

March 17, 2014

Charles Krauthammer has ideas on how we might stop Putin.

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*Invasion woke Carter from his illusions. Will it wake Obama?*

Paul Mirengoff spots the dumbest John Kerry statement, ever. There is a lot of competition for this, but Pickerhead agrees. It is a beautiful thing to see how the president has gathered blithering idiots to his cabinet; Kerry, Hagel, and the president - a matched set of incompetents. The American voting public has a lot to answer for. *John Kerry has said some criminally stupid things in his time. Recall, for example, this statement by Kerry from 2010 about Bashar al-Assad:*

*Let me just say that I am . . . absolutely convinced that carefully calibrated diplomacy, that if that is what we engage in, that Syria will play a very important role in achieving a comprehensive peace in the region and in putting an end to the five decades of conflict that have plagued everybody in this region.*

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Andrew Ferguson caught a bunch of economists admitting their mistakes.

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*The economists now say they failed to consider the damaging effects of regulation. In the real world, regulations “delay[ed] necessary reallocations across [economic] sectors in the recovery phase”—which, translated from the Economese, means that government was retarding the ability of businesses to do what they do best: find a way to create value and make money even in calamitous circumstances. The concession is implied, but it’s clear the economists regret letting an ideological assumption in favor of government intervention overwhelm their forecasts as the recession swept the globe, raining on the regulated and unregulated alike.*

*Failures of foresight are common among experts—commoner among them, probably, than among the rest of us, who are unburdened by the expertise that tends to bind rather than liberate habits of mind. The OECD economists are happy to point out that their failures in figuring out the economy from one country to the next are no greater than those of the profession as a whole, especially in the years before and after the recession. Yet no amount of publicity about such spectacular failures deters their clients, whether in government or business, from asking economists for more. ...*

Perhaps one of this administration's most contemptible actions came last week with proposals for changes to over-time pay work rules. It was not the result of any diligent effort of study. It is simply something flicked out there to compensate for, and change the subject from, their manifest failures in domestic and foreign policy. Ed Morrissey comments.

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*That protest had two big problems for Democrats’ credibility. First, they control the upper chamber, so they can introduce legislation any time they wish – and they offered no legislation during the all-nighter. Second, climate change falls far down the list of priorities for Americans; according to Gallup, it’s second to last on a non-exclusive list of concerns overall, and near the bottom even*

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**Camille Paglia** never fails to surprise. Her comments on the failures of sex education is spot on. She wants more sex.

*Fertility is the missing chapter in sex education. Sobering facts about women's declining fertility after their 20s are being withheld from ambitious young women, who are propelled along a career track devised for men.*

*The refusal by public schools' sex-education programs to acknowledge gender differences is betraying both boys and girls. The genders should be separated for sex counseling. It is absurd to avoid the harsh reality that boys have less to lose from casual serial sex than do girls, who risk pregnancy and whose future fertility can be compromised by disease. Boys need lessons in basic ethics and moral reasoning about sex (for example, not taking advantage of intoxicated dates), while girls must learn to distinguish sexual compliance from popularity.*

*Above all, girls need life-planning advice. Too often, sex education defines pregnancy as a pathology, for which the cure is abortion. Adolescent girls must think deeply about their ultimate aims and desires. If they want both children and a career, they should decide whether to have children early or late. There are pros, cons and trade-offs for each choice.*

*Unfortunately, sex education in the U.S. is a crazy quilt of haphazard programs. A national conversation is urgently needed for curricular standardization and public transparency. The present system is too vulnerable to political pressures from both the left and the right—and students are trapped in the middle. ...*

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## Washington Post

### How to stop — or slow — Putin

by Charles Krauthammer

The president of the [Los Angeles World Affairs Council challenges critics of President Obama's Ukraine policy](#) by saying, "What are you going to do, send the 101st Airborne into Crimea?" Not exactly subtle. And rather silly, considering that no one has proposed such a thing.

The alternative to passivity is not war but a serious foreign policy. For the [past five years, Obama's fruitless accommodationism](#) has invited the kind of aggressiveness demonstrated by Iran in Syria, China in the East China Sea and Russia in Ukraine. But what's done is done. Put that aside. What is to be done now?

We have three objectives. In ascending order of difficulty: Reassure NATO. Deter further Russian incursion into Ukraine. Reverse the annexation of Crimea.

#### *Reassure NATO:*

We're [already sending U.S. aircraft to patrol the airspace of the Baltic states](#). That's not enough.

- Send the chairman of the Joint Chiefs to the Baltics to arrange joint maneuvers.
- Same for the four NATO countries bordering Ukraine — Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.
- Urgently revive the original missile-defense agreements concluded with Poland and the Czech Republic before [Obama canceled them unilaterally to appease Russia](#). (But first make sure that the respective governments are willing to sign on again after Obama left them hanging five years ago.)

#### *Deter Russia in Ukraine:*

- Extend the Black Sea maneuvers in which the [USS Truxtun is currently engaged with Romania and Bulgaria](#). These were previously scheduled. Order immediate — and continual — follow-ons.
- Declare that any further Russian military incursion beyond Crimea will lead to a rapid and favorable response from NATO to any request from Kiev for weapons. These would be accompanied by significant numbers of NATO trainers and advisers.

This is no land-war strategy. This is the "tripwire" strategy successful for half a century in Germany and Korea. Any Russian push into western Ukraine would then engage a thin tripwire of NATO trainer/advisers. That is something the most rabid Soviet expansionist never risked. Nor would Putin. It would, therefore, establish a ring of protection at least around the core of western Ukraine.

#### *Reverse the annexation of Crimea:*

Clearly the most difficult. In the short run, likely impossible. There are no military cards to play, Russia holding all of them. [Ukraine's forces are very weak](#). The steps must be diplomatic and economic.

First, Crimean secession under Russian occupation must lead to Russia's immediate expulsion from the G-8. To assuage the [tremulous Angela Merkel](#), we could do it by subtraction: All seven democracies withdraw from the G-8, then instantly reconstitute as the original G-7.

As for economic sanctions, they are currently puny. We haven't done a thing. We haven't even named names. We've just [authorized the penalizing of individuals](#).

Name the names, freeze their accounts. But any real effect will require broader sanctions and for that we need [European cooperation](#). The ultimate sanction is to cut off Russian oligarchs, companies and banks from the Western financial system. That's the economic "nuclear option" that brought Iran to its knees and to the negotiating table. It would have a devastating effect on Putin's economy.

As for now, the Germans, French and British have balked. They have too much economic interest in the Moscow connection.

Which means we can do nothing decisive in the short or even medium term. But we can severely squeeze Russia in the long term.

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Invasion woke Carter from his illusions. Will it wake Obama?

## **Power Line** **[Dumbest John Kerry statement ever](#)**

by Paul Mirengoff

John Kerry has said some criminally stupid things in his time. Recall, for example, [this statement](#) by Kerry from 2010 about Bashar al-Assad:

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Kerry is now absolutely convinced that "[it's a mistake](#)" for Israeli leaders "again and again" to raise the PLO's refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state "as the critical decider of their attitude toward the possibility of a [Palestinian] state and peace." Apparently, Kerry believes that Israel should consider as its peace partner an entity that doesn't accept its right to exist as it is fundamentally constituted.

Throughout human history, war has often been the arbiter when neighboring entities disagree fundamentally about the status of territory. And when that territory is one of the two entities itself, war becomes almost inevitable. So why does Kerry see error in Israel's insistence that the PLO affirm its right to exist as constituted before concluding a "peace" with its long-time sworn enemy?

Kerry says that "[The] 'Jewish state' was resolved in 1947 in [UN General Assembly partition] Resolution 181 where there are more than 40-30 mentions of 'Jewish state.'" The idiocy of this argument is obvious. Since the passage of this U.N. resolution, Israel has had to fight three major wars against forces that refused to accept it as a Jewish state. Kerry isn't asking that Israel make "peace" with the U.N; he wants it to make "peace" with an entity that refuses to affirm what Resolution 181 "mentions."

Kerry also sniffs that "Chairman Arafat in 1988 and again in 2004 confirmed that he agreed [Israel] would be a Jewish state, and there are any other number of mentions." But if even "Chairman" Arafat was willing to say (albeit insincerely) that Israel would remain a Jewish state, it becomes particularly telling that the current leadership won't say it.

Kerry was spectacularly wrong about Assad's Syria, and that's far from the only example. But for sheer stupidity Kerry has, I think, surpassed himself with his assertion that Israel should overlook the fact that its alleged peace partner won't affirm its right to exist.

UPDATE: If we go back far enough, of course, we find Kerry comparing the conduct of U.S. troops in Vietnam to "[the Army of Genghis Khan.](#)" That statement transcends "dumb." It belongs in a category of its own.

## **Weekly Standard**

### **Wrong Again**

#### ***The economists' confession.***

by Andrew Ferguson

It's hard to find nice things to say about economists. Their detachment from the real world of human activity is matched only by their enormous influence over it, and by their unearned assumption that this arrangement is well deserved. That all changed last month, however. Now we

can say something nice about at least some of the economists at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and it is this: They may not be very good at what they do, but they're not afraid to admit it.

Last month they released a report, "OECD Forecasts During & After the Financial Crisis: A Post-Mortem." It is not beach reading, unless you're the sort of person who works for the OECD or The Weekly Standard. The report's watery tone and obscure nomenclature are common to the literature of professional economists—and are indispensable when it comes time to hide an unflattering conclusion from the prying eyes of laymen. The unflattering conclusion here, though, is straightforward, if understated. The OECD economists looked at their own work forecasting the direction of the world economy over the last several years and admitted: "GDP growth was overestimated on average across 2007-12, reflecting not only errors at the height of the financial crisis but also errors in the subsequent recovery."

The passive voice in the first clause of that sentence is squirmy; a flat assertion in the first person - plural would be more seemly and more accurate. But give them credit for the rest of the sentence. How big were the errors? Pretty big.

In May 2010, for example, with one-third of the calendar year already over, the OECD economists predicted the U.S. economy would grow 3.2 percent for the year. As it happened, gross domestic product grew 1.7 percent. Note that this is not a small error. That 1.5 percentage point spread between the two numbers means the original projection was off by nearly half. It's as if you thought you saw a car go by at 60 miles per hour while it was actually going 30.

The new report is not solely an admission of error. It is also a catalogue of errors by type. The biggest mistakes, the economists point out, occurred when they forecast growth rates in countries with a relatively high level of government regulation. This surprises the economists, though it won't surprise anyone who takes a dim view of government regulation generally. The forecasters, good statisticians all, assumed that the regulations "would help to cushion financial shocks" in the highly regulated countries and would therefore aid recovery.

The economists now say they failed to consider the damaging effects of regulation. In the real world, regulations "delay[ed] necessary reallocations across [economic] sectors in the recovery phase"—which, translated from the Economese, means that government was retarding the ability of businesses to do what they do best: find a way to create value and make money even in calamitous circumstances. The concession is implied, but it's clear the economists regret letting an ideological assumption in favor of government intervention overwhelm their forecasts as the recession swept the globe, raining on the regulated and unregulated alike.

Failures of foresight are common among experts—commoner among them, probably, than among the rest of us, who are unburdened by the expertise that tends to bind rather than liberate habits of mind. The OECD economists are happy to point out that their failures in figuring out the economy from one country to the next are no greater than those of the profession as a whole, especially in the years before and after the recession. Yet no amount of publicity about such spectacular failures deters their clients, whether in government or business, from asking economists for more.

In late 2009 the economist William McEachern impishly looked back at the previous year's forecasts by the *Wall Street Journal's* panel of economic experts. The *Journal* surveyed its experts in September 2008 when U.S. unemployment was at 6.2 percent; the average prediction among

the economists was for the rate to stay more or less flat. By the following September the unemployment rate was 9.8 percent. At the same time, the average prediction among *Journal* economists was that growth for the last quarter of 2008—the quarter, you'll note, that was just about to commence—would be 1.2 percent. Instead it was -2.7 percent.

Economists, in other words, not only fail to predict the future, they can't even predict the present. The OECD offered various reasons for its abysmal record. "The OECD forecasts," the report says, "are conditional projections rather than pure forecasts." Why this should let them off the hook is unexplained. The conditional projections, they go on, "rest on a specific set of assumptions about policies and underlying economic and financial conditions." Oil prices, fiscal policy, the course of the euro crisis—all of these, they say, are beyond an economist's control and bound to throw him off his game.

And we shouldn't doubt it. The oft-cited (by Democrats or Republicans, depending) Congressional Budget Office makes similar demurrals when it owns up to its forecasting failures, which are regular and very large. "Sources of large forecasting errors," one CBO report says, "have included the difficulty of predicting: Turning points in the business cycle—the beginning and end of recessions; changes in trends in productivity; and changes in crude oil prices."

The world is a crazy place, no doubt about it. Most events that occur—even the actions of governments, sometimes—are beyond the control of economists, much as they might like to daydream otherwise. But isn't that the point? This admission just begs the question of why anyone should pay attention to their wizardry to begin with. The forecaster's chief conceit is that by feeding numbers into one end of a statistical model he can see the future come out the other side. The conceit touches off a phantasmagoria of argument in Washington, where politicians and policymakers sift the numbers from one set of econometricians or another, and then use their favorite figures to determine how they will orchestrate the activities of the folks back home. In thrall to economists, government policy-making is a fantasy based on a fantasy.

Perhaps I'm wrong to say the OECD economists aren't very good at what they do. They may be champs, for all I know. It's just that what they are trying to do is worse than worthless. The fault, if that's the word, lies with the people who are soliciting their forecasts, and why.

In an autobiographical essay published 20 years ago, the left-leaning economist Kenneth Arrow recalled entering the Army as a statistician and weather specialist during World War II. "Some of my colleagues had the responsibility of preparing long-range weather forecasts, i.e., for the following month," Arrow wrote. "The statisticians among us subjected these forecasts to verification and found they differed in no way from chance."

Alarmed, Arrow and his colleagues tried to bring this important discovery to the attention of the commanding officer. At last the word came down from a high-ranking aide.

"The Commanding General is well aware that the forecasts are no good," the aide said haughtily. "However, he needs them for planning purposes."



## The Fiscal Times

### Obama Works Overtime to Interfere With Business

by Edward Morrissey



The Roman Empire notoriously distracted its citizenry by providing bread and circuses to mollify and distract them from the real problems of their lives and the failures of their government. Washington DC kept up that hoary tradition this week, starting with an all-night Senate session on global warming, conducted by Senate Democrats protesting the lack of action by the US government on the issue.

That protest had two big problems for Democrats' credibility. First, they control the upper chamber, so they can introduce legislation any time they wish – and they [offered no legislation](#) during the all-nighter. Second, climate change falls far down the list of priorities for Americans; [according to Gallup](#), it's second to last on a non-exclusive list of concerns overall, and near the bottom even among Democrats. The top priorities on Gallup's list are the economy and unemployment, for voters of both parties.

With the failure of the circus on Capitol Hill, the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue focused on the bread. The White House told [The New York Times](#) and other media outlets that President Obama would take executive action to redefine salaried employment in order to expand overtime payment from employers. As usual, this top-down and unforeseen change in regulation will create more problems than it solves, and likely result in lowered compensation rather than the explosion of riches for the working class the Obama administration will claim.

Critics of the administration will object to the unilateral nature of this change, but this does fall within the purview of the executive branch, unlike the minimum-wage demand from Obama. Congress sets the federal minimum-wage level in statute, but the distinction between exempt and non-exempt payroll comes from Department of Labor regulation. Executive-branch agencies can change regulations based on their own authority within the statutory jurisdiction approved by Congress and the President--and this falls well within that authority.

That doesn't mean it's great policy, though. Currently, Labor sets the lowest pay level for exemption from overtime at \$455 per week, which requires that the job entail some kind of "executive" function, such as supervision of other employees. For a full-time job, that equates to about \$11.38 an hour or an annual salary of \$23,660. Under current rules, employers do not have to quantify what part of the job entails "executive" responsibilities, which White House officials claim leads to exploitation of low-income workers.

What new level and definition of exempt status *will* Obama embrace? No one seems to know at the moment, and the White House isn't saying. Former White House economist Jared Bernstein wants it [raised to \\$984 per week](#), which equates to an annual income of just over \$51,000, slightly above the household median income in the US.

That doesn't mean they'll be getting bigger checks any time soon, either. Employers seeking to control costs will likely just exercise a lot more scrutiny of work assignments, and require more from their full-time employees in the forty hours on their regular schedule. That may be especially true at small businesses, the US Chamber of Commerce argued in [an e-mail to Bloomberg](#).

The White House argued that this is about income inequality and economic growth, anticipating the backlash from the business community. The move would "potentially shift billions of dollars' worth of corporate income into the pockets of workers," *The New York Times* explained, adding, "Since the mid-1980s, corporate profits have soared," and S&P 500 companies have seen profits double since the end of the recession in 2009, without a commensurate increase in compensation for workers. The 2012 share of GDP going to workers hit an all-time low of 42.6 percent, *The Times* also takes care to note.

Almost all of these ills, however, and especially that of burgeoning corporate ledgers, comes from the interventions conducted by the Obama administration's economic policies. At the end of prior recessions, the US has acted to reduce costs on investment through lower taxes and regulatory costs.

The Obama administration has piled on in both areas, especially with the added hiring costs of the Affordable Care Act and the 2012 increase in the capital-gains tax rate. Capital that might have gone into business expansion that creates jobs instead stays in corporate coffers to earn interest instead of return on risk.

In a growing economy, businesses would add staff to deal with increased demand, not increased regulation and mandates from Washington. The civilian workforce participation rate has dropped to lows not seen since the Jimmy Carter era, and chronic unemployment has made workers nearly powerless in the labor market.

In a healthy economy with robust job creation, employers would not be able to force low-income workers into exempt definitions, because those workers would find better-compensated work elsewhere. Businesses that might have hired more workers are now looking for ways to duck the costs of employer-subsidized health insurance by cutting hours to less than 30 a week.

The problem Obama claims to be solving is largely that of his own making – and this top-down change will have significant consequences as well. The White House argues that it will either force employers to pay overtime or to hire more workers to perform the work. Forcing a change of any

significance through regulation now, with job creation at stagnation levels, will not inspire confidence in the necessary expanded investment to boost hiring and then compensation.

This proposal could well accelerate the trend to part-time staffing, convincing businesses to convert in order to eliminate overhead costs, and create savings that can then be applied to short-term gaps in work coverage. That might have more appeal for small businesses that survive on smaller margins, even if it creates more management headaches.

Even these changes, though, are largely for show. A move to a \$984/week floor would add five million more Americans to overtime eligibility in Bernstein's calculations – only 3.5 percent of the number of employed in the US, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It will take months for the Department of Labor to promulgate them, put them through a comment period, and deal with any opposition from Congress, and that timeline starts whenever the White House gets around to making an actual proposal.

All this does is give Obama and Democrats a wonky talking point for the midterm elections, and a way to distract the voters universally impacted by the negative consequences of Obamacare by discussing changes at the margins that will worsen the stagnation in the current economy. It's just another ring in the circus, with imaginary bread promised to magically appear at some later date.

## Time

### Put the Sex Back in Sex Ed

*When public schools refuse to acknowledge gender differences, we betray boys and girls alike.*

by Camille Paglia

Fertility is the missing chapter in sex education. Sobering facts about women's declining fertility after their 20s are being withheld from ambitious young women, who are propelled along a career track devised for men.

The refusal by public schools' sex-education programs to acknowledge gender differences is betraying both boys and girls. The genders should be separated for sex counseling. It is absurd to avoid the harsh reality that boys have less to lose from casual serial sex than do girls, who risk pregnancy and whose future fertility can be compromised by disease. Boys need lessons in basic ethics and moral reasoning about sex (for example, not taking advantage of intoxicated dates), while girls must learn to distinguish sexual compliance from popularity.

Above all, girls need life-planning advice. Too often, sex education defines pregnancy as a pathology, for which the cure is abortion. Adolescent girls must think deeply about their ultimate aims and desires. If they want both children and a career, they should decide whether to have children early or late. There are pros, cons and trade-offs for each choice.

Unfortunately, sex education in the U.S. is a crazy quilt of haphazard programs. A national conversation is urgently needed for curricular standardization and public transparency. The present system is too vulnerable to political pressures from both the left and the right—and students are trapped in the middle.

Currently, 22 states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education but leave instructional decisions to school districts. Sex-ed teachers range from certified health educators to volunteers and teenage “peer educators” with minimal training. That some instructors may import their own sexually permissive biases is evident from the sporadic scandals about inappropriate use of pornographic materials or websites.

The modern campaign for sex education began in 1912 with a proposal by the National Education Association for classes in “sexual hygiene” to control sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis. During the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called for sex education starting in third grade. In the 1990s, sex educators turned their focus to teenage pregnancy in inner-city communities.

Sex education has triggered recurrent controversy, partly because it is seen by religious conservatives as an instrument of secular cultural imperialism, undermining moral values. It’s time for liberals to admit that there is some truth to this and that public schools should not promulgate any ideology. The liberal response to conservatives’ demand for abstinence-only sex education has been to condemn the imposition of “fear and shame” on young people. But perhaps a bit more self-preserving fear and shame might be helpful in today’s hedonistic, media-saturated environment.

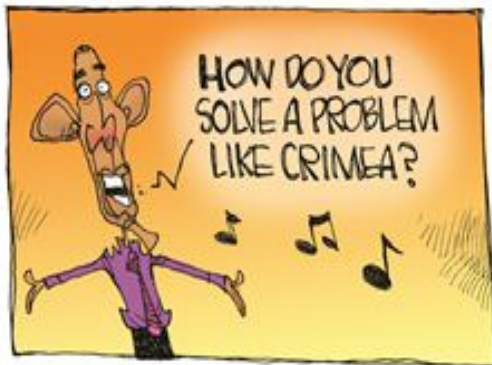
My generation of baby-boom girls boldly rebelled against the cult of virginity of the Doris Day 1950s, but we left chaos in our wake. Young people are now bombarded prematurely with sexual images and messages. Adolescent girls, routinely dressing in seductive ways, are ill-prepared to negotiate the sexual attention they attract. Sex education has become incoherent because of its own sprawling agenda. It should be broken into component parts, whose professionalism could be better ensured.

First, anatomy and reproductive biology belong in general biology courses taught in middle school by qualified science teachers. Every aspect of physiology, from puberty to menopause, should be covered. Students deserve a cool, clear, objective voice about the body, rather than the smarmy, feel-good chatter that now infests sex-ed workbooks.

Second, certified health educators, who advise children about washing their hands to avoid colds, should discuss sexually transmitted diseases at the middle-school or early-high-school level. But while information about condoms must be provided, it is not the place of public schools to distribute condoms, as is currently done in the Boston, New York and Los Angeles school districts. Condom distribution should be left to hospitals, clinics and social-service agencies.

Similarly, public schools have no business listing the varieties of sexual gratification, from masturbation to oral and anal sex, although health educators should nonjudgmentally answer student questions about the health implications of such practices. The issue of homosexuality is a charged one. In my view, antibullying campaigns, however laudable, should not stray into political endorsement of homosexuality or gay rights causes. While students must be free to create gay-identified groups, the schools themselves should remain neutral and allow society to evolve on its own.

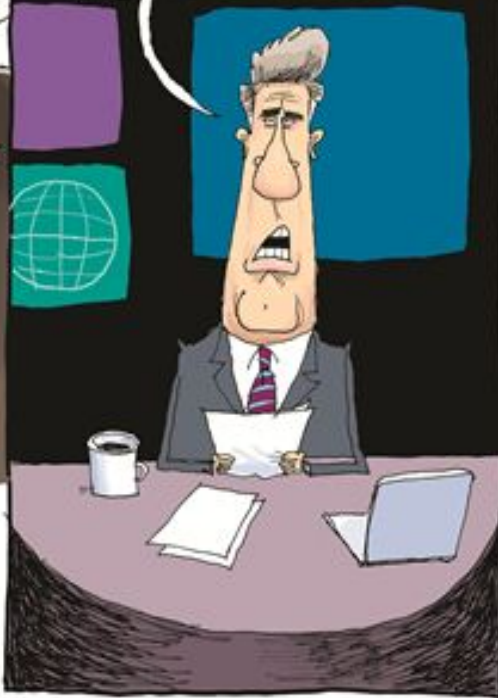
*Paglia is the author of Glittering Images: A Journey Through Art From Egypt to Star Wars*



Wow! The President's approval rating is at 38%! As an unbiased member of the media it's my duty to report this!



A new poll proves 62% of Americans are racist.



GIVE ME YOUR PHONE, YOUNG LADY! NO MORE TEXTING YOUR FRIENDS UNTIL YOUR GRADES IMPROVE.

OK, NOW I'M TEXTING MY LAWYER.



THIS YEAR, THE NCAA TOURNAMENT BEGINS THE DAY AFTER ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

COOL... SO WE CAN CALL IN SICK FOR WORK WITHOUT EVEN LYING.

