

December 18, 2011

[Matt Labash](#) of the Weekly Standard with a nice send off for Christopher Hitchens. *No secrets are being divulged when I report that Christopher Hitchens liked a drink every now and then. Preferably now. He wasn't sloppy about it. In fact, he always seemed in perfect control. (I once saw him steer a beach bike through the streets of Key West without spilling his Scotch.) He just liked to keep the machine well-oiled so he could get on to more important things, like liberating oppressed peoples of the world, knocking out his 1,000 words a day, or starting fights with God, assuming there is one, which he didn't. In some ways, his affection for drink brought us together, setting in motion my most vivid memories of him.*

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"I don't usually start this early," he said, his glass already gratefully extended, "but holding yourself to a drinking schedule is always the first sign of alcoholism." ...

We start an extended section on Obama's re-elect chances with an article in the National Journal by [Ron Brownstein](#). To be fair we start with a center left publication.

There's an ominous trend for President Obama in the latest Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor poll: not only is his overall approval rating lagging, but he's lost as much (or even more) ground among groups that favored him in 2008 as among those who resisted him last time.

The chart at left compares Obama's vote among key groups in 2008, according to exit polls, and his job approval rating among them in the latest Heartland Monitor released Thursday morning. (The survey, conducted by FTI Strategic Communications, polled 1200 adults by landline telephone and cell phone from November 30 to December 4 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.8 percentage points.)

Overall, Obama has slipped from 52.8 percent of the vote in 2008 to 44 percent approval in the new survey with 49 percent disapproving. As the chart shows, Obama has declined not only in the groups that were always dubious of him, but also with several that enthusiastically joined his winning 2008 majority.

In 2008, Obama assembled what I called a "coalition of the ascendant" - by which I meant he did best among groups that were themselves growing rapidly in society, particularly minorities, the vast Millennial Generation, and the growing ranks of college-educated whites, especially women. Several of those groups have noticeably cooled on him. Obama's approval rating is now 12 percentage points lower than his 2008 share of the vote among young adults (aged 18-29); 11 points lower among African-Americans; and 10 points lower among college-educated white women. ...

[Chris Stirewalt](#) of Fox News reports on polls that attend to states, not groups.

In the dozen swing states where voters will decide the 2012 presidential election, a new Gallup/USA Today poll shows President Obama losing to the current Republican frontrunners by significant margins.

Obama trailed [Mitt Romney](#) by 5 points, 43 percent to 48 percent and trailed [Newt Gingrich](#) by 3 points, 45 percent to 48 percent, in the survey of these 12 battleground states

It's a pretty big deal.

While Obama continues to tie or lead national polls, his performance in Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New [Mexico](#), North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin matters more. And there, things are not so good for the incumbent.

Part of the gap with the national numbers can be explained by the fractious, boom-and-bust Republican nominating process. While the overwhelming number of Democrats in deep-blue states already know who their nominee will be next year, Republicans are still squabbling amongst themselves in bright-red states like [Georgia](#) and Texas. That will change after there is a nominee and the national number for the GOP standard bearer will even out.

But the biggest problem for Obama is that he is underperforming his national number by so much in the swing states. Compared to his national number, his score falls by 4 points against Gingrich and 5 points against Romney. While Obama believes he can [drive](#) down the support for whoever the Republican nominee may be, it seems unlikely that he can get his own numbers up very much. ...

[James Pethokoukis](#) graphically illustrates Obama's troubles.

And [Reuters](#) notes a Harvard poll showing re-elect problems.

... Harvard surveyed voters age 18 to 29, a group known as Millennials because many were born just before the turn of the millennium in 2000.

They supported Obama over a generic Republican candidate by 6 percentage points. His margin widened to about 11 percentage points if he faces Romney in a general election and to 16 percentage points if his opponent is Gingrich or Texas Governor Rick Perry, the survey said.

But 18 to 29-year-olds have become disillusioned with his job performance, the survey showed. Some 36 percent predict Obama will lose reelection, 30 percent said he will win and 32 percent are unsure.

Less than half of those polled approve of the job Obama is doing and their view of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress is slipping as well, according to the survey.

Only 12 percent of young Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction and less than one-third of those polled approve of the way Obama is managing the economy, results showed.

The web-based survey of 2,028 U.S. citizens age 18 to 29 was conducted between November 23 and December 3. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. ...

Switching subjects, [Pethokoukis](#) quotes a FT article on problems in our economy.

1. From the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, 450,000-550,000 new businesses with at least one employee were created in the US each year. In 2009, the latest year for which records are available, there were just 400,000.
2. More recent numbers suggest that the climate has not improved: the number of incorporated self-employed people, a measure of the health of small businesses, was 5.06m in November, down from 5.37m in November 2009, official figures say.
3. As the rate of new company formation has been slowing, the number of jobs created by each start-up has been falling too – again a trend that began well before the start of the recession. The result is that the total number of jobs created by start-ups, which had been running at 3m-3.5m per year, dropped to just 2.3m in 2009.
4. For most of the 1990s, job creation ran at about 8 percent of employment, with job destruction a little lower at about 7.5 per cent, as the total number of people in work rose. Starting in about 2000, both job creation and destruction began to drift downwards, and carried on falling even as employment recovered after the 2000-01 recession. Job destruction has fallen and is now well below its rate in the 1990s, when the economy was much stronger. Job creation, however, also remains very weak, at only about 6.5 percent of employment. That statistic is the immediate cause of America's persistently high unemployment.

[Spengler](#) catches Tom Friedman looking particularly stupid. We quote from this extensively since it hits the nail on the head when it comes to American universities. That Thomas Friedman would spout stupidity and anti-Semitism surprises me no more than the appearance of a gumball after I put a quarter into the machine and turn the knob. But one line in the New York Times' columnist's (sic) [Dec. 13 tantrum against Israel](#) was worth a double-take: "I sure hope that Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, understands that the standing ovation he got in Congress this year was not for his politics. That ovation was bought and paid for by the Israel lobby. **The real test is what would happen if Bibi tried to speak at, let's say, the University of Wisconsin. My guess is that many students would boycott him and many Jewish students would stay away, not because they are hostile but because they are confused.**"

Why on earth is the "real test" at the University of Wisconsin? For liberals, the only people who count are the smart people, because it is an article of faith that social engineering can fix all the world's problems, and a logical conclusion that only smart people qualify as social engineers. It doesn't matter what the dumb people think. They are the ones who need to be socially engineered. To Friedman, it is irrelevant whether Americans at large support Israel by a 4:1 margin or better, and that support for Israel is growing steadily, as the Gallup Poll consistently shows:

That poll includes dumb people, so it doesn't count. To Friedman, what matters is what university audiences might think. ...

... The American university system exists for the most part to produce the social engineers who will fix all the world's problems. During the 1960s, those of us who had the misfortune to attend the better colleges were taught that our mission was to make the world perfect, through the Great Society, arms control, internationalism, disarmament, and so forth. When the Vietnam War and the urban riots of the 1960s showed that the liberalism of our elders had not fixed the world's problems, we abominated them, and pursued even more radical versions of social engineering. The radicalization of the universities produced a generation of clever people unsuited to productive activity in the real world but skilled at bloviating, and they became the tenured faculty of today. And their salaries, privileges, and perks continued to grow to the point that \$50,000 in annual tuition barely covers them. Overall CPI is up 70% since 1990, but tuition and fees have risen by 300%. ...

... Rather than produce smart people, the university system has dumbed America down. After two generations of academic wheel-spinning, the transformation of universities into Maoist re-education camps with beer kegs has ruined their practical value. The giant sucking sound you hear is the air going out of the higher education bubble. As the New York Times reported in a [Nov. 23 feature](#), "One of the greatest changes is that a college degree is no longer the guarantor of a middle-class existence. Until the early 1970s, less than 11 percent of the adult population graduated from college, and most of them could get a decent job. Today nearly a third have college degrees, and a higher percentage of them graduated from non-elite schools. A bachelor's degree on its own no longer conveys intelligence and capability."

Student loans, with a default rate of 8.8%, are the new subprime debt.

The only good news here is that liberal mainstream culture can't afford to brainwash as many American kids as it used to. Prof. Harvey Mansfield of Harvard University likes to say that the big question in American politics is whether the red states can produce kids faster than professors from the blue states can corrupt them. ...

... long before demographics catch up with liberal culture and extinguish it, like the post-Alexandrine Greeks or the 5th-century Romans, the economic destruction wrought by liberal education will have impoverished most of a generation of American young people.

[Instapundit](#) notes a change at the NY Times;
DOINGS AMONG THE ONE PERCENT:

The New York Times Company today abruptly announced that its 61-year-old chief executive officer, Janet Robinson, will leave at the end of the year, with no permanent successor lined up.

An SEC filing says Ms. Robinson will get \$4.5 million plus health insurance for a 12-month retirement and consulting agreement, including "two-year non-competition, non-solicitation and non-disparagement covenants, a three-year cooperation covenant and an indefinite confidentiality covenant."

The Times itself reported that Ms. Robinson's pay in 2009 was \$4.9 million, so she'll earn almost as much as a retired consultant as as a full-time CEO.

The handy investment calculator on the Times corporate Web site shows that \$10,000 invested in NYT stock the day Ms. Robinson took over as CEO, on December 27, 2004, would be worth

\$1,855.14 today, a decline of 81.45%. The price of the stock went from \$40.59 when she took over to \$7.53 today, and though some dividends were paid out early in her tenure as CEO, the dividend has since been suspended.

Consequences for failure are for the little people.

[Mad Magazine](#) has a cover that catches the spirit of the Obama administration.

Weekly Standard **A Hitchless World**

by Matt Labash

No secrets are being divulged when I report that Christopher Hitchens liked a drink every now and then. Preferably now. He wasn't sloppy about it. In fact, he always seemed in perfect control. (I once saw him steer a beach bike through the streets of Key West without spilling his Scotch.) He just liked to keep the machine well-oiled so he could get on to more important things, like liberating oppressed peoples of the world, knocking out his 1,000 words a day, or starting fights with God, assuming there is one, which he didn't. In some ways, his affection for drink brought us together, setting in motion my most vivid memories of him.

As the Iraq War kicked off in 2003, I was holed up in the Kuwait City Hilton—home to unembedded reporters looking to make their way in. While I'd only briefly met Hitchens once before, word had spread through mutual friends that my hotel room was the last cantina in town. Since the border being sealed meant the black market hooch supply had dried up, we smuggled our amber past customs officials in Listerine bottles. So when Hitchens showed up at my door early one morning kitted for battle with nothing more than his black leather jacket, blue jeans, and a half-smoked pack of Rothman's (he refused to bring Kevlar, saying it made him feel "like a counterfeit"), I offered him a welcome-to-the-war shot of "Listerine," just to be hospitable.

"I don't usually start this early," he said, his glass already gratefully extended, "but holding yourself to a drinking schedule is always the first sign of alcoholism." With our soldiers already rolling across the desert, the humanitarian channels to hitch rides were gummed up, stranding hundreds of reporters on the bench. But Hitchens would not be deterred. On assignment for *Vanity Fair*, he only had a few days to touch Iraqi soil, and watching him get there was a study in forward motion, as he charged just as hard, if not harder, than Lord Cardigan's Light Brigade.

When we missed by minutes a humanitarian convoy some three hours after he'd arrived in Kuwait, he considered it an utter professional failure. "This can't be happening," he despaired. When we made the list the next morning to ride into Iraq with the Red Crescent food trucks, I asked if we should commemorate our successful passage with my disposable camera. "No," he said, hoping to avoid a jinx. "Save it for the bloated corpses. Don't say anything, or something bad will happen."

Something bad did happen when enemy booms went off above our bus. The trip was cancelled "due to weather and instability," as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information official phrased it. But Hitchens didn't require a bus. "Convoys are an insult to journalism, I think." When a producer friend said his driver had a Syrian uncle who worked at the French embassy who could shuttle us around the checkpoints, he suggested Hitchens make him an offer. "What is this, the souk?"

Hitchens said, with the impatience of a man whose mission was being pointlessly delayed. “No Hitchens has ever haggled. Tell him to tell me what he’s worth.”

As we fortified ourselves with liquid courage out of Apollinaris water bottles, he assured me we’d be in safe hands. He totally trusted this driver that he’d yet to lay eyes on. The driver, it turns out, charged us 500 bucks to take my truck, because he didn’t want to get his dirty if we ran into a ditch or were shot in our backs. Meanwhile, Hitchens took care of provisions in case we got stranded by our lonesome in Iraq for weeks at a time. His original plan entailed digging into the humanitarian cornmeal supply if needed. But he finally caved into my caution, and retrieved for us two cheese sandwich platters and a couple bananas. “Bananas!” he exclaimed, “it’s the easiest way to carry food, plus they’re good for you.”

At the first checkpoint, we were turned back by a British Air Force policeman who told us passage was unthinkable due to security reasons. Hitchens was incensed. “Security is only a word, but it’s not a reason, is it?” When we wished to talk to the head Kuwaiti in charge, our efforts to bribe him were met with cool resistance, and our yellow-bellied driver breached his contract and turned back. We made it onto a humanitarian run the next morning, rolling down the Highway of Death, while being periodically pulled over and delayed for hours as the Kuwaitis—worshippers of all things bureaucratic—kept demanding we fill out more paperwork declaring our affiliations. “Who wants to know?” barked Hitchens, castigating reporter colleagues for complying like sheep, while pointing out particularly egregious offenders: “Look at him, reading the list upside down. Do you sign anything they put in front of you? You’ve got to push back hard or you’ll get too used to being pushed around.”

We finally made it into an impoverished Iraqi border town, watching starving, elbow-throwing Iraqis battle each other in front of the food trucks in desperate displays of aggression where the strong hoarded and the weak went hungry. Hitch and I passed out Tic Tacs and Marlboro Reds to children begging for smokes as empty goodwill gestures. “Quite a burg, isn’t it?” he said.

Back on the Kuwaiti side, our minder, Yacoub, told us our bus would once again be delayed so the other buses could catch up and we could convoy in safety. “How are six more buses going to make us safer?” protested Hitchens. After a protracted tussle in which Yacoub demanded Hitchens’s press badges, then after a cooling off in which he gave them back, then after a resumption of hostilities when Hitchens decided he didn’t want his Kuwaiti press badge back as the Kuwaitis were proving themselves the trampling of liberty, Yacoub screamed that Hitchens would “leave Kuwait tonight!” It’s pretty hard to get kicked out of a war. But Hitchens almost managed.

Hitch waved off the threat, and went outside for a smoke, restating his golden rule: “Do something every day against Bastards HQ.” The rest of the press corps, by now, had turned on him, except for one defiant Indian journalist who sidled up beside him to commiserate by whispering, “We are the hollow men. We are the stuffed men.” The lines from T.S. Eliot caused Hitchens to flash his pearly yellows. “You see, only in India do people really bother with English literature anymore,” he beamed.

To say literature mattered to him would be like saying he greatly enjoyed inhaling and exhaling. It was necessity, not luxury - a refuge and a brace against randomness and Bastards HQ. So with the void he’s thoughtlessly left, I’m reminded of a few more lines, ones Christopher sent me just a short time after our travels together when his friend and editor, the *Atlantic’s* Michael Kelly, died near Baghdad. They’re from his beloved First World War poet Wilfred Owen, and

Hitchens would probably shudder with horror and humility that I'd dare apply them to this occasion. But if he can witness my crime from beyond, then he has a lot of explaining to do. And so I expect there'll be silence on his end, sadly:

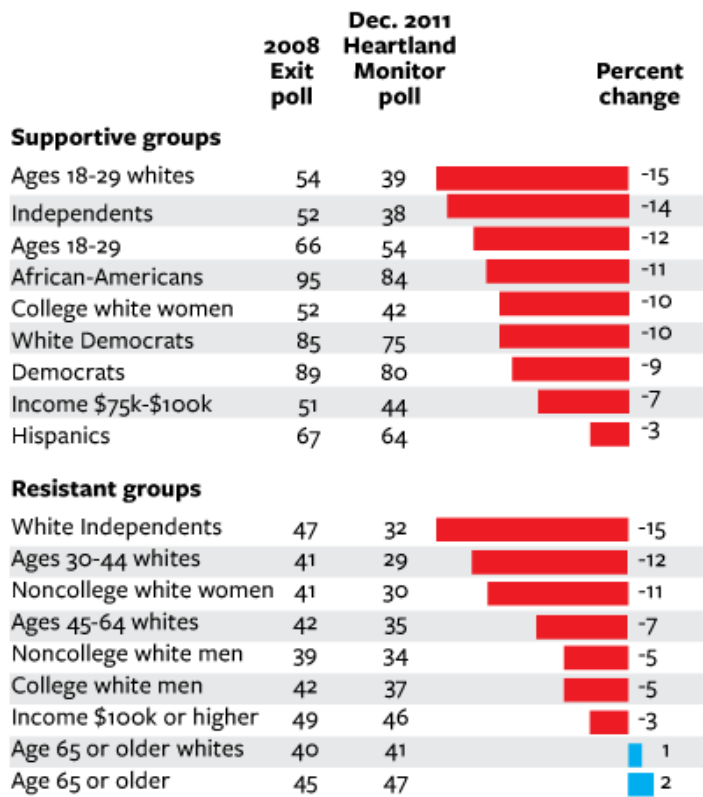
*What candles may be held to speed them all?
 Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
 And each slow dusk, a drawing-down of blinds.*

National Journal
[Where Obama Has Slipped](#)
 by Ronald Brownstein

There's an ominous trend for President Obama in the latest Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor poll: not only is his overall approval rating lagging, but he's lost as much (or even more) ground among groups that favored him in 2008 as among those who resisted him last time.

Obama's Decline

President Obama's approval ratings have slipped across the board, but especially among whites.



Source: Exit polling, Heartland Monitor poll

The chart above compares Obama's vote among key groups in 2008, according to exit polls, and his job approval rating among them in the latest Heartland Monitor released Thursday morning. (The survey, conducted by FTI Strategic Communications, polled 1200 adults by landline telephone and cell phone from November 30 to December 4 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.8 percentage points.)

Overall, Obama has slipped from 52.8 percent of the vote in 2008 to 44 percent approval in the new survey with 49 percent disapproving. As the chart shows, Obama has declined not only in the groups that were always dubious of him, but also with several that enthusiastically joined his winning 2008 majority.

In 2008, Obama assembled what I called a "coalition of the ascendant" - by which I meant he did best among groups that were themselves growing rapidly in society, particularly minorities, the vast Millennial Generation, and the growing ranks of college-educated whites, especially women. Several of those groups have noticeably cooled on him. Obama's approval rating is now 12 percentage points lower than his 2008 share of the vote among young adults (aged 18-29); 11 points lower among African-Americans; and 10 points lower among college-educated white women. Each of those groups provided him a majority of their votes last time. Compared to his 2008 showing, he's tumbled 14 percentage points among independents, another group that provided him a narrow majority of its votes last time. Upper middle-income families earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 annually were an important constituency for Obama last time; but he's dropped from 51 percent of the vote with them to 44 percent approval.

Obama is now facing dismal approval ratings in all corners of the white community. In 2008, he carried 52 percent of those college-educated white women, but attracted much smaller shares among college-educated white men (42 percent), white women without a college degree, the so-called waitress moms (41 percent), and the non-college white men (just 39 percent). The new survey shows that with all four groups his approval rating is appreciably lower than his 2008 performance. He's fallen to 42 percent of the college-educated white women, 37 percent among the college-plus white men, just 34 percent among the non-college white men, and all the way down to 30 percent with the waitress moms.

Looking at whites by age underlines the picture of broad-based weakness. In 2008, Obama carried a 54 percent majority of whites under 30; but in the new poll his approval rating with them has tumbled to 39 percent. His standing with white seniors now is almost identical: in 2008, he won only 40 percent of them, and his approval rating with them now is 41 percent. His numbers are lowest with whites in the prime working years: just 29 percent of whites 30-44, and 35 percent of whites 45-64 say they approve of his performance. In 2008, he won 41 percent of the former and 42 percent of the latter.

Among all whites, now just 35 percent approve of his performance and 58 percent disapprove. That's virtually identical to the results in the 2010 Congressional election, when whites gave 60 percent of their votes to Republicans and just 37 percent to Democrats, according to the National Election Pool exit poll conducted by Edison Research. (The convergence extends down to the subgroups: Obama's approval rating among college-educated white women now exactly equals the party's share of their vote in 2010; among both college-plus and non-college white men, the difference is two percentage points.) In eight Heartland Monitor polls since January 2010, Obama's approval rating among whites has exceeded 40 percent just once.

The groups that have proven most resistant to this trend are Hispanics (where Obama's latest approval rating has slipped just three percentage points from his 2008 vote share); seniors (where he's actually running slightly ahead) and families earning at least \$100,000 annually (where he's also fallen just three percentage points.) Some other surveys - like Gallup's nightly tracking poll - show Obama receiving lower ratings among all three of those groups than the Heartland Monitor does.

With some of the previously sympathetic groups, Obama's actual vote in 2012 is almost certain to exceed his approval rating today, as those voters focus on the choice with his Republican opponent. (Some national polls in fact show Obama running much closer to his 2008 numbers with some of those constituencies when tested against Mitt Romney or Newt Gingrich.) But the diminished ratings Obama is receiving even from groups critical to his 2008 victory underscores the challenge he'll face maintaining both turnout and his margin next year among the pillars of his "coalition of the ascendant."

Fox News

Power Play

Swing State Poll Shows Obama's Narrow Options

by Chris Stirewalt

"It means that the votes that President Obama needs to cobble together are going to be made up more of independents than they were last time. This time, it's going to be much, much closer..."

-- Lanae Erickson of moderate Democratic group Third Way talking to USA Today about the flight of registered Democrats from the party in battleground states.

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While Obama continues to tie or lead national polls, his performance in Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin matters more. And there, things are not so good for the incumbent.

Part of the gap with the national numbers can be explained by the fractious, boom-and-bust Republican nominating process. While the overwhelming number of Democrats in deep-blue states already know who their nominee will be next year, Republicans are still squabbling amongst themselves in bright-red states like Georgia and Texas. That will change after there is a nominee and the national number for the GOP standard bearer will even out.

But the biggest problem for Obama is that he is underperforming his national number by so much in the swing states. Compared to his national number, his score falls by 4 points against Gingrich and 5 points against Romney. While Obama believes he can drive down the support for

whoever the Republican nominee may be, it seems unlikely that he can get his own numbers up very much.

And this is where the president's decision to not stay focused on the economy in his term is really a kick in the pants. In that dozen states, you have once prosperous places that have experienced major busts driven by a continually poor real estate market further retarded by extremely poor job growth (Colorado, Florida, Nevada and North Carolina) or states that were already struggling economically and have seen hopes for a brighter future dashed in the non-recovery recovery of the past three years (Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin).

Only Virginia is an economic success story, thanks in large part from federal outlays that support good incomes for residents in the northern part of the commonwealth and a large military presence across the Old Dominion. That, combined with the same business hospitality seen across the South, has made Virginia a rare swing-state success story. Most of the good economic news in the country has been in states down South or in the Midwest or Appalachia – thanks in part to an ongoing energy boom – where Obama cannot benefit.

Obama spent most of his first two years in office banging away at a health care law that proved to be an unpopular distraction for an economically anxious electorate. In his third year, Obama has been stymied by the historic Republican gains in the House. Despite his promise of a “hard pivot” to jobs, Obama has spent most of his time in 2011 in three pursuits: getting a jump on swing-state campaigning, raising money and engaging in the kind of grinding, small-bore budget battles that generally profit no one involved.

The overarching Obama miscalculation seems to have been that he needed to burn his political capital to get something big done with Democratic supermajorities in the Congress. The first miscalculation was that the legislation would be popular. It is not. The second miscalculation was on how many seats his party would lose in the midterms.

Had Obama lost the same number as [Ronald Reagan](#) did in 1982 (26) or even [Bill Clinton](#) did in 1994 (54), the Democratic plan might have worked better. That's certainly the range Team Obama was thinking about as the president and his crew mostly stayed out of the fight as incumbent Democrats sent out distress signals.

But with a 63-seat shellacking, Obama was not able to pivot to anything except a battle over debt, deficits and spending. Even if Obama had found it in himself to moderate after midterms as Reagan and Clinton had done he was faced with the most Republican house since the 1920s.

Obama's first bad bet was prematurely pursuing the health care law, which may yet be struck down by the [Supreme Court](#). That resulted in the 2010 landslide, making it harder for Obama to reassume his 2008 centrist pose for his re-election campaign. Clinton paid a price for his attempt to overhaul healthcare, but Obama's decision to try again at exactly the wrong political moment looks increasingly like one of the great blunders in American electoral history.

Obama won all 12 of the swing states in 2008, but how many of them will he win again?

He has structural advantages and history on his side in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania (though all three states skewed heavily Republican statewide in 2010). Polls and electoral trends suggest the president is unlikely to prevail in Florida, Iowa, New Hampshire and North Carolina.

That leaves Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio and Virginia as the swingiest swing states and Obama trailing in electoral votes 245 to 242 with 51 up for grabs. And there, team Obama will be counting on the most expensive, aggressive and negative re-election campaign ever waged.

And that's where there's real trouble in the poll for Obama in this poll.

Since 2008, swing state voters have become 9 percent less Democratic. When Obama won the swing states by 8 points, Democrats boasted an 11-point party identification edge. Now it's down to 2-points. The huge advantage was the result of a huge registration drive among young and minority voters by the Obama campaign, the [Democratic Party](#) and labor unions. But it was also the natural result of four unhappy years for the GOP. The [Iraq war](#) and the Panic of 2008 left many moderates feeling frustrated with the party that had been in power for eight years.

Those folks, believing Obama was a sensible moderate, flocked to the blue banner. Having found that Obama was more of a doctrinaire liberal than they had assumed (health care, again) and now having heard the president engaging in an endless loop of partisan attacks, they have drifted away.

The president's promise is that the base will be ready to roll by Election Day (hence all of the raw, red meat he has been serving up) combined with a high-tech, very expensive grassroots organization will compensate for the disaffection of the moderates.

But there, the poll has bad news for Obama too. Democratic enthusiasm, despite the president having devoted most of the fall to baiting his base with attacks on the red team and the plutocratic "1 Percent," trails Republican enthusiasm in swing states 61 percent to 47 percent.

This sets up a scenario in which Obama spends more and more time trying to whip up the dwindling number of Democrats, further annoying moderate independents who are desperate for Washington to be less of a eye-popping failure. With Republicans shunning the most conservative contenders in their race, Obama finds himself with a narrower electoral map and narrower strategic options.

American.com

[3 graphics that show just how much political trouble the Obama reelection effort is in](#)

by James Pethokoukis

The AEI political analysis team has published [a great state-of-the-race piece](#) for the 2012 White House contest. While being the incumbent president is a huge advantage, the following graphics show Barack Obama has his work cut for him.














1. In only one of the competitive purple states shown below is President Obama's most recent approval rating at 50 percent.

The Purple Maze

In only one of the competitive purple states shown below is President Obama's most recent approval rating at 50 percent.

	2012 Electoral College Votes	Number of times a Republican has won since '92	Unemployment % Point Change 2008–2011	Latest available Obama approval
Colorado	9	3	+4.1	46% (August)
Nevada	6	2	+7.9	44 (October)
New Mexico	5	1	+3.5	50 (June)
Iowa	6	1	+2.4	43 (November)
New Hampshire	4	1	+1.9	44 (October)
Ohio	18	2	+3.6	44 (November)
Florida	29	3	+6.0	41 (November)
North Carolina	15	4	+5.6	45 (October)
Virginia	13	4	+3.1	40 (September)
Total Electoral Votes in 2012: 105				

2. Obama has the worst set of approval/confidence metrics of any president in more than a generation.

	Satisfied with the way things are going in the country	Country heading in the right direction	Job approval	Consumer confidence
Obama Nov/Dec 2011	 12%	 22%	42%	64.1
G. W. Bush 2003	 50	 52	55	92.6
Clinton 1995	 24	 21	51	91
G.H.W. Bush 1991	 37	 24	52	68.2
Reagan 1983	 35	 43	54	94.2
Carter 1979	 19	 16	51	61
Nixon 1971	N/A	 26	50	82

3. Barack Obama is the big government candidate. Voters are frustrated with Washington and government.

The Nation's Mood

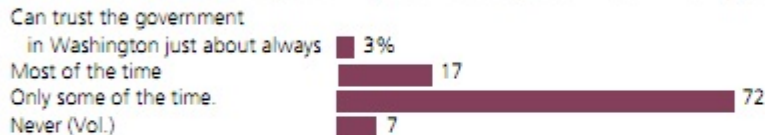
Dissatisfaction Extremely High

Q: Some people say they are basically content with the federal government, others say they are frustrated, and others say they are angry. Which of these best describes how you feel?



Source: Pew Research Center, September–October 2011.

Q: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?



Note: The "only some of the time" 2011 response is the highest Pew has gotten on this question.

Source: Pew Research Center, September–October 2011.

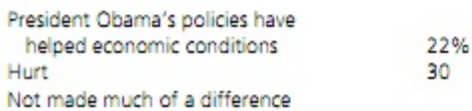
Q: Do you . . . ?



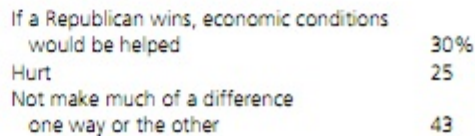
Note: Twenty-two percent approved of the way Democrats in Congress were handling their job. Nineteen percent approved of the way the Republicans in Congress were.

Source: CBS, November 2011.

Q: When it comes to the effect of President Obama's policies in improving economic conditions, would you say his policies have . . . ?



Q: If the Republican candidate wins the presidency, would economic conditions be . . . ?



Reuters

Young voters, once enthusiastic, disenchanted with Obama

Young voters, crucial to President Barack Obama's election in 2008, are disenchanted with him and more think he will lose than win reelection, a Harvard University poll showed on Thursday.

While they favor Obama over any of his Republican challengers, they are not motivated to turn out for him as in 2008.

"They are not particularly inspired by Romney, Gingrich or anyone else," Trey Grayson, director of Harvard's Institute of Politics, said of former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and former U.S. House speaker Newt Gingrich.

Harvard surveyed voters age 18 to 29, a group known as Millennials because many were born just before the turn of the millennium in 2000.

They supported Obama over a generic Republican candidate by 6 percentage points. His margin widened to about 11 percentage points if he faces Romney in a general election and to 16 percentage points if his opponent is Gingrich or Texas Governor Rick Perry, the survey said.

But 18 to 29-year-olds have become disillusioned with his job performance, the survey showed. Some 36 percent predict Obama will lose reelection, 30 percent said he will win and 32 percent are unsure.

Less than half of those polled approve of the job Obama is doing and their view of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress is slipping as well, according to the survey.

Only 12 percent of young Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction and less than one-third of those polled approve of the way Obama is managing the economy, results showed.

The web-based survey of 2,028 U.S. citizens age 18 to 29 was conducted between November 23 and December 3. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

According to the survey, Romney led the pack of candidates vying for votes from young Republican and Independent voters who were at least somewhat likely to head to the polls for a primary or caucus.

Ron Paul, Herman Cain and Gingrich followed the front runner. Cain suspended his campaign on the final day of interviews for the survey.

Among other findings included in the survey, just 21 percent of those polled support the Occupy movement.

Protesters with the Occupy movement, which was launched near Wall Street in New York City and has now spread to other cities nationwide, say the U.S. economic system no longer works to the benefit of most Americans

American.com

[Here's what's really broken in America's broken economy](#)

by James Pethokoukis

The entrepreneurial engine that powers the amazing American jobs machine may be *kaput*. Check out these terrifying statistics from the [Financial Times](#):

1. From the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, 450,000-550,000 new businesses with at least one employee were created in the US each year. In 2009, the latest year for which records are available, there were just 400,000.
2. More recent numbers suggest that the climate has not improved: the number of incorporated self-employed people, a measure of the health of small businesses, was 5.06m in November, down from 5.37m in November 2009, official figures say.
3. As the rate of new company formation has been slowing, the number of jobs created by each start-up has been falling too – again a trend that began well before the start of the recession.

The result is that the total number of jobs created by start-ups, which had been running at 3m-3.5m per year, dropped to just 2.3m in 2009.

4. For most of the 1990s, job creation ran at about 8 percent of employment, with job destruction a little lower at about 7.5 per cent, as the total number of people in work rose. Starting in about 2000, both job creation and destruction began to drift downwards, and carried on falling even as employment recovered after the 2000-01 recession. Job destruction has fallen and is now well below its rate in the 1990s, when the economy was much stronger. Job creation, however, also remains very weak, at only about 6.5 percent of employment. That statistic is the immediate cause of America's persistently high unemployment.

Spengler @ Pajamas Media

[Thomas Friedman and the Higher Education Bubble](#)

by David P. Goldman

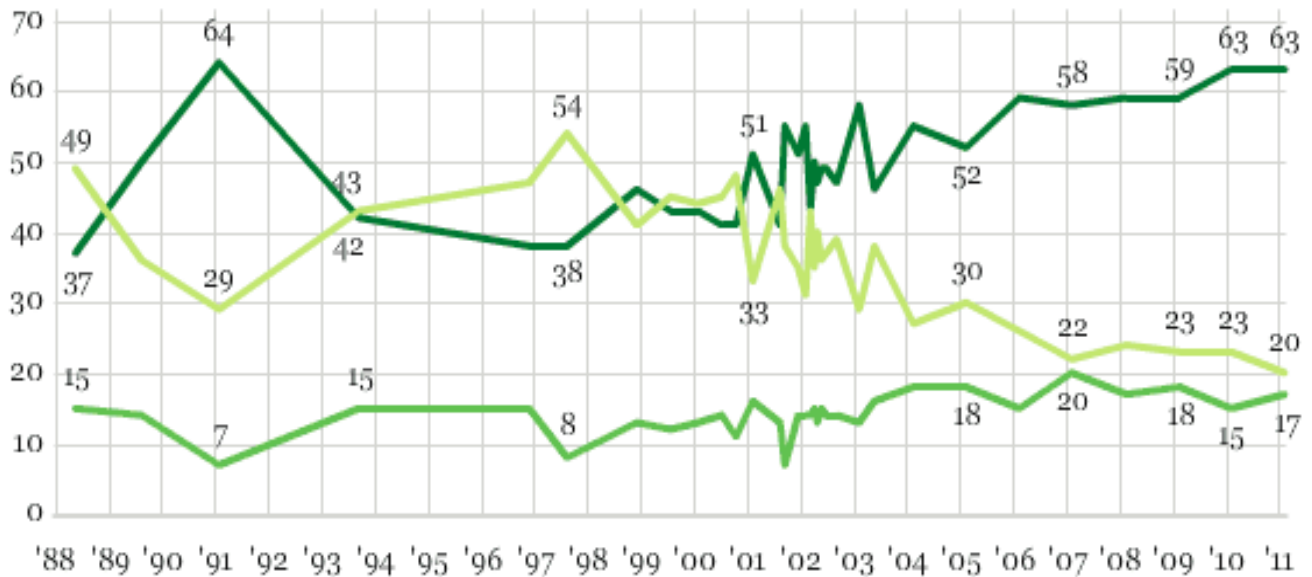
That Thomas Friedman would spout stupidity and anti-Semitism surprises me no more than the appearance of a gumball after I put a quarter into the machine and turn the knob. But one line in the New York Times' columnist's (sic) [Dec. 13 tantrum against Israel](#) was worth a double-take: "I sure hope that Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, understands that the standing ovation he got in Congress this year was not for his politics. That ovation was bought and paid for by the Israel lobby. ***The real test is what would happen if Bibi tried to speak at, let's say, the University of Wisconsin. My guess is that many students would boycott him and many Jewish students would stay away, not because they are hostile but because they are confused.***"

Why on earth is the "real test" at the University of Wisconsin? For liberals, the only people who count are the smart people, because it is an article of faith that social engineering can fix all the world's problems, and a logical conclusion that only smart people qualify as social engineers. It doesn't matter what the dumb people think. They are the ones who need to be socially engineered. To Friedman, it is irrelevant whether Americans at large support Israel by a 4:1 margin or better, and that support for Israel is growing steadily, as the Gallup Poll consistently shows:

Middle East Sympathies, Full Trend

In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

■ % Israelis ■ % Palestinians ■ % Both/Neither/No opinion



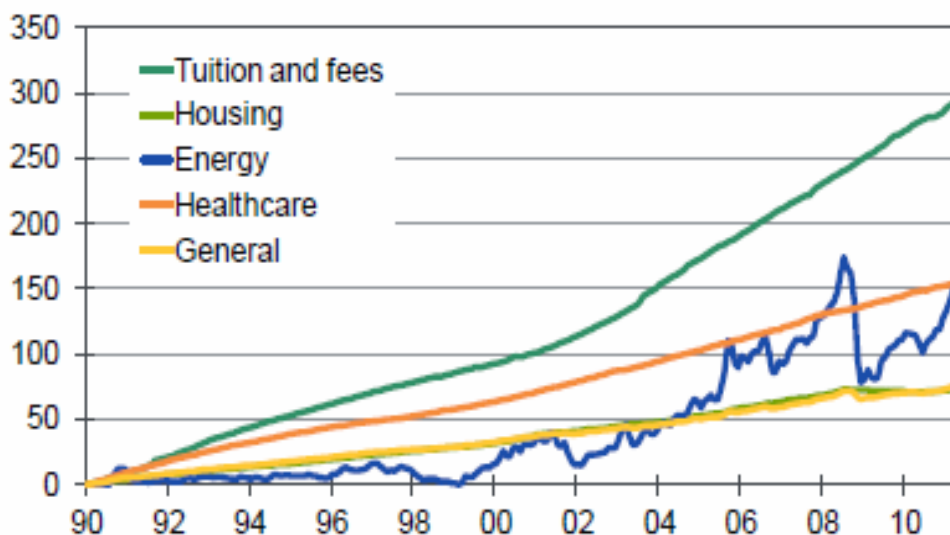
GALLUP

That poll includes dumb people, so it doesn't count. To Friedman, what matters is what *university* audiences might think. The insularity of the liberal mind is astonishing. It brings to mind the anecdote about Emperor Ferdinand of Austria (deposed for incompetence in 1848). He went hunting and shot an eagle. The bird fell to his feet, and Ferdinand said, "It's got to be an eagle—but it's only got one head!"

The American university system exists for the most part to produce the social engineers who will fix all the world's problems. During the 1960s, those of us who had the misfortune to attend the better colleges were taught that our mission was to make the world perfect, through the Great Society, arms control, internationalism, disarmament, and so forth. When the Vietnam War and the urban riots of the 1960s showed that the liberalism of our elders had not fixed the world's problems, we abominated them, and pursued even more radical versions of social engineering. The radicalization of the universities produced a generation of clever people unsuited to productive activity in the real world but skilled at bloviating, and they became the tenured faculty of today. And their salaries, privileges, and perks continued to grow to the point that \$50,000 in annual tuition barely covers them. Overall CPI is up 70% since 1990, but tuition and fees have risen by 300%.

Chart 7: Tuition Vs. Other Price Indices

CPI, cumulative % change since 1990



Source: Moody's

Meanwhile the hard-science faculties of major universities (as well as the better music conservatories) filled up with foreign graduate students, mainly Asians. As I noted in a recent post, MIT's Chinese graduates now get higher starting salaries if they return home. The most disturbing report of all was a [UCLA study](#) showing that only 40% of students who initially chose a science/engineering/math major finished a degree within five years (for blacks and Latinos, the completion rate was closer to 15%). Americans simply won't work hard enough.

Rather than produce smart people, the university system has dumbed America down. After two generations of academic wheel-spinning, the transformation of universities into Maoist re-education camps with beer kegs has ruined their practical value. The giant sucking sound you hear is the air going out of the higher education bubble. As the New York Times reported in a [Nov. 23 feature](#), "One of the greatest changes is that a college degree is no longer the guarantor of a middle-class existence. Until the early 1970s, less than 11 percent of the adult population graduated from college, and most of them could get a decent job. Today nearly a third have college degrees, and a higher percentage of them graduated from non-elite schools. A bachelor's degree on its own no longer conveys intelligence and capability."

Student loans, with a default rate of 8.8%, are the new subprime debt.

The only good news here is that liberal mainstream culture can't afford to brainwash as many American kids as it used to. Prof. Harvey Mansfield of Harvard University likes to say that the big question in American politics is whether the red states can produce kids faster than professors from the blue states can corrupt them. The lure of the elite universities was the promise that kids could have their cake and eat it, too, that is, save the planet and drive a Volvo. The dashed hopes of American students promote the sort of misbehavior we see in the Occupy Wall Street protests. They would do better to sue their universities for fraud and demand a return of their tuition, with interest. Somehow, I don't expect quite the same level of mobilization

for Obama in 2012 as we saw at the universities in 2008. The kids won't have gas money, let alone cars.

The existential question for liberalism becomes: If you so smart, how come you ain't rich? Who cares what an audience of soon-to-be-unemployed kids at the University of Wisconsin might think? With their heads stuffed with literary theory, gender studies, and environmental pseudo-science, they are barely qualified for the cubicle jobs they will obtain if they are lucky. There is some value to a B.A. of any kind; it teaches you to read, memorize, show up on time and repeat what you are told. College graduates, at least, can read the new job manual, which explains why their unemployment rate is much lower than the national average. But few of them will live well, and almost none up to their expectations.

Liberalism, like cancer, is a self-liquidating malady. Eventually it kills the patient. Secular Americans, mainline Protestants, loosely-affiliated Catholics, and Reform and Conservative Jews breed like Germans or Italians, with fewer than 1.5 children per female. By contrast, Hispanic Catholics have 3 children, and evangelicals 2.6 children. America is like Schrodinger's Cat, in a superposed state of being dead and live. And long before demographics catch up with liberal culture and extinguish it, like the post-Alexandrine Greeks or the 5th-century Romans, the economic destruction wrought by liberal education will have impoverished most of a generation of American young people.

Instapundit

DOINGS AMONG THE ONE PERCENT:

The New York Times Company today abruptly announced that its 61-year-old chief executive officer, Janet Robinson, will leave at the end of the year, with no permanent successor lined up.

An SEC filing says Ms. Robinson will get \$4.5 million plus health insurance for a 12-month retirement and consulting agreement, including "two-year non-competition, non-solicitation and non-disparagement covenants, a three-year cooperation covenant and an indefinite confidentiality covenant."

The Times itself reported that Ms. Robinson's pay in 2009 was \$4.9 million, so she'll earn almost as much as a retired consultant as as a full-time CEO.

The handy investment calculator on the Times corporate Web site shows that \$10,000 invested in NYT stock the day Ms. Robinson took over as CEO, on December 27, 2004, would be worth \$1,855.14 today, a decline of 81.45%. The price of the stock went from \$40.59 when she took over to \$7.53 today, and though some dividends were paid out early in her tenure as CEO, the dividend has since been suspended.

Consequences for failure are for the little people.



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