

November 10, 2011

The president finds another way to insult Israel and Netanyahu. [Elliot Abrams](#) has the story.

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Two examples prove the point.

1. In May, Netanyahu moved the Likud Party considerably to the center in his speech to the opening of the summer session of the Knesset. In that speech he discussed relations with the Palestinians and called for a “long term IDF presence along the Jordan River,” and said “we agree that we must maintain the settlement blocs.” In other words, he was saying that the Israeli presence along the Jordan would be that of soldiers only, not settlers, and that it would in any event not be permanent; and he was saying that only the settlement blocs, not all settlements no matter how small and isolated, would remain with Israel.

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[Alana Goodman](#) has more in Contentions.

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Israeli critics of Netanyahu weighed in on the comments in the Jerusalem Post, with Labor MK Daniel Ben-Simon saying that he’s “embarrassed” that Bibi is shown such little respect by allies. But Obama should be the one most embarrassed by this faux pas, which he can expect to be used by Republican presidential candidates to attack his frosty relationship with Israel.

It’s hardly news that Obama and Netanyahu aren’t on friendly terms. But this is one of the more public displays of Obama’s hostility toward the Israeli prime minister, and the latest in a string of diplomatic clashes between the two. Obama’s record provides more than enough evidence that

he's not interested in dealing fairly with Israel, and these comments only add to that. Not only did Obama hand his opponents an easy attack with this, he also came off looking amateurish, unprofessional and catty.

Michael Barone reviews Tuesday's vote.

The biggest result was Ohio Governor John Kasich's defeat on Issue 2. Voters cast 61% of their votes (as I write) to repeal Kasich's law, which had been backed by Republican majorities in the legislature (with some defections). Kasich's effort is part of a struggle to rein in public employee unions, which use taxpayers' money (in the form of union dues) to elect pliable politicians who then confer benefits on their members—especially generous health care and pensions—which then result in economy-killing tax rates. It's a kind of economic death spiral for states and localities where public employee unions are a major political force.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger tried to rein in their powers with a series of ballot propositions in November 2005. The unions spent something like \$100 million and defeated him. Unions spent a proportionate amount, more than \$30 million it has been reported, in Ohio, a state whose population is about 30% the size of California's.

There is some consolation here. The same Ohio voters—and the turnout seems to have been just about as high as in November 2010—who voted 61% against Kasich's public employee union restrictions also voted 66% for Issue 3, which purported to shield Ohioans from any mandate to buy health insurance. This was a clear repudiation of Obamacare, and about half the folks that the unions turned out voted against Obamacare. There were something like 300,000 of them, or almost 10% of the total votes cast, reported as absentee balloters in the big industrial counties (Cuyahoga, Trumbull, Mahoning, Lucas, Montgomery, Franklin, Hamilton) before any other votes were counted.

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More from **Red State**.

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But I personally believe there is a simpler explanation. Voters like their local cops, firefighters, nurses and teachers. In many ways, they idealize these type of positions even if they don't like the state of education or public safety, etc. Thus opponents of reform had a very easy and emotionally effective message: Senate Bill 5 is an attack on the "everyday heroes" who protect

our communities. It doesn't really matter if this was true or not. In a 30 second ad it is easy to say and makes an emotional connection. This is a huge advantage in a statewide ballot issue.

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And from [Mark Steyn](#).

Big Labor's victory over John Kasich's reforms in Ohio is a reminder to conservatives that we're still a long way from closing the deal. A majority of the citizenry seem to agree that the nation's mired and that their homes and jobs and futures are sinking with it. But that same majority is not yet sold on transformative rollbacks of government and the public sector. They seem to think that out there somewhere there's a way to get the good times back that's more or less pain-free. More fool them – which is to say Obama & Co will have a pretty good shot at fooling them.

Somewhere in either my current book or the previous one (or possibly both), I cite the line Gerald Ford used to use to ingratiate himself with conservatives: "A government big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take away everything you have." That may be true, but there's an intermediate stage: A government big enough to give you everything you want isn't big enough to get you to give any of it back. That's the problem Mr Papandreou's ministry has in Athens, and the Kasich administration in Ohio, and many other governments around the western world.

So it's easy for reformers to get voted in, and easy for their opponents to make sure their reforms get voted down. I'm afraid things are going to get a lot worse before that dynamic shifts.

[Joel Kotkin](#) writes on the LA push to fund a stadium.

Over the past decade Los Angeles has [steadily declined](#). It currently has one of the the highest unemployment rates (roughly 12.5%) in the U.S, and there's little sign of a sustained recovery. The city and county have become a kind of purgatory for all but the most politically connected businesses, while job creation and population growth lag not only the vibrant Texas cities but even aged competitors such as New York.

Rather than address general business conditions, which sorely need fixing, L.A. Mayor Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the other ruling elites have instead focused on revitalizing the city's urban core, which has done little to boost the region's overall economy in generations. The most recent example of such foolishness is a \$1.5 billion plan to build a football stadium, named Farmers Field, downtown, unanimously approved by the city's City Council and backed by the city's "progressive" state delegation.

Like most of the dominant political class, California Senator and former City Council member Alex Padilla cites the sad state of the local economy as [justification](#) for approving the plan. But, in reality, it's hard to find something more profoundly irrelevant than a football stadium.

Indeed years of independent investigations have discovered that urban vanity projects like sports teams and convention centers [add little](#) to permanent employment or overall regional economic well-being. ...

Football stadiums? How about government efforts to promote Christmas Trees.

[Yuval Levin](#) has the story.

If, like me, you have been terribly worried about the declining status and image of Christmas trees lately, worry not: the Obama administration is on the case! As Heritage notes this morning:

In the Federal Register of November 8, 2011, Acting Administrator of Agricultural Marketing David R. Shipman announced that the Secretary of Agriculture will appoint a Christmas Tree Promotion Board. The purpose of the Board is to run a “program of promotion, research, evaluation, and information designed to strengthen the Christmas tree industry’s position in the marketplace; maintain and expand existing markets for Christmas trees; and to carry out programs, plans, and projects designed to provide maximum benefits to the Christmas tree industry” (7 CFR 1214.46(n)). And the program of “information” is to include efforts to “enhance the image of Christmas trees and the Christmas tree industry in the United States” (7 CFR 1214.10).

To pay for the new Federal Christmas tree image improvement and marketing program, the Department of Agriculture imposed a 15-cent fee on all sales of fresh Christmas trees by sellers of more than 500 trees per year (7 CFR 1214.52). And, of course, the Christmas tree sellers are free to pass along the 15-cent Federal fee to consumers who buy their Christmas trees. The administration offered no specific estimate of how many jobs would be created or saved by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and the new Christmas tree tax, but we can assume the number is very high.

[Andrew Malcolm](#) says the tax got scrapped yesterday morning.

... Since the economy is back humming again and unemployment has plummeted, the Obama administration published in the Federal Register Tuesday its intention to charge a new 15 cent tax on cut Christmas trees this year. The Democrats don't need congressional approval for that baby. The Ag Dept. needn't wait. Just do it.

So what if eventually some people stop buying American-grown trees and switch to fake ones from China.

But wait! The overnight outrage was quicker than a pajama-clad four-year-old sliding down the stairs on Christmas morning. With the president just off Air Force One from Europe and Pennsylvania and about to head off to Hawaii, the White House was desperate to snuff this guaranteed PR loser.

Scrooge Obama. Tiny Tim Geithner. Ebenezer Biden. The possibilities for fun in this gaffe are endless. ...

[Michael Graham](#) has a good thought. Maybe not all people should go to college.

... “We should be doing everything we can to put a college education within reach for every American,” President Barack Obama told a group of college students in Denver last week. “College isn’t just one of the best investments you can make in your future. It’s one of the best investments America can make in our future.”

Before we beat this nonsensical notion to death with the latest data, take a second and think about the young people you know. The kid behind the fast-food counter, the geek camped out at Best Buy waiting for the Call of Duty game, the girl popping her gum at the hair salon.

Would it really be the “best investment in America” to spend \$100,000 of our money sending each one of them to college?

Because that’s what we’re talking about: your money. Every year Massachusetts taxpayers pour hundreds of millions of dollars into the University of Massachusetts system, subsidizing college costs for all. Add the \$36 billion in federal Pell Grants and that giant sucking sound is the money going from your wallet to some kid’s six-year bong party known as “the college experience.”

And what’s the big payoff? Some entitled punk waving a “Debt Is Slavery!” sign outside a shabby tent on Dewey Square. This is America’s “best investment?” ...

Council on Foreign Relations

Obama Joins the Chorus

by Elliott Abrams

If Prime Minister Netanyahu were to ask a fair-minded, balanced, sensible adviser what he could realistically do to win the confidence and approbation of President Obama, the answer would have to be “nothing.”

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1. In May, Netanyahu moved the Likud Party considerably to the center in his [speech](#) to the opening of the summer session of the Knesset. In that speech he discussed relations with the Palestinians and called for a “long term IDF presence along the Jordan River,” and said “we agree that we must maintain the settlement blocs.” In other words, he was saying that the Israeli presence along the Jordan would be that of soldiers only, not settlers, and that it would in any event not be permanent; and he was saying that only the settlement blocs, not all settlements no matter how small and isolated, would remain with Israel.

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2. This week, Netanyahu has started to move on the issue of “outposts,” small and unauthorized encampments in the West Bank. Prime minister Sharon repeatedly promised president Bush that he would act to remove them—and repeatedly failed (as did prime minister Olmert). At some political cost (see [this](#) and [this](#)), Netanyahu plans now to act.

The [*Wall Street Journal*](#) explained it this way:

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled he plans to dismantle some unauthorized Jewish dwellings in the West Bank, setting up potential clashes with extremist settlers and the hard-liners in his government who back them. Such a move could mark the largest evacuation of settlers since the 2005 Gaza withdrawal, and could boost Mr. Netanyahu's credibility among mainstream Israelis as well as abroad.

Well, apparently not "abroad." No sooner does Netanyahu take this courageous step than he is denounced by French President Sarkozy and President Obama, in a private conversation that has now been revealed. According to [press reports](#),

Sarkozy told Obama, "Netanyahu, I can't stand him. He's a liar." Obama did not object to the characterization, and responded: "You are sick of him, but I have to work with him every day."

So we return to what our wise adviser might tell Netanyahu. In the very week that he moves on outposts—something Sharon and Olmert completely failed to do—he is called names by the French and the insults are apparently accepted and approved by the Americans. The advice to Bibi would have to be "forget it. Forget the possibility that Obama will ever treat you fairly. Forget the idea that he will give you a fair shake or pay attention to what you are actually doing."

If this were only a matter of personal relations between Obama and Netanyahu, it could be left at that. But it is far more consequential, for by that comment—and especially as it was made in private and can be interpreted as his actual view—President Obama has joined the chorus of assaults on the Jewish State. We only have one president at a time and they only have one prime minister. To treat the prime minister of Israel in this way is disgraceful.

Contentions

[Obama and Sarkozy Gripe About Bibi](#)

by Alana Goodman

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But Obama should be the one most embarrassed by this faux pas, which he can expect to be used by Republican presidential candidates to attack his frosty relationship with Israel.

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Washington Examiner

[A few thoughts on the November 8 elections](#)

by Michael Barone



Ohio Senate president John Niehaus, left, Gov. John Kasich, center, and House Speaker William Batchelder talk Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2011, in Columbus, Ohio

The biggest result was Ohio Governor John Kasich's defeat on Issue 2. Voters cast 61% of their votes (as I write) to repeal Kasich's law, which had been backed by Republican majorities in the legislature (with some defections). Kasich's effort is part of a struggle to rein in public employee unions, which use taxpayers' money (in the form of union dues) to elect pliable politicians who then confer benefits on their members—especially generous health care and pensions—which then result in economy-killing tax rates. It's a kind of economic death spiral for states and localities where public employee unions are a major political force.

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There is some consolation here. The same Ohio voters—and the turnout seems to have been just about as high as in November 2010—who voted 61% against Kasich's public employee union restrictions also voted 66% for Issue 3, which purported to shield Ohioans from any mandate to buy health insurance. This was a clear repudiation of Obamacare, and about half the folks that the unions turned out voted against Obamacare. There were something like 300,000 of them, or almost 10% of the total votes cast, reported as absentee balloters in the big industrial counties (Cuyahoga, Trumbull, Mahoning, Lucas, Montgomery, Franklin, Hamilton) before any other votes were counted.

But the real bragging rights here belong to the public employee unions and the Democrats. They got actual results: the Kasich reforms will not go into effect. The other side got a theoretical victory: for the federal mandate to buy health insurance, if upheld by the courts, will surely trump any state effort at repeal under the supremacy clause of the Constitution.

There is an additional charge here that may be laid against Kasich this year, just as it could be made against Schwarzenegger in 2005: political malpractice. They allowed the public employee unions to vastly outpace their side and failed to counter the unions' ad barrages. They had effective arguments on their side that they simply did not communicate to voters. In 2005 this gave the public employee unions five more years to plunder the private sector in the states where they hold sway.

The Ohio result, on the other hand, is balanced off by the success of public employee union opponents to keep in place, by narrow margins, the restrictions imposed by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and the legislature by maintaining Republican margins on the state Supreme Court in an April election and in the state Senate in recall elections held this summer. Also restricting the public employee unions is the fact that taxpayers today simply do not have the kind of money to be plundered that everyone thought they did in the years immediately after Schwarzenegger's defeat.

Other November 8 results were less negative for Republicans. At a time when polls show huge dissatisfaction with politicians of both parties, it is an interesting fact that incumbents did quite well this cycle. Democratic Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear was reelected 56%-35% just as Republican Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal was reelected with 64% against a field of other candidates last month. Mississippi Republican Lieutenant Governor Phil Bryant was elected 61%-39% to replace term-limited Republican Governor Haley Barbour; similarly, West Virginia Democratic Governor Earl Ray Tomblin was elected 50%-47% for the rest of the term held by Joe Manchin, who resigned after he was elected U.S. senator.

In state legislative elections there was relatively little turnover. Incomplete returns suggested that the 39 incumbent state senators running for reelection yesterday in New Jersey were all reelected or running ahead, and a Democrat was winning 75% in the one open seat election in a heavily Democratic district. In the Assembly races it appeared that only one incumbent, a Democrat, was defeated and that no other seats changed party hands (I may have missed one or two). That means Governor Chris Christie will have to continue working, as he has with considerable success, with Democratic majorities.

In Virginia Republicans gained a modest number of seats—not so surprising considering that Republican Governor Bob McDonnell has one of the highest job approval rates of any state governor. Republicans got lucky and ousted incumbent Democrats in the two state Senate seats that will, with Republican Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling's vote, give them control there to

match their lopsided margin in the House of Delegates. But they won only narrow victories. In the Southside 20th district, including Martinsville, probably the most economically ailing part of the Commonwealth, the Republican challenger won by 643 votes out of more than 50,000 cast. In the central Virginia 17th district, running west from Fredericksburg almost to the college town of Charlottesville, the Republican challenger won by 86 votes.

Democrats might reasonably seek recounts, but the Virginia totals stand up pretty solidly, as we saw when Democrat Jim Webb beat Republican Senator George Allen narrowly in 2006. At this moment, I don't know whether Mississippi Republicans managed to win majorities in both houses of its legislature for the first time since Reconstruction; as in Louisiana, they have been gaining by party switches as well as in elections.

Generalizations? It looks to me like the political balance, which swung wildly between 2008 and 2010—the 9% Republican gain and Democratic loss in percentage of the popular vote for the U.S. House between those two elections was the largest such percentage change since the elections of 1946 and 1948—has stayed pretty much the same.

The public employee unions' success in overturning the Kasich reforms in Ohio does not constitute an embrace of Obamacare or the other national policies of the Obama Democrats, though it does give the public employee unions a boost in morale and ability to plunder taxpayers (the Kasich reforms would have cut off the payment of union dues directly from local governments to unions, with the employee/union members having only fictitious use of the money that is technically theirs). The results of gubernatorial and legislative races suggest that the low poll numbers of both parties don't translate into carnage for incumbents of either one, though Democrats fared a bit worse than Republicans (incumbent Republicans tended to get much more robust percentages compared to previous years than incumbent Democrats did).

In other words, in November 2011 we are about where we were in November 2010, but we're not very happy about it. Governors who adapt well to the political climate of their states—Democrats Beshear and Manchin and, to a lesser extent, Tomblin, and Republicans Jindal and McDonnell and, to a lesser extent, Christie—are getting pretty favorable treatment from the voters.

But no sensible person thinks the Democrats' success in Kentucky or West Virginia means that Barack Obama will fare well there in 2012. And McDonnell's limited success and the lack of any evidence of a rebellion against (though also lack of evidence of a big rally toward) Chris Christie suggest that Obama will fare less well in states like Virginia and New Jersey than he did in 2008 and more like he did there in 2010 (when Republicans carried the popular vote for the House in both states). Plus, Obamacare is still not being received by the mass of purported beneficiaries as a wonderful elixir; it's more like a dud.

Red State

[Ohio Issue 2: Let's not over-react or fall for media templates](#)

by Kevin Holtsberry

Issue 2 in Ohio has failed. Unions poured a gazillion dollars into Ohio and won. Despite having a sense of this outcome for some time it still stings. Believe it or not, a great many felt that these reforms were important steps in bring fiscal and structural sanity to government. The voters clearly did not get that message.

The media is going to try and play this as horse race politics. Governor John Kasich lost and the Democrats won. And obviously, in some important sense – even if only in the fact the story and perspective being conventional wisdom – this is true. Kasich and Republicans passed this legislation and it has been rejected. Fair enough.

But I personally believe there is a simpler explanation. Voters like their local cops, firefighters, nurses and teachers. In many ways, they idealize these type of positions even if they don't like the state of education or public safety, etc. Thus opponents of reform had a very easy and emotionally effective message: Senate Bill 5 is an attack on the “everyday heroes” who protect our communities. It doesn't really matter if this was true or not. In a 30 second ad it is easy to say and makes an emotional connection. This is a huge advantage in a statewide ballot issue.

Combine this with the huge financial advantage the opponents had (unions could take dues from union members regardless of their political beliefs and spend it on this election) and you have an uphill battle for supporters (and of course there is a minority of voters – public sector and labor unions – who are simply voting their self-interest). All they had to do was blanket the state with pictures of police and firefighters opposed to the issue and the lasting impression is that the bill is an attack on the people we value the most in our communities.

We can debate the wisdom of keeping fire and safety forces in the bill (and the larger strategy & process) later. But what I want to note tonight is that this is not an ideological victory in my mind. I don't believe voters saw this as a smaller or larger government debate. Nor was it about lowering or raising taxes. It was about not attacking public safety. It was about a simple but effective message with overwhelming financial superiority. The nature of modern elections means this was not an upset but par for the course given the nature of popular ballot issues.

Is Kasich unpopular? Sure, the economy sucks and doesn't look good any time soon. People tend to blame people at the top. Kasich didn't have any real political capital left to win on this issue. But that doesn't mean Kasich is suddenly a defeated governor. He is going to ultimately be judged on the success of his policies in the medium to long term. He passed a budget that puts Ohio on a path to success. He is fundamentally redefining economic development in this state and he is selling Ohio like mad. If the Ohio economy gets better and the policies he has implemented begin to bear fruit he will be just fine.

And this is not the sign of GOP over-reach either. If this was such an ideological turning of the tide that how to explain the passage of Issue 3 – a clear repudiation of health care mandates? If Ohio voters suddenly turned to the left that win seems to make little sense. I think it is much easier to see this as another reflection of message and popular sentiment. People saw health care mandates as threat to their care and likely to raise costs. They rejected the idea. Exactly how is this going to help Democrats (or the president for example) in Ohio?

If Democrats think the ground has shifted significantly I think they are getting carried away. Unions felt their backs were up against the wall and they leveraged their financial advantage to great effect. They rallied the troops and used their message, however deceptive, to great effect. This is a big win. I get that.

But off-year ballot issues of this nature do not mean fundamental change. As I said on twitter, “If you have an emotionally effective message, and can spend five times as much, you have a good chance of winning ballot issues.” This is not sea change in political philosophy or a

rejection of the party in power (neither party are particularly popular when it comes right down to it).

So ignore the union gloating and the media stories about how independents reject extremism and over-reach. Instead, conservatives need to find ways to better communicate their ideas and continue to build the institutions and organizations that can move their ideas and policies forward. Fiscal reality is not going to change. The nature of what government can and can't accomplish given its nature and this fiscal reality isn't going to magically change because of this vote.

Conservatives took one on the chin, yes, but the larger war is far from clear. There are even bigger battles that lie ahead. Let's get ready.

The Corner **State of the Union**

by Mark Steyn

Big Labor's victory over John Kasich's reforms in Ohio is a reminder to conservatives that we're still a long way from closing the deal. A majority of the citizenry seem to agree that the nation's mired and that their homes and jobs and futures are sinking with it. But that same majority is not yet sold on transformative rollbacks of government and the public sector. They seem to think that out there somewhere there's a way to get the good times back that's more or less pain-free. More fool them – which is to say Obama & Co will have a pretty good shot at fooling them.

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So it's easy for reformers to get voted in, and easy for their opponents to make sure their reforms get voted down. I'm afraid things are going to get a lot worse before that dynamic shifts.

Forbes **Political Footballs: L.A.'s Misguided Plans For A Downtown Stadium**

by Joel Kotkin

Over the past decade Los Angeles has steadily declined. It currently has one of the the highest unemployment rates (roughly 12.5%) in the U.S, and there's little sign of a sustained recovery. The city and county have become a kind of purgatory for all but the most politically connected businesses, while job creation and population growth lag not only the vibrant Texas cities but even aged competitors such as New York.

Rather than address general business conditions, which sorely need fixing, L.A. Mayor Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the other ruling elites have instead focused on revitalizing the city's urban core, which has done little to boost the region's overall economy in generations. The most recent example of such foolishness is a \$1.5 billion plan to build a football stadium, named

Farmers Field, downtown, unanimously approved by the city's City Council and backed by the city's "progressive" state delegation.

Like most of the dominant political class, California Senator and former City Council member Alex Padilla cites the sad state of the local economy as [justification](#) for approving the plan. But, in reality, it's hard to find something more profoundly irrelevant than a football stadium.

Indeed years of independent investigations have discovered that urban vanity projects like sports teams and convention centers [add little](#) to permanent employment or overall regional economic well-being. As a Minneapolis Fed study revealed, consumers simply shift their expenditures from other activities to the new stadium. Certainly mega-stadiums have done little to boost sad-sack, depopulating cities such as St. Louis, [Baltimore](#) or Cleveland.

Commitments to mega-projects tend to further drive urban areas into debt, largely by issuing more bonds that taxpayers are obligated to pay back. One particularly gruesome case can be found in [Harrisburg, Pa.](#), whose underwriting of a minor league baseball team helped push the city into bankruptcy. To get the stadium deal, Los Angeles, already over-indebted and suffering a [poor credit rating](#), will issue another \$275 million.

Such projects often obscure the real and more complex challenge of nurturing broad-based economic growth. This would require substantive change in a city or regional political culture. Instead the football stadium services two basic political constituencies: large unions and big-time speculators, particularly in the downtown area. The fact that the stadium will be built with union labor, for example, all but guaranteed its approval by the city's trade union-dominated council.

Downtown developers and "rent-seeking" speculators, the other group behind the project, have siphoned hundreds of millions in tax breaks and public infrastructure in the past decade. They have done so – subsidizing companies from other parts of Los Angeles, entertainment venues and hotels — in the name of a long-held, impossible dream of turning downtown Los Angeles into a mini-Manhattan. Perhaps no company has pushed this more effectively than the stadium developer Anschutz Entertainment Group, a mass developer of generic entertainment districts around the world. AEG has expanded its influence by [doling out substantial financial donations](#) to Mayor Villaraigosa and others in the city's economically clueless political class.

This explains how the stadium was exempted from the state's draconian anti-greenhouse gas legislation. The city promises that the stadium will be the "most transit-friendly" football stadium in the nation, which strikes locals as absurd. Football crowds tend to be drawn largely from affluent types who don't live anywhere close to downtown and rarely take public transit to their jobs, much less over the weekend. D.J. Waldie, a leading Los Angeles writer, described the entire project as "[cloaked in green snake oil.](#)"

An even more nebulous claim is that downtown needs the investment in order to drive regional growth. To be sure, recent years have seen the growth of a central city restaurant scene, and some 30,000 residents now live in the area compared to closer than 20,000 a decade ago. Yet just outside the immediate, highly-subsidized core, population growth in the surrounding parts of central city over the past decade stood at a mere 0.7%, the lowest rate since the 1950s. The vast majority of the region's population growth took place in the far-flung regions of the San Fernando Valley.

As an economic engine, downtown LA simply does not warrant the attention, nor the special treatment, that the city's ruling elites give it. For one thing, it represents a far smaller part of the city's economy when you compare it to the urban cores of Washington, D.C., or New York City. Indeed, in New York and D.C. roughly 20% of all employment is in the central core; in Los Angeles it's barely 2.5%.

And, despite all the hype, fewer people now work in downtown L.A than in the 1980s and 1990s, when the area was populated by corporations and small businesses, [many in manufacturing and trade](#), instead of hip hangouts. A more recent analysis shows that, despite all the hype, the downtown area has [created virtually no new net jobs](#) over the past decade.

LA's leaders should therefore focus on the systematic causes for the region's ailing economy. One source of the problem lies in tough environmental rules that, although lifted on behalf of football, clamp on growth of virtually every other industry, including the city's port and manufacturing sector. Powerful green interests, for example, make any plan to modernize the port all but impossible. This could prove catastrophic when the [widening of the Panama Canal](#) will allow aggressive, cheaper ports in the Gulf or Southeast U.S. to compete with the Pacific Asian trade that has driven LA's port economy for decades.

Los Angeles' huge industrial sector has also been a victim of the regulatory tsunami. Manufacturers have [lost roughly one-third of their jobs](#) over the past decade as firms head out to more congenial regions with less onerous regulatory burdens. Sadly, Los Angeles has benefited little from the [recent upsurge in manufacturing nationwide](#) when compared with metropolitan areas such as Detroit, Salt Lake City and San Antonio.

Even Hollywood, an industry less affected by green regulations, has begun to lose steam. Film production has [dropped by more than half](#) over the past 15 years. LA's share of [film and television production](#) has eroded as well, with much of the new work headed to Toronto, New Mexico, New Orleans, New York and Atlanta. All these cities offer richer incentives to attract productions than the world's self-proclaimed "entertainment capital."

Faced with these serious regional challenges, officials should place less emphasis on football and creating another generic downtown and more on the city's uniquely vibrant and heavily immigrant-driven small-business sector, which has been stifled by the state's regulatory excess as well as the city's legendary bureaucracy. Business consultant [Larry Kosmont](#) notes that the system is particularly tough on smaller, less politically connected firms. "It usually takes two to three times more to process anything in L.A., compared even to surrounding cities," Kosmont told the [Wall Street Journal](#). "It makes a big difference if you are a major Korean airline or AEG or if you are an independent entrepreneur."

Yet to date these entrepreneurs receive little respect from City Hall. They are unlikely to be granted the sort of papal dispensations from green legislation so readily given to the football stadium and other downtown projects. Until the disconnect of the leaders from the city's real economic essence ends, Los Angeles, a city uniquely blessed by its population, climate and location, will continue to flounder, a perpetual underperformer among America's great urban areas.

The Corner

Essential Government Functions

by Yuval Levin

If, like me, you have been terribly worried about the declining status and image of [Christmas trees](#) lately, worry not: the Obama administration is on the case! As Heritage [notes](#) this morning: In the Federal Register of November 8, 2011, Acting Administrator of Agricultural Marketing David R. Shipman announced that the Secretary of [Agriculture](#) will appoint a Christmas Tree Promotion Board. The purpose of the Board is to run a “program of promotion, research, evaluation, and information designed to strengthen the Christmas tree industry’s position in the marketplace; maintain and expand existing markets for Christmas trees; and to carry out programs, plans, and projects designed to provide maximum benefits to the Christmas tree industry” (7 CFR 1214.46(n)). And the program of “information” is to include efforts to “enhance the image of Christmas trees and the Christmas tree industry in the United States” (7 CFR 1214.10).

To pay for the new Federal Christmas tree image improvement and marketing program, the [Department of Agriculture](#) imposed a 15-cent fee on all sales of fresh Christmas trees by sellers of more than 500 trees per year (7 CFR 1214.52). And, of course, the Christmas tree sellers are free to pass along the 15-cent Federal fee to consumers who buy their Christmas trees. The administration offered no specific estimate of how many [jobs](#) would be created or saved by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and the new Christmas tree tax, but we can assume the number is very high.

Investor's.com

Christmas Tree Tax plan quickly axed

by Andrew Malcolm

Christmas Tree tax ?

Of course. A Christmas Tree Tax. Why not? Perfect timing. Can't wait for that evergreen revenue.

Next no doubt comes a turkey tax. Also a wrapping paper tax. Tape tax. Tinsel tax. Oh, and a greeting card tax. That should be a gold mine. How about a toy tax?

And what about a tax on those scrawly-crayoned angels that first graders so earnestly produce for Mom and Dad?

Since the economy is back humming again and unemployment has plummeted, the Obama administration published in the Federal Register Tuesday its intention to charge a new 15 cent tax on cut Christmas trees this year. The Democrats don't need congressional approval for that baby. The Ag Dept. needn't wait. Just do it.

So what if eventually some people stop buying American-grown trees and switch to fake ones from China.

But wait! The overnight outrage was quicker than a pajama-clad four-year-old sliding down the stairs on Christmas morning. With the president just off Air Force One from Europe and

Pennsylvania and about to head off to Hawaii, the White House was desperate to snuff this guaranteed PR loser.

Scrooge Obama. Tiny Tim Geithner. Ebenezer Biden. The possibilities for fun in this gaffe are endless.

No need for a Boston egg nog party. First thing this morning a sacrificial White House [spokesman was sent out](#) to say that no, no, no, there was no Christmas Tree Tax. Relax. *Please!* The fee was actually requested by a Christmas tree industry group on volume growers and Agriculture was only helping out.

But just in case, the 15 cent tax has been delayed -- indefinitely. And this year's bonus for the bureaucrat who saw a need for the federal government to step in to the tree industry now by agreeing to this stupid idea will be a lump of coal (sulfur-free).

It seems the National Christmas Tree Assn. wants the revenue to create, of course, a Christmas Tree Promotion Board. And in America today when anyone thinks of collecting money, they think of this Democratic administration. The association claims that, c'mon, no grower would ever think of passing on increased costs to consumers. Right. And reindeer can't fly.

The NCTA says the CTPB would "enhance the image of Christmas trees and the Christmas tree industry."

Because, as even the dimmest North Pole elf knows, Christmas trees as the gathering site for some of families' happiest moments have been in ill repute ever since -- NEVER.

Boston Herald

Obama has lot to learn

Everyone should not go to college

by Michael Graham

In life, the three big lies are "The check's in the mail," "The car was fine when I parked it" and "Honey, I swear I don't know whose thong that is in the glove box."

In this political moment, the three big lies are "Social Security is solvent," "Everyone should go to college," and "Honey, I swear I don't know whose thong that is in Herman Cain's glove box."

Setting aside the Social Security issue and Herman's possibly "Cain-al" knowledge of a lady, who is foolish enough to believe everyone belongs in college?

"We should be doing everything we can to put a college education within reach for every American," President Barack Obama told a group of college students in Denver last week. "College isn't just one of the best investments you can make in your future. It's one of the best investments America can make in our future."

Before we beat this nonsensical notion to death with the latest data, take a second and think about the young people *you* know. The kid behind the fast-food counter, the geek camped out at Best Buy waiting for the Call of Duty game, the girl popping her gum at the hair salon.

Would it really be the “best investment in America” to spend \$100,000 of our money sending each one of them to college?

Because that’s what we’re talking about: *your* money. Every year Massachusetts taxpayers pour hundreds of millions of dollars into the University of Massachusetts system, subsidizing college costs for all. Add the \$36 billion in federal Pell Grants and that giant sucking sound is the money going from your wallet to some kid’s six-year bong party known as “the college experience.”

And what’s the big payoff? Some entitled punk waving a “Debt Is Slavery!” sign outside a shabby tent on Dewey Square. This is America’s “best investment?”

The “Everybody gets a cupcake” crowd insists that college degrees are essential in the new, high-tech workplace. And if our students were getting high-tech degrees, they might have a point.

In 2009, American colleges handed out more business degrees than engineering, computer and biology degrees *combined*. We graduated about the same number of engineers as we did “Visual And Performance Arts” grads.

Alas, despite the fact that engineers are both well-paid and in short supply, The **New York Times** [\[NYT\]](#) reports “roughly 40 percent of college students planning engineering and science majors end up switching to other subjects or failing to get any degree.” Why? To quote that great education reformer Talking Barbie, “Math class is hard!”

What the crybabies of Generation Cupcake want — a good paying, white-collar job right out of college — is available .□.□. if you’re willing to do the hard work of earning a valuable degree. But because these little snowflakes can’t do calculus, they end up burying themselves under 50K in college debt for a degree in Womyn’s Studies.

All because someone told them “everyone should go to college.”

It’s bunk. About 50 percent of current college kids are just there because mom and dad don’t want to explain at the next cocktail party that Junior isn’t college material. These mediocre students clog our classrooms and drive up college costs. In the end, they’re still mediocre students with meaningless degrees who wind up working as the assistant manager at a TGI Fridays.

Who ends up getting screwed? The rest of the students who actually belong in college. Because demand is artificially high, so are college costs — up 8.3 percent in just the past year at public colleges.

And because there are so many more degree holders, each degree is worth less. And Obama’s solution is to send even more kids into the college system.

Then again, he majored in poli-sci.

Michael Graham hosts an afternoon drivetime talk show on 96.9 [WTKK](#).



I CAN'T STAND NETANYAHU. HE'S A LIAR.

YOU'RE FED UP WITH HIM. I HAVE TO WORK WITH HIM EVERY DAY.

I'M WITH YOU GUYS.

G20
FRANCE
NEW WORLD
NEW IDEAS

G20
FRANCE
NEW WORLD
NEW IDEAS

IRAN

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE....

