

January 27, 2010

[Abe Greenwald](#), in [Contentions](#), discusses the president's pathological self-regard.

...For all this, Obama makes a tremendous show of his cool nerves. "I don't rattle," he said. In a way, that's true. Blaming Republican failings for the Massachusetts Republican victory, for example, is not a sign of being rattled. It's a sign of disconnected logic, a much more exotic subconscious defense. It requires a lot of psychological reappropriation not to get rattled while flailing on the world stage. Instead of losing your cool, you indulge in excessive denial or projection or sublimation. Something, after all, has got to give. It's becoming clear that something is giving. As the Las Vegas Review-Journal's Sherman Frederick [put it](#), "this kind of weird delusion is consistent with the unbounded hubris of Team Obama."

During the campaign, we heard endlessly about Barack Obama's "presidential temperament." But a few observers thought of it more as a strange placidity. What, in fact, is presidential about terminal aloofness? He's the chief executive of a country that's fighting two wars, struggling to get out from under an unprecedented financial breakdown, staring a near-nuclear Iran in the face, and on the constant receiving end of terrorist threats. Yet the most fired up we've ever seen Obama was when he decided a Cambridge Massachusetts police officer was "stupid" for inconveniencing his friend with a request to show ID. His second most animated moment came when some nobodies crashed his dinner party. What's worrisome in this pattern is the president's attachment to the personal. If we acknowledge that Obama weighs everything first by the degree to which it redounds on him personally, his failings are not so mysterious. If Obama has not conveyed to Americans that he hears their concerns, it may be because he doesn't hear them. He merely hears pointers for his perpetual image upkeep.

Which makes you wonder where it ends. An object in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by external force. But for Obama, it's all internal, personal. ...

[Peter Wehner](#) blogs about an arrogant comment spoken by The One.

Rep. Marion Berry, yet another retiring Democrat, gave an interview to Jane Fullerton of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. According to [Fullerton](#):

Berry recounted meetings with White House officials, reminiscent of some during the Clinton days, where he and others urged them not to force Blue Dogs "off into that swamp" of supporting bills that would be unpopular with voters back home.

*"I've been doing that with this White House, and they just don't seem to give it any credibility at all," Berry said. "They just kept telling us how good it was going to be. **The president himself, when that was brought up in one group, said, 'Well, the big difference here and in '94 was you've got me.'**" ...*

...Whatever strengths Mr. Obama brought to the job as president — and they now appear to be quite limited — they are overwhelmed by, among other things, his massive ego and otherworldly arrogance. It is leading him and his staff into a state of self-delusion. Mr. Obama's self-regard is not only utterly unwarranted, especially given his failed first year; it is downright dangerous. He is a man whose wings are made of wax; if he's not careful, a long fall into the deep blue sea awaits him.

It appears that Obama has not understood anything the electorate has said. [Jennifer Rubin](#) comments.

It is only fitting that Obama's first significant personnel change in the wake of the Massachusetts debacle is to hire back his campaign manager. No, really. ...

...Not a new economic team. Not a new chief of staff. Not even a new national security staff to replace the gang that dropped the ball on the Christmas Day bomber. No, with the Obami, it is never about substance or

getting the policy right. It's not about governance. It is about the perpetual campaign. So the campaign manager gets the emergency call.

Plouffe, not coincidentally, authors an [op-ed](#) in Cillizza's paper arguing that ObamaCare was a fine idea, just misunderstood. ("It's a good plan that's become a demonized caricature.") He says Democrats better pass it, or the public won't understand how wrong Sarah Palin was. (I'm not making that up: "Only if the plan becomes law will the American people see that all the scary things Sarah Palin and others have predicted — such as the so-called death panels — were baseless.") ...

... You see the problem. This is what passes for inspired advice, and this is the personnel slot that Obama fills first. It's hard to believe that the candidate who ran against stale politics is now, a year into his presidency, a hackneyed pol happy to push this sort of pabulum on an already disgusted public. Well, it sure does explain how Obama wound up in his current predicament.

We have a couple of shorts from [Streetwise Professor](#).

[Jennifer Rubin](#) thinks that Congress should try to pass some real healthcare reforms.

It is not clear whether anyone has the stomach for more health-care negotiations. For the Democrats, it would be like revisiting the site of a traumatic auto accident. It is where the pain started, and it will only remind voters where the Democrats got off course. Republicans might just as soon move on to other issues rather than throw Democrats a lifeline. But there are good reasons, both substantive and political, to move forward. ...

...In a similar vein, [James C. Capretta and Yuval Levin](#) urge Republicans to move forward on three fronts:

First, they should seek to address the problem of insuring Americans with preexisting conditions through state-based high-risk pools, not cumbersome insurance regulations that try to outlaw basic economics. ... Second, they should propose to help doctors and patients limit some of the burden of rising costs with medical malpractice reform. ... Third, they should argue that the states be given the lead role in developing more detailed reforms of how and where people get their insurance—to cover more people and slow the rise of costs. The overall goal should be to build well-functioning marketplaces in which insurers and providers compete to deliver the best value to cost-conscious consumers. The federal government should remove bureaucratic obstacles to state experimentation on this front, and offer support where possible, but not design one mammoth new program.

Well, it sounds like they and the Washington Post editors could hammer something out in an afternoon. But alas, the same crew who came up with ObamaCare would be negotiating with the Republicans, so we shouldn't get our hopes up. Nevertheless, as a political matter, it makes sense, if not now then in a couple of months, for both Democrats and Republicans to give it a try. Democrats don't want the last chapter of health-care reform to be the Cornhusker Kickback and the mandate to make everyone buy policies they don't want from Big Insurance. And Republicans, who are auditioning for control of Congress, want to show what real reform looks like and how the "party of no" was another liberal fable cooked up while Democrats were trying to convince voters the choice was between ObamaCare and nothing at all. (The voters liked the "nothing at all" option better.) ...

[Jennifer](#) also points out Obamacare was big business and big government railroading the American people.

Mara Liasson on [Fox News Sunday](#) makes a key point that the Obami aren't likely to appreciate:

This is not a revolt of special interests killing the health care bill like with Hillary-care. You have big pharma, you have the insurance companies basically inside the tent, bought into this idea that they're going to get a big new market in exchange for being highly regulated.

This is not only accurate but also highlights the phoniness of Obama's newfound populism. The populists — yes, including those “angry” tea party protesters whom Obama pretended to ignore — are arrayed against Obama and his statist, big-government agenda. They aren't protesting that special interests have blocked health care; they're mad that an unholy alliance of big business, big labor, and big government has formed with little concern for the interests of seniors (whose Medicare would get slashed) or middle-class voters (who would be taxed on Cadillac plans, forced to buy insurance, etc.). Obama may be donning the lingo of those who elected Scott Brown, but he's missing the point.

Obama's own agenda is fundamentally anti-populist. What could be worse for the little guy than to be told to go buy a big, expensive health-care plan from a big insurance company? It's the sort of thing Democrats would rightly mock Republicans for coming up with, had the GOP the nerve to come up with such a scheme in the first place. ...

[John Stossel](#) blogs about Obama's belief that he didn't talk to the American public enough last year.

Obama said it was his [hard work](#) creating public policy that caused him to lose a direct connection to Americans.

“If there's one thing that I regret this year it's that we were so busy just getting stuff done and dealing with the immediate crises that were in front of us that I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people about what their core values are...”

Excuse me? We know what our core values are. It is presumptuous for a politician to presume that he must lecture us about them. ...

...Blogger [Denny Hartford](#) asks, Obama needs to talk to us even more?

*Talk about revisionism. For this statement comes from a fellow who was constantly on our television screens, in the headlines, and on the magazine covers. Indeed, only **21** days in the whole doggone year did he not have a public appearance or splashy press event!...*

[Mark Steyn](#) essentially asks if the government can do anything with common sense and efficiency.

A couple of days after the Christmas Day Pantybomber tried to light up his gusset on the approach to Detroit, I was at a small airport in Vermont shuffling through the line to what they call the “sterile” area. Anyway, I handed over my driver's license and, as he had done with all the previous passengers, the Transportation Security Administration agent examined it. And examined it. And examined it some more. He had a loupe, one of those magnifying glasses jewelers use to examine diamonds for any surface blemishes or internal flaws. In this case, he was deploying it to examine how the ink lies on the paper. And when he'd finished doing that he got out his UV light to study the watermark on my license.

And, looking down at his bald patch as he went about his work with loving care, I was overcome by a sudden urge to point out that nobody had ever blown up a U.S. airliner with a fake driver's license. Why

bother going to all that trouble when a real one is so easy to get? On Sept. 11, 2001, four of the terrorists boarded the flight with genuine, valid picture ID issued by the state of Virginia and obtained through the illegal-immigrant day-workers' network run out of the parking lot of the 7-Eleven in Falls Church. Almost two years earlier, Ahmed Ressam, the Millennium Bomber, had been arrested on the British Columbia-Washington state border travelling on a genuine Canadian passport. In that instance, the terrorist had been stopped because the guard thought he seemed nervous when she looked him in the eye. ...

...Question: what do the 9/11 killers, the Shoe bomber, the Heathrow plotters, the Pantybomber, the London Tube bombers, the doctors who drove a flaming SUV through the concourse of Glasgow Airport and the would-be killers of Danish cartoonists all have in common? Answer: they're Muslim. Sometimes they're Muslims with box cutters, sometimes they're Muslims with flaming shoes, sometimes they're Muslims with liquids and gels, sometimes they're Muslims with fully loaded underwear. But the Muslim bit is a constant. What we used to call a fact. But America's leaders cannot state that simple fact, and so the TSA is obliged to pretend that all seven billion inhabitants of this planet represent an equal threat. ...

David Harsanyi examines Colorado Senator Michael Bennet's sudden change of conviction on Obamacare.

...For a case study on malleable values, take Colorado's Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet. In December, CNN host John King asked him if "every piece of evidence tells you, if you support that bill, you will lose your job, would you cast the vote and lose your job?"

Our hero answered, "Yes." The senator even commemorated his own gutsiness via press release. He then voted for the Senate health care bill — a surprise to no one.

Well, this week, the political world, as it tends to, was upended. And only hours after the president capitulated to the will of voters and called for a slowdown, Bennet — by mere happenstance, no doubt — chimed in that, you know what, he too believed Congress should slow down. ...

...Bennet, like many others, had a magnificent opportunity to demonstrate independence by voting "no" on government-run medicine. Bennet had a chance to overcome his ethical misgivings regarding transparency and fishy deals then. Now, however, he is about political survival — the real message taken from Massachusetts. ...

Christopher Hitchens discusses the revelations about the Clintons in Game Change.

The inevitable grumbling and grunting about the use of unattributed quotations in Game Change, the engrossing new campaign book by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, has been accompanied by a more or less grudging general admission that nobody cited in these pages has so far complained of being misrepresented. To this suggestive point I would add, from comparatively limited experience, that where the authors discuss anything that I know about, they have it right. In fact, what they say is often less sensational than what they might have said.

Surely this is particularly true of the most notorious rapid-response operation in modern political history: the infamous Clinton team and its eager outriders and propagandists. I am astonished at how relatively little attention this has received. If the book is to be believed, then the following things occurred:

1) After his wife's third-place showing in the Iowa caucuses, Bill Clinton telephoned Sen. Edward Kennedy in pursuit of an endorsement and, according to Kennedy's own account as given to a friend, said of then-Sen. Barack Obama: A few years ago, this guy would have been getting us coffee. ...

[The Economist](#) has figured out there is a problem with government growth.

...Rising government spending is not the only manifestation of growing state power. The spread of regulation is another. Conservatives tend to blame the growing thicket of rules on unwanted supranational bodies, such as the European Union, and on the ever growing industry of public-sector busybodies who supervise matters like diversity and health and safety. They have a point. But voters, including right-wing ones, often demand more state intrusion: witness the “wars” on terror and drugs, or the spread of CCTV cameras. Mr Bush added an average of 1,000 pages of federal regulations each year he was in office. America now has a quarter of a million people devising and implementing federal rules.

...In these circumstances, hard rules make little sense. But prejudices are still useful—and this newspaper’s prejudice is to look for ways to make the state smaller. That is partly for philosophical reasons: we prefer to give power to individuals, rather than to governments. But pragmatism also comes into it: there is so much pressure on the state to grow (bureaucrats building empires, politicians buying votes, public-sector workers voting for governments that promise bigger budgets for the public sector) that merely limiting the state to its current size means finding cuts.

And cuts can be found. In the corporate world, slimming a workforce by a tenth is standard fare. There’s no reason why governments should not do that too, when it’s needed. Sweden and Canada managed it, and remained pleasant countries with effective public services. Public-sector pay can be cut, given how secure jobs are: in both America and Britain public-sector workers are on average now paid more than private-sector ones. Public-sector pensions are far too generous, in comparison with shrunken private-sector ones. Entitlements can be cut back, most obviously by raising pensionable ages. And the world might well be a greener, more prosperous place if the West’s various agricultural departments disappeared. ...

Contentions

[From Disgusting to Odd](#)

by Abe Greenwald

A question about Barack Obama is starting to take shape in the American mind: where does this stop? The “this” is the collective hodgepodge of delinquent policy, administrative incompetence, a bottomless capacity for self-delusion, hubris, and the vetoing of American opinion. The “this” is comprised of attempts to harness populist disaffection in order to create a diversion, the presidential campaign that never ends, the 24/7 up-and-down-the-dial interview blitz, the hyper-partisan “post-partisanship,” and, foremost, the compulsion to lay all blame at the feet of the previous president.

Back in October, Charles Krauthammer [called](#) Obama’s incessant denunciation of George W. Bush “disgusting.” Three months later, and still going strong, the habit is bordering on eccentric. Not merely in its preponderance, but in kind. Consider that Obama explained away Republican Scott Brown’s Massachusetts victory as resulting from Americans’ anger over the “past eight years.” A Republican won because of the voters’ rage toward Bush?

Also bordering on the eccentric is the president’s endless infatuation with his own story. On the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Obama noted how the Soviet Union’s collapse paved the way for

his path to the White House. He thought the Olympics would be in the bag if he flew to Copenhagen and recited a tale from the Book of Barack. When he went to Massachusetts to stump for Martha Coakley, he told the audience, "So it's good to be back in Boston. . . I came back here a few years ago and gave a little speech that turned out pretty well." This was a reference to the electrifying DNC Convention speech that made him a star. "Something about Boston folks have just always been good to me," he said, as if the people of Massachusetts were obligated to uphold this benevolent tradition. This time he was heckled and the state took a fatal chunk out of his agenda.

And it is courting eccentricity to remain unable to take a definitive position: to amplify and wind down the same war in the same speech, to simultaneously rescue and punish big banks, to overrule the voters who put him in office and to "never stop fighting" for them.

Early in his presidency, Obama spoke of his belief in persistence. But his dogged effort to force his left-wing square-peg agenda into the moderate round hole of American politics feels more like an unhealthy obsession. He tried to "jam it down Americans' throats." Fine. But to keep jamming even after the public has regurgitated in such dramatic fashion?

For all this, Obama makes a tremendous show of his cool nerves. "I don't rattle," he said. In a way, that's true. Blaming Republican failings for the Massachusetts Republican victory, for example, is not a sign of being rattled. It's a sign of disconnected logic, a much more exotic subconscious defense. It requires a lot of psychological reapportioning not to get rattled while flailing on the world stage. Instead of losing your cool, you indulge in excessive denial or projection or sublimation. Something, after all, has got to give. It's becoming clear that something is giving. As the *Las Vegas Review-Journal's* Sherman Frederick [put it](#), "this kind of weird delusion is consistent with the unbounded hubris of Team Obama."

During the campaign, we heard endlessly about Barack Obama's "presidential temperament." But a few observers thought of it more as a strange placidity. What, in fact, is presidential about terminal aloofness? He's the chief executive of a country that's fighting two wars, struggling to get out from under an unprecedented financial breakdown, staring a near-nuclear Iran in the face, and on the constant receiving end of terrorist threats. Yet the most fired up we've ever seen Obama was when he decided a Cambridge Massachusetts police officer was "stupid" for inconveniencing his friend with a request to show ID. His second most animated moment came when some nobodies crashed his dinner party. What's worrisome in this pattern is the president's attachment to the personal. If we acknowledge that Obama weighs everything first by the degree to which it redounds on him personally, his failings are not so mysterious. If Obama has not conveyed to Americans that he hears their concerns, it may be because he *doesn't* hear them. He merely hears pointers for his perpetual image upkeep.

Which makes you wonder where it ends. An object in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by external force. But for Obama, it's all internal, personal.

What speaker of truth has the president's ear? Is there a White House break man to slow this runaway train? Or are there only yes-men, mutes, and passive-aggressive leakers? How welcome some of the old Bush-style administration in-fighting would be right about now.

Of course, the President invites the harshest judgments. By continuing to campaign instead of lead he asks to be assessed as someone who has not yet proven himself. He forces comparisons with those he campaigned against. And so it is no surprise that the public is once again [split](#) between the general election tickets. If Obama is in campaign mode, why shouldn't the electorate follow suit? The difference between today and 2008 is that today Obama can't have his clean slate back.

Streetwise Professor

But I'm just a soul whose intentions are good / Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood

Apparently the diagnosis within the White House is that Obama is a soul whose intentions and actions are good, but because he was so busy successfully acting on those intentions, he failed to communicate their total wonderfulness. And as a result, he's just misunderstood:

"One thing I regret this year is that we were so busy just getting stuff done . . . that I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people. . . . I think the assumption was, if I just focus on policy, if I just focus on the, you know, this provision, or that law, or are we making a good, rational decision here, that people will get it."

So prepare for another chorus of paeans to The One's new clothes. A propaganda offensive for all you hicks out there just not smart enough to get it on your own, so it has to be spelled out for you.

But Obama's problem isn't that people *don't* know what he's done and what he intends to do, but that they know them all too well. Consequently, this new communications barrage is only likely to make things worse for him politically, not better. It's sort of like what Twain said: better to remain silent and let people think you're an idiot, than open your mouth and remove all doubt.

Contentions

Obama's Wax Wings

by Peter Wehner

Rep. Marion Berry, yet another retiring Democrat, gave an interview to Jane Fullerton of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. According to [Fullerton](#):

Berry recounted meetings with White House officials, reminiscent of some during the Clinton days, where he and others urged them not to force Blue Dogs "off into that swamp" of supporting bills that would be unpopular with voters back home.

"I've been doing that with this White House, and they just don't seem to give it any credibility at all," Berry said. "They just kept telling us how good it was going to be. **The president himself, when that was brought up in one group, said, 'Well, the big difference here and in '94 was you've got me.'** We're going to see how much difference that makes now." [*snip*]

"I began to preach last January that we had already seen this movie and we didn't want to see it again because we know how it comes out," said Arkansas' 1st District congressman, who worked in the Clinton administration before being elected to the House in 1996... "I just began to have flashbacks to 1993 and '94. No one that was here in '94, or at the day after the election felt like. It certainly wasn't a good feeling."

This is yet more evidence — as if we needed any — of Obama's almost pathological self-regard. He seems to dismiss President Clinton — a successful five-term governor who won his presidential re-election by a comfortable margin — as a political hack compared to The One. It explains how Obama can interpret the results of the Massachusetts Senate race — the third in a series of pulverizing losses for Democrats since November — as confirmation that he, well, spent too much time doing too many good and important things for the American people and, in the process, forgot to inform the simple-minded citizenry what a treasure we have in Obama.

Whatever strengths Mr. Obama brought to the job as president — and they now appear to be quite limited — they are overwhelmed by, among other things, his massive ego and otherworldly arrogance. It is leading him and his staff into a state of self-delusion. Mr. Obama's self-regard is not only utterly unwarranted,

especially given his failed first year; it is downright dangerous. He is a man whose wings are made of wax; if he's not careful, a long fall into the deep blue sea awaits him.

Contentions

[That's What They Need — A Campaign Manager!](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

It is only fitting that Obama's first significant personnel change in the wake of the Massachusetts debacle is to hire back his campaign manager. No, really. [Chris Cillizza](#) reports:

Daivd Plouffe, the man who managed President Barack Obama's campaign, will be taking on an expanded role as an outside adviser to the White House, according to sources familiar with the plan, a move that comes just days after a stunning defeat for Democrats in a Massachusetts Senate special election.

Not a new economic team. Not a new chief of staff. Not even a new national security staff to replace the gang that dropped the ball on the Christmas Day bomber. No, with the Obami, it is never about substance or getting the policy right. It's not about governance. It is about the perpetual campaign. So the campaign manager gets the emergency call.

Plouffe, not coincidentally, authors an [op-ed](#) in Cillizza's paper arguing that ObamaCare was a fine idea, just misunderstood. ("It's a good plan that's become a demonized caricature.") He says Democrats better pass it, or the public won't understand how wrong Sarah Palin was. (I'm not making that up: "Only if the plan becomes law will the American people see that all the scary things Sarah Palin and others have predicted — such as the so-called death panels — were baseless.") Where are the votes going to come from? What about the legitimate complaints from the Left and Right that the bill is an incoherent jumble? Sorry — Plouffe is in the campaign business, not the policy business. (Republicans shouldn't get their hopes up that anyone in Congress other than Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid buys this stuff.)

It gets worse after that. He also thinks Democrats should create jobs. (Who knew you could get paid for coming up with this stuff?) And Democrats should defend the stimulus plan. (Do we think this is a Karl Rove mind-trick game?) Democrats shouldn't listen to complaints about spending because voters will be impressed by blaming the other party. Work on the corruption issue. (Reps. Murtha, Rangel, etc., don't agree, I suspect.) And "run great campaigns." (Who'd have thought?)

You see the problem. This is what passes for inspired advice, and this is the personnel slot that Obama fills first. It's hard to believe that the candidate who ran against stale politics is now, a year into his presidency, a hackneyed pol happy to push this sort of pablum on an already disgusted public. Well, it sure does explain how Obama wound up in his current predicament.

Streetwise Professor

[I Thought DC Was On the Potomac, But I Guess It's Actually on De Nile](#)

[You just keep on believing, folks:](#)

Gibbs said that Brown may have campaigned on stopping the health care bill but that's not why voters elected him over Democrat Martha Coakley.

"More people voted to express their support for Barack Obama than to oppose him," Gibbs said.

Yeah, go with that. Right until that moment when you realize, Wiley Coyote-like, that you've just sprinted over the edge of a cliff.

Beep-beep!

Contentions

The Next Chapter of Health-Care Reform

by Jennifer Rubin

It is not clear whether anyone has the stomach for more health-care negotiations. For the Democrats, it would be like revisiting the site of a traumatic auto accident. It is where the pain started, and it will only remind voters where the Democrats got off course. Republicans might just as soon move on to other issues rather than throw Democrats a lifeline. But there are good reasons, both substantive and political, to move forward.

As the *Washington Post* editors counsel, now that ObamaCare is “in mortal danger, President Obama should try treating the Senate Republicans the way he treats the ruling mullahs of Iran.” In other words, try to engage and give the other side every benefit of the doubt. More seriously, the *Post* notes that Republicans have some good ideas. (“Tort reform, freedom for state experimentation and other issues could advance Mr. Obama’s goals of increased access and decreased costs.”) In short, we might actually get a coherent, effective piece of legislation now that the monstrosity cooked up by Obama-Reid-Pelosi is kaput.

In a similar vein, [James C. Capretta and Yuval Levin](#) urge Republicans to move forward on three fronts:

First, they should seek to address the problem of insuring Americans with preexisting conditions through state-based high-risk pools, not cumbersome insurance regulations that try to outlaw basic economics. ... Second, they should propose to help doctors and patients limit some of the burden of rising costs with medical malpractice reform. ... Third, they should argue that the states be given the lead role in developing more detailed reforms of how and where people get their insurance—to cover more people and slow the rise of costs. The overall goal should be to build well-functioning marketplaces in which insurers and providers compete to deliver the best value to cost-conscious consumers. The federal government should remove bureaucratic obstacles to state experimentation on this front, and offer support where possible, but not design one mammoth new program.

Well, it sounds like they and the *Washington Post* editors could hammer something out in an afternoon. But alas, the same crew who came up with ObamaCare would be negotiating with the Republicans, so we shouldn't get our hopes up. Nevertheless, as a political matter, it makes sense, if not now then in a couple of months, for both Democrats and Republicans to give it a try. Democrats don't want the last chapter of health-care reform to be the Cornhusker Kickback and the mandate to make everyone buy policies they don't want from Big Insurance. And Republicans, who are auditioning for control of Congress, want to show what real reform looks like and how the “party of no” was another liberal fable cooked up while Democrats were trying to convince voters the choice was between ObamaCare and nothing at all. (The voters liked the “nothing at all” option better.)

It is understandable if lawmakers would rather move on. But given that there isn't too much agreement on anything else (immigration, cap-and-trade), they might give health-care reform one more shot. They really can't do worse than they did the first time.

Contentions

Obama Misses the Populist Message

by Jennifer Rubin

Mara Liasson on [Fox News Sunday](#) makes a key point that the Obami aren't likely to appreciate:

This is not a revolt of special interests killing the health care bill like with Hillary-care. You have big pharma, you have the insurance companies basically inside the tent, bought into this idea that they're going to get a big new market in exchange for being highly regulated.

This is not only accurate but also highlights the phoniness of Obama's newfound populism. The populists — yes, including those “angry” tea party protesters whom Obama pretended to ignore — are arrayed against Obama and his statist, big-government agenda. They aren't protesting that special interests have blocked health care; they're mad that an unholy alliance of big business, big labor, and big government has formed with little concern for the interests of seniors (whose Medicare would get slashed) or middle-class voters (who would be taxed on Cadillac plans, forced to buy insurance, etc.). Obama may be donning the lingo of those who elected Scott Brown, but he's missing the point.

Obama's own agenda is fundamentally anti-populist. What could be worse for the little guy than to be told to go buy a big, expensive health-care plan from a big insurance company? It's the sort of thing Democrats would rightly mock Republicans for coming up with, had the GOP the nerve to come up with such a scheme in the first place.

So when Obama now hollers about the “little guy” and expresses outrage over big, powerful forces in Washington, perhaps he should have looked more closely at the bill he was attempting to foist on the American people. A cushy deal for Big Pharma. New customers mandated by the federal government for Big Insurance. A sweetheart deal for Big Labor.

As with so much else that has gone wrong in the past year for Obama, we once again see that he mistakes (or thinks we will mistake) rhetoric for substance. He wants to get on the side of the ordinary voters? Listen to Scott Brown's message:

Raising taxes, taking over our health care, and giving new rights to terrorists is the wrong agenda for our country. What I've heard again and again on the campaign trail, is that our political leaders have grown aloof from the people, impatient with dissent, and comfortable in the back room making deals.

That's what has the public riled up — and Obama would do well to listen to what voters are saying rather than simply imitate the tone of the other side's victory rallies.

John Stossel's Blog

Obama's Bad Connection

In an appearance with ABC's George Stephanopoulos last week, there was little danger of the President being too hard on himself. (Perhaps he just didn't want to jeopardize that "good, solid B+" Obama gave himself last month.)

Obama said it was his hard work creating public policy that caused him to lose a direct connection to Americans.

“If there's one thing that I regret this year it's that we were so busy just getting stuff done and dealing with the immediate crises that were in front of us that I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people about what their core values are...”Excuse me? We know what our core values are. It is presumptuous for a politician to presume that he must lecture us about them.



I'm surprised Stephanopoulos was able to keep a straight face. Blogger [Denny Hartford](#) asks, Obama needs to talk to us even more?

Talk about revisionism. For this statement comes from a fellow who was constantly on our television screens, in the headlines, and on the magazine covers. Indeed, only **21** days in the whole doggone year did he not have a public appearance or splashy press event!...

How about **411 speeches**, released remarks and carefully crafted public comments? **52** of them specifically dealing with his health care schemes.

He gave **42 news conferences** including 4 which took over prime time TV.

He did **158 interviews** for a fawning press, 90 of which aired on television.

He presided over **23 "town hall" gatherings** where he pontificated on his issues.

He traveled to **21 nations** in his first year and to **58 U.S. cities** (always accompanied by a huge throng of adoring reporters who let the American people know his every word and gesture).

He had **13 bill-signing ceremonies** plus plenty of media coverage on the other **111 bills** he signed into law.

Frankly, I hope the President will talk more if he'll just agree to legislate less.

Macleans

[99-year-old Granny isn't the problem](#)

by Mark Steyn



A couple of days after the Christmas Day Pantybomber tried to light up his gusset on the approach to Detroit, I was at a small airport in Vermont shuffling through the line to what they call the “sterile” area. Anyway, I handed over my driver’s licence and, as he had done with all the previous passengers, the Transportation Security Administration agent examined it. And examined it. And examined it some more. He had a loupe, one of those magnifying glasses jewellers use to examine diamonds for any surface blemishes or internal flaws. In this case, he was deploying it to examine how the ink lies on the paper. And when he’d finished doing that he got out his UV light to study the watermark on my licence.

And, looking down at his bald patch as he went about his work with loving care, I was overcome by a sudden urge to point out that nobody had ever blown up a U.S. airliner with a fake driver’s licence. Why bother going to all that trouble when a real one is so easy to get? On Sept. 11, 2001, four of the terrorists boarded the flight with genuine, valid picture ID issued by the state of Virginia and obtained through the illegal-immigrant day-workers’ network run out of the parking lot of the 7-Eleven in Falls Church. Almost two years earlier, Ahmed Ressam, the Millennium Bomber, had been arrested on the British Columbia-Washington state border travelling on a genuine Canadian passport. In that instance, the terrorist had been stopped because the guard thought he seemed nervous when she looked him in the eye. But in Vermont the guy didn’t look me or anybody else in the eye. He remained hunched over his loupes and licences—no doubt in part because if he looked me or any other regular air traveller in the eye all he’d see staring back at him was an expression of total contempt at the pointless and stupid “security.” So they avoid looking at you, and instead peer through their magnifiers, and amble back and forth barking out the rules about how the three-ounce containers of liquids and gels have to be placed in a one-quart zip-top clear plastic bag, and rummage through your carry-on for more and more proscribed items. But they never look at you. Because they’re not looking for terrorists. They’re looking for things, and an ever-growing list of them.

Oh, to be sure, you can still find the occasional nonagenarian spinster who thinks if they’re patting her down and making her unscrew her leg brace it’s a sign that they’re being extra-super-careful about security. Which, of course, they’re not. Every minute spent on the nonagenarian spinster is a minute not being spent on, say, a nervous 23-year-old Muslim male who’s a bit twitchy because his crotch is loaded with PETN. In the end, I forbore to mock the scrutiny of my driver’s licence, as most of us do, lest the TSA stick us on the no-fly list. Even by the standards of government make-work bureaucracies, they dislike being questioned, and they seem to believe they have the power to pull you off the flight for lèse-majesté. A week after the Pantybomber, a man broke into the “sterile” area at Newark. When I say “broke into,” that’s Homeland Security-speak for “strolled into,” while crack TSA agent Ruben Hernandez had wandered away from his post and had his back turned. He wouldn’t have noticed it, but a member of the public, whiling away an hour or three waiting for an arriving passenger, chanced to see it and brought it to the TSA’s attention. They immediately swung into action and checked the surveillance cameras to get a good look at the man. Alas, the cameras weren’t recording. They required a reboot, and nobody at the TSA had got around to asking for one. Still, it looks nice and reassuring having all those cameras everywhere, doesn’t it? Even if there’s nothing in them.

Fortunately, Continental Airlines at Newark keep their own surveillance video. Unfortunately, the TSA didn’t know the phone number to call or the procedures that had been agreed on for getting hold of the backup tape.

So instead they locked down the airport, stopped all flights, pulled everyone off the plane, prevented them from getting food or drink or using the bathroom, and rescreened them all, causing massive inconvenience and loss of time and money. All because TSA “model employee” Ruben Hernandez turned his back. In the wake of the Newark incident, I received a number of emails from airport workers suggesting this sort of thing happens fairly regularly. For example, one correspondent tells me that at Detroit’s North Terminal last year some fellow sauntered into the “secure” area through the exit, bought some food from Village Pizza, and was halfway through eating it before the TSA caught up with him. Presumably the cameras were working that day.

At Newark it took a little longer. After six days, they finally found the security breacher—a man called Haisong Jiang, a 28-year-old Rutgers grad student who’d decided to give his sweetheart one last kiss. New

Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg is furious that Mr. Jiang may only get a fine and not serious jail time. “It wasn’t some prank that didn’t do any harm,” fumed the senator. “It did a lot of harm because it sent out an alert that people can get away with something like this.”

Er, yes. But isn’t that the problem you should be focusing on? That people can “get away with something like this,” because the model employee turns his back, and your security tape isn’t running, and you don’t have the phone number for the backup.

But for a while they’ll be more careful. So the lines will move slower, and get longer. If you’re at a busy airport on a Friday afternoon, two thoughts occur:

First, this is costing a ton of money. Not just “model employees” as far as the eye can see, and the new full-body scanners that show you what all the Islamobabes look like underneath the burka for 200 grand a pop. But the money and energy drained out of the real economy by all those people who’d be doing something more productive if they weren’t spending so many hours standing around waiting to do the shoeless shuffle. Look at the crowd, figure they’re all on minimum wage, and it’s still a lot.

The second thought that strikes you is that the ever-longer lines to get into the “secure” area are now the least secure area in America. Why not blow up the security line? You could kill as many people as on an airplane, and inflict more long-term economic damage. But don’t worry. The TSA has plans to expand the “secure” area, so the insecure perimeter will be somewhere else, with even more vulnerable people standing around waiting to get into it.

I wrote a few days after 9/11 that the modern airplane cabin was the most advanced model of the progressive social-democratic state, the sky-high version of trends that, on the ground, progress more slowly. It was a statist’s dream on Sept. 11: no smoking, 100 per cent gun control, and no First Amendment either. The justification was a familiar one—that in return for surrendering liberty, the state will ensure you are safe. And so on 9/11 three out of the four planes followed all the 1970s security procedures and everybody died. Because in the end the state wasn’t up there with them.

It was the same on Christmas Day. This time it was the post-9/11 security procedures that didn’t work, and once again the state wasn’t up there. We’re told that Mr. Abdulmutallab wasn’t on the no-fly list per se—there’s only about 4,000 people on that—but on a kind of standby list for the no-fly list, with about half-a-million people on it. Whatever. Had he chosen to light up his panties in the bathroom instead of waiting till he got back to his seat, everyone would be dead.

Question: what do the 9/11 killers, the Shoebomber, the Heathrow plotters, the Pantybomber, the London Tube bombers, the doctors who drove a flaming SUV through the concourse of Glasgow Airport and the would-be killers of Danish cartoonists all have in common? Answer: they’re Muslim. Sometimes they’re Muslims with box cutters, sometimes they’re Muslims with flaming shoes, sometimes they’re Muslims with liquids and gels, sometimes they’re Muslims with fully loaded underwear. But the Muslim bit is a constant. What we used to call a fact. But America’s leaders cannot state that simple fact, and so the TSA is obliged to pretend that all seven billion inhabitants of this planet represent an equal threat.

I wonder how far out the “security” perimeter will eventually be drawn. Just as the micro-regulatory coerciveness of the pre-9/11 airline cabin has now spread to the airport, so eventually post-9/11 airport “security” will spread way beyond—all because the prevailing political culture cannot tell the truth about what’s happening.

Thinking back on it, I should have spoken up in Vermont, even if I get on the no-fly list. The more the merrier. And the sooner all seven billion of us are on it, the sooner we can start over.

Denver Post

Any way the wind blows

The flexible political convictions of Michael Bennet

by David Harsanyi

The pestering overlords have been repelled. The despots of do-gooderism bested. The phony saviors of proles and plebs are dazed and confused. They'll be back for more, of course very soon.

But for the beleaguered, a fleeting respite. Not so long ago, those of you who opposed nationalizing health care were accused of promoting death and sedition — or even worse, *selfishness*. Today, Democrats are calling for patience and dialogue.

What's changed? The solution? The problem? Nah. Principles? Those cheap things? The only thing more flexible than a political conviction is an Obama campaign promise.

For a case study on malleable values, take Colorado's Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet. In December, CNN host John King asked him if "every piece of evidence tells you, if you support that bill, you will lose your job, would you cast the vote and lose your job?"

Our hero answered, "Yes." The senator even commemorated his own gutsiness via press release. He then voted for the Senate health care bill — a surprise to no one.

Well, this week, the political world, as it tends to, was upended. And only hours after the president capitulated to the will of voters and called for a slowdown, Bennet — by mere happenstance, no doubt — chimed in that, you know what, he too believed Congress should slow down.

The voters of Massachusetts "didn't just elect a senator," he explained, "they sent a message to Washington that I have heard all across Colorado."

Why, one might wonder, would a senator — willing to pass reform even if Colorado voters objected only a month ago — give one whit about the message sent by the Bay State or the Square State? Not very long ago, this guy was willing to lose his job, no matter what the consequences.

Coloradans might be telling Bennet something. They may not. They may be telling him something else completely tomorrow. But, if left to him, Coloradans would have the federal government making their most private choices. If it were up to Bennet, his constituents would be busy paying off dubious debts to Nebraska, Louisiana, California, unions — and anyone else clever enough to get their kickback.

Which makes the rest of Bennet's platitudinous non-sequitur even more curious.

The senator pledges to "continue to fight against the backroom deals and special interest handouts" and hopes "the rest of Washington will join me."

Join him? This would be tricky if you bear in mind that Bennet has done absolutely nothing to fight backroom deals or special interest handouts. The very bill Bennet staked his Senate seat on — by his own admission — is loaded with shady handouts. Presumably by "fight," Bennet meant that he once grumbled about the ugly process on the Senate floor.

When I asked a Bennet spokesperson how the senator had stared down evil in Washington and lived to tell about it, she explained that he "was the first Senate Democrat to call out the deal struck on health care reform in December, to which a number of others followed and arguably led to a request that the deal be removed from the bill."

Arguable, indeed.

After all, using this logic, one could point out that Bennet's complaints followed a few dozen Republicans. Was the GOP fighting special-interest handouts? Did Bennet join them?

Bennet, like many others, had a magnificent opportunity to demonstrate independence by voting "no" on government-run medicine. Bennet had a chance to overcome his ethical misgivings regarding transparency and fishy deals then. Now, however, he is about political survival — the real message taken from Massachusetts.

The interesting thing about political grandstanding is that the neighborhood you pick to do it in better be one you're prepared to live in for a long while.

Slate's fighting words

Loose Lips or Dirty Tricks?

***Game Change* provides more evidence of the Clintons' shocking behavior during the 2008 campaign.**

by Christopher Hitchens

The inevitable grumbling and grunting about the use of unattributed quotations in [Game Change](#), the engrossing new campaign book by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, has been accompanied by a more or less grudging general admission that nobody cited in these pages has so far complained of being misrepresented. To this suggestive point I would add, from comparatively limited experience, that where the authors discuss anything that I know about, they have it right. In fact, what they say is often less sensational than what they might have said.

Surely this is particularly true of the most notorious rapid-response operation in modern political history: the infamous Clinton team and its eager outriders and propagandists. I am astonished at how relatively little attention this has received. If the book is to be believed, then the following things occurred:

- 1) After his wife's third-place showing in the Iowa caucuses, Bill Clinton telephoned Sen. Edward Kennedy in pursuit of an endorsement and, according to Kennedy's own account as given to a friend, [said](#) of then-Sen. Barack Obama: A few years ago, this guy would have been getting us coffee.
- 2) In a subsequent conversation, former President Clinton [told](#) Kennedy in so many words: "The only reason you're endorsing him is because he's black. Let's just be clear." (This last is given in direct quotes and not in reported speech.)
- 3) After Obama so handily won the South Carolina primary in January 2008, drawing more than half the state's white voters under the age of 30, Bill Clinton's comment to a reporter was: "Jesse Jackson won South Carolina in '84 and '88. Jackson ran a good campaign. And Obama ran a good campaign here." Answering Obama's question—"Now, why would he say that?"—the authors conclude:

Clinton was comparing Obama to Jackson to diminish the former's victory, and to accomplish the blackening that Obama's advisers suspected was his objective all along. (The Jackson comparison circulated in Clintonworld the night before, in an email from Bill's former White House aide Sidney Blumenthal, which prophesied, "After Feb 5, Obama may prove to be a lesser version of Jackson.")

- 4) Mention of Blumenthal brings me to the next point of shock in the narrative, where by mid-May 2008 the Clinton campaign is foundering hopelessly and beginning to rely on the desperate pitch to "superdelegates." Two things then happen: Bill Clinton plays the race card even more crudely, and Sidney Blumenthal claims that Michelle Obama has been caught on tape using the word *whitey*. To cite Heilemann and Halperin again:

Bill Clinton's main assignment was continuing to make phone calls to superdelegates, in which he pressed the case for Hillary and against Obama aggressively—at times, too aggressively. Clinton's message, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, was that the country wasn't ready to elect an African American president.

And then there's this:

Blumenthal was obsessed with the "whitey tape," and so were the Clintons, who not only believed that it existed but felt that there was a chance it might emerge in time to save Hillary. "They've got a tape, they've got a tape," she told her aides excitedly.

I have concentrated until now on the race-card material, but this is by no means the whole story. Everybody remembers the later wild allegations made by Sarah Palin about Obama's "palling around with terrorists." But this is how the whole smear started, during a Democratic debate in Philadelphia way back in April when Sen. Clinton seemed to know a huge amount about former Weatherman Bill Ayers and his supposed closeness to Obama (who had been 8 years old when Ayers was doing his revolting stuff):

Clinton's staff was surprised; Ayers hadn't been part of her prep. But Hillary had a number of friends—among them Sid Blumenthal, whose nickname was "Grassy Knoll"—regularly feeding her on the sly negative tidbits of dubious veracity about Obama. (In getting ready for that night, Hillary casually mentioned to her aides that she'd heard that Obama's mother was a communist.)

I don't say any of this as a partisan. I never agreed with those who said that the Obamas had "laid to rest" the problem of their long association with the appalling Rev. Jeremiah Wright. But that was a public question, to be resolved by democratic argument. Whereas the striking thing about all the examples above is how *low* they are in their tone and the commitment they reveal to the spreading of surreptitious innuendo by grimy, cowardly, and underhanded means.

A bit more than a decade ago, I had a [public showdown](#) with Blumenthal, who was then professionally engaged in defaming more than one truth-telling female witness against then-President Clinton. I thought it was wrong for the White House to be involved in such creepy tactics. But at the time, a huge number of liberal and pseudo-left commentators thought of Clinton as a victim rather than a practitioner of "sexual McCarthyism" and even went so far as to utter the absurd, insulting idea that this moral vandal was the nation's "first black president." Now that the exact same team has been exposed as circulating the cheapest sort of racist insinuation against the man who actually did become the first president with an African parent, I wonder if any of that liberal chorus will have the grace to blush. It was the old Bill-Hillary-Sidney gang who handed over the weapons of defamation to the Republicans in the closing stages of the last campaign, and it was they who were not-so-secretly upset when the candidate of their own party actually won. Will there be any belated acknowledgement that one set of dirty tricks led to another? Of course there will not. But meanwhile, keeping score is the next best thing.

The Economist

Stop!

The size and power of the state is growing, and discontent is on the rise



IN THE aftermath of the Senate election in Massachusetts, the focus of attention is inevitably on what it means for Barack Obama. The impact on the Democratic president of the loss of the late Ted Kennedy's seat to the Republicans will, no doubt, be significant. Yet the result could be remembered as a message more profound than the disparate mutterings of a grumpy electorate that has lost faith in its leader—as a growl of hostility to the rising power of the state.

America's most vibrant political force at the moment is the anti-tax tea-party movement. Even in leftish Massachusetts people are worried that Mr Obama's spending splurge, notably his still-unpassed health-care bill, will send the deficit soaring. In Britain, where elections are usually spending competitions, the contest this year will be fought about where to cut. Even in regions as historically statist as Scandinavia and southern Europe debates are beginning to emerge about the size and effectiveness of government.

There are good reasons, as well as bad ones, why the state is growing; but the trend must be reversed. Doing so will prove exceedingly hard—not least because the bigger and more powerful the state gets, the more it tends to grow. But electorates, as in Massachusetts, eventually revolt; and such expressions of voters' fury are likely to shape politics in the years to come.

How it grew and grew

The immediate reason for the rise of the state is the financial crisis. Governments have spent trillions propping up banks and staving off depression. In some countries they now play a large role in the financial sector; and thanks to bail-outs, stimulus and recession, the proportion of GDP made up by state spending and public deficits has rocketed.

But the rise of Leviathan is a much longer and broader story (see [article](#)). Long before AIG and Northern Rock ended up in state custody, government had been growing rapidly. That was especially true in Britain and America, the two countries in which “the end of big government” had been declared in the 1990s. George Bush pushed up spending more than any president since Lyndon Johnson. Britain's initially frugal Labour government went on a splurge: the state's share of GDP has risen from 37% in 2000 to 48% in 2008 to 52% now. In swathes of northern Britain the state now accounts for a bigger share of the economy than it did in communist countries in the old eastern bloc. The change has been less dramatic in continental Europe, but in most of those countries the state already made up around half of the economy.

Demography is set to push state spending up further. Ageing populations will consume ever more public health care and ever bigger pensions. Unless somebody takes an axe to them, entitlements will consume a fifth of America's GDP in 15 years, compared with 9% now.

Rising government spending is not the only manifestation of growing state power. The spread of regulation is another. Conservatives tend to blame the growing thicket of rules on unwanted supranational bodies, such as the European Union, and on the ever growing industry of public-sector busybodies who supervise matters like diversity and health and safety. They have a point. But voters, including right-wing ones, often demand more state intrusion: witness the "wars" on terror and drugs, or the spread of CCTV cameras. Mr Bush added an average of 1,000 pages of federal regulations each year he was in office. America now has a quarter of a million people devising and implementing federal rules.

Globalisation, far from whittling away the state, has often ended up boosting it. Greater job insecurity among the voting middle classes has increased demand for safety nets. Confronted by global market failures, such as climate change, voters have demanded a public response. And the emergence of new economic powers, especially China, has given fresh respectability to the old notion of state capitalism: more and more of the world's biggest companies are state-owned, and more and more of its biggest investors are now sovereign-wealth funds.

What should be done?

Many difficulties present themselves to those who would reform the state. One is the danger posed by the fragility of the world economy. Government stimulus may still be needed to ward off a new slump. But even in the most vulnerable countries, governments need to be planning for withdrawal.

A further danger consists in equating "smaller" with "better". As the horrors in Haiti demonstrate, countries need a state of a certain size to work at all; and more government can be good. *The Economist*, for instance, is relieved that politicians stepped in to bail out the banks, since the risks of tumbling into a depression were large. This newspaper also supported Mr Obama in 2008 in part because he wanted to extend health-care coverage.

How much a state spends often matters less than how it spends. Systems in which the state pays and the private sector provides often work well. Scandinavia's schools are expensive, but they are by and large more efficient than their Anglo-Saxon peers. Much of France's health care is paid for by the state but supplied by private hospitals.

Even where big change is clearly needed, the history of "reinventing government" shows it is not easy. The quick fixes, such as privatising national telecoms firms, have been done. Fortunes have been spent on management consultants in the public sector, without much to show for it (see [article](#)). In 1978 another American state shocked the world by rejecting big government: California's tax-cutting Proposition 13 paved the way for Reaganism, but direct democracy has ended up making the Golden State's government worse.

In these circumstances, hard rules make little sense. But prejudices are still useful—and this newspaper's prejudice is to look for ways to make the state smaller. That is partly for philosophical reasons: we prefer to give power to individuals, rather than to governments. But pragmatism also comes into it: there is so much pressure on the state to grow (bureaucrats building empires, politicians buying votes, public-sector workers voting for governments that promise bigger budgets for the public sector) that merely limiting the state to its current size means finding cuts.

And cuts can be found. In the corporate world, slimming a workforce by a tenth is standard fare. There's no reason why governments should not do that too, when it's needed. Sweden and Canada managed it, and remained pleasant countries with effective public services. Public-sector pay can be cut, given how secure jobs are: in both America and Britain public-sector workers are on average now paid more than private-sector ones. Public-sector pensions are far too generous, in comparison with shrunken private-sector ones.

Entitlements can be cut back, most obviously by raising pensionable ages. And the world might well be a greener, more prosperous place if the West's various agricultural departments disappeared.

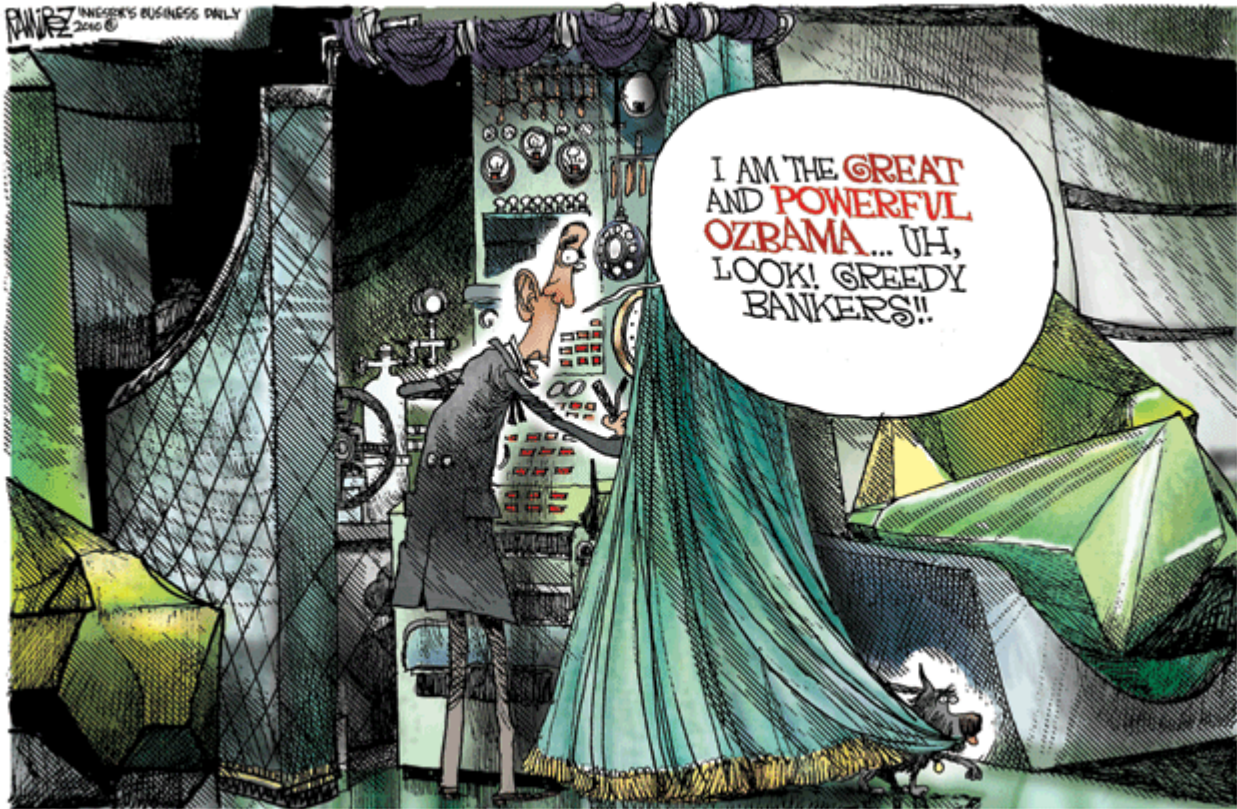
The Economist will return to these areas in coming months. All raise different issues; and different countries may need to deal with them in different ways. But one large general point links them: a great battle about the state is brewing. And, as in another influential revolution, the first shot may have been heard in Massachusetts.

Yahoo News

[Obama Uses Teleprompter to Address Sixth Graders](#)



President Barack Obama, accompanied by Education Secretary Arne Duncan, speaks to the media after a discussion with 6th grade students at Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, Va., Tuesday,



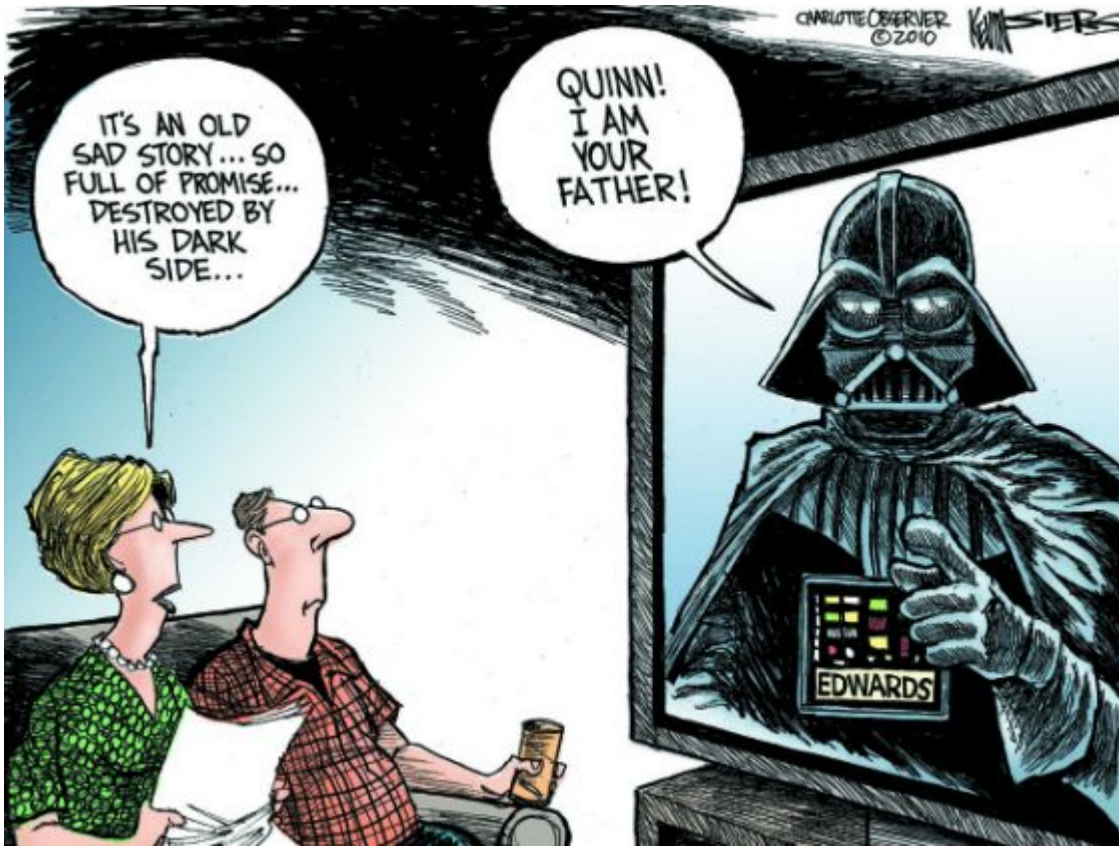
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SPEAKING OF RECESSIONS...







The ONLY PERSON in AMERICA SHOCKED TO LEARN JOHN EDWARDS IS the FATHER OF RIELLE HUNTER'S BABY