**Obama/McChrystal:** Conflicts between military commanders and presidents are not a new phenomenon in the history of the United States. During the Civil War, several generals publicly clashed with President Lincoln. The most notable, of course, was Gen. George B. McClellan, who went on to oppose Lincoln for reelection in 1864. The public disagreements between Gen. MacArthur and President Truman are the stuff of legend, as are the protestations of Gen. Patton during World War II.

In all of these cases, the general was relieved of command. That is the prerogative of the commander in chief. But it is also the right — and obligation — of a commander in the field to aggressively support the strategy that they believe will accomplish the mission that they have been assigned, with the least loss of American blood and treasure as possible.

The president fired Army Gen. David McKiernan and replaced him with Gen. McChrystal. The president laid out a mission and its objectives in March and asked the general to come up with a strategy to accomplish that. McChrystal did so, and is now under criticism for the recommendation he proffered at the president's request.

President Obama has come under criticism within his party and support base over his Afghanistan policy announced in March. It now seems that he is going to pivot on that policy. Rather than do so directly, it appears as though he may use McChrystal's proposal as a scapegoat to cover his own indecision about the best course in this war.

The skills and personality required to be a politician in a democracy are very different from those required to be a commander in the military. Those personalities have often come into conflict over centuries of war and politics. Our system, with a civilian commander in chief setting policy for the military chain of command, while not perfect, is still the best system out there. But it doesn't mean that the two will never conflict.

That said, I have been very clear that the situation in Afghanistan is extremely challenging and the solutions are far from obvious. But the president needs to decide on a mission objective and then fully implement the policy to accomplish that objective to achieve the desired end state. He has not done so. This vacillation, indecision, and weakness merely encourages our enemies and troubles our friends around the world.

**Health Care Update:** Democrats in both Houses continue to debate among themselves over this issue and continue to be uninterested in talking to, or compromising with Republicans because such a compromise would necessitate giving up on socialized medicine. That being said, here is what I believe their strategy on health care is:

The Senate Finance committee will vote next week on the Baucus bill you have heard so much

about. But that will not be the final Senate bill. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will have their own version. They hope to get 60 votes in the Senate on whatever bill emerges and then probably send that bill to the House for an up or down vote. That is their "plan A." But, if they can't get the required 60 votes in the Senate, the will go to "plan B." Plan B involves using a Congressional process called "reconciliation." If they use "reconciliation, " then they only need 50 votes in the Senate (plus Vice President Biden) to pass it. A reconciliation process would start in the House and then move to the Senate. The bill would go through the House Budget Committee of which I am a member of. This is "plan B" because reconciliation is more restrictive than a general bill. There are some things you can do and some you can't when using this process. Both the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts were done using such a process. The reason those tax cuts sunset next year is because reconciliation would not allow them to go on over 10 years.

I expect the Senate to determine by the end of the month whether they can get 60 votes or not. Either way, the bill then moves to the House in November. They clearly want to try and pass this by Thanksgiving.

Hopefully we can stop them from killing more jobs and making the economy even worse than they already have.

**More of my bills: Here are 2 more things I am working on:**

***Put Your Money Where Your Mouth is:*** This is a bill I first introduced last Congress. A number of very wealthy individuals and Hollywood luminaries have publicly commented on how they would be willing to pay more taxes to fund various new and expanded government programs. I think that's great. They should do that. Just don't use the tax code to make the rest of us support their pet projects.

In spite of all of their public statements, I am not aware of a single one of these individuals who has voluntarily contributed additional taxes to show their commitment to their words. Maybe that 's because they don't know how to do it? Perhaps it is too hard to figure out? Well, this bill would remedy that problem. It would simply add a line to the end of your tax return to enable anyone to pay more tax money than what is due if they choose to do so. This bill would make it so simple a caveman could do it. (Do I have to send a royalty to GEICO for that??)

Anyway, this bill would make it very easy for all of those actors, Congressmen, and various others who believe that taxes should be raised, to lead by example and pay more now! In other words, to put their money where their mouth is.

Interestingly, no Member of Congress who supports tax increases has cosponsored this bill. When similar bills were passed in the States of Oklahoma and Massachusetts, the amount of money raised was in the hundreds of dollars. Not hundreds of thousands. Hundreds.

***Bear Bill:*** This is another bill from last Congress that I have reintroduced with Raul Grijalva (D-AZ). Some far eastern cultures use bear gall bladders and bear paws for ritual worship. As a result, bears are being killed all around the United States simply for their gall bladders, which

are then shipped to another state, and then out of the country. This bill would make it a federal crime to transport bear gall bladders or paws across state lines. The idea here is to create a new enforcement mechanism to stop this disgusting and inhumane practice. As many of you know, I am an animal person and believe that the humane treatment of animals is an essential part of being a civilized society. Wherever animal abuse is accepted, human abuse is not far behind.

Last year, we were unable to get this bill passed out of the Natural Resources Committee, but we are hopeful that we will have more success this year.

Until next time, I remain respectfully,