



**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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17 February 2008

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

Dear Editor:

I'm forever flabbergasted at the preposterously low standards to which politicians are held. Case in point: in today's lead editorial you correctly note that Senators Clinton and Obama each now is trumpeting more and more wrongheaded populist themes - including suspicion of trade - only to increase her or his chances of securing the nomination. So by your own assessment (which I

share) the next President of the United States might well be someone who endorses policies that he or she knows to be unwise AND who lies in order to score with the electorate.

If a man tonight falsely assures a woman of his undying love only to score with her, we rightly regard him as a sleazeball. But when politicians do essentially the same thing, save on a much larger scale, we call them "public servants" and treat them as our saviors. Very strange.

Friends,

My colleague Tyler Cowen -- in his column in today's

New York Times -- explains why political elections turn more on style than on substance:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/business/17view.html?\\_r=1&ref=business&ref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/business/17view.html?_r=1&ref=business&ref=slogin)

Here are Tyler's concluding paragraphs:

"That might sound pessimistic, but it's not. Many Americans will be living longer, finding new sources of learning and recreation, creating more rewarding jobs, striking up new loves and friendships, and, yes, earning more money. Just don't expect most of these gains to

come out of the voting booth or, for that matter, Washington.

"And if you're still worrying about how to vote, I have two pieces of advice. First, spend your time studying foreign policy, where the president has more direct power, and the choice of a candidate makes a much bigger difference. Second, stop worrying and get back to work."

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16 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

How distressing that many Americans now worry themselves sick that their consumption habits are ruining the environment ("Well, Doctor, I Have This Recycling Problem," February 16). There is, however, no need for them to seek professional help. My three-step plan to cure this mental anguish is simple and guaranteed to work:

Step One: Avoid major newspapers, magazines, and network news. These media uncritically genuflect to the official creed of environmental groups, and never give readers any historical perspective.

Step Two: Get historical perspective by learning how filthy and perilous the environment was before modern capitalism. I recommend reading Fernand Braudel's *The Structures of Everyday Life*.

Step Three: Get the actual facts about today's state of humanity and the

environment by reading the data-packed works of Indur Goklany, Bjorn Lomborg, and Julian Simon.

Persons completing this regimen will feel supreme contentment whenever they buy things such as SUVs, non-fair-trade, non-organic coffee from Guatemala, and even incandescent light bulbs.

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15 February 2008

Editor, New York Post

Dear Editor:

Rob Perry asserts that "common sense" dictates that Uncle Sam's recent military budget in recent years has been "inadequate" (Letters, February 14). Mr. Perry should rely less on his common sense and more on the data. As reported last week in the Los Angeles Times by Mercatus Center scholar Veronique de Rugy, George W. Bush "has given us the biggest defense budget since World War II - and that's regularly budgeted defense spending, not counting funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

[http://www.mercatus.org/Publications/pubID.4466,cfilter.0/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.mercatus.org/Publications/pubID.4466,cfilter.0/pub_detail.asp)

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15 February 2008

Director, CBS Radio News

Dear Sir or Madam:

On this morning's 8am (EST) broadcast, your anchorman reported that Rep. Henry Waxman says that he held this week's hearing with Roger Clemens and Brian McNamee only because it was requested by Mr. Clemens.

Has Mr. Waxman no shame? He stages a circus, involving Congress in a matter that is none of its business. At that circus he and his colleagues pompously pontificated, posed, and performed for the cameras, pretending to be great protectors of the republic. Finally, now that it is clear - undoubtedly to Mr. Waxman's surprise - that most Americans regard these hearings as being, at best, a farcical waste of time, Mr. Waxman blames Mr. Clemens! Surely Mr. Waxman, as Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, could have refused Mr. Clemens' alleged request if Mr. Waxman believed such hearings to be inappropriate.

Let us hear no more of Mr. Waxman's "toughness" and "courage." Like nearly all of his Congressional colleagues, he's a weasel and miscreant, skilled only at spending other people's money and other people's reputations on their own glorification.

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14 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

Every month you report Commerce Department figures on the U.S. trade deficit with individual countries. For example, we learn today that last year "[t]he trade deficit with China continued to rise, jumping by 10.2 percent to \$256.3 billion" ("U.S. Trade Deficit Drops in 2007," February 14).

Before again reporting such figures, your reporters (and the Commerce Department) should ask a fundamental question: In this world of extensive multilateral trade and investment, of what conceivable relevance is a measure of the volume of good and services trade between any two countries? America's

"trade deficit" with China is as relevant as is your "trade deficit" with, say, your columnist Maureen Dowd. I'm sure that every year you buy more from her than she buys from you. I'm also sure that you're not bothered by this fact - and for good reason: in a world of multilateral trade, no two entities are likely to have so-called "balanced" trade with each other.

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13 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

The 2008 presidential campaign has been going on for a year now, with nine months remaining. This campaign features several U.S. senators. So I ask: what sorts of "public servants" are Sens. Clinton, McCain, and Obama that each goes AWOL for almost two years from the jobs they were elected to perform in order to hunt for another job? Either each of these people is utterly irresponsible, or "service" in the U.S. Senate is pointless. If the former, each of these persons is ethically challenged. If the latter,

the Senate experience and achievements that each brags about are irrelevant.

13 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

At least a full-sized op-ed is required to address the many wrong-headed presumptions, factual errors, and non sequiturs that mar Robert Reich's "Totally Spent" (February 13). The most blatant mistake, however, is Mr. Reich's assertion that women entering the workforce, and people working longer hours, are examples of how Americans "live beyond their paychecks."

When more family members work, and when those who work do so for more hours per week, families' paychecks increase. Working more might be good or bad - it might be evidence of underlying economic problems - but it emphatically is not a means of living beyond a paycheck.

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12 February 2008

News Director, WTOP  
Radio

Dear Sir or Madam:

On this morning of the Chesapeake Primary, one of your reporters advised all listeners to "Let your voice be heard. Vote!"

Why is voting the only way to let my "voice" be heard? If I don't vote, doesn't that fact speak just as loudly as if I do vote? By not voting, I announce my dislike of all of the candidates. This announcement expresses my disdain for politicians as loudly and as clearly as does, say, my neighbor's vote for Barack Obama express her admiration for that candidate.

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12 February 2008

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

Dear Editor:

A contradiction mars Lisa Lombardo's opposition to Fairfax County Public Schools' plan to reduce its budget deficit by charging parents for their children's participation in extracurricular activities (Letters, February 12). Her expressed resistance to

new school fees "imposed on already overburdened taxpayers" unintentionally highlights the justification for the proposal. Fairfax parents are indeed overburdened taxpayers. IF the Schools continue offering extracurricular activities, these must be paid for either directly by Fairfax families in the form of fees, or indirectly in the form of taxes.

Either way, Fairfax's overburdened taxpayers cannot escape this burden. Payment in the form of fees at least focuses the costs of such programs on the families that benefit most from them.