Norquist Jumps Off The Fiscal Cliff! The First Five Self-Defeating Things About His Non-Endorsement Endorsement Of John Boehner's "Plan B"

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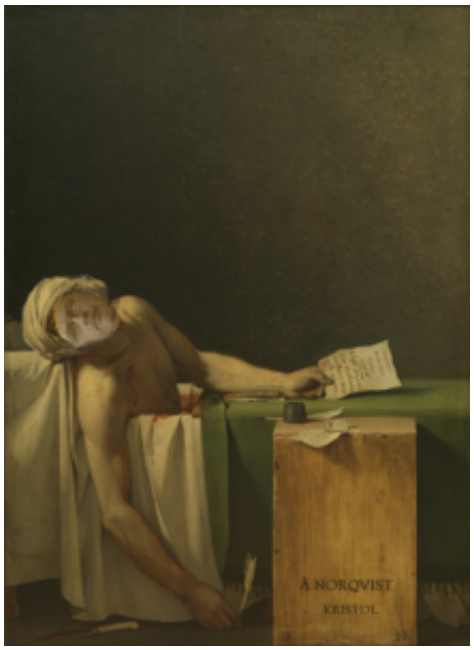
[Reader's note: ***All in-text hyperlinks*** in this post (if any) are not links I have attached to the post. They are malware infesting the internet. Don't click them. They are spam. I'm trying to learn how to remove this problem from my site, but until then, please note that all ***my legitimate links are in the form of footnotes only***, listed at the bottom of the post. I'm working on a fix to these sneaky hyperlinks. Thanks! Mike]

Norquist Jumps Off The Fiscal Cliff! The First Five Self-Defeating Things About His Non-Endorsement Endorsement Of John Boehner's "Plan B"

By Michael Matthew Bloomer, Dec. 20, 2012.

[caption id="attachment_2743" align="alignleft" width="218"]



Grover Norquist's high water mark?[/caption]

The "clarifying" statement below ejected from Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) ought to be drowned in a bathtub.[1. "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." Norquist made this statement in 2001 on NPR. I cannot find a live link to the show, however. See this instead.] It's all but useless. No, in fact, it's useless, incomprehensible. Give it a read [emphasis in original]:

ATR's statement on the "Plan B" tax bill.

> ATR has consistently maintained that individual Members of Congress make a pledge **to their constituents** to oppose and vote against tax increases. The House this week will vote on a tax bill. This legislation—popularly known as “Plan B”--permanently prevents a tax increase on families making less than $1 million per year. Republicans supporting this bill are this week affirming to their constituents in writing that this bill—the sole purpose of which is to prevent tax increases—is consistent with the pledge they made to them. In ATR’s analysis, it is extremely difficult—if not impossible—to fault these Republicans’ assertion.
>
> In particular, in this Congress the House has already voted twice to prevent any tax increases on any American. When viewed with this in mind, and considering this tax bill contains no tax increases of any kind—in fact, it permanently prevents them—matters become more clear. Having finally seen actual legislation in writing, ATR is now able to make its determination about a legislative proposal related to the fiscal cliff. ATR will not

> consider a vote for this measure a violation of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge.
>
> UPDATE: Despite inaccurate press reports, the statement above is not to be misconstrued as an endorsement of any legislation.[2. ATR's statement on the "Plan B" tax bill, Americans for Tax Reform, Dec. 19, 2012.]

HUH? I had an easier time translating Klingon . . . but here are the first five things that stuck me as batty or humbug or manic or forgetful or various combos of these:

1. Norquist and his ATR geniuses make the assertion that the signers of the anti-tax pledge have made a promise to "their constituents" to never vote to raise taxes. Yet, for some time now voters have strongly supported raising taxes on the moving target called the "wealthiest Americans." Released two days ago, a new POLITICO/George Washington University Battleground Poll[1. *December, 2012 Battleground Released*, Lake Research, Dec. 10, 2012, link is to poll's summary charts.] found that

- 60 percent of respondents support raising taxes on households that earn more than $250,000 a year and 64 percent want to raise taxes on large corporations.
- Even 39 percent of Republicans support raising taxes on households making more than $250,000. Independents favor such a move by 21 percentage points, 59 to 38 percent.
- Only 38 percent buy the GOP argument that raising taxes on households earning over $250,000 per year will have a negative impact on the economy. Fifty-eight percent do not.

So too do other polls indicate about the issue and they have done so for more than a year. (And so then why did the administration "compromise" (with itself) to raise the tax rate hike income ceiling from $250,000 to $400,000?! But that's another question for another post.)

So when Norquist and his minions write "ATR has consistently maintained that individual Members of Congress make a pledge **to their constituents** to oppose and vote against tax increases," on the face of it, ATR is saying "pay attention to your constituents!" And now, in many of the 200+ districts and 20+ states of congressional and senatorial signers of the anti-tax pledge, constituents - even many Republicans - are saying, loud and clear, raise taxes on those couples earning above $250,000/year (individuals at $200,000). And don't forget these rate increases are quite low historically.

2. And who, if you are a legislator, just who do you think you ought to listen to? Here's another revealing little section summarizing results of the survey:

Click for larger and much clearer version which opens in a new tab/window.

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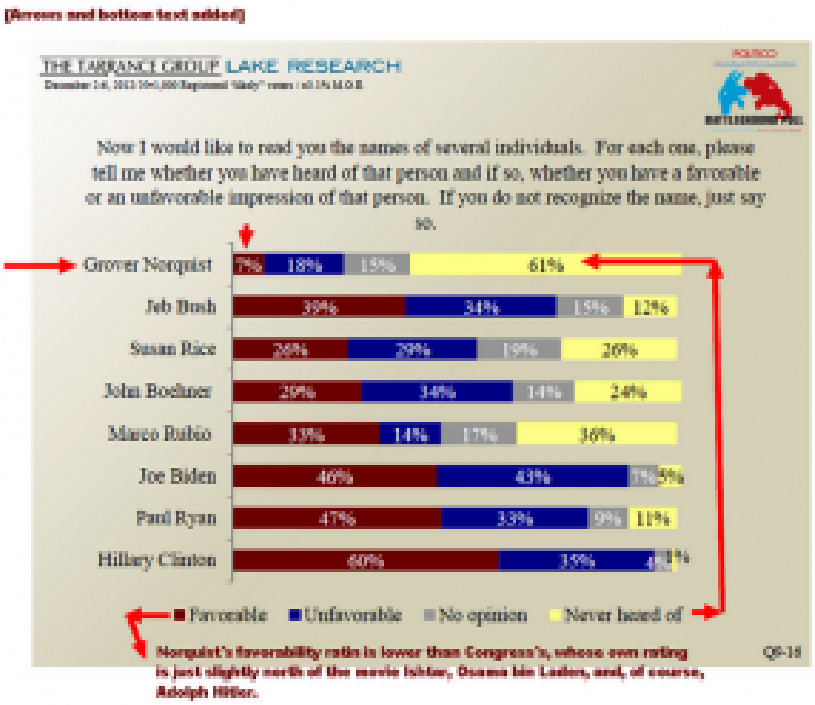

Hitler's gaining on him![/caption]

Both observations in number one above and here seem to moot any real influence that Norquist ought to have with those still clinging fearfully to their pledge and association with him. He's becoming old news fast, and folks would have to think hard about which would be more tolerable, lunch with Grover Norquist or lunch with Adolph Hitler.

The one group that is a large exception, of course, is the group of wingnut districts with Tea Party and Tea Party wannabes representing them in Congress. People like those inimitables Louis Gohmert (R-TX)[3. New Law Will Remove The Term “Lunatic” From Federal Statutes : Texas Congressloon Louis Gohmert Disappointed, Michael Matthew Bloomer, *They Will Say ANYTHING!*, Dec. 9, 2012.], Steve King (R-IA)[5. Iowa’s “Kingmaker” Congressman Steve King On Tonight’s Iowa Caucus: “Can’t Read Mum Mah Mah Mah Puh Puh Puh Poker Face," Michael Matthew Bloomer, They Will Say ANYTHING!, Jan. 3, 2012.], Cliff Stearns (R-GA), and Joe Wilson (R-SC) in the House, and Senators Jim Lee (R-UT), Rand Paul (R-KY), and Sen. Jim DeMint[6. Wily Senator DeMint (R-SC) Leads GOP Senate to the Cliff!, Michael Matthew Bloomer, They Will Say ANYTHING!, Feb. 6, 2009], who will serve through the lame duck session then to be replaced by another Tea Partier, Tim Scott.[7. Rep. Tim Scott, A Jim DeMint Think-Alike, Appointed South Carolina’s U.S. Senator, Michael Matthew Bloomer, *They Will Say ANYTHING!*, Dec. 15, 2012] Especially in the House, this pesky group of approximately 70 congressloons can still scuttle any deal that Boehner pushes, and they do not like Plan B. If Democrats can be held in place by Pelosi and vote *en masse* against the Boehner plan, then it will fail. We'll see. House vote planned for tonight. In any event, Plan B will likely not see the light of

day in the Senate, if Harry Reid is to believed, and, lately, he is.

3. The ATR statement above asserts this about Boehner's Plan B:

> When viewed with this in mind, and considering *this tax bill contains no tax increases of any kind*—in fact, it permanently prevents them—matters become more clear.

This is patently false. Its own refutation is within its own description of Plan B's tax proposal (see italics above). *Who wrote this?* The bill obviously raises taxes on those making more than $1 million per year. The expiration of the Bush tax cuts on this group returns these rates to Clinton era tax rates. Millionaires at ATR's own website are moaning and groaning about it. Who does Norquist think he's kidding? Or has he become even more noticeably unhinged?

4. There are other tax increases in Boehner's Plan B. Tax increases in the form of expiration of *tax credits*, including the expanded Child Tax Credit and a credit that helps with higher education tuition. Also, the payroll tax holiday will be ended. These are tax hikes according to Norquist's longstanding analysis of tax expenditures and credits and deductions, so-called tax loopholes that benefit certain groups, most taxpayers, and industries, like the ethanol subsidy and the subsidies for oil and tax companies.

Ask Senator Tom Coburn when he attempted to float a plan to cut tax expenditures by $1 trillion over 10 years. Grove was all over him like ugly on an ape.[8. Tom Coburn Traps Grover Norquist , Johnathan Chait, *The New Republic*, Mar. 30, 2011.] You see, Norquist considers tax expenditures and deductions as a way to "starve the beast" - they deny the government revenue, and contribute to getting it down to bathtub size. Therefore, all tax expenditures that are in force are sacrosanct despite their merit. Here's the important point: any reduction or removal of a tax expenditure is, by definition, a "tax hike" since it thereby provides more revenue to the government.

So, when Grover and ATR write, "this tax bill contains no tax increases of any kind—in fact, it permanently prevents them," he's implicitly abandoning his position on expenditures (Plan B cuts the Child Tax Credit, and proposes limiting deductions for the $1 million/year club to 28%), and lying about it. Plan B's ending or limiting preexisting tax expenditures results in more revenue for the federal government, and plain and simple, these are by Norquist's own definition and history known as *tax increases*. Apparently no longer *verboten*.

5. Finally, note this "UPDATE" section in ATR's remarkably self-defeating statement:

> UPDATE: Despite inaccurate press reports, the statement above is not to be misconstrued as an endorsement of any legislation

In English this means, "Who are you going to believe, *me* or your lying eyes?" Does Norquist think we're utterly stupid? As a matter of fact, yes, he does. That's all that can explain this "update" that issues a permission slip for Republicans to vote for Plan B, mentioning it specifically by name. There's no other way to analyze the "update": Norquist believes we're idiots.

So, in a few hours we'll learn how the House voted on Plan B. Will enough tax pledge takers use their permission slips to vote for it? Will the 70 odd Tea Party loons refuse, and vote it down by holding to the Norquist pledge? However this works out, Norquist has likely left his high water mark on tax reform.