

October 23, 2013

Want to know how bad things are in DC? Jeff Jacoby says there's no chance JFK could get nominated by the dems now.

AS DEMOCRATS begin maneuvering for the 2016 presidential race, there isn't one who would think of disparaging John F. Kennedy's stature as a Democratic Party hero. Yet it's a pretty safe bet that none would dream of running on Kennedy's approach to government or embrace his political beliefs.

Today's Democratic Party — the home of Barack Obama, John Kerry, and Al Gore — wouldn't give the time of day to a candidate like JFK.

The 35th president was an ardent tax-cutter who championed across-the-board, top-to-bottom reductions in personal and corporate tax rates, slashed tariffs to promote free trade, and even spoke out against the "confiscatory" property taxes being levied in too many cities.

He was anything but a big-spending, welfare-state liberal. "I do not believe that Washington should do for the people what they can do for themselves through local and private effort," Kennedy bluntly avowed during the 1960 campaign. One of his first acts as president was to institute a pay cut for top White House staffers, and that was only the start of his budgetary austerity. "To the surprise of many of his appointees," longtime aide Ted Sorensen would later write, he "personally scrutinized every agency request with a cold eye and encouraged his budget director to say 'no.'"

On the other hand, he was a Cold War anticommunist who aggressively increased military spending. He faulted his Republican predecessor for tailoring the nation's military strategy to fit the budget, rather than the other way around. "We must refuse to accept a cheap, second-best defense," JFK said during his run for the White House. He made good on that pledge, pushing defense spending to 50 percent of federal expenditures and 9 percent of GDP, both far higher than today's levels. Speaking in Texas just hours before his death, he proudly took credit for building the US military into "a defense system second to none." ...

Andrew Malcolm reports on our soldiers lack of training.

While the president of the United States pitched his crumbling healthcare program like a late-night infomercial barker, the Army's chief of staff made a shocking admission about national defense.

Gen. Ray Odierno told a Washington conference Monday that the U.S. Army had not conducted any training in the last six months of the fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

And, he said, there currently are only two Army brigades rated combat-ready. That's a total of between 7,000 to 10,000 troops and less than one-third what the combat veteran regards as necessary for proper national security.

"Right now," Odierno said, "we have in the Army two brigades that are trained. That's it. Two."

Odierno also revealed that troops shipping out to Afghanistan now are prepared only to train and assist Afghan troops, not to conduct combat operations themselves. But, of course, there's no guarantee the Americans won't find themselves in combat while accompanying Afghan soldiers.

All this to obey Obama administration orders to drastically cut the Army and military spending and meet cuts under sequestration. Since the Obama Pentagon began the troop draw-down two years ago under the president's orders, more than 33,000 active duty soldiers have been cut. ...

Even though we want to look away, it is time for seeing what's going on with the healthcare rollout. Megan McArdle starts us off.

Another week has passed, which apparently means that it's time for another terrifying article from Sharon LaFraniere, Ian Austen and Robert Pear on the federal health-care exchanges.

Federal contractors have identified most of the main problems crippling President Obama's online health insurance marketplace, but the administration has been slow to issue orders for fixing those flaws, and some contractors worry that the system may be weeks away from operating smoothly, people close to the project say.

Administration officials approached the contractors last week to see if they could perform the necessary repairs and reboot the system by Nov. 1. However, that goal struck many contractors as unrealistic, at least for major components of the system. Some specialists working on the project said the online system required such extensive repairs that it might not operate smoothly until after the Dec. 15 deadline for people to sign up for coverage starting in January, although that view is not universally shared.

Time to panic? No. But it's time to prepare to panic. It sounds like the earliest anyone is projecting fixes is sometime in the middle of November. That's the time when it absolutely has to work -- and if it doesn't, we should panic. Maybe not "Get in the shelter, Homer!" panic, but I'd definitely think about rebalancing the 401(k) and maybe voting in some politicians who will treat this with the gravity it deserves, rather than giving Rose Garden speeches saying that everything's basically A-OK if you don't look at the parts that don't work! Because make no mistake: If this piece doesn't work, then most of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act doesn't work. ...

In 2004 a NY Times columnist said the Katrina problems came from the fact that DC was run by people who hate government. David Bernstein takes that to mean the healthcare failures are the result of an administration filled with secret libertarians. Of course, it might also be proof of Pickerhead's Iron Rule -- Government always f--ks up!

Why is the Obamacare Rollout Failing?

Why, it's obviously because President Barack Obama and his top aides hate government, and therefore can't be trusted to run a major government program. When the government is run by political forces committed to the belief that government is always the problem, never the

solution, that belief tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Key priorities are neglected; key functions are privatized; and key people, the competent public servants who make government work, either leave or are driven out. What we really need is a government that works, because it's run by people who understand that sometimes government is the solution, after all.

Doesn't make any sense to you? It made just as little sense when Paul Krugman made the argument in 2008, imaginatively (to say the least) positing that George W. Bush and John McCain were wild-eyed libertarians, and that the former's purported libertarianism was the cause of FEMA's incompetence in dealing with Katrina.

I ridiculed the premise at the time (and again a year later), noting that "After eight years of "no child left behind," Medicare expansion, aid to Africa for AIDS, drug warring, abstinence education, nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan, and so forth and so on, and more of the same promised by McCain, the better question is, is there any problem that Bush and McCain DON'T think government should solve?"

As I recall, others rejoined that no, Krugman is right, incompetence by the Bush Administration is OBVIOUSLY due to Republicans all totally hating government. It must come as a surprise to Krugman and his defenders that government can prove itself to be wildly, disastrously incompetent even when run by people whom even Krugman would have to admit aren't going to be confused with libertarians any time soon (assuming, of course, that Krugman actually ever believed the nonsense he wrote).

Andrew Malcolm also reminds us our country could have avoided the pain if only Mike Ditka had wanted to run for the senate in 2004. Of course, if he had, the country would have watched Ditka get destroyed.

... It didn't need to be this way.

We're reminded this week that, but for the business decision of one famous man, Obama's once rising star could have been blown out of the sky and the country saved years of anguish by an election defeat in 2004. That's when the ambitious ex-state legislator Obama sought and got the Democrat nomination for a U.S. Senate seat from Illinois.

With 70% of that November's vote, Obama crushed the Republican Party's last-minute sacrificial lamb, Alan Keyes, who had portrayed himself as a GOP primary presidential contender back in 2000 but was really just trying to jack his speaking fees with some free TV fame.

That's what people often remember.

What they often forget is Republicans came close that year to enlisting as their U.S. Senate candidate from Illinois the NFL Hall of Famer and Super Bowl Champion Player and Coach Mike Ditka. After an illustrious career as a belligerent tight end for Chicago, Philadelphia and Dallas, Ditka coached as a Cowboys assistant before becoming head coach of the Bears and, later, the New Orleans Saints. ...

BBC News reports on something floating on a river in the Czech Republic we need on the Potomac.

As parliamentary polls get under way in the Czech Republic this week, artist David Cerny has floated a huge purple statue of an extended middle finger down the River Vltava in Prague.

The outsized purple hand has been mounted on a barge floating on the river.

It is pointed at Prague Castle, the seat of President Milos Zeman.

Mr Cerny has shocked and mocked politicians and public figures in the past, says the BBC's Rob Cameron.

This latest piece is clearly his message to the leftist President Zeman and the political party recently set up by his supporters, our correspondent says. ...

Boston Globe

[Would Democrats embrace JFK now?](#)

by Jeff Jacoby



President John F. Kennedy looks into the sky as planes from the Carrier Enterprise maneuver in a demonstration off the east coast on April 14, 1962.

AS DEMOCRATS begin maneuvering for the 2016 presidential race, there isn't one who would think of disparaging John F. Kennedy's stature as a Democratic Party hero. Yet it's a pretty safe bet that none would dream of running on Kennedy's approach to government or embrace his political beliefs.

Today's Democratic Party — the home of Barack Obama, John Kerry, and Al Gore — wouldn't give the time of day to a candidate like JFK.

The 35th president was an ardent tax-cutter who championed [across-the-board, top-to-bottom reductions](#) in personal and corporate tax rates, slashed tariffs to promote free trade, and even spoke out against the “confiscatory” property taxes being levied in too many cities.

He was anything but a big-spending, welfare-state liberal. “I do not believe that Washington should do for the people what they can do for themselves through local and private effort,” Kennedy bluntly avowed during the 1960 campaign. One of his first acts as president was to institute a pay cut for top White House staffers, and that was only the start of his budgetary austerity. “To the surprise of many of his appointees,” [longtime aide Ted Sorensen would later write](#), he “personally scrutinized every agency request with a cold eye and encouraged his budget director to say ‘no.’ ”

On the other hand, he was a Cold War anticommunist who aggressively increased military spending. He faulted his Republican predecessor for tailoring the nation’s military strategy to fit the budget, rather than the other way around. “We must refuse to accept a cheap, second-best defense,” JFK said during his run for the White House. He made good on that pledge, pushing defense spending to 50 percent of federal expenditures and 9 percent of GDP, [both far higher than today’s levels](#). Speaking in Texas just hours before his death, he [proudly took credit](#) for building the US military into “a defense system second to none.”

Since that terrible day in Dallas 50 years ago, popular mythology has turned Kennedy into a liberal hero. Some of that mythmaking, as journalist and historian Ira Stoll argues in a new book, [“JFK, Conservative,”](#) was driven by Kennedy aides, such as Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who had always wanted their boss to be more left-leaning than he was. Some of it was fueled by the Democratic Party’s emotional connection to the memory of a martyred president, and its understandable desire to link their priorities to his legacy.

But Kennedy was no liberal. By any reasonable definition, he was a conservative — and not just by the standards of our era, but by those of his era as well.

Stoll draws on an embarrassment of riches to make his case.

When the young JFK launched his first political campaign for the US House in 1946, a profile in Look magazine homed in on his conservatism:

“When young, wealthy, and conservative John Fitzgerald Kennedy announced for Congress, many people wondered why,” it began. “Hardly a liberal even by his own standards, Kennedy is mainly concerned by what appears to him as the coming struggle between collectivism and capitalism. In speech after speech he charges his audience ‘to battle for the old ideas with the same enthusiasm that people have for new ideas.’ ”

He hadn’t changed his political stripes by the time he ran for the Senate in 1952, challenging incumbent Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. Stoll notes that Massachusetts newspapers wanting to back a liberal in that race came out for the Republican — the Berkshire Eagle, for example, endorsed Lodge as “an invaluable voice for liberalism.” When his reelection in 1958 made it clear that Kennedy would be running for the Democratic presidential nomination, Eleanor Roosevelt was asked in a TV interview whom she would support if forced to choose “between a conservative Democrat like Kennedy and a liberal Republican [like] Rockefeller.” FDR’s widow, then as now a

progressive icon, answered that she would do all she could to make sure Kennedy wouldn't be the party's nominee.

Many on the left felt that way about JFK. When he decided to resume nuclear testing in 1962, Bertrand Russell attacked him as "much more wicked than Hitler," and Linus Pauling, who would receive that year's Nobel Peace Prize, predicted that he would "go down in history as . . . one of the greatest enemies of the human race." Left-wing intellectuals raged against Kennedy's failed attempt to topple Fidel Castro (the renowned sociologist C. Wright Mills said the administration had "returned us to barbarism"). Liberals within the administration expressed dismay for Kennedy's unwavering support for tax cuts. Schlesinger called one of Kennedy's exhortations "the worst speech the president had ever given."

Nearly 30 years ago, an essay in Mother Jones magazine asked: "Would JFK Be a Hero Now?" If the answer wasn't obvious then, it certainly is now. In today's political environment, a candidate like JFK — a conservative champion of economic growth, tax cuts, limited government, peace through strength — plainly *would* be a hero. Whether he would be a Democrat is a different matter altogether.

Investors.com

[Shocking admission on Army preparedness: No training the last 6 months](#)

by Andrew Malcolm



While the president of the United States pitched his crumbling healthcare program like a late-night infomercial barker, the Army's chief of staff made a shocking admission about national defense.

Gen. Ray Odierno told a Washington conference Monday that the U.S. Army had not conducted any training in the last six months of the fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

And, he said, there currently are only two Army brigades rated combat-ready. That's a total of between 7,000 to 10,000 troops and less than one-third what the combat veteran regards as necessary for proper national security.

"Right now," Odierno said, "we have in the Army two brigades that are trained. That's it. Two."

Odierno also revealed that troops shipping out to Afghanistan now are prepared only to train and assist Afghan troops, not to conduct combat operations themselves. But, of course, there's no guarantee the Americans won't find themselves in combat while accompanying Afghan soldiers.

All this to obey [Obama administration orders to drastically cut the Army](#) and military spending and meet cuts under sequestration. Since the Obama Pentagon began the troop draw-down two years ago under the president's orders, more than 33,000 active duty soldiers have been cut.

Current plans call for additional reductions of 42,000 soldiers in the next 23 months to a total of 490,000, down from 570,000. Those cuts have been accelerated by two years under Pentagon orders and [will involve involuntary separations of thousands](#).

But under directions from Obama Defense Secy. Chuck Hagel last summer, military planners now anticipate administration orders to sever another 70,000 active-duty Army personnel at all levels, most of them unwillingly and after receiving expensive training. The 420,000-level is the absolute minimum Odierno says he can effectively operate, but he warns equipment updating and purchases have already been adversely affected.

"The worst-case scenario," Odierno said, "is you ask me to deploy thousands of soldiers somewhere and we have not properly trained them to go because we simply don't have the dollars and money."

The Obama military draw-downs that hit the Army the hardest come on top of an apparent ongoing [purge among some of the nation's top veteran generals, as we reported here](#).

Ten days ago, [two more generals in charge of the country's nuclear weapons were fired](#) by this administration, allegedly for personal misconduct.

The ongoing housecleaning of top military brass or whatever it is seems peculiarly meticulous given these disturbing cover-up facts in other scandals:

---Obama has fired not one single person for the inadequate security and response in the deadly Benghazi attack last year that saw four Americans killed;

---No one fired for the lethal Fast and Furious gun-running operation of the Justice Department and the attorney general's professed ignorance of the activities under his supervision;

---No one fired for the illegal use of the Internal Revenue Service to target and intimidate political opponents of this Democrat administration, preventing their participation in the 2012 campaign.

The No. 2 State Department official in the Libyan Embassy was, however, sidelined and demoted after meeting with a visiting congressman to answer his questions about the deadly night of 9/11/12. ...

Bloomberg News **[Is Obamacare in a Death Spiral?](#)**

by Megan McArdle

Another week has passed, which apparently means that it's time for [another terrifying article](#) from Sharon LaFraniere, Ian Austen and Robert Pear on the federal health-care exchanges.

Federal contractors have identified most of the main problems crippling President Obama's online health insurance marketplace, but the administration has been slow to issue orders for fixing those flaws, and some contractors worry that the system may be weeks away from operating smoothly, people close to the project say.

Administration officials approached the contractors last week to see if they could perform the necessary repairs and reboot the system by Nov. 1. However, that goal struck many contractors as unrealistic, at least for major components of the system. Some specialists working on the project said the online system required such extensive repairs that it might not operate smoothly until after the Dec. 15 deadline for people to sign up for coverage starting in January, although that view is not universally shared.

Time to panic? No. But it's time to prepare to panic. It sounds like the earliest anyone is projecting fixes is sometime in the middle of November. That's the time when it absolutely has to work -- and if it doesn't, we should panic. Maybe not "Get in the shelter, Homer!" panic, but I'd definitely think about rebalancing the 401(k) and maybe voting in some politicians who will treat this with the gravity it deserves, rather than giving Rose Garden speeches saying that everything's basically A-OK if you don't look at the parts that don't work! Because make no mistake: If this piece doesn't work, then most of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act doesn't work.

Am I exaggerating? I know it sounds apocalyptic, but really, I'm not. As Yuval Levin [has pointed out](#), what we're experiencing now is the worst-case scenario for the insurance markets: It is not impossible to buy insurance, but merely very difficult. If it were impossible, then we could all just agree to move to Plan B. And if it were as easy as everyone expected, well, we'd see if the whole thing worked. But what we have now is a situation where only the extremely persistent can successfully complete an application. And who is likely to be extremely persistent?

1. Very sick people.

2. People between 55 and 65, the age band at which insurance is quite expensive. (I was surprised to find out that turning 40 doesn't increase your premiums that much; the big boosts are in the 50s and 60s.)
3. Very poor people, who will be shunted to Medicaid (if their state has expanded it) or will probably go without insurance.

Insurance that is only sold to these groups is going to be very, very expensive. Not the first year -- President Barack Obama was in the Rose Garden just this morning, touting the fantastic cost savings available to the old and sick people whom Obamacare was already helping. But if those are the only people who sign up, insurers will lose a bunch of money on these policies. And then next year, they'll ask for a lot more money.

What happens next -- as we've seen in states such as New York that have guaranteed issue, no ability to price to the customer's health, and a generous mandated-benefits package -- is that when the price increases hit, some of those who did buy insurance the first year reluctantly decide to drop it. Usually, those are the healthiest people. Which means that the average cost of treatment for the people remaining in the pool rises, because the average person in that pool is now sicker. So premiums go up again . . . until it's so expensive to buy insurance that almost no one does.

For folks who make less than 400 percent of the federal poverty line, that won't matter much; the price of a "silver" plan (which covers about 70 percent of expected expenditures) is capped as a percentage of their income. For those who make more than 400 percent of the poverty line (a little over \$40,000 for a single person), however, that will be a big problem. And, of course, the federal government will also have a big problem if the cost of subsidized policies starts marching rapidly northward.

About 5 percent of the U.S. population bought individual insurance on the private market pre-Obamacare, and about half of the law's coverage expansion was slated to come from people buying policies in the individual exchanges. Moreover, the states' high-risk pools, which covered a bunch of very sick people, are coming to an end, dumping those people into the normal private market. And some employers, whose policies did not meet the minimums set by the health-care act, are expected to dump their employees into the private market rather than buy more expensive insurance. If this segment of the market breaks, it's a Big Deal.

The line taken by the president's speech this morning, and by the White House more generally, is that while these problems are unfortunate, they're just not that big a deal. "It's important to remember the website alone is not the Affordable Care Act," [Jay Carney said last week](#).

This seems to be the administration's line every time anything goes wrong with this system. In July, we learned that the employer mandate was being delayed, but don't worry, because that's not really essential. Now we learn that the much-touted exchanges aren't really essential, either -- in his speech this morning, Obama helpfully pointed out that you could also sign up by phone. One begins to wonder if Obamacare consists of any actual thing, such that one could ever definitively say that it had happened or not happened . . . that it was working or not working. Perhaps Obamacare is just a dream that lives on in the hearts of the men and women who designed it. As long as they draw breath, Obamacare did happen, and it is working.

Perhaps. But that is not the impression that I was given when those daring dreamers were working to pass it. Back then, Obamacare's architects frequently spoke of the "three-legged stool": guaranteed issue, community rating and the individual mandate. Guaranteed issue meant that no one could be turned away. Community rating meant that insurers couldn't effectively deny insurance to sick people by quoting them policies that cost a squintillion dollars. And the individual mandate prevented the pricing death spiral (known to economists as an "adverse selection problem"). Take away any one of the legs, and the stool would tip over.

But there was also a fourth leg, always acknowledged but not always numbered: the subsidies. Without them, the mandate wouldn't work, either politically or practically, because you can't order someone to buy insurance that costs 50 percent of their take-home pay. And the wonks, and the journalists covering them, tacitly understood that there was a fifth leg: the exchanges. You can't order people to get insurance if they don't know where to buy it, or if the only quote they got from the one company they called cost more than they could afford.

The exchanges were also broadly understood to be needed to get young, healthy people into the system. Somewhat naturally, almost every story you've seen about a new enrollee -- including those told by the president this morning -- has focused on someone who couldn't buy insurance before, or who had very expensive insurance. But it's not surprising that those people are fighting through the system to get coverage; they would pull themselves to the top of Mount Rushmore using only their teeth if that's what it took to get a cheap insurance policy. What we need to know is what is happening among the people who didn't need Obamacare to help them buy insurance, because insurers would be perfectly happy to sell them a policy without it. Those are the folks whose premiums will cover treatment for the rest.

As Yuval Levin says, "The healthy young man who sees an ad for his state exchange during a baseball game and loads up the site to get coverage -- the dream consumer so essential to the design of the exchange system -- will not keep trying 25 times over a week if the site is not working. The person with high health costs and no insurance will." One might add that he's probably not going to call into the call center, wait three weeks to get his PDF application mailed to him, review it and send it in, wait another week or two for notification about his subsidy eligibility, and then (finally!) call back yet again to check out his policy options. Some will, of course. But at every tedious step, you will lose people.

In other words, whatever the administration says, the exchange is Obamacare -- at least, the Obamacare I was told about during the debate over health-care reform. The one that didn't destroy the individual insurance market, or cause costs to spiral out of control.

Judging from President Obama's speech, the administration has decided to triple down on the ["burn the boats"](#) strategy pioneered by Hernan Cortes in his conquest of Mexico: Make a total commitment in the hopes that this will somehow enable you to overcome impossible odds. There was no sign of a Plan B (other than call centers), no hint that they might consider a full or partial delay if they couldn't get the systems working on time. Presumably they think (correctly) that the longer this goes on, the harder it will be to implement a delay, because so many people will have lost their existing insurance and/or bought new policies through the exchanges. But as I pointed out last week, while the "burn the boats" strategy sometimes ends with an improbable victory, the problem is that the other way it ends is in . . . well, a death spiral.

Volokh Conspiracy

[Why is the Obamacare Rollout Failing?](#)

by David Bernstein

Why, it's obviously because President Barack Obama and his top aides hate government, and therefore can't be trusted to run a major government program. When the government is run by political forces committed to the belief that government is always the problem, never the solution, that belief tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Key priorities are neglected; key functions are privatized; and key people, the competent public servants who make government work, either leave or are driven out. What we really need is a government that works, because it's run by people who understand that sometimes government is the solution, after all.

Doesn't make any sense to you? It made just as little sense [when Paul Krugman made the argument in 2008](#), imaginatively (to say the least) positing that George W. Bush and John McCain were wild-eyed libertarians, and that the former's purported libertarianism was the cause of FEMA's incompetence in dealing with Katrina.

[I ridiculed the premise at the time](#) (and [again a year later](#)), noting that "After eight years of "no child left behind," Medicare expansion, aid to Africa for AIDS, drug warring, abstinence education, nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan, and so forth and so on, and more of the same promised by McCain, the better question is, is there any problem that Bush and McCain DON'T think government should solve?"

As I recall, others rejoined that no, Krugman is right, incompetence by the Bush Administration is OBVIOUSLY due to Republicans all totally hating government. It must come as a surprise to Krugman and his defenders that government can prove itself to be wildly, disastrously incompetent even when run by people whom even Krugman would have to admit aren't going to be confused with libertarians any time soon (assuming, of course, that Krugman actually ever believed the nonsense he wrote).

Investors.com

[The man who could have saved us from Obama now regrets his punt](#)

by Andrew Malcolm



A Barack Obama Update: The good news is we have endured 1,729 days of this guy. The bad news is there are still 1,193 left.

His pettiness and lack of leadership helped produce and prolong a record duration of high unemployment, the worst economic 'recovery' in decades, record deficits, record national debt, a wasted trillion dollars in stimulus, record youth and black employment hardships, untold lies about the unfolding disaster called ObamaCare and Benghazi and so many other things.

The country's latest fiscal crisis continues this week as an arrogant incumbent president of the United States, who approached this crisis by playing more golf, leads his nation to the brink of an historic default, which he voted to have eight years ago, but now opposes.

We [listed here the other day the public's guilty verdicts on Obama's](#) feet-on-the-desk stewardship of the Oval Office and the bitter political, social and class divisions afoot, which he once promised to heal.

It didn't need to be this way.

We're reminded this week that, but for the business decision of one famous man, Obama's once rising star could have been blown out of the sky and the country saved years of anguish by an election defeat in 2004. That's when the ambitious ex-state legislator Obama sought and got the Democrat nomination for a U.S. Senate seat from Illinois.

With 70% of that November's vote, Obama crushed the Republican Party's last-minute sacrificial lamb, Alan Keyes, who had portrayed himself as a GOP primary presidential contender back in 2000 but was really just trying to jack his speaking fees with some free TV fame.

That's what people often remember.

What they often forget is Republicans came close that year to enlisting as their U.S. Senate candidate from Illinois the NFL Hall of Famer and Super Bowl Champion Player and Coach Mike Ditka. After an illustrious career as a belligerent tight end for Chicago, Philadelphia and Dallas, Ditka coached as a Cowboys assistant before becoming head coach of the Bears and, later, the New Orleans Saints.

Thanks to his TV commercials and iconic 'Saturday Night Live' skits where he was fondly labeled 'Da Coach,' Ditka gained national fame as an ESPN commentator and tough-talking, can-do, tell-it-like-it-is guy likely with some anger management issues.

In 2003, Sen. George Allen, namesake son of the legendary NFL coach, approached Ditka to be the party's nominee the next year. Ditka, who had described himself as "uber-conservative," subsequently said he considered the new career path for two days. But turned it down as an interference with business plans.



Speaking to a business group the other day, Ditka regretted his choice. "Biggest mistake I've ever made," said the coach. Which is saying something because Ditka relinquished the Saints' entire 1999 draft for one player, Heisman winner Ricky Williams.

"Not that I would have won," Ditka added, "but I probably would have and (Obama) wouldn't be in the White House."

Now there's a teeth-grinding thought.

Illinois is a notorious Democrat state and the media loved Obama even then, although Obama's old Senate seat is now held by Republican Mark Kirk. Ditka, who turns 74 on Friday, would have certainly done better than Keyes' 27%.

And Ditka would have certainly served Illinois longer than the uber-liberal Obama's blessedly brief 1,412 days.

Watching Obama and these old toads in Congress endlessly circle each other these days to no meaningful end, makes some of us daydream for a chair-kicking Ditka to shake up that out-of-touch senatorial somnolence. Someone there to cheer for, instead of shake our heads at.

And not too long ago Ditka provided evidence of his feelings on that and what he dislikes about Washington. "The hypocrisy, of both parties," [he said](#). "You're not there to represent a party, a special interest. You're there to represent America, the people that elected you. They don't do that. I'm sorry, they don't do it! And you can't make all these promises when you're a candidate and none of them happen."

BBC News

Czech floating finger sends president message



The outsized purple hand by artist David Cerny has been mounted on a barge outside Prague Castle

As parliamentary polls get under way in the Czech Republic this week, artist David Cerny has floated a huge purple statue of an extended middle finger down the River Vltava in Prague.

The outsized purple hand has been mounted on a barge floating on the river.

It is pointed at Prague Castle, the seat of President Milos Zeman.

Mr Cerny has shocked and mocked politicians and public figures in the past, says the BBC's Rob Cameron.

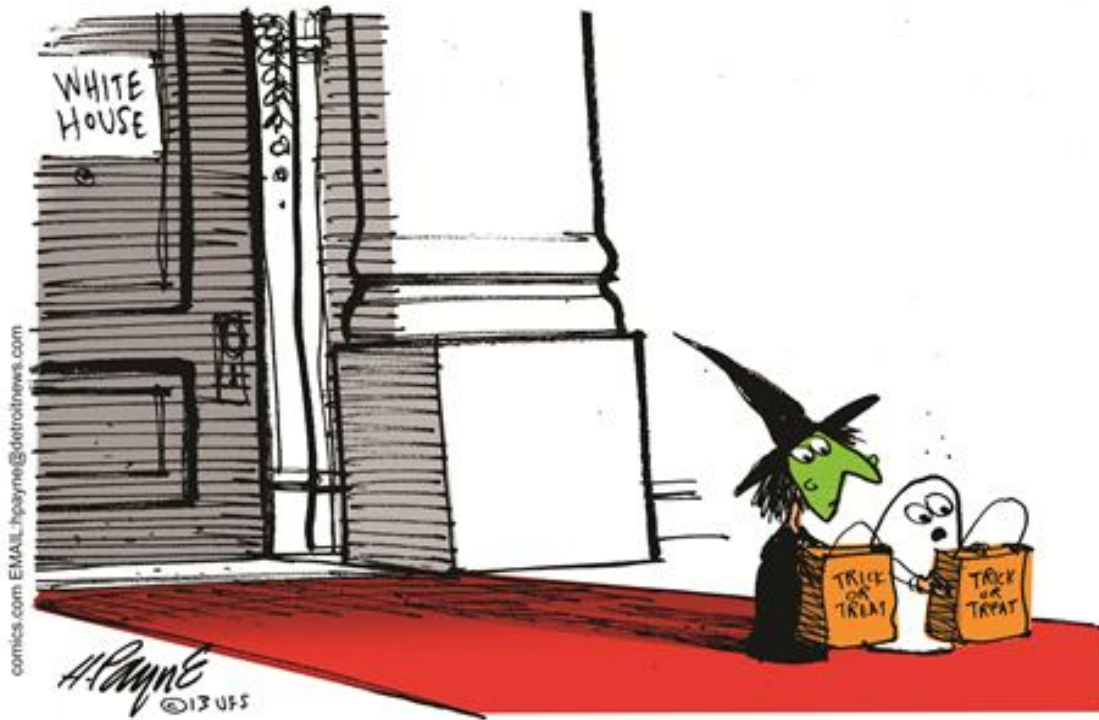
This latest piece is clearly his message to the leftist President Zeman and the political party recently set up by his supporters, our correspondent says.

It is unclear how long the finger will stay there; Cerny himself declined to say too much about the piece, telling reporters the gesture spoke for itself - what mattered, he said, was which way it was pointing.

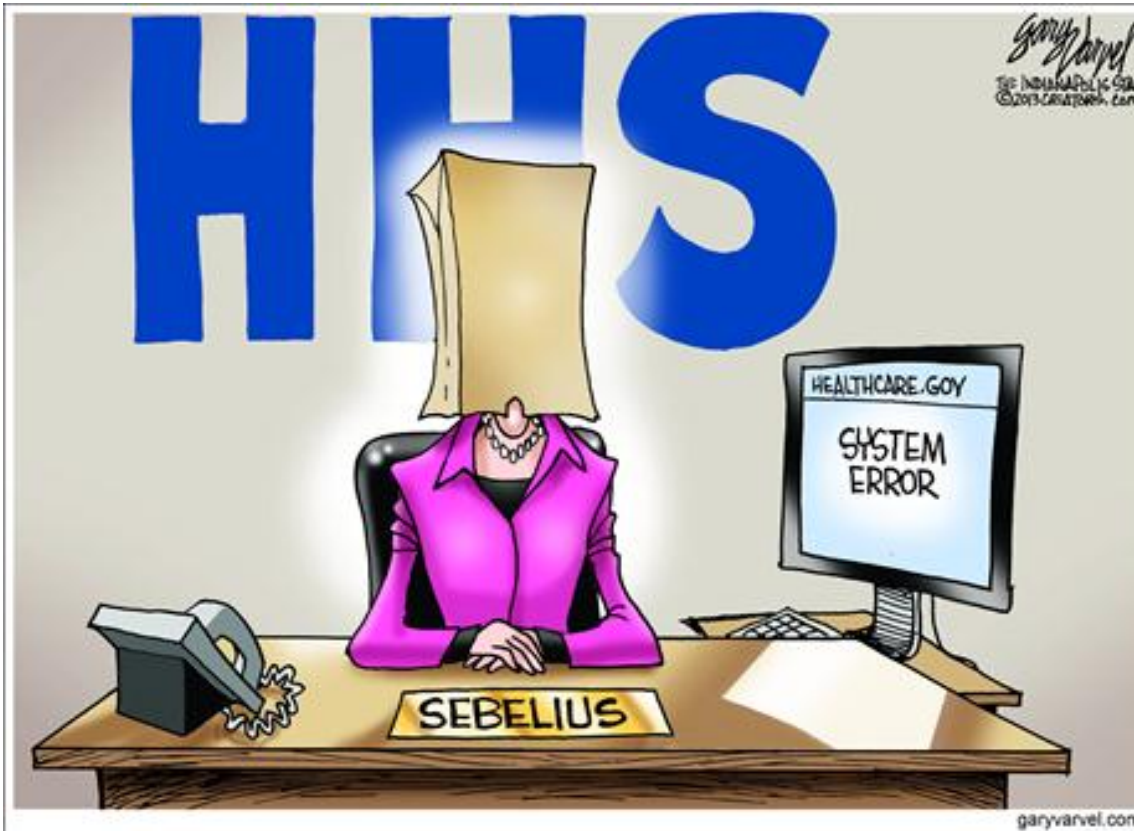
President Zeman, meanwhile, is on an official visit to Ukraine and said he could not comment until he had seen it.

The Czech parliament was dissolved in August following weeks of turmoil in Czech politics.

Prime Minister Petr Necas's government collapsed in June amid a bribery scandal, and a government of technocrats, formed by President Zeman in July and opposed by the main political parties, resigned in August.



" I GOT A GLITCH."



THE MOMENT

©2013
MRC.org/CMI
Dist. by King Features



KATHLEEN SEBELIUS HEARS THE TRAIN WRECK COMING

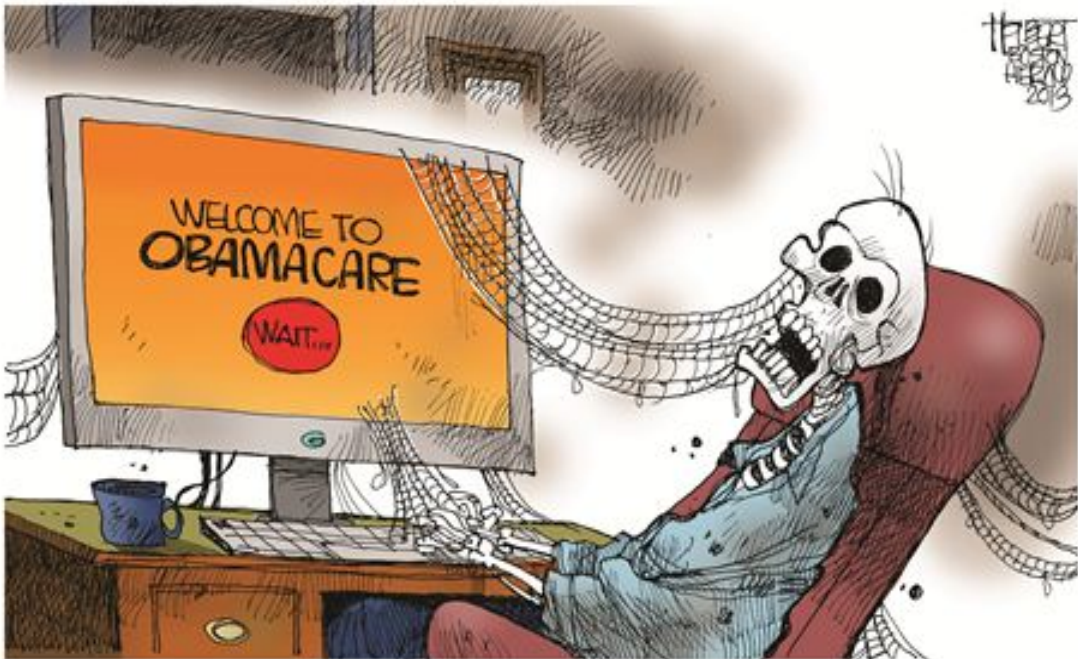
©2013 LUKLICK-1079 10-21

THE ROLLOUT



The Roll-out





IT'S DEFINITELY A WEBSITE

Website

