

# 2003

## YEAR IN REVIEW



**DRUM  
MAJOR**  
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC  
POLICY

**co-sponsored by:**  
BLACKPLANET.COM  
CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE  
DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY  
THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING  
MOVING IDEAS NETWORK  
PROGRESSIVE MAJORITY

# 2003

**Year in Review**

## Introduction

### The Best and Worst of Public Policy

From the American Parity Act's call for equal resources spent to rebuild Iraq and America to the 2003 tax cut, a look at the year's best and worst policy.

### The DMI 2003 Injustice Index

The real state of the union in 2003, by the numbers.

### Your 2003 Reading List

Tools to refute the antiquated arguments of your in-laws.

### The State of the States

What happened in Alabama, Alaska, California, New York, and Texas?

### Best of the ProgBlog

The year's news, predigested for the busy progressive.

For sources of material cited in the DMI 2003 Year in Review, please visit [www.drummajorinstitute.org](http://www.drummajorinstitute.org)

DMI 2003 Year in Review co-sponsored by:



## DRUM MAJOR INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

110 East 59th Street  
28th Floor  
New York NY 10022

phone 212.909.9663  
fax 212.909.9493  
[drummajorinstitute.org](http://drummajorinstitute.org)

Fernando Ferrer  
**President**

Andrea Batista Schlesinger  
**Executive Director**

Malik Lewis  
**Policy and Communications  
Associate**

Steven Presser  
**Assistant to the President**

Hannah Major-Monfried  
**Intern**

The 2003

# best & worst

of Public Policy

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES. When we began 2003, we had yet to charge off to war in Iraq; California had a regularly elected governor; and, fewer Americans could count themselves among the impoverished, imprisoned, unemployed, and uninsured.

Since January, the President has gone to Congress requesting everything from \$330 billion in tax cuts to help get America on the road to economic recovery to \$87 billion to help get Iraq on the road to reconstruction. He has raised more than \$90 million on his own road to re-election, as more cuts and modifications have been made to overtime pay, Social Security, Medicare, federal subsidized school lunches, TANF, welfare, and Headstart. And now, more of the American poor and middle class are bracing for a journey down the road to economic insecurity.

But, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “The arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice.” This year, the Supreme Court recognized the ongoing necessity for affirmative action in public universities. New York advocates, who spent years in the courts to prove that all children were entitled to a meaningful education, were finally victorious. And we saw policy makers challenge this administration to match its zeal for “nation building” abroad with passion for “job building” at home.

In this Year in Review, the Drum Major Institute offers our take on the year’s best and worst legislation, a 2003 Injustice Index, the best of the ProgBlog, a reading list, and an in-depth look at five of our states. We’ve also polled prominent Americans for their thoughts on this action-packed year.

With that, we invite you to take a look back at 2003.

# The Best of 2003

## American Parity Act

On the heels of a \$100 billion military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, the President went to Congress requesting an additional \$87 billion (\$20 billion for social services and infrastructural improvements alone) to begin the long process of making Iraq self-sufficient. The American Parity Act (2003), introduced by Congressman Rahm Emmanuel (D-IL), called for the \$20 billion slated to rebuild Iraq to be matched in kind by domestic spending on education, health care, police services, roads, and bridges. Congressman Emmanuel has drawn attention to a great irony: as budget deficits faced by the states in fiscal year 2004 are expected to reach as high as \$85 to \$94 billion, the President has asked Americans to make further sacrifices in the name of “homeland security.” While not yet the law of the land, the American Parity Act merits mention in the 2003 Best of Public Policy.

## CFE v. State of New York (2003) Appellate Court Decision

It’s about time—or rather, it’s about equity. This year marked a legislative milestone for New York’s Campaign for Fiscal Equity and those who have struggled to ensure that all public school children receive a “sound basic” education. The state Court of Appeals ruled in favor of CFE, against the will of Governor George E. Pataki, requiring the State to guarantee a meaningful high school education to all students. To do so, New York State must find the \$1.4 billion in education funding that had been siphoned away from city schools with each successive state budget. Of course, many have noted that the hard part is deciding how best to allocate such funds (a policy decision that could easily earn the Governor a place in next year’s “worst of”). For finally balancing the scales of educational justice, the 2003 ruling wins a special place in the DMI Best of Public Policy.

## Bush Tax Cut Roll-back

With a record federal surplus squandered, a deficit on track to exceed \$6 trillion, states in the red, social programs on the block, and companies in layoff mode, President George W. Bush petitioned

Congress to enact a \$330 billion tax cut in the early part of 2003 to “put money back into the pocket of the American people.” Needless to say, most Americans (except the very well-off) noticed when their state and local taxes rose to the occasion. This year, Senator Charles Biden (D-DE) and Congressman John Wexler (D-FL) earn a place in the DMI Best of Public Policy for introducing a bill to roll back the Bush tax cut, 40 percent of which went to the nation’s top 1% income earners, and restore spending on programs put on the shelf in its place. As this bill finds an audience in Congress, we’ll have to see how hard it is to put the toothpaste back in its tube.

## Congressional Inquiry of “The Poverty Draft”

More than three decades ago, in a war that increasingly draws parallels to the one being fought today in the streets of Iraq, more than three quarters of the young Americans who served in Vietnam came from lower- and middle-income families. In October, Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Senator Fritz Hollings (D-SC) sent out a call to begin a congressional inquiry into the possibility of re-instituting the draft. Their goal: create parity between the racial and socioeconomic breakdown of the United States fighting force and the population. Notable career soldiers Secretary of State Colin Powell and Democratic Presidential candidate General Wesley Clark often praise the Armed Forces for being at the institutional vanguard of social inclusion in America. But for their valor in bringing to light the great number of American young people who chose to enter the armed forces not so much by choice, but due to a lack of choices, both Senator Hollings and Congressman Rangel get a place in the 2003 Best of Public Policy.

## Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2003

With the number of uninsured Americans topping 40 million, and the cost of prescription drugs rising, it was almost as if Republican leaders in Congress told the American people to “take two years and call them in the next campaign cycle.” Congress voted in October to allow

Americans to travel abroad to buy commonly used prescription drugs at a significantly discounted price. The Drug Re-importation Act of 2003, currently in committee in the Senate, earns a place in this year’s DMI Best of Public Policy not because it is a panacea (no pun intended), but because it tried to alleviate the burden of paying for prescription drugs while illustrating that one answer may be just north of the border.

## Child Tax Credit (amendment to the President’s 2003 Tax Cut)

It seemed that in a rush to make all sorts of special exemptions for the incomes and investments of the nation’s top wage earners, the President forgot to include the Child Tax Credit (a provision that helps working parents with a \$300 to \$400 rebate on their taxes) in his 2003 tax cut. Luckily for everyone, Congressional leaders Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Tom Daschle (D-SD) went to the mat to have the credit restored across the board. For their quick action, and steadfastness in making middle-class lemonade out of the Bush administration \$330 billion economic stimulus lemon, Senator Daschle and Congresswoman Pelosi get a special nod, and a place in the 2003 Best of Public Policy.

## Supreme Court Ruling on Texas Sodomy Case

When this year began, 13 American states had anti-sodomy laws on the books, while only 7 had prohibitions against discrimination in employment practices based on sexual orientation. After 17 years of debate, a 6-3 decision by the Supreme Court struck down state laws criminalizing consensual homosexual sex, and set the stage for future discussions about extending all the liberties afforded to heterosexuals to same-sex couples, including the right to marry (a right granted this year to residents of Massachusetts by their Supreme Court). Reactions were quick to set in, from Justice Scalia’s 20-page dissent to President’s Bush’s statement about “loving the sinner but hating the sin.” For their use of the bench both as a means of passing judgment, and bending the arc towards justice, this decision wins a place in the Best of Public Policy.

# The Worst of 2003

## The 2003 Bush Tax Cut

Where to begin? With a federal surplus squandered, all 50 states forced to make cuts to mainstay social programs, 40 million Americans without health coverage, 34.6 million in poverty, and 9 million without jobs, the President went to Congress with a request for \$330 billion on top of the mounting \$100 billion cost of the “War on Terror,” to provide a “stimulus” to the economy by putting more money into the hands of average Americans. The irony: with states raising local taxes as a result of the costs of the President’s other foolhardy policy decisions, many of those overly-“stimulated” American taxpayers saw their \$300-\$400 windfall go right down the drain.

## Medicare Prescription Drug Reform Bill

American seniors spend roughly 1.8 trillion a year on life saving prescription drugs. However, for Republican Congressional leaders in 2003, that wasn’t nearly enough. In November, a bitterly (and almost evenly) divided Congress voted to pass a Medicare reform bill that would move the nation’s largest guaranteed health insurance program one step closer towards total privatization by undercutting its strict cost protection provisions, forcing prescription drug providers to compete with fair market prices and Medicare and HMO enrollees to pay more for their medication. For adding to the growing number of Americans that must often choose between food, rent, and health care, by introducing a prescription drug bill that both raises the cost of prescription drugs and the bar for Medicare eligibility, Grand Old Party stalwarts have earned a place in the “Worst of Public Policy.”

## Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003

This year, Republican members of Congress all but legislated themselves into irrelevancy with the re-naming of “French Fries” to “Freedom Fries.” However, that was small potatoes compared to their attempt to circumvent the Constitutional decisions with which they disagree. In November, President Bush signed into law the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003,

legislation that the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional three years ago because, in part, there are no exceptions for the health of the mother. He said it was to protect the innocent child—he really meant his conservative base. We could note the irony that this time Mr. Bush views the Supreme Court’s will as less than the last word, but this bill is too dangerous to laugh off.

## Camp X-Ray

The Bush administration wages war to defend the rule of law in Iraq while exploiting a legal loophole to hold suspected terrorists indefinitely without cause or a hearing. For the better part of two years, the Justice Department has argued that the 660 men held at “Camp X-Ray” in Guantanamo Bay did not qualify to receive the same due process protections as American criminal defendants because they were not held on U.S. soil. For such an underhanded perversion of the law, we salute you.

## Welfare-to-Work

While the Welfare-to-Work program is nothing new—it’s origins actually reach back into the Clinton administration with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996—New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg took it to new lows by refusing to allow single-parent welfare recipients to substitute hours spent enrolled in public university classes with time they were required to work. The reasoning was that working, as opposed to studying, provided a greater sense of personal accomplishment and dignity for those reliant on

public assistance. For his great “accomplishment” of distancing working-class city parents from greater social mobility, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his take on the “Welfare-to-Work” program earn a place on our “Worst of” list.

## Overtime Restructuring Act of 2003

Despite the fact that Americans are working longer hours and taking fewer vacation days than ever before, the President supported the Overtime Restructuring Act of 2003—a plan that would allow employers to reclassify positions typically identified as “white collar” jobs as “professional,” eliminating the opportunity for more than 8 million Americans to receive “time and a half” for the extra hours put in on the job. Not only does this bill, yet to be passed, earn a place in this year’s “Worst of,” but it calls into question the whole notion of a “day’s work for a day’s pay.”

## FCC Decision to Relax Rules Governing Media Ownership

It was pretty clear what the Federal Communications Commission thought of the integrity of the American media and its viewers when they honored The Howard Stern Show with the distinction of being a “bonified news program.” But for their 3-2 decision to grant expanded access to commercial media outlets by the likes of Fox, Viacom, and a handful of other mega-media outlets that collectively control more than three quarters of all cable television broadcasting, FCC Chairman Michael Powell both made headlines, and a spot on this year’s Worst of Public Policy.

“

**The deficit is a result of a conscious strategy to shrink the size of the government, thereby forcing the reduction of key programs.**

”

—Henry Cisneros, former Secretary of Housing & Urban Development, 1993-97, on ‘What do you consider the defining statistic of 2003? The \$401 billion deficit.’

The 2003 Drum Major Institute

# injustice

Percentage of the President's 2003 tax cuts that went to the top 1% income earners:

40 percent

Percentage of those polled by CBS News who preferred preserving Social Security versus cutting taxes:

85% versus 12% respectively

Number of Americans living in poverty as of this year:

34.6 MILLION

Maximum income for a family of four to be considered "poor" by the Department of Health and Human Services:

\$18,100

Number of "super-rich" Americans who reported being "less happy" than most people in 2003:

4 in 10

Ratio of the number of United States Armed Forces servicemen currently deployed in Iraq to the number of United States war veterans that are sleeping on American streets:

2:1

Ratio of the time spent by the President at his Crawford, Texas horse ranch since elected to the time spent by the average unemployed American looking for work:

1:1

Percentage of American servicemen and women stationed in Iraq that come from an "ethnic minority":

4 in 10

Number of Black and Latino United States Senators in 1776, 2003:

0, 0

Number of Black and Latino youth who "do not believe they can make a difference in their communities":

6 in 10

Percentage of American prisons filled with non-violent criminals who committed a crime in order to "get money to buy illicit drugs":

19

Percentage of American prisons filled with "corporate criminals" who committed a crime in order to get more money:

less than 1 percent

Ratio of the amount requested by the President to rebuild Iraq to the amount proposed by the President to fund his own No Child Left Behind educational reform:

7:1

Number of New York City public school children who think the President is "the most important person in the world":

7 in 10

Number of 4th graders reading at or below basic reading level:

7 in 10

Ratio of the number of young black men in prison versus in college:

1.2:1

Ratio of the average salary of a CEO in 2003 to the average salary of a worker:

475:1

Number of Americans who cast a vote via telephone on the final night of the Fox Television airing of "American Idol":

15.5 million

Number of 18-25 year old American citizens who voted in the 2000 Presidential election:

9.9 million

Number of people on death row who were exonerated by new evidence this year:

100

Percentage of California voters who supported the recall of Gov. Gray Davis based on his "fiscal mismanagement":

70

Ratio of the salaries of former New York Stock Exchange CEO Dick Grasso to the "worth of a good CEO" according to the Burson-Marsteller public relations firm:

47:1

Number of Americans who have permanently lost the right to vote due to a felony conviction:

4.65 million

Estimated increase of the federal debt over the next 10 years as a result of the President's 2001 and 2003 tax cuts:

\$4.614 TRILLION

Grade received by newly sworn-in Senate majority leader Bill Frist (R-TN) in 2002 on civil rights and "reproductive rights" issues according to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America:

F

# index

Ratio of the number of regular viewers of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* to the number of Americans currently behind bars:

**4:1**

Ratio of the average number of cases handled by a public defense lawyer to the number recommended by the American Bar Association:

**2:1**

Number of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" found in Iraq since the President sent ground troops into the region:

**0**

Number of loaded handguns in American households with children:

**96 million**

Number of uninsured Americans:

**43.6 MILLION**

Number of unemployed Americans:

**9.1 million**

Ratio of the reduction in funding for public schools on army bases for servicemembers' children, to the amount of a no-bid contract awarded to Halliburton to build prisons in Iraq:

**1:1**

Percentage of United States Senators with assets in the millions of dollars:

**40**

Percentage of United States families with assets in the millions of dollars:

**4**

President's budget request for experiments to promote the institution of marriage:

**\$300 MILLION**

Number of children receiving food from a pantry, kitchen, or shelter within the network of America's Second Harvest:

**over 9 million**

Cost of a meal at a re-elect Bush-Cheney '04 fundraising dinner in Philadelphia:

**\$2,000**

Number of Americans who think that President Bush isn't "working hard enough":

**1 in 3**

Percentage of American seniors who think social and moral values in the United States were higher when they were growing up than they are today:

**70**

Annual pay of low-level United States Armed Forces servicemen who make up 60% of the Iraq War fighting force:

**\$9,600**

Cost of the President's May 2003 aircraft carrier landing in which he declared the war in Iraq "Mission Accomplished":

**\$1 MILLION**

# report reading recomm

Having trouble refuting the antiquated arguments of your in-laws? Tired of speaking in generalities about what's wrong with the world to your non-newspaper reading friends? Searching for eloquence in your rants at the Sunday morning talk shows? Check out the following reports, guaranteed to leave you well-equipped to take on your family, friends, or television set.

## **Progress in the States:**

### **A Report on Proactive, Progressive Victories in 2003**

BERNIE HORN, LIZ CATTANEO, EDITORS  
CENTER FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
JULY, 2003

"While the progressive movement has been stymied by the conservative stranglehold in Washington, state legislators have quietly won a series of surprising, proactive victories in the states." According to this report, over 150 progressive measures on civil rights, criminal justice, health, environment, consumer protections, and employee wages and benefits were enacted at the state level during 2003. "For progressives, both the policies and leaders of tomorrow are developing in state capitals today." Hopefully these leaders will turn their sights to the nation's capital, tomorrow.

## **Prospecting for Access:**

### **How the Bush Pioneers Shaped Public Policy**

JAMES C. BENTON  
COMMON CAUSE  
OCTOBER, 2003

While it's not unusual for an elected official to bestow perks on donors, Bush's aptly named Pioneers are blazing new trails, all the way to the White House. This report profiles 14 Pioneers—those who raised at least \$100,000 for his 2000 campaign—illustrating how money influences politics at the highest level of the Bush administration. In each case, a Pioneer helped candidate Bush, and in return, President Bush endorsed policies that would benefit the Pioneer or his business interest. Looks like the personal is still the political, and the political is still the personal.

## **State Impact Analysis Reports:**

### **Effects of the 2004 Congressional Budget Resolution**

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE  
MAY, 2003

Massive new tax breaks advanced by the Bush administration have benefited our nation's wealthiest citizens, while squeez-

ing our state governments dry. The real victims? People concerned about public education, security, healthcare, and infrastructure. Nearly every state government in the union is grappling with a serious budget crisis, mounting unemployment, and an ever-growing list of priorities that cannot be met. So much for state's rights—even the most elastic reading of Congress' most recent budget resolution shows a desire to leave states high and dry.

## **Are Lifetime Incomes Growing More Unequal? Looking at New Evidence on Family Income Mobility**

KATHERINE BRADBURY AND JANE KATZ  
THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF BOSTON  
JANUARY, 2003

For a nation whose unofficial past time is "keeping up with the Joneses," a study of the growth in income inequality in American cities by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston sparks tough questions about our nation's promise as the "land of hope and opportunity." Should we care, ask the authors? That all depends on what side of the fence you're on, and how green the grass is—between the 1970s and today, while the incomes of the "well to do" have experienced tremendous growth in real dollar terms, the incomes of the lower-middle and working class have barely budged an inch. In other words, the rich get richer, the poor stay poor.

## **Class Warfare Fact and Fiction**

BERNARD WASOW  
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION  
FEBRUARY, 2003

Fact or fiction: "The rich deserve most of the tax cuts because they pay most of the taxes." Myth or reality: "Cutting taxes on dividends and other capital income will generate new investment essential for economic growth." After President Bush unveiled his \$330 billion proposal to cut taxes, the incendiary language of "class warfare" reared its ugly head as a catch-all slur against its opponents. How to help debunk the myth that fairness in economic policy is a zero-sum game? Check out this series for a preemptive strike in the struggle.

# Recommendations

## **Borrowing to Make Ends Meet: The Growth of Credit Card Debt in the 1990s**

TAMARA DRAUT AND JAVIER SILVA  
DEMOS  
SEPTEMBER, 2003

“Just Do It” may have been the mantra of middle-aged baby boomers in the 1990s, but according to this Demos report about credit card debt in the Clinton years, “Just Charge It” was a close second. Notes the report: Credit card debt in the ‘90s nearly tripled from \$238 billion to \$692 billion and debt among families earning less than \$10,000 a year grew by an astonishing 184 percent. At the same time, health care and housing costs rose for many, while real wages stayed flat or decreased. Are we forcing the working and middle-class to mortgage their futures away?

## **The State of Black America**

LEE A. DANIELS, EDITOR  
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE  
2003

With more young black men filling prisons than universities, felony disenfranchisement robbing more than a million of their political voice, and the proliferation of HIV/AIDS in the young urban black community robbing many more of their lives, this National Urban League report couldn't be more critical of the national agenda. Covering issues including “Race, Gender, and Welfare Reform,” the “Impact of Mass Incarceration on Public Health in Black Communities,” and “The Harmful Impact of the Criminal Justice System and War on Drugs on the African-American family,” *The State of Black America* is as much a profile as it is an indictment — on the policymakers who too often would rather drive by this America than engage it.

## **People and Politics in America's Big Cities**

JOHN LOGAN AND JOHN MOLLENKOPF  
DRUM MAJOR INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY  
MAY, 2003

The face of America is changing. The profound population shifts under way in our cities have resulted in a “representation gap” between elected officials and those they represent. When cities failed to appreciate the importance of such gaps in the past, they paid a heavy price. With urban democracy at a crossroads again today, which path will we take? “People and Politics,” written by urban politics experts John Mollenkopf and John Logan for the Drum Major Institute, looks at the impact of the demographic transformation now under way in New York City and Los Angeles. We've learned the hard way that this is a conversation too important to postpone.

## **What event made the greatest impression on you in 2003?**

“A U.S. president conducting an illegal (by international law) and aggressive war with the willing collusion of the Congress, the media, and political elites. My four daughters will be living with the consequences of that aggression for the next 30 years. I recall Jefferson's quote, I tremble for my country when I know that God is just.”

—David Bositis, Senior Political Analyst  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

“In a matter of a few days, the Republicans unveiled two huge pieces of legislation, on Medicare and energy, and tried to ramrod them through Congress. The 1,100 page Medicare bill...could help the GOP achieve their longstanding goal of dismantling the Medicare program. [And] the 1,200-page energy bill, written behind closed doors by energy executives, ...is another grotesque special interest rip-off that threatens our environment and does little to promote alternative fuels. While all this was happening, they quietly slipped into the budget bill a provision that will end overtime pay for as many as 8 million Americans.”

—David Axelrod, President  
Axelrod and Associates

“The Supreme Court's decision in the Michigan affirmative action case was a positive development in American race relations. With affirmative action under widespread attack, the court created a safe haven for honest consideration of race in school admissions. With Justice O'Connor leading the way, the court avoided two traps. First, the court stayed free of the illusion that race no longer matters in American life. And second, the court managed to sidestep the illusion that race should not matter... The ruling also had the benefit, from a progressive viewpoint, of getting many of America's schools, corporations, and the U.S. military on the record with support for affirmative action. Consequently, people who prefer not to think about race had to think about race.”

—Juan Williams, Senior Correspondent  
National Public Radio

“The failure of liberal, democratic, independent congresspeople and the media to demand the truth from the President of the United States and the failure to state opposing views to his international policies. I am stunned that the Democrats and moderate Republicans have absolutely no vision and no capacity to speak in opposition to the dominant and radically conservative ideology, especially when that ideology is not shared by the majority of Americans.”

—Kathy Rodgers, President  
NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund

# State of the States

## ALABAMA, ALASKA, CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK, AND TEXAS

**FROM THE FRONTLINES: A look at five states where debates important to progressives came to a head in 2003.**

### Alabama 2003: The Twilight Zone of Republicans and Taxes

Meet Bob Riley, conservative Republican governor, who bragged about serving six years as a Congressman without voting for a tax increase. Fast forward to 2003, when a \$675 million budget deficit, a broken public school system—funded at the lowest level per child in the nation—and an over-extended prison system, forced Governor Riley to make a tough decision.

Dubbed “Alabama’s Foundation for Greatness,” Riley’s proposal was simple: first, shift the tax burden off the poor by raising the tax threshold from \$4,600 to \$20,000 for a family of four and increase the exemption per child; second, raise property taxes, which are the lowest in the nation and greatly benefit the state timber and agriculture interests and the wealthy. Not surprisingly, Riley’s party and conservative groups, like Americans for Tax Reform, came out strongly against the tax increase. Riley found himself in alien territory, allied with the state Democratic party and the head of the state teachers union, courting the votes of black democrats.

The State Legislature approved Riley’s tax and accountability package in June, but changes to the state constitution require going to the voters. The referendum was overwhelmingly rejected by a margin of 2 to 1 on September 9.

Riley’s lesson learned: his constituents “want a government that is smaller and more efficient. One that is open and accountable to the people. One that operates with the resources on hand.” Sure. But how will states operate with the resources on hand without making huge cuts in basic services on which the middle class and poor rely? And what of their fellow Republicans’ tax cuts that forced these state deficits in the first place?

### State of California 2003: Total Recall

In true Hollywood fashion, California recalled Governor Gray Davis on October 7, just 11 months after the Democrat had been reelected, and replaced him with actor-turned-politician and Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. Reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with the way Davis managed the state and the 2000 energy crisis, 55 percent voted to recall, including 25% of registered Democrats.

The recall effort was initially ignored by Republican leaders who were focused on unseating Senator Barbara Boxer, but it bloomed in May when Congressman Darrell Issa (R-San Diego County) put up \$1 million of his personal fortune to bankroll the effort. For ten weeks, Schwarzenegger campaigned on a platform of balancing the budget, protecting education and, bringing a sense of transparency to government—as was his claim in a campaign TV spot: “Here is my plan: Day One, audit everything. Open the books. And then, we end the crazy deficit spending.”

Just as Arnold out-muscled his opponents by more than one million votes, pulling majority support from every ethnic group in the

state, the hotly contested California ballot referendum Proposition 54 emerged a loser, defeated overwhelmingly by voters of all races. Proposition 54 was designed to restrict state and local governments from collecting and classifying information about race, ethnicity, and nationality. The chief architect of the proposition, as well as Proposition 209, the state’s 1996 anti-affirmative action in local and state hiring practices referendum, was California businessman Ward Connerly—with help from other prominent black conservatives: Shelby Steele, Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams. However, unlike Davis’s gracious concession to governor-elect Schwarzenegger, Connerly has promised he “will be back.”

### Alaska 2003: Pipeline to the heart of the Energy Debate

In 1977, Jimmy Carter identified energy, “with the exception of preventing war, [as] the greatest challenge our country will face during our life times.” This is no less true today as it will be in 20 years when fully 68 percent of all oil consumed domestically is expected to come from imports.

The Energy Policy Act of 2003, based on the recommendations of the secretive Bush Administration’s 2001 energy task force, was introduced to Congress in April. As part of the bill, drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and the construction of a natural gas pipeline between Alaska and the Midwest were floated as ways of diminishing American reliance on foreign energy imports. Opponents accused the President of increasing American dependence on non-renewable energy sources like oil and gas while awarding \$18.7 billion in tax subsidies to the energy industry. As the proposal to open ANWR to drilling (passed in the House, but defeated in the Senate) returns in mid-October, the debate over American’s energy and homeland security priorities is likely to rage on.

With similar shortsightedness, the Bush administration took steps to modify the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Enacted in the last days of the Clinton administration, the Roadless Rule prevents logging and industrial development on approximately 58.5 million acres of federal forest and grasslands—a quarter of which exist in Alaska’s forests. Environmental groups have led the resistance against the “wholesale implementation of the timber industry’s long-standing agenda of reversing forest policies that put wildlife and the public on equal footing with extractive interests.” Further evidence of the administration’s dedication to exchanging long-term damage to our nation’s people and infrastructure in exchange for short term political gain.

### Texas in 2003: Bounty Hunting for State Officials

For all its bravado and swagger, politics in Texas was known for its bipartisanship. Governor George W. Bush, en route to the White House, bragged that “Republicans and Democrats have worked together to do what is right for the people.” But that was then. In 2003, partisan politics erupted in a struggle that consumed Austin, spread into nearby states, and gained national attention.

Borders of Congressional districts are redrawn every ten years with the release of new Census data—initiating a series of partisan battles for political turf. In 2000, due to shifts in population

## What policies should progressives fight for in 2004?

nationally, Texas won two new seats in Congress. In May 2003, the Texas Redistricting Committee submitted a plan to give Republicans five to seven more seats in Congress. Democrats accused Republicans of making a power grab by packing black and Hispanic voters into Republican suburban districts, effectively diluting their political power.

Taking a cue from the 1979 Killer Bees, 51 House democrats flew to Oklahoma to prevent passage of the controversial redistricting bill. In response, Governor Perry called a series of special legislative sessions, but then 11 of the 12 State Democratic Senators fled again, this time to New Mexico. After their time on the lam, the Democrats were hailed as heroes, and eventually took their grievance all the way to the federal courts, charging that the Republicans violated the Voting Rights Act in an attempt to consolidate political power.

In the second week of October, after months of heated debate and three sessions of the state legislature, Governor Perry signed-off on the House- and Senate- approved redistricting map. Of course, with plans underway by various civil rights activists to challenge the plan as a violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, there is still hope yet for a happy ending.

### New York State 2003: Escape from New York

Happy anniversary! In 2003, New York celebrated its 30th year of living under the Rockefeller Drug Laws—a set of harsh felony drug laws that mandate long prison sentences for often minor narcotics infractions.

Proof of its charm: New York's distinction of having the fourth largest state prison population in the country. In fact, of the more than two million Americans behind bars, more than 70,000 are in New York State. Of that number, nearly a third was sentenced to 5-year minimum prison terms under "The Rock," and almost all of them were black or Latino.

Recognizing the urgent need to address the mass incarceration of the state's black and Latino youth, Def Jam Founder Russell Simmons galvanized an unlikely coalition of state Democratic leaders, drug law reform activists, and members of the Hip-Hop community. Their goal was to achieve what Governor George E. Pataki could or would not do in his first eight years of office: drop the Rockefeller drug laws.

However, after weeks of private debate, Simmons, Governor Pataki, and state and city representatives emerged with only limited proposed changes to the 30-year old laws. Notably absent was any suspension of mandatory sentences imposed on small quantity narcotics possessions.

With few changes to the Rockefeller drug laws, and a report from the Brennan Center for Justice showing that inadequate political education of voters and pollsters cost nearly 130,000 New York State ex-felons the right to participate in regular elections, many locked in New York's lopsided criminal justice system found little comfort in 2003.

“I believe that in 2004, progressives should support such issues as homeownership for all Americans, universal pre-school, and closing the achievement gap so that we can truly be a global society.”

—Marc H. Morial  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
National Urban League

“It's all about regime change in America. Hated abroad and broke at home, gutting programs that address human needs, shifting our nation's treasure from the people and the environment to corporations....Next year we have the opportunity to replace Bush. So Anybody But Bush should be the single and unifying focus of progressives”

—Ben Cohen, co-founder  
Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc.

“We need: 1) childcare for all, 2) healthcare for all, 3) an economy that pays living wages and benefits and doesn't subsidize dying industries, and 4) an international program that supports multilateral efforts to achieve peace and prosperity.”

—Kathy Rodgers, President  
NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund

“In this day and age, it seems to me that progressives should stand for what they have always stood—to build a political movement that would enable government to use its powers to provide all Americans with greater access to happy middle class lifestyles, to enable each of us to reach our full potential as human beings, and to organize that government in a way that is accountable to all of its ordinary citizens, that listens to and seeks ideas from us all, and that works to promote the same outcomes in the rest of the world.”

—John Mollenkopf, Director  
Center for Urban Research at the  
City University of New York

“If you are asking what liberals or social democrats should be fighting for [in 2004], then there is only one answer—defeat W. and everything Bushism represents: anti-intellectualism, nationalism, and right wing racism.”

—David Bositis, Senior Political Analyst  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

“As the nation heads into an election year there needs to be a dedication of energy and resources to improving schools and repairing the social safety net for poor children. Too many young people in America, especially minority young people, are not being given the education and opportunity to succeed.”

—Juan Williams, Senior Correspondent  
National Public Radio

# best of the progblog 2003

On February 14, 2003 the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy burst onto the scene with all the force of an opinion column in one-tenth the space with the launch of the DMI ProgBlog—what we call, ‘predigestion for the busy progressive.’

The conservative *New York Sun* says of the ProgBlog: “While Bill Clinton, the former president, has lately been complaining about a dearth of liberal prose outlets and personalities, local lefties have been taking matters into their own hands....”

It’s not enough for progressives to read our own publications. That’s why the ProgBlog reviews media sources from the left to the right, from the Wall Street Journal to the Nation to the White House’s press office. We find the most compelling news, offer our own commentary, and link you to the original.

## ON THE ECONOMY

**The White House presents  
Don’t Ask Don’t Tell  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)  
July 10, 2003**

For comic relief, check out WhiteHouse.gov’s latest stirring episode of “Ask the White House,” featuring Global Communications Director Tucker Eskew. From which CD would you take with you if you were stranded on a desert island to how do you get any sleep, these direct and important questions must have made Eskew sweat! We have taken the liberty of developing some questions for President Bush not written by White House communications staff: Did he mislead the public on our reasons for going to war? How does he reconcile spending \$3.9 billion per month in Iraq while underfunding his No Child Left Behind act? At which point does he promise that tax cuts for the wealthy will improve the lives of working and middle class Americans? As for his favorite CD, we think we know it: it’s called trickle down economics and it’s a broken record.

**President Bush Has a Dream  
*New York Times*  
July 11, 2003**

Mr. Bush has a dream: That the American worker neither be judged by the color of their collar, nor by the hours they put in on the job. Under new regulations adopted

by the Republican-controlled House, only individuals earning less than \$22,100 a year would qualify for overtime, effectively rendering “eight million workers...who count on overtime as an essential part of their income,” ineligible to receive overtime pay. Said one of 213 Republican representatives who voted for the Bush-proposed bill about the old rules: “[They] simply do not meet the needs of today’s 21st-century work force.” Apparently Mr. Bush’s 21st century dream for the future is radically different than that of most Americans. From his mountaintop, \$22,100 a year is enough to make ends meet, and “white collar workers” and “blue collar workers” can come together (around their unfair pay) at last.

## ON DOMESTIC POLICY

**Ready for what?  
February 18, 2003**

Make sure to visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), the Department of Homeland Security’s key to surviving a terrorist attack. It seems fairly ironic that the federal government is advising Americans to keep three days worth of perishable foods on hand when there were 9 million people suffering from hunger in 2001, and 23.3 million seeking emergency food from Second Harvest charities the same year. We’re sure the 11.7% of the country living in poverty is most concerned with having flashlights, batteries, and a warm change of clothing ready in case of disaster. And the debate over staying put or leaving might be irrelevant to the millions of homeless people in America (3.5 million as of 1996). Terrorism warrants a federal website. What about hunger, poverty, homelessness, or the state of our schools? We guess those things aren’t emergencies....

**Medium-Welfare  
*Weekly Standard*  
June 2, 2003**

It seems like the defenders of the Welfare Reform Act like their social programs the same way they like their burgers: medium-well. Not so charred as to fire up those who rely on them, but well enough to be more “conservative” than “compassionate.” “It’s time to turn up the volume and the heat,” on the issue of welfare reform, writes David

Brooks in the *Weekly Standard*, as the 1996 Welfare Reform Act comes up for review this year in Congress. “Welfare rolls have since dropped by 60 percent,” says Brooks as proof of its success. “The culture of welfare has been transformed so that recipients are now expected to work” despite the acknowledged “difficulty most mothers leaving welfare have in becoming financially self-sufficient.” Minor inconvenience. Don’t you know, at every good cookout a few burgers get burnt?

## ON EDUCATION

**“No exit”  
*New York Daily News*  
July 1, 2003**

Very soon, the State University of New York’s swelling student body may become puny, says Miriam Kramer of NYPIRG, regarding yesterday’s State University of New York Board of Trustees’ 11-to-1 vote authorizing a fall tuition hike of \$950 for in-state students. “When tuition rose by \$750 in 1995,” said Kramer, “about 30,000 students dropped out.” This year’s hike, which SUNY Chancellor Robert King called “necessary... in light of the unprecedented fiscal crisis facing our state,” is nearly 25 percent larger than the 1995 increase, and comes when even college graduates are having trouble finding jobs. Raise tuition, which makes it harder to get a college education, which makes it harder to get a job, which limits the state’s revenue, which forces an increase in tuition. This is a cycle worthy of Sartre.

## ON LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

**See no evil, report no evil  
*Weekly Standard*  
March 16, 2003**

In today’s *Weekly Standard*, Noemie Emery laments the inability of “lefty publications” to rejoice over the success of the war on Iraq. Emery’s frustration is that these “lefty publications couldn’t bring themselves to recognize the good coming from American policy.” Well, if it’s all just about fairness, we have a challenge: How about the *Weekly Standard* spend an issue dedicated to the bad coming from American policy? We challenge them to accurately report on the poverty of more than 1 in 10 Americans, the failure of President Bush’s latest tax cut package to stimulate the economy, the failure of his

current proposals to provide real relief to the under- and unemployed, and the persistent government disinvestment in public education and how that runs counter to the American dream. We'll read it. We promise!

### **Oops!... she's a conservative**

**CNN.com**

**September 9, 2003**

Normally we shy away from making serious public policy pronouncements about the political opinions of pop stars, but, if it's good enough for Crossfire.... In an interview with CNN's Tucker Carlson, when asked about her feelings towards the President, said Britney Spears: "Honestly, I think we should just trust our president in every decision that he makes and we should just support that, you know, and be faithful in what happens." Clearly no Madonna rubbed-off on her during that sensational smooch. But what do you expect? She has the luxury of being insulated from the effects of his poor economic judgment. Millions of American teens may follow her into bare midriff land, but if they take this political trip with her, they'll soon feel the chill.

### **ON THE WAR IN IRAQ**

#### **How to talk to your kids about \$87 billion Ourfuture.org**

**October 2, 2003**

While there's been a wealth of advice coming from the Bush administration on how American parents should talk to their children about everything from drugs to teen pregnancy, how should they talk to their kids about the President's \$87 billion request to rebuild Iraq? America's Future gives us some pointers: 1) Abstinence: "Roll back Bush tax breaks for the rich to pay for the new \$87 billion," 2) Scared Straight: "New \$87 billion price tag brings the war home," or 3) Tough Love: "Our choices today are stark." As Senator Joe Biden, co-author of the Bush tax-cut rollback bill, puts it: "We can either pass on to our grandchildren the cost of meeting our security needs...or we can face our obligations squarely and pay for them by asking the most fortunate among us to share in the common sacrifices Americans are making to make the nation more secure." Now those are some values to talk about around the kitchen table.

### **ON FAMILY VALUES**

#### **Call it the "Stonewall Strategy"**

**CNN.com**

**April 22, 2003**

When the GOP ousted Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott for making 'racially insen-

sitive' comments, some called the move a revival of the "Southern Strategy": a two-pronged political maneuver to win both moderates and hard-line conservatives. Lott's heave-ho was supposed to be proof that the party had changed, but that's no reason to scrap a perfectly good strategy. "If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual (gay) sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy...polygamy...incest...adultery," said Senator Rick Santorum in response to Supreme Court review of a Texas sodomy statute. "All of those things are antithetical to a healthy, stable, traditional family." Silly us. We thought the major impediments to strong families were poverty and lack of access to good education or health care. It seems the 'Grand Old Party' has conveniently forgotten some of its own "party-hearties." Distraction by bigotry and vice-versa.

#### **They're too sexy for this country**

##### **The American Conservative**

**August 11, 2003**

They're like Alex P. Keaton meets The Fonz. The *New York Times* calls them "Hippublicans." Leary lefties call them "Social Hedonists." But to *The American Conservative*, co-founded by renowned paleo-con Pat Buchanan, on issues like immigration, affirmative action, and taxes, "The New Conservatives" aren't just "correctamundo!," but right for America. "The joy of mass immigration is easy to talk about when you live in the suburbs and benefit from cheap housecleaning," notes the AC, discussing the boom-time complacency that robbed conservatives of their Gen-X base, "but when you are going to schools that are 50 percent Spanish and watching your education slip through your fingers, you tend to be a little more pragmatic." Talking about the failure of public education is one thing, but blaming Spanish speaking immigrants for it is another. If that's the attitude of the young right, maybe they're just too sexy for this country.

### **ON CALIFORNIA**

#### **Survivor: California**

**USA Today**

**March 6, 2003**

Call it the latest of several reality shows to premier this season: *Survivor: California*. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said Wednesday, in her majority opinion in defense of California's 'three strikes' rule, that repeat offenders "must be isolated from society...to protect the public safety," even

in such cases as the one of a California man who received a 25 year sentence for stealing \$1,197 worth of golf clubs. Rest easy Tiger, "the tribal council has spoken." Apparently Justice O'Connor believes that the American prison population, now 2,000,000 in number, can simply be "voted off the island."

#### **Beverly Hills are alive with the sound of music**

**Contra Costa Times**

**September 13, 2003**

Forget the "Flight of the Valkarie"—what really plucks California gubernatorial hopeful Arnold Schwarzenegger's heart-strings is good old-fashioned American "conservatism." Said Ah-nold this weekend at the biannual California Republican convention: "I'm a conservative because I believe communism is evil and free enterprise is good. Because Milton Friedman is right and Karl Marx is wrong. Because I believe government serves the people, the people don't serve the government. Because I believe in a balanced budget, not budget deficits. Because I believe money that people earn is their money and not the government's money." Well, we "believe" he didn't get the RNC 2003 Talking Points Memo: Conservatives do believe in deficits—ask the President; they do believe in people serving the government—ask an increasing number of grieving families, and just for the record, "red bating" is sooooo 1980s.

### **ON BLOGS**

#### **Blog Humbug!**

**New York Times**

**August 13, 2003**

The AOL, in struggling media empire AOL Time Warner, may be AWOL. And DSL might be DOA if Congress doesn't give fair market competition the OK. But, reports Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times*, that "Blogs," short for web logs, once a symbol of the hip cutting-edge nature of the Internet, "which sprang up to sass the establishment, have been overrun by the establishment." Nearly every Democratic presidential candidate's got one, adds Dowd, including long-shot Senator Bob Graham who dubs himself "the original blogger"—which is slightly less grandiose than a claim to having "invented the Internet." But why such scorn from the "Old Gray Lady"? Is this new form of free communication making her feel that much grayer? As one of the new kids on the block, rest assured, this little blog will never sell out.