



Today in Liberty: HHS official warned of Obamacare “disarray,” Ghostbusters and libertarianism

By Jason Pye

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“The great and abiding lesson of American history, particularly the cold war, is that the engine of capitalism, the individual, is mightier than any collective.” — Rand Paul

— **Small businesses to see health premiums rise:** An actuarial report from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services finds that 65% of small businesses — affecting 11 million people — [will see health insurance premiums rise thanks to Obamacare](#). These are firms with 50 or fewer employees, those exempted from the individual mandate.

— **Obamacare exchanges in disarray months before rollout:** The *Washington Examiner* reports this morning that a senior Department of Health and Human Services official warned in May of serious problems with the Obamacare exchanges. “A senior Health and Human Services official was so frustrated last May over the White House’s ‘disarray’ on health care before the launch of Obamacare insurance exchanges that he warned of needing a ‘come to Jesus meeting’ with his counterparts,” [reports the Examiner](#). “The comment from Anton Gunn, then-HHS director of external affairs, came in an email exchange with Anne Filipic, the president of the outside group Enroll America, a nonprofit with close ties to the White House that was formed to promote the fall Obamacare rollout and boost enrollment — an effort the two were working on closely.”

— **HHS wants to monitor your tweets:** Gah! What is it with government? It’s not like the NSA is retaining data on us or anything, now the Department of Health and Human Services wants a real-time look at social media accounts. “The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is seeking a ‘social media analytic tool’ that will give the government access to ‘full Twitter historical data,’ according to a [solicitation](#) released on Tuesday,” [the Free Beacon notes](#). “The agency requires an archive that goes back at least five years of ‘full Twitter historical data.’ The government will also need ‘access to multiple account log-ins,’ ‘real-time alerting,’ the ‘ability to construct lengthy Boolean searches,’ and a function that can filter search results based on the location of a Twitter user.” So...more snooping and you’re footing the bill.

— **Keystone XL and property rights:** There are many arguments against Keystone XL, though most of them are based on misguided radical environmentalist dogma, but Tim Carney has brought up one that supporters of the oil pipeline should strongly consider. “If somebody else is trying to build something literally through *your* back yard, shouldn’t you have the right to say no?” [wrote Carney at the Washington Examiner](#). “And from north to south, that’s exactly what Keystone XL’s owners are doing: working with state governments to use eminent domain and

force reluctant landowners to allow the pipeline through their property.” Let’s remember that property rights are the cornerstone of freedom, making Keystone XL not as cut and dry as some, including this author, would like to believe.

— **Defense spending cuts a step in the right direction:** That what Christopher Preble of the Cato Institute [argued after seeing media reports on the Defense Department’s budget proposal](#). “True, the Army will be smaller, declining from a post-Iraq high of 566,000 in 2011, to perhaps as few as 440,000 active-duty troops, about 40,000 fewer than the late 1990s average. But the force retains enormous capabilities across a range of contingencies. In the words of the senior Pentagon official, this ‘very significant-sized Army’ is ‘going to be agile. It will be capable. It will be modern. It will be trained,’” [noted Preble](#). “That sounds like the kind of force that Americans want and expect. Given rapidly rising personnel costs, and the great political difficulty of reining them in, the only way to achieve actual savings may be a smaller active-duty force. That is [what Ben Friedman and I suggested over three years ago](#), and with this latest proposal, we might actually be heading in that direction.”

— **Rise of the machines:** Could an increase in the federal minimum wage lead to business investment into automation? James Pethokoukis warns that some industries may have no choice. “As MIT’s Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, authors of *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies* [told me recently](#): ‘There’s no economic law that says everyone’s going to benefit from technological progress, even as the pie gets bigger. It’s possible for some people, even a majority of people, to be made worse off.’ While some low-skill jobs might be automation proof, what about retail and fast food?” [wrote Pethokoukis](#). “Indeed, Brynjolfsson and McAfee support helping workers via a greatly expanded [Earned Income Tax Credit]. Subsidize work, don’t raise the cost of hiring.”

— **GOP-connected lobbyist wants to ban openly gay football players:** Sadly, folks, this story isn’t from *The Onion*, nor did *The Hill* begin writing satire. Jack Burkman, a lobbyist connected to the GOP, is [drafting legislation that would ban openly gay players](#) in the NFL, saying in a statement that “[i]f the NFL has no morals and no values, then Congress must find values for it.” Sigh. Just...stop.

— **War all of the time:** That pretty much sums up House Majority Leader Eric Cantor’s (R-VA) foreign policy views, as [described in a recent speech](#). Conor Friedersdorf took a look at Cantor’s speech and is, well, [troubled by the themes](#). “So Cantor believes that the United States is paying insufficient attention to China, North Korea, and our Pacific allies ... even as he insists the U.S. should still be fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, that the U.S. should have used more U.S. force in Libya, that it should be more involved in Syria’s civil war, *and* that we should be prepared to wage war on Iran,” wrote Friedersdorf. “Little surprise that he calls for more defense spending. We’ve got the largest military in the world by a significant margin, but it isn’t even close to big enough if we’re going to fight at least four wars in a region that he doesn’t even regard as our focus!”

— **Pope Francis is against human progress:** Though our religious friends, particularly those who are Catholic, may be fans of Pope Francis (and those who are not religious do like a lot of what he’s saying in regards to controversial social issues), [Marian Tupy](#) of the [Cato Institute](#) and

[HumanProgress.org](#) argues that the [Vatican's animosity toward free markets and capitalism contradicts its desire to lift people out of poverty](#).

— ***Ghostbusters* is the best libertarian movie ever:** Reflecting on the [sudden death of Harold Ramis](#), Philip Klein argues that *Ghostbusters* is the best libertarian movie ever. Why? Because our four ghosthunting heroes took on the EPA. “[T]he villain — a regulator from the Environmental Protection Agency — decides to interfere with the private business by cutting off their power, thereby releasing all of the captured ghosts. [Here is the clip, wrote Klein](#). “The EPA agent orders the shut down of the ghost containment unit over the protests of Ramis’ character, Dr. Egon Spengler, who says: ‘Excuse me, this is private property!’” And Ashe Schow [memorializes Egon](#) (Ramis) in a meme.