young students is that educationally at-risk children – those who least afford it – lose even more.

In plain words, poorer children regress more than richer children do. The best answer is intellectual and physical stimulation. Children are natural learning machines. That they lose any of the educational progress that made during the school year is a social crime. The nation can't afford that loss. Neither can Delaware. And the children themselves will suffer for it.

Part of the problem is to find programs to keep the children learning. There are quite a few available. There are camps and library programs. Schools and churches add a hand as well. Some special programs such as the mentored chess games at Thomas Edison Charter School are good examples.

The first challenge is to get more students in those programs. Scholarships often are available for science and math camps, for example.

The second, and greater, challenge is to get parents and guardians to recognize the child's need to learn. Too often spots in programs are left vacant because parents can't get the forms in on time or they simply fail to recognize their importance. One way to meet this challenge is for civic and church groups to play mentor to the parents.

Get the parents on track to help their children. Progress will follow.

Following The "Storyline" Of The World's Athletes

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Pick your athlete, or your team, or even your nation. And then go ahead and root for an Olympic victory. Much of the world is watching London as the Summer Games are underway.

Forget the silly controversies of what Mitt Romney said or meant. Instead, pay attention to the athletes and their feats on the fields, in the pools and in the gyms.

In fact, television has gotten us into the "back story" of the athletes so much that smart programmers are offering storylines for readers and viewers to follow. For example, how about the swimmer Michael Phelps' final quest for even more Olympic gold? Or the South African Oscar Pistorius, an amputee, who will be running in the 400-meter dash? He runs on carbon fiber prosthetic legs.

You don't have to be a sports fan to recognize the implications of Mr. Pistorius' participation.

For one, it is a tremendously dramatic story of human determination. For another, it is a harbinger of what a combination of sports and technology will bring in the future.

Already some critics have objected to Mr. Pistorius' participation, saying the carbon fiber legs give him an unfair advantage over athletes. For the time being, let's stick with the story of Mr. Pistorius and his determination to succeed. We can leave the debate for another day.

Some observers deplore the nationalistic aspect to the Olympics. They scoff at the American media's preoccupation with medal counts. We should, the critics insist, applaud the best athlete no matter where he or she comes from. That, of course, is the ideal. In reality, we all need someone to root for. That's an important part of the storyline.

VICE PRESIDENTIAL **NEWS CLIPS**

PRODUCED FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS

The Biden Family Business

By Michelle Malkin

New York Post, July 28, 2012

Vice President Joe **Biden**, America's textbook Beltway barnacle, still labors under the illusion that he's America's middle-class Everyman. And now, he's gone and dragged his adult children into the land of Democratic make-believe. This is a BFD: a **Biden** Fabulist Dud.

As usual with White House class-warfare demagoguery, reality doesn't fit the wealth-bashing narrative.

In Philadelphia on Wednesday, **Biden** stoked passive-aggressive resentment of the 1 percenters. “The wealthy,” he sniveled. “God bless ‘em,” he snarked. “I wish my kids would become wealthy,” he sighed before railing against tax relief for all those evil, privileged rich people earning more than $250,000 a year.

Does **Biden** have kids we don’t know about? Because his three children with wife Dr. Jill **Biden** all appear to be, well, doing just fine. Way more than just fine.

Daughter Ashley, a social worker in the Delaware state bureaucracy, graduated from Tulane and has a master’s from the University of Pennsylvania. Her husband is a plastic surgeon at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals in Philadelphia. Along the way, he also racked up a PhD and snagged a slot as an assistant professor of otolaryngology/head and neck surgery and as a director of the Herbert Kean Center for Facial Aesthetics.

Not exactly Occupier-level poverty in that line of business.

Oldest son Beau is the attorney general of Delaware, a former Justice Department official and federal prosecutor, a former partner in the Wilmington law firm Bifferato, Gentilotti, **Biden** and Balick and a career beneficiary of the **Biden** dynasty.

Then there’s younger son Hunter. Vice President **Biden**, meet your well-heeled and wildly successful lobbyist/lawyer offspring.

Hunter **Biden** now fronts Eudora Global, “a uniquely organized growth and acquisition firm focused on purchasing and accelerating the development of high potential enterprises in industries that meet its selective investment profile.” He co-founded the firm with Jeffrey Cooper. Who is Jeffrey Cooper?

Cooper helped build one of the biggest asbestos-litigation firms in the country. SimmonsCooper, based in Madison County, Ill., has donated a whopping $196,050 to the senior **Biden**’s campaigns since 2003, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. In that same time frame, the firm poured $6.5 million into lobbying against a key tort-reform bill — which Sen. **Biden** worked hard to defeat. Cooper also donated to Beau **Biden**’s first attorney general campaign and paid Beau for legal work on Delaware asbestos litigation cases.

Hunter **Biden** was previously a top official at PARADIGM Global Advisors, a hedge-fund holding company founded with Vice President **Biden**’s brother, James, and marketed by convicted finance fraudster Allen Stanford. As Paradigm chairman, Hunter **Biden** oversaw half a billion dollars of client money invested in hedge funds while remaining a lobbyist. Cooper chipped in $2 million for the ill-fated venture, which went down in flames amid nasty fraud lawsuits.

Before all that, Hunter **Biden** was a senior vice president at MBNA America Bank, one of his dad’s wealthiest corporate campaign donors. An MBNA bank official helped facilitate an eyebrow-raising real-estate deal for Daddy **Biden** that paved the way for the acquisition of a custom-built house in Delaware’s ritziest Chateau Country neighborhood.

While raking in consultant payments at MBNA, Hunter **Biden** also served as a founding partner in DC lobbying shop Oldaker, **Biden** and Belair. His lobbying brought in nearly $4 million in 2007 alone.

Nice Beltway influence-peddling work if you can get it. As I noted in my book “Culture of Corruption,” one client seeking federal government earmarks told The Washington Post, “**Biden**’s parentage was a selling point.”

Nepotism has its privileges — and the **Biden** children, despite Papa Joe’s lamentations, have enjoyed far more than their fair share.

Security Tight For Biden Arrival At Porter County Airport

Munster (IN) Times, July 28, 2012

Several members of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Northwest Indiana chapter got a bonus Friday afternoon.

The group has been camped at the Porter County Municipal Airport for more than a week to greet pilots headed to the annual air show in Oshkosh, Wis. They sell freshly grilled hot dogs, hamburger and brats along with turkey sandwiches and drinks for the pilots while they get refueled.

"We're always at the mercy of the weather, but seldom at the mercy of the vice president," said chapter President Ed Hanson, of Crown Point.

The group learned Tuesday that a VIP was expected at the airport Friday, and Hanson said they could tell by the air space restrictions it probably was Vice President Joe **Biden**. Air Force 2, with **Biden** and several others aboard, landed about 3:45 p.m. and taxied to the terminal building, where everyone was quickly whisked away by the Secret Service.

Airport manager Kyle Kuebler said he was told Monday to expect an important visitor, and the airport has been working with the White House security detail to make sure everything went smoothly. Protective measures included stationing snipers on the roof of the terminal and restricting access to the terminal to security personnel only.

A member of the cleaning crew arriving for work at the building next to the terminal said she never had seen the terminal entrance blocked off before. Kuebler said it was the first time in his 22 years at the airport such a high-ranking official landed at Porter County, although a former president landed there once.

"It's normal operations for us," he said. "It's an airplane, and it landed."

For the EAA members, it actually was a bit of a hindrance. The group uses the money raised from food sales to support its activities, and the visit meant the airport was off limits for regular traffic for more than an hour. And neither **Biden** nor anyone else on the plane bought even a hot dog.

The group had only about 10 planes stop by Friday afternoon, and Hanson said they've had as many as 35 in the past. The Oshkosh show goes through the weekend, but the EAA will be at the airport through Wednesday to greet pilots and visitors for the Collins Foundation Wings of Freedom Tour.

The Wings of Freedom planes arrive Monday, and visitors can tour the planes and go for rides. Tuesday will be the big day, Hanson said.

"We'll sell a lot of ice cream on Tuesday," he predicted.

It's expected **Biden** will depart the airport Sunday after speaking to the American Federation of Teachers convention in Detroit. It's unknown if he likes ice cream.

Local Police To Assist At DNC

By Nash Dunn

Lexington (NC) Dispatch, July 28, 2012

A handful of local law enforcement officers will assist policing the 2012 Democratic National Convention this fall in Charlotte.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to descend upon Charlotte for the convention, which is scheduled for Sept. 3-6.

Lexington Police Department will send 10 officers to assist Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department with controlling the crowds and various events. The officers will be in Charlotte for about a week, said Capt. Mark Sink, of the Lexington Police Department.

"They'll be helping with whatever Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs us to assist with," Sink said, adding that local officers will be responsible for a variety of safety and security roles.

Sink said LPD was initially contacted last fall to assist with the convention. They decided earlier this year that they would help.

"We have always assisted other departments on a regular basis, but this is definitely on a larger scale," Sink said. "This is a bigger event for North Carolina, and we are proud to be helping out with it."

While the department will be down 10 officers during the convention, Sink said LPD will still be able to maintain its normal level of officers throughout the city.

"We always have plenty to do, and we will make due," Sink said. "We planned for this sometime back, so we wouldn't have any officers out of town or on vacation."

Davidson County Sheriff David Grice said his department will not be sending any officers to Charlotte. The Davidson County Sheriff's Office was contacted for help, Grice said.

"We are pretty well covered up with our responsibilities here," Grice said. "They do pay overtime, but it's hard to let people go."

The sheriff's office has assisted with large events in the past, reserving as much as 60 officers when prominent political figures like Joe **Biden** and Bill Clinton visited the region. Those events were a little closer, though, and Grice said he can't afford to send dozens of officers to Charlotte for a week.

Nearby, Guilford County Sheriff's Office will send 40 deputies to the DNC, while Forsyth County Sheriff's Office will reserve 11 deputies for the event. High Point Police Department is sending 45 officers to the convention, and Greensboro Police Department has agreed to send 150 officers and 18 vehicles.

"Those departments just simply have more numbers and more people than we do," Grice said.

Thomasville Police Department did not respond to phone calls by press time on Friday.

September's DNC will be the first time North Carolina has hosted a major party convention.

While it's unclear exactly how many people will attend the convention, police officials say they will be ready for an influx of crowds and the potential for protestors.

The convention will kick off on Labor Day with CarolinaFest 2012, a family friendly celebration in Uptown Charlotte. Convention events will be held throughout the week, all leading up to President Barack Obama's acceptance speech inside Bank of America Stadium on the night of Sept. 6.

For more information on the convention, visit www.charlottein2012.com.

Is Israel Mitt Romney's New Swing State?

His visit to Jerusalem could be a turning point for the GOP. Why a tide of super PAC funds and Obama's shaky diplomatic relations might loosen Democrats' grip on Jewish voters.

By Eli Lake

The Daily Beast, July 28, 2012

On the eve of Mitt Romney's trip to Israel, America's Jewish vote may be in play in ways that it has not been in the past. Traditionally, most Jewish Americans have voted for Democrats. In 2008, President Obama got between 74 and 78 percent of the Jewish vote. But 2012 might be different.

"It would be difficult for Republicans to get 35 percent of the Jewish vote, but it's not impossible," said Mik Moore, the treasurer of the Jewish Council for Education and Research, the super PAC that produced and financed the Web video in which comedienne Sarah Silverman offers to allow billionaire casino-executive Sheldon Adelson an evening of lesbian-style sex known as "scissoring" if he pulls his support for Romney.

Adelson has promised to spend $100 million of his own fortune to defeat Obama. He will be with Romney in Israel and will help host a fundraiser for the candidate while he's there.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he thought more Jewish votes were in play this year. "I think there is probably 15 to 20 percent of the Jewish community that is realistically undecided and conflicted at this point and this is what we are all fighting for," he said. A Gallup poll released Friday found Jewish registered voters favored Obama over Romney by 68 percent to 25 percent.

Mitt Romney will arrive in Israel on Saturday afternoon to make a bid for both undecided Jewish voters but also the evangelical Christians, who are a key Republican constituency and are strong supporters of Israel.

While in Israel, Romney will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as key members of his national-security cabinet on Sunday. He will also meet with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who is seen by Republicans and Democrats as a reformer, but not with the Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority. Romney on Sunday evening will attend a dinner at Netanyahu's home to mark the breaking of the Jewish fast of Tisha B'av, a holiday that commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples of the biblical Israelites.

Netanyahu is scheduled on Sunday also to deliver a speech on the U.S.-Israel relationship. Briefing reporters on a conference call Friday, Dan Senor, a senior adviser on the campaign, said the speech will highlight how "the challenges and threats to Israel are challenges and threats to America. And the opportunities awaiting Israel are opportunities awaiting America."

The symbolism of the trip is important for Romney. To start, President Obama has not visited the Jewish state since coming into office despite multiple trips to the region, including Israel's neighbor, Egypt, and Israel's former ally, Turkey. But the trip is also important as a contrast between Obama's relationship with Netanyahu and Romney's relationship with Netanyahu.

Romney has known the Israeli leader since 1976, when both were corporate advisers for the Boston Consulting Group. Netanyahu's chief of staff, Ron Dermer, is a protégé of Republican pollster Frank Luntz.

Obama has had a notoriously chilly relationship with Netanyahu. During a visit to Washington in May 2011, Netanyahu famously lectured Obama during a photo opportunity on how Israel could not withdraw to its borders before the 1967 war. A year before that, Obama was furious after an Israeli housing authority announced new settlement construction in an Arab neighborhood of East Jerusalem during a visit from Vice President **Biden**. More recently, Obama spokespeople have declined to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in press conferences. Since the 1990s, Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have promised to move the U.S. embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. In office however, President Clinton, President Bush, and now President Obama have stuck by a policy that considers the status of Jerusalem to be something that must be negotiated in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

These snubs and disagreements will be amplified in the 2012 election cycle because of a tide of unregulated and undisclosed money following the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision, which overturned independent expenditure limits in U.S. campaign-finance laws.

Those independent expenditures include a new $6.5 million campaign from the Republican Jewish Coalition targeting Jewish voters. Adelson is one of the financial backers of the campaign.

A new group called the Emergency Committee for Israel has launched a series of ads in Jewish newspapers this week attacking Obama's record on Israel, claiming that he has placed undue pressure

on the Jewish state. A new Web and television ad from the group contrasts Obama's 2008 speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee,I where he said he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, with recent statements from White House spokesman Jay Carney declining to answer the question of where the administration believes Israel's capital is.

"I don't want to see Obama get 78 percent of the Jewish vote again and the RJC and the Emergency Committee are important parts of the conversation and they hold the president accountable for what has been a bad record on Israel," said Mark Isakowitz, a member of the Romney finance committee and a board member of the Republican Jewish Coalition.

Alan Solow, a national co-chairman of the Obama-**Biden** reelection campaign, said he is expecting to be hit hard with these kinds of independent expenditures.

"We are anticipating that they will spend a lot of money to try to mischaracterize the president's record on Israel," Solow said. "The reason they have to spend so much money is that they don't have a case. Rather than stick to the facts and look at what the president has accomplished, they will spend a lot of money to convince people of an alternative reality and we believe they will fail."

The Obama campaign will highlight a series of moves the president has taken to strengthen support for Israel's defenses, such as a special aid package to help finance the development of Iron Dome, a missile-defense system designed to shoot down portable short-range rockets. Under Obama, U.S. diplomats have helped defeat the Palestinian campaign for recognition by the U.N. On Friday, Obama signed into law the U.S.-Israel Enhanced Cooperation Act, a bill that extends loan guarantees for Israel and authorizes more spending on Israeli defense.

Solow said the Obama campaign is just getting started to make this case to Jewish voters in swing states and to donors. At the same time, he acknowledged that Obama's initial efforts at making peace between Israel and the Palestinians have not been successful.

"We have been trying to solve this problem since 1948—no president has been 100 percent successful in achieving peace between Israel and its neighbors," he said. "I give President Obama lots of credit in trying to untie this knot. He tried some things that didn't work, and in response to things that didn't work, he made adjustments to his policy."

For now however, Obama will be making this case without the benefit of a major new lobby group, J Street, whose executive director in 2009 said it would be Obama's "blocking back" in Congress and supported Obama's more confrontational approach with Netanyahu in 2009 and 2010. "We have many supporters from across the Jewish spectrum including some who are affiliated with J Street," Solow said. "J Street as an organization does not play a role in the campaign." Jessica Rosenblum, J Street's director of communications, confirmed that her organization was not playing a role in the reelection campaign. "Our work is focused on advocating for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our political action committee focuses on House and Senate races."

Romney's Gaffe Joins Quayle's Potatoe On Gore's Internet

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

Bloomberg News, July 27, 2012

Was this Mitt Romney's "potatoe" moment?

The presumed Republican presidential nominee's brief stay in London came off more like a blooper reel than a statesman's first audition on the international stage.

The visit recalled candidate slip-ups of years past — from Dan Quayle's misspelling of potato to Al Gore's claim of inventing the Internet — questioning whether Romney's could do lasting damage to his image and electoral prospects.

"From the point of view of diplomacy and the original intent and nature of the trip, it looks like a real foot-in-the- mouth moment for Romney," said Michael Silverstein, a professor of anthropology, linguistics and psychology at the University of Chicago who co-wrote a forthcoming book about communication in presidential politics. "It's really a question of how this will continue — or not — to reverberate, and what are its consequences?"

U.S. political history is rife with embarrassing tales of candidate slips that took on lives of their own, sometimes forming lasting tropes about the politician in question.

There was former President George H.W. Bush's much- lampooned moment of amazement when he encountered a supermarket scanner at a 1992 grocer's convention. It opened him to ridicule as out of touch with American life outside the cloistered confines of the White House.

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, drew ridicule for ordering a Philadelphia cheese steak sandwich with Swiss cheese and dressing in head-to- toe camouflage for a campaign trail photo-opportunity going goose-hunting. Both were seen as Kerry's tin-eared efforts to portray himself as something he was not.

Quayle, who served with Bush, couldn't shake his reputation as an intellectual lightweight after he corrected a sixth grader during a visit to a Trenton, New Jersey, school, saying the child had left the "e" off the end of the word "potato."

Quayle would later write in his autobiography that it was "a defining moment of the worst kind imaginable."

Enter Romney, who had scarcely been on the ground in London a few hours when he came under withering criticism from leaders and media there for having cast doubt on the success of the summer Olympic games.

"You know, it's hard to know just how well it will turn out," Romney told NBC in an interview, adding that reports of security problems were "disconcerting."

The comments prompted a tart retort by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who noted that, "Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere" — an implicit reference to the games Romney chaired in 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

London Mayor Boris Johnson worked a crowd of 80,000 into a lather referring to the candidate as "a guy called Mitt Romney" who was questioning whether his city could handle the games. "Are we ready? Yes we are!" he yelled.

Romney, wrote The Telegraph newspaper, "is perhaps the only politician who could start a trip that was supposed to be a charm offensive by being utterly devoid of charm and mildly offensive." The Sun tabloid labeled him "Mitt the Twit."

It wasn't over yet. In damage-control mode, Romney slipped again yesterday, as he tried to praise London's management of the Olympics in an interview with NBC, calling it "impressive" that spectators could watch events from downtown.

"You're going to be able to be just in the backside of 10 Downing Street for beach volleyball," Romney said.

The mistakes may not have much shelf-life, given that they occurred overseas and will soon be overtaken by the Olympic Games, said political science professor Steven Frantzich.

"The ones that are damaging are ones that really reflect a candidate's character or ability, and particularly ones that are repeated so that it becomes a storyline of its own," said Frantzich, who teaches at U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and has written a book about political gaffes.

"At this point, I don't think we're going to look back and say, 'That was the moment in which Mitt Romney lost the election.'" Frantzich said. "Now, if there is a longer series of missteps, there may be a story that this carefully managed campaign could be coming apart at the seams."

The former Massachusetts governor's allies say Americans couldn't care less about perceived insults and mistakes in England.

"We're not worried about overseas headlines — we're worried about voters back here at home in America," Louisiana Republican Governor Bobby Jindal told reporters during a conference call July 26.

Still, one top aide did try to change the subject. Beth Myers, who is heading Romney's vice presidential search, tantalized reporters and others by taking to the social media site Twitter urging them to follow politicians believed to be on the short list — and then she listed 13 names, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a prospective pick that no party strategist considers serious.

Still, some gaffes — however silly or overblown — can help dash presidential hopes. When Gerald Ford fell down the stairs of Air Force One while waving to supporters, he was satirized by Chevy Chase on "Saturday Night Live" as clumsy and dim, doing lasting damage to his reputation.

Vice President Joe **Biden**, a Democrat, has had his share of bloopers — such as when he asked a wheelchair-bound man at a campaign event to, "Stand up — let 'em see you!" --yet the miscues are rarely seen as a major liability.

"Since virtually all of his over-speakings are of the genial, hail-fellow-well-met sort, he gets away with it," Silverstein said.

That's not the case for Romney, he added, in part because of how tightly his campaign manages media and public access to the candidate.

"The strategy seems to involve large clumps of silence or avoidance, and that's never really a good way of trying to fashion an image or personality," Silverstein said. "When gaffes are taken to be little breakthrough windows into the real self, then you have a problem."

Taylor Morris Given Purple Heart

By Pat Kinney

Waterloo and Cedar Falls (IA) Courier, July 28, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. --- A Cedar Falls sailor who lost portions of all four limbs in a May bomb blast in Afghanistan was personally awarded the Purple Heart by President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe **Biden** at the White House on Thursday.

Obama and **Biden** presented the medal to Taylor Morris in the company of his girlfriend, Danielle Kelly, his mother, Juli Morris, and sister Claire Morris during a White House tour for about 40 "wounded warriors" and their families.

Kelly said the foursome were posing for a group photo with other tour members when they were taken aside an escorted into a private room. Obama and **Biden** walked in.

Kelly said she originally thought the president was simply stopping for a quick hello, having met Taylor twice previously at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at a July 4 White House picnic.

"He (Obama) said 'Taylor Morris. I'm going to have to buy a cot for you at the White House, I've got something for you'" Kelly recalled. The president then pulled out a case containing a Purple Heart, as **Biden** read the official citiation relating how Morris earned the medal.

The Purple Heart is given to military personnel wounded in combat. Morris, a bomb disposal expert was accompanying a unit of U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers, clearing explosive ordnance, when one went off under him.

Kelly said she and Taylor were totally surprised. Officials told Juli Morris in advanced but asked her to keep the event a surprise for the couple.

The bittersweet part of the event, Juli said, is that Dan Morris, was unable to attend due to the short notice. In fact, Taylor had just completed a morning workout and was wearing a T-shirt, shorts and a headband.

Kelly said Taylor continues his recovery and improving his mobility and use of artificial limbs.

A mid-October fundraising event is planned in Cedar Falls. Kelly said it's one of Taylor's goals to be home for that.

New Program To Train Social Workers To Help Troops

Associated Press, July 27, 2012

WASHINGTON — A new program is being launched to train thousands of social workers on how to aid troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

First lady Michelle Obama's "Joining Forces" campaign says the training will help workers spot problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse and the danger signs for homelessness and suicide.

Mrs. Obama's partner in the campaign, Jill **Biden**, the vice president's wife, says social workers are "uniquely positioned" to help vets and military families.

The program – being run by a social workers' professional association – includes online courses and new standards and credentialing. It's being offered to 650,000 social workers nationwide.

Joining Forces Exceeds Expectations, Director Says

By Lisa Daniel

American Forces Press Service, July 28, 2012

When First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill **Biden**, wife of Vice President Joe **Biden** started the "Joining Forces" campaign 15 months ago, they did so with the goal of creating impactful and lasting health, education and employment support for military families.

The campaign had two significant achievements this week that its director, Navy Capt. Brad Cooper, told me hit both of those marks.

First, North Carolina became the 26th state to pass a law making it easier for military spouses to transfer their professional licenses. (Read more.) South Carolina and Hawaii passed similar laws in recent weeks, potentially affecting tens of thousands of military spouses, Cooper said. With similar legislation pending in California, Ohio and New Jersey, the campaign is "exceeding our expectations" in getting laws passed in all 50 states by the end of 2014, he said.

"As I take step back and look this – and my dad was an Army officer – this signals a pretty remarkable cultural shift," Cooper said. "I remember my mother — as well as my wife, spouses of my friends — were reluctant even to indicate they were military spouses" to prospective employers, he said.

Second, the National Association of Social Workers, at its annual convention here this week, announced it is launching a free, online training course for all social workers to better understand the unique needs of military families. It also is providing a set of standards for working with veterans and military families, and is creating a professional Credential for Social Work with Veterans and Military Families. (Read more.)

Social workers are considered the nation's frontline mental health services providers, and they practice in every county in the country. The NASW represents 650,000 of them. Its pledge to Joining Forces follows that of the four largest nursing associations, representing 3 million nurses, and the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, with 105 and 25 schools, respectively, in training doctors to serve military families and veterans. The Association of Marriage and Therapy Therapists also has signed on, as well as associations representing psychiatrists, psychologists and surgeons.

"This really represents, to me, not just the impactful piece, but the sustaining piece," Cooper said.

Spouses' and veterans' employment also has made major strides, Cooper said. More than 2,000 companies have signed on already hiring 25,000 spouses and 65,000 veterans, and pledging to hire another 175,000 in the next two years, helping bring down the veterans' unemployment rate, he said.

"This really is the largest outreach and advocacy efforts we've had on behalf of veterans and their families for years," Cooper said.

Joining Forces has been successful, he said, because "we've been able to breach through years and years of bureaucracy and bring people together and focus them on the effort." All they needed was leadership and direction, he added.

"People, generally, want to be helpful," Cooper said. "They don't always know what they can do. Our objective is to steer them to meaningful action."

Joining Forces' efforts have caught the attention of military spouses.

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NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS

The Long, Uphill Battle Against AIDS

New York Times, July 28, 2012

The international AIDS conference in Washington has already made two points clear. There is no prospect that scientists will any time soon find the ultimate solutions to the AIDS epidemic, namely a vaccine that would prevent infection with the AIDS virus or a "cure" for people already infected with the virus. Even so, health care leaders already have many tools that have been shown in rigorous trials to prevent transmission of the virus, making it feasible to talk of controlling the epidemic within the foreseeable future. The only question is whether the nations of the world are willing to put up enough money and make the effort to do it.

An estimated 34.2 million people around the world are currently infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. According to the United Nations agency that tracks the disease, some 23.5 million of these live in sub-Saharan Africa and another 4.2 million in India and Southeast Asia. About 1.1 million live in the United States.

This conference is the first in more than two decades to be held in the United States. It became possible only when a benighted policy that prohibited entry visas for people suffering from AIDS or infected with H.I.V. was finally overturned in 2009. It was "a bad policy, based on faulty science, that ran contrary to America's deepest values," Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, told the conference.

There has been optimistic talk at the conference about accelerating the search for a "cure" that would allow people to eventually stop taking the drugs that have prolonged many lives for decades — and about developing a truly effective vaccine. But Dr. Anthony Fauci, the American government's top AIDS expert, made clear just how difficult those tasks will be. He told the conference that a cure was "way upstream" and depends on future research breakthroughs, and he called the most successful vaccine trial to date "humbling" because it showed only a modest degree of efficacy.

Instead of waiting for these future possibilities, Dr. Fauci and other health leaders are proposing the broad adoption of other available tools to reduce the spread of the virus so as to produce an "AIDS-free generation," a goal enunciated last year by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. In her talk at the conference this week, Mrs. Clinton anticipated a time when virtually no child anywhere would be born with the virus, teenagers and young adults would have much less risk of becoming infected and those that do become infected would have access to treatments to prevent them from developing full-fledged AIDS or passing the virus on to others.

She cited the importance of condoms, counseling and testing; voluntary circumcision to protect males from becoming infected by a female partner; treating mothers to prevent transmission to their babies; and treating infected people with antiviral drugs as early as possible to enhance their own health and lessen the likelihood they will spread the virus to others. Studies also show that people at high risk of infection can protect themselves by taking an antiviral pill daily.

All that will take money. There is a widespread misconception that donors from well-heeled international organizations, rich countries and charitable foundations are the main source of money to combat the global epidemic. The share provided by international donors has, in fact, stagnated while the share provided by low- and middle-income countries to fight the epidemic on their own turf has been growing rapidly. Last year, the poorer countries invested $8.6 billion of their own money while international financing remained at $8.2 billion, the 2008 level, according to a report from the United Nations AIDS agency. Both groups will need to expand their contributions to meet ambitious treatment and prevention goals set for coming years.

Mrs. Clinton announced additional financing for AIDS programs, but perhaps her most important pledge was that the United States will issue a blueprint by Dec. 1 setting forth a road map for how to achieve an AIDS-free generation. To be effective, it will need to set priorities and define specific health outcomes and coverage targets and require detailed annual reports on the progress being made. It is unacceptable that millions of people sick enough to need treatment are not getting it.

Payday Profits

New York Times, July 28, 2012

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which failed to control the reckless mortgage lending that helped cause the financial crisis, is widely regarded as a pushover among federal regulators. But the agency showed some welcome muscle and concern for consumer protection during a House hearing this week when it vigorously opposed a bill that would accelerate the growth of payday-style lenders who peddle predatory loans that can carry interest rates of 400 percent or more.

The bill would dilute the power of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which currently has authority over these lenders, by shifting primary oversight to the comptroller's office, whose central mission does not involve consumer protection. The bill would pre-empt state licensing and most consumer protection laws, allowing the payday-loan industry to expand even in states that have restricted it in the past to protect their citizens from abusive lending policies.

Payday loans are advertised as a convenient, short-term option for people who need a small loan that they quickly repay in full, often two weeks later. But the industry relies for its considerable profits on the fact that it can easily turn these short-term loans into long-term debt.

Struggling workers who borrow a few hundred dollars at a time are frequently unable to pay on time, which means they must borrow again right away or pay extension fees that enrich the lender but are not applied to principal. After four months, for example, a customer who has borrowed $400 for a fee of $60 will have paid about $480 — and will still owe the original $400.

In some cases, people might take out more than a dozen loans in a year, or borrow from one payday lender to pay another, digging themselves ever deeper into debt. Beyond that, studies have shown that payday-loan customers are more likely than others to default on credit card debt, file for bankruptcy protection or lose bank accounts for abusing overdraft policies.

According to a new study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, many states have either disallowed payday lending or set price caps so low that the lenders go elsewhere. Under the bill in the House, however, the comptroller's office would issue charters to the lenders, overriding state laws that now regulate the terms of a loan. Worse still, the bill is disingenuously cast as a compassionate measure that would help the very poor and "unbanked" citizens who would be most hurt by it.

Speaking at a House Financial Services subcommittee hearing this week, Grovetta Gardineer, the deputy comptroller for compliance policy, demolished this pretense, noting that the industry was "based on a business model that is not sustainable from the perspective of low- and moderate-income customers — high fees, repetitive use, high defaults and severely weak legal compliance." Indeed, she said, the lending encouraged by the bill had already been found by the comptroller's office "to be unsafe and unsound and unfair to consumers."

The Time For Patience In Syria Is Over

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

AMERICA'S LONG paralysis in responding to the conflict in Syria is coming home to roost. Outside Aleppo, one of the oldest cities in the world, Syrian forces are massing for a possible assault on opposition fighters. President Bashar al-Assad has sent fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters and armored columns, threatening tens of thousands of terrified civilians.

When peaceful protest broke out in Syria last year, there was hope for a transition that would be turbulent but not violent. Mr. Assad chose instead to open fire on the protesters. President Obama called on Mr. Assad to leave office, a proper reaction to the brutality. But Mr. Obama has not backed his words with actions that might help them come true.

For a long while, the administration tried to give diplomacy a chance, saying it hoped to bring Russia, Syria's ally, into the effort. It was never realistic to expect autocrat Vladi-mir Putin to assist in the overthrow of a fellow autocrat, and Russia predictably refused.

Another argument for remaining on the sidelines was that the opposition is fractured or ineffective and includes unknown or extremist elements. But if the administration is committed to Mr. Assad's downfall, those weaknesses argue for more, not less, U.S. involvement, to get a better read on opposition forces and to encourage those less inclined toward sectarianism.

"We cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy," Mr. Obama said when civilians in another Arab city — Libya's Benghazi — were threatened as Aleppo's are now. There are important distinctions between the conflict in Syria and the conflict in Libya, in which the United States, European allies and Arab states intervened. Mr. Assad's forces are better armed. Syria has three

times Libya's population. There was stronger international support for action in Libya. But the broad challenge to the United States remains the same. Are we going to stand back and watch Aleppo turn into a shooting gallery?

No one is arguing for a Libyan-style intervention into Syria at this point. But the United States and its NATO allies could begin contingency planning for a no-fly zone, now that Mr. Assad is deploying aircraft against the opposition. Instead of providing only non-lethal support, such as medical supplies and communications gear, America could help supply weapons to the outgunned opposition fighters. It could work with Turkey and other allies to set up havens for them.

All of these moves contain risks. But those must be weighed against the danger of inaction — a long civil war that could spill across Syria's borders.

Yes, this is an election season, and Americans are fatigued from a decade of war. But global leadership does not take a timeout, and sometimes it has to lead toward a consensus, not wait for one to form. "The United States has been, and will remain, the one indispensable nation in world affairs," the president declared in a speech last week. Fine words.

Is The US Classification System Dysfunctional?

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

NO GOVERNMENT can function without secrets. In national security, they are necessary to protect military operations, intelligence sources and methods, and sensitive deliberations and communications. The United States has created a system that gives about 4.8 million people, both government employees and contractors, access to classified materials, labeled confidential, secret or top secret.

J. William Leonard knows this system well. He served in the Defense Department, where in the 1990s he had responsibility for policies on classified information, and from 2002 to 2008 he was the director of the Information Security Oversight Office, the "classification czar."

Mr. Leonard was hoping to be an expert witness at the trial of Thomas Drake, a former National Security Agency official charged in 2010 with 10 felony counts for passing information to a Baltimore Sun reporter in 2006 and 2007. The case collapsed in June 2011; Mr. Drake agreed to plead guilty to a single misdemeanor of exceeding the authorized use of his government computer.

As a result, Mr. Leonard never got to testify. But he had something important to say about the system of keeping secrets at a time when so much concern is being expressed about leaks.

A document at the center of the Drake case was a classified e-mail summarizing an agency meeting. The e-mail was titled "What a Wonderful Success." It is an innocuous, self-congratulatory message to a team for its presentation to the director, Gen. Keith Alexander. Two paragraphs were classified "secret." Now that the e-mail has been released, everyone can see what was so sensitive. One of the paragraphs included the hush-hush fact — be careful if you finish reading this sentence — that Gen. Alexander left a conference room and greeted people in a lab who had worked to make sure the demonstration was a success.

According to an affidavit by Mr. Leonard, the e-mail "contained no information which met the standards of the classification system." He added, "I have seen many equally egregious examples of inappropriate assignment of classification controls to information that does not meet the standards for classification; however, I was prepared to testify that I have never seen a more willful example."

He subsequently told Ellen Nakashima of The Post that the episode underscores how our classification system is becoming "dysfunctional." Mr. Leonard added, "Specifically, the system clearly lacks the ability to differentiate between trivial information and that which can truly damage our nation's

well-being." He pointed out that while people with clearances are being punished for disclosing supposedly classified information, almost no one is ever punished for over-classification.

The more that classification is used to hide the trivial, inconvenient or embarrassing, the less useful it is for genuine national security secrets. A democracy needs to balance secrecy with openness. While leaks can be damaging, excessive concealment is also corrosive, undermining trust and credibility in the very policies that the government seeks to protect.

Mr. Cuccinelli's Abortion Crusade

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

KEN CUCCINELLI II, the most overtly partisan attorney general in Virginia's history, has waged war on Obamacare, harassed climate-change scientists, sanctioned discrimination against homosexuals and embraced Arizona's (now mostly gutted) immigration law. He has clung to his post after declaring his candidacy for governor, thereby parting ways with past attorneys general, Republicans and Democrats alike, who resigned to run rather than entangle the office in politics.

Now, true to this record, Mr. Cuccinelli (R) has given a boost to the crusade to limit abortion rights, a cause he championed for years as a legislator: He refused to certify draft regulations governing abortion clinics, which had been watered down by the state Board of Health last month.

The move is classic Cuccinelli: ideological activism masquerading as professional legal "advice." It was accompanied by his office's usual disclaimer, issued by a spokesman who insisted that Mr. Cuccinelli's personal views had not colored his legal opinion. The merits suggest otherwise.

Mr. Cuccinelli's intervention is not the last word. The dispute will be kicked upstairs to Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R), who, despite his own anti-abortion views, has been somewhat more circumspect about foisting his conservative agenda on a politically moderate state.

Mr. McDonnell signed legislation last year to classify abortion clinics like hospitals, which are subject to exacting standards governing the size of treatment rooms, the width of hallways and doorways, the number of parking spaces and so forth. The purpose of the legislation, which does not apply to other outpatient clinics performing plastic or oral surgery, was to force the closure of most of the state's 21 abortion clinics, which could ill afford the costly retrofitting the regulations would -require.

But the governor left the details of implementation to the Board of Health. Last month the board ruled that the state's existing clinics are exempt from the new regulations, which would apply only to new clinics.

Mr. Cuccinelli argues that the law covers existing clinics. But as the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups have pointed out, Virginia law has not been generally interpreted to mandate that existing facilities meet new construction standards. When the Board of Health amended in 2006 its regulations covering hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient surgical facilities, it made clear that the rules applied to new construction, not existing structures.

Advocates of the legislation insist its intent is to protect women's health. But they offered no evidence to suggest that the state's clinics, where most of Virginia's 25,000 abortions annually are performed, are dangerous, unsanitary or slipshod in any way.

The law's real purpose is to use extrajudicial means to roll back abortion rights, conferred by the Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade, by making the procedure inaccessible to most women in the commonwealth. The Board of Health has taken a courageous stand to ensure that women retain that access. Rather than further politicize the issue, Mr. McDonnell should let the board's decision stand.

Where's The Outrage?

By Charles M. Blow

New York Times, July 28, 2012

Are too many Democratic voters sleepwalking away from our democracy this election cycle, not nearly outraged enough about Big Money's undue influence and Republican state legislatures changing the voting rules?

It seems so.

A Gallup poll released this week found that: "Democrats are significantly less likely now (39 percent) than they were in the summers of 2004 and 2008 to say they are 'more enthusiastic about voting than usual' in the coming presidential election." Republicans are more enthusiastic than they were before the last election.

Some of that may be the effect of having a Democratic president in office; it's sometimes easier to marshal anger against an incumbent than excitement for him. Whatever the reason, this lack of enthusiasm at this critical juncture in the election is disturbing for Democrats.

First, there's the specter of the oligarchy lingering over this election, which disproportionately benefits Republicans. According to a report by Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont, "So far this year, 26 billionaires have donated more than $61 million to super PACs, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. And that's only what has been publicly disclosed." That didn't include "about $100 million that Sheldon Adelson has said that he is willing to spend to defeat President Obama; or the $400 million that the Koch brothers have pledged to spend during the 2012 election season."

During a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on Tuesday, Sanders put it this way: "What the Supreme Court did in Citizens United is to say to these same billionaires and the corporations they control: 'You own and control the economy; you own Wall Street; you own the coal companies; you own the oil companies. Now, for a very small percentage of your wealth, we're going to give you the opportunity to own the United States government.' "

Then, of course, there's the widespread voter suppression mostly enacted by Republican-led legislatures.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, at least 180 restrictive voting bills were introduced since the beginning of 2011 in 41 states, and "16 states have passed restrictive voting laws that have the potential to impact the 2012 election" because they "account for 214 electoral votes, or nearly 79 percent of the total needed to win the presidency."

A provision most likely to disenfranchise voters is a requirement that people show photo identification to vote. Millions of Americans don't have these forms of ID, and many can't easily obtain them, even when states say they'll offer them free, because getting the documentation to obtain the "free" ID takes time and money.

This is a solution in search of a problem. The in-person voter ID requirements only prevent someone from impersonating another voter at the polls, an occurrence that the Brennan Center points out is "more rare than being struck by lightning."

The voting rights advocates I've talked to don't resist all ID requirements (though they don't say they are all necessary, either). They simply say that multiple forms of identification like student ID and Social Security cards should also be accepted, and that alternate ways for people without IDs to vote should be included. Many of these laws don't allow for such flexibility.

Make no mistake about it, these requirements are not about the integrity of the vote but rather the disenfranchisement of voters. This is about tilting the table so that more of the marbles roll to the Republican corner.

Look at it this way: We have been moving toward wider voter participation for a century. States began to issue driver's licenses more than a century ago and began to include photos on those licenses decades ago. Yet, as the Brennan Center points out, "prior to the 2006 election, no state required its voters to show government-issued photo ID at the polls (or elsewhere) in order to vote."

Furthermore, most voter laws have emerged in the last two years. What is the difference between previous decades and today? The election of Barack Obama. It is no coincidence that some of the people least likely to have proper IDs to vote are the ones that generally vote Democratic and were strong supporters of Obama last election: young people, the poor and minorities.

Republicans are leveraging the deep pockets of anti-Obama billionaires and sinister voter suppression tactics that harken back to Jim Crow to wrest power from the hands of docile Democrats.

There is little likely to be done about the Big Money before the election, and, although some of the voter suppression laws are being challenged in court, the outcome of those cases is uncertain.

These elements are not within voters' control, but two things are: energy and alertness.

If Democrats don't wake up soon, this election might not just be won or lost, it could be bought or stolen.

Land Of The Mega-Voters

By Gail Collins

New York Times, July 28, 2012

"No! No! No!" cried Heidi Heitkamp. She's the Democratic senatorial candidate in North Dakota. I had just asked her whether residents of her state think it's unfair that, in the Senate, each North Dakota voter has the clout of approximately 50 Californians.

She doesn't.

That was the top thing I had always wondered about the politics of North Dakota, whose two U.S. senators serve a population of around 680,000. (Campaign-wise, it resembles the Iowa caucuses. Voters expect to have met the candidates personally. Sometimes they seem to expect the candidates to invite them home for dinner.)

I was wandering around the state this week, mulling its Senate race. Really, we can't possibly focus on Barack Obama and Mitt Romney for another three months without an occasional reprieve.

So, North Dakota. Heitkamp, a former attorney general, is running against Representative Rick Berg, the state's sole member of the House. In the beginning, the national Democrats wrote this one off as a long shot at best, but Heitkamp seems to have, at minimum, pulled even. On the campaign trail, she's a happy warrior with the endless energy you'd need if you were running for office in a state where there's a two-hour drive between even the smaller clumps of voters. She also has a dramatic story that centers on the year 2000, when she ran for governor and was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer, but she stayed in the race, campaigning even while she had chemotherapy and her trademark red hair fell out. She lost but seems to have made an indelible imprint on the public.

(The other happy Senate surprise for the Democrats is Arizona, where the party somehow came up with a Hispanic physician who is a disabled Vietnam veteran and former surgeon general for the Bush administration, as well as the hero of several dramatic rescues, during one of which he shot a deranged

suspected murderer. I believe I speak for all the political hopefuls in America when I say that the bar for a potential upset win is being set unacceptably high.)

As soon as the North Dakota Senate race began, Republican super PACs began beating Heitkamp with the health care mallet. "Heidi endorsed Obamacare," says one much-aired ad that features a very brief tape of Heitkamp saying, with no apparent enthusiasm, "It actually is a budget saver." In response, she almost always brings the discussion back to her own story. Her next ad began with Heitkamp discussing her bout with cancer and adding, "When you live through that, political attack ads seem silly."

"I have a pretty well-known pre-existing condition," she says dryly.

My second big North Dakota question was why, if the voters were really obsessed about the economy and jobs, jobs, jobs, the state wasn't tilting toward Obama. True, North Dakota hasn't gone for a Democratic presidential candidate since Lyndon Johnson. But things are great! The unemployment rate is around 3 percent and close to zero in the areas around the booming oil industry. The farmers weren't hit by the drought, and their crops are going to be worth a fortune at harvest time.

Much of this good news occurred on the president's watch. Does he get credit? The answer, once again, is no, no, no.

"If Heidi is elected, I won't lose sleep. She'll do a great job," said E. Ward Koeser, the mayor of the oil-boom town of Williston, a Republican who has endorsed Berg. "If Barack Obama gets elected, I'll lose sleep."

"Leadership means you take people who are polarized and get them together. I don't think he was that good at building relations," said Heitkamp, trying to explain her state's antipathy toward Obama. "When people are mad at me, I always try to stand next to them for 20 minutes. They can't stay mad."

We will not try to envision the president using that tactic on John Boehner. But Heitkamp says she'll be voting for Obama in November — because Mitt Romney supports the House Republican budget.

"People ask me why, and I point to that budget," she says.

In 2010, North Dakota voters were furious about the national debt and the horrors they'd heard about Obamacare, and they tossed out virtually every Democratic incumbent they could get their hands on. Now Heitkamp is betting that the House budget, with its Medicare restructuring and dramatic program cuts will seem even more radical to the emotionally conservative North Dakotans than the stimulus or health care law. "There's $180 billion in farm cuts in there," she said, launching into a litany of government aid it would strip away from North Dakota.

Berg says the House budget is thrifty and represents the "North Dakota way of doing things." We shall see. It's up to the North Dakota voters. A very small number of North Dakota voters.

Eat your heart out, California.

Addressing Poverty In Schools

By Joe Nocera

New York Times, July 28, 2012

About two years ago, Dr. Pamela Cantor gave a speech at a Congressional retreat put together by the Aspen Institute. Her talk was entitled "Innovative Designs for Persistently Low-Performing Schools."

Cantor is a psychiatrist who specializes in childhood trauma. After 9/11, her organization, the Children's Mental Health Alliance, was asked by New York City's Department of Education to assess the impact of the attack on the city's public school children. What she found were plenty of traumatized children — but less because of the terrorist attack than because of the simple fact that so many of them were growing up in poverty.

"If children are under stress, the ways they respond are remarkably similar," she says. "They get sad, distracted, aggressive, and tune out." That is what she saw in the high-poverty schools she visited. Chaos reigned. The most disruptive children dominated the schools. Teachers didn't have control of their classrooms — in part because nothing in their training had taught them how to deal with traumatized children. Too many students had no model of what school was supposed to mean. "These were schools that were not ready to be schools," she said.

The traditional therapist's response, of course, is to recommend therapy for traumatized children. But that's an impossible solution in a big-city school of 1,000 or more students. Still, Dr. Cantor wondered, would it be possible to design schools that could, in her words, "address the issues poverty poses as they present in the classroom?" She came to the belief that the answer was yes, and, in 2002, she founded a new organization, Turnaround for Children. It's what she's been doing ever since.

Part of the reason this work strikes me as so important is the obvious: there are an immense number of children growing up in poverty — one out of three in New York City alone. The good charter schools can take only a tiny fraction of those children; the rest are in public school, far too many of which are dysfunctional.

The second reason, though, is that Turnaround is trying to bridge an important divide. Part of the debate over school reform is about poverty itself, with the reformers taking the view that a great teacher can overcome the barriers poverty poses, while the other side says that the problems of public schools can't be solved until poverty itself is alleviated. Cantor is suggesting an alternative way of thinking — that students in public schools can do well if the issues they face are dealt with head-on, instead of sidestepped.

I have space to give only the barest outline of how it works. A three-person Turnaround team embeds in a group of schools for three to five years. One works with the principal to create a positive, disciplined culture, where students come to believe they can succeed in school. One works with teachers, showing them tools, for instance, that will allow them to handle disruptions while keeping the other students on track. The third is a social worker who helps train the school social workers to help with the psychological and emotional needs of children in poverty, while identifying the most troubled students, the ones who can drive the entire school. Instead of suspending them, or expelling them, though, Turnaround contracts with mental health organizations to provide them with services. That sends an important signal to the other students.

I should stress that even after a decade, Turnaround is still an experiment, and relatively small. In 2008, it underwent an independent evaluation by the American Institutes for Research, which showed that its schools had far fewer disruptions and were generally calmer, safer, indeed, happier places. But that same evaluation suggested that Turnaround needed to put more emphasis on improving the academic environment in the classroom. That is what Dr. Cantor and her team are implementing now.

Which brings me back to that speech she gave a few years ago. In it, she laid out her ideas about the importance of facing poverty squarely in schools. They struck a chord. Since then, she has spent a great deal of time in Washington, where officials both in Congress and the White House have been receptive to these ideas. In May, a group of White House officials visited a Turnaround school in Washington, where they were impressed by what they saw. Ultimately, if Dr. Cantor's ideas gain enough momentum in Washington, they could become part of what the federal government — and school districts across the country — expect from schools.

By refusing to accept the status quo, school reformers kicked off an important movement, long overdue. Although I happen to think there is an overemphasis on test scores, the demand for teacher accountability has also been an important step.

Creating schools that are designed from the start to deal with the predicable challenges of poverty — it is the most important thing we can do next.

The Politics Of Horse Ballet

By Dana Milbank

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The animal kingdom has been inhospitable to Mitt Romney in this election cycle.

First there was the damaging story of Seamus, the Irish setter he strapped to the roof of the Romneys' car on a family trip.

Now it seems that, when it comes to Romney's political aspirations, Seamus may not be the most dangerous animal in the family menagerie. This past week belonged to Rafalca, the dancing horse.

Rafalca, a 15-year-old Oldenburg mare owned in part by the Romneys, qualified as a member of the U.S. Olympic team and will compete in London in the dressage competition — a form of ballet for horses and their riders in which the animals do pirouettes and serpentines. They also do piaffes, which, according to the International Equestrian Federation, is a "highly collected, cadenced, elevated diagonal movement" in which "the haunches with active hocks are well engaged." Rafalca, after qualifying, flew across the Atlantic on a FedEx jet (no, they didn't strap her to the roof) and reportedly dined on an in-flight meal of watermelon.

Understandably, Romney was wary about discussing dressage when NBC's Brian Williams asked him in London on Wednesday about his equine Olympian. "You actually have a horse in the race. What's that gonna be like?"

"Well," Romney replied. "It's — a big — exciting experience for my wife and — and for the person that she's worked with, the trainer of the horse who's riding the horse. And — obviously, it's fun to be part of the Olympics in any way you can be part of them."

Williams followed up: "When is the event, and for those of us who don't follow the sport, what happens? Are there rounds that — of competition? Is there just one chance? What happens?"

Romney pleaded ignorance. "I have to tell you, this is Ann's sport. I'm not even sure which day the sport goes on. She will get the chance to see it, I will not — be — watching — the event. I hope — her horse does well."

It was arguably Romney's worst interview since Chris Wallace asked him about Seamus. The flustered candidate went on to disparage the British preparation for the Olympics, setting off an international incident.

It's understandable that Romney would be reluctant to discuss dressage. Seamus may have made him look odd, or insensitive. Rafalca makes him look like a super-rich playboy.

John Kerry was made to look effete in 2004 by Republican mockery of his windsurfing, his Turnbull & Asser shirts and his French fluency. Now Democrats have a chance to do something similar to Romney, with his Swiss bank account, his Grand Cayman and Bermuda tax havens, his multiple homes, his $10,000 bet, his friends who own NASCAR teams, and now the six-figure horses his wife imports from Europe. Nothing says "man of the people" quite like horse ballet.

Ann Romney takes umbrage at the criticism, saying that dressage has helped with her multiple sclerosis. That was enough to get the Democratic National Committee to back away from a video campaign showing Rafalca spliced with Mitt Romney "dancing around" questions about his tax returns.

While it's heartening that Ann Romney has been helped by the horses, most MS sufferers don't have the luxury of importing $100,000 horses from Europe. And the candidate's disavowal of dressage as "Ann's sport" isn't quite right.

In an interview with the Web site Chronicle of the Horse, Rafalca's trainer, Jan Ebeling, said Mitt Romney selected the music for the horse's routine at an international competition; Ebeling, in another interview, said the former Massachusetts governor, inspired by his wife, "really enjoys the horses." Romney joined his wife at an Olympic qualifying dressage event in April 2008, and the couple declared a $77,731 loss on their 2010 tax returns for their share of Rafalca's care.

That's a lot of hay (and another possible reason for the candidate's disinclination to release more tax returns), but consider what the Romneys get for their money: a horse that can do not only a Reinback, a Shoulder-in and a Travers, but a Flying Change of Leg, a Renvers and a Half-Pass.

"The object of Dressage is the development of the Horse into a happy Athlete through harmonious education," the equestrian federation explains. "As a result, it makes the Horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen."

Sounds as if this is worth seeing. For the record, the dressage events begin Aug. 2 at Greenwich Park. You can bet Mitt Romney won't be there.

Blowing The Whistle On The Federal Leviathan

By George F. Will

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The huge humpback whale whose friendliness precipitated a surreal seven-year — so far — federal hunt for criminality surely did not feel put upon. Nevertheless, our unhinged government, with an obsession like that of Melville's Ahab, has crippled Nancy Black's scientific career, cost her more than $100,000 in legal fees — so far — and might sentence her to 20 years in prison. This Kafkaesque burlesque of law enforcement began when someone whistled.

Black, 50, a marine biologist who also captains a whale-watching ship, was with some watchers in Monterey Bay in 2005 when a member of her crew whistled at the humpback that had approached her boat, hoping to entice the whale to linger. Back on land, another of her employees called the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ask if the whistling constituted "harassment" of a marine mammal, which is an "environmental crime." NOAA requested a video of the episode, which Black sent after editing it slightly to highlight the whistling. NOAA found no harassment — but got her indicted for editing the tape, calling this a "material false statement" to federal investigators, which is a felony under the 1863 False Claims Act, intended to punish suppliers defrauding the government during the Civil War.

A year after this bizarre charge — that she lied about the interaction with the humpback that produced no charges — more than a dozen federal agents, led by one from NOAA, raided her home. They removed her scientific photos, business files and computers. Call this a fishing expedition.

She has also been charged with the crime of feeding killer whales when she and two aides were in a dinghy observing them feeding on strips of blubber torn from their prey — a gray whale.

To facilitate photographing the killers' feeding habits, she cut a hole in one of the floating slabs of blubber and, through the hole, attached a rope to stabilize the slab while a camera on a pole recorded the whales' underwater eating.

So she is charged with "feeding" killer whales that were already feeding on a gray whale they had killed. She could more plausibly be accused of interfering with the feeding.

Never mind. This pursuit of Black seems to have become a matter of institutional momentum, an agent-driven case. Perhaps NOAA, or the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section, has its version of Victor Hugo's obsessed Inspector Javert.

In any event, some of the federal government's crime-busters seem to know little about whales — hence the "whistle-as-harassment" nonsense.

Six years ago, NOAA agents, who evidently consider the First Amendment a dispensable nuisance, told Black's scientific colleagues not to talk to her and to inform them if they were contacted by her or her lawyers. Since then she has not spoken with one of her best friends.

To finance her defense she has cashed out her life's savings, which otherwise might have purchased a bigger boat. The government probably has spent millions. It delivered an administrative subpoena to her accountant, although no charge against her has anything to do with finances.

In 1980, federal statutes specified 3,000 criminal offenses; by 2007, 4,450. They continue to multiply. Often, as in Black's case, they are untethered from the common-law tradition of mens rea, which holds that a crime must involve a criminal intent — a guilty mind. Legions of government lawyers inundate targets like Black with discovery demands, producing financial burdens that compel the innocent to surrender in order to survive.

The protracted and pointless tormenting of Black illustrates the thesis of Harvey Silverglate's invaluable 2009 book, "Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent." Silverglate, a civil liberties lawyer in Boston, chillingly demonstrates how the mad proliferation of federal criminal laws — which often are too vague to give fair notice of what behavior is proscribed or prescribed — means that "our normal daily activities expose us to potential prosecution at the whim of a government official." Such laws, which enable government zealots to accuse almost anyone of committing three felonies in a day, do not just enable government misconduct, they incite prosecutors to intimidate decent people who never had culpable intentions. And to inflict punishments without crimes.

By showing that Kafka was a realist, Black's misfortune may improve the nation: The more Americans learn about their government's abuse of criminal law for capricious bullying, the more likely they are to recoil in a libertarian direction and put Leviathan on a short leash.

Unfinished Business In Weeding Out D.C. Corruption

By Colbert I. King

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The names alone were enough to keep readers glued to the newspaper: Roger W. "Whitetop" Simkins, Curtis "Bozo" Taylor, Albert "Real Estate" Smith, Charles "Geechie" Anderson, William "Snags" Lewis, James M. "Jim Yellow" Roberts, Abe "Jewboy Dietz" Plisco, Randolph "Catfish" Turner, Herbert "Bucklejaws" Johnson.

It's fair to say I got my formal introduction to D.C. crime courtesy of these characters. All were convicted operators of illegal lotteries in the District, commonly called "the numbers" — except for Jim Yellow Roberts and Catfish Turner, who were drug kingpins. All of them became household names in the early '50s, thanks to celebrated criminal trials and televised hearings of the Senate District Crime

Subcommittee, which delved into crime and corruption in our nation's capital. I recall rushing home from Francis Junior High School to catch the tail end of the hearings.

The crime figures, however, weren't the only Washingtonians to make the spotlight. The hearings revealed that the D.C. Police Department had several dirty cops, and not those officers walking a beat.

A onetime head of the police gambling division and later commanding officer of the 12th Precinct was sentenced to up to five years in jail. A probationary detective got a sentence of up to four years. A deputy chief was officially reprimanded for accepting Christmas gifts from a known gambler. One chief was forced into retirement.

So District newcomers, the current probe into city corruption is nothing new.

True, the scope of investigations by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. is unprecedented in the era of home rule. But even before Congress gave the District a measure of self-government, some in the city were stinking up the joint with their nefarious behavior.

That dark era in the '50s should serve as a reminder that corruption is not a one-time affair. It takes hold quietly, slowly, when no one's looking. The corrupt are always there, watching and waiting for the chance to score. They are aided and abetted by a climate of indifference.

The Post captured that climate in a 1951 editorial, "Respectable Racketeers." Ironically, the editorial took note of a deficiency that exists to this day.

Observing that an amateur detective uncovered the large-scale gambling operations, The Post asked, "Why was it necessary for an amateur — who turned out to be more professional than the professionals — to do the work that law enforcement agencies should have been doing?"

The editorial pointed out that the little success achieved fighting corruption was "more through the work of the United States Attorney than through the work of the police."

Isn't that true today?

Where in the world, it must be asked, were the D.C. inspector general, the city's Office of Campaign Finance and the D.C. Council while our city was being politically and criminally corrupted?

Are you telling me that no one in the District government had an inkling that a council member was misusing earmarks and lining his pocket, or that campaign contribution limits and spending rules were being violated with impunity?

A federal grand jury is investigating the award of the D.C. lottery contract. But ask council members and city agencies what the investigation is about — as I have — and they adopt the classic D.C. leader position: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

The Post's 1951 editorial, referring to lottery corruption and the fact that one of those involved was operating "under a cloak of respectability and legitimate business" (why do I think of Jeffrey Thompson?), asked: "How many other[s]. . . are there in similar circumstances?"

"Every Washington newspaperman is aware of reports that higher-ups . . . are really the bosses," The Post observed. "No newspaper," it said, "has either the staff or the privileges to compel testimony in order to conduct an investigation.

"But from the recurrent seepages of evidence which contradict the bland assurances that there is no big crime here, it is obvious," the editorial continued, "that no investigation of crime in Washington has yet gotten at the roots."

That, indeed, is our unfinished business — even today.

Now, as was true in the '50s, all the facts must be laid out. We need an exhaustive investigation that fully exposes the corrupt activities of the "respectable" figures seemingly behind the disreputable acts.

Only then can we kill corruption at its roots and stand guard against the recurrence that is sure to come.

Imagine A World Without AIDS

By Danielle Ofri

New York Times, July 28, 2012

THE beginning of the end of AIDS? The article with that title jumped out at me last week, as I did my weekly table-of-contents scan of The New England Journal of Medicine. I wasn't prepared for the flood of emotion that overcame me. The beginning of the end? Could it really be?

For those of us who did our medical training in the late '80s and early '90s, AIDS saturated our lives. The whole era had a medieval feel, with visceral suffering and human decimation all around. Death was vivid, brutal and omnipresent.

Bellevue Hospital, where I trained, was one of those city hospitals that felt like ground zero for the plague. Every third admission seemed to be a patient in his mid-20s who looked as if he'd arrived from Dachau or Biafra, with nary a T-cell to his name. Horrific Kaposi's sarcoma ulcerated these patients' bodies. P.C.P., a brutal form of pneumonia, strangled their breathing. Fevers and infections plundered every organ system. What few defenses their bodies mustered were pummeled into insignificance.

The utter relentlessness of the disease pummeled the doctors-in-training as well. It felt as if we were slogging knee-deep in death, with a horizon that was a monochrome of despair. Witnessing your own generation dying off is not for the faint of heart.

The 17 West AIDS ward in Bellevue was always full to capacity, so H.I.V. patients overflowed into the general medical wards, and of course swamped the prison ward, the tuberculosis ward, the pediatric ward and the emergency room. We even had a "spillover" ward, 12 East, reserved for the "actively dying." The hospital had carved out a ward of private rooms — otherwise unheard-of in a city hospital — so that these patients could have a modicum of privacy in their final days. Needless to say, 12 East was also full to capacity, with a line of patients waiting for a room to "open up."

If you'd grabbed a random intern toward the end of my residency in 1995, and asked her if she could envision the headline "The Beginning of the End of AIDS" in less than 20 years, she would have simply stared uncomprehendingly at you with bleary eyes. More than 50,000 Americans died of AIDS that year. By 2009, the number had edged under 20,000.

In the worlds of both medicine and metaphor, the narrative arc of AIDS has almost no peer. The transformation from hopelessness to pragmatic optimism is — scientifically speaking — nothing short of miraculous. Potent combinations of antiviral medications that brought patients off their deathbeds and back to life, viral load testing and H.I.V. genotyping that helped tailor treatment regimens, screening of the blood supply, aggressive public health campaigns, prevention of maternal-fetal transmission — we could hardly have envisioned the pace of development.

After years of disappointments, H.I.V. vaccine research is heating up again, as breakthroughs in the understanding of H.I.V. immunology have identified nearly two dozen potential vaccine candidates. The apparent H.I.V. cure as a result of a bone-marrow transplant in a man known as the "Berlin patient" has stimulated tantalizing gene therapy research.

The staggering progress of these past two decades leaves me breathless, and to be honest, almost teary-eyed. For nearly every other category of disease that afflicts my patients, the treatments are largely the same as when I was an intern. Yes, we have fancier stents for our cardiac patients, and more targeted chemotherapy for our cancer patients, but the overall paradigms have shifted only incrementally.

H.I.V. has been easier to target, in part, because it is caused by a single infectious agent — as opposed to the diverse factors that influence cardiovascular disease and cancer. And then there was the avalanche of resources and the galvanizing of public activism that served to concentrate scientific efforts in a manner never seen before. By no means do I wish to belittle the impressive advances in other fields of medicine, but our oncology wards and cardiac wards still do a brisk business.

AIDS patients in the hospital are a rarity now — they are more likely to be admitted for an ulcer or a heart attack than for an H.I.V.-related illness. The overwhelming majority receive their medical care in outpatient settings, like everyone else who is living with a disease rather than dying of a disease. AIDS has settled in next to hypertension and diabetes as one of those chronic conditions that patients deal with over the course of a lifetime.

"Over the course of a lifetime." Now there's a concept we never thought about back then.

There is still a long way to go, of course. The 19th annual International AIDS Conference just ended on Friday, and no one is underestimating the gravity of the challenges that remain, particularly in developing countries. But to even contemplate, however tentatively, the beginning of the end is something that my peers and I never imagined happening in our lifetimes.

I often think about grim days we spent doing rounds on 17 West and 12 East. I remember the slow and tortured deaths of our patients, their emaciated bodies disintegrating into nothingness before our eyes. More tears were shed on those wards than any I've worked in since.

And what happened? The 17 West AIDS ward became a regular medical ward. The 12 East dying ward was turned into offices. And then, this month, the inpatient AIDS service at Bellevue closed down entirely. If that doesn't signify the beginning of the end, I don't know what does.

Danielle Ofri, an associate professor at New York University School of Medicine, is the editor of the Bellevue Literary Review and the author, most recently, of "Medicine in Translation: Journeys With My Patients."

What Drives The Obama Doubters And Haters?

By David Maraniss

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

There are Obama doubters and haters out there who claim with righteous anger that they are "vetting" the president, something they say the mainstream media never did. Some of them have said that my new biography — unwittingly, they argue, for I am too dumb to understand what my research has unearthed — proves that Barack Obama's defining memoir is phony and that his entire life is a fraud. My intent is not to defend Obama or his book; he can take care of himself, and I have my own questions about "Dreams From My Father," which I make clear in my book. But when comparing the liberties Obama took with composite characters and compressed chronology — which he acknowledged in the introduction to his memoir — to the stretches his most virulent detractors have taken in building their various conspiracies, I believe that they are the frauds and fabricators.

Not all of them are "birthers," but the notion that the president was not born in the United States remains at the epicenter of the anti-Obama mythology. Here is the conspiracy that would have had to exist if Barack Hussein Obama II were not born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Aug. 4, 1961:

First, the local newspapers would have had to have been in on the scheme, because they ran notices of his birth among all the other local births that week. Second, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would have had to have been covering something up, because INS officials were closely tracking Barack Obama Sr. when he was at the University of Hawaii on a student visa from Kenya. They thought

that he was a bigamist — which he was, having married a woman in Kenya before coming to the States — and a womanizer, which he also was. INS documents in the weeks and months before and after the son's birth clearly establish the father's whereabouts and the birth of his son. Finally, the name of Obama's mother, Stanley Ann, was unusual enough that doctors and nurses in Honolulu remembered it and her giving birth. One prominent doctor was asked by a young journalist if anything interesting had happened in the medical world that week, and he responded, "Well, Stanley had a baby!"

In tandem with the birther notion comes the idea that Obama is a secret Muslim. His Kenyan grandfather, Hussein Onyango, was Muslim; his Indonesian stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, was Muslim; as a boy he was instructed in Islam at a school in Jakarta; and many of his college friends were Muslim. None of this adds up to Obama being Muslim, except in the minds of conspiratorialists. Obama never met his Kenyan grandfather. After infancy, he spent time with his Kenyan father only once, and in any case Barack Obama Sr. was an atheist. The truth is that Muslims had nothing to do with the rise of the Obamas of Kenya and that conservative evangelical Christians were essential every step of the way.

It was proselytizing Seventh-day Adventists who first came to the Obamas' villages out near Lake Victoria at the start of the 20th century. They taught English and Western ways to the first wave of young boys from the Luo tribe, including Hussein Onyango. His son, the president's father, was also educated at a missionary school. Later, as a young adult, Barack Obama Sr. was mentored by a remarkable evangelical Christian, Betty Mooney, whose grandfather was one of the founders of Texas Christian University. Mooney, who went to Kenya in the late 1950s to spread the gospel and literacy, met Obama Sr. in Nairobi and hired him to translate some of her literacy books into the Luo tribal language. She encouraged and helped sponsor his coming to the United States and specifically to the University of Hawaii, where he met Stanley Ann Dunham. One can say that President Obama would not exist except for evangelical Christians.

While living in Jakarta from ages 6 through 9, young Obama temporarily took the last name of his stepfather, Soetoro, for school purposes. He was listed as a Muslim on school documents because students were listed in the religion of their fathers. Lolo was not particularly religious; Stanley Ann was spiritual but not part of any formal religion. For most of his three-plus years in Indonesia, Obama attended a Catholic grade school. When his family moved to a better neighborhood in his final year, he went to the local grade school, one of the best in the city. The central doctrine taught at S.D. Besuki was not Islam but Pancasila, or five principles, of modern Indonesia, which evoked the unity of the islands on the vast archipelago, social justice and a belief in one God. Conservative Muslims detested Pancasila (a Sanskrit word revealing Indonesia's Hindu heritage), insisting that it was too liberal and open to too many religions and interpretations.

In both the issues of Obama's birth and of his religion, documents and common sense lead in one direction. Obama's doubters run the other way: His birth certificates must be fake; his espoused Christianity must be a cover. Another group of right-wing doubters hold on to the notion that Obama is a closet socialist, some sort of Manchurian candidate, an idea that his every move as a pragmatic liberal politician over the past 16 years has utterly disproved. Some others maintain that he was not smart enough to get into Occidental, Columbia and Harvard Law, and too inept to write his own memoir, which one particularly obsessed conspiratorialist claims was penned by the former radical Bill Ayers. What about the well-written letters from Obama that are published in my book? Those, too, must be frauds slipped to me by the Obama administration.

In the introduction to my book, I took note of a sick political culture where "facts are so easily twisted for political purposes and where strange armies of ideological pseudo-historians roam the biographical

fields in search of stray ammunition." That sentence is now cited on right-wing Web sites as evidence that I hold them in contempt. True enough, one of the few accurate things that I've read from them. I do hold some of them in contempt, not because of their politics, nor because of their dislike of Obama. Political debate and disagreement are the lifeblood of American democracy. No, I hold them in contempt for the way they disregard facts and common sense and undermine the role of serious history as they concoct conspiracy theories that portray the president as dangerous, alien and less than American.

What drives them? Some of it can be attributed to the give-and-take of today's harsh ideological divide. Some of it can be explained by the way misinformation spreads virally to millions of like-minded people, reinforcing preconceptions. And some of it, I believe, arises out of fears of demographic changes in this country, and out of racism.

If Obama Loses The Election, Here's Why

By Drew Westen

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

With 100 days left in the presidential campaign, perhaps the two most vexing questions in American politics are: How could President Obama possibly lose? And, how could he possibly win?

Americans are scared, angry and struggling. They used to talk about job satisfaction; now they talk about just holding on to their jobs. No incumbent since FDR has ever won reelection with unemployment numbers remotely resembling today's. What voters feel about their lives and dreams in the months leading up to an election tends to stick to the president when they enter the voting booth. And right now what's sticking to Obama isn't good.

But it sure helps to face a candidate as uncomfortable in his own skin, as likely to say by accident what he really means and as wrong for the times as Mitt Romney. In an era when even conservatives are populists, enraged about the favors granted the rich and well-connected, Romney is running as a CEO who thinks his taxes are too high. Voters just aren't warming up to a guy who enjoys firing people and attempts to woo the people of Michigan by referring to his wife's "couple of Cadillacs." If Obama offers what well-paid elites call a "jobless recovery," Romney offers the only thing worse: a promise to restore the policies that led to the joblessness that made a recovery necessary.

So, beyond the anemic economy, why do the latest polls show the former Massachusetts governor in a dead heat with the president? Because Obama's administration made three crucial errors that enabled the Republican obstructionism that has tied his hands for the past two years, with GOP leaders shooting down any idea — even if it's one of their own — that might have helped the president strengthen the economy. And those mistakes have made possible what was unimaginable in January 2009: that a private-equity baron lacking a sense of noblesse oblige, and preaching the gospel of deregulation and lower taxes for the rich, might actually win the presidency four years after those policies led to the collapse of the U.S. economy.

Obama's first mistake was inviting the Republicans to the table. The GOP had just decimated the economy and had been repudiated by voters to such an extent that few Americans wanted to admit that they were registered Republicans. Yet Obama, with his penchant for unilateral bipartisanship, refused to speak ill of what they had done. The American people wanted the perpetrators of the Great Recession held accountable, and they wanted the president and Congress to enact legislation to prevent Wall Street bankers from ever destroying the lives of so many again. Instead they saw renewed bonuses — and then they saw red. Republicans learned very quickly that they could attack Obama and his agenda with

impunity. Only at election time, or when he's up against the ropes, does this president ever tell a story with a villain.

The second mistake was squandering the goodwill that Americans felt toward the new president and their anxiety about an economy hemorrhaging three-quarters of a million jobs a month. That combination gave Obama, at the beginning of his term, a power to shape public policy that no one since Franklin Roosevelt had held. But instead of designing a stimulus that reflected the thinking of the country's best economic minds, he cut their recommended numbers by a third and turned another third into inert tax cuts designed to appease Republican legislators whose primary aim was to defeat him. He stimulated the economy — but just enough to leave the results open to interpretation, rendering questionable what should have been an uncontested success.

Obama compounded the problem a year into his presidency, when corporate profits were on the rise while job creation wasn't. The Senate was considering a jobs program much like one the House had passed. But Obama refused to throw his support behind it. To do so, he would have had to articulate a vision in which government sets the conditions for the private sector to create prosperity and jobs, and steps in when the private sector can't — or when it works against the interests of ordinary Americans. It's a vision in which leadership means knowing when to step up and when to step back, not simply passively riding the waves of market failures, business cycles and bubbles — the vision that unites Herbert Hoover, George W. Bush and Romney.

But Obama chose neither to offer that vision nor to take action to put Americans back to work directly, rebuilding our broken roads, our bridges, our crumbling schools. The stimulus was a good start, but its flaws were already apparent. Instead, he began using Republican language about how the government, like ordinary families, needs to tighten its belt, as if that were a solution for people whose belts couldn't get any tighter. "Government has to start living within its means, just like families do," he said in a weekly Web and radio address. Words like these not only undercut the vision behind the stimulus — the whole point of which was to spark a sputtering economy with deficit spending — but they came as bankers were loosening their belts, making average Americans angrier.

The third way the administration created opportunities for Republican obstructionism will someday become a business-school case study: It let a popular idea — a family doctor for every family — be recast as a losing ideological battle between intrusive government and freedom. In the 2008 election, the American people were convinced that families should never have to choose between putting food on the table and taking the kids to the doctor. They were adamant that neither they nor their aging parents should have to choose between their medicine and their mortgage.

How did the administration manage to turn one of the most popular campaign issues of 2008 into one of the major causes of Democrats' "shellacking" at the polls two years later?

In keeping with the most baffling habit of one of our most rhetorically gifted presidents, Obama and his team just didn't bother explaining what they were doing and why. To them, their actions were self-evident. But nothing is self-evident when your opponents are spending millions of dollars to defeat you. Instead, the White House blundered around with memorable phrases such as "bending the cost curve," which didn't speak to the values underlying the need for health-care reform.

Republicans, in contrast, offered a coherent story: Democrats think the government knows what you need better than you do; you should be able to make your own choices, not have some bureaucrat stand between you and your doctor. The White House could have counterpunched, but instead it dropped its gloves.

The president acknowledged as much this month in an interview with Charlie Rose for CBS. When asked about the biggest mistake of his first term, he replied it was his belief that "this job was just about getting the policy right. And that's important. But the nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times."

To his credit, Obama has been telling a much better story over the past several months about the challenges ahead and why he deserves a second term. "We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by," he declares in his new campaign message, "or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules."

But the problems of health-care reform were not just about selling it — they were substantive as well.

There was no way to tell the story of why the government couldn't negotiate prices for drugs with the big drug companies, the way the Department of Veterans Affairs already does, without admitting either that the administration was buying off the pharmaceutical industry or that the industry was buying off the administration. There was no way to explain why Americans who saw how much their parents or grandparents liked Medicare couldn't have at least one option not controlled by the insurance industry — without admitting that the administration had made a deal with the industry that guaranteed it 30 million new customers with no government competition. As Ron Suskind reported in his book "Confidence Men," that decision ended any possibility of a "public option" a year before the president announced, without explanation, that the public option had died on the operating table.

Whereas the House, under the leadership of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), put forward a sensible health-care bill in the early days of the new administration, the White House and congressional Democrats ultimately crafted a bill whose greatest benefits would become apparent only years later, giving Republicans all the time in the world to galvanize public opinion against it. Democrats frequently point out that most of the elements of the law are extremely popular, even though the law as a whole remains unpopular. They're absolutely right. But that's like saying people pick a spouse based on the person's nose, mouth, shoulders, hair, job, personality and earning potential, when in fact it's the totality of the person that either does or doesn't make our hearts flutter.

One of the most popular elements of the health-care law, and the one that matters most to middle-class Americans, is the end to insurance companies' ban on people with "preexisting conditions." That part of the law came online in 2010 for children, an enormous achievement. But our bodies generally start falling apart in our 40s and 50s (trust me on that), and nothing could have been more important for the success of the legislation — and the party and president who made it the law of the land — than for Obama to have been able to pronounce as he signed the bill, "With this stroke of my pen, never again will any American ever see the words from an insurance company, 'Rejected: preexisting condition.' " Try repealing that.

By delaying that part of the law until 2014, along with provisions designed to cover 30 million more people (unless Republican governors refuse federal funding to extend Medicaid), the Democrats lost the message war. Nothing blunts the fierce urgency of now like the soft promise of later.

Obama has every reason to feel underappreciated. Both the stimulus and health-care reform were kinda-sorta the right policies. The stimulus was not, as conservatives have convinced many of their fellow Americans, big government on steroids; it was Keynesian economics on birth control. It did not restore the 8 million jobs lost to the crash of 2008 or provide the 200,000 jobs a month needed for new entrants into the labor market, but it did prevent a second Great Depression. The health-care law was no more a

prelude to a long march to European-style socialism than the similar bill Richard Nixon proposed 40 years ago — or the law Romney enacted as his greatest legacy to the people of Massachusetts.

So how did the White House make mistakes of this magnitude, which have breathed new life into Republicanism and made a Romney administration a possibility?

One factor is the tyranny of money in our nation's politics. That two administrations — one Republican, one Democratic — bailed out the banks instead of the people on whom they were foreclosing is an outrage that reflects the legalized bribery we call campaign financing. The bottom line for corporate executives is "return on investment," and the return on Wall Street's bundling and lobbying has more than made up for the failures of its bundling of toxic assets.

But just as important is the tyranny of timidity. If self-interest and self-righteousness are at the heart of the Republican Party today, cowardice lies too close to the spine of the Democrats. While Republicans show extraordinary hubris by harnessing minority rule on virtually every issue with just the threat of a filibuster, Senate Democrats show extraordinary fearfulness in enabling them. In the past, Democrats spoke openly of poverty, a word seldom heard today even though Americans of every race and color are sharing a rapid descent down the economic ladder. While the president has begun to speak effectively in the past several months about the economic distress of working- and middle-class families, on the major issues he too often uses the bully pulpit to bully the truth.

That was most apparent in the first three years of his administration, but you don't have to look further than the past three weeks. The nation has experienced climate change firsthand, with Americans witnessing extreme weather, drought, wildfires, floods and harvests destroyed by the scorched-earth policies of the oil and coal industries. But Obama, like his challenger, has simply turned up his air conditioner, refusing to connect the dots between the devastation people can see and the causes they are finally ready to accept.

And a week ago, the nation was in shock after yet another mass shooting, allegedly carried out by yet another troubled young man who had purchased weapons that should not be legal. The first day, Obama and Romney issued the usual comforting platitudes about how our prayers are with the victims' families. But in its public statements, the White House seemed more concerned with reassuring the National Rifle Association than with giving voice to the desire of a bullet-ridden nation to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens — those who want guns to hunt or protect their families and homes, as well as those who want to go to the movies, church, school or a shopping mall without fear. To his credit, Obama gave a speech Wednesday before the Urban League calling for "common sense" steps to prevent gun violence, although it was long on hope and short on change.

Obama may be reelected by a public that has nowhere else to turn. Perhaps freed of the constraints imposed by having to raise a billion dollars to finance his campaign, he will reveal a true self of which we've seen glimmers. One who will speak forthrightly to the American public and be unafraid to take on the perpetrators of economic crimes that have devastated American families; the perpetrators of myths about "clean coal," which the president instead repeats even as the industry rains fire on America's breadbasket; or the perpetrators of the record foreclosures on longtime homeowners who have become collateral damage in the war on the middle class.

We can only hope that in his heart, Obama can truly feel the pain, sadness and fear of ordinary Americans, because it's not hard to imagine that inside the chest of his opponent is a cavity waiting to be filled.

Drew Westen is a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Emory University and the author of "The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation." He is the founder of Westen Strategies, a consulting firm.

Romney Isn't Out To Make The World Swoon

By Fouad Ajami

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

The itinerary for the overseas trip that Mitt Romney is taking — Britain, Poland and Israel — is brilliantly chosen. These countries contrast greatly with candidate Barack Obama's 2008 foreign tour, which included stops in Afghanistan and Jordan. That journey aimed to show that he would strengthen America's bonds with countries that aren't always our staunchest allies — and that Obama was the opposite of President George W. Bush. Huge crowds swooned over Obama in Paris and Berlin, a reception that was a boon to his campaign at home.

The former Massachusetts governor, however, neither seeks nor generates this sort of delirium. He is a sober man who promises reliable management and a foreign policy that recognizes that the world is beset with dangers to America's welfare and liberty.

Thanks to Romney's speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Reno, Nev., on Tuesday, we now have the broad outlines of how his foreign policy would differ from Obama's. There would be a break, the Republican candidate indicated, from policies that have "exposed the military to cuts that no one can justify, compromised our national security secrets and, in dealings with other nations, given trust where it is not earned, insult where it is not deserved and apology where it is not due."

Romney is an old-fashioned, unstylish man whose views hark back to a time when America was confident in itself and less worried about the judgments of other nations. We have grown anxious in the past decade or so, seeing our country in the mirror held up beyond our shores. There is a yearning for that self-confidence. And Romney promises to call back those older, simpler American verities.

Just as Obama sought to distance himself from Bush's legacy, Romney's overseas itinerary is meant to draw a contrast with the current president. Israel, Poland and Britain are resolutely pro-American societies, choices that play it safe politically and suggest that a Romney presidency would as well.

The "special relationship" with Britain calls for no commentary; this is the Anglo-Saxon world, as it was once unapologetically called. Campaigns don't always follow the script, of course. Romney's gaffe Wednesday about potential troubles at the London Olympics is a reminder that, even when dealing with close allies, a few ill-chosen words can ruffle feathers.

Israel is of the West but not in it, a besieged democracy. Obama has not visited there since his 2008 trip, and Israelis have wondered about his fidelity to their country.

Poland, too, imparts meaning: Its people have paid dearly for their liberty, daring to defy the Soviet Union and casting their fate with the West. Poland still stands sentry against Russia. And Romney's previous characterization of Russia as the United States' "number one geopolitical foe" is music to Polish ears.

And Poland has had its own disappointment with Obama: Bush proposed a missile-defense system to be based in Poland and the Czech Republic. Obama has reconfigured it, proposing a system more acceptable to Russia and, he contends, more effective in warding off potential missile attacks from Iran and North Korea.

Before his VFW remarks, Romney was largely reticent on foreign policy, and his campaign concentrated on the economy. But he is not running for Treasury secretary. Even in a time of economic distress and high unemployment, foreign policy cannot be ignored.

The Obama campaign has made much of the president's presumed mastery of that domain. In 2008, he promised that he would bring the war in Iraq to an end, and he has done so. Osama bin Laden and American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki have been hunted down and killed on Obama's watch.

In his own speech to the VFW on Monday, Obama trumpeted his record on fighting terrorism. He had made it a priority, he said, "to take out the terrorists who had attacked us on 9/11. . . . Since I took office, we've worked with our allies and our partners to take out more top al-Qaeda leaders than any time since 9/11."

Presidential campaigns are, of course, not about truth. And a candidate's ambitious promises are generally cast aside once he assumes the burdens of office. As a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy, it should be recalled, promised to close the missile gap with the Soviet Union. But for the United States, there was no gap to close. It was the Soviets who were at a huge disadvantage, a paltry three scores of missiles for an American arsenal of more than 2,000. In the same vein, candidate Obama vowed to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, repair "brand America" abroad, drain anti-Americanism from the Islamic world and build trust between Pakistan and the United States.

But these promises have been largely forgotten in the exercise of power. Guantanamo is still open, and anti-Americanism in the Islamic world did not dissipate when Bush left the White House. In a supreme note of irony, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which was once held up as proof of Bush's poor standing in foreign lands, recently bore bad tidings for Obama:

"In a number of strategically important Muslim nations," the June report says, "America's image has not improved during the Obama presidency. In fact, America's already low 2008 ratings have slipped even further in Jordan and Pakistan."

The Romney campaign is not out to win hearts and minds in Karachi and Cairo; that sort of public diplomacy is of no interest to the candidate and his bid for the presidency.

"I do not view America as just one more point on the strategic map, one more power to be balanced," Romney said Tuesday, emphasizing American exceptionalism — probably because Obama has often equivocated about it.

"I believe in American exceptionalism," the president said in France in 2009, "just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." The world was changing, Obama observed; nations the world over were contending for influence, and no single power could deem itself superior to others.

This difference is of no small importance. Ideology has been played down in Obama's foreign policy. By the early signs, there would be more of it under Romney. But continuity would probably carry the day on Afghanistan and Iran.

"As president," Romney said Tuesday, "my goal in Afghanistan will be to complete a successful transition to Afghan security forces by the end of 2014." Obama has given up on his early view that Afghanistan could be reformed. We are headed for the exits, whoever wins in November.

Iran has frustrated American presidents since its 1979 revolution. Neither carrots nor threats of military action have altered the behavior of Tehran's theocracy. "Sanctions must be enforced without exception, cutting off the regime's sources of wealth,"Romney asserted Tuesday.

That view comes directly from Obama's playbook. After his early infatuation with the idea of "engaging" Iran, entertaining the illusion that he could succeed where other presidents had failed, Obama

has become a realist. By now, he has recognized that the ruling mullahs are bent on acquiring nuclear weapons and have no interest in accommodation with the United States. Romney is without illusions about Iran, but he, too, would not take up the sword against the theocracy. The American people show no taste for a new war in the Persian Gulf.

Under Romney, would there be a difference on the "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians? The tone might improve, as the bonds between Romney and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are strong; in contrast, there is an obvious estrangement between Obama and the Israeli leader. But that conflict will not yield to an American president's power. From Harry Truman till the present, that primordial struggle has frustrated U.S. leaders. No matter how close the U.S.-Israeli relationship is, the United States cannot dictate the terms of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Any grand historical accommodation must be the work of the protagonists themselves.

The late Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington once sketched three visions of the United States' place in the world: nationalist, cosmopolitan and imperial. In the nationalist view, America defends her interests in the world and marks ideological borders and differences with other nations. In the cosmopolitan view, the foreign world and globalization reshape America, erasing the differences that separate it from other countries. In the imperial vision, America remakes the world by remaking foreign lands.

An imperial push can't be sustained; the United States lacks the resources and the drive for such grand ambitions. So we are down to a more realistic distinction. Obama embodies the cosmopolitan aspiration, and Romney the nationalist idea. We have already seen Obama's worldview at work; it probably wouldn't change in a second term. Romney's stewardship would dawn without trumpets and drums. It would have the sobriety of Gerald Ford's and George H.W. Bush's leadership. But there would be an ideological edge, illustrated in Romney's VFW address: "Like a watchman in the night, we must remain at our post — and keep guard of the freedom that defines and ennobles us and our friends."

Why Killing Is A Profitable Enterprise

By Michael F. Mcnulty

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

It is easy to ignore the issue of gun control, given the perfect leaderlessness it enjoys in Congress. Then again, it becomes harder to ignore when your relatives or friends are murdered in the company of someone you idolize, which describes thousands of us in Tucson.

I have owned guns, continuously, since I was 6. I still own my grandfather's pump-action Winchester, carried for decades in a scabbard behind his saddle as he rode the range where he ranched, in Wikieup, Ariz. All the guns I've owned have been what are quaintly called long guns. I began my brief assault on local fauna at age 12, and I had "taken" four white-tailed deer, a couple of javelina and innumerable quail and dove by the time I got my driver's license at 16. A driver's license is a far greater liberator than a hunting license, and thereafter, trekking around in the wilderness killing things lost its luster. It has been decades since I engaged in those adventures.

There are, today, few who hunt with handguns or assault rifles equipped with 100-clip magazines. There are even fewer reasons to do so. But the National Rifle Association's principal focus has evolved mostly to those. It is news to no one that the NRA has abandoned the sportsman in every practical sense; if the group were honest, it would change its name. Speaking as a rifleman, I think it's an embarrassment.

The NRA not only dependably opposes limits on assault-rifle sales but even opposes reporting bulk sales of assault rifles. Last year, the NRA went to the mat to prevent anyone from cross-checking the names of those on the terrorist watch list against the names of those buying guns. These two actions clarify beyond argument that the safety and welfare of you and yours have simply dropped from the NRA's list of priorities. The NRA represents gun manufacturers, end of story.

Now, handguns excel at certain things. They are unequaled at killing people at close range: quite useful for law enforcement officers and drug dealers. They're genuine security in a drawer for those who have received unambiguous threats, like my friend Gabby Giffords. They're even a useful, if dubious, tool to defend yourself from murderers and rapists breaking in at 2 a.m. That hasn't happened to me in the past 60 years, but maybe your experience is different. NRA President Wayne LaPierre thinks it may happen to you tonight: If you search YouTube for "The NRA's Circus of Fear," you'll find a collection of LaPierre's reasons why he lives in fear, and his arguments as to why you should, too. Personally, I think that "living in fear" is inconsistent with being an American, and I'm not going to play.

But how else are the gun manufacturers going to "grow the market," to sell more than the 3 million handguns they already do per year? Fear is a great motivator; mass murder is great for the gun business.

Just days ago a dozen citizens were murdered and about five dozen plugged with slugs from a trinity of firearms. Setting aside the shotgun, it bears mentioning that the Glock and assault rifle James Holmes is suspected of firing in an Aurora, Colo., movie theater were being used for the purpose for which they were designed, manufactured and sold. But the gun makers have no product-liability litigation to worry about, because in 2005 Congress approved and President George W. Bush signed into law legislation providing immunity for gun manufacturers from the foreseeable consequence of building instruments of murder. Every year three times as many people are murdered with guns in the United States as were murdered on Sept. 11, 2001. But blessed be the gun makers, for they are pardoned in advance.

It strikes me that the NRA is pretty comfortable when debates over mass murder devolve into intellectual discussions relating to civility vs. demagoguery, insanity vs. impressionability, and freedom vs. the tyranny of gun zealots. The more abstract, the better. In the end, however, it's simple: The NRA shills for gun makers who profit from the murder of American citizens. If you think the country's policies are shaped by Judeo-Christian values, you're not paying attention.

Why Gun Control Isn't A Lost Cause

By Matt Bennett And Jonathan Cowan

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Dozens of college students murdered in their classrooms; a member of Congress shot at point-blank range; innocents gunned down in a movie theater. Then, in the aftermath of a mass gun crime, the same ritual: national shock and anger, traumatized communities asking how this could happen, followed by . . . nothing. At least, no progress on gun safety.

In a speech to the Urban League on Wednesday, President Obama called for a conversation on youth violence and more steps to keep guns away from criminals and the mentally ill. But everyone, including Obama, has been pretty frank about it: No major new gun laws will result.

However, in Washington, nothing is ever as immovable as it seems.

The key is to understand how intractable problems are ultimately dislodged — not by a single, seismic event, but by a slow shift in politics.

Consider three categories of such issues and the forces that have gotten them unstuck.

When the problem gets too big

One reason for paralysis is that politicians fear the consequences of taking on powerful, well-financed organizations such as, when it comes to guns, the National Rifle Association. The gun lobby dramatically outspends gun-control advocates and has a long record of successfully opposing politicians who cross it.

Still, even a heavyweight institution can be sidelined when a problem becomes too large. The AARP has long been regarded as an invincible opponent of Social Security reform. But in the early 1980s, Social Security was nearing collapse. In 1981, its trustees issued a report warning that the system would be "unable to make benefit payments on time beginning in the latter half of 1982" and that it would run out of money by the middle of 1983. A bipartisan group of lawmakers began to explore the idea of making changes to Social Security, but the AARP stood firm.

A commission led by Alan Greenspan recommended fixes to Social Security in January 1983, and the AARP fought the proposals vigorously. The group argued that rather than change benefits or payroll taxes, Congress should raise other taxes and give that revenue to Social Security. It ran ads and urged its thousands of volunteer leaders to swamp Congress with letters, calls and visits. But the scale and immediacy of the problem moved President Ronald Reagan and congressional Democrats to take on the matter squarely, cut a deal on reforms and put in place a long-term fix.

When experts can't be ignored

Sometimes a consensus of experts raises an alarm, but Washington tunes them out. In the case of guns, the experts are police chiefs and mayors in cities plagued with gun crime, who almost uniformly support tougher gun laws, to little avail in Congress.

But expert voices can start to ring louder on Capitol Hill when the data move into the public's consciousness. In the 1960s, a small band of scientists began to notice the impact of acid rain — pollutants emitted by power plants, most in the Midwest, were being carried by winds to the Northeast, where they were damaging waterways and forests.

This problem was hard for the nonexpert to spot. Only scientists understood that there were rising levels of hydrogen ions in the rain. They saw the trends and understood the significance, even if the public did not — like a minor cough that seems innocuous but to a doctor's ear could be an early sign of lung disease.

The scientists' warnings were ignored in the policy debate. No one did anything for more than a decade. But their concerns eventually began to move from academic journals and niche magazines into the mainstream. The public finally took notice of reports showing that many lakes in New England were so acidic, they no longer could support fish and other wildlife. And they connected the dots between lakes in New Hampshire and power plants in Ohio.

This steady accumulation of the scientific consensus ultimately became too big for politicians to ignore. Congress and the president responded, and in 1990, they enacted amendments to the Clean Air Act instituting a cap-and-trade system to control acid rain pollutants. The system has worked, and acid rain has been dramatically reduced.

When public opinion shifts

Perhaps the most obvious reason for stasis in Washington is when public opinion runs counter to a policy change. Few elected officials will risk the wrath of voters on controversial issues.

In the gun debate, large majorities of voters favor particular changes to laws, such as banning assault weapons or high-capacity ammunition magazines. But polls also show that they're skeptical that such changes would affect the right people or reduce gun crime. A Washington Post poll last year found that 57 percent of Americans thought that tougher enforcement of existing laws was a better way to

reduce gun crime, vs. 29 percent who favored passing new laws. And focus groups have long found that many voters are turned off by elected officials who call for new gun laws. So politicians are generally right to think that gun control makes bad politics.

Yet voters reserve the right to change their minds. When he ran for president in 1992, Bill Clinton vowed that he would lift the ban on gay men and women serving openly in the military, and upon taking office, he tried to do it. But he met opposition in the Pentagon and in Congress, fueled by polls showing that the public opposed the change. Clinton was forced into a face-saving compromise — "don't ask, don't tell" — that kept the ban in place.

Over time, though, the politics of gay rights began to shift. By 2010, when Obama persuaded Congress to scrap "don't ask, don't tell" and lift the ban, a majority of voters said they supported its repeal. And even members of Congress who opposed the move mounted only a halfhearted campaign when the measure came up for a vote.

What this recent history shows is that Washington is rarely shocked into action. Galvanizing events can change the tone briefly: Congress adopted bipartisan seating at the State of the Union address after the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), for instance. But even really big surprises rarely lead to major political change. We no longer see many Sputnik moments.

Rather, change is slow and cumulative. It takes time for a problem to boil over, for expert consensus to pierce the fog of denial, for public opinion to shift decisively.

We see this process today on the same issues: Social Security, the environment and gay rights. The AARP still opposes significant changes to Social Security, but as the potential for catastrophic fiscal failure becomes more real, the prospects for reform are improving. The scientific consensus is solid on global warming, and as the weather grows more destructive, demands for action are likely to become too loud to ignore. And even though the public has voted in 31 states to ban same-sex marriage, the national mood is changing, raising the odds that the Defense of Marriage Act eventually will be swept away.

So too on guns. It may be that nothing revolutionary or evolutionary will soon alter the gun debate. There are nearly 300 million guns in private hands in this country, and the Supreme Court has affirmed that the Second Amendment confers the right to own guns on most law-abiding adults. And the power of the NRA is real.

But when we ran a group called Americans for Gun Safety, we found reason for hope. We worked with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) following the Columbine tragedy, because he was tired of doing nothing to prevent gun deaths. Together, we wrote legislation that would close a loophole allowing people to obtain firearms without background checks at gun shows. It reached the Senate floor in 2004 and passed as an amendment to another bill, but it was scuttled by NRA supporters.

McCain took a lot of grief for his stance. After he appeared in our television ads in Colorado promoting changes to close that state's gun show loophole, the NRA featured him on the cover of its magazine drawn as the devil.

Sadly, when McCain ran for president again in 2008, he reverted to the NRA's point of view. He knew it would be virtually impossible for him to win the GOP nomination if he was opposed by the most powerful interest group in conservative politics.

McCain's heresy on guns was short-lived. But rather than see it as a depressing truth about the power of the NRA, we see it as proof that virtually nothing is impossible in American politics. Even mountains will eventually be moved, but it will take the work of years, not a moment of shock or pain.

Matt Bennett is a co-founder and senior vice president of Third Way. Jonathan Cowan is a co-founder and president of Third Way. Previously, they served as director of communications and president, respectively, of Americans for Gun Safety.

We Won't Know The Cause Of Gun Violence Until We Look For It

By Jay Dickey And Mark Rosenberg

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

A few years ago, one of us came across a young woman who had just been hit by a car. She was the mother of two young children and one of Atlanta's star runners. I found her unconscious and bleeding profusely from a severe head injury. She died in my arms while I tried to resuscitate her.

Her death was tragic, but it wasn't "senseless." In scientific terms, it was explicable. The runner, who had competed in 15 marathons and broken many records, wore no lights or reflective vest in the early-morning darkness; she crossed the street within crosswalk lines that had faded to near-invisibility; there were no speed bumps on this wide, flat street to slow cars down.

Scientists don't view traffic injuries as "senseless" or "accidental" but as events susceptible to understanding and prevention. Urban planners, elected officials and highway engineers approach such injuries by asking four questions: What is the problem? What are the causes? Have effective interventions been discovered? Can we install these interventions in our community?

The federal government has invested billions to understand the causes of motor vehicle fatalities and, with that knowledge, has markedly reduced traffic deaths in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, research has inspired such interventions as child restraints, seat belts, frontal air bags, a minimum drinking age and motorcycle helmets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009.

Through the same scientific, evidence-based approach, our country has made progress understanding and preventing violence. Once upon a time, law-abiding citizens believed that violence generated by evil always had existed and always would exist. By the mid-20th century, that sense of fatalism was yielding to discoveries by social scientists, physicians and epidemiologists. Now a body of knowledge exists that makes it clear that an event such as the mass shooting in Aurora, Colo., was not a "senseless" occurrence as random as a hurricane or earthquake but, rather, has underlying causes that can be understood and used to prevent similar mass shootings.

We also recognize different types of violence, including child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, elder abuse, suicide and economically and politically motivated violence. Like motor vehicle injuries, violence exists in a cause-and-effect world; things happen for predictable reasons. By studying the causes of a tragic — but not senseless — event, we can help prevent another.

Recently, some have observed that no policies can reduce firearm fatalities, but that's not quite true. Research-based observations are available. Childproof locks, safe-storage devices and waiting periods save lives.

But it's vital to understand why we know more and spend so much more on preventing traffic fatalities than on preventing gun violence, even though firearm deaths (31,347 in 2009, the most recent year for which statistics are available) approximate the number of motor vehicle deaths (32,885 in 2010).

From 1986 to 1996, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored high-quality, peer-reviewed research into the underlying causes of gun violence. People who kept guns in their homes did not — despite their hopes — gain protection, according to research published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Instead, residents in homes with a gun faced a 2.7-fold greater risk of

homicide and a 4.8-fold greater risk of suicide. The National Rifle Association moved to suppress the dissemination of these results and to block funding of future government research into the causes of firearm injuries.

One of us served as the NRA's point person in Congress and submitted an amendment to an appropriations bill that removed $2.6 million from the CDC's budget, the amount the agency's injury center had spent on firearms-related research the previous year. This amendment, together with a stipulation that "None of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control," sent a chilling message.

Since the legislation passed in 1996, the United States has spent about $240 million a year on motor vehicle safety research, but there has been almost no publicly funded research on firearm injuries.

As a consequence, U.S. scientists cannot answer the most basic question: What works to prevent firearm injuries? We don't know whether having more citizens carry guns would decrease or increase firearm deaths; or whether firearm registration and licensing would make inner-city residents safer or expose them to greater harm. We don't know whether a ban on assault weapons or large-capacity magazines, or limiting access to ammunition, would have saved lives in Aurora or would make it riskier for people to go to a movie. And we don't know how to effectively restrict access to firearms by those with serious mental illness.

What we do know is that firearm injuries will continue to claim far too many lives at home, at school, at work and at the movies until we start asking and answering the hard questions. "Such violence, such evil is senseless," President Obama said last week. What is truly senseless is to decry these deaths as senseless when the tools exist to understand causes and to prevent these deadly effects.

We were on opposite sides of the heated battle 16 years ago, but we are in strong agreement now that scientific research should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners. The same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of deaths and injuries from gun violence.

Most politicians fear talking about guns almost as much as they would being confronted by one, but these fears are senseless. We must learn what we can do to save lives. It is like the answer to the question "When is the best time to plant a tree?" The best time to start was 20 years ago; the second-best time is now.

The Kind Of Woman Who Needs A Late-Term Abortion

By Christy Zink

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Introduce me to the woman who has an abortion after 20 weeks because she is cruel and heartless. Introduce me to the lazy gal who gets knocked up and ignores her condition until, more than halfway through her pregnancy, she ends it because it has become too darn inconvenient for her selfish lifestyle.

If such a woman exists, I have never met her. Sadly, however, she appears to have influenced the thinking of even savvy, politically informed people in this country. Otherwise, how could they argue that carrying to term is always the right decision late in pregnancy? In fact, the myth of such callous women has been compelling enough to push along a bill that would ban abortion in the District after 20 weeks of pregnancy; the bill was approved this month by the House Judiciary Committee, moving it forward for consideration by the full House, perhaps as soon as Tuesday.

Believing this fabrication of the radical right depends on one's ability to conjure at once a perfectly unfeeling woman and a perfectly healthy child, a stand-in for the much more tragic and complex reality. Meet, instead, a real live, breathing woman who terminated a much-wanted pregnancy at almost 22 weeks, when her baby was found to have severe fetal anomalies of the brain.

My son's condition could not have been detected earlier in the pregnancy. Far from lazy, I was conscientious about prenatal care. I received excellent medical attention from my obstetrician, one of the District's best. Only at our 20-week sonogram were there warning signs, and only with a high-powered MRI did we discover the devastating truth of our son's condition. He was missing the corpus callosum, the central connecting structure of the brain, and essentially one side of his brain.

If he survived the pregnancy and birth, the doctors told us, he would have been born into a life of continuous seizures and near-constant pain. He might never have left the hospital. To help control the seizures, he would have needed surgery to remove more of what little brain matter he had. That was the reality for me and for my family.

Meet, too, the many real women I know who belong to one of the saddest groups in the world: those carrying babies for whom there was no real hope and who made the heartbreaking decision to end their pregnancies for medical reasons. Meet the women among this group who had gotten, they thought, safely to the middle of pregnancy, who had been planning nurseries and filling baby registries, only to find they would need to plan a memorial service and to build, somehow, a life in aftermath.

We are not reckless, ruthless creatures. Our hearts hurt each day for our losses. We mourn. We speak the names and nicknames of each other's babies to one another; we hold each other up on the anniversaries of our losses, and we celebrate new babies and new accomplishments, all bittersweet because they arrive in the wake of grief. We extend our arms to the women who must join our community, and we lament that our numbers rise every day.

Medical research from the Guttmacher Institute shows that post-21-week terminations make up less than 2 percent of all abortions in this country. Women like me can seem an exception. You also rarely hear stories like mine, because they involve intensely private sorrow and because there is no small amount of shame still associated with terminating a pregnancy, no matter how medically necessary.

The consequences of the House bill, if it becomes law, will be inhumane. If the restrictions in this bill had been the law of the land when my husband and I received our diagnosis, I would have had to carry to term and give birth to a baby who the doctors concurred had no chance of a real life and who would have faced severe, continual pain. The decision my husband and I made to terminate the pregnancy was made out of love — to spare my son pain and suffering.

The ugly politics in this Congress and the sheer number of Republicans mean that this bill will likely pass in the House. I understand any citizen's hesitancy when the issue of the right to middle-term to late-term abortion arises. But I also know from my own experience that this bill would have calamitous ramifications for real women and real families, and that the women it would most affect could never imagine they would need their right to abortion protected in this way.

Women and their families must be able to trust their doctors and retain their access to medical care when they most need it. To make sure that happens, members of the Senate and ordinary people across this country must see through the stereotype of the late-term aborter and see, instead, the true face of a woman who has been in this situation. I extend my hand; it is an honor to make your acquaintance.

How Conservatives Misread And Misuse Milton Friedman

By Nicholas Wapshott

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Milton Friedman, the combative, impish free-market economist, died in 2006, too early to witness and diagnose the financial crisis of 2008 and the long economic slump we've experienced since. But that doesn't mean he's absent from the debate over how to handle it.

"I wish we could find Milton Friedman again," Mitt Romney lamented in an October debate during the Republican primary campaign, when asked if he had any candidates in mind to run the Federal Reserve instead of Chairman Ben Bernanke. And speaking at a University of Chicago forum this spring, Romney enlisted Friedman in his side of the political fight over economic policy.

"Milton Friedman understood what, frankly, our president, President Obama, I don't think has learned even after three years and hundreds of billions of dollars in federal spending," Romney said. "And that is: Government does not create prosperity. Free markets and free people create prosperity."

Tuesday will mark the 100th anniversary of Friedman's birth in New York. In the midst of a global economic slump and a U.S. presidential campaign focused almost entirely on the economy, it is worth considering what he might really think of our economic troubles.

Friedman burst onto the national stage when, in pioneering work with Anna Schwartz, he rewrote the history of the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. The pair concluded that, by imposing high interest rates when disaster struck, the Federal Reserve did not funnel enough money into the economy, turning the crash into a depression. If the Fed had provided plentiful cheap money, Friedman argued, the slump would have lasted a couple of years, not a decade.

Friedman leveraged this insight into a cure for "stagflation" — that crippling combination of inflation and feeble economic growth that took hold in the United States in the mid-1970s. He believed that inflation resulted from too much government spending on Keynesian stimulus programs, which led to too much money chasing too few goods. His remedy was "a steady rate of monetary growth at a moderate level," providing "a framework under which a country can have little inflation and much growth." In short, close control of interest rates would stabilize prices.

Paul Volcker, the Fed chairman appointed by President Jimmy Carter and kept on by Ronald Reagan to cure stagflation, took Friedman's advice and rebooted the economy, provoking a recession and purging hyperinflation by raising interest rates. Inflation came down, and economic growth resumed.

On the face of it, there are enough similarities between the financial crises of 1929 and 2008 for Friedman to remain relevant. Before the Great Depression, ample supplies of cheap money fueled a stock market bubble. Attempting to curb such rampant speculation by tightening the money supply, the Fed plunged the economy into destructive deflation. Seventy years on, Alan Greenspan's cheap money policy as Fed chief at the turn of the century stoked a housing bubble based on reckless lending. A stock market crash, the financial freeze, panic in the banks, George W. Bush's "troubled asset" rescue and Obama's near-trillion-dollar Keynesian stimulus followed in short order.

For followers of Friedman, Greenspan's policy of keeping interest rates too low for too long was sure to lead to trouble. By happy chance, the person in charge of the Fed when the economy finally ran off the rails was Bernanke, a distinguished student of the Great Depression and a Friedman disciple. At a conference on the occasion of Friedman's 90th birthday in 2002, Bernanke said to Freidman and Schwartz: "Regarding the Great Depression, you're right. We [the Fed] did it. We're very sorry. But, thanks to you, we won't do it again."

Bernanke seemed like the right man at the right time, and his response to the financial turmoil was to follow Friedman's advice and open the faucets wide, pumping money into the system through "quantitative easing" that provided long-term low interest rates to bolster business confidence. But Bernanke's actions, while they followed Friedman's advice to the letter, have brought opprobrium on the Fed chairman from his erstwhile conservative supporters.

Indeed, despite their frequent invocations of Friedman, conservatives have long since abandoned the principles of his Chicago School remedies in favor of more stern solutions advocated by Austrian economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. They want to reduce the size of the state as fast as possible by slashing government spending, paying off public debt quickly, cutting taxes and removing regulations from business.

Faced with a lifeless economy, would Friedman have taken Obama's lead in demanding from Congress a new Keynesian spending stimulus? Unlikely. Friedman thought big government was economically inefficient and stood in the way of the private sector. He was "in favor of cutting taxes under any circumstances and for any excuse, for any reason, whenever it's possible" because "the only effective way I think to hold [public spending] down is to hold down the amount of income the government has."

But his devotion to cutting taxes is not enough for today's conservatives, who have adopted a near-nihilistic view of the state. Friedman believed that the Fed has a right to manage the national economy and, contrary to Romney's oversimplified depiction, that government has a role in making markets operate fairly. "The existence of a free market does not of course eliminate the need for government," he wrote. "On the contrary, government is essential both as a forum for determining the 'rules of the game' and as an umpire to interpret and enforce the rules decided on."

Today, Friedman has been left out in the cold. His belief in an ordered, managed economy through interest rates runs counter to prevailing conservative orthodoxies. It was his certainty — and the wit with which he delivered his message — that helped popularize his views around the globe. But the fact that he did not adopt absolutist positions on the size of the state and the evils of government has made his true views irrelevant among those he used to lead.

George Shultz, an economist and a former secretary of labor, Treasury and state, once joked that "everybody loves to argue with Milton, particularly when he isn't there." Alas, now that Friedman is truly gone, it seems that no one cares to grapple with his vision anymore.

Nicholas Wapshott is the author of "Keynes Hayek: The Clash That Defined Modern Economics."

My Friend Sally Ride's Final Mission: Making Science Cool

By Susan Okie

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Sally Ride seized the chance to go to space because she wanted to find out what it would feel like. Sally loved testing the limits of her brain and body — solving the puzzles in Scientific American as a teenager, running five miles a day while doing research in physicsat Stanford University, winning tournament tennis matches, learning to fly a NASA T-38 jet.

After she blasted off to become America's first woman in space, the support crew at Mission Control asked Sally how she'd enjoyed being launched on a rocket. She gave it Disneyland's top rating: "Definitely an E ticket." Looking back at her first spaceflight years later, she called it "the most fun I'll ever have in my life."

When we were best friends and high school classmates in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, Sally told me that she wanted to be famous, but she wanted to achieve that goal by winning a Nobel Prize. A ninth-grade science teacher had introduced her to physics and astronomy, and she intended to study the stars. After her retirement from NASA and academia, Sally, who died this past week at 61, turned her focus back to teachers — like the one she always credited with planting the seed that eventually got her to space. She hoped to motivate a new generation of teachers who might impart a love of science to their students.

It wasn't until 1977, when she was completing her graduate work in physics at Stanford, that Sally spotted a notice in the university's student newspaper announcing that NASA was recruiting young scientists — for the first time including women — to become astronauts. She knew instantly that this was what she wanted to do. I was thrilled, but not surprised, when she called early one morning in 1978 to tell me that she was one of six women selected.

Sally easily fitted into the mostly male, can-do engineering culture of NASA. It was a culture that valued level-headedness and good judgment; the operative slogan was "don't screw up."

Assigned to the team helping to design the space shuttle's computer-operated mechanical arm, which would be used to deploy and recover satellites, Sally threw herself into the job and proved adept at manipulating the arm. That skill, as well as her coolness under pressure while assigned to a key job at Mission Control, impressed veteran astronaut Robert Crippen, who was to command the shuttle's seventh flight, scheduled for the first half of 1983.

Before offering Sally a spot on Crippen's crew, Christopher Kraft, director of Houston's Johnson Space Center, warned her that she would become a historic figure and the focus of worldwide attention. "I think he wanted to give me a chance to back out," she later recalled.

When I visited the space center several months before the flight, I watched her go from demanding sessions in a shuttle simulator — practicing for every possible mishap— to a photo shoot for the cover of Ms. magazine. Wearing a crisp blue flight suit, Sally rolled her eyes when a makeup artist applied blush and the photographer requested "a restless, smug half-smile."

Still, she refused to worry about the pressures of becoming a national hero. "I have great confidence in my ability not to go nuts," she told me.

Those pressures proved greater than she expected. Sally's historic flight was front-page news all over the world. For almost half a year, her days were a succession of public appearances, goodwill trips, speeches and interviews. She couldn't go to the grocery store without being asked for an autograph. She told me that the only time she felt she could be alone was when she was standing at a lectern, preparing to deliver a speech.

When talking about science or the space shuttle, Sally was a natural teacher — enthusiastic, engaging and clear — but she detested personal questions. Married then to fellow astronaut Steven Hawley, she was determined to keep her private life to herself. Eventually, public excitement waned, and she returned to the relatively anonymous routine of an astronaut. "Fortunately, I have an extremely forgettable face," she quipped.

But she always enjoyed speaking with children. Kids asked questions that adults were embarrassed to ask — how the space shuttle's toilet worked, how to make a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich while weightless. Sally realized that elementary and middle-school students were endlessly curious about space travel and that sharing her experience was a way to get them excited about science and engineering.

When she proposed writing a book about a shuttle flight, half a dozen publishers were enthusiastic — until they learned that what Sally had in mind was a children's book, not her life story. "To Space and Back" (which I co-authored), published in 1986, was the first of seven science books that Ride wrote for children. The others were written with her longtime partner, Tam O'Shaughnessy. It's characteristic of Sally's love of privacy that their 27-year relationship did not become publicly known until the announcement of her death.

When the space shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986, killing seven astronauts, including schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, the disaster stunned the nation — and put an end to NASA's prospects of sending more teachers into space. Ride served as a member of the presidential commission investigating the accident. A few days after the disaster, she called me in a fury because, as one of the reporters helping to cover the disaster for The Washington Post, I had called space center employees whom I had met through her. It took years for our friendship to recover from what she saw as a betrayal.

In the years after Sally left NASA in 1987 and became a physics professor at the University of California at San Diego, she seemed to grow comfortable with her place as a hero — particularly as a role model for girls. In 2001, she started her own company, Sally Ride Science, to create books for students on key scientific concepts and careers, and to sponsor science festivals for girls in elementary and middle school. The media-shy former astronaut now regularly donned her NASA flight suit to speak at day-long festivals on university campuses that still attract hundreds of girls in the fifth through eighth grades.

At one such festival in Northern Virginia, I watched her spend more than an hour sitting at a card table in the hot sun, signing autographs and answering questions from a long line of excited girls, many of whom hoped to grow up to be astronauts.

I last saw her about 18 months ago. We met for breakfast at her favorite seaside inn in San Diego. She was enthusiastic about the recent direction of her company, which had shifted its focus from engaging middle school students to engaging their teachers. She believed that students' natural interest in science was too often snuffed out by stereotypes about what scientists do and by subtle messages from teachers, parents and peers. She said that teachers too often offer students a heavy diet of facts instead of a chance to experiment and have fun.

"When I was growing up," she recalled in a 2009 speech, "science and engineering were really cool." Kids dreamed of becoming rocket designers or studying moon rocks. "That's generally not the case today," she said. "And that's a problem."

With funding from industry, her company creates research-based professional-development curricula and brings elementary and middle school teachers from across the country to attend four-day trainings. The sessions have been shown to be effective in changing teacher practices and student attitudes.

Sally had a new mission: She was determined to reach as many science teachers as she could — and through them, the girls and boys they teach — to help make the study of science interesting and meaningful to kids. Her own science teachers did that for her. Sally is gone, but let's hope that the countless teachers and students she inspired will carry on with the task.

Susan Okie is a physician, a former medical reporter for The Washington Post and a clinical assistant professor of family medicine at Georgetown University.

The Way Forward For Penn State

By Rodney A. Erickson

Washington Post, July 28, 2012

Since the news about Jerry Sandusky broke last fall, the most challenging chapter in Penn State's history has unfolded in the glare of the national spotlight. Those of us in leadership roles at Penn State have faced questions for which there is no playbook. I have spent many nights — and many more with our leadership team — considering the actions we must take to ensure that this university endures as an institution of which we can all be proud and one that learns from the past to be a brighter light for the future.

I knew when I accepted the position of president in November — and the Board of Trustees strongly agreed — that, for Penn State to move forward, we would need to uncover and expose the full scope of the university's knowledge of Sandusky's actions. We could not wait for courts to bring evidence to light. So, knowing that we would need to accept accountability for whatever was discovered, the board asked former FBI director Louis Freeh to lead an independent investigation.

The Freeh report revealed that those in positions of authority had failed to protect children. The Board of Trustees and my administration have accepted responsibility for this breakdown of leadership.

Since the report was published, accepting responsibility has come to take on an additional meaning. This week the NCAA imposed -unprecedented penalties on the university. These include a $60 million fine, the loss of football scholarships, a ban on postseason play and the forfeiture of all wins between 1998 and 2011. Many have questioned how I could agree to such sanctions. Let me be clear that I did not suggest this punishment, and I do not take its repercussions lightly. But I believe that the alternative — a multi-year ban on football — would have been far more detrimental to the healing process of our students and alumni.

With this penalty, it is true that all of us in some way now shoulder the burden for the wrongdoings of others. Students, faculty, staff and alumni who had no involvement, or even knowledge of who Jerry Sandusky was, now share in the responsibility of leaders who failed. To many, it is simply unfair.

I think, however, that acceptance of this responsibility will be essential to our ability to lay a new foundation and integral to the long-term character of our institution. In the face of this adversity, I am proud of the many students, faculty and alumni who have banded together with grace, humility and determination.

In a larger sense, the past year's events have brought into focus the pain experienced by victims as well as the insidious crime of child sexual abuse. We owe it to them, and it is our social responsibility, to make the prevention of child sexual abuse a part of our university's mission of teaching, research and service. We have already begun to mobilize our university community to support and work with organizations that prevent and detect child abuse and help victims recover. We have established the Center for the Protection of Children at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, and national experts are scheduled to gather on our campus in October for a two-day conference about the many facets of child sexual abuse. We have partnered with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to expand public awareness, provide training for our employees and advise us on future initiatives.

Some will still find it hard to imagine a new chapter in Penn State's history, to see beyond a football program without postseason play or the story of a school that fell from a pedestal. I urge the skeptics to look harder and see what I see today: an institution that will emerge stronger than ever before, one that will be made great not because of the reputations of a few but because of the resolve, compassion and

talents of many. From the headlines alone, it would be forgivable — though wrong — to think that Penn State is little more than an ordinary university with a tradition of athletic success. More than 150 years of tremendous accomplishments in teaching, research and service suggest otherwise. Penn State graduates are among the most successful leaders in science, engineering, medicine, public policy, the arts and business. Many were the first in their families to go to college. They came and still come from near and far — and they continue to succeed.

So as I look ahead, I see a university that ultimately prevails. I see a community that has learned from this experience in the most painful and personal of ways — a story that is more than just our story but that of humanity in all its fallibility. Irrevocably changed by the lessons of the past, the community joins together to become a passionate voice for the victims of child sexual abuse and for the courage in each of us to stand up to protect society's most vulnerable.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

A New Way Of Life Promised In Dewey

Council accepts prodding to be more forthcoming

By James Fisher

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

DEWEY BEACH — The Dewey Town Council said Friday it will change the ways it publishes its meeting agendas, stung by an Attorney General's Office letter that said the town routinely violated the Freedom of Information Act.

But as they took some licks, commissioners objected to the tone of the attorney general's letter. The letter said Dewey frequently put out meeting agendas that were too vague and failed to make it clear to residents what would be discussed. This "fell far short" of FOIA rules, the letter said, and it described "obvious and blatant" violations that were "clearly unlawful." It demanded the council make changes to avoid litigation over FOIA infractions, saying "extraordinary violations require extraordinary and rigorous remedies."

"I think they should change the language in the opinion not to be so degrading to the council," Mayor Diane Hanson said. The council passed a motion asking the state to "consider revising the language of the opinion to more accurately reflect the good faith of this town council. "

The criticism of the Attorney General's Office was one in a series of problems to plague Dewey Beach this summer.

The most recent setback was the sudden resignation of the town's newly hired manager. The town had conducted a lengthy search for its new town manager before settling on Bob Stickels, who had nearly 20 years of experience as a Sussex County administrator under his belt. He started work in April, but after four months of Dewey's roiling politics, announced he was leaving for "personal reasons."

Stickels has not elaborated on the reasons for his departure, and could not be reached Friday. Hanson, at the night's meeting, said she didn't know why he resigned but suggested he was dismayed by a deluge of FOIA requests and by "bad publicity."

Some of that publicity concerned push back from bar and restaurant owners against what they say is a too-restrictive noise ordinance approved by council early this summer.

Hanson, who has been upfront about wanting to nudge Dewey closer to the family-friendly model of beach resorts and away from the bar-and-party model, has been the focus of much of the criticism – and

more. She recently learned, according to The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times, that her face had been printed on urinal cakes left in bar bathrooms.

Bar owners adamantly denied approving that unorthodox political speech, but fought for changes to a noise ordinance they said threatened bars with multiple offenses with loss of their business licenses. The council agreed Friday to remove that punishment from the code. Hanson also said the council would consider making the maximum noise limit in town higher near well-trafficked Highway One than at properties near the water.

Dewey also found itself in the spotlight earlier this summer when media attention focused on the first murder in the town's history. A Pennsylvania woman found in a hotel was the victim of an apparent murder-suicide, but it led town officials to take steps to bring in additional manpower to provide security and offer reassurance to residents and tourists. At Friday's meeting, police reported to the council that aside from public urination, both petty crime and serious crime rates are lower this year than in the recent past.

Last night, first on the agenda was the discussion of how to respond to the attorney general's accusations of FOIA infractions. Dewey's leaders took care to walk the right side of the FOIA law, with a specifically worded agenda posted on the town's website noting the council would talk in closed session about how to respond.

As it happened, the council voted to talk about responding to the FOIA letter in open session. Only Hanson and commissioner Martin Seitz voted for closed-door talks.

The council voted to take some of the steps the attorney general requested. Its members agreed to remove a sentence from agendas that allows changes with only 48 hours notice, and committed to put on each agenda's front page the date it was publicly posted.

The council declined, though, to give the attorney general copies of its meeting agendas 10 days in advance for at least a year, one remedy suggested in the letter.

"I don't want to do that," Hanson said, and commissioner Anna Legates said, "I thought that was very strict."

All of the commissioners pledged to run government in public view.

"I ran on a platform of open government, and I'm very distressed to find us in this situation," Joy Howell said. "What comforts me is we acted in good faith."

"We need to get back to the basics of having open and honest communication in town government, and transparency," said Denise Campbell, an activist in Dewey civic life who's announced she'll run for town council in September. "At the end of the day, the attorney general's office is just asking us to follow the law."

Conspiracy Or A Case Of Crossed Wires?

Teenager sued over alleged prank calls

By Sean O'Sullivan

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

To most, a prank phone call – asking unsuspecting victims if their refrigerator is running, then advising them, "Well, you better go and catch it" – is either a rite of passage or a byproduct of a misspent youth.

To one Utah-based company, it is a weapon of corporate espionage.

In January, Newark-area resident Dan Smith opened a letter from attorneys that accused his 15-year-old son of being part of a corporate conspiracy to bring down 1-800 CONTACTS, a contact lens supplier, with prank phone calls.

"It took me by surprise," said Dan Smith, adding that his son, Dennis, a soft-spoken full-time student going into his senior year, is a good kid who is not the type to make prank calls. "I know it wasn't Dennis."

But 1-800 CONTACTS says otherwise. According to the suit, Dennis Smith – along with 19 other named defendants from New Jersey, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada, and some 30 additional unknown individuals – made thousands of prank phone calls to the company's customer service line.

The lawsuit claimed the phone callers were paid and their prank call campaign was coordinated by competitors that it identifies only as John Does 1 through 5.

"The true identities of Does 1 through 5 are currently unknown to the plaintiff," wrote attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS in the civil lawsuit filed in Utah state court. "When Plaintiff discovers the true identities of Does 1 through 5, plaintiff will amend this ... complaint to allege their true identities."

Attorney Jefferson Gross, of Utah, who is representing 1-800 CONTACTS, refused to answer questions about the lawsuit. "Our client has no comment at the present about the litigation," he said in an email.

The suit says Dennis Smith and the other defendants were employed as part of a competitor's plan "to flood plaintiff's sales line with numerous calls to interfere with plaintiff's employees' efforts to fulfill legitimate orders," thereby injuring the business.

The suit alleges that between February and March 2011 alone, more than 3,000 prank calls were made to 1-800 CONTACTS, an average of about 100 a day. These calls included silence, "talking in strange voices, laughing and harassment of sales line staff."

The lawsuit asks for a restraining order against the still unknown corporate defendants and punitive and compensatory damages.

In a separate document, attorneys accuse Dennis Smith of making 2,800 prank calls to 1-800 CONTACTS over a year and a half. The lawsuit doesn't say how the company traced the calls to Dennis Smith. It says the alleged prank callers used Skype, an application that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet, to conceal the origins of the calls.

Dennis Smith, now 16, said while he is a regular user of Skype, he has never made a prank phone call and has not come near making 2,800 calls to anyone.

Dan Smith said that based on a list provided to him, it is impossible for his son to have made some of the calls because he was in school on some of the days and times when the calls were made. And he said he's not seen any evidence of his son suddenly throwing around cash from mystery corporate backers.

Dan Smith believes 1-800 CONTACTS is using the litigation as some kind of fishing expedition. He showed off a plastic bin full of hundreds of pages of legal documents that he has been sent since the suit was filed.

"It has been harassment," Dan Smith said, adding, "This thing is driving me crazy. It is insane."

Dan Smith said attorneys for 1-800 CONTACTS tried to get a default judgment entered against his son because he – not an attorney – responded to the lawsuit. Dan Smith said he cannot afford an attorney, and the judge ruled that as a parent, he can represent his son.

Smith also said the lawsuit has made a stressful time for his family even more so. Smith's wife, Deborah, was diagnosed with breast cancer in late 2010 and was undergoing treatment at the time the lawsuit arrived. She died this year, just before Easter.

At least two other Delawareans are named in the suit, but they could not be reached for comment.

Smith said he has tried to write to attorneys and the company to resolve the issue, but so far, he has gotten nowhere.

"I'm fed up," he said. "I'm so mad, I'd like to countersue but it is not worth it. I just want it to go away."

Fire Displaces Four Businesses

One injured in accidental blaze

By Jesse Paul And Terri Sanginiti

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Eric Martin paced around nervously watching flames consume the building that housed his business, Lost Motion Automotives, in an industrial park near the north end of the St. Georges Bridge.

His repair shop was uninsured.

"That was my livelihood in there," said Martin, 23, of Bear, as he tried to choke back his emotions. "One hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment and my only source of income … This is just a bad dream. I'm waiting to wake up."

Three other businesses also located in the building in the St. Georges Industrial Park were lost in the fire that broke out just before 11 a.m. Friday in the 1600 block of S. DuPont Highway . One man had minor injuries, police said.

Firefighters arrived to find the building engulfed in flames as thick, black smoke billowed from the roof. Neighbors, business owners, employees and passers-by watched as crews attacked the fire. Smoke could be seen for miles rising above the St. Georges Bridge on U.S. 13 and the nearby Roth Bridge on Del. 1. U.S. 13 was closed from Cox Neck Road to the south entrance of the bridge as crews worked to put out the flames.

The fire marshal's office ruled the fire accidental and said it caused an estimated $500,000 in damages. The cause of the fire was determined to be from fuel vapors being siphoned from a tank that ignited surrounding combustibles.

The injured man was identified as a 22-year-old employee of FNJ Enterprises. He sustained first- and second- degree burns to his arms trying to extinguish the fire and was treated by New Castle County paramedics before being transported to Christiana Hospital.

FNJ Enterprises, Lost Motion Automotive, Quality Automotive Enterprises and Monoghan Fence were all lost in the flames, according to business owners and employees. Little of the building was left by the time flames were mostly extinguished at about 1 p.m.

The fire originated in a part of the building that housed a salvage garage, according to the fire marshal.

Dave Laird, 28, was working inside his garage at Quality Automotive Enterprises when he heard a scream from outside. Less than 5 seconds later, flames erupted through the opening of the shop, he said.

"I tried to drag out as much as I could," said Laird, who was visibly shaken.

Keith Goodman, 48, watched the fire from his home across the highway, and said he saw multiple small explosions come from the blaze. At one point, he said, a large explosion "flipped up" part of the roof and expelled a large fireball.

"I saw the smoke when I was coming home and my heart started to drop," said Goodman. "I thought it was my house. It was pretty scary, pretty intense. I could feel the heat from over here on the other side of the road."

Up To $50,000 Offered For Info On Assault Of Postal Carrier

Two men still sought in March attack in Bear

By Robin Brown

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Fliers have been posted throughout the Bear post office, advertising a reward of up to $50,000 in an unsolved armed assault in March that seriously injured a carrier.

"We believe it was an attempted robbery," U.S. Postal Inspector Alex Sylvester told The News Journal on Friday night.

Such crimes occur "pretty close to almost never," Sylvester said, partly due to severe penalties for attacking federal workers.

Another reason is that robbing a carrier is pointless if money is the object: "They don't carry any currency," Sylvester said, and no mail is known to have been stolen.

The attack occurred at about 11:30 a.m. March 16 in the densely residential area off Rivers End Drive in the Smalleys Dam area of Bear, west of Del. 7 and north of U.S. 40.

The longtime carrier – delivering mail on foot at Stephanie Drive and Silver Run Terrace off Rivers End Drive on her regular route when attacked – suffered a significant head injury but recovered and returned to work, Sylvester said.

She told police the suspects were both 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 9 inches tall, and one had a handgun. One was thin and athletic looking, but she couldn't estimate his age. The other appeared to be in his mid-20s and stocky. He had a goatee and was smoking a thin cigar, she told police. They may have had a vehicle nearby, Sylvester said.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service reward offers up to $50,000 for information leading to the men's arrest and conviction. Tips may be given confidentially at (877) 876-2455, option 2, Sylvester said. Tips given locally also will be eligible for the reward, he said.

New Castle County Cpl. John Weglarz Sr. said Friday tips may be given at www.nccpd.com or www.tipsubmit.com, sent by text to 847411 (TIP411) starting with NCCPD or called in to Delaware Crime Stoppers, (800) TIP-3333.

County police handled the investigation at first, but the case shifted to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to pursue and prosecute because the victim was a postal employee on duty, Weglarz said. Tips will be relayed to the federal enforcement agency, he said.

"Even though it happened several months ago, any information would be greatly appreciated," Sylvester said. "We'll track any leads we get."

Dan Gaffney Joins New Sussex Talk Radio Station

By Earl Holland

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

A new talk radio station will hit the airwaves this fall in Sussex County.

On Sept. 4, Delmarva Broadcasting Co. will flip the switch on "Delaware 105.9." The FM station's mission will be to provide local, regional, national and international news to the lower Sussex County area.

The station will begin with a familiar voice as longtime local radio personality Dan Gaffney will be its anchor. Gaffney resigned last week from Georgetown-based WGMD-FM, where he was the morning show host and the station's program director.

"It's a huge positive for our company to start a station and to get a personality who is well-liked, popular and highly regarded in the Southern Delaware area like Dan," said Mike Kazala, Delmarva Broadcasting regional general manager. "We've been talking about doing something like this for some time and there's been a lot of planning involved with and a lot more to go."

Gaffney's inclusion is just one of several additions planned for the new station. Kazala, who said he could not divulge further information on additional personnel, said his hope is to be able to have further announcements about staffing within a few weeks.

"We intend to have live and local personalities on the air all day long," Kazala said. "We want to be live, local and pertinent."

In preparation for the start of the station, a new studio is being built at Delmarva Broadcasting's location west of Milford. The facility is also home to Eagle 97.7, COOL 101.3 and Spanish language station La Exitosa 930 AM.

The 105.9 station, which currently simulcasts Cat Country, has a signal that covers the Lewes, Milford and Milton areas. Kazala said the change from Cat Country to talk radio will not have an effect on the listeners of the country radio station as its 97.5 signal covers all of Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties and much of Sussex.

Kazala said his hope is that Delaware 105.9 will follow in the path of Delmarva Broadcasting's other news station, Wilmington-based WDEL.

"Part of it is the success we have had with our news talk at WDEL," he said. "We wanted to have a dialogue with people in the lower Sussex area about things that matter to them. We feel we'll be putting a powerful product on the radio."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Tell A Parent: Summer Is A Time For Learning

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

"Making Summer Count" is aptly named a recent report from the Rand Corporation on the educational losses children suffer from the time school lets in early June and reopens in late August. On average, the report tells us, students lose about a month's worth of learning. That's bad enough as an average. But a closer look at what is happening to young students is that educationally at-risk children – those who least afford it – lose even more.

In plain words, poorer children regress more than richer children do. The best answer is intellectual and physical stimulation. Children are natural learning machines. That they lose any of the educational progress that made during the school year is a social crime. The nation can't afford that loss. Neither can Delaware. And the children themselves will suffer for it.

Part of the problem is to find programs to keep the children learning. There are quite a few available. There are camps and library programs. Schools and churches add a hand as well. Some special programs such as the mentored chess games at Thomas Edison Charter School are good examples.

The first challenge is to get more students in those programs. Scholarships often are available for science and math camps, for example.

The second, and greater, challenge is to get parents and guardians to recognize the child's need to learn. Too often spots in programs are left vacant because parents can't get the forms in on time or they simply fail to recognize their importance. One way to meet this challenge is for civic and church groups to play mentor to the parents.

Get the parents on track to help their children. Progress will follow.

Following The "Storyline" Of The World's Athletes

Wilmington News Journal, July 28, 2012

Pick your athlete, or your team, or even your nation. And then go ahead and root for an Olympic victory. Much of the world is watching London as the Summer Games are underway.

Forget the silly controversies of what Mitt Romney said or meant. Instead, pay attention to the athletes and their feats on the fields, in the pools and in the gyms.

In fact, television has gotten us into the “back story” of the athletes so much that smart programmers are offering storylines for readers and viewers to follow. For example, how about the swimmer Michael Phelps’ final quest for even more Olympic gold? Or the South African Oscar Pistorius, an amputee, who will be running in the 400-meter dash? He runs on carbon fiber prosthetic legs.

You don’t have to be a sports fan to recognize the implications of Mr. Pistorius’ participation.

For one, it is a tremendously dramatic story of human determination. For another, it is a harbinger of what a combination of sports and technology will bring in the future.

Already some critics have objected to Mr. Pistorius’ participation, saying the carbon fiber legs give him an unfair advantage over athletes. For the time being, let’s stick with the story of Mr. Pistorius and his determination to succeed. We can leave the debate for another day.

Some observers deplore the nationalistic aspect to the Olympics. They scoff at the American media’s preoccupation with medal counts. We should, the critics insist, applaud the best athlete no matter where he or she comes from. That, of course, is the ideal. In reality, we all need someone to root for. That’s an important part of the storyline.