



Promoting Government Accountability and Citizen Participation

[ACTION CENTER](#) | [BLOGS](#) | [DONATE](#)

The Watcher

April Fools' Day, 2008

Vol. 9, No. 7

In This Special April Fools' Day Issue

Regulatory Matters

[Congress Passes Clean Waterboarding Act](#)

[Bush Policy Revealed: President Suppresses Science He Can't Understand](#)

Nonprofit Issues

[Clara Barton Designated as Terrorist for Aiding Rebels](#)

[New Rules on Protests Announced](#)

[Unusual Alliance Calls for Banning All Campaign Contributions; Vote Buying to be Legalized](#)

Information & Access

[EPA Outsourced to ExxonMobil](#)

[The Letters C, I, and A Declared Need-to-Know-Only](#)

[Cheney Refuses to Disclose Final Four Picks](#)

Federal Budget

[Senate Considers Plan to Offset AMT with eBay Auctions, Bake Sales](#)

Congress Passes Clean Waterboarding Act

The Bush administration and congressional leaders agreed to begin negotiations over the Clean Waterboarding Act of 2008 that Congress passed April 1. The key sticking point is the administration's objections to leaving the responsibility for implementing the act to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). According to Congress, EPA is the agency that sets U.S. water quality standards and is therefore the most appropriate agency to ensure that, if domestic sources are used for waterboarding, the water is "clean." The administration wants the Justice Department (DOJ) to have the authority to implement the act because DOJ has the legal responsibility for justifying other torture tactics, and the agency can oversee the use of waterboarding in international settings. Since President Bush has stopped short of threatening a veto, an agreement with Congress is expected soon.

Bush Policy Revealed: President Suppresses Science He Can't Understand

In a surprise speech April 1, President George W. Bush acknowledged it is his policy to suppress or ignore science he cannot understand. "Sometimes I get reports that scientists want to regulate chemicals or pollution, but they use a bunch of jibber jabber and fancy math to make their point," Bush said. "The American people didn't elect me to read reports and understand science; they elected me to make decisions — that's why I'm the decider."

Clara Barton Designated as Terrorist for Aiding Rebels

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced its first posthumous designation of a terrorist on April 1, placing Clara Barton of Civil War fame on its list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists. The unusual action came after OFAC Internet search engines discovered that [Barton had aided Confederate soldiers during the war](#). A press release noted, "The Confederacy was clearly a terrorist organization. And our laws prohibiting material support for terrorists must be strictly enforced. While medical supplies are exempted from the ban, medical services are not. In addition, the [National Park Service](#) has verified that Ms. Barton also provided food and water to the wounded." Barton spent three years nursing soldiers in Virginia and South Carolina, conflict areas with a high level of Confederate infiltration of the civilian population. She continued her pattern of indiscriminate humanitarian aid by forming the American Red Cross in 1881, which became associated with the infamous International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, whose [Code of Conduct](#) "clearly violates the U.S. ban on transactions with those unfortunate enough to live in conflict areas, regions controlled by terrorists, or have a second cousin twice removed who belongs to Hamas," according to a government source.

New Rules on Protests Announced

The Department of Homeland Security's Center for Educational Nonprofit Speech Outreach and Research (CENSOR) announced a new program April 1 aimed at ensuring that public protest does not provide a public relations benefit to the administration's political opposition, terrorists, or criminal defense lawyers. Under the new rules, nonprofits that apply for permits to hold demonstrations in Washington, DC, must submit basic information on all their members, including name, address, e-mail, Social Security number, date of birth, political party affiliation, and blood type, to be checked against the terrorist watch lists. If any potential matches are found, the permit application will be denied. Demonstrators entering the protest zone will be required to sign a waiver of privacy and constitutional rights. Civil liberties groups attempted to object, but all their websites and e-mail systems mysteriously crashed simultaneously.

Unusual Alliance Calls for Banning All Campaign Contributions; Vote Buying to be Legalized

Presidential candidates Sens. John McCain (R-AZ), Hillary Clinton (D-NY), and Barack Obama (D-IL) joined forces today, April 1, on what they call "groundbreaking legislation" to do away with special interest money in federal elections. The bill would ban all campaign contributions to candidates, political parties, 527 groups, and any other entity. Instead, the bill legalizes vote buying, which the three presidential candidates said could provide an important stimulus for the faltering economy. In a joint statement, the three senators said, "[Research](#) indicates vote buying is a free market activity. Vote buying in the cultural context of a world without campaign contributions empowers the citizen consumer." In response to critics that claim the proposal would mean only the wealthy could run for office, the three co-sponsors suggested surrogate vote buying would also be permitted. The National Distillers' Association issued a statement of support for the bill: "It is the American way to pay people to vote a certain way with a bottle of whisky or spirit of choice."

EPA Outsourced to ExxonMobil

With FY 2009 budget cuts looming, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced April 1 that ExxonMobil will be taking over the majority of the agency's operations as part of a new efficiency plan adopted last year. As ExxonMobil is poised to take command, it has courageously called for a "war on pollution." A first step in its multi-pronged agenda to eliminate pollution is the elimination of all pollution reporting. ExxonMobil management boldly predicts a dramatic drop in pollution as soon as the program begins. The company won the contract, beating out Chevron and Sierra Club, by highlighting opportunities for new scientific discoveries. For instance, an innovative plan for comprehensive logging should eliminate tree-generated carbon dioxide by 2015. The company is planning to add the letter 'M' to the agency's acronym and rename it the Exxon Mobil Protection Agency (EMPA) to more accurately reflect its new direction.

The Letters C, I, and A Declared Need-to-Know-Only

In a move to further protect a certain unnamed intelligence agency and its operations, the federal government has ruled the letters C, I, and A need-to-know information for use only by those with the highest security clearance. The government ordered that the public stop using these three letters immediately and instead substitute K for C, Y for I, and E for A. While President Bush acknowledged that this change will cause some difficulty for the American people, he asserted that "If we continue to risk using these vital letters, the terrorists will win." The Department of Homeland Security announced that episodes of *Sesame Street* sponsored by the restricted letters will immediately be pulled from broadcast schedules.

Cheney Refuses to Disclose Final Four Picks

In what public access advocates are calling the worst demonstration of excessive government secrecy, Vice President Dick Cheney is refusing to reveal his Final Four picks in the White House NCAA men's basketball tournament pool. Shortly after the 13-year-old son of a White House secretary moved into the lead in the pool after correctly predicting Davidson's shocking upset over Georgetown in the second round, Cheney's bracket was pulled. The Office of the Vice President explained that the Vice President is not technically a part of the White House and is therefore not subject to NCAA pool rules that require disclosure of picks in order to participate. Ironically, Cheney is also claiming to have locked up winning the pool when the tournament concludes, stating, "At this point, it's a slam dunk. Trust me."

Senate Considers Plan to Offset AMT with eBay Auctions, Bake Sales

A major divide between the House and Senate budget resolutions — whether or not a \$70 billion Alternative Minimum Tax "patch" should be offset with other revenue increases or spending cuts — may be bridged by week's end. An April 1 Congressional Budget Office scoring of Senate Finance Committee Chair Kent Conrad's (D-ND) plan to utilize "alternative revenue methods" may break the congressional logjam. Conrad's measure would allow federal agencies to partially fund their operations through either bake sales or the auctioning off of surplus agency assets through the Internet auction site eBay. "Schools all across the nation do it, so it just makes sense that the federal government avail itself of these taxpayer-friendly revenue enhancers," said Conrad before returning his attention to icing cupcakes.

This concludes the special April Fools' Day edition of The Watcher. The Watcher will return to its regular format on April 15.

For nonfictional, up-to-date news on the issues we cover, [please visit our blogs](#).

[Privacy Statement](#) | [Press Room](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact OMB Watch](#)

© 2008 OMB Watch

1742 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009

202-234-8494 (phone)

202-234-8584 (fax)

Combined Federal Campaign #10201

Please credit OMB Watch when redistributing this material.