



Snapshots

From the editorial
advisory boardObama: School Choice for Me,
not for Thee

"We need to focus on fixing and improving our public schools; not throwing our hands up and walking away from them," said President-elect Barack Obama to a teachers' union convention. But when it comes to his own daughter's education, he and Michelle Obama have walked away.

Obama's daughters will attend the Sidwell Friends School, which the Washington Post describes as "a rigorous school where many of Washington's most prominent and moneyed families have sent their children." "The Obamas selected the school that was the best fit for what their daughters need right now," said Michelle Obama's spokeswoman.

But when ABC News asked him about giving inner-city parents a similar choice to opt out of government-run schools, Obama said "it would be overall bad for most kids." Most kids, but not his own daughters, of course.

Instead, Obama wants to "foster competition within the public school system." That is, he wants to maintain what is effectively a government monopoly on schools. If this would be good, then why not do the same for, say, cars? As Neal McCluskey, the author of *Feds in the Classroom* suggests: "While we're at it, let's not allow multiple auto producers; let's just foster competition within General Motors and see how that works."

Brian Schwartz

Coal vs. wind in Appalachia

This was a big week for news in mountaintop removal in Appalachia with a crisis emerging. First, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency allowed a change of rules to benefit the rapacious coal business by making it legal to dump mining debris (rocks, soil, trees) into nearby stream beds as the extraction method clears the mountain away to reveal the seams of coal. The practice already has buried 700 miles of streams, which helps to form erratic water drainage during storms and poisons local aquifers.

To add insult to injury, Governor Manchin of West Virginia this week gave final permission for Massey Coal (the nation's leader in mountaintop removal) to blast into a portion of Coal River Mountain. The local community wishes for the mountain to stand at full height to be developed for a wind farm of 440 megawatts that would power 150,000 homes and add 200 jobs. The proposed wind farm would provide over 10 times more county revenue than the mountaintop removal operations would.

A narrow strand of hope: this week, activists won a major victory by persuading Bank of America, which is the nation's leader in financing this barbaric type of extraction, to agree to stop financing it. May this fall hard on Massey's prospects. There are already 765 kV transmission lines near Coal River Mountain so the Governor should let the area profit by wind power while its coal remains extractable through other means. The Governor can be called at 1-888-438-2731.

Anne B. Butterfield

Fantasy cabinet football

Now that Obama is making his cabinet appointments, all my friends are busy playing fantasy cabinet football trying to figure out whom he will pick, and naming their favorites choices for each post.

I'd like to make an argument for my dream interior secretary, though I've not heard any leaks on whom is being vetted for it: Al Gore.

I know, I know, he's already said he doesn't want the position since he feels he can do more on the global stage in another capacity. But that's precisely why the following argument is needed.

With Gore in the cabinet, the world will be assured that this Nobel Peace Prize winner is truly helping to shape United States and thereby international policy on global warming, which is arguably the most important short- and long-term challenge now before us.

Bruce Babbitt, Clinton's interior secretary, generally did a great job. But towns dependent of mining were angry that he came down from on high to preserve myriad "crown jewels" of the American West through his National Landscape Conservation System preserving 27 million acres, including the wondrous Black Ridge Can-

yons in Colorado. At this point in his career, Gore is perhaps the only person with the necessary experience, vision and respect to unite all parties to the task of environmental preservation and global ecological balance.

Some have suggested our Sen. Ken Salazar. He would surely continue to be a good steward but lacks the crucial gravitas on global warming.

Julian Friedland

Strides at Angevine

About half of Latino students in the Boulder Valley School District currently don't graduate from high school. Instead of just hoping for better statistics, Jay Kenis, a counselor at Angevine Middle School and Daniel Escalante, a community activist, deserve lots of praise for being part of the solution. They organized and carry out the Latino Boys Leadership Group at Angevine that meets once a week before school and includes other occasional activities.

I was delighted to hear this year's group of 18 seventh- and eighth-graders receive support and down-to-earth messages to help all of them graduate. If members want to be successful in school, they are told they must support each other. They are told they need to praise and encourage each other. These makes sense. The enemies of success need not be within the group. And, they are told to find their own voices and reject the negative images and messages society imposes upon them. I hope they see themselves as bright, capable and bound for success if they make the necessary efforts to do well in school. Their education is key.

The group's team-building exercises can be fun and even make a good point of cooperation. Now, as the group moves forward, I hope the program's leaders and the students involve the students' parents and families more.

Shirley Scoville

The friends you need in Washington

Years ago I represented my corporate employer on the Council of the Americas. This organization had been created by David Rockefeller and was based in New York. At the time, 1977, the Council was concerned with the future of the Panama Canal and the fear that failure to devolve the canal to the Panamanians might create problems throughout Latin America for American corporations with offices and plants there.

The Council also had a range of other interests in pending or future legislation and had an office in Washington, D.C., to make its wishes known to U.S. government officials and members of Congress. During the monthly council meetings I attended, it became clear that the wished-for developments in Washington weren't happening. One member began asking questions about the office in D.C. and its performance. How many staffers and how old were they? They were a couple of mature, reliable, middle-aged gentlemen, he was told.

"If you want things done in D.C. you need young staffers. Hire young staffers under 35, and get rid of the old fogies," he stated.

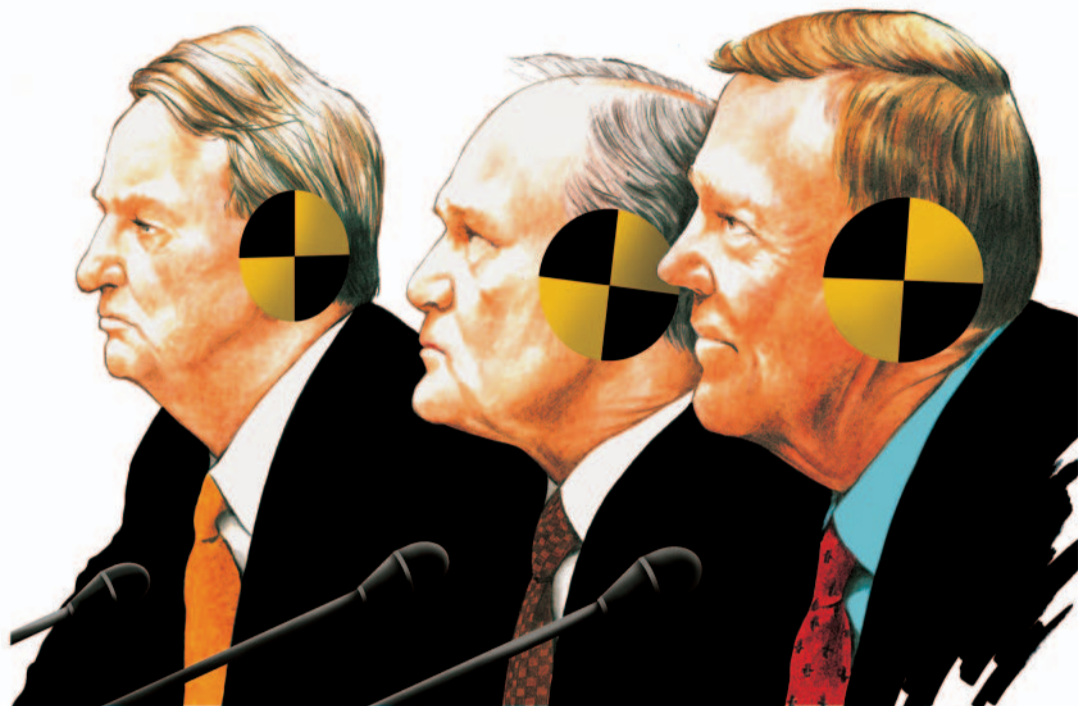
He explained that young staffers know and are friends with young Congressional staffers. "They know each other; hang around certain bars after working hours, go to parties together, and date members of the opposite sex." Young Congressional staffers, he added, are who do the work of Congress. They research issues, conduct interviews, support committee activities, and write proposed legislation. Eventually, three young staffers were added to the Council staff and after a while things happened in the legislative areas of interest to the organization.

Most folks believe that for things to happen in Washington, they have to speak to their senator or representative, but without a fat check to accompany it, little may happen. In most instances, you would do well to have the ear of the appropriate Congressional staffer.

Marc Raizman

(The Camera's editorial advisory board members are: Rick Beaufait, Anne B. Butterfield, Jimmy Calano, Ed Byrne, Clay Evans, Julian Friedland, Brian Lewis, Steve Pomerance, Marc Raizman, Brian T. Schwartz and Shirley Scoville.)

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Detroit heads

Open forum

Community Foundation
Helping out
Boulder nonprofits

Many thanks to all of you who have already answered The Community Foundation's communitywide challenge to help us raise \$1 million this year for Boulder County nonprofits. The checks are starting to roll in. On Tuesday alone we received 61 separate envelopes — a record here at the Foundation! That puts our fundraising progress at almost \$500,000. We are halfway there. We know it's too early to declare victory, but this is some impressive early momentum. If we achieve Boulder County's "Million Dollar Mission" by Dec. 31, our grant-making will double.

Please join the movement at www.cultureofgiving.com or by sending your check to The Community Foundation, 1123 Spruce St., Boulder, CO 80302. Let's respond to the recession by making it an unforgettable year for the Boulder County nonprofits who deliver so much with so much heart. Thank you Boulder County. Please keep it up!

NANCY STEVENS

Chairperson, The Community
Foundation Serving
Boulder County

A canine campus

Using dogs
to get dates

Dogs are frequently referred to as "man's best friend," but have you ever wondered why that is? It's commonly assumed that the expression is acknowledging the companionship the animals offer or their loyalty to their owners. I find both qualities to be true as I'm sure many other canine loving, college girls do. But is there an underlying catch in this catch phrase?

As a freshman at the University of Colorado, I was overwhelmed by the amount of adorable puppies I consistently saw on Farrand Field this fall. It seemed as though every fluffy, chubby, little guy was cuter than the next. On top of that, every pup seemed to be attached to a leash held by a boy.

Coincidentally, there was always a pack of girls surrounding the puppy and his proud papa, bending down to pet or play with it; or some girls passing by on their way to class pointing in admiration and flashing an envious smile to the lucky owner.

By knowing our male, dog-owning friends and observing the boys on Farrand, my girlfriends and I didn't waste too much time before deciding (perhaps rashly) that college boys, at least the ones parading their dogs through Boulder's campus, may be using their faithful companions as a gateway to the land of girls. As

far as opening up opportunity for introductions and small talk, these four-legged friends just might be getting the job done. Maybe a man's best friend doubles as a college boy's best wingman. What happens when the dog isn't allowed into dinner and the movies?

KELSEY BRAZILL
Boulder

Louisville library

A valuable resource
to community

I go to Monarch High School and for my government class I did a survey about the Louisville library debate and I interviewed people from Superior. I gave the people that I interviewed two options: The first one was the current situation in which the town of Superior makes no payment to the city of Louisville and the citizens of Superior must use another library; or the other option in which Superior pays Louisville \$125,000 per year and Superior residents pay for a library card.

I interviewed 53 people. Sixteen people, or about 30 percent of the people, chose the first option, where Superior would make no payment to the city of Louisville for the library. Thirty-seven people, or about 70 percent of the people I interviewed, said that they would choose the second option in which the town of Superior pays \$125,000 a year for the library. Some of the people who go to the library didn't even know about what was happening, and that was really surprising. I think that Superior should pay for the library because it is a very valuable resource to the community.

ALEX WITTE
Superior

The Big Three

Make GM sell
electric cars

In light of the request for federal government support, I support the efforts of Congress to ask the Big Three for a credible plan of future success. I am a native Michigander and have watched the lack of serious progress on creative next-generation products from Detroit for 35 years. They have refined what they have made, but continue to lag behind even after the U.S. car project begun in the Clinton administration.

I offer an added suggestion to the conditions for federal loans: Make GM sell its EV1 electric car product!

As you may know, GM already had the car of the future years ago. And it had enthusiastic supporters in California who leased and loved this car. Then GM pulled the plug, literally, taking back all of the cars and crushing almost all of them. I'm not making this up! (See the movie "Who Killed the

Electric Car"). Leasees asked to buy them from GM, but were refused. GM could have sold the cars or even licensed or sold the product line and any patents, but did not. So, in an act that can be seen as grossly unpatriotic and short sighted, GM unilaterally closed the door on a working technology that moved the United States closer to energy independence and environmental responsibility. Meanwhile, GM currently uses the concept car Volt as a public relations "carrot" claiming that it is really into this alternative energy stuff though the dates for the production and retail sales of the Volt continue to fade into the fictional future year after year.

I would bet my house that there are entrepreneurs and enthusiasts who would love to get the EV1 back into redesign and production, and that the EV1 would in time make a profit. It is a shocking fiction that there is an elusive, unknown answer to making a car of the future. One has been made and is waiting to be reborn and redesigned for the 21st century.

As a condition of federal loan guarantees..... make GM sell its EV1 electric car product!

TODD SMIEDENDORF
Boulder

Community chorus

A talented
group

What a delightful evening of choral music we experienced with the Rocky Mountain Choral and Conductor Steve Howie.

This is a talented and devoted group — one that needs to be supported and cherished.

Boulder is indeed lucky to have community choruses with such talent and direction!

REBECCA COPLEY
Longmont

More online

Most of the letters we receive are available on our letter-to-the-editor blog: www.dailycamera.com/blogs/letters-editor-blog

To Write the Forum

The Camera welcomes readers' letters. Timely topics of local interest are given first preference. All letters are subject to editing.

Our guidelines:

- Letters of 300 words or fewer will receive preference
- Name, full address and daytime phone number required
- No anonymous or "open" letters
- No name-calling or ad hominem attacks
- Each writer limited to one letter a month
- e-mail submissions are processed more quickly than hard-copy letters. Plain text preferred over attachments

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