

Northeastern University Political Review



Cricket

An Innovative Approach to
Combat Terrorism

The Kids Don't Stand a Chance

Opposing the Repeal of National
Health Care

The Tunisian Spark

Triggering the Fourth Wave of Democratization

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Mission Statement of the Northeastern University Political Review

The Northeastern University Political Review seeks to be a nonpartisan platform for students to publish essays and articles of the highest possible caliber on contemporary domestic and international politics, as well as critical reviews of political media. The Political Review aspires to foster a culture of intelligent political discourse among interested individuals while promoting awareness of political issues in the campus community. The organization envisions itself as a place where students with a common interest in politics and world affairs may come together to discuss and develop their views and refine their opinions. The Political Review hopes to reflect the diversity of thought and spirit at Northeastern, including the dual ethic of academic and experiential education our school embodies.



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From the Editor:

This issue marks the first anniversary of the Northeastern University Political Review. In our first year we have gained more contributors and increased our following among students. As always we hope that our peers can engage and relate to the articles in this magazine. The pieces on youth uprisings in the Middle East and Africa reflect how important young people can be when they reach out and make an effort to be a part of political life – even under the harshest circumstances. With such struggle and upheaval spreading from Tunisia to Gabon and Wisconsin how can any young person not have something to say?

Khalid Lum, '11
Editor-in-Chief
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Creative Commons: The GNU and You

Over the centuries content producers have searched for ways of protecting their wares. From engraving names on sculpture, to scribing them on art, to the 21st-century development of Digital Rights Management (DRM) technology, these methods have only gotten more complex. The overarching idea behind all of the aforementioned methods, however, is a legal term known as copyright, and relatively recent innovations in the field of copyright law are beginning to change this fundamental right of ownership.

Legally, copyright has existed in some form or another for well over 450 years, dating back to the days of the Renaissance. Modern copyright, however, can only be traced back about 300 years,

to the law known as the Statute of Anne. This English proclamation, known formally as An

Act for the Encouragement of Learning, granted content creators the sole rights to their works for a period of fourteen years, renewable only once if the creator was still alive. This created the first standard for copyright, and has been built upon over the three centuries since its inception.

Unfortunately, the modern age has seen new and greater challenges arise regarding copyright, particularly within the last thirty years. The growth of electronic media, beginning with VHS

tapes and continuing on through the new Blu-Ray format as well as online storage components like those of Carbonite and Windows Live SkyDrive, has been a boon to pirates and copyright infringers everywhere. In response to this advancement of technology, certain reactive elements within society (e.g. the motion picture and recording industries) have attempted to restrict ownership through means such as copy protection software, protected hardware components, and Byzantine licensing agreements. However, other, more progressive elements have also gained a voice in this gladiatorial arena, and have given rise to a new term, one far more adaptive to the modern age. That term is known as copyleft.

“Modern copyright, however, can only be traced back about 300 years, to the law known as the Statute of Anne.”

The first formal institution of copyleft can be found in the historical annals of the Free Software Foundation and its founder, Richard Stallman. Stallman was a programmer at MIT, creating and maintaining software when he found himself forced to make a choice: betray himself and his fellow programmers by subscribing to proprietary (and pricey) software code, or work for the good of the community by producing compatible software that also happened to be free for all. He chose the latter,

and the seeds of what would later be known as the GNU General Public License (GPL) were sowed. Copyleft, according to Stallman, “flips [copyright] over to serve the opposite of its usual purpose: instead of a means for restricting a program, it becomes a means for keeping the program free.”

The GPL was the first of the free software licenses, and an important step in the development of copyleft. It established what have become known as the four freedoms for software users; these freedoms include the ability to use software for any purpose, the freedom to change it as necessary, the ability to share it freely, and the freedom to share any changes made to it. Software and content under the GPL and its derivatives

become for all intents and purposes, free in every sense of the word, and

this freedom lasts in perpetuity, as no restrictions may be added to it after the fact. Since its inception, the GPL has become a very common license, used in software such as Linux, a free operating system, and MediaWiki, the software that powers Wikipedia, a free online encyclopedia.

The problem with the GNU General Public License is its scope; having been developed for use in licensing software, it quickly became used solely for that purpose. To expand the

idea of copyleft to other media (e.g. videos, music, photography, etc.), a new type of copyleft protection needed to be developed. Enter the Creative Commons.

Creative Commons was founded in 2001 by Duke University’s Center for the Public Domain. Using the GPL as a basis for its development, a platform was created that allows people to license their private works for one of three main avenues: free for certain uses only, free for all but with certain conditions of use, or into the gen-

erated public domain. Each of these is further broken down into subgroups. Unlike the GPL, however, a Creative Commons license can be applied to any type of work; for example, many photographs on the website Flickr are licensed under one of the Creative Commons variants. Since its release, Creative Commons licenses have been applied to over 350,000,000 separate works around the world.



Photo Courtesy of Creative Commons

erated public domain. Each of these is further broken down into subgroups. Unlike the GPL, however, a Creative Commons license can be applied to any type of work; for example, many photographs on the website Flickr are licensed under one of the Creative Commons variants. Since its release, Creative Commons licenses have been applied to over 350,000,000 separate works around the world.

The effects of copyleft are just now beginning to be felt in the legal world. In 2003, the first court case involving the GPL entered the legal system in Massachusetts. The case, Progress Software Corp. v. MySQL AB, resulted from a dispute as to whether one company (Progress Software)

violated the copyright of MySQL. After an initial lawsuit brought by Progress against MySQL citing a breach of contract, MySQL filed a countersuit regarding possible infringement on the part of Progress. Specifically, the case revolved around the inclusion of certain GPL-licensed MySQL software in Progress’ proprietary Gemini product. Gemini had been released as its own program, but MySQL asserted that it was a derivative work under the terms of the GPL. This case has been cited by proponents

ter, it provided the foundation for a score of other similar lawsuits, all of which have resulted in forcing the defendants to comply with the GPL and establishing the idea of copyleft as a binding legal force.

Copyleft has yet to take a large hold in the public consciousness as of yet due to its still-niche application. Traditional copyright is so ingrained into society that new methods like Creative Commons and the GPL haven’t had the opportunity to grow as well as they could with efficient mar-

as a major case in the legality of such licenses, as the GPL was never challenged on its legitimacy. The case resulted in a partial settlement between the involved parties.

The first actual lawsuit over copyleft was not filed until 2007, when the case known as Erik Andersen and Rob Landley v. Monsoon Multimedia came to trial. Andersen and Landley, through representatives of the Software Freedom Law Center, were suing Monsoon Multimedia, a multimedia software company, over the inclusion of the GPL-licensed BusyBox software in the latter organization’s product, a series of time-shifting devices similar to TiVo. Although the case was eventually settled shortly thereaf-

keting and public acceptance. As previously mentioned, the two are still mostly invoked when dealing with technological products such as operating systems, but more and more artists are invoking copyleft protection on their works, particularly photographers. There is still a long way to go, however, and with proponents of traditional copyright having very deep pockets, the road ahead to a world more accepting of product sharing is going to be long and arduous. With any luck, a sensible balance can be achieved, one that is amenable to all parties involved.

*- Paul Hanley,
Political Science ‘12*

How Will America Remember Joe Lieberman: Connecticut's Independent Senator

With his entire extended family behind him and a crowd of several hundred supporters in front of him, Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman took the podium at a hotel in Stamford, Connecticut on January 19 to announce he would not seek reelection in 2012. Lieberman, 68, has had a tumultuous career in the Senate over the past twenty four years. Liberals say he is a traitor while conservatives see him as an occasional, albeit untrustworthy, ally. So when Americans reflect upon the four-term senator and former vice presidential candidate, how will he be remembered?

Two viewpoints have developed in response this question. The traditional take on Lieberman paints him as a politician no one on either side of the political aisle can trust, an easy conclusion to reach about Lieberman given his history in the Senate. New York Times' writer Gail Collins argues that Congress relies on political parties, in part, for organizational efficiency. Sometimes, she says, politicians obviously need to take an independent stance, but Lieberman has failed to do so with humility, "if you're continually admiring yourself as you walk away from your group, eventually people are going to feel an irresistible desire to trip you."

Many of Lieberman's Democratic colleagues in the Senate feel the same way about his party (dis)loyal-

ty. One of the more obvious and deeper betrayals Lieberman dealt to Democrats came during the 2008 Presidential Election. Most Democrats divided their support amongst senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Lieberman, on the other hand, surprised everyone by walking on stage at the Republican National Convention in Saint Paul, Minnesota to endorse Senator John McCain for president. Democrats were furious.

After the election, Lieberman nearly lost his chairmanship of the Senate Homeland Security Committee. In the end, however, Democrats allowed him to remain chairman in order to avoid losing Lieberman as a political ally while also trying to dodge future legislative conflict. This did not last long.



Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The recent debate over health care reform was a major point of contention between Senate Democrats and Lieberman. The healthcare reform bill was moving through the Senate on a party line basis. If one Democratic senator decided to ally with the unified Republican effort to filibuster the bill, it would have stalled. Lieberman was strongly opposed to the public option that was included. He said, "I think [the public option] is such a mistake that I would use the power I have as a single senator to stop a final vote." This sent the message that he would join the Republican efforts to filibuster the bill if the provision was included in it. Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid, seeing no other option, caved and stripped the provision so the bill could move forward.

Connecticut politicians are not known for following political norms. While many states seem to be swept up in the polarizing political environment that has been developing across the country, Connecticut has been trying to avoid the hysteria. This can be seen in the recent election of Richard Blumenthal to the other Senate seat in Connecticut. Blumenthal was campaigning against Republican challenger Linda McMahon, the former CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment. McMahon's campaign was built upon

a fiscal conservative platform.

While mirroring platforms assisted Republicans in winning several congressional seats across the nation, it was not enough for McMahon, and Blumenthal won by a twelve-point margin. Bill Curry, a former Democratic candidate for governor summed up the abnormality of Connecticut politics by saying, "Connecticut, for lots of reasons, has proved itself almost immune not just to the kind of extremism that's overtaken the Republi-

can Party nationally, but to extremism from both political parties...Sarah Palin's endorsement of almost anyone in Connecticut would end their campaign."

Lieberman was no exception to this rule and that is why he is still in the Senate today. After being defeated for the Democratic nomination by Ned Lamont, a political neophyte, Lieberman campaigned as an independent, solidified a centrist stance, and won a fourth term mostly with the assistance of Republican voters.

The second argument about Lieberman describes him as never having any real party loyalty beyond organizational purposes. This more favorable perspective has been championed by former Republican Congressman Mickey Edwards in an article he wrote in *The Atlantic*. In it he bluntly opposes Collins' opinion. Edwards paints Lieberman as an ideologue who is a truly independent politician. He says, "Lieberman is ... the kind of

member of Congress we should all hope for; one who decides issues on their merits, not party dictates, and who listens to his constituents, not party insiders." There is a considerable amount of evidence to support Edwards' claim.

Consider Congress' attempt to repeal the government's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which denied homosexual men and women from serving openly in

and willing to cross party leadership. That, in turn, has made him a target on both sides. Although clearly he does not care that much for Democrats or partisan politics in general, Lieberman's retirement is a gift to Democrats. By deciding not to run for reelection, Democrats have a significantly higher chance of retaining the senate seat. This situation is extremely similar to the one his former colleague,

Senator Chris Dodd, found himself in a year ago when he decided not to run. By doing this,

Dodd bolstered the chances that Democrats would retain the Senate seat, which they did in the end.

Although there is no right answer to what kind of politician Lieberman is, the most realistic conclusion is that he falls into a middle ground. Americans will likely remember him as someone who did look at each issue individually and formed his opinions on his own. They will also remember him as a politician who fell out of love with his former political party after it fell out of love with him. Lieberman has learned over the years that Congress may not value centrism as much as he does, and time and time again he is reminded of that as he alone at the Senate's podium.

- Nicholas Martin,
International Affairs '11

"They will also remember him as a politician who fell out of love with his former political party after it fell out of love with him."

Cricket: An Innovative Approach to Combat Terrorism

The comparison between sports and violence is far from a novel association. For hundreds of years under the Roman Empire violence was sport and sport was violence. Further, George Orwell wrote in a 1945 essay that sport is little more than “war minus the shooting.” These comparisons can yield modern-day benefits for law enforcement and counterterrorism officials. Understanding the similarities between athletic teams and terrorist groups will allow law enforcement agencies to work to mitigate radicalization by utilizing sports leagues to build constructive relationships with at-

risk individuals and communities. No individual is born a terrorist. Violent extremists are definitively a product of their environment. It is only after prolonged exposure to various circumstances that an individual evolves into a violent radical extremist. Because radicalization is a process it is possible to intervene and take measures to prevent radicalization. Patterns allow for better understanding of the terrorist radicalization cycle.

Five of the nine factors designated by a 2002 University of Northampton study on sports team cohesion listed nine factors which contribute to a sports team’s ability to coalesce

into a solid, goal-oriented unit can be applied directly to the group cohesion of a terrorist cell and provide insight into why an individual ultimately finds sanctuary in a terrorist group. Those factors with substantial cross-applicability are as follows: “(1) The opportunity to achieve personal goals or desires as a

member of a team, such as challenge-seeking; (2) The extent to which individuals perceive themselves as members of a group; (3) The presence of a charismatic leader; (4) The opportunity to satisfy personal needs, such as enhancing self-esteem through being associated with a prestigious group; [and] (5) The commitment of other group members.”

With these many common characteristics between team sports and terrorist groups, George Orwell’s quote could be turned around to read “terrorism is sports with shooting.” Strong charismatic leaders and the furtherance of personal status are especially common in the realm of terrorist groups. Washington Post writer Christopher Dickey highlights the importance of social status in the minds of aspiring jihadis, “some are looking for Paradise as ‘martyrs,’ some just for street cred back home, and some for serious combat experience in urban warfare.”

One way to take advantage of the commonalities between motivation for joining a sports team and joining a terrorist group is to create sports leagues which foster a positive sense of community. Better yet are sports leagues administered by police departments, which build positive communal ties and create a constructive relationship between law enforcement and at-risk individuals. Numerous police departments across the country have “Police Athletic Leagues” also known as PALs

which target inner-city youth, typically those at the greatest risk of turning to crime or gang activities.

The New York Police Department administers a robust sports program which boasts an annual attendance of over 17,000 participants. One particularly innovative program, established in 2008 to create an amicable relationship between local communities and the NYPD, is the NYPD United and

Cricket programs which consist of multi-team clubs in both soccer and cricket. The cricket league features nearly 150 members on ten teams with names like the Dare Devils, Superstars and the 2009 league-champion Lycans. NYPD Deputy Inspector Amin Kosseim highlighted the need for a sport aimed to engage the Muslim demographic in the city, because “the Muslim community is not a community we had great outreach to in the past,” according to Kosseim. By choosing a sport popular with southwest Asian communities, an increasingly targeted demographic for terrorist recruitment, the NYPD can more effectively work to prevent radicalization.

Based on positive feedback from players in the league, the NYPD’s cricket league has been quite successful. One player went as far to say about the police, “They are more into community than I thought they were. They actually care about different types of people.” This is precisely the type

of positive relationship the NYPD hoped to achieve. Another metric to gauge the league’s success is its consistent growth and expansion. The league continues to grow in popularity within the community, sporting ten teams this season, as compared to only six last season. With such success, the league will

“One player went as far to say about the police, ‘They are more into community than I thought they were. They actually care about different types of people.’”

likely continue to grow in the future.

Recently counter-radicalization theory picked up steam in the government, as demonstrated by Congresswoman Sue Myrick’s letter to President Obama concerning the need for a developed counter-radicalization strategy. One of Congresswoman Myrick’s suggestions emphasized the necessity of targeting radical propagandists to diminish terrorism’s appeal and decrease recruitment. The obstacles to comprehensive programs persist. Violent terrorist groups evolve and adapt as government efforts to combat terrorism change. Nonetheless, it is worth the effort, and can make a real dif-

ference if implemented in earnest.

Athletic outreach programs will not quiet radical propagandists; however the leagues can work to diminish the resonance these propagandists have with their intended audiences. Sports leagues provide local law enforcement agencies with a prime opportunity to combat radicalism and terrorism in a more benevolent and approachable way. These leagues will not be a panacea for violent extremism in America; however they are a simple step towards building better relationships between law enforcement agencies and certain communities and demographics.

- Andrew McConnell,
International Affairs ‘11



Photo Courtesy of the New York Police Department



Photo Courtesy of the New York Police Department

The Arab Winter Uprisings: An Awakening for All

The cascade of pro-democracy protest across the Middle East presumably should not have caught the West off guard, but it did. The United States spends billions of dollars each year supporting Arab governments and on a vast intelligence service dedicated to better informing officials about on goings in the region. Regardless of the United States' intimate role in the region, the Arab popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt blindsided the West. President Obama reportedly criticized the United States intelligence community for failing to predict the wave of revolt and again for underestimating its magnitude. Memories flash in the minds of those who remember as an astonished West watched the 1989 Velvet Revolution topple the entrenched Communist regimes of Eastern Europe in a matter of weeks.

Consistent with the nature of these two recent bouts of popular pro-democratic revolution, many social scientists have determined that foresight into revolutionary upheavals of this magnitude is nearly impossible to ascertain because their thrust rests largely on the phenomenon of "critical mass social behavior."

According to this theory, a people will not rise up in revolt unless they are certain that

a large proportion of others will rise en masse with them so that

net benefits surpass net costs for an actor as an individual. The unpredictability of revolutionary action is also due in part to the principle of "preference falsification" in which a people misrepresent or suppress their political feelings due to perceived societal and political pressures or the fear of facing backlash from their government. Due to the obfuscation of preference falsification and the capriciousness of perceived critical mass thresholds, both analysts and people of the Middle East did not expect 2011 to open with a regional pro-democratic revolution. In the spring of 2011, the international community watched as the Arab world rose up and cast off the chains of fear and muzzle of obedience to pursue fair representation, oust their calcified regimes, and seek "aish, horreya, karama insannayia," meaning "bread, freedom and human dignity." Long-standing dictators in Tunisia and Egypt were overthrown in January and February, while mass protests sprung up throughout the region.

Abundant indicators pointed to the waves of change brewing under the stymied status quo in the Arab world. Decades of unchanging regimes, jobless economic

"Abundant indicators pointed to the waves of change brewing under the stymied status quo in the Arab world."

stagnation, and the persistent lack of government accountability

in the region created a breeding ground for fear and political dissatisfaction in the Middle East. Number crunching for the region's socio-economic situation in the last decade indicated a dire forecast. Population growth, unemployment figures and resource management in the region produced a long-term logistical nightmare, the hopelessness of which fell particularly on Arab youth. The youth population of the Arab world exceeds 66 million, with people aged 15-29 making up for more than 20 per cent of the population. Social scientists call this social distribution a "youth bulge," and believe that when a region passes this threshold, unrest undoubtedly ensues, as resource and employment competition is rendered unsustainable. As the repressive political and economic climate in the region melded with the advent of communications technologies and the exposure of behind-the-scenes politicking through Wikileaks-style transparency-initiatives, Arab dissatisfaction reached critical mass and boiled over.

The region swelled with pride as it watched an organic popular revolt, unflinching to police brutality, become a revolution in Tunisia. Mohamed Bouazizi's now iconic act of self-immolation sparked what

is dubbed "The Jasmine Revolt." In one month the Tunisian people

forced their President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali into resignation and exile, and security forces united with the people. Next, the world listened as Egypt, despite a full media blackout, roared in an unprecedented revolt against its thirty-year old regime. Cairo, or al-Qahera in Arabic, meaning literally "The Victorious," struggled to redefine its own destiny with vengeance with youth-sponsored protests beginning on Egypt's Police Day, an annual holiday celebrated every January 25th. Exasperated by thirty years of repression

and energized by the successful coup in Tunisia, Egyptians called through the streets for the resignation of their president. In doing so, Egyptians effectively undermined the model of the Arab state and the legitimacy of Arab dictators across the region by setting the precedent that silence was unacceptable. Due in part to what has been dubbed "hacktivism," the call to protest reached unprecedented levels in various Arab states as it spread through internet-based social media platforms and beyond.

Tunisia's spark and the kindle provided by the Egyptian revolt lit the region ablaze within weeks. The precedent was set in many Arab states that the protest movement had reached a threshold of critical mass, and regional calls to protest ensued. Thirty years of the state of affairs in the Middle East were suddenly invalidated. On January 30, 2011, the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds al-Arabi reported that men and



Photo Courtesy of Anne Hermes, The Christian Science Monitor

women had gathered in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah to protest the corruption rampant in their government and to show their solidarity with the message of the Egyptian people. On February 01, 2011, Al-Jazeera reported that the Jordanian monarch King Abdullah II had sacked his government cabinet and replaced Prime Minister Samir al-Rifai with Marouf Barkhit, a former Prime Minister of the kingdom, in an attempt to pacify the waves of protest and tension in the country. Most Jordanian opposition forces deemed this symbolic act insufficient and have carried on their protest movement. On February 03, 2011, Al-Jazeera reported that 20,000 protesters converged in the Yemeni capital city Sanaa to demand that Al Abdullah Saleh resign after thirty years of ineffective rule. On February 05, 2011, The Wall Street Journal reported that hundreds had gathered in Manama, the capital city of Bahrain, to push for further

reform and express their dissatisfaction as a Shiite-majority population with their Sunni monarch King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

Though starting with silent steps, these democratic movements have produced irrevocable consequences for the region in a matter of weeks. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton warned Arab leaders of a "perfect storm," brewing in the Arab world, a storm that is now inexcusable to ignore or underestimate. The thresholds of critical mass in popular support for protest across the Middle East have been surpassed, and the people of the region have shed the pretense of preference falsification. They have paved a path for a new reality, awakening leaders in the Arab world and the West alike to the call of their demands.

*- Sarah Sheffer,
International Affairs '11*

The Tunisian Spark: Triggering the Fourth Wave of Democratization

Mohamed Bouazizi was a college graduate and yet at twenty-six years old he found himself selling fruit on the side of the street to support his mother, uncle and five siblings in their hometown of Sidi Bouzid. According to a report by the New York Times, a municipal inspector, Faida Hamdy, seized Bouazizi's goods because of his failure to pay a government fine. It was more than the young man could stand. Two of Hamdy's colleagues beat Bouazizi on the spot. Later that day he was beaten outside the city's municipal building where he went to demand the return of his property. He was denied an audience with the governor and denied the return of his goods.

At noon on December 17, 2010 Bouazizi doused himself in paint thinner outside the governor's gate and lit himself on fire. He died fifteen days later on January 4, 2011 with burns covering more than 90% of his body. The horrific scene galvanized locals who swelled his funeral procession to five thousand people and causing twenty-eight days of unrest throughout the country. On January 14, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was forced to resign and flee the country to Saudi Arabia.

With a single action indicative of the frustrations and burdens of an unemployed youth, Bouazizi became a martyr for the people of Tunisia. It was the breaking point needed for the Tunisian people to finally topple the twenty-three year authoritarian rule of Ben

Ali. For the first time in history, a leader in an Arab country was forced to resign and flee because of the popular will of the people and the push for democracy.

Foreign journalists have dubbed the protests and toppling of Ben Ali's regime "The Jasmine Revolution," placing it in line with the color revolutions of the former Soviet bloc states and the Balkans. The color revolutions were non-violent uprisings against corrupt and authoritarian governments by people seeking democratic reform. In Tunisia the events were similar and the uprisings were for the most part non-violent. Another similarity between the color revolutions and the events in Tunisia is that the Jasmine Revolution could be just the first of several democratic revolutions in the area. Peoples of one country are often inspired by the actions of others, and through technology, word of their triumphs has already spread and begun the process of change in countries like Egypt. Roping this revolution in with the color revolutions, however, deemphasizes the role that social media and the Internet have played in this movement's ability to manifest and maintain itself. The protesters used websites like Facebook and Twitter to gain support and organize rallies.

Tunisia was a country primed for a revolution. Popular frustration with Ben Ali's authoritarian rule and secret police kept people in fear through state repression. Corruption among the ruling

elite was rampant, evidenced by Ben Ali's hairdresser wife bringing one and a half tons of gold with them when they fled the country. Bribes were commonplace and the only way to do business. The majority of the Tunisian people were raised to fear the government and not to question the strong rule of Ben Ali. And so how then did one man's action trigger such a large revolution? Bouazizi's actions were taken up as a rallying cry by the young and educated who understood his frustrations and shared his views. They used social networking sites, their cell phones and word of mouth to spread their cause. They received support from thousands of outsiders through Tweets and support groups made on Facebook. The will and the power to take on a corrupt government and root out change rested with the youth. Their actions have changed their country and in turn, their futures.

Many developing nations like Tunisia have seen an increase in their youth populations over the past few decades. This 'youth bulge' is caused by an increase in basic health care beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. In a country with over 10 million people, Tunisia's median age is roughly 30 years old. This is young compared to countries of the developed world, such as Japan where the median age is 45 and Canada where the median age is 41. This means there are more young and ambitious individuals

who are frustrated because they cannot find a job, especially with a national unemployment rate of 14% in Tunisia. These frustrations finally lead to revolution.

As of February 7, 2011, the interior minister suspended all activities of the Democratic Constitutional Rally, Ben Ali's party. Protests continue as the caretaker government tries to stabilize the country and remove all traces of Ben Ali's former government. This will take time and the Tunisian people will continue to be weary of those in power until they prove they can be trusted. As of February 8, 2011, the



Photo Courtesy of Antoine Walter via Flickr.

army is in place to try and help restore order. This included calling up reservists and recently retired members of the armed forces because the armed forces only numbers at around 45,000 while the police number over 100,000 strong. And so the next issue to be addressed must be the country's police force, which for twenty-three years was the long arm of Ben Ali. It is the police that the people now resent the most and will continue to protest and fight.

While conflict is not new

to the region, the Middle East and North Africa have been the one part of the world that has avoided Samuel Huntington's three waves of democracy. Huntington pointed to three distinct periods in history where the world saw a large number of nations start the transition from authoritarian governments to democratic ones. He argues that while not all make the transition

promising a transition to democracy and free elections. In an effort to slow the protests and disable the protesters, over eighty percent of the country's Internet was shut down. In Syria, as elsewhere, the government has sought to stave off protests by making economic concessions to public sector workers and you. Peaceful protests have begun in Yemen to overthrow the government; however protesters warn that once they begin wearing red, they will no longer protest peacefully. In Jordan the king has replaced his prime minister and cabinet, efforts aimed at appeasing the people and quash unrest in that country. So if

Huntington is correct, the Tunisian spark will have not only ignited Egypt into revolution, but will continue to spread across North Africa and the Middle East.

- Christina Petrucci,
*Journalism &
Political Science '11*

The Syrian 'Day of Rage': A Revolution That Wasn't

In a recent exclusive interview with the Wall Street Journal, President Bashar Al-Assad of Syria stated, "When there is divergence between your policy and the people's beliefs and interests, you will have this vacuum that creates disturbance." He also said that despite the similarities between Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia, Syrians were different because they had not become desperate like the Egyptians and Tunisians, who had lost faith in their governments.

As protests against autocratic Arab governments continue across the region, analysts have begun to predict which repressive regime will be the next to fall. On a list of most repressive states, Syria ranks amongst the highest in the Middle East. With the con-

tinuing protests against dictators in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, Syria has taken steps to ease resentment its citizenry may hold.

Fearing the resentment may actually materialize into full-scale protests, the government has increased its employees' salaries, and \$250 million in aid is to be distributed to families living below the poverty line. Government blocks on popular websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube existent since 2007 have been lifted, despite the fact that these sites are already widely-used by Syria's youth using proxies.

Like Egypt before it, Syria had its own "Day of Rage" scheduled for February 4th yet that date came and went without any major protests inside the country. A

Facebook event titled, "The Syrian Revolution 2011" had only 17,000 attendees, an overwhelming number of whom were ex-pats. At the same time, various pro-Bashar groups and events were made, and declared support for the president.

To understand how difficult it is to manifest and maintain a popular-uprising in Syria, the events of February 2nd, 1982 must be revisited. The Muslim Brotherhood, which violently resisted the administration of President Hafez Al-Assad for years by assassinating members of the ruling Ba'ath Party and military figures, had finally holed itself in the city of Hama, taking over the city. The Syrian military was called in to restore government control, resulting in the massacre of an estimated

17,000 to 40,000 citizens. Ordinary Syrians have remained politically mute and the opposition hobbled ever since.

In the spring of 2000 a new era was ushered in, known by many as the "Damascus Spring." Hafez Al-Assad died suddenly after 30 years in power. His son, Bashar, an eye doctor by trade, was quickly chosen to lead the



Photo Courtesy of Hugh Macleod, Al-Jazeera

country. He promised to bring reform to the country his father had ruled with an iron-fist, calling for easing of media restrictions and an opening of the economy.

Political prisoners were released in a sign of goodwill, and Syrian citizens were allowed to openly discuss domestic and foreign politics. The newfound reforms were short-lived; government security forces began to crack down on political dissidents

and activists after just six months.

Today, with the burgeoning of the middle class and the steady growth of the economy, President Bashar Al-Assad continues to maintain control of every aspect of Syrian society. Syria remains a secular state, under the one party rule of the Ba'ath Party, which tightly controls all political and economic aspects of the country. Syrians themselves are hopeful for the future, although they

remain unsure of what it might hold for them. And those with an idea of how they believe it ought to look are often afraid to demonstrate it in words or otherwise.

- Omar Duwaji,
Accounting &
Journalism '11

The Struggle for Kirkuk: Oil, People and Power

As the violence in Iraq slips from western headlines and the coalition mission appears accomplished, there is a false sense of calm in this troubled country. An unanswered question of who controls the Northern city of Kirkuk has threatened to throw the most promising region of the country into war. To ethnic Kurds, the most contentious issue is the future of Kirkuk. Kirkuk is the equivalent of Jerusalem to Christians, Jews, or Muslims to Iraqi Kurds -- the assumed place of origin of their people, a holy land worth fighting and dying for. The federal government based in Baghdad puts Kirkuk in its sphere of influence, governing the city much to the ethnic Kurds chagrin. The city sits squarely on the border of the autonomous Kurdish

Regional Government (KRG), and the Republic of Iraq based in Bagh-

dad. KRG in the north wishes to incorporate Kirkuk into their sphere of autonomy to strengthen their power. The city sits on massive oil wealth which both the Kurdish and Baghdad federal governments have their eye on. It is estimated that Kirkuk is near the fourth largest oil field in the world. With the economic incentive of potentially billions of untapped dollars in oil wealth, all the sides should work to prevent war. Tragically this is not so. The potential for violence is on the mind of every State Department diplomat, Kurdish politician, and citizen of Kirkuk. If the city does explode into sectarian violence, it could dwarf the paci-

put forward in order to stop this explosive situation from plunging Iraq back into another ethnic war.

For the majority of the war Northern Iraq has been a peaceful stretch of land that Coalition forces have largely been able to ignore. It was not always this way; Northern Iraq was the scene of a brutal civil war soon after Sadaam's forces left in 1991. The factions were composed of the two dominant families in Northern Iraq, the Talabani and the Barzani families. Each family controlled the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) political organizations respectively in a brutal civil war that ended

with the Washington Agreement in 1998. Talabani and Barzani agreed to share power and oil profits in the agreement.

"Kirkuk is the equivalent of Jerusalem to Christians, Jews, or Muslims to Iraqi Kurds -- the assumed place of origin of their people, a holy land worth fighting and dying for."

fication of Baghdad in 2007. A clear power-sharing plan must be

The Kurds new found prosperity is the result of a solid vot-

ing bloc that does not resemble their factionalized Sunni and Shiite Arab partners to the south.

The Kurdish people have been a traditional ally of the United States since the end of the first Gulf War in which the United States imposed a non-fly zone to ensure their protection and sovereignty. They now find themselves in the position to tilt the balance of power in Iraqi politics. The Kurdish Governed Republic in Northern Iraq is the only Kurdish run administration in the region, providing a haven to refugees and other Kurds. KRG has solidified its borders, establishing strong ties

to western nations and ensuring its sovereignty from the central government in Baghdad. To be in Northern Iraq is to see the “other Iraq” as the KRG government has marketed itself. In Sulimanya, construction is brisk with cranes thirty stories high constructing

new office buildings. The emerging markets have brought an influx of foreign workers and expatriates. Most importantly, a stable government of bureaucrats and municipalities regulates and runs the

newfound prosperity. With KRG’s house in order, government bureaucrats are looking to the south and the traditional Kurdish city of Kirkuk to bring into their fold.

The repercussions of Sadaam’s “Arabization” policy are at the heart of the issue. An estimated five hundred thousand Kurds left or were forced out of the city by Saddam’s regime, making the city split between Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen. Both sides of the dispute cite several censuses determining the ethnic breakdown of the city over the years. Arabs cite a Saddam era number in 1997 where an Arab

founders of the city and claim that historically, it has always been so.

An Arab-led ‘Commission on the Normalization of the Status of Kirkuk’ was formed in 2007 with the intended goal of finding a resolution for all parties. Diplomats desperately want to circumvent the potential for a violent process. A plan was struck in which Arabs would be paid to return from where they came from before Saddam’s Arabization policy took effect. Kurds would be paid to move back to Kirkuk if they had been forcibly relocated. Results of this policy have been mixed. Many Kurds remain in KRG but travel

to Kirkuk to collect resettlement checks. Large numbers of Arabs remain in the city despite being paid twice as much to leave. Allegations of bribery and fraud have plagued the commission and interference from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United

States has stymied the process. Kurdish refugees interviewed made it clear that policy from KRG government aims to create an environment unsuitable to those Kurds that fled Saddam Hussein’s

regime. The goal of these policies is to force them back to Kirkuk in order to have a majority in the city. Ironically, Sunni and Shiite refugees fleeing from the south are relatively well taken care of in Sulimanya and other KRG cities. A census determining the ethnic breakup of Kirkuk would tear the city up and terrifies the population. This conflict cannot be solved with a simple number count to determine the majority.

With all the ethnic groups having a legitimate claim and the impossibility of one group vacating the city completely, a plan in which revenue from the vast oil wealth of the region can be shared must be struck. Also, trust building between the ethnicities should also be a tenet of the plan. Mixed military units or joint patrols can build cooperation and trust. It will also alleviate the suspicion that the other side is plotting a first strike. Strong pressure from the State Department on both sides of the issue can encourage this process. KRG and the federal Government in Baghdad must be shown that resorting to violence would not be beneficial to either party. With the threat of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia still operating in the region, the government of KRG should remember that terrorist attacks are not the actions of all Arabs. The terrorist group has targeted Kirkuk in the past in an attempt to disrupt the operations of the Baghdad

government and sow discontent. Kurdish leaders should exercise the restraint that prominent Shiite leaders did in 2006 when Al Qaeda

to the top leaders of the Turkmen, Kurds, and Arabs. The Kurds have a tight control on their people with a firm government in place. With

“With all the ethnic groups having a legitimate claim and the impossibility of one group vacating the city completely, a plan in which revenue from the vast oil wealth of the region can be shared must be struck.”

such a structure in place, the potential for deviation from the party line is decreased. However it is not proven that if fighting

attempted to goad them into a full-blown sectarian war. The Central Government can do this by keeping pressure on Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and continuing to disrupt their operations. The Shiite led government in Baghdad must keep their shaky coalition together by working with the Kurds and resolving their demands. If not, then the Kurds could pull out of the coalition and partner with the Sunnis to give them the reins of government.

Politicians often are tempted to rally citizens around ethnic banners to consolidate power and increase personal standing. As proven historically in the Balkans, the gains of this policy are short lived and lead to financial devastation and isolation from the world. KRG would lose much of its foreign investors if war were to break out, for no one will put money into an unstable conflict zone. Baghdad can little afford to embroil itself in yet another civil war. Therefore the leaders of these forces must reign in their party and tightly control the message that comes out of their respective camps. The best way to alleviate this threat would be to establish direct communications

breaks out on the street, that the Kurdish people will escalate the situation into a full-blown war.

As the situation stands, large populations of Arabs and Kurds are currently being manipulated in an attempt to dominate the ethnicity of Kirkuk from both Baghdad and KRG, creating tension. The Central Government of Iraq, stationed in Baghdad wants Kirkuk to remain in their fold in an attempt to remain in control of its oil supply. Ministers interviewed in KRG expressed that they would never give up on the issue of Kirkuk. Some analysts of the region suspect that the Kirkuk issue could divisively separate KRG from the Baghdad once and for all. If this is true, it could be the scene of the worst violence yet in Iraq. Therefore it is imperative that a power-sharing plan be struck soon with the two governments.

- Daniel O'Brien,
International Affairs '12



Photo Courtesy of Daniel O'Brien.

The Real Value of the Vermont Yankee

Vermont Yankee (VY) is the only nuclear reactor in the state of Vermont and the second oldest in the country. While President Obama has committed his administration's energy agenda to galvanizing a nuclear energy renaissance, on February 24, 2010 the Vermont Senate decided, twenty-six to four, in favor of concluding VY operations. Unless the Senate overturns its decision and the House approves an extension, VY must close by March 2012.

During the years leading up to the vote on reli-

censing VY, multiple issues surfaced leading to decreased confidence in VY by Vermont residents and legislators. Notable controversies surrounding VY include: ambiguous testimony from plant executives, the collapse of a cooling tower, security problems, and a tritium leak. During August of 2007, a three-story cooling tower on the western side of the plant gave way, releasing some cooling water. Likewise, in 2008, Vermont Yankee issued a public statement asserting there was a security breach, but a full account of the security issue could not be rendered due to security concerns. The first two events, while serious, were forgiven and did not draw nearly as much attention as what occurred during a standard committee hearing regarding the station.

Plant executives testified

under oath to two state panels that there were no underground pipes at VY that could leak Tritium when, in fact, there were. Entergy, the owners of VY, then informed Vermont legislative officials and state authorities there were in fact pipes, though they claimed the pipes did not carry any sort of "irradiated water." Measurements of residual water found in a pit sump, a storage tank that collects water

"...the majority of Vermont residents and legislators have lost confidence in the Vermont Yankee plant."

from the plant, indicated otherwise as the level of tritium was at 19,800 picocuries per liter, just two hundred shy of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's mandated maximum of 20,000 picocuries per liter. Tritium is a radiation hazard when ingested, inhaled, or if it is able to permeate the skin. The effects of Tritium are not something Vermonters should take light heartedly, but the consequences of a person's exposure to Tritium have been greatly exaggerated by the media.

As a result, the majority of Vermont residents and legislators have lost confidence in the Vermont Yankee plant. However, the decision to decommission and end VY activities by 2012 is fiscally and economically irresponsible. An extension of VY's operations past 2012 is imperative for the

protection of Vermont's future. VY has been a source of economic stimulation in southeastern Vermont for thirty-eight years. In a report by Richard Heaps, in 2009 VY employed 670 employees, had a payroll of \$68 million, created 1,288 jobs, a payroll of \$93.3 million, and raised disposable incomes by \$78.5 million. When the rest of the state, and country for that matter, was hit with staggering unemployment rates and closing businesses, VY stood strong and acted as an anchor for Vermont's econ-

omy, preserving the jobs of all employees. As one of the state's largest employers, it speaks well of the institution and demonstrates its worth to the Vermont economy and community. VY paid \$4.94 million in Education Fund taxes in 2008, out of the total of \$1.3 billion received by the entire state. The \$4.94 million in revenues received from the VY station were enough to cover the entire cost of educating 352 Vermont students in 2009.

VY saves Vermont hundreds of millions of dollars, charging 6.1 cents per Kilowatt per hour. From 2002 to 2009, these savings have exceeded \$300 million. It is estimated that for every \$10 million saved from lower electricity costs by Vermont households, 64 more jobs are created throughout Vermont with a payroll of \$2.4 million in 2009. Entergy-VY

Spokesperson Larry Smith stated VY provides a two billion dollar benefit to Windham County and provides \$16 million to the state of Vermont annually. The state has a \$170 million deficit, and VY provides a grand total of \$100 million to the Vermont economy.

If Vermont Yankee operations are not extended, reports show that within twenty years there would be a consistent average of 1,232 unemployed individuals in Windham County and 342 unemployed individuals in the state. Over the same period of time, estimates show that Windham County would see a departure of 600 people due entirely to the closure of the plant. Dr. Howard Axelrod, an independent energy consultant, said Vermont would lose a total of \$313 million in tax revenues over the thirty-eight years between 2012 and 2050 if the VY Station is shut down. Further, over the course of forty years, it is estimated that

Vermont will see a total revenue decrease of \$92 million. Statewide average retail electric prices are estimated to increase by 19% to 39%, and without Vermont Yankee's power, carbon dioxide emissions, from all sources statewide, would likely increase by two million tons annually, an increase of ten thousand percent.⁷ The potential costs to Vermonters stemming from the need for pollution allowances could exceed \$60 million annually for carbon dioxide and \$3 million for nitric oxide.⁷ These costs would be in addition to the increase in retail price of energy.

Vermont must act because while VY's issues are indefensible and careless, they are also amendable. Vermont's current alternative energy portfolio is limited. It currently provides few other sources or plans for the immediate, affordable renewable energy resource needed to replace one-third of the state's electricity. The

closure of VY, without an acceptable substitute, will initiate higher taxes for the residents of Vermont.

The best option for the state is to extend VY operations thereby ensuring one-third of the state's electricity and eliminating the threat of increased energy bills. Jobs will be preserved at the plant, and it will provide an incentive for individuals to pursue occupations in the renewable energy field as Vermont plans for the future. An extension would give VY the opportunity to improve and repair its trust problems with Vermont residents, as well as give the state of Vermont the necessary amount of time to develop alternative energy programs.

As a resident of Vermont, it would be an understatement to say that the recent behavior of the plant is unsettling. However, Vermont legislators have acted rashly and have allowed re-election anxieties to temper good judgment. It will be much more beneficial to improve what needs to be fixed, than to shut it down entirely. State officials and legislators need to do what is economically sound for the people of Vermont, and that is to grant VY a certificate of public good to extend its operations, giving Vermont more time to formulate and re-articulate a well-founded, long-term plan.

- Sean Comi,
Political Science '13

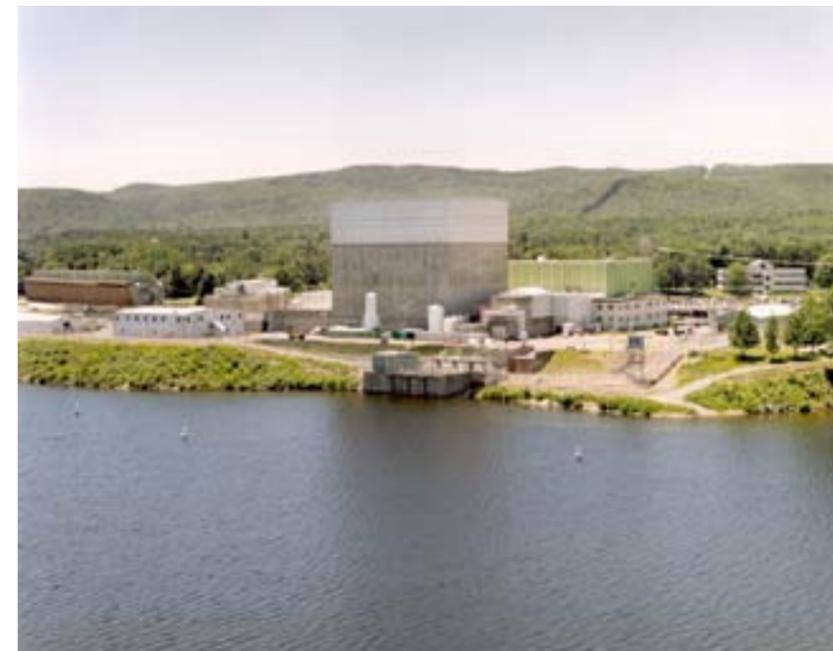


Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Sarah Palin's Alaska: More Than A Campaign Ad

The Kardashians. The Duggars. The Gosselins. I had always wondered why anyone would want to watch the day-to-day lives of these families on their respective television shows. Even more puzzling to me is how viewers actually enjoy the experience. However, over the course of two months last winter, I had to take my foot out of my mouth repeatedly, both

ily may not have across-the-board star power like the Kardashian sisters do, but each "character" developed his or her own distinct personality during the course of the show's first and only season. It was easy to fall in love with Trig

"Palin could have easily used her own show as a place to opine candidly on any issue she chose, but instead let her lifestyle make those statements for her."

for hygienic reasons and so that I would be more comfortable when watching *Sarah Palin's Alaska*. Alaska's former First Fam-

and Tripp, Sarah's infant son and grandson respectively, as well as nine-year-old Piper (the cutest child on television). Willow, who

celebrated her sixteenth birthday during the course of the show, is the show's 21st century teenage presence, constantly texting, badgering her parents to get her a car, and in one scene (playfully) shoving Piper's face into Willow's birthday cake.

Palin's two oldest children, Track and Bristol, while not appearing in the show as frequently as

their younger siblings maintain a presence throughout the season. We see Track in the Fourth of July episode, as Sarah's husband, Todd, grooms Track to take over the day-to-day operations of his commercial fishing business. Todd presents a hard-nosed persona in this episode in order to prepare Track to fish on his own, but in most other episodes he acts like the embodiment of a family man, playing with his children and acting as Sarah's technical director for interviews in the recently constructed studio on their property. Sarah's father, Chuck Heath, Sr., described by Sarah as "a true Alaskan" also plays a visible role in the series. Chuck's roles in the show vary from accompanying Sarah on a hunting trip to reprising his career as a schoolteacher in educating Kate Gosselin's children about the myriads of pelts and bones on the walls of his house.

While the family dynamic

is central to all of the show's episodes, it was entitled *Sarah Palin's Alaska* for a reason. Cameras were, unsurprisingly, focused on the former Governor and Vice Presidential nominee at all times, but she succeeded in making the show at least as much about Alaska as Sarah Palin. In an increasingly urbanized country, Alaska is portrayed as the last frontier, where fishing and hunting are treated as much as sustenance activities as they are sport. The Palins explore virtually every aspect of their life in Alaska over the course of the series, with Sarah in the middle of it all. She operates the crane at a logging site, shoots a caribou, goes whitewater rafting, visits with an Iditarod winner, pans for gold, and climbs a mountain in Denali National Park, all with a trademark smile of unmistakable enthusiasm on her face.

Regardless of what Palin did during the show, the idea that the public can be exposed to a politician for longer than a sound bite or interview is refreshing. Instead of listening to pundits with an agenda pontificate on Palin's actions, *Sarah Palin's Alaska* allowed viewers to look at Palin through a lens that many public servants would not embrace. Palin does an impressive job addressing some of the more superfluous criticisms thrown her way without addressing them directly, such as her children's names. Bristol Bay is a favorite fishing spot of the Palins and Piper is a small aircraft commonly used for travel to remote locations in Alaska. She peppers the series with self-deprecating humor, including joking about the typo

that led to her tweeting the word "refudiate," and asserting that she can "see Russia" from various vantage points in western Alaska.

Palin could have easily used her own show as a place to opine candidly on any issue she chose, but instead let her lifestyle make those statements for her. Her pro-hunting, pro-gun stance was evident when she went caribou hunting and every time she opened her freezer, stuffed with packages of moose and caribou meat. We see the Palins pray before meals and before they assist divers searching for gold. Most evident of all, however, were the constant references to self-reliance and rugged individualism, a direct 'refudiation' of the big-government policies of the Obama administration that Palin's supporters so ardently oppose. The show will not tape a second season, which may lead some to believe that Palin is clearing her schedule for a Presidential run. I believe that a bid for the GOP nomination will come to fruition, but will ultimately fail. It would be wise of Palin to run for the Senate or for another term as Governor, in order to shore up a resume that is lacking in high-level political experience (sorry, Wasilla). Will she end up competing with the Romneys and Gingriches for the chance to unseat President Obama in 2012? Maybe, maybe not. Would another season of *Sarah Palin's Alaska* been as entertaining and eye-opening as the first one? You betcha.

- Pat O'Neil,
Business '15



Photo Courtesy of Pimkie via Flickr.

Sarah Louise Palin née Heath

Vice-Presidential Candidate
2008

9th Governor of Alaska
Dec. 2006 - July 2009

Chairperson of the Alaska Oil and
Gas Conservation Commission
Feb. 2003 - Jan. 2004

5th Mayor of Wasilla
Oct. 1996 - Oct. 2002

Member of the Wasilla City
Council from Seat E
Oct. 1992 - Oct. 1994

Occupations:

Local news sportcaster
Commercial fisherman
Politician
Author
Political commentator

Won the Miss Wasilla beauty
pageant in 1984.

Received her bachelor's degree in
communication from the
University of Idaho in 1987.

Children:

Track
Bristol
Willow
Piper
Trig

Grandchildren:

Tripp

The Kid's Don't Stand a Chance: Opposing the Repeal of National Health Care

Franklin Pierce is surely applauding modern day Republicans' and their effort to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and as unaware of the times Pierce would be today, I believe the same can be said for modern day Republicans. In 1894, Pierce vetoed the first proposal of a federally sponsored social program that would have provided asylums for the indigent insane, as well as blind, deaf, and dumb Americans. He held that the government should not commit itself to social welfare, that such a power was best left to the states. And now, in 2011, Republicans are proposing to repeal an act that will have longstanding benefits for

Americans that have previously not had regular access to comprehensible, affordable health care. A poll released by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation on January 31, 2011 found that people who generally hold a positive opinion of health care reform dropped by only a percentage point from December 2010, but people who hold an unfavorable opinion of health care reform increased nine percentage points, while those who had no opinion dropped nine percentage points as well. How is affordable and comprehensible health care a bad thing? Some Americans are not granted the same opportunities

as others and require assistance to maintain the standard of living many in America have come to hold dear. Sixty percent of those who are uninsured are members of a working family with at least one full-time worker, and 16% are members of a family with only part-time workers; lack of coverage is not from lack of employment, but rather underemployment. Forty percent of the uninsured are from families with income below the poverty level and would now qualify for Medicaid under the new health care legislation. The longer people remain without insurance, the less likely they are to receive preventative care and the more likely they are to

delay regular appointments, which will result in more expensive medical bills than if preventative medical measures were taken. If members of Congress were faced with this same issue, maybe then they would see how important health care coverage is to everyday Americans. One such case exists: Congressman Andy Harris, who ran on an anti-Obamacare platform, could not go twen-

ty eight days without health insurance before his government-subsidized plan began.

Unfortunately, not everyone can be pleased one hundred percent of the time, but think of the other end of this argument: if health care in America remained the same as it was before health care reform was enacted, 50 million Americans would remain uninsured.

Because of a lack of health coverage and preventative care, community hospitals and walk-in clinics must take on the burden of these uninsured

Americans, and they are overcapacity. Community health centers are funded through tax dollars, but if health coverage were to be subsidized for the uninsured, in the long run, costs would drop significantly and would lessen the burden on American taxpayers. The Congressional Budget Office has stated that keeping health care reform in practice will lower the deficit by \$240 billion over ten years, but how?

The major methods put forth by the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act would be providing the public with a choice of health care providers through a health care exchange provided by the states; the Independent Medicare Advisory Board would be comprised of experts chosen by the president and approved by the Senate, who would make certain that Medicare complies with budgetary standards; New taxes on

'Cadillac' insurance plans (expensive, employer-provided coverage) would require individuals pay taxes, through their employers, of 40% tax on any money spent over \$27,500 on their annual plan in order to keep coverage providers honest and prices competitive; Medicare 'bundling' programs, meaning that physicians will be paid once for the care of a patient

involved on campus, and I pay all of my own bills. Much like filing FAFSA every March 1 in order to help pay for my education, I am asking for assistance, not a free ride. If I asked for none of this, I can guarantee that my burden on society would be much greater. I would not have any savings to exhaust if I became ill, and would rely wholly on taxpayers to pay for

my life-altering disease or any other necessary care I could incur. Personally, I want options. I went the majority of my adolescence

"I went the majority of my adolescence uninsured, and can almost guarantee that the majority of people who are opposing health care reform have never gone a significant amount of time without coverage."

on Medicare for a specific condition and its side effects, not for every incidence of treatment of that condition, paying for quality of treatment over quantity; under the new health care reform bill, everyone is required to have insurance, and now, people will have subsidized care and Capitol Hill is now directly involved in the process, and Congress will need to monitor prices and quality of coverage.

Americans will become healthier, not to mention more informed, and will have a bigger role in their health and the health of their families. What about those who work, but do not have positions that offer health care coverage? If I did not attend Northeastern, I would not have a health insurance option, and I do not think I could accuse myself of not working. Like many others I am a full-time student, I work, I am

uninsured, and can almost guarantee that the majority of people who are opposing health care reform have never gone a significant amount of time without coverage. I am the product of a destroyed financial life from lack of adequate preventative care and available, affordable health care and know firsthand that no person should exhaust their life savings in pursuit of a healthy life. As an independent student, as someone who owes more money in loans than they are worth, and as someone who is paying into Social Security but will never receive a dime, I demand affordable and transparent coverage options and refuse to let the gainfully insured deny them to me.

- Courtney Rainey,
Political Science '13



Photo Courtesy of Neil Parekh via Flickr.

BE HEARD.

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