

## Weigel:

Reporting about politics and policy

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### [Ronnie, Talk to Russia](#)

Posted [Tuesday, June 28, 2011 8:13 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

I took a bit of a departure this week and [spent some time with the new, leading, prime time personalities](#) of Russia Today (RT), the proudly Kremlin-funded network. To watch RT is to see an America brought low by triviality, ever-teetering on the edge of collapse. There is an audience for this.

*When RT first drew attention here, it was for its coverage of the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, which portrayed the small republic of 4.6 million people as the aggressor. (One fairly typical segment [featured an interview](#) with an American in South Ossetia who blamed America for the violence.) Its coverage of American politics was heavy on interviews with fringe experts and third party candidates; frequent on-air experts included [radio host Alex Jones](#) and newsletter reporter Wayne Madsen, who'd discuss too-good-to-check stories about the origins of the [swine flu](#) and why WTC Building 7 fell on 9/11.*

*A couple of years later, the network has a bureau of 70 people in downtown Washington, including veterans of CNN and NBC News; it gets credible guests from places like Talking Points Memo, Reason, the Cato Institute, and the Washington Examiner. Before he got his own show on MSNBC, Cenk Uygur would go on these shows to riff on the news. Talking out of turn, and not for attribution, these guests have no idea what to make of RT's regular content ("it's always some truther crap"). But the network's most visible, popular presence in Washington is that evening line-up. A watcher of RT always got the impression that America was irrational, oppressive, frivolous and in trouble; a watcher of the prime-time line-up gets the same impression, but it's different somehow. It's somewhere between Jon Stewart's monologue and the world that [Rowdy Roddy Piper](#) sees when he puts on those special sunglasses in [They Live](#).*

In Soviet Russia, article keeps reading you!

Filed under: [russia today](#)

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### [Encore: Ideas](#)

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 6:33 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Here is Michele Bachmann's Tuesday morning media schedule.

6:30 a.m. ET – ABC's "Good Morning America" with host George Stephanopoulos  
6:45 a.m. ET – CBS's "The Early Show" with host Erica Hill  
7:00 a.m. ET – NBC's "The Today Show" with host Matt Lauer  
7:15 a.m. ET – Fox News Channel's "Fox and Friends"  
7:30 a.m. ET – CNN's "American Morning"

Set the DVR.

Bernie Sanders [is becoming](#) a one rant-every-six-months volcano.

Shockingly Super PACs are becoming [soft landing pads](#) for political operatives of the past.

The rise of [gay divorce](#).

A [lucky break](#) for Wisconsin Democrats.

For what it's worth, [I disagree](#) with the thinking man's Weigel.

I [had an idea](#), although Rand Paul had it first.

Gene Weingarten [is making sense](#).

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### [Sandra Day O'Connor Worries About SCOTUS's New Tack on Campaign Finance](#)

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 5:48 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

ASPEN -- It's not fun to watch someone analyze a mistake she could have prevented. In one of the first sessions here at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Jeffrey Rosen peppered Sandra Day O'Connor with questions about the campaign finance decisions that have come down from the Supreme Court since she left it in 2005. She answered frankly, keeping a poker face, as she argued that the court -- in majorities that include her successor, Sam Alito -- was getting it wrong.

She apologized to Rosen for not having read *Arizona Free Enterprise Club's Freedom Club PAC v. Bennett*, today's decision that struck down part of a public financing law in O'Connor's home state. Did she think this was an open constitutional question?

"I hadn't thought so," she said. "Many states have given some of that. If I'm not mistaken, West Virginia has given some form of this... this is going to come as a shock to some states that have adopted some aspect of public funding for campaigns."

Rosen pressed her on the impact of *Citizens United*. As she's said before, she's not a fan.

"*Citizens United* was a concern to me because what it did was recognize corporations as fully recognized as persons under the first Amendment," she said. "I very much doubt that the framers of the Constitution, when they wrote the first Amendment" -- she rustled into her purse to get a copy of the document -- "I don't think they had corporations in mind, to tell the truth."

O'Connor looked down at her copy of the Constitution and read the amendment.

"Do you think they were talking about corporations there, or about us as individuals?"

It was a rhetorical question, one that it's now up to Sam Alito to answer.

UPDATE: The first question to O'Connor was about "stories in the press" about the financial relationships of judges. It was a veiled reference to reports that Clarence Thomas has [received gifts](#) from Harlan Crow. O'Connor kept her answer as ambiguous as the question.

If that's the allegation, that certainly could be pursued.

Filed under: [Citizens United](#), [Sandra Day O'Connor](#)

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### Can Obama Capture Some Cuomentum?

Posted Monday, June 27, 2011 4:43 PM | By David Weigel

Nate Silver asks why Barack Obama [can't get things done](#) like Andrew Cuomo can.

*It's hard not to be impressed by the accomplishment, particularly after reading my colleague Michael Barbaro's [article](#) on the work Mr. Cuomo did behind the scenes. Six senators who had voted against the bill in 2009 voted for it on Friday night, including three Republicans. Black and Hispanic members of the Senate, whose constituents sometimes have more tepid feelings toward gay rights, voted for the bill by a 13-1 margin despite the vocal opposition of Senator Rubén Díaz Sr. of the Bronx. The Republican majority leader, Dean G. Skelos, decided to bring the bill to the floor, something he did not have to do.*

*I'm generally of the view that individual politicians receive both more credit and more blame than they deserve, with legislative and electoral outcomes usually determined by broad cultural, economic and political undercurrents. But the type of leadership that Mr. Cuomo exercised — setting a lofty goal, refusing to take no for an answer and using every tool at his disposal to achieve it — is reminiscent of the stories sometimes told about with President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had perhaps the most impressive record of legislative accomplishment of any recent president.*

Okay, but you don't have to be an Obama apologist to point out Cuomo's advantage -- *there's no filibuster in the New York Senate*. If there was, Ruben Diaz could have ranted endlessly and wound down the clock, and a determined group of senators could have made sure the bill never got a vote.

Now, Obama could have done a better job in 2009 on something Cuomo has perfected -- co-opting the other party's priorities and signing bills they want that Democrats don't want. But the incentives in Washington, for Republicans, would have still been completely different than the incentives for Dean Skelos in Albany. The essential partisan problem of Obama's first two years was that Mitch McConnell bet hard on obstruction, and court fights kept the Democratic majority at an AI Franken-less 59 votes. (The essential policy problem was a lack of effective stimulus design and oversight, but that's neither here nor there.)

Here's some prime Diaz for you.



Filed under: [andrew cuomo](#), [barack obama](#)

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**Bachmann Was Right (Sort of)**Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 4:08](#)PM | By [David Weigel](#)

Ah, I'm glad I was otherwise occupied when everyone [decided to pile on Michele Bachmann](#) for saying John Wayne -- Marion Robert Morrison to his parents -- was from Waterloo, Iowa. Serial killer John Wayne Gacy was born there (though he did much of his killing in Illinois.\*) Wayne wasn't. But Alex Burns [points out](#) that Marion Morrison's parents met in Waterloo, and I consulted another Wayne bio, *The Man Behind the Myth* (2005), which says the same.

*Just a few years after Clyde [Morrison's] birth in 1884, his family moved to Iowa where he grew up and served an apprenticeship as a pharmacist in Waterloo. It was there that he met Molly, who worked as a telephone operator.*

Look: I'm not from a small town, but I'm from a pretty anonymous place (Wilmington, Delaware), and I know that when you've got a tenuous local connection to a celebrity, you flaunt it. Bachmann's problem, if we even want to call it that, is that she's been hopelessly defined as a gaffe-machine who flubs silly things. But she didn't pull this out of thin air! Waterloo has more of a claim on John Wayne than most other towns in America, excepting Winterset, Iowa and Los Angeles.

\*I was wrong -- Gacy's murder spree began in Waterloo, but was interrupted.

Filed under: [John Wayne](#), [michele bachmann](#)

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**Blago, Guilty on 17 Counts**Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 3:01 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Just a massive and [decisive defeat in court](#) for the former governor of Illinois. The list of counts -- he only got off on three, two of them because of deadlocks -- is [here](#), and they cover corruption above and beyond the schlepping of Barack Obama's open Senate seat.

- *Alleged attempt to shake down the CEO of Children's Memorial Hospital for a campaign contribution. Maximum penalty of 20 years.*

- *Blagojevich allegedly conspiring with an aide to shake down a racetrack executive for a campaign contribution. Maximum penalty of 20 years.*

- *The alleged attempt to force then-U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel's Hollywood agent brother to hold a fundraiser for Blagojevich in exchange for releasing a school grant. Maximum penalty of 20 years.*



Blagojevich had quite a productive life between trials, including a starring role on *Celebrity Apprentice* and a (false!) autobiography that no one bought. Multiple times, Blago tried to call Obama officials to the stand; he was denied. All the remaining drama in this sordid, stupid affair is over whether he can, or will, drop dimes on the president that, by all reports, he's never forgiven for his electoral success. There was a moment, believe it or not, when Blagojevich was a rising Democratic star, and a possible candidate for the big job.

Filed under: [rod blagojevich](#)

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**Greetings from Aspen, Colorado**Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 1:40 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

ASPEN -- I have landed and acquired my swag bag for the Aspen Ideas Festival, the weeklong celebration of Things and People Who Think About Things. It would be easy and lazy to have fun with the snatches of conversation I am picking up, so I'll just do it



once.

- "We're trying to leverage our social media presence."
- "That's what I did my thesis on."
- "Have you gone biking yet?"

There we go. Out of my system.

The first panel I'm planning to attend will be relevant to the news cycle. As Ken Vogel [reports](#), the Supreme Court has just weighed in 5-4 against Arizona's matching funds law. And by coincidence, there's an afternoon event on "Money, Politics and Judicial Elections" featuring Sandra Day O'Connor, who was once a state senator in... yes, Arizona.

Among the other luminaries here:

- Feisal Abdul "Ask Me About the Cordoba Initiative" Rauff
- David Axelrod
- Sheila Bair
- Melody Barnes
- L. Paul Bremer
- Michael Chertoff
- Arne Duncan
- Tom Friedman
- Austan Goolsbee
- Alan Greenspan
- Arianna Huffington
- Fred Malek
- Gavin Newsom
- Queen Noor
- Mark Penn
- Penny Pritzker
- Nouriel Roubini
- Robert Rubin
- Alan Simpson

So, you know, one of those sort of events. If you want any of these people chased down for a particularly brilliant question, write it in the comments.

Filed under: [aspen ideas festival](#)

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### **The Anti-Romney Primary: Tim Pawlenty Will See Your Poll Numbers and Media Coverage and Raise You**

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 12:33 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Tim Pawlenty brackets Michele Bachmann's big day with the endorsements of nine, count 'em, state legislators -- Erik Helland, Linda Miller, Steve Lukan, Chris Hagenow, Matt Windschitl, Chip Baltimore and Joel Fry from the House, and Randy Feenstra, Shawn Hamerlinck, and Rob Bacon from the Senate.

Who are these people? Miller, Lukan, and Windschitl were all serving during the 2008 caucuses. Lukan endorsed John McCain, while Miller endorsed Mitt Romney. These are endorsers interested in going for the candidates who can win the nomination, not just the caucuses, which is convenient because both candidates lost the caucuses.

Filed under: [2012 presidential election](#), [tim pawlenty](#)

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**Bachmann 2012: She's From Iowa**Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 10:32 AM](#) | By [David](#)**Weigel**

I'm still traveling, but here, for historical purposes, is the text of Michele Bachmann's announcement speech -- admirably heavy on reminders that she's the candidate who was born in Iowa and should have a claim on the state.

*It's great to be in Iowa and even better to be in Waterloo where I was born. It's fitting to be here at the Snowden House, the place that once served as the home of the Waterloo Women's Club. I stand here today in front of many friends and family to formally announce my candidacy for President of the United States. I do so because I am grateful for the blessings God and this country have given to me, and not because of the position of the office, but because I am determined that every American deserves these blessings and that together we can once again strengthen America and restore the promise of the future. I want to bring a voice, your voice, to the White House, just as I have brought your voice to the halls of congress to secure the promise of the future for our generation and generations to come.*

*I often say that everything I needed to know I learned in Iowa. It was at Hawthorne and Valley Park Elementary Schools and my home, both a short distance from here, where those Iowan roots were firmly planted. It's those roots and my faith in God that guide me today. I'm a descendent of generations Iowans. I know what it means to be from Iowa—what we value and what's important. Those are the values that helped make Iowa the breadbasket of the world and those are the values, the best of all of us that we must recapture to secure the promise of the future.*

*Waterloo was different five decades ago when I grew up here. That elementary school building was a lot younger and for that matter so was I. Five decades ago when I went there to school the halls were teeming with young children who, like me, had dreams of their future. A future with promise and parents who wanted it to be filled with more opportunities than they had. Five decades ago America had less debt, in fact our national debt was less than 300 billion dollars. A gallon of gasoline was 31 cents, and owning a home was part of living the American dream. Today our debt is over 14 trillion dollars, a gallon of gas is still outrageously high, millions of homes are in foreclosure, and those dreams are distant for many Americans.*

*Times have changed here in Waterloo, but the people still have the same spirit we Iowans have come to exemplify. We work hard, we live within our means and we expect to pass on a better life to our children. But our government keeps getting bigger making it tougher for us to pass on that life, causing our jobs to go overseas and spending more of the money we make, while we keep less of it.*

*Don't mistake my happy memories of growing up in Waterloo as pining for the past. I recognize it's impossible to turn the clock back and go back to a different day. Instead, I want this moment to serve as a reminder about the best of who we are as a nation, what our values are, and what went in to making America great to capture its best for the promise of the future. I want my candidacy for the presidency to stand for the moment when "we the people" reclaimed our independence from a government that has gotten too big, spends too much and has taken away too much of our liberty.*

*Americans have always confronted challenges. Ours is a history marked by struggles as well as prosperity. My early days were difficult as they were for many Americans, especially during the time when my mother struggled to raise us after divorce. But we made our own way. We depended on our neighbors and ourselves and not our government for help. We trusted in God and our neighbors and not in Government. Americans still have that same spirit. But government keeps trying to erase it because government thinks it knows better—that government can create jobs, and make a better life for all of us, even make us healthier! But that's NOT the case. We have to recapture our founders' vision of a constitutionally conservative government if we are to secure the promise of the future.*

*I'm also here because Waterloo laid the foundation for my own roots in politics. I never thought that I would end up in public life. I grew up here in Iowa. My grandparents are buried here. I remember how sad I was leaving Iowa to go to Minnesota in the sixth grade, because this part of Iowa was all I knew—I remember telling my parents that we couldn't move to Minnesota because I hadn't even been to Des Moines to see the state capitol.*

*I grew up a democrat. My first involvement in politics was working for Jimmy Carter's election in 1976. But when I saw the direction President Carter took our country; how his big spending liberal majority grew government, weakened our standing in the world, and how they decreased our liberties, I became a Republican. I remember standing in the kitchen of my grandma's house on Lafayette Street in Waterloo listening to my dad, a Democrat debating the merits of the Great Society with my grandmother, a Republican. I remember her prophetic admonition to my father that the Great Society wouldn't work because it wouldn't be my father's generation who paid for it, but rather my brother, David and me. And now that prediction has come true and neither my democrat father nor my republican grandmother would have condoned this spending and debt.*

*I hadn't planned on getting into politics. I loved the law and went to law school. I went on to William and Mary to become a tax lawyer. Together with my husband we started a successful small business.*

*When I saw the problems with our local school district and how academic excellence was being eroded by federal government interference with the local schools, I decided to do more than just complain about it. One of those Iowa values instilled in me was to always leave whatever you were involved with better than when you found it, so I decided to seek public office to make our local school district better. I didn't seek public office for fortune or power, but simply to make life better in our community and education better for our children. And now I seek the presidency not for vanity, but because America is at a crucial moment and I believe that we must make a bold choice if we are to secure the promise of the future.*

*We cannot continue to kick the can of our problems down the road, because they are problems of today and not tomorrow.*

*We cannot continue to rack up debt on the backs of future generations.*

*We can't afford an unconstitutional health plan that costs too much and is worth so little.*

*And we can't afford four more years of failed leadership at home and abroad.*

*We can't afford four more years of millions of Americans out of work or in jobs that pay too little to support their families.*

*We can't afford four more years of a housing crisis that is devaluing our homes and making home ownership impossible for many Americans.*

*We can't afford four more years of a foreign policy that leads from behind and doesn't stand up for our friends and stand up to our enemies.*

*We can't afford four more years of Barack Obama.*

*As a constitutional conservative, I believe in the Founding Father's vision of a limited government that trusts in and preserves the unlimited potential of the American people. I don't believe that the solutions to our problems come from Washington: more than ever, Washington IS the problem, and the real solutions will come from our businesses, our communities, our schools and the most basic and powerful unit of all-our families.*

*We've started another campaign season, almost when it seemed like the last one just ended. Through all of the rancor of the campaign, let us always remember that there is much more that unites us than divides us. Our problems don't have an identity of party, they are problems created by both parties.*

*Americans agree that our country is in peril today and we must act with urgency to save it. And Americans aren't interested in affiliation; they are interested in solutions, and leadership that will tell the truth. And the truth is that Americans ARE the solution and not the government!*

*This election is about big issues, not petty ones. When all is said and done, we cannot be about big government as usual. Then America will lose.*

*In Washington I am bringing a voice to the halls of congress that has been missing for a long time. It is the voice of the people I love and learned from growing up in Waterloo. It is the voice of reasonable, fair-minded people who love this country, who are patriotic, and who see the United States as the indispensable nation of the world.*

*My voice is part of a movement to take back our country, and now I want to take that voice to the White House. It is the voice of constitutional conservatives who want our government to do its job and not ours and who want our government to live within its means and not our children's and grandchildren's.*

*I am here in Waterloo, Iowa to announce today: We can win in 2012 and we will. Our voice has been growing louder and stronger. And it is made up of Americans from all walks of life like a three-legged stool. It's the peace through strength Republicans, and I'm one of them, it's fiscal conservatives, and I'm one of them, and it's social conservatives, and I'm one of them. It's the Tea Party movement and I'm one of them.*

*The liberals, and to be clear I'm NOT one of them, want you to think the Tea Party is the Right Wing of the Republican Party. But it's not. It's made up of disaffected Democrats, independents, people who've never been political a day in their life, libertarians, Republicans. We're people who simply want America back on the right track again.*

*We're practical people who want the country to work again. This is a powerful coalition the left fears, and they should because, Make no mistake about it, President Obama is a one-term president!*

*In February 2009 President Obama was very confident that his economic policies would turn the country around within a year. He said, "A year from now, I think people are going to see that we're starting to make some progress. If I don't have this done in three years, then there's going to be a one-term proposition." Well Mr. President, your policies haven't worked. Spending our way out of this recession hasn't worked. And so Mr. President We Take You at Your Word!*

*Waterloo holds a special place for me, but also holds a special place for our country. You sent and still do send your sons and daughters off to fight for America and to protect the freedoms that allow us to gather here today. I honor my dad who served in the United States Air Force. I honor my step dad who served in the United States Army. And I honor my stepbrother who retired full United States Navy. We will never forget those sacrifices; it is part of our past we must remember to secure the promise of the future. It is those values that make our country unique and make us the most powerful force for good on this planet. I believe the United States of America is THE indispensable nation. It is that spirit that separates us from those who would give their own life for others from those who sacrifice others, like terrorists who use little children as human shields.*

*Perhaps the valor of our American fighting heroes was never captured better than in the sacrifice made by the Sullivan brothers from right here in Waterloo. The Sullivan family was much like other families in America during the depression. They were fortunate to get by. Most of the family worked here in Waterloo at the local meat packing plant. When a close friend of the family died at Pearl Harbor, the five Sullivan brothers enlisted in the Navy, but under the condition that they be allowed to serve together. One of the brothers wrote, "We will make a team together that can't be beat." Born and raised here in Waterloo, the five Sullivan brothers had always stuck together. However, one fateful morning after a long night of intense battle, a Japanese torpedo struck the USS Juneau, the ship on which they served killing most of the crew and launching the rest into the water. The oldest of the Sullivans, George, searched tirelessly for his brothers, but they were not to be found. He had survived the attack, but later perished at sea. All but 10 of the 697 brave men of the Juneau, gave their lives for their country. In spite of the intense pain of losing their five sons all at once, the parents of the Sullivans became an inspiration to America speaking to millions on behalf of the war effort. To honor the Sullivans two ships were named for them. The motto of the last ship—We Stick Together!*

*Theirs was a demonstration of the Holy Scriptures that says: "Greater love hath no man than this, but that he lay down his life for his friend."*

*That is the kind of love we Americans have for our country. We Americans stick together. We triumph*

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together. In the words of Daniel Webster, we are, "One cause, one country, one heart." That is the kind of commitment it will take to face the great challenges of today. The people of this great country have that level of courage and they are longing for a President who will listen to them, who will lead from the front, and not from behind.

I'm Michele Bachmann and I'm running for President of the United States.

Together, we can do this. Together we can reign in all the corruption and waste that has become Washington and instead leave a better America for future generations.

Together we can make a team that can't be beat!

Together we can secure the promise of the future.

Together we can - and together we will!

God bless you and God bless the United States of America!

Filed under: [2012 presidential election](#), [michele bachmann](#)

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### [Will Compromise Kill the Tea Party?](#)

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 10:08 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Benjy Sarlin [asks whether Tea Partiers](#) have set themselves up for perpetual disappointment by demanding Republicans be more obstinate on the debt ceiling than the party's willing to be.

*"The bottom line is this: the only way to cut is to impose the debt ceiling cap," Tea Party Patriots co-founder Mark Meckler told TPM. "If you have a bad teenager abusing your credit card, you don't put new rules in place, you take the card away."*

*He described DeMint's "Cut, Cap, and Balance" plan as a "fraud," noting that the movement is especially skeptical of pledges after being told Republicans would cut spending by \$100 billion in the this March's continuing resolution.*

*"What's driving me crazy is the political class is nattering on about a deal, but the American people aren't buying it," he said. "This is just more evidence they're not listening to the people."*

*The trouble for Meckler and other Tea Party activists is that every time they lay down a line in the sand and the GOP walks over it unscathed, their credibility withers. House Republicans have already cut significant deals with Democrats twice, on extending the Bush tax cuts and on passing a continuing resolution funding the government.*

I guess the importance of this depends on how important we think individual Tea Party groups and leaders are. Sarlin proves that Mark Meckler and Andrew Ian Dodge are holding the fort and giving good quote. But Dodge is running for Senate against Olympia Snowe, and he's not really breathing down her neck. (The last poll, taken by PPP in March, has her at 43 percent and him at 10 percent.) Individual Tea Party leaders are less fearsome than they were in 2010. But that's because they've already co-opted and been co-opted by Republicans. Look at Sarlin's theoretical (and likely-sounding!) scenario, wherein the debt ceiling is raised only after \$4 trillion in spending cuts over the next decade and an end to \$1 trillion of tax breaks. That's just miles far to the right of where Republicans were two years ago. If all Tea Party activists are doing is creating a right flank that makes a deal like this *look moderate*, they're merely the most effective political movement in a generation.

Sarlin begs a question: Will the Tea Party rebel in any serious way over compromises? I doubt it. Their path reminds me quite a lot of the path liberals took in 2007. That year began with outrage, rallies, and in-person [confrontations with Democrats](#)\* over the new congressional majority's failure to stop the surge. It was an outrage -- progressives had just helped win an election with a clear mandate to pull out of Iraq, and here went George W. Bush, sending more troops. And there went congressional Democrats, failing to stop him!

You might have expected Democratic base voters to rebel over this, but they didn't. Their presidential candidates all towed the line against the surge, just like the responsibility-free 2012 GOP candidates are saying whatever the Tea Party wants about debt and the Ryan budget. Base energy went into the presidential campaign. That will happen again, because there's no significant conservative achievement coming out of Congress apart from these big compromises.



\*I'd totally forgotten about the genius who asks why House Democrats don't just stage a filibuster.

Filed under: [debt ceiling](#), [tea party](#)

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### [Has Eric Cantor Already Won?](#)

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 9:08 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

In case you missed it, I [spent some time last week explaining the state of play](#) on the debt ceiling debate, and trying my best to answer a question: So how did this go from an "adult moment" for the GOP, and maybe a leverage point for Democrats and taxes, to a no-surrender GOP battle for spending cuts?

I'm also spending much of the week in Aspen for the Atlantic Ideas Festival, so posting may be a little lighter than usual. On the plus side, it will feature -- for the first time! -- some ideas.

Filed under: [budget](#), [debt ceiling](#), [Eric Cantor](#)

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### [Pawlenty in Iowa: Not Doomed!](#)

Posted [Monday, June 27, 2011 8:15 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

I'm [with Nate Silver](#) on the *Des Moines Register's* [Iowa poll](#). Yes, it's good for Michele Bachmann that she begins her launch tour in a tie with Mitt Romney. It's not necessarily bad that Tim Pawlenty, the Minnesota candidate whose image and network and strategists and record make him the "serious" anti-Romney, is only at 6 percent at this stage.

*Consider Jonathan Bernstein's [reminder](#) about the first Iowa Poll in the last election cycle, which was published in May, 2007. In that survey, Mitt Romney — who eventually finished second in Iowa — had 30 percent of the vote. In second and third place were John McCain (with 18 percent) and Rudy Giuliani (17 percent), who flopped there. The winner of the caucuses, Mike Huckabee, had 4 percent of the vote at this point in time — behind the likes of Tommy Thompson and Sam Brownback.*

Sure. I will briefly state the difference -- McCain and Giuliani were media favorites with limited appeal to social conservatives, whereas as this weekend's [Flakegate](#) reminded us that the media isn't schlepping Bachmann. But generally speaking, *it's June* and you don't want your dark horse candidate to be surging in a key state yet. The internals:

*People don't dislike him, despite perceptions of a milquetoast performance in the New Hampshire debate. Just 13 percent have an unfavorable impression of him. And while 6 percent say Pawlenty is their top choice, which is in line with national poll numbers, 12 percent name him their backup pick.*

Jon Huntsman's unfavorables are six points higher than Pawlenty's! (Some of this has to be linked to Huntsman's showy diss of the caucuses, because the rubes there won't like his no-subsidies stances.) Pawlenty is no one's least favorite candidate, and at some point the gyre's going to spin again and he'll be able to turn in a Surprisingly Good performance at a cattle call or debate.

Filed under: [2012 presidential election](#), [iowa caucuses](#), [tim pawlenty](#)

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### [Gay Marriage After New York](#)

Posted [Saturday, June 25, 2011 9:33 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

The [vote was 33-29](#): New York becomes the sixth and largest state to allow gay marriage. And naturally my thoughts to turn how the pro-traditional marriage movement

can stop this. The National Organization for Marriage moved quickly:

*The National Organization for Marriage's president Brian Brown doubled his previous pledge, promising to commit "at least \$2 million" in elections in 2012 to make sure Republicans understand that voting for gay marriage has consequences... NOM's pledge to commit at least \$2 million in the 2012 elections to hold politicians accountable for their vote includes independent expenditures as well as through NOM PAC New York.*

*"The New York Republican Party is dysfunctional. When Democrats control a chamber, they refuse to permit the people to vote for marriage. When they are a minority, as in Wisconsin and Indiana, they even flee the state to prevent a vote on a bill their base disapproves," noted Maggie Gallagher, Chairman of NOM. "Contrast that with the behavior of the Republican party today."*

Why the focus on beating Republicans, something that activists have to wait 15 months to do? Because unlike in California or Maine, where NOM et al rolled back legal gay marriage with referenda, it's incredibly difficult to bring up a plebiscite in New York. It may become easier, as the legislature is moving a referendum bill, but look at the [details](#) -- if this passes, it's going to be far less easy to gather petitions in New York than it is in California.

And does the project begin with enthusiasm? Last night saw the first-ever ratification of gay marriage by a Republican legislature. You had a body controlled by the GOP; you had one of the most determined and virulent (and unconvincing!) opponents of gay rights, Ruben Diaz Sr, in the Democratic conference. But go and read Michael Barbabo's [tick-tock](#) of how this happened. You can hear the din fading on the opposing side.

Filed under: [gay marriage](#), [new york](#)

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#### [Encore: Just One More Question](#)

Posted [Friday, June 24, 2011 5:46 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Actually, [most of Congress did](#) want to defund the Libya intervention.

American Crossroads ad [discovers](#) that everything was going amazingly until Obama was president.



Filed under: [encore](#)

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#### [Leave Ryan King Alone!](#)

Posted [Friday, June 24, 2011 4:23 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

Mitt Romney's campaign [releases a video](#) about economic struggles starring Ryan King, a college graduate who's struggling in a town (Midland, Mich.) that's struggling even more. But the Wall Street Journal scoops that King is not unemployed.

*According to [his Facebook](#) and [MySpace](#) pages, he graduated just last month from Northwood University in Midland, where he studied accounting, was a residential adviser and mail clerk. On May 6, just as he was graduating, he*

announced that he "got the job, booya!!!" at Quality Marketing Enterprise, a Midland company.

I'm now seeing Democrats blast this and other articles out, and I chuckled at it initially. But King never says he's unemployed. He says "I have about \$3 to my name before I catch my paycheck tomorrow." And in the clip from Barack Obama's 2008 speech shown at the beginning of the ad, Obama is talking about jobs that don't pay a good living wage.

King is not jobless. He's underemployed. [A lot of people are underemployed](#), meaning that they have a job that they're overqualified for, and they're probably looking for a better one. In King's case, we have a college graduate who's only able to find a job at a [direct marketing firm](#) -- and go ahead, find me someone who goes to college for four years, studies economics, and is satisfied with a job like that. Sure, it seems like King [got to star in this ad](#) because of his work as a Republican volunteer. That's sort of odd. It's not that hard to find people in worse shape than him. But a young white guy who's just out of college and is struggling because he could only find a lousy job? Gee, do we think there are any voters this rings true to? Any parents?

Romney keeps his focus on jobs and the various kinds of hits people are taking in this economy. Democrats make fun of him. Great strategy!

Filed under: [Mitt Romney](#)

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### [Complimentary Friday Afternoon PR Lessons](#)

Posted [Friday, June 24, 2011 3:22 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

I've finally come under the gun of KochFacts, the aggressive PR fightback from Koch Industries against journalists who write inaccuracies and/or things that the PR department doesn't like. Last week I [filed something](#) in the latter category -- an ironic reference to the new liberal ire against the libertarian Free State Project.

Here was the reference.

*In 2011, people noticed that Free Staters had been elected to the New Hampshire legislature and were introducing bills to [decriminalize marijuana](#) and classify TSA groping as sexual assault. They soon received the ultimate honor—being attacked by progressive groups as a "radical right" and Koch-connected plot.*

*In Keene, the Koch-connected right-wingers are mostly interested in breaking behavior laws and seeing if anyone raises a fuss about it.*

Unless you're clicking over from Slate.fr -- and *Bonjour*, if that's the case -- you speak pretty good English and catch the meaning. I often write about how Charles and David Koch have become Enemy No. 1 and 2 for liberals. The FSP, which liberals really couldn't have given a damn about before this year, became the target of some muckraking about Koch connections. Because some key individuals in the movement have worked with Koch-affiliated organizations, the guilt-by-association train chugged onward. Pete Eyre, who's been a recruiter of sorts for Free Keene, spent years working for Koch-funded organizations. And I spent two and a half years at Reason, so I'm part of the "Kochtopus" too. I thought nothing of the reference.

Nonetheless, the reference inspired an accusatory e-mail from KochFacts. To their credit, their e-mail and my response are both [posted on their site](#), as is a second e-mail I hadn't noticed until now. Line by line:

*I don't see from your piece how readers would know you were referring to an essay in the Nation from a few months ago.*

My readers read several [items](#) from me about those *Nation* stories.

*I also don't understand how the reference to Koch is meant to be ironic. The assertion you made seems straightforward: "In Keene, the Koch-connected right-wingers are mostly interested in breaking behavior laws and seeing if anyone raises a fuss about it."*

It's ironic because the attack from ThinkProgress that I linked to implied that the Free State Project was about to do the bidding of corporate interests. Here I was pointing out that the Keene libertarians were not doing that. They were rebelling against open container and nudity and marijuana regulations. The left-right paradigm is flawed, sure, but painting your breasts and defying cops to arrest you is not behavior commonly attributed to right-wingers. For more about "irony," consult your local library.

*But if you believe that it's not clear enough, as you say, then perhaps a clarification is in order.*

I believe it is clear, especially now, so: No.

*Specifically, we request you clarify that Koch is not involved in the Free Keene project.*

I never said it was. I said liberal critics exploited the past financial connections of Free Staters generally, and Pete Eyre in particular, for articles that -- as the reader can see -- don't do Free Keene justice.

*We don't provide any funding (which is what I meant by "formal") and we have no interaction with them (which is what I meant by "otherwise").*

One of the most prominent members of the movement worked for Koch-funded organizations for years, though, so the point is moot for our purposes. Some liberals attacked the movement as "Koch-connected" because of this well-known connection; that was all I wrote.

*You point out that one of the people participating in the Free Keene project formerly worked for an organization that received Koch foundation funding. As you know, many thousands of people, yourself included, have worked at places that received such funding. At a certain point, the how-many-degrees-of-separation assertion becomes absurd.*

Agreed. This was my point. Readers who are *not* paid to hassle reporters seem to have understood this.

*By your logic, anything the person in your story might do for the rest of his career would be "Koch-connected," correct? Similarly, could Slate magazine be regarded as Koch-connected?*

Just as The Nation and ThinkProgress have knocked the FSP that way, I suppose they could knock other organizations that way. Were they to do so, I would treat it with the same level of seriousness I treated it here: None.

*I look forward to your response and the requested clarification.*

And I hope you have a Merry Christmas. Really, though: How many more people will notice the Koch reference, and scratch their heads about it, because of this over-the-top correction request?

Here's a tip. If it ever seems like a reporter leaves out some link or context that would make a point more clear, e-mail the reporter or the editor and say so. Don't start the negotiation by claiming, falsely, to have found an "error," and demanding a correction, because if there is no error -- if there's only a disagreement about phrasing, one that the reporter would be happy to explain -- you're achieving nothing.

Filed under: [Koch brothers](#)

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### [The Libya "Present" Caucus](#)

Posted [Friday, June 24, 2011 2:26 PM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

So: 225 House Republicans [voted against](#) approving the intervention in Libya, but [only](#) 144 voted to partially defund the war. Seventy Democrats voted against the intervention; only 36 voted to defund.

Who voted "no" both times? That is, who voted not to support the war, but not to cut funds? Among Republicans:

*Sandy Adams  
Justin Amash  
Michele Bachmann  
Roscoe Bartlett  
Judy Biggert  
Marsha Blackburn  
Mo Brooks  
Paul Broun*

Anne-Marie Buerkle  
Dan Burton  
John Campbell  
Quinco Canceso  
John Carter  
Jason Chaffetz  
Tom Cole  
Rick Crawford  
Mario Diaz-Balart  
Bob Dold  
Jeff Duncan  
Duncan  
Renee Ellmers  
Stephen Fincher  
Jeff Flake  
Trent Franks  
Scott Garrett  
Paul Gosar  
Trey Gowdy  
Tom Graves  
Tim Griffin  
Frank Guinta  
Hanna  
Joe Heck  
Tim Huelskamp  
Randy Hultgren  
Darrell Issa  
Tim Johnson  
Sam Johnson  
Walter Jones  
Raul Labrador  
Leonard Lance  
Jeff Landry  
James Lankford  
Steven LaTourette  
Cynthia Lummis  
Don Manzullo  
Kenny Marchant  
Tom McClintock  
McHenry  
Miller  
Mick Mulvaney  
Nugent  
Ron Paul  
Erik Paulsen  
Steve Pearce  
Mike Pence  
Joe Pitts  
Ted Poe  
Mike Pompeo  
Bill Posey  
Ben Quayle  
Dana Rohrabacher  
Todd Rokita  
Pete Roskam  
Ross  
Ed Royce  
Tim Scott  
James Sensenbrenner  
Christopher Smith  
Steve Southerland  
Cliff Searns  
Marlin Stutzman  
John Sullivan  
Thompson  
Scott Tipton  
Joe Walsh  
Lynn Westmoreland

Among Democrats:

Rob Andrews  
Tammy Baldwin  
Xavier Beccera  
Sanford Bishop

Andre Carson  
 Hansen Clarke  
 Yvette Clarke  
 William Lacy Clay  
 Jerry Costello  
 Danny Davis  
 Gene Green  
 Raul Grijalva  
 Luis Gutierrez  
 Colleen Hanabusa  
 Hinojosa  
 Mike Honda  
 Bill Keating  
 John Larson  
 John Lewis  
 Dave Loebsack  
 Zoe Lofgren  
 Ben Lujan  
 Carolyn Maloney  
 Jim McGovern  
 Mike McIntyre  
 George Miller  
 Frank Pallone  
 Ed Pastor  
 Collin Peterson  
 Mike Ross  
 Loretta Sanchez  
 Nydia Valesquez  
 Henry Waxman

No obvious patterns there, although there was some face-saving among members with ambitions who don't want to cast "anti-troop funding" votes. For example, Allen West didn't vote on the funding portion.

Filed under: [libya](#)

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### Ultra-Kinetic MCs: House Defeats Second Libya Measure, Won't Defund War

Posted Friday, June 24, 2011 1:54 PM | By [David Weigel](#)

The "no" votes on Tom Rooney's bill to defund the war in Libya have passed 218; the bill will fail. It was destined to be a symbolic vote, and the symbolism might have already been achieved by the failure of the approval resolution, but this is a bit of an own goal for war foes.

Republicans are voting "aye" on defunding the war by roughly a 3-2 margin. Democrats are voting "no" by roughly 4-1.

UPDATE: The bill has failed by a vote of 238 to 180; 144 Republicans voted to defund most war operations.

Greg Sargent [reported earlier](#) that Democrats weren't whipping the vote. Nevertheless, they kept all but 36 members home on the farm.

Filed under: [libya](#)

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### 295-123: House Votes Down Resolution Supporting Libya Intervention

Posted Friday, June 24, 2011 12:47 PM | By [David Weigel](#)

[That's](#) what the kids call a "stunning rebuke." What I hear from talking to members of Congress is that much of this opposition is based on, well, pique. The administration has not corresponded with Congress about what it's doing. But just look at the numbers -- there's more going on. Only eight Republicans voted to "authorize the limited use of the United States Armed Forces in support of the NATO mission in Libya." Among them: Rules Chairman David Dreier, possible vanity presidential candidate Thaddeus McCotter, Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King, and Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers. Meanwhile, 225 Republicans voted no. (Steve King and Michele

Bachmann found themselves on the opposite side; he's a yes, she's a no, as she's said on the trail.)

Filed under: [libya](#)

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### The Two-Word Solution for Overcoming Rick Scott's Unpopularity

Posted [Friday, June 24, 2011 11:17 AM](#) | By [David Weigel](#)

You might guess it, but first the context -- Rick Scott [is unpopular](#). The governor of Florida barely won office in the anti-Obama wave. Republicans don't like him. In this year's municipal elections, Democrats grab control of city halls in Tampa and Jacksonville with campaigns that touched on opposition to Scott, his cuts, and his ideas like drug-testing welfare recipients.

And so, Public Policy Polling:

*In the survey, 40% of registered voters said Gov. Rick Scott's actions have made them less inclined to back the GOP presidential nominee next year, versus 26% who said his actions had made it more likely they'd vote Republican in 2012. An additional 34% said Scott has had no impact on whether or not they'll support a Republican candidate.*

That's not good, but can't a 2012 Republican candidate erase this problem by picking Marco Rubio as his running mate? Yes, [he's ruled it out](#), but Joe Biden ruled out being anyone's running mate, too. Until there's some reason to think otherwise, the Cuban-American senator from Florida who is studiously speaking out only on popular issues (he didn't join the "Tea Party caucus," he's not running from cable show to cable show) is obviously the frontrunner.

Barack Obama narrowly won Florida in 2008 in part by [carrying 57 percent of the Hispanic vote](#). Rubio [won 55 percent](#) of the Hispanic vote. If Scott keeps taking on water, no problem: Rubio becomes an even more obvious VP candidate.

Filed under: [2012 presidential election](#), [rick scott](#)

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**mepmep09**

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This has been another edition of, QUESTIONS OF NO IMPORTANCE TO ANYONE...

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