

July 21, 2013

Jonathan Tobin says the Egyptians are right to ignore advice coming from our government.

The Obama administration has been forced to navigate a difficult path in the past week. The fall of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt has forced it to balance its rhetorical support of democracy with the necessity to acknowledge that the military coup that forced Mohamed Morsi from office was a product of a popular backlash against the Brotherhood's excesses and drive for total power. But as much as Washington has slowly begun distancing itself from the strategy of embracing the Brotherhood that characterized U.S. policy for the past year, the president still can't quite grasp the realities of the conflict in Cairo. The U.S. decision to pressure the military to release Islamists they have arrested, or to include them in a new government, is exactly the sort of tone deaf advice that has cratered America's reputation in Egypt.

But the fact that the military is rejecting Obama's advice and thereby endangering the more than \$2 billion a year they get in U.S. aid shows just how out of touch the administration is with the reality on the ground. The administration is treading a bit more carefully on Egypt than it was a year ago, when they were strong-arming the army into letting the Brotherhood take over. But Obama and his foreign policy team need to wrap their brains around a basic truth that the Egyptian generals are forced to deal with: the conflict with a group like the Brotherhood is a zero-sum game. Allowing the Islamists freedom to organize or letting Morsi re-enter the government would merely give the Brotherhood a leg up in its effort to seize back the reins of power. And anyone, include the fools in the State Department and the White House, who thinks the Brotherhood will stop at anything once they gain back what they have lost, understands nothing about the movement. ...

Good column from David Goldman on the problems of blacks.

My earliest memory is looking up at a circle of black and white faces. I was seated in the living room of the family home in Edison Township, N.J., and the group I saw was the local chapter of the NAACP. My association with the civil rights movement goes back to the age of two. The year would have been 1953 or 1954, and my parents were left-wing activists, among the very few white people involved at the time. Their activism was deep. In 1950, my father drove from New York with a group of Columbia University students to protest the impending execution of Willie McGee, a black man convicted and eventually electrocuted for the alleged rape of a white woman in Mississippi. I followed my parents' example: in my senior year of high school I organized and led a student civil rights demonstration and marched next to Andrew Young. You can look it up.

I believe in civil rights as much now as I did then. That's why it's painful to watch the degeneration of the NAACP with its silly petition to persuade the Justice Department to bring a civil rights case against George Zimmerman. The leaders of what used to be a civil rights movement want to talk about everything but the main problem afflicting black people in the United States. That is the breakdown of the black family.

Just 29% of black women over the age of 15 were married in 2010, according to the Census Bureau's comprehensive Current Population Survey. That compares to 54% of white women. At

all ages, black women were about half as likely to be married as white women. That is an astonishing number.

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John Fund reports on progress in the IRS investigation.

Finally we may be getting somewhere in the IRS scandal involving the targeting and harassment of tea-party groups applying for tax exemptions. At Thursday's House Government Reform and Oversight hearing, some names were at last attached to some of the IRS's most questionable actions in the scandal.

Back in May, top IRS officials Steven Miller and Lois Lerner insisted that "rogue" agents in the Cincinnati office acted without direction from IRS headquarters in Washington. But Elizabeth Hofacre, who was the Cincinnati agent in charge of reviewing flagged tea-party applications, says she "had no autonomy or authority" to act on applications and so she simply sat on them. She blamed Carter Hull, an IRS lawyer in Washington, for the delays, saying that he directed her in how to treat problem cases but never gave her any feedback.

For his part, Hull said he had tried to tackle the growing pile of applications, but he was told they must first go through a multi-tier review that involved Lerner's office and that of William Wilkins, the IRS's chief counsel. Wilkins, a political appointee of President Obama's, has been involved in Democratic politics as a staffer and campaign donor for over 30 years. Wilkins's office did not have its first meeting with IRS officials on the tea-party applications until August 2011; at that point the applications had been pending for so long that it was decided that the IRS needed to demand updated information from the tea-party groups, further slowing down the process. Hull says that the behavior of IRS management during this whole process was "unusual."

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Peggy Noonan adds some details.

... When the scandal broke two months ago, in May, IRS leadership in Washington claimed the harassment of tea-party and other conservative groups requesting tax-exempt status was confined to the Cincinnati office, where a few rogue workers bungled the application process. Lois Lerner, then the head of the exempt organizations unit in Washington, said "line people in Cincinnati" did work that was "not so fine." They asked questions that "weren't really necessary," she claimed, and operated without "the appropriate level of sensitivity." But the targeting was "not intentional." Ousted acting commissioner Steven Miller also put it off on "people in Cincinnati." They provided "horrible customer service."

House investigators soon talked to workers in the Cincinnati office, who said everything they did came from Washington. Elizabeth Hofacre, in charge of processing tea-party applications in

Cincinnati, told investigators that her work was overseen and directed by a lawyer in the IRS Washington office named Carter Hull.

Now comes Mr. Hull's testimony. And like Ms. Hofacre, he pointed his finger upward. Mr. Hull—a 48-year IRS veteran and an expert on tax exemption law—told investigators that tea-party applications under his review were sent upstairs within the Washington office, at the direction of Lois Lerner.

In April 2010, Hull was assigned to scrutinize certain tea-party applications. He requested more information from the groups. After he received responses, he felt he knew enough to determine whether the applications should be approved or denied.

But his recommendations were not carried out.

Michael Seto, head of Mr. Hull's unit, also spoke to investigators. He told them Lois Lerner made an unusual decision: Tea-party applications would undergo additional scrutiny—a multilayered review. ...

The IRS is still a scandal and ethanol is still a boondoggle says Walter Russell Mead.

... This is a mess even before you consider the foibles of the source of the lion's share of this ethanol: corn. Before the Renewable Fuel Standard set these arbitrarily high targets, the US used just 23 percent of its corn to produce ethanol. Last year 43 percent of our corn crops went towards producing the biofuel. That shift has driven up global prices for corn, starving the world's poor and potentially fueling food riots. And to what end? Corn ethanol is categorized as a biofuel, but it doesn't reduce emissions. Advanced biofuels produced from such sources as sugarcane and algae pass the green test, but they haven't yet proven their commercial viability.

...

Michael Walsh celebrates Jay Leno unbound.

... As Jay Leno nears the end of his nearly 22-year run as the host of The Tonight Show, the lantern-jawed comic with the thick Boston accent finds himself in an unusual predicament. Having won the War of Johnny Carson's Succession (1992), successfully fended off a challenge from upstart Conan O'Brien during a brief interregnum (2009–10), and gracefully bowed to the inevitable with the accession of Jimmy Fallon to the late-night throne next year, Leno now finds himself cast in a new role: conservative hero.

Leno's always played his politics, or lack of them, close to the vest, insisting that his job as host of The Tonight Show is business, not politics. And he's right, of course. Hard as it may be for younger readers to believe, there was a time in this country when not everything was political, and you could get through one whole day at work without talking about #\$\$%@BUSH!&@ or Barry with your co-workers.*

At the same time, comics used to play their historical role as jesters to the hilt, mocking the Kennedys at the height of Camelot (Vaughn Meader), whaling away at a scowling Tricky Dick (David Frye), impersonating a bumbling Gerald Ford (Chevy Chase) or an inarticulate George H. W. Bush (Dana Carvey). Reagan and Clinton also came in for substantial comic abuse during

their administrations, and Will Ferrell made an entire cottage industry out of ridiculing George W. Bush.

And then, with the election of Barack Obama, it all stopped. Suddenly, there was nothing funny about the president of the United States — not his massive ego, his pomposity, his Bush-like inability to speak extemporaneously, his golf game, even his jump shot. “The only person that’s made jokes about President Obama in the last five years is him,” observed comic Colin Quinn. “He has to do it at the White House Correspondents Dinner. That’s how bad it’s gotten.”

Enter Leno Unbound. ...

Whadaya know? Good advice from the [NY Times](#) - low tech mosquito deterrent. ... *our friends had come up with a solution that saved us from having to deal with bug repellents or, worse, bites and itches.*

On a low table, they set up a small electric fan, perhaps 12 inches high, that swept back and forth, sending a gentle breeze across the grassy area where people were sitting.

That was it. No citronella candles, no bug zappers, no DEET, nothing expensive or high-tech. Yet amazingly, it worked. As far as I could tell, no mosquitoes flew into the vicinity of the simulated wind; nobody was bitten.

As we left, I asked our hosts about the fan idea; they credited a mutual friend at the barbecue. He, in turn, paid tribute to a friend of his: Frank Swift, president of Swift Food Equipment Inc. in Philadelphia.

So I reached out to Mr. Swift, who replied by e-mail. “The solution came from trying to think like a bug,” he explained, “and realizing I don’t like flying into a 15 m.p.h. wind.” ...



Contentions

[Egyptians Right to Ignore Obama’s Advice](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

The Obama administration has been forced to navigate a difficult path in the past week. The fall of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt has forced it to balance its rhetorical support of democracy with the necessity to acknowledge that the military coup that forced Mohamed Morsi from office was a product of a popular backlash against the Brotherhood’s excesses and drive for total power. But as much as Washington has slowly begun distancing itself from the strategy of embracing the Brotherhood that characterized U.S. policy for the past year, the president still can’t quite grasp the realities of the conflict in Cairo. The U.S. decision [to pressure the military](#) to

release Islamists they have arrested, or to include them in a new government, is exactly the sort of tone deaf advice that has cratered America's reputation in Egypt.

But the fact that the military is rejecting Obama's advice and thereby endangering the more than \$2 billion a year they get in U.S. aid shows just how out of touch the administration is with the reality on the ground. The administration is treading a bit more carefully on Egypt than it was a year ago, when they were strong-arming the army into letting the Brotherhood take over. But Obama and his foreign policy team need to wrap their brains around a basic truth that the Egyptian generals are forced to deal with: the conflict with a group like the Brotherhood is a zero-sum game. Allowing the Islamists freedom to organize or letting Morsi re-enter the government would merely give the Brotherhood a leg up in its effort to seize back the reins of power. And anyone, include the fools in the State Department and the White House, who thinks the Brotherhood will stop at anything once they gain back what they have lost, understands nothing about the movement.

On the surface, the U.S. position on the current impasse in Egypt seems reasonable. The call to de-escalate the conflict and to reconstruct a democratic process is in line with America's values as well as a belief that civil war is the worst possible outcome for both Egyptians and regional stability.

But the Egyptian generals understand that this was their one chance to stop the Brotherhood from irrevocably changing their country. Prior to the election they won, the Brotherhood worked hard to improve their image and sell the West on the notion that they were merely religious democrats who wouldn't impose their beliefs on the rest of the country. But once in power, they proved to be not only incompetent at the business of running the country but quickly moved to seize total power in a way that might make it difficult if not impossible to ever depose them via democratic means. The demonstrators that took to the streets in unprecedented numbers earlier this month understood it was a now-or-never moment in which they sought to take back the country before it was too late.

That's why the urgings of senior U.S. diplomat William Burns to the military to free the Brotherhood detainees or to bring them into a new coalition are being rejected. Once free, the Islamists won't be long in seeking to use their supporters to topple the new government and impose a new order that will ensure the end of any independent sources of power in Cairo.

It should also be noted that the Islamists were equally unwilling to listen to Burns. They, too, see the power struggle in terms that seem to have eluded the Americans. Seeking to bridge the gap between the Brotherhood and the secular liberals and their military supporters is as much of a fool's errand as Secretary of State John Kerry's latest effort to revive the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

At this point, there are no good options left for the United States. Neither side in the conflict in Egypt is perfect. But what Obama needs to understand is that though the Morsi/Brotherhood government may have been elected, it was as much a threat to freedom as the military. It's time for the U.S. to step back and let the new government do what it must to ensure the Islamists won't launch a civil war. A failure to do so won't help democracy. Nor will it enhance America's influence in a country where Obama already has zero credibility.

Pajamas Media

[What Do You Do When The Oppressed Are Their Own Worst Oppressors?](#)

by David Goldman (Spengler)

My earliest memory is looking up at a circle of black and white faces. I was seated in the living room of the family home in Edison Township, N.J., and the group I saw was the local chapter of the NAACP. My association with the civil rights movement goes back to the age of two. The year would have been 1953 or 1954, and my parents were left-wing activists, among the very few white people involved at the time. Their activism was deep. In 1950, my father drove from New York with a group of Columbia University students to protest the impending execution of [Willie McGee](#), a black man convicted and eventually electrocuted for the alleged rape of a white woman in Mississippi. I followed my parents' example: in my senior year of high school I organized and led a student civil rights demonstration and marched next to Andrew Young. You can [look it up](#).

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The percentage of out-of-wedlock births has risen from 18% in 1980 to 40% in 2010. 29% of white births were non-marital, against 73% for black births. That's nearly three-quarters of all black births.

Young black men without a high school diploma are more likely to be in jail than to be employed, reports the [Pew Institute](#):

Collateral Costs details the concentration of incarceration among men, the young, the uneducated and African Americans. One in 87 working-aged white men is in prison or jail compared with 1 in 36 Hispanic men and 1 in 12 African American men. Today, more African American men aged 20 to 34 without a high school diploma or GED are behind bars (37 percent) than are employed (26 percent).

The report also shows more than 2.7 million minor children now have a parent behind bars, or 1 in every 28. For African American children the number is 1 in 9, a rate that has more than quadrupled in the past 25 years.

The worst oppressors of young black men are older black men who abandon their children. And the second-worst oppressors of young black men are other young black men. [94%](#) of black murder victims are killed by blacks. The accelerating decline of the black family portends a much worse situation in the future.

Why have civil rights organizations and black clergy wagered their reputations on the Zimmerman case? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the issues that really concern African-Americans simply are too painful to discuss. Five years after the ultimate boost to self-esteem — the election of the first black president — things are getting worse faster. If black leaders — from Barack Obama and Eric Holder on down — can't talk about the real problems, the prospects for the future are frightening indeed.

Postscript: Conservatives should view African-Americans' emotional response to the death of Trayvon Martin with empathy. What makes the incident so hard to bear is that so many young black men die every day through involvement in violent crime. Trayvon Martin, whatever his past misbehavior might have been, did not have a record of violent crime, and was carrying no weapon when he confronted George Zimmerman. He was not lost to society as so many black youth sadly are lost. The emotion is understandable in a community that is suffering terrible losses, and finds intolerable the loss of this particular young man. But that does not excuse the likes of Eric Holder for manipulating these emotions for political advantage, nor does it excuse the NAACP and the rest of the so-called civil rights establishment for its demagoguery.

National Review

[Name That Bureaucrat](#)

The IRS scandal shows that those who make decisions must be held responsible.

by John Fund

Finally we may be getting somewhere in the IRS scandal involving the targeting and harassment of tea-party groups applying for tax exemptions. At Thursday's House Government Reform and Oversight hearing, some names were at last attached to some of the IRS's most questionable actions in the scandal.

Back in May, top IRS officials Steven Miller and Lois Lerner insisted that "rogue" agents in the Cincinnati office acted without direction from IRS headquarters in Washington. But Elizabeth Hofacre, who was the Cincinnati agent in charge of reviewing flagged tea-party applications, says she "had no autonomy or authority" to act on applications and so she simply sat on them. She blamed Carter Hull, an IRS lawyer in Washington, for the delays, saying that he directed her in how to treat problem cases but never gave her any feedback.



Elizabeth Hofacre (left) and Carter Hull testify

For his part, Hull said he had tried to tackle the growing pile of applications, but he was told they must first go through a multi-tier review that involved Lerner's office and that of William Wilkins, the IRS's chief counsel. Wilkins, a political appointee of President Obama's, has been involved in Democratic politics as a staffer and campaign donor for over 30 years. Wilkins's office did not have its first meeting with IRS officials on the tea-party applications until August 2011; at that point the applications had been pending for so long that it was decided that the IRS needed to demand updated information from the tea-party groups, further slowing down the process. Hull says that the behavior of IRS management during this whole process was "unusual."

It's taken nearly three months to begin to peel back the onion and discover the chain of command in the IRS scandal. One of the bureaucracy's biggest weapons against scrutiny and accountability is its ability to hide who actually makes decisions and who should be held responsible for them. Back in May, former IRS commissioner Douglas Shulman didn't even pretend to know how the scandal had happened. Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus, a Democrat, asked him, "What caused that culture to develop, and what did you do about correcting that culture?" Shulman responded: "Mr. Chairman, I can't say I know that answer."

Similarly, acting IRS commissioner Steven Miller was asked by Representative Kevin Brady, a Texas Republican: "Who is responsible for targeting these individuals?" Miller responded: "I don't have names for you."

Later, he acknowledged that senior technical adviser Nancy Marks had identified someone as responsible for the targeting policy. When asked who it was, he repeated his mantra of the day: "I don't remember."

It's an old tactic in Washington to attempt to "move on" from instances of bureaucratic abuse without assigning blame. J. Russell George, the IRS's inspector general, revealed to Congress that a government official had recent "willful unauthorized access" to private tax documents. His office presented the evidence to the Department of Justice, but "the case was declined for prosecution." George thought three other cases involving the access of tax documents involved "inadvertent" behavior, but it appears Justice didn't do much checking on its own and declined to prosecute any of them.

Iowa senator Chuck Grassley, the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, wrote Attorney General Eric Holder this month demanding answers. "The public needs to know whether the decision not to prosecute these individuals was politically motivated and whether the individuals were held accountable in any other way," he wrote. Grassley said the IRS scandal may be expanding: Inspector General George recently told him his office is now investigating two cases in which the IRS may have targeted political candidates for an audit.

Morton Blackwell is head of the conservative Leadership Institute. A few years ago his organization went through an intrusive IRS audit which found no problems. He thinks it vital that the IRS scandal be pursued vigorously.

"If nothing ends up happening to the abusive employees, if no one is fired or demoted or disciplined, it will be very dangerous for all of us," he told me. "Bureaucrats will conclude you can do just about any abuse of power with impunity."

One of the reasons scandals in the bureaucracy can occur so easily is that the modern administrative state makes accountability so hard. “With government’s ever-expanding mission it’s impossible to know where the buck stops,” says New York University professor Paul Light, an expert on reforming government. “Accountability has been shredded, and you can’t tell who makes the decision, where the information gets stuck, or who is responsible for doing the job well.” In a 2005 study, he found an average of 18 layers “between, say, the secretary of agriculture and the forest ranger, or the secretary of the interior and the oil-rig inspector — up from seven layers in 1960.”

But the biggest problem with our bureaucracy is not its complexity. It is its ability to sidestep democratic procedures and make decisions on its own. Congress has increasingly delegated authority to agencies run by unelected bureaucrats who have incredible discretion in implementing laws that in turn can be incredibly vague. The new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created by the Dodd-Frank financial-regulation bill, was given the following mandate by Congress: “Ensure that all consumers have access to makers for consumer financial products and services . . . [that are] fair, transparent and competitive.” Whoever interprets those high-sounding phrases is making law, not following it.

That’s why it’s all the more important to both shrink the power of bureaucrats and make them as accountable as possible. This week, Representative Lynn Jenkins (R., Kan.) introduced the Citizen Empowerment Act as a step in the right direction. It would allow any citizen to record his meetings and telephone exchanges with federal regulatory officials engaged in enforcement actions, and it would require that citizens be informed of their right to do so. Last year, federal agencies conducted more than 939,000 enforcement actions, including trials. That’s ten times the number of trials or similar actions that were held in federal courts.

It would also help if every rule, every edict, and every decision memo contained the names of the people responsible for its creation and execution. Some members of Congress are already drafting legislation to require this. Some names would be accessible to the general public. Others, such as those on decision memos and other similar documents, would be available to members of Congress, who currently have to pry them out of the executive branch with letters or oversight hearings. As a journalist, I’ve found that bureaucrats absolutely hate having their name attached to anything — they react to sunlight the way Dracula does. It’s time to help them overcome their desire for anonymity by making them responsible for their actions.

If we don’t, we will only have ourselves to blame if this country descends into what Alexis de Tocqueville warned could befall America: “democratic despotism.” Back in 1840, he warned of “an immense and tutelary power . . . [that] every day renders the exercise of the free agency of man less useful and less frequent.”

The lesson of the IRS scandal so far is that the despotism de Tocqueville feared is a real threat to our liberties, and one of the weapons we must use against it is to call out the bureaucrats who so frequently control our lives and insist they explain their actions.

WSJ

A Bombshell in the IRS Scandal

No, it wasn't confined to a few rogue workers in Cincinnati.

by Peggy Noonan

The IRS scandal was connected this week not just to the Washington office—that had been established—but to the office of the chief counsel.

That is a bombshell—such a big one that it managed to emerge in spite of an unfocused, frequently off-point congressional hearing in which some members seemed to have accidentally woken up in the middle of a committee room, some seemed unaware of the implications of what their investigators had uncovered, one pretended that the investigation should end if IRS workers couldn't say the president had personally called and told them to harass his foes, and one seemed to be holding a filibuster on Pakistan.

Still, what landed was a bombshell. And Democrats know it. Which is why they are so desperate to make the investigation go away. They know, as Republicans do, that the chief counsel of the IRS is one of only two Obama political appointees in the entire agency.

To quickly review why the new information, which came most succinctly in a nine-page congressional letter to IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel, is big news:



IRS Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division revenue agent Elizabeth Hofacre, left, and retired IRS tax law specialist Carter Hull testify before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Capitol Hill on Thursday.

When the scandal broke two months ago, in May, IRS leadership in Washington claimed the harassment of tea-party and other conservative groups requesting tax-exempt status was confined to the Cincinnati office, where a few rogue workers bungled the application process. Lois Lerner, then the head of the exempt organizations unit in Washington, said "line people in Cincinnati" did work that was "not so fine." They asked questions that "weren't really necessary," she claimed, and operated without "the appropriate level of sensitivity." But the targeting was

"not intentional." Ousted acting commissioner Steven Miller also put it off on "people in Cincinnati." They provided "horrible customer service."

House investigators soon talked to workers in the Cincinnati office, who said everything they did came from Washington. Elizabeth Hofacre, in charge of processing tea-party applications in Cincinnati, told investigators that her work was overseen and directed by a lawyer in the IRS Washington office named Carter Hull.

Now comes Mr. Hull's testimony. And like Ms. Hofacre, he pointed his finger upward. Mr. Hull—a 48-year IRS veteran and an expert on tax exemption law—told investigators that tea-party applications under his review were sent upstairs within the Washington office, at the direction of Lois Lerner.

In April 2010, Hull was assigned to scrutinize certain tea-party applications. He requested more information from the groups. After he received responses, he felt he knew enough to determine whether the applications should be approved or denied.

But his recommendations were not carried out.

Michael Seto, head of Mr. Hull's unit, also spoke to investigators. He told them Lois Lerner made an unusual decision: Tea-party applications would undergo additional scrutiny—a multilayered review.

Mr. Hull told House investigators that at some point in the winter of 2010-11, Ms. Lerner's senior adviser, whose name is withheld in the publicly released partial interview transcript, told him the applications would require further review:

Q: "Did [the senior adviser to Ms. Lerner] indicate to you whether she agreed with your recommendations?"

A: "She did not say whether she agreed or not. She said it should go to chief counsel."

Q: "The IRS chief counsel?"

A: "The IRS chief counsel."

The IRS chief counsel is named William Wilkins. And again, he is one of only two Obama political appointees in the IRS.

What was the chief counsel's office looking for? The letter to Mr. Werfel says Mr. Hull's supervisor, Ronald Shoemaker, provided insight: The counsel's office wanted, in the words of the congressional committees, "information about the applicants' political activities leading up to the 2010 election." Mr. Shoemaker told investigators he didn't find that kind of question unreasonable, but he found the counsel's office to be "not very forthcoming": "We discussed it to some extent and they indicated that they wanted more development of possible political activity or political intervention right before the election period."

It's almost as if—my words—the conservative organizations in question were, during two major election cycles, deliberately held in a holding pattern.

So: What the IRS originally claimed was a rogue operation now reaches up not only to the Washington office, but into the office of the IRS chief counsel himself.

At the generally lacking House Oversight Committee Hearings on Thursday, some big things still got said.

Ms. Hofacre of the Cincinnati office testified that when she was given tea-party applications, she had to kick them upstairs. When she was given non-tea-party applications, they were sent on for normal treatment. Was she told to send liberal or progressive groups for special scrutiny? No, she did not scrutinize the applications of liberal or progressive groups. "I would send those to general inventory." Who got extra scrutiny? "They were all tea-party and patriot cases." She became "very frustrated" by the "micromanagement" from Washington. "It was like working in lost luggage." She applied to be transferred.

For his part, Mr. Hull backed up what he'd told House investigators. He described what was, essentially, a big, lengthy runaround in the Washington office in which no one was clear as to their reasons but everything was delayed. The multitiered scrutiny of the targeted groups was, he said, "unusual."

It was Maryland's Rep. Elijah Cummings, the panel's ranking Democrat, who, absurdly, asked Ms. Hofacre if the White House called the Cincinnati office to tell them what to do and whether she has knowledge of the president of the United States digging through the tax returns of citizens. Ms. Hofacre looked surprised. No, she replied.

It wasn't hard to imagine her thought bubble: *Do congressmen think presidents call people like me and say, "Don't forget to harass my enemies"? Are congressmen that stupid?*

Mr. Cummings is not, and his seeming desperation is telling. Recent congressional information leads to Washington—and now to very high up at the IRS. Meaning this is the point at which a scandal goes nowhere or, maybe, everywhere.

Rep. Trey Gowdy, a South Carolina Republican, finally woke the proceedings up with what he called "the evolution of the defense" since the scandal began. First, Ms. Lerner planted a question at a conference. Then she said the Cincinnati office did it—a narrative that was advanced by the president's spokesman, [Jay Carney](#). Then came the suggestion the IRS was too badly managed to pull off a sophisticated conspiracy. Then the charge that liberal groups were targeted too—"we did it against both ends of the political spectrum." When the inspector general of the IRS said no, it was conservative groups that were targeted, he came under attack. Now the defense is that the White House wasn't involved, so case closed.

This is one Republican who is right about evolution.

Those trying to get to the bottom of the scandal have to dig in, pay attention. The administration's defenders, and their friends in the press, have made some progress in confusing the issue through misdirection and misstatement.

This is the moment things go forward or stall. Republicans need to find out how high the scandal went and why, exactly, it went there. To do that they'll have to up their game.

American Interest

Ethanol Still a Boondoggle

by Walter Russell Mead



The US has a law on the books, the Renewable Fuel Standard, that mandates an ever-increasing amount of ethanol to be blended into gasoline. Under the 2007 law, oil companies must blend the required amount of ethanol or, in lieu of that, buy credits, known as renewable identification numbers (RINs). The price of those credits has skyrocketed this year more than 2,300 percent, [hitting an all-time high](#) yesterday.

The ethanol targets set by the Renewable Fuel Standard are out of sync with both the demand for ethanol and its potential supply. Gasoline consumption is [projected](#) to be relatively flat this year, a change that the Renewable Fuel Standard lacks a mechanism to account for. This shortfall in demand could potentially be fixed if producers up the percentage of ethanol they mix in with their gasoline past the current industry standard of 10 percent, but few oil companies are willing to move past this so-called “blend wall,” citing studies that link higher ethanol content with [engine damage](#). Even if refiners started blending in more ethanol, the supply problem remains: this year’s supply is [projected](#) to be less than the mandate.

All of this explains why oil companies are snatching up increasingly-rare RINs at ever-higher prices. Oh, the RIN-sanity!

This is a mess even before you consider the foibles of the source of the lion’s share of this ethanol: corn. Before the Renewable Fuel Standard set these arbitrarily high targets, the US used just [23 percent](#) of its corn to produce ethanol. Last year [43 percent](#) of our corn crops went towards producing the biofuel. That shift has [driven up](#) global prices for corn, [starving](#) the world’s poor and potentially fueling food riots. And to what end? Corn ethanol is categorized as a biofuel, but it [doesn’t reduce emissions](#). Advanced biofuels produced from such sources as [sugarcane](#) and [algae](#) pass the green test, but they haven’t yet proven their commercial viability.

Two bills—one to [repeal](#) the Renewable Fuel Standard, the other to [reform](#) its targets to more reasonable levels—are making their way through Congress as we speak. The oil lobby is [heating up its rhetoric](#) to turn the tide against these mandates, and even the ethanol lobby [acknowledges](#) that these biofuels targets have been set too high.

The EU is planning on [nearly halving](#) its biofuels targets in the face of studies disproving the energy source's green credentials. For once, the US should follow Europe's lead on green energy policy.

National Review

[Leno Unbound](#)

Is the folksy Tonight Show host a secret conservative? No, but he plays one on TV.

by Michael Walsh

Congratulations to President Obama on being reelected president of the United States. Turns out it is not all bad news for the Republicans. It seems that depression is covered by Obamacare.

As Jay Leno nears the end of his nearly 22-year run as the host of *The Tonight Show*, the lantern-jawed comic with the thick Boston accent finds himself in an unusual predicament. Having won the War of Johnny Carson's Succession (1992), successfully fended off a challenge from upstart Conan O'Brien during a brief interregnum (2009–10), and gracefully bowed to the inevitable with the accession of Jimmy Fallon to the late-night throne next year, Leno now finds himself cast in a new role: conservative hero.

Leno's always played his politics, or lack of them, close to the vest, insisting that his job as host of *The Tonight Show* is business, not politics. And he's right, of course. Hard as it may be for younger readers to believe, there was a time in this country when not everything was political, and you could get through one whole day at work without talking about #\$\$%@BUSH!*&@ or Barry with your co-workers.

At the same time, comics used to play their historical role as jesters to the hilt, mocking the Kennedys at the height of Camelot (Vaughn Meader), whaling away at a scowling Tricky Dick (David Frye), impersonating a bumbling Gerald Ford (Chevy Chase) or an inarticulate George H. W. Bush (Dana Carvey). Reagan and Clinton also came in for substantial comic abuse during their administrations, and Will Ferrell made an entire cottage industry out of ridiculing George W. Bush.

And then, with the election of Barack Obama, it all stopped. Suddenly, there was nothing funny about the president of the United States — not his massive ego, his pomposity, his Bush-like inability to speak extemporaneously, his golf game, even his jump shot. "The only person that's made jokes about President Obama in the last five years is him," observed comic Colin Quinn. "He has to do it at the White House Correspondents Dinner. That's how bad it's gotten."

Enter Leno Unbound.

One of President Obama's winning points last night was about how sanctions against Iran are crippling their economy. And believe me, if anyone knows how to cripple an economy, it's President Obama.

As Leno edges both out the door and perhaps slightly rightward, he's become an object of derision for the Left. Jay's appeal to Middle America drives them crazy, since they inherently dislike the good old-fashioned, homey virtues of flyover country that Leno embodies and celebrates in his comedy. Further, there was never anything "post-funny" about Leno — no hip,

ironic detachment like David Letterman's, nor Conan's wisenheimer Harvard snark. With nothing to lose, Jay seems fresher and freer than he has been in years.

And yet, in a 2004 interview with Nikki Finke, the reigning queen of Hollywood gossip and news, Leno described himself as a liberal ("I'm not conservative. I've never voted that way in my life") and an equal-opportunity jokester who had a grand total of zero Republicans on his writing staff. What he wasn't, he insisted, was partisan:

You know I did the White House Correspondents Dinner this year, and this is the most partisan crowd. You do a joke about Bush, and half of them sit like this [his hands are in his lap] and the other half are applauding. And then I do Kerry jokes, and half the people are like this [his hands are in his lap again]. It's like the most juvenile atmosphere you could possibly imagine. And every now and then you do a joke that will cross both sides, so they both laugh.

Getting both sides to laugh has been the secret to Leno's success for decades, a task made easier by his image as a nice guy, which he is in reality too. When NBC took an axe to *The Tonight Show's* \$100 million budget last year, he took a major salary cut to keep as many on his staff employed as possible. I had a chance to watch him backstage and on the set in Burbank a few months ago, and it's clear he engenders strong loyalty from the folks who help make *The Tonight Show* such a long-running success.

But is Leno a closet conservative? In a town where open conservatives are still fairly rare — there are plenty of conservatives, but with a few prominent exceptions (e.g. Jon Voight), they prefer to keep their politics to themselves — there's no percentage in coming out if you don't have to. Should Leno decide to unretire and perhaps join the Fox network (not Fox News) as host of another late-night talk show, it would say absolutely nothing about his politics one way or the other.

Did you hear about this? The IRS has admitted they were targeting conservative groups. President Obama called it outrageous and said he would immediately have his Benghazi investigators look into it.

Okay, that one smarts. And there are signs that even the lefty comics are beginning to take the gloves off; libertarian Bill Maher has been especially tough on the president lately:

President Obama was in Germany and spoke at the Brandenburg Gate, which divided that city during the Cold War. Obama said: "It's taught me a lot. When I was a kid, West Germany taught me the importance of standing tall, and East Germany taught me the importance of reading everyone's mail."

So does that one. The thing you need to understand about Hollywood is that at the creative level, politics is not paramount. Some conservatives who've never worked a day in the Industry like to imagine that there's a vast conspiracy against them, but the fact is, Hollywood rewards good old-fashioned conservative virtues like talent, hard work, and an unwillingness ever to give up.

Just ask Jay Leno. But don't expect an answer.

NY Times

A Low-Tech Mosquito Deterrent

by William J. Broad

Over the Fourth of July holiday, my wife and I joined some friends for a barbecue in their backyard. The guests were lively and the space was lovely — grassy and open but shady and surrounded by lots of shrubs and trees.



In other words, it was perfect for mosquitoes — and indeed, closer inspection showed that they were thriving in all that greenery.

But our friends had come up with a solution that saved us from having to deal with bug repellents or, worse, bites and itches.

On a low table, they set up a small electric fan, perhaps 12 inches high, that swept back and forth, sending a gentle breeze across the grassy area where people were sitting.

That was it. No citronella candles, no bug zappers, no DEET, nothing expensive or high-tech. Yet amazingly, it worked. As far as I could tell, no mosquitoes flew into the vicinity of the simulated wind; nobody was bitten.

As we left, I asked our hosts about the fan idea; they credited a mutual friend at the barbecue. He, in turn, paid tribute to a friend of *his*: Frank Swift, president of Swift Food Equipment Inc. in Philadelphia.

So I reached out to Mr. Swift, who replied by e-mail. “The solution came from trying to think like a bug,” he explained, “and realizing I don’t like flying into a 15 m.p.h. wind.”

Outsmarting bugs with a fan may be a poorly known strategy. But the method, it turns out, is endorsed by the American Mosquito Control Association, a nonprofit group based in Mount Laurel, N.J., that publishes a journal bearing its name.

“Mosquitoes are relatively weak fliers,” it says on [its Web site](#), “so placing a large fan on your deck can provide a low-tech solution.” The group says mosquitoes fly slowly — from roughly 1 to 1.5 miles per hour, depending on the species.

Scientists have identified another factor. The breeze from a fan disperses the human emanations that allow female mosquitoes to zero in on us. (The guys are innocent! Honest! Females need the stolen blood for egg making.)

Humans exhale lots of carbon dioxide — the most widely recognized of the many likely mosquito attractants, including body heat and odors. When a female mosquito senses the invisible gas, she typically flies a zigzag path within the plume to track down its source.

In a wetland swarming with mosquitoes, entomologists from Michigan State University did an experiment that demonstrated not only the attractive power of a carbon dioxide trap but the effectiveness of plume disruption.

“Fan-generated wind strongly reduced the mosquito catches,” [the scientists wrote](#) in The Journal of Medical Entomology. “We recommend that fan-generated wind should be pursued as a practical means of protecting humans or pets from mosquitoes in the backyard setting.”

The recommendation has penetrated the blogosphere — a bit. “Sit near an electric fan while you are outside,” [eHow.com advises](#). “An oscillating fan works best, but a regular box fan will do. Mosquitoes aren’t strong enough to fly through the wind.”

In my experience, that kind of homey advice is lost amid all the ads and pitches for mosquito repellents and traps, which can cost hundreds of dollars.

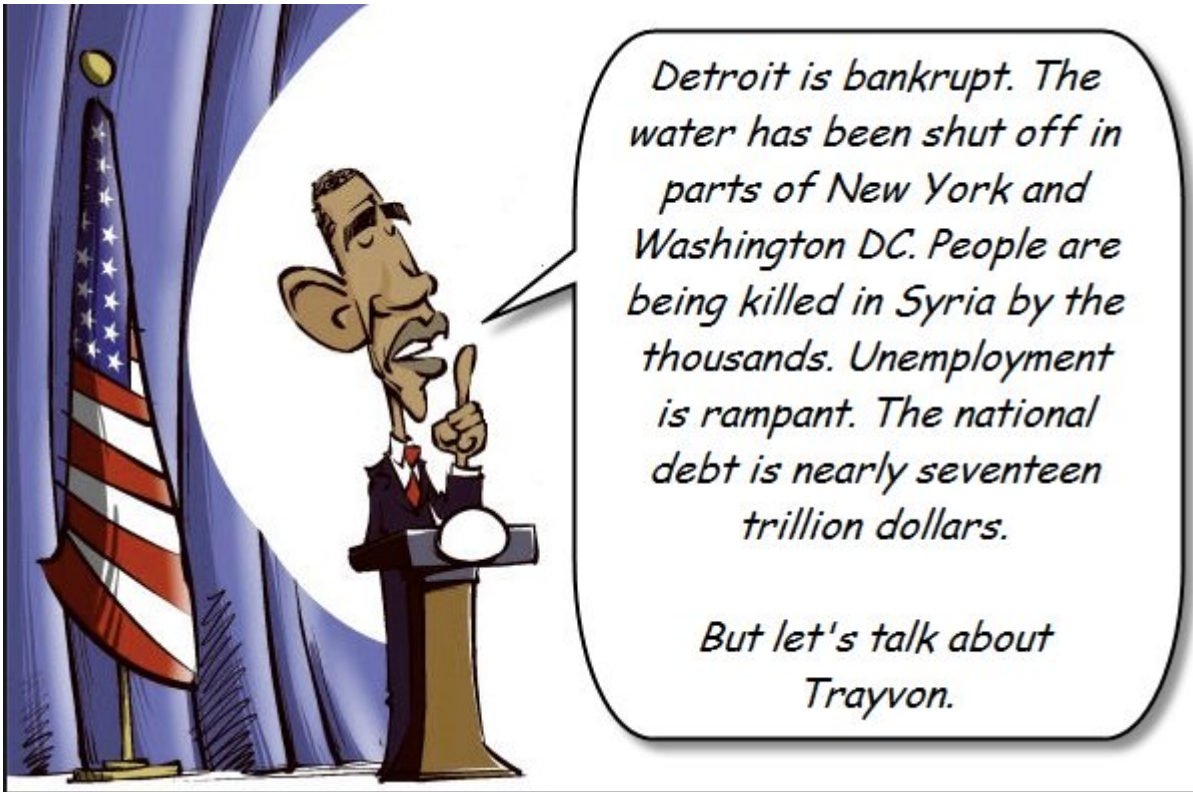
As for other popular remedies, the mosquito control association says repellent-infused mosquito coils provide only “some protection” at best, and it dismisses the candles with a shrug, saying their mild repellent action offers no significant advantage over other candles that give off lots of smoke.

By contrast, the simple fan seems like a sure thing. In the world of journalism, we call this news you can use.

Drudge



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