



Mailbag: Not all birthday cards contain warm wishes

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Related rulings:

"1.53 million jobs are at risk (from potential defense cuts)."

Randy Forbes, Wednesday, October 12th, 2011.

Ruling: Mostly True | [Details](#)

Says his proposed payroll tax cut "will mean an extra \$1,500 in your pocket compared to if we do nothing."

Barack Obama, Tuesday, October 18th, 2011.

Ruling: True | [Details](#)

"I'd like to think politicians are being more honest with you looking over their shoulders," one reader told us.

Lots of feedback -- good and bad -- has been coming in lately that we'd like to share.

Birthday Cards

We [noted](#) last week that PolitiFact Virginia had turned one. Not everyone was celebrating.

On our birthday, we broke down the Truth-O-Meter ratings we've given to 137 claims made by Democrat and Republican politicians. Then we applied a scale, giving five points for each True, four for Mostly True, three for Half True, two for Mostly False, one for False, and zero for Pants on Fire. The average for Democrats was 2.78; the average for Republicans was 2.66.

Several readers who contend we are biased said are numbers our meaningless.

"The assertions you analyze, out of the thousands possible, are those of your own choosing," one man and his wife emailed. "Having chosen differently, you could have easily demonstrated that the Republicans are more truthful than Democrats...For you to

give an overall `score' based on your own selectivity about which quotes to analyze, and which to ignore, simply says more about you than about the featured politicians or their political parties."

We did receive some nice wishes, however.

"I'd like to think that politicians are being more truthful with you looking over their shoulders," emailed an Henrico County reader, who was disappointed that the average Truth-O-Meter rating for each party isn't higher. "Perhaps at birthday #2 they will be. Keep up the good work."

Military Jobs

We received 76 responses to our [Oct 29 look](#) into a claim by U.S. Rep. Randy Forbes, R-4th, that 1.53 million military jobs are "at risk" from potential defense cuts. We rated the claim Mostly True, saying Forbes had made a credible, but high-side estimate of the potential layoffs.

Most people who responded supported scaling back the military. Several found it ironic that Forbes, who represents a district where military installations dominate the economy, is seeking to shield defense from his otherwise hard line on cutting government spending.

"Got to admit I'm a bit confused." Peter Anderson wrote on our Facebook wall. "On one hand, they're calling for spending cuts and a smaller government; on the other hand, they're complaining about job losses. You can't have it both ways."

Benjamin Friedman, a research fellow at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, thought we should have been tougher on Forbes. "Nowhere did your article make it clear that it is dishonest simply to count job losses from cuts without mentioning that the money will be spent elsewhere and employ people."

We thought we had addressed that point in the story, quoting a University of Massachusetts professor who said defense spending does not generate as many jobs as investments in education and health care.

Payroll Tax Cut

A couple of readers took issue with our [True rating](#) to President Barack Obama's claim in Virginia that his proposed payroll tax cuts "will mean an extra \$1,500 in your pocket compared to if we do nothing."

One reader said Obama should have received a Mostly True, because not all of the \$1,500 in savings would go into people's pockets -- a portion of it would be taxed as income.

We would note, however, that Obama's \$1,500 savings was based on the median U.S.

household income in 2010 of \$49,445. The savings would be greater in Virginia, where the median household income was \$60,393. Such a family would see an \$1,871 reduction in payroll taxes between 2010 and 2012 if Obama's plan is passed.

Another reader sent us an email entitled "Obama tells the truth...really?" He did not contest our math, but offered a suggestion: "Why not just put on an Obama shirt, pick up an Obama placard, and join the Occupy bunch?"