**Spotlight on Wall Street**

- **President Obama has taken formidable, decisive steps to protect consumers.** The President wants an economy that provides opportunities for every American. That’s why he championed Wall Street reform that requires more rigorous disclosure and tightens oversight of the kind of speculation that caused the market meltdown. He signed bills that end the days of unfair credit card rate hikes and hidden fees, and ensure taxpayers will not have to bear the costs of Wall Street’s irresponsibility. These bills ended bailouts and constrain firms from being “Too Big To Fail” by restraining the growth of the largest financial firms, and restricting the riskiest financial activities.¹ The President also created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), dedicated to protecting consumers from unfair, abusive financial practices. And when Senate Republicans refused to confirm the new head of the CFPB, the President boldly made a recess appointment of Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray.²

  *******

- **Mitt Romney makes contentious statements, demonstrates Main Street disconnect.** “I like being able to fire people who provide services to me,”³ Romney said on Monday, ignoring a deluge of disparagement from both sides on the political spectrum. Romney’s tenure at Bain – a large venture capital firm – has come under attack, with discussion of companies his firm acquired and dismantled, laying off workers. Pressed whether concerns about Wall Street corruption and income disparity might have merit, Romney replied “you know, I think it’s about envy.”⁴ After President Obama circumvented filibustering Republican Senators, making a recess appointment of Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Romney said “This action represents Chicago-style politics at its worst.” He went on to call the new Bureau, formed to protect Americans from predatory lending and other illegal or unethical financial industry practices, “perhaps the most powerful and unaccountable bureaucracy in the history of our nation.”⁵ Making earlier comments on the movement to reform Wall Street, Romney called Occupy Wall Street “dangerous.”⁶ He also argued that “for an economy to thrive ... there are a lot of people who will suffer...”⁷ Romney, whose net worth is at between $190 million and $250 million⁸, worked for years in venture capital and has received most of his funding from the financial sector. In the 3rd quarter of last year, only 9% of Romney’s money came from small donors. Of the five companies with the most employees donating to Romney, all five are banks or financial service firms.⁹

- **Ron Paul condemns Wall Street, pays for it in fundraising.** “I’ve been condemning that 1 percent, because they’ve been ripping us off... But the people on Wall Street got the bailouts and you guys got stuck with the bills, and I think that’s where the problem is.”¹⁰ Paul’s rhetoric, as well as opposition to the TARP bailout among other initiatives, has won him few friends on Wall Street. At the end of 2011, Paul raised over $25 million. Paul failed to receive more than $6,000 in donations from employees at any major Wall Street firm by the end of the third quarter.¹¹ “We can’t go to Wall Street and get this money,” he explained.¹² Following Cordray’s recess appointment, Paul condemned the move, saying “the president is not a dictator or a king.”¹³

- **Newt Gingrich disparages Occupy Wall Street, echoes their message to slam Romney.** “...The Occupy movement starts with the premise that we all owe them everything,” Gingrich asserted last year. “Go get a job, right after you take a bath”¹⁴ After Gingrich’s embarrassing ⁴¹⁵ place finish in the New Hampshire Primary, the themes of “Occupy” became an effective tool to attack current front-runner Romney. “Rich people figuring out clever, legal ways to loot a company”¹⁶ was Gingrich’s description of Romney’s business background. “It’s legitimate to ask the question – and this is the whole Wall Street problem – how come the big boys made a lot of money and [others] went broke?”¹⁷ This attack came on the heels of news that Gingrich would not be disclosing the details of his firm’s $1.6 million eight year contract with Freddie Mac. “I’m not certain that I want the government micromanaging the financial sector,” Gingrich said when asked about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.¹⁸

---

¹ Wall Street Reform, White House Blog.
² Obama Appoints Richard Cordray to Head Consumer Watchdog Bureau, Washington Post, 1/4/2012
³ The Real Problem With Romney’s ‘Fire People’ Gaffe, Yahoo Finance, 1/10/2012
⁴ Romney: Questions about Wall Street and inequality are driven by ‘envy’, Washington Post, 1/11/2012
⁵ Obama names Cordray top consumer watchdog, The Columbus Dispatch, 1/5/2012
⁷ ‘King of Bain’: How Newt’s Super PAC Film Could Trip Up Romney, Rolling Stone, 1/12/2012
⁸ The net worth of GOP presidential contenders, MSNBC, 10/11/2011
⁹ Wall Street’s Bad Romance With Romney, The Nation, 12/29/2011
¹⁰ Ron Paul Reaches Out to the Youth of Occupy Wall Street, Reason, 1/4/2012
¹¹ Ron Paul 2012: Wall Street Won’t Give me Money, International Business Times, 1/10/2012
¹² Ibid
¹³ Ron Paul on Cordray appointment: ‘The president is not a dictator or a king’, Washington Post, 1/5/2012
¹⁴ Newt Gingrich to Occupiers: Take a Bath and Go Get a Job!, Mother Jones, 11/19/2011
¹⁵ Romney Problem Is the Bain of Wall Street, Wall Street Journal, 1/12/2012
¹⁶ Newt Gingrich: I’m targeting specific Bain deals, Politico, 1/12/12
¹⁷ Opinion: Reflections from the campaign trail, The Tech, 1/11/2012
Santorum defends Romney, accuses rivals of anti-capitalism. “It’s this hostile rhetoric, which unfortunately - I don’t want to stand here and be a defender of Mitt Romney, but unfortunately even some in our party now, even some running for president will engage in with respect to capitalism,” Santorum recently found himself in the midst of his own controversy over class issues, after singling out black Americans in a statement about welfare. “I don’t want to make black people’s lives better by giving them somebody else’s money; I want to give them the opportunity to go out and earn the money” Santorum said, though the majority of welfare earners in the United States are white. Santorum, while the poorest of the Republican nominees, recently joined the ranks of U.S. millionaires after post-Senate consulting work. Following President Obama’s recess appointment of Richard Cordray, Santorum said that “If I were a leader in the U.S. Senate, I would shut the body down...until he withdrew it.”

NEA BELIEVES...

Three years after the financial meltdown and a taxpayer bailout, Wall Street is booming with record profits and bonuses. At the same time Main Street is still suffering as families continue to struggle to find work and feed their children. It is fair and practical to ask Wall Street to do more to aid economic recovery. Wall Street should not be given a free pass to continue to engage in risky trading that has created unstable, volatile markets.

18 Santorum: Attacks on Romney are attacks on capitalism, MSNBC, 1/12/2012
19 Commentary: Santorum stumbles over food stamps stereotype, The Macon Telegraph, 1/12/2012
20 Santorum Becomes Millionaire in Six Years After U.S. Senate Loss, Bloomberg, 1/11/2012
21 Santorum event spills outside, Capitol Confidential, 1/6/2012