

The Washington Times

Inside the Beltway: Alarmed by the Feds

By Jennifer Harper January 31, 2013

Some Americans feel like they live in a police state, others are discouraged by a sense of waning opportunity or flagging optimism. Do we have national malaise? Yes. It's called "federal government," suggests some new research.

"Overall, 53 percent of Americans think that the federal government threatens their own rights and freedoms," says a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, which also reveals that 70 percent of Republicans feel this threat, as do 76 percent of conservative Republicans. In contrast, 38 percent of Democrats agree, as do 34 percent among liberal Democrats.

Then there is the matter of trust. Or distrust.

"For the past seven years, a period covering the final two years of the Bush administration and Obama's entire presidency, no more than about three-in-10 Americans have said that they trust the government in Washington to do the right thing always or most of the time," Pew says. "The current survey finds only about quarter (26 percent) saying they can trust the government always or most of the time, while nearly three-quarters (73 percent) say that they can trust government only some of the time, or volunteer that they can never trust the government."

AN EYE ON MR. GORE

A call for a congressional investigation of Al Gore's recent business dealings with Al-Jazeera looms. Coming to the National Press Club on Tuesday to announce their demand for close attention: Cliff Kincaid, president of America's Survival; Pamela Geller, president of the American Freedom Defense

Initiative; plus Jerry Kenney, who has previously filed complaints with the Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission over what he calls Al-Jazeera's "illegal broadcasts into the U.S."

Mr. Gore recently sold Current TV, the news channel he founded in 2006, to Al-Jazeera, an Arabic language network based in Qatar. Mr. Gore, incidentally, is currently on a national tour for "The Future," his new book.

"While Americans are packing theaters to watch the movie 'Zero Dark Thirty' and celebrate the death of terrorist Osama bin Laden, the former al Qaeda's leader's favorite TV channel is coming to 40 million to 50 million American homes," Mr. Kincaid says. "Al-Jazeera should be exposed as a homeland security threat that already has American blood on its hands."

AN EYE ON THE SUPER BOWL

"The Obama administration can promote camaraderie among the American people, keep the streets safer for our children on Sunday night and Monday morning, promote a productive workplace when work resumes on Tuesday, and honor the most popular event in modern American culture."

(From a White House online petition asking President Obama to declare the Monday following Super Bowl Sunday a national holiday.)

EYE ON THE PRESIDENT

The Super Bowl menu at the White House is always big news; in past years, it has included home-brewed beer, deep-dish pizza, bratwurst, buffalo wings, guacamole and chips. The good stuff. Let's hope the menu repeats, maybe with a kale salad or something to do with White House-grown cabbage.

President Obama, meanwhile, is part of the television coverage. CBS News anchor Scott Pelley will chat with Mr. Obama live from the White House as part of the official pregame extravaganza. The potential audience? Fox News host Bill O'Reilly pulled in an easy 17 million viewers when he interviewed the president before the big game in 2012. Mr. Pelley, incidentally, says his goal on Sunday will be to "make news."

HOT OVER WARMING

It could be raining regulations soon, should the wishes of Rep. Henry A. Waxman of California and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island come true. The two Democrats have launched an aggressive Bicameral Climate Change Task Force, and they have taken their case to 300 major businesses, manufacturers, charities, interest groups, academic institutions, think tanks and even professional sports organizations. The lawmakers seek advice, they say, by Feb. 20.

“What actions or policies could federal agencies adopt, using existing authorities, to make our nation more resilient to the effects of climate change?” they ask, noting that “we have a moral obligation to act.”

And among the many who have received this missive: Home Depot Inc., the Heritage Foundation, Boeing Co., Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the Walt Disney Co., Harvard University, Coca-Cola Co., the National Football League, DuPont, Hasbro Inc., Major League Baseball, Google Inc., Apple Inc., the AFL-CIO, the Cato Institute, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Port of Los Angeles, and the Wine Institute.

STILL BREWING

The tea party alternative to Facebook fires up Saturday. In the works for three months, the “Tea Party Community” offers a comfortable Facebook-ian appearance and layout, with similar user interface. There the similarity ends.

“Tea Party Community is family owned and operated by conservative Christians, who believe God, family and country come before all else,” the founders say in their mission statement. “We encourage all conservatives to join the new community and enjoy all the familiarity of Facebook, without all the restrictions it’s free and always will be.” Find them here: teapartycommunity.com.

POLL DU JOUR

- 80 percent of business managers and workers said their work productivity declined after they were treated rudely on the job.

- 78 percent said their commitment to the organization declined because of incivility at work.

- 66 percent said their performance declined because of incivility.

- 63 percent lost time at work “avoiding the offender.”

- 50 percent say they were treated rudely at work at least once a week.

- 48 percent intentionally decreased their work effort because of workplace incivility.

- 25 percent take their frustration out on customers because of it; 12 percent left their job.

Source: A Georgetown University/Thunderbird School of Global Management survey of 800 managers and employees in 17 industries compiled during 2011-2012, and released Thursday via the Harvard Business Review.