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## THEY SAID IT

When the history of this administration is written, a key theme will be the abyss between the hope-and-change, across-the-aisle rhetoric and the almost gratuitous way Obama has caricatured his supposed opponents. The current “don’t make me look bad”/ “like a dog” psychodrama follows attacks of various sorts on Arizonans, Wall Street, opponents of the Ground Zero mosque, insurers, police, doctors, and anyone above the hated \$250,000 income level.

After the media’s embarrassment over the hagiographic coverage of Obama in 2007–9, they still cannot quite fathom that we have the most lashing-out and paranoid president since Richard Nixon – a nebulous and nefarious “they” always behind every administration stumble.

Victor Davis Hanson, “The Them vs. Us Presidency,” *National Review’s* “The Corner,” October 11, 2010.

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## THE MODIFIED BRADLEY EFFECT?

Don’t look now, boys and girls, but the 2012 presidential campaign will begin in just over three weeks. And if all goes as expected – which is to say that the Republicans pick-up a considerable number of seats and perhaps even the majority in one or both houses – then Barack Obama, who is unmistakably energized by campaigning and thoroughly bored by governing, will get back to doing what he does best, namely playing the victim. And play it he will. In fact, he will spend the next 24 months blathering on nonsensically about how he is an underdog and a fighter and how the whole world, but especially this “mean” country, is determined to see him fail.

As you may have guessed, we think this is as big a load of horsehockey as there is in American politics today. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine a more standard, traditional, establishment candidate than Barry. Prep school; Ivy league undergrad; community organizer; Ivy League law school; constitutional lecturer; tony, leftish, politically connected neighborhood; state legislature; U.S. Senate; on so on. The guy is a campaign strategist’s dream, which is to say that the victim routine is old and tired already and will only get more so over the course of the next election cycle.

But will it work this time around? Now that everyone in the country knows the guy, knows his politics, and knows how he’ll govern, will they return him to the White House, despite the fact that his shtick is already manifestly fetid?

This should not be a difficult question to answer. But, given how drastically political environments can change in just two short years, it is. And as long-time readers undoubtedly recall, we gave up trying to predict how the American public would vote nearly a decade-and-a-half ago after naively assuming that a majority of the electorate would not reelect a sleazy, licentious, amoral, deeply corrupt low-life and his dishonest wife who ran under the slogan, “two for the price of one.”

Still, we think that the exercise of discussing the President’s re-election prospects is worthwhile, principally because it gives us an opportunity to examine the man, his governing style, and the steps that he will likely take over the next two years to try to win back the voters that he and his party have lost. Besides, everyone else is doing it, or will do it soon, and we don’t want to get left behind.

Among those who have already made their 2012 predictions is Peter Beinart, the erstwhile center-left wunderkind, who became the managing editor of *The New Republic* at 24 and the Editor of the magazine just four years later, but who has sacrificed his professional *bona fides* of late with his rather fervent excoriations of Israel. In any case, Beinart argues confidently that Obama will win reelection and will do so rather comfortably. Indeed, he suggests that the expectation of re-election is “blindingly obvious.”

Beinart’s case rests largely on three “advantages” that he says Obama will likely have going into election season. First, Beinart claims, Obama will not face a primary challenge, which will guarantee him the unified support of his party. Second, the economy will turn around, thereby nullifying the principal complaint against Obama. And third, according to Beinart, Obama will have the incalculable advantage of having the GOP and its nominee as his opponents.

For the record, we disagree with Beinart rather ardently on this first advantage. Not that we don’t think that a unified party is a good thing and a tremendous benefit; obviously it is. We just don’t believe that it is anywhere near certain that Obama

will not be “primaried.” Even if Bill and Hillary can be made to swallow their perpetual ambition – which is a highly dubious expectation – there are other Democrats, Virginia Senator Jim Webb, to name one, who represent the very demographic and socioeconomic groups that are most upset with Obama, and who might therefore consider a run at the nomination.

As for the third of Beinart’s “advantages,” we find ourselves, sadly, in rather considerable agreement. None of the GOP “frontrunners” even piques our interest, much less excites us, and we remain, as always, resigned to the notion that the Republican establishment is highly capable of blowing its opportunity, irrespective of the wishes, hopes, and eagerness of its party’s base.

That leaves advantage #2 as the real question mark in this exposition of Obama’s reelection prospects. Beinart declares that the economy will be in recovery and therefore all will be well for Obama. Specifically, he writes:

Historically, when voters evaluate a president for reelection, they judge the economy not against some abstract standard but against the economy he inherited. That’s why Franklin Roosevelt could win 48 states in 1936 with the U.S. still mired in depression, and Ronald Reagan could win 49 in 1984, even though unemployment on Election Day was still 7.5 percent. Obama doesn’t need the economy to be booming in 2012 to win reelection, he just needs voters to feel that it is better than it was when he took office and heading in the right direction. If that’s the case, and most economists seem to think it will be, Republicans won’t get very far by harping on the deficit. In 1984, you may remember, a presidential candidate told voters to ignore the nation’s nascent economic recovery and focus instead of the country’s swelling debt. His name was Walter Mondale.

We're not sure we agree with Beinart's assessment of Reagan's record or his prediction that the deficit will not matter, simply because it didn't matter nearly three decades ago. But we certainly hope that he is right when he says that the economy will be better in two years than it was when Obama took office. If it is not, then we're all going to see a great deal more suffering in the next several months.

That said, what we find most interesting is Beinart's assertion that the traditional models of the economy's effect on elections remain valid, despite the fact that they have been not been terribly reliable of late. In 2004, for example, George W. Bush should have had a leisurely stroll to re-election and should have won far more handily than he did, at least based on the economic models of voter behavior. Likewise, the watershed midterm elections of 1994 and 2006 shouldn't have been anywhere near as determinative as they were, given the economic expansions during which each took place.

Again, this is not to say that the state of the economy is not a critical component of vote determination. Obviously it is. But after 1994, 2004, and 2006, it might be wise to acknowledge that other factors have become rather vitally important, perhaps even more so than the cycles of the economy.

Apparently, Beinart doesn't want to acknowledge this. He seems to think that Obama himself will not matter very much in the battle for his reelection, that as long as Hillary sits tight and the economy picks up, he will cruise. Indeed, any old president would cruise to re-election, at least if Beinart's model can be believed.

Interestingly, among those who appear to agree with Beinart is the ideologically diametrical Charles Krauthammer, who wrote last week that Obama himself doesn't really matter much in the political debate as the midterms approach.

Now, to be fair to Krauthammer, his argument is different and considerably less silly than Beinart's in several ways. First, he writes specifically about the midterm and not about the 2012 campaign.

Additionally and more important perhaps, Krauthammer argues, essentially, that "it's the policy, stupid." To wit:

A president's first midterm election is inevitably a referendum on his two years in office. The bad news for Democrats is that President Obama's "re-elect" number is 38 percent – precisely Bill Clinton's in October 1994, the eve of the wave election that gave Republicans control of the House for the first time in 40 years.

Yet this same poll found that 65 percent view Obama favorably "as a person." The current Democratic crisis is not about the man – his alleged lack of empathy, ability to emote, etc., requiring remediation with backyard, shirt-sleeved shoulder rubbing with the folks – but about the policies.

And the problem with the policies is twofold: ideology and effectiveness. First, Obama – abetted by Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid – tried to take a center-right country to the left. They grossly misread the 2008 election. It was a mandate to fix the economy and restore American confidence. Obama read it as a mandate to change the American social contract, giving it a more European social-democratic stamp, by fundamentally extending the reach and power of government in health care, energy, education, finance, and industrial policy.

Obama succeeded with health care. Unfortunately for the Democrats, that and Obama's other signature achievement – the stimulus – were not exactly what the folks were clamoring for. What they wanted was economic recovery.

Despite the differences here, Krauthammer's salient point is nevertheless similar to Beinart's. The people want economic recovery. And if they get economic recovery – because of, in spite of, or irrespective of Obama's policies – then the Democrats would, hypothetically, be fine next month and Obama himself would be sitting pretty with respect to reelection.

Naturally, as a conservative, Krauthammer disagrees with Beinart about the likelihood that Obama's policies will affect the economy positively and therefore likely disagrees with Beinart's conclusion about Obama cruising to re-election. Still, he concedes, wittingly or unwittingly, that Obama personally is less relevant than the economy or policies or any other variable you may wish to pile into your model.

We, for two, are not convinced.

When Krauthammer describes Obama as being characterized by a “lack of empathy, ability to emote, etc., requiring remediation with backyard, shirt-sleeved shoulder rubbing with the folks,” he is being kind. Very, very kind. What we have learned about Obama in his nearly two years as the most important man in the world is that he is petty, thin-skinned, arrogant beyond measure, downright mean, and completely and utterly unaware of all of the above. The guy is a jerk, plain and simple. And the only one who appears not to know it is Barack Obama.

The record on this matter is long and rather indisputable. During the campaign, Obama told Hillary that she was “likeable enough,” ridiculed Special Olympians, called Sarah Palin a pig, and declared that the people of Pennsylvania are so primitive and frightened that they cling to guns and religion. Immediately after his election, the president-elect mocked then-87-year-old Nancy Reagan and, more to the point, confused her with Hillary. Shortly after inauguration, he told Republicans to “get out of the way” and to shut up. He called the police in Cambridge stupid. He called doctors greedy and accused them of practicing medicine exclusively for profit. Over and over (and over and over), Obama has proven himself to be incredibly thin-skinned and incredibly contemptuous of his fellow Americans.

Last week, the former Vice President and former Democratic Presidential nominee Walter Mondale criticized Obama's unswerving use of a teleprompter, calling the machines “idiot-boards” and saying that they prevent the President from connecting with his audience. What Mondale appears not to understand is that connection or no connection, the teleprompter keeps Obama focused and keeps him from being himself, which is to say it keeps him from being a jerk. When the guy ad libs, invariably he whines or picks or insults or says something incredibly stupid and self-absorbed. It's who he is. He can't help it. And only the prompter can save him.

Just last week, for example, Obama did a pre-election interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, intended, we presume, to fire up the kids (as if anybody under 50 has read *Rolling Stone* in twenty years) and get them to turn out again on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Instead, Obama took the softballs lobbed at him by the magazine's 64-year-old editor Jann Wenner and smacked them as hard as he could – at his own ostensible supporters. Mary Kate Cary summarizes the best bits in a piece for *US News and World Report*:

What is most startling is how the interview ends--the president, “repeatedly stabbing the air with his finger,” calls Democrats who sit out the midterms “inexcusable” and “irresponsible.” “People need to buck up” and “stop sitting on their hands,” he says to his supporters. Continuing on this theme later this week, he told a crowd at a Democratic campaign event to “stop sulking.” Gone are the days of “Yes We Can.” It's become “You Better Not.” In other words, the beatings will continue until morale improves.

Cary says that what this reveals about Obama is that he is “disconnected” from voters. That's one interpretation, we guess. But we're more inclined to think that it shows that the guy is a narcissistic bully who is ticked off that the voters aren't willing to do what is necessary to avoid embarrassing him. And if

you're worried that we're out on a limb here, imputing to Obama sentiments that aren't fair or genuine, we turn for confirmation to the man himself, who last week appeared at a rally for Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley and told voters that they need to get excited about the election, beseeching them, "Don't make me look bad, now."

So what do we make of the poll cited above by Charles Krauthammer showing that "65 percent" of poll respondents "view Obama favorably 'as a person'"? Well, to be perfectly honest, not much.

Last week, in a column about voters and their opinion of Obama and the Democratic Party, *The Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto cited Selena Zito of the Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review* and, in so doing, broached the subject of the "Bradley Effect." His thoughts were as follows:

Here's an intriguing straw in the wind from Salena Zito of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, who says she's "traveled 6,609 miles, interviewed 432 people registered as or identifying with Democrats in 17 states, and written about scores of races for U.S. Senate and House seats and governors' mansions" in the course of her work on this year's campaign:

*All along "blue highways," Americans spoke about their disappointment in the change they so proudly supported in 2008 – some whispering for fear of being labeled racist, some shouting at tea party rallies.*

"Some whispering for fear of being labeled racist." Remember the "Bradley effect"? This was the theory--named for Tom Bradley, the 1982 Democratic nominee for California governor--that voters in polls were predisposed to overstate their support for black candidates for fear of being thought racist otherwise.

It's debatable whether the Bradley effect ever actually existed, and it certainly didn't materialize in 2008. But given the vehemence with which Democrats and the media have accused Obama's critics of racism, Zito's anecdotal report makes us wonder if current polls, as dismal as they look for the Dems, may be overstating support for the president and his party.

We agree with Taranto that the original Bradley effect was likely an over-hyped excuse developed by unhappy and bitter Bradley supporters. We also agree that no version of it manifested itself in 2008. Moreover, we'll even go Taranto one-step further and grant that such an effect may not have any relation whatsoever to this year's midterm election. But do we think that there is Bradley effect of sorts at work in inflating the president's *personal* approval numbers? You bet we do. How could we not?

After two years of accusing everyone of being a racist who dares to disagree with him even about something as impersonal as policy, is there anyone in left in the country stupid enough or brave enough to tell a complete stranger that he doesn't like Barack Obama personally? Are you kidding?

It's one thing to disagree with him about the politics of health care or tax policy. It is something else altogether to admit to disliking him personally. And if those who disagree on policy are un-American racists, then what horrible and radically unjust labels are there for those who admit that they don't like the guy as a person? We shudder to think about it.

For months now, as his approval numbers have sunk lower and lower and as a midterm bloodbath for his party appears more and more likely, Obama supporters have pointed for consolation to the examples of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, both of whom struggled in their first two years, saw big losses in the midterm, but then rebounded for comfortable re-election victories. That's all well and good, we

suppose. But such hopeful projection overlooks one critical fact: both Reagan and Clinton were incredibly amiable and likeable men. Barack Obama is not.

The question among political analysts these days – including guys like Peter Beinart, who are already looking to 2012 – is whether Obama will hear the message delivered by the voters next month and pivot to the center. Like Beinart, we doubt that he will. It's not in his nature.

But even if he does, it won't make him any less prickly and unlikable. That's just who he is. And if after two years, it's undeniable, then after four it may well be unbearable.

## **DON'T LET THE BEDBUGS BITE.**

Do you have bedbugs? Do you have bedbug bites? Are you scared of bedbugs, afraid you'll get bedbug bites and spend the next several days or weeks scratching swollen welts? Are you looking for someone to blame for your pain, your misery, your fear? We have an answer, a culprit for you: New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

New York, after all, is the heart of bedbug territory, the city that never sleeps – or never sleeps tight, anyway. As *USA Today* noted yesterday morning, “the tenacious bloodsuckers have reportedly been spotted [throughout the city] in movie theaters, flagship retail stores and such tony digs as the Waldorf-Astoria.”

And what, you ask, has Mayor Bloomberg been doing while this menace races through his city, killing the already struggling tourism industry and making life hell for those souls unfortunate enough to have to live within his realm? Nothing. Or at least nothing about bedbugs.

The Mayor has been too busy, you see, making sure that you can't smoke, guaranteeing that you aren't exposed to the silent killers lurking inside of margarine and good-tasting ketchup, protecting the poor and the ignorant against the ravages of Mountain Dew, and calling everyone, everywhere “un-American” for daring to question the probity of constructing

a Muslim community center just a couple of blocks from Ground Zero. With such critical battles to wage, how's a guy supposed to have time for anything so trivial as bedbugs? Those tubs of “I Can't Believe It's Not Butter” aren't going to throw themselves away, you know.

Think we're being unfair to the good Mayor? Think, perhaps, that we've exaggerated the threat and, at the same time, unduly singled out a man who has nothing whatsoever to do with the problem and couldn't have stopped it, even if he had tried?

Well, maybe.

But then again, maybe not. First, by the standards of proof required to assign blame in this political environment, we're hardly out too terribly far on a limb here. If the left can blame George Bush for everything from the deregulation of the financial sector and the repeal of Glass-Steagall (which, for the record, was signed into law by Bill Clinton) to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico (which, by the way, took place more than a year after Bush had left office), then we can blame just about anyone for anything and still bring as much evidence and substance to our charge. More to the point, since Bloomberg is one of the most aggressive and determined advocates of an expanded nanny state, in which all needs are met and metered by the government, then it strikes us as more than fair to charge him with the responsibility for allowing some of those needs – including the need to live free of pest infestations – to go unmet.

The bottom line here is that Michael Bloomberg is the most visible and best known promoter of the full-service state, and as such, he is also part of a rather debilitating governmental posture whereby threats to the population at large are identified and then summarily disregarded, while the population itself is punished for its victimization.

Let us explain.

Michael Bloomberg insists that it is his job as the Mayor of New York to look after the health of his constituents. As the *Wall Street Journal* recently put it:

Improving the city's health has been a major focus of the Bloomberg administration, with its bans on smoking in restaurants and bars, and junk food in schools. This year, city and state officials sought to impose a tax on sugary beverages – akin to a cigarette sin tax – but state lawmakers killed the idea.

Now, we could debate the question of whether “the city's health” is any of its Mayor's business until we collapse from exhaustion. And we could muster powerful moral, constitutional, and practical arguments in opposition to the idea. But what would be the point of that? Bloomberg sees no constraint on his power, and thus far, no one else in the ruling class has done anything to suggest that he is wrong. Indeed, a great many admire the man and the “progress” that his efforts have achieved. All of which is to say that it doesn't matter what we or anyone else thinks about the Mayor's power grab. He has the power, legitimately or not. And he is going to use it.

So let's just concede, for the sake of argument, that Mayor Bloomberg – and all other mayors out there – can and should be looking out for our health. How has Bloomberg chosen to do so? By attacking you, restricting your freedom, and treating you as a child – his child. And more to the point, he has done so in pursuit of ends that are speculative at best and dubious at worst. The science behind the scourges of second-hand smoke, moderate trans-fat ingestion, and dietary sodium is hardly as convincing as Mayor Bloomberg would have us believe. Not that any of this matters, of course, since the matters are “settled” and based on scientific “consensus.” You can't prove that any of Bloomie's initiatives will actually result in better health. But so what? That's beside the point. This really isn't about the promotion of “health.”

If all of this were really and truly about health; if the mayors of this fair land really wanted to promote healthier living for their constituents, then they would give some serious consideration to tackling other, more pressing problems. They might want, for example, to tackle the aforementioned bed bug problem and related insect infestations.

Consider, for example, the problem of asthma. As you may know, Mayor Bloomberg attacked smoking and enacted his ban, principally because he wanted to control indoor air pollution which, among other things, he claimed contributed to and exacerbated the epidemic of asthma among the city's urban dwellers and especially among its children. The science here is ambiguous at best. But that didn't stop the Mayor.

Where the science is less ambiguous and where the connection to asthma is clearer and more pronounced is, interestingly, where bug infestations are concerned. As the web site for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America puts it:

When most people think of allergy “triggers,” they often focus on plant pollens, dust, animals and stinging insects. In fact, cockroaches also can trigger allergies and asthma.

Cockroach allergy was first reported in 1943, when skin rashes appeared immediately after the insects crawled over patients' skin. Skin tests first confirmed patients had cockroach allergy in 1959.

In the 1970s, studies made it clear that patients with cockroach allergies develop acute asthma attacks. The attacks occur after inhaling cockroach allergens and last for hours. Asthma has steadily increased over the past 30 years. It is the most common chronic disease of childhood.

Now we know that the frequent hospital admissions of inner-city children with asthma often is directly related to their contact with cockroach allergens—the substances that cause allergies. From 23 percent to 60 percent of urban residents with asthma are sensitive to the cockroach allergen.

The increase in asthma is not fully understood. Experts think one reason for the increase among children is that they play

indoors more than in past years and thus have increased contact with the allergen. This is especially true in the inner cities where they stay inside because of safety concerns.

So...if Mike Bloomberg really wanted to control asthma, he might think about controlling cockroaches. Or might that make too much sense?

Naturally, asthma is not the only bug-borne health risk extant in the world. And cockroaches are not the only culprits spreading disease. As the previously cited *USA Today* article on bedbugs concludes:

Mosquitoes, of course, are another story. You could fork over \$300 for a portable heating unit to bake bedbugs into oblivion, but you might be better off spending it on insect repellent and long-sleeved shirts for your next vacation to Florida - where dengue fever is making inroads after a 75-year absence. And, like other mosquito-borne scourges such as malaria and West Nile virus, dengue can disrupt a lot more than a night's rest.

So we have bedbugs, cockroaches, mosquitoes, asthma, dengue fever, West Nile Virus, malaria, and thousands of people covered in welts and rashes. And what do all of these things have in common? We'll give you a hint: it starts with a D and ends with a DT.

That's right, DDT, by far the most effective and lifesaving pesticide ever known to man. DDT kills mosquitoes, kills bedbugs, prevents malaria and dengue fever, and helps to control cockroaches (though its effectiveness against roaches is not quite as impressive as against mosquitoes). Unfortunately, though, DDT has been banned in this country and essentially banned worldwide, all because of the "scientific" insights of an overzealous marine biologist who ventured far beyond her area of expertise. As Dr. Elizabeth M. Whelan, the president of the American Council on Science and Health recently put it:

In 1962, Rachel Carson's lyrical but scientifically flawed book, *Silent Spring*, argued

eloquently, but erroneously, that pesticides, especially DDT, were poisoning both wildlife and the environment – and also endangering human health. The National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association, and the U.S. surgeon general were among those who dismissed these charges and came out in support of continuing to use DDT to fight disease and protect crops. A federal hearing was held on the safety of DDT, and in April 1972 Judge Edmund Sweeney concluded that not only was DDT safe, but it was an essential chemical. Two months later, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, William Ruckelshaus – who had never attended a single day's session of the EPA's hearings and admitted that he had not read the transcripts — overturned the judge's decision, declaring, without evidence, that DDT was "a potential human carcinogen" and banned it for virtually all uses. The ban on DDT was considered to be the first major victory for the environmentalist movement in the United States, and countries around the world followed America's lead.

In Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), DDT spraying had reduced malaria cases from 2.8 million in 1948 to 17 in 1963. After spraying stopped, malaria cases rose sharply, reaching 2.5 million over the next decade.

Scientists have never found an effective substitute for DDT — and so the malaria death rate has kept on soaring.

If Michael Bloomberg were really interested in promoting health, then, what he would do would be to lobby Congress, the President, and anyone else who would listen for the reintroduction of DDT. But he doesn't do that. That would be hard, you see. Beating up on smokers and tobacco companies is easy. But challenging the myths of the environmental movement is not easy. And so rather than take the difficult, controversial, and potentially painful approach that might actually yield some benefits, he chooses instead

simply to limit his constituents' personal liberty and responsibility in the pursuit of dubious and largely unquantifiable ends.

Additionally, one might argue that Mayor Bloomie really doesn't care all that much about the health of his constituents. Or at least he doesn't care as much as he claims he does. If he did, he would take on the hard fights, rather than just the painfully easy ones. But again, he doesn't, which suggests that what he cares about is power and exercising that power. What he truly enjoys is "helping" the little people who simply are unable to survive without his magnanimity, his *noblesse oblige*.

Strangely, one finds some confirmation for this view in, of all places, *The New York Times*, which, in a piece about the Mayor's new plans to ban the use of food stamps to buy soda, reported the following:

Bloomberg L.P., the media and financial information company founded by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, has one perk its employees almost universally love: free snacks.

At the sixth-floor pantry in its glossy Upper East Side headquarters, employees can pick from a health-conscious menu of celery sticks, bananas, freshly made peanut butter and 100-calorie snack packs.

There is also free Coke, Pepsi, orange Fanta, ginger ale and Mountain Dew — exactly the types of drinks Mr. Bloomberg this week said he wanted to prohibit poor New Yorkers from buying with their food stamps.

"We have all the junk in the world up there," a Bloomberg employee, who declined to be named for fear of upsetting the company, said during an interview outside the offices at 731 Lexington Avenue. "I mean, you can gain 15 pounds in a hurry."

It is hardly the first time that Mr. Bloomberg's policies as New York City's health mayor have

come into conflict with his personal eating habits, or, in this case, nutritional options at a place he is closely associated with.

He is known for negotiating voluntary reductions in salt by food companies, and putting salt on his own saltine crackers; for fighting rising obesity among his constituents, and for serving comfort food like grilled hot dogs and ice cream sundaes at his town house.

At a news conference on Thursday where he announced that he was requesting federal permission for a two-year ban on the use of food stamps for sugared drinks, Mr. Bloomberg talked about the "enormous correlation" between those drinks and obesity and diabetes, and asserted that taxpayers did not want to subsidize bad nutrition.

Then the mayor answered "Yes" when asked if he allowed soft drinks to be served at Gracie Mansion, where he holds events but does not live.

Glenn Reynolds, the law professor and blogger known as Instapundit, notes that this turns out to be just another case of "health rules, like taxes [being] for the little people."

Of course, Bloomberg is only a part of the problem here. And so are "health" concerns. The instances of government's decision to bother, annoy, and restrict your freedom; to treat you like a child who needs its protection; all in an effort to avoid having to address real and more politically difficult problems are manifold in the current era of the administrative state, and they traverse party lines.

How, for example, has our federal government chosen to deal with the issue of Islamist terrorists on airplanes? By making you stand in line forever, take off your shoes, dispose of your water bottles and tweezers, and stop going to the bathroom. It would more effective, we suppose, to ask questions of travelers and to gauge their responses or to profile for

potential terrorists. But that would be uncomfortable. And who wants that?

Health insurance is too expensive and so, for that matter, are the incredibly inflationary costs of health care. Given that, one might think that a couple of obvious solutions would include increasing competition and reestablishing the link between health care services and the payment for those services. Instead, however, our government has decided that it should eliminate competition, destroy the marketplace as it currently exists, reduce choice, and extend coverage mandates. Will any of these “solutions” address the concerns related to cost? Of course not; they’ll actually just exacerbate them. But so what? It’s easier this way, and who cares if you get screwed, have to give up your current coverage, and wind up paying more over the long run? Certainly the government doesn’t.

And on and on it goes. Want to stop buying so much foreign oil? No new domestic drilling for you, only smaller, more “efficient” cars. Never mind our Escalades, Tahoes, limos, and 20-plus-car motorcades. Want more energy independence generally? Shut up about coal already and pay your cap-and-trade taxes.

Government knows the problems. It knows the solutions. And it chooses instead to punish you and to treat you as if you are incapable of behaving like smart, educated adults. It’s easier that way. And more satisfying, we suppose, if you like wielding that kind of power.

It’s also likely to get worse over time. So get used to it. And in the meantime, good night, sleep tight, and... well, you know the rest.

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