

June 7, 2011

The [New Editor](#) highlights additional proof that the federal government has taken care of its own while the country has suffered.

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Number six on the list is Los Alamos County, NM, where about 60% of those employed work for the federal government.

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...Is there anyone who actually thinks this is healthy for the country?

[Mark Steyn](#) enjoys joking about the latest lewd topic.

..."British intelligence has hacked into an al-Qaida online magazine and replaced bomb making instructions with a recipe for cupcakes."

True. If MI6 can break into a Yemeni website run by Anwar al-Awlaki and infect it with home-baking favorites from "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," I don't doubt that the same spooks could easily hack into Anthony Weiner's computer and Tweet his cupcake to that poor college girl in Seattle.

But Congressman Weiner then retreated from the sinister hacking line, and protested that all this fuss about a mere "prank" involving a "randy photo" (his words) was an "unfortunate distraction" from real issues like raising the debt ceiling. Like Bill Clinton in the Nineties, Rep. Weiner needs to "get back to work for the American people."

It's the political class doing all this relentless "work for the American people" that's turned this country into the brokest nation in the history of the planet ...

In the [WaPo](#), [Kevin Chavous](#) has an amazing story of the NAACP working against better education opportunities for African Americans, and Harlem parents protesting against the NAACP.

...How did it get to the point that the country's foremost civil rights organization is the target of a protest by the people it was created to serve? Forty years ago, Harlem was marching alongside NAACP leaders in the fight for justice and education equity for African Americans. So what happened?

Harlem residents gathered last month to urge the NAACP to [drop a lawsuit it had filed](#) with the teachers union against the New York City Department of Education. That lawsuit seeks to stop the closure of 22 bad schools as well as the placement of several charter schools in district school space. The lawsuit essentially could lead to the closing of several high-performing charter schools that primarily serve black children in Harlem. Seeing this threat, thousands of parents took to the street against those who would deny their child a good education — even if that meant marching against the NAACP.

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the NAACP seems intent on preserving is the “system” of New York public schools that has failed kids in Harlem for far too many years. System preservation has emerged as the common refrain from those fighting expanding charter schools and quality educational options for parents. Preserving such a system in its current form would ensure that thousands of low-income minority children fail to get the education they deserve. Ironically, the NAACP has become the protector of the status quo it once fought. ...

**Clive Crook** talks about what the government can do to help the economy, including more stimulus.

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Even with a government that worked, remedial action would be hard to devise. Fiscal and monetary policy are both stretched, the options for more action limited and risky. But the very notion of optimal policy just now is Utopian because the US does not have a government that works. If it did, the clock would not be ticking down to a congressionally mandated default even as the economy stalls.

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In the **Economist**, W.W. blogs about the lack of recovery and offers an explanation that will give liberals fresh reason to blame Republicans.

MITT ROMNEY officially [threw his hat in the ring](#) yesterday. That “Barack Obama has failed America” by exacerbating and prolonging the recession is emerging as a main theme of Mr Romney’s campaign. Last week I reported on [Mr Romney’s speech in Des Moines](#), in which he pressed hard on the claim that Mr Obama’s policy initiatives have retarded recovery by sowing uncertainty precisely when certainty about “the rules of the game” was most needed. In a Bloomberg column earlier this week Stephen L. Carter, a professor at Yale Law School, [offers some anecdotal evidence](#) in favour of the “regime uncertainty” argument collected from a guy he sat next to on an airplane:

The man in the aisle seat is trying to tell me why he refuses to hire anybody. His business is successful, he says, as the 737 cruises smoothly eastward. Demand for his product is up. But he still won’t hire.

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t know how much it will cost,” he explains. “How can I hire new workers today, when I don’t know how much they will cost me tomorrow?”

*He's referring not to wages, but to regulation: He has no way of telling what new rules will go into effect when. His business, although it covers several states, operates on low margins. He can't afford to take the chance of losing what little profit there is to the next round of regulatory changes. And so he's hiring nobody until he has some certainty about cost. ...*

The [Economist](#) interviews historian Timothy Snyder about his book, [Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin](#).

*SOME topics are so dark that even scholars feel intimidated. Yet Timothy Snyder is not so easily daunted. A professor of Eastern European history at Yale, his most recent book, "[Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin](#)", examines some of the most devastating collective memories of the modern world. With scholarly rigour and engaging prose, he seeks to explain both the causes and effects of the two most haunting mass murderers of the 20th century. The "bloodlands" of the title describes the area where the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered 14m civilians. The Economist [has praised](#) the book for being a "revisionist history of the best kind", one that "makes the reader rethink some of the best-known episodes in Europe's modern history."*

***...What are some of the most common misconceptions of the history of the so-called "bloodlands"?***

*The first is that there's something that people think they understand and it turns out that they don't, and that thing is the Holocaust. The reality of it is, if anything, worse than they think, much more face-to-face, much more barbaric, much more unforgettable. People think that the Holocaust is something that happened in Germany, generally to German Jews. They think it's something that happened only in Auschwitz. They generally don't know about any of the other death facilities besides Auschwitz; they generally don't know that half of the Jews who were killed were shot rather than gassed.*

*Hitler and Stalin killed virtually in the same place, and that is Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, the Baltic states, western Russia. The Holocaust happened in a place where millions and millions of people have just been killed due to the Soviet policies. ...*

[Gerald Traufetter](#), in [Der Spiegel](#), has an excellent explanation of the information overlooked by the French investigation into the crash of flight Air France 447.

*...Lawyers and technical experts for the families of German crash victims suspect that a hidden software error in the automated flight control system -- specifically concerning a vital stabilizer flap on the plane's tail -- doomed to failure all pilot efforts to regain control of the plane. They are demanding that the Parisian court investigating the crash take action. "We petition that appropriate action be taken to prevent a catastrophe similar to that which befell AF 447 from happening again," reads the letter submitted to Judge Sylvie Zimmermann, which SPIEGEL has obtained.*

*The families' attorneys are demanding that the court require Airbus to undertake "technical improvements" so that "speed sensors can no longer ice up in the future." Should that not be possible, then Airbus planes must be "outfitted with software for the electronic flight control system that precludes the sudden occurrence of an uncontrolled flight situation."*

*The letter also raises the possibility that the entire fleet of Airbus A330s as well as that of the sister model A340 might have to be temporarily grounded. More than 1,000 planes would be affected by such an order. ...*

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## The New Editor

### [Washington Area Dominates List of America's Ten Richest Counties](#)

According to [this list from Forbes magazine](#), four of the top five richest counties in the US are in the Washington, DC, area. Five of the top ten are in the Washington, DC, suburbs.

Number six on the list is Los Alamos County, NM, where about 60% of those employed work for the federal government.

Here is the list: (emphasis added)

- 1. Falls Church County, VA (median household income: \$113,313)**
- 2. Loudoun County, VA (median household income: \$112,021)**
- 3. Fairfax County, VA (median household income: \$104,259)**
4. Hunterdon County, NJ (median household income: \$102,500)
- 5. Howard County, MD (median household income: \$101,003)**
6. Los Alamos County, NM (median household income: \$100,423; government employment: [59%](#))
7. Douglas County, CO (median household income: \$99,522)
8. Morris County, NJ (median household income: \$96,316)
9. Somerset County, NJ (median household income: \$96,233)
- 10. Fairfax, County, VA (median household income: \$96,232)**

Is there anyone who actually thinks this is healthy for the country?

## Orange County Register

### [Weiner helping junk the country](#)

by Mark Steyn

After the tumult of the First World War, noted Winston Churchill, only the intractability of the Irish Question had emerged unscathed:

"Great Empires have been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed," he told the House of Commons. "But as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short, we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again."

And so it goes after another tumultuous week in American politics. Nearly a third of homeowners are "underwater" – that's to say, they owe more on their mortgages than the property is worth. Private-sector job growth has all but vanished. The House of Representatives voted not to raise the debt ceiling.

But as the debt ceiling subsides – or, at any rate, stays put – we see the dreary steeple of Anthony Weiner emerging from his Twitpic crotch shot.

For the benefit of the few remaining American coeds Rep. Weiner isn't following on Twitter, the congressman's initial position when his groin Tweet went viral was that his Twitter had been hacked. Could happen to anyone. From last Thursday's edition of The Daily Telegraph:

"British intelligence has hacked into an al-Qaida online magazine and replaced bomb making instructions with a recipe for cupcakes."

True. If MI6 can break into a Yemeni website run by Anwar al-Awlaki and infect it with home-baking favorites from "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," I don't doubt that the same spooks could easily hack into Anthony Weiner's computer and Tweet his cupcake to that poor college girl in Seattle.

But Congressman Weiner then retreated from the sinister hacking line, and protested that all this fuss about a mere "prank" involving a "randy photo" (his words) was an "unfortunate distraction" from real issues like raising the debt ceiling. Like Bill Clinton in the Nineties, Rep. Weiner needs to "get back to work for the American people."

It's the political class doing all this relentless "work for the American people" that's turned this country into the brokest nation in the history of the planet, killed the American Dream and left the American people headed for a future poised somewhere between the Weimar Republic and Mad Max. So, if it's a choice between politicians getting back to work for the American people or Tweeting their privates round the planet, I say, Tweet on, MacDuff. Tough on our young college ladies. But, as Queen Victoria advised her daughter on her wedding night, lie back and think of England. Download and think of America.

Congressman Weiner's next move was to tell NBC News that he "can't say with certitude" whether the Tweeted crotch is his. "I don't know what photographs are out there in the world of me," he told CNN. He seems to be saying that this could be one of his, but, until an appraiser from Sotheby's can establish the provenance, it might just be a doppelganger. Saddam Hussein had a lot of lookalikes on the payroll to confuse his enemies, and it wouldn't be a surprise to discover our Congressional princelings were trending in the same direction.

So we're drifting from outrageous cybercrime to "prank" to "Hey, who doesn't have snaps of his genitalia out there in the world?" To revive another Clintonian line: Everybody does it. "Everyone lies about Twitter-flirting," wrote the blogger Little Miss Attila, "and everyone knows that everyone lies about Twitter-flirting." "Flirting"? Why, yes: I'm assured by correspondents more au courant in "social media" that there's nothing unusual about Tweeting your nether regions to people you've never met in distant time zones. Get with the beat, daddy-o, it's a widely accepted courtship ritual of the 21st century: the flower of American maidenhood wants to see a prospective swain straining his BVDs at what I believe the lads at the TSA call Code Orange alert before they'll agree to meet him for a chocolate malt at the soda fountain.

To each her own. In my day it was "A White Sport Coat And A Pink Carnation," as Marty Robbins sang (Billboard Country & Western Number One, 1957). But apparently these days that leaves the ladies cold, and the pink carnation can prompt titters, unless it's artistically positioned across one's crown jewels, and you'd probably need to get in a professional photographer and some double-sided Scotch tape.

According to Christopher Hitchens, politics is show business for ugly people. If Anthony Weiner is anything to go by, it seems more like high school for ugly people. As the story evolves, the logic seems to favor the blogger Ann Althouse's explanation – that Weiner's cavalcade of daily Tweets are too droll to be written by him. He favors cute hashtags: For the Republican presidential field, "#TargetRichEnvironment"; for Newt Gingrich, upon entering the race, "#TallestPygmy." "So terribly

clever and edgy," writes Professor Althouse. "Why does a Congressman have time for that?" Her conclusion is that Weiner has a ghost-Tweeter, and the ghost-Tweeter uploaded the crotch shot, but that, because the "terribly clever and edgy" Tweets are essential to Weiner's sense of his own indispensability, he cannot admit that he's lip-synching. It would be like Charlie Sheen confessing that it was a body-double under the bevy of hookers and suitcase of coke.

Between Occam's Razor (it's Weiner's junk, and he Tweeted it) and Occam's Lip-Syncher (the ghost-Tweeter did it) lies a third possibility – that the Tweets aren't by Weiner but the Twitpic crotch shot to the cute co-ed is. The republic's "citizen-legislators" do hardly anything for themselves these days, starting with reading the thousand-page legislation they cheerily pass, but if they can't even perform their own sex scandals there really is no point to them. For the last quarter of 2010, Weiner listed 19 staffers, a few with highly specific job descriptions ("Deputy Director of Immigration Affairs") but most with the kind of blandly nebulous titles ("Staff Assistant") that could cover almost anything, including in-house ghost-Tweeting. For the sake of argument, let us take it as read that American men are emailing their genitals across the fruited plain all day long, and that in the nature of these things one or two attachments go awry and wind up in the in-box of the elderly spinster who runs the quilting bee and you have to make a rather sheepish apology. Congressmen are among the few in this land who, in such a situation, can breezily say, as Weiner did to CNN's Dana Bash, "You have statements that my office has put out... ." Herein lies the full horror of American politics in the death throes of the republic: A Congressman has nothing better to do of an evening than Tweet his crotch to coeds, but he requires an "office" with "staffers" to "put out" "statements" on the subject.

When Weiners have staffers, it's very difficult to have limited government: You cannot have a small state run by big Weiners. If you require an "office" to issue "statements" about your Tweets, it's hardly surprising you're indifferent to statist bloat elsewhere.

In the end, the Congressman was not so "distracted" that he wasn't able to vote to raise the debt limit. Confronted by his Twitpic, one is tempted to channel Mae West: Is that a debt-ceiling increase in your Fruit of the Looms or are you just pleased to see me? Alas for America, it's both.

## Washington Post

### [Why is the NAACP fighting African Americans?](#)

by Kevin P. Chavous

The images are jarring. Photos of children with signs saying "NAACP, drop the lawsuit" and "NAACP, unite us, don't divide us." Video clips of parents, teachers and community leaders urging the NAACP to put the education of children first and to stop supporting the status quo.

It was so jarring because these children, parents and community leaders were black. Thousands of black Harlem residents rallied in the street May 26 protesting the NAACP.

The NAACP! In the heavens above, legendary figures such as Thurgood Marshall, Walter White and Roy Wilkins must be shaking their heads.

How did it get to the point that the country's foremost civil rights organization is the target of a protest by the people it was created to serve? Forty years ago, Harlem was marching alongside NAACP leaders in the fight for justice and education equity for African Americans. So what happened?

Harlem residents gathered last month to urge the NAACP to [drop a lawsuit it had filed](#) with the teachers union against the New York City Department of Education. That lawsuit seeks to stop the

closure of 22 bad schools as well as the placement of several charter schools in district school space. The lawsuit essentially could lead to the closing of several high-performing charter schools that primarily serve black children in Harlem. Seeing this threat, thousands of parents took to the street against those who would deny their child a good education — even if that meant marching against the NAACP.

In response, an NAACP spokesman says that the group supports alternative schools but doesn't want the city to neglect its public schools. But wait a minute. Charter schools are public schools. What the NAACP seems intent on preserving is the "system" of New York public schools that has failed kids in Harlem for far too many years. System preservation has emerged as the common refrain from those fighting expanding charter schools and quality educational options for parents. Preserving such a system in its current form would ensure that thousands of low-income minority children fail to get the education they deserve. Ironically, the NAACP has become the protector of the status quo it once fought.

As an African American growing up in the '60s, I revered the NAACP. I will never forget when my mother took me to a NAACP-League of Women Voters rally at Butler University in Indianapolis, my hometown. My mother was active in both groups, which, at that time, were protesting the presence of Alabama Gov. George Wallace on Butler's campus. Wallace was an avowed segregationist who famously stood in the doorway of the University of Alabama to block the entrance of its first black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood. Only 7 at the time, I distinctly remember carrying a sign that I pointed in Wallace's face. I don't recall what the sign said, but I knew he didn't want boys like me to get an education. As the police pushed me aside, my mother and her fellow protesters praised me for marching like a man for equal rights. Later, when my parents sat me down to give me my own NAACP membership card, I was proud beyond words.

I reflected on that time when I saw a photo of young black students at the Harlem march against the NAACP. I could see myself in one of those photos — a boy standing with his mom, holding a sign and making a statement in support of his future. I couldn't help but see the irony: me marching with the NAACP against Wallace, and today's children marching against the NAACP. It just shows that black parents will fight for the progress and quality education that their kids deserve — no matter who is standing in the way.

*The writer, a former member of the D.C. Council, serves as board chair for the Black Alliance for Educational Options and Democrats for Education Reform.*

## Financial Times

### [America is too tethered to take off](#)

by Clive Crook

Concern is growing that the US is falling back into recession. Consumers are scared. The [housing market is crippled](#), with prices still falling. Last week saw more [disappointing figures on jobs and manufacturing](#). Friday's closely watched payroll numbers were worse than expected. Analysts had predicted 175,000 new private sector jobs, which would have been low; there were 83,000. The unemployment rate rose to 9.1 per cent.

Within weeks, federal borrowing will collide with the statutory debt ceiling, raising the [possibility of default](#); talks to prevent this are getting nowhere. The Federal Reserve's second programme of quantitative easing, or QE2, is at an end. Higher commodity prices have caused a blip in inflation. All these factors should have lowered the price of US government debt, pushing long-term interest rates

higher. But such is the concern about the flagging recovery that 10-year rates fell to less than 3 per cent last week, lower than they have been all year.

Even with a government that worked, remedial action would be hard to devise. Fiscal and monetary policy are both stretched, the options for more action limited and risky. But the very notion of optimal policy just now is Utopian because the US does not have a government that works. If it did, the clock would not be ticking down to a congressionally mandated default even as the economy stalls.

Though asking the question is no more than an academic exercise, what ought US fiscal policy to do? It should combine renewed short-term stimulus (in forms that subsidise jobs) with measures to reduce borrowing (revenue increases and entitlement reforms) in the longer term. How could something so obvious be controversial? In a way, in fact, there is no controversy: Democrats and Republicans are agreed in rejecting this out of hand.

To the exclusion of every other consideration, Republicans want to cut spending as deeply and quickly as possible, adding to the risk of a second recession. For them, further short-term stimulus is out of the question.

Democrats, on the other hand, recoil at the idea of long-term fiscal control. This is camouflage, they think, for dismantling Medicare (health insurance for the elderly) and Social Security (pensions). Once you start worrying about long-term deficits, they say, you have conceded half the argument to the other side. In Washington, you concede nothing.

Democrats are right that zeal to cut spending immediately is dangerous, but they are wrong – wrong on the economics and wrong on the politics – that long-term borrowing can be left to take care of itself. On the present fiscal trajectory, even the US will exhaust its capacity to borrow. As for the politics, the Democrats' complacency over public debt has moved opinion behind the Grand Old Party's drive to cut spending immediately. Partly thanks to the Democrats, a position that deserves little support actually commands plenty.

By holding their respective views so implacably, the two sides have ruled out using long-term fiscal consolidation to make room for new stimulus. And the parties' respective positions on taxes only compound the problem.

Republicans refuse to consider tax increases of any kind – even as part of a reform that would lower marginal tax rates. Democrats have also promised not to raise taxes for 98 per cent of households. Higher taxes on households making more than \$250,000 a year is almost their only recommendation for deficit control, and that is plainly insufficient to deal with the long-term problem. Neither side has any interest in the profile of public borrowing over time – which is the fiscal variable that matters most.

It is probably too late to revisit these arguments. Positions are too deeply entrenched. Success in the [debt ceiling talks](#) has come to mean avoiding, for the time being, the calamity of a self-inflicted default. Once you filter out the noise, getting fiscal policy right in a more intelligent sense is not even being discussed.

That leaves, first, housing policy. Housing has been at the centre of the recession and it continues to blight the recovery. The market, unable to deal promptly with the surge in foreclosures, has failed to find its floor and stabilise. Even now, the administration should revisit this issue and look for ways to reduce and/or expedite foreclosures, either by taking them out of loan servicers' hands or by giving distressed borrowers new options for reducing principal.



And then there is monetary policy. The Fed is divided on how far the risk of higher inflation argues for caution in maintaining, let alone increasing, the monetary stimulus provided by very low short-term interest rates and quantitative easing. Markets had come to assume there would be no QE3 when the present phase of easing ends: the only question was how quickly QE2 would be unwound.

The [stalling recovery](#), and the evident incapacity of Congress and the administration to respond, should silence talk of a rapid exit from QE2 and put QE3 back on the table. The case for additional easing is strong. A responsible central bank is always mindful of the risk of inflation – but with wages showing no sign of responding to the blip in prices, this danger is hardly imminent. True, exiting from an even larger programme of easing will pose problems, but again this should be weighed against the much greater costs of a failing recovery.

The economy is faltering and the government – if not actually making things worse – is flailing uselessly. The Fed is all there is.

## The Economist

### [Uncertainty and economic recovery](#)

#### *Partisan animal spirits*

by W.W.

MITT ROMNEY officially [threw his hat in the ring](#) yesterday. That "Barack Obama has failed America" by exacerbating and prolonging the recession is emerging as a main theme of Mr Romney's campaign. Last week I reported on [Mr Romney's speech in Des Moines](#), in which he pressed hard on the claim that Mr Obama's policy initiatives have retarded recovery by sowing uncertainty precisely when certainty about "the rules of the game" was most needed. In a *Bloomberg* column earlier this week Stephen L. Carter, a professor at Yale Law School, [offers some anecdotal evidence](#) in favour of the "regime uncertainty" argument collected from a guy he sat next to on an airplane:

The man in the aisle seat is trying to tell me why he refuses to hire anybody. His business is successful, he says, as the 737 cruises smoothly eastward. Demand for his product is up. But he still won't hire.

"Why not?"

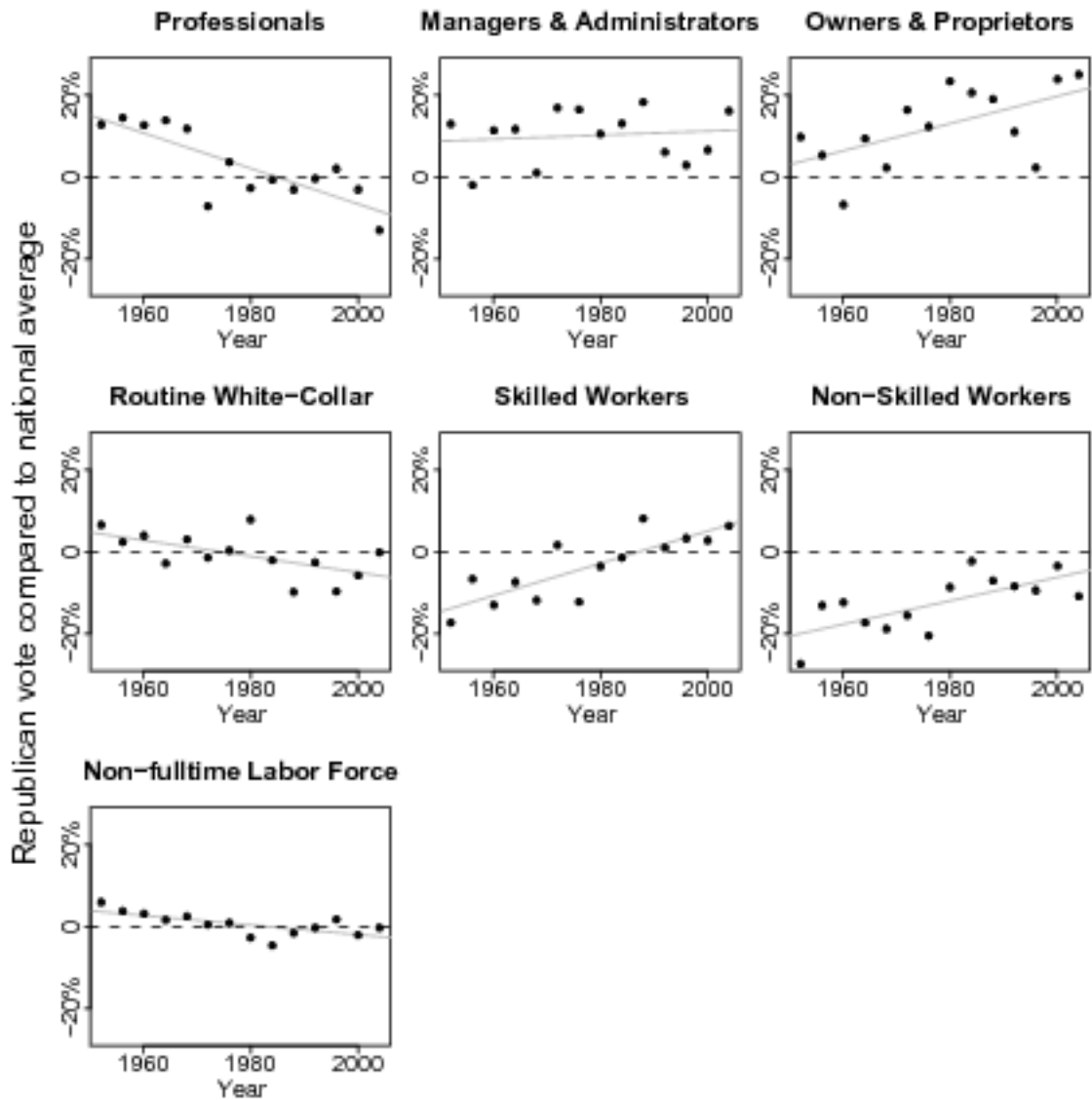
"Because I don't know how much it will cost," he explains. "How can I hire new workers today, when I don't know how much they will cost me tomorrow?"

He's referring not to wages, but to regulation: He has no way of telling what new rules will go into effect when. His business, although it covers several states, operates on low margins. He can't afford to take the chance of losing what little profit there is to the next round of regulatory changes. And so he's hiring nobody until he has some certainty about cost.

(I propose we call this move—writing a column based on a conversation predicated on the authors' position of privilege—the "full Friedman", in honour of Thomas Friedman and his fearlessly hard-hitting reporting from golf courses, luxury hotels, and first-class-cabins the world over.)

Now, I think the regime-uncertainty argument is plausible, and [I've made it in the past](#). [Paul Krugman does not](#) think it's a plausible argument. Perhaps I can sift through the evidence pro and con some other time. The key to the issue is intelligently estimating how many people with the power to hire have the same attitude as Mr Carter's seatmate? If there are enough of them to make a difference, then their hesitancy to hire makes a real difference, whatever the source of that hesitancy. Now, as

the behavioural economists never tire of reminding us, real economic players are at best distant kin to *homo economicus*. Real people are moved by all manner of animal spirit, including ideological prejudice. "Recessions have complex causes," Mr Carter notes in conclusion, "but, as the man on the aisle reminded me, we do nothing to make things better when the companies on which we rely see Washington as adversary rather than partner". Of course, whether entrepreneurs and small-business types see Washington as an adversary or partner is not entirely a matter of in-the-trenches business experience. It is at least partly a matter of political identity. This thought put me in mind of a set of graphs in Andrew Gelman and friends' excellent book "Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State":



What you see here is that "managers and administrators" as well as "owners and proprietors", the groups that do most of the hiring, are significantly and increasingly more likely than average to vote Republican. This raises a fascinating possibility: that Republican-leaning businesspeople freak out when Democrats are in power. Let's call this "partisan regime uncertainty". Now, maybe there is a good reason Democrats in power make Republican businessfolk afraid to make a move, which would help explain the relatively dramatic flight of owners and proprietors away from the Democrats. Or maybe individuals most likely to run a business are also most likely to fall for empty, right-wing free-

market rhetoric, and this has made them increasingly likely to see Democrats as forces of socialising chaos. I don't know. In either case, we get partisan regime uncertainty.

If this is a real phenomenon, and I would love to know whether it is, there are a couple of important implications. First, Mr Romney's regime-uncertainty argument against President Obama could make him popular with nervous Republican burghers who, like Mr Carter's seatmate, believe this message to be true. Second, and this is the humdinger, a Republican president could accelerate the economic recovery *simply by virtue of being Republican*.

As I was googling around for Mr Gelman's graphs, I found that [I'd been well and truly scooped by Ezra Klein](#), who flirted with this idea last summer. Still, I don't think Mr Klein fully conveyed the weirdness of the possibility that partisan regime uncertainty has hampered, and is continuing to hamper, the recovery. He concluded:

What gets difficult in all this is separating things that are actually hurting businesses from things that Republican-leaning business owners, for reasons of ideology or personal self-interest, simply don't like. And because there's virtually no data on this question, there's really no way to tell the two apart.

Mr Klein's right about the lack of good data on the question. But how much does that matter? If Republican-leaning business owners aren't hiring or expanding for objectively idiotic ideological or self-interested reasons, it remains that *they aren't hiring or expanding*. In that case, the partisan idiocy of America's conservative business class is hurting the economy, not Mr Obama's policies. But it might remain that, holding policy constant, we'd be better off economically with a Republican president. There's a maddeningly unfair "heads I win, tails you lose" quality to this possibility, but it seems to me a real one and well worth considering.

## The Economist

### [Hitler and Stalin](#)

*The Q&A: Timothy Snyder, historian*

SOME topics are so dark that even scholars feel intimidated. Yet Timothy Snyder is not so easily daunted. A professor of Eastern European history at Yale, his most recent book, "[Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin](#)", examines some of the most devastating collective memories of the modern world. With scholarly rigour and engaging prose, he seeks to explain both the causes and effects of the two most haunting mass murderers of the 20th century. The "bloodlands" of the title describes the area where the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered 14m civilians. *The Economist* [has praised](#) the book for being a "revisionist history of the best kind", one that "makes the reader rethink some of the best-known episodes in Europe's modern history."

The book has been controversial among some Holocaust scholars, many of whom argued that Mr Snyder does a disservice by comparing the crimes of the Nazis with those of the Soviet Union (something Mr Snyder [discussed](#) in an interview with *The Economist* when the book first came out last year).

Mr Snyder was recently in Poland to promote a Polish-language edition of his book. This month his tour will take him to the Netherlands, England, Australia and Israel. In a conversation with *More Intelligent Life*, Mr Snyder talked about his approach to the book, which is meant to clarify some common misunderstandings about the second world war.

**What are some of the most common misconceptions of the history of the so-called "bloodlands"?**

The first is that there's something that people think they understand and it turns out that they don't, and that thing is the Holocaust. The reality of it is, if anything, worse than they think, much more face-to-face, much more barbaric, much more unforgettable. People think that the Holocaust is something that happened in Germany, generally to German Jews. They think it's something that happened only in Auschwitz. They generally don't know about any of the other death facilities besides Auschwitz; they generally don't know that half of the Jews who were killed were shot rather than gassed.

Hitler and Stalin killed virtually in the same place, and that is Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, the Baltic states, western Russia. The Holocaust happened in a place where millions and millions of people have just been killed due to the Soviet policies.

And the third thing I would point to is the habit of reduction. For example an approach saying: it must have all been the Germans, or it must have all been the Soviets. Both of these systems brought tremendous death and suffering. If you want to avoid criticism then you shouldn't be a historian, because historians are trying to understand and explain. If you're trying to please people then you should go into the fashion business, or the candy business.

**You've lived in Eastern Europe for a while, and you have learned the languages spoken in the 'bloodlands'. Would you say it's much harder, or even impossible, to get to certain information if you don't speak the local language?**

The question of languages is very important. If you don't know Russian, you don't really know what you're missing. Imagine that you're in a huge country house and you have keys, but your keys only open some of the rooms. You only know the part of the house that you can wander in. And you can persuade yourself that that's the whole house, but it's not. We can only see as much, and we can only go as far as our languages take us. I wrote this book in English, but there are very important conversations that are happening in German, Russian, Polish and so on among those historians, and the book is addressed to all of them.

**At a lecture at the Kosciuszko Foundation a few months ago, you said that your goal is not to compare the crimes of Hitler and Stalin. But how does one write about the casualties caused by both without forcing the reader to compare? How do you resist the urge to draw clear comparisons while writing such a book?**

It's not that I'm against comparisons per se. On the contrary, I think a comparison is totally natural. It's just that if you want to compare you have to know what it is you're comparing. People often generate these comparisons thinking: 'I already know about the Nazis' or 'I already know about the Soviets. Therefore, I know that the Nazis were worse.' Often they don't know a lot about the other side of the conflict. I like to think that people will read this book and then be able to make better comparisons.

**Westerners tend to know the history of Nazi Germany better than the history of the Soviet Union. Why is that? Is there more literature about the Nazi crimes than the Soviet ones in English?**

Something interesting happened when the cold war ended: the US stopped being so concerned about the Soviet Union. Our teachers and professors strive desperately to save something from the 20th century, and that something is the Holocaust. It's been happening since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Part of this has to do with an issue of identification. People in the West tend to identify with western victims. So even when they think about the Holocaust, they really think about the German or French

victims, they're not thinking about the Polish, Hungarian or Soviet victims. And when they think about the German crimes, they're not thinking about the starvation of Soviet prisoners of war, which also killed 3m people; they're not thinking about the partisan campaigns in Belarus, which no one has ever heard of, which killed hundreds of thousands of people. They're thinking of the people they can identify with—nice, middle class, western-looking people. So it's not that people only know about the Holocaust. It's just that they have this very western idea of the whole tragedy. What I try to do in my book is to make the Holocaust more 'eastern', which it was.

**How did you pick the individual, personal stories that are included in the book? They are effective in giving names and faces to the otherwise inconceivable numbers of casualties.**

It was important to me that a book that was mainly about a tragedy on a tremendous scale be comprehensible. I did my best to explain the policies, but also to make sure the readers understood that the victims were human beings. That's why I have the material about these individuals. It's about life and death, and life is made of individual human beings. And the significance of death is that it ends a life.

Writing a book like this you don't want to seem too mechanical, but you also don't want to be sentimental, and say that only because they died all these people were good. That's not the point. I was trying to make these people real. And if you make them ideal, they're not real.

## Der Spiegel

### [Victims' Families Propose Grounding All A330s](#)

***Airbus believes pilot error caused the crash of Air France flight AF 447 two years ago. But the families of some victims think it might have been a technical defect. They have filed a petition with a Paris court which could result in a temporary grounding of all A330s.***

by Gerald Traufetter



An initial report released by the French aviation accident investigation agency BEA, based on a preliminary analysis of flight AF 447 data recorders, provided plenty of insight into the causes of the Air France crash into the Atlantic Ocean two years ago. But plenty of questions remain open -- and they have provided fuel to an intense debate currently raging among Air France, Airbus and the families of crash victims.

The central questions are clear: Did the pilots react incorrectly once the speed sensors on the outside of the plane iced up and the automatic pilot disengaged? Or was an additional technical error to blame?

Lawyers and technical experts for the families of German crash victims suspect that a hidden software error in the automated flight control system -- specifically concerning a vital stabilizer flap on the plane's tail -- doomed to failure all pilot efforts to regain control of the plane. They are demanding that the Parisian court investigating the crash take action. "We petition that appropriate action be taken to prevent a catastrophe similar to that which befell AF 447 from happening again," reads the letter submitted to Judge Sylvie Zimmermann, which SPIEGEL has obtained.

The families' attorneys are demanding that the court require Airbus to undertake "technical improvements" so that "speed sensors can no longer ice up in the future." Should that not be possible, then Airbus planes must be "outfitted with software for the electronic flight control system that precludes the sudden occurrence of an uncontrolled flight situation."

The letter also raises the possibility that the entire fleet of Airbus A330s as well as that of the sister model A340 might have to be temporarily grounded. More than 1,000 planes would be affected by such an order.

### **A Strange Anomaly**

The Hanover legal practice of Ulrich von Jeinsen, which composed the letter, and the Berlin aviation law expert Elmar Geimulla made mention in the letter that there could be "criminal consequences" should indications of a software error not be thoroughly investigated and another Airbus crashes for the same reason.

Von Jeinsen's motion is primarily based on the expert opinion of Gerhard Hüttig, a professor at the Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics at the Technical University in Berlin. Just over a year ago, Hüttig recreated the Air France crash in a flight simulator. In the course of the exercise, Hüttig noticed a strange anomaly in the plane's reaction once it goes into a stall. The trimmable horizontal stabilizer, a flap instrumental in keeping the plane on an even keel, automatically adjusted to push the nose of the plane skyward.

Hüttig, a former Airbus pilot himself, and other pilots present for the test were unable to push the nose of the airplane down and thereby escape the stall.

When the BEA released its preliminary report last Friday, Hüttig immediately zeroed in on data relating to the trimmable horizontal stabilizer. During the final minutes of flight AF 447 as it plunged toward the Atlantic, the flap moved from a 3 degree deflection to a 13 degree deflection, almost the maximum possible. "The phenomenon is startlingly similar," he told SPIEGEL.

### **A Quiet Reaction**

Hüttig passed along his simulator findings to Airbus, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and to BEA. On Oct. 27, 2010, Hüttig received a response from EASA which said that Hüttig's theory was inconsistent with the "current state of knowledge." "We suspect that the anomaly you found originated with the simulator you used in the study rather than with the airplane model A330," the response read.

Hüttig and Jeinsen told SPIEGEL that the data recovered from the wreck of flight AF 447 would now seem to have corroborated the simulator findings. Furthermore, Airbus has quietly reacted to the safety loophole. In a communiqué to airlines, Airbus provided a new version of pilot instructions for dealing with a stall. Furthermore, in the January issue of its internal safety magazine, there is a mention of manually trimming the horizontal stabilizers.

In response to a SPIEGEL query, Airbus rejected Hüttig's theory. The company has said that the deflection of the stabilizers can be explained by pilot attempts to pull up the nose of the aircraft.

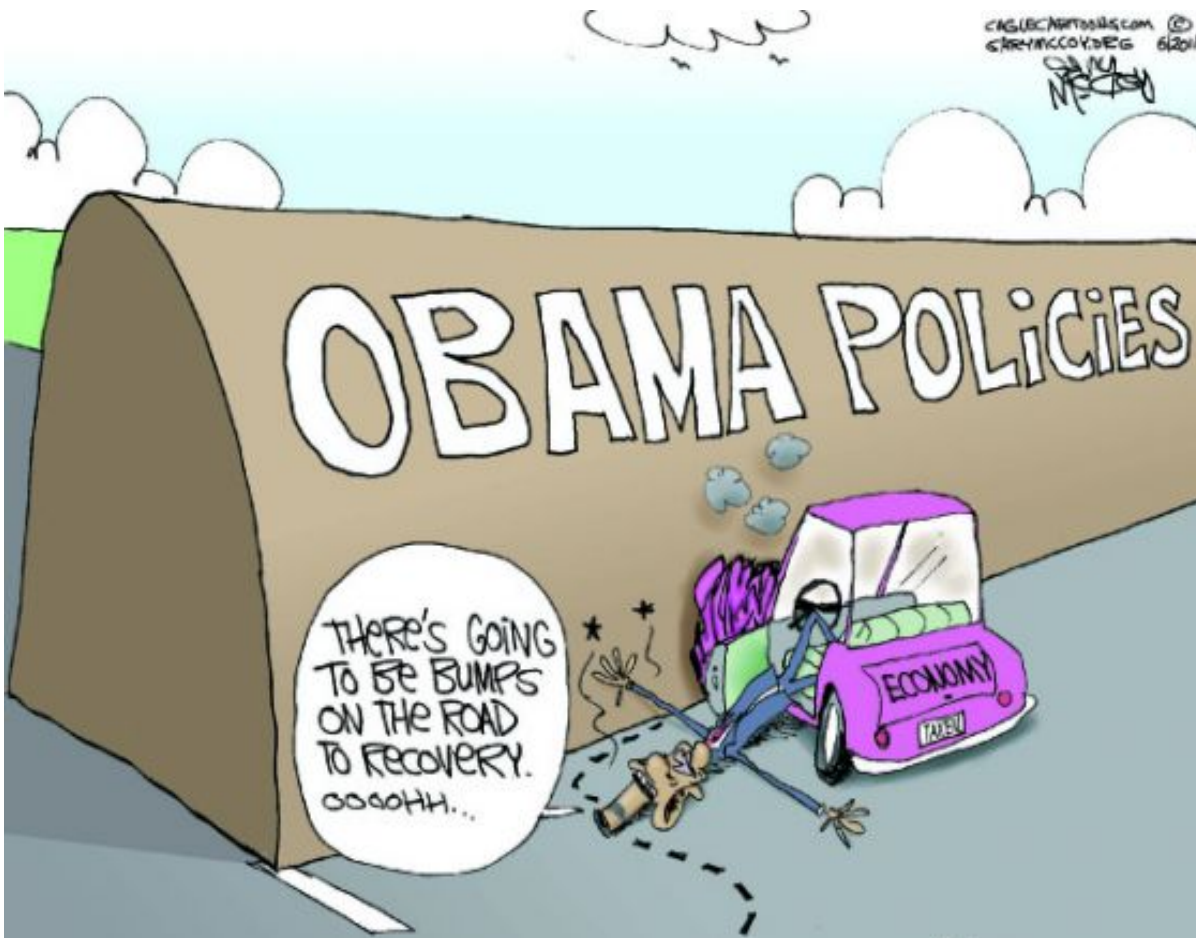
Other European airlines have begun analyzing the data from flight AF 447 in an effort to identify potential dangers to aircraft of the same model in their own fleets. A final and comprehensive report from the BEA is scheduled for release at the end of July. Aviation experts predict that the report will do little to forestall a brewing fight among the investigators, Airbus and Air France over who, ultimately, is responsible for the crash, which resulted in 228 deaths.

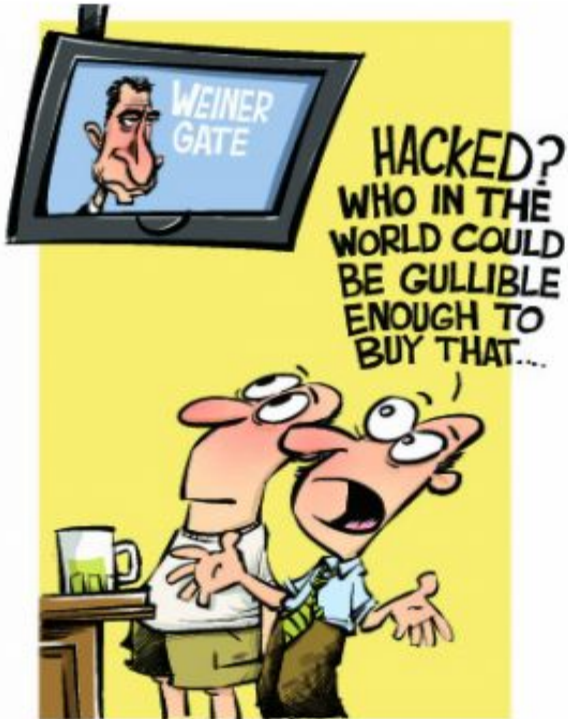
### Below the Waves

Meanwhile, the recovery of the bodies lying 4,000 meters (13,100 feet) below the ocean surface continues. In addition to recovering the data recording devices from the Air France jet, tissue samples were taken from two bodies. After a laboratory in Paris was able to identify the bodies using DNA samples, the French government made the decision to recover as many bodies as possible.

Families of Brazilian victims, who are still waiting for death certificates for their loved ones, would also like to see the remains brought to the surface. Many families of European victims, however, have asked that the bodies be left on the floor of the Atlantic.

A total of 75 bodies have thus far been brought to the surface. About 100 more remain below the waves. Search teams recovered 51 bodies from the ocean in the aftermath of the accident.



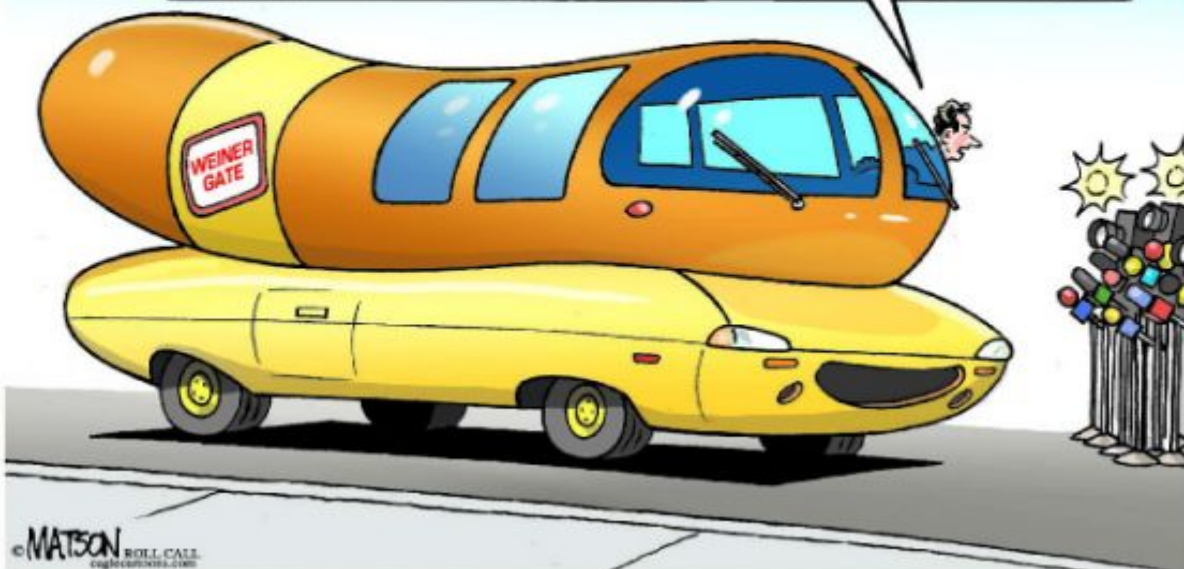


SIGN OF SUMMER: THE FIRST WEINER ROAST





I AM THE VICTIM OF ANOTHER HACKER'S PRANK,  
BUT I CAN'T SAY WITH CERTITUDE THIS IS NOT MY CAR.



MEDIA CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

# MY TWITTER ACCOUNT WAS HACKED!

A CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED... JUST DON'T CALL THE COPS.

**THAT'S NOT ME IN THAT PHOTO**

(AT LEAST I DON'T THINK IT'S ME)

**I'M NOT SURE I'M REALLY ME RIGHT NOW.**

REP. WEINER HAS TURNED "TWISTING IN THE WIND" INTO PERFORMANCE ART.



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# TWEET!

DON'T ANSWER IT.



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the LATEST IN A LONG LINE...



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United States House of Representatives



ROBERTO (D)  
District  
New York



JERROLD NADLER (D)  
8th District  
New York



ANTHONY D WEINER (D)  
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ERIC CANTOR (R)  
7th District  
Virginia



NANCY PELOSI  
8th District  
California



JAMES CLYBURN (D)  
6th District  
South Carolina



DANA ROBERTS  
46th District  
California

OOOOH, I WISH I  
WERE AN OSCAR  
MAYER WIENER...  
THAT IS WHAT  
I TRULY WANT  
TO BEEEE...



'CAUSE THEN WHEN I  
POST MY OSCAR  
MAYER WIENER...  
IT WOULDN'T REFLECT  
UPON MY STUPIDITY.

IT'S ALL A JOKE  
BECAUSE MY  
NAME IS  
"WEINER."

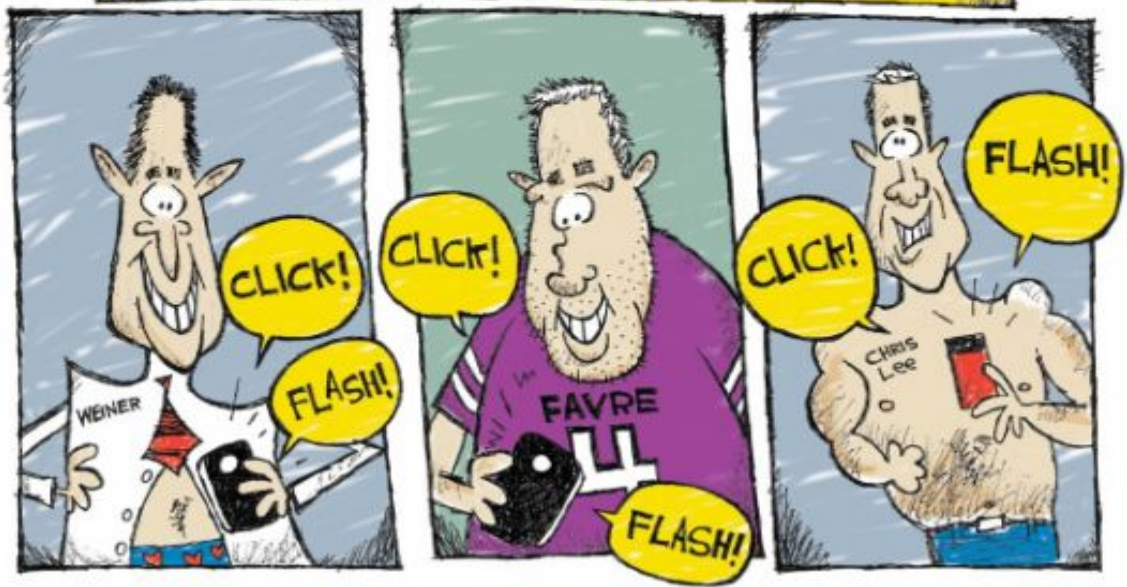
Joke

Jerk



LOVES THE FREE LANCE STAR  
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# NEW STUDY: CELLPHONE USE MAY CAUSE CAREER-THREATENING CANCER...



STAR TRIBUNE  
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