

# “Taps” or Just Tapped Out

✘ In a recent column by Bill McClellan in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, he suggested, as a way to cut government spending, that we eliminate military funerals for all veterans except for those who died in combat. He states that buglers who play “Taps” make \$24.50 per service and, although, not excessive, the government is just “tapped out” and needs to cut spending.

I saw an interview with Mr. McClellan and Laura Ingraham and he seems like a nice enough fellow. He served his country during the Vietnam War, and for that, I thank him for his service. But, as he wrote in his column, “most veterans did nothing heroic” and, as far as he was concerned, the country paid him back with the college education he derived from the G.I. Bill. His solution for the fiscal problem was that if a veteran wished to have a military funeral, he should join a veterans’ association and let the association provide military honors at the funerals of their members.

I would have to disagree with Mr. McClellan on two points. First, I question his definition of “heroism” and the second, I don’t agree with him about the government expenditure for military funerals.

I don’t know whether Mr. McClellan was drafted or enlisted. If he was drafted, (and if my memory serves me well) he could’ve gone to Canada, he could’ve gotten a student deferment, he could’ve feigned or overstated a medical problem, he could’ve gotten married, or he could’ve applied for a job in an “essential” civilian occupation.

On the other hand, if he enlisted, as our current men and women in the military have done, he made a deliberate decision to serve his country.

In either case, being drafted or having enlisted, anyone who

serves in our military is a hero. Women who enlisted in the Marine Corps during WWII were never in combat but held vital jobs behind the scenes such as radio operators, parachute riggers, drivers, cooks, bakers, auto mechanics, etc., all jobs that would've had to have been filled by men, thereby reducing the number of combat troops. The same probably holds true today. To say that any person who wears a military uniform in this country is not a hero is a misjudgment.

Getting out alive doesn't make one less of a hero than someone who died on the battlefield. The sacrifice is different, but sacrifice, in whatever form, should still be honored and revered.

Anyone who puts on a uniform with the potential of being in harm's way in order to protect the interests of our country and we, its people, is a hero to me, including Mr. McClellan, even if he doesn't see himself as one.

On the second point, fiscal responsibility, anyone who's read my articles knows how crazy I get about government waste. Providing military funerals for all our veterans is not an item I would eliminate from our balance sheet.

Today, when our government is hemorrhaging money in handouts to people who give back absolutely nothing to America and are not required to account for it (e.g., no drug testing required for welfare) or even perform community service or some type of volunteer work in exchange for those handouts, I have a real problem with people who think that our military's men and women should not be accorded a military funeral. Whatever the cost of the bugler, or any other expense attributable to the military funeral, should be gladly paid by the taxpayer with a smile and a big "thank you!"

I'm not at all interested in teaching Moroccans how to make pottery at a cost of \$27 million, or spending \$1.5 million to find out why some women homosexuals are fat while homosexual

males are not, or spending \$325,000 to build a robotic squirrel or \$682,750 to study shrimp on a treadmill. There's plenty of room for government to cut back, including footing a \$585,000 bill for Joe Biden's recent one-night-stay in Paris. Cutting back military honors for our veterans is not one of them.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

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## Fisker Karma – Another Obama Boondoggle

☒ Everyone's probably heard of Solyndra but how many of you have heard of the Fisker Corporation?

Two years ago, Henrik Fisker got \$529,000,000 (yes, that's \$529 million) in government loan guarantees to start up his electric car company. All the money hasn't circled the bowl yet, but I'm predicting it will.

Let's start off with the price of this "green" car. Guess how much they cost.

Higher...higher...you're getting warm....\$97,000.00!

According to our ever brilliant Vice-President Joe Biden, spending \$529 million was seed money "that will return back to the American consumer in billions and billions and billions of dollars in good new jobs." That's a lot of billions. On the other hand, an article in Forbes didn't see it that way. At the same time, it was announced that Fisker was to re-open a former GM plant in Delaware for the less-expensive "Nina project." Delaware's Council on Development Finance approved

a \$12.5 million loan which would become a grant if Fisker spent at least \$175 million renovating the old GM facility and showed that it created 2,495 jobs in five years.

Anyway, it turns out that Mr. Fisker decided to build the car not in the U.S. even though there are a countless number of auto workers in need of jobs. Instead, 500 assembly jobs were created in Finland! Yes, the car is being manufactured 4,000 miles away on our dime.

Fisker's plan was to build a cheaper, compact car in the United States beginning in 2013.

Well, it looks like there's already a problem with the luxury model. All 239 cars have been recalled because of a potential fire hazard.

There are recalls all the time by automobile companies but this is one helluva way to start a new company – with the help of U.S. taxpayers!

Nevertheless, our government is hellbent on shoving "green" technology down our throats whether we like it or not.

Now we're learning that Fisker is laying off 26 workers at the GM plant in Wilmington and another 40 contractors and employees working on design and development of the Karma in California.

The car's been delayed because of "regulatory delays" and "battery pack problems" which prompted a voluntary safety recall by Fisker.

"The Energy Department made loan availability for the Nina project contingent on Fisker meeting development and sales milestones for the Karma, which the company missed. Fisker is now negotiating with the DOE to modify the loan agreement so funds for that project can be released."

I read yet another story about a fire badly damaging the home of a new Fisker Karma owner, and the 60-day old electric car

was the source of the blaze, according to the Fort Bend County, Texas, chief fire investigator Robert Baker. Fisker denies this of course.

In March, another Karma broke down in the middle of a Consumer Reports road test, a failure that Fisker later said was due to a faulty battery.

Yet another Fisker Karma went up in flames recently near Palo Alto, CA.

This is yet another one of President Obama's boondoggles he'd sooner sweep under the carpet than have it widely reported on this year. So what about those billions and billions and billions of dollars Vice President Biden was expecting to see and the 2,495 jobs Delaware was hoping to see? Never happened; never will.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

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## **Mitt Romney "Gets" What's Important**

☒ At the DNC, Julian Castro, Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, said Mitt Romney "doesn't get it." According to some, Mr. Romney doesn't relate to the "little people" because he didn't grow up like average folks. Well, so what? Mitt Romney comes from money, I don't. I don't want him to "get" my life; I want him to fix what's wrong in Washington.

I don't want a President who can "relate" to me. Were these things said about John F. Kennedy and his trust fund when he ran for President? I doubt it. When our country was being

founded, did the common folk care about George Washington's wealth? Did they moan and complain that General Washington didn't "understand us." The idea is laughable.

I don't want another hope-y change-y kind of President – we've already got one of those and look where it's gotten us. Complete incompetence at solving our Nation's problems. If I want my President to "relate" to me in a touchy-feely sort of way, I would've nominated Dr. Phil for President.

If I had a brain tumor, I would want to find the best surgeon to cut out the cancer and wouldn't care about his bedside manner. I'd look to God, my family and friends for solace – not to my doctor. I don't need or want that from a surgeon. That's not his job. His job is to remove a cancer growing inside my skull. Period.

I view the Presidency the same way. With the state of the economy today, I want someone who understands economics – someone to come in and fix what's wrong in Washington. I have to ask myself why we think community organizers and lawyers (and there are plenty of them in Congress) are capable of solving the monumental problems facing us today? Lawyers may know how to write laws, but that doesn't mean that we actually need more laws. We need common sense and a basic understanding of money management, which, in my opinion, is completely lacking in Washington at the present time.

Anytime I had a question, I'd go to my late cousin who had a high school education, was a butcher by trade, and knew more about the economy, stock market and money management than anyone else I knew and probably more than half the fools in Washington put together.

Even if the government taxed "millionaires" 100%, it still wouldn't put a dent in our debit. I want someone who's going to put the brakes on the uncontrolled spending. If some things have to be cut, then we all have to put on our big girl

panties and deal with it.

If I've said it once, I've said it a dozen times, government is incapable of competently overseeing any sort of program – there's so much waste and unaccountability that if I ran my home and office the way the government did, I'd have to file bankruptcy. And the politicians in Washington (and in just about every State at this point) don't seem to care; they just keep funding more and more programs with absolutely no oversight resulting in mind-boggling waste.

Our national debt has just hit \$16,000,000,000,000.00 (yes, that's \$16 trillion) and if we keep going the way we're going, I foresee the chaos on the streets of Greece being repeated on the streets of Los Angeles and New York when this country reaches the brink of bankruptcy. The liberals don't seem to realize that we're just running out of money. They just want to increase the number of people sucking the government teat in order to maintain their power. It's that simple. That's their view of America. Make people dependent of them and they'll keep voting for them. That's their philosophy. It's not mine.

I have no idea when the idea of "self-reliance" turned into a "sense of entitlement." I certainly wasn't raised with that idea. You work, you get paid. You work harder, you get paid more. You go to school, you get a better job. You get a better job, you get paid even more. That's the American Dream. Too many people don't want to do what's necessary to achieve it – they want it handed to them without the hard work.

Our Declaration of Independence insures us life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It does not insure us happiness. The government has no obligation to make us happy. It's up to each of us. I just read a story about 82-year old Doris Thompson, who's led a life of crime and is back in prison (on the taxpayers' dime, of course), and who has the audacity to

say she “wouldn’t do all this nonsense if the government gave us more money.” Her actions and her choices are now the fault of the government! I’m surprised she didn’t specifically blame President Bush. Is that insane, or what?

I don’t care whether Mitt Romney “gets” me. As far as I’m concerned, he “gets” what’s important and I pray he’s elected in November to do what needs to be done to turn this mess around.

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## Stay Out of My Kitchen!

☒ Let me start out by saying I’m not one of those size 2 gals who won’t eat a Hershey’s kiss because they’re afraid they’ll gain an ounce. I’m a normal size 12 woman who has fought against weight gain all my adult life. I try and watch what I eat, not always successfully, but get to the gym regularly, and, for the most part, I have no aches or pains.

I know what I’m supposed to do and what I’m not supposed to do. Unless someone’s lived under a rock for the last 50 years, everyone knows that foods high in fat and tobacco products are not good for you. If you sit and watch tv all night with a bag of Fritos and a few cans of beer, you’re going to gain weight. If you never do any exercise, you’re going to lose all muscle strength and have a whole lot of problems.

But, even with everything we already know, we’re still an obese country and, quite simply, people are going to do what they’re going to do. No amount of government spending will make people healthier. You can’t legislate good eating habits.

Michelle Obama has tried to influence the citizenry in good eating habits and exercise. I doubt that statistics will show she's had any overall influence on how people live their lives or raise their children.

On top of all of her efforts, I now read that billions of dollars of taxpayer money are being spent on more ridiculous programs aimed at changing the way people think about eating.

Part of Obamacare includes allocation of \$500 million for something called the Prevention and Public Health Fund which has been increased by an additional \$750 million in 2011. All this money is aimed at preventing tobacco use, obesity, heart disease, stroke and cancer, etc., etc. In all, \$15 billion, yes "b" as in billion, will be allocated to this fund over the next decade.

These monies are doled out in what are called "Community Transformation Grants" or "CTGs" to fund "prevention, wellness, and public health activities."

Here's some examples of this wasteful expenditure of the taxpayers' money.

\$4.9 million was given to Florida to assign nutrition and physical activity consultants to child care centers and restaurants to promote healthy behaviors and limit unhealthy food choices.

\$3.7 million in North Carolina to improve access and availability of healthy foods and drinks, improve product placement and attractiveness, and change the relative process of healthy vs. unhealthy items in convenience stores.

\$3.6 million to California for the "Rethink your Drink Campaign" designed to get people to drink healthier alternatives such as water, milk, or 100 percent fruit juice beverages. (I always thought fruit juices were very high in sugar and bad for your teeth.)

Nearly \$1.2 million to Colorado for programs to increase sodium awareness and reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Sodium awareness? Really? We've known about "too much salt" in our diets as far back as the late 50s. My mother's doctor had her on a low-sodium diet because she used to eat those little tasteless Melba toast crackers. So, after over 50 years, how much more do we need to know about "too much salt?"

Anyone who really wants to know about nutrition need only go to a library or go online and google Dr. Oz. Reading one of his books is all anyone needs to do – and it doesn't cost anything if you get his books at the library or go on his website.

If you don't like to read, why not watch The Biggest Loser on network tv –you don't even have to pay for cable. Doesn't that gal Michaels help everyone lose hundreds of pounds each season with sensible eating habits and exercise? And her advice is free!

When I read about government wasteful spending, and I read about it every day, I have to conclude that it's all about keeping another governmental bureaucracy, with more layers than a delicious Napoleon pastry, alive and well – at our expense.

In April, the House passed H.R. 1217 which eliminated the Prevention and Public Health Fund. In October, the Senate reviewed the merits and necessity of the Fund and has not yet voted on the issue. God only knows why it takes months to accomplish anything in Congress.

As far as I'm concerned, all this wasteful spending is more over-reaching by the government to try and modify our behavior. After this \$15 billion is spent trying to influence consumer behavior, nothing will change. It's an individual's decision and no amount of government spending is going to have

any effect on that decision.

If someone doesn't already know that eating at McDonald's every day is a bad thing, they're hopeless and no amount of taxpayer money aimed at educating this clueless individual will make a difference.

Wishing you a joyous, happy and healthy New Year!

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## IT and the Government

✘ Earlier in the year, I wrote an article entitled Government at Work – Ain't It Grand?, about the inefficiency of any government activity. Although I'll have to admit the Department of Motor Vehicles has cleaned up its act and made things move along more smoothly, I stand by my words.

Recently, I read even more disturbing stories which reveal how incompetent the government is at almost everything it touches – and with a big price to the taxpayer.

Here's the perfect example. There's a federal jobs program called USAJob.gov which matched openings with applicants. Back in 2004, the feds outsourced USAJobs.gov to Monster.com. If you're unfamiliar with Monster.com, it's the market leader in online job search sites. But in a brilliant move, eighteen months ago, the Obama Office of Personnel Management decided the feds could do a better job and spent about \$6 million developing a new in-house version of the site.

Well, needless to say, the whole thing is a disaster. The volumes of requests crushed the government servers, slowed down the system and locked out thousands of applicants. Monster.com has "graciously" offered to host free job postings

for federal agencies for a month as the government reboots its "improved" website.

My nephew who is an IT director at a very large software company wasn't surprised. While I don't fully understand how all this stuff works, he explained a lot to me and, even as simple-minded as I am when it comes to the workings of the internet, even I scratched my head at the government's stupidity.

Monster.com has spent untold amounts of money and time on their site to make it what it is. So what did the government think was wrong with how Monster.com was handling its website that it believed it could do better? How did the Obama administration think they could improve on it? God only knows how much all this is costing the taxpayers!

Here's another example. The government apparently has an electronic green-card lottery system in place. This year, about 15 million people submitted entries to the lottery, which offers a quick path to permanent U.S. residence for 50,000 people selected randomly. Well, a recent report released by the State Department's Inspector General's office revealed a major screw-up, which affected thousands of the 22,000 people who had been notified they were in line for permanent U.S. residency through the annual May lottery. Apparently, the snafu resulted from a failure to test a new computer program wreaking havoc with people's lives. Government officials weren't aware of the problems "until after it failed and results had to be voided." The computer glitch caused 90% of the winners to be selected from applications received on the first two days, instead of from the entire 30-day registration period.

(By the way, the fact that 15 million people from around the world submitted entries for permanent U.S. residency should be startling news to those morons who think America is such a rotten place. Maybe we can trade some of those losers for

some of the 15 million people who would be thrilled to be part of the 99% in the United States.)

Recently, I heard of a municipality that bought a software package that must "go live" on January 1, 2012. The municipality bought this very expensive software package for its financial, payroll and HR systems way in advance in order to be sure it's tested properly and all systems were be working perfectly by the first of the year. Unfortunately, it hired a consulting firm at the lowest bid (already a bad sign) that didn't know what they were doing. Everything got behind, and now if they can't go live by the first of the year, the damages are incalculable. The municipality now has to cut corners because it's committed to the January 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. In order to make that deadline, they're not sufficiently testing the system to ensure that everything will work as expected. We'll see in January if people are receiving their paychecks.

In January 2008, King County (Seattle) announced that after approximately 2 to 3 years and \$38 million, the County's SAP initiative "blew up" creating a "political maelstrom." (My nephew decided I'd heard enough about IT, SAP, and the rest when he saw my eyes glaze over.)

More horror stories about the government's IT failures, including the FBI, IRS and problems with the southern border fence, can be read here if you have the stomach for all this waste of money.

My nephew assures me that private companies have problems too. As far as I'm concerned, private companies aren't using my money. But that's just me.

From a professional's point of view, analyst Tom Foristell, "software implementations fail for a variety of causes and factors in both the private and public sectors. Failed government ERP software implementations often exhibit strong negative organizational cultures, turf wars and deep rooted

politics which collectively challenge even the most well managed ERP implementations. While software technical challenges generally play a contributing role in implementation failures, the catastrophes are exacerbated by inexcusable executive leadership, insufficient project management and denial of the facts.”

When it's not your money, you just don't care. That's my opinion of the government.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.