



## Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

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**Disclaimer: The following "Letters to the Editor" were sent to the respective publications on the dates indicated. Some were printed but many were not. The original articles that are being commented on may or may not be available on the internet and may require registration or subscription to access if they are. Some of the original articles are syndicated and therefore may have appeared in other publications also.**

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18 December 2005

Editor, The New Orleans  
Times-Picayune

Dear Editor:

New Orleanians hoping that a rebuilt Crescent City won't be overly gentrified (Letters, Dec. 17) should oppose the movement for rent control. Such controls shift builders' incentives away from constructing rental units and toward building homes and condominiums for sale to owner-occupiers. Contrary to the intentions of its advocates, rent control will reduce poor people's prospects of finding housing in New Orleans.

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17 December 2005

Editor, The Washington Post  
1150 15th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

Mistaking toll roads as a privilege for rich people (Letters, Dec. 17), your readers insult non-rich drivers. Fact is, everyone today

pays a high price to use 'free' roads - namely, spending hours each day creeping along in traffic jams. That this expenditure of time isn't a cash outlay doesn't mean that it isn't a real cost paid by rich and non-rich alike.

By easing congestion on non-toll roads and by giving everyone the option of paying money to avoid traffic congestion altogether, toll roads reduce the time all drivers waste behind the wheel. The only way non-rich drivers would not benefit from toll roads is if they don't value their time. But clearly they do.

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16 December 2005

Editor, The Wall Street Journal  
200 Liberty St.  
New York, NY 10281

To the Editor:

Ronald Cass clearly explains why antitrust authorities shouldn't harass firms that bundle products together ("Antitrust a la Carte," Dec. 16). He's mistaken, however, to say that bundling done to "distinguish among buyers based

upon how much they value the base product" - the subject of early bundling cases - "doesn't promote efficiency."

While such bundling raises the firm's profits, it does so by enabling the firm to expand its output efficiently and thereby satisfy consumer demands that otherwise would remain unmet.

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15 December 2005

The Editor, New York Times  
229 West 43rd St.  
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Rep. Marcy Kaptur proposes legislation to retaliate against countries that "run trade surpluses with the United States of more than \$10 billion a year" ("Trade Deficit Hits Record, Threatening U.S. Growth," Dec. 15). She doesn't understand economics.

Suppose that next year Americans import \$200 billion from China but export nothing to that country. Suppose further that the Chinese spend this \$200 billion buying

coffee from Brazil, enabling Brazilians to buy \$200 billion in U.S. exports. China will then have a trade surplus with America of \$200 billion, while America will have a trade surplus with Brazil of \$200 billion.

Does it matter that these dollars are spent in America by Brazilians rather than by the Chinese? Should the Brazilians retaliate against America for our trade surplus with it?

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14 December 2005

Editor, CBS News

Dear Editor:

On today's noontime CBS News radio broadcast, Christopher Glenn misleadingly described the U.S. trade deficit as "red ink" (Dec. 14). In fact, the trade deficit is simply evidence of foreigners investing in America rather than buying U.S.-made goods and services. Only insofar as these investments take the form of loans to Americans does the trade deficit become red ink. All other modes of foreign investment, such as building businesses in the U.S., increase America's trade deficit without spilling red ink.

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14 December 2005

Editor, The Washington Post  
1150 15th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales insists that the Patriot Act protects liberty ("Reauthorize the Patriot Act," Dec. 14). He undermines his credibility, though,

by asserting that Al Qaeda's "stated goal is to kill Americans, cripple our economy and demoralize our people."

Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda honchos repeatedly say that their goal is to rid the middle east of American troops and aid. The fact that these thugs' means are murderous and without a shred of justification does not excuse the Bush administration's attempt to mislead Americans into accepting expanded police-state powers.

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13 December 2005

Editor, Reason

Dear Editor:

Asked by Julian Sanchez why he wrote only about the Republican - rather than the larger political - war on science, Chris Mooney replied that "Democrats have no constituency that compels them to deny something as fundamental as evolution" (Soundbite, January 2006). Mr. Mooney's claim is rejected by the evidence.

Democratic no less than GOP ranks bulge with people proclaiming that legislated minimum wages benefit low-wage workers and that goods in short supply are made more affordable by price caps. These people, in short, deny something as fundamental as supply and demand. More generally, the faithful of all political creeds imagine that the lives of 300 million diverse individuals can be successfully run by a handful of strangers who pose and pontificate beneath soaring marble domes.

These are egregious superstitions, immune to evidence and reason.

12 December 2005

Editor, The Washington Post  
1150 15th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

Steven Ginsburg worries that private firms will build roads "according to their ability to make money, a criterion that may not reflect the most pressing traffic needs" ("A Future Free From Gridlock, For a Price," A1, Dec. 12). For at least two reasons, this worry is silly.

First, today's incessant gridlock reveals that government is none too talented at building and operating roads to "reflect the most pressing traffic needs." Second, private firms earn greater profits the better they satisfy consumers. Why would profit-seeking firms avoid building roads that meet pressing traffic needs?