



Today's buncombe, itemized

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Published: Saturday, January 25, 2014 9:00 p.m.

Item: Long voting lines and wait times at the polls on Election Day 2012 supposedly “disenfranchised” millions of American voters, critics lament.

A report by the nonpartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration “unabashedly identifies voting difficulties as a national problem that requires a national solution,” says liberal Washington Post pundit Greg Sargent.

And to “correct” the “problem,” “remedies” ranging from enhanced online registration to extended early voting are being proposed.

Never mind that the average national waiting time on that Election Day, in a presidential election year, was a whopping 12.4 minutes. In Pennsylvania, it was a “disenfranchising” 9.1 minutes. The average national waiting time for early voters? Try nearly 20 minutes.

And that information comes from the reliably liberal New York Times.

Item: President Obama plans to make “income inequality” the centerpiece of his State of the (Political) Union address on Tuesday night. It is “the defining challenge of our time,” Mr. Obama says.

Never mind that real income for the average American household, far from being “stagnant,” as the class-envy crowd claims, has increased by more than a third over the past 30 years, reminds John Goodman, writing at [Forbes.com](#) .

And never mind, as objectivist scholar Yaron Brook reminds, that wealth in a free society is not, as “progressives” would have you believe, gained off the backs of the poor but indeed through hard work.

The economic pie is not one of fixed size, says Cato Institute scholar Michael Tanner, and it's not the government's job to equally divvy up the pie's slices. In a capitalist society, we reward the innovators and risk-takers who expand the size of the pie. And by that very nature, yes, there is “inequality” but also the opportunity for others to follow.

But there would be no growing pie if, by government diktat, “everyone had the same earnings, status, prestige and other rewards,” Nobel economist Gary Becker once noted.

Item: Funded by a \$415,000 grant from the liberal Heinz Endowments, Allegheny General Hospital will conduct a yearlong pilot study to better establish childhood asthma rates and exact triggers. It comes in a climate in which Pittsburgh Public Schools nurses claim as many as half of the district's students have asthma.

“If that 50 percent number ... is real, it means we have some real problems related to air quality,” said study co-director David P. Skoner.

Uhm, no.

Never mind that this particular study does not consider use of acetaminophen, a key ingredient of Children's Tylenol. And there is a vast body of research that fingers it as the culprit, beginning with the rise of acetaminophen use in the 1980s as an alternative to aspirin, then linked to Reye's syndrome in children. That change dovetails with a marked increase in reported asthma cases.

To be fair, AGH says it is participating in a National Institutes of Health study that does consider acetaminophen use and, in later phases of its own research, will consider its role.

Still, Dr. Skoner's statement of premature conclusion not only casts serious doubt on the study's methodology but on the Heinz Endowments' motivations for funding it.