



**Vol. II Number III February 15, 2012**

*We hope you enjoy reading VIEWPOINT. We know that a few of our readers were experiencing formatting problems with the first few editions of this publication. While we are confident that these problems have been resolved for most, there may still be a few readers, especially those who access their email messages in their Web browsers, who are still having problems with lines that appear to run off of the right side of pages. Therefore, beginning with this issue, each edition of VIEWPOINT will also contain a .pdf file attachment. This is a "universal format" that can be read on any computer. If you cannot read this newsletter in your email, you need only click on the attachment. The file will then open in a separate window, assuming you have a pdf reader program. Most computers do. If not, you can download a free copy of the Acrobat Reader [here](#). Ed.*

## **THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE**

President Barack Obama's re-election campaign has launched a "Truth Team" with news conferences in Florida and other states designed to recruit **grassroots supporters** to promote his achievements, respond to attacks and "*hold the eventual Republican nominee accountable.*"

The effort includes a web site, [BarackObama.com/TruthTeam](http://BarackObama.com/TruthTeam), with sections on responding to attacks, criticizing Republican presidential contenders and touting the Obama administration's accomplishments, plus tools for social media sharing, volunteering, and sending postcards, emails and letters to newspapers and undecided voters.

The effort is similar to the "Fight the Smears" initiative during Obama's 2008 campaign, which the campaign today says involved a million people; the goal this year is to **double** that.

Obama partisans say the rise of "super PACS," independent political organizations that can raise money in unlimited contributions and spend it on political campaign advertising, makes the effort more important this year.

In remarks during the news conference in Florida, State Democratic Party Chair Rod Smith said, "*Mitt Romney and his Republican allies will say anything – no matter how untruthful or over-the-top – to win,*" and that Romney "*has been caught lying about everything under the sun.*"

He said the Truth Team will be "*a sustained program that we'll be relying on for the next nine months as our primary resource for providing information to our army of supporters.*"

The [Web site](#) is now active. By providing your email address, you will receive timely updates on the lies Republicans are spreading and the **real story**.

## INFORMATION ON HEALTH REFORM

Another important Web site with which Democrats should become familiar is operated by [Doctors For America](#). This group was formed to provide accurate information on the **Affordable (Health) Car Act**, which Republicans, and often their corporate media hacks, derisively call "ObamaCare." The site is chock full of valuable information on the significant reforms the law makes to halt the most egregious insurance company abuses, as well as information on how the act helps control the rising cost of health care in America.

Learning about the Affordable Care Act and what it really means for Americans will help all of us counter the incredible amount of misinformation currently dominating conversations on this issue. [Get Educated](#) now!

## CAN THEY SINK ANY LOWER?

The annual hatefest known as the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) has just concluded. Much media fanfare, of course was given to speeches by presidential candidates. Here's a little tidbit we bet you didn't see covered by major media outlets. CPAC provides forums to anti-gay groups like the [Family Research Council](#), birther leader [Joseph Farah](#) of WorldNetDaily, and the apartheid-nostalgic [Youth for Western Civilization](#), but that's not all. On Saturday CPAC hosted a panel on "The Failure of Multiculturalism: How the pursuit of diversity is weakening the American Identity" with Peter Brimelow, the founder and head of [VDARE.com](#).

VDARE is a [White Nationalist](#) website, run by Brimelow, which frequently publishes the works of anti-Semitic and racist writers and is named after Virginia Dare, who is believed to be the first child of English parents born in the Americas. Brimelow, an immigrant from Great Britain, expresses his [fear](#) of the loss of America's white majority, [blames](#) non-white immigrants for social and economic problems and urges the Republican Party to [give up on minority voters and focus on winning the white vote](#). He also [said](#) that a New York City subway is the same as an Immigration and Naturalization Service waiting room, "an underworld that is not just teeming but also almost entirely **colored**."

VDARE has published the work of people like [Robert Weissberg](#), who [says that black and Hispanic students are responsible for problems in the American education system](#), [Marcus Epstein](#), the Youth for Western Civilization leader who [karate-chopped a black woman after calling her a "n\\*\\*\\*\\*r" \(he later pled guilty to assault\)](#), and J. Philippe Rushton of the eugenicist [Pioneer Fund](#).

The Southern Poverty Law Center lists VDARE as a [White Nationalist hate group](#) and [notes](#) that "VDARE.com's archives contain articles like 'Freedom vs. Diversity,' 'Abolishing America,' 'Anarcho-Tyranny — Where Multiculturalism Leads' and 'Why Immigrants Kill,'" compiled quotes from other VDARE writers that call the U.S. an exclusively white nation and denounce Jews for "weakening America's historic White majority."

While CPAC gave the boot to the gay conservative group **GOProud** "because of their behavior and attitude," apparently running a website dedicated to promoting white nationalism is just fine.

Apparently Romney, Santorum, Gingrich and other Republican leaders like Speaker John Boehner and Leader McConnell who appeared at CPAC, had no problem speaking at a conference which is giving a platform to birthers, apartheid apologists and white nationalists.

## **NOW THE COURTS GET A CHANCE**

It comes as no surprise that Democrats have filed a lawsuit against a congressional redistricting map immediately after that plan and a second one redrawing Florida House and Senate districts received final approval from the Republican-controlled Legislature.

The Senate sent the congressional map (HB 1174) to Gov. Rick Scott and the legislative plan (SJR 1176) to the Florida Supreme Court. Both passed in the House last week.

The Democrats contend the maps violate anti-gerrymandering standards in the two Fair Districts amendments to the Florida Constitution that voters approved in 2010. The suit was filed in state Circuit Court in Tallahassee.

**Three nonpartisan groups** that supported the Fair Districts amendments **also announced plans to sue** once Scott signs the congressional plan.

*"Republicans have undertaken the sort of incumbent protection and partisan gerrymandering that 63-percent of Florida voters overwhelmingly demanded must stop,"* said Florida Democratic Party Chairman Rod Smith. *"Now the courts have to step in to implement the will of the people -- a job the GOP in Tallahassee failed to accomplish."*

Republicans insisted the maps conform to the amendments that prohibit the intentional drawing of districts to favor or disfavor incumbents or political parties.

Senate Reapportionment Committee Chairman Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, argued that it doesn't matter if the maps favor the GOP or incumbents because if they do that result was unintentional.

*"Effect does not prove intent,"* Gaetz said. *"The effect is irrelevant legally and constitutionally."*

Leaders of the League of Women Voters of Florida, The National Council of La Raza, and Common Cause Florida said their groups and four individual plaintiffs will sue in the same Tallahassee court if and when Scott, a Republican, signs the congressional bill into law.

A draft of their planned lawsuit says the map *"is filled with unconstitutional political gerrymanders intended to favor one political party and certain incumbents, while disfavoring the other political party and other incumbents"*

The groups did an analysis that showed Republicans would be favored to win at least twice as many districts as Democrats, although **voter registration in Florida is split almost evenly between the parties.**

The proposed lawsuit also alleges the plan *"suppresses the ability of minorities to participate in Florida's political process by unnecessarily confining their influence to select districts and purposefully keeping them out of others."*

There's no need to show intent to prove a violation of the minority protection provisions, but Gaetz also argued the maps do not diminish their ability to elect their preferred candidates.

The congressional map increases the black voting age population of a district currently held by U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, a black Democrat, from slightly below 50 percent to just above 50 percent. It also maintains minority majorities in two other congressional districts represented by black Democrats and three seats held by Hispanic Republicans.

The map adds two new congressional districts to bring the total to 27 including one in central Florida with a 41.3 percent Hispanic voting age population. Most of those Hispanics, though, are Puerto Ricans

who tend to vote Democratic.

One feature of the Senate map that's sure to be a focal point of the court arguments is that **no sitting senators**, except for those being term-limited out of office, would be placed in a district with another incumbent.

That's not the case with the House and congressional maps that double up numerous incumbents.

## **IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PROFITABLE**

(From [TBO.com](http://TBO.com)) The **high-speed rail** project that Gov. Rick Scott doomed last February by turning down more than \$2 billion in federal money would have made an **annual surplus of \$31 million to \$45 million** within a decade of operation, according to a state report.

The Florida Department of Transportation sent the report to the Federal Railroad Administration in November. The Tampa Tribune obtained the document after a lengthy public records request.

The heart of the report is an **analysis by two consulting firms** of projected ridership, costs and the resulting surplus – or loss. If the project to link Tampa and Orlando would have gone forward, the research would have been used in determining an investment grade for bond sales.

According to data from both consulting firms **hired by the state**, the project, which would have given Florida the nation's first high-speed rail line, would have been a fiscally sound decision.

The firm of Steer, Davis, Gleave projected Tampa-Orlando ridership of 2.5 million and a \$9.1 million deficit in 2016, the first year of operation. By 2026, though, the high-speed rail would be carrying nearly 5 million passengers a year and generate an annual surplus of \$31.1 million, according to the firm.

The projection by Wilbur Smith Associates was even rosier. The firm estimated 3.6 million riders in 2016, producing a \$17.6 million operating surplus. By 2026, Florida's high-speed rail would carry more than 5 million riders and produce a \$44.8 million surplus, according to its analysis.

The state used the information from the two consultants to come up with a midrange estimate: 3 million passengers and \$4.3 million surplus in the first year, and a ridership of nearly 5 million and an annual surplus of \$38 million by 2026.

The initial stage of the project would have been the Tampa-to-Orlando route. An Orlando-to-Miami route was envisioned as a second phase, but because those plans had no dedicated funding, the consultants did not include that route in their study.

If they had, the surpluses would have been larger, the report says.

*"Ridership and revenue for the (proposed second phase) Orlando-Miami corridor would be expected to be substantially higher and produce large operating surpluses,"* the state report said.

A Scott spokesman last week said the governor stands by his decision to turn down the federal offer to pay \$2.4 billion of the projects estimated \$2.65 billion cost. The governor's office has said Scott was *"verbally briefed"* on highlights of the study before it was completed.

When making his decision a year ago, Scott relied heavily on a January 2011 [Reason Foundation](http://ReasonFoundation.org) policy brief, whose project director Robert Poole Jr. served on Scott's gubernatorial transition team.

Using comparisons with overseas high-speed rail projects and one envisioned for California, the report by the libertarian group said it was likely the project would cost significantly more to build than estimated and that the state could be on the hook for significant operating subsidies for years.

The state report noted that, "*Concerns have been expressed about the possible capital cost overruns from the project that could obligate Florida taxpayers as well as concerns about ridership and revenue projections that historically are overly optimistic.*"

That reference clearly is directed toward the governor's publicly stated skepticism toward the project, though Scott is not mentioned by name in the executive summary.

The report said private-sector interest in high-speed rail had been substantial. Up to eight consortiums were anticipated to bid on the project, representing most of the world's existing high-speed rail systems, including China, Japan, South Korea, France, Germany and Spain.

"*Several teams had expressed willingness to absorb ridership risk and invest in the system,*" the report said.

Ross Capon, president and chief executive of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, which favors high-speed rail, said large transportation projects, such as **new highways, often have "issues" like cost overruns.**

The projects often are "*steamrolled through*" by governments because major infrastructure work usually pays for itself through time, he said.

Such government resolve has not yet shown up when it comes to high-speed rail, he said.

"*It's less likely with rail because so many people are eager for various reasons to attack any rail plan that actually appears close to implementation,*" Capon said.

Some of the federal money for high-speed rail that had been offered to Florida instead went to California. Price estimates for that project have consistently risen over early estimates, which Scott says shows he was right to turn down the money.

Capon argues **Florida's situation is different from California**, which he said has complex issues of what routes to take and build first. Florida's plan of Tampa to Orlando, then Orlando to Miami, followed **straight paths on level terrain** with some segments on Interstate right-of-way paid for and set aside for rail.

What's been lost, Capon said, is Florida's opportunity to raise its economic development image worldwide, along with an alternative transportation system for the state.

**Elections do, indeed, have consequences.** This is just one of many Floridians will have to endure well after Rick Scott is turned out of office in the next election.

## **CLUB'S WEB SITE UPDATED**

We at the South Shore Democratic Club are proud of our communications program. A major component in that program is our [WEB site](#). There you will find a wide variety of information ranging from a local calendar of events, reprints of materials distributed at our monthly meetings, and commentary from well-known state and national political pundits.

One recent addition has captured the attention of all of the Club's board members. It is a video made by a very special group of Orlando teens who have a [musical message for 2012](#).

[Check it out](#), and while you're there take a look at all the other valuable information on the site.

## "ANOTHER 'LOONY' JOBS BILL"

That's what the *Miami Herald* calls SB 7206 by state Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach. The measure deals with **internet sales** of goods that, if purchased in a traditional retail outlet would be subject to state sales tax. Under current law, internet retailers like Amazon and eBay are not required to collect sales taxes unless they have some sort of "physical presence" in the state, like a showroom or warehouse. Estimates of the loss of income to Florida's dwindling coffers ranges up to \$1 billion per year and growing. Lynn's bill would close this internet loophole.

So what's so "loony" about that?

The state would **not gain** one red cent from the application of sales tax to internet purchases, that's what. Sen. Lynn's proposal would require the Department of Finance to track the money collected and offer a "sales tax holiday" for about the same amount. Says the *Herald*, "*(The)blame goes to Gov. Rick Scott, who in an election year seems to think that leveling the sales field for all businesses somehow amounts to a tax hike. He says he supports 'e-fairness' legislation only if it becomes revenue neutral. Memo to the governor: We're broke! We need the money!*"

A second internet sales tax bill, by Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, SB 1514 would also collect Internet sales taxes but doesn't include provisions to meet Scott's "revenue neutral" requirement. Poor sick people should not get their hopes up, though. Sen. Detert said she's willing to amend her bill to match SB 7206.

*"I think the Governor's supportive of it and I think the House just wants to make it revenue neutral so whatever we can do to help overcome their objections we're willing to do,"* Detert said.

## HOW DO YOU SPELL OUTRAGEOUS?

We spell it **Florida Governor and Legislature**. For the second consecutive year, our esteemed leaders are on their way to reducing **corporate taxes** in our already "tax-friendly" state. Tax cuts [recently approved](#) by the Florida House will deprive state and local governments of \$47.4 million in revenue next year and a whopping \$121.1 million in recurring funds. The bill is backed by Gov. Rick Scott, whose avowed goal is to eliminate corporate taxes completely.

Meanwhile those same alternate universe inhabitants are busy reducing **Medicaid** payments to hospitals and nursing homes, **cutting thousands jobs** and raising college tuition to free up more than \$1 billion for education which will barely fund enrollment and inflationary increases and will not come close to restoring the cuts they made in education last year.

**House Speaker Dean Cannon**, in an unintentional declaration of irony said the budget is "intellectually honest."

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

We normally shy away from reporting opinions expressed in local media, preferring to bring our readers perspectives gleaned from other state and national sources. However, we just couldn't resist this all too accurate description of the Florida Legislature by *Tampa Bay Times* columnist Daniel Ruth,

which was published yesterday. Ruth wrote about the shameful and nasty retaliation against USF for its refusal to bow at the feet of the state Senate's master of pique JD Alexander, as he personally shepherds the separation of Florida Technological University from USF. Alexander has long wanted this new independent university in his home town, so that he would have a "legacy," other than bully-in-chief of course. Said Ruth:

*"This isn't democracy in action. It's a good old boy junta, taking names, settling scores and extracting revenge. Think of this as the reign of the Borgias, only without the sense of whimsy. So it's a fair question: Why even bother with the charade of legislating? Why not dispense with filing bills, holding committee hearings and voting on stuff and put Senate Budget Committee Chairman JD Alexander in charge of everything, since it certainly appears the Big Daddy of Lake Wales is firmly in charge of establishing Florida as the Dogpatch of the nation?"*

## ONLY IN REPUBLICAN-LAND

In an earlier story on the Florida budget, we commented on House Speaker Dean Cannon's sense of "irony." It seems there is a lot of that going around among Republicans lately, especially as it relates to women's health and contraception.

For instance, in New Hampshire, State House Speaker William O'Brien (R) [introduced a resolution](#) Friday urging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to rescind the Obama rule requiring employers to cover contraception with no co-pay for their employees. O'Brien, joined by state House Republican Leader D.J. Bettencourt, Rep. Charles Bass (R), a spokesman for Rep. Frank Guinta (R) and Bishop Peter Libasci told reporters at a [news conference](#) that Obama's compromise, requiring insurers to cover birth control when the employer morally objects, doesn't go far enough to protect religious freedom.

*"This is about ensuring we do not mandate things contrary to people's moral and religious views,"* Bettencourt said.

The irony? Well, it seems that New Hampshire has had a law on the books for more than a decade that **requires** insurance coverage for contraceptive devices and services -- and the law has **no religious exemptions**. It passed with strong **bipartisan support**, and religious organizations in the state have been complying for years without complaint!

In fact, 26 states require such coverage in health insurance plans.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Unusual circumstance have conspired to create three vacancies on the *South Shore Democratic Club's* board of directors - Director of Membership; Director of Publicity; and Recording Secretary. None of these positions require inordinate committments of time, though all are important in an active club like ours. If you are interested in any of these positions, or would like more information, please send an email to [ssdemclub@gmail.com](mailto:ssdemclub@gmail.com).

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