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Weinergate reminds us not to give these clowns more power

Ah, Weinergate, you are the gift that keeps on giving, the crotch-shot that launched a thousand puns. Yet, sadly, some people fancy themselves far too serious to embrace the hilarity.

"Just pathetic," an example of "American Puritanism," journalism professor Jeff Jarvis pronounced the media focus on Rep. Anthony Weiner's, D-N.Y., alleged boxer-brief malfunction.

Spare me. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a good old-fashioned political sex scandal. They're entertaining, and they may even be edifying -- reminding us that self-styled "public servants" are often less responsible, more venal, and just plain dumber than those they seek to rule.

Jarvis delivered his jeremiad on CNN's "Reliable Sources," where navel-gazing journos discuss their favorite subject, themselves. Weinergate led the hour, with CBS' Nancy Cordes confessing her embarrassment over having to ask Weiner about the "racy underwear photo" now plaguing Weiner:

"I don't think anyone says I would like to cover Capitol Hill because I think there will be a lot of sex scandals involving underpants. So, no, it wasn't any fun," Cordes said.

Not fun? You lie, Cordes. I haven't sniggered so much since the Atlantic profiled "Sister Mary Schmuck," a Brooklyn nun who gamely defends her unfortunate last name.

"At one point, there were 400 Schmucks in America," she told the magazine, undercounting by several orders of magnitude. (There must be at least that many on Capitol Hill alone.)

Maybe it's Weiner's onetime status as a rising left-wing star that's made liberal journalists queasy about the pile-on. When sex scandals and partisan loyalties collide, partisans get pious and prissy, lecturing us about America's "unserious" political culture.

But one of the few perks of being a libertarian is that you get to enjoy twice as many scandals. Politics is one big smorgasbord of schadenfreude, and I feel sorry for my Republican friends who root, root, root for the Red Team so ardently that it hampers their enjoyment of the wonderful GOP sex scandals of recent years.

Only someone with a calcified funnybone could fail to chuckle at the 2010 downfall of moralizing

Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind. It's one thing to have an affair with a married staffer, but it takes true comic genius to have that staffer interview you on camera about the virtues of abstinence education.

A botched extramarital cover-up drove Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., from office as well. Ensign had an affair with the wife of one of his best friends, staffer Doug Hampton, then allegedly tried to buy Hampton off with a lobbying gig.

The New York Times story featured a priceless photo, possibly provided by Hampton himself. It was an autographed picture featuring Ensign with his arm around the buddy he cuckolded, signed "your friend and brother in Christ -- John Ensign."

This is quality stuff, easily the equal of the material provided by the handsy Rep. Eric Massa, D-N.Y., who liked nothing better than a good tickle fight with the fellas.

H.L. Mencken thought government as practiced in these United States was "dishonest, insane, and intolerable." But that never stopped the sage of Baltimore from enjoying what he called "incomparably the greatest show on earth."

In Mencken's version of American exceptionalism, this great nation had elevated politics to "the plane of undiluted comedy" because "we have clowns in constant practice among us who are as far above the clowns of any other great state as a Jack Dempsey is above a paralytic."

So have a guilt-free laugh about Weinergate. Not only are political sex scandals great fun, they serve an important social purpose. They remind us that we should think twice before we cede more power to these clowns.

Examiner Columnist Gene Healy is a vice president at the Cato Institute and the author of "The Cult of the Presidency."

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