

Center for American Progress: The Democrats' Public Relations Firm

By Sean Higgins

Summary: They call it a think tank, but the Center for American Progress is something altogether different. It is an adjunct of the Democratic Party dedicated to repeating the message of the Obama administration over and over again until it becomes the unchallenged conventional wisdom in Washington.

December 7, 2010, was a day that will live in infamy—for liberals. That was the day they learned that President Obama cut a deal with Republicans to extend the Bush-era tax cuts for two more years. Even though the GOP agreed to extend unemployment insurance and to set a maximum estate tax at 35%, the Left's reaction was apoplectic. "That is not compromise. It is capitulation," thundered the New York Times. Democrats in Congress were sullen. Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) warned: "House Democrats have not signed off on this deal." AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka called the deal "unconscionable." Nation editor Katrina vanden Heuvel said Obama risked being a one-term president.

But the Center for American Progress came to the rescue of the political compromise reached in the post-election "lame duck" session of the 111th Congress. It endorsed the deal, issuing three press releases that day urging Democrats to accept the deal and chiding the Left for its stubbornness. Said John Podesta, the Center's president and CEO: "All the talk about decoupling



If you're looking for bad ideas and lies about conservatives, you've come to the right place. The Center for American Progress churns out world class propaganda in the service of liberalism and Democrats. Here the Center's chief, John Podesta (at left), greets Vice President Joe Biden in an undated photograph.

and extending middle class tax cuts from the cuts for millionaires was wishful thinking at best and just political talk at worst and no strategy could have produced it during the lame duck."

The Center did not embrace tax cuts for higher earners. It previously said the GOP agenda would "blow up the budget by extending Bush's enormous tax cuts for the wealthy, including the elimination of the millionaires and billionaires' estate tax." But Podesta was

February 2011

CONTENTS

Center for American Progress
Page 1

Briefly Noted
Page 8

Organization Trends

ready to conclude, “On balance, I think the President was right to choose helping working Americans over a December (budget) conflagration.”

This was a sharp about-face, but it was one that surprised no one in Washington. Though it’s usually described as a liberal think tank, the Center for American Progress is really an adjunct of the Democratic Party. It manufactures talking points, spins the daily news, and does opposition research. It is a nonprofit public relations firm.

Unlike the Brookings Institution or the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), the Center produces little serious research. Its senior staffers, are largely veterans of the Clinton and Obama administrations and the Democratic National Committee. Not surprisingly, when the Obama administration announced the tax cut deal, the Center immediately cast principle aside and fell in behind the White House. That meant, ironically, contradicting infuriated liberal allies, including congressional Democrats. Meanwhile, the Center continues to criticize

Editor: Matthew Vadum

Publisher: Terrence Scanlon

Organization Trends

is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization, classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Address:
1513 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1480

Phone: (202) 483-6900
Long-Distance: (800) 459-3950

E-mail Address:
mvadum@capitalresearch.org

Web Site:
<http://www.capitalresearch.org>

Organization Trends welcomes letters to the editor.

Reprints are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

Republicans for proposing what the Center was willing to accept—a tax cut for higher earners.

In the Beginning, There Was Soros

The Center is the spawn of George Soros. The billionaire philanthropist was deeply disappointed when the Bush victory in 2000 was followed by the election of outright Republican majorities in the House and Senate in 2002, and he was convinced that propaganda, not ideas, made all the difference. The GOP had a better “noise machine,” as liberals like to call it, an infrastructure of think tanks, magazines, talk radio and Fox News that somehow manages to dominate political discussion. Hillary Clinton famously called it the “vast right-wing conspiracy.”

The liberals have plenty of think tanks, policy shops such as Brookings, CBPP, Urban Institute, and Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. But Soros complained that none deigned to directly challenge the Right. In discussing the problem with Morton Halperin, a Washington veteran who had worked for the ACLU and the Clinton administration, Soros concluded that the Left needed its own communications machine to shout even louder than the Right.

As far as Soros and Halperin were concerned, the person to run it was John Podesta. Neither a scholar nor an activist, Podesta is a savvy Washington insider. A lawyer and former lobbyist, in 1988 Podesta and his brother Tony founded the Podesta Group, a major D.C. lobbying firm that’s still run by Tony. Podesta subsequently joined the Clinton White House, becoming chief of staff in 1998.

Podesta is no less plugged into the current administration, having served as the head of President Obama’s White House transition team. During the transition, Podesta’s old boss and Center board member, Tom

Daschle, was given the plum job of heading the Department of Health and Human Services. (Daschle would subsequently withdraw after revelations he had not paid certain taxes.)

Many on the left believe the right’s success in politics can be attributed purely to messaging. Conservative ideas are bad, they reason, but conservatives are good at selling those ideas. If liberals could develop their own so-called noise machine to compete with conservatism, Americans would embrace their progressive ideas, the thinking goes. As Podesta once told the Washington Post, “For as long as I can remember people have talked about the rise of the Republican think tank machine with a powerful communications machinery really embedded in it – creating the ability not just to develop the philosophy, but sell it.” In July 2003, he launched the Center for American Progress as a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It would quickly become the Democrats’ communications machine.

Although the late historian Richard Hofstadter described the Right in his seminal book, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, one of his observations might easily apply to Podesta’s creation. “A fundamental paradox of the paranoid style is the imitation of the enemy,” Hofstadter wrote. “The enemy, for example, may be the cosmopolitan intellectual, but the paranoid will outdo him in the apparatus of scholarship.” Or in the case of the Center, propaganda dressed up as scholarship.

Money Matters

The Center reportedly received \$13 million to begin operations. Soros is said to have contributed \$3 million over a three-year period. Philanthropy databases show the Sandler Foundation, created by the savings-and-loan pioneers Herbert and Marion Sandler, gave a total of \$22,274,000. (For more on the Sandler’s role in helping to create the hous-

ing bubble, see my article in CRC's March 2010 *Organization Trends*.)

Other major donors include Marisla Foundation (\$3 million), New York Community Trust (\$2,192,450), Stephen M. Silberstein Foundation (\$1.9 million since 2003), Soros's Open Society Institute (\$1,849,991), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (\$797,983), and the Tides Foundation (\$765,000).

According to 2008 IRS filings, the most recent publicly available, the Center's annual revenue was \$28 million, almost all in contributions. Located in downtown Washington, its staff of approximately 240—an enormous number by D.C. think tank standards—occupies several floors of a gleaming post-modern building.

The Center has an affiliate, the Center for American Progress Action Fund, a 501(c)(4) lobbying organization located at the same address. It had \$8.8 million in revenues in 2008. IRS documents report the Center contributed \$1.8 million to the Action Fund in 2007 and \$4.1 million in 2008. Tax filings indicate the Center lobbies too. It reported \$226,305 in lobbying expenditures in 2007 and \$701,000 in 2008. Podesta pulls in an annual salary of at least \$269,000, counting benefits. It is a pretty good gig for the other top staffers too, with some senior fellows pulling north of \$180,000 in salary and benefits.

It's Who You Know

The Center's board of directors includes: Podesta; Marion Sandler; Century Foundation president Richard Leone; Aryeh Neier, president of Soros's Open Society Institute; Soros friend and Progressive Insurance chairman Peter Lewis, a major funder of liberal groups during the 2004 election; Swiss billionaire philanthropist Hansjorg Wyss; lawyer Cheryl Mills, best remembered as Clinton's advocate during his Senate impeachment trial; hedge fund manager S. Donald Sussman; Akin,

Gump attorney Jose Villarreal, a former Wal-Mart board member; and Tom Daschle, once Podesta's Senate boss.

The Center's list of affiliated scholars and fellows is a Who's Who of the Left. It includes pundits Eric Alterman and Joe Conason; Clinton economic advisor Laura Tyson; Obama health care advisors David Cutler, a Harvard economist, and Tom Daschle, the former senator; the late Elizabeth Edwards; and, most strikingly, Van Jones.

Jones was the Obama administration "green jobs czar" who was forced to resign in 2009 after it became known that he had signed a "truther" petition alleging that President Bush was complicit in the 9/11 terror attacks. When the news broke Jones said, "I do not agree with this statement and it certainly does not reflect my views now or ever." Later, in a New York Times op-ed, he flatly denied signing the petition. The Center's bio for Jones makes no reference to the controversy.

Another notable Center Action Fund senior fellow is Steve Kest, formerly ACORN's executive director. According to the Fund's website, Kest is "focusing on building links between the Center's policy experts and grassroots community organizations." (At press time Kest's bio had mysteriously disappeared from the site.) The Center Action Fund co-sponsors with ACORN an anti-poverty project called "Half In Ten" (i.e., to cut the poverty rate in half over the next 10 years). It seeks to lobby officeholders for more welfare spending.

During the Bush years the Center was perceived as a Clinton outpost. "[T]here's no escaping the imprint of the Clintons. It's not completely wrong to see it as a shadow government, a kind of Clinton White House-in-exile," the Nation reported in 2004. Center staffer Bob Boorstin told the publication that

his role was to renew the public's trust in the Democrats: "My job is to take that 35-point (polling) gap and shrink it, so that we're viewed as credible again."

Different Name, Same Game

Strangely, the Center for American Progress Action Fund, a 501(c)(4) lobbying organization, reported no lobbying expenditures between 2005-8. So then what is its purpose?

As the group explained in a 2008 IRS filing: "[A]t various times during the tax year, CAP Action made communications to the public commending or criticizing particular public policy positions taken by various candidates. These policy assessments took the form of position papers, blog posts, press releases, and other similar public communications."

In other words, it exists solely for the purpose of attacking candidates in ways the Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, cannot. (Contributions to a c-3 are tax-deductible; contributions to a c-4 are not.) This is despite the fact that a 501(c)(4) cannot directly support a candidate or call for his or her defeat.

The Action Fund's budget – \$8.8 million in 2008, up from \$3 million in 2007 – appears to be largely funded by the 501(c)(3) Center. IRS documents report the Center making a \$1.8 million donation to the Action Fund in 2007. It made another \$4.1 million the following year. Note that both sets of numbers spiked during an election year.

Though legally separate, the two groups are basically indistinguishable. They have the same addresses, which must be helpful because the two appear to have the exact same staff too. Podesta is listed as president and CEO on the website and on the IRS documents, though elsewhere on the website Jennifer Palmieri is listed as the president. According to most news accounts, Palmieri runs the show.

Organization Trends

Palmieri is a longtime party operative, having been a press secretary for the DNC and the Clinton administration, where she was an assistant to White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta. She also worked as a spokesman for former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) during his 2004 presidential run.

Her bio doesn't mention it, but she continued to spin for Edwards in his second bid while still working for the Action Fund. During an August 2008 appearance on Anderson's Cooper's CNN program to discuss Edwards's recent admission that he had had an extramarital affair, Palmieri urged people to withhold judgment on Edwards until later.

"We haven't even seen the interview yet that Senator Edwards gave where he was asked many of these questions and, you know, answered all of -- each of them. And so I think that -- before everyone makes a judgment about what else he needs to do to at least let people see what he -- what he does have to say," Palmieri said.

She is referring to the infamous interview -- not yet aired at the time -- in which Edwards admitted the affair but lied about fathering his mistress's child, falsely claiming that aide Andrew Young was the likely father. The cover-up was intended to preserve Edwards's future political viability, though it too was eventually uncovered.

Why was Palmieri, identified by CNN only as a "former Edwards spokeswoman," on Cooper's show in the first place? Palmieri gave a hint when she stated that Edwards held a conference call with "a lot of the former staff" supposedly to apologize. But noting Palmieri's appearance on CNN, it also seems likely the intention was to get people not directly affiliated with the campaign to put out Edwards's spin on the scandal.

Spinning the News

In the Obama era, the Center continues to spin the news. Tellingly, its single largest department is communications, comprised of 31 full-time staffers. Rare is the day a reporter doesn't get three or more press releases from them.

The Center hosts almost daily conference calls to reporters promoting its policy positions and responses to news events. The staff accommodates the press, eagerly arranging one-on-one interviews and supplying quotable quotes for news stories. For reporters with deadlines crashing down on them, the Center is well-known as an easy quote machine. Podesta regularly appears on Sunday morning news programs.

Center panel discussions are a forum for Democratic lawmakers—Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), is a particular favorite—and Center researchers provide useful talking points for Democratic members of Congress. During the health care debate House Speaker Nancy Pelosi claimed Obamacare would "create 4 million jobs, 400,000 jobs almost immediately." Her source for this dubious information was a Center study. The Center's website churns out a constant stream of research and opinion pieces.

The Center Action Fund runs Campus Progress, a training program for budding college-age journalists. The program makes "publication grants" of up to several thousand dollars to support explicitly leftist campus newspapers. The Action Fund also hosts several blogs, including ThinkProgress; Climate Progress, an environmentalist blog, and the Wonk Room, by young liberal pundit Matthew Yglesias.

Center staffers are kept on a tight leash. That was apparent when Yglesias used his blog to criticize the Third Way, a think tank for

more moderate Democrats, calling its agenda "hyper-timid incrementalist [expletive]"

Two days later a note was posted on Yglesias' blog:

This is Jennifer Palmieri, acting CEO of the Action Fund. Most readers know that the views expressed on Matt's blog are his own and don't always reflect the views of the Center for American Progress Action Fund. Such is the case with regard to Matt's comments about Third Way. Our institution has partnered with Third Way on a number of important projects -- including a homeland security transition project -- and have a great deal of respect for their critical thinking and excellent work product. They are key leaders in the progressive movement and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Note that Yglesias complained that the Third Way group was not liberal enough. But he was publicly rebuked for not toeing the party line. The posting stunned other liberal bloggers who noted the chilling effect of this editorial interference.

To further spin the news, every weekday the Action Fund emails reporters a "progress report," a 400-500 word hyperlink-heavy analysis of the issue of the moment. The links often refer back to the Center's own various blogs and website postings.

It is a reliable echo chamber for left-wing conventional wisdom. After the January shootings of Democratic congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others in Tucson, Ariz., it said: "[T]his horrific attack occurs in the midst of a poisonous and dangerous political climate environment that's been fostered, in large part, by conservatives that

have been too willing to paint political opponents as existential enemies who must be eliminated, through violence if necessary.” When news reports revealed that alleged shooter Jared Loughner had no ties to any conservative groups or causes and a history of mental illness, the Progress Report made no correction or retraction.

The Action Fund also runs Campus Progress, “[T]o see that new generations of progressives are better trained, better informed, more inclusive, and more united than ever before.” It is an obvious attempt to counter groups on the right like College Republicans and Young Americans for Freedom.

Its key method here appears to be making “publication grants” from about a few hundred to a few thousand dollars a piece to support liberal campus papers. So, how well does this all of this liberal advocacy and spin work in practice? Let’s look at a few case studies of the Center and the Action Fund’s impact on the public debate.

Target: U.S. Chamber of Commerce

By contrast, all hands were on deck when the Obama administration decided to target the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. On October 5, a New York Times editorial attacked the Chamber, alleging that its \$75 million ad campaign criticizing Democratic tax and spending policies was funded by foreign interests in violation of U.S. election laws. The Chamber “is actively soliciting foreign money, and government enforcers seem to be doing nothing about it,” said the Times.

The charge was bogus. There was no government investigation because there was no “scandal.” But the Times editorial and the subsequent chatter in the news media were a great coup for the Center for American Progress Action Fund. Its researchers had created the issue and they shopped it around for liberal blogs, opinion journals

and television cable programs like the “Rachel Maddow Show” to repeat. The Times editorial, which appeared on the same day as the Action Fund announcement, was the icing on the cake.

It happened with remarkable speed. The Action Fund’s “findings” (headlined: “Exclusive: Foreign-Funded ‘U.S.’ Chamber Of Commerce Running Partisan Attack Ads”) were announced on the Fund’s ThinkProgress blog on October 5, the same day as the Times editorial.

ThinkProgress said the “largest attack campaign against Democrats this fall is being waged by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a trade association organized as a 501(c)(6) that can raise and spend unlimited funds without ever disclosing any of its donors.” (The 501(c)(4) Center Action Fund also does not disclose its donors.)

The post went on to say that the campaign was funded from the Chamber’s “general account, which solicits foreign funding. And while the Chamber will likely assert it has internal controls, foreign money is fungible, permitting the Chamber to run its unprecedented attack campaign. According to legal experts consulted by ThinkProgress, the Chamber is likely skirting longstanding campaign finance law that bans the involvement of foreign corporations in American elections.”

Clearly, the Action Fund leaked its report to the Times before the official release date and coordinated publicity to get the maximum news bounce. The story aimed to blunt the Chamber’s ad blitz and give Democrats a new talking point.

The Center coordinated the message with Democrats. On October 7, it held a conference call on its report with Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.). Franken then demanded a Federal

Election Commission investigation, saying it proved the need for new campaign laws to counter the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* ruling, which overturned campaign spending constraints that violated the right to free speech.

Only a fool or a partisan hack would imply that foreign interests were unlawfully funding the U.S. Chamber’s \$75 million ad campaign. The so-called foreign money was no more than \$300,000 that the Chamber received in annual dues payments from its overseas affiliates.

Nor was the Chamber’s \$75 million election budget the largest amount spent that year. That honor belongs to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which spent at least \$87.5 million in 2010. Other top spenders were the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the National Education Association (NEA), which spent \$44 million and \$40 million, respectively. Virtually all of Big Labor’s money went to Democrats.

How the Center Got Juan Williams Fired

Juan Williams, a journalist on National Public Radio (NPR), has long been a thorn in the side of left-wing activists. The author of two award-winning books on the civil rights movement, *Eyes On The Prize* and *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, Williams has always felt free to speak his mind. As far back as 1991, during the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court, Williams, then with the Washington Post, wrote a widely-cited op-ed criticizing liberals for orchestrating a media campaign against the Bush appointee.

When Williams became a regular commentator on Fox News, the left’s enmity only grew. Among those with an axe to grind against him was the Center, which regularly criticized him on its ThinkProgress blog.

Organization Trends

On October 19, ThinkProgress posted a clip of Williams' appearance the day before on Fox's "The O'Reilly Factor." The clip began with Williams commenting on political correct responses to the War on Terror.

Said Williams to host Bill O'Reilly: "I mean, look, Bill, I'm not a bigot. You know the kind of books I've written about the civil rights movement in this country. But when I get on the plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous."

"Now, I remember also that when the Times Square bomber was at court, I think this was just last week. He said the war with Muslims, America's war is just beginning, first drop of blood. I don't think there's any way to get away from these facts."

Immediately following this Williams added – citing George W. Bush – that the bomber's words were untrue. "It's not a war against Islam," Williams said, but rather a claim that radical Islamists were making to spread fear.

O'Reilly challenged Williams on that point – "Were they Norwegians? I mean, come on." – but Williams shot back: "Wait a second though, wait, hold on, because if you said Timothy McVeigh, the Atlanta bomber, these people who are protesting against homosexuality at military funerals, very obnoxious, you don't say first and foremost, we got a problem with Christians. That's crazy."

Williams was straining to make a point. He was saying that stereotyping Muslims-as-terrorists is wrong, but seeing someone dressed in Muslim garb when you get on a plane can be unnerving, and only someone determined to be politically correct would deny it.

The ThinkProgress blog jumped. It edited out of the video clip of Williams' remarks everything after the word "facts." By removing the context, ThinkProgress made it seem as if Williams was justifying a fear of Muslims.

And the edit made him appear to endorse a war against them. The following evening, NPR fired Williams, citing his comment on "The O'Reilly Factor."

Many people defended Williams, but only a few understood how he had been set up. One was Slate.com media critic William Saletan who noted: "The passage quoted by NPR and the Times is a dead ringer for a video clip of Williams, branded and distributed by ThinkProgress. The clip, which cleverly isolates the offending comment, has circulated among left-wing websites."

Saletan called it dishonest editing. He went on to compare what ThinkProgress did to Williams to what had been done to Agriculture Department official Shirley Sherrod, who in one videotape had appeared to bragging about mistreating a white farmer because of his race. "The damning video clip of Williams, like the damning clip of Sherrod, cuts off the speaker just as he's about to reverse course," Saletan said.

ThinkProgress never acknowledged its role in orchestrating the controversy but it did back away after Williams was fired. An October 21 post said: "ThinkProgress never called for Williams' firing, and we are surprised by NPR's move." It also ran the full transcript of the "O'Reilly Factor" exchange so that readers of its blog saw the comments in context.

Last month NPR got its comeuppance. Thirty-year NPR veteran Ellen Weiss, the senior vice president for news, was forced to resign. "With conservative members of Congress calling for cuts in public financing of NPR, it seems that somebody has to

end up in the volcano," a New York Times op-ed quipped.

The Insiders' Game: Lobbying for Clean Energy

"Clean energy" offers an interesting example of the stealth tactics of the Center for American Progress. No ordinary think tanks would move with such cool calculation to promote Obama administration positions that also aid private sector lobby groups.

In 2010 the free-market oriented Competitive Enterprise Institute filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Department of Energy. It wanted to obtain emails between a lobby group, the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), and scientists at the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). The emails, exchanged over several months in early 2009, suggested that the government scientists were working behind the scenes to benefit the lobby. The emails also suggest involvement by the Center for American Progress.

The emails show that the AWEA and NREL worked together to discredit a Spanish university study demonstrating that Spain's massive investment in wind power energy was a costly boondoggle. The report issued by King Juan Carlos University found that for every job created by investments in wind power, 2.2 jobs were lost. Republicans on Capitol Hill were starting to cite the study just as AWEA was lobbying to add wind power subsidies to a White House green energy bill. In late August 2009 the NREL published a report attacking the Spanish university study. The emails obtained by the Competitive Enterprise Institute reveal that the wind power industry lobbyists were pleading with NREL scientists to publish a report attacking the Spanish study before Congress acted.

“It is critical that we respond, this thing won’t die and its [sic] doing a good job of undermining our green job message,” AWEA analyst Elizabeth Salerno said in a May 12, 2009 email that she sent on to NREL scientist Elizabeth Tegen, who would co-author the report critical of the Spanish study.

The emails show that the energy department hustled to publish its report. “Is it okay if we send out our response to colleagues at AWEA and CAP? We promised it to them many weeks ago. It will soon be irrelevant,” said the NREL’s Tegen in a July 29, 2009 e-mail. (CAP is the acronym used in Washington for the Center for American Progress.)

The email suggested that the Center was at the very least made aware of the government-industry effort to discredit the Spanish study. Indeed, it probably coordinated its own press release with AWEA lobbyists and the Obama administration. A Sept 1, 2009 entry on the Action Fund’s Climate Progress blog touted NREL’s work. The headline: “Department of Energy study eviscerates right-wing Spanish ‘green jobs’ study.”

The emails also show the officials apparently attempting to create a cover story over how the study was created to obscure the role of AWEA in requesting the study. Several emails by NREL staff show them reminding each other to tell reporters that the study was done at the request of DOE headquarters, whereas emails by other DOE staff indicate that NREL acted on its own to create the report.

AWEA and NREL denied any wrongdoing but did not deny their longstanding “public-private partnership.” They said collaboration was necessary to produce a report to refute the flawed Spanish study.

In an email exchange with me in March 2010, Daniel Weiss, the Center’s director of climate strategy, denied involvement in producing or

editing the energy department study sought by the wind power lobby. But he added that it would not be wrong to be involved.

“To the best of my knowledge, no one at CAP peer reviewed the NREL analysis of the ‘Spanish study.’ But there would be nothing wrong with it if we did since we have experts here in economics, renewable energy, and other related topics that could ensure that the NREL analysis was as accurate as possible,” Weiss said.

He then offered to give me a quote that I could include in the story on which I was then working. It is an example of the scorched-earth rhetorical style typical of the Center for American Progress Action Fund:

This is another right wing goose chase that will waste tax payer money by forcing public servants to go on the policy version of unicorn hunting. Not only is there no fire or smoke here, there isn’t even anything flammable. Although it seems that the National Renewable Energy Lab did not consult with outside experts in this case, it is sad that conservatives are so anti-science and anti-knowledge that they would oppose it from seeking peer review of technical papers from experts outside government.

Weiss’s comment evades the real issue. How is it right for a trade association that seeks federal funding for its industry to also ask the government to produce a study helpful to its lobbying efforts? (AWEA did not get its wind power funding. The energy bill died in committee.)

Conclusion

An initial investment by George Soros, Herb and Marion Sandler, and other deep-pocketed donors has paid off quite nicely. For what

amounts to pocket change, they have created a “noise machine” for the Obama administration and the Democratic Party, one that is adept at crafting stories and manipulating the news cycle to its advantage. Thanks in large part to the relentlessness of its attacks, the Center for American Progress has made itself one of Washington’s premier “think tanks.”

Sean Higgins is a Washington, D.C.-based reporter.

Please consider contributing early in this calendar year to the Capital Research Center.

We need your help in the current difficult economic climate to continue our important research.

Your contribution to advance our watchdog work is deeply appreciated.

Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon
President

Briefly Noted

A Las Vegas judge sentenced senior **ACORN** executive **Amy Adele Busefink** to two years in prison for her role in a voter fraud conspiracy. But Judge **Donald Mosley** suspended the jail time provided that Busefink abides by the terms of her probation: paying a \$4,000 fine and performing 100 hours of community service. This isn't the first time Busefink was involved in shady electoral dealings. While under indictment in Nevada she ran the 2010 national voter drive for **Project Vote**, President **Obama's** employer in 1992. Project Vote and ACORN have long been indistinguishable. Busefink also ran ACORN's fraud-ridden 2008 voter registration drive. In that drive, officials nixed an astounding 400,000 bogus registrations.

Happy New Year, and clean out your desk. Despite nearly double-digit unemployment, the group **Organizing for America**, a **Democratic National Committee** project to promote the Obama agenda, has begun to lay off staff. The group says it wants to save money as it gears up for the 2012 campaign. OFA was profiled in the May 2010 *Organization Trends*.

Rep. **Gabrielle Giffords** (D-Ariz.) is fighting for her life after being shot in the head by a would-be assassin. But on Jan. 8 **Markos Moulitsas**, founder of the prominent left-wing group blog **Daily Kos**, used Twitter to rant about how rotten and despicable conservatives were for shooting her. “[Expletive] American Taliban,” he tweeted within minutes of the shooting. Moulitsas was also promoting his book *American Taliban: How War, Sex, Sin, and Power Bind Jihadists and the Radical Right*. We know that shooter **Jared Loughner** is no conservative, but radicals like Moulitsas never let facts get in the way of a good story.

In the **Nation** magazine last month Marxist academic **Frances Fox Piven** asked why Wall Street bankers haven't been dragged from their homes and led to the guillotine. Piven, the co-ordinator of the 1960s Cloward-Piven Strategy of “orchestrated crisis,” proposes a new strategic attack on the American system of government. “Local protests have to accumulate and spread—and become more disruptive—to create serious pressures on national politicians,” she wrote. “An effective movement of the unemployed will have to look something like the strikes and riots that have spread across Greece in response to the austerity measures forced on the Greek government by the European Union, or like the student protests that recently spread with lightning speed across England in response to the prospect of greatly increased school fees.”

In December a liberal-dominated group called “No Labels” was founded to combat what it calls the “hyper-partisanship [that] is destroying our politics and paralyzing our ability to govern.” Amazingly, it has no apparent connection to **George Soros**. The new 501c4 advocacy organization has adopted the vapid slogan: “Not Left. Not Right. Forward.”

A bit of “Upstairs, Downstairs” history: Twenty years ago George Soros fired his butler for a decision made by another Soros employee. The Guardian of London reported on May 8, 1991 that Soros cashiered butler **Patrick Davison** for complaining that the cook used Château Lafite to flavor the goulash. (Château Lafite is currently going for \$1,449 per bottle.) Davison told the cook to use a much less expensive Chardonnay or Beaujolais. Was it extravagant to use Château Lafite? Who knows what the norm was in the household of one of the world's richest men.