

December 22, 2013

Jennifer Rubin approves of the administration's snub of the Sochi Olympics.

*The Post reports: "The White House announced Tuesday that President Obama, Vice President Biden and the first lady will not attend the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, in February, a pointed snub by an administration that is feuding with Russian leaders on a range of foreign policy and human rights issues. The U.S. delegation will be led by a former Cabinet secretary and a deputy secretary of state, and will include two openly gay athletes — tennis legend Billie Jean King and ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow — in an apparent bid to highlight opposition to Russia's anti-gay laws." Well — and you don't read this often around here — bravo, Mr. President.*

*I've argued for just such a snub for some time, so it pleases me no end that Obama has finally stepped up to the plate on even a small, symbolic issue of human rights. Did we wait too long, letting Europeans take the lead? Sure, but this is Obama we're talking about, not Ronald Reagan. Did he only see the light when the human rights cause became a favorite cause of the left (gay rights)? You bet. He praised Putin's stolen election, has been silent about kangaroo court trials and has nary a word to say about the female punk rock band thrown in jail. But you have to start somewhere. ...*

Jonathan Tobin posts on the president's affinity for *House of Cards*.

*Nobody should blame President Obama for enjoying the Netflix political thriller *House of Cards*. Indeed, the show's millions of fans (including me) probably sympathized with the commander in chief when he pleaded for access to advance copies of the series' second season that is due out next year when high-tech execs (including the head of Netflix) came to the White House to discuss important issues, like how to build a functional website. But I wasn't quite so amused by the president's much-quoted remarks in which he purported to envy the ability of the show's villain Frank Underwood to do what he likes.*

*"I wish things were that ruthlessly efficient," Obama joked at a meeting with tech CEOs on Tuesday, according to a White House pool report.*

*We're supposed to chuckle at this comment and regard it as an understandable expression of frustration by the president at the inability of Congress to do its job. But I'm afraid this crack tells us more about Obama's way of governing than it does about the fact that neither House Speaker John Boehner nor Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid can teach Frank Underwood much about passing legislation. The fact is, for five years Obama has sat in the White House and acted as if he had as little interest in accommodating the positions of his political foes as Underwood does. The problem isn't that the West Wing and its congressional allies aren't as "ruthlessly efficient" as the wicked Underwood, it's that he has as negative an attitude toward the normal business of democracy as the character played by actor Kevin Spacey. ...*

**Peter Wehner** thinks 2014 will be worse than 2013 for the administration.

*President Obama is ending a miserable year on a down note.*

*Public opinion polls show Mr. Obama's approval ratings at their low and disapproval ratings at their high. He's being tagged by the elite media as a liar and as having had the Worst Year in Washington. His signature achievement, the Affordable Care Act, is a rolling disaster. And the rest of his agenda—on gun control, climate change, immigration, and much else—is dead in the water. As CNN's John King put it, Obama was "0 for 13" on the policy proposals he advocated at the beginning of the year.*

*One question, I suppose, is whether 2013 can be written off as simply one bad year—or whether, in fact, the Obama White House will look back to this year as the good old days of the second term.*

*It's impossible to know for sure, of course, since politics is rarely linear and events we can't anticipate are sure to intervene. But all we can do is to assess how things look at any given moment in time—and based on where things now stand, my guess is that 2014 will be even worse for the Obama presidency than has been 2013. ...*

**Marc Thiessen** says there's a new poll with even worse news for the administration. ... *But as bad as that news is, it pales in comparison to the new AP-GfK poll on Obamacare that came out earlier this week – because this poll suggests that Obama's numbers will continue their downward spiral in 2014 as more Americans feel the negative impact of Obamacare.*

*The administration has taken comfort in the fact that while about six million Americans have seen their health plans cancelled, the "vast majority" of insured Americans have been largely unaffected. But this poll shows that "vast majority" is increasingly unhappy with Obamacare.*

*The AP reports:*

*The poll found a striking level of unease about [Obamacare] among people who have health insurance and aren't looking for any more government help. Those are the 85 percent of Americans who the White House says don't have to be worried about the president's historic push to expand coverage for the uninsured.*

*In the survey, nearly half of those with job-based or other private coverage say their policies will be changing next year — mostly for the worse. Nearly 4 in 5 (77 percent) blame the changes on the Affordable Care Act... Sixty-nine percent say their premiums will be going up, while 59 percent say annual deductibles or copayments are increasing.*

*Only 21 percent of those with private coverage said their plan is expanding to cover more types of medical care, though coverage of preventive care at no charge to the patient has been required by the law for the past couple of years.*

*In other words, most of those with employer-based coverage are expecting to see their plans get worse and more expensive next year thanks to Obamacare – and they are not happy. ...*

**John Fund** says the staff shake up will only move the white house to the left.

*... From this staff shake-up it's clear there won't be even a feint to the center. Last week's budget deal in Congress bypassed Obama. The Washington Post's Bob Woodward candidly told Fox News on Sunday that the budget deal came together only because "Obama was not part of the negotiations — he is not a good negotiator." While Republican Paul Ryan and Democrat Patty Murray were hammering out a compromise budget, the Obama White House was desperately issuing retroactive "suggestions" to insurance companies to provide free health care to people who have lost their insurance thanks to Obamacare. You can bet that most insurers will follow the "suggestions," given the White House's veiled threats that it will view any non-compliance unfavorably when it comes to taking regulatory actions in the future.*

*Welcome to Obama's New Power Grab, where the administrative state takes on a quasi-lawless form as the White House tries every scheme in the book (and some that aren't in any book) to save Obamacare without having to negotiate changes with Congress — the old-fashioned American way of altering laws.*

*Certainly, John Podesta, the most well known of Obama's new aides, will be helpful in this anything-goes strategy. Podesta is ostensibly on board merely for a one-year assignment focusing on climate and energy issues, but few believe he will stick to that knitting.*

*Podesta was chief of staff to President Clinton when, shortly before leaving office, he issued outrageous pardons to fugitive financier Marc Rich and other criminals. ...*

**Seth Mandel** posts on why Podesta was chosen.

*The potential impact of President Obama's decision to bring veteran Democratic figure John Podesta on board to save his floundering presidency continues to be debated, and is the subject of a Glenn Thrush analysis today. But Thrush's article seems to have fallen victim to the reportorial success of its author, with Thrush having been able to get such a juicy quote out of Podesta that the quote itself has overshadowed the rest of the story.*

*That's too bad, because the more important element of the story is not Podesta's quote, though that's worth mentioning as well: "[Obama and his team] need to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress," Podesta told Thrush, comparing the GOP and the large segment of the American public that elected them to the cult movement that ended in infamous mass suicide.*

*There's not much surprising about the quote. Now that the moderate wing of the Democratic Party has all but disappeared, unhinged rhetoric and uncontrolled temper tantrums characterize much of the left's discourse. And the modern Democratic Party has an unhealthy fascination with murder fantasy, from their political ads depicting legislators throwing people off a cliff to their columnists' attachment to effigy executions. What's important about the quote is not its morbid conclusion but the first half of it, which is the subject of Thrush's article:*

*"This is not just about providing added muscle to a beleaguered and undermanned West Wing staff. According to interviews in recent weeks with an array of Obama insiders and a dozen*

current and former senior aides, Podesta's hire is explicitly meant to shake things up inside the White House. In effect, I was told, it represents the clearest sign to date of the administration's interest in shifting the paradigm of Obama's presidency through the forceful, unapologetic and occasionally provocative application of White House power. Podesta, whose official mandate includes enforcement of numerous executive orders on emissions and the environment, suggested as much when he spoke with me earlier this fall about Obama's team. "They need to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress," he told me. ..."

**Paul Mirengoff** pointed out Jim Jones was a Dem operative.

*John Podesta, who is about to join the Obama administration as a top adviser, should fit right in. In an interview with Politico, Podesta stated that the White House "need[s] to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress."*

*Jonestown — an avowedly leftist enterprise — was where followers of James Jones committed mass suicide. It is also where a former member of Congress (Leo Ryan) was killed and a current member (Ryan's aide Jackie Speier) was shot when they tried to find out what the cult was up to. ...*

**Jim Geraghty** spotted a Salon article on Jim Jones outlining his attachment to the Democrat party. Salon even has a nice picture of Jones with Jerry Brown.

*During the 1976 presidential campaign, Jones wangled a private meeting with Jimmy Carter's wife, Rosalynn, at the elegant Stanford Court Hotel on Nob Hill, arriving with a security contingent that was larger than her Secret Service squad. Later Jones accompanied Moscone and a group of Democratic dignitaries who climbed aboard vice presidential candidate Walter Mondale's private jet when it touched down at San Francisco International Airport.*

*Governor Jerry Brown sang the preacher's praises. Congressman John Burton, Phil's brother, lobbied the governor to appoint Jones to the high-profile board of regents, which oversaw California's sprawling public university system. San Francisco Supervisor — now U.S. Senator — Dianne Feinstein accepted an invitation to lunch with Jones and to tour Peoples Temple.*

*But no political figures were more gushing in their praise of Jones than Willie Brown and Harvey Milk, San Francisco's rising tribune of gay freedom.*

---

---

---

## Right Turn

### Obama gets Sochi right

by Jennifer Rubin

The Post reports: “The White House announced Tuesday that President Obama, Vice President Biden and the first lady will not attend the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, in February, a pointed snub by an administration that is feuding with Russian leaders on a range of foreign policy and human rights issues. The U.S. delegation will be led by a former Cabinet secretary and a deputy secretary of state, and will include two openly gay athletes — tennis legend Billie Jean King and ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow — in an apparent bid to highlight opposition to Russia’s anti-gay laws.” Well — and you don’t read this often around here — bravo, Mr. President.



*Tennis champion Billie Jean King will be among those representing the United States at the Sochi Winter Olympics.*

I’ve argued for just such a snub for some time, so it pleases me no end that Obama has finally stepped up to the plate on even a small, symbolic issue of human rights. Did we wait too long, letting Europeans take the lead? Sure, but this is Obama we’re talking about, not Ronald Reagan. Did he only see the light when the human rights cause became a favorite cause of the left (gay rights)? You bet. He praised Putin’s stolen election, has been silent about kangaroo court trials and has nary a word to say about the female punk rock band thrown in jail. But you have to start *somewhere*.

In addition to the gay athletes, Obama might consider sending some democracy advocates and private citizens who labored for the Magnitsky law to punish human rights offenders. That would make it clear our concern for human rights doesn’t stop with gay Russians.

There is a school of thought that keeps people away from religious services. “I don’t believe,” they say, “So I’d be a hypocrite to go.” There is another viewpoint: Once you start practicing habits of faith you may develop some actual faith. I’m a believer in the second — actions foster habits, which in turn change how we think. And even if we don’t entirely change our thinking, what difference does it make if you do some good along the way or adopt some socially redeeming behaviors?

I hope this will be the case with the president we will have for the next three years. I don’t care if his heart is in the right place on human rights so long as, for whatever reason, he begins to act in defense of them. Once he does, maybe he’ll like the acclaim he gets and he’ll do more of it.

Maybe he'll branch out from support for gay rights to religious freedom and from there to robust support for ethnic minorities and women.

It is entirely fitting that Obama made his announcement on the day Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), the House's most ardent defender of human rights, announced his retirement. Obama is no Frank Wolf, but Obama's announcement is a fitting, if unintended, compliment to the Republican representative whose heart is and was always with the oppressed and whose actions were consistently on the side of the persecuted.

## Contentions

### [House of Cards? Obama and Democracy](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Nobody should blame President Obama for enjoying the Netflix political thriller *House of Cards*. Indeed, the show's millions of fans (including me) probably sympathized with the commander in chief when he pleaded for access to advance copies of the series' second season that is due out next year when high-tech execs (including the head of Netflix) came to the White House to discuss important issues, like how to build a functional website. But I wasn't quite so amused [by the president's much-quoted remarks](#) in which he purported to envy the ability of the show's villain Frank Underwood to do what he likes.

"I wish things were that ruthlessly efficient," Obama joked at a meeting with tech CEOs on Tuesday, according to a White House pool report.

We're supposed to chuckle at this comment and regard it as an understandable expression of frustration by the president at the inability of Congress to do its job. But I'm afraid this crack tells us more about Obama's way of governing than it does about the fact that neither House Speaker John Boehner nor Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid can teach Frank Underwood much about passing legislation. The fact is, for five years Obama has sat in the White House and acted as if he had as little interest in accommodating the positions of his political foes as Underwood does. The problem isn't that the West Wing and its congressional allies aren't as "ruthlessly efficient" as the wicked Underwood, it's that he has as negative an attitude toward the normal business of democracy as the character played by actor Kevin Spacey.

That sounds a little harsh so let me specify that, as much as I disagree with most of his policies, I haven't joined the tin-foil hat brigade. I am not accusing the president of enacting wicked conspiracies aimed at subverting every notion of decency in a cold-blooded putsch to achieve total power as Frank does. Nor do I think he got to the White House by cheating or sabotaging his opponents as did Francis Urquhart, the protagonist of the far wittier but less darkly thrilling original British version of *House of Cards*.

But I do think that throughout his presidency he has demonstrated a studied contempt for the business of democracy. Not since Jimmy Carter have we had a president who was as uncomfortable working with members of Congress of his own party, let alone those from the opposition. Even more to the point, this is as top-down an administration as any in recent memory. Foreign policy has been largely dictated from the White House, as have efforts to push priorities in other areas. Partly this reflects the president's high opinion of himself and his

distrust, if not disdain, for the opinions of others. As his cabinet choices have shown (especially in his second term), with a few prominent exceptions (Hillary Clinton being one), this is a president who prefers yes men and women to strong leaders running departments. The echo chamber in the West Wing that has made it insensible to the opinions of Congress or the public when it comes to the president's pet projects is a reflection of this attitude.

It should be noted that in the show, Underwood has shown a dogged talent for negotiation that Obama lacks, even if, in the end, the character gets his way more by underhanded tactics than give and take. But he shares the president's desire to have his own way at all costs. In the program's fictional Washington where the anti-hero can do as he likes, "ruthless efficiency" can be achieved. But in the real Washington, Obama's desire for acclimation of his every ideological whim is always bound to be frustrated by a constitutional system of checks and balances that allows the views of the minority to be heard and even at times to stop those of the president and the majority.

The genius of the American political system is that it is antithetical to "ruthless efficiency" because it was set up to thwart would-be presidential dictators, congressional majorities, and even the fleeting sentiments of public opinion as expressed in the House of Representatives (elected every two years) and not to let them run roughshod over their opponents.

The president may want us to think his talk about envying Underwood was entirely humorous but, contrary to his less comical public statements about Congress, the trouble with Washington in the age of Obama isn't that too many voices are heard but that we have a president who listens to no one but himself and an inner circle that seems to be afraid to contradict him. While efficiency would be nice, what the country needs is a president more inclined to work with Congress in the normal, non-dramatic manner that gets the best results in the Capitol, not the ruthless fantasy Obama harbors.

## Contentions

### [So You Think Obama's 2013 Was Bad? Just Wait Until 2014](#)

by Peter Wehner

President Obama is ending a miserable year on a down note.

Public opinion polls show Mr. Obama's [approval ratings at their low and disapproval ratings at their high](#). He's being tagged by the elite media [as a liar](#) and as having had [the Worst Year in Washington](#). His signature achievement, the Affordable Care Act, is a rolling disaster. And the rest of his agenda—on gun control, climate change, immigration, and much else—is dead in the water. As [CNN's John King put it](#), Obama was "0 for 13" on the policy proposals he advocated at the beginning of the year.

One question, I suppose, is whether 2013 can be written off as simply one bad year—or whether, in fact, the Obama White House will look back to this year as the good old days of the second term.

It's impossible to know for sure, of course, since politics is rarely linear and events we can't anticipate are sure to intervene. But all we can do is to assess how things look at any given



moment in time—and based on where things now stand, my guess is that 2014 will be even worse for the Obama presidency than has been 2013.

I say that for a couple of reasons. The first is that the issue that has done the most durable damage to the Obama presidency is the Affordable Care Act—and if you believe, as I do, that the problems with it are (a) fundamental and structural and (b) ongoing, then next year will produce yet more problems, more dislocation, more anxiety, and more anger, caused by things like (but not limited to) small business cancellations of health-care plans, “doc shock,” and the coming problems facing the exchange systems in each of our 50 states.

The core problem facing the Obama presidency, then, can’t be fixed simply by personnel changes; it can only be repaired by accepting that the Affordable Care Act is intrinsically defective and therefore needs to be ended. And Mr. Obama will fight to his last breath to keep that from occurring.

The second reason 2014 could well be worse for the president is the mid-term election, which (if history is any guide) will almost surely subtract the number of Democrats in Congress—and which may, in fact, be the second “wave” election to hit Democrats during the Obama years.

With the qualifier that we’re still 11 months away, Republicans right now are relatively well positioned to make gains, and probably significant gains, in both the House and Senate. If that were to occur, it would not only further damage Mr. Obama; it would go some distance toward affirming the narrative that the Obama presidency is deeply injurious to his party and, more broadly, to liberalism.

Perhaps this analysis can be dismissed as biased thinking by a conservative critic. Or perhaps it’s a fair reading of where things stand and where things are headed. We’ll know this time next year. But I suspect that for all his problems this year, it may be viewed in retrospect as (for the second term at least) the land of milk and honey compared to what awaits the man Barbara Walters thought was going to be [“the next messiah.”](#)

## **Enterprise Blog**

### **[The poll Obama should be really worried about](#)**

by Marc Thiessen

Folks at the White House couldn’t have been happy to wake up this morning to the [headline](#) in today’s Washington Post, “Obama’s approval ratings plummet:”

President Obama is ending his fifth year in office matching the worst public approval ratings of his presidency, with record numbers of Americans saying they disapprove of his job performance and his once-hefty advantages over Republicans in Congress eroded in many areas, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll....

On several key measures, Obama has lost significant ground to his Republican opponents in Congress. On the question of who is seen as better able to handle the country’s main problems, Obama and Republicans are tied at 41 percent. A year ago, the president’s advantage was 15 points and at this stage in 2010 it was still five points.



Obama also has lost the lead he enjoyed on who could better deal with the economy. Today Republicans are at 45 percent to Obama's 41 percent. Last year at this time, it was Obama at 54 percent and congressional Republicans at 36 percent. A 26-point Obama advantage a year ago on who would better protect the middle class has fallen to just six points in the latest survey.

He has lost ground on these measures among women, liberals and younger Americans — key members of his winning electoral coalition.

The president's overall approval rating stands at 43 percent, while disapproval is at 55 percent. Those numbers are virtually identical to a poll taken a month ago. At this time last year, 54 percent approved of Obama's overall performance and 42 disapproved. Even after the huge losses his party suffered in the 2010 midterms, Obama's approval rating was higher, at 49 percent, than it is today and was slightly more positive than negative.

Ouch.

But as bad as that news is, it pales in comparison to the new [AP-GfK poll](#) on Obamacare that came out earlier this week – because this poll suggests that Obama's numbers will continue their downward spiral in 2014 as more Americans feel the negative impact of Obamacare.

The administration has taken comfort in the fact that while about six million Americans have seen their health plans cancelled, the “vast majority” of insured Americans have been largely unaffected. But this poll shows that “vast majority” is increasingly unhappy with Obamacare.

The AP reports:

The poll found a striking level of unease about [Obamacare] among people who have health insurance and aren't looking for any more government help. Those are the 85 percent of Americans who the White House says don't have to be worried about the president's historic push to expand coverage for the uninsured.

In the survey, nearly half of those with job-based or other private coverage say their policies will be changing next year — mostly for the worse. Nearly 4 in 5 (77 percent) blame the changes on the Affordable Care Act... Sixty-nine percent say their premiums will be going up, while 59 percent say annual deductibles or copayments are increasing.

Only 21 percent of those with private coverage said their plan is expanding to cover more types of medical care, though coverage of preventive care at no charge to the patient has been required by the law for the past couple of years.

In other words, most of those with employer-based coverage are expecting to see their plans get worse and more expensive next year thanks to Obamacare – and they are not happy. But as Stan Veuger has pointed out, tens of millions of them may see their plans not simply changed, but cancelled entirely.

Think how mad they are going to be then. A few million cancellations in 2013 will pale when compared to tens of millions in 2014 – right before the November mid-term elections.

The Washington Post just [crowned](#) Obama the winner of its award for the “Worst Year in Washington.”

Truth be told, this time next year Obama may be looking back on 2013 with nostalgia.

## National Review

### [The Wrong Kind of White House Shake-Up](#)

***Obama opts for leftist true believers, meaning we'll see even more presidential overreach.***

by John Fund

Last week, in a shake-up designed to arrest his falling poll numbers, President Obama brought in several new staffers. We've seen this before with Obama, and it ultimately didn't change much. If anything, the current shake-up anchors the president even more firmly to his left-wing base and makes it more likely he will use legally suspect executive orders and rogue regulations to impose his will and go around Congress.

In early 2011, after Democrats received a “shellacking” in the midterm elections (to use Obama's phrase), he brought in Bill Daley, a scion of the Chicago Machine that had kick-started Obama's own political career, to be his new chief of staff. Daley, a former Commerce secretary under Bill Clinton, was a smooth salesman with ties to the business leaders Obama needed on his side to win the 2012 reelection campaign. Many onlookers predicted that Daley would help shift Obama toward the center. After all, in the middle of the debate over Obamacare, Daley had famously [written](#) a *Washington Post* op-ed titled “Democrats, reclaim your center.” All Democrats had to do to regain their political footing, he said in the op-ed, was “acknowledge that the agenda of the party's most liberal supporters has not won the support of a majority of Americans — and, based on that recognition, to steer a more moderate course on the key issues of the day.”

But Daley — among other mistakes — ran afoul of Obama's insular staff, especially the behind-the-scenes liberal powerhouse Valerie Jarrett. Only ten months later, he was pushed aside and replaced as chief of staff by Pete Rouse, who had worked for Obama since his days as an Illinois senator. Rouse eventually gave up the top staff job to Denis McDonough but remained as a top adviser. Last week, though, Rouse announced he would leave at the end of 2013, when a raft of new aides are slated to come aboard.

From this staff shake-up it's clear there won't be even a feint to the center. Last week's budget deal in Congress bypassed Obama. The *Washington Post's* Bob Woodward candidly told Fox News on Sunday that the budget deal came together only because “Obama was not part of the negotiations — he is not a good negotiator.” While Republican Paul Ryan and Democrat Patty Murray were hammering out a compromise budget, the Obama White House was desperately issuing retroactive “suggestions” to insurance companies to provide free health care to people who have lost their insurance thanks to Obamacare. You can bet that most insurers will follow the “suggestions,” given the White House's veiled threats that it will view any non-compliance unfavorably when it comes to taking regulatory actions in the future.

Welcome to Obama's New Power Grab, where the administrative state takes on a quasi-lawless form as the White House tries every scheme in the book (and some that aren't in any book) to save Obamacare without having to negotiate changes with Congress — the old-fashioned American way of altering laws.

Certainly, John Podesta, the most well known of Obama's new aides, will be helpful in this anything-goes strategy. Podesta is ostensibly on board merely for a one-year assignment focusing on climate and energy issues, but few believe he will stick to that knitting.

Podesta was chief of staff to President Clinton when, shortly before leaving office, he issued outrageous pardons to fugitive financier Marc Rich and other criminals. Podesta later founded the liberal Center for American Progress. Both during his tenure with Clinton and since, Podesta has been a vigorous proponent of stretching executive power to its outer limits. Earlier this year, he told the *Washington Post* that Obama's future "path to success . . . is going to come through every single place that you can squeeze some authority which he has." From striking down Obama-era EPA rulings to nullifying President Obama's dubious "recess" appointments, the courts have increasingly rejected Obama's overreaching. But Podesta wants to go even further in creating new executive powers.

In policy terms, Podesta is a leftist true believer, backing a single-payer government health-care system and raising environmental objections against the Keystone Pipeline with such vociferousness that the White House announced Podesta would have to recuse himself from internal deliberations on that issue.

Another new Obama hire who will try to plug the leaks in Obamacare is Phil Schiliro, a former top aide to Democratic representative Henry Waxman of California, a co-author of Obamacare and the chief liberal cheerleader for expanding Medicare and Medicaid. Given his investment in Obama's health-care law, don't expect Schiliro to explore any compromises on the issue. Look instead for more evasive maneuvers to get Democrats past the 2014 elections.

The staff shakeup at the White House certainly could mean that more competent players are on deck, but it also increases the chance that we'll see sweeping new assertions of presidential power and trench warfare with Congress. The White House will be in full campaign mode, even more than ever before. It's going to be a very long three years until the next president is sworn in.

## Contentions

### [Why Obama Chose Podesta](#)

by Seth Mandel

The potential impact of President Obama's decision to bring veteran Democratic figure John Podesta on board to save his floundering presidency continues to be debated, and is the subject of a Glenn Thrush [analysis](#) today. But Thrush's article seems to have fallen victim to the reportorial success of its author, with Thrush having been able to get such a juicy quote out of Podesta that the quote itself has overshadowed the rest of the story.

That's too bad, because the more important element of the story is not Podesta's quote, though that's worth mentioning as well: "[Obama and his team] need to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress," Podesta told Thrush, comparing the GOP and the large segment of the American public that elected them to the cult movement that ended in infamous mass suicide.

There's not much surprising about the quote. Now that the moderate wing of the Democratic Party has all but disappeared, unhinged rhetoric and uncontrolled temper tantrums characterize much of the left's discourse. And the modern Democratic Party has an unhealthy fascination with murder fantasy, from their political [ads](#) depicting legislators throwing people off a cliff to their columnists' [attachment](#) to [effigy executions](#). What's important about the quote is not its morbid conclusion but the first half of it, which is the subject of Thrush's article:

This is not just about providing added muscle to a beleaguered and undermanned West Wing staff. According to interviews in recent weeks with an array of Obama insiders and a dozen current and former senior aides, Podesta's hire is explicitly meant to shake things up inside the White House. In effect, I was told, it represents the clearest sign to date of the administration's interest in shifting the paradigm of Obama's presidency through the forceful, unapologetic and occasionally provocative application of White House power. Podesta, whose official mandate includes enforcement of numerous executive orders on emissions and the environment, suggested as much when he spoke with me earlier this fall about Obama's team. "They need to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress," he told me.

"I think [White House officials] were naturally preoccupied with legislating at first, and I think it took them a while to make the turn to execution. They are focused on that now," Podesta added. "They have to realize that the president has broad authority, that he's not just the prime minister. He can drive a whole range of action. They always grasped that on foreign policy and in the national security area. Now they are doing it on the domestic side."

The confirmation that Obama wants a divisive partisan steering his second-term agenda isn't exactly breaking news, and neither is the fact that he wants to ignore Congress and continue amassing power in the executive branch. But it's significant precisely because it *isn't* surprising. None of this would constitute a change of course for Obama, but a change of course can often be a productive way for a president to salvage a second term from the challenge of lame-duck status and diminishing political capital.

Obama is often compared to the previous Democratic president, Bill Clinton, and this should be no different. Even before Clinton's second term really fell apart, he understood the growing influence of the House Republican caucus and the public appetite for some of the right's policy preferences. When Clinton needed to replace Leon Panetta as his chief of staff, he did not give the job to Panetta's deputy, Harold Ickes, but instead brought in Erskine Bowles.

The *Baltimore Sun* [reported](#) on a January 1997 one-day retreat in which Clinton stressed bipartisanship and working with congressional Republicans on balancing the budget. Though these were general administration priorities, the *Sun* noted that the event "very much had the stamp of new Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles." His organizational skills and ability to work with Republicans were going to be key in getting the president's second-term agenda off the ground. The *Sun* added:

Top Cabinet officials suggested that a good relationship with Congress isn't as difficult as it sounds and that it essentially entails being willing to compromise with Republicans on tax and spending cuts while delivering a budget that is in balance by the year 2002.

The Democrats have certainly come a long way from those days of compromise and fiscal responsibility. Those are not priorities for Obama-era Democrats, but more than that, the Obama administration doesn't believe it needs to compromise with congressional Republicans because the president doesn't recognize their authority.

The *Sun* had noted that Clinton was more open to compromise with Republicans after his reelection because he didn't "need Republicans as a foil anymore." But for Obama, the campaign never ends, so the need for a foil is always there. Because the campaign never ends, serious governing—as opposed to executive power grabs and bureaucratic rulemaking—never begins. The perfect candidate for this job, the president believes, is John Podesta. And Podesta seems to agree.

## Power Line

### [A window into the White House's view of House Republicans](#)

by Paul Mirengoff

John Podesta, who is about to join the Obama administration as a top adviser, should fit right in. In [an interview with Politico](#), Podesta stated that the White House "need[s] to focus on executive action given that they are facing a second term against a cult worthy of Jonestown in charge of one of the houses of Congress."

Jonestown — an [avowedly leftist enterprise](#) — was where followers of James Jones committed mass suicide. It is also where a former member of Congress (Leo Ryan) was killed and a current member (Ryan's aide Jackie Speier) was shot when they tried to find out what the cult was up to.

Podesta provided a [weak and disingenuous apology](#), saying: "In an old interview, my snark got in front of my judgment. I apologize to Speaker Boehner, whom I have always respected." The "old interview" occurred "earlier this fall," according to Politico.

Podesta probably doesn't view Boehner as a cult leader, a part for which the Speaker would be egregiously miscast. But this doesn't mean that he rejects his comparison of House Republicans as a whole to a cult. At most, he regrets his lack of judgment in publicly making this declaration.

When Edward Bennett Williams owned the Baltimore Orioles, he reportedly called his ex-manager Joe Altobelli a "cement-head." When asked to confirm the quote, Williams said it "is not inconsistent with my thinking."

The same is true, I think, of Podesta's quote. I'm afraid that the quote is also not inconsistent with President Obama's thinking.

## National Review

### 'A Cult Worthy of Jonestown'? Hey, Democrats Embraced Jim Jones!

By Jim Geraghty

John Podesta, soon to become a White House adviser, recently called the Republican Party “a cult worthy of Jonestown.” Today he apologized.

It's an interesting metaphor, increasingly common — how often have you heard references to “drinking the Kool-Aid”? — but it's worth recalling Jim Jones was, before his horrific, sadistic end, an increasingly influential figure in California politics, particularly Democratic Party politics.

Jones' “People's Temple” religious group/organization/cult played a role in the election George Moscone's election as mayor of San Francisco in 1975, and Moscone subsequently rewarded Jones by naming him chairman of the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission.

#### Salon:

Jones used his position to take possession of public housing units and install temple members in them, and he put other followers on the housing authority payroll. The preacher was building his own power base within city government. “He was using his power to recruit members and to put the hammer on people,” said David Reuben, an investigator for San Francisco District Attorney Joseph Freitas, another politician under Jones's sway. “He had a lot of authority.”

“Jim Jones helped George Moscone run this city,” said Jim Jones Jr., a chillingly matter-of-fact assessment of the temple leader's creeping encroachment in San Francisco.

Political leaders, aware of Jones's ability to deliver — or manufacture — votes, lined up to pay tribute to the preacher. He worked his way into the good graces of officials high and low — most of them Democrats, since that was the party in power in California and San Francisco in the mid-1970s. But Jones was also happy to exchange mutually complimentary correspondence with the offices of Ronald Reagan and statesman Henry Kissinger.

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Jones wangled a private meeting with Jimmy Carter's wife, Rosalynn, at the elegant Stanford Court Hotel on Nob Hill, arriving with a security contingent that was larger than her Secret Service squad. Later Jones accompanied Moscone and a group of Democratic dignitaries who climbed aboard vice presidential candidate Walter Mondale's private jet when it touched down at San Francisco International Airport.

Governor Jerry Brown sang the preacher's praises. Congressman John Burton, Phil's brother, lobbied the governor to appoint Jones to the high-profile board of regents, which oversaw California's sprawling public university system. San Francisco Supervisor — now U.S. Senator — Dianne Feinstein accepted an invitation to lunch with Jones and to tour Peoples Temple.

But no political figures were more gushing in their praise of Jones than Willie Brown and Harvey Milk, San Francisco's rising tribune of gay freedom.



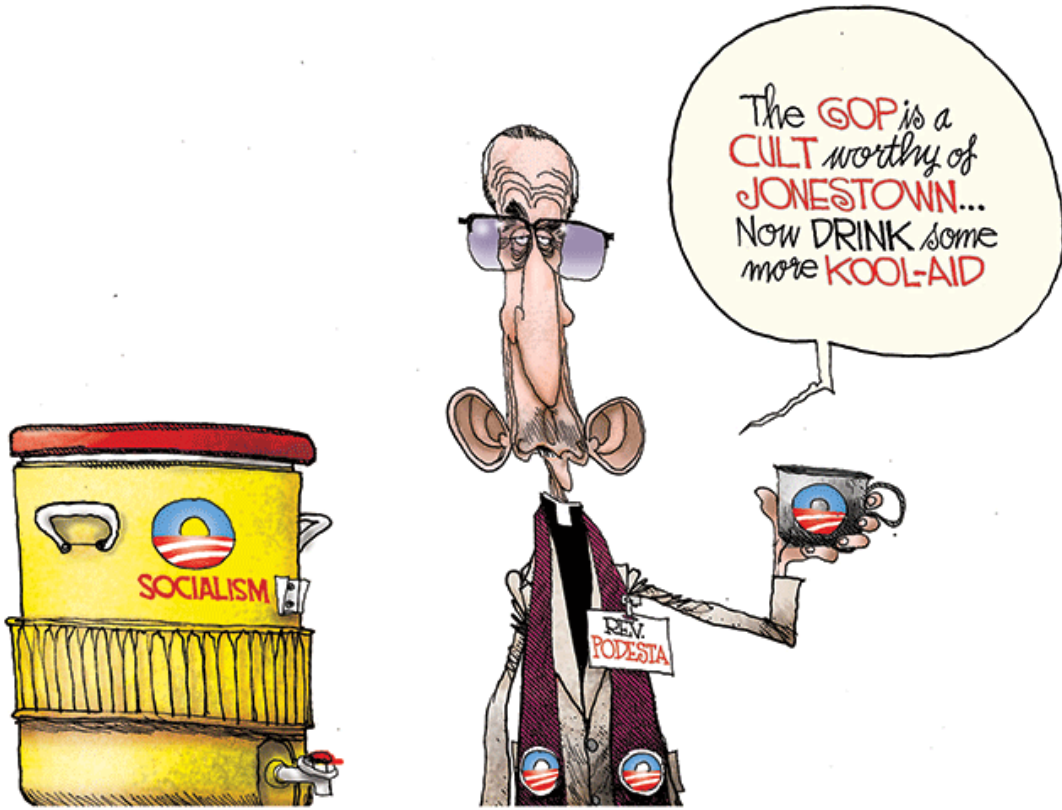


*Jerry Brown and Jim Jones.*

For a stark raving lunatic atop a cult of personality, Jones had amazing sway among the political leaders of his time. In 1977, facing increasing media scrutiny of allegations of abuse of his followers, Jones moved to Guyana, and renamed it after himself. The rest is gruesome, horrific history, culminating in the November 1978 cyanide poisoning of 909 members of the cult, including more than 300 children.

The comparison of today's GOP to the Jim Jones' followers is deeply offensive and obnoxious, but also ironic, considering how some of the Democrats still on the scene today were all too eager to embrace Jones when he could provide political assistance.





[www.investors.com/cartoons](http://www.investors.com/cartoons)



**PRESIDENT OBAMA  
JUST WON A  
"MAJOR AWARD"**

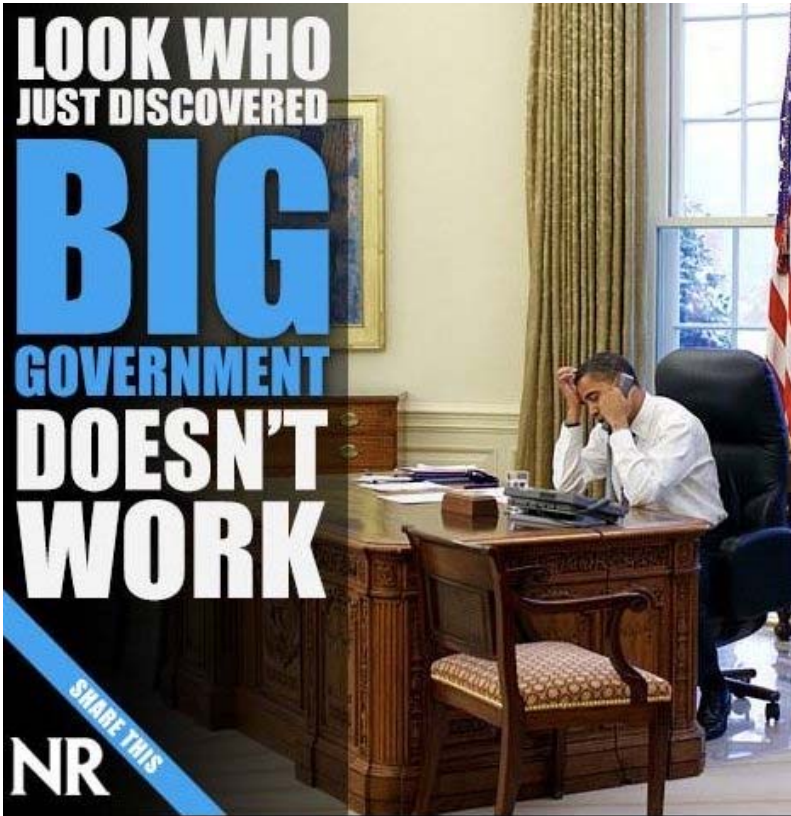


**PolitiFact's  
LIE OF THE YEAR**

Facebook.com/NY18DistrictForum







# New, Improved Obamacare Program Released On 35 Floppy Disks

NEWS IN BRIEF · Government · Barack Obama · Healthcare · News · ISSUE 49·43 · Oct 21, 2013



 64.2K  
 4.0K  
 510





I just woke up from a 10 year coma. So whatever happened with the national debt?



我们都是中国人



All the American flags placed on the moon are now white due to radiation from the sun.



**Great, now it looks like the French went there**