

Does Hillary Clinton understand economics?

by: Darryl W. Perry

In late October, Hillary Clinton made a stop in Boston to campaign for Massachusetts gubernatorial candidate Martha Coakley. During her 25 minute speech, Clinton said, “Don’t let anybody tell you it’s corporations and businesses that create jobs. You know that old theory, trickle-down economics. That has been tried, that has failed. It has failed rather spectacularly.” She then made a statement that her husband “brought arithmetic” to Washington.

Some people have called Clinton’s statement her “You didn’t build that” moment, a reference to a comment by Barack Obama, which in context, meant that business owners did not build the infrastructure that allowed their business to thrive. However, the statement by Clinton lacks context, as the transcript of her speech has not been released, nor has the full video of her speech. Politico reports, “A Clinton aide said she had been referring to tax breaks for corporations.”

Even if one believes the explanation from the aide, that doesn’t explain who Mrs. Clinton thinks is responsible for creating jobs. Knowing that Clinton is a supporter of government intervention, it isn’t hard to take an educated guess that she believes jobs are created by governments. That may even give some insight to the aide’s explanation.

Twitter, free speech and warrant canaries

by: Darryl W. Perry

On October 7, Twitter, which is called by some the champion of free speech among social networks, filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the FBI. Reuters reports, “In the lawsuit... Twitter said that current rules prevent it from even stating that it has not received any national security requests for user information.”

A blog post from Twitter stated, “It’s our belief that we are entitled under the First Amendment to respond to our users’ concerns and to the statements of U.S. government officials by providing information about the scope of U.S. government surveillance – including what types of legal process have not been received. We should be free to do this in a meaningful way, rather than in broad, inexact ranges.”

The “broad, inexact ranges” mention by Twitter is a reference to an “agreement between Internet companies like Google and Microsoft with the government about court orders they receive related to surveillance,” according to Reuters. For example, a tech company that received 456 FISA orders and/or national security letters, would be able to say it received between zero and 999 orders.

Twitter added that the company tried, but was not able, to achieve a level of transparency without litigation. The

It’s possible that in the mind of Hillary Clinton jobs are created by government through tax breaks, government handouts, bids on government contracts, etc. I’m sure there are a lot of Republicans, many of whom are attacking Hillary, that would agree that those factors help create jobs.

Again, since Hillary hasn’t explained her statement, and since the transcript of her speech hasn’t been released, it’s hard to know exactly what she meant. However, it’s easy to know what she didn’t mean, and what she doesn’t believe.

Hillary Clinton, and many others from the two factions of the Ruling Party, doesn’t believe that a free market produces wealth. Hillary doesn’t believe that a free market creates jobs. She doesn’t believe that people should be free to produce goods and provide services absent government regulations. Hillary believes that you are not capable of making decisions for yourself when it comes to what you produce, buy, and/or sell. She doesn’t think you’re smart enough to decide how your children should be educated. She doesn’t think you’re smart enough to decide what substances (i.e. food, drink, etc) you decide to ingest; and most importantly, Hillary Clinton doesn’t think you’re capable of living a normal life without a ruler telling you how to be safe.

company provided a draft Transparency Report addendum to the DOJ and the FBI in April. The lawsuit states, the FBI and DOJ “informed Twitter on September 9, 2014 that ‘information contained in the [transparency] report is classified and cannot be publicly released’ because it does not comply with their framework for reporting data about government requests under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the National Security Letter statutes.”

The lawsuit adds, “[t]he Defendants’ position forces Twitter either to engage in speech that has been preapproved by government officials or else to refrain from speaking altogether.”

This raises two major questions:

- 1) can the federal government, or an agency thereof, rightly compel speech?
- 2) can the federal government, or an agency thereof, rightly compel untrue speech?

I say, no and no! However, it seems the legality of these questions will be decided by a federal court. Twitter’s claim is that the “U.S. government has taken the position that service providers like Twitter are even prohibited from saying that they have received zero national security requests, or zero of a particular type of national security request.”

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Mid-term elections trends

by: Darryl W. Perry

I'm not necessarily going to make predictions about which faction of the ruling coalition will control which House, though I will point out some polling trends.

Let's begin with the House of Representatives. A fundraising pitch from the National Republican Congressional Committee quotes Ted Cruz as saying, "It's crunch time in the midterm elections and control of Congress is hanging in the balance... Nancy Pelosi has declared all-out war on us conservatives, and if we don't fight back, they will be in a strong position to win the 17 seats needed to send Pelosi back to the Speaker's Chair."

Whether or not Nancy Pelosi has "declared war" on conservatives, Ted Cruz isn't telling the truth. Tom Knapp points out on his blog, "It's a mid-term election. In mid-term elections the president's party doesn't win seats, it loses seats — even in non-"wave" years..."

Republicans are expected to pick-up 16 of the top 25 "most likely to change parties" House seats, as ranked by RealClearPolitics. Further, Knapp points out, "[i]f Republicans lose every one of the House races ranked as "tossups" by RealClearPolitics, they'll still come out of the election with 230 seats (12 more than they need to retain their majority), so long as they win all the 'leans/likely GOP' contests." Based on these numbers, expect the GOP to retain control of the House of Representatives.

The Senate is a different story, mainly because only one third of the seats are up for election, plus three special elections to fill the remainder of a term. Of the 36 Senate

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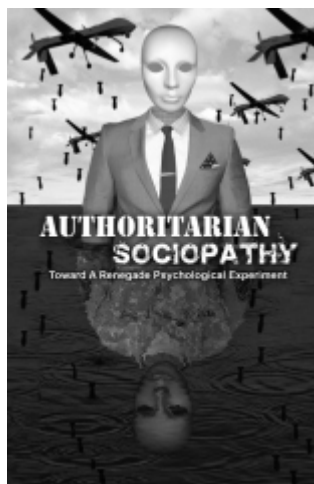
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Free speech and warrant canaries

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In other words, Twitter is filing a lawsuit over the legality of warrant canaries. The Electronic Frontier Foundation defines a warrant canary as “a colloquial term for a regularly published statement that a service provider has not received legal process that it would be prohibited from saying it had received. Once a service provider does receive legal process, the speech prohibition goes into place, and the canary statement is removed.”

Last month it was reported that Apple’s warrant canary was missing from the company’s transparency report covering Jan 1-Jun 30, 2014. Apple, and other companies, began using warrant canaries last year after spying revelations made by Edward Snowden. It’s not just tech companies that need to worry about receiving National Security Letters and FISA orders; these have been served on librarians and journalists alike. I encourage everyone to come up with at least one warrant canary. I have one for each of my podcasts, my website, and my newspaper.

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FBI on encryption: nothing to hide, nothing to fear?

by: Darryl W. Perry

Ever since the revelations from Edward Snowden became public last year, there has been an increased interest in encryption and online privacy. This has led companies like Apple and Google to encrypt or protect their new operating systems with coding by default. The FBI isn't happy with the news.

Last week, FBI Director James Comey said in a speech at the Brookings Institute, "We have the legal authority to intercept and access communications from information pursuant to court order, but we often lack the technical ability to do so." Adding that the move by tech companies to protect user communications in the name of privacy is certain to impede a wide range of criminal investigations.

The AP reports, at least three "examples the FBI director has cited are not so cut and dry. They are cases in which the authorities were tipped off – or even solved the crime – through means other than examining data they took from victims or suspects." However, Comey is still pushing for tech companies to give them backdoors to allow them unfettered access to people's data.

The EFF wrote, "the FBI is trying to convince the world that some fantasy version of security is possible—where 'good guys' can have a back door or extra key to your home but bad guys could never use it." Adding, "Comey wants everybody to have weak security, so that when the FBI decides somebody is a 'bad guy,' it has no problem collecting personal data."

In essence, James Comey is saying, "If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear," and privacy groups are responding, "if the FBI gets its way... we'll all end up

less secure and enjoying less privacy."

Luckily, there are companies and products that are helping people maintain their privacy online. One such product is The Onion Router (TOR), a browser bundle that encrypts online data, which was used by Private Manning to send files to Wikileaks in 2010. There are also Virtual Private Networks (VPN) that will encrypt the data being sent and received online. One company called Anonabox is claiming to have created a router that will direct all of your internet traffic through TOR, which eliminates the need to install software on your computer. Anonabox was hoping to raise \$7,500 in 30 days using the Kickstarter fundraising site. They wound up raising over half a million dollars in less than 3 days, and ended the campaign two days later. It turns out, that Anonabox actually lost some of it's funding before the campaign ended. Wired reports, some people were accusing the project's creators of fraud and "the backlash against that project had become so severe that its total funding was actually ticking down rather than up, as disillusioned backers pulled their pledges faster than others could make them."

I believe that people should do what they can to protect their privacy online, and this means doing some work to make sure the products and programs that claim to encrypt your data are actually doing just that. To those who are against the idea of encrypting data, and who say "If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear," I say, if you don't care about your privacy, then post all of your usernames and passwords online, post your Social Security Number, bank account number, credit card numbers, etc online for the world to see; after all you're the one who believes "If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear!"

Put my birth control and Midol(tm) on the same aisle!

by: Ashley E. Geno

Surprise! Unintended pregnancy is still a problem in the United States and the insistence on birth control access being tied to prescription is a big factor. God forbid allowing women to buy it over-the-counter at Walgreens instead of having to take a day off work to go the doctor, get examined, get a prescription, and go back to Walgreens. For the cost of missing a day at work, reading old People's magazines from 2004 at the doctor's office while she waits at least an hour before seeing any healthcare professional, and the cost of the doctor's visit itself, she could have saved time and money by just buying her birth control over-the-counter; she wouldn't need Obamacare to cover the cost because she could afford it herself.

The American public agrees. A recent Reason-Rupe poll found that 70 percent of Americans polled actually favor allowing women to legally purchase their birth control over-the-counter. And they aren't the only ones; the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists agree, we can improve access and decrease unintended pregnancy by allowing over-the-counter access to birth control.

So, if women's healthcare professionals and a majority of Americans are on board for over-the-counter birth control, why don't we have it yet? Organizations like Planned Parenthood aren't on board. They characterize the

movement to widen access to birth control by making it over-the-counter as a Republican attempt to force women to pay for their birth control rather than have it paid for by their health insurance providers under the Affordable Care Act. I guess Planned Parenthood missed the memo where 65 percent of women making \$30,000 per year or less (you know, those women they are concerned can't afford it themselves) are in favor of over-the-counter birth control.

We all know the Affordable Care Act has allowed most women, including those who are privately insured, those who get health insurance through their employer, and those covered through their state's Marketplace, access to free birth control. As anyone with a basic understanding of economics would know, however, there is no such thing as a free lunch (or in this case, free birth control). This "free lunch" falls under the Affordable Care Act's free preventative care requirement and certainly isn't free to the insurance companies who are forced to foot the bill for it and not allowed to ask for a copay.

A wide range of birth control methods are covered under the Act and cost to the company doesn't really seem to matter. For example, a \$200 per prescription pill is covered fully just the same as the cheap, generic stuff. Still, to get access to either you have to have a doctor's visit and a prescription (more cost to the company required to pay for such preventative care). This certainly isn't cheap, let alone free. So, why haven't we come up with a

Mid-term elections trends

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seats up for election, 21 are currently held by Democrats and 15 are held by Republicans. The consensus of pollsters is that only 11 of these seats are competitive, and either party will need to win 6 to have control of the Senate. Winning 6 of these seats would give the GOP a 51 seat majority, and doing the same would give the Democrats 50 seats, plus the tie-breaking President of the Senate.

Most of the polls show the Republicans being expected to win 19 seats, the Democrats expected to win 13 seats, and three seats being labeled toss-ups, this is in addition to Kansas which may very likely be won by an independent candidate. The three toss-up seats are Alaska, Arkansas & Louisiana, and all three have Democratic incumbents. Since incumbents are generally tougher to beat, I think the Democrats will hold all three. That means, I expect the Republicans to only gain three seats, leaving the Democratic faction of the ruling coalition in control of the Senate.

Over the next two years, expect more of the same: more bickering between the red faction and the blue faction on certain issues (i.e. issues that rally the base, but won't actually become law), and cooperation between the two factions on other issues (i.e. the things of actual importance: taxation and regulations, increased spending, drug war, foreign policy, domestic spying, etc.). This mid-term election will not change much over the next two years. However, it will set the stage for the 2016 Presidential election.

solution to make getting birth control cheaper for everyone? We have and the answer is to allow us to buy it over-the-counter at our local drug store at our convenience without a prescription. There would be no wasting time at the doctor's office, no expensive and unnecessary lab tests, and no having to take off work just get your birth control. Everyone will save money! The companies required to pay for the service under the Affordable Care Act won't have to pay the for the unnecessary doctor's visit or lab tests required to get the prescription in the first place and women won't have to go through the cost-benefit analysis of whether or not they can/should take off work to go through the hassle of getting birth control. Imagine, women could just pick up their monthly birth control pill for relatively cheap (we all know generic and over-the-counter medicines are cheaper than brand-name or prescription) on the aisle with the Midol and tampons.

So, you see, the best way to provide easier access to birth control and prevent unintended pregnancy isn't to force insurance companies to pay for it, but rather to get rid of the government requirement that access to birth control requires a prescription. Make birth control accessible over-the-counter! Men don't have to get a prescription for condoms, why should women have to get prescriptions for birth control?

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