

CLOSEOUT FILES



Resolved: Current trends in American
political dialogue compromise
meaningful democratic deliberation.

Introduction

First things first, congratulation on qualifying for nationals! It is quite the honor and a really fun tournament. The format is very unique. In a nutshell, the format is six prelim rounds with two judges per round, and teams that win eight or more ballots (out of the 12) break. Then in elims, it is double elimination until only one team remains.

Unfortunately, I'm not a huge fan of the topic, because it's not particularly interesting or concrete. What are the current trends? How big a timeframe are we talking about? What's democratic deliberation? I hate when rounds descend into just definition debates which I fear will likely happen far too often with this topic. It's also very hard to find great relevant evidence.

I predict most teams will favor the pro, because a lot of people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated with aspects of what's going on and not going on in Washington. In addition, pro has the advantage that the media in general likes to report what's wrong as oppose to what's right with the system. If you're on the con make sure you don't lose sight of the big picture. Things often make more sense at a distance.

I predict a lot of teams will focus on healthcare, immigration, and the tea parties; however, I think smart con teams will shift the focus towards more substantial and meaningful trends such as the increasing effect the internet has on politics. There's no denying such a trend exists, there's substantial evidence in the file about why it's a positive, and I predict you could catch quite a few teams off guard with it.

Like last year, you will notice that this issue of the Closeout Files follows a very different format. Due to the importance of Nationals, we felt that publishing points and responses would hinder teams who encountered someone else who had read these files. Nationals draws from such a diverse group of debaters and we did not want there to be a uniformity of ideas in which every team knew which arguments and responses to expect. We also didn't want teams to focus solely on the arguments we offered when they were preparing. All of the evidence in the issue is included for a reason and is organized into a logical progression of ideas. Because of all of these reasons, the Closeout Files would rather take a more personal approach when it comes to offering analysis. We would like to start a dialogue with all of you where we offer help and suggestions for your debating. Please ask us any questions you might have about the topic, how evidence should be used, nationals in general. Run ideas for arguments or blocks by us, and send us your cases for our analysis. We look forward to being of assistance and please contact us via e-mail at CloseoutFiles@yahoo.com. Good luck everyone!

Definitions

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/contro-pol.html>

Civil Political Discourse In A Democracy: The Contribution Of Psychology
University of Minnesota

The purposes of political discourse include (a) clarifying citizens' understanding of the issue, (b) helping citizens reach their best reasoned judgment as to which course of action will solve a problem, (c) increasing citizen participation in the political process, and (d) socializing the next generation into the procedures and attitudes they need to be active citizens.

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Pro Evidence

Importance of Healthy Political Discourse

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/contro-pol.html>

Civil Political Discourse In A Democracy: The Contribution Of Psychology
University of Minnesota

Thomas Jefferson, and the other founders of the American Republic, considered political discourse to be the heart of democracy. Jefferson believed that instead of the social rank within which a person was born, the basis of influence within society should be discourse in a free and open discussion characterized by conflict among ideas and opinions. He noted, "Differences of opinion lead to inquiry, and inquiry to truth." According to Webster's dictionary, the concept **discourse** has two major meanings: (a) formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason. **Political discourse** is the formal exchange of reasoned views as to which of several alternative courses of action should be taken to solve a societal problem. It is intended to involve all citizens in the making of the decision, persuade others (through valid information and logic), and clarify what course of action would be most effective in solving the societal problem.

Jefferson and the other founders of the United States democracy expected that the clash of opposing positions within political discourse would increase citizens' understanding of the issue and the quality of their collective decision making. Within political discourse, each alternative course of action was expected to (a) be strongly advocated, (b) receive a complete and fair hearing, and (c) be critically analyzed to reveal its strengths and weaknesses. James Madison, furthermore, described political discourse as (a) including open-minded consideration of other points of view ("*much is gained by a yielding and accommodating spirit*") and (b) keeping conclusions tentative by realizing that one's current knowledge is not the whole truth (no citizen is "*obligated to retain his opinions any longer than he is satisfied of their propriety and truth*"). The views of political discourse of Jefferson, Madison, and their contemporaries were grounded in the philosophy and thought of the time. The philosopher Edmund Burke, for example, recommended conflict among ideas by stating "*He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.*" In 1748 Baron Charles de Montesquieu published, "**The Spirit of Laws**," in which he explored the relationship between people and different forms of government. He concluded that while dictatorship survives on the fear of the people and monarchy survives on the loyalty of the people, a free republic (the most fragile of the three political systems) survives on the virtue of the people. Virtue is reflected in the way a person balances his or her own needs with the needs of the society as a whole. Motivation to be virtuous comes from "*a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose life is at stake.*" This moral bond is cultivated by "*deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping shape the destiny of the political community.*"

Importance of Healthy Political Discourse Cont'd

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/contro-pol.html>

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Constructive controversy exists when one person's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement (Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 1989, 1995). Constructive controversy involves what Aristotle called **deliberate discourse** (i.e., the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of proposed actions) aimed at synthesizing novel solutions (i.e., **creative problem solving**). Constructive controversy is most commonly contrasted with concurrence seeking, debate, and individualistic decisions. **Concurrence seeking** occurs when members of a group inhibit discussion to avoid any disagreement or argument, emphasize agreement, and avoid realistic appraisal of alternative ideas and courses of action. Concurrence seeking is close to Janis' (1982) concept of **groupthink** (i.e., members of a decision-making group set aside their doubts and misgivings about whatever policy is favored by the emerging consensus so as to be able to concur with the other members and thereby preserve the harmonious atmosphere of the group). **Debate** exists when two or more individuals argue positions that are incompatible with one another and a judge declares a winner on the basis of who presented their position the best. **Individualistic decisions** exist when individuals consider the issue alone while perceiving their goals to be unrelated and independent from the goals of others (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998).

Consequences of Destructive Political Discourse

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/contro-pol.html>

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While political discourse is essential to a democracy, and informed decisions may be impossible unless political discourse occurs, elections can be conducted and decisions made in democracies without it. There are dangers when political discussion becomes destructive rather than illuminating. **Destructive political persuasion** exists when misleading, superficial, or irrelevant information is presented in ways that decreases citizens' understanding of the issue, results in an absence of thoughtful consideration of the issue, and decreases citizen participation in the political process. Discourse may be replaced by other means of persuasion, such as using deceit through misinformation, de-emphasizing and ignoring important issues, positioning, pandering to voters, and focusing on the candidates (not the issues) through commercials (imagery and slogans) or argumentum ad hominem.

Mainstream Extremism

http://turcopolier.typepad.com/sic_semper_tyrannis/2010/04/mainstreaming-extremism-into-american-political-discourse-silverman.html

Mainstreaming Extremism into American Political Discourse

18 April 2010

Adam L. Silverman PhD[1]

I was in Iraq during almost the entire 2008 campaign season (I got back one week before the election) and repeatedly remarked to my team mates, colleagues and friends in the BCT, and to colleagues and friends back home, that based on the type and amount of negative rhetoric that I was observing when taking the time to follow the campaign coverage I was amazed that there was not widespread violence. I stated more than once that I would be pleasantly surprised, regardless of the election's outcome, should then Senator Obama make it to the election without someone actually taking a shot at him. Since the election the rhetoric, divisiveness, anger, and outrage seem to have actually gotten worse. Moreover, as was the case when President Clinton was in office, it did not take long for the loyal opposition to begin to subtly undermine the authority of the Presidency. Conservative pundits, analysts, and operatives steadfastly refused to refer to President Clinton as *President* Clinton. Rather they would call him Mr. Clinton (appropriate, but telling) or William Jefferson Clinton. Week in and week out I would watch Dr. Will on ABC's *This Week* manage to politely avoid putting president in front of Clinton. At that time extremism watchers were amazed at the proliferation of extreme right, authoritarian movements and their increased activities. President Clinton and his administration, arguably center left if not outright centrist regardless of what anyone thinks of the man's personal behaviors, were accused of shredding the Constitution, destroying liberty, and a whole host of other crimes. If it sounds familiar it's because we're seeing a repeat.[2]

The major difference between the extremist rhetoric and behavior that was demonstrated as a reaction to the Clinton Administration and now is that many of the most extremist themes have been mainstreamed into the public discourse by elected officials of the minority party, political operatives, and conservative analysts, pundits, and commentators. And this is what stands out for me as different. The messaging that I'm hearing put forward now, and yes we've always had a member of Congress, a senator, or two (REP Chenoweth-Brown, SEN Craig) who have spouted it, seems to be coming straight out of various extremist themes and is routinely promoted by members of Congress, media figures, political operatives, etc. It should be no surprise that this was the first year in decades that the John Birch Society was allowed to participate at CPAC! Moreover, the language and the behaviors being promoted are those of the most violent movements of the 1970s through 1990s: the overlap of the white supremacist, militia, and anti-abortion[3] extremist movements.

Mainstream Extremism Cont'd

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ed-guowitz-phd/political-dialogue-too-im_b_520473.html

Huffington Post

March 31, 2010

[Political Dialogue; Too Important to be Hijacked](#)

Another principle of group intelligence is that the extremes cannot be allowed to hijack the debate. During the Vietnam War era, the anti-war left took control of the debate. While the view is not popular on the left, it is my firm belief that, despite the best of intentions, our taking over that debate from Nixon et al. had them resist all the more and thus prolonged the war and cost countless lives. This is not something of which I am proud - it is something I try to make up for in my life and in my writing.

Today the anti-government Right has an influence in current political debates that is, by all indications, all out of proportion to its actual numbers or popular support. Just as the Left in the 70's attracted all kinds of ideas that were irrelevant to being against the war - Leary's "tune in, turn on, drop out" comes to mind as do Kesey's Acid Tests and others - the anti-government Right finds itself in bed with the insanity of the birthers, racists, militia extremists, and a whole clown car of idiots and nutcases.

Just as the Left had to get itself straightened out in the post-Vietnam dialogue, it's time for those on the Right who know the value of the dialogue to retake control of it from the extremists, both those in the Tea Party movement and those in Congress. We need two sides or we will become very dumb indeed at a time when we need every ounce of intelligence and wisdom we can find.

Extremist Actions

http://turcopolier.typepad.com/sic_semper_tyrannis/2010/04/mainstreaming-extremism-into-american-political-discourse-silverman.html

Mainstreaming Extremism into American Political Discourse

18 April 2010

Adam L. Silverman PhD[1]

The recent screams of baby-killer directed at Congressman Stupak, the incorrect posting of the address of a Democratic congressman from Virginia (his brother's address was posted), the vandalism and harassment at political offices, the death threats, and yes the increase in both the formation of groups and movements dedicated to extreme understandings of American history, politics, society, and the Constitution, the conflation of legal and relatively normal American behavior with that of Nazi Germany, as well as the increase in actual violence over the past year and a half, including an attack on the IRS (Federal Office), the assassination of Dr. Tiller, the attempted attack at the Pentagon (Federal Office), the attack at the Holocaust Museum, attacks on law enforcement in PA and elsewhere, as well as thwarted attacks, all share one commonality: the nexus of the white supremacist, militia, and anti-abortion extremist movements. Just take a moment and check out the [Army of God handbook](#), [the Nuremberg Files website](#) with its list of abortion providers, judges, and politicians who ruled or legislated in favor of abortion rights and where they can be located, and [the Army of God website](#) with its links to, and pages about, Eric Robert Rudolph, Shelley Shannon, Paul Hill, as well as their victims if you can stomach the graphic, gory language and imagery. What stands out, once one gets past the ghastly pictures and images, is just how similar the language that is used and the behavior that is proposed, lauded, and justified is to what we have been seen suggested since the start of 2009. If you're really feeling brave you can take a wander over to [the National Alliance](#) or [the Aryan Nations](#) and then compare some of what you see on all of these sites with what you hear coming out of the resurgent militia movements or on talk radio or out of the mouths of our own elected officials who claim they are in DC as insurgents or correspondents on the front line of a war. What we are seeing is the mainstreaming of identity-based extremism into US political and civil discourse. In just under a year and a half the deadly legacy of April 19th has made a major comeback.

Obstruction

<http://www.truthout.org/republicans-and-tea-party-no59519>

Truthout

Republicans and the Tea Party of No

Monday 17 May 2010

As much as they may grumble, there is a legitimate reason why the Republicans have been labeled the “Party of No.” For decades, the party’s kneejerk stance has been to oppose any legislation or policy involving social, economic or political progress.

You name it, the right has opposed it: civil rights, school desegregation, women’s rights, labor organizing, the minimum wage, social security, LGBT rights, welfare, immigrant rights, public education, reproductive rights, Medicare, Medicaid. And through the years the right invoked hysterical rhetoric in opposition, [predicting](#) that implementing any such policies would result in the end-of-family-free-enterprise-God-America on the one hand, and the imposition of atheism-socialism-Nazism on the other.

Republicans are obstructionist for one simple reason: it’s a winning strategy. Opposing progressive policies allows the right to actualize the ideals that both motivate and define their base. Rightist ideologies are not without sophistication, but right-wing politicians and media figures boil them down to a crude Manichean dualism to mobilize supporters based on group difference: good versus evil, us versus them. By demonizing and scapegoating politically marginal groups, the right is able to define “real Americans,” who are good, versus those defined as parasites, illegitimate and internal threats, who are evil.

There is a critical paradox at work. The Republicans have deftly turned being the “Party of No” into a positive stance: They signal to their base they are working to defeat an alien ideology while defending real Americans and traditional values and institutions.

Ideologues and opinion-makers spin any redistributive policy as a zero sum game; progressive policies give to undeserving groups by taking wealth from or denying rights to deserving Americans and institutions. Since Obama took office, the rise of the Tea Party has made the Republicans even more strident in their opposition. The GOP fights against every Democratic policy – including the stimulus bill, jobs programs, aid to local governments, court appointees, more labor rights, health care, financial regulation, net neutrality unemployment benefits, expanding access to food stamps and Head Start, action on global warming and immigrant rights – because it claims some sort of theft of money or rights is involved.

Obstruction Cont'd

<http://www.truthout.org/republicans-and-tea-party-no59519>

Truthout

Republicans and the Tea Party of No

Monday 17 May 2010

The Tea Party is the latest chapter in the history of the Republicans as the “Party of No.” Its existence depends on continuous promotion from FOX News, organizing by Republican consultants, front groups such as Americans for Prosperity and Freedom Works, and the GOP itself. Much of the Tea Party’s funding comes from right-wing foundations through the front groups, and its politics are anti-government, anti-labor, pro-corporate and often socially conservative, which is the same agenda the right has been [pushing](#) for more than 30 years.

The right’s need for enemies is coded in its political DNA. Without enemies to defeat, vanquish and even destroy, the right would suffer an existential crisis. For Goldwater it was the Communist menace; for Wallace, integrationists and intellectuals; for Nixon, liberals, antiwar activists and black radicals; for Reagan, labor, welfare queens and the Evil Empire; for Gingrich and his cohorts it was gays, feminists, welfare mothers and the Democrats; during the Bush years, it was Islam, immigrants, gays and abortionists; For the Tea Party, Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin, it’s all of the above.

Additionally, only one-third were opposed to the government tapping people’s telephones and racial or religious profiling, and barely half opposed indefinite detention without trial. This is a movement that thrives on opposing the distribution of power and wealth more equitably in society and for imposing a repressive social order.

With nearly 60 percent of Tea Partiers believing Obama is foreign born or saying they are not sure, it becomes clear why so many on the right have adopted violent and revolutionary rhetoric. The thinking is he’s a foreigner or a Muslim or stole the election, so he is alien and illegitimate. As such, it makes sense he is pushing an alien idea like socialism that may be part of some grand conspiracy like the New World Order, the North American Union, the Bilderberg Group or Satan. (In a [poll](#) last September of New Jersey residents, not known for being prone to right-wing radicalism, 29 percent of Republicans thought Obama was the Anti-Christ or were unsure.)

However irrational this position may be, the logical consequences are not: anything Obama and the Democrats do must be opposed because it is a life-and-death struggle. In opposing the health care plan, the right is not just trying to deny services to the undeserving, it is affirming and protecting free choice, family, the sanctity of life, the market, God, country, the Constitution – all arguments trotted out in the last year.

Obstruction Cont'd

<http://www.truthout.org/republicans-and-tea-party-no59519>

Truthout

Republicans and the Tea Party of No

Monday 17 May 2010

Like the Clinton years, no matter how much Obama tries to appease Republicans, he will remain under attack and be held responsible for bizarre crimes and conspiracies because the right has nothing to gain from compromise. In fact, Republican opposition has devolved from the philosophical to the tactical. The right-wing noise machine frames Obama and the Democrats as the source of all evil, making compromise virtually impossible. Republicans now assail Obama policies they used to champion from the market-friendly health care law and huge tax cuts in the stimulus bill to the bipartisan deficit commission and pay-as-you-go budget rules.

At the same time, the Obama administration has stoked support for the Tea Party by providing aid and comfort to Wall Street rather than Main Street. The Republicans have exploited legitimate anxieties over high unemployment, a shrinking economy and onerous taxes by scapegoating the weak and marginal for policies that are structural and historical in nature.

<http://www.tnr.com/article/womens-suffrage-and-other-visions-right-wing-apocalypse?page=0,0>

The New Republic

Women's Suffrage and Other Visions of Right-Wing Apocalypse

December 21, 2009

Conservatives have lined up in near-unanimous opposition to any progressive legislation introduced during President Obama's first year in office. Whether they've been railing against health care reform, a climate bill, or financial regulation, their ire has stemmed less from legislative specifics than from a generalized prophecy of doom: Obama's proposals will move the country toward socialism, bankrupt entire industries and small businesses, and deny Americans their basic freedoms. These arguments, however, aren't new. Conservatives—not just Republicans, but various politicians and groups who've resisted major social changes—recycled them throughout the twentieth century. They used them to oppose numerous progressive measures that Americans now take for granted, from women's suffrage to child-labor laws to Medicare.

Obstruction Cont'd

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/01/analysis-republicans-sett_0_n_480801.html

Huffington Post

[Republicans Setting Filibuster Record](#)

03/01/10

The filibuster – tool of obstruction in the U.S. Senate – is alternately blamed and praised for wilting President Barack Obama's ambitious agenda.

Opposition Republicans are using the delaying tactic at a record-setting pace.

"The numbers are astonishing in this Congress," says Jim Riddlesperger, political science professor at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

The filibuster, using seemingly endless debate to block legislative action, has become entrenched like a dandelion tap root in the midst of the shrill partisanship gripping Washington.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-p-croley/filibusters-should-promot_b_463512.html

Huffington Post

[Filibusters Should Promote Democratic Deliberation](#)

February 16, 2010

There is more to it, however. The problem with the silent filibuster is not simply that filibustering has become too easy and thus too frequent. Rather, the silent filibuster is undemocratic because it impedes rather than fosters democratic deliberation. That is, the traditional--"talking"--filibuster focused the attention of the public on the matter at hand. The talking filibuster thus raised the salience of the legislation it targeted, as well as the merits of the opposition to it. The talking filibuster inspired debate over whether the majority's policy was desirable, or whether the filibusterers' protests were justified. In other words, the traditional filibuster fosters democratic deliberation, and not merely within the Senate as its defenders emphasize, but beyond it.

After all, the spotlight of a talking filibuster puts pressure on the majority party to relent, and pressure on the filibusterers to stand down. In so doing, the convictions of both are tested in the light of the public's response to both. Is the majority asking for too much too fast, or are the filibusterers poor-sport obstructionist? The occasion of a traditional filibuster prompted such conversation within the democracy at large. This is not to say that whichever side "won" was therefore right or necessarily enjoyed the public's blessing. But the spectacle of the filibuster focused public as well as media attention to concrete policy choices in ways that promoted democratic deliberation.

Racism

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/whats-emreallyem-behind-t_b_514298.html

Huffington Post

What's *Really* Behind the Health Care Hate?

March 26, 2010

Can it *really* be that health care reform in and of itself is the true cause of the massive vitriolic rage spewing from conservatives today? Is the Tea Party movement *really* about runaway government spending? Have the chilling faces of hate seen at protests across America truly been about a *public option*? If you ask me, it has way more to do with an ugly truth that few are willing to acknowledge: it's about a bunch of angry, bigoted white racists who see reform as little more than a black president doling out more *welfare* to other blacks and minorities.

It's shocking to me to witness this rage over health care reform when not a *peep's* been uttered by these right-wing loons for the past seven years over an unjust war in Iraq that's killed thousands of U.S. soldiers, wounded and maimed tens of thousands of others, and squandered nearly a trillion dollars. *Health care reform* is what's heatedly brought these heretofore silent Americans into the political ring? I'm not buyin' it, sorry. Once again, *racism* is rearing its ugly head. Have you *seen* these protesters? The things they do and say? Shouting racial epithets and anti-gay slurs, and spitting at lawmakers. So angry that blood vessels are popping in their necks. Faces contorted in hatred. Screaming like animals and calling for the deaths of elected Democrats. All over *health care*? Really? Have we become so politically correct as a nation as to be so afraid to call this shameful behavior *exactly* what it is? Not me. This blatant racism makes me sick, and I'm not afraid to call it out.

The grass roots bigotry mobs first surfaced during the 2008 presidential campaign, and included the birthers (denying President Obama's citizenship) and those who attacked him and Michelle on every conceivable despicable level. The post-election movement picked up steam during last Summer's Town Hall meetings where the flames of intense anger and hatred were recklessly stoked. Almost one year and the passage of the reform bill later, and things have sadly and shamefully gotten much worse. This week alone, in the wake of the reform bill's passage, there've been numerous verbal attacks, acts of vandalism and death threats aimed at Democrats. A caller to Stupak's office left this outrageously offensive message in the lawmaker's office:

"Ah yes, um, congressman Stupak, you baby-killin' motherfucker...you turncoat son-of-a-bitch piece of shit. I hope you bleed out your ass, get cancer and die, you motherfucker. You do not...you do not say that you're pro-life and then for a few bucks, go turncoat and hurt the country, you motherfucking piece of shit. You bastard. Motherfucker. I hope you die."

Racism Cont'd

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/whats-emreallyem-behind-t_b_514298.html

Huffington Post

What's *Really* Behind the Health Care Hate?

March 26, 2010

A female caller left this voicemail on Arizona Rep. Harry Mitchell's machine: "Hi Mr. Mitchell. For the rest of your life, with the vote that you cast, you are going to have to look over your shoulder for as long as you live in this district. You are always going to have to look over your fucking shoulder because people in your district hate your fucking face. And don't you forget it.

You have riled up peoples' rage. We are filled with rage and hate, today, towards you, hate like we have never, ever felt. I love my insurance company, and to have you come in between me and my fucking doctor. I cannot tell you how much I wish a panty bomber would come, would come in and just blow your fucking place up." Listen to her venomous rage. It'd perhaps be 1/10th understandable if she had a fucking clue what the hell she was talking about, which makes these attacks even more infuriating and shocking.

Jeez Louise, what the hell is wrong with these people? Have they all gone *mad*? It's become abundantly clear that the Republican Party has been utterly hijacked by its far, far, far right-wing fringe lunatic faction. And the only notable voice of reason on the right to highlight this dangerous, suicidal behavior is former George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum, who was fired Thursday from conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute a day after he had the balls to criticize his own party in an op-ed piece for CNN: "*We went the radical way looking for Waterloo and it looks like we arrived at Waterloo.*" There's obviously no room in the party for voices of reason.

When will the madness stop, when the incendiary rhetoric and violent metaphors turn to actual horrific *violence*? Before the *unthinkable* occurs, the leaders of the Republican Party -- Cantor, Rep. John Boehner, Sen. Mitch McConnell, RNC Chair Michael Steele, etc -- have a moral obligation and civic duty to put an end to the hate speak flame-fanning amongst the electorate and within its own ranks. Enough's enough.

Racism Cont'd

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35990654/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/?ocid=twitter

MSNBC

Keith Olbermann: GOP self-destruction imminent

March. 22, 2010

Eight days ago, a 16-year old kid picked up a courtesy phone at a store in Washington Township, New Jersey, and announced over the public address system, quote "Attention, WalMart customers: All black people leave the store now." The boy has been arrested and charged with harassment and bias intimidation.

Two days ago, a Tea Party protestor shouted the "n" word at Congressman John Lewis of Georgia, one of the heroes of 20th Century America, and Congressman Andre Carson of Indiana and another shouted anti-gay slurs at Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts.

Capitol Hill Police confirm no arrests were made and there were no serious efforts to identify the vermin involved. Television, print, and radio news organizations will not be asked to turn over their tapes and images of the event, nor subpoenaed if necessary. This is not to dismiss what the 16-year old did in New Jersey.

But it would seem that what was shouted at the Congressmen merits at least as much investigation and hopefully as much prosecution. After all, it did occur inside the halls of Congress, a place at least as crowded as, and as sanctified as a WalMart.

In a backwards, sick-to-my-stomach way, I would like to thank whoever shouted at Mr. Lewis and Mr. Carson for proving my previous point. If racism is not the whole of the Tea Party, it is in its heart, along with blind hatred, a total disinterest in the welfare of others, and a full-flowered, self-rationalizing refusal to accept the outcomes of elections, or the reality of Democracy, or of the narrowness of their minds and the equal narrowness of their public support.

Racism Cont'd

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/the-tea-party-movement-is_b_538750.html

The Huffington Post

[The Tea Party Movement Isn't About Racism? Read This...](#)

April 15, 2010 10:08 AM

The Tea Party movement is not about *Sarah Palin*: most Tea Baggers, while they love her inflammatory rhetoric, think she's unqualified to be president. The movement is not about *taxes*: most think the amount they pay is fair. And Tea Baggers really aren't angry about *big government* either: most love their Social Security and Medicare and wouldn't want to lose it. These and other unsurprising revelations are part of a [NY Times poll](#) released this week which reinforces the ugly truth about the role *racism* plays in the Tea Party movement.

There's no denying the level of ignorance that permeates the Tea Party movement or the rampant racism in which it's rooted. Here's a classic example of Tea Bagger "populist rage:" "I just feel he's getting away from what America is," said Kathy Mayhugh, 67, of Jacksonville, Fl. "He's a socialist. And to tell you the truth, I think he's a Muslim and trying to head us in that direction, I don't care what he says. He's been in office over a year and can't find a church to go to. That doesn't say much for him."

Clearly, in Ms. Mayhugh's America, blacks aren't supposed to hold positions of power. They're not supposed to benefit more than white people. In fact, white people are supposed to get all the goodies. And good, patriotic Americans are white, Christian and go to church regularly. So it's no stretch that in this America, if you're black and not a church goer, well then you must be a socialist, a Muslim (can ya be both, for Pete's sake?) and anti-American. Well, at least that's what shameless demagogues like Palin have brainwashed them to think.

Racism Cont'd

<http://www.truthout.org/republicans-and-tea-party-no59519>

Truthout

Republicans and the Tea Party of No

Monday 17 May 2010

The Tea Party movement – which the Republicans have helped create and exploit to oppose the entirety of the Obama administration – is the latest political variant of the right's themes. Much of the right's anger is directed at immigrants, African Americans and social welfare and equality in general. Among Tea Partiers, 73 percent think "Blacks would be as well off as whites if they just tried harder"; 73 percent believe "providing government benefits to poor people encourages them to remain poor"; 60 percent believe "We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country"; 56 percent think "Immigrants take jobs from Americans"; 92 percent want a smaller government with "fewer services"; 92 percent think Obama's policies are moving the country toward socialism; only 7 percent approve of Obama's performance as president; and a combined 5 percent identify themselves as black, Asian or of Hispanic origin.

One [survey](#) found that identifying as a conservative or a Tea Party supporter was an accurate predictor of racial [resentment](#).

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/09/15/tea-party-leader-melts-do_n_286933.html

Huffington Post

09-15-09

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CitkQMVEv8M>

Cooper had done his homework, however, and caught Williams blatantly misrepresenting himself: "What you're saying makes sense to me here when I'm hearing what you say but then I read on your blog, you say, you call the President an Indonesian Muslim turned welfare thug and a racist in chief."

Williams shrugs and responds, "Yeah, that's the way he's behaving." An incredulous Cooper asks Williams if he really believes Obama is an Indonesian Muslim and a welfare thug. The tea party leader digs the hole a little deeper: "He's certainly acting like it. Until he embraces the whole country what else can I conclude."

Encouragement

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35990654/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/?ocid=twitter

MSNBC

Keith Olbermann: GOP self-destruction imminent

March. 22, 2010

Shockingly, that support even came, on a specific basis, from another Congressman, Republican Devin Nunes of the California 21st.

"When you use totalitarian tactics, people, you know, begin to act crazy," he said on C-SPAN. "And I think, you know, there's people that have every right to say what they want. If they want to smear someone, they can do it."

Congressman Nunes? You should resign. You have no business opening a door for a man like John Lewis, let alone serving alongside him. And if you shouldn't resign for your endorsement, your encouragement, of the most vile, the most reprehensible, and the most outdated spewings of the lizard-brain of this country, you should resign because of your total disconnect from reality.

There have been no "totalitarian tactics," Congressman. People, these few, sad, people, have begun to act crazy, because it has been the dedicated purpose, the sole method and sole function, of the Republican party, to entice them to act crazy.

Those shouts against the Congressmen, Mr. Nunes, were inspired not by what people like John Lewis have done in their lives. They have been inspired by what people like you have done in the last year.

Harmful Rhetoric

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35990654/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/?ocid=twitter

MSNBC

Keith Olbermann: GOP self-destruction imminent

March. 22, 2010

And so the far right escalates the rhetoric and the level of threat, just a little more. And worse still, it escalates the level of delusion. The election of a Democratic president is socialism. The election of a black president is an international conspiracy. The enactment of any health care reform is an apocalypse. And the willful denial of reality by the leader of the minority party in Congress is the only truth.

A willful denial, incidentally, that includes the leader of the minority party in Congress ignoring the fact that his is the minority party, and that he represents the minority, and that despite having broken all the rules of decorum in place in this nation since the end of the Civil War that despite having played every trick — mean and low, despite having the limitless financial backing of one of the biggest cartels in the world, he and his cronies and the manufactured outrage of the Tea Party failed to derail Health Care Reform.

Lack of Civility

<http://www.esoterically.net/weblog/2010/05/01/political-discourse/>

May 1st, 2010

President Obama's University of Michigan Commencement Speech

The second way to keep our democracy healthy is to maintain a basic level of civility in our public debate. These arguments we're having over government and health care and war and taxes are serious arguments. They should arouse people's passions, and it's important for everyone to join in the debate, with all the rigor that a free people require.

But we cannot expect to solve our problems if all we do is tear each other down. You can disagree with a certain policy without demonizing the person who espouses it. You can question someone's views and their judgment without questioning their motives or their patriotism. Throwing around phrases like "socialist" and "Soviet-style takeover;" "fascist" and "right-wing nut" may grab headlines, but it also has the effect of comparing our government, or our political opponents, to authoritarian, and even murderous regimes.

The problem with it is not the hurt feelings or the bruised egos of the public officials who are criticized.

The problem is that this kind of vilification and over-the-top rhetoric closes the door to the possibility of compromise. It undermines democratic deliberation. It prevents learning -- since after all, why should we listen to a "fascist" or "socialist" or "right wing nut?" It makes it nearly impossible for people who have legitimate but bridgeable differences to sit down at the same table and hash things out. It robs us of a rational and serious debate that we need to have about the very real and very big challenges facing this nation. It coarsens our culture, and at its worst, it can send signals to the most extreme elements of our society that perhaps violence is a justifiable response.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/10/obama.heckled.speech/index.html>

CNN

September 10, 2009

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The GOP congressman from South Carolina who shouted out during President Obama's health care address to Congress insisted Thursday that his outburst was "spontaneous."

Rep. Joe Wilson shocked many observers Wednesday night when he shouted, "You lie!" after the president denied that health care legislation would provide free coverage for illegal immigrants.

Lack of Civility Cont'd

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0310/34782.html>

Bart Stupak called 'baby killer' on House floor

Politico

3/21/10

A health care debate marked by episodes of ugly rhetoric took another turn for the worse late Sunday night when a voice on the Republican side of the House shouted “baby killer” at Rep. Bart Stupak.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-Wis.), who was in the chair at the time, said he saw a Republican lawmaker shout out “baby killer” – but he wouldn’t say who it was, either.

"I think members have a right to make an idiot of themselves once without being exposed," he said.

House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank (D-Mass.), who was subjected to an anti-gay epithet from a protestor Saturday, said the "baby killer" shout showed the close alignment between the GOP and some of its most extreme allies in the health care fight.

"The difference between some of the Republicans and some of their raucous followers appears to be, unfortunately, diminishing," Frank said. "Obviously, that's not the whole party, but there's a disturbing tendency to forget about civility."

Republican Reps. Michele Bachmann and Tom Price said they believed the voice came from the gallery and not from a lawmaker. Price declined to say whether the comment was inappropriate.

But Iowa Republican Rep. Steve King – not known to mince words in attacking the Democrats – said he didn’t approve of the “baby killer” shout. “There are a lot of other words I would’ve used – not that,” he said.

Lack of Civility Cont'd

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/09/09/gop-rep-wilson-yells-out_n_281480.html

Huffington Post

Updated: 11- 9-09 05:12 AM

GOP Rep. Joe Wilson has [apologized](#) for yelling out "You lie!" to Obama during his health care speech in front of Congress:

This evening I let my emotions get the best of me when listening to the President's remarks regarding the coverage of illegal immigrants in the health care bill. While I disagree with the President's statement, my comments were inappropriate and regrettable. I extend sincere apologies to the President for this lack of civility.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mario-solismarich/mario-to-joe-wilson-you-l_b_281995.html

Huffington Post

September 10, 2009

Mr. Wilson, I understand that you had to scream out. The president was calmly dismantling the lies that you and others have created in order to thwart health reform. The lie that the undocumented can benefit in anyway from reform is a powerful one. It joins the specter of an action by an African American president to the hatred of immigrants that you and others have used as political currency. I have to admit that this combination makes for political dynamite and, of course, since you have no real ideas for health reform divisive lies may be the only tools at your disposal. Therefore, considering your weak and ethically compromised position, I can understand the visceral impulse to scream out like a wounded animal. But, Mr. Wilson, that does not change the fact that the statement that the undocumented can benefit from health reform is a lie, you know it is a lie, therefore you are a liar.

Name Calling

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ed-gurowitz-phd/political-dialogue-too-im_b_520473.html

Huffington Post

March 31, 2010

[Political Dialogue; Too Important to be Hijacked](#)

It seems to me, though, that in recent years American political dialogue has degenerated into a war that has as its object the demolition of the other side. I think it is absolutely crucial that we nip this trend in the bud. So far this war has been mostly rhetorical, but recently the rhetoric has escalated to unwarranted insults (["you lie," "baby killer"](#)), racial slurs, and homophobic slurs directed at members of Congress. And it seems to be heating up to the point of bricks through windows and assassination plots, and lest we forget, people on both sides have been injured or killed, though so far, thankfully, this has been rare. Nonetheless, it seems to be heating up.

<http://www.globalclashes.com/2010/03/racist-slurs-the-tea-party-movement-and-the-american-political-dialogue.html>

The Republic of Dissent

23 March 2010

I have the sense that both parties in America have accusations that they use to shut each other up and to discredit one another. The Democrats have the racism, religious extremism, and the ignorant cards. The Republicans have the hate-America, wimp, and Socialism cards. The point is that Republicans and Democrats are not interested in debating one another, they are just trying to win elections and to delegitimize one another. I don't understand why people are so obsessed with the Tea parties as if they represented something new in American history and as if they are going to take over America. Experience shows that their message will be co-opted by smart politicians and that their most marketable members will get off the margins and integrate the America political establishment.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/03/22/stupak.shout/index.html>

CNN

March 22, 2010 9:06 p.m. EDT

Texas Rep. Randy Neugebauer says he was the Republican House member who called out "baby killer" during the chamber's debate Sunday night on the health care reform bill. Neugebauer issued a statement Monday apologizing for the outburst. His statement said he called out, "It's a baby killer," in reference to the last-minute deal between Michigan Democratic Rep. Bart Stupak and the White House that secured the support of Stupak and other anti-abortion Democrats for the health care bill.

Name Calling Cont'd

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=new_years_resolutions_for_improving_political_dialogue

The American Prospect
January 4, 2010

But what if we used that energy not for self-improvement but for national renewal? If there's anything that urgently needs a makeover, it's the state of political dialogue. When we look back over the last year, it appears that our civic conversation has hit a new low. Think of Rep. Joe Wilson screaming "You lie!" during President Barack Obama's health-care speech, the birthers preying on ignorance and fear, the tea baggers disrupting town hall meetings across the nation, and almost any so-called debate between television pundits on one of the many shallow cable news shows. We've become a nation of screamers, not thinkers.

I'd rather live in a place where there isn't such a wide gap between those who don't feel like they had a civic voice at all and those who spend their social capital shouting and pointing fingers. A place where the average news consumer is more interested in learning about education reform for all American children than the seventh Brangelina baby. A place where quality conversations about the day's most pressing political issues actually take place -- in living rooms, classrooms, boardrooms, and the halls of Congress, alike. A place where legislation is created without ego-stroking and grandstanding. A place where minds are opened and changed.

Our 24/7 news cycle has created a climate in which the networks are constantly trying to find the loudest, most controversial voice that they can in order to spike ratings.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/21/baby-killer-yelled-at-bart-stupak_n_507718.html
Huffington Post

In a dramatic gesture, the pro-life Stupak rose to speak against the amendment saying that it was nothing more than an effort to deprive 32 million Americans of health insurance. Democrats rose to applaud the much-maligned Stupak.

"It's your bill!" shouted several chastened members from the GOP side, as the chamber descended into chaos. Once order was restored, a GOP member then shouted at Stupak: "Baby killer!"

Name Calling Cont'd

http://www.cleveland.com/nation/index.ssf/2010/03/political_incivility_a_weekend.html

Associated Press

Political incivility: A weekend of ugly discourse preceded historic health vote

March 22, 2010, 7:29PM

Remember how shocking it was six months ago when Rep. Joe Wilson shouted "You lie!" to the president?

Suddenly, that outburst seems positively genteel.

From the "N-word" and anti-gay slurs being leveled at congressmen by protesters right outside the Capitol, to a shout of "baby killer!" within the chamber itself, to veiled and not-so-veiled threats online, the weekend saw an explosion of stunningly ugly discourse.

What is going on? Is our political culture sinking ever lower?

Actually, say political historians, not necessarily, though it surely may seem so. In reality, they say, such a descent into incivility happens periodically at times of significant political change.

The difference is that now we hear about every shocking outburst again and again, on 24-hour cable news, on YouTube, on Twitter -- where there were a few random threats of violence over the weekend -- and on blogs too numerous to count.

"This stuff is always out there," says Steven Cohen, professor of public administration at Columbia University. "It's just that now, we can't get away from it. That's what's new. With the Web's insatiable appetite for conflict, everything becomes magnified, even if it's often an expression of a fringe minority."

Everyone knows that the health care debate has stoked emotions on both sides like few issues in our political history. Still, even hardened observers were shocked by some of this weekend's developments.

First there were the racist slurs shouted by protesters at black congressmen outside the Capitol on Saturday, only feet from the actual debate inside.

Rep. Andre Carson, D-Ind., said that as he left the Cannon House Office Building with Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., 70, a leader of the civil rights era, they were taunted with chants of "the N-word, the N-word, 15 times."

Name Calling Cont'd

http://www.cleveland.com/nation/index.ssf/2010/03/political_incivility_a_weekend.html

Associated Press

Political incivility: A weekend of ugly discourse preceded historic health vote

March 22, 2010, 7:29PM

A spokeswoman for Democratic Whip Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., said a protester spit on Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., who is also black.

"I heard people saying things today that I have not heard since March 15, 1960, when I was marching to try to get off the back of the bus," Clyburn told reporters.

"It was like going into a time machine," Carson said of his experience.

That's an important point, Cohen notes; the same kind of vitriolic language was used after civil rights measures were passed, and also when Franklin Roosevelt was trying to implement the New Deal. "It was at least as intense back then," Cohen says.

Also targeted this weekend was Rep. Barney Frank, the openly gay congressman from Massachusetts. Protesters used common anti-gay slurs against him.

"Yes, they called me faggot, homo, several times," Frank said in a telephone interview Monday. "It doesn't hurt me, but it was sad to see this level of vituperation." He also said he was stunned to see, inside the chamber on Sunday, Republican lawmakers cheer protesters who stood up in the House gallery and shouted, "Kill the bill."

"I've never seen that before -- Republicans on their feet applauding, cheering as the people were physically resisting the ushers," Frank said. Disruptions from the gallery are banned. "To see the Republican leadership praising this group is very disturbing."

House Minority Leader John Boehner, speaking Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," called the racial and anti-gay remarks to Democratic members of Congress "reprehensible." He added: "Let's not let a few isolated incidents get in the way of the fact that millions of Americans are scared to death" of the health care bill.

Finally, many were taken aback to hear a congressman -- Rep. Randy Neugebauer of Texas, it later turned out -- shout "Baby killer!" during the House debate. This, in a forum where members refer to each other routinely with the terms "gentlemen" and "gentlelady."

Heckling

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-marshall/gops-heckling-future-uncertain_b_508874.html

Huffington Post

GOP's Heckling Future Uncertain

March 22, 2010

One day after anti-abortion stalwart Rep. Bart Stupak was called a "baby killer" and several months after Rep. Joe Wilson shouted "You lie!" at President Obama, the GOP is looking at hard choices in its heckling agenda for the rest of 2010.

"How do we not be seen in the public eye as the party of boorish, disruptive assholes," said a Republican Party spokesman, "while still maintaining our status as the party of boorish, disruptive assholes?"

He added that the challenge for the party in the months ahead would be learning how to heckle, insult and piss off in a way that pleases its base without alienating Democrats or independents in November.

Rather than become more flexible, however, the Republican Party is considering making heckling an official part of its mission statement. "It doesn't add to the legislative process," said the spokesman, "but we haven't been a part of that for a while now."

Rhetoric Not Isolated Incidents

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35990654/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/?ocid=twitter

MSNBC

Keith Olbermann: GOP self-destruction imminent

March. 22, 2010

Failed Mr. Boehner. You lost. You blew it. "Shame on each and every one of you who substitutes your will and your desires above those of your fellow countrymen," you said last night just before the vote. The will and desire of your countrymen, Mr. Boehner?

If you're one of the leaders of a party that in four years, coughed up the Senate Majority, coughed up the House Majority, coughed up the White House, coughed up Health Care Reform, and along the way ignored every poll, and every election result, I would think the "will and desires of your fellow countrymen" should be pretty damn clear by now: Your countrymen think your policies are of the past, and your tactics are of the gutter.

But Boehner's teary "shame on you" over the tyranny of the vast majority taking a scrap back from the elite clueless minority — that's just an isolated incident. Just as Congressman Neugebauer shouting "Baby-Killer" at, or "It's a Baby-Killer" during, Congressman Stupak's laudable speech last night was just an isolated incident.

Just as the shouting of "n" words at Congressmen Lewis and Carson was just an isolated incident. Just as the spitting on Congressman Cleaver was just an isolated incident. Just as the abuse of Congressman Frank was just an isolated incident. Just as the ethnic slurs shouted at Congressman Rodriguez of Texas was just an isolated incident. Just as the oinking by Congressman Wilson during the President's address was just an isolated incident.

Just as whatever's next will be just an isolated incident. You know what they call it when you have a once-a-week series of isolated incidents? They call it two things. They call it a "pattern" and in the United States of 2010 they call it "The Republican Party."

Tea Party Demographics

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/04/snapshot042610.html>

Center For American Progress

Public Opinion Snapshot: The Tea Party vs. The Public

April 26, 2010

The so-called Tea Party movement has received a tsunami of publicity lately. But one indisputable fact about this movement has been undercovered in the media: The fact that this group is not by any stretch of the imagination a movement based in the center of the American electorate. It is instead a movement of the conservative right that is very much unrepresentative of the general public's views.

Findings from a recent *New York Times*/CBS News poll make this point very clearly. The poll finds that the general public remains stalwart in its support for the *Roe v. Wade* decision establishing the right to obtain a legal abortion: 58 percent say this decision was a good thing, compared to just 34 percent who say it was a bad thing. But among Tea Party supporters, sentiment is just the reverse: 53 percent say the decision was a bad idea and only 40 percent say it was a good idea.

The public also shows its progressive colors on the issue of whether the rich should be taxed to help provide health insurance coverage for those who don't have it. In the same poll, 54 percent say this approach is a good idea, compared to 39 percent who think it's a bad idea. Among Tea Party supporters, however, an amazing 80 percent term this a bad idea and a mere 17 percent say it's a good idea.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html>

New York Times

Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated

Published: April 14, 2010

Tea Party supporters are wealthier and more well-educated than the general public, and are no more or less afraid of falling into a lower socioeconomic class, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll.

The 18 percent of Americans who identify themselves as Tea Party supporters tend to be Republican, white, male, married and older than 45. They hold more conservative views on a range of issues than Republicans generally. They are also more likely to describe themselves as "very conservative" and [President Obama](#) as "very liberal."

And while most Republicans say they are "dissatisfied" with Washington, Tea Party supporters are more likely to classify themselves as "angry."

Tea Party Demographics Cont'd

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-02-05/top-5-misconceptions-about-the-tea-party-movement/>

The Daily Beast

Top 5 Misconceptions About the Tea Party Movement

February 5, 2010

1. Tea Partiers = Independents

Independents are the largest and fastest-growing voter segment—a new CNN poll puts independents at 42 percent of the American electorate. Given the Tea Partiers' anger at overspending under Bush as well as Obama, it's been tempting to equate them with independent voters—but there are fundamental differences. Polls of independents' policy positions consistently place them in between Republicans and Democrats—closer to the GOP on economic issues and closer to the Democrats on social issues. But the Tea Partiers tend to be to the right of the Republican Party on both fiscal and social issues. Their opposition to the Obama administration is overheated and absolute. Independents are angry at the polarization of the two parties; Tea Partiers want more polarization between the two parties. Independents tend to be centrists; Tea Partiers attack centrist Republicans as Republicans in Name Only, or RINOs. Tea Partiers are conservative populists.

Partisanship

<http://www.caivn.org/article/2010/05/01/mindless-partisanship-has-eroded-thoughtful-political-discourse>

Independent Voter Network

Sat, May 01st 2010

There were always people around who spoke in simplistic and often hateful terms about groups with different backgrounds and opposing political persuasions.

But, for the most part, those people in responsible positions – whether in politics or the media – took moderate stances.

So what has made it okay to brook laughably unsupportable positions about your adversaries, and do so with impunity?

The words that are uttered daily by politicians and commentators are astounding. Political leaders of every stripe are accused of being Nazis or socialists without a shred of evidence to support that view. The apparent knowledge of these political ideas is so shoddy that politicians are sometimes accused of holding opposing views simultaneously.

When combined with current coarseness of language, oversimplified and overheated rhetoric takes on a tone of disrespect to political leaders. Politicians may deserve our disrespect, but not on the basis of their party preference alone.

It is ridiculous on its face that all the members of one party are villains while the others are heroes. This is a democracy that balances itself with a two-party system. But the concept of a “loyal opposition” has practically disappeared from our political landscape.

Spirited debate and strong feelings are respectable parts of a political process. But the absence of respect for others and the replacement of thoughtful discussion with sloganeering are not advancing our state and our nation.

If we don't insist on a higher form of political discourse, then we are likely to suffer the consequences of narrow-minded decisions for years to come.

Partisanship Cont'd

<http://tinyurl.com/22kj2l6>

THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW

FALL 04

Over the last several elections, the character of political discourse in America has seemed more and more like a shouting match, a ceaseless antiphonal ranting that seems only to serve the media's need for a story or the politician's aspiration for power. The most important and consequential issues of the day are presented in, and all too often decided upon, what amount to slogans or clichés—observations and opinions rendered within ten-second sound bites and manifestoes published in the latest direct mail copy or in paid political advertisements in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. The shrill tone and clichéd content of much public discourse seems to leave little space for complexity, subtlety, and seriousness in public discussion.

Current Political Dialogue Undermines Democracy

<http://tinyurl.com/22kj2l6>

THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW, FALL 04

The reason is simple: in a democracy, we agree not to kill each other over our differences. We choose, rather, to engage each other in open, public, substantive discussion and debate. The operating assumption is that we can work out disagreements through persuasion rather than coercion. Public discussion, debate, and argument, then, are at the heart of America's great political experiment in self-rule.

It is not just that we talk—how we talk is every bit as important. The reason is that language both reflects and shapes social reality, framing how we think about experience. The means by which the dialectic of public discourse takes place, then, shapes the nature and formation of political reality. Thus, democracies are deeply affected by the kinds of public discourse that occur within them.

One way to highlight the significance of this point is to recognize that all democracies are not the same. There is an important difference between “forms of government” and “forms of power.” Democracy, like monarchy, is a form of government. But democracy can be despotic in the way that it exercises power, particularly when democratic processes become shallow, rather than substantive; thin, rather than thick.

Thus, when shallow, democracy tends to repress, minimize, or even ignore conflict altogether. Substantive democracy, by contrast, is not only consonant with the idea of conflict, it depends upon conflict and the frank recognition of difference that it implies. The crucial premise to a substantive democracy is that consensus or moral agreement should not necessarily be the first and most urgent priority of a social and political order, particularly if that consensus is achieved by compelling people to compromise their most passionately held beliefs and commitments.

At the same time, when democracy is shallow, public discourse becomes a kind of language game that has the form of meaningful communication, but is in fact merely another manifestation of aggression. Sound bites and direct mail, for example, require no accountability to the public and provide no possibility of a meaningful public response. Debates in which opponents do not respond to each other and in which points and counterpoints are constrained by 60-, 90-, and 120-second time frames truncate substantive deliberation. The technologies of public communication themselves distort meaningful discourse. Is it any wonder that contemporary public discourse becomes an unconcealed demonstration of symbolic violence? In such an environment, public speech may become nothing more than a device for increasing power, a weapon facilitating the coercion of consensus.

Current Political Dialogue Undermines Democracy Cont'd

<http://tinyurl.com/22kj2l6>

THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW, FALL 04

How we talk, argue, discuss, and debate in public, then, matters a great deal. As many have said before: in a democracy, genuine disagreement becomes an accomplishment; authentic debate becomes a virtue. This is why we should be alarmed by the superficial and manipulative nature of American public discourse. Having said this, no one imagines that we can achieve the highest ideals of democratic practice any time soon. That, of course, doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to approximate them a little better than we do at present. Improving the character of public discourse, though, presupposes that we understand the problems and challenges that attend it. It is to this end that this issue of *The Hedgehog Review* is devoted: to move us in small ways towards a richer understanding of the issues facing us as we seek the virtue of authentic debate.

Lack of Intelligent Debate

<http://beyondstageonepolitics.com/blog/2010/04/03/namecalling-and-political-dialogue/>

Beyond Stage One Politics

Name calling and Political Dialogue

April 3rd, 2010

A disturbing phenomenon seems to be creeping into the national political dialogue with increasing frequency, and in the process undermining intelligent debate. My personal experience is that more and more liberals, outspoken about their opinions, shut down completely when presented with evidence contrary to what they've always believed. It's as though they've never been aware that intelligence existed on the other side of the political spectrum. This phenomenon has been noticed, and written about, by Gerard [Alexander](#) in the Washington Post back in February 2010 in an article entitled, *Why are liberals so condescending?*

That is why the direction in which we're moving is so disturbing; if we don't actually listen to each other and acknowledge the good intentions and ideas coming from those who disagree with us, it's over.

One of the most consistent ways this intolerance is manifest is in statements such as, "Don't quote Fox News or The Heritage Foundation." Didn't President Obama just try claiming that a centerpiece of his health care reform originated from Heritage? And didn't the Heritage president have to come out and tell him to stop [misrepresenting](#) their work? This is beside the point of course, but apparently a Democrat president finds their work legitimate enough to claim he's incorporating their ideas into his legislation when it suits his purposes.

<http://www.caivn.org/article/2010/05/01/mindless-partisanship-has-eroded-thoughtful-political-discourse>

Independent Voter Network

Sat, May 01st 2010

Mindless partisanship has eroded thoughtful political discourse

No one would argue that today's political discourse reaches the heights of intelligent repartee. You'd have to go back to media figures such as William F. Buckley and politicians such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) to find much in the way of politics as an intellectual pursuit.

There have been many other times in our nation's history when shouting overwhelmed thoughtfulness, so I'm not trying to argue that we're in totally unique circumstances.

But during my lifetime, I have never experienced such a surfeit of stupidity, a torrent of tantrums, and a diminishment of deep thinking.

No Substance to Arguments

<http://americanbullmoose.com/content/who-we-are/is-useful-political-discourse-dead-in-america/comment-page-1>

Journal of the American Bull Mouse

2009 November 17

But more frustrating is the fact that instead of arguing the pros and cons of the actual issue, our information sources argue over the number of people protesting. They have successfully framed the issue as a war between Obamists and Republicans, so naturally, the focus of a good story should be how many foot soldiers marched on the Capitol rather than, gee, maybe the provisions of the bill they're fighting over. This is the root of my frustration. That political discourse has moved from the substance of the thing being fought over, to the fight itself. It has been happening to nearly every issue, and it may be intentional.

Totalism

<http://americanbullmoose.com/content/who-we-are/is-useful-political-discourse-dead-in-america/comment-page-1>

Journal of the American Bull Mouse

2009 November 17

“And where totalism exists, a religion, a political movement, or even a scientific organization becomes little more than an exclusive cult.” – Robert J. Lifton[\[2\]](#)

Robert Lifton wrote what has been the fundamental classic work on social brainwashing. Lifton defines ideological totalism as “the coming together of immoderate ideology with equally immoderate individual character traits.” Basically, absolutists; what Lifton also refers to as an “all-or-nothing emotional alignment.” Later in that chapter, he explains that ideological totalism divides the world into absolutist bins; either a thing is absolutely good or it is absolutely evil.[\[3\]](#) Once a thing is placed in its proper bin, the ideological totalist can proceed with his proper response to it, irrespective of context or circumstance. E.g., since Obama is absolutely evil, we may cheer with glee whenever he fails, even though that might mean America losing out as an Olympics venue. No matter how reasoned or reasonable a liberal proposal may be, it must be opposed.[\[4\]](#)

Lifton’s book goes on to discuss how the powers that be use language to brainwash and suppress independent thought:

The language of the totalist environment is characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed. These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis.[\[5\]](#)

Fabricated Material

<http://americanbullmoose.com/content/who-we-are/is-useful-political-discourse-dead-in-america/comment-page-1>

Journal of the American Bull Mouse

2009 November 17

It's easy to see that MSNBC is as left-biased as Fox News is right-biased. But the problem as relates to the title of this article is that these days, instead of the sides presenting opposing viewpoints, opposing statistics and anecdotes, the sides simply fabricate material. Instead of advocates, we now have cultists.

Why, at every opportunity, are the news agencies and politicians consistently, insistently lying? Have I simply not studied history carefully enough to know that this has always been the case? It seems to me that at many points in our country's past, the object of political discourse was not to confuse and bamboozle the public, but to educate it as to two opposing positions. Instead, the public debate has been overrun by ideological cults. Which brings me to Glenn Beck.

Consequences of Personal Attacks

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/contro-pol.html>

Civil Political Discourse In A Democracy: The Contribution Of Psychology
University of Minnesota

Argumentum ad hominem consists of directing arguments at the opponent rather than at his or her ideas and proposals (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Ad hominem arguments can involve questioning the motives of the opponent, accusing the opponent of acting on personal interest, accusing the opponent of inconsistency, or accusing the opponent of past misconduct. In essence, ad-hominem arguments communicate that the opponent is "bad," and therefore must be wrong. By focusing attention on the candidates rather than the issues, such persuasive procedures may be markedly unhelpful in clarifying which course of action society should adopt. In addition, ad-hominem arguments weaken the moral bond underlying the democratic process, undermine tolerance (discouraging others from presenting opposing positions), undermine trust in the political system, and undermine the overall positive interdependence that holds society together. Negative persuasive procedures used under the guise of political discourse may discredit political discourse and disillusion citizens about the political process. Political discourse may then be ignored or rejected.

The power of the personal attack rather than discourse in campaigning is illustrated by the negativity effect. The **negativity effect** exists when a negative trait affects an impression more than a positive trait, everything else being equal. There is evidence that individuals tend to pay special attention to negative information and weigh negative information more heavily than positive information (Coovert & Reeder, 1990; Taylor, 1991), especially in regard to moral traits. In a wide variety of studies, ranging from forming impressions about other people to evaluating positive and negative information to reach a decision or judgment, negative information figured more prominently than positive information (Taylor, 1991). Capitalizing on the power of negativity, however, may be inherently dangerous to the health of a democracy. Adlai Stevenson (1952), for example, noted that it is the American "*tradition of critical inquiry and discussion that informs our entire civilization*" but critical inquiry only advances the general welfare when its purpose is honest. He notes that "*criticism, not as an instrument of inquiry and reform, but as an instrument of power, quickly degenerates into the techniques of deceit and smear.*"

What Stevenson and others point out is that when negative personal attacks are used as an instrument of power, they tend to (a) increase intolerance aimed at the other person and the views he or she represents (which is directly opposite to the values of democracy which emphasize tolerance of others even if they are promoting unpopular views), (b) undermine trust and other influences on political participation, and (c) undermine the overall positive interdependence and moral bonds that hold society together. The more widespread the use of negative personal attacks, the greater tends to be the disillusionment of citizens about the political process and a decrease in their participation.

Herd Mentality

<http://americanbullmoose.com/content/who-we-are/is-useful-political-discourse-dead-in-america/comment-page-1>

Journal of the American Bull Mouse

2009 November 17

By focusing the discussion on things like tea parties and protests, the various news outlets can cheerlead their particular biases, and gain support through subconscious popularism rather than by persuasion. Such a subterfuge is more insidious than simply claiming that President Obama is not a U.S. citizen. By puffing the numbers up or down, the speaker suggests that the majority either really supports or really opposes health care reform, and thereby invokes several psychological effects of [herd mentality](#).

Specifically, an instance like this conjures [information cascade](#) and [emulation](#). Briefly, when a person sees a crowd of others doing something, irrespective of what his own sources of information may be telling him, he experiences an irrational tendency to follow suit, thereby adding himself to the growing crowd, and thus further influencing other passersby. That is an information cascade. Parallel to this impulse, emulation occurs when some people simply do what others of higher status do. Both are irrational and unconscious behaviors.

Group Polarization

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1082521278.php>

USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review

2004-04-22

While news futurists have dreamed of the day people could create their "Daily Me" -- a newspaper or Web site with only the news they want (and agree with) -- one prominent political thinker believes this could lead to a closed-minded society and the eventual ruin of democracy. Cass Sunstein, a professor at the [University of Chicago Law School](#) and [Department of Political Science](#), warned of the dangers of fragmented media online in his book "[Republic.com](#)" and follow-up essay "[Echo Chambers](#)."

Sunstein believes that like-minded people discussing an issue amongst themselves tend to move to more extreme viewpoints. He also found that "pro" and "con" shows such as "Crossfire" actually produced more hardened opinions for viewers, rather than opening their minds to opposing views. In "Republic.com," Sunstein even suggested that the government might have to step in and force Web sites to link to opposing opinions.

Sunstein expounds on the idea of group polarization in the "Echo Chambers" essay, which focuses on the 2000 election fracas. "If Republicans are talking only with Republicans, if Democrats are talking primarily with Democrats, if members of the religious right speak mostly to each other, and if radical feminists talk largely to radical feminists, there is a potential for the development of different forms of extremism, and for profound mutual misunderstandings with individuals outside the group," Sunstein wrote.

Group Polarization Cont'd

<http://blogs.hawaiinewsnow.com/howard/2010/03/modern-obstacles-to-civilized-political-discourse.html>

03/20/2010

Howard Dicus Hawaii News Now

It's not new to feel strongly for one guy and against another one. It's not new to feel that news stories you agree with are straight news while stories you disagree with are unbalanced. Of course you will have a deeper understanding of the side you already sympathize with. It's human nature. What is new, and one of two key factors destabilizing our political discourse today, is that the proliferation of information sources has robbed us of a common database from which we argue our various views.

Today you can watch MSNBC and Fox News and feel like you're hearing about two parallel universes. Liberals and conservatives alike get spammed with attack emails rehashing discredited rumors as fact, unquestioned by recipients who don't like the people being attacked and are willing to believe the worst about them.

Each new encounter reinforces the reader's views, including some which are factually insupportable, and even the jokes that spread this way reinforce the idea that it's okay to believe the worst about Dick Cheney or Hillary Clinton, again depending on your own pre-existing views.

Lack of Relevance

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35990654/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/?ocid=twitter

MSNBC

Keith Olbermann: GOP self-destruction imminent

March. 22, 2010

American political parties have disappeared before. They are never forced out by their rivals. They die by their own hands, because they did not know that the hatred or the myopia or the monomania they thought was still okay wasn't okay, any more. And so I offer this olive branch to the defeated Republicans and Tea Partiers.

It is a cold olive branch, and scarred, and there aren't many olives on it, but it still counts. You are rapidly moving from "The Party of No," past "The Party Of No Conscience," towards "The Party of No Relevancy." You are behind the wheel of a political Toyota. And before the mid-terms, you will have been reduced to only being this generation's home for the nuts.

You will be the Flat-Earthers, the Isolationists, the Segregationists, the John Birchers. Stop. Certainly you must recognize the future is with the humane, the inclusive, the diverse— it is with America. Not the America of 1910, but the America of 2010. Discard this dangerous, separatist, elitist, backward-looking rhetoric, and you will be welcomed back into the political discourse of this nation. Continue with it, and you will destroy yourselves and whatever righteous causes you actually believe in, and on the way you will damage this country in ways and manners untold.

But even that damage will not be permanent. Faubus, and the MacNamara Brothers, and Bull Connor, and Lindbergh, and Joe McCarthy damaged this nation. We survived and they were swept away by history. You cannot destroy this country, no matter how hard you seem to be trying to nor can you destroy this country's inexorable march towards the light.

The Belgian Nobel Prize winner Maurice Maeterlinck once wrote that, quote, "at every cross-roads on the path that leads to the future, tradition has placed 10-thousand men to guard the past." Last night those 10,000 men fell.

Influence of Corporations

<http://www.opencongress.org/articles/view/1476-The-Corporatization-of-Political-Discourse>

And you thought money in politics was bad enough already... [NYT](#)

January 21, 2010

The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that corporations may spend as freely as they like to support or oppose candidates for president and Congress, easing decades-old limits on business efforts to influence federal campaigns.

By a 5-4 vote, the court overturned a 20-year-old ruling that said companies can be prohibited from using money from their general treasuries to produce and run their own campaign ads. The decision, which almost certainly will also allow labor unions to participate more freely in campaigns, threatens similar limits imposed by 24 states.

Justice Stevens wrote the dissenting opinion, which begins on [page 88 of the PDF](#): “The Court’s ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.”

<http://blog.sunlightfoundation.com/2010/01/21/how-the-citizens-united-case-affects-money-politics-and-transparency-as-we-know-it/>

The Sunlight Foundation

01/21/10

The ramifications of today’s [Supreme Court decision in Citizens United v. FEC](#) are breathtaking – opening the floodgates of political money such as we have never seen before. If you thought Congress was ‘for sale’ to the highest bidder, you ain’t seen nothing yet. Nothing less than a fundamental rethinking of our campaign finance laws is demanded as a result of today’s decision.

Con Evidence

Partisanship Leads to Better Results

<http://americanbullmoose.com/content/who-we-are/is-useful-political-discourse-dead-in-america/comment-page-1>

Journal of the American Bull Mouse

2009 November 17

A professor of mine once told me that “truth is in discourse,” and I have wholeheartedly agreed ever since. As an example of the idea, our legal system is based on an adversarial system precisely because truth is more likely to be uncovered by two opposing zealous advocates than by two people trying to remain unbiased. It’s also a significant factor in the basis of our two-party system. Partisanship can be ugly, but often it allows us to reach consensus we otherwise wouldn’t. The ideal of a presidential debate hinges on the same mechanism: each candidate argues a point, and the one who convinces more people gets more votes. In short political discourse was never intended to be collaborative, it was designed to be adversarial.

Different Parties Allow for Wide Range of Viewpoints

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ed-guowitz-phd/political-dialogue-too-im_b_520473.html

Huffington Post

March 31, 2010

[Political Dialogue; Too Important to be Hijacked](#)

Readers, apparently stung by my criticism of hypocrisy on the Right often accuse me of wanting the Right to disappear. On the contrary, I think that would be a very bad thing, just as bad as if the Left disappeared. In my work with corporations one of the key principles I teach, one for which there is clear scientific evidence, is that in order for any group to come up with ideas that are smarter than its smartest members would have come up with on their own, it must have a wide range of diverse viewpoints. I am convinced that one of the reasons that the US has been a consistent world leader in innovation, quality, human rights, standard of living, and on and on is that we have had a lively and vibrant dialogue among wide-ranging points of view.

News Appeals to Different Groups

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1082521278.php>

USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review

2004-04-22

Other researchers believe that ideological journalism is just another way to serve a niche audience. Tom Rosenstiel, director of the [Project for Excellence in Journalism](#), says that the recent [State of the News Media 2004](#) report showed a demand for targeted media in general, and not just ideological media.

"We are in an on-demand world," Rosenstiel said via e-mail. "People want what they want when they want it. They don't want a one-size-fits-all news. For those who want to make their niche a conservative audience, that has given them a comfortable spot. But I really believe the larger phenomenon is targeting -- whether it is a bicycling magazine or other targeted groups. People want depth and some context they trust. For some this is ideological. But for others it is something else. It is part of fragmentation."

Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, who started the popular progressive blog, [Daily Kos](#), says that objective journalism isn't really possible because of reporters' inherent biases. He told me via e-mail that partisan media has the advantage of being open about its biases, so readers know what they're getting.

"Is there value in objective journalism?" he said. "I think the wire services should strive for it as much as possible. But ultimately, such news is boring. There's nothing drier than wire copy. But news with attitude is fun. Exciting. It gets the blood boiling. It makes us react and take action, whether in approval or anger. I absolutely believe that as more Americans become aware of the partisan news outlets available to them that they will gravitate in that direction."

Opposing Dialogue is Beneficial

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1082521278.php>

USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review

2004-04-22

Of course, not everyone thinks ideological journalism is such a bad thing -- in moderation. Michael Cornfield, research director at the [Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet](#) at George Washington University, says that respectful debate has its place.

"I wouldn't be so quick to equate partisan/ideological with coarse and bad if I were you," he told me via e-mail. "There's nothing wrong with partisan dialogue, provided that it is grounded in facts, oriented to policymaking, and suffused with respect. True, some of the online dialogue doesn't meet those standards. But we can criticize, and click elsewhere."

Internet Filled with Non-Legitimate Political Dialogue

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1082521278.php>

USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review

2004-04-22

And not every ideological site takes a monolithic stance on issues. Jonah Goldberg, editor at large at the [National Review Online](#), says that his site has showcased a wide range of conservative political opinions.

"[NRO] shows that there is a lot more heterogeneity to conservatism than the mainstream media will concede," Goldberg told me via e-mail. "We showcase the arguments within conservatism when many liberals think conservatives all think one thing."

While Goldberg believes that there are more "amateur" pundits now than at any time in history -- thanks to call-in shows, blogs, etc. -- he doesn't believe that low-end online operations can beat out larger operations.

"I do believe that NRO is often much better than Salon and [Slate](#) at the things we are good at," he said. "But Slate and Salon have enormous, massive advantages in terms of [financial] resources. Everyone talks about how bloggers are 'citizen reporters,' but 99 percent of the time that's bunk. A handful do great 'you are there' stuff, but the vast majority simply pick over the morning news like everyone else."

So perhaps the most intense ideological debates online are just a loud minority drowning out an overall populace that is much more moderate and apathetic. But until someone comes up with an entertaining centrist radio show or Web site, we can expect the attack dogs of the left and right to continue to garner bigger audiences on the air and online.

Disagreement is Necessary

<http://beyondstageonepolitics.com/blog/2010/04/03/namecalling-and-political-dialogue/>

Beyond Stage One Politics

Name calling and Political Dialogue

April 3rd, 2010

I don't expect that we'll all agree with each other all the time, and I don't think absolute agreement would be good for our republic. The interplay of different thoughts and ideas, founded upon our Constitution, is healthy. The founders didn't all agree all the time, and from their debates and conversations emerged the most stable, prosperous, opportunity-granting nation the world has ever seen. Not bad.

Harmful Political Dialogue Has Always Existed

<http://tinyurl.com/22kj2l6>

THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW

FALL 04

It is not as though the past is any model for the present. One doesn't have to look very hard to find evidence that public discourse in the past was, perhaps, as rough then as it is today. For example, Federalist editors spoke of Jefferson as a "cold thinking villain whose black blood always runs temperately bad."¹ It was said that if he were elected president, "the seal of death is that moment set on our holy religion, our churches will be prostrated, and some infamous prostitute, under the title of the Goddess of Reason, will preside in the Sanctuaries now devoted to the Most High."²

Response to Corporation Influence

<http://blog.sunlightfoundation.com/2010/01/21/how-the-citizens-united-case-affects-money-politics-and-transparency-as-we-know-it/>

The Sunlight Foundation

01/21/10

The Majority wrote:

With the advent of the Internet, prompt disclosure of expenditures can provide shareholders and citizens with the information needed to hold corporations and elected officials accountable for their positions and supporters. Shareholders can determine whether their corporation's political speech advances the corporation's interest in making profits, and citizens can see whether elected officials are 'in the pocket' of so-called moneyed interests... This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages.

Tea Party Foundation

<http://www.teapartypatriots.org/Mission.aspx>

Tea Party Patriots

Mission Statement

The impetuses for the Tea Party movement are excessive government spending and taxation. Our mission is to attract, educate, organize, and mobilize our fellow citizens to secure public policy consistent with our three core values of Fiscal Responsibility, Constitutionally Limited Government and Free Markets.

Core Values

Fiscal Responsibility: Fiscal Responsibility by government honors and respects the freedom of the individual to spend the money that is the fruit of his or her own labor. A constitutionally limited government, designed to protect the blessings of liberty, must be fiscally responsible or it must subject its citizenry to high levels of taxation that unjustly restrict the liberty our Constitution was designed to protect. The runaway deficit spending as we now see in Washington D.C. compels us to take action because we know that a heavy burden of national debt is a grave threat to our national sovereignty and the personal and economic liberty of future generations.

Constitutionally Limited Government: We, the members of The Tea Party Patriots, are inspired by our founding documents and regard the Constitution of the United States to be the supreme law of the land. We believe that it is possible to know the original intent of the government our founders set forth, and stand in support of that intent. Like the founders, we support states' rights for those powers not expressly stated in the Constitution. As the government is of the people, by the people and for the people, in all other matters we support the personal liberty of the individual, within the rule of law.

Free Markets: A free market is the economic consequence of personal liberty. The founders believed that personal and economic freedom were indivisible, as do we. Our current government's interference distorts the free market and inhibits the pursuit of individual and economic liberty. Therefore, we support a return to the free market principles on which this nation was founded and oppose government intervention into the operations of private business.

Positive Recognition of Tea Parties

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/05/Salvatori-Prize-Goes-to-Tea-Party-Movement>

The Heritage Foundation

Salvatori Prize Goes to Tea Party Movement

May 5, 2010

The tea party movement, the largest grass-roots political effort in decades, is rallying Americans to restore limited constitutional government. The Heritage Foundation is nurturing those roots this year with its annual Henry Salvatori Prize for American Citizenship.

Named for entrepreneur and philanthropist Henry Salvatori, the \$25,000 prize is given annually to an American who upholds and advances the principles of the American Founding, embodies the virtues of character and mind that animated the Founders and exemplifies the spirit of independent and entrepreneurial citizenship in the United States.

“The nationwide tea party movement is the most significant citizen effort in our times that seeks to revive America’s founding principles,” said Matthew Spalding, Heritage scholar and author of *We Still Hold These Truths: Rediscovering Our Principles, Reclaiming Our Future* (ISI, 2009).

“It is hard to think of a more appropriate recipient.”

Tea Party Beliefs

<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2010/04/19/libertarians-independents-and-tea-parties/>

Cato Institute

[Libertarians, Independents, and Tea Parties](#)

In particular, the Politico/TargetPoint poll used some of the same questions, drawn from the Gallup Poll and other surveys, that Kirby and I have used to identify libertarians in our “[libertarian vote](#)” studies. Here’s the [analysis from TargetPoint](#) (emphases added):

IDEOLOGY

The Tea Party is, unsurprisingly, for small-government and cuts to taxes and spending; but there is a clear split when it comes to government promotion of moral values.

- Overwhelming majorities of 88% and 81% say government is trying to do too many things best left to individuals and businesses, and that government should cut taxes and spending, respectively. But in terms of values, Tea Party attendees are split right down the middle. A slim majority of 51% say “Government should not promote any particular set of values”, versus 46% that say “Government should promote traditional family values in our society.”
- We can compare these to Gallup data collected in September of 2009: nationally, 57% said government was doing too much (among Republicans it was 80%), while 53% said government should promote traditional values (among Republicans it was 67%). So **the Tea Party is actually more conservative than national Republicans when it comes to the size and role of government, but less conservative than national Republicans in terms of government promotion of traditional values.**
- Indeed, combining the responses to some of these questions is a revealing ideological exercise: **43% of attendees said government is doing too much AND that government should promote traditional values, a distinctly conservative view; 42% said government is doing too much AND that government should NOT promote any particular set of values**, an ideological view used by the Cato Institute as an indicator of libertarianism (currently 23% of all Americans fit into this category).
- This split between a libertarian Tea Party and a socially conservative Tea Party is reinforced when we consider the combination of all three ideological questions we asked, questions on the size and role of government, the role of traditional values, and the dynamic between taxes and spending. If we count the number of times a respondent gave the “conservative” answer (government should do less, it should promote traditional values, and cut taxes and spending), **40% of Tea Party attendees gave the conservative answer all three times, and 42% gave the conservative answer only two times. Those that gave only two conservative responses were most likely to defect on the role of traditional values.**

Tea Parties Have Historical Roots

<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2009/11/05/tea-party-conservatism-and-the-gop/>

Cato Institute

Tea Party Conservatism and the GOP

November 5, 2009 @ 11:49 am

Let's start with some clarity: "Tea Party conservatism" stands for several things, but it is not the caricature one often finds in the mainstream media, to say nothing of the left wing blogs. It is a movement with deep historical roots, drawing its name and inspiration from the Boston Tea Party of 1773. As with that event, taxes brought it to the fore — on Tax Day, April 15. But taxes are simply the most obvious manifestation of modern government run amok, insinuating itself into every corner of life. Trillions of dollars of debt for our children, out-of-control government budgets, massive interventions in private affairs — the list of wrongs is endless, and under Obama has exploded. He stands for nothing if not for making us all dependent on the government he has promised us. That's not America. That's a foreign vision, which over the centuries countless millions have fled, searching for freedom.

Tea Party Has Fringe Members Like any Other Group

<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2009/11/05/tea-party-conservatism-and-the-gop/>

Cato Institute

Tea Party Conservatism and the GOP

November 5, 2009 @ 11:49 am

To be sure, the Tea Party movement has its fringe elements, as did the revolt against British tyranny, which the establishment of its day disparaged. So too does the Obama administration, some of whom have already resigned. The basic question, however, is what does the movement stand for? What are its principles? And on that, the contrast with the Obama vision is stark: However much confusion there might be on specific issues, which is to be expected, the broad principles are clear. The Tea Party movement stands for limited constitutional government. At its rallies, on hand-written sign after sign, that was the message repeatedly seen. These are ordinary Americans – Republicans, Independents, and even Democrats — who want simply to be left alone to plan and live their own lives. They don't want “community organizers” to help empower them to get more from government.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-02-05/top-5-misconceptions-about-the-tea-party-movement/>

The Daily Beast

Top 5 Misconceptions About the Tea Party Movement

February 5, 2010

2. Tea Partiers Are All Wingnuts

The guys with the Obama-as-Hitler signs get all the attention, for obvious reasons, but the reality is that the Tea Parties began as a fiscal conservative protest in response to the \$787 billion stimulus amid bailout backlash. Their ranks are full of folks who've never attended a protest before, small businesses owners who were angry at the way they were struggling to pay their bills while big business and big government could rack up debts and pass the buck onto taxpayers in backroom deals. There is common-sense anger at unsustainable deficits that are seen as generational theft. Reagan's rhetoric won Americans' hearts and minds when it came to Keynesian spending. Unified Democratic control of Congress and the White House also provokes in many a distrust that is consistent with a Madisonian desire for checks and balances. Extremists are always ultimately their own side's worst enemy, and I've seen plenty of people with ugly cases of Obama Derangement Syndrome at Tea Party protests. But it is by no means the whole crowd.

Tea Party to Move Republicans Back to Roots

<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2009/11/05/tea-party-conservatism-and-the-gop/>

Cato Institute

Tea Party Conservatism and the GOP

November 5, 2009 @ 11:49 am

But they do need to be organized to bring that about — to get government off their backs. And the Republican Party should be the natural vehicle toward that end — the party, after all, that was formed to get government off the backs of several million slaves. But today's Republican Party is a mixed lot: Some understand those principles; but others, as in the NY 23 race, are all but indistinguishable from their counterparts in the party of Obama. The problem in NY 23 was not that a third party entered the race. Rather, the party establishment botched things from the beginning, by picking a nominee who properly belonged in the Democratic Party, as her pathetic last-minute endorsement indicated, and that's why a third party entered the race — with a novice of a nominee who nearly won despite the odds against him.

The question, therefore, is not whether Tea Party conservatism is a help or a hazard for Republicans seeking a return to power? To the contrary, it is whether the Republican Party is a help or a hindrance to the Tea Party movement? It will be a help only if it returns to its roots. The mainstream media, overwhelmingly of the Democratic persuasion, will continue to push Republicans to be "moderate," of course — meaning "Democrat Lite" — to which the proper response is: Why would voters go for that when they can get the real thing on the Democratic line? If Tuesday's returns showed anything, it is that Independents, a truly mixed lot, are up for grabs; but at the same time, they are looking for leaders who promise not simply to "solve problems" but to do so in a way that respects our traditions of individual liberty, free markets, and limited government. When Republican candidates stand clearly and firmly for those principles, they stand a far better chance of being elected than when they temporize. That is the lesson that Republicans must grasp — and not forget — if they are to return to power.

Tea Parties are Grassroots

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-02-05/top-5-misconceptions-about-the-tea-party-movement/>

The Daily Beast

Top 5 Misconceptions About the Tea Party Movement

February 5, 2010

3. Tea Partiers Are "Astroturf"

On Tax Day 2009, Tea Party protests were held in 346 towns and cities, drawing an estimated 300,000 people, according to the dependable fivethirtyeight.com. At the time, liberal columnists joined with Nancy Pelosi in trying to downplay the events, dismissing them as artificial "astroturf" protests rather than a genuine grassroots movement. True, groups like Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks helped fund organizational costs while Fox News helped make the protests a national conservative happening by airing more than 100 commercial promotions for the protests in the ten days before Tax Day. But these were the equivalent of conservative public service announcements. For all the "astroturf" asides, the crowds were homegrown. They may have been pumped up by partisan interests, but they were not purchased. There is real grassroots anger going on, based in deep policy debates over the proper role of government as well as shallow partisan politics.

Tea Partiers Are Not All Libertarians

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-02-05/top-5-misconceptions-about-the-tea-party-movement/>

The Daily Beast

Top 5 Misconceptions About the Tea Party Movement

February 5, 2010

4. Tea Partiers Are All Libertarians

This is the opening pitch to any young Tea Party attendee, a revealing attempt at finding common ground. The libertarian label accounts for the anger at overspending under the Bush administration and gives the movement a modern-sounding spin, recasting the Obama opposition into a clear-cut fight between individualism and collectivism. By contrast, social conservatism has an ideologically inconvenient collectivist streak embedded in it, particularly an intrusion of the government into questions of sexual and reproductive freedom. Past icons, like libertarian Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, couldn't have passed the party purity measures pushed by some conservatives. And current Tea Party icons like Sarah Palin and Rush Limbaugh enforce the social and fiscal conservative straightjacket—they embrace the idea that there are no enemies on the right and RINOs on the left. Accordingly, they are hugely popular with conservatives but kryptonite to independents and centrists. Libertarians are given plenty of lip service, but they are not trusted with leadership roles in the conservative populist movement to date.

Tea Parties Not the Most Important Part of Republican Party

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-02-05/top-5-misconceptions-about-the-tea-party-movement/>

The Daily Beast

Top 5 Misconceptions About the Tea Party Movement

February 5, 2010

5. Tea Partiers Will Take Over the GOP

Rep. Michele Bachmann has said she wants the Tea Partiers to take over the GOP. Sarah Palin's hopes are more modest—a "merger" of the two forces. There's no question that conservatives are trying to surf the Tea Party wave into increased influence while also trying to purge RINOs from the GOP. But if you take a close look at what's happening in key campaigns, a different story emerges. The greatest symbol of the Republican resurgence to date is the election of Scott Brown to succeed Ted Kennedy in the Senate. The full 2010 trifecta would include taking Obama and Biden's Senate seats—and the once-implausible scenario now seems increasingly likely because of the centrist GOP nominees running. Illinois' Mark Kirk and Delaware's Mike Castle have been targeted as RINOs by grassroots conservative groups because they describe themselves as social moderates. Like Scott Brown, they are pro-choice. Like Brown, they are also fiscal conservatives and national security hawks. The secret behind the GOP's improved electoral chances is in fielding centrist candidates who can win over independent voters.

Obama Acknowledges Republican Policies

<http://thehill.com/homenews/house/78847-despite-testy-exchanges-gop-officials-applaud-obama-for-meeting-with-them>

The Hill

01/29/10

Despite testy exchanges, GOPs applaud Obama for meeting with them at retreat

“[F]or the first time, Obama acknowledged that House Republicans had crafted measures to stimulate the economy, reduce the budget deficit and reduce health insurance costs. At a number of times during the rare, televised, question and answer session with members, the president said that he had read many of their proposals. ‘I’ve actually read your bills,’ the president said to a packed banquet room at Baltimore’s Marriott Renaissance hotel. . . For Republicans, at least one important goal was achieved: ‘it got President Obama to acknowledge repeatedly on national TV that Republicans have in fact offered detailed alternatives on all of the big issues, flatly contradicting a fundamental White House talking point of the past year,’ a GOP aide explained.”

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=NGFINzdiZDVmYjNjMzNkODIxMDc0ZjJmMTYxODU4NWE=>

“**The President & The GOP,**”

National Review Online,

January 29, 2010

It was striking to me that during the president's Q&A the president repeatedly acknowledged that House Republicans have solutions. This runs contrary to the party of ‘no’ meme. Anyone who tries to continue it, should have to watch this again. That includes the president.” – Kathryn Jean Lopez,

Democrats and Republicans Continue to Work Together

<http://thehill.com/homenews/house/78847-despite-testy-exchanges-gop-officials-applaud-obama-for-meeting-with-them>

The Hill

01/29/10

Despite testy exchanges, GOPs applaud Obama for meeting with them at retreat

Mr. Obama was received with polite applause on Friday. He noted that Republicans and Democrats, for all their partisan jousting, had worked together on security issues, such as the war in Afghanistan. And he thanked those Republicans who joined in efforts to strengthen the rights of credit-card holders and to boost benefits for the unemployed.

"We have a track record of working together. It is possible," the president said. But he then went on to complain about the largely party-line votes that have defined "some very big things," including pending health-care legislation and the economic-stimulus package enacted a year ago.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703389004575033121215646944.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_MIDDLENexttoWhatsNewsTop#printMode

Wall Street Journal

Obama, Republicans Spar at House GOP Event

JANUARY 30, 2010

"Privately, Republicans welcomed the exchanges, many of which turned on policy nitty-gritty. The meeting elevated members of the House minority to Mr. Obama's footing and neutralized the Democratic line that the GOP is 'the party of No,' said one Republican strategist."

Beneficial Discussion Between Republicans and Democrats is Happening

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2010/0129/Obama-s-spirited-Q-A-with-House-Republicans>

The Christian Science Monitor

Obama's spirited Q&A with House Republicans

January 29, 2010

But overall, [the interchange](#) was lively, civil, and substantive. Reporters in the room said the audience murmured in polite disagreement on a few occasions but not in a disruptive way. There were no partisan outbursts. Midway through the question-and-answer session the president said, "I'm having fun."

Republican House leader John Boehner invited the president to attend and introduced him by saying those in Washington "need to listen to each other."

Mr. Boehner remarked that Republicans had proposed a lot of solutions that were disregarded over the past year and had compiled them into a single booklet, titled "Better Solutions," that he handed to Obama. When the introduction was completed, the assembled Republican legislators welcomed the president with a standing ovation.

In response to a question about Republican legislative ideas being "stiff-armed by [House Speaker] Nancy Pelosi," the president said "both sides can take some blame for a sour climate on Capitol Hill." He said not having more communication between the legislative leaders of the major parties was "a failure on my part" and that he would [try to do more](#) on that issue this year.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-p-croley/filibusters-should-promot_b_463512.html

Huffington Post

[Filibusters Should Promote Democratic Deliberation](#)

February 16, 2010

Yet defenders of the filibuster find virtue where the critics see vice. The filibuster applies necessary brakes on majoritarian initiative. Otherwise, majorities might get carried away and ignore those who, although in the minority, still represent legitimate points of view. The filibuster also ensures that narrow majorities cannot impose dramatic policy change against the wishes of large minorities. For these purposes, whether a majority is narrow and likewise whether a minority is large ultimately depends on the number of votes required for cloture.

Magnitude of Internet Use for News

<http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/american-life/a-13-2006-03-29-voa77.html>

Voice of America

Internet News-Gathering in U.S. on the Rise

29 March 2006

50 million Americans are turning primarily to the Internet for their news. It is a high-water mark that experts say ought to be a clarion call to newspapers, television networks, and other, more traditional news sources

What the Pew Internet Project found is that among so-called "high-powered" broadband users - that is, people who do things online at least four times a day - the Internet was the greatest single news source. 71 percent of them said they got their news online. Horrigan says information about what's happening in the world has become one more thing these people turn to the Internet for.

"As people have gained experience on the Internet, as people have folded different facets of their lives (into the Internet), whether it's getting healthcare information online, or communicating with family and friends online - as they become more generally dependent on the Internet, they move more things online, including getting the news online."

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx?r=1>

Pew Internet and American Life Project

Understanding the Participatory News Consumer

2010

The internet is at the center of the story of how people's relationship to news is changing. Six in ten Americans (59%) get news from a combination of online *and* offline sources on a typical day, and the internet is now the third most popular news platform, behind local television news and national television news.

- **Portable** : 33% of cell phone owners now access news on their cell phones.
- **Personalized** : 28% of internet users have customized their home page to include news from sources and on topics that particularly interest them.
- **Participatory** : 37% of internet users have contributed to the creation of news, commented about it, or disseminated it via postings on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter.

Magnitude of Internet Use for News Cont'd

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx?r=1>

Pew Internet and American Life Project

Understanding the Participatory News Consumer

2010

To a great extent, people's experience of news, especially on the internet, is becoming a shared social experience as people swap links in emails, post news stories on their social networking site feeds, highlight news stories in their Tweets, and haggle over the meaning of events in discussion threads. For instance, more than 8 in 10 online news consumers get or share links in emails.

The rise of the internet as a news platform has been an integral part of these changes. This report discusses two significant technological trends that have influences news consumption behavior: First, the advent of social media like social networking sites and blogs has helped the news become a social experience in fresh ways for consumers. People use their social networks *and* social networking technology to filter, assess, and react to news. Second, the ascent of mobile connectivity via smart phones has turned news gathering and news awareness into an anytime, anywhere affair for a segment of avid news watchers.

Impact of Internet News on Youth

<http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/american-life/a-13-2006-03-29-voa77.html>

Voice of America

Internet News-Gathering in U.S. on the Rise

29 March 2006

"They won't have formed news-gathering habits in their 20s and 30s by subscribing to the newspaper or turning on the television," he says. "Their news consumption habits will have been formed by turning to the Internet, so as these people age, they will probably be less likely to do things like subscribing to the local paper or watching the national TV news."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/02/washington/02campaign.html>

New York Times

Politics Faces Sweeping Change via the Web

April 2, 2006

Analysts said that the Internet appeared to be a particularly potent way to appeal to new, young voters, a subject of particular interest to both parties in these politically turbulent times. In the 2004 campaign, 80 percent of people between the age of 18 and 34 who contributed to Mr. Kerry's campaign made their contribution online, Carol Darr, director of the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet at George Washington University.

Internet as a Tool for Campaign Fundraising

<http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/11/05/eight-reasons-the-internet-has-changed-politics-forever>

Web Pro News

Eight Reasons the Internet has Changed Politics Forever

November 8, 2008

Possibly most game changing of all has been Obama's use of the Internet to raise money. In the 1980's, it was Republicans who altered fundraising by successfully using computers to fine tune and manage mailing lists of donors, which was utilized to help them take over Congress for the first time in 40 years. That was no small feat. However, the Obama campaign used the Internet to help them raise over \$600 million in contributions from over 3 million donors.

Barack Obama's campaign has singlehandedly destroyed the concept of public financing of major political contests. Ironically, it was the Democrats who championed the public financing of presidential campaigns, and it is they who have killed it. The \$600 million spent this election by Obama will likely be a billion dollars per candidate in four years.

Internet has Become Mainstream

<http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/11/05/eight-reasons-the-internet-has-changed-politics-forever>

Web Pro News

Eight Reasons the Internet has Changed Politics Forever

November 8, 2008

News enlightenment sites such as the [Drudge Report](#) and [The Huffington Post](#) have gained significant influence since the last election. The Drudge report in particular can make mainstream media pay attention to a story by simply linking to it. Major news outlets don't want to look foolish not covering a story that they know was seen on Drudge by 30 million people.

Mainstream news websites such as CNN.com, MSNBC.com and FOXNews.com have overtaken their television counterparts as the place people get their news. For example, CNN.com [reportedly](#) received a huge Election Day audience of 27 million unique visitors to their site. These visitors generated over 276 million page views in one day. Simply amazing.

Niche non-partisan political sites like [RealClearPolitics.com](#) and [Politico.com](#) have become mainstream. The RealClearPolitics.com poll average map in particular has been routinely source-referenced by the major television networks and news websites. This has changed how news organization report on poll data and has made people more understanding of variations in polls. Outlying poll results are not given as much credence as in the past.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx?r=1>

Pew Internet and American Life Project

Understanding the Participatory News Consumer

2010

The internet has surpassed newspapers and radio in popularity as a news platform on a typical day and now ranks just behind TV.

More than half of American adults (56%) say they follow the news “all or most of the time,” and another quarter (25%) follow the news at least “some of the time.” Asked specifically about their news habits on “a typical day,” the results are striking: 99% of American adults say that on a typical day, they get news from at least one of these media platforms: a local or national print newspaper, a local or national television news broadcast, radio, or the internet.¹

The Impact of Youtube

<http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/11/05/eight-reasons-the-internet-has-changed-politics-forever>

Web Pro News

Eight Reasons the Internet has Changed Politics Forever

November 8, 2008

Internet video clips have become mainstream, both as a way to illustrate political points and to view clips of the candidates from news and entertainment television shows. For instance, [a clip](#) of Sarah Palin's appearance on Saturday Night Live was viewed 7,264,478 times on YouTube. A recent politically inspired clip of Barack Obama [discussing](#) on a radio show his desire to "spread the wealth" around was viewed on YouTube 2,393,392 times. This in particular has changed political marketing forever.

Political news watched via Internet video clips clearly has become mainstream, as [illustrated](#) by the huge viewing numbers for election day on CNN.com:

- CNN.com Live: 4.9 million live streams
- additional 6.7 million on-demand video streams

News often isn't TiVo'd, but it apparently is watched in large numbers on the news websites and YouTube.

The Impact of Youtube Cont'd

<http://online-business-woman.com/internet-news/238/238/>

Online Business Woman

How YouTube has changed U.S. politics forever

There can be no question that this year's election campaign is the widest, most accessible election in this nation's history. Hard-to-reach voters are being charged up, in a big way, as a result of social media efforts by individual citizens.

One obvious example of this – YouTube. Used early in the campaign by Barack Obama's folks, YouTube was successfully deployed to build massive interest within a typically de facto disenfranchised group, America's young voters.

The Obama campaign recognized early on that this election would be won or lost based on social media efforts; a smart move for a grass roots campaign.

While the John McCain campaign has ignored these efforts, their strategy instead was to energize a nearly as politically uninspired group, stay-at-home moms. This group is one of the largest growing groups actively utilizing social media networks to stay in touch with other moms, and stay informed.

Sound bites may last for a few days, or maybe even a week, but CNN reports captured on video, held in posterity for all eternity by each and every individual who desires it through mediums like YouTube, makes for a very enlivened campaign.

All these efforts are being driven, and many developed, by self-appointed political pundits, journalists and self-made commentators like me, who desire to have their voice heard in a world that seems to drown out the every-day average citizen.

The Impact of Blogs

<http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/11/05/eight-reasons-the-internet-has-changed-politics-forever>

Web Pro News

Eight Reasons the Internet has Changed Politics Forever

November 8, 2008

Partisan political blogs like PowerLineBlog.com and DailyKos.com have become even more important. Yes, political blogs made CBS and Dan Rather look silly in the last election, but with this election they have become legit voices of political opinion. *The 2008 election has solidified the political blogger as an authority voice in politics.* Some of them, such as John H. Hinderaker of Power Line and Markos Moulitsas of Daily Kos, regularly appear on network and cable news shows.

Social Media as a Tool to Spread Information

<http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/11/05/eight-reasons-the-internet-has-changed-politics-forever>

Web Pro News

Eight Reasons the Internet has Changed Politics Forever

November 8, 2008

Social media hardly existed four years ago, but during this election the candidates and their supporters used sites such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace aggressively. I think this is a strategy that will continue to evolve over the next four years to possibly become one of the most powerful weapons a candidate has in their quest to organize, rally, raise funds, and ultimately win the presidency.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx?r=1>

Pew Internet and American Life Project

Understanding the Participatory News Consumer

2010

News consumption is a socially-engaging and socially-driven activity, especially online. The public is clearly part of the news process now. Participation comes more through sharing than through contributing news themselves.

Getting news is often an important social act. Some 72% of American news consumers say they follow the news because they enjoy talking with others about what is happening in the world and 69% say keeping up with the news is a social or civic obligation. And 50% of American news consumers say they rely to some degree on people around them to tell them the news they need to know. Online, the social experience is widespread:

- 75% of online news consumers say they get news forwarded through email or posts on social networking sites and 52% say they share links to news with others via those means.
- 51% of social networking site (e.g. Facebook) users who are also online news consumers say that on a typical day they get news items from people they follow. Another 23% of this cohort follow news organizations or individual journalists on social networking sites.

Some 37% of internet users have contributed to the creation of news, commentary about it, or dissemination of news via social media. They have done at least one of the following: commenting on a news story (25%); posting a link on a social networking site (17%); tagging content (11%), creating their own original news material or opinion piece (9%), or Tweeting about news (3%).

Internet as a Political Tool

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/02/washington/02campaign.html>

New York Times

Politics Faces Sweeping Change via the Web

April 2, 2006

The transformation of American politics by the Internet is accelerating with the approach of the 2006 Congressional and 2008 White House elections, prompting the rewriting of rules on advertising, fund-raising, mobilizing supporters and even the spreading of negative information.

Democrats and Republicans are sharply increasing their use of e-mail, interactive Web sites, candidate and party blogs, and text-messaging to raise money, organize get-out-the-vote efforts and assemble crowds for a rallies. The Internet, they said, appears to be far more efficient, and less costly, than the traditional tools of politics, notably door knocking and telephone banks.

Analysts say the campaign television advertisement, already diminishing in influence with the proliferation of cable stations, faces new challenges as campaigns experiment with technology that allows direct messaging to more specific audiences, and through unconventional means.

Those include Podcasts featuring a daily downloaded message from a candidate and so-called viral attack videos, designed to trigger peer-to-peer distribution by e-mail chains, without being associated with any candidate or campaign. Campaigns are now studying popular Internet social networks, like Friendster and Facebook, as ways to reaching groups of potential supporters with similar political views or cultural interests.

"The effect of the Internet on politics will be every bit as transformational as television was," said Ken Mehlman, the Republican national chairman. "If you want to get your message out, the old way of paying someone to make a TV ad is insufficient: You need your message out through the Internet, through e-mail, through talk radio."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jose-antonio-vargas/top-moments-in-tech-and-p_b_402364.html

The Huffington Post

December 29, 2009

Politics is changing: perhaps not at a pace we'd all like, maybe not to the extent we'd envisioned, but it's definitely changing. Nothing speaks louder than **Money** in politics, and an increasing amount is being raised online. **Organizing** has taken on a whole new meaning because of the here-comes-everybody social Web. So has **Transparency**, the biggest and arguably most important word in the emerging vernacular of online-based politics. *Free the data, let the information speak for itself!* And **Communication**? More and more candidates, officials and politicians are directly communicating (and sometimes truly interacting) with their constituents -- otherwise known as "**We the people**," as our 222-year-old U.S. Constitution puts it. "I see the Internet as a great source of hope for re-energizing representative democracy," Al Gore, the long-time Internet evangelist, [told me in an interview](#), "and making it possible for people to really participate."

Internet Improves Chance of New Political Entrants

Fox School of Business Temple University

Does the Internet matter? A study of the 2008 presidential primaries

November 2008

Some candidates received a disproportionate share of attention in the traditional media such as television and radio. It is generally assumed that frontrunners like Hillary Clinton will receive more coverage of a campaign event than underdog candidates such as Ron Paul or Chris Dodd. The Internet may increase the threat of new entrants by leveling the playing field for all candidates. Candidates can circumvent traditional media and get their message across inexpensively. The distribution cost of YouTube is practically zero. Campaign workers can get their message across on blogs even if the traditional media is not paying attention.

Blog mentions alone may not provide the necessary “traction” for less-known candidates. Voters who are unaware of these candidates may be overlooking associated blog entries. Instead, YouTube and MySpace have a positive and significant influence on a less known candidate’s standing in the polls. These results are consistent with our descriptive analysis of YouTube and MySpace which show Ron Paul holding the largest share among republicans. YouTube and MySpace are likely partially responsible for Ron Paul’s success both in terms of increasing standing in polls and in the case of YouTube in leading to site visits. Web 2.0 media may have ultimately increased the legitimacy of his campaign. Given the sharing (YouTube) and linking (MySpace) nature of these technologies it is possible that supporters are using these tools to promote their candidate to people they know.

Overall, it does seem that the internet and web 2.0 media in particular does increase the threat of new entrants and given the low barriers to entry, it is likely that this phenomena will only gain ground.

<http://blogs.ft.com/techblog/2008/11/has-the-internet-really-changed-us-politics/>

The Financial Times

Has the internet really changed US politics?

November 28, 2008

[A study of this year’s US primary campaign](#) by the Fox School of Business at Temple University concludes that the internet has opened the political field to new entrants who would not have got a look in otherwise. The study also claims to find a correlation between ideas being promoted in the blogosphere and the results of opinion surveys, suggesting that bloggers help to shape broader public opinion.

Obama and the Internet

<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>

New York Times

How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics

November 7, 2008

One of the many ways that the election of Barack Obama as president has echoed that of John F. Kennedy is his use of a new medium that will forever change politics. For Mr. Kennedy, it was television. For Mr. Obama, it is the Internet.

“Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president. Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not have been the nominee,” said Arianna Huffington, editor in chief of [The Huffington Post](#).

She spoke Friday about how politics and Web 2.0 intersect on a panel with [Joe Trippi](#), a political consultant, and Gavin Newsom, the mayor of San Francisco, at the Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco. (Karl Rove and Newt Gingrich had been invited to balance out the left-leaning panel, but declined, according to John Battelle, a chair of the conference.)

Howard Dean's 2004 campaign — which was run by Mr. Trippi — was groundbreaking in its use of the Internet to raise small amounts of money from hundreds of thousands of people. But by using interactive Web 2.0 tools, [Mr. Obama's campaign](#) changed the way politicians organize supporters, advertise to voters, defend against attacks and communicate with constituents.

Mr. Obama used the Internet to organize his supporters in a way that would have in the past required an army of volunteers and paid organizers on the ground, Mr. Trippi said.

“The tools changed between 2004 and 2008. Barack Obama won every single caucus state that matters, and he did it because of those tools, because he was able to move thousands of people to organize.”

Mr. Obama's campaign [took advantage of YouTube](#) for free advertising. Mr. Trippi argued that those videos were more effective than television ads because viewers chose to watch them or received them from a friend instead of having their television shows interrupted.

“The campaign's official stuff they created for YouTube was watched for 14.5 million hours,” Mr. Trippi said. “To buy 14.5 million hours on broadcast TV is \$47 million.”

Obama and the Internet Cont'd

<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>

New York Times

How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics

November 7, 2008

There has also been a sea change in fact-checking, with citizens using the Internet to find past speeches that prove a politician wrong and then using the Web to alert their fellow citizens.

The [John McCain campaign](#), for example, originally said that Governor Sarah Palin opposed the so-called bridge to nowhere in Alaska, Ms. Huffington said. "Online there was an absolutely obsessive campaign to prove that wrong," she said, and eventually the campaign stopped repeating it.

"In 2004, trust me, they would have gone on repeating it, because the echo chamber would not have been as facile," Ms. Huffington said.

The Internet also let people repeatedly listen to the candidates' own words in the face of attacks, Mr. Huffington said. As Reverend Jeremiah Wright's incendiary words kept surfacing, people could re-watch [Mr. Obama's speech on race](#). To date, 6.7 million people have watched the 37-minute speech on YouTube.

The Internet Changes the Way Politicians Govern

<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>

New York Times

How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics

November 7, 2008

The Internet also changes the way politicians govern. Mr. Newsom learned that last year when he ran for re-election. He showed up at a rally and didn't see the usual crowd. His aides told him the audience was made up of his Facebook friends. "I said, 'What's Facebook?'" Mr. Newsom recalled.

These days, Mr. Newsom is "obsessed with Facebook." It strengthens his connection with his constituents and their connection with the causes they care about, he said.

He predicted that this real-time Internet contact with constituents will also change the way the president of the United States governs. [He recently proposed](#) that Mr. Obama start a Web site called MyWhiteHouse.gov to talk with citizens. (Mr. Obama just started a different site, [Change.gov](#), on Thursday to keep in touch with people during the transition.)

"When Congress refuses to go with his agenda, it's not going to be just the president" they oppose, Mr. Trippi said. It will be the president and his huge virtual network of citizens.

"Just like Kennedy brought in the television presidency, I think we're about to see the first wired, connected, networked presidency," Mr. Trippi said.

Internet Puts Politicians Under the Lens

<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>

New York Times

How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics

November 7, 2008

The constant exposure can, of course, turn against politicians.

Ms. Huffington's "[off the bus](#)" team of 10,000 citizen journalists caught candidates saying things that embarrassed them later, like Mr. Obama's "guns and religion" remark. Now, she said, "there is no off-the-record fund-raiser."

Mr. Newsom says he is fearful of the constant need to watch his tongue. "I have to [watch myself singing](#), 'I left my heart in San Francisco' on YouTube and it can't go away. I am desperate to get it to go away," he said dryly.

"There will be a lot of collateral damage coming to grips with the fact that we're in a reality TV series, 'Politics 24/7,'" Mr. Newsom said.

That's a good thing, Mr. Trippi said. "This medium demands authenticity, and television for the most part demanded fake. Authenticity is something politicians haven't been used to."

The History of the Internet and It's Effects on Politics

<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2010/04/how-technology-changed-american-politics-in-the-internet-age096.html>

Public Broadcasting Service

How Technology Changed American Politics in the Internet Age

April 6, 2010

The 2008 U.S. presidential campaign drew the attention of the world. In the aftermath, the Obama campaign's use of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were widely credited with helping secure the historic victory of President Barack Obama.

But the Obama campaign wouldn't have been able to make its technological strides without the innovations first deployed by the Howard Dean campaign years before; and, in turn, the designers of the Dean campaign made sure to study the technology lessons of Jessie Ventura's successful gubernatorial run.

The dawn of the Internet era and introduction of technologies such as email lists and social media have had a remarkable impact on American politics. Below are some highlights, game-changing moments, and other uses of technology that stand as significant moments in political history.

An early moment in any timeline about modern tech development in politics is the February 1997 creation of the GOP Internet forum [FreeRepublic](#). To put it in perspective, 1998 was the year Google was founded. It was also the year that [MoveOn](#) was created for progressives as a political community formed in response to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton.

Another early note: I would be remiss not to include the now famous 1999 Al Gore interview with Wolf Blitzer on CNN's "Late Edition," when the the vice president declared, "I took the initiative in creating the Internet. I took the initiative in moving forward a whole range of initiatives that have proven to be important to our country's economic growth." Though technically not claiming credit for the Internet, Gore's comments would become famous.

February 2003 saw a tectonic shift in how political campaigns are run, thanks to the rise of Howard Dean and his campaign's use of [Meetup](#) to empower supporters to self-organize. The Dean campaign also created a YouTube-like online video site call Dean TV, experimented with SMS, used an online event tool called Get Local, and created a pre-Facebook-style site called Deanlink, among other pioneering innovations.

"We fell into this by accident," Dean [told Wired magazine](#). "I wish I could tell you we were smart enough to figure this out. But the community taught us. They seized the initiative through Meetup. They built our organization for us before we had an organization."

According to the Wired piece, in February 2003 there were 11 Dean meetings around the country organized through Meetup. By late fall, there were more than 800 monthly meetings on the calendar.

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Zephyr Teachout, director of Internet organizing for Dean For America, told me that of all the online tools experimented with and deployed during the campaign, the meeting tool was the most exciting.

"The meeting tool was completely opposed internally when we started designing it in May 2003," she said. "If you ask people what [they] do for a candidate, now I think most people know that they can go to events and get other people to support them whereas 10 years ago it wouldn't even be possible. It's really changed people's sense of possibility in terms of their potential interaction with a campaign."

Another significant technical innovation in 2003 came when Arizona became the first state to implement online voter registration.

2004 saw the launch of the successful Democratic online fundraising outfit [ActBlue](#). The summer of 2004 was also marked by the Rock the Vote campaign that registered an estimated 1.2 million new voters. The campaign included a partnership with Motorola that launched a large-scale mobile political project which enabled people to sign up to receive information on their mobile devices.

That same year, the Washington Times had reported in August that Daily Kos received about 200,000 visitors a day during the Democratic National Convention.

And on September 9, bloggers for the right-leaning site Power Line published a post suggesting Dan Rather's "60 Minutes II" report on George W. Bush's National Guard service [included some fraudulent memos](#). The post and the more than 500 other sites that linked to it are credited with exposing the report and later causing CBS News to apologize, leading to Dan Rather's resignation. Time Magazine named Power Line [Blog of the Year](#).

In early 2005, three former PayPal employees, Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim created YouTube. The popular video sharing site has significantly changed political campaigns, by allowing citizens to post their own video from campaign events, including politicians making faux pas.

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By May of 2005 a new site called [The Huffington Post](#) was launched by Arianna Huffington, Kenneth Lerer, and Jonah Peretti that would add a new dynamic to online political coverage.

Today, politicians with blogs are very common, but in 2005 Georgia Rep. Jack Kingston established the [first Congressional blog](#) with the help of rising GOP Internet guru David All.

In 2005, another GOP Internet tech star, Patrick Ruffini, the webmaster for the 2000 Bush campaign, launched the highly successful "eCampaign" operation while at the Republican National Committee.

By 2006, political campaigns online were widespread and in full force. In June, one of the first to test out the use of YouTube for their campaign was Georgia Rep. Jack Kingston. He posted a video of what his campaign called [Mailtube](#), an attempt to reach out to constituents through the use of online video.

YouTube started to take hold of the political imagination when, on August 15, 2006, then Sen. George Allen (R-VA) called opposition campaign volunteer S.R. Sidarth "macaca." The video [went viral](#) and is seen as a major turning point that led to Allen's electoral defeat.

2006 was also the year that the [Rightroots](#) coalition was created to support GOP candidates online. The site raised over \$300,000 for different candidates.

Zephyr Teachout said the initial use of most technologies is not where it ends up having an impact. She cites the Dean campaign's use of Meetup and email as examples. Echoing this point, 2007 saw some of the most notable uses of technology in political campaigns. One example is how Barack Obama's team took the social networking suite developed by the Dean campaign to a new level with Blue State Digital's creation of [My.BarackObama.com](#).

Facebook gave rise to an enormous constituency of political activity in 2008, and upstart Twitter dipped its toes in the campaign waters. One of the biggest tech innovations of the year came on July 23, when CNN held the first YouTube Debate [for the Democrats](#) in Charleston, S.C. The Dems were followed by the GOP's November 28 [YouTube Debate](#) in St. Petersburg, Fla.

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2007 also saw an innovative use of distributed online video by Mike Huckabee's campaign for the GOP nomination. Ron Paul, building on Howard Dean's pioneering fundraising efforts, created the [money bomb](#) which raised \$4.3 million in 24 hours on November 5 largely through online donations. Paul did it again on Dec. 16 when his campaign brought in \$6 million in 24 hours, which Fox News called the biggest one-day take ever.

In other 2007 notes, [Slatecard](#) was created by David All and Sendhil Panchadsaram as a website that funneled contributions to conservative candidates. All also started the group blog [TechRepublican](#), focusing on the intersection of Republican politics and technology. (In April 2009, TechRepublican was awarded the Golden Dot Award for the Best Blog in National Politics).

Another tech innovation launched in 2007 was the Ustream.tv platform for live online interactive video broadcasts. The technology was been widely used by politicians, including by Barack Obama when he appeared with Oprah during a South Carolina rally which included 74,000 participants.

Supported by online campaigning, the Democrats had a good election year in 2008, taking large majorities in both houses of Congress and celebrating the election of Barack Obama.

Tech innovations played a big role in the election successes of the Dems. One notable highlight was the [August 28 text](#) from the Obama campaign:

"Breaking news: the text message is out and it's official... Barack Obama has selected Joe Biden to be his running mate!"

In October 2008, the Obama campaign released its free Obama08 app, which organized a person's iPhone contacts to enable supporters to call friends located in important electoral districts among other features.

While much of the attention in 2008 was on the Democrats, in the spring of 2008 [The Next Right](#) was formed as a GOP imitation of the huge left-wing community Daily Kos and MyDD.

In other significant tech innovations, [Facebook Connect](#) was launched in July. Connect is a set of APIs from Facebook that enables Facebook members to log onto third-party websites. The release of the API paved the way for the David All Group development of the award winning

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[Act.ivi.st](#), which integrates with a campaign and sends out messages to the online communities including Facebook and Twitter.

"The idea of web surfing is so dead," All told me. "Once you get people to a website, it's rare they are going to go back too often. But, every single day they are going to be logging into Facebook and they are going to be engaging with that community. So if your news can be liked or commented on and engaged with it is really powerful."

After one of the biggest election years in modern history, in March 2009 New York's 20th congressional district held a special election. Democrat Scott Murphy's successful run was supported by a new tech innovation from Google, the [Google Blast Advertising Campaign](#), which blanketed sites running Google AdSense with Murphy ads targeted to people in his district.

With elections fast approaching, we're bound to see new kinds of tech innovation that will turn heads this year. I recently wrote [here on MediaShift](#) about how the election of Scott Brown in Massachusetts was aided by a smartphone app created for GOP candidates called Walking Edge. It offered Brown's canvassers a database of where undecided voters and supporters live. The app used geo-location tools and Google Maps so that after canvassers made contact with a person, they could update the database in real time.

The Walking Edge falls squarely in what Zephyr Teachout describes as the "data oligarch" model, which is designed to create massive databases. But Teachout said there is also the potential for the Internet to allow for more civic organizing.

"[The Internet is] one of the greatest collective action problem-solving tools in world history," Teachout said. "These are constantly in tension with each other."