

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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A ROSTER OF DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES

Now that we've entered 2014, it's high time to give serious thought to the 2016 presidential election. I mean, let's face it: when it comes to presidential races, 35 months just isn't a heck of a lot of time. And although we aren't ready for engaging in America's favorite political sport -- the so-called "Favorite of the Week" -- we nonetheless would do well to look at a roster of possibilities.

This week, we begin on the Democratic side of the aisle where, in the minds of many, the roster beings and ends with Hillary Clinton. And although the former Secretary of State has yet to toss her bonnet into the ring, it is reasonable to assume that she will



once again seek her party's nomination. Need proof? Her super-pac surrogates have been raising money like crazy. She was just out in California drumming up support -- both political and financial -- among the Golden State's glitterati. She already has the endorsement of New York Senator Chuck Schumer, figured prominently at the swearing-in of New York Mayor Bill DeBlasio and, as of the other day, is sporting a new hair-do replete with bright honey-colored tones and wispy bangs. Goodness knows

the Republicans are treating her as if she already has the nomination sewn up. They've all but made "Benghazi" her new middle name. And yet, despite universal name recognition and brandishing the most impressive portfolio of any presumptive candidate of the past half century or more, Secretary Clinton is *not* the favorite among many Democrats. To members of the party's more progressive wing, she is too moderate, too cozy with the corporate elite and perhaps a bit too long in the tooth. (In 2016 she will be 70 . . . however, she isn't the only one who "suffers" from this problem.)

Next comes Vice President Joe Biden, the "Mr. Malaprop" of American politics. Personally, I have no problem with his penchant for sticking his foot in his mouth; to paraphrase a comment made about a former Red Sox outfielder, "That's just Joe being Joe." On the plus side, Biden is already on a first-name basis with virtually every leader in the world, and has been at the epicenter of American political history ever since he was 30 -- more than 40 years ago. I for one don't think he has the requisite fire-in-the-belly to make another run for president. Assuming that whoever the Republicans pick in '16 will be essentially be running against Barack Obama, Joe Biden is simply too easy a target -- and far too easy to parody.



Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley is, without question, the most outspokenly liberal member of the speculative Democratic corps. O'Malley, who will turn 51 in two weeks, has been at the forefront of his state's fight over gay marriage, which was legalized via ballot initiative. He has been a highly effective governor, and as far back as 2005, *Business Week Magazine* named him one of five "new stars" in the Democratic Party along with future President Barack Obama, future Senator Mark Warner, and future Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. O'Malley was given a prime time speaking slot at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, has already passed the so-called "Iowa litmus test" -- visiting a steak fry hosted by legendary Iowa Senator Tom Harkin.



Then there is Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, the darling of the party's progressive wing. The 64-year old Warren, a longtime Harvard Law School professor (where she specialized in bankruptcy law), is perhaps the nation's leading consumer protection advocate. Her work led directly to the creation of the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. In 2012, Warren defeated Senator Scott Brown, who himself had won a special election following the death of Ted Kennedy. While on the campaign trail, Warren quickly became a national figure for such plain-spoken, no-nonsense comments as: *There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. ... You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory, and hire someone to protect against this, because of the work the rest of us did. Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific, or a great idea. God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is, you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.* Despite a groundswell of interest in a Warren candidacy, she has steadfastly maintained an interest in "being the best Senator I can . . ."



Two other Democratic governors are also receiving mention -- as much as for which states they lead as for who they are: New York's Andrew Cuomo and California's Jerry Brown.

The 57-year old Cuomo, who served as President Clinton's Secretary of HUD, is nearing the end of his first term in office, and given his pedigree (his father, Mario, served as New York governor from 1983 to 1994), it's inevitable that he's included in the 2016 speculation. Cuomo has been a relatively quiet figure on the national stage, with a marginal one-day appearance at the Democratic National Convention and his stumping for Obama held off by Superstorm Sandy. But with high approval ratings in New York, and proven success in fundraising, he remains part of the presidential conversation. (Parenthetically, it should be noted that no sitting New York Governor has been elected president since FDR more than 80 years ago . . .)



Lastly, there is California Governor Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown. (In the interest of full disclosure, I worked as a writer/ environmental ethicist for Governor Brown back in 1976-77 -- his first term in office.) Like Andrew Cuomo, Brown is from a revered political dynasty: his father, Edmund G. "Pat" Brown served as the much beloved California Governor from 1959-1967, when he was swamped by Ronald Reagan. Kathleen Brown, Jerry's sister, served as California Treasurer in the mid 1990s. A 3-time aspirant for the Democratic presidential nomination (1976, 1980 and 1992), Jerry Brown is the Lazarus of American politics -- one who has come back from the dead. Over the past 45 years, Brown has run 6 state-wide races in California, of which he's won 5 (he lost a senate bid to then San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson in 1982).



Returning to the governor's mansion (well, not actually -- he refuses to live there) after a nearly 30-year absence, Brown has been a highly effective chief executive, turning a devastating deficit into a major budget surplus in less than two years. Now nearly 76, he will likely run for reelection later this year. So far as running for president in 2016, the notoriously Delphic Brown will likely leave us guessing for quite some time. When asked about 2016, Brown first said, "Well, time is kinda running out on that." Then, he noted *"Things happen in California that are not happening in Washington. We can do a lot of things in California to shift the [political] climate throughout the whole country."*

Should he run, you can bet that we will once again hear two two-word phrases: "Governor Moonbeam" and "Linda Ronstadt." Anyone wishing to know the origin of the first or the truth of the second just ask . . .

Coming next week, the roster of GOP possibilities . . .

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A ROSTER OF REPUBLICAN POSSIBILITIES

Last week, we took a look at five Democrats -- along with perceived front-runner, Hillary Clinton -- who could all play roles in the 2016 presidential primaries. This week, we take a look at nine Republicans whose names are frequently mentioned as possible candidates.

Although in the world of presidential politics there is rarely any such thing as a "sure bet," one might nonetheless wager that the 2016 roster of Republican wannabes won't be quite as entertaining -- or inane -- as the lineup for 2012. Gone are the political oddities Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachmann and Herman Cain; the veterans Ron Paul and Newt Gingrich; the losing Mitt Romney, the should--have-been-better Tim Pawlenty and one-week wonders Thaddeus McCotter, Buddy Roemer and Gary Johnson. So who does make up the 2016

Republican roster as of January 2014? Let's take a look . . .



Following on the heels of Barack Obama's reelection victory, many Republican pundits and strategists began directing their spotlights in the direction of New Jersey Governor **Chris Christie**. His 2013 landslide reelection victory -- handily defeating Democrat Barbara

Buono 60.3%-38.2% -- gave the 51-year old Christie the ability to portray himself as an attractive moderate alternative for Republicans sick of gridlock in Washington. In the weeks following his reelection victory he moved to the front

of the GOP pack, and was featured on the covers of news magazines and websites. But there are still plenty of hurdles facing Christie, the two most important being his perception among party activists that he is a "RINO" -- a "Republic in Name Only" and the politically dicey Ft. Lee lane closure imbroglio. As of this morning, Christie, claiming he had been "blindsided," fired his deputy chief of staff, Bridget Anne Kelley for her role in the debacle. Whether the issue will have legs -- will continue to grow and/or haunt Christie -- remains to be seen. In any event, as Los Angeles *Times* reporter Mark Z. Barabak notes, assuming Christie is the inevitable front-runner "is not only terribly premature but structurally as worthy as a house built of pickup sticks."

It is doubtful whether Chris Christie will garner much support from the Tea Party/Libertarian wing of the GOP. For those who find Christie too moderate, too willing to compromise and too close to President Obama, there are a whole host of other choices.

And so we continue . . .

Former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) made a final run at the White House in 2012, leaving behind a libertarian legacy that now needs another standard bearer. In the minds of many of Paul's former supporters, there is no one better to take up the flag of limited government than his son and current Kentucky Sen. **Rand Paul**.

The 51-year practicing Ophthalmologist's view of government is perhaps best expressed in the title of his 2012 book, [*Government Bullies: How Everyday Americans are Being Harassed, Abused, and Imprisoned by the Feds*](#).



Prior to being elected to the Senate in 2010, Dr. Paul spent 15 years as founder and chair of the anti-tax organization "Kentucky Taxpayers United." His profile has been on the rise since his lengthy filibuster on the Senate floor over the Obama administration's drone policies. However, continued questions over [plagiarism](#) in speeches, columns and books have slowed his ascent.

Paul Ryan, having been Mitt Romney's 2012 running mate, will be inseparable from the 2016 discussion. The Wisconsin congressman, who has been a rising star within the GOP for nearly a decade, has built a reputation for his focus on budgetary issues. Though he didn't emerge from the 2012 campaign unscathed,



he retains his status as chair of the House Budget Committee, and Senator Patty Murray's (D-WA) partner in last December's budget compromise. This latter act earned him few if any plaudits among the GOP's conservative wing. It was during the government shutdown that the 44-year old Ryan first mentioned the possibility of negotiating with Democrats; for his efforts, he was shouted down by howls of disapproval among the party's right wing.

Texas Senator **Ted Cruz** (about whom I devoted [an essay](#) last year) has become the face of Republican opposition to President Obama's signature healthcare law, drumming up support among the far right in a 21-hour address advocating the defunding of Obamacare. And inevitably, his speech, and his popularity among the Tea Party faction of the party, has sparked 2016 speculation. Abrasive, narcissistic and widely disliked by his senate colleagues, Cruz, 43, could shine if given the chance to participate in televised debates: during his years at Princeton, Cruz was the leader of the school's famed debate panel (the [PDP](#)) and voted the nation's outstanding debater.



Texas Gov. **Rick Perry** has announced that he will not seek reelection in 2014, freeing up his calendar for perhaps another presidential run. In his announcement, the 63-year old Perry notably left the door open to future political endeavors. But Perry's performance in the 2012 presidential race, best remembered for his quick fall from grace after his late entrance and an "oops" moment during a debate, casts a long shadow over his 2016 chances.



Florida Senator **Marco Rubio**, who was on Mitt Romney's vice presidential short list, saw his national profile soar during the 2012 campaign as he worked as a liaison between the Republican Party and Latinos. And as a leading member of the so-called "Gang of Eight," a bipartisan Senate group, Rubio, 42, has injected himself into the heart of the ongoing debate over immigration reform. But Rubio's openness for compromise on the issue has subjected him to criticism from the right over being too lenient toward immigrants currently in the U.S. Of late, he has lowered his immigration profile and taken up the issue of income inequality, calling for a "fundamental change" in how government combats

poverty. His solution is to shift responsibility for most existing federal assistance programs to the states. Critics noted Rubio's speech on how to deal with poverty came just 24 hours after he voted against advancing a Senate bill that would extend unemployment insurance for 1.3 million Americans. Should Rubio run, he will once again have to deal with the truth about how and when his family left Cuba. (On many occasions, [Rubio stated](#) that his parents left Cuba in 1959 -- after the Castro revolution -- in search of a better life. This is not true: his parents came to Miami in 1956 -- three years *before* Castro.)



Like Marco Rubio, 42- year old Louisiana Governor **Bobby Jindal** was rumored to be in contention to be Mitt Romney's running mate, but was eventually delegated to campaign surrogate. Jindal has earned a reputation as a policy expert within the Republican Party, particularly on healthcare, though his first chance at the national stage, the 2009 Republican response to Obama's State of the Union address, was ineffectual and poorly reviewed. Jindal also presents an opportunity for the Republican Party, now more concerned than ever about demographic trends working against it; he is the son of Indian immigrants, who came to America six months prior to his birth.



Former Pennsylvania Senator **Rick Santorum**, whose presidential campaign began with minimal fanfare and ended up being Mitt Romney's biggest hurdle during the primaries, was a conduit for social conservatives displeased with Romney, particularly his past positions on gay rights and abortion. Although some blame the far right's ideological rigidity for Romney's defeat, the far right and the tea party are still prominent elements of the GOP, and Santorum, 55, could remain popular in 2016.



Former Utah Governor -- and Obama Administration Ambassador to China -- **John Huntsman** is one of the few remaining moderates in the G.O.P. Described by [The Huffington Post](#) as a "conservative technocrat-optimist with moderate positions," Huntsman was the one Republican Obama least wanted to face in 2012. After dropping out of the 2012 presidential race, Huntsman told the press, *"I will not be attending this year's convention, nor any Republican convention in the*

future until the party focuses on a bigger, bolder, more confident future for the United States — a future based on problem solving, inclusiveness, and a willingness to address the trust deficit, which is every bit as corrosive as our fiscal and economic deficits." Although shunned by most of the Republican establishment, Huntsman's name remains in circulation.



I have purposefully *not* included former Florida Governor **Jeb Bush**, for the simple reason that I do not believe he has the desire to engage in yet another brutal political battle. Then again, I do not see it in the cards for Republicans nominating a man who, like John Huntsman, has severely criticized the party for its "adherence to ideology and partisanship," and has suggested that former President Ronald Reagan and his own father, former President George H.W. Bush, would "have a hard time" finding support in the contemporary GOP.

Let the races begin . . .

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DENYING REALITY FOR FUN AND PROFIT

For all those who have yet to make his acquaintance, permit me to introduce you to Oklahoma's senior senator, James Inhofe. The 79-year old Inhofe, who served six years (1978-1984) as Mayor of Tulsa, was elected to the House in 1986, and has been a member of the United States Senate since 1994. Inhofe is the longtime senior Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Without question, Inhofe is one of the upper chamber's most conservative members, and very much a creature of the oil and gas industry -- not surprising for one representing Sooner State interests on Capitol Hill. He has steadfastly favored oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and more oil and gas drilling exploration in the United States generally. He also has low regard for the Endangered Species Act, about which he said, "*America has adopted an attitude*

that places more value on the life of a critter than on a human being."



And when it comes to the subject of man-man climate change, Senator Inhofe is unquestionably the Upper Chamber's "Denier-in-Chief." As far back as 2003, Inhofe raised hackles among environmentalists and other thinking

people when he took to the senate floor and declared that "man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people after the separation of church and state." Over the years, Inhofe has compared the United

State Environmental Protection Agency to the Gestapo and once compared EPA Administrator Carol Browner to Tokyo Rose. When Rolling Stone Magazine awarded him seventh spot on its list of the "planet's worst enemies," Inhofe suggested – with far more pride than irony – "I should have been number one." Indeed, in February 2012, WND Books published Inhofe's [*The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future.*](#)

At the time of the book's publication, Inhofe told a radio interviewer that his belief that global warming is a hoax is biblically inspired. Inhofe told *Voice of Christian Youth's* Vic Eliason that " . . . only God can change the climate" and that the idea that man-made pollution could affect the environment is "arrogance." Inhofe backed up his claim, quoting Genesis 8:22, in which God proclaims " . . . *as long as the earth remains springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night shall never cease.*"

Inhofe was also one of those who bought in hook, line and sinker into what has come to be known as "[Climategate](#)," an alleged conspiracy on the part of climate scientists at the University of East Anglia. According to this thoroughly discredited urban legend, private e-mails from the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia were stolen and made public. Climate change disbelievers became utterly convinced that the purloined e-mails explained in fine detail how a bunch of supposedly discredited climate scientists had created false data in order to "prove" that the earth was growing warmer and that man was largely responsible.

To folks like Senator Inhofe, Representative Michelle Bachmann, former Senator Rick Santorum and Rush Limbaugh to name but four, the fact that we've had severely cold weather conditions across much of the United States *proves* that global warming is a both a hoax and a lie perpetrated by liberals in furtherance of what Inhofe and his ilk refer to as "their green schemes agenda." Moreover, in a recent interview with WABC-AM's Aaron Klein, Inhofe claimed that "fewer and fewer" of his senate colleagues believe in climate change. Expounding on the topic, Inhofe told Klein "*Those who have read my book, The Greatest Hoax, know that this goes way back a long period of time, started by the United Nations, when they first started talking about the Kyoto Treaty [President Bill] Clinton and Gore, they were all excited about it, and they never submitted it for ratification because they didn't have the votes. But anyway, that's when the whole global warming thing started.*" (In reality, discussions about global warming have been ongoing within the scientific community for more than two generations.)

Fascinatingly, in the same interview, Inhofe as much as admitted that the real reason why he is so strongly anti-global warming isn't so much because he disbelieves it . . . it's mostly because he cannot stomach the solution. In the

interview, Inhofe explained to interviewer Klein that he was initially intrigued when former Vice President Al Gore began warning about human-induced climate change but became skeptical after discovering that environmental regulations might prove costly to business. (*"But anyway, that's when the whole global warming thing started, and frankly, Aaron, I thought there might be something to it – until we found out the cost it would be to the United States of America of \$300 billion to \$400 billion a year."*) Inhofe's rejection of the findings of science is really no different than when cigarette companies rejected science connecting smoking with cancer: Their real objection was to the *implications*, not to the *methods*. Science denial almost always has nothing to do with science.

In order to understand what is truly behind the growing "disbelief" in man-made global warming -- or climate change as it is now more frequently called -- one need only look at the movement's financial underpinnings. In a recent refereed paper entitled [*Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S. Climate Change Counter-Movement Organizations*](#), Drexel University Sociology Professor Robert Brulle writes:

The climate change countermovement has had a real political and ecological impact on the failure of the world to act on the issue of global warming. Like a play on Broadway, the countermovement has stars in the spotlight – often prominent contrarian scientists or conservative politicians – but behind the stars is an organizational structure of directors, script writers and producers, in the form of conservative foundations. If you want to understand what's driving this movement, you have to look at what's going on behind the scenes.

It turns out, the biggest *known* funders of organizations denying the truth of man-made climate change are foundations such as the [*Searle Freedom Trust*](#), the [*John William Pope Foundation*](#), the [*Howard Charitable Trust*](#) and the [*Sarah Scaife Foundation*](#). Most of the grant monies that fuel the anti-climate change movement are untraceable. Increasingly, funding has shifted to "pass-through" organizations which bundle contributions from many sources and then write out a single enormous check in the name of that "pass-through." As traceable funding drops, the amount of funding given to the countermovement by the [*Donors Trust*](#) has risen dramatically. Donors Trust is a donor-directed foundation whose funders cannot be traced. This one foundation now provides a minimum of 25% of all traceable foundation funding used by organizations engaged in promoting systematic denial of human-caused climate change. The lion's share of these now untraceable funds finds their origin within -- *mirabile dictu!* -- the oil, gas and coal industry.

And getting back to Senator Inhofe, the "Denier-in-Chief," one must understand that throughout his career, he has been one of Capitol Hill's top recipient of oil,

gas, and coal industry campaign cash. In his last reelection (2008), he outraised his opponent by a nearly two-to-one margin, and wound up spending nearly \$5.5 million -- the lion's share coming from industries that would face intense regulation if Congress actually accepted the fact of man-made climate change. Gee, I wonder what Senator Inhofe will do once he retires from the senate. Can you say "Mega-Buck Oil Industry Lobbyist?"

Inhofe's emergence as "Denier-in-Chief" brings to mind two literary quips -- the first from George Bernard Shaw, the second from Oscar Wilde:

In the case of Shaw, the great Irish playwright and wit once allegedly asked an actress "Will you sleep with me for a million pounds?" To which she responded, "My goodness. Well, I'd certainly think about it." "Would you sleep with me for a single pound?" Shaw then asked. "Certainly not!" the actress said. "What kind of a woman do you think I am?" To which Shaw is supposed to have said, "Madam, we've already established that. Now we're just haggling about the price . . ."

The second comes from Oscar Wilde's farce *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in which Algernon Moncrieff's best friend, John Worthling -- whom he knows as Ernest, comes from the country to propose to Algernon's cousin the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax. The farce revolves around whether Mr. Worthling is John, Jack, or Ernest. At one point in Act II Gwendolen asks her betrothed, "Is your name really John?" To which he replies, rather proudly:

"I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked . . ."

Makes one wonder if Senator Inhofe has ever read G.B. Shaw or Oscar Wilde . . .

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EVENTUALLY, EVERYTHING GETS OUTSOURCED -- EVEN ETHICS

According to [Merriam Webster](#), the transitive verb "outsource" first entered the English vocabulary in 1979 -- a scant 35 years ago. It's hard to believe that the term -- if not the business strategy it describes and defines -- is of such recent vintage. For by now, it seems like *everything* in our cabinets, closets, garages and medicine chests is the product of cheap labor doing its thing in places like China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Malaysia or Honduras. Precisely *why* American manufacturers move millions of jobs offshore isn't too difficult to figure out: lower production costs equal higher profits



which equal much, much happier stockholders. Why Congress has not -- and apparently will not -- do something about it is even easier to understand: American manufacturers kick back a percentage of their increased profits in the form of campaign contributions.

As a result, almost everyone and everything is the product of outsourcing these days:

- Johnson & Johnson gauze pads and Purina dog treats are made in China (along with just about everything else);
- Rawlings baseballs are stitched in Costa Rica; Mattel's iconic Barbie doll is manufactured in Hong Kong;
- Converse Allstars hail from Thailand;

- Levis are made in Lesotho, Cambodia, Turkmenistan and the Philippines;
- Even my beloved Brooks Brothers shirts are manufactured in Malaysia.

And of course, this doesn't include what might be termed "Call Center Purgatory -- all those Indians, Pakistanis, Malaysians and Filipinos named "Mark" or "Betty" who handle our questions, requests and complaints about defective products we've purchased at Wall Mart, Best Buy or Big Lots.

Although both maddening and occasionally stupefying, none of the above-referenced forms of outsourcing are illegal and heretofore rarely -- [except in the case of our pets](#) -- lethal.

One form of outsourcing that has been flying well beneath the radar for the past several years is lethal: this involves the outsourcing of medical ethics. According to [federal law](#) all clinical trials -- medical research trials involving human subjects -- must first be brought before an Institutional Review Board (I.R.B.) which both oversees and protects the rights of these human subjects. The creation of I.R.B.s finds its genesis in the post-war [Nuremberg Doctors' Trial](#), which considered the fate of 23 German physicians who either participated in the Nazi program to euthanize persons deemed "unworthy of life" or who conducted experiments on concentration camp prisoners without their consent. The need for such review boards -- peopled by physicians, scientists and public representatives -- was given even greater impetus when the truth of the "[Tuskegee Syphilis Study](#)" was made public. This "experiment" was an infamous clinical study conducted between 1932 and 1972 by the U.S. Public Health Service to study the natural progression of untreated syphilis in rural African American men who thought they were receiving free health care from the U.S. government.

Today, by law, anyone participating in a clinical trial -- whether it be for the creation of a new drug or medical device or the collecting of medical data -- must be fully cognizant of what they are signing up for. They must be apprised in easily understandable lay terms (in their native language) what they are about to undergo, what the possible risks and benefits (if any) are, and then give what is called "informed consent." If the subject is a minor or an individual otherwise unable to give consent, they must be represented by a "legally appointed representative" (LAR).

(Note: Over the past 19 years, I have served as a public representative on two different IRBs; from 1995-2012 with Cleveland Clinic, Florida, and since May 2013 with [Schulman Associates IRB](#). It is the most intellectually challenging -- and rewarding -- position I have ever held. Over nearly 2 decades, I have poured through, sought to understand, edited (when necessary) and voted on more than 1,000 research protocols. Yes, it's a lot of work, but protecting human beings in the name of medical advancement is terribly worthwhile . . .)

Bringing new pharmaceuticals and medical devices to market is a lengthy, exhaustive, incredibly expensive proposition. It involves reams and reams of reports filed at virtually every step along the way, and an unbelievable amount of clinical and federal oversight. However, if and when a new drug or device is granted Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, it can earn literally billions for companies like Bristol-Meyers Squibb (Abilify), Astra Zenica (Nexium), Perdue Pharma (OxyContin) or Pfizer (Celebrex).

This last drug, Celebrex, is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug that has been aggressively promoted in television commercials for a decade. Its manufacturer, Pfizer, the world's largest drug company, has spent more than a billion dollars promoting its use as a pain remedy for arthritis and other conditions, including menstrual cramps. Without getting into too much boring detail, it turns out that many of the clinical trials Pfizer ran during the creation of this incredibly profitable drug were held in places like Estonia, Croatia, Ukraine and Lithuania -- places where the F.D.A., due to financial and staffing limitations, simply could not monitor research trials. In many cases, doctors were paid hundreds of dollars for each test subject they enrolled, while the subjects, many of whom had little or no knowledge of what they were about to undergo, were paid as little as \$3.50 for their participation. This is precisely the sort of unethical behavior an IRB is on the lookout for. Turns out that Celebrex ran into a world of difficulty.

First, it was disclosed that patients taking the drug were more likely to suffer heart attacks and strokes than those who took older and cheaper painkillers. Then it was alleged that Pfizer had suppressed a study calling attention to these very problems. Meanwhile, Pfizer was promoting Celebrex for use with Alzheimer's patients, holding out the possibility that the drug would slow the progression of dementia. It didn't. And yet, Celebrex is still on the market, still making a fortune for Pfizer (more than half-a-billion dollars in sale in the first quarter of FY 2013 alone).

Believe me, this is just the tip of the iceberg . . . the tip of the tip of the iceberg.

It has become frighteningly commonplace for big pharmaceutical companies to engage in test protocols in third world countries. By outsourcing trials, they not only save millions upon millions of dollars; they evade the long arm of an already overworked and understaffed FDA. Frequently they take advantage of poor, illiterate men, women and children -- some reportedly as young as 6 months. Besides being thoroughly unethical, this creates an intolerably dangerous situation. A pair of Levis or Converse Allstars made by cheap labor won't kill you; a drug created under less than pristine clinical conditions can.

It is horrifying to note that in 2009, the American death toll from prescription drugs considered "safe" was in excess of 200,000. According to an exhaustive investigative

piece by [Vanity Fair's](#) Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, ". . . [this] is three times the number of people who die every year from diabetes, four times the number who die from kidney disease. Overall, deaths from F.D.A.-approved prescription drugs dwarf the number of people who die from street drugs such as cocaine and heroin. They dwarf the number who die every year in automobile accidents."

On the bright side, the budget passed by Congress last week did increase FDA funding: \$85 million in industry-provided user fees, and an additional \$91 million above FY 2013 funding levels. What is truly needed above and beyond increased funding and the beefing up of the FDA are hearings; hearings in which the heads of big pharma will be forced to answer two straightforward questions:

Why in the world are you outsourcing medical ethics?

Have you no shame?

Hopefully, Congress won't accept additional campaign contributions in lieu of answers
...

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