

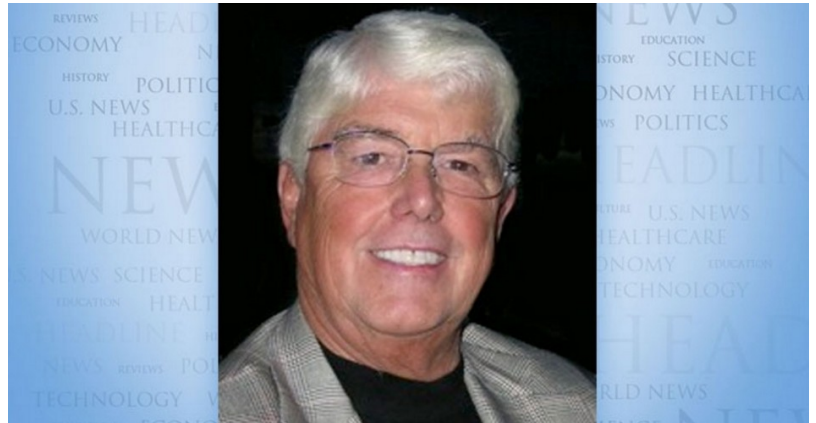


Written by [Wallis W. Wood](#) on October 12, 2012

Could Big Bird Decide This Year's Election?

Is it remotely possible that the 2012 presidential election will be decided by an eight-foot-tall, bright yellow bird?

I know it sounds ridiculous. But the liberal cognoscenti in this country are going absolutely gaga over Mitt Romney's promise during last week's presidential debate that he would end government funding of the Public Broadcasting System. Oh, the horror of it! Imagine: no more "Sesame Street" to entertain the little tykes.



CNN's Soledad O'Brien said, "... my son was devastated when he heard that Big Bird might be killed." And where did he get such an absurd idea? By any chance, was it from his momma?

The Barack Obama campaign was quick to seize on what it perceived as a major Republican gaffe. Within hours, it had a new commercial on the air with a narrator using his most menacing voice to warn, "Big, yellow, a menace to our economy. Mitt Romney knows it's not Wall Street you have to worry about, it's 'Sesame Street.'"

[Romney's remarks](#) followed one of the most powerful points he made in the debate. He said that when he is president, he will use a very simple test to determine which government programs should be allowed to continue: "Is the program so critical it's worth borrowing money from China to pay for it?"

And then he said, in what appeared to be a spontaneous ad-lib but was probably carefully rehearsed: "I'm sorry, Jim [Lehrer], I'm going to stop the subsidy to PBS."

He added, almost regretfully: "I like PBS. I love Big Bird. I actually like you, too. But I'm not going to — I'm not going to keep on spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for it."

I thought it was a masterful moment. But liberals think Romney gave them a big club they can use to smack him upside the head. Actually, I suspect that the vast majority of wage-earning, taxpaying Americans who were watching the debate loved what Romney had to say.

By the way, don't spend a second worrying about the future of Big Bird — or any other Sesame Street character, for that matter. The nonprofit organization that produces the show and owns the licensing rights to all of the characters in it is [rolling in the dough](#). Sesame Workshop raked in a staggering \$46.9 million last year for licensing rights.

In fiscal year 2011 financial statements, Sesame Workshop reported that it owned assets totaling \$289 million, including some \$29 million in cash and "cash equivalents" and \$121 million in "investments." Oh, and the total operating revenue last year of Sesame Workshop and its nonprofit and for-profit subsidiaries was \$134 million.

Yet Obama thinks these folks need to be subsidized with some of your tax dollars. Give me a break. If one of Bain Capital's businesses were doing this well and got this much government support, you know the Democrats would be screaming in outrage.

Tell your children and grandchildren not to worry about Big Bird or any of the other "Sesame Street"



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characters. They're going to be just fine; I promise.

It doesn't look as though Sesamegate is going to hurt the Romney campaign, either. The most recent post-debate polls show him to be doing better than his most ardent supporters hoped.

An [Oct. 4-5 Gallup poll](#) found that Americans believe Romney won the first debate by a margin of 72 percent to 20 percent. That is the largest margin in Gallup history. The previous record was set in 1992, when Bill Clinton beat George H.W. Bush by 42 percentage points.

Prior to the debate, Gallop showed Obama leading Romney nationally by 5 percentage points. Now, Gallop reports the race is tied at 47 percent to 47 percent.

The [Pew Research Center](#) reported an even bigger swing. In mid-September, Pew reported that among likely voters Obama was ahead of Romney by 8 percentage points. Pew says Romney now leads by 4 percentage points, 49 percent to 45 percent, among likely voters.

I'd love to see a left-right debate about subsidizing Big Bird. Wouldn't you? It's pretty obvious to me that "Sesame Street" is proof of what we've said all along: The free market works. It's made Big Bird's company worth tens of millions of dollars.

At the heart of this debate is one simple truism: The liberal elites demand we all fund public broadcasting because they are convinced that *they know better than we do what is good for us*.

Isn't that really what it's all about? They are afraid that if we're allowed to keep more of our own money and spend it the way we want, government won't have enough money to fund all of their pet programs.

Heck, Uncle Sam is already borrowing 30 cents of every dollar he spends, which is how we've racked up a national debt of more than \$16 trillion.

Meanwhile, the free market pours tens of millions of dollars into Sesame Workshop every year. Talk about a dramatic difference!

So by all means, let the debate continue. I don't have any doubt which side will win this one.

Until next time, keep some powder dry.

Chip Wood was the first news editor of *The Review of the News* and also wrote for *American Opinion*, our two predecessor publications. He is now the geopolitical editor of *Personal Liberty Digest*, where his *Straight Talk* column appears weekly. This article first appeared in [PersonalLiberty.com](#) and has been reprinted with permission.



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