

November 16, 2011

**Mark Steyn** thinks we could do more to live up to our slogans.

*Whenever I write in these pages about the corrosive effect of Big Government upon the citizenry in Britain, Canada, Europe, and elsewhere and note that this republic is fairly well advanced upon the same grim trajectory, I get a fair few letters on the lines of: "You still don't get it, Steyn. Americans aren't Europeans. Or Canadians. We're not gonna take it."*

*I would like to believe it. It's certainly the case that Americans have more attitude than anybody else — or, at any rate, attitudinal slogans. I saw a fellow in a "Don't Tread on Me" T-shirt the other day. He was at LaGuardia, and he was being trod all over, by the obergropinfuhrers of the TSA, who had decided to subject him to one of their enhanced pat-downs. There are few sights more dismal than that of a law-abiding citizen having his genitalia pawed by state commissars, but him having them pawed while wearing a "Don't Tread on Me" T-shirt is certainly one of them.*

*Don't get me wrong. I like "Don't Tread on Me." Also, "Don't Mess with Texas" — although the fact that 70 percent of births in Dallas's largest hospital are Hispanic suggests that someone has messed with Texas in recent decades, and fairly comprehensively.*

*In my own state, the Department of Whatever paid some fancypants advertising agency a couple of million bucks to devise a new tourism slogan. They came up with "You're Going To Love It Here!," mailed it in, and cashed the check. The state put it up on the big "Bienvenue au New Hampshire" sign on I-93 on the Massachusetts border, and ten minutes later outraged Granite Staters were demanding it be removed and replaced with "Live Free or Die." So it was. Americans are still prepared to get in-your-face about their in-your-face slogans. ...*

**Toby Harnden** says the whiff of scandal is wafting over the administration.

*... the appearance of Attorney General Eric Holder on Capitol Hill last week underlined the problems that Obama faces in his re-election bid as he attempts to portray himself as an honest broker who rises above partisan politics — just as Tony "pretty much a straight kind of guy" Blair before him.*

*Holder was schooled in the last Democratic administration and his word-parsing performance was certainly one of Clintonian virtuosity. In a February letter, Holder's department denied that illegal guns had been allowed into Mexico. Now that this had been revealed as untrue, Holder carefully conceded that the letter "could have been better crafted" and blamed ATF officials.*

*His recollection in May that he had first heard about Fast and Furious in the "past few weeks" had been mistaken, he admitted. "I should probably have said a couple of months." He insisted that he did not read 2010 briefings about the operation that were addressed to him.*

*Asked whether he would apologise to Agent Terry's family, to whom he has never spoken, he declined, preferring instead the formulation once favoured by Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, when asked about IRA atrocities. "I certainly regret what happened to Agent Terry," he said.*

*By this weekend, Holder had decided he would say “sorry” to the Terry family and offered to meet them while at the same time slamming Republicans for using “inflammatory and inappropriate rhetoric about the operation in an effort to score political points”. ...*

An example of the above, from the [Washington Post](#).

*The Obama administration urged officers of the struggling solar company Solyndra to postpone announcing planned layoffs until after the November 2010 midterm elections, newly released e-mails show.*

*Solyndra, the now-shuttered California company, had been a poster child of President Obama’s initiative to invest in clean energies and received the administration’s first energy loan of \$535 million. But a year ago, in October 2010, the solar panel manufacturer was quickly running out of money and had warned the Energy Department it would need emergency cash to avoid having to shut down.*

*The new e-mails about the layoff announcement [were released Tuesday](#) morning as part of a House Energy and Commerce committee memo, provided in advance of Energy [Secretary Steven Chu’s](#) scheduled testimony before the investigative committee Thursday.*

*Solyndra’s chief executive warned the Energy Department on Oct. 25, 2010, that he intended to announce worker layoffs Oct. 28. He said he was spurred by numerous calls from reporters and potential investors about rumors the firm was in financial trouble and was planning to lay off workers and close one of its two plants.*

*But in an Oct. 30, 2010, e-mail, advisers to Solyndra’s primary investor, Argonaut Equity, explain that the Energy Department had strongly urged the company to put off the layoff announcement until Nov. 3. The midterm elections were held Nov. 2, ...*

[Pajamas Media](#) post says Romney/McDonnell is a done deal.

*It’s a done deal! It’s a slam dunk! You can just about start printing the bumper stickers for the 2012 Republican presidential ticket. For as a result of last week’s GOP debate and a Virginia legislative election, the Romney/McDonnell ticket has been solidified.*

*Mitt Romney, the inevitable Republican presidential nominee, has become even more so as a result of Rick Perry’s [debate implosion](#). (Otherwise known as the “56 second brain freeze” that rocked the world.)*

*Romney looks and sounds presidential and is by default going to be the last man standing after Cain-mania settles down. This is not exactly pleasing to the conservative base, but there is “hope and change” coming for conservatives on the 2012 ticket and his name is Governor Bob McDonnell of Virginia.*

*Governor McDonnell took a well-deserved victory lap this past week after helping the Republican Party of Virginia [win control](#) of both the Virginia General Assembly and Virginia*

Senate. This huge legislative victory, won with tea party support, catapults McDonnell right into Romney's number two slot.

But for McDonnell, these favorable Virginia election results are only the cherry on top of the sundae. There are five other important reasons why McDonnell will be Romney's running mate, served up for coronation at the 2012 Republican nominating convention in Tampa.

### **1. Governor Bob McDonnell is a conservative who conservatives trust.**

McDonnell can make a Romney-topped ticket more palatable to the tea party/conservative base. The base currently does not trust Romney but with McDonnell as his VP, McDonnell can help "sell" Romney and soften the blow for conservatives nationally, while not scaring away moderate voters

### **2. Virginia is a must-win-back state for the GOP.**

Obama won Virginia in 2008 by 7 percentage points, but with Governor McDonnell's high approval rating of [62%](#), Romney can count on him to return Virginia into the red column where it had been for forty years since 1968.

Obama will throw everything he has at Virginia but McDonnell will triumph. Already, Tuesday's Virginia election results are considered a [bad omen for Obama](#) nationally. ...

While we've been looking elsewhere, a revolution has been going on in on line education. [Wall Street Journal](#) has the story.

*It was nearing lunchtime on a recent Thursday, and ninth-grader Noah Schnacky of Windermere, Fla., really did not want to go to algebra. So he didn't.*

*Tipping back his chair, he studied a computer screen listing the lessons he was supposed to complete that week for his public high school—a high school conducted entirely online. Noah clicked on his global-studies course. A lengthy article on resource shortages popped up. He gave it a quick scan and clicked ahead to the quiz, flipping between the article and multiple-choice questions until he got restless and wandered into the kitchen for a snack.*

*Noah would finish the quiz later, within the three-hour time frame that he sets aside each day for school. He also listened to most of an online lecture given by his English teacher; he could hear but not see her as she explained the concept of a protagonist to 126 ninth graders logged in from across the state. He never got to the algebra.*

*His sister Allison, meanwhile, has spent the past two hours working on an essay in the kitchen. She has found a new appreciation of history. At her old school, she says, the teacher stood at the blackboard and droned, and history was "the boringest class ever." Now, thanks to the videos she's been watching on ancient Egypt, she loves it.*

*In a radical rethinking of what it means to go to school, states and districts nationwide are launching online public schools that let students from kindergarten to 12th grade take some—or all—of their classes from their bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens. Other states and districts are bringing students into brick-and-mortar schools for instruction that is largely computer-based and self-directed.*

*In just the past few months, Virginia has authorized 13 new online schools. Florida began requiring all public-high-school students to take at least one class online, partly to prepare them for college cybercourses. Idaho soon will require two. In Georgia, a new app lets high-school students take full course loads on their iPhones and BlackBerrys. Thirty states now let students take all of their courses online.*

*Nationwide, an estimated 250,000 students are enrolled in full-time virtual schools, up 40% in the last three years, according to Evergreen Education Group, a consulting firm that works with online schools. More than two million pupils take at least one class online, according to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a trade group. ...*

---

---

---

## **National Review**

### **Treadmarks**

by Mark Steyn

Whenever I write in these pages about the corrosive effect of Big Government upon the citizenry in Britain, Canada, Europe, and elsewhere and note that this republic is fairly well advanced upon the same grim trajectory, I get a fair few letters on the lines of: “You still don’t get it, Steyn. Americans aren’t Europeans. Or Canadians. We’re not gonna take it.”

I would like to believe it. It’s certainly the case that Americans have more attitude than anybody else — or, at any rate, attitudinal slogans. I saw a fellow in a “Don’t Tread on Me” T-shirt the other day. He was at LaGuardia, and he was being trod all over, by the obergropinfuhrers of the TSA, who had decided to subject him to one of their enhanced pat-downs. There are few sights more dismal than that of a law-abiding citizen having his genitalia pawed by state commissars, but him having them pawed while wearing a “Don’t Tread on Me” T-shirt is certainly one of them.

Don’t get me wrong. I like “Don’t Tread on Me.” Also, “Don’t Mess with Texas” — although the fact that 70 percent of births in Dallas’s largest hospital are Hispanic suggests that someone has messed with Texas in recent decades, and fairly comprehensively.

In my own state, the Department of Whatever paid some fancypants advertising agency a couple of million bucks to devise a new tourism slogan. They came up with “You’re Going To Love It Here!,” mailed it in, and cashed the check. The state put it up on the big “Bienvenue au New Hampshire” sign on I-93 on the Massachusetts border, and ten minutes later outraged Granite Staters were demanding it be removed and replaced with “Live Free or Die.” So it was. Americans are still prepared to get in-your-face about their in-your-face slogans.

No other nation has license-plate mottos like “Live Free or Die.” No other nation has songs about how “I’m proud to be a Canadian” or “Australian” or “Slovenian” — or at least no songs written in the last 20 years in a contemporary pop vernacular. And yet, underneath the attitudinal swagger, Americans are — to a degree visiting Continentals often remark upon — an extremely compliant people.

For example, if you tootle along sleepy two-lane rural blacktops, the breaks in the solid yellow line are ever farther apart. One can drive for miles and miles without an opportunity to pass. Unlike the despised French surrender monkeys, Americans are not to be trusted to reach their own judgment on when it's safe to pull out and leave Gran'ma eating dust. Odd. But these days what *can* Americans be trusted with? You may have noticed those new lime green pedestrian signs sprouting across the fruited plain, in many cases where no pedestrian has been glimpsed in years. Some new federal regulation requires them to be posted wherever pedestrians are to be found, or might potentially be found in the years ahead. I just drove through Barre, Vt., which used to be the granite capital of the state but, as is the way, now offers the usual sad Main Street of vacant storefronts and non-profit community-assistance joints and whatnot. For some reason, it has faded pedestrian crossings painted across the street every few yards. So, in full compliance with the Bureau of Compliance, those new signs have been stuck in front of each one, warning the motorist of looming pedestrians, springing from curb to pavement like Alpine chamois.

The oncoming army of lurid lime signs uglies up an already decrepit Main Street. They dominate the scene, lining up in one's windshield with the mathematical precision of Busby Berkeley's chorines in *Gold Diggers of 1935*. And they make America look ridiculous. They are, in fact, double signs: One lime green diamond with the silhouette of a pedestrian, and then below it a lime rectangle with a diagonal arrow, pointing to the ground on which the hypothetical pedestrian is likely to be hypothetically perambulating. The lower sign is an exquisitely condescending touch. A nation whose citizenry is as stupid as those markers suggest they are cannot survive. But, if we're not that stupid, why aren't we outraged?

What's the cost of those double signs — 300 bucks per? That's the best part of four grand we don't need to have wasted on one little strip of one little street in one small town. It's not hard to see why we're the Brokest Nation in History: You can stand at almost any four-way across the land, look in any direction, and see that level of statist waste staring you in the face. Doesn't that count as being trod on? They're certainly treading on your kids. In fact, they've stomped whatever future they might have had into the asphalt.

A variant of my readers' traditional protestation runs like this: "Americans aren't Europeans, Steyn. We have the Second Amendment, and they don't." Very true. And Vermont has one of the highest rates of firearms ownership in the nation. And Howard Dean has a better record on gun rights than Rudy Giuliani. Or Chris Christie. But one would be reluctant to proffer the Green Mountain State as evidence of any correlation between gun rights and small government.

If I've sounded a wee bit overwrought in recent columns, it's because America is seizing up before our eyes. And I'm a little bewildered by how many Americans can't see it. I think about that chap at LaGuardia with "Don't Tread on Me" on his chest, and government bureaucrats in his pants. And I wonder if America's exceptional attitudinal swagger isn't providing a discreet cover for the shriveling of liberty. Sometimes an in-your-face attitude blinds you to what's going on under your nose.

**Telegraph, UK**

## **Whiff of scandal now taints Barack Obama**

by Toby Harnden

Rick Perry's brain freeze and Herman Cain's alleged penchant for blondes have fixated the American media in recent days. Liberals, sensing there might yet be hope for President Barack Obama, are engaging in a fresh round of condescending chortling about the idiocy of the Grand Old Party.

Certainly, recent Republican shenanigans have provided ample fodder for late-night comedians. Talk to many ordinary Americans beyond Washington's Beltway, however, and you tend to hear about other concerns.

Yes, they are preoccupied with the prospect of a double-dip recession and unemployment. But two topics that were raised again and again by people I met in Michigan this week were the brewing scandals surrounding Republican-led investigations into Solyndra and Operation Fast and Furious.

Solyndra is the solar energy company trumpeted by Obama as part of the "green jobs" future and given \$535 million loan guarantees from federal government stimulus funds. In September it filed for bankruptcy and its premises were raided by the FBI.

Operation Fast and Furious was a botched sting operation run by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agency (ATF) in which at least 2,000 weapons were allowed to be sold to suppliers linked to Mexican drug cartels.

Some 1,600 of the weapons have never been recovered. They disappeared into Mexico and have been linked to numerous crimes, including two of them to the murder of Brian Terry, a US Border Patrol agent. His parents found out about the provenance of the murder weapons from the media.

In the past week, it has emerged that George Kaiser, a billionaire donor to the Obama campaign whose family foundation was Solyndra's main investor, had raised the subject of the company inside the White House, something the Obama administration had denied. The suspicion of cosy inside deals is hard to escape.

Other emails released by investigators from the House of Representatives indicated that the foundation's associates had closely tracked the White House's interest in promoting Solyndra as, in Mr Kaiser's words, one of "their prime poster children" for renewable energy.

The Obama administration, which has been touted by the president himself as the "most transparent" in history, has refused to comply with a congressional subpoena for all internal White House documents relating to Solyndra.

Once principally a preoccupation of Right-wing bloggers, the Solyndra scandal is now being covered by the mainstream media and is slowly becoming an emblem for crony capitalism, wasted stimulus funds and, worst of all, stonewalling and hypocrisy from Obama.

But the appearance of Attorney General Eric Holder on Capitol Hill last week underlined the problems that Obama faces in his re-election bid as he attempts to portray himself as an honest broker who rises above partisan politics – just as Tony “pretty much a straight kind of guy” Blair before him.

Holder was schooled in the last Democratic administration and his word-parsing performance was certainly one of Clintonian virtuosity. In a February letter, Holder’s department denied that illegal guns had been allowed into Mexico. Now that this had been revealed as untrue, Holder carefully conceded that the letter “could have been better crafted” and blamed ATF officials.

His recollection in May that he had first heard about Fast and Furious in the “past few weeks” had been mistaken, he admitted. “I should probably have said a couple of months.” He insisted that he did not read 2010 briefings about the operation that were addressed to him.

Asked whether he would apologise to Agent Terry’s family, to whom he has never spoken, he declined, preferring instead the formulation once favoured by Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, when asked about IRA atrocities. “I certainly regret what happened to Agent Terry,” he said.

By this weekend, Holder had decided he would say “sorry” to the Terry family and offered to meet them while at the same time slamming Republicans for using “inflammatory and inappropriate rhetoric about the operation in an effort to score political points”.

Although Holder refused to discuss it at the congressional hearing, Dennis Burke, a Democrat-appointed US attorney in Arizona, has admitted leaking damaging information about the Special Agent who first blew the whistle on the failings in Operation Fast and Furious back in January.

One of the primary roles of Congress is to hold the executive branch to account. Democrats pursued the Bush administration relentlessly but are crying foul now that Republicans are starting to uncover malfeasance on the part of the holier-than-thou Obama.

Those candidates vying for the chance to kick Obama out of the White House would do well to turn their attention away from each other’s own goals and concentrate on the misdeeds of the current administration being uncovered by Republicans on Capitol Hill. Cronyism, incompetence, stonewalling, evasion and smears – it is not a pretty picture.

## **Washington Post**

### **[Solyndra: Energy Dept. pushed firm to keep layoffs quiet until after midterms](#)**

By Carol D. Leonnig and Joe Stephens

The Obama administration urged officers of the struggling solar company Solyndra to postpone announcing planned layoffs until after the November 2010 midterm elections, newly released e-mails show.

Solyndra, the now-shuttered California company, had been a poster child of President Obama’s initiative to invest in clean energies and received the administration’s first energy loan of \$535 million. But a year ago, in October 2010, the solar panel manufacturer was quickly running out

of money and had warned the Energy Department it would need emergency cash to avoid having to shut down.

The new e-mails about the layoff announcement [were released Tuesday](#) morning as part of a House Energy and Commerce committee memo, provided in advance of Energy [Secretary Steven Chu's](#) scheduled testimony before the investigative committee Thursday.

Solyndra's chief executive warned the Energy Department on Oct. 25, 2010, that he intended to announce worker layoffs Oct. 28. He said he was spurred by numerous calls from reporters and potential investors about rumors the firm was in financial trouble and was planning to lay off workers and close one of its two plants.

But in an Oct. 30, 2010, e-mail, advisers to Solyndra's primary investor, Argonaut Equity, explain that the Energy Department had strongly urged the company to put off the layoff announcement until Nov. 3. The midterm elections were held Nov. 2, and led to Republicans taking control of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"DOE continues to be cooperative and have indicated that they will fund the November draw on our loan (app. \$40 million) but have not committed to December yet," a Solyndra investor adviser wrote Oct. 30. "They did push very hard for us to hold our announcement of the consolidation to employees and vendors to Nov. 3rd – oddly they didn't give a reason for that date."

Solyndra has become a rallying cry for Republicans who argue Obama used his clean energy initiative to steer valuable loans to benefit his friends and donors. Argonaut is a private equity firm of [George Kaiser](#), who advised his investor deputies on how to approach the White House to help Solyndra with its financial problems.

Earlier in October, [Solyndra executives](#) and its investors had warned the agency that they needed emergency financing to keep the company operating after December, and were working with the agency to restructure and ease the terms of its half-billion-dollar federal loan.

On Oct. 25, 2010, Solyndra chief executive Brian Harrison e-mailed the energy department's loan staff to explain that Solyndra "has received some press inquiries about rumors of problems (one of them with quite accurate information) and we have received in bound calls from potential investors. Both of these data points indicate the story is starting to leak outside Solyndra."

Harrison went on to state that he would "like to go forward with the internal communication [to employees regarding layoffs] on Thursday, October 28."

Harrison's e-mail was forwarded to program director, Jonathan Silver, who then alerted [White House](#) climate change czar Carol Browner and Vice President Biden's point person on stimulus, Ron Klain. Browner asked for more information about the announcement, and Chu's chief of staff explained he had left a voicemail message on her cellphone.

On Nov. 3, 2010, Solyndra announced it would lay off 40 workers and 150 contractors and shut down its Fab 1 factory. The department agreed to continue giving Solyndra installments of its federal loan despite the company's failure to meet key terms of the loan, and in February



restructured its loan to give investors a chance to recover \$75 million in new money they put into the company before taxpayers would be repaid.

Silver resigned from the agency last month.

## **Pajamas Media**

### **[A Romney/McDonnell 2012 Presidential Ticket Is \(Practically\) a Done Deal](#)**

by Myra Adams

It's a done deal! It's a slam dunk! You can just about start printing the bumper stickers for the 2012 Republican presidential ticket. For as a result of last week's GOP debate and a Virginia legislative election, the Romney/McDonnell ticket has been solidified.

Mitt Romney, the inevitable Republican presidential nominee, has become even more so as a result of Rick Perry's [debate implosion](#). (Otherwise known as the "56 second brain freeze" that rocked the world.)

Romney looks and sounds presidential and is by default going to be the last man standing after Cain-mania settles down. This is not exactly pleasing to the conservative base, but there is "hope and change" coming for conservatives on the 2012 ticket and his name is Governor Bob McDonnell of Virginia.

Governor McDonnell took a well-deserved victory lap this past week after helping the Republican Party of Virginia [win control](#) of both the Virginia General Assembly and Virginia Senate. This huge legislative victory, won with tea party support, catapults McDonnell right into Romney's number two slot.

But for McDonnell, these favorable Virginia election results are only the cherry on top of the sundae. There are five other important reasons why McDonnell will be Romney's running mate, served up for coronation at the 2012 Republican nominating convention in Tampa.

#### **1. Governor Bob McDonnell is a conservative who conservatives trust.**

McDonnell can make a Romney-topped ticket more palatable to the tea party/conservative base. The base currently does not trust Romney but with McDonnell as his VP, McDonnell can help "sell" Romney and soften the blow for conservatives nationally, while not scaring away moderate voters

#### **2. Virginia is a must-win-back state for the GOP.**

Obama won Virginia in 2008 by 7 percentage points, but with Governor McDonnell's high approval rating of [62%](#), Romney can count on him to return Virginia into the red column where it had been for forty years since 1968.

Obama will throw everything he has at Virginia but McDonnell will triumph. Already, Tuesday's Virginia election results are considered a [bad omen for Obama](#) nationally.

### **3. Obama/Kaine vs. McDonnell/Allen**

The race for the open U.S. Senate seat created by Democrat Jim Webb stepping down will be one of the most watched, vicious, and expensive Senate races in 2012. But not only will it be a political fight to the finish but very personal as well.

The dynamic revolves around former Virginia Governor Tim Kaine who, as governor in 2008, was one of Senator Obama's earliest supporters and was widely credited with helping Obama turn Virginia from red to blue.

Now, Virginia governors can only serve one 4 year term, and Kaine's term was ending in January of 2010. So after Obama was elected president, Obama thanked Kaine for his early support by appointing him to be chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in early 2009 while Kaine was still governor of Virginia.

Then, in the Virginia gubernatorial election in November of 2009, Republican Attorney General Bob McDonnell won a resounding [59% of the vote](#), a 17.5% point margin of victory against Democrat Creigh Deeds to whom both Obama and Kaine (as DNC head and incumbent VA governor) threw much campaign funding and personal support. McDonnell's victory was a total embarrassment to Obama and Kaine.

Moving ahead to the 2012 election cycle, Kaine has left the DNC to run for the US Senate in Virginia against former US Senator and former Virginia Governor George Allen, who was defeated in 2006 by Jim Webb.

On Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup> a few days after his state legislative victories, [Governor McDonnell endorsed](#) George Allen, who has primary tea party opposition.

There are high hopes that George Allen will win that highly contested Virginia Senate seat, especially if the VP candidate is Governor Bob McDonnell.

President Obama, of course, will be supporting Kaine one thousand percent for two reasons. First, Obama is counting on Kaine to keep the Virginia Senate seat in the Democrat column. Second, Obama is expecting Kaine to have coat-tails *going up* the ballot, helping him to win Virginia again.

This all sets up an Obama/Kaine vs. McDonnell/Allen WWF style "death match."

For not only is Virginia and its 13 electoral votes a grand prize in the race for the White House, but Republican control of the US Senate also hangs in the balance.

This Virginia Senate race is the third practical political reason why a Romney/ McDonnell ticket will be appearing on your ballot in 2012.

### **4. McDonnell is chairman of the Republican Governors Association (RGA).**

The Bob McDonnell for VP stars aligned even more perfectly when Texas Governor Rick Perry resigned as chairman of the RGA to run for president, and Governor McDonnell was then tapped as chairman.

McDonnell chairing the RGA is highly significant for individual state and national media exposure as well as fundraising.

There is no better post for McDonnell to hold to help Romney more than RGA chairman and this is *even before* Romney chooses McDonnell as his running mate.

#### **5. Romney thinks very highly of McDonnell.**

That is an understatement in that Romney has called Governor McDonnell one of the ["great leaders of the Republican Party."](#) Romney has also said, "I say nice things about Governor McDonnell every time I have a chance."

McDonnell, meanwhile, has said that he would like to see a former governor in the White House. (Wink, wink, I don't think he is talking about Perry.)

Additionally, McDonnell has not been shy when asked about being considered for the number two position.

Furthermore, McDonnell would personally and politically complement Romney and not overshadow him in some ways like Palin did to McCain in 2008.

Romney/McDonnell could be a marriage made in political heaven — a win-win for the "establishment wing" of the Republican Party with the "conservative wing" placing a respectable second.

The next step would be for McDonnell to officially announce his support for a presidential candidate, something McDonnell said he would do after the Virginia legislative election this past Tuesday. Gee, I wonder whom McDonnell will endorse?

And when McDonnell does utter the name "Mitt Romney," it's time to start up the presses for the yard signs and bumper stickers. For on that day, the 2012 GOP presidential ticket will be non-officially inked but officially ready to do battle.

*Myra Adams is a media producer, writer, and political observer who served on the McCain Ad Council during the 2008 McCain campaign, and on the 2004 Bush campaign creative team. Her columns have appeared on Pajamas Media, The Daily Caller and as a co-writer on The Daily Beast. Myra's web site [TheJesusStore.com](http://TheJesusStore.com) contributes all profits to Christian charity.*

WSJ

## My Teacher Is an App

***More kids than ever before are attending school from their living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens. The result: A radical rethinking of how education works.***

by Stephanie Banchemo and Stephanie Simon



*Allison Schnacky attends an online school at her Florida home.*

It was nearing lunchtime on a recent Thursday, and ninth-grader Noah Schnacky of Windermere, Fla., really did not want to go to algebra. So he didn't.

Tipping back his chair, he studied a computer screen listing the lessons he was supposed to complete that week for his public high school—a high school conducted entirely online. Noah clicked on his global-studies course. A lengthy article on resource shortages popped up. He gave it a quick scan and clicked ahead to the quiz, flipping between the article and multiple-choice questions until he got restless and wandered into the kitchen for a snack.

Noah would finish the quiz later, within the three-hour time frame that he sets aside each day for school. He also listened to most of an online lecture given by his English teacher; he could hear but not see her as she explained the concept of a protagonist to 126 ninth graders logged in from across the state. He never got to the algebra.

His sister Allison, meanwhile, has spent the past two hours working on an essay in the kitchen. She has found a new appreciation of history. At her old school, she says, the teacher stood at the blackboard and droned, and history was "the boringest class ever." Now, thanks to the videos she's been watching on ancient Egypt, she loves it.

In a radical rethinking of what it means to go to school, states and districts nationwide are launching online public schools that let students from kindergarten to 12th grade take some—or all—of their classes from their bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens. Other states and districts are bringing students into brick-and-mortar schools for instruction that is largely computer-based and self-directed.

In just the past few months, Virginia has authorized 13 new online schools. Florida began requiring all public-high-school students to take at least one class online, partly to prepare them for college cybercourses. Idaho soon will require two. In Georgia, a new app lets high-school students take full course loads on their iPhones and BlackBerrys. Thirty states now let students take all of their courses online.

Nationwide, an estimated 250,000 students are enrolled in full-time virtual schools, up 40% in the last three years, according to Evergreen Education Group, a consulting firm that works with online schools. More than two million pupils take at least one class online, according to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a trade group.

Although some states and local districts run their own online schools, many hire for-profit corporations such as K12 Inc. of Herndon, Va., and Connections Academy in Baltimore, a unit of education services and technology company Pearson PLC. The companies hire teachers, provide curriculum, monitor student performance—and lobby to expand online public education.

It's all part of a burst of experimentation in public education, fueled in part by mounting budgetary pressures, by parental dissatisfaction with their kids' schools and by the failure of even top-performing students to keep up with their peers in other industrialized countries. In the nation's largest cities, half of all high-school students will never graduate.

Advocates say that online schooling can save states money, offer curricula customized to each student and give parents more choice in education.

A few states, however, have found that students enrolled full-time in virtual schools score significantly lower on standardized tests, and make less academic progress from year to year, than their peers. Critics worry that kids in online classes don't learn how to get along with others or participate in group discussions. Some advocates of full-time cyberschools say that the disappointing results are partly because some of the students had a rough time in traditional schools, and arrive testing below grade level in one or more subjects.

The experimental schools draw a diverse lot. Some students were previously home-schooled, some are high achievers and others have erratic schedules because of sports training or health problems. Many are ordinary kids who didn't prosper in traditional schools or whose parents want to shelter them from bullying and peer pressure. They are, however, less likely to be poor or to have special needs than the general public-school population, according to data from state education officials and from online schools.

One promising approach, many experts say, is hybrid schools, which blend online study with face-to-face interaction with teachers.

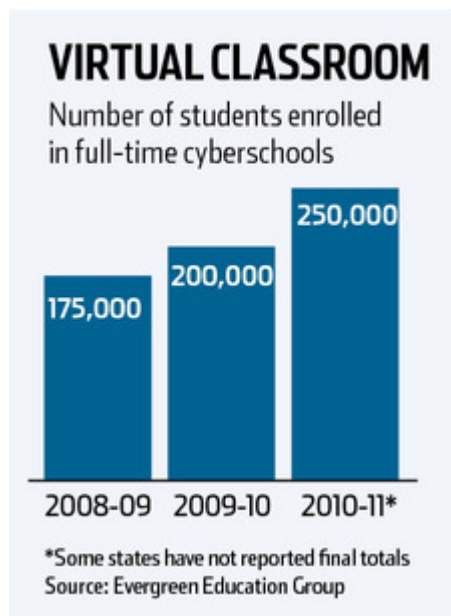
In California, Rocketship Education, a chain of charter hybrid schools that serves mostly poor and minority kids, has produced state test scores on par with some of the state's wealthiest

schools. Rocketship students spend up to half of each school day in computer labs playing math and literacy games that adjust to their ability level.

At Southwest Learning Centers, a small chain of charter schools in Albuquerque, N.M., standardized test scores routinely outpace state and local averages, according to data provided by the schools. Students complete most lessons online but come into class for teacher support and hands-on challenges, such as collaborating to design and build a weight-bearing bridge. The high school recently received a statewide award for its students' strong scores on the ACT college admissions test.

Allison Brown, a Georgia mother of three, says that she intended to enroll her son in the local public school for kindergarten last year until she met with an administrator there to discuss how the school might accommodate his advanced reading skills. She says the teacher told her that her son would be challenged—by helping other kids to learn their letters. So she enrolled her son in an online school where he could advance rapidly into higher grade levels.

Her son, Aarington, is now in first grade at Georgia Cyber Academy, and she has also enrolled her twins there for kindergarten. Ms. Brown has set up her basement as a mini-school, complete with counting blocks, reading nook and blackboard, and she tutors the kids through their online curriculum for most of each day. She says they're all thriving, and she plans to keep them in a full-time online school at least for the next several years.



"I don't think learning has to happen at school, in a classroom with 30 other kids and a teacher...corralling all children into learning the same thing at the same pace," she says. "We should rethink the environment we set up for education."

Colleges and universities have offered online courses for decades. The practice first cropped up in secondary schools in the early 1990s, when a few states began offering virtual Advanced Placement and foreign-language classes to high-school students. Cybercourses were also promoted as a convenient way for students who had failed a class to make up the credit.

The amount of teacher interaction varies. At online-only schools, instructors answer questions by email, phone or the occasional video conference; students will often meet classmates and teachers on optional field trips and during state exams. Southwest Learning Centers requires just 14 hours a week of classroom time and lets students set their own schedules, deciding when—or whether—to come in on any given day. And in Miami, students at iPrep Academy work in free-flowing "classrooms" with no doors or dividing walls but plenty of beanbag chairs and couches. Teachers give short lectures and offer one-on-one help, but most learning is self-directed and online.

"If it seems strange, that's because it is strange," says Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of the Miami schools. But he sees no point in forcing the iPod generation to adapt to a classroom model that has changed little in 300 years.



*Noah Schnacky, 14, says he likes expressing his thoughts at the keyboard instead of in a crowded classroom.*

The drive to reinvent school has also set off an explosive clash with teachers unions and backers of more traditional education. Partly, it's a philosophical divide. Critics say that cyberschools turn education into a largely utilitarian pursuit: Learn content, click ahead. They mourn the lack of discussion, fear kids won't be challenged to take risks, and fret about devaluing the softer skills learned in classrooms.

"Schools teach people the skills of citizenship—how to get along with others, how to reason and deliberate, how to tolerate differences," says Jonathan Zimmerman, a professor of educational history at New York University.

The growth of cybereducation is likely to affect school staffing, which accounts for about 80% of school budgets. A teacher in a traditional high school might handle 150 students. An online teacher can supervise more than 250, since he or she doesn't have to write lesson plans and most grading is done by computer.

In Idaho, Alan Dunn, superintendent of the Sugar-Salem School District, says that he may cut entire departments and outsource their courses to online providers. "It's not ideal," he says. "But Idaho is in a budget crisis, and this is a creative solution."

Other states see potential savings as well. In Georgia, state and local taxpayers spend \$7,650 a year to educate the average student in a traditional public school. They spend nearly 60% less—\$3,200 a year—to educate a student in the statewide online Georgia Cyber Academy, saving state and local tax dollars. Florida saves \$1,500 a year on every student enrolled online full time.

For individual school districts, though, competition from online schools can cause financial strain. The tiny Spring Cove School District in rural Pennsylvania lost 43 of its 1,850 students this year to online charter schools. By law, the district must send those students' share of local and state tax dollars—in this case \$340,000—to the cyberschool. Superintendent Rodney Green, already struggling to balance the budget, cut nine teaching jobs, eliminated middle-school Spanish and French and canceled the high-school musical, "Aida."

Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, says that his organization opposes full-time online schools but supports integrating virtual lessons into classrooms. "Obviously, we all want to save money," he says. "But to replace teachers with online learning is a mistake."

Online advocates note that teachers are still involved, delivering optional online lectures and answering questions by phone, text and email. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, who co-founded the Foundation for Excellence in Education, which promotes online schools nationwide, says learning will be "digitized" with or without cooperation from the unions. "I'm happy to go to war over this," he says.

[Rupert Murdoch](#), chief executive officer of News Corp., which owns The Wall Street Journal, has been an advocate of digital education. Last year News Corp. bought a 90% stake in Wireless Generation, an education-technology company that sells hand-held computers to teachers to help monitor student performance.

Two companies, K12 and Connections Academy, dominate the market for running public cyberschools. Full-time enrollment in online schools using the K12 curriculum has doubled in the past four years, to 81,000, the company says. K12's revenue grew 35% to \$522 million in its fiscal year ended June 30, when it reported net income of \$13 million.

At some K12 schools, academic struggles have followed rapid growth. Colorado Virtual Academy, launched in 2001, notched strong test scores initially. But enrollment has soared to nearly 5,000—and scores have plummeted. The school falls below Colorado averages on nearly every standardized test at every grade level, with particularly big deficits in math and writing. Outside Colorado, too, many K12 schools have poor results on state standardized tests.

K12 officials say state scores can be misleading because students often enroll midyear and take the tests after just a few months online. They say that the longer kids stick with cyberlearning, the better they do: Only 39% of students pass state math exams when they've been enrolled in K12 schools for less than a year, compared to 48% for kids enrolled at least one full school year. The same trend holds true for reading.

Tim Booker, an insurance agent who presides over the school board at Colorado Virtual Academy, says he fears that the program simply attracts too many kids who aren't suited to online learning. He now has deep concerns about whether full-time cyberschools are a viable model. "The jury's still out," he says.

Ron Packard, chief operating officer of K12, acknowledges that achievement has declined at some schools, which he attributes to explosive growth in the number of struggling students who register. K12 has become a "school of last resort" for many, he says. Traditional schools are best for most students, he says, but for some, "online education is a powerful choice."



Poor scores aren't unique to K12. In Minnesota, full-time online students in grades 4 through 8 made half as much progress in math during the 2009-10 school year, measured by annual state exams, as their peers in traditional schools, though they were about equal in reading. A September report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor also found that 25% of high-school seniors in virtual schools dropped out, compared to 3% of seniors statewide.

Nonetheless, many parents and pupils who have tried online education tout its benefits. The curriculum is flexible, so a second-grader can enroll in fourth-grade math. And while many lessons look like digitized workbooks, some online classes are more creative.

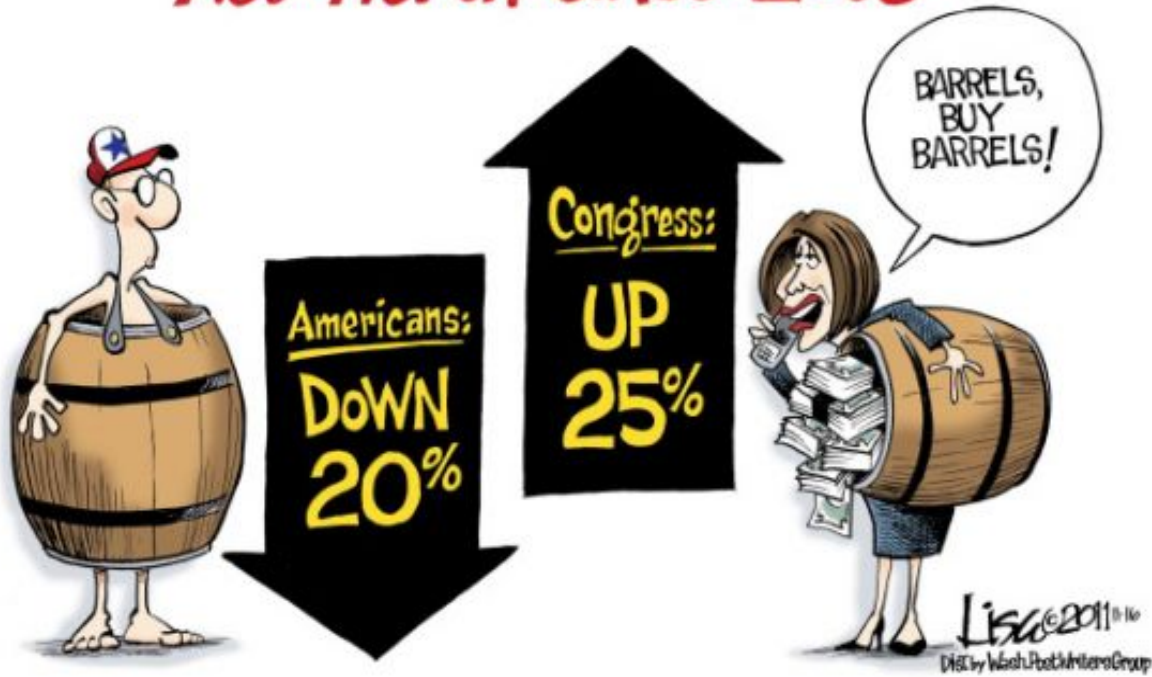
At Florida Virtual School, which has 4,300 full-time students, up from about 1,500 last year, high-school students can earn a U.S. history credit by playing a semester-long video game that whisks them through the historical milestones. Biology students don 3-D glasses to dissect a virtual frog.

Noah and Allison Schnacky, aspiring actors who travel frequently, initially chose Florida Virtual for its flexibility. Noah says that he likes expressing his thoughts at the keyboard, alone in his room, instead of in a crowded class. But there are downsides. After falling behind in algebra, he tried to set up a 15-minute call with his teacher. She was booked solid—for a month. Florida Virtual says that was an anomaly and most students can set up calls within three days. Teachers also answer emails daily.

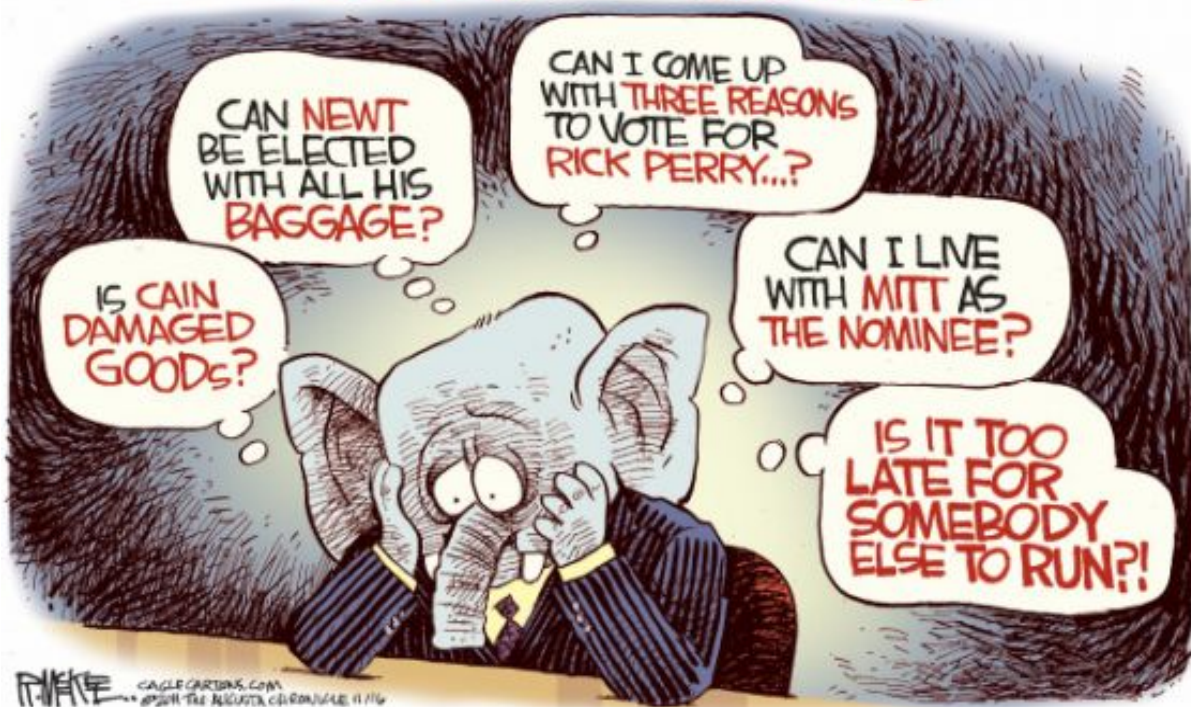
Miami's iPrep Academy, which blends online learning with in-person instruction, is so new that students have taken just one standardized test, in science, where they handily topped state averages. The unstructured days let teachers work one-on-one with struggling students; the free-form classrooms hum with conversations and impromptu lessons.

In the end, virtual schooling "comes down to what you make of it," says Rosie Lowndes, a social-studies teacher at Georgia Cyber Academy. Kids who work closely with parents or teachers do well, she says. "But basically letting a child educate himself, that's not going to be a good educational experience." The computer, she says, can't do it alone.

# Net Worth since 2008



# The GOP (INTERNAL) Debate



RW 2011 © CREATOR.COM



WHICH ONE IS CLOSER TO 99% OF AMERICA?

www.investors.com/cartoons

Lisa 2011 11-9 Dist by Wash Post Writers Group



Copyright Lisa Benson