

Ann Arbor City Council Session: December 20, 2010
Email Redactions List Pursuant to Council Resolution R-09-386

<u>Received Time</u>	<u>Sent Time</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>CC</u>	<u>Redactions</u> Email addresses and property address	<u>Reason for Redaction</u>
8:58 PM	8:58 PM	Heifje, John Derezinski, Tony; Honke, Carsten; Anglin, Mike; Teall, Margie; Higgins, Marcia; Taylor, Christopher; Kunselman, Stephen; Rapundalo, Stephen; Smith, Sandi; Heifje, John	Schulte, Paul and Krista	Rapundalo, Stephen; Derezinski, Tony	Privacy	Privacy
7:44 PM	7:44 PM	Heifje, John; Wondrash, Lisa; Water	Connor, Alan Sackett, Jay		Privacy	Privacy

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Higgins, Marcia
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:44 PM
To: Rainey, Dan
Subject: laptop

Hi Dan,
My issues with Microsoft Outlook are the same and haven't been resolved. I am leaving my laptop with Roger.
What can we do to finally resolve this?
Thanks,
Marcia

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Fraser, Roger
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:45 PM
To: Rapundalo, Stephen; Higgins, Marcia; Briere, Sabra
Subject: Planning for Jan. 8

Are you all available either Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of next week to plan for our meeting on Jan. 8?

Roger W. Fraser

City Administrator
734-794-6110
rfraser@a2gov.org

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:40 PM
To: Higgins, Marcia
Subject: RE: Amendment language

Thanks.

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

City Clerk's Office | City of Ann Arbor | 100 North Fifth Ave., Second Floor · Ann Arbor · MI · 48104
734.794.6140 (O) · 734.994.8296 (F) |
jbeaudry@a2gov.org | www.a2gov.org



Think Green! Please don't print this e-mail unless absolutely necessary.

From: Higgins, Marcia
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:39 PM
To: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Subject: RE: Amendment language

remove endorses and insert accepts receipt of the

From: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Mon 12/20/2010 9:31 PM
To: Higgins, Marcia
Subject: Amendment language

Can you send me your language to amend the 1st Resolved Clause?

Thanks!

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

City Clerk's Office | City of Ann Arbor | 100 North Fifth Ave., Second Floor · Ann Arbor · MI · 48104
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Greenshields, Rachel

From: Taylor, Christopher (Council)
To: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:32 PM
Subject: Read: Removal of Whereas Clause

Your message

To: Taylor, Christopher (Council)
Subject: Removal of Whereas Clause
Sent: 12/20/2010 9:12 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 9:32 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:31 PM
To: Higgins, Marcia
Subject: Amendment language

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Thanks!

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

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Greenshields, Rachel

From: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 9:12 PM
To: Taylor, Christopher (Council)
Subject: Removal of Whereas Clause

Whereas, The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission has begun the process of integrating recommendations from the "Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Strategy" into the City Master Plan;

Is this the clause to be removed?

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

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ibeaudry@a2gov.org | www.a2gov.org



Think Green! Please don't print this e-mail unless absolutely necessary.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Paul and Krista Schulte [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:58 PM
To: Hieftje, John
Cc: Rapundalo, Stephen; Derezinski, Tony
Subject: Re: Huron Hills RFP

Dear Mr. Hieftje,

I'm really shocked to learn in the latest articles that MOG is offering just \$1M over 20 years for the Huron Hills lease, beyond the 'improvement' of a retail building that doesn't belong on parkland in the first place. If HH is currently covering something like \$200K per year in fixed cost for the city, and MOG will simply leave all that behind, doesn't that mean that HH will still effectively operate at a substantial loss to the city -- just hidden in other books?

What do you think even the acreage covered by the range would be worth if taxed as commercial land? What does MOG currently pay in taxes on Carpenter Rd?

If I were Chris Mile, I'd be praying to Santa that no one wakes up in time to catch the sly deal he's offering, getting a city government to subsidize his business with mere peanuts of revenue due to the city, in a site no actual commercial range could ever afford.

Paul Schulte
Ward 2

----- Original Message -----

From: Hieftje, John
To: Paul and Krista Schulte
Sent: Monday, November 22, 2010 11:43 PM
Subject: RE: Huron Hills RFP

Dear Mr. Schulte:

Thank you very much for writing regarding Huron Hills. Since I have been receiving a fair amount of email on this topic I hope you don't mind if I reply with an email I sent to another resident who wrote on the same issue.

The city has no plans to privatize, sell, lease or develop Huron Hills or do anything that would take away from the pleasant view. Many residents who live around HH's and others interested in golf have insisted that it remain a golf course so the city has been expending resources to make this happen.

The RFP put out by city staff in August was issued in order to see if a private entity can make it work as a golf course better than the city can. Two proposals have been submitted. The city is under no obligation to accept either one.

Huron Hills Golf Course loses money each year and this is not due to any accounting gimmicks. Back in the 1990's the Golf Courses were put into their own "enterprise fund" by council. I suppose to protect the golf fund from being raided for other park's activities. Putting the courses back into the mix would not result in any charges to the golf fund going away. The costs are indeed the costs. Golf would have to compete for shrinking dollars with parks activities that have a larger base of support and my guess would be that golf would come out on the short end.

Many residents have commented that we are swimming upstream in trying to keep HH's as a golf course. Golf courses are abundant in our area (As are driving ranges.) and several of the privately owned courses are struggling. None of them are doing well. Still, the city is committed to exploring every avenue in order to keep golf at HH's and thus the RFP.

In any event, I will not support a plan that involves construction that would detract from the "vista" we all enjoy or put the city at financial risk. HH's is after all, a green and beautiful park. Our residents need to be able use this park year around.

In the worst financial situation for local governments since the Great Depression Ann Arbor city government has made it thus far with a millage that is lower now than it was 10 years ago, without closing any facilities and while maintaining almost all services. This is not the case in many of Michigan's other leading cities (Grand Rapids, Troy, Royal Oak, Etc.) where taxes have been raised and/or facilities are closing in the face of reduced State Revenue Sharing and falling property tax revenues. On top of everything else Ann Arbor lost 4.86% of property tax revenue when UM took over the old Pfizer site.

As you can imagine, the City cannot continue to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to subsidize golf forever. Indeed, there are citizens who question a subsidy for golf. If it turns out that Huron Hills cannot survive as a golf course the next best plan may be to turn it into a natural area park. Pathways could be mowed for hiking, skiing and sledding and over time the Natural Areas Preservation unit can work with their volunteers to put in low-maintenance natural plantings and more trees. There are citizens who would be happy to help in trail construction and maintenance. The rolling hills would make for a beautiful natural area park.

Please read the message below from Council Member Rapundalo who has been working tirelessly on this issue for years. It was written before the RFP's were submitted.

If you would ever like to discuss this further please call my office for an appointment during my weekly open office hours. 794 6161. Given the amount of energy some individuals are putting into this issue, it is surprising that only one resident has set up a time to talk to me about Huron Hills in the last six months.

Please do not hesitate to share this message with any friends or neighbors who may have similar concerns.

Thank you for writing,

John Hieftje

Message below from Council Member Rapundalo:

Thank you for writing regarding the Huron Hills RFP matter. Let me try to provide you with background and context that has led to the issuance of an RFP.

It was at our Council retreat back in December 2009 that we challenged staff to come up with creative ideas on how to improve golf operations while finding added revenues and/or reducing costs to insure that the Golf Enterprise Fund ended future fiscal years in the black. The fact of the matter is that Huron Hills in particular has been losing money (I'll get back to that topic a little later) even though its bottom line has improved over the last year or so. Despite better efficiencies, promotion and cost reductions the City finds itself having to allocate approximately \$650,000 from the General Fund to support the Golf Enterprise Fund (primarily Huron Hills) and

balance the fund's books as it were. Knowing this, Council asked staff to look into how we might better manage HH, improve its bottom line and enhance the golf operations there. Staff came back to us at a work session in early February 2010 during the FY12 budget deliberations and suggested that it would be useful to issue an RFP that sought creative proposals on how do just that...enhance the golf experience and keep HH as a community recreational facility that caters largely to beginner and intermediate golfers, including juniors and seniors.

Over the course of the summer Parks staff worked with other departments like Finance, City Attorney, etc. (as is standard procedure) to develop the RFP. The draft RFP (in large part pro forma) was presented to both the Golf Courses Advisory Task Force (which I Chair and includes a HH neighbor, PAC rep, high school golf coach, citizen with course design/maintenance experience, citizen with golf course management experience, golf enthusiast with league experience) and the Parks Advisory Commission (PAC). The GCATF suggested language to insure that proposals would be in keeping with the values articulated in the PROS Plan. PAC suggested clarifying the term "alternative design" to make clear to readers what might be included. These suggestions were considered and the RFP was revised accordingly before its issuance on Sept 3.

Let me be very clear... the City is NOT seeking to transfer or cede Huron Hills to private commercial development. Indeed, the RFP is explicit in that the course/park will be retained by the City, and if there are any improvements, including infrastructure, then those will also be owned by the City. Contrary to assertions made by others the RFP is fully in keeping with the PROS Plan, and there is no intention to contravene the City Charter by selling any portion of the course, or even leasing it. I, along with Councilmember Derezinski are strong proponents of the HH Golf Course and only wish to see golf operations maximized and continue there.

A number of individuals have embarked on a misrepresentation of the facts, and have not so quietly employed scare tactics for something that has not yet materialized. We do not know what, if any, proposals will be submitted, nor their nature. It's possible that some proposals may focus entirely on the operations - for instance, they might propose to simply manage the current course as is for less money. Alternatively, it's also possible that a proposal might be submitted that seeks to enhance golf operations via added amenities and thereby draw a broader cross-section of the golfing community, especially juniors (a demographic that we've lost to other area course unfortunately). We simply don't know who will be interested, much less if they will submit a proposal for consideration, or what those proposals might entail.

Much of the vocal opposition stems in part from the fact that staff was approached with an unsolicited early conceptual drawing of HH with a driving range contemplated for the front seven holes. Coincidentally, a second inquiry from an area golf enterprise came into staff along similar lines. There was an outcry by interested folks upon learning this in early spring 2010 and they immediately began spreading falsehoods...such as 1) the City was selling or privatizing HH, 2) that bulldozers were arriving imminently to tear up the fairways, erect protective netting and bright lights for nighttime usage. None of this was true then, nor is it now. Will there be some proposals that might contemplate infrastructure changes? Perhaps, but there's nothing to say that the City would accept any such proposal. However, we do owe it to taxpayers to insure that our services and facilities are being run in the most cost efficient manner while providing the highest level of service. At the very least this behooves us to examine the cost of doing business at HH and what will it take to do it better and enhance golf operations.

I won't bore you with metrics (though I'd be happy to sit down with you and show the specifics), but suffice it to say usage has demonstrated clearly that HH operates predominantly as a 9-hole course vs 18 holes (about 80-20 split). So it's natural to wonder if a reconfiguration of the course (and not necessarily physical changes) might bring more business, while retaining current levels.

Some have suggested that the City is doing all this under the false pretext that HH is losing money when in fact it isn't, that this is nothing more than accounting gimmickry. I can assure that the financials are clear. On a cash basis, HH breaks pretty much even, perhaps a little shy. However,

it's important to note that all of the City's Enterprise Funds (streets, solid waste, etc.) have a Municipal Service Charge (MSC) levied against them to account for costs associated with City services utilized by the Funds - payroll, IT, City Attorney, etc., not to mention that the Funds must also expense pension and healthcare for current and retired employees. When all that is added to the equation, then HH goes clearly into the red, and hence the need to allocate General Fund dollars to the golf courses year after year (at the expense of supporting other General Fund park improvements). Please note that the MSC is not arbitrarily set by the City in some willy-nilly manner as some would one believe. Rather, independent auditors come in every two years (they just completed such an exercise recently), review the books and business unit costs, and set the appropriate unit rates and allocations. It is those rates and allocations that then make up the MSC for the respective Enterprise Funds based on their relative usage. The same costs are expensed in a similar manner within the General Fund supported budgets, but are not wrapped up together and referred to as the MSC - and this is where some people make the mistake that the golf courses are somehow unique and disadvantaged by having the MSC levy, when in fact they are treated uniformly and equitably like all other budget lines.

Some have even suggested that since the MSC is an inappropriate levy, that the golf course should be placed into the General Fund like all other parks facilities. Fair enough, though I have endeavored to tell people that doing so would jeopardize funding for the golf courses more, as they would have to be prioritized relative to the other facilities, programs and parks. Despite what some people think, golf courses would rank much poorer than other City park facilities as golf is generally viewed as an elitist sport (rightly or wrongly, I'm simply telling you what is a rather apparent sense). PAC is not happy that Council continues to "subsidize" the golf courses every year when those funds could easily be used for things like the pools, ice rinks, senior center, etc. And I can assure you that golf courses would suffer under that kind of scenario. So again, it behooves us to explore what the possibilities might be that could improve golf operations at HH. We are under no obligation to accept anything. However, we will never know if we've missed some creative way to enhance the golf experience at HH, whether that approach is implemented by the City or via a public-private management partnership.

I should also point out that private management, if we were to do a public-private partnership (like we do already with recycling) does not mean that the City will simply walk away from the courses. The City will continue to provide oversight and insure that whatever is happening at HH will be in keeping with community values and in the best interests of the City, both financially and otherwise. We will not be handing HH over to private concerns. The City would continue to have a strong hand in golf operations and insure that our expectations and anticipated outcomes were being met.

Bottom line is this...I'm committed to seeing HH be better than it already is - there's plenty of room for improvements. I don't pretend to have all the answers, nor does staff, and the RFP is simply a way to seek creative approaches and determine if any of them seem to have merit and potential for success.

My sincere desire is to have cooler heads prevail. We have an educated community and I would hope that they would realize that the Council is exercising its fiduciary responsibility by insuring that all of the City's functions and services are being managed responsibly, including those at the golf courses. I think it would be a crime, and I certainly wouldn't be doing the job entrusted to me by residents, if I didn't at least insure that we've examined all possibilities for continuing golf operations.

Sorry for the long-winded response. Hopefully I've provided some meaningful insight into the matter. I'd be happy to meet with you at any time to discuss the subject further. Thank you for your interest and support for HH.

Stephen

Stephen Rapundalo
City Council - 2nd Ward
City of Ann Arbor
Email: srapundalo@a2gov.org
Tel: (734) 476-0648

From: Paul and Krista Schulte [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, November 21, 2010 5:01 PM
To: jkellersohn@milesogolf.com
Cc: Rapundalo, Stephen; Derezenski, Tony; Hieftje, John; janelumm [REDACTED]
Subject: Huron Hills RFP

Dear Miles of Golf,

I have been a regular customer of your business since you took over the Carpenter Rd location - most of the clubs in my bag, the bag itself, shoes, and a range card were all born at your store and well-worn since. So I want to share why I will not be returning as long as the RFP for the Huron Hills property remains "in play" - or ever visit the resulting development if it were to occur.

1. The course in its current configuration is a **key piece of multiple greenways within Ann Arbor**. Whether through the Huron Parkway corridor, which is still predominantly natural from just north of Washtenaw up to the U-M campus, or the river corridor, which bears few sights of development from the seat of a canoe all the way through town, this is a scenic and environmentally important crossroads. It is a horrible place to build a retail building, construct containment nets for wayward range balls, or re-shape the land to the benefit of a range.
2. **Huron Hills is a terrific local asset for youth and beginning golf**. My first rounds were there, as were my daughter's. This will be greatly diminished in a 9-hole setup. You have a reputation for supporting junior golf; eliminating some of the best terrain for learning in the county does not meet that mission. Huron Hills is affordable and geographically convenient for the city's young, old, and otherwise beginning golfers - the source of new blood our sport needs. And the course is filled with the scenic magic that draws many of us to the game in a way that very few low-cost courses can. The back 9 is a key part of this - but a very incomplete course on its own.
3. **Without knowing what your sealed financial proposal will entail, your business is not in need of public subsidy** in the form of untaxed property, city-backed bonds, or liquor licensing obtained outside the normal marketplace. The irony of giving up on HH as a public asset because it might not cover allocated fixed costs from the city - and then directly subsidize it instead - is absurd.
4. **I use this parkland for far more than golf**. I am on the property more often with XC skis or a sled than I am with golf clubs, and I bike by the property edges regularly and enjoy its open landscape. I can't say I think the same way of the nets, targets, and the abandoned old mini-golf area on Carpenter. You've had the chance to make that space whatever you wanted - and it's not pretty. And I'm not confident that in private hands, I'll be allowed to ski the whole property, or sled the back 9.

I would far rather do business with a local merchant than at the Golfsmith that's convenient to my work commute, but not one that undermines a local asset for commercial gain.

As for my elected officials, if you've read this far, I'd like to know more about your positions on this issue.

Paul Schulte
[REDACTED]

Ward 2

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Kunselman, Stephen
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:33 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:33 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Rapundalo, Stephen
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:31 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:31 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Taylor, Christopher (Council)
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:31 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:31 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Briere, Sabra
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:32 PM
Subject: Read: FW: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:32 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Facebook [update+kjdmnk_diwm_@facebookmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:31 PM
To: Higgins, Marcia
Subject: Reminder: Robbie Gramm invited you to join Facebook...

facebook

Hi,

The following person invited you to be their friend on Facebook:



Robbie Gramm

Invite sent:
Dec 2, 2010

Facebook is free and
anyone can join.

[Sign Up](#)

Other people who have invited you to join Facebook:



Garret Carlson

Invite sent:
Jan 9, 2010



Jason Kemp

Invite sent:
Dec 4, 2010

Facebook is a great place to keep in touch with friends, post photos, videos and create events. But first you need to join! Sign up today to create a profile and connect with the people you know.

Thanks,
The Facebook Team

To sign up for Facebook, follow the link below:

<http://www.facebook.com/r.php?re=35bb8d65b99f468fa3059ed700d959c6&mid=37a0085G5af32e646493G0G46>

This message was intended for mhiggins@a2gov.org. If you do not wish to receive this type of email from Facebook in the future, please [click here](#) to unsubscribe.
Facebook, Inc. P.O. Box 10005, Palo Alto, CA 94303

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Teall, Margie
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:30 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:30 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Anglin, Mike
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:29 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:29 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Hieftje, John
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:29 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:29 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:29 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:29 PM
To: *City Council Members (All)
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Attachments: B-1 (ORD-10-39) proposed amendments.doc

Stephen K. Postema
Ann Arbor City Attorney

100 N. Fifth Ave
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107
(734) 794-6170

Internal number: 41889

From: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:12 PM
To: Postema, Stephen
Subject: Proposed amendments

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

City Clerk's Office | City of Ann Arbor | 100 North Fifth Ave., Second Floor · Ann Arbor · MI · 48104
734.794.6140 (O) · 734.994.8296 (F) |
jbeaudry@a2gov.org | www.a2gov.org



Think Green! Please don't print this e-mail unless absolutely necessary.

ORDINANCE NO. ORD-10-39

First Reading : December 6, 2010
Public Hearing : December 20, 2010

Approved:
Published:
Effective:

TRAFFIC
ADOPTION OF MOTOR VEHICLE CODE AND
UNIFORM TRAFFIC CODE

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 10:1a OF CHAPTER 126 (TRAFFIC) OF
TITLE X OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR

The City of Ann Arbor Ordains:

Section 1. That Section 10:1a of Chapter 126 of Title X of the Code of the City of Ann Arbor be amended to read as follows:

10:1a. Adoption of Michigan Vehicle Code and Michigan Uniform Traffic Code.

(1) ~~Effective May 1, 2005~~ Effective January 1, 2011, the City of Ann Arbor adopts by reference the Michigan Vehicle Code, 1949 PA 300, MCL 257.1 to 257.923 and as subsequently amended, ~~except for MCL 257.627, 257.628, and 257.629.~~ A complete copy of the code is available to the public for inspection in the Office of the Ann Arbor City Clerk.

(2) Effective January 1, 2011, the City of Ann Arbor adopts by reference the Michigan Uniform Traffic Code for Cities, Townships and Villages, R 28.1001 et seq., of the Michigan Administrative Code and as subsequently amended to the extent not in conflict with existing or future ordinances and regulations of the City. A complete copy of the code is available to the public for inspection in the Office of the Ann Arbor City Clerk. The City's adoption by reference of the UTC does not simultaneously prohibit the existence, addition, and adoption of further ordinances or regulations, provided such ordinances or regulations do not conflict with State law.

(23) The penalties provided by the Michigan ~~v~~Vehicle ~~e~~Code and Michigan Uniform Traffic Code for Cities, Townships and Villages are adopted by reference, provided, however, that no ordinance violation under the Michigan Vehicle Code shall be punishable by more than 93 days imprisonment.

(34) The provisions of the Michigan ~~v~~Vehicle ~~e~~Code and Michigan Uniform Traffic Code for Cities, Townships and Villages adopted in this section supersede all provisions of this chapter that substantially correspond to provisions in the Michigan Vehicle Code or the Michigan Uniform Traffic Code for Cities, Townships and Villages, respectively, ~~except for Sections 10:44, 10:45, 10:46, 10:47, and 10:48.~~

Section 2. That this Ordinance shall take effect on the tenth day following legal publication.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Derezinski, Tony
To: Postema, Stephen
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:27 PM
Subject: Read: Proposed amendments

Your message

To: Derezinski, Tony
Subject: FW: Proposed amendments
Sent: 12/20/2010 8:25 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 8:27 PM.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Portside Moderator [moderator@PORTSIDE.ORG]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:10 PM
To: PORTSIDE@LISTS.PORTSIDE.ORG
Subject: Senator Sanders's Socialism

Senator Sanders's Socialism

By Nancy Folbre

New York Times Economix

December 20, 2010

<http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/20/senator-sandersss-socialism/>

Nancy Folbre is an economics professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

When the ruffled, plain-spoken Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont spoke virtually nonstop for more than eight hours on Dec. 10 to explain his opposition to tax cuts for the rich, he quickly became a YouTube and Twitter celebrity. Harry Hamburg/Associated Press Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a sharp critic of the Federal Reserve, forced its disclosure of details of its lending and bailout practices.

A majority of Americans polled earlier this year by New York Times/CBS News, Bloomberg News and USA Today/Gallup also opposed these cuts, and many cheered him on as he spoke.

President Obama's firm support for a compromise on the tax cut - which Congress approved late Thursday night - helped swing many voters back into approval, but the debate publicized the issue of economic inequality.

Senator Sanders, who describes himself as a democratic socialist, describes the United States economy as "socialism for the rich."

Earlier in the year, he allied with Representative Ron Paul, Republican of Texas, to win support for new legislation requiring an unprecedented level of disclosure of the Federal Reserve's specific emergency lending activities.

With that process of disclosure now under way, Senator Sanders can offer details from the Fed's "bailout files" to substantiate his claim that the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program was pocket change compared with the trillions of dollars in low-interest loans the central bank provided both to American corporations and foreign agencies.

No such assistance was offered to small businesses in need of capital or homeowners going through foreclosures.

Senator Sanders's criticisms of the Fed go well beyond the observation that it bailed out only institutions it considered too big to fail. In a recent public letter to the Fed chairman, Ben Bernanke, he points to major conflicts of interest: Senior executives of General Electric, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Banco Popular, Sun Trust and Fifth Third Bank served as directors of regional Federal Reserve Banks even as they doled out funds to their firms.

The new information lends support to the concept of a financial oligarchy detailed by my fellow Economix blogger Simon Johnson and his co-author, James Kwak, in "13 Bankers: The Wall Street Takeover and the Next Financial Meltdown."

The specifics also provide a case study of regulatory capture, in which a state agency created to act in the public interest instead advances the commercial or special interests it was charged with regulating.

Mainstream Republicans and Democrats have recently squared off over the issue of who caused the financial crisis - the government or the financial industry.

Republicans blame public efforts to increase homeownership through the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 and the subsidization of low-interest mortgages through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Democrats blame deregulation.

If Senator Sanders is correct, the debate is misplaced, because a government dominated by the financial industry helped orchestrate both federal subsidies and deregulation.

Many of our most influential policy makers spin through revolving doors between government and private finance. Hardly an eyebrow was raised this fall when the White House budget director, Peter Orszag, left public service to join Citibank's global banking division.

The Fed does not seem a bit embarrassed by the bailout's double standard or uneven impact. Corporate profits are up 28 percent from a year ago, but unemployment edged up to 9.8 percent last month.

A widespread apprehension that government no longer effectively represents the interests of ordinary people has tipped populist rage to the right.

Senator Sanders has proved more adept than any of the Democrats in tipping it the other way.

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Greenshields, Rachel

From: Portside Moderator [moderator@PORTSIDE.ORG]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:11 PM
To: PORTSIDE@LISTS.PORTSIDE.ORG
Subject: Group IQ - What makes one team of people smarter than another?

Group IQ

What makes one team of people smarter than another? A new field of research finds surprising answers.

By Carolyn Y. Johnson

The Boston Globe

December 19, 2010

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2010/12/19/group_iq/?page=1

For a century, people have been devising tests that aim to capture a person's mental abilities in a score, whether it is an IQ test or the SAT. In just an hour or an afternoon, a slate of multiple choice questions or visual puzzles helps sift out the superstars -- people whose critical thinking skills suggest they have potent intellectual abilities that could one day help solve real-world problems.

But separating the spectacularly bright from the merely average may not be quite as important as everyone believes. A striking study led by an MIT Sloan School of Management professor shows that teams of people display a collective intelligence that has surprisingly little to do with the intelligence of the team's individual members. Group intelligence, the researchers discovered, is not strongly tied to either the average intelligence of the members or the team's smartest member. And this collective intelligence was more than just an arbitrary score: When the group grappled with a complex task, the researchers found it was an excellent predictor of how well the team performed.

The new work is part of a growing body of research that focuses on understanding collective behavior and intelligence -- an increasingly relevant topic of research in an age where everything from scientific progress to entrepreneurial success hinges on collaboration. Embedded in a century's worth of Broadway shows, the interactions of online communities, or the path a ball travels between soccer players, researchers are finding hints about how individual people contribute to make a group creative and successful.

The interest is fueled in part by the Internet, which provides an unprecedented opportunity for people to join and leave groups, unbounded by geography. In the digital age, interactions between people are also creating a huge stream of data, giving scientists new ways to glean precise insights about how complex, aggregated behaviors arise. What they are finding is that groups, as entities, have characteristics that are more than just a summing up or averaging of those of its members.

"Intuitively, we still attribute too much to individuals and not enough to groups. Part of that may just be that it's simpler; it's simpler to say the success of a company depended on the CEO for good or bad, but in reality the success of a company depends on a whole lot more," said Thomas W. Malone, director of the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence and senior author of the recent study, published in the journal *Science*. "Essentially what's happening as our society becomes more advanced and more developed is that more things are done by groups of people than by individuals. In a certain sense, our intuitions about how that works haven't caught up with the reality of modern life."

As the mechanics of how groups work emerge, such insights are forming the basis of a scientific approach to engineering better groups, with experiments already unfolding in sports arenas and scientific laboratories.

The best-selling book "Moneyball" told the story of how the Oakland Athletics used an unconventional statistical approach to build a winning baseball team without a big budget. The new research suggests it may one day be possible to give a test to a sales team and predict how well it will sell in the following year, or to pick a management team with a good sense of exactly how it is likely to respond to an array of challenges.

"It's kind of staggering, it's 2010 and we're only beginning to realize what look in this paper to be very strong effects," said Iain Couzin, an assistant professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University who studies collective behavior in animals. "I run a relatively large lab, and I was thinking reading this paper about how I could make my lab more effective."

People have been studying group dynamics for decades, seeing crowds variously as sources of madness and wisdom. Theories have arisen about people acting in plural, from the "groupthink" decision-making in the Bay of Pigs invasion to the "collective mind" of the flight operations on an aircraft carrier. But despite that long history, Malone and colleagues could not find an example in which people had asked the relatively simple question of whether groups had intelligence, the same way individual people do.

The field of measuring and ranking people's mental aptitudes has been rife with controversy, but the finding that something called "general intelligence" exists has persevered. By giving people a set of tests, researchers can calculate a factor that predicts how a person will perform on a variety of cognitive tasks -- as well as their performance in school and work. The MIT and Carnegie Mellon University researchers decided to see if the same concept applied to groups. While people have measured group performance on specific tasks, what Malone sought to understand was whether there was such a thing as general group intelligence.

In two studies, researchers divided 699 people into groups of two to five people. They measured each team member's intelligence individually, but then gave the teams intelligence-testing tasks to solve -- figuring out the next pattern in a sequence, brainstorming the different potential uses of a brick. Then, the group performed a more complex "criterion" task, such as playing checkers against a computer or completing a complicated architectural task with Legos, which was used to understand whether the collective intelligence researchers measured in the initial tasks correctly predicted the group's abilities.

What the researchers found was that groups' collective intelligence strongly predicted how well they did in the computer checkers game and on the Legos task -- evidence that something called "collective intelligence" did in fact exist. What was more surprising, however, was that neither the average intelligence of the group members nor the person with the greatest intelligence strongly predicted how well the group did.

Other tenets of group success also seemed to fall by the wayside: A group's motivation, satisfaction, and unity were unimportant. Instead, the researchers found that when a group had a high level of collective intelligence, the members tended to score well on a test that measured how good they were at reading other people's emotions. They also found that groups with overbearing leaders who were reluctant to cede the floor and let the others talk did worse than those in which participation was better distributed and people took turns speaking. And they also found that the proportion of women in the group was a predictor of collective intelligence -- a factor they believe was likely influenced by women's generally superior social sensitivity.

Though intriguing, this work is just a first step. What Malone and colleagues are ultimately interested in is how to predict a group's abilities in real-life scenarios -- how they handle an environmental cleanup or design a blockbuster product. Legos and checkers are a surrogate for complicated tasks, but the ultimate test will be in determining whether collective intelligence truly predicts how teams, of all sizes, work on everyday tasks. Since groups and situations in the

real world have fluidity and complexity whose individual components can be difficult to break down and measure, however, other research is focusing on dissecting the dynamics that build to group behavior.

Take the game of soccer: A player who never scores a goal may play an integral part in the team's success. Baseball has its RBIs, ERAs, and OBPs, but, as with soccer, most real-life activities do not come with discrete statistical measures of how people interact or work together toward a goal. In a paper published in the journal PLoS ONE this summer, Luis A. Nunes Amaral, a professor of chemical and biological engineering at Northwestern University, worked with colleagues to see if they could quantify individual players' performance by modeling the game of soccer -- creating a network in which each player in each match of the 2008 Euro Cup is a node, and tracing the ball flow between them. Each time the ball flowed toward a possible shot, it passed through players on a team, and measuring just how central any one player was in that team flow allowed the researchers to develop a quantitative measure of the individual players' contributions to the team.

Amaral has also studied how team members contribute to creativity by analyzing 113 years of Broadway musicals. In a 2005 paper in Science, he studied the changing rosters of librettists, lyricists, producers, composers, choreographers, and directors and found that success and creativity seemed to depend on groups that do not become stale, using the same slate of collaborators each time. The same thing held true for teams of scientists conducting research in various scientific disciplines over 50 years.

Questions about how to make groups better have taken on new urgency as evidence has accrued that teams are usurping the central spot once occupied by solo contributors. A 2007 Science study found that in science and engineering, patents, social sciences, and even to some extent in the arts and humanities, there is a shift at work -- new knowledge is increasingly being produced by teams.

"This is a matter that is of national interest," Amaral said. "We have limited resources to spend on any activity -- including scientific research -- so we would want to get highest possible benefit from the money we spend."

The tendency to assign credit to a discrete individual, not a group, runs deep. There are certainly group projects in school and bonuses built on team performance, but there is also a seemingly inescapable impulse to search in a group for the narrative of the individual. How did the president guide the country at a particular time? Who is the scientist that created the lifesaving drug? People gravitate toward stories of individuals who matter, despite the fact that much of human history has been shaped not by one person at a time but by networks of people, whether they are bands of hunter-gatherers or corporations.

"Very rarely are we coming up with something that influences the rest of society as a maverick, on our own," said Robert Goldstone, a professor of psychological and brain sciences at Indiana University.

Instead of seeing groups as nameless and faceless affiliations that swallow up an individual's identity, the new work on collective behavior suggests that in company lies opportunity. The field of intelligence testing has long been controversial, in part because of concerns that such scores were crude and biased, pigeon-holing people as stupid or smart. In contrast, collective intelligence offers a new spectrum of possibilities. Instead of pronouncing a person's intellectual engine good or bad, the research suggests that group intelligence is highly malleable and that concrete steps -- such as mixing newcomers into an established team or not allowing a single leader to dominate -- could fundamentally alter the group's intelligence.

More broadly, groups and the complex social structure of human interactions may help account for how people got "smart" in the first place. The dramatic changes in science, culture, art, language, technology, and music over the past thousand years are not due to the development of brand-new mental or physical capacities. Instead, it is a particular kind of group benefit, Goldstone argues, in which human progress bootstraps upon itself through a collective cultural memory.

Knowledge ratchets up in successive generations without our having to reinvent technologies, discover laws of nature anew, or risk tasting all the mushrooms in the forest.

"There's been a tendency to focus on the negative, the mob psychology, the idea that people can bring out the worst in each other," Goldstone said. "There's just as much evidence that people can bring out the best in each other."

Carolyn Y. Johnson is a Globe reporter. E-mail cjohnson@globe.com.

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From: Portside Moderator [moderator@PORTSIDE.ORG]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:11 PM
To: PORTSIDE@LISTS.PORTSIDE.ORG
Subject: The Most Important Free Speech Issue of Our Time

The Most Important Free Speech Issue of Our Time

Al Franken U.S. Senator, Minnesota December 20, 2010

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/al-franken/the-most-important-free-s_b_798984.html

This Tuesday is an important day in the fight to save the Internet.

As a source of innovation, an engine of our economy, and a forum for our political discourse, the Internet can only work if it's a truly level playing field.

Small businesses should have the same ability to reach customers as powerful corporations. A blogger should have the same ability to find an audience as a media conglomerate.

This principle is called "net neutrality" -- and it's under attack. Internet service giants like Comcast and Verizon want to offer premium and privileged access to the Internet for corporations who can afford to pay for it.

The good news is that the Federal Communications Commission has the power to issue regulations that protect net neutrality. The bad news is that draft regulations written by FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski don't do that at all. They're worse than nothing.

That's why Tuesday is such an important day. The FCC will be meeting to discuss those regulations, and we must make sure that its members understand that allowing corporations to control the Internet is simply unacceptable.

Although Chairman Genachowski's draft Order has not been made public, early reports make clear that it falls far short of protecting net neutrality.

For many Americans -- particularly those who live in rural areas -- the future of the Internet lies in mobile services. But the draft Order would effectively permit Internet providers to block lawful content, applications, and devices on mobile Internet connections.

Mobile networks like AT&T and Verizon Wireless would be able to shut off your access to content or applications for any reason. For instance, Verizon could prevent you from accessing Google Maps on your phone, forcing you to use their own mapping program, Verizon Navigator, even if it costs money to use and isn't nearly as good.

Or a mobile provider with a political agenda could prevent you from downloading an app that connects you with the Obama campaign (or, for that matter, a Tea Party group in your area).

It gets worse. The FCC has never before explicitly allowed discrimination on the Internet -- but the draft Order takes a step backwards, merely stating that so-called "paid prioritization" (the creation of a "fast lane" for big corporations who can afford to pay for it) is cause for concern.

It sure is -- but that's exactly why the FCC should ban it. Instead, the draft Order would have the effect of actually relaxing restrictions on this kind of discrimination.

What's more, even the protections that are established in the draft Order would be weak because it defines "broadband Internet access service" too narrowly, making it easy for powerful corporations to get around the rules.

Here's what's most troubling of all. Chairman Genachowski and President Obama -- who nominated him -- have argued convincingly that they support net neutrality.

But grassroots supporters of net neutrality are beginning to wonder if we've been had. Instead of proposing regulations that would truly protect net neutrality, reports indicate that Chairman Genachowski has been calling the CEOs of major Internet corporations seeking their public endorsement of this draft proposal, which would destroy it.

No chairman should be soliciting sign-off from the corporations that his agency is supposed to regulate -- and no true advocate of a free and open Internet should be seeking the permission of large media conglomerates before issuing new rules.

After all, just look at Comcast -- this Internet monolith has reportedly imposed a new, recurring fee on Level 3 Communications, the company slated to be the primary online delivery provider for Netflix. That's the same Netflix that represents Comcast's biggest competition in video services.

Imagine if Comcast customers couldn't watch Netflix, but were limited only to Comcast's Video On Demand service. Imagine if a cable news network could get its website to load faster on your computer than your favorite local political blog. Imagine if big corporations with their own agenda could decide who wins or loses online. The Internet as we know it would cease to exist.

That's why net neutrality is the most important free speech issue of our time. And that's why, this Tuesday, when the FCC meets to discuss this badly flawed proposal, I'll be watching. If they approve it as is, I'll be outraged. And you should be, too.

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From: Portside Moderator [moderator@PORTSIDE.ORG]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:09 PM
To: PORTSIDE@LISTS.PORTSIDE.ORG
Subject: Corporate America's Plan to Loot Our Pensions- The Latest Battle

Corporate America's Plan to Loot Our Pensions is the Latest Battle in Decades-Long Assault on the Middle Class

While the safety net is being withered by attrition, record corporate profits are deemed off-limits for discussion about closing the budget gap.

by Arun Gupta

AlterNet

December 18, 2010

http://www.alternet.org/economy/149226/corporate_america%27s_plan_to_loot_our_pensions_is_the_latest_battle_in_decades-long_assault_on_the_middle_class/

The severe economic crisis, now in its fourth year, is being used to batter the remnants of the social welfare state. Having decimated aid to the poor over the last 30 years, especially in the United States, the economic and political elite are now intent on strangling middle-class benefits, namely state-provided pensions, health care and education.

The initial neoliberal assault under Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher reorganized the capitalist economy and hammered private-sector unions into submission.

This was accomplished by putting labor back into competition with itself by off-shoring industrial production, through deregulation and with frontal assaults on labor rights, organizing and solidarity.

Similarly, the current attack is a two-pronged effort to reorganize state social services, either by eliminating or privatizing them, and decimate public-sector unions whose workers provide those services. While the safety net is being withered by attrition, police and spying agencies are getting more powers and funding, and the wealth of the super-rich and record corporate profits are deemed off-limits to taxation to close any government budget gap.

Simply put, the elderly are superfluous to capitalism.

With high rates of joblessness the "new norm," more and more people are being made disposable. This leads to an efficient if brutal logic: cutting old-age income and health care will make it easier to scrap old, useless workers. In fact, this reality is already coming to pass. One study published in 2008 found that over a 16-year period life expectancy had declined for many poor American women - precisely those who are disproportionately represented among the elderly heavily dependent on Social Security and Medicare.

Slashing social services affects everyone by increasing the pool of workers desperate for any sort of paying job, pushing down wages and benefits. This will all be pushed under the rubric of "personal responsibility," and it will probably be successful as long as opposition is weak and divided. The main beneficiaries will be the super-wealthy who gain both from tax cuts as the social sector is chopped up and higher corporate profits as wages and benefits are slashed more deeply.

The attack on pensions is mainly occurring in the West and those countries close to its orbit. So while the United States, Greece, Ireland, Japan, France, Turkey, Spain, Poland and Latvia have been cutting or trying to squeeze state-

run pensions, others such as Bolivia, China and Venezuela have been increasing funding of old-age pensions in recent years (though within these countries the picture is more complicated because social spending may be declining overall and inflation increasing).

The Right has stridently opposed Social Security since it was enacted in 1935, but the modern attack on pensions originated during the Reagan-Thatcher era.

While he proposed making Social Security voluntary during the 1964 Goldwater campaign, when he reached office Reagan temporarily froze cost-of-living adjustments, raised the future retirement age to 67, taxed benefits of higher-income earners, made it more difficult for the disabled to claim benefits and forced the self-employed to pay 100 percent of payroll taxes.

Then under Clinton, according to some economists, inflation was understated to suppress cost-of-living adjustments, resulting in benefits that should be 50 percent higher than the current average of \$1,072 a month. Thatcher and Tony Blair formed the same one-two punch as Reagan and Clinton, but they went further by partially privatizing much of the state-run pension system.

The second historical component is the current crisis, which is severely widening the economic chasm.

According to the New York Times, corporate profits "have grown for seven consecutive quarters, at some of the fastest rates in history," hitting a record of

\$1.66 trillion on an annual basis. Taking advantage of Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury monies, Wall Street has notched record profits over the last two years. And the top one percent actually increased their share of the wealth through the end of 2009.

As for the overall economic picture, industrial production is back to where it was in 2000 and the all-important capacity utilization rate - which measures how much of existing manufacturing plants are actually operating - is below 75 percent, compared to a level above 80 percent before the crash. This is like saying more than one-fourth of factories are idle. The trade deficit is at 3.7 percent of the gross domestic product. Only 874,000 jobs were created during the first 10 months of 2010, well short of the 1.2 million needed to keep up with population growth, and some 260,000 state workers lost their jobs during this period, leaving 7.5 million fewer jobs than when the recession began.

The household picture is even grimmer: family income shrank more than 4 percent in 2008 and 2009; the official poverty rate of 14.3 is the highest since 1994; 13.5 percent of home mortgages are in delinquency or foreclosure; the percentage of people receiving health insurance through their employer has dropped by 13 percent over the last decade and the real unemployment rate -- the "U6 rate" which includes those who have given up looking for work -- is at 17 percent.

Household debt stands at 118 percent of after-tax income.

Most economists say there are really only four sources of potential growth in our economy: consumer spending, business investment, trade and government. As the data above indicates, the first three are on life support, while the Obama White House bungled the stimulus plan, helping the right in discrediting government intervention, which is still the only remaining option.

These economic conditions prevail throughout the West, which is the backdrop for the global assault on pension plans. Thus the conclusion is stark: there is no functioning engine to drive economic growth.

With so much idle productive capacity, the bromide of giving tax breaks to spur business investment is little more than throwing away money. With American families drowning in debt, getting smacked with rising healthcare costs, having lost \$15.8 trillion in wealth and fearing joining the armies of unemployed, they are incapable of pulling the economy out of its funk with increased consumption. Increased trade is one possibility, which would require a weaker dollar to make U.S. exports more competitive. But, as Paul Krugman points out, this is opposed by Republicans who believe continued economic decline will enhance their electoral chances in 2012. Despite investment money pouring into the BRIC countries - Brazil, Russia, India and China - agricultural commodities and precious metals, these markets are too

narrow and shallow to form a new asset bubble, such as the ones in tech and housing that fueled economic growth for nearly two decades. And in any case, we know how well those bubbles worked out.

When business investment, consumption, trade, debt and speculation all falter, that leaves government as the only sector that can revive a capitalist economy. But, as I first pointed out in December 2008, the Obama administration knew the stimulus was almost certain to fail because the downturn was sapping a staggering \$1 trillion a year from the economy at that point, while the plan offered a relatively meager \$787 billion. Of that, only \$600 billion of stimulus money was spent in the last two years and, according to Paul Krugman, more than 40 percent of that was in tax breaks that tend to offer the least bang for the buck. So in early 2009, faced with an economy leaking 7 percent of the GDP a year, Obama offers a plan that plugs 1 to 2 percent a year.

In the final equation, the Obama stimulus only covered some of the shortfall in state and local budgets. But that money is drying up, and that, to a large degree, is the reason state services and workers are now under attack.

But now we are in for more bloodletting of social services and government workers because the failed stimulus has legitimized the establishment hysteria over the federal debt. Debt matters but the simplest way to reduce it is by a combination of economic growth and inflation. This is what happened to U.S. debt after WW2, which peaked at about 120 percent of GDP, far more than today even with the economic depression and bailouts. Instead, the right is pushing policies that may result in a worst-case scenario. Cutting spending and taxes -which Obama has endorsed - could lead to further economic contraction and deflation. This will make federal debt payments doubly onerous because tax revenues will shrink as the dollar strengthens.

There is another solution to reviving the economy without piling on debt: tax the wealth of the elite. According to economist Rick Wolff, "high-net-worth"

Americans have around \$12 trillion in investable assets, which excludes the value of their homes. A 13 percent wealth tax would wipe out the entire 2010 federal budget deficit of \$1.56 trillion while doing little to crimp the economy because this money is literally lying around.

Yet Obama never seriously considered even the Keynesian policy of debt-driven financing for national re-industrialization because he was the darling of Wall Street - and number one recipient of its dollars - for his unwavering support of the Bush bailout in September 2008 and by taking counsel from Larry Summers and Tim Geithner during the campaign. Once in the White House Obama shunned jobs programs on a massive enough scale to revive the economy because the indirect method of debt-driven financing would shore up benefits, wages and labor bargaining power, thus cutting into corporate profits, while the direct financing method, taxing the rich, would mean they would have to pay for programs that would eventually cut into their profits.

The Obama administration has consistently fought for policies that involve weakening labor -- such as its attacks on auto workers and teachers and the cynical gesture of calling for a freeze on the pay of federal workers- driving down wages, letting unemployment rise, and squeezing social services and benefits, all to transfer more wealth upward.

The wealthy have profited three times off the crisis: from the bubble itself, during the bailouts and from government bonds sold to them to pay for the bailouts. Putting pensions on the chopping block would give them a fourth opportunity to profit off the same crisis.

If debt is a problem, then bondholders should take a haircut because they took the risk. Of course, that's not how capitalism works. So, in the case of Social Security, which has nearly \$2.6 trillion in its trust fund and can meet ALL obligations through 2037 even assuming no changes are made, the plan is to raid it to pay off bondholders.

That's why a crisis is being manufactured. Obama's deal to reduce payroll tax by two percentage points will pilfer an estimated \$120 billion from the trust fund that will supposedly be paid back by revenues from the general treasury. This means the deficit will increase, feeding into the fabricated panic over Social Security and debt.

For any country, cutting pensions is disastrous to long-term economic health. In the United States, Social Security accounts for 40 percent of the income of the population over 65 and nearly 50 percent for women in this group. It would also leave more people in the workforce as older workers delay retirement. Because the elderly tend to spend their benefits right away, on housing, food, transportation and medical services this means less demand and lower economic activity. And combining all this with trying to crush public workers also means more unemployed, less tax revenue and a shrinking economy.

It all adds up to a recipe for a depression. Two conclusions are inescapable: Obama is far more Herbert Hoover than FDR, and change will only come from creative independent movements instead of marching into the tomb of the Democratic Party

[Arun Gupta is a founding editor and the publisher of The Independent newspaper. He is writing a book on the politics of food for Haymarket Books.]

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Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 8:10 PM
To: PORTSIDE@LISTS.PORTSIDE.ORG
Subject: Wikileaks: Documents Confirm US Plans Against Venezuela

Wikileaks: Documents Confirm US Plans Against Venezuela

State Department documents published by Wikileaks evidence Washington's plans to "contain" Venezuela's influence in the region and increase efforts to provoke regime change

By Eva Golinger
ZNet
December 20, 2010

<http://www.zcommunications.org/wikileaks-documents-confirm-us-plans-against-venezuela-by-eva-golinger>

A substantial portion of the more than 1600 State Department documents Wikileaks has published during the past two weeks refer to the ongoing efforts of US diplomacy to isolate and counter the Venezuelan government.

Since Hugo Chavez won the presidency for the first time in 1998, Washington has engaged in numerous efforts to overthrow him, including a failed coup d'etat in April 2002, an oil industry strike that same year, worldwide media campaigns and various electoral interventions. The State Department has also used its funding agencies, USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), to channel millions of dollars annually to anti-Chavez NGOs, political parties, journalists and media organizations in Venezuela, who have been working to undermine the Chavez administration and force him from power. When these interventionist policies have been denounced by the Chavez government and others, Washington has repeatedly denied any efforts to isolate or act against the Venezuelan head of state.

Nonetheless, the State Department cables published by Wikileaks clearly evidence that not only has Washington been actively funding anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela, but it also has engaged in serious efforts during the past few years to convince governments worldwide to assume an adversarial position against President Hugo Chavez.

"CONTENTION" PLAN AGAINST A "FORMIDABLE FOE"

In a secret document authored by current Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Craig Kelly, and sent by the US Embassy in Santiago in June 2007 to the Secretary of State, CIA and Southern Command of the Pentagon, along with a series of other US embassies in the region, Kelly proposed "six main areas of action for the US government (USG) to limit Chavez's influence" and "reassert US leadership in the region".

Kelly, who played a primary role as "mediator" during last year's coup d'etat in Honduras against President Manuel Zelaya, classifies President Hugo Chavez as an "enemy" in his report. "Know the enemy: We have to better understand how Chavez thinks and what he intends... To effectively counter the threat he represents, we need to know better his objectives and how he intends to pursue them. This requires better intelligence in all of our countries". Further on in the memo, Kelly confesses that President Chavez is a "formidable foe", but, he adds, "he certainly can be taken".

In 2006, Washington activated a Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Mission Manager for Venezuela and Cuba. The mission, headed by clandestine CIA veteran Timothy Langford, is one of only four such intelligence entities of its type. The others were created to handle intelligence matters relating to Iran, North Korea and Afghanistan/Pakistan,

evidencing the clear priority that Washington has placed on Venezuela as a target of increased espionage and covert operations.

Another suggestion made by Kelly in the secret cable, is a recommendation to increase US presence in the region and improve relations with Latin American military forces. "We should continue to strengthen ties to those military leaders in the region who share our concern over Chavez".

Kelly also proposed a "psychological operations" program against the Venezuelan government to exploit its vulnerabilities. "We also need to make sure that the truth about Chavez - his hollow vision, his empty promises, his dangerous international relationships, starting with Iran - gets out, always exercising careful judgment about where and how we take on Chavez directly/publicly".

Kelly recommended US officials make more visits to the region to "show the flag and explain directly to populations our view of democracy and progress". Kelly also offered details on how Washington could better exploit the differences amongst South American governments to isolate Venezuela:

"Brazil...can be a powerful counterpoint to Chavez's project...Chile offers another excellent alternative to Chavez...We should look to find other ways to give Chile the lead on important initiatives, but without making them look like they are our puppets or surrogates. Argentina is more complex, but still presents distinct characteristics that should inform our approach to countering Chavez's influence there".

PRESSURING MERCOSUR

Kelly also revealed the pressure Washington has been applying to Mercosur (Market of the South) to not accept Venezuela as a full member in the regional trade bloc. "With regard to Mercosur, we should not be timid in stating that Venezuela's membership will torpedo US interest in even considering direct negotiations with the trading bloc".

MEXICO, BOGOTA & OTHERS ASK TO "FIGHT" CHAVEZ

The cables published by Wikileaks not only reveal US hostility towards Venezuela, but also the requests made by regional leaders and politicians to work against President Chavez.

One secret document from October 2009 referring to a meeting between Mexican President Felipe Calderon and US Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair tells of how Calderon confessed he was "trying to isolate Venezuela through the Rio Group". The Mexican head of state also appealed to the US intelligence chief, "The region needs a visible US presence...the United States must be ready to engage the next Brazilian president. Brazil, he said, is key to restraining Chavez...The US needs to engage Brazil more and influence its outlook".

URIBE REQUESTS "MILITARY ACTION" AGAINST CHAVEZ

In several secret documents authored by the US Embassy in Colombia, efforts by ex President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe, to convince Washington to take action against Venezuela are evidenced.

In one cable from December 2007, the US Ambassador in Colombia recounts a meeting between Uribe and a delegation of US congress members, including Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid. According to the text, Uribe "likened the threat Chavez poses to Latin America to that posed by Hitler in Europe".

And in yet another report summarizing a January 2008 meeting between Uribe and the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, Uribe is quoted as recommending military action against Venezuela.

"The best counter to Chavez, in Uribe's view, remains action - including use of the military".

Later in that same secret cable, Uribe urged Washington to "lead a public campaign against Venezuela...to counter Chavez..."

OPPOSITION BISHOP REQUESTS US ACTION

In addition to regional politicians and US diplomats urging plans against President Chavez, one cable reveals how during a meeting between a Venezuelan Archbishop and the US Ambassador, the religious leader asked for Washington to act against his own government.

At the meeting, which took place in January 2005 according to the document, Archbishop Baltazar Porras told Ambassador William Brownfield that the "US government should be more clear and public in its criticism of the Chavez administration" and that the "international community also needs to work and speak out more to contain Chavez..."

The plans and strategies revealed through these official documents confirm what other evidence has already corroborated regarding Washington's increase in aggression towards Venezuela. The US continues to fund opposition groups that act to undermine Venezuelan democracy while escalating its hostile discourse and policies against the Chavez government.

This week's Senate affirmation of Larry Palmer as Ambassador to Venezuela will only make matters worse. Palmer was rejected by the Venezuelan government after he made negative statements about the Chavez administration in August. Washington's insistence of sending Palmer appears to be an effort to provoke a rupture in diplomatic relations.

Portside aims to provide material of interest to people on the left that will help them to interpret the world and to change it.

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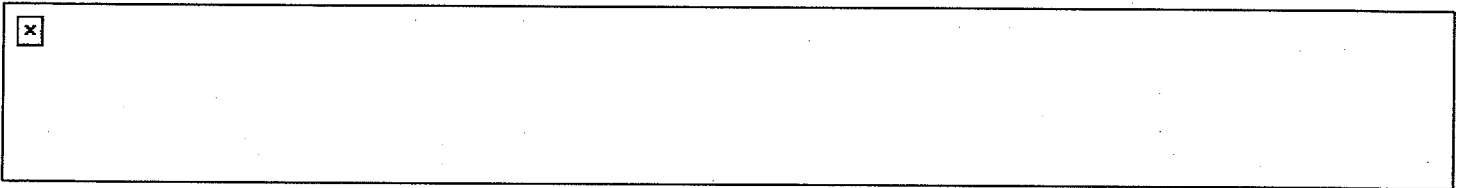
Greenshields, Rachel

From: Congress.org [congressorg@capwiz.com]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 7:46 PM
To: Hieftje, John
Subject: What Do Unemployment Numbers Mean?

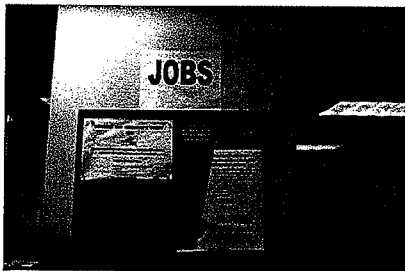
Get informed, get involved
Congress

This Week in Congress

December 20, 2010



What Do Unemployment Numbers Mean?



Each month, the nation breathlessly awaits the latest unemployment and job growth numbers.

But what do those numbers really mean?

In this episode of "D.C. Decoder," veteran Washington journalist Craig Crawford digs into the numbers behind the numbers.

He shows how they aren't really an accurate gauge of what people in the real world are feeling.

[Watch the video about unemployment numbers.](#)

Get on Your Soapbox

Want to make your voice heard concerning issues important to you? Get on your soapbox and make it happen! Our Soapbox feature allows you to give exposure to your issue and lets other Congress.org users take action on the alerts you create. Registered users are now allowed four free soapbox alerts per month!

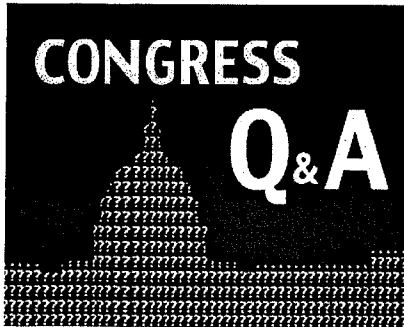
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Congress Q&A: The Rules



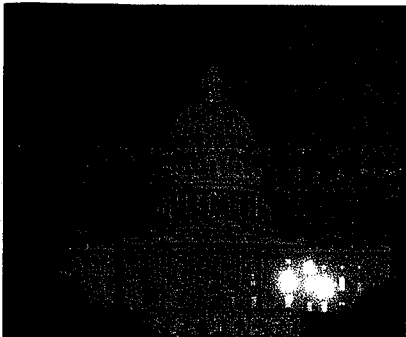
This week researcher Frances Symes answered a reader's question about how the House and the Senate work:

Why are the procedural rules for the House and Senate so different? — John Doucette

If you have a question you'd like answered, e-mail editor@congress.org.

You can also post it on [our Facebook wall](#) or write [@congressorg](#) on Twitter. Please include your name and hometown.

Six Tips from Retiring Members of Congress



The rules are about to change in Washington.

Delivered!

Did you know that you can have your message hand-delivered to the door of your Members of Congress? For a small fee, we can give your letter "Extra Impact" to help make your voice heard. Select that option when filling out your message on any topic.

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With Republicans set to take over the House and make gains in the Senate, both parties will have to change strategies — and work together — to get legislation passed.

Experienced lawmakers say Congress needs to make big changes in order for that to happen.

Several lawmakers who lost in the midterm elections offered their advice for breaking partisan gridlock during a panel at the Bipartisan Policy Center this week.

[Read their six tips for the incoming Congress.](#)

How One Farmer Swayed Congress



It's no secret that activism takes work, but for John Boyd, it took half his lifetime.

The 45-year-old black farmer from Virginia became an activist in the 1980s after being denied a loan by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

That journey ended last week at the White House, when President Barack Obama signed into law \$1.25 billion to settle discrimination claims made by Boyd and 80,000 other black farmers.

"This is a perfect example of people who did not have any money but had a good story," Boyd said. "Between that and activism on the Hill, we were able to get something."

[Read more about how Boyd made his case.](#)

Tell Congress: New START Treaty

YEA OR NAY?

**THE NEW
START TREATY**

Should the Senate approve an arms reduction treaty with Russia?

The treaty would limit the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads, inter-continental ballistic missile launchers and submarine-based nuclear missiles in both countries.

Some Republicans, including former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, have criticized the treaty, while President Obama, Senate Democrats and Republicans such as Sen. Richard Lugar support it.

Now is the time to tell Congress what you think. Click to e-mail your lawmakers through Facebook:

[Pass the New START Treaty](#) or [Stop the New START Treaty](#)

If you do not wish to write through Facebook, you can send a letter through Congress.org instead:

[Pass the New START Treaty](#) or [Stop the New START Treaty](#)

On our last question, 95 percent of 1,591 Congress.org users wrote in favor of banning earmarks, while 5 percent of users wrote in defense of them.

[Follow Congress.org on Twitter to see the latest news.](#)

What's on No Labels' Agenda?



What does No Labels Want?

The centrist political movement launched last week in New York City with a daylong meeting touting the benefits of bipartisanship.

But much of the event focused more on how the group's founders think politics should be conducted than on what they think should be done.

In speeches, the founders generally shied away from calling for action on specific issues, unlike nearly every other political gathering of this type.

But we found at least seven topics that came up during the event.

[Read what might be on No Labels' agenda.](#)

[Even the calendars for the House and Senate show a deep divide.](#)

[The Obama-GOP tax deal will add \\$3.9 trillion to the deficit over 10 years.](#)

[The Senate passed a food safety bill and sent it to the president.](#)

A bill would fund the government through next March.



Repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell

The Senate gave final approval to this bill repealing a 1993 law prohibiting homosexuals from serving openly in the military. The president lobbied for repeal and is expected to sign the bill into law.

Vote: 65-31, 4 Not Voting

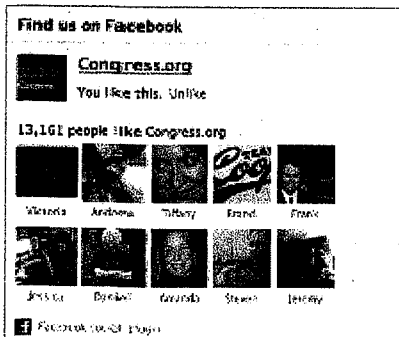
Cloture Motion; DREAM Act

The Senate fell short of the votes needed to move forward on this bill that would provide a path to legal status for certain undocumented children brought into the U.S. illegally by their parents. The measure is unlikely to be brought up again in the 111th Congress.

Vote: 55-41, 4 Not Voting

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If you know anyone who might be interested in this newsletter, please forward this email or [subscribe here](#).

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Greenshields, Rachel

From: alan connor [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 7:44 PM
To: Derezhinski, Tony; Hohnke, Carsten; Anglin, Mike; Teall, Margie; Higgins, Marcia; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Kunselman, Stephen; Rapundalo, Stephen; Smith, Sandi; John Heiftje, Mayor
Subject: Correction to letter Re: Valiant Proposal and Intermodal Transit Center site

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please be advised that original letter I emailed you regarding the Valient Proposal for the Library Parking Lot and the Intermodal Transit Center to be sited on parkland near the intersection near Maiden Lane and Fuller Road should be corrected as follows:

in the third paragraph which begins with (1), the word "**not**" should be inserted before "**on the hook**" in the second sentence. I did read that in the new proposal, no bonds need be issued to fund construction of convention center.

Thank you for making that correction.

Alan N. Connor [REDACTED]

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Hieftje, John
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 7:25 PM
To: *City Council Members (All)
Cc: Beaudry, Jacqueline; Fraser, Roger; Stanton, Ryan; dave.askins@annarborchronicle.com
Subject: FW: Administrator Communication Item: News Report on Chromium in Drinking Water

From: Wade, Molly
Sent: Mon 12/20/2010 6:12 PM
To: Fraser, Roger; McCormick, Sue; Dempkowski, Angela A
Subject: Administrator Communication Item: News Report on Chromium in Drinking Water

Today the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit environmental group, released results of a study they completed on the occurrence of hexavalent chromium (also known as "Chromium-6"). Hexavalent chromium is not a regulated contaminant, but is being considered for regulation by the state of California.

EWG reportedly analyzed drinking water from 35 cities nationwide, and detected hexavalent chromium in 31 of those cities, including Ann Arbor. The study reports hexavalent chromium in Ann Arbor at 0.21 parts per billion.

Total chromium, which includes hexavalent and trivalent forms of chromium, is a regulated contaminant under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The maximum allowable level of total chromium in the finished drinking water is 100 parts per billion. The City is required to test its finished water for total chromium every 9 years. However, the City tests the water for chromium on an annual basis. Results from the last three annual samples were less than the EPA-approved minimum detection limit (currently set at 2 parts per billion). Samples below the minimum detection limit are considered "non-detected".

If the City detected total chromium, follow-up samples would be taken to determine the levels of hexavalent and trivalent chromium.

The City was not contacted by EWG to participate in the study or to supply a water sample. It is unknown where EWG collected the water sample(s).

While hexavalent chromium can come from man-made sources, it can also be naturally occurring at low levels.

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Jay Sackett [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 7:18 PM
To: Hieftje, John; Wondrash, Lisa; Water
Subject: Ann Arbor water unsafe?

Hello,

Could you please find out if tap water in Ann Arbor is safe to drink? Today, a study released by the Environmental Working Group listed Ann Arbor as one of 31 cities in the U.S. with harmful levels of the chemical hexavalent chromium in its drinking water (source: Yahoo News and CNN Health).

The EWG report states:

"Despite mounting evidence of the contaminant's toxic effects, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not set a legal limit for chromium-6 in tap water and does not require water utilities to test for it. Hexavalent chromium is commonly discharged from steel and pulp mills as well as metal-plating and leather-tanning facilities. It can also pollute water through erosion of natural deposits.

"The authoritative National Toxicology Program (NTP) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has said that chromium-6 in drinking water shows 'clear evidence of carcinogenic activity' in laboratory animals, increasing the risk of gastrointestinal tumors. Just last October, a draft review by the EPA similarly found that ingesting the chemical in tap water is 'likely to be carcinogenic to humans.' Other health risks associated with exposure include liver and kidney damage, anemia and ulcers."

I appreciate your help with this matter.

Thank you,
Sunny Sackett
Ann Arbor resident

Greenshields, Rachel

From: Anglin, Mike
To: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 7:17 PM
Subject: Read: 12/20/10 Packet Update

Your message

To: Anglin, Mike; Beaudry, Jacqueline; Bowden (King), Anissa; Briere, Sabra; Dempkowski, Angela A; Derezinski, Tony; Fraser, Roger; Hieftje, John; Higgins, Marcia; Hohnke, Carsten; Kunselman, Stephen; Postema, Stephen; Rapundalo, Stephen; Satterlee, Joanna; Schopieray, Christine; Smith, Sandi; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Teall, Margie; Wondrash, Lisa
Subject: 12/20/10 Packet Update
Sent: 12/20/2010 6:11 PM

was read on 12/20/2010 6:29 PM.