

July 11, 2013

Great piece on the Voting Rights decision by [Abby Thernstrom](#).

The Supreme Court did itself proud on Tuesday when it struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act. That is the provision of the law containing the formula that determined which jurisdictions should be kept in the penalty box for suspected discrimination—even after nearly half a century of dramatic and heartening racial progress. While passage of the 1965 act marked the death knell of the Jim Crow South, the elimination of one of the act's obsolete provisions this week reflects the progress since.

*With the court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the "covered" jurisdictions (mostly in the South) are free at last to exercise their constitutional prerogative to regulate their own elections. In killing Section 4, the court made unenforceable the preclearance provision in Section 5 of the act that required certain states and jurisdictions to obtain Justice Department permission for any laws or actions related to voting. So "covered" jurisdictions are no longer covered by Section 4, and the requirement that they get federal approval before even moving a polling place across the street is dead.*

The civil rights community is up in arms over Shelby. Get ready for pressure on Congress to respond. But what could lawmakers do? Restore federal powers to review all proposed changes in election procedure—with the burden of proving an absence of discrimination on the jurisdiction itself, as was the case in pre-Shelby law? In theory, Congress could just use the original formula and update it with data from the 2012 elections. The problem: Members of Congress would not like the result.

In 2012, no state in the Union had a total voter turnout rate, for whites or minorities, under 50%—a figure that was the heart of the old formula. The turnout in the six states covered entirely by Section 5 was well above the national average. Mississippi, once the worst of the Jim Crow states, had the highest total turnout rate in the nation. ...

We have tried to ignore the Zimmerman trial, but [Roger Simon](#) has a good post.

If you still, for some reason, need proof that racism in today's America is largely a liberal mind game, watch ten minutes of the George Zimmerman trial.

This farce of jurisprudence would never have occurred without leading "liberals" like Al Sharpton and his mainstream media buddies beating the drums endlessly for an indictment in a case the local Florida authorities never wanted to try (and for good reason).

Barack Obama helped out too, injecting the presidency (and race) in an unfortunate, but minor regional death by saying "If I had a son, he'd look just like Trayvon."

*I guess all black people look alike to Obama who, unlike Trayvon, attended the most exclusive private school in Hawaii followed by Occidental, Columbia and Harvard in that order. No such luck for Trayvon and, most likely, not much more had he lived. He wasn't exactly an honor student and evidently dabbled in petty crime. But he did share something with the president, an attraction for *cannabis sativa*.*

Whatever his or the president's proclivities, this trial should never have happened. As we now know, with the prosecution's case wrapped, not only is there no evidence to prove Zimmerman guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, there's virtually no evidence to prove him guilty at all. Farce indeed.

Will we have riots if, as is now widely predicted, Zimmerman is innocent of all charges? Beats me, but what I know is this: if we do, Sharpton should be indicted for incitement. ...

More from **John Hinderaker**.

... The jury has heard Zimmerman tell investigating police officers that Trayvon Martin jumped him, knocked him to the ground, pummeled his face and banged his head repeatedly into the pavement. Fearful of his life, Zimmerman says he pulled his gun from his waistband and fired one shot at Martin, which proved fatal. Zimmerman's account is supported by Jonathan Good, the only eyewitness to any part of the altercation between the two men, who testified that he saw Martin on top of Zimmerman, punching him in the face. Zimmerman's defense is also supported by his own condition after the altercation—he had a bruised face and a bloody nose, and the back of his head had several sharp horizontal cuts, which could only have been caused by his head being smashed against the pavement, just as Zimmerman said. Further, the testimony of the chief police investigator into the incident showed that the investigation's findings were consistent with Zimmerman's account.

So the evidence in favor of Zimmerman's claim of self-defense is powerful. ...

Inept; thy name is obama. **Seth Mandel** on the obamacare belly flop.

Since the legislative monstrosity known as ObamaCare was both complex and poorly constructed, its current disastrous rollout should not be too surprising. But it turns out the bill's critics (most of the country) weren't the only doubters who foresaw this mess: National Journal points out that the Obama administration also knew exactly what was coming.

The National Journal story includes a chart illustrating how the insurance exchanges work in order to underscore what those who hoped for a seamless debut were up against. But the exchanges are far from the only setback. As Jonathan wrote last week, the administration announced it would postpone by one year the mandate that businesses with more than 50 employees offer them insurance. The mandate is an unbearable financial burden on businesses, so it was delayed until after the midterm elections to give Democrats some breathing space before the economic damage they have done fully sets in.

But there are a couple problems with that. First, the administration's action is of dubious legality. Second, delaying the employer mandate could drive up the cost of the new law by driving more people seeking insurance into the exchanges. But that's not how the Congressional Budget Office scored the bill, a point Paul Ryan is making when he asks the CBO to re-score the bill without the first year of the employer mandate—to score the actual law as we have it now, in other words, instead of letting the administration bypass Congress and game the system to fool the CBO. ...

Peter Wehner writes on the serial ineptness of our foreign policy. The policy led by the petulant narcissist.

Barack Obama's serial ineptness in foreign policy is not only continuing; it seems to be accelerating. The most recent example comes from a story in the New York Times in which we read this:

"Increasingly frustrated by his dealings with President Hamid Karzai, President Obama is giving serious consideration to speeding up the withdrawal of United States forces from Afghanistan and to a "zero option" that would leave no American troops there after next year, according to American and European officials.

Mr. Obama is committed to ending America's military involvement in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, and Obama administration officials have been negotiating with Afghan officials about leaving a small "residual force" behind. But his relationship with Mr. Karzai has been slowly unraveling, and reached a new low after an effort last month by the United States to begin peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar.

Mr. Karzai promptly repudiated the talks and ended negotiations with the United States over the long-term security deal that is needed to keep American forces in Afghanistan after 2014.

A videoconference between Mr. Obama and Mr. Karzai designed to defuse the tensions ended badly, according to both American and Afghan officials with knowledge of it."

Remind me again, but wasn't one of the key selling points of Mr. Obama in 2008 that he would improve America's relations in the world; that he would sit down with other leaders and reach agreements his predecessor did not; and that Afghanistan was the "good war" that America would prevail in under his inspired leadership? ...

Washington Post article goes a long way to explain why the food stamp program has exploded.

A good recruiter needs to be liked, so Dillie Nerios filled gift bags with dog toys for the dog people and cat food for the cat people. She packed crates of cookies, croissants, vegetables and fresh fruit. She curled her hair and painted her nails fluorescent pink. "A happy, it's-all-good look," she said, checking her reflection in the rearview mirror. Then she drove along the Florida coast to sign people up for food stamps.

Her destination on a recent morning was a 55-and-over community in central Florida, where single-wide trailers surround a parched golf course. On the drive, Nerios, 56, reviewed techniques she had learned for connecting with some of Florida's most desperate senior citizens during two years on the job. Touch a shoulder. Hold eye contact. Listen for as long as it takes. "Some seniors haven't had anyone to talk to in some time," one of the state-issued training manuals reads. "Make each person feel like the only one who matters.

In fact, it is Nerios's job to enroll at least 150 seniors for food stamps each month, a quota she usually exceeds. Alleviate hunger, lessen poverty: These are the primary goals of her work. But

the job also has a second and more controversial purpose for cash-strapped Florida, where increasing food-stamp enrollment has become a means of economic growth, bringing almost \$6 billion each year into the state. The money helps to sustain communities, grocery stores and food producers. It also adds to rising federal entitlement spending and the U.S. debt.

Nerios prefers to think of her job in more simple terms: "Help is available," she tells hundreds of seniors each week. "You deserve it. So, yes or no?"

In Florida and everywhere else, the answer in 2013 is almost always yes. A record 47 million Americans now rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, available for people with annual incomes below about \$15,000. The program grew during the economic collapse because 10 million more Americans dropped into poverty. It has continued to expand four years into the recovery because state governments and their partner organizations have become active promoters, creating official "SNAP outreach plans" and hiring hundreds of recruiters like Nerios. ...

Andrew Malcolm reports on an al Jazeera story on the night Bin Laden assumed room temperature.

... The report on the [al Jazeera website](#) also describes how:

The SEALs achieved complete surprise. Although the team had trained for a fierce firefight, anticipating booby traps and possibly a mined roof, the family said it never expected an attack, possibly lulled by nearly a decade of successful seclusion.

The assault came on a quiet, dark night when Amal left the other wives to go upstairs to bin Laden's small bedroom. She said he did reach for a weapon during the assault, which began shortly before 1 a.m. And he ordered all family out of his room, but they refused.

She's the one who rushed a SEAL and was shot in the knee. She was left on a bed while other family were taken and searched by the men. In 37 minutes the foreigners were gone.

The report tells of the family's confined lives in the compound's cramped rooms, how the custom buildings had numerous electricity meters to mask their substantial usage and how when one servant's daughter recognized bin Laden on TV, women were banned from ever watching.

It also reveals how bin Laden feared a nearby tree grove could harbor spies. And an almost humorously incongruous detail that whenever bin Laden exercised outdoors in the courtyard, he wore a large cowboy hat to cover his face. Not exactly the ideal head-covering to blend into a turbaned society.

It tells of their movements around Pakistan before settling into the custom compound in 2005, about the time Pakistan officially closed the books on its bin Laden hunt. ...

WSJ

[A Vindication of the Voting Rights Act](#)

The Supreme Court's ruling in Shelby County will help black political aspirations.

by Abigail Thernstrom

The Supreme Court did itself proud on Tuesday when it struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act. That is the provision of the law containing the formula that determined which jurisdictions should be kept in the penalty box for suspected discrimination—even after nearly half a century of dramatic and heartening racial progress. While passage of the 1965 act marked the death knell of the Jim Crow South, the elimination of one of the act's obsolete provisions this week reflects the progress since.

With the court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the "covered" jurisdictions (mostly in the South) are free at last to exercise their constitutional prerogative to regulate their own elections. In killing Section 4, the court made unenforceable the preclearance provision in Section 5 of the act that required certain states and jurisdictions to obtain Justice Department permission for any laws or actions related to voting. So "covered" jurisdictions are no longer covered by Section 4, and the requirement that they get federal approval before even moving a polling place across the street is dead.

The civil rights community is up in arms over *Shelby*. Get ready for pressure on Congress to respond. But what could lawmakers do? Restore federal powers to review all proposed changes in election procedure—with the burden of proving an absence of discrimination on the jurisdiction itself, as was the case in pre-*Shelby* law? In theory, Congress could just use the original formula and update it with data from the 2012 elections. The problem: Members of Congress would not like the result.

In 2012, no state in the Union had a total voter turnout rate, for whites or minorities, under 50%—a figure that was the heart of the old formula. The turnout in the six states covered entirely by Section 5 was well above the national average. Mississippi, once the worst of the Jim Crow states, had the highest total turnout rate in the nation.

Civil-rights advocates today want states like Ohio subject to preclearance. It is very doubtful, though, that any American voters will be happy if their city or country or state government has to get permission from federal authorities, for instance, to alter the hours that polling places are open. And do voters trust the Justice Department to govern with a light hand any more than they trust the IRS? Seems doubtful.

The court's ruling Tuesday will benefit black America. Enforcement of the statute—including the imposition of "safe" black (and Hispanic) legislative seats as a remedy for discrimination—has herded black voters into what even North Carolina Democrat and Congressional Black Caucus member Rep. Mel Watt once called "racial ghettos." Rep. Watt was referring to race-based districts that have generally rewarded minority politicians who campaign (and win) by making the sort of overt racial appeals that are the staple of invidious identity politics.

The black candidates who ran in such enclaves never acquired the skills to venture into the world of competitive politics in majority-white settings. They were thus thrust to the sidelines of American political life—which is precisely what the statute did not intend. In this sense the law became a brake on minority political aspirations.

In his majority opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts described the purpose of the 15th Amendment—which forbids government at any level to deny voting rights to citizens based on race—as ensuring a better future. But the safe minority districts are not that better future. These districts once served the purpose of protecting black candidates from white competition when Southern whites would not vote for black candidates. But times have changed, and whites now vote for black candidates at every level of government.

The Section 4 coverage formula ignores current political conditions, Chief Justice Roberts wrote: "No one can fairly say that it shows anything approaching the 'pervasive,' 'flagrant,' 'widespread,' and 'rampant' discrimination . . . that clearly distinguished the covered jurisdictions from the rest of the Nation" in 1965. He also cited the dramatically increased figures on black turnout and registration, as well as black office-holding.

In enforcing the Voting Rights Act, Congress, the Justice Department and the courts have coped with the question of when decisions about electoral matters can be trusted to elected representatives by ignoring racial progress. Blacks, they have implied, live in a world in which the clock has almost stopped.

The issue of racial change has long sharply divided right and left, on the bench and off. Justice [Sonia Sotomayor](#) is too young ever to have witnessed the horrors of the South before the great civil rights acts of the mid-1960s. Yet, in the oral argument in *Shelby*, she questioned the whole notion that race relations in the region have been transformed.

Whatever the rates of black political participation in a covered jurisdiction, however many blacks are elected to legislative office, the liberals on the court were not likely to be satisfied. In the oral argument, a skeptical Justice Stephen Breyer drew an analogy between the problem of voting discrimination and a state whose crops had a plant disease in 1965. But "the disease is still there." No statistical evidence could possibly convince him that what he believed to be true was in fact false.

Justice Roberts gave full credit to the 1965 law for the progress he noted. The Voting Rights Act "has proved immensely successful at redressing racial discrimination and integrating the voting process," he said. It was an important statement—an acknowledgment of the efficacy of the act in the years it was so badly needed.

As for the coverage formula of Section 4—which was originally only supposed to last five years—the justice made clear that even if it could no longer be justified, it should never be forgotten. In 1965, Southern blacks were still in political chains, and the hold of whites on political power made all other forms of racial subjugation possible. It was part of a law that was an indispensable, beautifully designed and effective response to a profound moral wrong—Southern black disfranchisement that persisted 96 years after passage of the 15th Amendment.

Justice Roberts's opinion for the court is a celebration of the Voting Rights Act—and of a nation that made it work and outgrew its most-radical provisions.

Ms. Thernstrom is an adjunct scholar at The American Enterprise Institute and vice-chairwoman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She is the author of "Voting Rights—and Wrongs" (AEI Press, 2009).

Roger L. Simon

The Zimmerman Trial as Media Pornography

If you still, for some reason, need proof that racism in today's America is largely a liberal mind game, watch ten minutes of the George Zimmerman trial.

This farce of jurisprudence would never have occurred without leading "liberals" like Al Sharpton and his mainstream media buddies beating the drums endlessly for an indictment in a case the local Florida authorities never wanted to try (and for good reason).

Barack Obama helped out too, injecting the presidency (and race) in an unfortunate, but minor regional death by saying "If I had a son, he'd look just like Trayvon."

I guess all black people look alike to Obama who, unlike Trayvon, attended the most exclusive private school in Hawaii followed by Occidental, Columbia and Harvard in that order. No such luck for Trayvon and, most likely, not much more had he lived. He wasn't exactly an honor student and evidently [dabbled in petty crime](#). But he did share something with the president, an attraction for *cannibis sativa*.

Whatever his or the president's proclivities, this trial should never have happened. As we now know, with the prosecution's case wrapped, not only is there no evidence to prove Zimmerman guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, there's virtually no evidence to prove him guilty at all. Farce indeed.

Will we have riots if, as is now widely predicted, Zimmerman is innocent of all charges? Beats me, but what I know is this: if we do, Sharpton should be indicted for incitement. It would be long overdue for one of the [great racists](#) of our time.

But most readers understand all this and I feel embarrassed for even writing about it. As a member of the media, it shows the poverty of my imagination and the narrowness of my mind. Not only should this trial never have happened, the ongoing obsession with it is an absurd waste of time and another (deliberate?) distraction from the real news and conflicts which are before us.

As I write this, Egypt teeters on the brink of civil war, Syria is still in civil war, Lebanon is also on the brink, Iran marches forward to nuclear arms, the U.S. economy remains a mess, unemployment is rampant, more people are on food stamps than work in the private sector, the deficit grows exponentially by the second, Social Security is going bankrupt, Medicare is going bankrupt, the IRS has virtually taken over the country and is about to subsume healthcare, Benghazi remains unresolved, the NSA is spying on everything and everybody between here and Alpha Centauri and we're (I) worrying George Zimmerman and Trayvon Martin?!

What unbelievable nonsense. The case has nothing to do with anything. Not race, not gun control, not even self-defense or "stand your ground." It's just a form of ginned-up media pornography. It may generate ratings for Fox News, but it pollutes the minds of the rest of us.

Power Line

How can the George Zimmerman Case Possibly Go To the Jury?

by John Hinderaker

The prosecution rested today in the George Zimmerman trial. The defense moved for dismissal, but Judge Debra Nelson [denied the motion](#), saying, “The state has presented enough direct and circumstantial evidence for the case to go to the jury.”

That is not a surprise, of course. But really: on what possible basis should this case be going to the jury? The basic standard here is that the prosecution must have presented evidence sufficient to allow a reasonable jury to convict Zimmerman, bearing in mind that it is the state’s duty to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Zimmerman did not act in self-defense. Andrew Branca, who is covering the trial for [Legal Insurrection](#), explains:

It’s a two step analysis–

(Step 1) Has State proved each and every element of the charge (or a lesser included charge) beyond a reasonable doubt? If no, acquit. If yes, proceed to step 2.

(Step 2) Has State DISPROVED one or more elements of self-defense? If no, acquit, if yes, guilty.

Note that self-defense fails if ANY SINGLE element of self-defense is disproved beyond a reasonable doubt–if, for example, prove beyond a reasonable doubt that GZ was the lethal-force aggressor, then no self-defense justification for George.

The jury has heard Zimmerman tell investigating police officers that Trayvon Martin jumped him, knocked him to the ground, pummeled his face and banged his head repeatedly into the pavement. Fearful of his life, Zimmerman says he pulled his gun from his waistband and fired one shot at Martin, which proved fatal. Zimmerman’s account is supported by Jonathan Good, the *only* eyewitness to any part of the altercation between the two men, who testified that he saw Martin on top of Zimmerman, punching him in the face. Zimmerman’s defense is also supported by his own condition after the altercation–he had a bruised face and a bloody nose, and the back of his head had several sharp horizontal cuts, which could only have been caused by his head being smashed against the pavement, just as Zimmerman said. Further, the testimony of the chief police investigator into the incident showed that the investigation’s findings were consistent with Zimmerman’s account.

So the evidence in favor of Zimmerman’s claim of self-defense is powerful. What has the state mustered on the other side? 1) The testimony of a friend of Martin’s who was talking with him on the phone shortly before the fight started. That testimony, if anything, helped Zimmerman; in any event, she did not “witness” anything that bears directly on who started the fight. 2) DNA evidence which proved nothing, one way or the other. 3) Various irrelevancies about Zimmerman’s character and personality. 4) The testimony of Martin’s mother, who said the screams in the 911 tape came from Martin. Apart from the mother’s obvious and overwhelming bias, the foundation for her testimony approaches zero. Has she ever heard Trayvon scream, as though in fear for his life? Presumably rarely, if ever. But in any event, she certainly has never heard Zimmerman scream. For all she knows, the screams on the audio sounded exactly like

Zimmerman. I am a little surprised, frankly, that the judge admitted such shaky testimony. 5) The testimony of Martin's brother to the effect that it was Trayvon screaming on the 911 recording. His testimony suffers from all of the defects of his mother's. In addition, he admitted that two weeks after the shooting, he said in a television interview that he couldn't tell whether the screams were Trayvon's.

How could a jury rationally find that this meagre evidence—contradicted by eyewitness testimony, physical evidence and the fact that the police investigation was fully consistent with Zimmerman's account—proves *beyond a reasonable doubt* that Zimmerman did *not* act in self-defense? I don't think a reasonable jury could so find, and if that is the case, the defense motion should have been granted, and the case should not have been allowed to proceed.

Contentions

Obama's Serial Ineptness

by Peter Wehner

Barack Obama's serial ineptness in foreign policy is not only continuing; it seems to be accelerating. The most recent example comes from [a story in the New York Times](#) in which we read this:

Increasingly frustrated by his dealings with President Hamid Karzai, President Obama is giving serious consideration to speeding up the withdrawal of United States forces from Afghanistan and to a "zero option" that would leave no American troops there after next year, according to American and European officials.

Mr. Obama is committed to ending America's military involvement in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, and Obama administration officials have been negotiating with Afghan officials about leaving a small "residual force" behind. But his relationship with Mr. Karzai has been slowly unraveling, and reached a new low after an effort last month by the United States to begin peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar.

Mr. Karzai promptly repudiated the talks and ended negotiations with the United States over the long-term security deal that is needed to keep American forces in Afghanistan after 2014.

A videoconference between Mr. Obama and Mr. Karzai designed to defuse the tensions ended badly, according to both American and Afghan officials with knowledge of it.

Remind me again, but wasn't one of the key selling points of Mr. Obama in 2008 that he would improve America's relations in the world; that he would sit down with other leaders and reach agreements his predecessor did not; and that Afghanistan was the "good war" that America would prevail in under his inspired leadership?

Instead, America's image in the world is worse than ever, the leaders of many other nations have sheer contempt for the president, and the Afghanistan war is in the process of being lost. Mr. Obama seems to think a retreat substitutes for a strategy and that a defeat is the same thing as a victory.

He's wrong on both counts.

I realize President Karzai isn't an easy individual to deal with. But that's always been the case, yet relations have never been this chilly. And it seems as if it hasn't quite dawned on Obama that a president doesn't get to choose his interlocutors.

Afghanistan embodies the Obama approach to international relations in a single case study. The president's approach to it has been confused, contradictory, inept, weak and unsuccessful. He is a (prickly) man who is simply overmatched by events and by other leaders. And in nation after nation, we're seeing the bitter fruits of his artlessness and incompetence.

Contentions

ObamaCare's Breathtaking Belly-Flop

Seth Mandel

Since the legislative monstrosity known as ObamaCare was both complex and poorly constructed, its current disastrous rollout should not be too surprising. But it turns out the bill's critics (most of the country) weren't the only doubters who foresaw this mess: *National Journal* [points out](#) that the Obama administration also knew exactly what was coming.

The *National Journal* story includes a chart illustrating how the insurance exchanges work in order to underscore what those who hoped for a seamless debut were up against. But the exchanges are far from the only setback. As Jonathan [wrote](#) last week, the administration announced it would postpone by one year the mandate that businesses with more than 50 employees offer them insurance. The mandate is an unbearable financial burden on businesses, so it was delayed until after the midterm elections to give Democrats some breathing space before the economic damage they have done fully sets in.

But there are a couple problems with that. First, the administration's action is of [dubious legality](#). Second, delaying the employer mandate could drive up the cost of the new law by driving more people seeking insurance into the exchanges. But that's not how the Congressional Budget Office scored the bill, a point Paul Ryan is making when he [asks](#) the CBO to re-score the bill without the first year of the employer mandate—to score the actual law as we have it now, in other words, instead of letting the administration bypass Congress and game the system to fool the CBO.

Of course, we have no idea what the administration is going to do with the employer mandate (or any other part of the law) going forward now that it has bestowed upon itself the power to unilaterally “suspend” parts of laws when it makes electoral sense to do so. In that respect, it's not so easy for the CBO to comply with Ryan's request—there's really no telling at this point what the administration is going to pretend the law says.

But that's not the only reason Ryan wants the CBO to re-score the bill. He also wants them to consider yet another piece of news about the ObamaCare rollout: the administration's announcement that rather than verify that those seeking ObamaCare subsidies meet the eligibility requirements, it will be content with the [honor system](#). At that Hot Air post you'll find a

link to Avik Roy's [explanation](#) for why the two are connected: without the employer mandate, which was key to proving eligibility, the administration has basically given up on verification.

Believe it or not, there's more. The administration isn't only running into trouble when trying to suspend parts of the law. It's also realizing that the law was written in a way as to make certain regulations contradictory or incompatible. As Katherine Connell [explains](#):

Insurers are prohibited from charging older customers more than three times what they charge their youngest customers, since the law depends on making young, healthy people subsidize the cost of care for their elders. But the law also [allows smokers to be charged a penalty](#) up to 50 percent of their premiums. The problem is that when you put the two together, it doesn't always add up.

One solution is that both young and old could end up being charged the maximum penalty. You know, so it's *fair*.

And in case that wasn't enough, ObamaCare's already problematic expansion of insurance through Medicaid—an expensive and [ineffective program](#)—just became even more so, as Bloomberg [reports](#) that “Colonoscopies, diabetes screenings and other preventative services mandated by the U.S. health law may be offered only to new Medicaid program enrollees next year, leaving existing patients with second-tier care, a study found.” It will create a “two-tiered” health system for the poor. Of course, fewer doctors are [accepting](#) Medicaid patients anyway, so those with the newer, fuller Medicaid coverage may not be able to find a doctor to actually perform those procedures.

Government gets bigger, more intrusive, more expensive, less efficient, and less effective. As expected. The silver lining is that ObamaCare [remains unpopular](#), proving the American public possesses more common sense than the technocrats running the federal government. Also as expected.

Washington Post

[In Florida, a food-stamp recruiter deals with wrenching choices](#)

by Eli Saslow

A good recruiter needs to be liked, so Dillie Nerios filled gift bags with dog toys for the dog people and cat food for the cat people. She packed crates of cookies, croissants, vegetables and fresh fruit. She curled her hair and painted her nails fluorescent pink. “A happy, it's-all-good look,” she said, checking her reflection in the rearview mirror. Then she drove along the Florida coast to sign people up for food stamps.

Her destination on a recent morning was a 55-and-over community in central Florida, where single-wide trailers surround a parched golf course. On the drive, Nerios, 56, reviewed techniques she had learned for connecting with some of Florida's most desperate senior citizens during two years on the job. Touch a shoulder. Hold eye contact. Listen for as long as it takes. “Some seniors haven't had anyone to talk to in some time,” one of the state-issued training manuals reads. “Make each person feel like the only one who matters.”

In fact, it is Nerios's job to enroll at least 150 seniors for food stamps each month, a quota she usually exceeds. Alleviate hunger, lessen poverty: These are the primary goals of her work. But the job also has a second and more controversial purpose for cash-strapped Florida, where increasing food-stamp enrollment has become a means of economic growth, bringing almost \$6 billion each year into the state. The money helps to sustain communities, grocery stores and food producers. It also adds to rising federal entitlement spending and the U.S. debt.

Nerios prefers to think of her job in more simple terms: "Help is available," she tells hundreds of seniors each week. "You deserve it. So, yes or no?"

In Florida and everywhere else, the answer in 2013 is almost always yes. A record 47 million Americans now rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, available for people with annual incomes below about \$15,000. The program grew during the economic collapse because 10 million more Americans dropped into poverty. It has continued to expand four years into the recovery because state governments and their partner organizations have become active promoters, creating official "SNAP outreach plans" and hiring hundreds of recruiters like Nerios.

A decade ago, only about half of eligible Americans chose to sign up for food stamps. Now that number is 75 percent.

Rhode Island hosts SNAP-themed bingo games for the elderly. Alabama hands out fliers that read: "Be a patriot. Bring your food stamp money home." Three states in the Midwest throw food-stamp parties where new recipients sign up en masse.

She distributed food and SNAP brochures for three hours. "Take what you need," she said, again and again, until the fruit started to sweat and the vegetables wilted in the late-morning heat. Just as she prepared to leave, a car pulled into the senior center and a man with a gray mustache and a tattered T-shirt opened the driver-side door. He had seen the giveaway boxes earlier in the morning but waited to return until the crowd thinned. He had just moved to Spanish Lakes. He had never taken giveaways. He looked at the boxes but stayed near his car.

"Sir, can I help?" Nerios asked. She brought over some food. She gave him her business card and a few brochures about SNAP.

"I don't want to be another person depending on the government," he said.

"How about being another person getting the help you deserve?" she said.

Did he deserve it, though? Lonnie Briglia, 60, drove back to his Spanish Lakes mobile home with the recruiter's pamphlets and thought about that. He wasn't so sure.

Wasn't it his fault that he had flushed 40 years of savings into a bad investment, buying a fleet of delivery trucks just as the economy crashed? Wasn't it his fault that he and his wife, Celeste, had missed mortgage payments on the house where they raised five kids, forcing the bank to foreclose in 2012? Wasn't it his fault the only place they could afford was an abandoned mobile home in Spanish Lakes, bought for the entirety of their savings, \$750 in cash?

"We made horrible mistakes," he said. "We dug the hole. We should dig ourselves out."

Now he walked into their mobile home and set the SNAP brochures on the kitchen table. They had moved in three months before, and it had taken all of that time for them to make the place livable. They patched holes in the ceiling. They fixed the plumbing and rewired the electricity. They gave away most of their belongings to the kids — “like we died and executed the will,” he said. They decorated the walls of the mobile home with memories of a different life: photos of Lonnie in his old New Jersey police officer uniform, or in Germany for a manufacturing job that paid \$25 an hour, or on vacation in their old pop-up camper.

A few weeks after they moved in, some of their 11 grandchildren had come over to visit. One of them, a 9-year-old girl, had looked around the mobile home and then turned to her grandparents on the verge of tears: “Grampy, this place is junky,” she had said. He had smiled and told her that it was okay, because Spanish Lakes had a community pool, and now he could go swimming whenever he liked.

Only later, alone with Celeste, had he said what he really thought: “A damn sky dive. That’s our life. How does anyone fall this far, this fast?”

And now SNAP brochures were next to him on the table — one more step down, he thought, reading over the bold type on the brochure. “Applying is easy.” “Eat right!” “Every \$5 in SNAP generates \$9.20 for the local economy.”

He sat in a sweltering home with no air conditioning and a refrigerator bought on layaway, which was mostly empty except for the “experienced” vegetables they sometimes bought at a discount grocery store to cook down and freeze for later. He had known a handful of people who depended on the government: former co-workers who exaggerated injuries to get temporary disability; homeless people in the Fort Pierce park where he had taken the kids each week when they were young to hand out homemade peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, even though he suspected some of those homeless were drug addicts who spent their Social Security payments on crack.

“Makers and takers,” Lonnie had told the kids then, explaining that the world divided into two categories. The Briglias were makers.

Now three of those kids worked in law enforcement and two were in management. One of them, the oldest, was on his way to visit Spanish Lakes, driving down at this very moment from Valdosta, Ga., with his wife and two kids. Lonnie placed the SNAP brochures in a drawer and turned on a fan to cool the mobile home.

His son arrived, and they went out to dinner. Lonnie tried to pay with a credit card, but his son wouldn’t let him. Then, before leaving for Valdosta, the son gave his parents an air conditioner, bought for \$400. Lonnie started to protest.

“Please,” his son said. “You need it. It’s okay to take a little help.”

The offer of more help came early the next morning. Nerios reached Lonnie on his cellphone to check on his interest in SNAP.

“Can I help sign you up?” she asked.

“I’m still not sure,” he said. “We have a lot of frozen vegetables in the freezer.”

“Don’t wait until you’re out,” she said.

She was on her way to another outreach event, but she told Lonnie she had plenty of time to talk. She had always preferred working with what her colleagues called the Silent Generation, even though seniors were historically the least likely to enroll in SNAP. Only about 38 percent of eligible seniors choose to participate in the program, half the rate of the general population. In Florida, that means about 300,000 people over 60 are not getting their benefits, and at least \$381 million in available federal money isn’t coming into the state. To help enroll more seniors, the government has published an outreach guide that blends compassion with sales techniques, generating some protests in Congress. The guide teaches recruiters how to “overcome the word ‘no,’ □” suggesting answers for likely hesitations.

Welfare stigma: “You worked hard and the taxes you paid helped create SNAP.”

Embarrassment: “Everyone needs help now and then.”

Sense of failure: “Lots of people, young and old, are having financial difficulties.”

Nerios prefers a subtler touch. “It’s about patience, empathy,” she said. While she makes a middle-class salary and had never been on food stamps herself, she knows the emotional exhaustion that comes at the end of each month, after a few hundred conversations about money that didn’t exist. Nowhere had the SNAP program grown as it has in Florida, where enrollment had risen from 1.45 million people in 2008 to 3.35 million last year. And no place in Florida had been reshaped by the recession quite like the Treasure Coast, where middle-class retirees lost their savings in the housing collapse, forcing them to live on less than they expected for longer than they expected. Sometimes, Nerios believes it is more important to protect a client’s sense of self-worth than to meet her quota.

“I’m not going to push you,” she told Lonnie now. “This is your decision.”

“I have high blood pressure, so it’s true that diet is important to us,” he said, which sounded to her like a man arguing with himself.

“I can meet with you today, or tomorrow, or anytime you’d like,” she said.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I’m really sorry.”

“You don’t have to be,” she said. “Please, just think about it.”

She hung up the phone and began setting up her giveaway table at another event.

He hung up the phone and drove a few miles down the highway to his wife’s small knitting store. They had stayed married 41 years because they made decisions together. She was an optimist and he was a realist; they leveled each other out. During the failures of the past three years,

they had developed a code language that allowed them to acknowledge their misery without really talking about it.

“How you doing?” he asked.

“Just peachy,” she said, which meant to him that in fact she was exhausted, depressed, barely hanging on.

She opened the knitting store three years earlier, but it turned out her only customers were retirees on fixed incomes, seniors with little money to spend who just wanted an air-conditioned place to spend the day. So Celeste started giving them secondhand yarn and inviting customers to knit with her for charity in the shop. Together they had made 176 hats and scarves for poor families in the last year. The store, meanwhile, had barely made its overhead. Lonnie wanted her to close it, but it was the last place where she could pretend her life had turned out as she’d hoped, knitting to classical music at a wooden table in the center of the store.

Now Lonnie joined her at that table and started to tell her about his week: how he had been driving by the community center and seen boxes of food; how he had decided to take some, grabbing tomatoes and onions that looked fresher than anything they’d had in weeks; how a woman had touched his shoulder and offered to help, leaving him with brochures and a business card.

He pulled the card from his pocket and showed it to Celeste. She leaned in to read the small print. “SNAP Outreach,” it read.

“I think we qualify,” Lonnie said.

There was a pause.

“Might be a good idea,” Celeste said.

“It’s hard to accept,” he said.

Another pause.

“We have to take help when we need it,” she said.

Celeste looked down at her knitting, and Lonnie sat with her in the quiet shop and thought about what happened when he opened a barbershop a few years earlier, as another effort of last resort. His dad, an Italian immigrant, had been a barber in New Jersey, and Lonnie decided to try it for himself after a dozen manufacturing job applications went unanswered in 2010. He enrolled in a local beauty school, graduated with a few dozen teenaged girls, took over the lease for a shop in Port St. Lucie and named it Man Cave. He had gone to work with his scissors and his clippers every day, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, standing on the curb and waving a handmade sign to advertise haircuts for \$5. He had done a total of 11 cuts in three months. But what tore him up inside had nothing to do with the lonely echo of his feet on the linoleum floor or the empty cash register or the weeks that went by without a single customer. No, what convinced him to close the shop — the memory that stuck with him even now — were

the weeks when old friends had come in to get their hair cut twice. He couldn't stand the idea of being pitied. He hated that his problems had become a burden to anyone else.

He wondered: Sixty years old now, and who was he? A maker? A taker?

"I'm not ready to sign up for this yet," he said.

"Soon we might have to," she said.

He tucked Nerios's business card into his back pocket.

"I know," he said. "I'm keeping it."

IBD

[Secret Pakistani report reveals new details of Seal Team 6 lethal raid on bin Laden](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

It was a moonless May night when his youngest wife, Amal, got her turn to sleep with Osama bin Laden. Suddenly, it sounded like a severe storm was gathering just outside their Pakistan housing compound.

A secret Pakistani commission report into the humiliating U.S. commando raid on its soil two years ago has produced a fascinating trove of new details into the fugitive life of bin Laden and the Seal Team 6 raid that assassinated him.

The 336-page report, which was leaked to Al-Jazeera, is a searing indictment of the "collective failures" and "gross incompetence" of Pakistani military and intelligence authorities that allowed the world's most-wanted man and his family entourage to move with freedom around Pakistan for nine years.

And then to be so grossly unprepared for the deadly raid by a presumed ally, which it calls "an act of war."

The commission's account details the confused reactions within the bin Laden compound in Abbottabad as U.S. stealth helicopters suddenly appeared overhead in a dusty, post-midnight thunder, disgorging masked commandos who moved into and through the house with lightning speed.

Armed with weapons with silencers and thin red beams of light, the SEALs collected scores of items, including computer hard and flash drives and documents, and did not hesitate to kill or wound anyone making a false move, including Amal, who rushed a soldier.

The commission heard testimony from 201 witnesses, including bin Laden family members. They told of the SEALs initially appearing uncertain that the tall man they shot in an upstairs

bedroom was their target. They brought family member after family member to look at the corpse, which had a bullet hole center forehead with blood streaming back through his hair.

Some family called bin Laden by an obscure family name that initially confused the SEALs, who took photos and DNA samples. But other SEALs speaking Arabic and Urdu with foreign accents clarified the identify and the body quickly disappeared.

The report on the [al Jazeera website](#) also describes how:

The SEALs achieved complete surprise. Although the team had trained for a fierce firefight, anticipating booby traps and possibly a mined roof, the family said it never expected an attack, possibly lulled by nearly a decade of successful seclusion.

The assault came on a quiet, dark night when Amal left the other wives to go upstairs to bin Laden's small bedroom. She said he did reach for a weapon during the assault, which began shortly before 1 a.m. And he ordered all family out of his room, but they refused.

She's the one who rushed a SEAL and was shot in the knee. She was left on a bed while other family were taken and searched by the men. In 37 minutes the foreigners were gone.

The report tells of the family's confined lives in the compound's cramped rooms, how the custom buildings had numerous electricity meters to mask their substantial usage and how when one servant's daughter recognized bin Laden on TV, women were banned from ever watching.

It also reveals how bin Laden feared a nearby tree grove could harbor spies. And an almost humorously incongruous detail that whenever bin Laden exercised outdoors in the courtyard, he wore a large cowboy hat to cover his face. Not exactly the ideal head-covering to blend into a turbaned society.

It tells of their movements around Pakistan before settling into the custom compound in 2005, about the time Pakistan officially closed the books on its bin Laden hunt.

And how local police once stopped the car of the world's most-hunted man for speeding. Apparently, they did not recognize bin Laden and the driver-bodyguard settled the violation, presumably with a bribe.

The commission raises the question of possible complicity by Pakistani intelligence and military officials both in allowing bin Laden refuge all those years and in creating their own plausible deniability about the SEAL raid through an utter lack of defensive detection, which remains uncorrected.

The bin Laden compound, whose residents never emerged to mingle with neighbors, apparently aroused no official suspicions despite its immense size, tall walls topped with barbed-wire and proximity to both the capital and an army garrison.

Despite an immense explosion and a huge ensuing fire as SEALs destroyed a downed helicopter and the clatter of several departing choppers, Pakistani troops did not arrive at the compound for an hour after the raid.

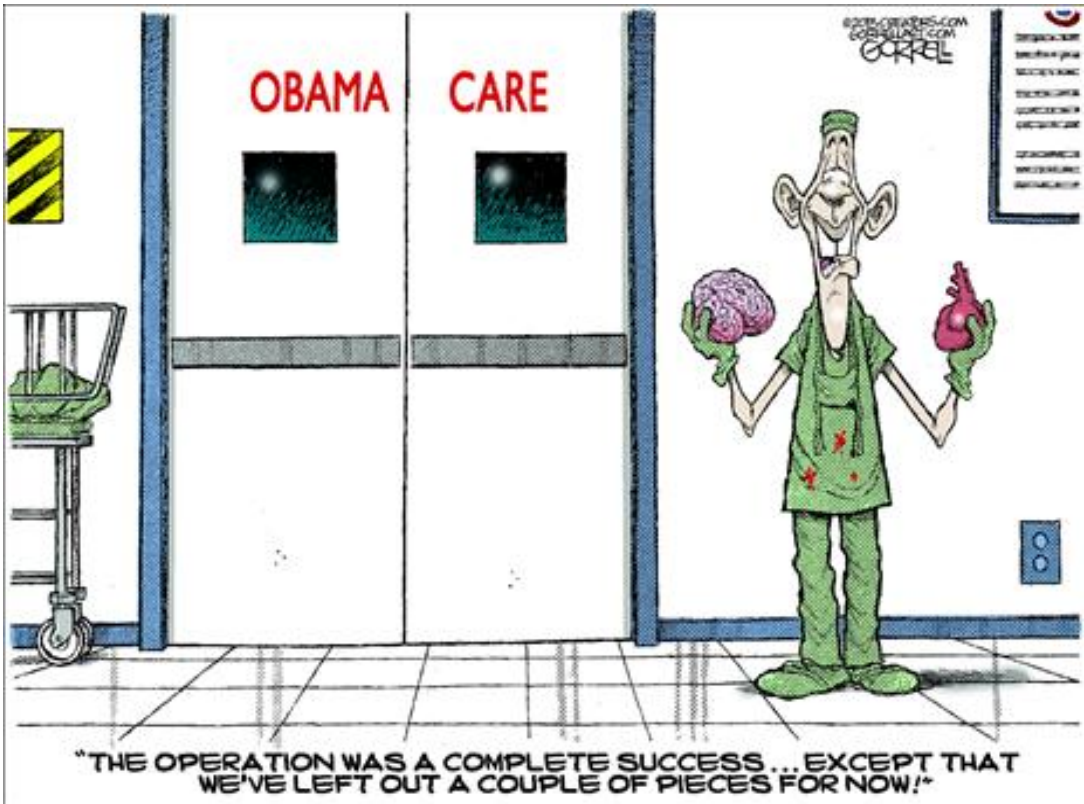
And military officials explained that the incoming and outgoing American planes were not detected because for some reason the low-level radar facing war-torn Afghanistan was on a "peacetime," or inactive, setting.

The report offers no definitive collusion conclusions. But it spares no condemnation of the government, which helps explain the report's quarantine. It found that "culpable negligence and incompetence at almost all levels of government can more or less be conclusively established". And it warned that without massive reforms, Pakistan remains vulnerable to more such raids.

The commission also revealed one other personal detail. Before his surprise demise, the terrorist chieftain had written a last will and testament. The family declined to share the document with members.

But one bin Laden wife said that her hubby, who had over the years called for so many thousands to martyr themselves in his jihad, had explicitly written that he did not want any of his children to join al Qaeda.







WHO SAYS I DON'T HAVE
A LINE-ITEM VETO?



OBAMACARE
✓ CRONY WAIVERS
- ~~SMALL BUSINESS EXCHANGES~~
- ~~EMPLOYER MANDATE~~