

Grassroot Perspective: Good as Gold, the Vanishing Student-Athlete, and More

Scanning the week's national news, views and clues with you and yours in mind

By Malia Hill

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"The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit."— Milton Friedman

Each week, we'll be monitoring the web to find the most interesting, challenging, or important items for those who are concerned about liberty, accountability, and big government. Here are some of the highlights from the past week:

Good as Gold

Just a few years ago, the notion of returning to the gold standard was only talked about in a few circles (and those were usually made up of economists, some of whom have an unfortunate tendency to make common sense seem complicated). Now, thanks in part to articles [like this one by Ralph Benko](#), there is a growing movement that sees return to gold as a way to stabilize our economy and restore value to the dollar. Benko deals with a few myths about the gold standard (e.g. the notion that there's not enough gold) and explains how a gold standard would help control government spending and grow the economy. And for those who want to know more than can be read in a short column, he even offers a [free online version of The 21st Century Gold Standard](#), which he wrote with Charles Kadlec. (Full disclosure: I know and work with Mr. Benko, but when you're talking about a new gold standard, he's one of the best guys around to explain it.)

Cents and Sentiment

It is a difficult question—that of whether college athletes should be paid in some way. On one side, there is the tradition of the student-athlete and true amateur, an ideal that harkens back to an earlier, rosier era, and symbolizes for many some sort of classical perfection. On the other hand, there is the modern reality—the millions in profits, the use of scholarships and eligibility to handicap the value of the diploma that is held as ample reward, and the sporadic, confusing, and sometimes irrational NCAA rules and enforcement that could smash a player's dreams for an infraction as minor as getting treated to a hamburger. [As Doug Bandow discusses in this article](#), it's a

sensitive and difficult issue, but one that begs for a fair resolution even as the divide between those who rake in the dollars and those who do the actual playing grows larger and more embarrassing.

Government by Bureaucracy

So much of the arguments about the enactment of Obamacare have been based in theory and speculation. (Informed, well-reasoned, and logical speculation, but speculation nonetheless.) However, it's time to let loose the I-told-you-sos. [As Matthew Spalding, writing for the Heritage Foundation, points out](#), we have already seen the result of giving such wide and unspecified powers to bureaucrats. And we've barely gotten started. Not only is there the revelation that religious institutions would have to disregard their own teachings in providing health care insurance that covers contraception, abortion-inducing drugs, and the like, but cronyism and influence have already raised their heads in the way that exemptions have been granted. The heart of the objection to Obamacare was the fact that if the government can regulate inactivity (like the decision not to buy health insurance), then you have opened up the door to regulating anything. A point that the Administration seems to be rushing to demonstrate.

What if they gave a crisis and nobody came?

Ironically, part of the reason that Obamacare garnered the support that it did (other than various political tricks) was due to the widely held perception that health care costs are spiraling out of control and destined to get worse. This, of course, was often accompanied by the kind of heart-wrenching anecdotes that suggested that opposing Obamacare was only a step or so removed from snatching medicine out of the hands of sick children. But what if the reverse is actually occurring? What if health care costs are stabilizing (and even decreasing) even as care itself improves? [That's the argument made by J.D. Kleinke in the Wall Street Journal](#), who demonstrates that consumer behavior is part of the reason for the change. Score another win for the free market.

The White Rose

Courage. And faith and freedom. That is the heart of the story of Sophie Scholl, her brother Hans, and their friend Christoph Probst, who were executed 69 years ago this week for their participation in The White Rose, a group of students in Munich who protested Nazi rule and urged their countrymen to rise up against Hitler and the Nazis. [As Paul Jacobs details in his column](#), for their courageous treason, the Scholls and Probst were tried and executed, even as their last words and acts demonstrated their willingness to die for freedom. It is a stark and moving reminder of the sacrifices that so many have made in the name of liberty.

Views expressed in this column are intended to promote creative thought, educate, and, we hope, prompt comment. Accordingly, thoughts expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of Grassroot Institute of Hawaii or the author.

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