

April 25, 2012

Matthew Continetti says the dog wars have been fun, but Romney should not spend all his time trading tweets.

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Similar thoughts about focus from **Craig Pirrong**.

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Jennifer Rubin posts five things we have learned about the Romney campaign.

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Short from [The Hill](#) on troubles raising money for The One.

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The pro-Republican American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS have raised nearly \$100 million and plan to spend a total of \$250 million on this election. If Priorities USA and other pro-Democratic super-PACs can't pick up the fundraising pace Democrats and their allies could be vastly outspent by their opposite groups this year.

[John McCormack](#) in the Weekly Standard provides an overview of the contest in Wisconsin.

Governor Scott Walker is facing the fight of his political life. On June 5, in the third gubernatorial recall election in U.S. history, Wisconsin voters will either choose to keep Walker in office or elect a Democrat. Polls show a tight race with Walker hovering at or slightly below 50 percent and holding a small lead over potential opponents. Walker won't know which Democratic opponent he'll face until May 8, when the recall primary is held. Meanwhile, he's letting the state of Illinois serve as a stand-in.

Speaking on April 19 to machinists in blue-collared shirts, jeans, and boots at the Trace-A-Matic Corporation, Walker contrasts Wis-consin's record with that of its neighbor to the south. “A year ago their unemployment rate was above 9 percent,” he says. “And today, a year later, it's still

above 9 percent because they made some poor choices. They raised taxes on businesses and individuals. On individuals, believe it or not, they raised it by 66 percent.”

And Wisconsin? Unemployment has dropped from 7.7 percent to 6.9 percent since Walker took office. Property taxes are down for the first time in 12 years. A \$3.6 billion deficit was eliminated without lots of layoffs. The message resonates with the machinists. Almost all applaud enthusiastically for Walker.

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Sitting in one of his campaign offices later in the day, Walker considers whether he might have avoided a recall. “If I hadn’t gone so far, would I face a recall? I don’t know,” Walker tells me. “But if I hadn’t gone as far as I did, I wouldn’t have fixed it.” And fixing Wisconsin’s fiscal problems is what matters, he says. “I’m running a campaign to win. And I aim to win. But I’m not afraid to lose.” ...

The [WSJ Editors](#) celebrate that the EPA had a chance to do more stupid things and didn't.

The Environmental Protection Agency once again invited itself to do tangible economic harm—this time to the hydraulic fracturing that is transforming American energy—and somehow . . . it didn't. In the annals of the unlikely, the EPA's new fracking rules fall somewhere between a Nobel Peace Prize for George W. Bush and a supply-side tax plan from Warren Buffett.

The first-ever federal fracking rule that the EPA released on Wednesday is also the first time the agency has shown restraint under the Clean Air Act since at least 2005 or 2006, about when the Bush Administration gave up on environmental regulatory reform. Given the agency's track record, any self-control is notable—though in particular on the unconventional oil and gas extraction that the green lobby would prefer to shut down because those fuels contain demon carbon. ...



Free Beacon

Dog Eat Dog

To win the coming nasty campaign, Romney must focus on Obama's record and avoid distractions of news cycle

by Matthew Continetti



For months on end—as the country has been stuck in a miserable economic “recovery” and the federal government has barreled toward a fiscal crisis—the Obama campaign has taken pains to remind an anxious nation that Mitt Romney is unfit for the presidency because he once took a family road trip with his dog in a carrier strapped to the roof of his car.

Hence the strong whiff of undisguised glee from Romney strategist Eric Fehrstrom Wednesday, [as he re-tweeted a photograph of President Obama and his dog Bo](#).

“In hindsight, a chilling photo,” Fehrstrom wrote, after [the Daily Caller's Jim Treacher reminded the world that in his first memoir Obama admitted to having eaten dog while a boy in Indonesia](#). Romney spokesman Ryan Williams [giddily tweeted an ABC News report on Obama's culinary taste](#), noting that this was “Not the headline Team Obama was looking for.” Indeed, it was not. Fehrstrom's message: *You think Romney is cruel to canines? Well, Obama EATS THEM.*

That was par for the course. Romney's operation has responded well so far to the Obama campaign's tactical strikes. Republicans finally and lustily engaged in the “war on women” last week when the presumptive GOP nominee noted that women have borne the brunt of job losses under Obama. Ann Romney pimp-slapped Democratic consultant Hilary Rosen for saying she had “never worked a day in her life.” Romney's Wednesday “[pre-buttal](#)” to the president's North Carolina convention address was another clever stunt.

But the coming general election campaign will be expensive, nasty, brutish, and long. There will be ups and downs. Romney or someone close to him will put his foot in his mouth once (or

several times) more. No one can predict the coming events that will shape the race. Most worrisome: There will be the constant temptation to trade barbs and snarky jibes over electronic media. Call it the Twitter Trap.

A candidate falls into the Twitter Trap when he allocates substantial time, energy, and resources to chasing the news cycle and scoring points with reporters and pundits. This sort of strategy may keep staff busy and amused, but it is not the way to victory. Romney must avoid playing at Obama's level. He must project an image appropriate to the office of the presidency while attacking endlessly the incumbent's record on the economy, the debt, and health care. He must strike a drastic contrast with the president, who is going to run this campaign small and petty because he has no other options.

A typical incumbent tells the American people that he deserves reelection because the country is doing well and his administration has overseen popular initiatives. But the country is not doing well and Obama's "accomplishments" are, in the view of most Americans, nothing of the sort. No one but economists can seriously believe that the stimulus was a success. The health care law is a disaster in the making that Americans want to repeal—if the Supreme Court does not do it for them.

Obama is blocking the popular Keystone XL pipeline while throwing money at cronies who run alternative energy companies. He has failed to revive the American economy, address the looming entitlements crisis, and end the Iranian nuclear program. He presided over one of the worst "shellackings" in the history of his party and has been unable to sway public opinion when it is not already on his side. The president is a loser, politically and substantively.

Obama has been reduced in stature. Four years ago he was going to change the world. Now his only path to reelection is through scaring his coalition into thinking Romney will seize its birth control, slash its benefits, and [reinstate Jim Crow](#). He has to bog the GOP candidate down in a net of Buffett-Rule-like gimmicks and egregious insinuations about Romney's wealth and religion.

The worst thing Romney could do is step into the net. Let aides trade Tweets with Obama spokesmen now and then, but don't make it a priority. Let others take the low road.

When David Axelrod mentions the dog, remind the country that this is [the worst recovery in history](#). When David Plouffe mentions the rich, let Americans know that everyone's taxes should be low, that everyone's taxes are scheduled to spike on Jan. 1, that Obamacare includes numerous taxes on every American, and that the [middle class has fared the worst in the Obama economy](#). When Debbie Wasserman Schultz sneers that Republicans are coming after women, stress the importance of a culture of life and Obamacare's threat to religious liberty. Ask every audience Reagan's question: "[Are you better off than you were four years ago?](#)" Unless the audience is filled with TARP recipients and government workers, the answer will be no.

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Streetwise Professor

Welcome to the Five Minutes of Hate Campaign

by Craig Pirrong

It's starting earlier than I had anticipated, but it has started. The Obama campaign, fresh off the War Against Women sortie, is now pivoting to the [Republicans Are The Taliban strategy](#) (h/t R). Loathsome Chicago hack David Axelrod, whom has appalled me since I lived in Hyde Park, kicked off the assault this morning:

"I think a lot of Republicans in Congress want to cooperate, know better, but they're in the thralls of this reign of terror from the far right that has dragged the party to the right. In your own polling and other polling, you see the Republican Party has really moved out of the mainstream."

The forthcoming campaign is going to resemble something out of the early-19th century, say Adams-Jefferson or the three Andrew Jackson campaigns. Obama's record is hardly one that he can run on, so he is going to wage a vicious campaign based on class warfare (note the "silver spoon" remark from last week) and relentless personal attacks, not just on his opponent Romney, but on the entire Republican base. The idea is to scare the moderates away from voting for Romney or the Republicans by painting them as dangerously radical.

Gee. Don't I remember some guy talking about there is no Red America, there is no Blue America? Who was that guy?

Whoever he was, whether those sentiments were legitimate or merely a cynical pose, he's gone now. This is a war to the knife.

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Right Turn

5 things about the Romney campaign

by Jennifer Rubin

There were a spate of polls last week, which rudely shook the left from its blissful obliviousness. This will be a close election, and Mitt Romney has a level of credibility on the economy, which happens to be President Obama's biggest weakness. We also learned five things about the Romney campaign.

Walk and chew gum at the same time. Conservatives fretted that Romney was becoming too “reactive” and getting lured into fights on Twitter-level inanities. But it turns out that Romney could punch back while still advancing his core message: Obama has failed in his most important task, restoring American prosperity. In a campaign stop in Arizona on Friday he told the crowd: “I think Obama is a nice person. I just don’t think we can afford him any longer.” With a blah economy, Romney’s message — Obama’s policies have slowed the recovery — has some resonance.

The campaign knows what it needs. Many Republicans feared that the Romney team was too isolated and a bit arrogant. But it turns out they knew what they needed. First, they brought on Ed Gillespie. Last week they got more help. [The Post reported:](#)

Mitt Romney has hired Richard A. Grenell, a veteran Republican communications strategist who served in the George W. Bush administration, as his national security and foreign policy spokesman, a campaign official said Thursday.

Grenell brings foreign policy chops and more than a decade of political experience to the aggressive but relatively young Romney staff. His is one in a series of hires as the presumptive Republican nominee rapidly expands his small staff as it moves into the general election against President Obama.

I was at a gathering of conservative foreign policy hawks Thursday when Grenell’s hire was announced. The overwhelming reaction was relief — that he had hired an experienced hand, had recognized a need for more rapid response to international events and had selected someone who had worked for, among other people, former United Nations ambassador John Bolton.

Romney has a game plan for reaching out to Hispanic voters. Democrats and anti-immigration-reform exclusionists had predicted that Romney would pivot 180 degrees and start moving left on immigration reform. Instead, we saw two developments. First, the Republican National Committee rolled out the party apparatus in critical battleground states. And second, Romney for now is focused on making [an economic appeal](#) to Hispanic voters consistent with his overall message. The [Associated Press reported:](#)

The general election-focused Romney who came to the Arizona Historical Society Museum on a 100-degree afternoon didn’t have much to say about border fences, illegal immigration or his promise to veto the so-called DREAM Act, which would allow some illegal immigrants a path to legal residency. . . . [Instead] Before the scheduled round-table discussion with Hispanic business leaders, Romney’s campaign circulated a graphic aimed at highlighting the impact of tough economic conditions on Hispanic families.

“The Obama administration has brought hard times to Hispanics in America,” the graphic says. “Under President Obama, more Hispanics have struggled to find work than at any other time on record.”

Whether that approach will work and whether he can come up with a modified DREAM Act that has some appeal to Hispanics without turning off anti-illegal-immigrant activists remains to be seen. But plainly he’s thinking this through, understanding how critical this segment of the electorate is.

Romney has rallied the base without moving to the right. With polling showing the conservative base has essentially accepted Romney, any temptation to move right or begin focusing on hot-button social issues was snuffed out. In this Romney was greatly helped by Hilary Rosen, who reminded conservative women and social conservatives just how much they dislike the liberal elites and their disdain for stay-at-home mothers. Romney can now remind the base that his core economic and foreign policy agenda is quite conservative, while reaching out to independent voters and Democrats.

Romney isn't going to turn himself inside out to "bond" with voters. Polls show Romney is running well above his approval numbers. That, and the president's shrill tone, suggest that Romney can just be Romney, talking up his business experience and his agenda without getting too personally cozy with voters. Indeed, Obama's underperformance now becomes rationale for his own candidacy: We had flash and look what happened. Perhaps the electorate is ready for a staid, competent guy who doesn't promise to "lower the oceans" or "feel their pain." Maybe boring is "in."

The Hill

[Struggling Obama super-PAC asks Clinton for help](#)

by Cameron Joseph

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Weekly Standard

The Battle for Wisconsin

Scott Walker awaits his challenger.

by John McCormack

Brookfield, Wisc.

Governor Scott Walker is facing the fight of his political life. On June 5, in the third gubernatorial recall election in U.S. history, Wisconsin voters will either choose to keep Walker in office or elect a Democrat. Polls show a tight race with Walker hovering at or slightly below 50 percent and holding a small lead over potential opponents. Walker won't know which Democratic opponent he'll face until May 8, when the recall primary is held. Meanwhile, he's letting the state of Illinois serve as a stand-in.



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And Wisconsin? Unemployment has dropped from 7.7 percent to 6.9 percent since Walker took office. Property taxes are down for the first time in 12 years. A \$3.6 billion deficit was eliminated without lots of layoffs. The message resonates with the machinists. Almost all applaud enthusiastically for Walker.

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Sitting in one of his campaign offices later in the day, Walker considers whether he might have avoided a recall. "If I hadn't gone so far, would I face a recall? I don't know," Walker tells me. "But if I hadn't gone as far as I did, I wouldn't have fixed it." And fixing Wisconsin's fiscal problems is what matters, he says. "I'm running a campaign to win. And I aim to win. But I'm not afraid to lose."

Democrats say they're attempting to recall Walker not only because he limited the collective bargaining power of public sector unions but because he "lied" about it. "The most effective anti-Walker message," reads a Democratic party of Wisconsin strategy memo published by *Mother Jones*, "focuses on the fundamental fact that he lied to the people of Wisconsin about what he would do as governor."

"He never once said he was going to attack 50 years of collective labor law in the state," said Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett, Walker's 2010 gubernatorial opponent and frontrunner in the recall primary, at a Democratic forum in Madison on April 11.

In fact, Walker did in office what he promised on the campaign trail. To balance the budget without raising taxes, Walker said government workers at the state and local level would have to pay more for their pensions and health care benefits (but still contribute far less than the typical private sector worker). Requiring government employees to pay more for their benefits necessarily meant paring back the rights of unions to veto changes to their members' pay, benefits, and work requirements. As a top policy adviser to Walker told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in August 2010: "The way the proposal would work is we would take the choice out of the collective bargaining process."

Union leaders saw that requiring government workers to pay more for their benefits polled very well, but limiting "collective bargaining rights" polled poorly. So union leaders tried to delink the two interlocking issues. They pledged to accept cuts in order to keep their "rights." But after Walker's budget passed, union leaders made a mockery of that pledge and proved Walker's point. The Milwaukee Public Schools union had locked in a collective bargaining agreement until 2014 that is not affected by Walker's law. Faced with a choice of cuts to benefits or layoffs, the teachers' union chose layoffs. According to the Maclver Institute, a conservative think tank, the school districts of Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Racine—all of which are still operating under collective bargaining agreements—make up 13.3 percent of the state's educational staff but accounted for 42.5 percent of staff reductions. Outside of these districts, there are no public education horror stories.

Mayor Tom Barrett knows very well how limiting collective bargaining can be necessary to balance a budget. In February 2011, as the battle raged in the Wisconsin state capitol over Walker's budget, Barrett proposed limiting collective bargaining rights for unions in Milwaukee, according to a memo reported by *BuzzFeed*. The city's union wouldn't budge on many issues, and when its contract finally expired, Barrett took full advantage of Walker's reforms, saving the city millions of dollars by making changes to everything from workers' health care benefits to overtime, disability payments, sick leave, paid lunches, and more. Walker says Barrett "absolutely" is a hypocrite, "and it's not me saying it, it's his own employees . . . over and over again calling him a hypocrite."

Wisconsin Democrats recognize that labor issues are not going to win the election for them—they already failed to win a state supreme court race last spring and failed to win control of the state senate in multiple recall elections last August. "Collective bargaining is not moving people,"

Democratic spokesman Graeme Zielinski told *Mother Jones*. Democrats are hoping to focus the campaign on an investigation of former Walker aides by the Milwaukee County district attorney. (Walker says he's not concerned about the D.A.'s integrity, calling him "an honorable guy. He's going to follow the truth.")

But Barrett's record on collective bargaining is at the center of the Democratic primary that pits him against former Dane County executive Kathleen Falk. (Dane County, which includes the state capital, Madison, and the University of Wisconsin, is the most liberal in the state.) Barrett has the backing of most of the Democratic establishment, but Falk has the backing of an alphabet soup of unions: AFSCME, SEIU, AFL-CIO, WEAC (the teachers' union).

Barrett and Falk have avoided direct confrontation so far, but their surrogates have been engaging in a flame war. In a video, AFSCME Wisconsin claimed that Barrett "demanded concessions that went far beyond those mandated by Act 10 [Walker's budget reform]." In an op-ed, former Madison mayor and Barrett supporter Dave Cieslewicz attacked Falk as an unelectable tool of the unions. "Wisconsin voters like politicians like Robert La Follette and Gaylord Nelson and Bill Proxmire, all of whom bucked their own party bosses, and yet the unions seem to want to offer them Jimmy Hoffa instead," he wrote. "A candidate beholden to big unions is no more appealing to independent voters than one who answers to the Koch brothers."

Polls show Falk performing only a couple points worse than Barrett against Walker, but concerns that she can't win persist. It's a "Republican talking point," she tells supporters at an event on April 12 in a private Madison home. "They're not worried a Dane County liberal can't win. They're worried one can." Falk points to Russ Feingold as a prime example of Dane County liberals' electability.

But unlike Feingold, Falk has failed to cultivate the image of a maverick and comes much closer to being a caricature of a Dane County liberal. At the April 11 forum, she touts her record as an environmentalist lawyer "taking on the utilities, fighting against nuclear power, fighting against coal power." The next day she points to former governor Jennifer Granholm and Michigan (unemployment rate: 8.8 percent) as a model for economic recovery. Falk tells supporters Michigan recovered in large part because it "went out and sold green batteries to the rest of the world." She says a major plank of her economic agenda involves taking "wood pulp cellulose and convert[ing] it to energy. The Air Force wants to buy this to fuel their jets."

Falk has pledged to veto any budget that doesn't repeal Walker's collective bargaining reform. She's also vowed to repeal the property tax cap enacted by Walker. There are reasons why she narrowly lost a statewide race for attorney general in 2006 even as Democrat Jim Doyle won the governor's race by 8 points.

That's why the Democratic establishment sees Barrett as a more electable candidate. Barrett's campaign so far amounts to a vague promise to restore civility and "end the civil war" in Wisconsin. But, as he tries to fend off a challenge from his left, Barrett's ability to cast himself as a uniter and a centrist is being undermined. Though Barrett acknowledges the state assembly can block him, he has promised to call a special session of the legislature in order to repeal Walker's union and budget reforms. That essentially guarantees more protests in the capitol building. So much for ending the civil war.

Barrett's campaign has also attacked Walker's property tax cap. Barrett has reiterated his support of taxpayer-funding of abortion. And he's said he would "consult on a regular basis" with his Democratic primary opponents on environmental policy, even though some of his opponents are even more radical on the environment than Falk.

For all their complaints about Walker's lack of transparency, Falk and Barrett are now evading questions about how they would have balanced Wisconsin's budget. "No, I'm not answering. None of us will answer that question," Falk told The Weekly Standard on April 11 when asked if she would have cut more or less than \$500 million from the education budget. Barrett too refused to say, when asked three separate times, how he would have balanced the budget. Both candidates say they wouldn't have enacted tax cuts Walker put into place, which amounted to a little over \$100 million or 3 percent of the state's deficit.

Barrett and Falk leave voters guessing what they would have done about the other 97 percent of the deficit. Walker fills in the details: "The answer is they'd have to do what they did in Illinois, which is massive tax increases, massive service cuts, and layoffs."

The Democratic primary is giving Walker greater hope about the recall, but, he says, "I actually think it's much closer than some of these latest polls suggest." Walker says a court's decision striking down the voter ID law creates "huge" concern about voter fraud. And he says the unions' intensity may be underestimated. "This is just driven by raw, unadulterated, passionate hate and anger, driven largely by these union bosses," he says. "The other side is motivated by anger. We've got to be motivated by hope."

WSJ - Editorial

[The EPA's Fracking Miracle](#)

Behold, the agency shows restraint on shale gas regulation.

The Environmental Protection Agency once again invited itself to do tangible economic harm—this time to the hydraulic fracturing that is transforming American energy—and somehow . . . it didn't. In the annals of the unlikely, the EPA's new fracking rules fall somewhere between a Nobel Peace Prize for George W. Bush and a supply-side tax plan from Warren Buffett.

The first-ever federal fracking rule that the EPA released on Wednesday is also the first time the agency has shown restraint under the Clean Air Act since at least 2005 or 2006, about when the Bush Administration gave up on environmental regulatory reform. Given the agency's track record, any self-control is notable—though in particular on the unconventional oil and gas extraction that the green lobby would prefer to shut down because those fuels contain demon carbon.

After a shale well has been tapped, trace amounts of natural gas, fracking fluids or a combination of both can escape, and the EPA's standards are targeted at such traditional air pollutants as methane or volatile organic compounds. Starting in 2015, the 588-page rule requires drillers to use technologies and practices that result in so-called "green completions" that limit emissions.

The EPA is basically requiring operators to do what they're doing anyway: Most wellheads and pipelines already exceed the EPA benchmark. One reason is that methane is the largest component of natural gas, so emitting more methane means losing more of the product that companies are trying to sell. The pollution control technologies the EPA is mandating didn't exist a few years ago and were developed by the industry for economic reasons.

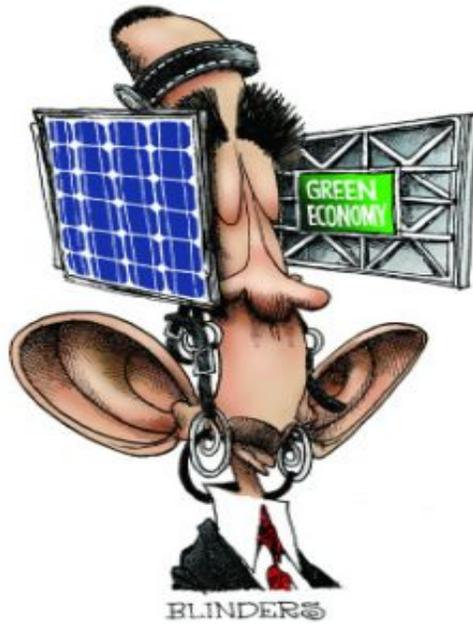
The reality is that as fracking booms through the Appalachian basin, the South and mountain West, the early wildcatting days are over. Operators are professional and best practices are spreading. The industry understands that the environmentalists and political class don't need much pretext to impose a moratorium, as New York state liberals have.

The EPA has a habit of abusing the Clean Air Act, a notoriously costly and flawed law to begin with, and why it didn't here is something of a mystery. Our guess is that the White House exercised adult supervision amid re-election season, knowing that another assault on the domestic oil and gas surge could be a political loser. The Obamateers already gave at the political office with their anticoal campaign and killing the Keystone XL pipeline, so the greens can't really complain, though as always they will.

The main problem with the rule is precedent. The Clean Air Act is designed to encourage environmental groups to sue the EPA, and after they do the EPA then files more stringent rules that the bureaucracy favored in the first place in order to get the greens to drop their suits. Rinse and repeat. That may be the longer post-election game the EPA has in mind against fracking.

These drilling operations have also traditionally been regulated by the states, which can point with pride to a generally sound record. Try as the EPA has, the fracking pollution the agency has claimed to uncover in Wyoming and elsewhere has turned out to be either small or hyped. But with this new rule, 10 separate federal agencies on top of the EPA will add a second layer of oversight. The EPA's rules may be achievable, but they're redundant.

The agency nonetheless had the opportunity to ruin or substantially damage the most important U.S. energy breakthrough in decades. The astonishing news is that it didn't.



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