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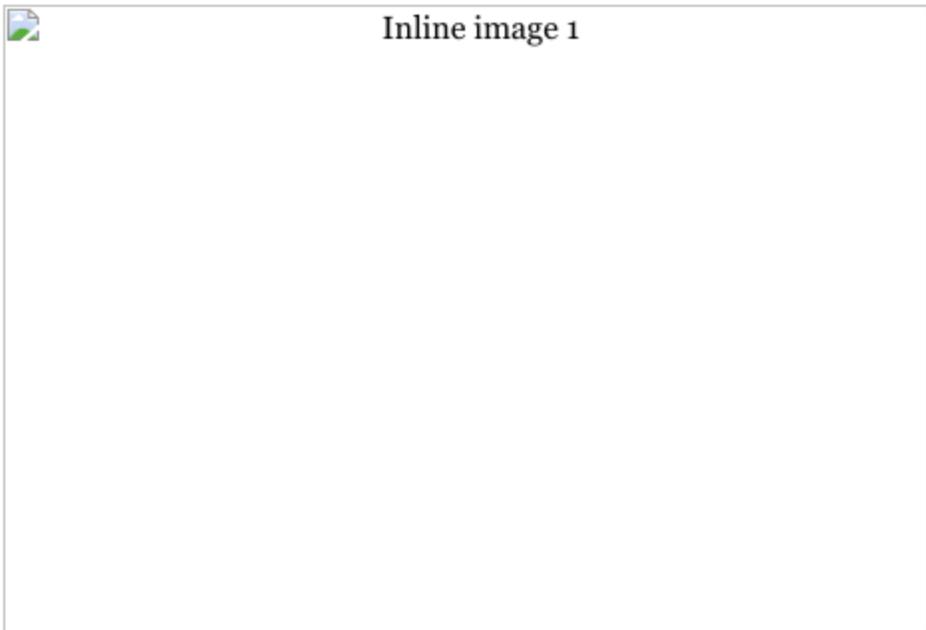
DEAR FRIEND.....

A Real American Hero

The Innocence Project turns 25 this year.

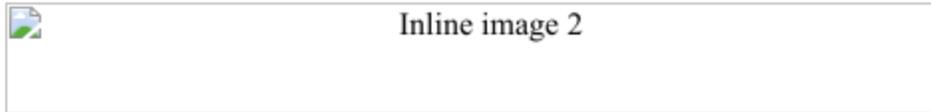


Inline image 1



The criminal justice system is far from perfect. More often than you might think, innocent people are convicted of crimes they did not commit. Often these victims are poor, uneducated with little or no

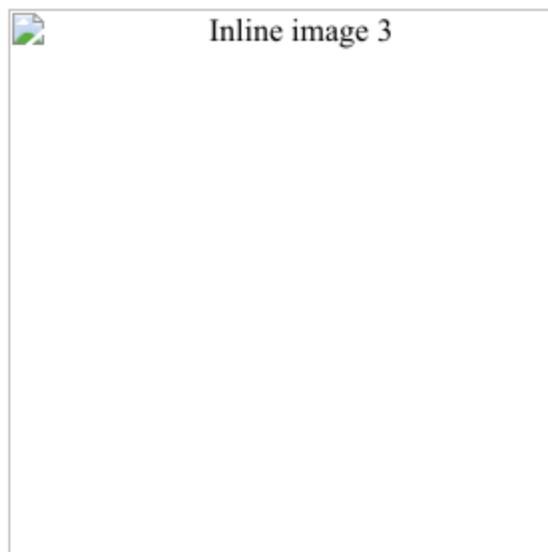
resources. When that occurs, the consequences for the lives of the wrongfully convicted and their families are truly devastating.



The Innocence Project, founded in 1992 by Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck at Cardozo School of Law, exonerates the wrongly convicted through DNA testing and reforms the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. To date, the work of the Innocence Project has led to the freeing of 343 wrongfully convicted people based on DNA, including 20 who spent time on death row, and the finding of 147 real perpetrators. Again, these are only the DNA-based exonerations. Numbers for all exonerations are considerably higher. The University of Michigan Law School's National Registry of Exonerations reported that as of two months ago the total number of known exonerations since 1989 were 1,784, of which no fewer than 156 were at one point on death row.

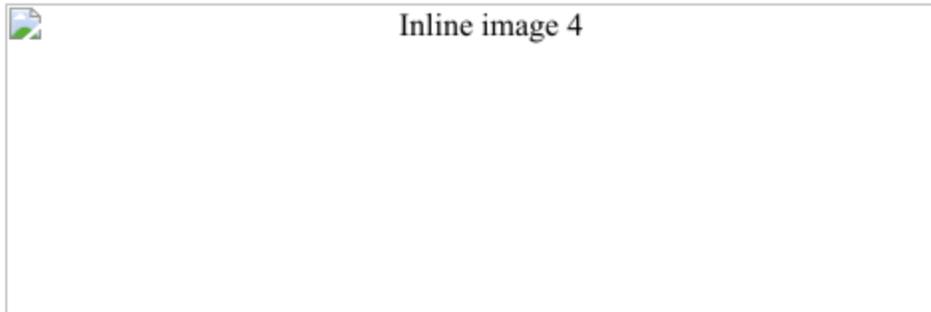
Contributing **Factors**

Mistaken Identification, False Confession, Bad Forensic, Evidence, Perjury / False Accusation and Official Misconduct.



The Innocence Project was established in the wake of a landmark study by the United States Department of Justice and the United States Senate, in conjunction with the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, which found that incorrect identification by eyewitnesses was a factor in over 70% of wrongful convictions. The original Innocence Project was founded in 1992 by Scheck and Neufeld as part of the Cardozo School of Law of Yeshiva University in New York City. It became an independent 501(c) non-profit organization in 2003 but maintains strong institutional connections with Cardozo. The current Executive Director of the Innocence Project is Madeline deLone.

Exonerations **Total By Year**



Here are a few of the numbers behind these exonerations:

- Number of U.S. post-conviction DNA exonerations: 311
- Number of prisoners sentenced to death before DNA proved their innocence: 18
- Number of prisoners charged with capital crimes but not sentenced to death: 16
- Longest sentence served by a DNA exoneree: 35 years
- Average length of sentence served by DNA exonerees: 13.6 years
- Approximate total years served by all DNA exonerees: 4,156
- Average age of exonerees at the time of their wrongful convictions: 27
- Percentage of prisoners exonerated by DNA testing who are people of color: 70%
- Percentage of DNA exoneration cases where the actual perpetrator has been identified by DNA testing: Almost 50%
- Number of U.S. states (and Washington, D.C.) where exonerations have been won: 36
- Number of DNA exonerees who pleaded guilty to crimes they didn't commit: 29
- Number of DNA exonerations that involved the Innocence Project: 171
- Year of the first Innocence Project DNA exoneration: 1989

Note: Other exonerations were helped by Innocence Network organizations, private attorneys and by pro se defendants, according to the Innocence Project.

A 1996 study by written C. Ronald Huff, director of the Criminal Justice Research Center and the School of Public Policy and Management at Ohio State University – Convicted But Innocent: Wrongful

Conviction and Public Policy. Huff concluded that more than 10,000 innocent people are convicted each year or 0.05% of all convictions. And the study was based on crimes in the year 1990 that were reported by the FBI, which included murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson.

"Wrongful convictions undermine public confidence in the judicial system and should be viewed with alarm," said Huff. It troubles Huff that liberals seem more concerned about the issue than conservatives. "Conservatives, too, should be concerned because it's a public safety issue. The actual offender remains free to victimize other citizens." Huff cites the case of William Jackson, a Columbus man who spent five years behind bars in the early 1980s for rapes later determined to have been committed by a physician who was similar in appearance and had the same last name. "No one has ever known for sure how many women Dr. Jackson raped while the wrong man was in prison. He had five more years to continue his serial rapes."

What causes wrongful convictions? To find out, Huff and his co-authors created a database of 205 wrongful convictions collected from a variety of sources. After analyzing these cases, the researchers found that most wrongful convictions resulted from a combination of errors. The main cause in more than half of the cases -- 52.3 percent -- was eyewitness misidentification. That's understandable, Huff said. "The victims are not, at the time of the crime, concentrating too much on the features of the assailant's face. For example, they may be looking at the weapon. The trauma of the moment interferes with their ability to recall details."

The next most common main cause was perjury by a witness, which contributed to 11 percent of the convictions. Other problems included negligence by criminal justice officials, coerced confessions, "*frame ups*" by guilty parties, and general overzealousness by officers and prosecutors.

Overzealousness can lead authorities to make careless, if unintentional errors, and cause some authorities to bend rules to get a known criminal off the street. Failure to keep an open mind can cause errors that become rubber-stamped by trusting colleagues as the case moves through the judicial process, Huff says. By the time the errors are discovered, the trail to the real offender is cold.

Public pressure to solve a case and the organizational culture of a police or district attorney's office can affect the process. While most errors are unintentional, the researchers say there are far too many incidences of unethical and unprofessional behavior. "Our research has convinced us that such unethical conduct in the United States has not, in general, received appropriate attention, nor has it been adequately punished," Huff said.

From their beginnings, innocence projects have played an enormously valuable role in the criminal justice system. With legal aid funding being hit by austerity cuts and current economic and socio-political policies; convicted felons seeking financial assistance to claim wrongful convictions are hardly expected to fare better than the tens of thousands of merely accused who struggle for legal help.

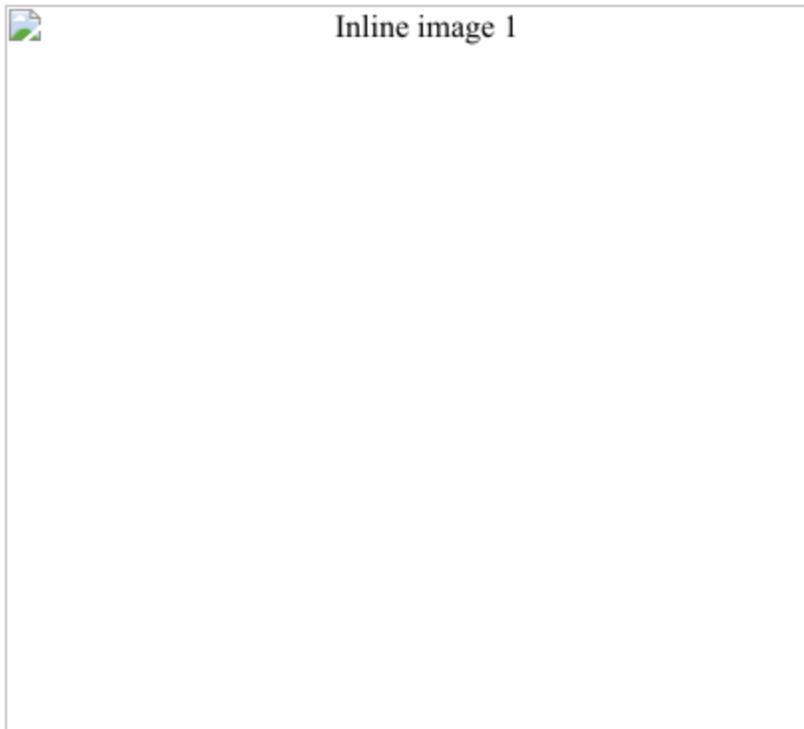
For those people challenging their convictions and appeals without representation, their chances are slim to none. This is why innocence projects are crucial. Another value to the pro bono nature of

innocence projects, being as they are affiliated with higher education institutions, public interest law firms or charities, is they are independent and immune from the political pressures of being housed in government ministries. Again as Professor Huff pointed out “Wrongful convictions undermine public confidence in the judicial system and should be viewed with alarm.” With this, ***I would like to give a shout out to The Innocence Project for its 25 years of public service of righting wrongs and saving lives....***

So True

“It is more important that innocence should be protected, than it is, that guilt be punished; for guilt and crimes are so frequent in this world, that all of them cannot be punished.... when innocence itself, is brought to the bar and condemned, especially to die, the subject will exclaim, 'it is immaterial to me whether I behave well or ill, for virtue itself is no security.' And if such a sentiment as this were to take hold in the mind of the subject that would be the end of all security whatsoever.”

Sir William Blackstone



Last week President Trump unveiled his budget plan that calls for a sharp increase in military spending and stark cuts across much of the rest of the government including the elimination of dozens

of long-standing federal programs that assist the poor, fund scientific research and aid America's allies abroad.

Trump's first budget proposal, which he named "**America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again**," would increase defense spending by \$54 billion and then offset that by stripping money from more than 18 other agencies. Some would be hit particularly hard, with reductions of more than 20 percent at the Agriculture, Labor and State departments and of more than 30 percent at the Environmental Protection Agency.

It would also propose eliminating future federal support for the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **National Endowment for the Humanities** and the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting**. Within EPA alone, 50 programs and 3,200 positions would be eliminated.

The cuts could represent the widest swath of reductions in federal programs since the drawdown after World War II, probably leading to a sizable cutback in the federal non-military workforce, something White House officials said was one of their goals. "You can't drain the swamp and leave all the people in it," White House Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney told reporters.

Winners And Losers (*Sad!*) In Trump's Budget

WINNERS

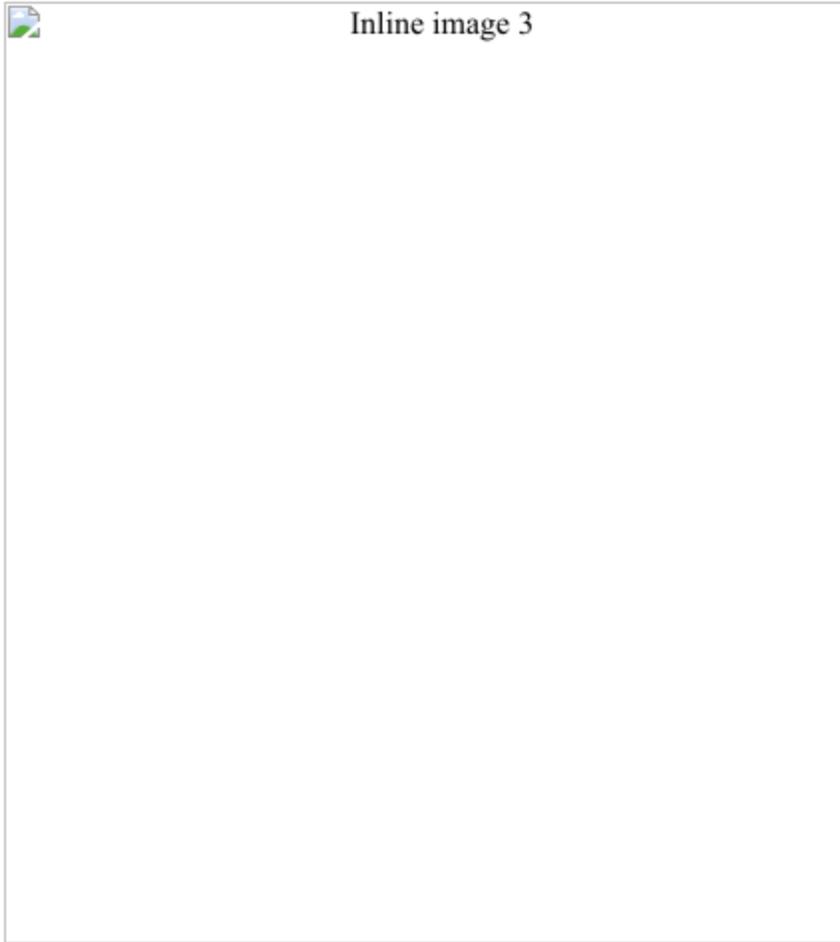
Defense contractors. The clearest winner in Trump's budget are defense contractors and the military, which would receive an additional \$54 billion to pay for ... pretty much anything. Among several other funding targets, the budget document cites "*stocks of critical munitions*," "*rebuilding readiness*," a "*more lethal joint force*" and "**additional F-35 Joint Strike Fighters**" (the last have proved to be a multitrillion-dollar disaster).

"This increase alone exceeds the entire defense budget of most countries, and would be one of the largest one-year [Defense Department] increases in American history," the budget document reads.

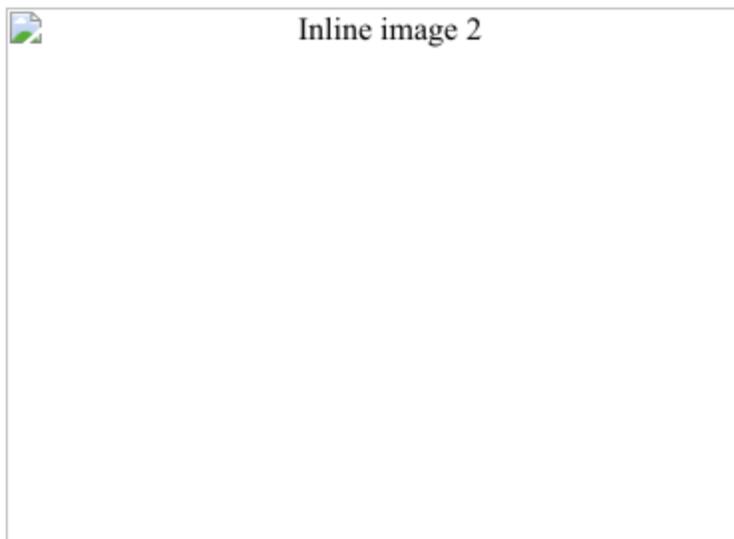
People who want to chase down and deport immigrants. The budget proposes \$314 million to hire 500 new border patrol age

nts and 1,000 new Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers.

The Wall. Trump wants to give the Department of Homeland Security an additional \$2.6 billion, some of which would be used to "plan, design, and construct a physical wall along the southern border." The actual wall, of course, would cost much more than \$2.6 billion, but Rome wasn't built in a day.



If you're a poor person in America, President Trump's budget proposal is not for you.



President Trump's budget would slash or abolish programs that have provided low-income Americans with help on virtually all fronts, including affordable housing, banking, weatherizing homes, job

training, paying home heating oil bills, and obtaining legal counsel in civil matters. During the presidential campaign last year, Trump vowed that the solution to poverty was giving poor people incentives to work. But most of the proposed cuts in his budget target programs designed to help the working poor, as well as those who are jobless, cope.

And many of them carry out their missions by disbursing money to the states, which establish their own criteria.

“This is a budget that pulled the rug out from working families and hurts the very people who President Trump promised to stand up for in rural America and in small towns,” said Melissa Boteach, vice president of the poverty to prosperity program at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in Washington.

The White House budget cuts will fall hardest on the rural and small town communities that Trump won, where one in three people are living paycheck to paycheck — a rate that is 24 percent higher than in urban counties, according to a new analysis by the center. The budget proposes housing “reforms” that add up to more than \$6 billion in cuts while promising to continue assisting the nation’s 4.5 million low-income households. If enacted, the proposed budget would result in the most severe cut to the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** since the early 1980s, according to the **National Low Income Housing Coalition**.

It would also eliminate the **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness**, which coordinates the federal response to homelessness across 19 federal agencies and on June 22, 2010, the **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness** and its 19 federal agency members started **Opening Doors**, the first-ever comprehensive federal plan to prevent and end homelessness. Amended in 2012 and 2015, the plan sets four ambitious goals in order to drive action and progress:

- • Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in 2015
- • Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in 2017
- • Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in 2020
- • Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

Through the urgent action mobilized by **Opening Doors**, we’ve seen significant reductions in homelessness across all our goals since 2010:

- • 11% reduction nationwide
- • 22% reduction in chronic homelessness
- • 19% reduction in family homelessness, including a 64% drop in unsheltered homelessness among families
- • 47% reduction in Veteran homelessness, including a 56% drop in unsheltered homelessness among Veterans

Consider This: More than 30 communities, including the entire states of Virginia, Connecticut, and Delaware, have also effectively ended homelessness among Veterans. Using these as examples, it is obvious that if we as a country really decided too, we could end homelessness and eliminate poverty. As such, it is reasonable to believe that hunger, homelessness and poverty are choices that the richest country in the world could eradicate if it chose to make it our #1 priority.

The administration's reforms include eliminating funding for a \$3 billion **Community Development Block Grant program**, one of the longest continuously run HUD programs that's been in existence since 1974 and was enacted by Republican President Gerald Ford with bipartisan support. The program provides cities with money to address a range of community development needs such as affordable housing, rehabilitating homes in neighborhoods hardest hit by foreclosures, and preventing or eliminating slums and community blight.

Nationally, CDBG funds were spent for the following purposes in 2011:

- Public infrastructure (32.7%)
- Housing (24.8%)
- Administrative and planning (15.1%)
- Public services (11.4%)
- Economic development (7.3%)
- Property acquisition (4.9%)
- Other (3.8%)

It also provides funding for **Meals on Wheels**, a national nonprofit network of more than 5,000 independently-run local programs that delivers food to more than a million homebound seniors across the country. Although Meals on Wheels America, is mainly funded by donations, its local affiliates get more federal funding from a separate Department of Health and Human Services program. In the Trump budget the agency's overall allocation would be cut by 17.9 percent.

Another program to be axed are the **21st Century Community Learning Centers** — helps school districts, churches and nonprofit groups serve more than 1.6 million children nationwide. As well as **Wings for Kids**, a program that aims to bolster not only academic performance, but also social skills, relationships with caring adults and a sense of belonging at school and provide kids with a safe and enriching place to spend the afternoon and early evening, and their working parents get child care. But now, Wings for Kids and thousands of programs like it are on the chopping block, threatened by President Trump's proposal to eliminate \$1.2 billion in grants for after-school and summer programs. Trump's budget will also eliminate billions for teacher training and scale back or end several programs that help low-income students prepare and pay for college.

Also gone would be \$35 million in funding for well-known programs such as **Habitat for Humanity** and **YouthBuild USA**, fair housing planning, and homeless assistance, among other housing help for needy Americans. Other targets include funding for neighborhood development and a home-buying program through which low-income individuals help build their own homes. Trump also plans to cut the Home Investment

Partnership Program, the largest federal grant to state and local governments that is designed to create affordable housing.

In a statement, Habitat for Humanity International said it has used \$92 million worth of Section 4 funds since 1998 that it paired with \$162 million in private donations. "Federal funding received by Habitat for Humanity supplements and leverages the support of our generous donors," the organization said. "It never replaces or duplicates it."

This is money that goes to Habitat for Humanity and other charities that build and refurbish houses for poor people. But don't worry – according to the budget, nice rich people are already giving poor people all the housing help they need. “This program is duplicative of efforts funded by philanthropy and other more flexible private sector investments,” the document declares.

Also screwed by President Trump's budget are **Workers**. The Trump spending plan slashes funds for a variety of Labor Department programs pertaining to worker training and safety. While the details of President Donald Trump's proposed 2018 budget remain scant, one thing is clear: The **Department of Labor** will likely be one of the biggest losers. Trump's budget proposal would cut the department's funding by \$2.5 billion, or 21 percent, which will mean drastic changes for the work the department does.

The dramatic scale-back is meant to offset the proposed budget's additional funding to national-security efforts. The proposal says, “With the need to rebuild the Nation's military without increasing the deficit, this Budget focuses the Department of Labor on its highest priority functions and disinvests in activities that are duplicative, unnecessary, unproven, or ineffective.”

Those are strong adjectives for programs that have helped put Americans back to work, a consistent and bipartisan economic goal. The 2018 budget details around \$500 million in cuts for the department, which likely means that programs for disadvantaged workers, including seniors, youths, and those with disabilities, would be reduced or completely eliminated. **The Senior Community Service Employment Program**, training grants at the **Occupational Safety and Health Administration**, and technical-assistance grants at the **Office of Disability**

Employment Policy would all disappear. Job-training centers for disadvantaged children would be shuttered and funding for more general job-training and employment services would move from the federal budget to states.

While Obama's budget did make some cuts similar to the ones proposed by Trump for the Labor Department, these reductions signal a definitive break from Obama's strategy, which focused on the inclusion of workers who might otherwise be left out of the workforce without government intervention.

The National Employment Law Project (NELP), a left-leaning nonprofit, has spoken out against the cuts, calling Trump's budget for the Labor Department “*draconian*.” “The Trump budget would gut the very job-training programs workers need to develop the skills required to compete in emerging fields and fill many of the high-paying jobs available now and projected for the future,” said Christine Owens, the executive director of the NELP, in a statement.

For instance, the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** — a federal initiative that has provided employment training to low-income Americans over 55 years old for more than 40 years — now faces an uncertain future. In 2015, Obama slashed the SCSEP's funding in his budget and has proposed moving the program from the **Labor Department to the Department of Health and Human Services**, where other programs for senior Americans are housed. Jim Seith, a

director at the nonprofit **National Council on Aging**, one of the grantees of the SCSEP, says that the program is the only labor programs targeted at seniors in poverty.

Another program that's likely facing cuts is **Job Corps**, which provides free education and job training for disadvantaged minors. This program also faced cuts in past Obama budgets. An economic cost-benefit study of the Job Corps program from 2008 found that it was the "only federal training program that has been shown to increase earnings for this population," leading participants to go further in school, reducing their criminal activity, and increasing their average earnings for several years after the program, although the earnings gains were only sustained by older participants. The budget includes closing centers where some 37,000 unemployed and underemployed youths receive job training.

"Basing important decisions on Job Corps performance measures could be more complicated than it appears," said Peter Schochet, a senior fellow at **Mathematica Policy Research** who led the study on the Job Corps program, via email. "Our data show that some Job Corps centers improved student earnings relative to what they would have been, even among centers with lower overall performance measures."

In addition to these cuts, the budget beefs up some Labor Department initiatives that are aimed at getting people back to work. The proposal would expand the **Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment program**, which is designed to make people less likely to claim unemployment insurance by referring recipients to programs and services that would help them find jobs. The program was found to be successful in Nevada, with participants in the program receiving unemployment funds for fewer weeks. Another expansionary effort in the proposed budget calls for apprenticeship programs, to be administered by states.

Science. It's hard to overstate just how devastating this budget would be to the science and biomedical research community.

The Environment. President Trump's budget blueprint would slash the **Environmental Protection Agency** by 31.5 percent, making the E.P.A. the hardest hit agency under the President's proposal — \$2.6 billion from its current level of \$8.2 billion. As a result, it would totally eliminate the **Chesapeake Bay Program**, a hugely successful federally funded six-state partnership over the past 15 years that enjoys bipartisan support. The \$73 million-a-year Environmental Protection Agency program has united Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and the District of Columbia and substantially reduced pollution levels in the bay. Cutting off funding, bipartisan supporters of the cleanup say, would threaten multibillion dollar tourism, recreation and commercial industries and could reverse strides in water quality that sustain fishing, boating and crabbing in the largest estuary in North America.

Almost unnoticed is the Trump spending reductions that explicitly target rural communities include a water and wastewater loan and grant program administered by the **U.S. Department of Agriculture**. The program, with an annual budget of \$498 million, helps rural communities fix water infrastructure systems. Trump's budget proposes to eliminate the entire program, arguing that private financing and increased funding from Environmental Protection Agency state revolving water funds can offset the "duplicative" USDA program.

But rural advocates say there's a problem with that plan. The \$2.3 billion budget for the EPA's state revolving funds program is slated to increase \$4 million — less than 1 percent. And many rural water systems are not equipped to compete with larger systems for that money. These smaller water systems also are less appealing to private investors, due to their limited, lower-income customer bases.

This federal initiative has been the historical solution for small and rural water infrastructure needs and is largely responsible for the success of delivering water and sanitation to almost every corner of rural America. Elimination of the USDA rural water program will disproportionately impact the most economically disadvantaged and especially rural communities, in addition to hurting the country.

Many of these communities are already struggling to comply with federal standards to deliver reliably safe drinking water. About 4 million rural Americans receive water from small, under-resourced water utilities that don't properly conduct required lead testing, USA Today reported last year. The bulk of these water utilities are also dealing with decaying delivery systems. Small water systems will need an estimated \$64.5 billion in infrastructure spending over the next 20 years, according to an EPA assessment.

In addition to massively reducing the budget of the **Environmental Protection Agency**, outright eliminating the **NASA** satellite program, implementing a \$900 million cut to the Department of Energy's Office of Science, ending the **Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing Program**, and slashing \$250 million in grants from the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**, it would also slash funds for the **National Institutes of Health** by \$6 billion. That would put the NIH funding level at a 15-year low and would more than erase the funding that Congress had pledged to devote to the institutes when it passed the 21st Century Cures Act at the tail end of the last Congress.

Benjamin Corb, director of public affairs at the **American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**, called the budget "*unacceptable*." It would erase "years' worth of bipartisan support for the NIH, and the American biomedical research enterprise which has long been the global leader for biomedical innovation," he warned.

Big Bird. The budget would eliminate the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting**, which funds **PBS**, which airs "*Sesame Street*."

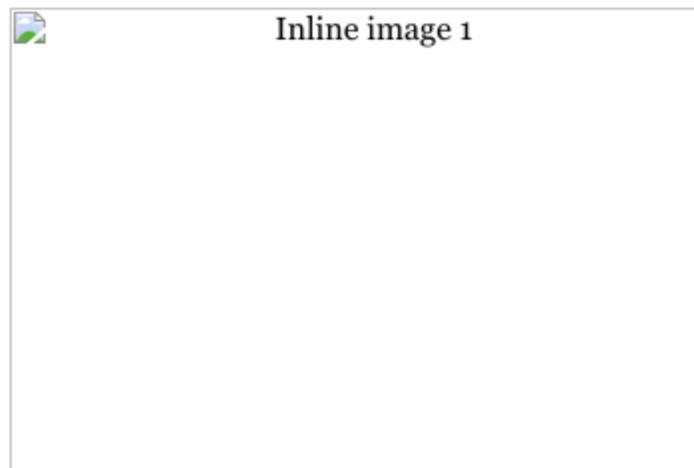
People who want to be nurses. Say goodbye to \$403 million in training for health professionals and nursing programs.

Artists. The **National Endowment for the Arts** would be no more, as would the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, which has funded all sorts of cool stuff but as important as well, including Ken Burns' Civil War documentary.

TBD. Social Security and Medicare – two of the biggest parts of federal spending – are omitted from the document, as is the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, an influential liberal think tank, noted that while past administrations have created simplified spending blueprints, Trump's decision to not even include details on such "*mandatory*" spending programs is unusual. "In contrast, while all five previous administrations released initial budgets that displayed information in very different ways, they all provided a more complete picture of how their policies affected total spending, revenues, and deficits (*or surpluses*), and showed them for several years beyond the budget year," Richard Kogan said in a blog post on the think tank's website.

Trump budget director: Feeding elderly and children has to end, it's not 'showing any results



White **House Office of Management and Budget Director** Mick Mulvaney told the White House press corps last week that popular vote loser Donald Trump's budget cuts Meals on Wheels and after-school nutrition programs because those programs "aren't showing any results."

"We can't do that anymore. We can't spend money on programs just because they sound good. Meals on Wheels sounds great. [...] I can't defend that anymore. We cannot defend that anymore. \$20 trillion in debt. We're going to spend money, we're going to spend a lot of money but we're not going to spend it on programs that show they deliver the promises we made to people."

As for the school children:

"They're supposed to help kids who don't get fed at home get fed so they do better in school. Guess what? There's no evidence they're actually doing that. There's no evidence they're helping results, helping kids do better in school, which is what -- when we took your money from you to

say, we're going to spend them on after-school program, we justified it by saying these kids will do better in school and get jobs. We have no proof that's helping."

Goddammit old people and school children! Get out there and get jobs so we know that feeding you is worth our money. **No**, Mulvaney says, the "*compassionate*" thing to do is for tax payers, to "go to them and say, look, we're not going to ask you for your hard-earned money anymore. Single mom of two in Detroit, give us your money. We're not going to do that anymore unless they can guarantee that money will be used in a proper function." That, he says, "is about as compassionate as you can get." Because, really, wouldn't we all rather fund a few more destroyers than see our neighbors not starve?

On the campaign trail, Trump repeatedly promised not to cut Social Security or Medicare. "I can confirm to you that the president's going to keep the promises he made with regard to those programs," Mulvaney told reporters. Trump also repeatedly promised not to cut Medicaid. The health care bill he is currently pushing would slash the program by \$880 billion, taking away health insurance for millions of Americans, which in turn would be mostly redistributed as tax breaks to the rich.

As Matthew Yglesias wrote last week in VOX – President Donald Trump's debut budget proposal is a stark declaration of war on the future of the American economy that substitutes a curious mix of ideology and blind nostalgia for any effort to think critically about the actual needs of a 21st-century nation. The war starts with reducing spending – even though an aging population, plus the government's role in inherently labor-intensive activities like education and long-term care, militates overwhelmingly in favor of a somewhat larger role for the state. But it continues with the priorities Trump set for where the remaining cash gets spent.

The picture that emerges is overwhelmingly one of nostalgia – more money for men with guns, less money for education, caring, and pointy-headed science. But nostalgia is not memory. The mid-century economy Trump yearns for was, almost by definition, less technologically advanced and educationally intensive than today's. But it was an extraordinarily forward-looking time. Propelled by the imperatives of Cold War competition, the United States made investments on an unprecedented scale in institutions dedicated to education and research, while engaging in massive public-private partnerships to disseminate then-new technological marvels like cars, phones, and televisions.

Trump's budget doesn't imitate the past; it simply looks backward to it in a way that postwar Americans never would. The government's manly men – the ones with guns, mostly – get more cash. Programs aimed at effeminate or pointy-headed undertakings like educating children get cut. Not just in obvious places like the Department of Education, either. Little educational programs in departments from State to NASA are getting zapped. Job training is in line for cuts, along with K-12 schooling and college education for the disadvantaged.

Scientific research – whether at Energy, NOAA, the NIH, or anywhere else – is out. Trump's America will give up on the dream of becoming a world leader in generating clean electricity or manufacturing the advanced batteries that store it. His statements on automobile fuel efficiency regulations make it clear that we won't be operating on the cutting edge there, either. Once the Environmental Protection Agency is gutted by cuts of over 25 percent, after all, we'll all be able to get good-paying jobs in coal mines and won't miss the skill- and technology-driven future Trump is destroying.

A fiscal manifestation of nostalgia politics

A presidential budget submission can play many roles — highlighting the alleged unreasonableness of congressional opposition, putting a new idea on the public agenda, rewarding a key interest group, or picking a symbolically useful fight— but for a newly elected president blessed with congressional majorities, one would expect it to also be a fairly literal legislative proposal. Trump’s budget is different.

Its military spending increases would violate the Budget Control Act of 2011, meaning that it could not actually be passed as a budget. (The law itself could be amended, but that, unlike a budget, would take 60 votes). Which is just as well, because a budget that completely ignores both taxes and the domestic entitlement programs — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, plus some smaller items — isn’t really a budget at all.

Instead, it’s simply an effort to translate a policy-ignorant candidate’s often nonsensical campaign rhetoric into something budget-shaped. Trump promised to balance the budget while cutting taxes and preserving entitlements — which isn’t possible. So huge swathes of the budget are simply missing. He promised a big defense hike, so it’s in there even though it’s illegal. As a blueprint for actually doing anything, it’s a mess. But that’s not the point. Writing laws is House Speaker Paul Ryan’s job. Trump’s budget is campaign rhetoric made manifest.

That campaign rhetoric was unprecedentedly backward-looking and nostalgic. Trump ran, literally, on making America better by making it more closely resemble the America of the past. While Democrats debated ways to make college tuition more affordable, Trump appealed to older white working-class voters with the notion that there is no need for anything to change over time — no need for immigrants to sustain the country’s demographics, no need for more education and more soft people skills to maintain relevance to the changing needs of the workplace. And so the nostalgia candidate has delivered a nostalgia budget.

America needs to get real

A little dose of Trump’s old-school approach was a necessary and useful corrective to an elite discourse that, four or five years ago, seemed too often to take it for granted that any day now literally everyone would be learning to code from MOOCs while riding in a self-driving car between various exciting “gig economy” employment opportunities at hip downtown lofts.

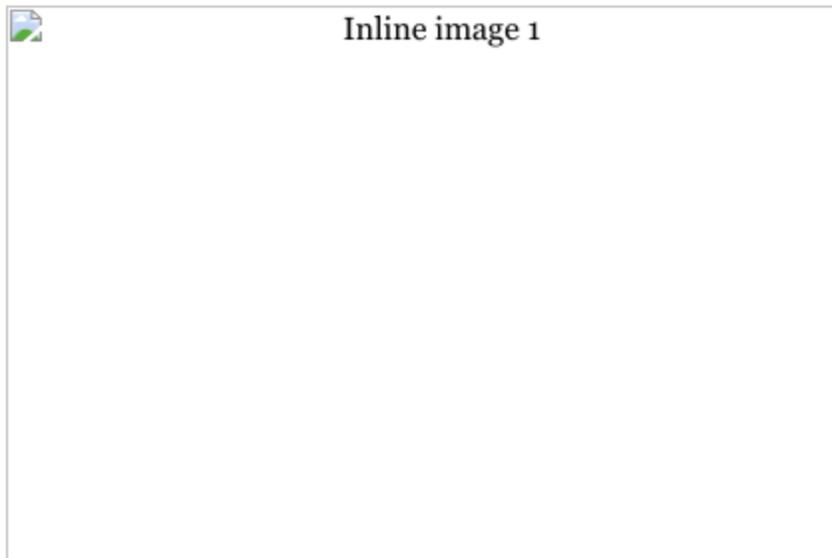
This is a big, diverse country, encompassing not just urban centers and peripatetic young people, but small towns and 50-somethings with chronic knee trouble. It needs to offer people more than an endless series of overhyped apps. But Trump’s rhetoric, and now his spending blueprint, don’t just push back against techno-utopianism. They constitute a denial of the obvious truth that a prosperous society is necessarily going to be one that is evolving and changing over time.

Most Americans work in the service sector, and that was true 20 or 40 years ago, too. And even within the goods-producing sector, today's highly paid jobs require more skills and training than their 1976 counterparts did. The country as whole, meanwhile, needs to continually develop whole new industries (generation, storage, and transmission of clean energy seems like the obvious candidate to me) to create new opportunities for new generations of people just as it did in the past. One of the main things that was good about the "good old days" is that they were a time of massive progress, expansion of higher education opportunities into the middle class and rapid development of new products and cures. This happened while the government invested more — not less — on health, education, science, and regional development.

As renowned American astrophysicist, cosmologist, author, and science communicator Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson pronounced last week, **"Trump's budget will make America weak, sick & stupid" and "We all want to Make America Great Again. But that won't happen until we first make America smart again."** As such the one thing that we know now is that from both Paul Ryan's healthcare reform proposal and President's budget if either are enacted, middle-class and poor Americans are *royally screwed*.

Bombs vs Food

The Trump Administration Chooses to Bomb this Child and Other then Feed Them



When I saw this grotesque picture in the New York Times of young Udal Faisal who was hospitalized in Sana, Yemen with malnutrition and died days later I was repulsed. It was in Nicholas Kristof's March

18, 2017 article – *‘That Food Saved My Life,’ and Trump Wants to Cut It Off*. The article focuses on the most important humanitarian crisis in the world today – the looming famine that threatens 20 million people in four countries. “*We are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations,*” warned Stephen O’Brien, the U.N.’s humanitarian chief. “*Without collective and coordinated global efforts, people will simply starve to death.*”

Yet, the way President Trump is responding to this crisis is by slashing humanitarian aid, increasing the risk that people starve in the four countries – Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria. The result is a perfect storm: Millions of children tumbling toward famine just as America abdicates leadership and cuts assistance. “*This is the worst possible time to make cuts,*” David Miliband, president of the International Rescue Committee, told me. He said that “the great danger” is a domino effect – that the U.S. action encourages other countries to back away as well.

The essence of the Trump budget released last week is to cut aid to the needy, whether at home or abroad, and use the savings to build up the military and construct a wall on the border with Mexico. (Yes, that’s the wall that Trump used to say Mexico would pay for. Instead, it seems it may actually be paid for by cutting meals for America’s elderly and by reducing aid to starving Yemeni children.) It’s important to note that “all of these crises are fundamentally manmade, driven by conflict,” as Neal KenyGuyer, C.E.O. of Mercy Corps, put it. And the U.S. bears some responsibility.

In particular, the catastrophe in Yemen – the country with the greatest number of people at risk of famine – should be an international scandal. A Saudi led coalition, backed by the United States, has imposed a blockade on Yemen that has left two-thirds of the population in need of assistance. In Yemen, “*to starve*” is transitive. The suffering there gets little attention, partly because Saudi Arabia mostly keeps reporters from getting to areas subject to its blockade. Kristof wrote that he has been trying to enter since the fall, but the Saudi coalition controls the air and sea and refuses to allow him in. In effect, the Saudis have managed to block coverage of the crimes against humanity they are perpetrating in Yemen, and the U.S. backs the Saudis. Echoing Kristof -- ***Shame on us.***

Likewise, the government in South Sudan this month denied me a visa; it doesn’t want witnesses to its famine. In the United States, humanitarian aid has been a bipartisan tradition, and the champion among recent presidents was George W. Bush, who started programs to fight AIDS and malaria that saved millions of lives. Bush and other presidents recognized that the reasons to help involve not only our values, but also our interests.

Think what the greatest security threat was that America faced in the last decade. One could argue that it might have been Ebola, or some other pandemic – and we overcame Ebola not with aircraft carriers but with humanitarian assistance and medical research – both of which are slashed in the Trump budget.

Whereas, President Trump’s vision of a security threat is a Chinese submarine or perhaps an unauthorized immigrant, and that’s the vision his budget reflects. But in 2017 some of the gravest threats we face are from diseases or narcotics that can’t be flattened by a tank but that can be addressed with diplomacy, scientific research, and social programs inside and outside our borders.

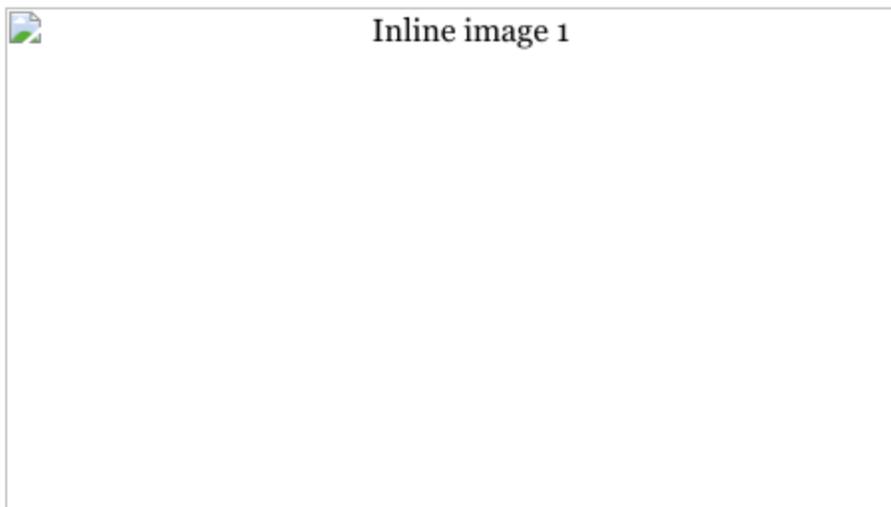
It's true that American foreign aid could be delivered more sensibly. It's ridiculous that one of the largest recipients is a prosperous country, Israel. Trump's budget stipulates that other aid should be cut, but not Israel's. The U.S. contributes less than one-fifth of 1 percent of our national income to foreign aid, about half the proportion of other donor countries on average. Humanitarian aid is one of the world's great success stories, for the number of people living in extreme poverty has dropped by half since 1990, and more than 120 million children's lives have been saved in that period.

Consider Thomas Awiapo, whose parents died when he was a child growing up in northern Ghana. Two of his younger brothers died, apparently of malnutrition. Then Thomas heard that a local school was offering meals for students, a "school feeding program" supported by **U.S.A.I.D.**, the American aid agency, and **Catholic Relief Services**. Thomas went to the school and was offered daily meals — on the condition that he enroll. "I kept going to that little village school, just for the food," he told me. He became a brilliant student, went to college and earned a master's degree in the U.S. Today he works for Catholic Relief Services in Ghana, having decided he wants to devote his life to giving back. Kristof asked him what he thought of the Trump budget cutting foreign assistance. "When I hear that aid has been cut, *I'm so sad*," he answered. "***That food saved my life.***"

So why is the Trump Administration cutting funding for food programs that could have save young Udal's and other innocent lives? For those of you who call yourself Christians, if you don't feel this pain you are hypocrites. As such, hopefully the above picture of Udal inspires you to press your representatives and the Trump Administration to do the right thing because the lives of millions of innocent people are seriously in danger.

The Dollar Price of a Bullet

Gun injuries cost Americans \$730 million a year in hospital bills



Surgeons at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center operate on a gunshot victim. A new study estimates that over eight years, the country spent more than \$6.6 billion on hospital bills related to gun injuries, with the federal

government picking up \$2.7 billion of that tab.

Americans paid more than \$6.6 billion over eight years to care for victims of gun violence, according to a new tally of hospital bills. And U.S. taxpayers picked up at least 41% of that tab say the authors of a study published this week in the American Journal of Public Health. Their sum does not include the initial — and very costly — bill for gunshot victims' care in emergency rooms. Nor does it include hospital readmissions to treat complications or provide follow-up care. The cost of rehabilitation, or of ongoing disability, is not included either.

“These are big numbers, and this is the lowest bound of these costs,” said Sarabeth A. Spitzer, a Stanford University medical student who co-wrote the study. “*We were surprised*” at the scale, she added. That, arguably, makes gun-injury prevention a public health priority, Spitzer said. The GOP’s healthcare reform measure would reduce federal contributions toward Medicaid, which foots roughly 35% of the hospital bills for gunshot victims. The GOP plan would also cut payments to the hospitals that absorb much of the cost of caring for self-paying (in other words, uninsured) patients, whose hospital bills accounted for about 24% of the \$730 million-per-year tab.

The new research underscores many grim facts of gun violence in the United States: In 2014, for instance, 33,700 people died of gunshot wounds, but an additional 81,000 were treated for nonfatal firearms injuries. Close to two-thirds of the gun deaths were self-inflicted, and those who commit suicide with a gun rarely survive long enough to be admitted to a hospital. To come up with their tally, Spitzer and her colleagues scoured the hospital bills of 267,265 patients across the country who were injured by guns between 2006 and 2014.

These patients were overwhelmingly male, and most of them were admitted to large, urban teaching hospitals. About 43% of the victims were treated in the South, where the proportion of uninsured patients was highest. And nationally, 30% of gunshot victims treated in hospitals during the study period were insured by Medicaid. “Firearm-related injuries place a particular burden on governmental payers and the poor,” the study authors wrote. In addition to the 29% of patients nationwide who were insured by Medicaid, which largely serves low-income and disabled Americans, more than 4 out of 5 of the uninsured patients “fell below the 50th income percentile.”

This group is unlikely to be able to pay their medical bills, and so these costs are often written off as losses to the hospitals that provide the care. The cost of keeping those hospitals open, in turn, is typically borne by taxpayers in the form of local tax levies or block grants to the states. Until now, the most recent estimate of the cost of firearm injuries extended only through 1997 and used hospital data from only two states. That’s very likely because in 1996, gun rights advocates on Capitol Hill began forbidding the use of federal funds “*to advocate or promote gun control*” and federal funds to conduct research on firearms injuries virtually dried up. While the Obama administration last year proposed a welter of initiatives to reduce gun injuries, few are likely to be funded by a GOP-led Congress.

Without a doubt, gun violence is a public health crisis — as last year gun violence took the lives of almost 33,000 Americans. Another 85,000 Americans sustained injuries from guns, many of them life-shattering. The price tag for gun violence was \$229 billion last year for health care, law enforcement, insurance, employment and other costs. While mass shootings like Sandy Hook Elementary School, Orlando, Virginia Tech and Fort Hood shake the national consciousness and give

rise to calls for gun reform measures, most deaths and injuries from gun violence involve fewer than four victims. It happens in our homes, on street corners, at work and at play.

Gun violence occurs more frequently in the United States than in almost any other nation. A study published in the American Journal of Medicine found that the gun homicide rate in the U.S. is 25 times (that is 2500 percent) higher than in other high income countries. Unintentional firearm deaths in the U.S. are 6.2 times higher. Perhaps most surprising is that about 60 percent of all firearm deaths in the U.S. are suicides, with the use of firearms highest among white males. Analysis, based on data provided by the Centers for Disease Control for 2015, found that more than one million years of life are lost each year to gun violence, assuming that the victim would otherwise live to age 75. This makes firearm violence a leading cause of foreshortened life, behind only cancer, heart disease and unintentional injury.

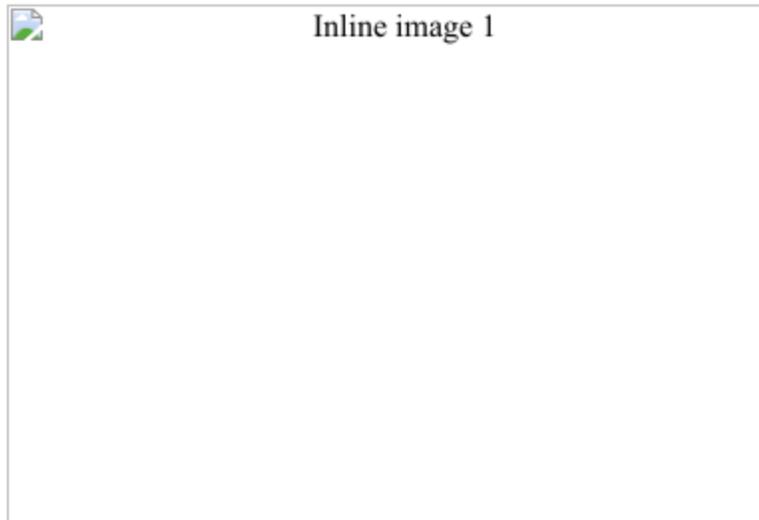
The thought that our legislators refuse to enact commonsense gun reforms, such as more comprehensive background checks for gun purchases and denial to any persons who have been convicted of domestic violence and those suffering from mental illness. Given the current political landscape, it is unlikely that additional gun control measures will be adopted in Washington. In fact, the opposite may occur. The new Congress just voted to repeal the Social Security disability gun rule. This rule limits access to guns for individuals with mental disabilities who are unable to manage their day-to-day affairs. According to the Washington Post, the rule would have prevented about 75,000 individuals with mental health issues from purchasing firearms.

Other gun rights measures that may be considered by Congress and the Trump administration include lifting the ban on suppressors/silencers, eliminating gun-free zones near schools and on military bases and streamlining the background check process. These proposals are difficult to understand if as Americans we share a common desire to reduce preventable deaths and trauma from gun injuries, both intentional and accidental.

Gun rights advocates claim that any gun reform infringes on their Second Amendment rights. While many reformers say that we need to better understand the underlying causes of this epidemic, how the problem is transmitted and identify existing and other potential remedies. This is nonsense, as Richard Reid's failed bombing attempt in 2001 resulted in people still being asked to remove their shoes before proceeding through scanners at US airports today, sixteen years later. As Americans we should share a common desire to reduce preventable deaths and trauma from gun injuries, both intentional and accidental and since any calls for common sense reforms falls on deaf ears, when more than 30,000 people die through gun violence each year, maybe the knowledge of its huge costs in taxpayer dollars should hopefully help ***and this is my rant of the week....***

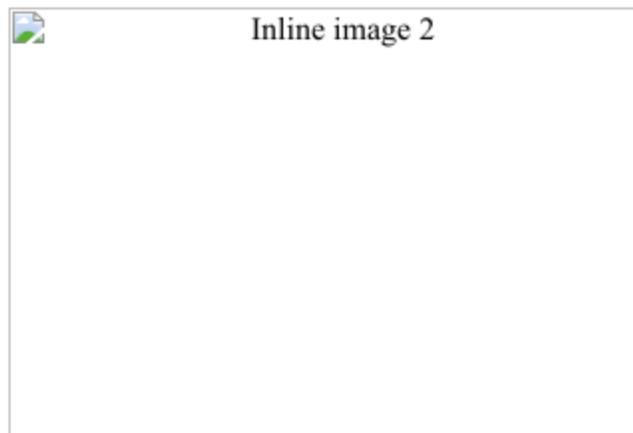
WEEK'S READINGS

WHY BEING AN IN-N-OUT MANAGER IS BETTER THAN BEING A LAWYER



Which is the better job? Being the manager of an In-N-Out or working as a lawyer? If you're inclined to pick the latter, it's understandable -- lawyers receive a solid paycheck and spend their days in fancy suits. But being the manager of an In-N-Out can pay just as well (plus you don't have to deal with a dry-cleaning bill for all of those suits).

They might not get to expense dinner on a corporate card, but In-N-Out managers are privy to a wealth of benefits too. Perks to working at one of America's most popular burger chains include strong job satisfaction and even this rare unicorn known as "work-life balance." While it might sound surprising, there's a number of reasons to skip that law degree and don an In-N-Out paper hat instead.



What it takes to do the job

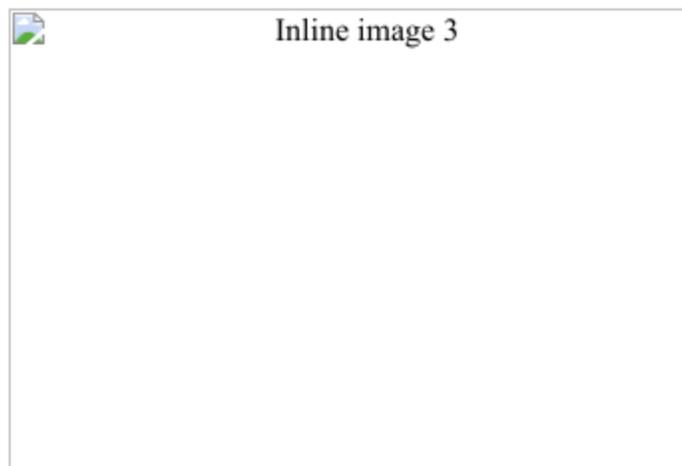
Anyone who wants to become a lawyer does not have an easy path ahead of them. First, lawyers must watch every episode of Law & Order to get a feel for what it's like to do the job. OK, not really, but they must complete an undergraduate degree, which will likely leave them in around \$25,500 of debt (and that's if they attend a cheaper public school). After that, a three-year law school program will set a student back about \$140,616, according to The Wall Street Journal. That's seven years of work in order to be in \$150,000 of debt.

The path to becoming an In-N-Out manager, however, is much quicker and way more affordable. According to its website, every single store manager begins as an hourly worker who is eventually promoted. Granted, even getting your foot in the door is competitive – most need a referral from a current employee to get an interview. A former employee warned Entrepreneur magazine that "the path to be a manager can be slow." But even if it does take seven long years (like it does to become a lawyer!), you'll get paid while you work, instead of racking up thousands of dollars of debt in the process.

The salaries of a lawyer and an In-N-Out manager

If TV and movies have taught us anything, it is that lawyers are rich and swimming in money. But the reality is a little different. According to US News, the average lawyer doesn't rake in millions of dollars each year. Instead, they take in about \$114,790 on average each year.

While that is a decent six-figure salary, the OC Register reported in 2012 that the salary for an In-N-Out manager is actually \$120,000. Yes, that's thousands of more dollars every year for way less years spent racking up debt. Even assistant managers get paid pretty well: An ex-employee said in a Reddit AMA recently that had he stayed at the job, he would've earned between \$68-78,000 as an assistant manager. And while you have to work for about \$11 per hour to start at the bottom of the (*literal*) food chain, at least when you get home you don't have to mail a check to pay off your student loan.



The fantastic perks of being an In-N-Out manager

If you work at a law firm, you'll likely get a benefits package that includes a retirement account, a health plan, bonuses, and a fancy company car with a cup holder that doesn't fit your damn travel mug! Sorry, been watching a lot of *Better Call Saul* lately. And those things are all well and good, but being an In-N-Out manager also has some substantial perks you might not expect. For instance, managers receive those same retirement accounts and health plans, plus three weeks of vacation each year (after you've worked 6+ years for the company). They also get tickets to sporting events and bonuses (including extra pay to help with the opening of new In-N-Out locations). But perhaps the best perk is the all-expense-paid trips abroad.

The free trips for In-N-Out managers began in the 1980s when one of the owners of the company set up a generous benefits package for supervisors, according to Bloomberg. "Managers who met their goals were sent on trips with their spouses, often to Europe in first-class seats."

An In-N-Out employee said on IGN that once a year, every store's manager "gets sent somewhere crazy in the world" and receives a generous per diem worth thousands of dollars. A former employee wrote on HubPages that her managers were sent on free 12-day trips to Munich and Scotland. Not a bad way to see the world.

In-N-Out managers are probably happier than lawyers

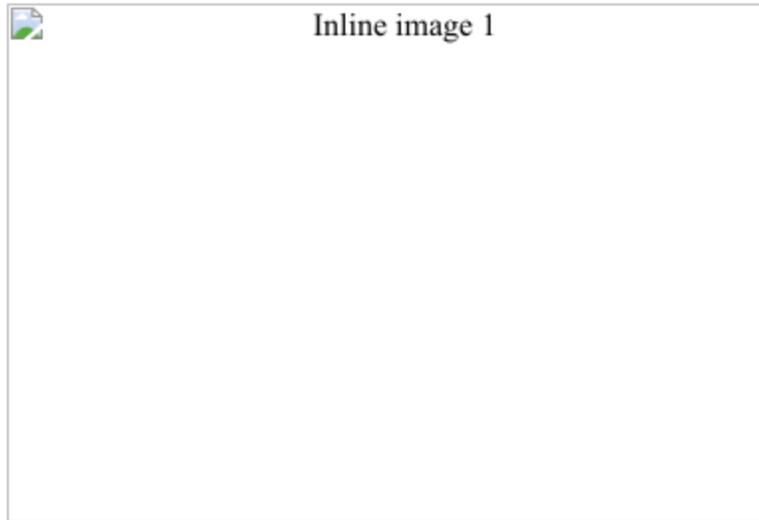
No matter how happy the lawyers on *Suits* might seem, in real life, "lawyers are 3.6 times as likely as non-lawyers to suffer from depression," according to The New York Times. The NYT also found that lawyers who work as public defenders are more likely to report being happy than lawyers in more prestigious and higher-paying positions.

Despite the fact that the majority of In-N-Out employees do not earn \$120,000 a year, the 500+ reviews from former and current workers about their experiences working for the brand tell a clear story. On the important workplace issues like work-life balance, compensation, advancement, management, and culture, employees rated them at more than four out of five stars. So even while people are climbing their way up the Animal Style-covered corporate ladder at In-N-Out, they're still enjoying themselves. That explains why it recently won an Employee's Choice Award for one of the best places to work by Glassdoor this year.

Working at In-N-Out seems like an overall solid career choice

Being a lawyer is certainly not all it's cracked up to be. They're saddled with debt and unhappy. But working as an I-N-O manager provides fringe benefits you probably never knew about -- a six-figure salary, trips around the world, and job satisfaction. So if you're considering going to law school, you might instead want to see if an I-N-O is hiring near you.

HERE'S WHAT TOO MUCH SITTING DOES TO YOUR BODY



Sitting is such a paradox. After a long day, you relish the opportunity to plop down on the couch and settle in for the evening. But cozy up in that same position (more likely on a poorly designed office chair than a plush sofa) all day long and you suffer a stiff neck, tight shoulders, and back pain. What gives? "Any position we hold for any length of time will eventually turn to pain because the body is not primed to do that," said Joan Vernikos, former NASA scientist and author of ***Designed to Move: The Science-Backed Program to Fight Sitting Disease and Enjoy Lifelong Health.***

She discovered that prolonged sitting can lead to similar health effects -- bone and muscle degeneration, along with back soreness -- astronauts suffer after spending time in microgravity. "Most people are sitting six to 13 hours a day. This immobility causes the illnesses we have come to recognize as modern disorders, like diabetes, obesity, cancers, heart conditions, and loss in blood volume," she said. While those diseases may take years to develop, the pain from sitting all day is immediately felt after getting up. Here's why everything hurts after a day spent chained to your chair.

Your muscles are wasting away

When you sit all day, you know what your glutes and calves are doing? Pretty much nothing -- except slowly wasting away. This could make for a sore, wobbly walk home, when your legs finally start holding you up again. "It's not the number of hours sat that's important, it's how many uninterrupted hours of sitting that matters," said Vernikos. When conducting a study on people lying in bed 24 hours a day, she found that standing up every half hour was enough to prevent the harmful effects of an otherwise immobile lifestyle. Taking a load off (and keeping it off for hours on end) can also make the blood build up in your veins, which causes unpleasant sensations like burning and cramping in the calves. Ouch.

Your nerves are spazzing out

Sitting might be relaxing for your body, but to your nerves, it's torture. The unnatural position causes strained and pinched nerves, which results in pain throughout the body. "If you sit in one position long enough and you don't move, the muscle contracts. As it contracts, it pulls the nerves it's in contact with, so you go into a sort of spasm," said Vernikos. But since those nerves are pulled with every movement, shouldn't we feel pain all the time? Not exactly, said Vernikos. It's one thing to stimulate the muscle to contract and relax when you're engaging in activity, but if you contract it and don't move for a long time, it can pinch the nerves and cause pain in the lower back and shoulders."

Your upper body slouches forward

You've probably seen those charts about how to sit properly -- shoulders relaxed, eyes level with the screen, arms parallel to the floor, back straight. But as your to-do list consumes the day, demands like managing your inbox and dealing with your boss eventually cause a breakdown in your posture. "You're slouching whether you know it or not. When you slouch while sitting, your head is pulled down and forward by gravity. Your spine will start to curve and your body will experience pain," Vernikos noted.

Your spine has three natural curves it aims to maintain. Imagine how tying an 11lb weight -- the average weight of a human skull and brain -- to your neck would distort your spine. That's exactly what's happening when your head slouches forward when sitting. Vernikos suggests thinking of aligning your spine straight up and down, with force of gravity, to prevent aching when sitting. "If you keep your back straight and you think of gravity as a force that pulls in one direction, downward, like a vertical rod, you can align yourself to this vertical and spare your body from pain."

Your lumbar discs are getting crunched

Your spine is practically begging you to stand. An upright position puts the discs in your lower back in proper alignment and minimizes the pressure they endure. Sitting, on the other hand, forces the vertebrae to crunch down onto each other and bear a lot more force, increasing the risk of chronic lower back pain. "When you're sitting, your spine is compressing. In space, you get taller by 1-2 inches, and if you lay in bed, you'll also get taller, because your discs are expanding. But when astronauts return from space or people get out of bed, their vertebrae collapse onto each other and cause pain. This is also happening when you sit for a long period of time," said Vernikos.

One big culprit of the pain from a compressed spine is the damage done to the cushioning between the discs. "The muscles have weakened and the vertebrae start collapsing, squeezing the padding and nerves between the discs. This is a huge source of pain," Vernikos added.

Here's the good news: Studies conducted by Vernikos and other researchers have discovered that adjusting your position every 15-30 minutes prevents changes to your lumbar discs. So go ahead and get a fresh coffee, gossip with a colleague, gaze out the window -- do anything other than sitting a few times an hour, and you won't feel so much pain later on.

You're fighting a natural instinct

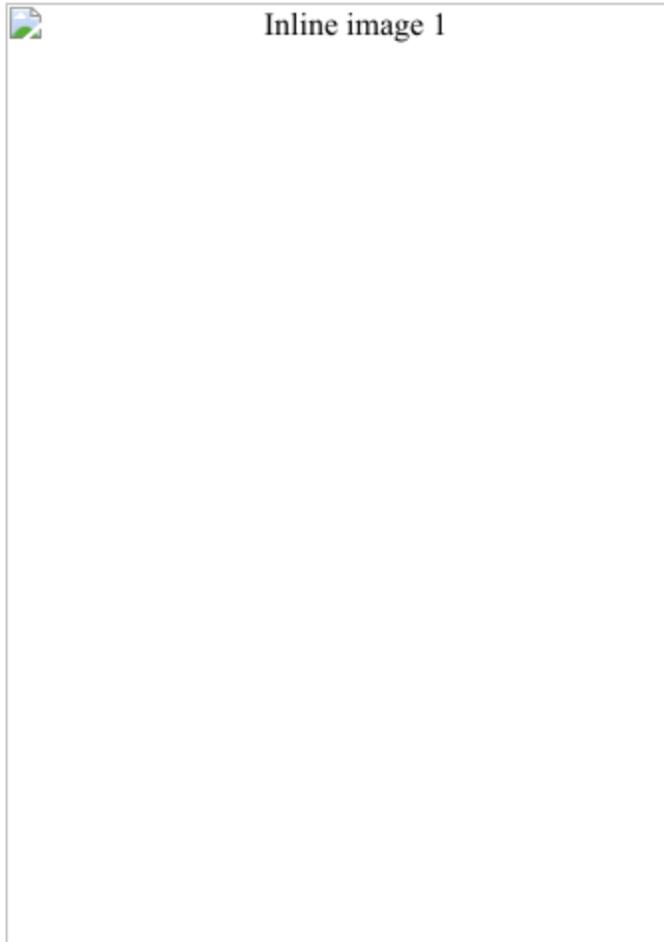
Vernikos believes that one of the biggest reasons our bodies respond to sitting with pain is due to our natural instinct to move. "What I learned from my research is that the body needs to move, it has a biological need to move throughout our waking hours as the earth turns," she said. "When we don't move, we suffer." The pain is like a nudge to your brain that you need to move, to keep the body primed to flee any potential danger at a moment's notice. The primitive instinct may have less of a place in our modern, safe-space filled lives, but it's still a powerful driver toward better health and longevity.

Vernikos suggests reacting to sitting-related pain with increased movement. Even something as small as standing to reach for a water bottle or walking to the printer are enough to counteract some of the painful effects of sitting, Vernikos pointed out. "You don't need to be running on a treadmill to condition yourself, you can tune your body to on-off movement throughout the day."

Joni Sweet – Thrillist – February 17, 2017

To Clean The Swamps in DC Please Start Here

10 of the Biggest Lobbies in Washington



Each year, lobbying groups in Washington spend billions of dollars trying to buy influence. Corporations, special-interest groups, unions, and single-interest groups like the NRA — all of them have poured money into efforts to shape laws and regulations to fit their interests. No doubt about it: most lobbies are forces to be reckoned with.

Despite numerous criticisms, lobbying in the US is protected under the First Amendment, which enshrined the right to petition the government. Recently, though, legislation was passed that forced lobbying organizations to be more transparent in their deals. Websites like the Center For Responsive Politics now track spending by industry, company, and individual groups. In the spirit of information sharing, we've compiled a list of some of the biggest lobbies in America, and the way they've affected politics.

The Tech Lobby

Over the past 15 years, the tech industry has become one of the big spenders in lobbying, doling out over \$120 million in 2010. With the power of tech giants Google, Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft behind it, the computer and Internet lobby has a lot of weight to throw around. By weight, we mean money: In 2010, Microsoft alone spent over \$6.9 million in federal lobbying efforts.

The tech lobby's priorities include trying to lower corporate tax rates and pass cybersecurity legislation. In the last few years, tech industry heavy-hitters and activists have found themselves at odds with communication companies and governing bodies like the FCC over the issue of Net Neutrality. In the summer of 2010, Google brokered a deal with Verizon that seemed an abrupt about-face from its former stance. Meanwhile, the House has gridlocked a bill by the FCC that would regulate ISPs and give them authority to step into disputes; more evidence of the tech lobby, hard at work.

The Mining Industry

The mining lobby, particularly the coal industry, has had its fingers in American politics for a long time. In the late 19th and early 20th century, it was responsible for some of the most dramatic labor uprisings in history. More recently, it's been trying to sell politicians and tax payers on the idea of "clean coal", which supposedly reduces carbon emissions and other pollutants. Environmental advocacy groups are skeptical, to say the least, but mining lobbyists have spent nearly \$100 million dollars in the last three years, ensuring that they have lawmakers' ears. In addition, the mining lobby has attempted to sway lawmakers in regulating labor laws, worker safety, and environmental regulations.

The Defense Industry

Defense spending in America has reached an all time high. Since 1998, military spending has grown each consecutive year, particularly after the events of 9/11. The Pentagon, military contractors and lobbyists, and the war hawks the serve on arms committees form an Iron Triangle, a nearly impermeable and interlocking dynamic of bureaucracy, influence, and favors.

The heaviest hitters in the industry are Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and General Dynamics. Lockheed Martin alone received 7% of the funds that were paid out by the Pentagon, and has additional multi-million dollar contracts with the IRS, NSA, TSA, CIFA, FBI, the US Census, and the postal service.

Political analysts are predicting the end of growth in military spending, however. After nearly 10 years of involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with worries over national and state budget deficits, Americans are war-weary and beginning to turn against the Iron Triangle of contractors, lawmakers, and lobbyists. The next few years will test whether the defense industry is as recession-proof as previously believed.

The Agribusiness Industry

Agribusiness lobbies represent a diverse collection of special-interest groups, including large food manufacturers like Kraft and Unilever, huge agricultural companies like Monsanto, tobacco companies such as Phillip Morris, biofuel producers like UNICA, and logging companies like International Paper

and Weyerhaeuser. These companies spend upwards of \$150 million each year, funding campaigns and pushing legislation through Congress.

Agribusiness lobbyists are responsible for holding up bills regulating food labeling, climate change, and biofuel production. In the last 10 years, they've pushed through legislation that undid much of the Clinton-era environmental efforts, powering down the EPA and amending bills such as the Clean Water Act to allow for greater industrial pollution.

Big Oil

The oil industry is in thick with lawmakers, nobody can argue with that. George W. Bush and his presidential cabinet had deep ties to different oil companies: Vice-President Cheney was the chief executive of Halliburton, Condoleezza Rice was a director of Chevron. In addition, Big Oil spends more on lobbying than any other group: nearly \$150 million in 2010.

After the disastrous BP oil spill last spring, oil and gas lobbying came into sharp focus in the American media, especially as BP stepped up efforts to remake its tarnished image. Recently, the oil industry has been unveiled as a major funder of the Tea Party, which advocates less governmental intervention and regulation, and generally denies climate change; all of which suits the oil industry quite well.

The Financial Lobby

The banking and finance lobbies in America are working overtime to try and keep the free market as free as possible. Financial lobbies are far and away the biggest spenders on the Hill, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to campaigns and political parties. Goldman Sachs alone donated over \$2.6 million to various politicians and governing bodies. In return, financial institutions have been allowed free reign with other people's money; they were responsible for the real estate bubble and the sub-prime mortgage of 2008, which contributed to the Great Recession.

A senate committee on the financial crisis of the late 2000's found that, "The crisis was not a natural disaster, but the result of high risk, complex financial products; undisclosed conflicts of interest; and the failure of regulators, the credit rating agencies, and the market itself to rein in the excesses of Wall Street."

Since the market crash, banking lobbyists helped push through the financial bailout in 2008, but have spent the last three years digging their heels in against any push towards reforms.

Big Pharma

Along with the financial lobbies, the pharmaceutical and health products industries have historically been one of the biggest and most powerful lobbies in Washington. Drug companies enjoy more power and influence in America than with any other government in the world. Pfizer Inc, one of the major political contributors of the pharmaceutical industry, spent more than \$25 million dollars in 2009, ensuring that the Obama administration's health care reforms didn't rock the boat overmuch. As it stands, drug companies stand to gain a huge increase in their already bloated profits after the new healthcare reforms go through; prescription drug prices are set to remain steady, despite already being the highest in the world, but an estimated 32 million Americans are going to be newly insured.

The AARP

Formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons, the AARP is an NGO and special interest group for people aged 50 years and over. According to its mission statement, it is "dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as we age, leading positive social change, and delivering value to members through information, advocacy, and service." The AARP offers a range of services, products, and special offers to its 38 million members. It is also one of the largest lobbying groups in Washington. In 2010, AARP spent \$22 million on lobbying, with most of its efforts going into health care and Medicare reform, Social Security, and legislation regarding retirement and age discrimination.

AARP has recently come under fire for supporting Obama's health care reform initiatives in 2009 and 2010. It has also raised eyebrows for being an incredibly profitable company. In addition to member dues and donations, AARP earns extra revenue by sponsoring private insurance policies.

The Pro-Israel Lobby

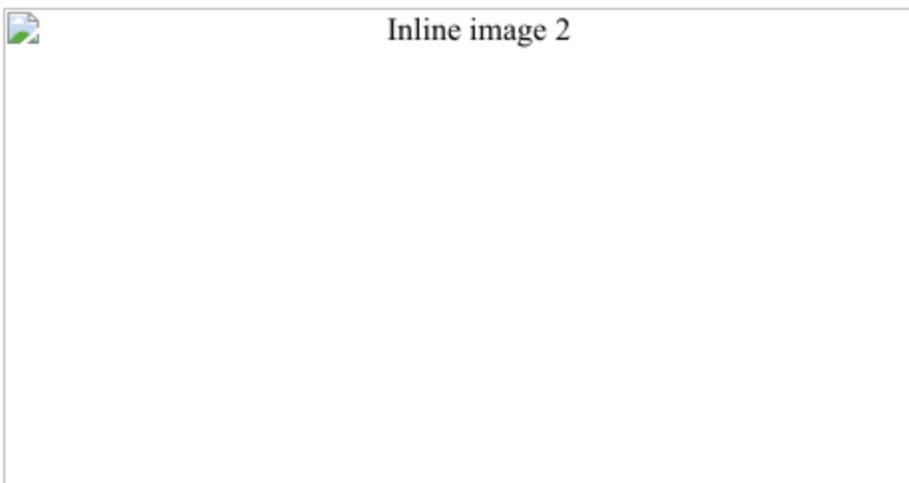
The Pro-Israel Lobby, headed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, has been called the NRA of foreign policy lobbies, "a hard-edged, pugnacious bunch that took names and kept score". The almost-unilateral popular support of Israel in America, not to mention the nearly \$3 billion in aid the country receives every year, did not come about by accident. It's the result of over 50 years of hard lobbying. Politicians and pundits alike are quick to support the Jewish state, and reluctant to criticize it. Pro-Israel groups such as AIPAC spent close \$4 million last year, ensuring that US-Israel ties will remain strong. The Pro-Israel lobby remains one of the strongest and most influential foreign-policy lobbies in the US.

The NRA

The NRA has been one of the most consistently influential political lobbies in American politics for the past 30 years, since it first endorsed Ronald Reagan as a presidential candidate. More recently, it spent an \$7.2 million during the 2010 elections on so-called private expenditures, messages that advocated or opposed certain political candidates. They even got Chuck Norris to star in an ad for their "Trigger The Vote" campaign, imploring potential voters to register.

Much of the NRA's power, however, seems to lie less in its spending and more in its ability to mobilize its members, who are 4 million strong and well-versed in grassroots campaigning. Gun rights are a polarizing issue in America, and can make or break politicians and legislation. Al Gore, for example, lost the 2000 election in his own home state of Tennessee, primarily because of his pro gun-control stance. Even now, fear of reprisals from the NRA is holding up a bill from the Bureau on Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives that would stem gun-trafficking to Mexico, in the hopes of alleviating the current drug war.

What Are The Health Benefits Of Ghee?



Ayurveda claims that ghee has a host of health and cooking benefits and is beneficial for both the mind and the spirit. Ghee (Clarified Butter) is made by a simple process of boiling butter and then removing the butterfat, leaving behind the proteins (casein and whey) and the milk solids (which includes lactose). This is known as clarified butter. If eaten in moderation, ghee can provide your body with higher concentrations of essential nutrients that aren't available in butter.

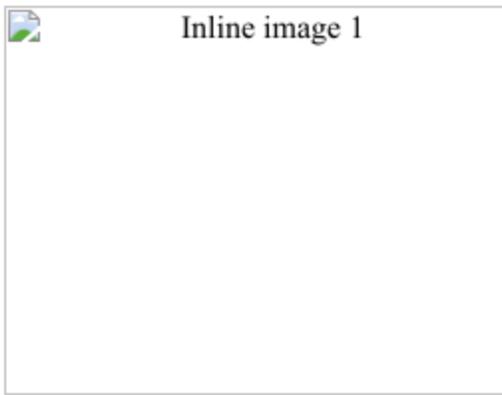
A staple in traditional Indian cooking and Ayurvedic medicine, ghee is made through a simple process of boiling butter and then pouring off the butterfat, leaving behind the proteins (casein and whey) and the milk solids (which includes lactose). What's left is also known as clarified butter.

Much like butter, ghee has gotten a bad reputation over the past 30 years due to its high saturated fat content. But research has revealed that instead of increasing the risk of heart disease, ghee actually decreases it — and that's not the only trick it has up its sleeve. Ghee made from grass-fed butter is packed with vitamins A, D, E and K, as well as fatty acids CLA and butyric acid, leading to some interesting health benefits.

Health Benefits of Ghee

Here is a list of important health benefits obtained by consuming ghee.

1. **High Smoke point:** Since it cooks at a higher point than almost any other oil, the advantage is that it won't break into free radicals like that in other oils. Free radicals can potentially be harmful to health, and when oils reach beyond their smoking point, it can be hazardous to a person's respiratory system. Ghee (250 °C or 482 °F) also has a higher smoke point than butter.
2. **Reduce Risk Of Heart Disease:** Ghee is rich in conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, a fatty acid known to be protective against carcinogens, artery plaque and diabetes. Because of this, researchers say ghee can be used to prevent cardiovascular disease.
3. **Weight Loss:** When ghee is derived from grass-fed cows, the butter contains cancer-fighting fatty acid that aids in weight loss.
4. **Better Digestion:** Ghee is rich in butyric acid. Beneficial intestinal bacteria convert fiber into butyric acid and then use that for energy and intestinal wall support. According to the author of Prescription of Nutritional Healing, butyric acid is "a monounsaturated fatty acid that reduces inflammatory conditions, reduces seepage of undigested food particles, and aids in repair of the mucosal wall."
5. **Lowers Cholesterol:** Ghee is high in palmitic acid, which is artery-clogging. Studies have shown that ghee can reduce cholesterol both in the serum and intestine. This is done by triggering an increased secretion of biliary lipids.
6. **Skin:** Ghee is known to purify the skin and give it an added glow. It acts as a natural moisturizer when used regularly. It's also known to reduce burning sensation of skin, heal scars, chicken pox scars and more.
7. **Ghee does not spoil easily:** It does not need refrigeration. Some ghee mixtures last up to 100 years.
8. **Ghee is not likely to affect people with a dairy or casein intolerance:** Ghee is made from butter but the milk solids and impurities have been removed, so most people who are lactose or casein intolerant have no issue with ghee.
9. **Ghee is rich:** in the oil soluble vitamins A and E.
10. **Ghee is rich in K2 and CLA (Conjugated Linoleic Acid)** – an antioxidant with anti-viral properties if it is sourced from grass fed cows.
11. **Ghee is Nutritionally Rich Like Coconut Oil:** Ghee is rich in medium chain fatty acids, which are absorbed directly by the liver (like carbs) and burned as energy. Athletes can use ghee as a consistent energy source.
12. **Anti-Inflammatory and Anti-Cancer:**
 - Researchers are using oral butyrate supplements and butyrate enemas to treat inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's and ulcerative colitis.
 - Ayurvedic physicians have been using ghee enemas for centuries to decrease inflammation.



Making and Storing Ghee

Ghee is made the same as clarified butter, but heated longer. Learn how to make ghee here.

The two things that will degrade ghee are water and sunlight.

- Always store your ghee in a container with a good seal in the dark.
- Ghee will last 2-3 months if you keep it in an airtight container.
- When kept in a refrigerator, without opening, ghee can last up to a year.

Don't Be Scared of Ghee

Ghee was once thought to be unhealthy because it is saturated, but research has now revealed the truth about fats and oils. Ghee is one of the seven healthy fats you need in your kitchen.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

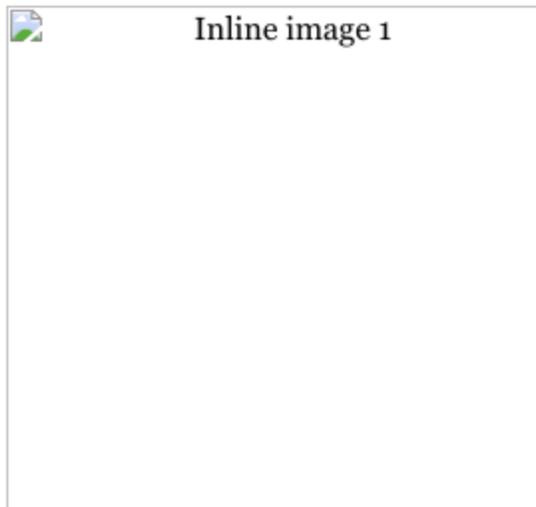
There's always more misery among the lower classes than there is humanity in the higher classes.

Victor Hugo

THIS IS BRILLIANT

One Amazing Dog

Why Can't My Dog Do This?



Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/Radioonelebanon/videos/1762188670470192/>

This 2 year-old Border-Aussie is one talented dog who can play the piano, drums, draws and dance the Irish Jig, as well as do yoga and vacuum the living room and other house cleaning chores, in addition to the doggy companion thing...

THINK ABOUT THIS

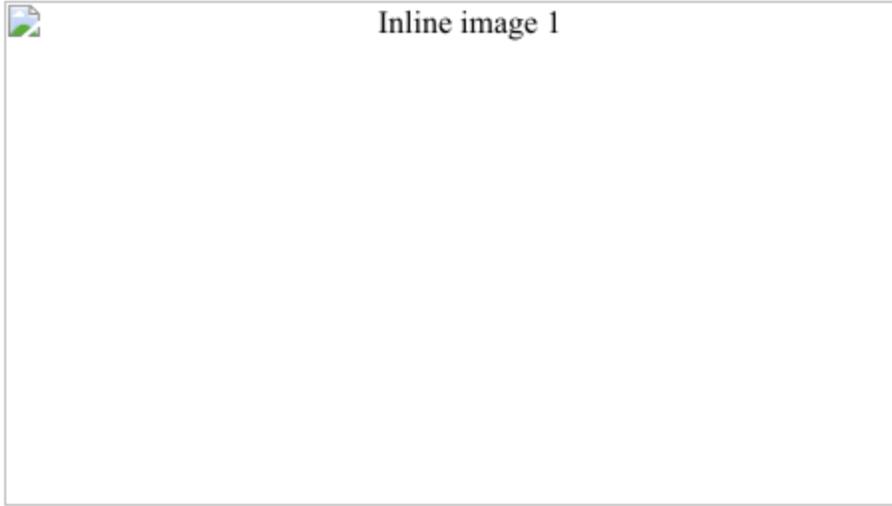


Inline image 1

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

The Voice

Don't Go Chasing Waterfalls

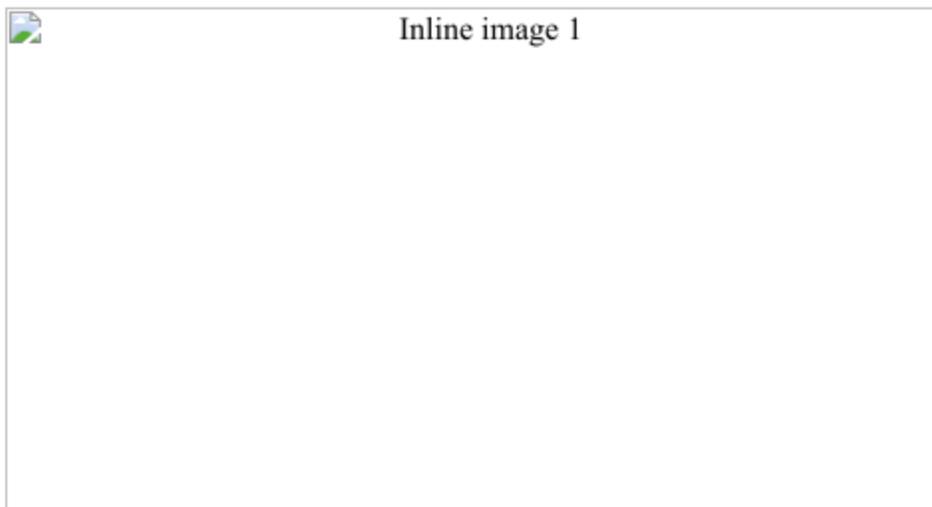


Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/NBCTheVoice/videos/1339396236097722/>

Enjoy..... Enjoy..... Enjoy.....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Chuck Berry



Although he was just featured last August this week you are invited again to enjoy the music of one of the pioneers who created rock and roll, the one and only **Chuck Berry** who was born October 18, 1926 in St. Louis, Missouri and died last Saturday at the age of 90 years-old after being married for 62 years to the same wife. With songs such as "*Maybellene*" (1955), "*Roll Over Beethoven*" (1956), "*Rock and Roll Music*" (1957) and "*Johnny B. Goode*" (1958), Berry refined and developed rhythm and blues into the major elements that made rock and roll distinctive, with lyrics focusing on teen life and consumerism and music featuring guitar solos and showmanship that were a major influence on subsequent rock music.

Berry refined and developed rhythm and blues into the major elements that made rock and roll distinctive, with lyrics successfully aimed to appeal to the early teenage market by using graphic and humorous descriptions of teen dances, fast cars, high school life, and consumer culture, and utilizing guitar solos and showmanship that would be a major influence on subsequent rock music.

His records are a rich storehouse of the essential lyrical, showmanship and musical components of rock and roll. In addition to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, a large number of significant popular-music performers have recorded Berry's songs. Though not technically accomplished, his guitar style is distinctive — he incorporated electronic effects to mimic the sound of bottleneck blues guitarists and drew on the influence of guitar players such as Carl Hogan, and T-Bone Walker to produce a clear and exciting sound that many later guitarists would acknowledge as an influence in their own style.

Berry's showmanship has been influential on other rock guitarists, particularly his one-legged hop routine, and the "**duck walk**", which he first used as a child when he walked "*stooping with full-bended knees, but with my back and head vertical*" under a table to retrieve a ball and his family found it entertaining; he used it when "performing in New York for the first time and some journalist branded it the **duck walk**."

Born into a middle-class African-American family, Berry had an interest in music from an early age and gave his first public performance at Sumner High School. While still a high school student he was convicted of armed robbery and was sent to a reformatory, where he was held from 1944 to 1947. After his release, Berry settled into married life and worked at an automobile assembly plant. By early 1953, influenced by the guitar riffs and showmanship techniques of the blues musician T-Bone Walker, Berry began performing with the Johnnie Johnson Trio. His break came when he traveled to Chicago in May 1955 and met Muddy Waters, who suggested he contact Leonard Chess, of Chess Records.

With Chess he recorded "*Maybellene*" — Berry's adaptation of the country song "*Ida Red*" — which sold over a million copies, reaching number one on **Billboard magazine's** rhythm and blues chart. By the end of the 1950s, Berry was an established star with several hit records and film appearances and a lucrative touring career. He had also established his own St. Louis nightclub, **Berry's Club Bandstand**. But in January 1962, he was sentenced to three years in prison for offenses under the Mann Act — he had transported a 14-year-old girl across state lines. After his release in 1963, Berry had more hits in the mid-1960s, including "*No Particular Place to Go*", "*You Never Can Tell*", and "*Nadine*". By the mid-1970s, he was more in demand as a live performer, playing his past hits with local backup bands of variable quality. In 1979 he served 120 days in prison for tax evasion.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Berry's music was the inspiration for such groups as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Berry had a number of comeback recordings and in 1972 had the first and only #1 Pop

Chart hit of his career with "*My Ding-A-Ling*." Berry was among the first musicians to be inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** on its opening in 1986; he was cited for having "*laid the groundwork for not only a rock and roll sound but a rock and roll stance*." Berry is included in several of **Rolling Stone magazine's "greatest of all time"** lists; he was ranked fifth on its **2004 list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time**. The **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's 500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll** includes three of Berry's: "*Johnny B. Goode*", "*Maybellene*", and "*Rock and Roll Music*". Berry's "*Johnny B. Goode*" is the only rock-and-roll song included on the **Voyager Golden Record**.

As Washington Post music critic Chris Richards wrote – “Even if Chuck Berry never sang all of those beautiful words about V-8s, jitneys, limousines and Coupe de Villes, it was obvious that he was making a new kind of car music. His songs started like engines. A guitar riff would stutter like a crankshaft, then the beat would kick in, and suddenly everything smelled like motor oil and hormones. This new vroom-vroom music was dubbed rock-and-roll.” Please feel free to read the attached, Luke Dittrich’s December 2011 Esquire Magazine interview with Chuck Berry.

Chuck Berry’s music has transcended generations. He earned respect as an international icon because in addition to being a master entertainer Berry was one of civilization’s finest songwriters, offering marvelously detailed accounts of anticipation, possibility and mobility – social, sexual and the like. Beyond simply a musical style, rock & roll, as seen in movies and on television, influenced lifestyles, fashion, attitudes, and language. In addition, rock and roll may have contributed to the civil rights movement because both African-American and white American teens enjoyed the music. It went on to spawn various genres, often without the initially characteristic backbeat, that are now more commonly called simply "*rock music*" or "*rock*" and much can be traced back to *Mr. Johnny B. Goode* himself, Mr. Charles Edward Anderson "*Chuck*" Berry.

Berry, who is considered one of "**The Founding Fathers of Rock & Roll**," discovered success by watching the audience’s reaction and playing accordingly, putting his listeners’ amusement above all else. For this reason, tunes like "*Johnny B. Goode*," "*Maybellene*" and "*Memphis*" have become anthems to an integrated American youth and popular culture. Berry is a musical icon who established rock and roll as a musical form and brought the worlds of black and white together in song. ***With this said, you are again invited to enjoy the music of The Father of Rock & Roll, the great Mr. Chuck Berry.....***

Chuck Berry – ***Johnny B Good*** -- <https://youtu.be/fNFOUWb9M4>

Chuck Berry – ***Maybellene*** -- <https://youtu.be/2qMxWEJvk58>

Chuck Berry – ***You Never Can Tell*** -- <https://youtu.be/CJs0PMVP3Bc>

Chuck Berry – ***Memphis Tennessee*** -- <https://youtu.be/KrbPlr4Wskc>

Chuck Berry – ***Roll over Beethoven*** -- <https://youtu.be/2ykCYwhfdMs>

Chuck Berry – ***Hoochie Coochie Man*** -- <https://youtu.be/SkYWfPNRp5A>

Chuck Berry – ***School Days*** -- <https://youtu.be/HYc8Txm0cYw>

Chuck Berry – ***The Blues*** -- <https://youtu.be/qaE7C-hf6Wg>

Chuck Berry & Keith Richards – ***Too Much Monkey Business*** -- <https://youtu.be/fCmXVi0FL6g>
Chuck Berry – ***No Particular Place To Go*** -- <https://youtu.be/WIY4OEAd6Yk>
Chuck Berry – ***My Ding-A-Ling*** -- <https://youtu.be/UaEC-IWSlml>
Chuck Berry – ***Nadine*** -- <https://youtu.be/5madtiLf7DI>
Chuck Berry – ***Carol*** -- <https://youtu.be/VgEc0hzTH7I>
Chuck Berry – ***Sweet Sixteen*** -- <https://youtu.be/7h3tXq5pkJ8>
Chuck Berry – ***Little Queenie*** -- https://youtu.be/s2a2Nrw_6G0
Chuck Berry – ***Get Your Kicks On Route 66*** -- https://youtu.be/SJe_WWSDqqY
Chuck Berry – ***Reelin and Rockin*** -- <https://youtu.be/eTnoSsaeOn0>
Chuck Berry & Tina Turner – ***Rock n Roll Music*** -- <https://youtu.be/F1LZuQ9E4JQ>
Chuck Berry & Robert Cray – ***Brown Eyed Handsome Man*** -- <https://youtu.be/03OfDbsT68U>
Chuck Berry & John Lennon – ***Johnny B. Good*** -- https://youtu.be/HbCWPo_B-t8
Chuck Berry, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards & Etta James – ***Rock 'n' Roll Music*** -- <https://youtu.be/Gb5BifGi-6Q>

BONUS

Chuck Berry, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards – jam -- <https://youtu.be/wzKd0aiaK4c>
Legendary musician Chuck Berry dies at 90 – https://youtu.be/hq_BT1sd7oc

I hope that you enjoyed this week's offerings and wish you and yours a great week....

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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