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VOICE OF ESSENTIAL LIBERTY

DIGEST

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THE FOUNDATION

“The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society.” --James Madison

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

What to Make of the Iowa Caucuses

Tuesday’s Iowa caucuses provided a clear storyline for the Republican primary. The problem is, everyone has a completely different clear storyline. Perhaps the most important one is that Iowa is a greatly over-hyped circus thanks to the media, which benefit from ratings and advertising.

To recap, Mitt Romney won but by just eight votes (of 122,255 cast) over Rick Santorum, who surged in the last week to capture a political, if not numeric, victory. Both had 24 percent of the vote. Ron Paul took third with 21 percent (almost double his 2008 result), Newt Gingrich finished a distant fourth with 13 percent, and Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann brought up the rear, with 10 percent and 5 percent respectively. Jon Huntsman took 1 percent, but had written off the state to focus on New Hampshire. From there, it’s all spin.

Bachmann dropped out Wednesday morning, seeing that there was no way forward for her. The Minnesota congresswoman and Iowa native won the Ames straw poll in August, but that was her high-water mark. Her last-place finish, in spite of having been the only candidate besides Santorum to visit all 99 Iowa counties and working tirelessly in the retail politics for which Iowa is famous, pretty well sums up her candidacy. In fact, she received only 7 percent of the votes in her home county. Look for her to endorse one of the “Not Romneys” in the coming weeks.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry at first said he was headed back to Austin to “reassess” his campaign, but he soon followed up with an announcement that he was moving on to South Carolina and would not be quitting just yet after all. He still has money in the bank, and it’s possible that he could still revive his campaign.

One word describes Gingrich after his precipitous fall in Iowa: angry. Newt led the polls in December by a signifi-

cant margin, only to see massive amounts of negative ads from his opponents cut his numbers by almost two-thirds. Gingrich refused to congratulate Romney on his win, and signaled that he would be running no-holds-barred against the “Massachusetts Moderate,” who is rich. Oddly, he meant that as a contrast: “I’m not rich,” he said, despite his earning \$1.6 million from Freddie Mac and having a six-figure line of credit at Tiffany’s. Class warfare isn’t becoming of a supposed conservative.

Ron Paul called his third-place finish “nothing to be ashamed of,” and says he’s “ready and raring to move on to the next stop, which is New Hampshire.” Indeed, Paul has millions in the bank -- certainly enough to keep him going for some time. We’re quite fond of his defense of the Constitution and principled stands for Liberty, and we hope that voters come around to his views on most domestic policy. On the other hand, we reject the blame-America foundation for his foreign policy and, as a result, have a hard time seeing him as commander in chief (Treasury secretary, anyone?). That said, Paul’s views are not isolationist, and it’s intellectually lazy to call them such -- a way to write him off without debate. For example, he supported military action against al-Qa’ida after 9/11, and he advocates free trade, among other examples that argue against the isolationist charge. Unfortunately for Dr. Paul, this perception, as well as blemishes like the incendiary newsletters published in his name two decades ago, means his ceiling is probably the 21 percent he garnered in Iowa, and he is arguably the least likely GOP candidate to beat Barack Obama.

“Game on,” said a triumphant Rick Santorum after taking a close second Tuesday. The former Pennsylvania senator ran the race as the tortoise, visiting every Iowa county and doing the all-important retail work. Many see Santorum’s showing as a big win for the underdog, though there are reasons to question this storyline. Santorum did nearly defeat Romney, but he also concentrated his entire candidacy on winning Iowa, taking months to earn the win, while Romney largely ignored the state until December. Then again, if Romney’s ceiling of 25 percent continues, Santorum could capitalize by unifying the other 75 percent. As a strong social conservative, Santorum has the same evangelical appeal Mike Huckabee had in 2008. His challenge will thus be to shed the all-too-appropriate label of “big government conservative” for his votes in Con-

gress, particularly on spending, including earmarks, and the Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Mitt Romney won the vote numbers, but he has a very real problem appealing to conservatives. He lost the Tea Party vote badly, and he will need it to beat Obama. That said, although it's far from inevitable that Romney will be the nominee, the reality of it is looking more likely all the time. He will almost certainly win New Hampshire going away, and he will compete in South Carolina, Nevada and Florida. For six months, conservatives have had flings with all the other candidates save Huntsman and have found them lacking in some significant way. Given the field, Romney may win by default -- not exactly a satisfying way to choose a presidential nominee in a year as important as this one.

This Week's 'Braying Jackass' Award

"[O]ne of my New Year's resolutions is to make sure that I get out of Washington and spend time with folks like you. Because folks here in Ohio and all across the country -- I want you to know you're the reason why I ran for this office in the first place. You remind me what we are still fighting for. You inspire me." --Barack Obama

Here's the official *Patriot Post* translation: My New Year's resolution is to get re-elected. Unfortunately, that means getting out of Washington to mingle with the great unwashed masses -- bitter clingers like you. Yet your votes inspire me because, well, it is all about me, after all.

No wonder the [audience laughed](#).

News From the Swamp: New Year Same as Last Year

Barack Obama didn't get in as much golf as he wanted during his holiday vacation in Hawaii, but he still managed to break a record in 2011 by hitting the links a total of 34 times. Surely he would have gotten to play more had it not been for his being stuck in Washington before Christmas, waiting to sign a two-month extension of the payroll tax cut. Despite early opposition, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) had held out for a full-year extension, which was what Obama had originally called for, but the Democrat-controlled Senate and the president flip-flopped to conspire against it. They touted the righteousness of their two-month tax cut, but small business owners, large corporations, payroll companies, and working men and women now have to contend with this 60-day farce that may or may not be extended beyond February.

Heading into the New Year's holiday weekend, Obama indicated that one of his resolutions for 2012 will be to continue spending and leave Americans with the bill. He briefly called for a \$1.2 trillion extension in the debt ceiling, which would add \$4,000 to the slice of government debt owed by every American citizen. It might be hard to cover that with the relative pocket change that came from the tax cut. The president delayed his request, however, when it became clear that Congress wanted to deliberate the issue when it reconvenes later this month.

Debate hardly seems worthwhile. No matter what Congress does, an automatic hike is scheduled as part of the prior debt deal, and for all the posturing in Washington in 2011 about reining in runaway spending, absolutely nothing was accomplished. The federal government currently overspends by \$4 billion every single day. Every year Obama has been in office has brought trillion-dollar-plus budget deficits. Federal outlays in fiscal 2012 are projected to be \$3.65 trillion, up from last year's \$3.6 trillion. The August debt agreement trimmed only \$7 billion in spending, and just 28 programs were cut out from among the thousands of items in the budget. All the while, Democrats continue resolutely to reject any meaningful cuts or reforms to the entitlements that are driving America's fiscal nightmare.

Hope 'n' Change: Recess Appointment

Barack Obama's attempt to make an end run around Congress may just lead to a constitutional showdown. As part of his strategy to demonize Congress, or more specifically Republicans in Congress, he made four recess appointments this week, three to the National Labor Relations Board, and one to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The problem is that Congress is not technically in recess, which means constitutional problems for the president. Since the Constitution states that neither chamber of Congress can adjourn for more than three days without the consent of the other chamber, Republicans have engaged in a pro forma session to prevent the type of recess appointments that Obama believes he can make.

Obama, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), and a number of Democrat lawyers maintain that the president can make recess appointments regardless of the pro forma session. Of course, they held the opposite view during the Bush years, when Obama and his fellow Democrats held their own pro forma session to keep recess appointments at bay. The option to challenge Obama's actions may rest in the private sector rather than with Republicans. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has long opposed the Con-

sumer Financial Protection Bureau's unchecked powers, and once new chief Richard Cordray starts ripping and tearing at American banks as expected, the Chamber is likely to be the group that steps forward with a lawsuit against Obama's extra-constitutional activities.

This Week's 'Alpha Jackass' Award

"When Congress refuses to act, and as a result hurts our economy and puts our people at risk, then I have an obligation as president to do what I can without them. I've got an obligation to act on behalf of the American people. I will not stand by while a minority in the Senate puts party ideology ahead of the people they were elected to serve. Not when so much is at stake. Not at this make-or-break moment for the middle class. I refuse to take 'no' for an answer." --Chairman Obama

New & Notable Legislation

Barack Obama signed the \$662 billion National Defense Authorization Act during his Hawaiian getaway. He included an 1,800-word signing statement that outlined several objections he had with some of its provisions, such as the treatment of suspected terrorists and the penalties against Iran's central bank to hinder that country's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Obama tried to have it both ways with the defense bill by signing it into law and then picking it apart for the benefit of his base. What he succeeded in doing was reminding us all of his hypocrisy by engaging in a practice that he castigated in his predecessor. Remember this gem from the 2008 campaign trail? "I taught the Constitution for 10 years. I believe in the Constitution and I will obey the Constitution of the United States. We're not going to use signing statements as a way of doing an end-run around Congress." Oh well, never mind.

From the Left: Democrats Head for the Exit

The DNC haughtily claims that the Donkey Party is capable of retaking the House in 2012, but Democrats closer to the action seem to believe otherwise. In recent weeks, a number of long serving congressional Democrats in relatively safe districts have announced their retirement at the end of this term. Barney Frank is calling it quits after 30 years, walking away from his role as ranking member of the Financial Services Committee. Dale Kildee of Michigan, who is the second most senior member on the Natural Resources Committee, is retiring after 18 terms. Jerry Costello of Illinois, an early supporter of the community organizer from Chicago, has served in a relatively safe district since 1989, but that didn't stop him from announcing his retirement. Even Mike Ross, co-chair of the supposedly fiscal conservative Blue Dog Coalition,

is retiring after seeing his group's numbers decimated in 2010.

Alexandra Pelosi, daughter of the House Minority Leader, even hinted that her mother is considering retirement, but Nancy's office denied the claim. Pelosi is likely to wait until after the election before making such a decision about her future. Unlike her colleagues in the leadership who are getting out while the getting is good, Pelosi seems to be holding out hope that Obama or some other element of her leftist coalition can pull off one more victory in 2012.

ECONOMY

Around the Nation: Employment Numbers

According to the U.S. Labor Department, the private sector added 212,000 jobs in December, while the public sector shrank by 12,000. The headline unemployment rate is now 8.5 percent, the lowest since February 2009, though November's rate was revised up to 8.7 percent -- an indication for December as well. More important than the number is that many of the jobs added were temporary couriers and so forth related to the Christmas season, meaning January will absorb some losses. Furthermore, if the workforce was as large as it was in 2009, the headline unemployment rate would be nearly 11 percent. Some 7.5 million people have dropped out of the market since January 2007. As it is, real unemployment is north of 15 percent.

Never fear, however; Obama has a plan. Earlier this week, he announced a new summer work opportunity for young people. Read: Get out the youth vote 2012. A White House statement declared, "Today's announcement is the latest in a series of executive actions the Obama administration is taking to strengthen the economy and move the country forward because we can't wait for Congress to act." The program ostensibly will create 180,000 "work opportunities" in the private sector, some 70,000 of which are actually paid positions. *That* should do the trick! In reality, this program and the unemployment numbers are all working together in Obama's re-election year to boost his numbers in November.

Regulatory Commissars:

Conoco's New Drilling Permit

It can hardly be called a black gold rush given how long it took to happen, but after years of stalling, the Obama administration has at last issued a permit to allow ConocoPhillips to develop a commercial oil well in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve. Conoco originally applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a permit in 2005 but withdrew the application in 2008 due to logistical

disagreements with the Village of Nuiqsut and the North Slope Borough. With consensus reached, Conoco reapplied in 2009 but was denied the following year due to objections from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), both of which are eager to block any path toward energy independence that might lead over a river or through a wood.

Eager at least to appear to promote domestic oil production, however, Obama's Interior Department announced support last year for Conoco's project, and, late last month, FWS and the EPA dropped their objections. This doesn't mean Conoco's path is completely clear. Along with the permit came 22 "conditions" designed to minimize environmental and public-interest impacts. Yet with Iran's threatening to blockade the Strait of Hormuz and the roughly 35 percent of the world's seaborne traded oil passing through it, it's good to see some movement -- albeit slow as molasses -- toward domestic oil production.

Income Redistribution: Electric Chevy Volt Is a Dud

There's not a lot of juice in Chevy Volt sales figures. After audaciously predicting the sale of more than 10,000 units in 2011, GM was surely disappointed to announce that sales fell a little short of the mark: 2,329 units short to be exact. Even more troubling to "Government Motors" was the fact that many of these units were sold as part of fleet purchases by various governmental organizations and companies; for example General Electric plans to buy 12,000 Volts over several years' time.

Yet falling that short of the optimistic estimate is still close enough for government work. Indeed, the slow sales are probably a good thing since a study by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy found just how heavily taxpayers were subsidizing the Volt, perhaps to the tune of \$250,000 per unit.

Still another factor in the Volt's lack of success -- besides the price tag barely under \$40,000 for a car otherwise comparable to the Chevy Cruze, which retails for less than half the price -- is the recent revelation that battery fires have occurred in Volts after crash testing. GM has now issued a recall on the roughly 8,000 units sold in the last two years to strengthen the structure around the batteries in hopes of preventing fires. Fisker Automotive is likewise recalling 239 vehicles for battery fires after having received a \$529 million federal loan to make the cars in Finland. That's Hope 'n' Change.

Despite all this, Ford and Toyota, which have already gone

into the hybrid market with some success, are moving forward with their own boutique all-electric models. Forget fires and dismal sales -- those government subsidies will do a lot for those respective companies' bottom lines.

Enlightened Retailers Still Sell 100-Watt Bulbs

In an interesting twist to the forced conversion of American consumers from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent (CFL) or LED bulbs, late last year Congress managed to pass a provision that forbade the Department of Energy from spending money to enforce the ban on the sale of 100-watt incandescent bulbs that took effect on Jan. 1. Unfortunately, conservatives in Congress couldn't wipe the silly ban itself off the books, so this was the next best thing. Enforcement, we suppose, will be on the honor system.

Retailers can legally finish selling their supplies of 100-watt incandescent bulbs, provided they weren't made or imported after Jan. 1, but many consumers have been stockpiling the beloved invention of Thomas Edison for some time. Next year, the ban steps down to 75-watt models, with the standard 60-watt and 40-watt bulbs phased out in 2014. All this is thanks to the "Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007," a bill that provides neither independence nor security but was a priority for a then-newly elected Democrat majority in Congress. One of President George W. Bush's many mistakes was signing it into law.

SECURITY

Department of Military Readiness: 'Smaller and Leaner'

Barack Obama made a rare visit to the Pentagon Thursday to announce a shift in military strategy, one that is "smaller and leaner" and reflects "turning the page on a decade of war." We hope that doesn't mean merely weaker, but Obama's history and ideology certainly suggest it. Obama declared that he will cut half a million troops and said that the U.S. can no longer fight two wars simultaneously. Obviously, millions of new food stamp recipients are eating into national defense, not to mention the big three entitlements and ObamaCare. "We'll be able to ensure our security with smaller conventional ground forces," he promised, adding, "We'll continue to get rid of outdated Cold War-era systems so that we can invest in the capabilities we need for the future."

There is no doubt the military needs to upgrade and could probably stand to be "leaner," but we offer this history lesson: Thanks to Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan spent eight years rebuilding our military capability, and thanks

to Bill Clinton, we were unprepared for the events of 9/11. We fear that Obama is bent on repeating history rather than learning from it.

Warfront With Jihadistan: New Year Roundup

As Obama continues to withdraw U.S. forces from fighting the Long War overseas, echoes of the war continue to reverberate around the nation. According to a new biography, current CIA Director and former General David Petraeus almost resigned as U.S. commander of the Afghan war over Obama's decision to withdraw his surge forces quickly. Instead of resigning, Petraeus ultimately decided that it would be a "selfish, grandstanding move with huge political ramifications" and that now was "time to salute and carry on." Not to second-guess Petraeus, but "political ramifications" should not come into play in a commander's war decisions; only the nation's war aims should. Nevertheless, Petraeus' surge turned around the Iraq war, and he always had his troops' safety in mind. One of Petraeus' first acts was to lift his predecessor's restrictions on the use of force if civilians were nearby. "There is no question about our commitment to reducing civilian loss of life," Petraeus told his staff, but there was "a clear moral imperative to make sure we are fully supporting our troops in combat."

We hope that moral imperative is brought to bear during the current court-martial of U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Frank Wuterich, the last Marine charged in an alleged massacre of Iraqi civilians in Haditha in 2005. Seven other Marines charged in the killings have been exonerated. The civilian deaths were certainly tragic, but they are inevitable in urban warfare.

As for Obama, not one to let anything escape his political aspirations, he now hopes that returning veterans pay him back with votes for bringing them home. "You stood up for America," Obama recently told returning troops at Fort Bragg, N.C. "America needs to stand up for you." Expect that pitch to continue, as Obama, knowing that many veterans and military families live in states crucial to his re-election, highlights his alleged efforts to promote jobs and benefits for returning veterans. Leave it to the shameless Left, which despises the military, to try nevertheless to exploit veterans for his political gain.

Obama Finally Gets Around to Remembering Pearl Harbor

For most of us, particularly the rapidly dwindling survivors of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, its 70th anniversary made us pause for reflection and remembrance.

Barack Obama, however, constantly in search of the photo op, waited until the week *after* Christmas while on his taxpayer funded vacation on Oahu to lay a wreath in a brief ceremony at the USS Arizona Memorial. The event was, predictably, sandwiched between relaxing at the beach and several rounds of golf.

So what did Obama do on Dec. 7 itself? His schedule that day included meetings with Democrat Senate leadership and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and, of course, a fundraiser. While we wouldn't necessarily want him to make a special trip to Hawaii on our dime just to lay a wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial, a few words at the World War II Memorial in Washington would have been more appropriate than commemoration when convenient.

Security or Security Theater?

"The Transportation Security Administration isn't just in airports anymore," reports the Los Angeles Times. "TSA teams are increasingly conducting searches and screenings at train stations, subways, ferry terminals and other mass transit locations around the country." The TSA conducted more than 9,300 such unannounced checkpoints or search operations last year using 25 "VIPeR" teams -- which stands for Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response -- costing \$110 million. That's compared to \$5 billion for airport security, yet it has critics wondering about the cost for security theater that could violate privacy by searching citizens without probable cause.

According to the LA Times, "TSA officials say they have no proof that the roving viper [sic] teams have foiled any terrorist plots or thwarted any major threat to public safety. But they argue that the random nature of the searches and the presence of armed officers serve as a deterrent and bolster public confidence."

CULTURE

Second Amendment: Tragedy and Rescue

Every time some unhinged lunatic commits murder with a gun, the Left reflexively attacks the Second Amendment. See for example The Washington Post's editorial on the shooting at Mount Rainier National Park. Tragically, Park Ranger Margaret Anderson was murdered at a road blockade when Benjamin Colton Barnes opened fire. Anderson, wife of another park ranger and mother of two, was just 34 years old. Barnes served a tour of duty in Iraq in 2007, but he was discharged two years later for drunk driving, and he likely suffered from post-traumatic stress. He was later found in the park dead from exposure, so some

answers may never be known. To the Post, however, “easy access to firearms” is to blame. Others blamed the law allowing citizens to carry firearms in national parks. Wrong again.

Looking to Oklahoma, we find an illustration of why guns are indispensable for self-defense. There, on New Year’s Eve, an 18-year-old mother shot and killed an intruder to protect the life of her three-month-old baby. The baby’s father had died of cancer less than a week before. The intruder had appeared on the day of the funeral, claiming to be a neighbor wanting to say hello, but she refused him entrance. He came back with another man and a 12-inch hunting knife, and both tried to force entry.

She retreated to the bedroom and called 911. “I’ve got two guns in my hand,” she told the dispatcher. “Is it okay to shoot him if he comes in this door?” The dispatcher replied, “I can’t tell you that you can do that, but you do what you have to do to protect your baby.” Moments later, she shot and killed one assailant, while the other fled and turned himself in to authorities. “You’re allowed to shoot an unauthorized person that is in your home,” said Det. Dan Huff of the Blanchard police. “The law provides you the remedy, and sanctions the use of deadly force.” Try telling that to the anti-Second Amendment fanatics on the Left.

Village Academic Curriculum: Occupy Columbia

Who doesn’t remember fondly their days in college, when they could philosophize about the ills of the world (both real and as propagated by professors), all on borrowed dime? Well, the students of Columbia University will have the opportunity to revel in their own moral superiority when they analyze and participate in Occupy Wall Street.

The Anthropology Department of the Ivy League school will soon offer “Occupy the Field: Global Finance, Inequity and the Social Movement” as an honest to goodness course offering. The professor, Dr. Hannah Appel, spent a few glorious nights with her Occupy comrades in Zucotti Park, site of the original OWS movement. Students will spend half their time in the classroom, learning the rhetoric of the “movement”; the other half will be spent in

the “field,” likely interfering with the rest of us as we try to be productive members of society.

There are several ironies here, including the fact that many Columbia students are undoubtedly part of the wealthy “1 percent” that OWS is protesting. Another is that students who have borrowed money to attend Columbia presumably did so to attain a certain level of professional success. Yet they are now using that money to learn about and imitate people who advocate camping out in parks and complaining about life. Wouldn’t classes that actually taught them a skill be a better use of that money?

In related news, the Heritage Foundation has a don’t-miss [Top 10 Education Stories of 2011](#) that’s worth the read.

And Last...

We worried earlier about the effect Barack Obama’s military plan will have on U.S. national security capability, but then we stumbled upon this story that reassures us that everything’s going to be okay. The Examiner’s Beltway Confidential reports, “American dance groups will further Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s ‘smart power diplomacy’ for the second year in a row, the U.S. State Department announced, by touring countries in Asia, Africa, and [the] Middle East, performing primarily before poor children in those areas as part of *DanceMotion USASM*.” The State Department issued a statement saying, “*DanceMotion USASM* ... embraces the full use of diplomatic tools, in this case dance, to engage people and create opportunities for greater understanding.” See what we mean? It really starts the New Year off right to know that our influence in the world is dependent on “Dancing with the Diplomats.”

Semper Vigilo, Fortis, Paratus et Fidelis! Nate Jackson for *The Patriot Post* Editorial Team. Read online at <http://patriotpost.us>

(Please pray for our Armed Forces standing in harm’s way around the world, and for their families -- especially families of those fallen Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, who granted their lives in defense of American liberty.)