

August 29, 2012

[Jennifer Rubin](#) posts on Ann Romney's speech.

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... "I know this good and decent man for what he is -- warm and loving and patient. He has tried to live his life with a set of values centered on family, faith, and love of one's fellow man. From the time we were first married, I've seen him spend countless hours helping others. I've seen him drop everything to help a friend in trouble, and been there when late-night calls of panic came from a member of our church whose child had been taken to the hospital. You may not agree with Mitt's positions on issues or his politics. Massachusetts is only 13% Republican, so it's not like that's a shock. But let me say this to every American who is thinking about who should be our next President: No one will work harder. No one will care more. No one will move heaven and earth like Mitt Romney to make this country a better place to live!"

...

[Rubin](#) also admired Christie's efforts.

No one in the GOP gives a speech like New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Clapping his hands and punching the air he strode onto the stage at the RNC, and then he proceeded to wow the crowd. If Ann Romney was empathetic, he was tough. If she vouched for her husband, he vouched for Americans. They were the yin and yang of the first night of the convention.

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Citing his own improbable success in a deep blue state he made the case for truth telling. Republicans, he said, will tell the people we "have to fundamentally reduce the size of government." In his view, President Obama is weak and timid. ("They believe the American people need to be coddled.") Republicans, he urged, "believe in telling seniors the truth." ...

[Kim Strassel](#) thinks a second term for Obama would be more of the same. Thank goodness we will avoid it when President Narcissist goes down in flames. *President Obama has a reputation for talking, but not necessarily for saying much. He has achieved new levels of vagueness this election season. Beyond repeating that he's in favor of making the "rich" pay for more government "investment," he hasn't offered a single new idea for a second term. This is deliberate.*

The core of the Obama strategy is to make Americans worry that whatever Mitt Romney does, it will be worse. That's a harder case for Mr. Obama to make if he is himself proposing change. And so the Obama pitch is that this election is a choice between stability (giving Mr. Obama four more years to let his policies finally work) and upheaval (giving Mr. Romney four years to re-ruin the nation).

The pitch is profoundly dishonest. While the choice between four more years of Obama status quo and Mr. Romney is certainly vivid, it isn't accurate. The real contrast is between Mr. Romney's and Mr. Obama's future plans. And while the president hasn't revealed what those plans are, there is plenty of evidence for what a second term would look like.

Let's dispense with the obvious: An Obama second term will be foremost about higher taxes and greater spending. The president has been clear about the former and will consider victory in November a mandate to raise taxes on higher-income Americans and small businesses—at the least. ...

Mark Steyn says there is no war on women, but there is a war on children.

... As George Will pointed out this week, nanny-state solutions (such as Michelle Obama's current campaign to get us all nibbling organic endives) don't work: Overweight kids in schools with high-calorie junk food, 35.5 percent; overweight kids in schools that banned all the bad stuff, 34.8 percent. Indeed, the bloating of government, of entitlements, of debt, and the increase in obesity track each other pretty closely over the past four decades. If all those debt graphs showing how we've looted our future to bribe the present are too complicated for you, look out the window: We are our own walking (or waddling) metaphor for consumption unmoored from production. And, to the Chinese and many others around the world pondering whether America has the self-discipline to get its house in order, a trip to the mall provides its own answer.

So we can't fight a war in Afghanistan, but we can fight a "war on women" that only exists in upscale liberal feminists' heads. We can't do anything about exploding rates of childhood obesity, diabetes and heart disease, but, if you define "health care" as forcing a Catholic institution to buy \$8 contraception for the scions of wealth and privilege, we're right on top of it. And above all, we're doing it for the children, if by "doing it" you mean leaving them with a transgenerational bill unknown to human history – or engaging in what Boston University's Larry Kotlikoff, speaking at the International Institute of Public Finance in Dresden last week, called "child fiscal abuse."

If that sounds a trifle overheated, how about... hmm, "legitimate fiscal rape"? No? Then let's call it a "war on children." Unlike the "war on women," it's real.

John Fund profiles Artur Davis who will be making a major address at the GOP convention.

Only about 3 to 5 percent of voters are truly undecided between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama. Focus groups run by Republicans have found that some of the most effective ads

appealing to those voters feature Democrats and independents speaking candidly about how they voted for Obama in 2008 but are now disappointed.

That's one of the reasons that Republicans have decided to showcase former Democratic congressman Artur Davis of Alabama as a "headline" speaker at their convention. Davis, a moderate black Democrat who voted against Obamacare in 2010 and was crushed later that year in a Democratic primary for governor, has since left the Democratic party and is backing Mitt Romney. He was an early Obama supporter — the first Democratic congressman outside Illinois to endorse the candidate in 2007. He seconded Obama's nomination for president at the 2008 Denver convention.

"The Obama I endorsed was the constitutional-law professor who said he supported the rule of law," Davis explained to me. "Instead, we got someone who always went to the left whenever he reached a fork in the road." Now Davis spends a great deal of time describing his conversion to Republican audiences. Even Jamelle Bouie, a writer for the left-wing American Prospect who doesn't find Davis's conversion story all that compelling, acknowledges its power. "Davis, like Joe Lieberman before him (and Zell Miller before that), can tell a credible story of ideological alienation," Bouie wrote in the Washington Post. "He thought the Democratic Party was a big tent, but now — under Barack Obama — it is a haven for intolerant leftism." ...

David Harsanyi with more on the election.

A little more than a year ago, speaking to [CBS Sunday Morning](#), Barack Obama said, "I don't think we're in danger of another recession, but we are in danger of not having a recovery that's fast enough to deal with what is a genuine unemployment crisis for a whole lot of folks out there, and that's why we need to be doing more."

"... I expect to be judged a year from now on whether or not things have continued to get better."

They haven't.

That's why Obama and friends are singularly focused on critical issues like Mitt Romney's [tax returns](#) and [dog whistles](#). This month, consumer confidence fell to a nine-month low as Americans continued to be anxious about the economy and unemployment. The Conference Board confidence index [fell](#) to 60.6, the lowest level since November. That does not bode well for an unemployment rate that has been over 8 percent for 42 months.

Add to that the fear of rising gas prices — the average price of a gallon of gasoline [spiked](#) 23.5 cents last month — and the potential of European and/or Middle Eastern troubles to shake markets, and a lot of people may be feeling like a brittle economy is about to shatter.

But, hey, have you heard that Mitt Romney made a birther joke!? ...

Charles Gasparino analyzes Buffett's portfolio moves and spots a trend.

Is the sky really falling on state and local governments, as Warren Buffett's recent bearish bet on municipal debt suggests?

Much of the media and even some sophisticated investors think so — even if Buffett's bet against munis was only cryptically disclosed in a quarterly filing of his investment company Berkshire Hathaway (he has yet to make a public comment on it).

And even if, when you dig deeper, the move suggests Buffett wasn't making a bet against all munis but only those that adopt some of the same policies he and President Obama are advocating on a national level. ...

Powerline introduces the first cartoon today.

Michael Ramirez is in Tampa, attending the convention. He took time out to draw this cartoon, which contrasts Hurricane Isaac with the force that has really brought destruction to America: Barack Obama's left-wing, crony-socialist policies.

Right Turn

Ann Romney at the RNC

by Jennifer Rubin

The Republican convention finally got underway today. The expectations for Ann Romney were sky high. Could she “humanize” her husband? Could she single-handedly close the gender gap? Time will tell, but she and a former Democratic congressman from Alabama delivered what Republicans had been looking for, that is, some genuine emotion and personal connection.

It was “We built it” night, with the president’s ill-chosen words repeated again and again by speakers and in video sequences. Before Ann Romney spoke, an energetic Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a feisty South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (who got the crowd cheering on voter ID, immigration enforcement and the Boeing labor case) and a forceful Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell made the case for Romney as a conservative reformer who wouldn’t fight them tooth and nail. (McDonnell declared: “When Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan get to work with Susana Martinez...Scott Walker...John KasichTerry Branstad and governors from both parties across this country, we will get people back to work! Our great country can no longer afford the job-destroying policies coming out of Washington D.C.”)Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, former Romney rival Rick Santorum (the only one who raised the pro-life issue) and Texas Senate candidate Ted Cruz also gave solid conservative speeches, but it was Democrat-turned-Republican Artur Davis gave the most stirring and poetic address, filled with appeals to Democrats with regrets about Obama, humorous jibes at the president and the fervent energy of a convert to the anti-Obama cause.

And then there was Ann Romney. The crowd erupted for the first time. She took a moment to recognize and ask for hopes and prayers for those in the path of hurricane Isaac. "I want to talk to you about love," she began. She spoke in quiet tones, the crowd hushed. She spoke in emotional terms about the struggling families and "especially the moms," whom she saluted, extolled and empathized with. "Everything has become harder," she said.

She migrated to her husband, her own family story and her father-in-law. She described her early married days, in humble circumstances, and the daunting experience of becoming a mother at 22 years old when her husband was in graduate school. "I read somewhere that Mitt and I have a 'storybook marriage.' Well, in the storybooks I read, there were never long, long, rainy winter afternoons in a house with five boys screaming at once. And those storybooks never seemed to have chapters called MS or Breast Cancer. A storybook marriage? No, not at all. What Mitt Romney and I have is a real marriage."

She spoke with personal conviction, bringing the crowd to her feet with this personal endorsement of her husband:

I know this good and decent man for what he is -- warm and loving and patient. He has tried to live his life with a set of values centered on family, faith, and love of one's fellow man. From the time we were first married, I've seen him spend countless hours helping others. I've seen him drop everything to help a friend in trouble, and been there when late-night calls of panic came from a member of our church whose child had been taken to the hospital. You may not agree with Mitt's positions on issues or his politics. Massachusetts is only 13% Republican, so it's not like that's a shock. But let me say this to every American who is thinking about who should be our next President: No one will work harder. No one will care more. No one will move heaven and earth like Mitt Romney to make this country a better place to live!

She continued that her husband "was not handed success... He built it [the crowd cheered]." She went on to explain her husband's reticence: "Mitt doesn't like to talk about how he has helped others because he sees it as a privilege, not a political talking point. And we're no different than the millions of Americans who quietly help their neighbors, their churches and their communities. They don't do it so that others will think more of them. They do it because there *is* no greater joy. 'Give and it shall be given unto you.'" She delivered perhaps the most compelling defense of his Bain years: "The jobs that grew from the risks they took have become college educations, first homes. That success has helped fund scholarships, pensions, and retirement funds. This is the genius of America: dreams fulfilled help others launch new dreams." Looking straight ahead she firmly declared, "I can only stand here tonight, as a wife, a mother, a grandmother, an American, and make you this solemn commitment: This man will not fail."

She showed a determination and soberness that was appropriate to a still doubting public. No one speech is going to turn an election. But Ann Romney delivered as promised. Romney and his team should consider themselves lucky to have a candidate's wife who can look her fellow Americans in the eye and sound both sincere and ebullient. She is indeed his greatest asset.

Right Turn

Chris Christie: A force of nature

by Jennifer Rubin

No one in the GOP gives a speech like New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Clapping his hands and punching the air he strode onto the stage at the RNC, and then he proceeded to wow the crowd. If Ann Romney was empathetic, he was tough. If she vouched for her husband, he vouched for Americans. They were the yin and yang of the first night of the convention.

Ironically for a convention with so many people chattering about “likability”, Christie declared, citing his mother, that it is “better to be respected than loved.” It was a powerful counterpoint to the hang-wringing and media fixation over likability.

Christie turned likability, or as he called it, popularity, into a liability. His was a tough message, repeatedly drawing contrasts with the Democrats. “Our ideas are right for America. Their ideas have failed.”

Citing his own improbable success in a deep blue state he made the case for truth telling. Republicans, he said, will tell the people we “have to fundamentally reduce the size of government.” In his view, President Obama is weak and timid. (“They believe the American people need to be coddled.”) Republicans, he urged, “believe in telling seniors the truth.”

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) is wonky, but Christie is no less enamored with the power of conservative ideas. He told the crowd that Republicans win when the focus is on their ideas, while Democrats win when it isn't. Through a series of parallel phrases he put Romney-Ryan on the side of families and kids, casting Obama as the prisoner of special interest groups. (“They believe in teachers unions. We believe in teachers.”)

He repeatedly had the crowd on its feet, making a virtue of unpopular, tough-minded politics. (“Real leaders don't follow polls. Real leaders change polls.”) And as he frequently does, he appealed to history, urging Americans to be up to the moment. “Every generation will be judged and so will we.” And he rejected the Obama scare tactics and victim-mongering. (“We have never been victims of our destiny.”)

Christie isn't everyone's cup of tea. But he was the crowd's hero tonight, a big, brash fellow unafraid to voice a conservative message and unconcerned with being taken as too tough, too forthright and too dismissive of the president.

What would the race have been like had he run for the presidency? Hard to say, although we would have had many great speeches. In any event, he planted the flag in the ground tonight. He's a force to be reckoned with now and in the future. Romney and Ryan have their work cut out to top Christie. On a scale of 1 to 10, his was an 11.

WSJ

The Silent Second-Term Agenda

Despite the Democrats' shellacking in 2010, the president moved left. Re-election in November will reinforce his view that he was correct to do so.

by Kimberley Strassel

President Obama has a reputation for talking, but not necessarily for saying much. He has achieved new levels of vagueness this election season. Beyond repeating that he's in favor of making the "rich" pay for more government "investment," he hasn't offered a single new idea for a second term. This is deliberate.

The core of the Obama strategy is to make Americans worry that whatever Mitt Romney does, it will be worse. That's a harder case for Mr. Obama to make if he is himself proposing change. And so the Obama pitch is that this election is a choice between stability (giving Mr. Obama four more years to let his policies finally work) and upheaval (giving Mr. Romney four years to re-ruin the nation).

The pitch is profoundly dishonest. While the choice between four more years of Obama status quo and Mr. Romney is certainly vivid, it isn't accurate. The real contrast is between Mr. Romney's and Mr. Obama's future plans. And while the president hasn't revealed what those plans are, there is plenty of evidence for what a second term would look like.

Let's dispense with the obvious: An Obama second term will be foremost about higher taxes and greater spending. The president has been clear about the former and will consider victory in November a mandate to raise taxes on higher-income Americans and small businesses—at the least.

Meanwhile, no matter how the coming budget sequester sorts out, nobody should forget why it came into being: It was the result of Mr. Obama's refusal to consider any real changes to Social Security or Medicare. There will be no reason to budge in a second term. Absent reform to these drivers of debt, and given Mr. Obama's ambitions to further "invest" in education, energy and infrastructure, a second term means proposals for even broader and bigger tax hikes—and not just for his favorite targets. Continued and growing deficits are likely as well.

Presidents often use re-election to revive leftover policy objectives. A New Yorker magazine article in June noted: "The President has said that the most important policy he could address in his second term is climate change." Such an unpopular policy focus might seem crazy if Republicans hold the House, but then again Mr. Obama will want an issue where he can press his advantage and blame an obstinate GOP. The president has to date been unconcerned by how his agenda hurts congressional Democrats; he's unlikely to begin caring once he has been re-elected.

Yet since the probable outcome of his approach would be continued gridlock, his real efforts will be devoted to fine-tuning the regulatory apparatus he has designed specifically to go around Congress—as the administration has done the past two years. The Environmental Protection Agency in particular will resurrect rules it delayed implementing before the election (see: costly ozone regulations) and move to take over new areas like natural-gas fracking.

The same goes for other agencies, from the Labor Department to the Securities and Exchange Commission. The National Labor Relations Board will continue to cement union dominance over employers. The Solyndras will continue. What Mr. Obama cannot accomplish via regulation, he will attempt through executive order—much as he did with his recent immigration directive.

Most voters understand that a second Obama term means the continuation of ObamaCare and the Dodd-Frank financial regulations. But there is also the *carte blanche* that re-election will give the president to supercharge those laws, which are only now entering key rulemaking periods. The same Obama appointees who have already taken vast liberties with these laws (see: HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius's ObamaCare slush fund) will be crafting the new regulations. The bureaucrats will also have four more years to put in place key civil servants who can be counted on to keep the rules going even past an Obama administration.

It is likely the Supreme Court will offer up another vacancy, and Mr. Obama might finally have his chance to shift the balance of the court. A slew of appellate-court positions are also in limbo as the campaign proceeds; they would be filled by a second-term Obama.

Just as important are the things Mr. Obama *will not* do. His record gives no indication he will revive America's leadership in free trade. Nor is he likely to restore America's influence in the international arena. And so we will inch closer to a nuclear-armed Iran and the threats that the regime will pose to international peace and order.

None of this is hyperbole. Mr. Obama is open about his tax aims, is proud of his spending and has never apologized for his regulatory ambitions. Despite a shellacking in the midterms, he moved left, and a November victory will reinforce his sense that he was correct to do so.

While Democrats will take careful pains in coming convention weeks to avoid outlining the president's intentions, they are sitting in plain sight. The real choice this fall will be between Mitt Romney's reform agenda and a Supersized Obama. No wonder the Democrats are keeping mum.

Orange County Register

[War on women? The real war is on children](#)

by Mark Steyn

The Democratic Party, never inclined to look a gift horse in the mouth, does have a tendency to flog him to death. So it is with a fellow called Todd Akin, a GOP Senate candidate who unburdened himself of some ill-advised thoughts on abortion and "legitimate rape," and put Missouri back in play for the Democrats. Less-ambitious political parties would be content with that little windfall, but the Dems have decided to make – what's his name again? Oh, yeah – this guy Akin the face of the Republican Party. I mean, Mitt pretty much sees "venture capitalism" as a fancy term for legitimate rape, right?

California's Barbara Boxer opened the bidding this week in her familiar low-key style. "There is a war against women, and Romney and Ryan – if they are elected – would become its top generals," Sen. Boxer told a Planned Parenthood meeting. "There is a sickness out there in the Republican Party, and I'm not kidding. Maybe they don't like their moms or their first wives."

Reichsmarschall Romney and Generalissimo Ryan are both still married to their first wives, so it must be the moms. No wonder Ryan wants to throw his off a cliff.

To win the "war on women," the party's general staff are planning their own Normandy invasion, adding to their convention lineup a host of stellar "pro-choice" speakers, including Desperate Housewife Eva Longoria, Planned Parenthood's head honchette Cecile Richards, NARAL Pro-Choice America abortion supremo Nancy Keenan, and Georgetown Law's contraceptive coed Sandra Fluke. President Obama's lavishly remunerated strategists have presumably run the focus groups and crunched the numbers, but, if I were a moderate, centrist, eternally indecisive swing-voter in a critical state, and I switched on the Democratic convention to find a bunch of speakers warning about the threat to your abortion rights I would find it a very curious priority in the summer of 2012.

None of us can know what the world will be like four years from now, but one thing can be said for certain: an American woman will still enjoy her "right to choose." Whether one supports or opposes abortion, the practical reality is that the biggest "threat" to your "right" to one is that you might have to drive a little bit further for it. Still, one should never underestimate the peculiar lens through which "progressives" view reality: The "war" on women boils down to Sandra Fluke, a 30-year-old schoolgirl, demanding Georgetown Law should pay for its students' contraceptives – notwithstanding that the entire cost of that four-year contraceptive bill works out to less than the first week's paycheck of a Georgetown Law graduate's first job (average starting salary: \$160 grand per year). War is hell.

If you think Barbara Boxer's right about Gen. Romney's war on woman, feel free to waste your vote. But what else is likely to happen between now and the next time you cast a presidential ballot? We've rehearsed the fiscal stuff in this space before: China becoming the world's biggest economy, another American downgrade, total U.S. liabilities equivalent to about three times the entire planet's GDP. A "nonpartisan" Pew Research study says the American middle class faces its "worst decade in modern history" – and the first bump down starts Jan. 1: The equally "nonpartisan" Congressional Budget Office now says that the tax and budget changes due to take effect at the beginning of 2013 will put the country back in recession and increase unemployment. This is a revision of their prediction earlier this year that in 2013 the economy would contract by 1.3 percent. Now they say 2.9 percent. These days, CBO revisions only go one way – down. They're gonna need steeper graph paper. In a global economy, atrophy goes around like syphilis in the Gay Nineties: A moribund U.S. economy further mires Europe, and both slow growth in China, which means fewer orders for resource-rich nations ... Four wheels spinning in the mud, and none with a firm enough grip to pull the vehicle back on to solid ground.

Oh, well, it was like that in the Thirties, and, then, as the ever-optimistic Paul Krugman likes to trill, the Second World War came along to stimulate the economy. Given that in Afghanistan the U.S. and its allies have just taken 11 years to lose to goatherds with fertilizer, I'm not sure I'd want to bet on the global-conflagration chips falling our way next time round.

But don't worry, Obamacare will "lower costs." Since passage of the bill in 2010, the CBO has revised its estimate of Obamacare's gross costs over 10 years. Can you guess in which direction, boys and girls? Yes, up from \$944 billion to \$1.856 trillion. That's some "revision." I wonder where it'll be in another two years.

Well, I'm not the CBO, but I'll take a wild guess: Obamacare is going to be expensive on a scale unknown to European health systems. Look around you. Americans are not Swedes. Obesity rate in the United States: 36 percent; Sweden: 9.7 percent; Japan: 3.2 percent; China: 2.9 percent; India: 0.7 percent. Ours is a country where 78 million people (or about the entire population of Germany) are classified by the Centers for Disease Control as "obese" – including over 40 million women. If 40 million women have it, isn't that a "women's health" issue? Perhaps even a bigger "women's health" issue than the right of thirtysomething students to free contraception? It's the first thing the average American of, say, 1950 would notice if you catapulted him forward from his midcentury Main Street to today: not how amazing all these computer gizmos are, but how large and sick today's Americans look.

As George Will pointed out this week, nanny-state solutions (such as Michelle Obama's current campaign to get us all nibbling organic endives) don't work: Overweight kids in schools with high-calorie junk food, 35.5 percent; overweight kids in schools that banned all the bad stuff, 34.8 percent. Indeed, the bloating of government, of entitlements, of debt, and the increase in obesity track each other pretty closely over the past four decades. If all those debt graphs showing how we've looted our future to bribe the present are too complicated for you, look out the window: We are our own walking (or waddling) metaphor for consumption unmoored from production. And, to the Chinese and many others around the world pondering whether America has the self-discipline to get its house in order, a trip to the mall provides its own answer.

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National Review

Artur Davis's Conversion

by John Fund

Only about 3 to 5 percent of voters are truly undecided between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama. Focus groups run by Republicans have found that some of the most effective ads appealing to those voters feature Democrats and independents speaking candidly about how they voted for Obama in 2008 but are now disappointed.

That's one of the reasons that Republicans have decided to showcase former Democratic congressman Artur Davis of Alabama as a "headline" speaker at their convention. Davis, a moderate black Democrat who voted against Obamacare in 2010 and was crushed later that year in a Democratic primary for governor, has since left the Democratic party and is backing Mitt Romney. He was an early Obama supporter — the first Democratic congressman outside Illinois to endorse the candidate in 2007. He seconded Obama's nomination for president at the 2008 Denver convention.

“The Obama I endorsed was the constitutional-law professor who said he supported the rule of law,” Davis explained to me. “Instead, we got someone who always went to the left whenever he reached a fork in the road.” Now Davis spends a great deal of time describing his conversion to Republican audiences. Even Jamelle Bouie, a writer for the left-wing *American Prospect* who doesn’t find Davis’s conversion story all that compelling, acknowledges its power. “Davis, like Joe Lieberman before him (and Zell Miller before that), can tell a credible story of ideological alienation,” Bouie wrote in the *Washington Post*. “He thought the Democratic Party was a big tent, but now — under Barack Obama — it is a haven for intolerant leftism.”

Davis himself puts it very simply. He wanted to get beyond race and run as a moderate who would unite people of all kinds behind a reform agenda. “Democrats know that only a moderate can win for their party now in Alabama — the legislature even went GOP in 2010 — but I was a threat to their interest groups. The teachers’ union knew I backed charter schools and they preferred to have a Republican elected rather than a Democrat who might move that party to the center.”

He says he is surprised at the reaction he’s gotten from conservative audiences. “You have a converted sinner who’s standing in front of you right now, and I thank you for letting me stand here,” he told a tea-party group in Falls Church, Va., this summer. “I used to go to the Baptist church in Birmingham, and Baptists are good folks. But they won’t let nobody preach on week one, or month one, like y’all will.”

A major reason Republicans have embraced Davis with such enthusiasm is the manner in which he abandoned liberalism. He wrote an op-ed piece for his hometown newspaper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, in October 2011, endorsing a voter-ID law being debated in the Alabama legislature.

Requiring a photo ID in order to vote may be supported by a large majority of Americans — 74 percent in the latest *Washington Post* poll (including 65 percent of African Americans) — but it has been portrayed by liberal elites as a discriminatory tool designed to suppress black turnout.

One of those voices was Bill Clinton, who in July 2011 excoriated the nationwide movement to pass voter-ID laws as the return of Jim Crow. “There has never been in my lifetime, since we got rid of the poll tax, and all the other Jim Crow burdens on voting, the determined effort to limit the franchise that we see today.”

Davis took his party’s former president on. He wrote: “I was disappointed to see Bill Clinton, a very good president and an even greater ex-president, compare voter ID to Jim Crow, and it is chilling to see the intimidation tactics brought to bear on African-American, Democratic legislators in Rhode Island who had the nerve to support a voter ID law in that very liberal state.”

The former congressman had real credibility in blowing the whistle on this preposterous rhetoric. The two-thirds black district Davis had represented from 2003 to 2011 included Selma, home of the National Voting Rights Museum, and other landmarks of the 1960s struggle for racial equality and voting rights. He had been an active member of the Congressional Black Caucus, and his career had begun with an internship at the Southern Poverty Law Center, an iconic civil-rights group.

So it was startling to read Davis’s mea culpa:

I've changed my mind on voter ID laws — I think Alabama did the right thing in passing one — and I wish I had gotten it right when I was in political office. When I was a congressman, I took the path of least resistance on this subject for an African American politician. Without any evidence to back it up, I lapsed into the rhetoric of various partisans and activists who contend that requiring photo identification to vote is a suppression tactic aimed at thwarting black voter participation.

Davis recognized that the “most aggressive” voter suppression in the African-American community “is the wholesale manufacture of ballots, at the polls and absentee, in parts of the Black Belt.” A predominantly black region in Alabama known for its dark, rich soil, the Black Belt comprises some of the poorest counties in the state — and some of the most prone to voter fraud.

“Voting the names of the dead, and the nonexistent, and the too-mentally-impaired to function, cancels out the votes of citizens who are exercising their rights — that’s suppression by any light,” continued Davis in his op-ed. “If you doubt it exists, I don’t; I’ve heard the peddlers of these ballots brag about it, I’ve been asked to provide the funds for it, and I am confident it has changed a few close local election results.”

The reaction to Davis’s column intrigued him. Some people were angry. “I saw it and was frustrated by it,” Representative Emanuel Cleaver, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, told *Roll Call* last fall. “I don’t know what that’s all about. There are some people who believe he’s getting ready to switch parties. I have no idea. Needless to say, he doesn’t confide in the CBC.” Davis said he was disappointed that some critics claimed he was speaking out over bitterness that he had lost the Democratic primary for governor. “I gave it my best shot, but they should be concerned that in defeating a moderate like me they handed Republicans every single statewide elected office,” he told me. “But rather than look in the mirror, they prefer to cast stones.”

They are still casting them. Last Thursday, the Democratic National Committee posted a YouTube video showing Artur Davis seconding Obama back at the 2008 convention. The video ends as follows: “The Artur Davis speech at the GOP convention isn’t about Barack Obama. It’s about Artur Davis.”

Davis isn’t concerned. “My old Democratic friends are reminding me of an old rule: In politics, if you fear someone is getting through and people are listening, attack them as fast as you can,” he says.

Davis’s future as a Republican is unclear. He has given thought to running for Congress in northern Virginia, his new home. He also has said he might be interested in a post in a Romney administration. As a former prosecutor and Harvard Law School graduate, he would be qualified for many positions. One possible job might be head of the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice. Putting Davis in charge of the federal office that monitors voter-ID laws passed by states and enforces civil-rights laws would be a clear signal that the hyper-politicized Eric Holder era was over at Justice.

Human Events

Obama in Aug. 2011: No danger of another recession

by David Harsanyi

A little more than a year ago, speaking to [CBS Sunday Morning](#), Barack Obama said, “I don’t think we’re in danger of another recession, but we are in danger of not having a recovery that’s fast enough to deal with what is a genuine unemployment crisis for a whole lot of folks out there, and that’s why we need to be doing more.”

“... I expect to be judged a year from now on whether or not things have continued to get better.”

They haven’t.

That’s why Obama and friends are singularly focused on critical issues like Mitt Romney’s [tax returns](#) and [dog whistles](#). This month, consumer confidence fell to a nine-month low as Americans continued to be anxious about the economy and unemployment. The Conference Board confidence index [fell](#) to 60.6, the lowest level since November. That does not bode well for an unemployment rate that has been over 8 percent for 42 months.

Add to that the fear of rising gas prices — the average price of a gallon of gasoline [spiked](#) 23.5 cents last month — and the potential of European and/or Middle Eastern troubles to shake markets, and a lot of people may be feeling like a brittle economy is about to shatter.

But, hey, have you heard that Mitt Romney made a birther joke!?

There’s plenty of talk about hard economic data (improving housing numbers, for instance) failing to sync up with consumer sentiment. Perhaps Americans have an intuitive reluctance to believe we’re in an actual recovery, because “recovery” [is not what they see](#). And with an election bearing down on them, it’s difficult for them to ferret out any reason to be positive about the future. Can you blame them?

As the Congressional Budget Office [reported](#), the U.S. economy will likely slip back into recession in 2013 if Washington can’t make a deal on the federal budget. You’ve, no doubt, heard about the array of scheduled tax increases that will hit come January. The CBO states, in its biannual report, that those tax hikes, coupled with automatic spending cuts, would shrink the economy by 0.5 percent and push unemployment to 9 percent with “economic conditions in 2013 that will probably be considered a recession.”

There is only one place in the United States where people are optimistic about their economic future — and with this president, they have every reason to be.

*Top 10 States,
Gallup Economic Confidence Index*

	Index score, 2012 (first half)
District of Columbia	+29
Minnesota	-6
South Dakota	-8
Maryland	-9
North Dakota	-10
Iowa	-10
Hawaii	-11
Nebraska	-14
Utah	-15
Virginia	-16
Texas	-16
Massachusetts	-16

Gallup Daily tracking, January-June 2012

GALLUP

That Gallup index is based on daily polls of “American adults about current economic conditions and perceptions of where the economy is heading.”

But as long as the president is focused on Bain Capital, I’m sure everything will be ok.

NY Post

[Bonds away! Buffett bets against Bam](#)

by Charles Gasparino

Is the sky really falling on state and local governments, as Warren Buffett’s recent bearish bet on municipal debt suggests?

Much of the media and even some sophisticated investors think so — even if Buffett’s bet against munis was only cryptically disclosed in a quarterly filing of his investment company Berkshire Hathaway (he has yet to make a public comment on it).

And even if, when you dig deeper, the move suggests Buffett wasn’t making a bet against *all* munis but only those that adopt some of the same policies he and President Obama are advocating on a national level.

Warren Buffett, of course, is a great investor, but a lot of what he does, particularly these days, has a political message as well.

He has wholeheartedly supported President Obama’s economic agenda of higher spending and higher taxes on wealth creators to pay for the welfare state both he and the president envision.

He even allowed the president to use him as a political prop and put the Buffett name on a new tax that won't raise much revenue but may win the president a few more votes as he fights for re-election.

Which is why the last thing he wants to do is explain that his move isn't a bet against all bonds but just some of those in areas that have adopted the same misguided fiscal policies both he and the president are advocating on a national level.

Yes, states and cities face daunting economic challenges: high, unfunded pensions, dwindling tax revenues and (particularly here in New York) a continued addiction to debt to pay our bills. But when you look at the stats, bond defaults, outside a few instances, are rare, and you can make a good case that places have weathered the country's economic malaise by rejecting the very core of Obamanomics.

Governors like Chris Christie in New Jersey, Scott Walker of Wisconsin and (to a far lesser extent) Andrew Cuomo here in New York have cut government, demanded concessions from workers and avoided economy-crippling tax hikes. Contrast this with those state and local governments that face the greatest fiscal difficulties and where defaults are actually occurring. They all seem to have certain things in common, namely they've adopted the same welfare-state policies advocated by Obama and his buddy Buffett.

Of course, it's hard to generalize when it comes to municipal bonds. Municipalities default for many reasons — Jefferson County, Ala., made a bad interest-rate bet on debt used to finance a large public project — so it's not just the economy and lower tax revenues that cause fiscal stress and bond defaults, but also poor management.

Also keep in mind, Buffett didn't hold actual municipal bonds through Berkshire Hathaway; he owned a credit-default swap, an agreement to insure another investor's portfolio (in this case, the estate of the bankrupt Wall Street firm, Lehman Brothers). So he may have simply been selling his portfolio because it had made a decent profit, not because he thinks the entire municipal market will soon be awash in a sea of defaults.

We have a better handle on debt Buffett is betting against. Calling around, his exposure doesn't appear to be in a broadly diversified portfolio of municipal bonds, but rather in the debt of about a dozen governments, with significant exposure to two of the most cash-strapped states, California and Illinois.

And that should tell you a lot about the move. California has the dubious distinction of being home to three cities that lavish their government workers with such costly salaries and pensions that they've had to announce bankruptcy and either have, or will, default on their debt.

On the state level, California Gov. Jerry Brown also thinks raising taxes is the way to save the state, even as wealth producers and business bolt for lower-cost states. He's banking on a "stimulus plan" involving a high-speed railway — an \$8 billion boondoggle that the state can't afford and that, judging by the Obama stimulus, will leave California with more debt and few new jobs.

The fiscal situation in Illinois is no better than in California. Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn hasn't been shy about hiking taxes, but the state's deficit continues to swell; its pensions are woefully underfunded, and businesses are leaving in droves for nearby Wisconsin.

Maybe that's why Buffett has been loath to publicly clarify his big muni bet: If he did he'd have to concede his folly and the folly of the president he supports as well.

Powerline

[The Really Destructive Hurricane](#)

by John Hinderaker

Michael Ramirez is in Tampa, attending the convention. He took time out to draw this cartoon, which contrasts Hurricane Isaac with the force that has really brought destruction to America: Barack Obama's left-wing, crony-socialist policies:





