

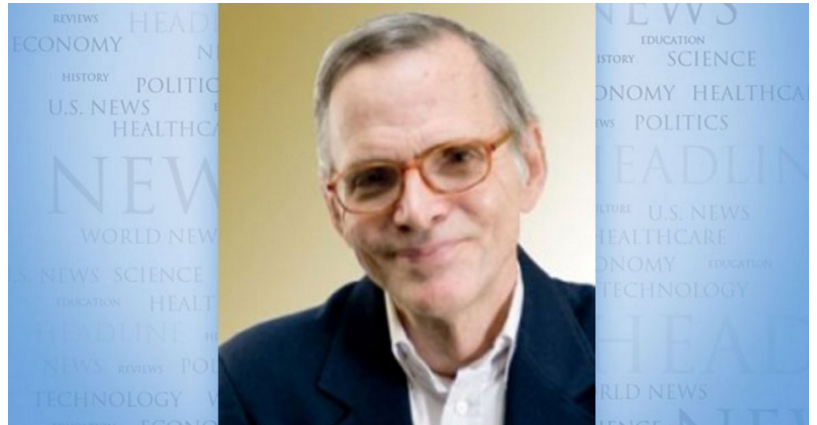


Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 31, 2014

## Hindsight Is Seldom 20/20

Perhaps it should be in the Constitution. Call it the Hindsight Amendment. Whenever a politician discovers that a favored bill isn't working out and has become unpopular, he or she resorts to the hindsight argument. "Hindsight is always 20/20."

Really? Then why do we have so many instances of rulers and nations failing to learn from history? George Bush and his gang of neocon desktop warriors insisted on a war with Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction." When "Operation Iraqi Freedom" resulted in a finding of no such weapons, there was a ready defense at hand. "Hindsight is 20/20." In other words, we had to invade the country to find out if the ostensible cause for the invasion was really there. It is the war hawk version of former speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's explanation that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, aka "ObamaCare," had to be passed before we could know what was in it.



Or consider another achievement of the George W. Bush administration, the Prescription Drug Benefit add-on to Medicare. It was Republicans who passed the biggest expansion of the welfare state since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. And Republicans had to defend it. Pity poor Judd Gregg, then the senior U.S. senator from New Hampshire with a reputation as one of the Grand Old Party's leading fiscal conservatives and deficit hawks. Shortly after the prescription drug bill was passed, Gregg accepted an invitation to appear on *This Week*, the ABC Sunday morning news show hosted by George Stephanopoulos. When Stephanopoulos asked about the budget-busting implications of the bill, Gregg reverted to his fiscal conservative posture and suggested the measure might be trimmed modestly by eliminating coverage for some of the "exotic drugs."

"Exotic drugs?" asked the ever-alert host.

Well, Gregg explained, things like Viagra. Whereupon Stephanopoulos played a clip of President Bush telling a group of senior citizens that if Congress tried to repeal *any* of the benefits in the legislation, he, George W. Bush, would veto that repeal. Apparently, Gregg had not understood the national security implications of Viagra. In his famous kitchen debate with Nikita Khrushchev, then-Vice President Richard Nixon conceded that the Soviet Union might be ahead of the United States in rocketry, but the United States was ahead in the production of color television. Bush might have said that the bloodthirsty terrorists of radical Islam may have a numerical advantage over the free world, but we have Viagra.



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Now New Hampshire's current senior senator, Democrat Jeanne Shaheen, has been attempting of late to distance herself from the albatross known as "ObamaCare." Not that she is proposing repeal of any of its provisions. She is much too cautious a politician for that. She is merely saying she didn't write it. With a bit more candor, she might also have said she did not read it, no doubt following Speaker Pelosi's advice to pass the bill so that lawmakers and others might then discover what was in it. "I would've designed it differently had I been designing it," Shaheen [said recently](#). "I wasn't the person who was writing the law. Hindsight is 20/20," she explained.

Well, as the former defense chief Donald Rumsfeld said, there are the "unknown unknowns." And you legislate with the ignorance you have, not with the knowledge you will later discover when hindsight is 20/20. The individual mandate, the contraceptive mandate, really, who knew? Don't blame your Congress member, he or she is only a lawmaker.

Hillary Clinton, when campaigning for president in 2007 and 2008, was pressed on whether she had read a certain intelligence report in 2002 that had cast doubt on the administration line on Iraq. "I was briefed on it," she explained. She hadn't written the intelligence report. She hadn't even read it. She was "briefed" on it. Then she voted to authorize the president to take military action against Iraq.

Last week New Hampshire's junior senator, Republican Kelly Ayotte, was in Kiev, talking up the U.S. sanctions against Russia over the annexation of Crimea. What, one wonders, has she read on the subject? How well has she been "briefed" on it? Does it matter? In the end, she can always say "Hindsight is 20/20." Perhaps that will be a warning to voters to choose next time leaders with a little foresight.



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