

January 26, 2010

[David Warren](#) takes a philosophical look at our judgments of events, and how they can change.

*...The victory of Scott Brown, in the Massachusetts byelection, has brought the Left agenda -- Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid in White House and Congress -- to an abrupt halt. And it has done so before that much damage could be done.*

*In the bluest of all American blue states -- the one which already had a taste of progressive "Obamacare" at state level -- people realized they'd made a horrible mistake. A vote swing of more than 30 per cent changed the complexion of a Senate seat that had belonged to the Kennedy family since 1952.*

*Debt is not the answer to economic problems, there or here; more bureaucracy is not the answer; nor is the further empowerment of public sector unions to hold taxpayers to ransom.*

*And as to terrorism and foreign threats, Mr. Brown was able to play, before the most politically correct constituency in the U.S., variations on the theme: "American taxpayer dollars should go to buying weapons to kill terrorists, not pay for lawyers to defend them." ...*

[Thomas Sowell](#) celebrates Scott Brown.

*Some of the most melancholy letters and e-mails that are sent to me are from people who lament that there is nothing they can do about the bad policies that they see ruining this country. They don't have any media outlet for their opinions and the letters they send to their Congressmen are either ignored or are answered by form letters with weasel words. They feel powerless.*

*Sometimes I remind them that the whole political establishment — both Democrats and Republicans, as well as the mainstream media — were behind amnesty for illegal immigrants, until the public opinion polls showed that the voters were not buying it. If politicians can't do anything else right, they can count votes.*

*It was the same story with the government's health care takeover legislation. The Democrats have such huge majorities in both houses of Congress that they could literally lock the Republicans out of the room where they were deciding what to do, set arbitrary deadlines for votes, and cut off debate in the Senate. The mainstream media was on board with this bill too. To hear the talking heads on TV, you would think it was a done deal.*

*Then Scott Brown got elected to the "Kennedy seat" in the Senate, showing that that seat was not the inheritance of any dynasty to pass on. Moreover, it showed that the voters were already fed up with the Obama administration, even in liberal Massachusetts, as well as in Virginia and New Jersey. The backtracking on health care began immediately. Politicians can count votes. Once again, the public was not helpless. ...*

[Mary Katherine Ham](#) blogs in the [Weekly Standard](#) about Medicare-related issues.

*...But Barack Obama needed senior support on Obamacare, so back in October, he sent out a [senior stimulus](#)— \$250 per Social Security recipient coming to a total of \$13 billion. He didn't get their support (as we now know), [but the checks went out](#), supported by some Republicans and criticized by deficit hawks and many conservatives.*

*Today, when answering an Ohio woman's question, Obama edged indelicately close to the political truth about programs for seniors: "We never forget seniors because they vote at very high levels," he said to light*

laughter before realizing the response was a bit crass. He then hastened to add that we appreciate seniors because they "changed our diapers." It was a cynical moment for the hope-and-change merchant.

The admission is a political truth we all know, and the reason Republicans have ([unwisely, I think](#)) painted themselves into a fiscal corner by bashing the idea of Medicare cuts in the fight against Obamacare. What's telling is how clumsy the president has become in his rhetoric. As the constant pitch for flailing health-care becomes more and more tired, the Great Orator does himself less and less good with each outing.

It's always interesting to see the MSM eat crow. [Mort Zuckerman](#) has another commentary on the deflation of Obama's popularity. Since the health care monstrosity was such a near miss, we are right to wonder where Zuckerman was when we really needed him.

...Taxpayers have thus come to see politics as usual masquerading as [economic recovery](#). Indeed, both the stimulus and [healthcare](#) plans were voted on so quickly that the lawmakers had no time to read the bills. In both cases, the White House created the impression it was interested in passing anything, no matter how ineffectual. This was epitomized by Obama's chief of staff essentially asserting that a healthcare bill would be passed even if all it consisted of was two Band-Aids and an aspirin.

Most critically, Obama misjudged the locus of the country's anxiety: the [economy](#). Instead of concentrating on jobs, jobs, jobs, he made the decision to "boil the ocean" and go for everything, from comprehensive health reform to global warming to a world without nuclear weapons ... and the beat goes on.

This was more than the Congress could absorb and more than the country could understand. Obama, the theoretician in a hurry, made no allowance for the normal resistance to dramatic change and the public's distaste for big government, big spending, and big deficits. He didn't seem to realize that Americans understand in the most personal terms that excessive debt has real consequences, given how many have mortgages that exceed the value of a home and credit lines that are too much to carry. Yet this was what the president seemed to be getting us into. Over 60 percent of the country believes that government spending is excessive; Obama's lowest approval ratings come from his mishandling of the present and future deficits. ...

The [Economist](#) reviews the undoing of The One, and suggests a course correction.

...One thing, though, is clear. The brief era in which the Democrats felt they could push through anything they wanted, courtesy of their thumping majorities in the House and the Senate and their occupancy of the White House, is over. Once Scott Brown is seated in the Senate, Mr Obama will lose his supermajority there, so a determined opposition (which this one certainly seems to be) will be able to block anything it wants to. Making deals with the Republicans once again becomes a necessity, not a luxury. That should not be a disaster; most presidents have to govern with far fewer than 60 Senate votes.

It is not obvious, though, that the Olympian Mr Obama knows how to do this, despite all his fine words along the campaign trail about "a new politics". What he now has to understand is that he is in a weak position: he needs the Republicans more than they need him. To get what he wants, he will have to learn to give them much more of what they want. For instance, he could now offer the Republicans tort reform and genuine cost-control to bring them on board for a slimmed-down health bill: that might be an offer they could not refuse. Likewise, any hope of getting a climate-change bill through Congress will probably have to involve more nuclear power.

Bill Clinton grasped all this after the disaster of 1994, when the Republicans took back Congress; the result was a stream of good laws that outraged many leftish Democrats, from welfare reform to free-trade deals to deficit-reduction. Mr Clinton won an easy re-election and his presidency, despite his own best efforts to

destroy it, was a pretty successful one. Mr Obama, who is now faced with the possibility of a similar electoral catastrophe, needs to copy the great triangulator.

**Peter Schiff** describes how government intervention has destroyed American Samoa's economy and standard of living. People who abuse the power of the state never learn the law of unintended consequences.

*...For generations, American Samoa offered strong advantages for tuna canners. The close proximity to vast Pacific tuna schools, the islands' good port facilities, political association with the United States, and an abundance of relatively inexpensive labor (by American standards) enticed StarKist and Chicken of the Sea to locate their primary canning facilities in American Samoa. Although the workers were paid, in recent years, wages that were below the U.S. minimum, given the low taxes and living costs, these wages were enough to offer the average worker a standard of living that was superior to the denizens of other islands in that area of the Pacific.<sup>[iii]</sup>*

*But then, in 2007, Washington came to the "rescue." As part of its efforts to provide a "living wage" for all Americans, Congress passed a law to step up the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour across all U.S. states and territories by 2009.<sup>[iii]</sup> Understanding that such a law would devastate American Samoa by raising canning costs past the point where the companies could maintain profitability, the non-voting Samoan member of the U.S. House of Representatives convinced Congress to allow an exemption for the islands. However, Republicans raised allegations that Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, in whose district both Chicken of the Sea and StarKist had corporate offices, had caved to pressure from big donors and was allowing the continued "exploitation" of Samoan workers. Facing a sticky political situation, the exemption was removed.*

*The Samoan representative desperately sought to fend off what he was sure would be an economic calamity. He asked the Department of Labor to issue a report examining the potential consequences of the law upon the islands' economy. The report explained that "nearly 80 percent of workers covered by the FLSA earned under \$7.25 per hour. By comparison, if the U.S. minimum wage were increased to the level of the 75th percentile of hourly-paid U.S. workers, it would be raised to \$16.50 per hour." Therefore, the study continued, "there is concern that [the tuna canneries] will be closed prior to the escalation of the minimum wage ... and that production will be shifted to facilities outside the U.S." Ultimately, the Department of Labor concluded that "closure of the tuna canneries will cause a total loss of **8,118 jobs – 45.6 percent of total employment.**" (emphasis mine) <sup>[iv]</sup>...*

**Roger Simon** blogs about the latest Climategate "science" scandal.

*Sitting here in Barbara Jordan Terminal, waiting for my plane home and surfing the net, I came upon yet more Climategate/Glaciergate news from the the superb ongoing [Telegraph](#) coverage. Now they reveal the UN IPCC's head climate honcho Rajendra Pachauri has hired the very scalawag who lied to us for years that the Himalayan glaciers were receding, the very "finding" from which Pachauri has suddenly been trying to distance himself. (Two weeks ago it was just the opposite. Don't we all wish we had Pachauri's bank account?)*

*So it goes. Anthropogenic Global Warming is rapidly morphing into the greatest scandal in the history of science since the belief in a flat earth – and people had a lot more excuses for that. Not that the Obama administration is even beginning to acknowledge it. Who knows what they say to each other behind the scenes? They have enough to worry about.*

*But speaking of climate scalawags, how about my Congressman Henry Waxman of Waxman-Markey fame? The reified liberalist lifer undoubtedly is incapable of understanding the science for himself – in fact he admitted as much in front of his committee, saying he "relied" on scientists for that – but it would be funny to watch if and finally they do make a public rollback on this nonsense. Fortunately for sclerotic Henry, this will*

*probably be avoided, since virtually no one is making noises about the risible cap-and-trade legislation any more. And Al Gore appears to have conveniently vanished from the public eye, a John Edwards of climate. (Actually, I'm surprised Gore hasn't turned up in Haiti to do "pro bono" work to resurrect his reputation.) ...*

**Jeremy Page**, in the Times, UK, reviews all the errors discovered in the IPCC report on Himalayan glaciers.

*...The IPCC's 2007 report, which won it the Nobel Peace Prize, said that the probability of Himalayan glaciers "disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high".*

*...The IPCC admitted on Thursday that the prediction was "poorly substantiated" in the latest of a series of blows to the panel's credibility.*

*...leading glaciologists pointed out at least five glaring errors in the relevant section.*

*It says the total area of Himalayan glaciers "will likely shrink from the present 500,000 to 100,000 square kilometers by the year 2035". There are only 33,000 square kilometers of glaciers in the Himalayas.*

*A table below says that between 1845 and 1965, the Pindari Glacier shrank by 2,840m — a rate of 135.2m a year. The actual rate is only 23.5m a year.*

*The section says Himalayan glaciers are "receding faster than in any other part of the world" when many glaciologists say they are melting at about the same rate.*

*An entire paragraph is also attributed to the World Wildlife Fund, when only one sentence came from it, and the IPCC is not supposed to use such advocacy groups as sources. ...*

**Walter Russell Meade**, in The American Interest, gives more reason to pull the plug on UN funding.

*The London Times continues to follow the glaciergate story—and it keeps getting worse.*

*The latest disclosure: Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN's (formerly) prestigious Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (known as the IPCC), may have raised millions of dollars for his New Delhi institute on the basis of the totally bogus 'glaciergate' claim by the IPCC that the Himalayan glaciers would melt by 2035.*

*According to the London Times, Pachauri's institute got money from the European Union and the US-based Carnegie Corporation to investigate a prediction that never had any scientific backing whatever, and one which all serious glacier scientists instantly recognized as impossible. The bogus claim was frequently repeated in the fundraising efforts — and reiterated as recently as January 15 when the IPCC was already under intense pressure to admit it had blundered.*

*This is now more than an example of eye-popping incompetence and gross neglect of elementary scientific standards by a body on whose authority the world is expected to make multi-trillion dollar decisions affecting every business and every person on the planet.*

*It is now, potentially, a criminal issue. If Pachauri knew the claim was bogus and allowed these grant applications to go forward, he could find himself facing criminal charges. ...*



---

---

---

## Ottawa Citizen

### On natural and other disasters

by David Warren

We cannot know, when the news hits us, whether it is for good or bad. Superficially, the answer is often obvious enough. An earthquake, for instance, cannot be a good thing. Not in itself. But who can guess what redemption may be worked through it? This thought may outrage some atheist readers: but it needs saying, if we are even to begin to "vindicate the ways of God to Man."

Likewise it is hard to see what good can come of pumping Qassam rockets into Israeli schoolyards, or dispatching suicide bombers to Jerusalem pizzerias. Palestinian incendiaries may see some good in it; I certainly cannot.

But what I see in Haiti is the benefit of that experience. For it was thanks to the skills and capabilities of rescue workers, honed in response to such terror hits, that Israel was able to put a 500-bed field hospital on the ground in Port-au-Prince, in little more than the flying time from Tel Aviv. Fully equipped and staffed by private volunteers, it is a miracle of human ingenuity. That hospital came with search expertise, to recruit patients from under the rubble; with specialists in pediatrics and obstetrics, etc. (The mother of the first born in that hospital called her child, "Baby Israel.")

Compare the easy squalour of Michael J. Fox urging Canadians not to get frustrated by the slow pace of other Haitian relief efforts, but to continue sending money. As a former colleague from this newspaper, reporting this remark from the radio, commented: "The Haitians are dying and WE have to be patient?" Yes, our narcissism has reached those levels.

Bad can come of bad, good from good, bad from good, but also, good can come of evil. Our task is to make the best of any fate.

Sometimes the disaster comes from nature. Far more often, it comes from human cause. Sometimes that cause is far from dramatic. There is no evil plot, no grand conspiracy; the very people doing harm are full of "good intentions." (Hitler himself thought he was doing the Germans a favour.) There may be an upwelling of foolishness, as broad as a national electorate.

Long months before the election of Barack Obama, as readers of this column may recall, I could see exactly what a disaster he would be as president of the United States. Indeed, any person of sound conservative conviction could predict what now even Paul Krugman begins to grasp, in New York Times blog posts under titles like, "He Wasn't The One We've Been Waiting For."

Krugman and company may never know why he was a disaster, but the idea that Obama was not God's gift to the Democratic Party strikes more Democrats every morning. That a man who, for all his charm of rhetoric and imposture, can be so out of touch with the "core beliefs and values" of his own countrymen -- yet still become their leader -- is something on which to marvel. Yet it has happened again and again in history.

In retrospect, the election result of 2008 could have been worse. John McCain might have won; and had he done so, the U.S. would now be in a less tractable mess. The liberal media, which made George W. Bush the most reviled U.S. president since Abraham Lincoln, would have turned on McCain (and his school-marm vice president) with even greater savagery. The Republicans would be wearing all the consequences of public policies not that much different from Obama's, so far -- bailouts and buy-offs and bafflegab -- yet giving the false impression these were "conservative" schemes.

The victory of Scott Brown, in the Massachusetts byelection, has brought the Left agenda -- Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid in White House and Congress -- to an abrupt halt. And it has done so before that much damage could be done.

In the bluest of all American blue states -- the one which already had a taste of progressive "Obamacare" at state level -- people realized they'd made a horrible mistake. A vote swing of more than 30 per cent changed the complexion of a Senate seat that had belonged to the Kennedy family since 1952.

Debt is not the answer to economic problems, there or here; more bureaucracy is not the answer; nor is the further empowerment of public sector unions to hold taxpayers to ransom.

And as to terrorism and foreign threats, Mr. Brown was able to play, before the most politically correct constituency in the U.S., variations on the theme: "American taxpayer dollars should go to buying weapons to kill terrorists, not pay for lawyers to defend them."

Hallelujah! ... And don't thank Martha Coakley for throwing that election; the polls show indisputably it is Obama we must thank. By "pushing his envelope" an inch too far, he has accomplished what took George III far more effort.

## **Jewish World Review**

### **Great Scott!**

by Thomas Sowell

Some of the most melancholy letters and e-mails that are sent to me are from people who lament that there is nothing they can do about the bad policies that they see ruining this country. They don't have any media outlet for their opinions and the letters they send to their Congressmen are either ignored or are answered by form letters with weasel words. They feel powerless.

Sometimes I remind them that the whole political establishment — both Democrats and Republicans, as well as the mainstream media — were behind amnesty for illegal immigrants, until the public opinion polls showed that the voters were not buying it. If politicians can't do anything else right, they can count votes.

It was the same story with the government's health care takeover legislation. The Democrats have such huge majorities in both houses of Congress that they could literally lock the Republicans out of the room where they were deciding what to do, set arbitrary deadlines for votes, and cut off debate in the Senate. The mainstream media was on board with this bill too. To hear the talking heads on TV, you would think it was a done deal.

Then Scott Brown got elected to the "Kennedy seat" in the Senate, showing that that seat was not the inheritance of any dynasty to pass on. Moreover, it showed that the voters were already fed up with the Obama administration, even in liberal Massachusetts, as well as in Virginia and New Jersey. The backtracking on health care began immediately. Politicians can count votes. Once again, the public was not helpless.

One seat did not deprive the Democrats of big majorities in Congress. But one seat was the difference between being able to shut off debate in the Senate and having to allow debate on what was in this massive legislation. From day one it was clear that concealing what was in this bill was the key to getting it passed.

That is why there had to be arbitrary deadlines — first to get it passed before the August 2009 recess, then before Labor Day, then before the Christmas recess.

The President could wait months before deciding to give a general the troops he asked for to fight the war in Afghanistan but there was never to be enough time for the health care bill to be exposed in the light of day to the usual Congressional hearings and debate. Moreover, despite all the haste, the health care program would not actually go into effect until after the 2012 presidential election. In other words, the public was not supposed to find out whether the government's takeover of medical care actually made things better or worse until after it was too late.

Although even the members of Congress who voted on this massive legislation did not have time to read its thousands of pages, just the way it was being rushed through in the dark should have told us all we needed to know. For many voters, that turned out to be enough.

Even after Scott Brown came out of nowhere to make a stunning upset election victory, there were still some cute political tricks that could have been pulled to save the health care bill. But enough Democrats saw the handwriting on the wall that they were not going to risk their own re-election to save this bill that Barack Obama has been hell-bent to pass, even when polls showed repeatedly that the public didn't want it.

President Obama's desire to do something "historic" by succeeding, where previous presidents had failed, was perfectly consistent for a man consumed with his own ego satisfaction, rather than the welfare of the country or even of his own political party.

As for the public, it doesn't matter if your Congressman answers your letter with a form letter, or doesn't answer at all. What matters is that you let him know what you are for or against and, when enough people do that — whether in letters, in polls or in an election, politicians get the message, because they know their jobs depend on it.

As for what is likely to happen to health care, neither the bill passed by the House of Representatives nor the Senate bill can be expected to be enacted into law. Meanwhile, Obama's reaction to his political setback has been to respond rhetorically and to call on the political operatives who helped engineer his successful election campaign in 2008. But the public did not know him then, and his rhetoric may not fool them again, now that they do.

## **Weekly Standard Blog**

### **[Awkward: Obama Admits Buying Off Seniors](#)**

by Mary Katharine Ham

An 83-year-old woman at Obama's Ohio town hall today asked him why seniors on Social Security didn't get a COLA increase this year. The reason was, of course, because deflation meant the cost of living actually went down, so a COLA wasn't needed.

But Barack Obama needed senior support on Obamacare, so back in October, he sent out a [senior stimulus](#)— \$250 per Social Security recipient coming to a total of \$13 billion. He didn't get their support (as we now know), [but the checks went out](#), supported by some Republicans and criticized by deficit hawks and many conservatives.

Today, when answering an Ohio woman's question, Obama edged indelicately close to the political truth about programs for seniors: "We never forget seniors because they vote at very high levels," he said to light laughter before realizing the response was a bit crass. He then hastened to add that we appreciate seniors because they "changed our diapers." It was a cynical moment for the hope-and-change merchant.

The admission is a political truth we all know, and the reason Republicans have ([unwisely, I think](#)) painted themselves into a fiscal corner by bashing the idea of Medicare cuts in the fight against Obamacare. What's telling is how clumsy the president has become in his rhetoric. As the constant pitch for flailing health-care becomes more and more tired, the Great Orator does himself less and less good with each outing

## US News & World Report

### The Incredible Deflation of Barack Obama

by Mortimer B. Zuckerman

The air is seeping out of the Obama balloon. He has fallen to below 50 percent in the poll approval ratings, a decline punctuated by his party's shocking loss in the Massachusetts special election.

Why?

Barack Obama was undoubtedly sincere in what he promised, even if his promises were within the normal range of political exaggeration. The first trouble is that his gift for inspiration aroused expectations, stoked to unprecedented heights by his own staff, that he would solve the climate crisis on Monday, the jobs crisis on Tuesday, the financial crisis on Wednesday, the education crisis on Thursday, Afghanistan on Friday, Iraq on Saturday, and rest on Sunday. His oratorical skills were highlighted by the contrast with President Bush, who mangled words so much that his incoherence became, as Tina Brown wrote, "a metaphor for incompetence." Expectations were spurred, too, by Obama's recognition that Americans yearned for a new kind of politics, a rejection, as he put it, of "politics as usual."

Perhaps the inevitable outcome was disappointment—and on this Obama has not disappointed. Alas, he has accelerated the deflation of hope with his extraordinary volume of public appearances. In his first six months, he gave three times as many interviews as George W. Bush, four times as many prime-time news conferences as Bill Clinton, and more interviews than both combined: 93 for Obama and 61 for his two immediate predecessors. He appeared on five Sunday talk shows on the same morning, followed the next day by David Letterman, the first-ever presidential appearance on a nighttime comedy show. In another week, he squeezed in addresses to the U.S. Climate Change Summit, the U.N. General Assembly, the U.N. Security Council, and a variety of press conferences.

His promiscuity on TV has made him seem as if he is still a candidate instead of president and commander in chief. He—and his advisers—have failed to appreciate that national TV speeches are best reserved for those moments when the country faces a major crisis or a war. Now he faces the iron law of diminishing novelty.

Despite this apparent accessibility, Obama's reliance on a teleprompter for flawless delivery made for boring and unemotional TV, compounding his cerebral and unemotional style. He has seemed not close but distant, not engaged but detached. Is it any wonder that the mystique of his presidency has eroded so that fewer people have listened to each successive foray? The columnist Richard Cohen wryly observed that he won the Pulitzer Prize for being the only syndicated columnist who did not have an exclusive interview with the president.

**Poor results.** But Obama's problems are more than a question of style. There is doubt aroused on substance. He sets deadlines and then lets too many pass. He announces a strategic review of Afghanistan, describing it as "a war of necessity," only to become less sure to the point that he didn't even seem committed to the policy that he finally announced. As for changing politics in Washington, he assigned the drafting of central legislative programs not to cabinet departments or White House staff but to the Democratic congressional leadership of Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, the very people so mistrusted by the public. Who could be surprised that the critical bills—the stimulus program and healthcare—degenerated under a welter of pork and earmarks that had so outraged the American public in the past?

Pelosi benefited from \$54 million to relocate a Bay Area wine train, not to speak of a secret deal with the drug industry lobby to preclude negotiations on Medicaid drug prices and exclude drug imports from Canada, concessions that had previously been strongly rejected by Obama. Reid favored the gambling industry by arranging an earmark for a Los Angeles-to-Las Vegas high-speed monorail, even though it won't



be built for years. Some components of the stimulus did help soften the recession, yet only roughly a third of the \$787 billion stimulus has been spent, and too much was spent on programs supported by liberal Democrats, which explains why so much of the stimulus money went toward education, health, energy conservation, and other activities, mostly worthy but not geared to achieving recovery and getting people back to work.

Taxpayers have thus come to see politics as usual masquerading as [economic recovery](#). Indeed, both the stimulus and [healthcare](#) plans were voted on so quickly that the lawmakers had no time to read the bills. In both cases, the White House created the impression it was interested in passing anything, no matter how ineffectual. This was epitomized by Obama's chief of staff essentially asserting that a healthcare bill would be passed even if all it consisted of was two Band-Aids and an aspirin.

Most critically, Obama misjudged the locus of the country's anxiety: the [economy](#). Instead of concentrating on jobs, jobs, jobs, he made the decision to "boil the ocean" and go for everything, from comprehensive health reform to global warming to a world without nuclear weapons ... and the beat goes on.

This was more than the Congress could absorb and more than the country could understand. Obama, the theoretician in a hurry, made no allowance for the normal resistance to dramatic change and the public's distaste for big government, big spending, and big deficits. He didn't seem to realize that Americans understand in the most personal terms that excessive debt has real consequences, given how many have mortgages that exceed the value of a home and credit lines that are too much to carry. Yet this was what the president seemed to be getting us into. Over 60 percent of the country believes that government spending is excessive; Obama's lowest approval ratings come from his mishandling of the present and future deficits.

**Delayed stimulus.** It is not as if the limited stimulus program has done the job either, since unemployment rates soared over 10 percent (compared with the 8 percent ceiling that was promised). Shelby Steele asked a good question in the *Wall Street Journal*: "Where is the economic logic behind a stimulus package that doesn't fully click in for a number of years?" Yes, we might have just escaped a depression, but as the *Economist* magazine observes, voters will not thank the president for averting a depression that did not come but are "more likely to blame him for the recession that did." On top of all this, and not all Obama's fault, a financial crisis usually produces weak recoveries in jobs, so a good number of Americans are likely to remain furious at the spectacle of the financial world doing well while so many ordinary folks lose their jobs and their savings. This anger will not subside while households see net worth slump to where it was 20 years ago and debt reach close to record highs at about 130 percent of disposable income, and while the residential real estate crisis continues unabated and the official jobless rate doesn't come close to reflecting the true extent of unemployment and ... and ... and ....

The White House might have at least demonstrated that it cares about fiscal restraint and independence from the leadership in Congress, but consistently Obama has failed to veto spending while centralizing power. A majority of Americans think it a mistake at this time of economic distress to embark on a costly healthcare program. As it was, the program's apparently stalled trip through Congress turned out to be another fiasco of political corruption, with millions of dollars allocated to buy votes, such as those of Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu and Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson. Anger with that process and the bill it produced helped fuel the stunning election of Republican Scott Brown in Massachusetts.

The result is a widespread concern that progressive [taxation](#) to pay for the "nanny state" will snuff out future opportunities that Americans believe they deserve for themselves and their children. Obama misjudged the public's appetite for taxpayer-funded solutions; most people believe all the government does is waste money. In a recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, only 23 percent said they "trusted the government just about always or most of the time"—the smallest proportion in 12 years, and the all-important independent swing voters who decide elections now favor Republicans by 52 percent, up from 30 percent.

Unfortunately, there is not much solace in international affairs either, where, again, expectations were so pumped up. America's image is better, no doubt, but uncertainty and procrastination prevail. One major international political leader recently put it well: "Not only does the leadership of this region not think that

Obama is strong enough to confront his enemies; they aren't sure he is strong enough to support his friends." The administration seems "hopelessly naive," according to one Arab foreign minister, and unable to face the full truth about Islamic terrorism. The public frustration over the administration's mismanagement of the latest jihadist attempt to blow up a plane with all its innocent travelers (on Christmas Day) was captured in the *New York Daily News* headline "Mr. President, it's time to get a grip!"

The consequence is that there isn't a single critical problem on which the president has a positive public rating. Only a minority of Americans now believe the president will make the right decisions for the country. Nor can he any longer take refuge in the rejoinder that "we inherited a terrible situation." Or blame it on fat-cat bankers and insurance companies. Blaming others, including Bush, for the country's predicament is less and less persuasive. "At some point you own your presidency," wrote Peggy Noonan in the *Wall Street Journal*. "At some point the American people tell you it's yours."

More worrying for the administration is that while Obama gets the approval of 76 percent of non-whites, his approval among whites is down to 41 percent, according to Gallup. This is a huge change that literally puts the Democratic control of Congress at risk. The Republicans have hardly been stellar either, but there is now a renewed openness in the country to hear what they have to say. Obama's political realignment of America is over. We no longer believe that he will "change the world" and "transform the country."

This brings to mind why an adviser to President Roosevelt in the 1930s, Bernard Baruch, told electors to vote for the person who promised them less. In this way, he said, "you would be less disappointed." There is still time for Obama to change and turn things around. But the first year is the critical year, one in which the public defines the president, and it has to be said that broad swaths of the country are deeply disappointed.

## The Economist

### The man who fell to earth

***After the Democrats' stunning loss, Barack Obama has no choice but to move back to the centre***



POLITICAL upsets don't get much more embarrassing than the one delivered by the voters of Massachusetts on January 19th, just in time to ruin Barack Obama's first anniversary in the White House. To lose, on a 43-point swing, a Senate seat that has been in Democratic hands since 1953 takes some doing, even in the teeth of the worst recession since the 1930s. Nor has it come in isolation; last November the Democrats managed to lose the governor's race in supposedly rock-solid New Jersey, as well as the one in Virginia, the state that symbolised the breadth of Mr Obama's appeal in the 2008 election. A succession of Democratic senators and representatives have decided to retire rather than face the voters in this year's mid-terms.

Mr Obama's popularity has fallen faster than that of any post-war president bar Gerald Ford. Independents are running from him as fast as their legs will carry them: in Massachusetts they voted Republican by almost

three to one. Mr Obama's personal intervention there was as ineffectual as his two forays to Copenhagen. His agenda has been dealt a mighty blow. So where does he go from here?

Diagnosing what is going wrong is easier than figuring out how to fix it, because voters' concerns are contradictory. Clearly Mr Obama's health-care proposals are one problem. Most voters are happy with their health coverage, and are not in a mood to pay more in taxes or see their benefits restricted in order to help out the disadvantaged minority; and the bill that has now been thrown into confusion, with its many flaws and shady giveaways, is a much harder sell than it should have been. A bigger problem, connected to the first, is the exploding government deficit, which an expensive health-reform plan only makes worse. Hence the spectacular rise of the "tea-party" movement, an alliance of ordinary people who are spooked by the huge amount of debt that is being racked up on Mr Obama's watch. For Democrats to deride such people as "tea-baggers", a term referring to a sexual practice involving testicles, is political stupidity of a high order. Instead, Mr Obama urgently needs to make deficit-reduction one of the dominant themes of his fightback. He can do so in his state-of-the-union message on January 27th.

The problem is that the other big theme of his speech will have to be jobs. Though the economy is technically out of recession, it does not feel that way to a lot of voters. Unemployment is stuck at 10%; and if you add to that the number of people who are working part-time because they cannot get a full-time job, as well as those who have simply given up looking, you reach a figure of around 17%. The proportion of long-term unemployed is at its highest since the government started collecting the statistic in 1948. The terrible fear is that the recovery will be long, slow and jobless. The greatest challenge he now faces is explaining how he plans to tackle these problems without inflating the deficit even more than he already has.

## **Time for a rethink**

One thing, though, is clear. The brief era in which the Democrats felt they could push through anything they wanted, courtesy of their thumping majorities in the House and the Senate and their occupancy of the White House, is over. Once Scott Brown is seated in the Senate, Mr Obama will lose his supermajority there, so a determined opposition (which this one certainly seems to be) will be able to block anything it wants to. Making deals with the Republicans once again becomes a necessity, not a luxury. That should not be a disaster; most presidents have to govern with far fewer than 60 Senate votes.

It is not obvious, though, that the Olympian Mr Obama knows how to do this, despite all his fine words along the campaign trail about "a new politics". What he now has to understand is that he is in a weak position: he needs the Republicans more than they need him. To get what he wants, he will have to learn to give them much more of what they want. For instance, he could now offer the Republicans tort reform and genuine cost-control to bring them on board for a slimmed-down health bill: that might be an offer they could not refuse. Likewise, any hope of getting a climate-change bill through Congress will probably have to involve more nuclear power.

Bill Clinton grasped all this after the disaster of 1994, when the Republicans took back Congress; the result was a stream of good laws that outraged many leftish Democrats, from welfare reform to free-trade deals to deficit-reduction. Mr Clinton won an easy re-election and his presidency, despite his own best efforts to destroy it, was a pretty successful one. Mr Obama, who is now faced with the possibility of a similar electoral catastrophe, needs to copy the great triangulator.

## Euro Pacific Capital

### Congress Sacks Samoan Economy

by Peter Schiff

Like many football fans around the country, I recently tuned into a heavily promoted *60 Minutes* segment on the uncanny ability of tiny American Samoa to produce a steady stream of NFL players. Although it was certainly interesting to learn how Pacific island warrior culture translated seamlessly into the disciplines of American football, and how the island's players adapted to the hard-scrabble terrain and poorly funded athletic fields, the most interesting aspect of the piece concerned economics rather than sports.

In passing, the narrator mentioned that American Samoa had recently experienced major setbacks, both natural and man-made. Earthquakes and tsunamis had left scores dead and inflicted major damage on the islands' infrastructure. More ominously, one of the two major tuna canneries, which together accounted for up to half of the islands' private sector jobs,<sup>[i]</sup> had closed. If the second cannery closes, as *60 Minutes* mentioned is a distinct possibility, American Samoa will become completely dependent on Federal support. Whether the reporters considered the subject off-target for their piece or simply could not connect the dots, the pending economic disaster was left largely unexamined. However, the Samoan situation offers a very clear lesson for the rest of America about how government policies can devastate an economy, and how the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

For generations, American Samoa offered strong advantages for tuna canners. The close proximity to vast Pacific tuna schools, the islands' good port facilities, political association with the United States, and an abundance of relatively inexpensive labor (by American standards) enticed StarKist and Chicken of the Sea to locate their primary canning facilities in American Samoa. Although the workers were paid, in recent years, wages that were below the U.S. minimum, given the low taxes and living costs, these wages were enough to offer the average worker a standard of living that was superior to the denizens of other islands in that area of the Pacific.<sup>[ii]</sup>

But then, in 2007, Washington came to the "rescue." As part of its efforts to provide a "living wage" for all Americans, Congress passed a law to step up the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour across all U.S. states and territories by 2009.<sup>[iii]</sup> Understanding that such a law would devastate American Samoa by raising canning costs past the point where the companies could maintain profitability, the non-voting Samoan member of the U.S. House of Representatives convinced Congress to allow an exemption for the islands. However, Republicans raised allegations that Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, in whose district both Chicken of the Sea and StarKist had corporate offices, had caved to pressure from big donors and was allowing the continued "exploitation" of Samoan workers. Facing a sticky political situation, the exemption was removed.

The Samoan representative desperately sought to fend off what he was sure would be an economic calamity. He asked the Department of Labor to issue a report examining the potential consequences of the law upon the islands' economy. The report explained that "nearly 80 percent of workers covered by the FLSA earned under \$7.25 per hour. By comparison, if the U.S. minimum wage were increased to the level of the 75th percentile of hourly-paid U.S. workers, it would be raised to \$16.50 per hour." Therefore, the study continued, "there is concern that [the tuna canneries] will be closed prior to the escalation of the minimum wage ... and that production will be shifted to facilities outside the U.S." Ultimately, the Department of Labor concluded that "closure of the tuna canneries will cause a total loss of **8,118 jobs – 45.6 percent of total employment.**" (*emphasis mine*)<sup>[iv]</sup>

Despite this dire forecast, the law went through. Two years later, the results could not be clearer: Chicken of the Sea closed its cannery and moved its production to a largely automated plant in Georgia,<sup>[iv]</sup> while StarKist has reduced its workforce and is threatening to leave as well.<sup>[v]</sup>

If that were to occur, which seems likely, American Samoa would be left with no functioning industry. Although many of the islanders have the size and athletic ability to be drafted into the NFL, clearly football will never serve as the backbone of their economy. By imposing an artificially high minimum wage on

American Samoa, without taking into account actual economic conditions on the islands, Washington essentially decided that it was better to have no one working there than have thousands of people working for wages that the politicians felt were substandard.

Meanwhile, just as the minimum wage is destroying jobs in American Samoa, it is destroying jobs here on the mainland. Of course the numbers are fewer because the relative minimum is lower, but the principle is the same. Rather than causing wages to rise (which only do so as a function of increased worker productivity), minimum wage laws simply set the minimal level of productivity a worker must contribute to legally be allowed to work. In the case of American Samoa, tuna canners simply could not deliver \$7.25 cents per hour of productivity, so their jobs were eliminated. Rather than being employed at \$3.26 per hour (the level prior to the minimum wage hike), they are now unemployed at \$7.25 per hour. Which do you think is better?

Among the unintended consequences of congressional “benevolence” are rapidly rising consumer prices, due to the higher shipping costs now necessary to bring consumer goods to the islands. Before the minimum wage hikes destroyed most of the canning jobs, lots of canned tuna were shipped from American Samoa to the U.S. (over 50% of the canned tuna in American markets came from American Samoa). One benefit of all the shipping traffic was a low cost of imports, as ships were coming to the islands anyway to pick up the tuna. However, with fewer ships coming to Samoa to pick up tuna, goods are now much more expensive to import. That is because the round trip cost of the journey must now be factored into import prices, as ships bringing in those goods now leave tuna-free. As a result, consumer prices rose from a 2006 annualized rate of 3%<sup>[v]</sup> to roughly 20% by 2008.<sup>[vi]</sup> So, not only is unemployment wide-spread, but the cost of living has risen sharply as well – a double whammy.

This just serves to highlight, once again, how inflexible central planning is compared to free markets. From housing to banking to money itself, the politicians would rather mandate prices that they deem acceptable than listen to the innumerable individual decisions that set market prices. Though not always as transparent as with the Samoan case, the result is the same, every time: economic dislocation, higher unemployment, the boom-bust cycle, and a lower standard of living.

**Roger L. Simon**

**[Climategate – the scandal that keeps on giving, even here in Austin](#)**

Sitting here in Barbara Jordan Terminal, waiting for my plane home and surfing the net, I came upon yet more Climategate/Glaciergate news from the the superb ongoing [Telegraph](#) coverage. Now they reveal the UN IPCC’s head climate honcho Rajendra Pachauri has hired the very scalawag who lied to us for years that the Himalayan glaciers were receding, the very “finding” from which Pachauri has suddenly been trying to distance himself. (Two weeks ago it was just the opposite. Don’t we all wish we had Pachauri’s bank account?)

So it goes. Anthropogenic Global Warming is rapidly morphing into the greatest scandal in the history of science since the belief in a flat earth – and people had a lot more excuses for that. Not that the Obama administration is even beginning to acknowledge it. Who knows what they say to each other behind the scenes? They have enough to worry about.

But speaking of climate scalawags, how about my Congressman Henry Waxman of Waxman-Markey fame? The reified liberalist lifer undoubtedly is incapable of understanding the science for himself – in fact he admitted as much in front of his committee, saying he “relied” on scientists for that – but it would be funny to watch if and finally they do make a public rollback on this nonsense. Fortunately for sclerotic Henry, this will probably be avoided, since virtually no one is making noises about the risible cap-and-trade legislation any more. And Al Gore appears to have conveniently vanished from the public eye, a John Edwards of climate. (Actually, I’m surprised Gore hasn’t turned up in Haiti to do “pro bono” work to resurrect his reputation.)



Anyway, got to make my flight now. A final word about Austin: it's a great place and I'd love to come back. Red State cities like Charleston, N'Awlins and Austin are the most fun in today's America. Walking down Sixth Street here last night, free-beating all the music, was, as we used to say, a "trip." Beats anything in LA. But could I live here or one of those other Red State cities? I'd like to, but I doubt it. I know I just couldn't take the summer heat.

But I am taking a bit of Austin back with me – a brisket from The Salt Lick for dinner tonight. Hope the vacuum packing works.

**Times, UK**

**[UN climate change expert: there could be more errors in report](#)**

by Jeremy Page



*Rajendra Pachauri*

The Indian head of the UN climate change panel defended his position yesterday even as further errors were identified in the panel's assessment of Himalayan glaciers.

Dr Rajendra Pachauri dismissed calls for him to resign over the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change's retraction of a prediction that Himalayan glaciers could disappear by 2035.

But he admitted that there may have been other errors in the same section of the report, and said that he was considering whether to take action against those responsible.

"I know a lot of climate sceptics are after my blood, but I'm in no mood to oblige them," he told *The Times* in an interview. "It was a collective failure by a number of people," he said. "I need to consider what action to take, but that will take several weeks. It's best to think with a cool head, rather than shoot from the hip."

The IPCC's 2007 report, which won it the Nobel Peace Prize, said that the probability of Himalayan glaciers "disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high".

But it emerged last week that the forecast was based not on a consensus among climate change experts, but on a media interview with a single Indian glaciologist in 1999.

The IPCC admitted on Thursday that the prediction was "poorly substantiated" in the latest of a series of blows to the panel's credibility.

Dr Pachauri said that the IPCC's report was the responsibility of the panel's Co-Chairs at the time, both of whom have since moved on.

They were Dr Martin Parry, a British scientist now at Imperial College London, and Dr Osvaldo Canziani, an Argentine meteorologist. Neither was immediately available for comment.

"I don't want to blame them, but typically the working group reports are managed by the Co-Chairs," Dr Pachauri said. "Of course the Chair is there to facilitate things, but we have substantial amounts of delegation."

He declined to blame the 25 authors and editors of the erroneous part of the report, who included a Filipino, a Mongolian, a Malaysian, an Indonesian, an Iranian, an Australian and two Vietnamese.

The "co-ordinating lead authors" were Rex Victor Cruz of the Philippines, Hideo Harasawa of Japan, Murari Lal of India and Wu Shaohong of China.

But Syed Hasnain, the Indian glaciologist erroneously quoted as making the 2035 prediction, said that responsibility had to lie with them. "It is the lead authors — blame goes to them," he told *The Times*. "There are many mistakes in it. It is a very poorly made report."

He and other leading glaciologists pointed out at least five glaring errors in the relevant section.

It says the total area of Himalayan glaciers "will likely shrink from the present 500,000 to 100,000 square kilometers by the year 2035". There are only 33,000 square kilometers of glaciers in the Himalayas.

A table below says that between 1845 and 1965, the Pindari Glacier shrank by 2,840m — a rate of 135.2m a year. The actual rate is only 23.5m a year.

The section says Himalayan glaciers are "receding faster than in any other part of the world" when many glaciologists say they are melting at about the same rate.

An entire paragraph is also attributed to the World Wildlife Fund, when only one sentence came from it, and the IPCC is not supposed to use such advocacy groups as sources.

Professor Hasnain, who was not involved in drafting the IPCC report, said that he noticed some of the mistakes when he first read the relevant section in 2008.

That was also the year he joined The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in Delhi, which is headed by Dr Pachauri.

He said he realised that the 2035 prediction was based on an interview he gave to the *New Scientist* magazine in 1999, although he blamed the journalist for assigning the actual date.

He said that he did not tell Dr Pachauri because he was not working for the IPCC and was busy with his own programmes at the time.

“I was keeping quiet as I was working here,” he said. “My job is not to point out mistakes. And you know the might of the IPCC. What about all the other glaciologists around the world who did not speak out?”

Dr Pachauri also said he did not learn about the mistakes until they were reported in the media about 10 days ago, at which time he contacted other IPCC members. He denied keeping quiet about the errors to avoid disrupting the UN summit on climate change in Copenhagen, or discouraging funding for TERI’s own glacier programme.

But he too admitted that it was “really odd” that none of the world’s leading glaciologists had pointed out the mistakes to him earlier. “Frankly, it was a stupid error,” he said. “But no one brought it to my attention.”

## The American Interest

### IPCC Head in Glaciergate Crime?

by Walter Russell Mead

The *London Times* continues to follow the [glaciergate story](#)—and it keeps getting worse.

The latest disclosure: Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN’s (formerly) prestigious Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (known as the IPCC), may have raised millions of dollars for his New Delhi institute on the basis of the totally bogus ‘glaciergate’ claim by the IPCC that the Himalayan glaciers would melt by 2035.

According to the *London Times*, Pachauri’s [institute](#) got money from the European Union and the US-based Carnegie Corporation to investigate a prediction that never had any scientific backing whatever, and one which all serious glacier scientists instantly recognized as impossible. The bogus claim was frequently repeated in the fundraising efforts — and reiterated as recently as January 15 when the IPCC was already under intense pressure to admit it had blundered.

This is now more than an example of eye-popping incompetence and gross neglect of elementary scientific standards by a body on whose authority the world is expected to make multi-trillion dollar decisions affecting every business and every person on the planet.

It is now, potentially, a criminal issue. If Pachauri knew the claim was bogus and allowed these grant applications to go forward, he could find himself facing criminal charges.

But at the least his immediate resignation is required. It was one thing to publish a false prediction in a long report—grossly incompetent and negligent, yes, but it was a long report and it was only one prediction. An honorable person would at least offer to step down in such a situation; it might, however, be survivable for a bureaucratic street-fighter with little sense of shame.



That is no longer the case. Before allowing this claim to be used for fundraising and, potentially, to be the centerpiece of a massive research effort, Pachauri had an inescapable obligation to investigate and verify the science behind the claim. This he clearly failed to do; no reputable foundation or government can now fund any organization he heads.

Environmentalists should be the first to call for Pachauri's resignation. Those who truly believe that the world is in imminent peril and that a concerted effort is vital to save the planet from human caused climate change should be all over this story, demanding a full and thorough investigation of IPCC incompetence and possible criminality. This is the only way that the serious scientists and thoughtful reformers who make up the overwhelming core of the climate change community can recapture the high ground and regain the public trust.

Meanwhile, the Indian press is also reporting increased scrutiny of possible [conflict of interest charges](#) surrounding Pachauri.

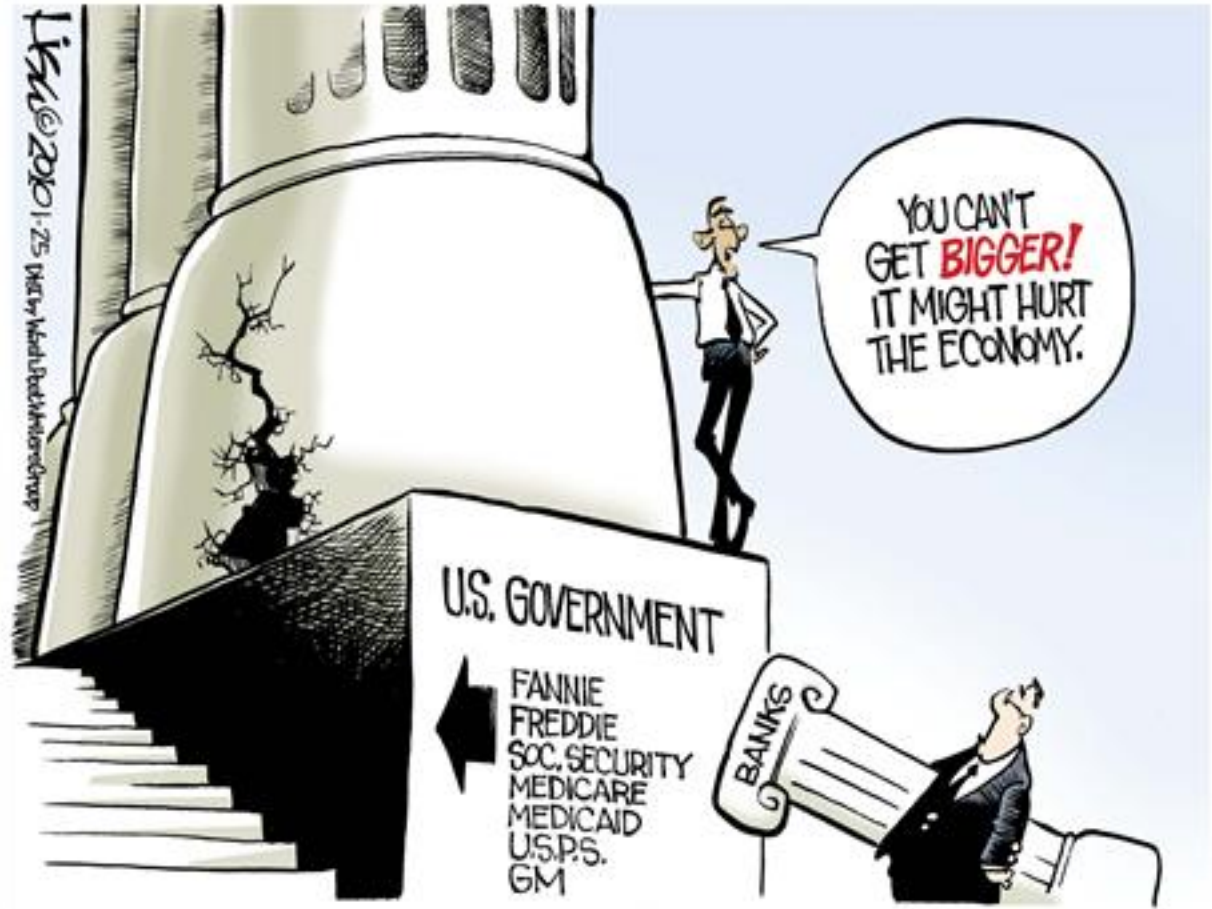
According to the *Times*, a groundswell is rising in India demanding that Pachauri step down. Al Gore needs to be leading this charge in the US. Where is he, and why is he silent?



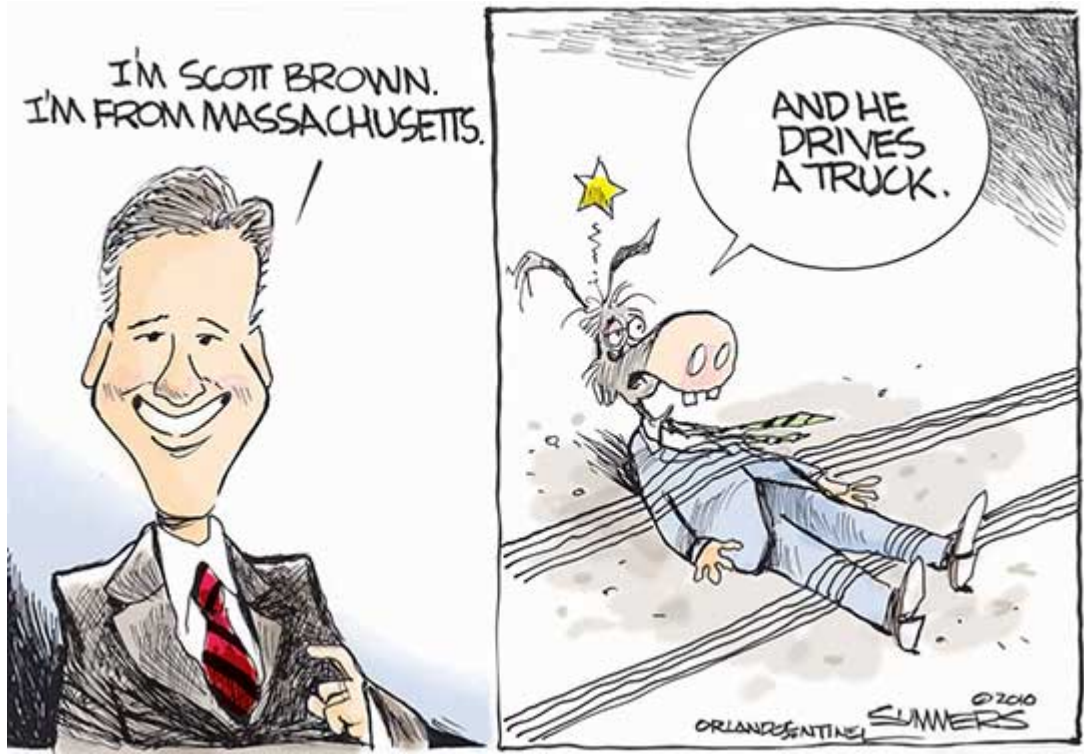


PULLING THE CURTAIN BACK ON THE WIZARD.

WWW.IPDeditorials.com/cartoons







THE GOOD NEWS IS,  
MY POLICIES ARE  
FINALLY CREATING A  
LOT OF NEW JOBS!



©2010 CARTOONS.COM  
GOREBELLA.NET.COM  
CORRELL

THE BAD NEWS IS,  
THEY'RE ALL FOR  
REPUBLICAN  
CANDIDATES.



2010

