

November 11, 2008

[Cafe Hayek](#) divides our country into two groups.

And [Independent.Org](#) says one of the groups knows the truth of Twain's dictum; " It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress."

*Driving yesterday past the gasoline station where I usually buy fuel, I noticed that the price of the lowest grade of unleaded—the one I buy—was down to \$2.09 per gallon. Registering this perception as a little piece of good news in an unhappy world, I drove on.*

*Later, however, I began to mull over the altogether unsurprising fact that, to my knowledge, Congress has held no televised hearings to look into the tremendous fall in fuel prices since last summer, when I paid more than \$4.00 per gallon for a while. Oil company executives have not been summoned to Washington so that they can be applauded for sloughing off the greed that (allegedly) impelled them to charge so much for their products in June and July. No member of Congress has apologized for calling the businessmen there last spring to [berate and threaten them](#) while angrily mouthing sentiments that can only be described as idiotic.*

*These congressional show trials, which are held whenever gasoline prices rise substantially, always adhere to a tight protocol and a traditional script for each of the actors. ...*

Particularly timely WSJ Op-Ed from the [Abby and Steve Thernstrom](#) on the need for the repeal of the Voting Rights Act.

*... In fact, racially gerrymandered districts are an impediment to political integration at all levels of government. Herding African-Americans into "max-black" districts forces black candidates to run in heavily gerrymandered districts. The candidates who emerge from those districts are, unsurprisingly, typically not the most well-positioned to appeal to a broader swath of the electorate.*

*Black candidates can win in multi-ethnic and even majority-white districts with color-blind voting. Mr. Obama should make it a priority to give more aspiring black politicians the opportunity to stand before white (and Latino and Asian and other ethnic) voters. He won, so can they.*

*American voters have turned a racial corner. The law should follow in their footsteps.*

[Froma Harrop](#) says "card check" is one campaign promise Obama should break.

*The first campaign promise Barack Obama should break is to push through the Employee Free Choice Act. That harmless sounding piece of legislation would let union organizers do an end run around secret-ballot elections: Companies would have to recognize a union if most workers signed cards in support of it.*

*We're not children here. We know how those majorities can be reached. There's repeated harassment, bullying and more inventive tactics, such as getting workers drunk, then sliding sign-up cards under their noses. Meanwhile, any strong-armed tactics by employers can be dealt with.*

*Unclear is why unions even want to go there. Their decline is one reason for the falling fortunes of American workers, particularly those without college educations. Unions have an interesting product to sell. Surely, they can persuade workers to support them in the privacy of a voting booth. That's how Obama and the enhanced Democratic majority in Congress got where they are.*

*Former Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern, a pro-labor liberal, has come out against the so-called card-check provision. He calls it "disturbing and undemocratic." ...*

**Peter Hitchens** on waving goodbye to the "our last best hope on earth."

*Anyone would think we had just elected a hip, skinny and youthful replacement for God, with a plan to modernise Heaven and Hell – or that at the very least John Lennon had come back from the dead.*

*The swooning frenzy over the choice of Barack Obama as President of the United States must be one of the most absurd waves of self-deception and swirling fantasy ever to sweep through an advanced civilisation. At least Mandela-worship – its nearest equivalent – is focused on a man who actually did something.*

*I really don't see how the Obama devotees can ever in future mock the Moonies, the Scientologists or people who claim to have been abducted in flying saucers. This is a cult like the one which grew up around Princess Diana, bereft of reason and hostile to facts.*

*It already has all the signs of such a thing. The newspapers which recorded Obama's victory have become valuable relics. You may buy Obama picture books and Obama calendars and if there isn't yet a children's picture version of his story, there soon will be.*

*Proper books, recording his sordid associates, his cowardly voting record, his astonishingly militant commitment to unrestricted abortion and his blundering trip to Africa, are little-read and hard to find. ...*

**WSJ editors** ask if Barack and the Dems are going to pay off Michigan unions bailing out Detroit.

*... Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid met last week with company and union officials, and they later sent a letter urging Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson to bestow cash from the Troubled Asset Relief Program (Tarp) on the companies. Barack Obama implied at his Friday press conference that he too favors some kind of taxpayer rescue of Detroit, though no doubt he'd like to have President Bush's signature on the check so he won't have to take full political responsibility.*

*We hope Messrs. Bush and Paulson just say no. The Tarp was intended to save the financial system from collapse, not to be a honey pot for any industry running short of cash. The financial panic has hit Detroit hard, but its problems go back decades and are far deeper than reduced access to credit among car buyers. As a political matter, the Bush Administration is also long past the point where it might get any credit for helping Detroit. But it will earn the scorn of taxpayers if it refuses to set some limits on access to the Tarp. If Democrats want to change the rules next year, let them do it on their own political dime. ...*

And they note **Henry Waxman** is leading the Dems "night of the long knives" as they purge their ranks.

*The champagne is barely off the ice and Democrats are already celebrating their new majorities by punishing a few heretical colleagues. In almost every sense, John Dingell and Joe Lieberman are loyal Democrats. But Mr. Dingell is holding down the party's right flank on energy, and Mr. Lieberman in foreign affairs. Now they're targets, and the retribution speaks volumes about the direction of liberal politics.*

*California Democrat Henry Waxman kicked things off the morning after Barack Obama's victory, with an announcement that he will seek the chairmanship of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee. The post is currently held by Mr. Dingell, the bulldog Michigander who next year will become the longest-serving Member in U.S. history. In Congressional physics, seniority is gravity, which alone makes Mr. Waxman's challenge extraordinary. ...*

## Thomas Sowell on Intellectuals.

*... During the 1930s, some of the leading intellectuals in America condemned our economic system and pointed to the centrally planned Soviet economy as a model— all this at a time when literally millions of people were starving to death in the Soviet Union, from a famine in a country with some of the richest farmland in Europe and historically a large exporter of food.*

*New York Times Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty won a Pulitzer Prize for telling the intelligentsia what they wanted to hear— that claims of starvation in the Ukraine were false.*

*After British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge reported from the Ukraine on the massive deaths from starvation there, he was ostracized after returning to England and unable to find a job.*

*More than half a century later, when the archives of the Soviet Union were finally opened up under Mikhail Gorbachev, it turned out that about six million people had died in that famine— about the same number as the people killed in Hitler's Holocaust. ...*

## Environmental Graffiti posts on Russia's 1908 Tunguska event.

*... Dubbed the Tunguska Event, or Tunguska Explosion, because of the location of the blast in the Tunguska Valley of Russia, the event would have registered a devastating 5.0 on the Richter Scale, had it been invented at the time. And had it occurred about five hours later in the day, the Earth's rotation would have guaranteed that instead of killing 1,000 reindeer, the blazing object would have completely wiped out St Petersburg. ...*

## Dilbert finds the recession's bright side.

*... As painful as this recession is likely to become, everyone agrees that sometimes you have to shake the rug to get all the crap out of it. Economies don't grow in straight lines.*

*It's expensive to travel anywhere, but on the other hand, the new season of 24 is almost here. I don't need to go to faraway places and meet people when I can sit on my couch and watch Jack Bauer shoot those people.*

*I remember driving home in 1989 and thinking I had a flat tire because the car went all wobbly. I pulled over and discovered that my tires were fine; the earth was moving. It was the Loma Prieta Earthquake, and I soon discovered my apartment in shambles. But a funny thing happened. All of my neighbors were outside, stunned. We talked. We shared stories. We bonded. It was a strangely good time. And I felt connected to people at a deeper level than ever before. Shared disaster does that. ...*

---

---

---

## Cafe Hayek

### Theater of the Absurd

by Don Boudreaux

It is not too much of a simplification to note that America is divided into two groups of persons: those who believe in their bones that what goes on in Washington is largely a serious quest by serious people to tackle serious problems seriously, and those who understand that what goes on in Washington is largely theater scripted so that the actors and actresses appear at first glance to be 'public servants' but in fact care for nothing nearly as much as maximizing their power and satisfying their megalomania.

Alas, the first group greatly outnumbers the second. This fact means that those of us in the second group are forced to attend and watch - and participate in the large audience role required in - this absurd drama.

One of my favorite scholars (and my dear friend) [Bob Higgs here strikes a similar chord](#). Bob's words are wise and welcome.

**Independent.org**

## **What Creeps These Members of Congress Be**

by Robert Higgs

Driving yesterday past the gasoline station where I usually buy fuel, I noticed that the price of the lowest grade of unleaded—the one I buy—was down to \$2.09 per gallon. Registering this perception as a little piece of good news in an unhappy world, I drove on.

Later, however, I began to mull over the altogether unsurprising fact that, to my knowledge, Congress has held no televised hearings to look into the tremendous fall in fuel prices since last summer, when I paid more than \$4.00 per gallon for a while. Oil company executives have not been summoned to Washington so that they can be applauded for sloughing off the greed that (allegedly) impelled them to charge so much for their products in June and July. No member of Congress has apologized for calling the businessmen there last spring to [berate and threaten them](#) while angrily mouthing sentiments that can only be described as idiotic.

These congressional show trials, which are held whenever gasoline prices rise substantially, always adhere to a tight protocol and a traditional script for each of the actors. Members of Congress huff and puff, demand to know how much the executives are earning, threaten new taxes and controls, and suggest ominously that the government may have to take over the companies unless something gives. Company executives do not laugh at these antics or dismiss them as the foolishness they are, but rather respond in solemn seriousness, explaining how changes in supply and demand have brought about the price increases.

Yeah, yeah, supply and demand. Isn't that just the sort of excuse you'd expect a robber baron, caught red-handed, to invoke?

It's no wonder the public always believes that conspiracies among the companies explain the high prices, and hence that the public supports government action to whip the conspirators into line or to impose price controls. It's a perfect match: ignorant (and immoral) members of the public and ignorant (and immoral) members of Congress to represent them in Washington. We are witnessing democracy in action. As H. L. Mencken said, "votes are collared under democracy, not by talking sense but by talking nonsense."

I first became aware of this moronic charade back in the 1970s, during the first "energy crisis." William E. Simon, whom Nixon appointed to be the "energy czar" at that time, later gave a hilarious account of it in his book *A Time for Truth* (1978). Simon described "the demagoguery that is often unleashed at these hearings and is a gross caricature of the process of seeking information." He illustrated his claim by reproducing the transcript of an exchange he had at one of the hearings with Congressman Joe McDade, who was certainly among the most corrupt members in the history of the corrupt House of Representatives. Read it (on pp. 62-64) and weep. "I knew," wrote Simon, "I was faced with an economic illiterate or with a political hypocrisy so great that it stunned me."

I challenge you, however, to read the transcript of the hearings the House conducted to bully the oil company executives as recently as last spring and reach a conclusion any different from Simon's.

In his book, Simon noted "the compulsion in a dominantly liberal Congress to believe any rumor, however baseless, from any source, however absurd, which suggested that the shortage was 'unreal,' a product of a vicious oil company plot, and the compulsion to 'demagogue' whenever the red light of the television camera lit up."

The more things change . . .

**WSJ**

## **Racial Gerrymandering Is Unnecessary**

by Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom

The conventional wisdom among voting-rights advocates and political scientists has been that whites will not vote for black candidates in significant numbers. Hence the need for federal protection in the form of race-based districts that create safe black constituencies where black candidates are sure to win.

But the myth of racist white voters was destroyed by this year's presidential election.

Although six out of 10 votes cast for Barack Obama came from whites, he did not win an overall majority of white votes -- he lost among this group 43%-55%. But no Democrat since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 has won the majority of whites. The reason is simple: Just as African-Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately Democrats, whites are now disproportionately Republicans.

Remember Mr. Obama's weak performance with working-class white voters during the primaries? Many speculated at the time, and right up to Nov. 4, that those voters who pulled the lever for Hillary Clinton would defect to John McCain.

Not so. Mr. Obama's 43% share of the white vote in the general election was actually a tad larger than that of John Kerry in 2004 (41%) or Al Gore in 2000 (42%).

So what happened to all those "racists" or "rednecks" that John Murtha spoke of so recently? If there had been that many of them, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Virginia and Florida would have gone the other way, and we would have a President-elect McCain today. Racism is the Sherlock Holmes dog that did not bark in the night.

Consider Iowa, with only a miniscule African-American population. The 5% of voters who said race was the most important factor in their choice of whom to vote for backed Mr. Obama 54% to 45%. Or consider Minnesota and Wisconsin, also overwhelmingly white, where Mr. Obama's lead was 18% and 21% respectively among the 5% to 7% of voters who made race their highest priority.

These results do not mean we now live in a color-blind society. But we can say that the doors of electoral opportunity in America are open to all.

The aggressive federal interference in state and local districting decisions enshrined in the Voting Rights Act should therefore be reconsidered. That statute, adopted in 1965 and strengthened by Congress in the summer of 2006, demands race-driven districting maps to protect black candidates from white competition. That translates into an effort to create black representation proportional to the black population in the jurisdiction.

That law gave federal courts and the Justice Department what are, in effect, extraordinary war powers to combat the evil of ongoing Southern black disfranchisement. But blacks are no longer disfranchised -- by any definition.

In fact, racially gerrymandered districts are an impediment to political integration at all levels of government. Herding African-Americans into "max-black" districts forces black candidates to run in heavily gerrymandered districts. The candidates who emerge from those districts are, unsurprisingly, typically not the most well-positioned to appeal to a broader swath of the electorate.

Black candidates *can* win in multi-ethnic and even majority-white districts with color-blind voting. Mr. Obama should make it a priority to give more aspiring black politicians the opportunity to stand before white (and Latino and Asian and other ethnic) voters. He won, so can they.

American voters have turned a racial corner. The law should follow in their footsteps.

*Ms. Thernstrom is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Mr. Thernstrom is professor of history at Harvard University. They are the co-authors of "America in Black and White: One Nation Indivisible" (Simon & Schuster, 1997).*

## **Providence Journal via Real Clear Politics** **Unions' Creepy Push Against Secret Ballot**

by Froma Harrop

The first campaign promise Barack Obama should break is to push through the Employee Free Choice Act. That harmless sounding piece of legislation would let union organizers do an end run around secret-ballot elections: Companies would have to recognize a union if most workers signed cards in support of it.

We're not children here. We know how those majorities can be reached. There's repeated harassment, bullying and more inventive tactics, such as getting workers drunk, then sliding sign-up cards under their noses. Meanwhile, any strong-armed tactics by employers can be dealt with.

Unclear is why unions even want to go there. Their decline is one reason for the falling fortunes of American workers, particularly those without college educations. Unions have an interesting product to sell. Surely, they can persuade workers to support them in the privacy of a voting booth. That's how Obama and the enhanced Democratic majority in Congress got where they are.

Former Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern, a pro-labor liberal, has come out against the so-called card-check provision. He calls it "disturbing and undemocratic."

This may sound obvious, but friends of labor should want what's good for laborers. Some of the best companies to work for -- Whole Foods, for example -- are not unionized. Such employers offer superior pay and benefits precisely to keep their workers happy and not eager to organize. They worry that unions would reduce their flexibility in managing labor.

What's wrong with letting companies that do not want to be unionized compete for the workers' affections? If the employees don't get an acceptable deal, then they will join a union. The notion that they wouldn't vote their interests in a secret ballot makes zero sense.

Your writer has belonged to several unions -- the Teamsters and two Newspaper Guild chapters. To her, the unions have giveth, and they have taketh. Thanks to them, her pay was often better than it would have been otherwise. But at times, the union work rules hindered career advancement. And let's face it: A good part of union dues goes to the administrators' own compensation and junkets.

Some of my union officials had watched too many B-movies. That would explain the occasionally dismissive or threatening lines with which they addressed the rank and file. A threat was once directed at me on the first day of the job. Actually, it was more of a pre-emptive warning, lest I "ever, ever" go over the shop steward's head -- something that had never, never occurred to me. (You can guess which union that was.)

The point is that while unions are often good for employees, they're not always. We shouldn't start with the assumption that a unionized workplace is better than a non-unionized one. The secret ballot lets workers make that judgment without an organizer (or company official) breathing down their necks.

The argument for private voting is evident, which may be why supporters of the Employee Free Choice Act spend so much time vilifying its opponents -- the Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart, even McGovern -- rather than explaining its merits.

With Democrats ascendant in Washington, labor leaders will have ample opportunity to fight the Chamber. And I hope they unionize the daylights out of Wal-Mart the fair, old-fashioned way. But they should leave the brave McGovern alone.

Whatever a new President Obama and his supercharged Democratic majorities owe labor can be paid in other ways. The ridiculously named Employee Free Choice Act really is disturbing and undemocratic -- and can be easily caricatured as such by the Republican opposition. It is also bad PR for unions. If they have so much to offer, why are they afraid of a secret ballot?

**Daily Mail, UK**

## **[The night we waved goodbye to America... our last best hope on Earth](#)**

by Peter Hitchens

Anyone would think we had just elected a hip, skinny and youthful replacement for God, with a plan to modernise Heaven and Hell – or that at the very least John Lennon had come back from the dead.

The swooning frenzy over the choice of Barack Obama as President of the United States must be one of the most absurd waves of self-deception and swirling fantasy ever to sweep through an advanced civilisation. At least Mandela-worship – its nearest equivalent – is focused on a man who actually did something.

I really don't see how the Obama devotees can ever in future mock the Moonies, the Scientologists or people who claim to have been abducted in flying saucers. This is a cult like the one which grew up around Princess Diana, bereft of reason and hostile to facts.

It already has all the signs of such a thing. The newspapers which recorded Obama's victory have become valuable relics. You may buy Obama picture books and Obama calendars and if there isn't yet a children's picture version of his story, there soon will be.

Proper books, recording his sordid associates, his cowardly voting record, his astonishingly militant commitment to unrestricted abortion and his blundering trip to Africa, are little-read and hard to find.

If you can believe that this undistinguished and conventionally Left-wing machine politician is a sort of secular saviour, then you can believe anything. He plainly doesn't believe it himself. His cliché-stuffed, PC clunker of an acceptance speech suffered badly from nerves. It was what you would expect from someone who knew he'd promised too much and that from now on the easy bit was over.

He needn't worry too much. From now on, the rough boys and girls of America's Democratic Party apparatus, many recycled from Bill Clinton's stained and crumpled entourage, will crowd round him, to collect the rich spoils of his victory and also tell him what to do, which is what he is used to.

Just look at his sermon by the shores of Lake Michigan. He really did talk about a 'new dawn', and a 'timeless creed' (which was 'yes, we can'). He proclaimed that 'change has come'. He revealed that, despite having edited the Harvard Law Review, he doesn't know what 'enormity' means. He reached depths of oratorical drivel never even plumbed by our own Mr Blair, burbling about putting our hands on the arc of history (or was it the ark of history?) and bending it once more toward the hope of a better day (Don't try this at home).

I am not making this up. No wonder that awful old hack Jesse Jackson sobbed as he watched. How he must wish he, too, could get away with this sort of stuff.

And it was interesting how the President-elect failed to lift his admiring audience by repeated – but rather hesitant – invocations of the brainless slogan he was forced by his minders to adopt against his will – ‘Yes, we can’. They were supposed to thunder ‘Yes, we can!’ back at him, but they just wouldn’t join in. No wonder. Yes we can what exactly? Go home and keep a close eye on the tax rate, is my advice. He’d have been better off bursting into ‘I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony’ which contains roughly the same message and might have attracted some valuable commercial sponsorship.

Perhaps, being a Chicago crowd, they knew some of the things that 52.5 per cent of America prefers not to know. They know Obama is the obedient servant of one of the most squalid and unshakeable political machines in America. They know that one of his alarmingly close associates, a state-subsidised slum landlord called Tony Rezko, has been convicted on fraud and corruption charges.

They also know the US is just as segregated as it was before Martin Luther King – in schools, streets, neighbourhoods, holidays, even in its TV-watching habits and its choice of fast-food joint. The difference is that it is now done by unspoken agreement rather than by law.

If Mr Obama’s election had threatened any of that, his feel-good white supporters would have scuttled off and voted for John McCain, or practically anyone. But it doesn’t. Mr Obama, thanks mainly to the now-departed grandmother he alternately praised as a saint and denounced as a racial bigot, has the huge advantages of an expensive private education. He did not have to grow up in the badlands of useless schools, shattered families and gangs which are the lot of so many young black men of his generation.

If the nonsensical claims made for this election were true, then every positive discrimination programme aimed at helping black people into jobs they otherwise wouldn’t get should be abandoned forthwith. Nothing of the kind will happen. On the contrary, there will probably be more of them.

And if those who voted for Obama were all proving their anti-racist nobility, that presumably means that those many millions who didn’t vote for him were proving themselves to be hopeless bigots. This is obviously untrue.

I was in Washington DC the night of the election. America’s beautiful capital has a sad secret. It is perhaps the most racially divided city in the world, with 15th Street – which runs due north from the White House – the unofficial frontier between black and white. But, like so much of America, it also now has a new division, and one which is in many ways much more important. I had attended an election-night party in a smart and liberal white area, but was staying the night less than a mile away on the edge of a suburb where Spanish is spoken as much as English, plus a smattering of tongues from such places as Ethiopia, Somalia and Afghanistan.

As I walked, I crossed another of Washington’s secret frontiers. There had been a few white people blowing car horns and shouting, as the result became clear. But among the Mexicans, Salvadorans and the other Third World nationalities, there was something like ecstasy.

They grasped the real significance of this moment. They knew it meant that America had finally switched sides in a global cultural war. Forget the Cold War, or even the Iraq War. The United States, having for the most part a deeply conservative people, had until now just about stood out against many of the mistakes which have ruined so much of the rest of the world.

Suspicious of welfare addiction, feeble justice and high taxes, totally committed to preserving its own national sovereignty, unabashedly Christian in a world part secular and part Muslim, suspicious of the Great Global Warming panic, it was unique.



These strengths had been fading for some time, mainly due to poorly controlled mass immigration and to the march of political correctness. They had also been weakened by the failure of America's conservative party – the Republicans – to fight on the cultural and moral fronts.

They preferred to posture on the world stage. Scared of confronting Left-wing teachers and sexual revolutionaries at home, they could order soldiers to be brave on their behalf in far-off deserts. And now the US, like Britain before it, has begun the long slow descent into the Third World. How sad. Where now is our last best hope on Earth?

## **WSJ - Editorial** **Nationalizing Detroit**

In the Washington mind, there are two kinds of private companies. There are successful if "greedy" corporations, which can always afford to pay more taxes and tolerate more regulation. And then there are the corporate supplicants that need a handout. As the Detroit auto makers are proving, you can go from being the first to the second in the blink of an election.

For decades, Congress has never had a second thought as it imposed tighter emissions standards on GM, Ford and Chrysler, denouncing them for making evil SUVs. Yet now that the companies are bleeding cash, and may be heading for bankruptcy, suddenly the shrinking Big Three are the latest candidates for a taxpayer bailout. One \$25 billion loan facility has already been signed into law, and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D., Mich.) wants another \$25 billion, this time with no strings attached.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid met last week with company and union officials, and they later sent a letter urging Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson to bestow cash from the Troubled Asset Relief Program (Tarp) on the companies. Barack Obama implied at his Friday press conference that he too favors some kind of taxpayer rescue of Detroit, though no doubt he'd like to have President Bush's signature on the check so he won't have to take full political responsibility.

We hope Messrs. Bush and Paulson just say no. The Tarp was intended to save the financial system from collapse, not to be a honey pot for any industry running short of cash. The financial panic has hit Detroit hard, but its problems go back decades and are far deeper than reduced access to credit among car buyers. As a political matter, the Bush Administration is also long past the point where it might get any credit for helping Detroit. But it will earn the scorn of taxpayers if it refuses to set some limits on access to the Tarp. If Democrats want to change the rules next year, let them do it on their own political dime.

A bailout might avoid any near-term bankruptcy filing, but it won't address Detroit's fundamental problems of making cars that Americans won't buy and labor contracts that are too rich and inflexible to make them competitive. [As Paul Ingrassia notes nearby](#), Detroit's costs are far too high for their market share. While GM has spent billions of dollars on labor buyouts in recent years, they are still forced by federal mileage standards to churn out small cars that make little or no profit at plants organized by the United Auto Workers.

Rest assured that the politicians don't want to do a thing about those labor contracts or mileage standards. In their letter, Ms. Pelosi and Mr. Reid recommend such "taxpayer protections" as "limits on executive compensation and equity stakes" that would dilute shareholders. But they never mention the UAW contracts that have done so much to put Detroit on the road to ruin. In fact, the main point of any taxpayer rescue seems to be to postpone a day of reckoning on those contracts. That includes even the notorious UAW Jobs Bank that continues to pay workers not to work.

A Detroit bailout would also be unfair to other companies that make cars in the U.S. Yes, those are "foreign" companies in the narrow sense that they are headquartered overseas. But then so was Chrysler before Daimler sold most of the car maker to Cerberus, the private equity fund. Honda, Toyota and the rest employ

about 113,000 American auto workers who make nearly four million cars a year in states like Alabama and Tennessee. Unlike Michigan, these states didn't vote for Mr. Obama.

But the very success of this U.S. auto industry indicates that highly skilled American workers can profitably churn out cars without being organized by the UAW. A bailout for Chrysler would in essence be assisting rich Cerberus investors at the expense of middle-class nonunion auto workers. Is this the new "progressive" era we keep reading so much about?

The car makers say that bankruptcy is unthinkable and "not an option." And bankruptcy would certainly be expensive, not least for Washington itself, which could be responsible for 600,000 or so retiree pensions through the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. In that sense, the bailout is intended to rescue the politicians from having to honor that earlier irresponsible guarantee. But at least that guarantee would be finite. If Uncle Sam buys into Detroit, \$50 billion would only be the start of the outlays as taxpayers were obliged to protect their earlier investment in uncompetitive companies.

\* \* \*

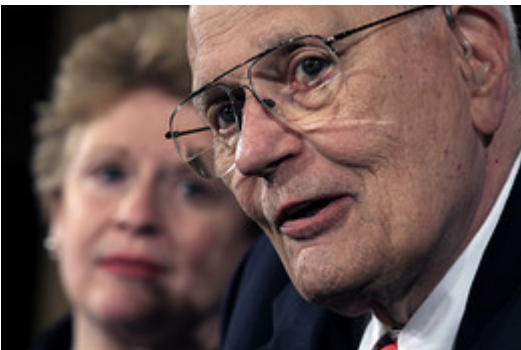
If our politicians can't avoid throwing taxpayer cash at Detroit, then they should at least do so in a way that really protects taxpayers. That means handing a receiver the power to replace current management, zero out current shareholders, and especially to rewrite labor and other contracts. Anything less is merely a payoff to Michigan politicians and their union allies.

### **WSJ - Editorial** **(D.) for Vendetta**

The champagne is barely off the ice and Democrats are already celebrating their new majorities by punishing a few heretical colleagues. In almost every sense, John Dingell and Joe Lieberman are loyal Democrats. But Mr. Dingell is holding down the party's right flank on energy, and Mr. Lieberman in foreign affairs. Now they're targets, and the retribution speaks volumes about the direction of liberal politics.

California Democrat Henry Waxman kicked things off the morning after Barack Obama's victory, with an announcement that he will seek the chairmanship of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee. The post is currently held by Mr. Dingell, the bulldog Michigander who next year will become the longest-serving Member in U.S. history. In Congressional physics, seniority is gravity, which alone makes Mr. Waxman's challenge extraordinary.

It is even more so because it is a coup d'etat against a climate-change moderate. For environmentalists, Mr. Dingell is a wet blanket because his committee will write any global-warming legislation. The word on the Hill is that Mr. Waxman enjoys the tacit support of übergreen Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who dislikes Mr. Dingell's independence.



In media shorthand, Mr. Dingell's approach to climate change is called "industry friendly." Apparently, this is because his principles include words like "realistic" and "achievable" and "cost containment." An ally of the Detroit auto makers, he does not pretend that putting a price on carbon will be painless and fun. He also

knows that well-to-do redoubts such as Mr. Waxman's Beverly Hills won't bear the heaviest burden. It will fall instead on blue-collar, middle-American regions that rely on manufacturing or coal-fired power.

Even so, Mr. Dingell's committee has held nearly 30 hearings on climate change since his party took power. In October, he released a cap-and-trade bill that aims to reduce emissions to 80% below 2005 levels by 2050. Incredibly enough, even that huge cut counts as a liberal heresy. The greens demand 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 -- a meaningless distinction considering that four decades is a political and technological eternity.

Then again, compared to Mr. Waxman, just about anyone could be mistaken for an Exxon executive. The Congressman has spent the last year trying to dragoon the Environmental Protection Agency into imposing an economy-wide carbon clampdown under current clean-air laws, an idea Mr. Obama also backs. But Mr. Dingell dares to point out that these laws -- passed in 1970, 1977 and 1990 -- were never written to include CO2. He should know. He wrote them.

The point is not only to humiliate a nuisance. Installing Mr. Waxman at Energy and Commerce would mean a far more aggressive push on global warming next year. It would also send a warning to the Blue Dogs and rural-state Democrats who might not fall in with the Obama-Pelosi energy agenda. Think rubber truncheons and bare light bulbs (compact fluorescents, of course).

Like Mr. Dingell, Senator Lieberman may also lose his gavel. Last week, Majority Leader Harry Reid informed the Connecticut renegade that rank-and-file sentiment against him had climbed to a point where he could not stay as Homeland Security Chairman. He may also be booted from the Democratic caucus.

To hear Democrats tell it, much less the Angry Left, Mr. Lieberman is Judas, Brutus and Cassius rolled into one. They're still furious about his high-profile campaign for John McCain, including his speech at the GOP convention. They also want to exact revenge for his unstinting support of President Bush's Iraq policy.

In 2006, Mr. Lieberman was defrocked for the sole reason that as a matter of policy and conscience he refused to repudiate the war that he and so many of his party colleagues had voted for. After Mr. Lieberman lost his Senate primary race to the antiwar Greenwich millionaire Ned Lamont, nearly all Senate Democrats were happy to abandon their friend and endorse Mr. Lamont. Chris Dodd, Hillary Clinton, Mr. Obama and the rest didn't even have the courage to stay neutral, for fear of affronting the empurpled left.

Were he a vindictive man, Mr. Lieberman could have returned the favor after he won the general election as an independent. With the Senate split 50 to 49, he might have handed control back to the GOP. Instead, he caucused with the Democrats and voted with them on social and economic issues. Now that they have comfortable margins, his reward may be a complete purge.

If a venerable New Deal liberal first elected in 1955 and a Vice Presidential nominee only two elections ago aren't fit for polite Democratic company, it shows how far left the party's center has shifted.

## **Jewish World Review**

### **'Intellectuals'**

by Thomas Sowell

Among the many wonders to be expected from an Obama administration, if Nicholas D. Kristof of the New York Times is to be believed, is ending "the anti-intellectualism that has long been a strain in American life."

He cited Adlai Stevenson, the suave and debonair governor of Illinois, who twice ran for president against Eisenhower in the 1950s, as an example of an intellectual in politics.

Intellectuals, according to Mr. Kristof, are people who are "interested in ideas and comfortable with complexity," people who "read the classics."

It is hard to know whether to laugh or cry.

Adlai Stevenson was certainly regarded as an intellectual by intellectuals in the 1950s. But, half a century later, facts paint a very different picture.

Historian Michael Beschloss, among others, has noted that Stevenson "could go quite happily for months or years without picking up a book." But Stevenson had the airs of an intellectual — the form, rather than the substance.

What is more telling, form was enough to impress the intellectuals, not only then but even now, years after the facts have been revealed, though apparently not to Mr. Kristof.

That is one of many reasons why intellectuals are not taken as seriously by others as they take themselves.

As for reading the classics, President Harry Truman, whom no one thought of as an intellectual, was a voracious reader of heavyweight stuff like Thucydides and read Cicero in the original Latin. When Chief Justice Carl Vinson quoted in Latin, Truman was able to correct him.

Yet intellectuals tended to think of the unpretentious and plain-spoken Truman as little more than a country bumpkin.

Similarly, no one ever thought of President Calvin Coolidge as an intellectual. Yet Coolidge also read the classics in the White House. He read both Latin and Greek, and read Dante in the original Italian, since he spoke several languages. It was said that the taciturn Coolidge could be silent in five different languages.

The intellectual levels of politicians are just one of the many things that intellectuals have grossly misjudged for years on end.

During the 1930s, some of the leading intellectuals in America condemned our economic system and pointed to the centrally planned Soviet economy as a model— all this at a time when literally millions of people were starving to death in the Soviet Union, from a famine in a country with some of the richest farmland in Europe and historically a large exporter of food.

New York Times Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty won a Pulitzer Prize for telling the intelligentsia what they wanted to hear— that claims of starvation in the Ukraine were false.

After British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge reported from the Ukraine on the massive deaths from starvation there, he was ostracized after returning to England and unable to find a job.

More than half a century later, when the archives of the Soviet Union were finally opened up under Mikhail Gorbachev, it turned out that about six million people had died in that famine— about the same number as the people killed in Hitler's Holocaust.

In the 1930s, it was the intellectuals who pooh-poohed the dangers from the rise of Hitler and urged Western disarmament.

It would be no feat to fill a big book with all the things on which intellectuals were grossly mistaken, just in the 20th century— far more so than ordinary people.

History fully vindicates the late William F. Buckley's view that he would rather be ruled by people represented by the first 100 names in the Boston phone book than by the faculty of Harvard.

How have intellectuals managed to be so wrong, so often? By thinking that because they are knowledgeable— or even expert— within some narrow band out of the vast spectrum of human concerns, that makes them wise guides to the masses and to the rulers of the nation.

But the ignorance of Ph.D.s is still ignorance and high-IQ groupthink is still groupthink, which is the antithesis of real thinking.

## **Environmental Graffiti**

### **Mysterious Explosion 1,000 Times Greater than Hiroshima**



*Image: [University of Maine](#)*

On June 30, 1908, the Earth experienced an explosion 1,000 times the magnitude of the the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan (shown above). The event resulted in the flattening of 80 million trees over an area roughly the size of Washington DC, and a century later [scientists](#) and UFO enthusiasts are still debating about what caused this colossal 5-30 megaton blast, and what happened to its mysterious remains.



Image: [WikiMedia Commons](#)

Dubbed the Tunguska Event, or Tunguska Explosion, because of the location of the blast in the Tunguska Valley of Russia, the event would have registered a devastating 5.0 on the Richter Scale, had it been invented at the time. And had it occurred about five hours later in the day, the Earth's rotation would have guaranteed that instead of killing 1,000 reindeer, the blazing object would have completely wiped out St Petersburg.

Instead, and luckily for us, the explosion happened at approximately 7:17 in the morning in isolated Siberia where only one unfortunate person died from the blast. Locals first noticed an extraterrestrial object [zip](#) bright blue across the clear sky; not long afterward, there was a flash, intense, blistering heat and loud thundering. Windows broke and people were knocked to the ground.

Russian mineralogist Leonid Kulik obtained this testimony from S Semenov during his 1930 Tunguska expedition:

"I suddenly saw that directly to the North, over Onkoul's Tunguska road, the sky split in two and fire appeared high and wide over the forest... The split in the sky grew larger, and the entire Northern side was covered with fire. At that moment I became so hot that I couldn't bear it, as if my shirt was on fire; from the northern side, where the fire was, came strong heat. I wanted to tear off my shirt and throw it down, but then the sky shut closed, and a strong thump sounded, and I was thrown a few yards. I lost my senses for a moment, but then my wife ran out and led me to the house. After that such noise came, as if rocks were falling or cannons were firing, the earth shook, and when I was on the ground, I pressed my head down, fearing rocks would smash it. When the sky opened up, hot wind raced between the houses, like from cannons, which left traces in the ground like pathways, and it damaged some crops. Later we saw that many windows were shattered, and in the barn a part of the iron lock snapped."



Image: [WikiMedia Commons](#)

Thousands of miles away, changes in [atmospheric pressure](#) occurred. For weeks, the night skies in England glowed with an eerie light caused by dust from the explosion. It was so bright that people didn't even need their lamps to read!

And what makes this event more bizarre is that the explosion seemed to have occurred in the sky; the actual impact from this object, whether [asteroid](#), comet, or UFO cannot be found. Some accounts even note that the unidentified object made two 45 degree angle turns to avoid harming human life before it blew up, and that a mysterious, towering human/yeti-like creature haunted the woods years after the blast. This led alien pundits to claim that life forms from another planet were trying to make what would turn out to be an unsuccessful emergency landing on Earth.

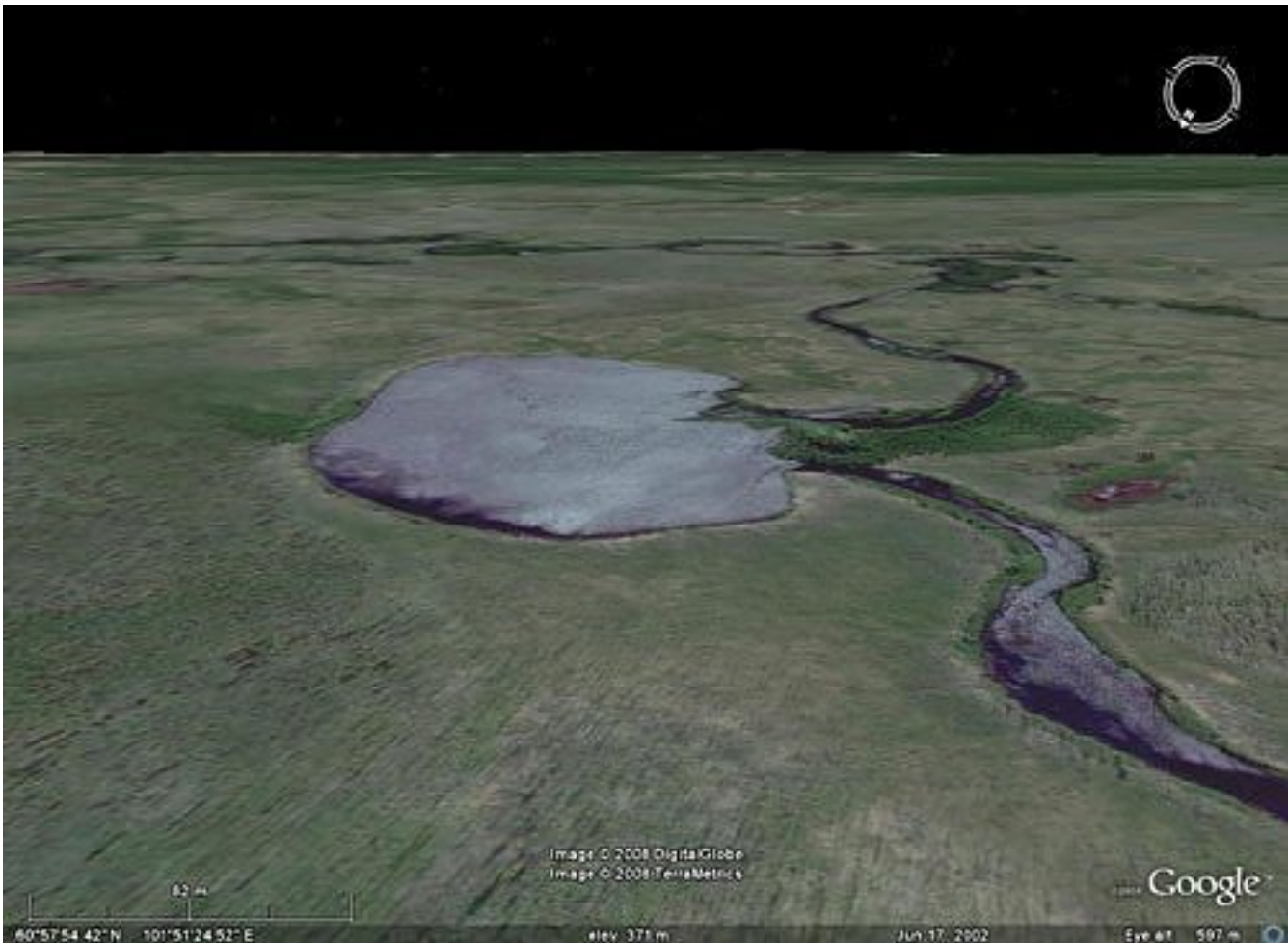


Image: [Google Earth](#) via [GIS Development](#)

Scientists have had their fair share of wacky ideas to explain the event as well. Some claimed that a 'small' black hole had entered the Earth, that it was an explosion of antimatter, or that deuterium in a comet underwent a nuclear fusion reaction. Although these theories have all been rebuffed, the Tunguska event still holds scientists and others captive 100 years after it occurred. The most recent, and perhaps more probable explanation about the mighty Tunguska explosion has been offered by a 2007 Italian expedition, which asserts that nearby Lake Cheko is the impact site.

Scientists are also running experiments to predict when the next similar impact might hit the Earth and how we might possibly avoid its disastrous effects. It's predicted that these types of events happen about once every 1,000 years – good news for us, because none of us want to get hit by anything near the size of the Tunguska event.

## **Dilbert's Blog**

### **[The Upside of the Recession](#)**

I don't know about you, but I have totally stopped worrying about terrorist attacks. Now I'm only afraid of bankers with new ideas. I'm not joking about either point.

Gas is a lot cheaper lately. That doesn't help you much if you're unemployed and can't afford a car, but for the lucky people with jobs, it helps a lot. No one saw that coming a year ago.

America is feeling a lot less arrogant and a lot more humble lately. If you believe the experts, that should go a long way toward helping International relations.

Traffic isn't so bad, bargains abound, and even the lines seem shorter.



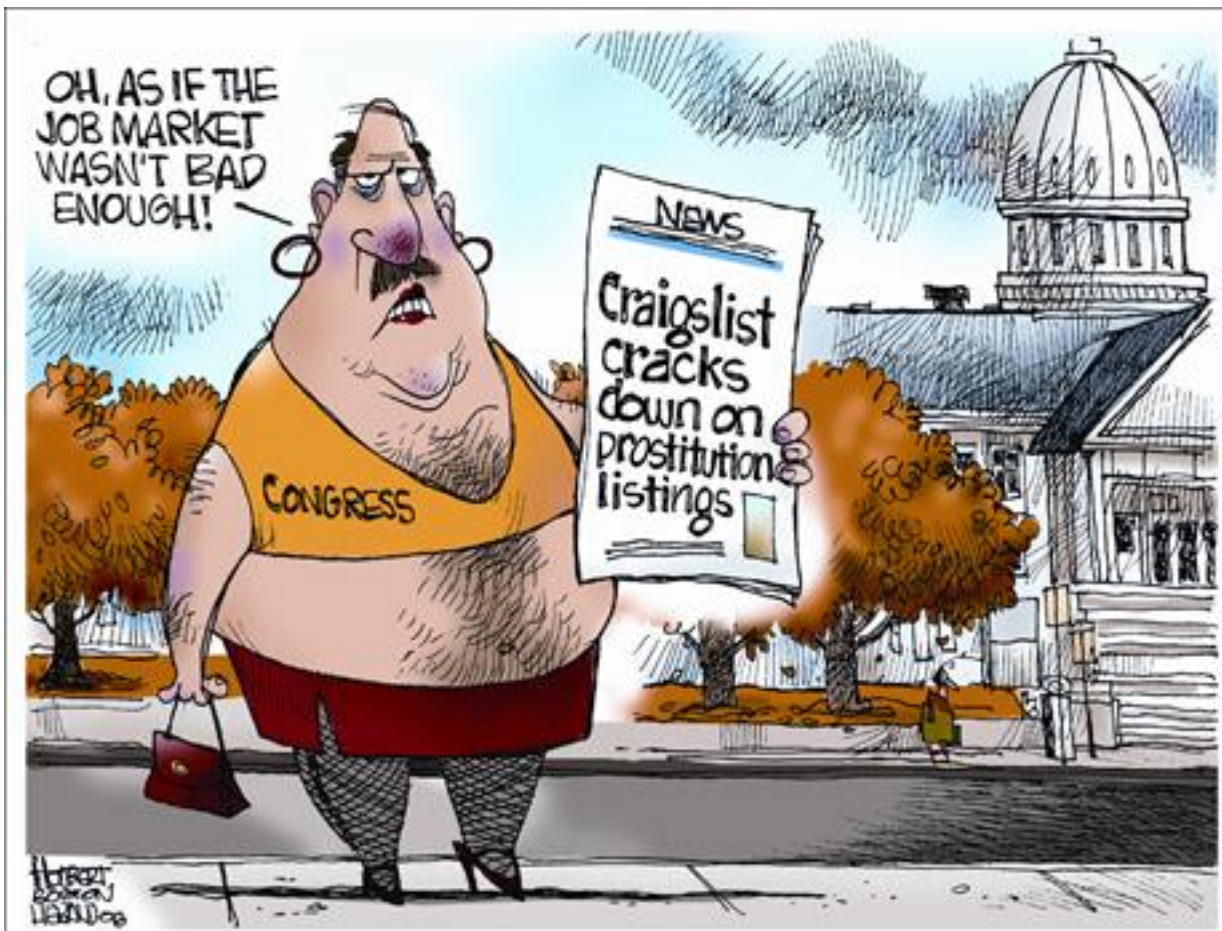
For the half of the country who wanted Obama as President, the economic woes sealed his victory. If he's half the savior his supporters believe, something good will happen soon. I just hope it isn't the Rapture.

As painful as this recession is likely to become, everyone agrees that sometimes you have to shake the rug to get all the crap out of it. Economies don't grow in straight lines.

It's expensive to travel anywhere, but on the other hand, the new season of 24 is almost here. I don't need to go to faraway places and meet people when I can sit on my couch and watch Jack Bauer shoot those people.

I remember driving home in 1989 and thinking I had a flat tire because the car went all wobbly. I pulled over and discovered that my tires were fine; the earth was moving. It was the Loma Prieta Earthquake, and I soon discovered my apartment in shambles. But a funny thing happened. All of my neighbors were outside, stunned. We talked. We shared stories. We bonded. It was a strangely good time. And I felt connected to people at a deeper level than ever before. Shared disaster does that.

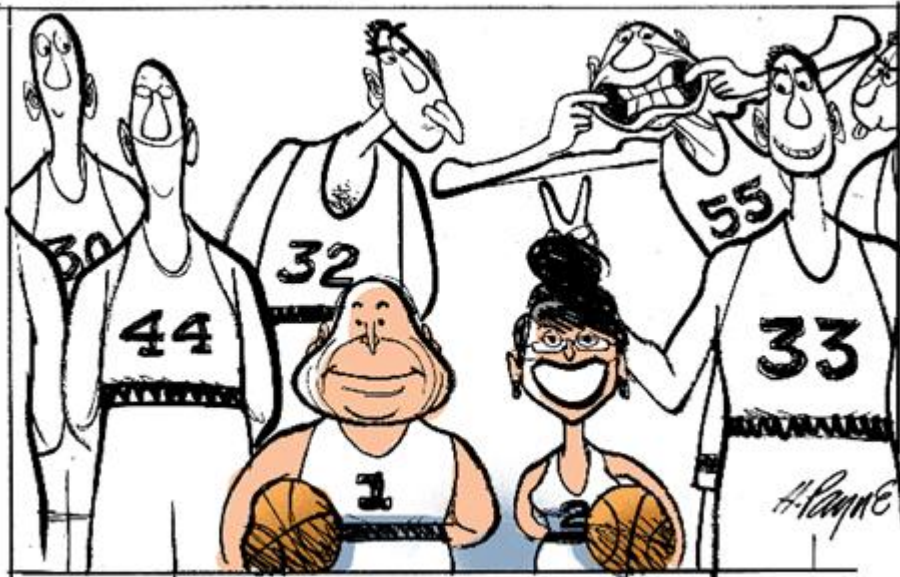
No one wants the economy to crumble. But having a reason to love your neighbor a litter better doesn't suck. If we can feed everyone - and I think we can - things will be fine. And as I have said here before, some kid in a garage has already figured a way out of this.



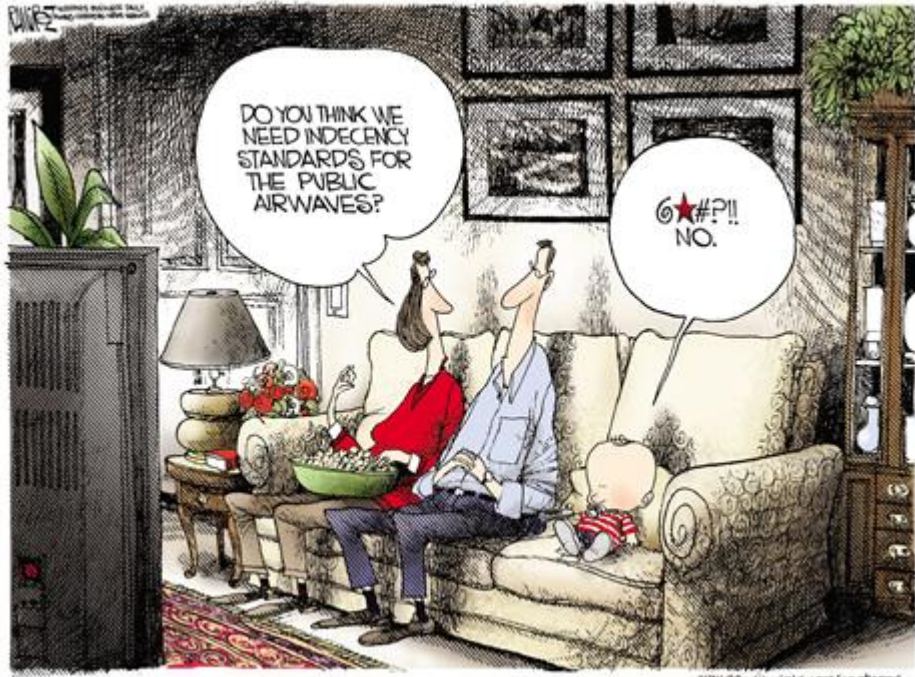


www.800edforals.com/cartoons

MCCAIN TEAM PHOTO



comics.com EMAIL: hpayne@detroitnews.com DoB



DO YOU THINK WE  
NEED INDECENCY  
STANDARDS FOR  
THE PUBLIC  
AIRWAVES?

6★#?!  
NO.