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Commentary

Brightest Ideas of the Week

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WASHINGTON -

Smart people are everywhere and so are people who are full of common sense. That's why [The Washington Examiner](#) looks high and low, here and there, every week to bring readers the brightest ideas of the week just past. Got a suggestion? Send it to: threads@dcexaminer.com.

Brightest Light of the Week: [Jim Cramer](#), Host, Mad Money

Gas hits \$4-a-gallon and polls show three-fourths of Americans want to increase [U.S.](#) energy production. Always irrepressible Mad Money host Jim Cramer tells the Morning Joe Show on [MSNBC](#) that he "has a beach house right on the beach in [Ocean Grove](#) (NJ). I want a well right out in front."

Now that's stepping up for your country.

1| Show us the money. Want to know how much a school district in [Texas](#) spent last year on perks for administrators and teachers? Check out [TexasBudgetSource.com](#), a new web site by the [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#).

Details: TBS puts on one easy-to-use web site links to spending data and documents for governments at every level in the Lone Star State.

2| Wake up and smell the coffee, congressmen. Both [New York](#) senators – [Charles Schumer](#) and [Hillary Clinton](#) – and eight of the state's representatives - Clarke, Maloney, Nadler, Rangel, Serrano, Towns, Velazquez and Weiner – voted against the FISA compromise in Congress needed to keep U.S. intelligence agencies at full strength against terrorist threats.

Details: Observed [The New York Daily News](#): "Senators? Congresspersons? Hello? Where do you think you live? Look around. No.1 terrorist target, we said. This is New York. You know?"

3| Tell it to the judge. [U.S. District Judge Marsha Pechman](#) invited the public to tell her how to sentence Robert "King of Spam" Soloway for sending an estimated 90 million fraudulent emails.

Details: Soloway could get up to 20 years and a fine of \$500,000. So many people signed up that Pechman had to schedule a second day of testimony.

4| Promotion for Petraeus. The Senate confirmed [Gen. David Petraeus](#) as Commanding Officer of the [U.S. Central Command](#) on a 98-2 vote.

Details: The promotion puts the man who fathered "the surge" in [Iraq](#) that has turned a desperately bloody struggle into a magnificent advance for democracy in the [Middle East](#) in overall charge of the [U.S. military](#) in Iraq and [Afghanistan](#).

5| Let the people speak. Tax reform activists succeeded in getting more than 100,000 signatures required to put an initiative repealing the [Massachusetts](#) state income tax on the November ballot.

Details: If approved by voters, the measure would repeal the Bay State's taxes on wages, dividends, interest and capital gains. Nine other states presently have no income tax.

6| DCPS test scores headed up

[District of Columbia](#) Public Schools announced improvements last week in the city's worst-in-the-nation test scores. Reading scores were up 8 percent and math scores improved 11 percent last year.

Details: Although a majority of DCPS students are still not proficient in these basic academic skills, the higher test scores raised hopes that the school system is finally heading in the right direction.

7| Legal spirits on Sunday in [Virginia](#)

Cheers! A new Virginia state law will allow a larger number of state-run liquor stores to sell booze on Sunday.

Details: The state [Department of Alcohol Beverage Control](#) reported that sales were steady on the first Sunday as 36 liquor stores across the state, and customers seemed to be happy. Perhaps they were raising their glasses to free markets and the end of the state's antiquated blue laws.

8| District population increases

After years of population decline, the nation's capital is seeing more people moving into – instead of out of - the District, driven to moving closer to work by high suburban home prices and spiraling fuel costs.

Details: Although the increase last year was only about 2,500 people, that's still growth. And for a city with three quarters of the 800,000 people who once lived here 50 years ago, even a little growth is good news.

9| No place to text

[Maryland](#) prison officials trained three dogs to sniff out contraband cell phones, one of the first states to do so.

Details: The dogs' noses are so sharp, they can even ferret out SIMS cards stashed under mattresses or between the pages of books. Cell phones are forbidden in state prison because they allow inmates to set up drug deals while still behind bars or secretly communicate with fellow gang members on the outside.

10| Zimmerman may be coming back

[Barack Obama](#) will pick [Dick Cheney](#) as his running mate before the Nationals finish first in the [NL East](#), but hope stirred last week when hitting star [Ryan Zimmerman](#) showed up at batting practice.

Details: A return to the lineup for the third baseman, who has been on the DL since June, would certainly lighten things up for the struggling team, which has been plagued with injuries during its first season in its new stadium. A healthy Zimmerman could make the second half of the season something to watch for [Washington](#) fans.

Examiner