



We are now 13 days into a government shutdown in the United States. It is hard to imagine that any group has the power to simply "shut down" governmental operations. Worse yet, it is even harder to imagine that any group can do so while pushing an agenda counter to legislation that has already passed into law. But I digress.

Politics in the United States have reached new levels for acrimony, disrespect, and a general disdain for the desires of the constituency. What is most annoying - and, frankly, downright disgusting - is how legislators can claim to quote the values of the Constitution while failing to provide context in the process. But as we all know, words without context bear greater power for instilling fear - and fear is a great motivator.

So while we all wait to see if the country will go back online, it's time for Episode 77 of the Rhubarb Report.

1. If you have lived in Austin over the past decade, you have rarely had the opportunity to watch the wet stuff (otherwise commonly known as "rain") fall from the sky. **Drought status in central Texas** has become a pretty significant issue. Imagine that the Highland Lakes are only 34% full these days. To put that in perspective, Lake Travis is considered full at 681 feet, and it is now at 622 feet. In 2011, inflows were the lowest in history at about 10 percent of average.

But when rain does fall, it often comes down in buckets, almost too much to handle at any one time. This past weekend, 6 to 12 inches fell at locations throughout central Texas. That is enough to bring on its share of flash flooding. It was the first time that Mother Nature has forced the cancellation of the last day of the Austin City Limits Music Festival.

Written by Allan Besselink  
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2. It is something that always bewilders people here: **Canadian Thanksgiving**. Yes, it is celebrated on Columbus Day, and yes, the traditions are pretty similar to those in the United States. I could definitely handle a day off and a turkey dinner with some Canadian football, but I guess I will just have to hold off until November.

To all my Canadian brethren, Happy Thanksgiving!

As a side thought: maybe we should be giving thanks for all that we have on a daily basis ...

3. In the "is the world ending?" category, the previously horribly under-coached University of Texas Longhorns pulled off a major upset in beating OU in the Red River Rivalry. But as much as I love a **UT win over OU**, my fear is that it will just prolong the current anguish of the football program. How so? I have no doubt that a win over Oklahoma will give coach Mack Brown another vote of confidence. A win could effectively cut him another 2 or 3 years of slack, leaving us with more time for the program to degrade further. By that time, the program may require a full resuscitation effort.

Of course, the other possibility is that Brown will realize that it is time to retire. Not only does he finally have another win against OU, but athletic director DeLoss Dodds will be retiring soon as well. Do what is right - for the University of Texas, for Longhorn Nation, and for the long-term success of the program. Fingers crossed.

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