

Holiday Guilt: Have a Terrible (as in Wonderful) Time!

This Memorial Day is shaping up to be one of the worst (i.e. best) ever for Washington, D.C., a.k.a. the City of The Worried Well. D.C. does very, very well when times are good, but we shine (as in prosper and grow) when there are problems (real or imagined) in the nation and the world. This is especially true for our political/legal/media class who thrive on problems, real or imagined.

And things have never been better, as in worse. Consider:

Traffic planners say this may be the worst (meaning best for us) traffic weekend in a long time. They are predicting that jillions of cars will be on the road, and that there will be gridlock everywhere. This will especially please media outlets who, when short on news (or sometimes even when not), count on horrible traffic and extreme weather conditions to fill air time and column inches.

Weather persons are predicting an unusually hot weekend — even for the end of May — for DC which, after all, was built on a sweltering swamp. Hot means miserable and miserable means good (again for those of us left behind to report the news from air-conditioned offices).

The forecast for a 90 to 95 degree Memorial Day weekend is the result of our early spring, and therefore additional proof that global warming (and the good news is it is our, as in your, fault) is real, and getting worse each year. This is doubly bad (meaning good to us) because people who use the wrong kind of deodorant can (as they should) feel guilty. And self-styled champions of the environment (the media, politicians, lawyers and lobbyists) can continue the good fight against people who say ice ages and warming periods are normal. As long as there is a problem and impending doom, real, imagined or manufactured, both sides make a good living.

Fears that oil would hit \$400 a barrel (as previously predicted) have faded. For now. In fact national gasoline prices have dropped about a nickel a gallon in recent weeks — assuming you can find the one pump station where the experts measure the average. The fact that gasoline prices are down is bad for the gloom and doom set. But the offsetting good (therefore bad) news is that because of slightly lower gasoline prices, people who thought they couldn't afford to take a long-weekend trip will now be able to do so, even though they probably still can't afford it. It's a lose-lose proposition all around which, for us here in the woe-is-me-city, is good.

Just before the holiday weekend, the Congressional Budget Office issued a report: Economic Effects of Reducing the Fiscal Restraint That Is Scheduled to Occur in 2013. Sounds bad, right? Which is good. My take away from this document is depressing (which is good) because it seems as if we keep on doing what we are doing: "The revenues collected by the federal government will fall far short of federal spending." I don't fully understand it, but that seems to be horrible which translates to actually wonderful. More problems!

To further put the evil eye on the bluebird of happiness, a prestigious D.C. area law firm, Tully Rinckey PLLC, issued a warning to holiday-minded federal workers. It was aimed at people who, today, plan to sneak out of the office to beat traffic headed for the bay, ocean or mountains. Hah!

Lest your holiday begin early, the law firm reminds that "federal employees hoping to get a jump on their long weekend could end up facing heat if they skip out of the office early and fudge their time cards to falsely reflect a full day of work." The firm pointed out a recent case in which a Social Security employee was found guilty of leaving work early (usually less than 5 minutes each time) 22 times. The penalty proposed: a 14-day suspension. The good news...

Even if you have a good car, can afford the gas, have a place to go and AC to fight off the predicted oppressive heat you can still feel guilty, maybe frightened, if you sneak away 5 minutes early.

Here's hoping you have a terrible (as in great) long weekend. And if you have a friend who is happy with life in general and looking forward to the holiday please show them this. Hopefully it will bring him/her down with the rest of us smart folks who really know what's going on!