



Written by [Staff](#) on December 21, 2015

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Inside Track

FDA Approves Genetically Engineered Salmon



On November 19, the Food and Drug Administration approved genetically modified salmon as safe for human consumption, marking the first time that a genetically altered animal has been approved. The *New York Times* reported November 19 that the FDA's approval of the AquaAdvantage genetically modified salmon "caps a long struggle for AquaBounty Technologies, a small company that first approached the FDA about approval in the 1990s."

The *Times* reported that the approved salmon "contains a growth hormone gene from the Chinook salmon and a genetic switch from the ocean pout, an eel-like creature, that keeps the transplanted gene continuously active, whereas the salmon's own growth hormone gene is active only parts of the year."

The approval came even as two million people filed public comments with the FDA in opposition to the decision, according to a November 19 press release by the Center for Food Safety. Environmental groups opposed the salmon, arguing that wild salmon populations could be negatively impacted if the fish were to escape into oceans and rivers.

AquaBounty claims that nearly 99 percent of its AquaAdvantage salmon are sterile females that could not breed with wild fish. However, the rapid growth rate of the GM salmon raises the possibility of the fish outcompeting wild salmon for food, whether or not any interbreeding could occur. To help alleviate this concern, AquaBounty says it is marketing its fish to be raised in land-based aquaculture farms to limit the chance fish of escaping into the wild.

Major retailers are rejecting the bioengineered fish. Red Lobster announced in the *Dallas Morning News* that it will not be selling the GMO salmon, and Costco Wholesale, the third largest retailer in the United States, has committed to not selling the genetically modified salmon. Costco is joined by more than 60 supermarket chains, including Kroger, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods.

The Center for Food Safety has announced plans to sue the FDA in coordination with other plaintiffs to block the agency's approval for the sale and consumption of the salmon.

By Raven Clabough



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Indian Schools Prove Uncle Sam Should Be Expelled From Education



For at least the last half-century, progressives have championed and achieved greater federal spending on and involvement in education; and during that entire time, public-school educational outcomes have steadily worsened. No one should be surprised by the outcomes, for as *Politico* reported November 25, the one domestic school system run entirely by the federal government “remains arguably the worst school system in the United States, a disgrace the government has known about for eight decades and never successfully reformed.”

The school system in question is the one operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), a division of the Department of the Interior. BIE’s network consists of 183 schools for Native American children across reservations in 23 states.

“The 48,000 students unfortunate enough to attend BIE schools,” wrote Maggie Severns for *Politico*, “have some of the lowest test scores and graduation rates in the country — even as the education they’re getting is among the nation’s most expensive: At \$15,000 per pupil, the system costs 56 percent more than the national average.”

In 2013, for instance, just five percent of BIE students were able to perform mathematics at grade level. Only 53 percent of BIE students graduate from high school; the national public-school graduation rate is 81 percent. “In 2011, when the latest national assessment was taken for which BIE data is available, BIE students performed worse than every major urban district in the country except Detroit,” noted Severns.

Much of this can be laid at the feet of socialism, which never succeeds in providing high-quality goods and services at low prices regardless of how often it is supposedly reformed. Some is the result of politics and bureaucratic infighting. The rest is attributable to the federal government’s legacy of mistreatment of the American Indians.

BIE is a flop when it comes to educating Indians, and it is instructive as further evidence that federal involvement in education is both costly and counterproductive. For the sake of the Indians and all other Americans, let’s expel Uncle Sam from the schools altogether.



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By Michael Tennant

Windows 10 Is Malware; Deletes Users' Programs



It seems that every new update brings the newest iteration of Windows increasingly closer to giving Microsoft total control over the way users can operate their own computers. The most recent update makes that abundantly clear.

While computer users typically think of “malware” as applying to viruses, it unfortunately fits Windows 10 very well. What else do you call an operating system that reports back to its developers, supplying them with personally identifiable information about you, including your name, e-mail address, postal address, phone number, passwords, password hints, age, and sex, as well as your browsing history, address book, calendar, the contents of your e-mails, and access to all your files including pictures, videos, documents, and anything else stored on your hard drive? What about an operating system that while doing all that hides updates from you, will not provide you information about them, and installs them even when you have told it not to? What about that same operating system being designed in such a way that you cannot even turn off these settings?

The Microsoft Services Agreement, which consumers must agree to before using Microsoft products, gives the software empire permission to not only install whatever software it chooses on your computer, but also to *delete* whatever software it chooses from your computer. Microsoft announced its Windows 10 November update with great fanfare. What the company did not tell users was that the update would give Microsoft the ability to reach into their computers and remove software that the company deemed either unstable (based on its own criteria) or pirated (based on its own assumptions). Just whose computer is it, anyway?

All the recent heavy-handedness from Microsoft has many computer users seeking other operating systems. Many are looking to Apple and the Mac OS. Others who want more freedom and control over their computers are looking increasingly to one of the many distributions of Linux.

By C. Mitchell Shaw



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Taxpayers Subsidizing Peanut Glut to the Tune of \$2 Billion



Two billion dollars may be peanuts to Uncle Sam, but to taxpayers that's real money — money they're going to have to shell out over the next three years to peanut farmers who have overproduced.

"Peanut growers in states including Georgia and Alabama boosted sowing acreage by a fifth this spring and now are wrapping up harvesting their 3.1-million-ton crop, the second-largest ever, even as prices plumb seven-year lows," reported Reuters on November 23.

Peanut farmers can profit from such overproduction in two ways. First, under the 2014 Farm Bill, the federal government will pay them most of the difference between a statutory "reference price" and the actual market price. Second, peanut farmers can profit from overproduction via a loan-guarantee program enacted as part of the 2002 Farm Bill. At harvest, a farmer can take out a loan on his crop at a specified rate. The farmer may repay the loan plus interest at any time during the next nine months that the weekly posted price for peanuts as determined by the USDA is at or above the loan rate.

Reuters found that the USDA now has 145,000 tons of forfeited peanuts from last year's crop in storage — "enough to satisfy the average annual consumption of over 20 million Americans." Furthermore, "As peanut carryover inventories are forecast to hit a record of 1.4 million tons by end-July 2016 and as loans begin to come due next summer, farmers are expected to fork over more peanuts to the USDA."

The problem for both the government and producers is what to do with the peanut glut. There doesn't appear to be much room for growth in U.S. peanut consumption; Bob Parker, president and chief executive officer of the National Peanut Board, told Reuters that peanut butter is already a staple in 94 percent of American homes. The only real option, therefore, is to export the nuts. Parker said he's been on two trade missions to China, a market over eight times the size of the U.S. market.

By Michael Tennant

NSA Documents: E-mail Surveillance Continues With Less Oversight



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In 2013, the NSA admitted that it previously had a program that captured information about citizens' e-mails, but claimed it had discontinued the program in 2011. Now, newly released documents show that — par for the course — the agency was telling half the truth. The same surveillance has continued all along under a subsequent program.

As the *New York Times* reported November 20: “While that particular secret program stopped, newly disclosed documents show that the N.S.A. had found a way to create a functional equivalent. The shift has permitted the agency to continue analyzing social links revealed by Americans’ email patterns, but without collecting the data in bulk from American telecommunications companies — and with less oversight by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.”

The documents the *New York Times* received as a result of a FOIA lawsuit included a report that was highly redacted. The portions not redacted show that the NSA found “two other legal ways to get” the data it wanted about Americans’ e-mails.

As the *Times* reported, “One was the collection of bulk data that had been gathered in other countries, where the N.S.A.’s activities are largely not subject to regulation by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and oversight by the intelligence court.... The other replacement source for the data was collection under the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, which permits warrantless surveillance on domestic soil that targets specific noncitizens abroad, including their new or stored emails to or from Americans.”

Concerned Americans need to demand real reform by requiring that the apparatus and agencies that have been built up around the surveillance culture are dismantled and not allowed to be rebuilt. It is time to stop trading liberty for security. And it is time to stop bargaining for either with liars.

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