

# Wrapping up 2010

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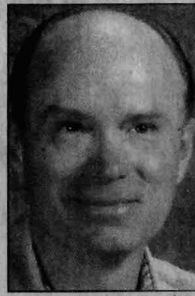
The year 2011 is upon us whether we like it or not. Let's hope the coming year is a bit less politically contentious than 2010, although the likelihood of that has about the same chance as me waking up tomorrow with a full head of hair.

Before we put 2010 too far in the rear view mirror, it might be enlightening to look at some year-end polls. In late December, for example, Politifact.com published its "Lie of the Year" awards. Readers voted the following as the top four, a list that coincided with Politifact's editor's picks: 1) ObamaCare is a government takeover of health care. — Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio and others; 2) The president of the United States will be taking a trip over to India that is expected to cost the taxpayers \$200 million a day." — Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-MN; 3) The stimulus has not created one private sector job. — Governor Rick Scott, R-Fla., and others; and 4) 94 percent of small businesses will face higher taxes under the Democrats' plan. — Rep. Randy Neugebauer, R-Texas, and others."

You may agree or not with these, but in 2011 Politifact will give you a way to track how our so-called leaders are keeping their promises. In addition to its Obamameter the site launched its GOP Pledge-O-Meter this week. Says Politifact: "The Pledge-O-Meter is a Republican version of our Obameter, our award-winning feature ... Like the Obameter it shows both trees and forest. You not only learn about individual promises but you get a broad picture of the Republican approach to governing — just as the Obameter reveals the Democrats' approach." You can find this new meter at <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/gop-pledge-o-meter/>.

Not to be outdone, FactCheck.org kept an eye on what politicians were saying while we were all busy singing "Deck The Halls" and trying to figure out what to do with our turkey leftovers.

FactCheck.org observed: "Potential Republican presidential aspirants are off and running, jockeying for exposure on the airwaves. Sarah Palin revisits her earlier claim of death panels in the health care law, attributing the term to a different board than she did before the law was passed. But the claim is just as false: The Medicare advisory board doesn't have the power to ration care, and its recommendations can be changed by Congress. Mike Huckabee maintains that he never supported a mandatory cap-and-trade system for reducing carbon emissions. But there's ample evidence in a 2007 speech in New Hampshire — where he referred to "true cap and trade" — that he was endorsing a mandatory program, and has only recently flip-flopped. Mitt Romney's attempts to differentiate his Massachusetts health care overhaul from the federal law enacted this year ring hollow. The laws have many similarities. And he's wrong when he says the federal law cuts half-a-trillion dollars from the private side of Medicare. Ron Paul's claim that the estate tax especially harms small and family-owned businesses misses the mark — farms and businesses accounted for less than 10 percent of taxable estates even before the Obama/GOP compromise took effect, and most of them weren't very small. Also, Paul's claim of double



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taxation is only partly true. Much of the value of big estates is capital gains that has never been taxed. Tim Pawlenty writes that since January 2008, private sector employment has declined while public sector employment has increased. But he's dead wrong about the public sector, where employment has gone down, not up. He used information that was months out of date and distorted by temporary Census Bureau hiring."

Not all the year-end polls were political, though. Several revealed things about ourselves. Leger Marketing, for example, asked adults how long they keep their holiday lights up. Most of us, 55 percent, keep our lights up for two weeks to a month after Christmas. Another 17 percent go two to five months. Apparently there's a group who like to be festive year round because 3 percent said they never take their lights down.

Harris Interactive surveyed people to find what holiday song they are sick and tired of by the end of the holiday season. "Jingle Bells" topped the list edging out "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer."

Then there was the survey by Sheraton Hotels that asked, "How honest are you on your social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter)?" It turns the majority of us "lie like a rug." Only 31 percent said they were totally honest, while 26 percent said they fibbed "a little." However 22 percent said they flat-out lie and another 21 percent said everything they post is a total fabrication.

Polls aside, my favorite story over the holidays came from Flint via

my brother, Big Rob. It seems that residents at the Centerview Apartments, a housing facility for seniors run by the Flint Housing Commission, were upset when they were told the new heat thermostats could not be turned above 73 degrees. Protests provided no satisfaction. So what did they do? Well, the wily seniors simply removed the thermostats, put them in their freezers, and then reinstalled them. Voila! The thermostats were tricked into thinking it was colder than it actually was and the seniors were warm and cozy. This goes to prove that there is no substitute for "experience."

And for the best year-end insight, I nominate Los Angeles Times columnist Doyle McManus who said: "Education is becoming the key discriminant in American life ... Increasingly, college-educated Americans live in a different country from those who never made it out of high school. Adults with college degrees have an unemployment rate of 5 percent, steady or rising incomes, relatively stable families (their divorce rate declined over the last 10 years), and few children out of wedlock. Adults without a high school education face an unemployment rate over 15 percent, declining incomes and a higher divorce rate, and they have lots of kids out of wedlock ... The best way for America to reclaim its self-image as a land of opportunity is to ensure that every kid has access to a decent education ... That's why bipartisan education reform isn't just about fixing schools; it's about repairing the fabric of American society."

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