

I'm with Stupid

The trouble with the Affordable Care Act—assuming *arguendo* that it has any shortcomings to begin with—is that not enough Americans are like Harry Reid's grandkids. Those bright young sparks can “handle everything so easy on the Internet,” the Senate majority leader said back in March, by way of explaining the slow pace of enrollment in Obamacare. Unfortunately, other “people are not educated on how to use the Internet,” hence the slow rate of people signing up. (Reid took care not to blame-shift; this was “no fault of the Internet,” he noted.)

When he said “people” couldn't use the Internet, he didn't mean the people who built a healthcare.gov website that crashed more often than a car test dummy. He meant the people who were trying to access it.

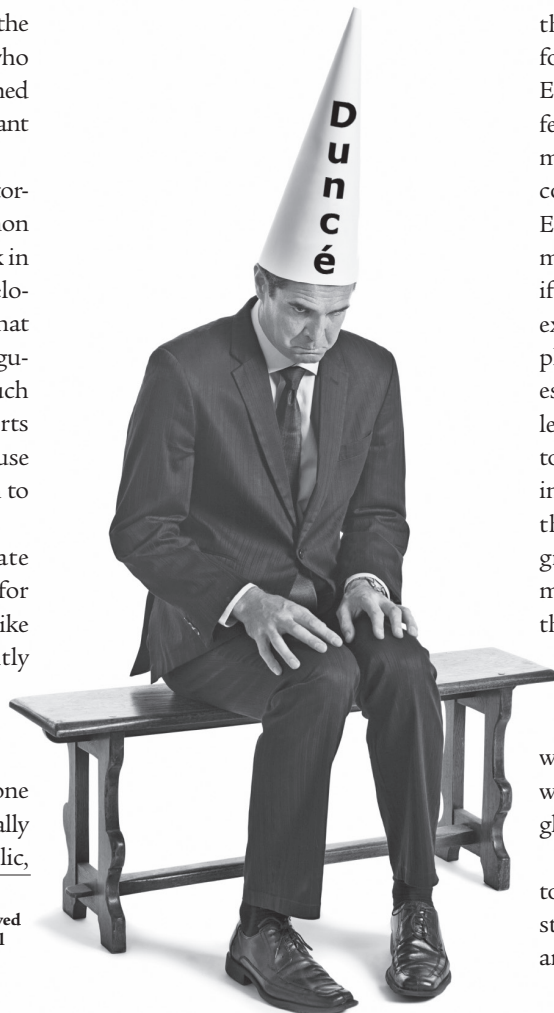
Insulting the intelligence of the electorate may seem impolitic, but it is a common theme among public officials. Also back in March, a Maryland state legislator, Delores Kelly of Baltimore County, argued that it would be “unconscionable” not to regulate the fares of ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft. “We regulate all sorts of things,” said Delegate Kelly, “because the general public is not smart enough to know when they are being fleeced.”

Government does indeed regulate all sorts of things—restaurant signs, for instance. In Norfolk, Va., the sign for Mike Imprevento's restaurant, Luce, recently got him in hot water with the city's Design Review Committee. Committee members resented its lack of a diacritical mark over the ‘e’. Besides, one member griped, it just wasn't “aesthetically pleasing.” Luckily for the imbecile public,

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Norfolk has sharp-eyed planners on the prowl for such things. Imagine the horror of making reservations at what you think is a great new Italian joint, only to discover upon arrival that the eatery's sign lacks a diacritical mark. Discover? Heck, you might not even notice it, you big dummy. Without the Design Review Committee to notice it for you, where would you be?

Not all of America's betters try to shame the public for being such lunkheads. After his party suffered giant losses at the polls in 2010, President Obama admitted he bore some small responsibility. “Sometimes



I fault myself for not having been able to make the case more clearly to the country,” he said. That's a Harvard man for you: modest as the day is long. If only he had been able to dumb himself down enough—speak slowly enough, use small enough words—for the average meathead to understand. But as one of his longtime advisers, Valerie Jarrett, once explained, Obama is “just too talented to do what ordinary people do.”

He might not be able to communicate with stupid people like us, but he has subordinates who can. For instance, the Department of Agriculture is spending almost \$5 million to encourage college students to “Get fruved!” “Fruved,” you see, is eating fruits and vegetables. It's a word mashup! Get it? No, you probably can't.

If only the president could lower himself to our level, then perhaps he could explain why the Food and Drug Administration has not approved any new sunscreen ingredients since 1999, even though several of them have been used for years in that Shangri-la of laissez-faire, Europe. Maybe he could explain why one federal agency, the Labor Department, is mandating that companies with federal contracts do what another agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, usually forbids: ask employees if they are disabled. And maybe he could explain why, in the name of saving the planet, vast swaths of North Carolina forest are being clear-cut to make wood pellets for use in Britain, which is supposed to almost triple its renewable-energy use in the next six years. The *Daily Mail* reports that British subjects are paying hefty green-energy subsidies to have a million metric tons of pellets a year shipped across the ocean so they can be burned at the

Drax power station in Yorkshire. The whole process generates 20 percent more carbon dioxide than burning coal would, and twice as much as burning gas would. Yet that is supposed to help stem global warming, somehow.

No doubt all those policies make sense to people who are smart enough to understand. But I guess we're not such folks, are we? R