



A BATTLE OF WITS

"Here comes the orator! With his flood of words, and his drop of reason." --Benjamin Franklin

In the 1987 quotable classic film "The Princess Bride," a favorite scene pits the heroic "Man in Black" against the villain Vizzini in a "battle of wits" to win the damsel in distress. After Vizzini runs rhetorical circles



Vizzini

around himself trying to outsmart the hero, the Man in Black wryly remarks, "Truly, you have a dizzying intellect." Vizzini replies, "Wait till I get going! Now where was I?" Such is the case with ObamaCare. Wait till it gets going!

At least that's been Barack Obama's response when asked about implementation problems -- that when the law really gets going, everyone will love it. This week, however, he attempted to assuage fears by telling us "a huge chunk of it's already been implemented." So no big deal, he says. "Those who can't afford it, we're going to provide them with some subsidies. That's it. I mean, that's what's left to implement because the other stuff's been implemented and it's working fine." In spite of all evidence to the contrary, Obama tells us not to worry: "For the 85 percent to 90 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, they're already experiencing most of the benefits of the Affordable Care Act even if they don't know it. ... They don't have to worry about anything else."

But Hoover Institution fellow [Daniel Kessler estimates](#) "that there will be 30 million to 40 million people damaged in some fashion by the Affordable

Care Act." Side effects include -- but are not limited to -- skyrocketing premiums, increased wait times for care, higher taxes and loss of jobs and benefits.

Many of the taxes established by ObamaCare are indeed already in effect, though taxpayers won't fully [feel the pain](#) until they file their 2013 returns. And the individual mandate penalty, er, tax doesn't begin until 2014, while the so-called "Cadillac" tax on high-cost insurance plans won't kick in until 2018.

Another part of the law that doesn't exist yet is the 15-member Independent Payment Advisory Board -- the infamous "death panel." The panel is supposed to receive a report from government officials overseeing Medicaid, but if the panel doesn't even exist, neither will the oversight. Finding 15 qualified volunteers to stand for such dismal duty -- to say nothing of getting them confirmed by the Senate -- seems to be nearly impossible, though the law was seemingly *designed* with that end in mind. If a panel isn't nominated, Obama won't have to spend political capital on the fight, while much of its authority will fall by default to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sibelius.

Meanwhile, compliant states are setting up health exchanges, and, in those that refuse to be White House bagmen, HHS is doing it. Fewer than half of the states have submitted to the coercion. "I'm pretty nervous," said Henry Chao, the government's chief technical officer in charge of establishing the exchanges. "Let's just make sure it's not a third-world experience." Obama himself conceded that there would be "glitches and bumps," though we think the bill's author, Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), was closer to the mark when he recently warned, "I just see a huge train wreck coming." Even Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said, "I agree with him," though he lamented the train wreck was money-related. "I

wish we had the money just to do this," Reid said. Let's just say spending too little isn't the problem.

Obama's assurances are also at odds with a new [study](#) published by the New England Journal of Medicine. Over a period of two years, a group of top health policy scholars compared objectively measured physical health outcomes for patients using Medicaid with those of a randomly selected control group. They found that those using Medicaid certainly used a lot more health care -- Why not? It's "free"! -- but there were no measurable positive effects on health. This seriously undercuts the arguments of those who advocate ObamaCare's vast expansion of Medicaid.

On a final note, according to a [Kaiser Family Foundation poll](#), "Four in ten Americans (42%) are unaware that the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is still the law of the land, including 12 percent who believe the law has been repealed by Congress, 7 percent who believe it has been overturned by the Supreme Court and 23 percent who say they don't know enough to say what the status of the law is." We're well aware of the epidemic of low-information voters, but this is, well, inconceivable.

We suppose the moral of the story, to paraphrase the scene in "The Princess Bride," is to never go against a community organizer when health care is on the line.

On Cross-Examination

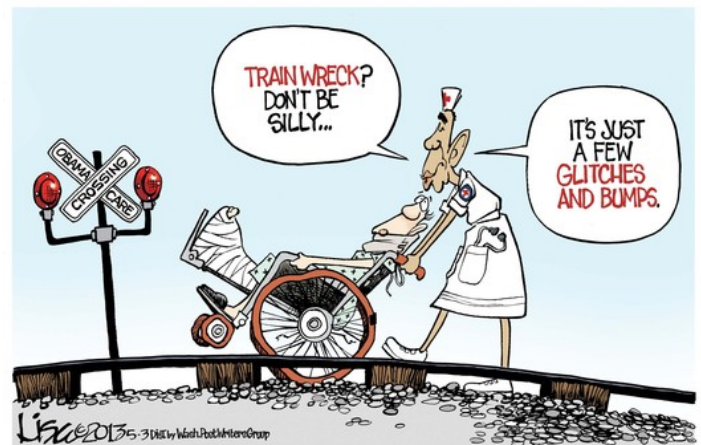
"The American people could be forgiven for being underwhelmed [with Obamacare]. ... Obama promised average annual premium reductions of \$2,500 per family once Obamacare passed. He promised no interruptions in your current coverage if you were satisfied with it. He promised to bend the cost curve down for government spending on health care while adding millions to Medicaid's rolls. And, he promised to do it all without adding to the deficit. None of those things are true, yet he claims the master plan is 90 percent complete. ... And, let's talk about the 15 percent -- that 'small group of people' for whom he concedes implementation will be a problem. When we began the process of debating and passing Obamacare, some 80+ percent of insured Americans

were satisfied with their health insurance coverage. The president insisted we disrupt much of the entire system to serve exactly the 'small group of people' he now admits without any apology will be hardest hit by implementation" --Hot Air's [Mary Katharine Ham](#)

Quote of the Week

"[M]aybe I should just pack up and go home. Golly!"
--Barack Obama at his Tuesday press conference

We can't think of another time when we've agreed with him so heartily.



Government and Politics

Immigration Front: Sessions Issues a Warning

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) exposed a major loophole in the [omnibus immigration bill](#) that allows illegal aliens traveling on the so-called "pathway to citizenship" to receive public benefits like welfare or food stamps significantly earlier than the 10 years promised by the "Gang of Eight." According to the fine print, illegals would become eligible for Registered Provisional Immigrant status after only *six months* -- just when the Department of Homeland Security is scheduled -- but not required -- to submit its first border security plan to Congress. Once RPI is established, they would be considered eligible for government assistance according to the laws in many states and municipalities. They would also be eligible for federal benefits through citizen and resident dependents, meaning that they would qualify for welfare, Social Security, ObamaCare, and a host of other entitlements through any U.S.-born children.

Furthermore, according to Sessions, the bill forbids DHS from applying current law to block entry to those who would become "public charges" -- those dependent on government assistance. To say the least, this is a slap in the face to the many *legal* immigrants who, at great personal cost and through extended bureaucratic wrangling, had to prove their economic viability to gain entry to the U.S.

It's no wonder that Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL and Gang member) publicly mused that the bill stands little chance of passing the House -- or the Senate, either, for that matter. House Republicans have proposed tackling immigration reform piecemeal, starting first with border security, then moving on to the more complex issue of handling upwards of 11 million illegal immigrants. This strategy would mean actually enforcing immigration laws, something the White House and congressional Democrats have been loath to do since the 1986 "reform" act.

News From the Swamp: A Drop in the Bucket

Washington is patting itself on the back this week for paying down a portion of the national debt for the first time in six years. Don't go popping the champagne corks just yet, though, as this reduction is only temporary, and in the grand scheme of things it amounts to little more than a rounding error. The Treasury Department will be able to pay off \$35 billion in bonds and bills in the period between April and June, compared to a net debt of \$172 billion this time last year. This infusion of cash comes at a time of year when the government receives a revenue boost in tax receipts, so it won't last. And the budget deficit for fiscal 2013 is still expected to come in at \$845 billion.

Meanwhile, the House Ways and Means Committee passed a bill along party lines to exclude the Social Security "trust fund" and principal and interest payments on Treasury bonds from the debt limit increase, leaving them unaffected by a potential government default. The debt ceiling will once again be reached later this month, and Republicans are hoping this move by Ways and Means will take the specter of default out of the perpetual debate over how to tackle the \$16.7 trillion debt. Democrats

immediately blasted the bill as unworkable, claiming that it gives precedence to foreign bondholders over veterans and other benefit recipients.

More Leftist Crony Obama Nominees

Barack Obama nominated Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx this week to replace the retiring Ray LaHood as transportation secretary. The choice of Foxx, as with every decision Obama makes, is steeped in politics. It's a quid pro quo to the mayor of the city that hosted last year's DNC, and it's also an attempt to squelch criticism on the Left that Obama's cabinet doesn't have enough "people of color." More important, though, this pick clearly reflects Obama's big government philosophy, in this case, regarding transportation.

Foxx, a Democrat with aspirations in the party, has used Charlotte's Douglas International Airport as a source of political and economic largesse. The airport, which had been a model of efficiency and also one of the cheapest hubs in the country, has seen costs skyrocket due to Foxx's decisions. He also pursued a \$3.9 million tax on airport parking spaces before it was pointed out that federal law prohibits using airport revenue on unrelated programs. He secured \$25 million in federal funds to pay for a small portion of a streetcar line in an area of Charlotte that is already well served by buses. Foxx stands by the streetcar proposal, which is currently off the tracks because he believes it will revitalize the fast growing city. Like other Democrats, he believes that economic vitality comes from government, and with that mindset, there's no telling what sort of transportation boondoggles he'll support should he be confirmed to the post.

Obama also nominated Penny Pritzker, a billionaire Obama campaign bundler from Chicago, for secretary of commerce. She's infamous for her leadership of failed subprime lender Superior Bank and for chairing the Olympic Village Subcommittee for Chicago's failed 2016 Olympic bid. She and her family owe a significant part of their immense fortune to crony deals and the ability to move their wealth to offshore

trusts. You know, the same kind of thing Obama hammered Mitt Romney for using.

Economy **Mired in Mediocrity**

The April jobs report concludes that 165,000 jobs were created last month, and that headline unemployment dropped to 7.5 percent. The economy must generate 150,000 jobs just to keep up with population growth. The Bureau of Labor Statistics revised February and March numbers up, contributing to the drop, but maybe the key number is workforce participation -- 63.3 percent, a 35-year low. Indeed, the U-6 rate, a more complete measure of unemployment, rose a tenth of a point to 13.9 percent. Even Reuters noted that the report "remained consistent with a slowdown in economic activity."

Meanwhile, economists predicted first quarter GDP growth of around 3 percent, but it came in at just 2.5 percent -- yet another complete miss by the "experts" on the latest sluggish report for the Obama "recovery." Still, GDP numbers were buoyed by a better-than-expected 3.2 percent increase in consumer spending, and most observers seem to think we dodged the twin bullets of federal sequestration spending cuts and the restoration of Social Security payroll tax rates that were temporarily cut back in 2011 in an unsuccessful effort to jump-start the economy. In fact, the private economy grew at a 3.2 percent rate, outstripping the government's role.

Of course, there are still dark clouds on the horizon. The drop in wages stemming from an increased tax burden dampened consumer spending in March after significant gains in February. Since consumer spending is by far the largest component of our economy, any slowdown in that category is looked upon with alarm from policymakers in Washington. Their likely response will be to once again prime the pump with more stimulus money in a continuing effort to assist the housing market, as well as maintaining unsustainably low interest rates.

In a nation where 5-7 percent annual growth punctuated previous economic recoveries, and 5

percent unemployment was thought to be a sign of trouble just a few years ago, too few "experts" seem to question why annual economic growth of just 2 or 3 percent and persistent unemployment well above 7 percent isn't a crisis justifying a new approach.

Income Redistribution: Pigford Farmers at the Reparations Trough

It started as a legitimate gripe with a chance for a small group of farmers who had endured discriminatory treatment at the hands of a federal agency to receive just compensation for their trouble. But a decade and a half later, the Pigford settlement -- which we first [reported in 2010](#) -- has turned into what's perceived as a reparation and a blank check for anyone of a certain ethnicity to scam a quick \$50,000 settlement from the federal government. "Basically, it was a rip-off of the American taxpayers," said one USDA employee.

That small group of original beneficiaries -- about 20,000 -- grew fourfold in the first few months after the application process ended back in 1999 as grifters began to see a pathway to easy money. Naturally, in an effort to avoid a polarizing racial situation, the federal government allowed most of the latecomers to join the lawsuit. Most made the dubious claim that the USDA refused to allow them to farm even if they couldn't demonstrate which end of the hoe to use or prove they had ever contacted the agency at all. Not surprisingly, the number of "farmers" in line for settlement greatly exceeded the number of black farmers counted by the Census Bureau during that era.

And if that situation wasn't foul enough, Barack Obama expanded the potential pool of applicants in 2010 by including Hispanic, Native American and female farmers who could claim USDA discrimination. The toll on the federal treasury is now over \$1.25 billion -- and counting.

Meanwhile, those who originally took the settlement yet continue to farm are regretting the decision. One Georgia farmer, an original plaintiff, said the lawsuit "did more harm than good" because accepting the

settlement meant being "shut out for life" from further USDA help. While he's still farming, he's resigned to the fact that he'll probably have to eventually sell his land to his white neighbor who already rents half of it. Perhaps he can sell to the trial lawyers who reaped the harvest so bitterly sown by this farmer, or to his undeserving fellow litigants, accomplished agriculturalists all.

Around the Nation: More Oil Is Available

Two energy/environment stories hit the airwaves this week, both potentially a huge boon to our economy. They are also proof that private industry can and will rise to any challenge even when its hands are tied by big government.

The "green" lobby has long vilified natural gas by claiming that the release of methane during production is even more damaging than carbon dioxide. The EPA was always happy to jump on this bandwagon, and even happier to apply the "necessary" regulations. So it was quite a surprise when the agency revised its earlier assessment of the risks natural gas poses to the environment. According to a new report, improvements in technology have reduced the amount of methane released into the environment by 41.6 billion metric tons between 1990 and 2010. This is 20 percent lower than the EPA's previous estimates.

And as if the ecofascists weren't already having a lousy week, the federal government *doubled* its estimate of the oil and natural gas reserves in the Dakotas and Montana. Just four years ago, the government deemed the Bakken and Three Forks formations as having little drilling potential; yet improvements in technology forced the government to revisit the issue. Now, with an estimated 11 billion barrels of recoverable oil, these reserves would go a long way toward making the U.S. the world's leading oil producer.

Security Warfront With Jihadistan: Why Bluffing Is Bad Policy

As Dear Leader's self-declared "red line" continues to turn a runny pink in the Syrian sand, America's

options in Syria keep going from bad to worse. The question is whether Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's troops used the chemical weapon nerve agent Sarin against rebel targets, or Syrian troops or others accidentally released it, or the Syrian rebels themselves obtained and used it intentionally. What we do know is that Obama's brash threat of retaliation against Syria should chemical weapons be used and his spineless waffling since are leaving the U.S. with very poor options.

On the side of American intervention in Syria is Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO), who said that putting American troops into Syria couldn't be ruled out. She further advocated that the U.S. should intervene in Syria to keep it from becoming a failed state where terrorists can freely set up shop. Had the good senator been paying attention to recent events, she would have known that *because* of American and NATO intervention in Libya, it turned into exactly the terrorist haven that McCaskill says she wants to avoid in Syria. Given the dearth of Western-friendly forces in Syria, there is little doubt Syria faces the same fate should Assad fall.

But if the Big O does not intervene in some way, then America loses even more credibility in the region. Obama's continued waffling and lack of response is seen correctly as a sign of American weakness and lack of resolve, even by forces that may want to ally themselves to the West. Many in the region would prefer to join forces with and back "the strong horse," but Obama is looking more like a castrated Shetland pony.



Boston Bombers May Have Had Help

Investigators found evidence of female DNA on one of the bombs detonated by the Tsarnaev brothers during the Boston Marathon, raising speculation that there was another accomplice involved in the attack. While it's plausible that the DNA can be traced to a victim or a person who handled the various materials before the perpetrators constructed the bombs, the FBI flagged the widow of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, Katherine Russell, as a person of interest. Additionally, three college friends of Dzhokhar were arrested on Wednesday and charged with impeding the investigation, attempting to hide evidence and lying to officials. One of the friends was allowed to return to the U.S. from Kazakhstan in January [without a valid student visa](#). And here we thought that problem had been fixed since 9/11.

Meanwhile, it's also been revealed that the Tsarnaev family received [more than \\$100,000](#) in welfare between 2002 and 2012. And while Democrat sympathizers are doing their best to keep this inconvenient fact out of the immigration debate, this is a troubling problem that Congress must face. The fact that these terrorists were allowed to stay here despite several warnings brushed aside by U.S. intelligence is troubling enough; allowing them to live on the taxpayer dole is simply damning.

However, taxpayer assistance for the Tsarnaev clan won't end there -- Uncle Sam will again be picking up the tab for Dzhokhar's defense team, which now

includes high-profile attorney Judy Clarke. Her clients have included, among others, "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski and Jared Loughner, both of whom escaped the death penalty. The defense is hoping for the same with Dzhokhar as they work on a plea deal for life imprisonment.

One World Trade Center

With striking symbolism, the spire of the new One World Trade Center was lifted Thursday on the second anniversary of the [death of Osama bin Laden](#). When complete, the building will be the tallest in the Western hemisphere and the third tallest in the world, standing at an also symbolic 1,776 feet.



President Pleads Ignorance on Benghazi

"I'm not familiar with this notion that anybody has been blocked from testifying," Barack Obama said at his Tuesday press conference. He was referring to allegations that Benghazi whistleblowers were threatened by the State Department and the CIA. In fact, [Fox News reports](#), "At least four career officials at the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency have retained lawyers or are in the process of doing so, as they prepare to provide sensitive information about the Benghazi attacks to Congress." White House Press Secretary Jay Carney likewise played dumb, dismissively answering, "Benghazi happened a long time ago. We are unaware of any agency blocking an employee who would like to

appear before Congress to provide information related to Benghazi."

In related news, the U.S. has [identified suspects](#) in the attack last Sept. 11 that left the ambassador and three other Americans dead. It remains to be seen what action will be taken. Astonishingly, the State Department's Office of Inspector General is even investigating the investigative team that reported on Benghazi. There seems to be reason to believe that the team neglected to interview some key witnesses.

As all of this is stirring again, it's important to remember some key things. Obama and his campaign have always attempted to downplay it, particularly just ahead of the election since part of his campaign was built on having brought al-Qa'ida to its knees. Nothing could be [further from the truth](#), especially considering that al-Qa'ida operatives were part of the attack. Initially blaming these deaths on a YouTube video was a brilliant distraction from reality -- and anyone who disagreed was labeled Islamophobic. It was Alinsky playbook stuff. The question is, if the White House hadn't lied about it, would Obama be president right now?

Obama to DoD: Courts Martial for the Faithful

The commander in chief wants to remove Christianity from the U.S. military. Find out more in [Mark Alexander's column](#).

Culture

Faith and Family: Gosnell Is Symptomatic

After weeks of testimony on Philadelphia abortionist Kermit Gosnell's alleged house of horrors, the jury began deliberating this week on whether to convict Gosnell of murdering babies born alive after failed late-term abortions. He and his staff would allegedly do so by cutting the baby's spinal cords with surgical scissors -- essentially beheading them. For its part, Planned Parenthood claims it has "consistently said that this is a horrifying and outrageous case." Not so. A Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania (PPSP) representative [admitted](#) that PPSP knew as early as 2010 of complaints about the conditions at

the clinic yet did nothing beyond "encourage" women to contact the Department of Health.

The Gosnell case shines light on the darkest side of an already dark industry. The pro-abortion lobby wants us to think this case is isolated, but it doesn't appear to be. Undercover video by [Live Action](#) recently exposed a Washington, DC, abortionist [admitting](#) that should a baby survive an abortion, they would leave it to die. A separate [video](#) caught a New York abortion counselor telling Live Action's undercover investigator to "flush" the baby down the toilet if "it comes out" at home before the final stage of the multi-day abortion procedure. When asked what the clinic would do after the abortion if the baby were moving and breathing, the counselor said they would put "it" in a jar with solution that "will make it stop." Live Action is releasing other videos as well.

Even as it becomes impossible for Americans to ignore abortion's atrocities, Barack Obama became the first sitting president to address a Planned Parenthood gathering. He closed his remarks by saying, "Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you." Asking God's blessing on such depravity is beyond the pale. His plea would have been better made for the innocent victims.

Village Academic Curriculum: Don't Need Gun Safety?

The Houston Independent School District canceled a gun safety program ostensibly after learning that the NRA back it. Of course, the NRA's widely known Eddie Eagle firearm safety program for young kids has been around for many years, and its basic message is simple: If you see a firearm, "Stop! Don't touch. Leave the area. Tell an adult." The objective, of course, is to save kids' lives.

A spokesman for the school district said, "The principals made a decision they didn't want to participate in an event that folks could perceive as them taking a position one way or another on the gun control debate or any other debate the NRA is involved in." That's rich considering that the NRA doesn't exactly conceal its involvement with the

program. On top of that, the principal at one of the canceling schools made an appearance with an NRA spokesman on a Houston radio station to express her excitement about hosting the program. It would seem she got a phone call from someone higher up the food chain. Ironically, the NRA convention is in Houston this weekend.

Conservative blogger [Ed Morrissey observed](#), "It is an example of responsible stewardship by the NRA, and canceling the program does nothing but keep children ignorant of how to act safely. Is that the core business of public schools -- keeping children ignorant?" Furthermore, what ever happened to Barack Obama's admonition that "If there's even one thing we can do, if there's just one life we can save -- we've got an obligation to try"?

In related mindless news from academia, a North Carolina Eagle Scout is facing expulsion for accidentally bringing his shotgun to school. The young man had been skeet shooting a day earlier and neglected to remove the shotgun from his truck before heading to school. When he realized what he had done, he went to the front office to call his mom for help. Someone overheard his call, and, just weeks before graduation, he was arrested and then expelled for one year.

And Last...

If you think the federal government is full of hot air, you're right. Well, technically it's helium, not plain air, but the point stands. The Federal Helium Program survived yet another House vote last Friday, meaning that now three presidents and congresses have tried unsuccessfully to get rid of this relic from the 1920s. The program was born after World War I when the U.S. military was concerned with keeping up with German inflatable airships. Today, according to The Washington Post, "The federal helium program sells vast amounts of the gas [at below-market rates] to U.S. companies that use it in everything from party balloons to MRI machines." The private sector, we're told, isn't stepping up to fill the balloons, leaving the government wearing the clown outfit.

"Imagine a world without balloons," lamented Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA) as he spoke about the House bill. We *hope* he was being facetious, though this is the same guy who thought that too many troops on the island of Guam could cause it to "tip over and capsized." So to make Hank happy and solve both problems, maybe we could attach some helium balloons to one side of the island to keep it afloat.

Semper Vigilo, Fortis, Paratus et Fidelis!
Nate Jackson for *The Patriot Post* Editorial Team