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BEST OF THE WEB TODAY | OCTOBER 14, 2009

## 'We're Going to Let You Die'

*Who said it? Hint: It wasn't Sarah Palin.*

By [JAMES TARANTO](#)

[David Espo](#) of the Associated Press is certainly excited about what the Senate Finance Committee did yesterday:

Historic legislation to expand U.S. health care and control costs won its first Republican supporter Tuesday and cleared a key Senate hurdle, a double-barreled triumph that propelled President Barack Obama's signature issue toward votes this fall in both houses of Congress.

[Michael Cannon](#) of the Cato Institute throws some cold water on the double-barreled hurdle-clearing of a signature-propellent, noting that lots of special interests--not just industry groups but unions, wealthy constituents of Democratic congressmen, and even coal miners--have reason to oppose this legislation. "Can President Obama and the congressional leadership satisfy [these] groups?" he asks. "My guess is, probably not, and this misguided effort at 'reform' will therefore die. Again."

Let's hope he's right. Meanwhile, if you're not part of a special interest but just a regular American who hopes one day to grow old (because it beats the alternative), [NewsBusters.org](#) has a timely reminder that proponents of "health-care reform" don't necessarily sympathize with that aspiration. NewsBusters links to another [Morgen Richmond YouTube clip](#), this one of a speech that Robert Reich, who served as President Clinton's labor secretary, delivered on the subject in 2007:

I will actually give you a speech made up entirely--almost at the spur of the moment, of what a candidate for president would say if that candidate did not care about becoming president. In other words, this is what the truth is, and a candidate will never say, but what candidates should say if we were in a kind of democracy where citizens were honored in terms of their practice of citizenship, and they were educated in terms of what the issues were, and they could separate myth from reality in terms of what candidates would tell them:

"Thank you so much for coming this afternoon. I'm so glad to see you, and I would like to be president. Let me tell you a few things on health care. Look, we have the only health-care system in the world that is designed to avoid sick people. [laughter] That's true, and what I'm going to do is I am going to try to reorganize it to be more amenable to treating sick people. But that means you--particularly you young people, particularly you young, healthy people--you're going to have to pay more. [applause] Thank you.

"And by the way, we are going to have to--if you're very old, we're not going to give you all that technology and all those drugs for the last couple of years of your life to keep you maybe going

for another couple of months. It's too expensive, so we're going to let you die. [applause]

"Also, I'm going to use the bargaining leverage of the federal government in terms of Medicare, Medicaid--we already have a lot of bargaining leverage--to force drug companies and insurance companies and medical suppliers to reduce their costs. But that means less innovation, and that means less new products and less new drugs on the market, which means you are probably not going to live that much longer than your parents. [applause] Thank you."

As noted in our transcription, Reich's Berkeley, Calif., audience applauded the idea of taxing the young, killing the old, and stifling lifesaving innovations. One suspects that these ideas would not be greeted as warmly in most other American locales, which is why elected politicians who are actually trying to sell such ideas cloak them in euphemisms about "universal care," "reform," "cost cutting" and so forth.

[Liz Hunt](#) of London's Daily Telegraph reports on an even more chilling euphemism used in a country that long ago instituted "health-care reform":

"Mrs ----- has breathing difficulties," the night manager told her. "She needs oxygen. Shall we call an ambulance?"

"What do you mean?" my friend responded. "What's the matter with her?"

"She needs to go to hospital. Do you want that? Or would you prefer that we make her comfortable?"

"Make her comfortable." Here's what that meant:

Befuddled by sleep, she didn't immediately grasp what was being asked of her. Her grandmother is immobilised by a calcified knee joint, which is why she is in the home. She's a little deaf and frail, but otherwise perky. She reads a newspaper every day (without glasses), and is a fan of the darling of daytime television, David Dickinson. Why wouldn't she get medical treatment if she needed it?

Then, the chilling implication of the phone call filtered through--she was being asked whether her grandmother should be allowed to die.

"Call an ambulance now," my friend demanded.

The person at the other end persisted. "Are you sure that's what you want? For her to go to hospital."

"Yes, absolutely. Get her to hospital."

Three hours later, her grandmother was sitting up in A&E [the accident-and-emergency ward], smiling. She had a mild chest infection, was extremely dehydrated, but was responding to oxygen treatment.

As Hunt notes, "Withdrawal of fluids (and drugs) is one of the steps on the controversial palliative care programme known as the Liverpool Care Pathway, which has been adopted by 900 hospitals, hospices and care homes in England."

[Former Enron adviser Paul Krugman](#) disagrees: "In Britain, the government itself runs the hospitals and employs the doctors. We've all heard scare stories about how that works in practice; these stories are false." But is it possible that Reich is right and Krugman is wrong?

### **Cradle to Grave in 9.8 Seconds**

"A new provision being rolled into the unified House health care bill would allow young adults to stay on their parents' health care plans until they turn 27, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told reporters Tuesday," the Puffington Host reports:

"Young adults are the most uninsured group in the country. They often lose coverage at age 19 when they graduate from high school or a few years later when they graduate from college. Once they enter the workforce, they face new obstacles to getting insurance," Pelosi said. "Now with this legislation that takes them to their 27th birthday, we take them a long way down the path of some independence, some liberation to follow their aspirations right out of school."

So now we can't expect people to establish "some independence" under they're 27 years old? Let's say for the sake of argument that this becomes the norm, and that (to pick some numbers out of a hat), the typical age for full independence is 30, and the average couple has its first child at age 33. That would mean that by the time the average American becomes a grandparent, he will be 66--old enough to attract the interest of Robert Reich's death panels.

And who says Congress will stop at 27? In coming years, perhaps it will mandate that 30- or 35-year-olds and up be covered by their parents' health plans. Eventually the same plan that is letting grandma die will be covering her son into late middle age. The Nancy Pelosi welfare state will take you from cradle to grave faster than a hybrid car can go from zero to 60.

### Support Our Tropes

The Associated Press has a little fun with President Obama's rhetorical crutches:

For all his flourish, President Barack Obama sure falls back on a few familiar phrases.

Make no mistake. Change isn't easy. It won't happen overnight. There will be setbacks and false starts.

Those who routinely listen to the president have come to expect some of those expressions to pop up in almost every speech. (That includes you, cynics and naysayers, the ones Obama mentions all the time without identifying who is saying nay.)

Atop the list of presidential catch-phrases, though, is "Let me be clear":

It is his emphatic windup for, well, everything.

"Let me be clear," he said in describing his surprise at winning the Nobel Peace Prize. "I do not view it as a recognition of my own accomplishments, but rather as an affirmation of American leadership on behalf of aspirations held by people in all nations."

"Let me be clear," he said in one of his dozens of pitches for a health insurance overhaul. "If you like your doctor or health care provider, you can keep them."

"Let me be clear" is one of those phrases that leads you to expect the opposite, like "To be honest," "I am not a crook," and "Let me make one thing perfectly clear." Make no mistake.

Meanwhile, did you notice this trope of Sen. Olympia Snowe? The Wall Street Journal's [Janet Adamy](#) has a pair of quotes from Snowe's comments yesterday on the Baucus health-care bill: "When history calls, history calls," and, "My vote today, is my vote today."

We tried to remember where we had heard something like this before, and finally it dawned on us: [A is A!](#) Olympia Snowe must be an Objectivist.

### Change, or More of the Same?

A reader passes along this February 2008 Der Spiegel interview with Henry Kissinger, who won a Nobel Peace Prize back when that award arguably still meant something. On the [second page](#) we find this exchange:

**Spiegel:** Isn't German and European opposition to a greater military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq also a result of deep distrust of American power?

**Kissinger:** By this time next year, we will see the beginning of a new administration. We will then discover to what extent the Bush administration was the cause or the alibi for European-American disagreements. Right now, many Europeans hide behind the unpopularity of President Bush.

Kissinger was quite right, with one qualification. As the Norwegian Nobel Committee demonstrated last week, Europeans are *still* hiding behind the unpopularity of President Bush. We [argued on Monday](#) that this would not have been the case if John McCain or Hillary Clinton had been elected president. In this regard at least, America elected the only candidate capable of extending, rather than breaking from, the Bush legacy.

### Better Luck Next Year, Mr. President

"Placido Domingo Accepts \$1 Million Birgit Nilsson Prize in Sweden"--headline, Associated Press, Oct. 13

### Logic Quiz

Spot the fallacy in this BBC report:

Restricting the availability of legal abortion does not appear to reduce the number of women trying to end unwanted pregnancies, a major report suggests. . . .

The survey of 197 countries carried out by the Guttmacher Institute--a pro-choice reproductive think tank--found there were 41.6m abortions in 2003, compared with 45.5 [million] in 1995--a drop which occurred despite population increases.

The answer, as always, is the Fox Butterfield fallacy. If abortion is declining, you'd *expect* population to rise, would you not?

### Zero-Tolerance Watch

Matthew Whalen, 17, is an Eagle Scout who has completed 10 weeks of military training and plans to attend West Point. But he's worried his plans to serve his country may be thwarted by the geniuses who run [Lansingburgh Senior High School](#) in Troy, N.Y., where Whalen is a senior. In an interview with FoxNews.com, he explains what happens:

He said his school's assistant principal, Frank Macri, approached him on Sept. 21 and asked him if he was carrying a knife.

"I was taken down to the office, and they told me that a student told them that I was carrying a knife," Whalen said.

He said he told them "they could search me and everything, and they said, 'There's no need for that.'" . . .

"And they said, 'Do you own a knife?' I said, 'Yes, I'm a soldier and an Eagle Scout--I own a knife.'

"And they were like, 'Well, is it in your car or anything?' And I told them, 'Yeah, it's in my car right now.'

"And they asked me to show it to them. I didn't realize it was going to be a problem. I knew it wasn't illegal--my police chief grandfather gave the knife to me."

Whalen said he took school administrators to his car because he thought their fears would be allayed when they saw it was just a 2-inch knife.

"They thought I had a dagger in my car or something like that, so I thought yeah, I'd show it to them," Whalen said.

"I showed it to them, and they told me I had a knife on school property and had to be suspended."

But things didn't end there, Whalen said.

"They brought a cop in, who told them 'he's not breaking any laws, so I can't charge him with anything.' "

Nonetheless, the principal suspended him from school for five days. Then, at a "superintendent hearing" that the superintendent didn't bother to attend, the principal quadrupled the punishment. Whalen says he worries that the disciplinary action on his record will hurt his chances for admission to West Point. Let's hope Principal Macri is shamed into backing down.

Good sense seems to have prevailed in Newark, Del., where, as we [noted yesterday](#), five-year-old Zachary Christie was sentenced to 45 days in reform school for bringing a Cub Scout utensil to school. Reports [NBC News](#):

On Tuesday night the school board made a hasty change to its code of conduct. The seven-member board voted unanimously to reduce the punishment for kindergartners and first-graders who bring weapons to school or commit other violent offenses to a suspension ranging from three to five days. . . .

School board member John Mackenzie told The Associated Press before the meeting that he was surprised school officials did not use common sense and disregard the policy in Zachary's case. The need for common sense to prevail over the letter of the law was a recurring theme among the boy's supporters and school safety experts.

It's amazing how often our government schools turn out to be run by people who need to be told of "the need for common sense to prevail."

### **That's Swift Action, All Right!**

- "Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is calling out his wife, Maria Shriver, for apparently violating a state law he signed--holding her cell phone while driving. The celebrity Web site TMZ.com posted two photographs Tuesday showing Shriver holding a phone to her ear while she's behind the wheel. It says one was snapped Sunday and the other in July. . . . On his Twitter feed, Schwarzenegger wrote to TMZ.com founder Harvey Levin: 'Thanks for bringing her violations to my attention. There's going to be swift action.' "--[Associated Press](#), Oct. 14
- "Schwarzenegger Signs New Anti-Paparazzi Law"--headline, [CNN.com](#), Oct. 14

### **Lured at Last**

- "Nats Cannot Lure Durham"--headline, [Washington Post](#) Web site, Feb. 10
- "Durham County OKs a \$1.2 Million Lure"--headline, [News & Observer](#) (Raleigh, N.C.), Oct. 13

### **Questions Nobody Is Asking**

- "Where Have All the Successful Female Rappers Gone?"--headline, [CNN.com](#), Oct. 14
- "Has Obama Hurt Michael Moore's New Film?"--headline, [Puffington Host](#), Oct. 13

### **Someone Give the Director the Chair**

"Polanski Is Finishing Latest Film From His Cell, Says Robert Harris"--headline, Times (London), Oct. 14

### **The Good News Is, They Didn't Go Extinct**

"Researchers Claim a Third of Dinosaurs Might Never Have Existed"--headline, PhysOrg.com, Oct. 13

### **Where Everyone's Lifespan Is Longer Than Average**

"Minn. Town Gets Healthy, Adds Longevity, Together"--headline, Associated Press, Oct. 14

### **What Do You Mean 'We,' Kemo Sabe?**

"Sidekick Implosion: Was It Sabotage?"--headline, Network World, Oct. 13

### **In Case You Were Wondering What That Smell Was**

"Fresh-Squeezed Veggie Juice Finally Comes of Age"--headline, Daily Local News (Chester County, Pa.), Oct. 14

### **'Take Me, God, but Please, Let My Children Live'**

"Most Who Die From New H1N1 Flu Have Conditions: CDC"--headline, Reuters, Oct. 13

### **That's About 1 per 160 Million Potential Customers**

"China Mobile to Sell 8 Motorola OPhones Next Year"--headline, Reuters, Oct. 13

### **Fish Stabs Man--Now *That* Would Be News**

"Oregon Man Gets Probation for Stabbing Ex's Fish"--headline, Associated Press, Oct. 13

### **Look Out Below!**

"Insurers Drop Drywall Victims"--headline, The Wall Street Journal, Oct. 14

### **It's Always in the Last Place You Look**

"Mayor Johnson's Missing Garment Bag Is Recovered in San Francisco"--headline, Sacramento Bee, Oct. 13

### **Someone Set Up Us the Bomb**

"Mokulele, Go! Airlines Merge"--headline, Associated Press, Oct. 13

### **Everything Seemingly Is Spinning Out of Control**

- "For Many U.S. Wealthy, Housing Crisis Still a Squeeze"--headline, [Reuters](#), Oct. 14
- "Invading Giant Snakes Threaten U.S. Wilderness Areas"--headline, [Reuters](#), Oct. 14
- "Sir Tim Berners-Lee Admits the Forward Slashes in Every Web Address 'Were a Mistake' "--headline, [Daily Mail](#) (London), Oct. 14
- "Human Race on the Verge of a Massive Upgrade"--headline, [Network World](#), Oct. 13
- "Scabies Outbreak at Elysee Palace"--headline, [Daily Telegraph](#) (London), Oct. 13
- "Al-Qaeda 'Faces Funding Crisis' "--headline, [BBC](#) Web site, Oct. 13
- "The Tragedy of Krispy Kreme"--headline, [Yahoo! Finance](#), Oct. 13

### **News You Can Use**

- "Michelle Obama Stresses Small Changes to Diet, Exercise Routine to Improve Fitness, Health"--headline, [Associated Press](#), Oct. 13
- "The Car That Uses Urine to Save the Planet"--headline, [Age](#) (Melbourne, Australia), Oct. 14
- "Jackson's Burnt Hair Up for Sale"--headline, [Sun](#) (London), Aug. 13
- "Tyra Banks Wants You to Know She Feels Great Naked"--headline, [New York](#) magazine Web site, Oct. 13
- "Bisexual or Lesbian--Please Make Up Your Mind"--headline, [CNN.com](#), Oct. 14

### **Bottom Stories of the Day**

- "No Decision on Drury's Future"--headline, [Wheaton \(Ill.\) Sun](#), Oct. 14
- "Valley Gains Its First Armenian Priest"--headline, [Desert Sun](#) (Palm Springs, Calif.), Oct. 14

- "St. Louis Union Prez Allegedly Took Bribes"--headline, [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), Oct. 13
- "PM Eats Biscuit, Twitters About It"--headline, [Australian](#), Oct. 14
- "Washington Is Nuts"--headline, [Tony Blankley](#) column, [JewishWorldReview.com](#), Oct. 14

### **So Many Nights I Sit by My Window Waiting for Someone to Stifle That Song**

Songwriter Joseph Brooks has been having a difficult time of late, the Associated Press reports. He is scheduled to go on trial next week after having "pleaded not guilty in June to raping 11 women seeking film roles." He's also involved in a messy civil case:

Brooks filed a fraud suit Tuesday seeking at least \$2 million in damages and the return of a \$550,000 bank account, a \$60,000 engagement ring and other expensive presents he says he gave to Joaly Gomez. . . .

According to the lawsuit, the 71-year-old Brooks met the then-21-year-old Gomez more than 18 months ago and grew close to her after suffering a stroke in April 2008. . . .

Told she was a student with no money, Brooks treated her to more than \$1 million worth of designer clothes and jewelry, the lawsuit said. After professing his love and proposing in May, he followed up with the 1.38-carat diamond-and-platinum Tiffany's ring, about \$50,000 worth of dental work, a \$70,000 Mercedes-Benz and more than \$1 million in deposits into her bank account, the suit said. Gomez later returned about half the money but kept \$550,000, according to the lawsuit.

The "complete shock" came Oct. 2, when he peered in her open handbag and discovered a 2007 marriage certificate listing her as another man's wife, the suit said. She had concealed the marriage "so that he would continue to shower her with gifts, attention, propose to her" and spend money on her, the suit said.

You almost start to think the guy has suffered enough. And then you realize he's the guy who wrote "You Light Up My Life."

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