

Matt Yglesias

Nov 1st, 2009 at 2:28 pm

The Grayson Factor



I think Alan Grayson has taken some stands on important substantive issues of public policy—mostly related to so-called “bailouts” and the Federal Reserve—that are incorrect on the merits. But personally I welcome at least a bit of his tone and his approach in congress, especially on the issues where I agree with him on the merits. But as I’ve said before, the political/media establishment can’t [quite seem to get their heads around](#) the idea of a progressive using stark, moralistic language rather than bloodless technocratic language:

First it was his comment, “If you get sick, America, the Republicans’ health care plan is this: Die quickly.” Then, appearing on MSNBC, he said of former Vice President Dick Cheney: “I have trouble listening to what he says sometimes because of the blood that drips from his teeth while he’s talking.” Finally, a radio interview surfaced in which he had called a female adviser to the Federal Reserve chairman “a K Street whore” — a reference to her former job as a Washington lobbyist. That one forced him to make a formal apology.

Mr. Grayson could be the latest incarnation of what in the American political idiom is known as a wing nut — a loud darling of cable television and talk radio whose remarks are outrageous but often serious enough not to be dismissed entirely. Mr. Grayson is the more notable because he hurls his nuts from the left in a winger world long associated with the right.

As I had occasion to note in the previous post, Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron, who is also a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, really did [outline the plan that if you get sick and don’t have money you should die](#) in an opinion piece for CNN. This is all part of his larger explanation of why “Government should not subsidize health insurance — for the uninsured, the poor, the elderly or anyone else — or regulate health insurance markets.” Most conservatives don’t articulate the right-wing position on health care in quite as rigorous a manner as Miron, but the fact of the matter is that the view that spending is bad, taxes is bad, and regulation is bad is at the very core of contemporary American conservative philosophy. And it leads you to where Miron ends up—to exactly what Grayson said.

Of course Miron puts it gently (“if some people do not purchase insurance and then become ill, they would

have to rely on private charity”) and Grayson puts it harshly (“die quickly”) but they’re saying the same thing: The right’s view is that the government should make no special provision to protect people from health-related economic catastrophe or from economically-driven health catastrophe.

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55 Responses to “The Grayson Factor”

1. *EarBucket* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:41 pm](#)

I get a bit too much of an attention whore vibe from Grayson. Some of what he’s saying has some merit, but he’s clearly realized that he gets more headlines (and probably more donations) the more he ramps up the hyperbole. He’s becoming something like a liberal Michele Bachmann, and that’s not the way I want to see the Democratic party going.

2. *pseudonymous in nc* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:46 pm](#)

The institutionalization of wingnut welfare plays its part. The usual [sources of funding](#) bestow bronze plaques and titles on people prepared to say outrageous things, which turns “some random nutbag” into a Senior Research Scholar for AEI or Heritage or Cato.

Their equivalent on the left generally tends towards the technocratic, because Washington is wired for Republicans, and Democrats haven’t mastered the art of the hissy-fit.

Grayson needs to watch his tongue a wee bit, but there’s no reason why the House Dem caucus shouldn’t have its equivalent to a [Dennis Skinner](#).

3. *larry birnbaum* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:47 pm](#)

I don’t think he’s an out-and-out nut like Bachmann. He may be a media hog. I don’t mind his comments about health care or even the K-Street whore bit — I don’t think he was thinking for one moment about the gender of the person he was criticizing. But the comment about Cheney’s teeth dripping blood is actually disgusting. Call him a liar, call him a warmonger, fine. But this comment really does call his judgment into serious question.

4. *Led* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:50 pm](#)

I agree with your general point but Grayson isn’t a great example. He’s just kind of a clown. I have no problem with the first statement in the excerpted passage. More “stark moralistic” language like that would be great. The second statement was a joke offered in lieu of a real response to the question. It wasn’t a stark moralistic argument about anything. And it wasn’t a particular funny joke, although that

shouldn't be a hanging offense. The last statement is totally offside — you don't call a woman a whore under any circumstances. There just really shouldn't be any question about that. Even if she's actually a prostitute, you say she's a prostitute.

So, yes, Dems and liberals should be more assertive about issues of social justice. But Grayson is likely to cause folks to associate those types of statements with kookery because he otherwise acts like a kook.

5. [James Gary](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:55 pm](#)

But the comment about Cheney's teeth dripping blood is actually disgusting. Call him a liar, call him a warmonger, fine. But this comment really does call his judgment into serious question.

Indeed, Larry! I clutched my pearls in shock when I heard such a vulgar metaphor being used in public discourse! It took a generous dose of smelling salts before I was quite myself again.

6. [Sam M](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 2:56 pm](#)

I am pretty sure I hear progressives using highly-charged, non-technical language all the time. For instance, people talking about global warming do not limit themselves to discussions about degrees celsius. Instead, it's about billions of people drowning and otherwise suffering slow, painful, preventable deaths. And last I checked, Michael Moore was making highly argumentative documentaries, not writing textbooks.

As for this: "but they're saying the same thing."

Are they? The guy from Cato is saying that provision of this good should be left to private charity. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided? For instance, in my town, Catholic education is provided by a private charity known as the Catholic school. Which seems like a good idea to me.

In what sense does my support for this arrangement mean that I do not think anyone should provide Catholic education? More broadly, aren't there lots of things provided by private charities? In any of those cases, does preferring that arrangement amount to preferring that the good in question not be provided at all?

You can argue these things on the merits. You can point out why health care is a special kind of good that private charities are ill-equipped to provide. And why this means that relying on private charities to provide healthcare will result in some people not getting that care.

But it's a stretch to say that these people are saying the same thing.

7. [ask2](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:00 pm](#)

Let's not ignore the benefit he has on the larger dynamic...

As the article notes, "Mr. Grayson is the more notable because he hurls his nuts from the left in a winger world long associated with the right."

Regardless of the validity of his statements, in Grayson's absence, the Broders of the world would cast Pelosi as the counterpart to Bachmann.

8. [James Gary](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:11 pm](#)

Sam M: As it happens, there is also a guy from the Lollipop Institute saying that the provision of health insurance should be left to “medical elves” who will creep in and provide magical treatment while the patient sleeps, and who require no payment other than a cinnamon stick and two shiny pennies. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided?

9. [Don Williams](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:16 pm](#)

Those who are Democrats as a profession don’t like “moralistic language” because it makes it more embarrassing when they sell out the people. Plus its kinda hard to conceive of passionate defense of moral values when your only value is self-interest.

And Larry Birnbaum can go fuck himself. Grayson’s criticism of Dick Cheney was too mild — considering how Cheney lied this country into an unnecessary war that has killed 4500+ citizens and has badly crippled thousands more for life.

But Larry probably likes Cheney because Cheney depicted the Great Oil Grab as being “Good for Israel”.

10. [kth](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:17 pm](#)

The guy from Cato is saying that provision of this good should be left to private charity. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided?

It’s the same as saying tough shit if lots of people can’t get health care—the similarities between Grayson’s version and Miron’s greatly outweigh the differences. Your analogy with Catholic schools shows how poorly you have thought out the matter: the government does, actually, guarantee access to education for every single person in this country. If Catholics stopped supporting their private schools this guarantee would not be affected in the slightest.

11. [kth](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:18 pm](#)

or #8, which addresses your argument at a more deserving level.

12. [Don Williams](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:21 pm](#)

PS I also wouldn’t call the Democratic Caucus sucking Israeli billionaire Haim Saban’s cock in 2002 an act of “bloodless technocracy” — I would call it prostitution for the Rich that differs from the Republicans only in subject, not in nature.

And it certainly wasn’t bloodless — 4500 + died because of it.

God knows what’s going to be the Butcher’s Bill for that blow job Hillary is currently giving Bibi.

13. [rapier](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:24 pm](#)

The bailouts have essentially been criminal operations, performed behind closed doors with no accountability and no oversight. The operation of Geithner's Treasury is an anti democratic nightmare. Dozens of positions stand empty without even nominations having been made to fill them. The only conclusion one can reach is he wants to keep all decisions within a tight box and even knowledge of what goes on hidden. He lies openly and repeatedly in his public statements.

Bailing out the giants was always going to be a political loser but the methods by which the administration has gone about it is going to be a political disaster.

The merits of the bailouts as conceived under Paulson and continued under the Obama administration are bad on principal and worse on execution. That will be apparent soon enough as phase two of the financial market devolution begins.

14. *theAmericanist* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:35 pm](#)

Sam M asks a stupid question: "The guy from Cato is saying that provision of this good should be left to private charity. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided?"

No. It is observing that the good WON'T be provided. It helps to notice when you're asking an empirical question that can be answered with facts.

See, this is where childlike simplicity like Grayson's actually helps raise the public debate. Ask2 is right — without a Grayson, the media winds up pairing a wingnut backbencher like Bachman with the Speaker of the House, pretty much the way Joe Wilson made himself Obama's opponent, at least in his South Carolina district and as a suddenly national figure for the GOP.

Better that we have junior US Representatives who can talk like this to pair off with their knuckleheads while the real work moves on. When a clown like Bachman (or Miron) will say that there's no need for government, because neighbors will help, there needs to be a ready response to be cited from somebody farther down the food chain: So, your plan DOES mean that people should die soon?

The wingnut idea that private charity will provide for the health care costs of several score million people is simply delusional. Were the sick and indigent and the elderly poor getting the best care in the world before Medicare and Medicaid? Nope.

Yet there was nothing to stop charities from providing top-dollar care for those folks — except, um, they didn't have the money.

Anybody follow up on those cases where Senators Coburn and who was it, Vitter? told constituents that charity would take care of their extremely expensive health care needs?

Well?

But without somebody SAYING the truth as plainly as Grayson did — that the GOP plan for sick people is that they should die soon — people tend to dance around the issue.

And give 'em their due — for all the ways the "death panel" imagery was brutally unfair, there's a real issue beneath it: former Labor Secretary Bob Reich was honest on the point a few years ago when he noted that we have the oddest health care system in the world, since its financing depends on avoiding anyone who is sick or injured. So he noted that when progressives reform health care, 'if you're old and sick, we're going to let you die' rather than bankrupt your kids (or the taxpayers, or both) ... which is pretty much exactly what the death panel charge was about.

It really isn't all that complex, and shame on us, the heirs of Washington and Jefferson and Jackson and Clay and Lincoln, that we can't seem to have a grownup debate about what to do.

I have found it's an interesting exercise to ask health care reform opponents to state in a sentence or two, what value private health insurance adds to care. They will generally say that by pooling risk (same as car insurance, or shipping), private health insurance enables people who could not otherwise afford care to get it. So then I note that the reason insurance for cars or shipping works, is that most cars/trucks/trains/planes/ships don't have accidents, so it make sense to buy AND offer insurance: it's like gambling, the house always wins in the long run.

Yet every single human is going to get old and die — so how, exactly, can the private sector profit model that works for insuring against accidents also work for the certainty of extremely expensive care before the inevitable death of each one of us?

Reasonable people (granted, a very small minority of wingnuts) immediately concede: it can't. There is no private insurance model that can ultimately work profitably for health care, because sooner or later way more individuals who have paid \$150k in premiums require \$250k in care.

And that's why we have Medicare and Medicaid. Nobody above a certain age can GET private insurance, cuz there ain't any profit in it.

So it's a simple question: is it worth it to raise the floor for everybody, and extend the ceiling for most of us? Elderly Americans live longer and healthier lives because of Medicare and Medicaid — the empirical evidence far outweighs the essential delusional ideology (charity????) that opposes doing health care reform right.

We need more blunt clarity in the public debate: go get 'em, Congressman Grayson.

15. *max* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:45 pm](#)

Mr. Grayson could be the latest incarnation of what in the American political idiom is known as a wing nut

This would be improper application of slang. A wing nut is a loud and proud conservative. I believe the slang term for a person who shared Mr. Grayson's beliefs would be 'moonbat'.

But it's a stretch to say that these people are saying the same thing.

Bah. The Cato Institute person believe health care should only be provided by the market, even if people die because they cannot get attention, and Grayson believes that if people could not get health care as needed even if they couldn't pay for it, they would die in the street. And then if we discussed this in reasonable terms, the Cato person would say the market would eventually provide and if a few people died, well, that would be sad, but it would eventually work out. Certainly the number of poor people needing health care would be reduced.

They are talking about the same situation, Grayson and Cato Guy view the given situation in entirely different lights of morality.

There just really shouldn't be any question about that. Even if she's actually a prostitute, you say she's a prostitute.

My God, we've certainly got a nice tea party going here on the settee with the Vicar and all – gilding

the lily on a Sunday afternoon, we are. And all the outstanding pearl clutching!

At any rate, I agree in part. A women who trades sex for money is engaging in prostitution. A person who lobbies for K-Street is a *whore*... of Mammon.

max
["Ridiculous."]

16. *Don Williams* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:47 pm](#)

Re Led at 4: “The last statement is totally offside — you don’t call a woman a whore under any circumstances. There just really shouldn’t be any question about that. Even if she’s actually a prostitute, you say she’s a prostitute.”

IF a politician — male or female — stabs the People of this country in the back on behalf of rich interests, that politician is a WHORE. AND if that offends your delicate sensibilities, you can go fuck yourself.

I am sick and tired of fucking Democratic speech police that get upset over polite manners but are indifferent to political corruption that literally kills thousands of our countrymen every year.

17. *Patrick* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 3:53 pm](#)

Of course Miron puts it gently (“if some people do not purchase insurance and then become ill, they would have to rely on private charity”) and Grayson puts it harshly (“die quickly”) but they’re saying the same thing: The right’s view is that the government should make no special provision to protect people from health-related economic catastrophe or from economically-driven health catastrophe.

While I can see how Miron’s statement is the same as the last one, I’m unsure of how Grayson’s statement is equivalent to either. Grayson’s statement is only true if there is no private alternative to public charity.

People can be pretty giving. Government agencies tend to be anti-competitive, using monopolistic tactics, and put pressures on the market in ways that discourage new entrants and push out competition. You may not like the private alternative that emerge (it may rely heavily upon methods that have the potential to be deliberalizing), and one can argue that these are insufficient to meet a level that you’re happy with, but these are two different points from “die quickly.” More relevantly, they are points which can be addressed through empirical observation and factually answered if one wished to study them.

I suspect this is more about fear. It bothers the left to trust autonomous systems to accomplish something that approaches, if not surpasses, top down management.

18. *Don Williams* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:01 pm](#)

Re Patrick at 17: “I suspect this is more about fear. It bothers the left to trust autonomous systems to accomplish something that approaches, if not surpasses, top down management.”

You mean like the “autonomous systems” that were guiding Wall Street during the Bush Administration? That required \$2 Trillion in expenditures — and another \$22 Trillion in

loans/guarantees –to avoid a catastrophic economic collapse?

By the way, do Republicans delegate the national defense to private “autonomous systems”?? Does our Military Budget only add up to less than \$1 Trillion over 10 years?

Or is it that an invasion by Islamofascists is more likely to kill us than accidents or untreated diseases?

19. *pseudonymous in nc* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:05 pm](#)

The guy from Cato is saying that provision of this good should be left to private charity. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided?

It’s the same as saying “not my problem”. The glibertarian argument from charity is as shallow as a puddle of cat-piss.

20. *KevinHayden* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:06 pm](#)

If all the bombthrowers are on one side advancing fear and greed motivators one way, the middle gets moved off-center. Bomb throwers on the left have always been essential to maintaining the equilibrium of the center (read: moderate).

Eventually, the rightist Democrat that conservative bomb-throwers have derided as liberals will have room to get back to the normal range of the Democratic Party. That doesn’t mean the Blue Dogs will disappear, but they’ll lack any capability to grow their ranks.

Guys like Grayson are critically needed and in too short supply.

Keith Olbermann’s a different matter entirely as a non-elected infotainer who’s found an overlooked niche to speak to, to swell his ratings. That’s not journalism, but what Grayson does is surely representing the views of sizable numbers of citizens in a constructive way that benefits society with more progressive outcomes.

21. *consumetheconsumer* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:07 pm](#)

So one liberal democrat dares to speak his mind in a manner that grabs attention and headlines and he’s a “problem child”. But, basically the entire Republican caucus can spout lie after lie after lie and their just presenting the other side. Got it.

He may not be the most articulate. He may be crass at times. But he speaks his mind in a way most everyone understands – he’s pissed at the status quo and wants that dynamic change we’ve all been waxing philosophical about all this time. To my mind, the Democrats need more people likse Grayson countering the right-wing crazies, not less.

22. *Don Williams* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:07 pm](#)

For the past 30 years, we’ve left our Energy Policy up to private sector “autonomous systems”. As a result , we are spending about \$40 per gallon of Middle Eastern gasoline.

Around \$3 at the pump — and \$37 per gallon for military operations to protect the foreign investments of autonomous Big Oil.

There are better solutions of course — but the hidden subsidy for Big Oil and the artificially low pump price cripples market response to create alternatives and campaign donations maintains the status quo.

That's the thing about private sector "autonomous systems" — they don't give a hairy rat's ass about the General Welfare or Libertarian ideology and they sure as shit don't want their profits endangered by a Free Market.

23. [abb1](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:16 pm](#)

If he believes that there will be enough charity to provide healthcare, I don't understand why charity is better than taxation. If he likes, he can view taxation as normalized charity.

24. [Hector](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:16 pm](#)

Re: The last statement is totally offside — you don't call a woman a whore under any circumstances. There just really shouldn't be any question about that. Even if she's actually a prostitute, you say she's a prostitute

What a bunch of politically correct, Kum-Ba-Yah, I'm OK You're OK feel-good nonsense. And how typical of the intellectual vacuity and degradation of the second wave feminists of our time.

If a woman is a wh*re, then I have every intention of calling her a wh*re. That goes for anyone who literally peddles s*x for money, as well as anyone who peddles their talents, labor or opinions. It is a shameful thing to do, and we ought to use shameful words for it, not resort to feel-good intellectual fluff designed to not hurt anyone's feelings.

25. [pseudonymous in nc](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:26 pm](#)

It bothers the left to trust autonomous systems to accomplish something that approaches, if not surpasses, top down management.

More abstract guff. If you have an example of a Cato-wet-dream healthcare market working in the real world, as opposed to at the end of the rainbow, please be sharing it.

People can be pretty giving.

There's probably a limit on just how much of US economy can be given over to bake-sales.

26. [Brian](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:35 pm](#)

Conservative/libertarian wing-nut here checking in, at least temporarily:

A Harvard pedigree by itself does not impress me, but the NY Times article states that Grayson clerked for then-appellate Judge Scalia. That, to me, is an imprimatur certifying that — at one time at least — Grayson was an intelligent, impressive individual.

So what the hell happened (and I don't mean his views, but his buffoonish manner of expressing them)?

27. [tomemos](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:38 pm](#)

“If a woman is a wh*re, then I have every intention of calling her a wh*re. That goes for anyone who literally peddles s*x for money, **as well as anyone who peddles their talents, labor or opinions.**”

Well, now I’m curious! Who’s *not* a whore, then? What do *you* peddle your talents and labor for—Bibles?

Led is absolutely right and I’m a little unsettled that more people don’t have his back. By the same token, you don’t call a black person a “slave,” “Uncle Tom,” or anything else that’s racially charged, no matter what they’re up to. This is completely obvious.

28. [abb1](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:40 pm](#)

What, Scalia is not buffoonish?

29. [Brien Jackson](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:54 pm](#)

If a woman is a wh*re, then I have every intention of calling her a wh*re. That goes for anyone who literally peddles s*x for money, as well as anyone who peddles their talents, labor or opinions.

Are there people peddling their talents and labor for free on any kind of large scale?

30. [Adam](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:54 pm](#)

So what the hell happened (and I don’t mean his views, but his buffoonish manner of expressing them)?

Probably seeing Fox News and the manner of discourse used by the Republican Party and realizing that doing what he’s doing is the only way to break through and actually get heard. There are plenty of smart liberal technocrats. You don’t hear about any of them on the news.

31. [Brian](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:58 pm](#)

Well, in college and law school, those of my professors who mentioned Scalia all expressed admiration, and this was of course was a population to Scalia’s ideological left. Scalia probably has more dissents published in law books than any other Justice, e.g., his sole dissent the case re the constitutionality of the Independent Counsel statute (*Morrison v. Olsen.*) And Scalia’s significant influence in some areas, e.g., statutory interpretation, can’t really be fairly described as ideological or partisan.

But I know I’m overreacting to what was just a barb on abb1’s part.

32. [SqueakyRat](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 4:58 pm](#)

There are such things as male whores, you know.

33. [Brien Jackson](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:01 pm](#)

By the same token, you don't call a black person a "slave," "Uncle Tom," or anything else that's racially charged, no matter what they're up to. This is completely obvious.

This.

Although, at the same time, I'm not really inclined to crucify someone just for using a colloquialism. If someone absent mindedly described Michael Steele as "a slave to the right-wing of the Republican Party," it wouldn't make me think they were a racist or bad person or anything, but when it's brought to their attention, they should apologize for the choice of words. Calling the lobbyist a whore doesn't bother so much as the "fuck you bitch" response Grayson's office gave when they were first pressed on it.

34. [Brien Jackson](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:02 pm](#)

There are such things as male whores, you know.

And private charity will cover the medical expenses of the uninsured.

35. [Tyro](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:08 pm](#)

Private charity has not, in the history of civilization, provided universal relief and services to the populace. Catholic schools are a case in point: if they were able to educate everyone, there would have been no public school system for them to supplement.

Brian, the only baffonery I have seen on display has been from Republican opponents of health care reform, so I fail to see what you are getting at here.

36. [Tyro](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:12 pm](#)

Brian , one might also add that Scalia's "public persona" contains many of the attributes you are criticizing Rep Grayson for. I have heard that, as a legal mind, Scalia is not unintelligent, but as a public figure, he tends to revel in being a bit of an attention-seeker.

37. [Hector](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:18 pm](#)

Re: Catholic schools are a case in point: if they were able to educate everyone, there would have been no public school system for them to supplement.

Well, Catholic schools have traditionally educated most of the population in some Catholic countries. But in those countries (Ireland, some of S. America) they were generally supported and subsidized by the state so they weren't actually private institutions.

38. [Don Williams](#) Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 5:26 pm](#)

Re tomemos at 27: "Well, now I'm curious! Who's not a whore, then? What do you peddle your talents and labor for—Bibles?"

Er.. I can understand why tomemos has trouble grasping the concept of legalized bribery –but let me try nonetheless. There is a difference between someone working at a job — versus a politician promising his constituents that he will work on their behalf and then betraying them for money in backroom deals.

If a politician openly proclaimed during the campaign that he is a whore for wealthy interests and that he will cheerfully stab the voters in the back for the first check that's handed to him, then I might concur that tomemos would have a point. But I haven't seen any politicians do that.

39. *Left Coast Tom* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 6:39 pm](#)

What do you mean “*so-called* bailouts”? To take the most egregious example, what do you think the odds are of getting all the taxpayer money back from AIG, considering that “bailouts” for AIG are really being laundered to Goldman, Soc Gen, et al? How exactly do you think AIG will create the couple hundred billion dollars of value required to pay back TARP when nobody really wants the AIG group that's being nominally bailed out, Financial Products, to exist?

40. *tomemos* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 6:54 pm](#)

“There is a difference between someone working at a job — versus a politician promising his constituents that he will work on their behalf and then betraying them for money in backroom deals.”

Maybe you should be explaining the difference to Hector, not me. He's the one who said that a whore is anyone who sells labor for money.

41. *JonF* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 7:13 pm](#)

Re: Yet every single human is going to get old and die — so how, exactly, can the private sector profit model that works for insuring against accidents also work for the certainty of extremely expensive care before the inevitable death of each one of us?

Life insurance works, even with the certainty that everyone will die. Though of course death is a one-time event, and the exact amount of the payout is known in advance.

42. *mtraven* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 9:05 pm](#)

What's wrong with you people? Grayson is a huge blast of fresh air, blowing some of the stale stink out of congress. If you call yourself a progressive but think he's too outspoken, just please get the fuck out of politics, your colorless whinging is the reason there is barely anything resembling a functioning left in this country.

43. *pseudonymous in nc* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 9:21 pm](#)

If you call yourself a progressive but think he's too outspoken, just please get the fuck out of politics

As I've said elsewhere, if Grayson doesn't learn when to disengage his mouth, he'll talk himself out of a job. That might be fine for those on the left who love political martyrs, but I'd prefer him to stick around for a while.

44. *kth* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 9:32 pm](#)

mtraven, I like a trash-talking lefty as much as the next liberal. But call me a nervous Nellie, I'd just as soon that kind of talk came from a safe Dem seat, not from a [freshman Rep from Orlando](#) who won 55-45 in a Dem juggernaut year.

Perhaps there's method in Grayson's madness: obviously his bluntness attracts money from lefties outside the district, and Grayson has calculated that there aren't enough admirers of Dick Cheney or the current health care system to be mobilized against him, to negate the extra money.

45. *Don Williams* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 9:54 pm](#)

I got news for the nervous Nellies — if you are too cowardly to fight, you are not going to win very often.

Obama etal have been sucking up to the Republicans for a year now , trying to forge a bipartisan consensus. How is that working out?

The Republicans need to be exterminated. But to do that , we need to find some Democrats with fucking balls who will point out to the voters exactly how the voters are being fucked by Republican and Fox News' lies and deceit.

46. *elle loco* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 10:56 pm](#)

Matt has got to stop quoting Cato Institute douchebags, or I'm going to have to start referring to him as a think-tank-sinecure whore! The Cato Institute is among the most useless institutions in American history, behind perhaps only the Securities and Exchange Commission. Matt, don't sully your reputation—just say no! Abstinence is always best—especially when sleeping with the enemy.

47. *Tyro* Says:

[November 1st, 2009 at 11:46 pm](#)

Perhaps there's method in Grayson's madness: obviously his bluntness attracts money from lefties outside the district, and Grayson has calculated that there aren't enough admirers of Dick Cheney or the current health care system to be mobilized against him, to negate the extra money.

It's not just the money. It's that voters are drawn to someone who appears to have "strong opinions." This is true especially of "independents" who, looking for something to vote for, choose the guy who "believes in something." In fact, I'd venture to say that the only people this puts off is a fringe of the "goo-goo left", some of whom seem to be represented here in the comments.

48. *ds* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 12:22 am](#)

Grayson was right on the money when it came to health care. Republicans use all sorts of buzzwords about "choice" and "affordability" to mask the fact that they believe that if you don't have the money to pay for it, you shouldn't be able to get medical treatment, even if it's necessary to save your life. A broad majority of the public disagrees with them on this issue, so why are most Dems so afraid to call them on it?

Are they really so afraid that Cokie Roberts will frown on them for being “uncivil”?

49. [Max424](#) Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 4:11 am](#)

MY “I think Alan Grayson has taken some stands on important substantive issues of public policy—mostly related to so-called “bailouts” and the Federal Reserve—that are incorrect on the merits.”

What stands has Grayson taken? And if he has taken a stand, why is that “stand” incorrect on its merits? Please elaborate.

I am not aware of any “stand” on the “bailout” issue taken by the Congressman, per se. And the “Last Stand of Alan Mark Grayson” certainly has not occurred yet. Although it does seem inevitable, doesn’t it, that powerful forces on both sides of the political spectrum will begin to align against him and seek to destroy the insidious threat he represents, Grayson has not been eliminated – not yet.

From what I’ve seen and read Grayson is simply doing his job as a United States Congressman and trying ascertain why the Federal Reserve is allowed to hand out trillions of taxpayer dollars to mostly foreign banks without any legislative oversight.

Yes, he did make things uncomfortable for Ben Bernanke on July 21 when he asked the Fed Chairman why in the world the Federal Reserve had given New Zealand banks \$9 billion dollars, adding, “seriously, wouldn’t it have been better to extend that kind of credit to Americans rather than to New Zealanders?”

And he did sharply question the Federal Reserve Inspector General Elizabeth Coleman, on May 6, asking her “what have you done to investigate the off-balance sheet transactions conducted by the Federal Reserve which now total \$9 trillion in the last eight months.” The Inspector General was unaware that these, or, it seemed, any transactions involving money actually take place with the confines of the Federal Reserve.

It was, most assuredly, an embarrassing five minutes for Coleman who is either clueless as to what her job description is and should therefore be immediately fired, or, Coleman knows exactly what she is doing and should therefore be brought up on charges of treason against the United States Government and its People and forced to stand trial for her life.

Making Government officials uncomfortable by questioning them is not necessarily taking a “stand,” especially when it is a Representative of the People doing the questioning.

The fact that the YouTube video titled: Alan Grayson: “Which Foreigners Got the Fed’s \$500 billion?” Bernanke: “I Don’t Know,” was the third most watched news video in July, and the YouTube video titled: “Alan Grayson: Is Anyone Minding the Store at the Federal Reserve?” concerning Inspector Coleman was the most watched Congressional hearing on YouTube ever, points out, to me at least, that one Congressman is being followed by millions of people, worldwide, because it appears Alan Grayson is one of only a handful of Washington politicians that have the courage to actually do what they are supposed to do -represent the American people and protect, to best of their ability, our Democracy.

50. [theAmericanist](#) Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 9:09 am](#)

Golly, you people hate democracy, e.g., Don Williams: “If a politician openly proclaimed during the campaign that he is a whore...”

Don't pay much attention, do you? For one thing, this is the primary theme of the Federalist papers, stated considerably more accurately (and elegantly), in the whole discussion of "factions".

One of the better lines about it was a couple generations ago, by Senator Kerr of Oklahoma: "I'm against any deal that I'm not in on." (THis seems to be essentially where Lieberman is at these days.)

To get all philosophical about it, self-government is necessarily a somewhat dirty business, like plumbing maintenance. In fact, it's not unlike the great metaphor for the evolution of the body — you can think of biological evolution (or the USA) as being like the constant expansion and renovation of a home. Every so often, there is a major modernization, like the development of the spine or Social Security, but the original roof and walls, pipes and wiring aren't torn out, they're just bypassed. "The past isn't over, it's not even past." When you look at how we govern ourselves in this country, underneath all the modern media, the scientific polling and the sophisticated focus group politicking, you can still see the levers that Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson used against each other.

But remember — it's dictators who rip out all the old wiring, and their homes generally catch fire. Free peoples who govern themselves just move on.

If you don't like plumbing as a metaphor, put it this way: one primary practical distinction between self-government and tyranny is that in democracies, corruption is spread about THINLY — and wide.

Senators and Representatives are constantly evaluating what is most important to their multiple constituencies, and what leverage they have in fluid legislative situations to deliver more to their employers — the voters of their states and districts. You may not LIKE that — but if you're not from their state or district, who cares?

And if you are, well: like it's a political sin for a Senator from Connecticut to help the insurance companies? Or somebody from Virginia to spend a ton of the taxpayers money on the US Navy? Get a grip, this is how a representative democracy WORKS.

A few years back, somebody asked then-Senator Breaux about why he changed his vote on a matter he decided was of lesser significance to Louisiana, in order to get a commitment for something he determined was more important to the good people of his state: Did this mean that your vote is for sale, Senator?

Breaux's response was brilliant: "No, it means it can be rented."

THAT's government by We, the People.

51. *Hector* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 10:07 am](#)

Re: THAT's government by We, the People.

Personally, I prefer government by men and women of integrity, virtue, and honor.

52. *lyons* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 10:09 am](#)

doesn't miron know? ayn rand thought charity was immoral or something. charity is not allowed. every libertarian who cries 'charity can fix it' should be reminded...

53. *Anthony Damiani* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 10:59 am](#)

Are they? The guy from Cato is saying that provision of this good should be left to private charity. Is that the same as saying the good should not be provided?

In practice, generally yes.

What's wrong with you people? Grayson is a huge blast of fresh air, blowing some of the stale stink out of congress. If you call yourself a progressive but think he's too outspoken, just please get the fuck out of politics, your colorless whinging is the reason there is barely anything resembling a functioning left in this country.

I'm not upset that he's outspoken; I cheered his healthcare line. But his subsequent behavior comes off as a self-aggrandizing windbag desperate to become a political celebrity.

54. *theAmericanist* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 11:03 am](#)

” I prefer government by men and women of integrity, virtue, and honor...”

And do you get to do the Vorwähler?

55. *Tyro* Says:

[November 2nd, 2009 at 11:08 am](#)

But his subsequent behavior comes off as a self-aggrandizing windbag desperate to become a political celebrity.

I don't see why his rhetorical style is a problem or why it is your concern. We should not seek politicians just because they fit our aesthetic preferences or because he is the sort of person we would like to hang out with.

The self-aggrandizibg gasbags have been the republicans who thought that throwing a tantrum about Grayson's "die quickly" line would force him to apologize and, of course, the earnest liberals upset that someone isn't fulfilling their West Wing fantasy.

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