

Tom McClintock's Capitol Commentaries

August 2015, Issue Sixteen

After a rocky start, the Republican majorities in Congress are starting to deliver major results; among them, the first balanced budget since 2001 and the first international trade bill since 2007. True, much more could and should be done, but the overall direction is positive and encouraging. In this issue, I'd like to share with you my thoughts on these breakthroughs.

NEVADA COUNTY REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE DINNER GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA APRIL 11, 2015

First, to address the overall Republican angst, I offered these remarks at a recent Republican dinner:

Thank you for your invitation to speak today and thank you for everything you have done and that you are doing to save our country.

A lot of Republicans tell me that they're so disgusted with the direction of the country under Obama-- and with the Republicans' spineless response -- that they're ready to give up.

Abraham Lincoln confronted the same frustration when he reminded the Illinois Republican convention in 1858 that "from strange, discordant and even hostile elements we gathered from the four winds and formed and fought the battle through, under the constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud and pampered enemy." Sound familiar? And then he asked them, "Did we brave all THEN to falter NOW -- now, when that same enemy is wavering and disheveled and belligerent?"

Isn't that where we are today?

Think about the progress we've made. In the last six years, Republicans have won a NET gain of 67 U.S. House seats, 13 U.S. Senate seats, 11 U.S. governors and 913 state legislative seats. Today we have bigger majorities in both houses of Congress than at any time since 1928 and more legislatures and governors than at any time since 1920!

Think about it this way: the closer we get to the people, the better we do. Today Republicans hold 54 percent of the Senate, 58 percent of the House, 64 percent of the governors and 70 percent of the state legislatures.

The same is true even in California. Democrats might be strong at the top, but Republicans now outnumber Democrats 46.5 percent to 42 percent on city councils and 60 percent of California's county supervisors are

now Republicans.

Does this sound like the time to give up and drop out?

I know, I know: events in Washington have been disappointing. It looks like Republicans have backed off from key fights over fiscal policy, illegal immigration, government abuses and international affairs while Obama issues illegal executive orders with apparent impunity. And yes, I wish our leaders were more articulate and showed more backbone. I always have and probably always will.

But look around! The reason Obama has turned to illegal executive orders is because the American people have stopped his legislative agenda dead in its tracks by electing overwhelming Republican majorities in Congress. What's more, the courts are now stepping in to block him -- and the next President can rescind every one of his decrees on the afternoon of Inauguration Day.

Meanwhile, the key groups that supported Obama are now turning away from him: likely "millennial" voters now prefer Republicans, while Asian, African-American and Hispanic voters are leaving the Democrats after so many years of broken promises. We've seen this before -- in the months leading up to the Reagan landslide of 1980. And remember, those changes were dramatic and long-lasting.

So I ask again: "Did we brave all THEN to falter NOW?"

I believe we are now at the threshold of a major political realignment. Arthur Laffer has often pointed out that four years of Jimmy Carter produced eight years of Ronald Reagan, which means that eight years of Barack Obama should get us the second coming of Christ.

Clearly, this nation is going through an industrial-sized case of buyer's remorse. As Lincoln said, "The voters are everything. If

the voters get their backsides too close to the fire, they'll just have to sit on the blisters a while." It is a painful experience, but it is a learning experience, and they emerge from that experience sadder, wiser, and in time for the next election.

The Left consoles themselves in saying that the 2014 election was just an anomaly driven by low voter turnout, and that the presidential turnout in 2016 will wipe out those gains.

Maybe not. Sean Trende, the chief political analyst for Real Clear Politics, wrote a very revealing piece just after the election. He pulled apart the vote from every group and sub-group in the electorate. He noted that the difference between the 2012 and 2014 elections was a 6.5 point shift toward the Republicans. And yes, about two points of that 6.5 point shift was due to differences in voter turnout. But that leaves 4.5 points of shift that could reflect something much more profound. America is awakening.

Indeed, Trende estimated that if each demographic group had voted in 2012 as they voted in 2014 -- which adjusted for turnout differences -- Obama would have lost the popular vote and been crushed in the electoral college. The shift is that big.

With this realignment and our historic gains in the House and Senate also comes great frustration that things aren't changing faster.

But they ARE changing -- and in some very significant ways.

The United States Senate is once again deliberating. During the last session under Harry Reid, the House sent the Senate some 382 job-creating bills that the Senate simply sat on. They didn't pass them; didn't defeat them and send us their own ideas; they didn't amend them. They just ignored them.

Our system cannot operate like that.

continued, page 3

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

One of the strangest debates I've ever seen just played out in Congress over the Trade Promotion Authority – the most important free trade measure passed in over 20 years. Strange, because of the disinformation fed to conservative groups by liberals masquerading as conservatives. I feel so strongly about the importance of free trade to our economy that I delivered the Republican national radio address on the subject in May. Here is what I said on the House Floor in April at the beginning of the deliberations process, and my statement when it was finally adopted in June:

Mr. Speaker:

It's said that when the plan for the ancient city of Alexandria was presented to the great Alexander, his master builder pointed with pride to an ingenious way to honor the city's namesake. All of the city's water supply would be channeled to a great central fountain featuring a giant statue of Alexander, and then flow from it to the surrounding city.

When Alexander seemed unimpressed, his architect explained the symbolism: Water – the life's blood of the city – would flow from Alexander to Alexandria.

Alexander replied, "Water is NOT the life's blood of a city. COMMERCE is the life's blood of a city." The statue of Alexander was placed instead at the entrance to the great Port of Alexandria.

As it is with city states it is with nation states. Every nation that engages in trade prospers from it. Every nation that fails to trade, fails to prosper.

Today, international trade agreements are the means by which nations establish the terms of their trade. This often requires intricate negotiations with trading partners, and our trading partners must be confident that the United States is bargaining in good faith and that what is decided at the bargaining table will not be revoked or redefined at a congressional table.

The Constitution gives Congress the authority to regulate commerce with other nations. Congress thus has the final say over any trade agreement, but trading partners must have confidence that once the agreement has been reached, it represents the last best offer of both sides – a meeting of the minds that won't be repeatedly altered after the fact.

That is why, since the 1930's, Congress has chosen to exercise its responsibility by establishing the broad terms of the agreement it seeks and then giving explicit instructions

to our negotiators at the beginning of the process. IF, and only IF, these objectives are advanced in the agreement, Congress will then consider it as a whole package and either approve it or reject it.

That process is now called "Trade Promotion Authority." It has stood the test of time, has been used to the great benefit of our nation in the past and has never been controversial until now.

From the left, the opposition comes from protectionist special interests. They fail to learn from the painful lessons of history. Protectionism is the fastest way to destroy an economy, as this nation has learned repeatedly, including during the Jefferson administration and again in the Hoover administration.

From the right, opposition comes from mistrust of this President's judgment and competence, a mistrust I completely and unequivocally share.

It is precisely because of this mistrust that the Trade Promotion Authority sets forth some 150 objectives that must be advanced before Congress will even consider the resulting agreement. And once those objectives are attained, a majority of the Congress must still approve it.

This measure does not empower the President to do his own thing; it binds the President to faithfully execute the will of Congress.

Trade Promotion Authority simply continues a time-proven process through which Congress exercises its authority to regulate commerce at the beginning of negotiations, so trading partners can have a reasonable expectation that their painstaking negotiations, compromises and concessions won't be subsequently ripped asunder and reopened when Congress acts.

Indeed, the successful Base Realignment and Closure Commission process worked on exactly the same principle.

Let me repeat: this gives the President no new authority. It binds him to Congress' will at the outset of negotiations, and promises ONLY that IF the objectives set by Congress are advanced, will the Congress agree – NOT necessarily to approve the agreement – but to vote on it without opening new issues or causing unnecessary delays.

The statue at one of our greatest ports is not of a person but an ideal – liberty. It is freedom that produces prosperity – the free exchange of goods between people and between nations for their mutual betterment.

The greater the freedom, the greater the prosperity. Trade Promotion Authority is the means by which this freedom is advanced.

Freedom works. It is time we put it back to work.

And at the conclusion of the process, I issued this statement:

History's most consistent lesson is that the more a nation trades, the more it prospers. In any trade, both sides go away with something of greater value than they came with – or the trade doesn't take place.

International trade is made possible through trade agreements. But our country's authority to effectively negotiate them lapsed in 2007. Since then, over 100 international trade agreements have been reached among nations – not one of them involving the United States. Competitors like China trade and prosper while America fades away on the sidelines.

The Trade Promotion Authority is how we have negotiated trade agreements since the 1930's. Congress sets the conditions, the administration negotiates them and then brings the agreements back to Congress for approval.

Why this process? Because you can't buy a car negotiating with 535 salesmen. You negotiate with one salesman who has been given a list of conditions by management. He negotiates the best deal he can, and if he meets these conditions, he brings them back to management for approval. THAT is how TPA has worked, in one form or another, for eight decades.

Since these are not treaties, Congress can change the terms if they no longer suit us.

Just one agreement that we expect from TPA – the Trans-Pacific Partnership – is estimated to add \$700 billion to the American economy. Jobs open to international trade average 18 percent higher wages than those restricted to domestic markets. More markets for American products mean more jobs and higher wages for American workers. More products entering our economy mean more consumer choices and lower prices.

I want to see our nation prosperous again. I want to see Americans optimistic again. I want to see American factories humming; American commerce bustling, American families thriving once again. We've been through a long, cold economic winter. It's time to close that chapter, restore American prosperity and return America to the center of world trade. □

continued, Nevada County GOP Dinner

The first and most significant effect of the new Republican majority is that the Senate is again functioning as the Founders intended. The first fruit of this change is the Keystone Pipeline, promising 42,000 construction jobs, \$8 billion of private investment, and when completed, a half-million barrels of Canadian crude oil entering the American economy.

But we have to remember, the Senate is...well, the Senate is different. As Jefferson said, the Senate is the saucer in which the hot tea of the House is left to cool. And that's frustrating – but it is designed to work like that for some very good reasons.

What it took the House one day to pass took the Senate two months. More recorded votes on amendments were considered to it on the Senate floor than Harry Reid had allowed during the prior year on ALL bills combined.

And remember, for almost any bill to be considered, it requires 60 votes – meaning that six Democrats have to cross party lines and vote with Republicans.

But even with all these institutional constraints, we put the Keystone bill on the President's desk. Yes, he vetoed it – but in so doing he further alienated and isolated American workers from the Democratic Party. And I expect we will see more of that in the days and months ahead.

The next advance our victory brought was the prospect of adopting a balanced budget for the first time since 1997. For four years, the House has passed balanced budgets – but when they reached Harry Reid's Senate, once again, he just sat on them. Now, the budget process is functioning again.

Before the Easter recess, both the House and the Senate passed budget resolutions that balance within ten years and I think the prospects are very good that before the end of the month, both Houses will reconcile differences and finalize this fiscal blueprint.

Remember, the budget doesn't require the President's signature and doesn't need 60 votes in the Senate – only a simple majority. And once it is in place, ALL appropriations bills must conform to that budget. Any changes in statute to bring spending back in line can be placed in a reconciliation bill that requires only a simple majority in the Senate to place on the President's desk.

And over the next two years, committees in both the House and the Senate continue to pursue investigations involving widespread corruption and incompetence that the American Left will have to answer for in the next election.

Meanwhile, the House will continue to challenge the President's unconstitutional amnesty orders. And although there are practical limitations to what the Congress can do to stop him with the power of the purse -- as we recently saw with the DHS funding bill -- this is not the end of our efforts by a long shot. A Gallup poll in January showed the American people oppose those orders by a whopping 56 to 41 percent. The courts have so far agreed with us, and I am told the chances are very good the injunction against the President will hold. And every day, Democrats will have to explain to struggling American workers why they want to reward five million illegal aliens for breaking the law with the right to compete for scarce jobs while consuming thousands of dollars of taxpayer-paid benefits.

People often ask me, "What can I do?" The answer is, you are doing it every time you talk to a neighbor, comment on a blog, send an article to a friend, call in to a talk show or write a letter to the editor. Suppose every Republican Central Committee member wrote just ONE letter to the editor or blog every month. Suppose EVERY Republican Committee member agreed to post just one comment on the Internet every day?

The Left does that. Now, as Lincoln said, they are wavering and disheveled and belligerent. Now is the time for us to double down.

On election night in 2012, I said that the American people were about to get a four-year, graduate level course in Obamanomics and at the end of that course they would be a lot sadder and a lot wiser. It looks like they have already graduated, summa cum laude, two years sooner. They have gotten a bitter taste of democratic socialism. They've watched their economy languish, their children plundered by debt, their fundamental rights under the Bill of Rights trampled; they've watched our nation's strength sapped away while the world has grown much more dangerous; they've watched their health care system decimated; and they've had enough.

All that we have to do as Republicans is to be true to our principles and true to the voters who put their trust back in us, and all will be well. We will have another tremendous fight in 2016, but the American public is indeed sadder and wiser. Just as importantly, they're ready to take back their freedom, their prosperity, their heritage, their Constitution and their future.

They are ready to join us if we will just raise our banner, as Reagan said, of bold colors.

On that day in 1858, Lincoln asked his fellow Republicans if, having put the Democrats on the run, they were now going to falter.

Here's his answer: "The end is not doubtful: we shall not fail. IF WE STAND FIRM, WE SHALL NOT FAIL."

THAT generation of Republicans stood firm, and so will this generation of Republicans. And a few years from now, it's going to be morning again in America. □

Your generous support has made it possible
for us to continue producing this newsletter.

Please support the Capitol Commentaries
by using the enclosed remit envelope.

Thank You!

McClintock for Congress
PO Box 1198
Rocklin, CA 95677

Paid for by McClintock for Congress

BUDGET CONFERENCE REPORT

One of the most important accomplishments of the 114th Congress is the adoption of a balanced budget. I addressed the importance of this breakthrough on the House Floor on April 30, the day we adopted the conference report:

Mr. Speaker:

With this vote, our nation is about to take its first step away from financial ruin and toward fiscal solvency and prosperity.

Our nation's debt has literally doubled in eight years, now exceeding the size of our entire economy.

That debt requires us to make interest payments of \$230 billion this year – nearly \$2,000 from an average family's taxes -- just to rent the money we've already spent. On our current path, that burden will triple within the decade, eclipsing our entire defense budget. Medicare and Social Security will collapse just a few years after that.

Time is not our ally and the future is not a pleasant place if we continue just a few more years down the road we've been on.

THAT's why this budget is so important. It changes the fiscal course of our nation, slowly pointing us back toward solvency and prosperity. It restores congressional oversight of an abusive federal bureaucracy. It redeems our healthcare system from the nightmare of Obamacare. It rescues Medicare from collapse. It adopts the time-tested pro-growth policies that produced the Reagan economic recovery and the unprecedented prosperity of the 1980's.

And if we can implement this budget, in ten years deficits will turn to surpluses we can begin paying down this ruinous debt at a pace that assures students now in college will retire into a prosperous, secure and debt-free America.

It's not perfect and it is not complete. Ahead of us are many months of legislating to build the governmental streamlining and reforms that it calls for.

But if we can set this course and stay this course, one day in the very near future a new generation can know just how wonderful it is to awaken and realize that it is morning again in America. □