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# The Washington Times

## Inside the Beltway

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By [Jennifer Harper](#)

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### GRADUATION GIGS

Earnest graduates will not get much encouragement from conservatives in the next few days. They'll get a liberal earful, for the most part: a new analysis by Young Americas Foundation found that out of 51 high-profile commencement speakers appearing on the nation's campuses this season, only 13 were conservative.

President Obama recently addressed Miami Dade College, and heads to the Coast Guard Academy next week. First lady Michelle Obama spoke at the University of Northern Iowa, and also will appear at Spelman College and the U.S. Military Academy. Former President Bill Clinton has got a gig at New York University, Al Gore at Hamilton College. Former President George W. Bush is not part of the speaker brigade, however. While MSNBC's Chris Matthews, outgoing CBS anchor Katie Couric and CNN's Wolf Blitzer won commencement dates, Fox News fixtures such as Sean Hannity and Bret Baier have not. Even Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert has a speaking spot at Northwestern University.

There is some promising news on the list, though. Compared with last year, there's an increase of three more conservatives on the commencement roster this year; most notably, House Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio State University), Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (University of Virginia) and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, Texas Republican (University of Texas at Austin). Still, the study (posted at [www.yaf.org](http://www.yaf.org)) advises that "there is no doubt that the permeating liberal bias of administrators once again shines through in this year's selection."

### TAKING ON SOROS

"When liberal investor George Soros gave \$1.8 million to National Public Radio, it became part of the firestorm of controversy that jeopardized NPR's federal funding. But that gift only hints at the widespread influence the controversial billionaire has on the mainstream media," says Dan Gainor, vice president for business and culture at the Media Research Center. "Soros, who spent \$27 million trying to defeat President Bush in 2004, has ties to more than 30 mainstream news outlets, including the New York Times, Washington Post, the Associated Press, NBC and ABC."

Mr. Gainor is in full battle mode, and is in the process of releasing a four-part expose of Mr. Soros' ties to the powerful press, which includes ABC's Christiane Amanpour and Washington Post Vice President Len

Downie, both of whom serve on advisory boards of Soros-funded groups. See the first installment at [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org), under the commentary section.

## **BUMPER PATROL**

"Anybody but Obama for President, 2012"

-- Bumper sticker spotted in Harrisburg, Pa.

## **ROMNEY AS RINO**

Yes, he stood up like a he-man and refused to apologize for his Massachusetts health plan. But former Gov. Mitt Romney is still a RINO - "Republican in name only" - to skittish, fickle voters, despite decent favorability numbers in several 2012 presidential polls.

Some analysts say he'll never really square his support for repealing President Obama's government takeover of health care with having imposed something remarkably similar in his own state four years ago.

"Romney bears as much responsibility for ObamaCare as any Democrat, and all the Republican health-policy boilerplate in the world won't change that fact," says Michael F. Cannon, director of health-policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute.

"If Republicans pick Romney as their standard-bearer, they will be choosing someone who, as the Wall Street Journal editorializes, is either a leftist on health care, too clueless to realize the Left played him for a fool, or so unprincipled that he doesn't care," Mr. Cannon continues. "The Obama campaign would like nothing more. The attack ads write themselves. Romney would become a laughingstock - if he isn't already - and would drag the ObamaCare-repeal effort down with him."

## **LINGERING LEHRER**

"News Hour" anchorman Jim Lehrer quitting PBS? Oh, not really.

Mr. Lehrer - a veteran fixture of political discourse for three decades at the network - says he will no longer be part of the daily team. It is all part of the inevitable, unenviable process of leaving the stage. A few months ago, the newsman quietly removed his name from the hourlong broadcast, "enhancing the brand," as PBS delicately put it.

It's frosty stuff. News organizations that obsess about "brand" often lose sight of the genuine appeal of their assorted "products." But no matter. Good luck, Mr. Lehrer.

"I have been laboring in the glories of daily journalism for 52 years - 36 of them here at the Newshour and its earlier incarnations - and there comes a time to step aside from the daily process, and that time has arrived," he says.

Mr. Lehrer will still appear on "many Friday evenings" to referee debates between syndicated columnist Mark Shields and New York Times columnist David Brooks.

"It is the most constructive and graceful exit strategy I have ever seen for someone holding a coveted and senior position in today's media," observes Robert McNeil, longtime partner to Mr. Lehrer in an earlier version of the show.

## **POLL DU JOUR**

\*87 percent of likely Republican voters say the federal government has become a "special-interest group."

\*6 percent disagree.

\*67 percent say big business and the government "work together" in ways to hurt consumers and investors.

\*20 percent are not sure; 13 percent disagree.

\*64 percent say the gap between Americans who want to govern themselves and politicians is as "big as it was" between the 18th-century American colonists and Great Britain.

\*20 percent are not sure; 16 percent disagree.

\*43 percent say they are "members" of the tea party movement; 41 percent are not.

Source: A Rasmussen Reports survey of 1,000 likely Republican voters conducted April 26 and released Thursday.

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