

October 24, 2011

**Mark Steyn** reacts to the administration's endless need to spend money we don't have.

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*If you're wondering how giving half-a-billion dollars to a Finnish factory stimulates the U.S. economy, well, what's a lousy half-bil in a multitrillion-dollar sinkhole? Besides, in the 2009 global rankings, Finnish schoolkids placed sixth in math, third in reading and second in science, while suffering under the burden of a per-student budget half that of York City. By comparison, America placed 17th in reading, 23rd in science, and 31st in math. So the good news is that, by using U.S. government money to fund a factory in Finland, Fisker may be able to hire workers smart enough to figure out how to build an unwanted electric car that doesn't lose its entire U.S. taxpayer investment.*

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**Peter Ferrara** in Forbes notes how the people are being ignored.

*In 2010, the American people delivered a stinging rebuke to President Obama. The 63 seat Republican gain in the House was a New Deal size landslide, harking back to a time when America was choosing a fundamental change of course. In the Senate, Republicans came back from a minority unable to even mount a filibuster to within three seats of the Democrats, after some party infighting fumbled away a couple of quite possible wins.*

*For Democrats, that does not bode well for a 2012 election with 23 Democrat Senate seats at stake, and a filibuster proof Republican majority possible by winning only half of those. The people elected these Republicans in 2010 to stop the emergent Obama agenda, not to cooperate in its advancement.*

*But President Barack Obama refused to heed the people and change course. The election results only changed the means by which he has pursued the most left wing policies of any President in U.S. history. Recognizing that he could no longer advance his agenda through Congress, Obama pivoted to maximizing the vast regulatory powers of the Executive Branch.*

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**National Journal** reports on a retiring Dem slamming the administration.

Rep. **Dennis Cardoza**, D-Calif., announced his retirement from Congress this afternoon -- and he issued a scathing parting shot at President **Obama's** track record on his way out.

*In a statement explaining his decision, Cardoza, a leader of the centrist Blue Dog Coalition, said he was "dismayed" by the administration's "failure to understand and effectively address the current housing foreclosure crisis."*

*"Home foreclosures are destroying communities and crushing our economy, and the Administration's inaction is infuriating," Cardoza said.*

*A former chairman of the moderate Blue Dog Caucus, Cardoza also bemoaned the increasing partisanship in Washington, and blamed the media for fueling the ideological divide in the country, not giving enough attention to moderates. ...*

**Alana Goodman** posts on Obama's Carter-like poll numbers.

*Obama is getting down to the wire. There is a strong historical correlation between where a president's approval ratings are around this point in his presidency, and whether he goes on to win a second term. And yet there's no indication that Obama's approval ratings are improving. In fact, [Gallup finds](#) that his 11<sup>th</sup> quarter numbers are the worst of Obama's presidency—as well as the worst of any recent president except [Jimmy Carter](#):*

*"Only one elected president since Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, had a lower 11<sup>th</sup> quarter average than Obama. Carter averaged 31% during his 11<sup>th</sup> quarter, which was marked by a poor economy and high energy prices. Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were the only other post-World War II presidents whose job approval averages were below 50% in their 11<sup>th</sup> quarter in office."*

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**Peter Wehner** wants to know when the anti-Semitism of the Occupy group will be criticized by the president.

*During one of the GOP presidential debates, two or three people in an audience of more than 5,000 [booed](#) a question posed by a gay soldier, not the gay soldier himself. As one might expect, though, many journalists, as well as the president, decided to make a big deal of this. It was held up as an example of Republican bigotry. President Civility, Barack Obama, decided to put his own interpretation on things:*

*' "We don't believe in the kind of smallness that says it's OK for a stage full of political leaders — one of whom could end up being the president of the United States — being silent when an American soldier is booed," Obama said at a Human Rights Campaign dinner. '*

*To repeat: the soldier was not booed; his question was. But no matter; Obama had political points to score and a base to energize. Yet with the precedent Obama is setting in place, I do*

wonder: *The Occupy Wall Street movement is rife with anti-Semitism. The statements we're hearing from the protesters are vile, ugly and seemingly endless. And yet this is a movement Obama, Vice President Biden, Minority Leader Pelosi, and DNC chairwoman Wasserman Schultz have all warmly embraced. Revealingly, they have yet to denounce the unvarnished anti-Semitism they must be aware of by now.* '

*I don't know about you, but I don't believe in the kind of smallness that says it's OK for a president and Democratic leaders – including one who could end up being re-elected as president of the United States – being silent when a movement they have praised and are provoking is spewing forth anti-Semitic bile on a daily basis. It would be nice, and exceedingly rare, for the president to show even a spark of moral leadership.*

*If he's not careful, one might begin to (reasonably) conclude the president isn't terribly bothered by anti-Semitism. Because if he were, he would actually speak out against it. Even once.*

**Investor's.com editors** want the GOP contenders to pin the mortgage mess on the government.

*If Republicans are to take back the White House and Senate, they need to do a better job tying Democrats and Washington to the subprime crisis. It's not hard, yet even their front-runner struggles to make the case.*

*On Wednesday night, CNN host Piers Morgan guilted Cain into allowing that banks were, as Morgan put it, "effectively preying on the most vulnerable elements of American society," and that Wall Street deserves at least partial blame for the crisis and should be held to account. "I wouldn't defend the banks," Cain said, "because I happen to think that the banks are part of the problem. Wall Street is."*

*Cain belatedly also faulted Fannie and Freddie, and the Democrats in Washington who protected them. Piers then pressed him to come up with a pie chart allotting blame — Washington vs. Wall Street—and Cain assigned neither a majority responsibility for the mess.*

*But based on the number of toxic loans in the system in 2008, the government was responsible for not just a simple majority, but more than two-thirds. It's quantifiable — 71% to be exact (see chart). And the remaining 29% of private-label junk was mostly attributable to Countrywide Financial, which was under the heel of HUD and its "fair-lending" edicts. ...*

**New York Magazine** reports on the Occupy folks turning towards **Animal Farm**. Next will they turn towards **Lord of the Flies**?

*All occupiers are equal — but some occupiers are more equal than others. In wind-whipped Zuccotti Park, new divisions and hierarchies are threatening to upend Occupy Wall Street and its leaderless collective.*

*As the protest has grown, some of the occupiers have spontaneously taken charge on projects large and small. But many of the people in Zuccotti Park aren't taking direction well, leading to a tense Thursday of political disagreements, the occasional shouting match, and at least one fistfight.*

*It began, as it so often does, with a drum circle. The ten-hour groove marathons weren't sitting well with the neighborhood's community board, the ironically situated High School of Economics and Finance that sits on the corner of Zuccotti Park, or many of the sleep-deprived protesters.*

*"[The high school] couldn't teach," explained Josh Nelson, a 27-year-old occupier from Nebraska. "And we've had issues with the drummers too. They drum incessantly all day, and really loud." Facilitators spearheaded a General Assembly proposal to limit the drumming to two hours a day. "The drumming is a major issue which has the potential to get us kicked out," said Lauren Digion, a leader on the sanitation working group.*

*But the drums were fun. They brought in publicity and money. Many non-facilitators were infuriated by the decision and claimed that it had been forced through the General Assembly.*

*"They're imposing a structure on the natural flow of music," said Seth Harper, an 18-year-old from Georgia. "The GA decided to do it ... they suppressed people's opinions. I wanted to do introduce a different proposal, but a big black organizer chick with an Afro said I couldn't." ...*

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## **Orange County Register**

### **[U.S. schools teach how to do less with more](#)**

by Mark Steyn

In one of those inspired innovations designed to keep American classrooms on the cutting edge of educational excellence, the administration has been sending Joe Biden out to talk to schoolchildren. Last week, it was the Fourth Grade at Alexander B. Goode Elementary School in York, Pennsylvania, that found itself on the receiving end of the vice president's wisdom:

"Here in this school, your school, you've had a lot of teachers who used to work here, but because there's no money for them in the city, they're not working. And so what happens is, when that occurs, each of the teachers that stays have more kids to teach. And they don't get to spend as much time with you as they did when your classes were smaller. We think the federal government in Washington, D.C., should say to the cities and states, look, we're going to give you some money so that you can hire back all those people. And the way we're going to do it, we're going to ask people who have a lot of money to pay just a little bit more in taxes."

Who knew it was that easy?

So let's see if I follow the vice president's thinking:

The school laid off these teachers because "there's no money for them in the city." That's true. York City School District is broke. It has a \$14 million budget deficit.

So instead Washington, D.C., is going to "give you some money" to hire these teachers back.

So, unlike York, Pennsylvania, presumably Washington, D.C., has "money for them"?

No, not technically. Washington, D.C., is also broke – way broke than York City School District. In fact, the government of the United States is broke than any entity has ever been in the history of the planet. Officially, Washington has to return 15,000,000,000,000 dollars just to get back to having nothing at all. And that 15,000,000,000,000 dollars is a very lowball figure that conveniently ignores another \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities that the government, unlike private businesses, is able to keep off the books.

So how come the Brokest Jurisdiction in History is able to "give you some money" to hire back those teachers that had to be laid off?

No problem, says the vice president. We're going to "ask" people who have "a lot of money" to "pay just a little bit more" in taxes.

Where are these people? Evidently, not in York, Pennsylvania. But they're out there somewhere. Who has "a lot of money"? According to President Obama, if your combined household income is over \$250,000 a year you have "a lot of money." Back in March, my National Review colleague Kevin Williamson pointed out that, in order to balance the budget of the United States, you would have to increase the taxes of people earning more than \$250,000 a year by \$500,000 a year.

OK, OK, maybe that \$250K definition of "bloated plutocrat" is a bit off. After all, the quarter-million-a-year category includes not only bankers and other mustache-twirling robber barons, but also at least 50 school superintendents in the state of New York and many other mustache-twirling selfless public servants.

So how about people earning a million dollars a year? That's "a lot of money" by anybody's definition. As Kevin Williamson also pointed out, to balance the budget of the United States on the backs of millionaires you would have to increase the taxes of those earning more than \$1 million a year by \$6 million a year.

Not only is there "no money in the city" of York, Pennsylvania, and no money in Washington, D.C., there's no money anywhere else in America – not for spending on the Obama/Biden scale. Come to that, there's no money anywhere on the planet: Last year, John Kitchen of the U.S. Treasury and Menzie Chinn of the University of Wisconsin published a study called "Financing U.S. Debt: Is There Enough Money In The World – And At What Cost?"

Don't worry, it's a book with a happy ending! U.S. government spending is sustainable as long as by 2020 the rest of the planet is willing to sink 19 percent of its GDP into U.S. Treasury debt. And why wouldn't they? After all, if you're a Chinese politburo member or a Saudi prince or a Russian kleptocrat or a Somali pirate, and you switched on CNN International and chanced to catch Joe Biden's Fourth Grade Economics class, why wouldn't you cheerily dump a fifth of your GDP into a business model with such a bright future?

Since 1970, public school employment has increased 10 times faster than public school enrollment. In 2008, the United States spent more per student on K-12 education than any other developed nation except Switzerland – and at least the Swiss have something to show for it. In 2008, York City School District spent \$12,691 per pupil – or about a third more than the Swiss. Slovakia's total per student cost is less than York City's current per student *deficit* – and the Slovak kids beat the United States at mathematics, which may explain why their budget

arithmetic still has a passing acquaintanceship with reality. As in so many other areas of American life, the problem is not the lack of money but the fact that so much of the money is utterly wasted.

But that's no reason not to waste even more! So the President spent last week touring around in his weaponized Canadian bus telling Americans that Republicans were blocking plans to "put teachers back in the classroom." Well, where are they now? Not every schoolmarm is down at the Occupy Wall Street drum circle, is she? No, indeed. And, in that respect, York City is a most instructive example: Five years ago (the most recent breakdown I have), the district had 440 teachers but 295 administrative and support staff. If you're thinking that sounds a little out of whack, that just shows what a dummy you are: For every three teachers we "put back in the classroom," we need to hire two bureaucrats to put back in the bureaucracy to fill in the paperwork to access the federal funds to put teachers back in the classroom. One day it will be three educrats for every two teachers, and the system will operate even more effectively.

It's just about possible to foresee, say, Iceland or Ireland getting its spending under control. But, when a nation of 300 million people presumes to determine grade-school hiring and almost everything else through an ever more centralized bureaucracy, you're setting yourself up for waste on a scale unknown to history. For example, under the Obama "stimulus," U.S. taxpayers gave a \$529 million loan guarantee to the company Fisker to build their Karma electric car. At a factory in Finland.

If you're wondering how giving half-a-billion dollars to a Finnish factory stimulates the U.S. economy, well, what's a lousy half-bil in a multitrillion-dollar sinkhole? Besides, in the 2009 global rankings, Finnish schoolkids placed sixth in math, third in reading and second in science, while suffering under the burden of a per-student budget half that of York City. By comparison, America placed 17th in reading, 23rd in science, and 31st in math. So the good news is that, by using U.S. government money to fund a factory in Finland, Fisker may be able to hire workers smart enough to figure out how to build an unwanted electric car that doesn't lose its entire U.S. taxpayer investment.

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## **Forbes**

### **[Above Democracy, And The Rule Of Law](#)**

by Peter Ferrara

In 2010, the American people delivered a stinging rebuke to President Obama. The 63 seat Republican gain in the House was a New Deal size landslide, harking back to a time when America was choosing a fundamental change of course. In the Senate, Republicans came back from a minority unable to even mount a filibuster to within three seats of the Democrats, after some party infighting fumbled away a couple of quite possible wins.

For Democrats, that does not bode well for a 2012 election with 23 Democrat Senate seats at stake, and a filibuster proof *Republican* majority possible by winning only half of those. The people elected these Republicans in 2010 to stop the emergent Obama agenda, not to cooperate in its advancement.

But President Barack Obama refused to heed the people and change course. The election results only changed the means by which he has pursued the most left wing policies of any President in U.S. history. Recognizing that he could no longer advance his agenda through Congress, Obama pivoted to maximizing the vast regulatory powers of the Executive Branch.

For example, since cap and trade legislation obviously no longer had any prayer of getting through Congress (even the overwhelmingly Democrat Congress of 2009-2010 wouldn't pass it), Obama said after the election, "Cap and trade was just one way of skinning the cat; it was not the only way. It was a means, not an end." Sometimes this pivot has involved ignoring legal rulings, breaking agreements with Congress, and exceeding statutory authority.

Phil Kerpen understands Barack Obama and what he is up to better than almost anyone else in the country. Kerpen is vice president for policy at the grassroots free market organization Americans for Prosperity and author of the new book *Democracy Denied: How Obama is Ignoring You and Bypassing Congress to Radically Transform America – and How to Stop Him* (BenBella Books, October 2011).

As Kerpen writes, "In the face of an unprecedented wave of public discontent expressed at the ballot box and throughout his time in office, Obama has remained committed to an extreme left wing agenda." But, "Unfortunately, for decades Congress has been delegating away its legislative power to bureaucratic agencies that Obama is now using to bypass Congress and the American people to pursue his agenda." That includes moving "forward to impose huge 'cap-and-trade' style energy taxes via Environmental Protection Agency regulation, to use his friends at the Federal Communications Commission to regulate the Internet, and to pursue his failed union agenda at the National Labor Relations Board."

Kerpen discusses in detail the FCC's adoption of net neutrality regulations on December 21, 2010. The foundation for those regulations is that the companies that invest in and build the Internet infrastructure can't be trusted to manage it, arbitrarily favoring some users over others. So the government needs to step in and manage it, eventually taking over control of the 'Net.

Of course, the experience has been that under private management in the competitive market, the Internet has been the freest institution in the world. But wherever the government has stepped in to control the Web, that freedom has been restricted or squelched.

Obama's FCC appointees adopted this regulation even though just 8 months earlier the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously in [Comcast v. FCC](#) that the FCC has no statutory authority for it. Kerpen also notes that in the 2010 Congressional campaigns, 95 candidates signed the pledge of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee to promote Net Neutrality and Internet regulation, and all 95 lost. Moreover, a bill introduced in Congress to provide FCC authority for such regulation garnered only 27 co-sponsors.

Yet Obama continues to implement such regulation heedless of the people, the courts and Congress.

Similar lawlessness occurred in the offshore drilling moratorium imposed by Obama's Interior Dept. in response to the 2010 Gulf oil spill. Kerpen recounts that Obama appointed an expert task force to make recommendations concerning how the federal government should respond to the spill. The task force report featured a recommendation for a six month moratorium on all

deepwater drilling activities. But as Kerpen explains, “the recommendation for a moratorium was not supported by the authors of the task force report.” Task force authors wrote in a letter to Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and Senators David Vitter and Mary Landrieu, saying:

[W]e are concerned that our names are connected with the moratorium as proposed in the executive summary of the report. There is an implication that we have somehow agreed to or “peer reviewed” the main recommendation of that report. This is not the case....[T]he scope of the moratorium on drilling which is in the executive summary differs in important ways from the recommendation in the draft which we reviewed. We believe the report does not justify the moratorium as written and that the moratorium as changed will not contribute measurably to increased safety and will have immediate and long term economic effects.

Kerpen reports in the book that the Executive Summary for the report was rewritten to endorse the moratorium by the staff of White House energy czar Carol Browner. President Obama then used his staff rewritten task force report to justify the offshore drilling moratorium “with full knowledge that it would put more than 23,000 Americans out of work at a time of record high unemployment.” This is yet another example of the Obama public relations style I have called “calculated deception,” more worthy of a third world authoritarian government than the world’s leading liberal democracy.

Kerpen continues, explaining, “On June 23, 2010, U.S. District Judge Martin Feldman issued a stinging 22 page decision, issuing an injunction to overturn the moratorium based on the political manipulation and the Interior Department’s utter failure to justify the breadth of the moratorium.” Judge Feldman wrote regarding the studies Interior cited for the moratorium:

How these studies support a finding that shear equipment does not work consistently at 500 feet is incomprehensible. If some drilling equipment parts are flawed, is it rational to say all are? Are all planes a danger because one was? All oil tankers like [Exxon](#) Valdez? All trains? All mines? That sort of thinking seems heavy-handed and rather over-bearing.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals then rejected the Obama Administration’s request for a stay of Feldman’s ruling. Yet Obama’s Interior Secretary Ken Salazar “reimposed a very similar moratorium disregarding the rulings of the two courts,” Kerpen reports. Salazar imperiously pronounced, “We will only lift the moratorium when I as Secretary of Interior am comfortable that we have significantly reduced those risks.” Salazar and the Interior Department were held in contempt of court by Feldman, to no avail.

Kerpen provides another example of Obama Administration authoritarianism backed by double talk. When he was a candidate, Obama lambasted Bush’s practice of “signing statements,” objecting to parts of legislation he was signing as unconstitutional and so refusing to enforce them. Candidate Obama said:

*“This is part of the whole theory of George Bush that he can make laws as he is going along. I disagree with that. I taught the Constitution for 10 years. I believe in the Constitution and I will obey the Constitution of the United States. We are not going to use signing statements as a way of doing an end run around Congress.”*

But just weeks after taking office, Obama reversed himself on signing statements, saying they involved “a legitimate constitutional function, and one that promotes the value of transparency,



to indicate when a bill that is presented for presidential signature includes provisions that are subject to well founded constitutional objections.”

Obama soon provided an egregious example of his new position. In the April, 2011 budget deal to avoid a government shutdown, he agreed to language blocking funding for several of his most controversial policy czars, Kerpen reports. But on April 15, 2011, Obama issued a signing statement on the compromise government funding bill reneging on the agreement, saying, “Section 2262 of the Act would prohibit the use of funds for several positions that involve providing advice directly to the President....Therefore, the executive branch will construe section 2262 not to abrogate these Presidential prerogatives.”

Who gives advice to the President may be a Presidential prerogative. But the President has no prerogative to agree to a deal with Congress on funding for those positions, and then to refuse to abide by the deal.

Kerpen’s book continues to discuss Obama Administration regulatory abuses and counterproductive misjudgments in full detail. Such overregulation and its costs is one of the reasons America has suffered no recovery after the last recession on the historical time scale for the American economy.

But Kerpen doesn’t just complain. He offers good, long overdue solutions, leading with the REINS Act (Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny). As Kerpen explains, that legislation proposed by Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY) and Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) “cuts to the heart of abuse of regulatory power by requiring any major regulatory action to receive the approval of the House and Senate as well as the signature of the president *before* it can take effect.”

That would restore the Constitution to control over regulation, which states in Article I, Section I, “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.” Kerpen adds, “In Federalist 47, James Madison explained that the U.S. Constitution was written to avoid the danger of legislative and executive power being fused by prohibiting the executive from making laws...Yet we now have precisely the situation that Madison and the other framers wanted to avoid. We have regulators who are effectively writing and executing their own laws.”

The Republican controlled House is expected to pass the REINS Act within this year. Nobody knows what the Democrat controlled Senate will do, or even whether it will allow a vote on the measure.

Kerpen further advises that “We must repeatedly and unrelentingly...deliver these two messages to Congress: You can delegate authority, but you can never delegate responsibility. If you fail to stop out-of-control regulators, voters will hold you accountable.” That is a powerful message coming from one of the nation’s most effective grassroots organizations.

Kerpen has written the best book available on Obama Administration regulatory abuse and excess. It is a must-read for every informed voter.

## National Journal - Hotline

### Announcing Retirement, Dem Congressman Bashes Obama

by Jessica Taylor and Billy House

Rep. **Dennis Cardoza**, D-Calif., announced his retirement from Congress this afternoon -- and he issued a scathing parting shot at President **Obama's** track record on his way out.

In a statement explaining his decision, Cardoza, a leader of the centrist Blue Dog Coalition, said he was "dismayed" by the administration's "failure to understand and effectively address the current housing foreclosure crisis."

"Home foreclosures are destroying communities and crushing our economy, and the Administration's inaction is infuriating," Cardoza said.

A former chairman of the moderate Blue Dog Caucus, Cardoza also bemoaned the increasing partisanship in Washington, and blamed the media for fueling the ideological divide in the country, not giving enough attention to moderates.

Cardoza is the sixth member -- all Democrats -- to announce plans to retire outright so far. He's also the third member of the Blue Dog Caucus to head for the exits -- joining fellow moderate Reps. **Dan Boren**, D-Okla., and **Mike Ross**, D-Ark.

The five-term congressman had become an increasingly-vocal critic of his own party's leadership in recent months, fueled by the skyrocketing unemployment in his Central Valley district. He's previously criticized the administration on its handling of the foreclosure crisis - but it's rare to see a departing congressman blast the president in an official statement.

Given his growing dissatisfaction with his party, Cardoza's departure didn't come as a surprise to Democrats, but his sharp criticism of Obama is bound to sting at the White House, which has already seeing many members of his own party, particularly those in battleground states and districts, keeping their distance.

Cardoza was also a thorn in the side of House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi**, D-Calif.. Despite his previous posts in leadership (he was a DCCC co-chair in 2010), the two at times clashed, including during the negotiations over the health care law. He voted against Pelosi for Democratic leader earlier this year, supporting his more-moderate home-state colleague Rep. **Jim Costa** instead. In the fight for majority leader in 2007, ~~Costa~~ Cardoza publicly backed Rep. **Steny Hoyer** over Pelosi.

Nonetheless, the National Republican Congressional Committee had already targeted Cardoza in an ad campaign last month, and immediately seized on Cardoza's retirement as more evidence of a worsening political environment for Democratic moderates.

"After years of being one of Pelosi's top lieutenants, Dennis Cardoza has realized it will be impossible to continue to fool voters about his self-proclaimed Blue Dog label as the political environment worsens for Democrats between now and Election Day," said NRCC spokeswoman Joanna Burgos.

Redistricting also played a major role in his decision. Under the new map, Cardoza was facing the unpalatable option of challenging Costa in a Democratic primary, or running in the more-Republican 21st District where Democrats already landed a strong recruit in state senator **Michael Rubio**.

Cardoza's lackluster fundraising this past quarter had also raised retirement speculation; he raised just \$23,000 during the past three months.

## Contentions

### [Obama Rivals Carter for Worst Approval Ratings](#)

by Alana Goodman

Obama is getting down to the wire. There is a strong historical correlation between where a president's approval ratings are around this point in his presidency, and whether he goes on to win a second term. And yet there's no indication that Obama's approval ratings are improving. In fact, [Gallup finds](#) that his 11<sup>th</sup> quarter numbers are the worst of Obama's presidency—as well as the worst of any recent president except [Jimmy Carter](#):

Only one elected president since Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, had a lower 11<sup>th</sup> quarter average than Obama. Carter averaged 31% during his 11<sup>th</sup> quarter, which was marked by a poor economy and high energy prices. Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were the only other post-World War II presidents whose job approval averages were below 50% in their 11<sup>th</sup> quarter in office.

According to Gallup's analysis, “an incumbent president's 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-quarter averages [give a strong indication of whether he will win a second term](#).” So the crucial test is whether Obama can perk up his approval ratings between now and January.

Ed Morrissey [comments](#) that Obama's class-warfare strategy probably won't help him in this regard. At least not if the 11<sup>th</sup> quarter is any indication:

This includes at least six weeks of polling after Obama's decision to strike a much more populist, class-warfare tone in Washington, a strategy that undoubtedly at least inspired the Occupy movement, if not explicitly coordinated with that effort. There is no particular reason for such a sharp dropoff in approval otherwise — no big economic setback, no significantly bad outcome militarily or diplomatically, either.

It will be interesting to see if these numbers prompt the Obama campaign to rethink its current tactics, or whether it will continue the anti-rich rhetoric full steam ahead. Either way carries a risk. Democrats opened a Pandora's box by encouraging the Occupy Wall Street movement, and if Obama turns on them now he could find himself the target of his very energized—and organized—base. On the other hand, there is a sense that time is running out for Obama to boost his approval ratings to a safe level for reelection.

## Contentions

### RE: Obama Rivals Carter

by Peter Wehner

To add a bit to [Alana's post](#): Gallup's Daily Tracking Poll this week showed President Obama with a 38 percent approval rating. As a reference point, [Jimmy Carter's](#) Gallup approval rating in February 1980 was 41 percent; in April 1980 it was 40 percent; and as late as August 1980 it was 37 percent. (Carter also dipped into the low 30s on several occasions in 1980.) All of which means that Barack Obama has pitched his tent squarely in the upper quadrant of Carter Country when it comes to his approval ratings.

Jimmy Carter, by the way, won six states against [Ronald Reagan](#).

## Contentions

### Obama's Double Standard on OWS

by Peter Wehner

During one of the GOP presidential debates, two or three people in an audience of more than 5,000 [booed](#) a question posed by a gay soldier, not the gay soldier himself. As one might expect, though, many journalists, as well as the president, decided to make a big deal of this. It was held up as an example of Republican bigotry. President Civility, Barack Obama, decided to put his own interpretation on things:

' "We don't believe in the kind of smallness that says it's OK for a stage full of political leaders — one of whom could end up being the president of the United States — being silent when an American soldier is booed," Obama said at a Human Rights Campaign dinner.

To repeat: the soldier was not booed; his question was. But no matter; Obama had political points to score and a base to energize. Yet with the precedent Obama is setting in place, I do wonder: The Occupy Wall Street movement is rife with anti-Semitism. The statements we're hearing from the protesters are vile, ugly and seemingly endless. And yet this is a movement Obama, Vice President Biden, Minority Leader Pelosi, and DNC chairwoman Wasserman Schultz have all warmly embraced. Revealingly, they have yet to denounce the unvarnished anti-Semitism they must be aware of by now. '

I don't know about you, but I don't believe in the kind of smallness that says it's OK for a president and Democratic leaders — including one who could end up being re-elected as president of the United States — being silent when a movement they have praised and are provoking is spewing forth anti-Semitic bile on a daily basis. It would be nice, and exceedingly rare, for the president to show even a spark of moral leadership.

If he's not careful, one might begin to (reasonably) conclude the president isn't terribly bothered by anti-Semitism. Because if he were, he would actually speak out against it. Even once.

## Investor's.com - Editorial

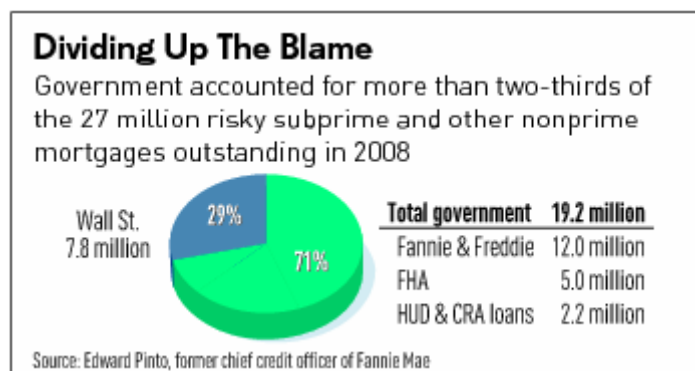
### Wall Street Did It?

**Meltdown:** If Republicans are to take back the White House and Senate, they need to do a better job tying Democrats and Washington to the subprime crisis. It's not hard, yet even their front-runner struggles to make the case.

On Wednesday night, CNN host Piers Morgan guilted Cain into allowing that banks were, as Morgan put it, "effectively preying on the most vulnerable elements of American society," and that Wall Street deserves at least partial blame for the crisis and should be held to account. "I wouldn't defend the banks," Cain said, "because I happen to think that the banks are part of the problem. Wall Street is."

Cain belatedly also faulted Fannie and Freddie, and the Democrats in Washington who protected them. Piers then pressed him to come up with a pie chart allotting blame — Washington vs. Wall Street—and Cain assigned neither a majority responsibility for the mess.

But based on the number of toxic loans in the system in 2008, the government was responsible for not just a simple majority, but more than two-thirds. It's quantifiable — 71% to be exact (see chart). And the remaining 29% of private-label junk was mostly attributable to Countrywide Financial, which was under the heel of HUD and its "fair-lending" edicts.



To be fair, the blame-Wall Street narrative has cemented in the public consciousness, and is hard to crack. That's because in the wake of the crisis, the Obama White House and Pelosi-Reid Congress engineered a cover-up of Washington's role in the mess through the Democrat-led Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission. The national media now defer to it as the final authority on what caused the crisis and ensuing recession.

"The FCIC's report put the majority of the blame squarely where it belonged: on the shoulders of the Wall Street executives," Bloomberg News opined.

While not blameless, Wall Street is an easy scapegoat. And investment houses that made billions slicing and dicing mortgages into CDOs, derivatives, credit default swaps and other exotic paper are easy to demonize. But the problem wasn't these financial instruments. Or even the obscene profits they generated. Mortgage-backed securities were nothing new, and we've always had speculation in the market.

The problem was the underlying assets: low-quality mortgages. We've never had so many junk home-loans poisoning the financial well before. And who poisoned the well? Washington and its affordable-housing policies.

It was Washington that declared prudent home-lending standards racist and gutted traditional underwriting rules in the name of diversity. It was government that created the risk on Main Street. Yes, Wall Street spread it, with the help of Treasury-backed Fannie and Freddie. But who's at greater fault for harming the village — the person who poisons the well or the one who distributes the water?

The biggest applause line in the Las Vegas debate came when Cain told the growing throngs of jobless protesters their anger was misplaced. They should be marching on Pennsylvania Avenue, he said, not Wall Street. But that's not enough. Republicans have to lay out the facts that Democrats have swept under the rug.

The historical record is clear, the evidence overwhelming, if only someone would litigate the case on the national stage. While GOP leaders dither, the Democratic National Committee has launched a coordinated attack with the Obama re-election campaign to link GOP candidates closer to Wall Street and the crisis.

By criminalizing Wall Street, they hope to sour voters to their biggest defender. Polls show the strategy is starting to work. Time to fight fire with fire.

## **New York Magazine**

### **[The Organizers vs. the Organized in Zuccotti Park](#)**

by Alex Klein



*It began, as it so often does, with a drum circle*

All occupiers are equal — but some occupiers are more equal than others. In wind-whipped Zuccotti Park, new divisions and hierarchies are threatening to upend Occupy Wall Street and its leaderless collective.

As the protest has grown, some of the occupiers have spontaneously taken charge on projects large and small. But many of the people in Zuccotti Park aren't taking direction well, leading to a tense Thursday of political disagreements, the occasional shouting match, and at least one fistfight.

It began, as it so often does, with a drum circle. The ten-hour groove marathons weren't sitting well with the neighborhood's community board, the ironically situated High School of Economics and Finance that sits on the corner of Zuccotti Park, or many of the sleep-deprived protesters.

"[The high school] couldn't teach," explained Josh Nelson, a 27-year-old occupier from Nebraska. "And we've had issues with the drummers too. They drum incessantly all day, and really loud." Facilitators spearheaded a General Assembly proposal to limit the drumming to two hours a day. "The drumming is a major issue which has the potential to get us kicked out," said Lauren Digion, a leader on the sanitation working group.

But the drums were fun. They brought in publicity and money. Many non-facilitators were infuriated by the decision and claimed that it had been forced through the General Assembly.

"They're imposing a structure on the natural flow of music," said Seth Harper, an 18-year-old from Georgia. "The GA decided to do it ... they suppressed people's opinions. I wanted to do introduce a different proposal, but a big black organizer chick with an Afro said I couldn't."

To Shane Engelerdt, a 19-year-old from Jersey City and self-described former "head drummer," this amounted to a Jacobinic betrayal. "They are becoming the government we're trying to protest," he said. "They didn't even give the drummers a say ... Drumming is the heartbeat of this movement. Look around: This is dead, you need a pulse to keep something alive."

The drummers claim that the finance working group even levied a percussion tax of sorts, taking up to half of the \$150-300 a day that the drum circle was receiving in tips. "Now they have over \$500,000 from all sorts of places," said Engelerdt. "We're like, what's going on here? They're like the banks we're protesting."

All belongings and money in the park are supposed to be held in common, but property rights reared their capitalistic head when facilitators went to clean up the park, which was looking more like a shantytown than usual after several days of wind and rain. The local community board was due to send in an inspector, so the facilitators and cleaners started moving tarps, bags, and personal belongings into a big pile in order to clean the park.

But some refused to budge. A bearded man began to gather up a tarp and an occupier emerged from beneath, screaming: "You're going to break my fucking tent, get that shit off!" Near the front of the park, two men in hoodies staged a meta-sit-in, fearful that their belongings would be lost or appropriated.

Daniel Zetah, a 35-year-old lead facilitator from Minnesota, mounted a bench. "We need to clear this out. There are a bunch of kids coming to stay here." One of the hoodied men fought back:

"I'm not giving up my space for fucking kids. They have parents and homes. My parents are dead. This is my space."

Other organizers were more blunt. "If you don't want to be part of this group, then you can just leave," yelled a facilitator in a button-down shirt, "Every week we clean our house." Seth Harper, the pro-drummer proletarian, chimed in on the side of the sitters. "We disagree on how we should clean it. A lot of us disagree with the pile." Zetah, tall and imposing with a fiery red beard, closed debate with a sigh. "We're all big boys and girls. Let's do this." As he told me afterwards, "A lot of people are like spoiled children." The cure? A cold snap. "Personally, I cannot wait for winter. It will clear out these people who aren't here for the right reasons. Bring on the snow. The real revolutionaries will stay in -50 degrees."

"The sunshine protestors will leave," said "Zonkers," a 20-year-old cleaner and longtime occupier from Tennessee. (He asked that his name not be used due to a felony marijuana conviction.) "The people who remain are the people who care. You get a lot of crust punks, silly kids, people who want to panhandle ... It disgusts me. These people are here for a block party."

Another argument broke out next to the pile of appropriated belongings, growing taller by the minute. A man named Sage Roberts desperately rifled through the pile, looking for a sleeping bag. "They've taken my stuff," he muttered. Lauren Digion, the sanitation group leader, broke in: "This isn't your stuff. You got all this stuff from comfort [the working group]. It belongs to comfort."

And as I spoke to Michael Glaser, a 26-year-old Chicagoan helping lead winter preparation efforts, a physical fight broke out between a cleaner and a camper just feet from us.

"When cleanups happen, people get mad," Glaser said. "This is its own city. Within every city there are people who freeload, who make people's lives miserable. We just deal with it. We can't kick them out."

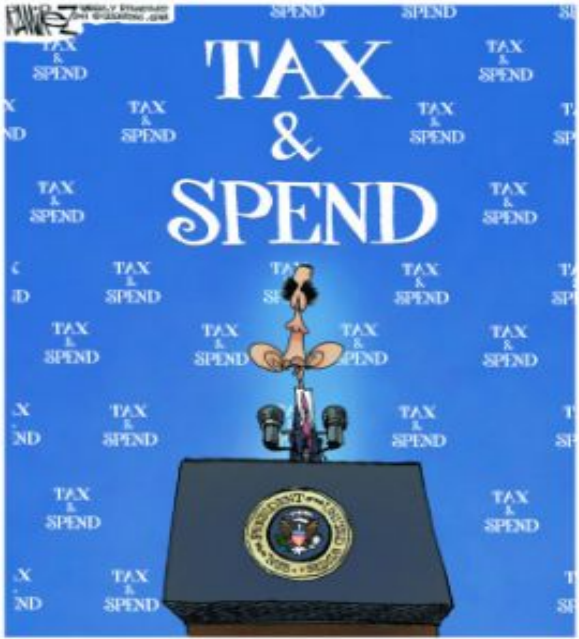
In response to dissatisfaction with the consensus General Assembly, many facilitators have adopted a new "spokescouncil" model, which allows each working group to act independently without securing the will of the collective. "This streamlines it," argued Zonkers. "The GA is unwieldy, cumbersome, and redundant."

From today's battles, it's not yet clear who will win the day: the organizers or the organized. But the month-long protest has clearly grown and evolved to a point where a truly leaderless movement will risk eviction — or, worse, insurrection.

As the communal sleeping bag argument between Lauren Digion and Sage Roberts threatened to get out of hand, a facilitator in a red hat walked by, brow furrowed. "Remember? You're not allowed to do any more interviews," he said to Digion. She nodded and went back to work. But when Roberts shouted, "Don't tell me what to do!" Digion couldn't hold back.

"Someone has to be told what to do," she said. "Someone needs to give orders. There's no sense of order in this fucking place."





THE OLD OBAMA JOB PLAN



THE **NEW** OBAMA JOB PLAN







"HOORAY! YOU'RE FINALLY HERE!  
I AM **SO** SICK OF TRYING TO **SPELL** YOUR NAME!"