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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

Dukakis the Great

Posted by **W. James Antle, III** on 9.25.09 @ 8:22AM

In a post that otherwise nails the political logic of appointing Paul Kirk to fill Ted Kennedy's Senate seat on an interim basis, E.J. Dionne seems a bit wistful about their being no Senator Michael Dukakis: "[Dukakis] was actually a very good governor. He is smart about health care. He's fun to talk policy with -- for those who find talking about policy fun. He is a thoroughly decent and honest person."

Well. I agree that Dukakis is wonkier than your average pol, and is a decent and honest person. But, as you might guess from my column on the main site today, I think even "mediocre governor" would be a stretch, much less "very good governor."

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Europeans Against the Lisbon Treaty

Posted by **Doug Bandow** on 9.25.09 @ 7:21AM

The Irish will soon be voting again on the so-called Lisbon Treaty, which would create a stronger consolidated government in Brussels. Now some Europeans have organized a new website against this approach, arguing democracy yes, Lisbon no.

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Shock! Taxpayers Won't Get their Bail-Out Money Back

Posted by **Doug Bandow** on 9.25.09 @ 7:11AM

Shock, shock. It looks like taxpayers won't get their money back from TARP. Who would have imagined that!?

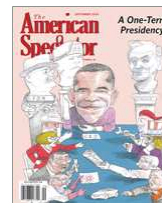
Reports ABC News:

Nearly one year after Congress approved the \$700 billion financial bailout, it was attacked by Republicans and fiscal watchdogs as an expensive failure that has not stopped home foreclosures or jobs from disappearing.

"This has been a failed program," Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., said at today's Senate Banking committee hearing. "The very promises made to the taxpayer of what was going to happen with this money, in my judgment, have not been kept."

Johanns cited what he called "very damning" testimony by the bailout's Special Inspector General Neil Barofsky that said it is "extremely unlikely" that American taxpayers will get a full return on their \$700

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billion investment. Moreover, Barofsky observed, the [Troubled Asset Relief Program](#) has failed to increase bank lending, stop rising unemployment, or stem the rash of home foreclosures.

"In the last year," said the Congressional Oversight Panel's Elizabeth Warren, "the apprehension that pervaded this country has turned into something else: frustration and anger. Today's fragile stability has come at an enormous cost to the American people." [Barofsky](#) noted that "a lot of this frustration and cynicism and anger comes out of the lack of transparency in the TARP program." This, he said, was his group's "biggest frustration" with the [Treasury Department](#) and "one of the great failures of the past year."

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

[NEA's Yosi Sergant Resigns](#)

Posted by [Philip Klein](#) on 9.24.09 @ 6:03PM

Yosi Sergant, who led a conference call encouraging artists to promote the Obama administration's agenda in his role as the National Endowment for the Arts communications director, has [resigned](#).

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[Bibi to UN: "Have You No Shame?"](#)

Posted by [Philip Klein](#) on 9.24.09 @ 2:46PM

Earlier this afternoon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a [stirring speech](#) in which he called the United Nations to task for legitimizing the Holocaust-denying Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and for sanctioning a report charging Israelis with war crimes for defending themselves against terrorism from Gaza.

Early in the speech, he held up a copy of the meeting minutes of the 1942 conference in Wannsee in which Germans made plans to exterminate the Jews, and asked, "Is this protocol a lie?" Then he held up the original construction plans from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, which he received on a recent trip to Germany, and asked, "Are these plans of the camp where one million Jews were murdered a lie too?"

Netanyahu commended those who walked out on or boycotted the Ahmadinejad speech to the chamber yesterday, then continued: "But for those who stayed - I say on behalf of the Jewish people, my people and decent people everywhere - have you no shame? No decency? What a disgrace, what a mockery of the charter of the UN."

He [said](#), "Perhaps some of you think [Ahmadinejad] and his odious regime only threaten the Jews. Well, if you think that you are wrong, dead wrong." He explained that, "the struggle against Iran pits civilization against barbarism."

Later in the speech, he blazed the UN report drawing moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas for the conflict in Gaza earlier this year, accusing Israelis of war crimes for defending themselves against a terrorist group that hides among civilians.

"By these twisted standards, the UN Human Rights Council would have dragged Roosevelt and Churchill to the dock as war criminals," he said. "What a perversion of truth. What a perversion of justice."

Should the broader UN endorse the report's findings, he said, "It would send

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a message to terrorists everywhere, saying: terrorism pays. All you have to do is launch your attacks from densely populated areas, and you will win immunity."

Netanyahu said Israel was willing to negotiate peace with Palestinians, noting that historically Israel has always been willing to make deals with Arab leaders genuinely interested in peace, as it did in the cases of Egypt and Jordan.

"We want to live side by side with them - two free peoples living in peace, living in prosperity, living in dignity," he said of Palestinians. "Peace, prosperity, and dignity require one other element. We must have security."

I've posted some of the video below. Well worth watching.



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[Doug Wilder, Democrats Refusing to Back Deeds](#)

Posted by **W. James Antle, III** on 9.24.09 @ 2:33PM

Yesterday John Gizzi reported that a number of former Mark Warner supporters have decided to support Republican Bob McDonnell for governor of Virginia this time around. Now former Gov. Douglas Wilder, the nation's first elected black governor, has announced that he won't be supporting Creigh Deeds either, though he stopped short of endorsing McDonnell. McDonnell has consistently, if narrowly, led his Democratic opponent in recent polls.

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Breaking: Treasury I-G Agrees to Probe ACORN

Posted by **Matthew Vadum** on 9.24.09 @ 1:32PM

From a [press release](#) from the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee:

Treasury Department Inspector General, J. Russell George agreed to comply with a [request](#) submitted by House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs Ranking Member Susan Collins (R-Maine) to conduct a review of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and of the IRS's oversight of nonprofit organizations.

"The lack of an appropriate firewall between ACORN's charitable activities and its political arm has raised significant questions regarding the appropriateness of their status as a taxable nonprofit corporation and their management of federal dollars," Issa said. "Cutting ties with ACORN is a good first step for the federal government, but since they have been the recipients of taxpayer dollars, we have an obligation to investigate to discover whether or not those dollars were misused in anyway."

"I am heartened by the agreement of the Treasury Department's Inspector General to examine the troubling financial questions that have been raised about ACORN," said Senator Collins. "This is the first step in the right direction toward much-needed transparency. As I've noted before, at a time when so many American families are facing difficult economic situations, it is completely unacceptable that even one penny of taxpayer money be misused. We must bring all agencies and groups that use taxpayer funds into the spotlight of accountability."

Last week, Senator Collins and Rep. Issa made a formal joint request that seven Offices of Inspectors General, including Treasury, probe the activities of ACORN, a community advocacy organization. [...]

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Small Refiners Back Out of Cap and Trade

Posted by **W. James Antle, III** on 9.24.09 @ 12:38PM

In the latest blow to the coalition behind cap and trade, small oil refiners who broke with the oil industry to support the Waxman-Markey energy bill -- after House Democrats added a provision favorable to them -- now [oppose](#) it advancing in the Senate. The *Hill* quotes one such company's CEO as saying, "We agreed only that the legislative process should move forward, with a view toward working subsequently with the Senate. We did not agree to support H.R. 2454."

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Daily Must-Reads

Posted by **Brian O'Connell** on 9.24.09 @ 11:16AM

When in doubt, blame the Israelis. Ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya claims Israeli mercenaries are using mind altering radiation on him and threatening to assassinate him at the Brazilian Embassy ([Miami Herald](#))

Czech President Klaus: UN climate meeting "propaganda." ([Reuters](#))

A grungy jihadi. Culprit in last week's Somali suicide bombing last week believed to be from Seattle ([Washington News](#))

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to sue Abercrombie & Fitch for refusal to hire a woman who refused to take off the hijab ([Time](#))

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The Question Michael Moore MUST Be Asked

• • •

Posted by **Hunter Baker** on 9.24.09 @ 10:14AM

I was telling my boss, Robert Sloan (former Baylor president and current president of HBU), about Michael Moore's new film *Capitalism: A Love Story*. We briefly discussed an interview of Moore by the *Wall Street Journal* yesterday in which Moore asserted that the auto workers should own 100% of the auto companies.

Sloan responded, "The interviewer should have asked Moore if the crews on his films own the projects they work on for him." That would be a nice question for the filmmaker, wouldn't it?

"Mr. Moore, do you pay your workers a wage to perform their functions or -- consistent with your philosophy -- do they own the films you make along with you?"

I suspect we know the answer to that one. Michael Moore probably places a premium on his own intellectual property, creativity, and personal drive and thus maintains ownership of the fruits of his own labor. He likely thinks his unique work product and his unorthodox and risky career as a filmmaker should benefit him personally and that he should own and control his projects.

Why not believe that for all the other capitalists, Mr. Moore?

Reporters, we need the answer to this one, please. "Mr. Moore, do your crews own your film projects or are they simply paid a wage?"

I wonder how much the key grip made on *Fahrenheit 9/11*?

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Ted Kennedy's Replacement

Posted by **W. James Antle, III** on 9.24.09 @ 10:07AM

Is going to be former Democratic National Committee head Paul Kirk, a confidante of the former senator. An announcement ceremony including the Kennedy family and Sen. John Kerry is expected later today. The 71-year-old will only serve on an interim basis and will be replaced by the winner of the Jan. 19 special election. The Massachusetts legislature just changed the succession law back to where it was in 2004, when the Beacon Hill Democrats feared Mitt Romney would appoint a Republican interim senator should Kerry have been elected president that year.

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Of Two Minds on the Medicare Debate

Posted by **Philip Klein** on 9.24.09 @ 9:55AM

In his health care speech to a joint session of Congress earlier this month, President Obama said that his proposed cuts to Medicare "will ensure that you – America's seniors – get the benefits you've been promised."

But Douglas Elmendorf, director of the Congressional Budget Office, disagrees. He testified yesterday that the proposed changes would "would reduce the extra benefits that would be made available to beneficiaries through Medicare Advantage plans." That is, the privately-administered plans that will see a funding cut to help pay for health care legislation.

I've been of two minds about the recent Medicare debate. On the one hand, I worry about the long-term impact of the Republican decision to make protecting Medicare from any cuts a focal point of their opposition to health care legislation. Not only does it distract from other arguments that attack the very idea of government-run health care, but it helps perpetuate the third rail status of a program that, if its growth is left unchecked, will bankrupt the country. If Democrats are unable to touch Medicare, then there's absolutely no hope that somewhere down the line a conservative administration would be able to do so.

At the same time, I do think it's important to point out that Obama is lying through his teeth when he says that cutting Medicare by \$500 billion to as much as \$622 billion will have absolutely no effect on anybody's benefits. Additionally, it would be one thing if Obama were proposing these cuts as part of a larger entitlement reform, but instead he's proposing them in the name of creating a new entitlement.

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I Guess I'm Unreasonable

Posted by **Paul Chesser** on 9.24.09 @ 9:08AM

Who knew Mr. Whipple was really advocating for the destruction of old growth forests? That nice fluffy T.P. (no one wants others to see "toilet paper" spelled out on their shopping list) requires longer wood fibers, while the coarse stuff is made of younger trees and recycled newspapers and computer printouts (ouch!). *The Washington Post* in yet another environmental wackjob report:

"The problem is not yet getting better," said Chris Henschel, of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, talking about logging in Canada's boreal forests. He said real change will come only when consumers change their habits: "It's unbelievable that this global treasure of Canadian boreal forests is being turned into toilet paper. . . I think every reasonable person would have trouble understanding how that would be okay."

All I know is I've never seen the Canadian boreal forests and probably never will, but I probably use its products every day. Thanks olde growth!



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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2009

Barney Frank Throws ACORN Under the Bus

Posted by **Matthew Vadum** on 9.23.09 @ 9:19PM

"And I reiterate that my own view is that the appropriate response here would be to have the Obama administration continue what it began with regard to the Census and **withhold any funding or authority from ACORN** pending a very serious examination of their past behavior and significant changes regarding the future." [emphasis added]

-from a statement by Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), a longtime ACORN ally and current chairman of the House Financial Services Committee

Wow.

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ACORN Sues Filmmakers, Breitbart

Posted by **Philip Klein** on 9.23.09 @ 5:57PM

ACORN has filed suit in Maryland Court against James O'Keefe, Hannah Giles and Breitbart.com, the *Politico* [reports](#):

In the complaint, [ACORN](#) alleges that the filmmakers entered into the organization's offices in July with a "hidden camera and microphone" and taped employees Tonja Thompson and Shera Williams. Both employees are listed as plaintiffs on the complaint, filed in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

ACORN is seeking \$500,000 for each employee and \$1 million for the organization in damages.

The lawsuit recalls a case in the 1990s of *Food Lion v. ABC News*, in which reporters for the show *Primetime Live* applied for jobs at the grocery store chain and worked with hidden cameras to reveal unsanitary practices. As Wikipedia [recounts](#):

Food Lion was awarded USD\$5.5 million by a jury in 1997. The award was later reduced by a judge to \$316,000. The verdict was then overturned by the [U.S. Court of Appeals Fourth Circuit in Richmond](#).

Virginia. According to the court, even though ABC was wrong to do what they had done, Food Lion was unable to show that they had been directly injured by ABC's actions - essentially that it was the actions of Food Lion that caused the damages, not the publication of those actions.

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