

We're now in the 5th week of the shutdown and apparently there are not enough of their constituents worrying about putting food on their table, or paying their healthcare bills to get Congress to act---42 million slated to lose SNAP benefits not enough? So, how do we get Congress back on track to do the job for which we elected them? The No Kings October 18 protest and other weekly protests against both the administration and Congress that I and many of you attend are one step in the right direction from the bottom up---and no Mr. Trump we are not terrorists, and we wouldn't even know how to join Antifa, if it is indeed even joinable. Nor are we part of the "Democratic Party's main constituency... made up of Hamas terrorists, illegal aliens, and violent criminals," as White House Press Secretary Leavitt labels us. And you administrative loyalists who claim our No Kings protest was a "Hate America rally" better look in the mirror..

But what we need at this moment is a corresponding step from the top down---a combination of leadership, compassion, and common sense.

How is it that everyone I talk to has numerous compromises on major issues that they could live with, yet the officials that we manage to elect are helpless?

Trump claims to be the great deal maker, and he has indeed accomplished some historic deals in his second term---weakening the malign influence of Iran by eradicating their nuclear capability at least for the near future, getting the Hamas hostages back (for the most part) and leading the effort for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza and joining with many of the middle east leaders to scale down some of their other conflicts.

But now, there is a major deal to be accomplished at home. He is adept at convening and publicizing meetings of domestic officials like his cabinet. So, he should spend some time meeting with the leaders of the House and Senate demanding that they negotiate a compromise and immediately come to an agreement that includes ending the shutdown. He is currently justified in spending much of his time abroad, but if he now also has plenty of time at home to manage the reconstruction of the White House, incidentally our house, without consulting us, and to pardon or commute the sentences of convicted felons like former Representative Santos and many other Congressman for no other reason than their loyalty to him, he might squeeze in a meeting with our Congressional leaders or, better still with the entire Congress.

There are plenty of opportunities for a win-win-win here---the President, both parties and the American people who could all claim victory, and he would do something that he will once again claim “has never been done.”

Here is an opportunity to actually accomplish an immediate resolution of a major issue, unlike his failure to immediately end Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It has been constantly demonstrated that the Republican sycophants leading Congress will comply with anything he tells them. The accolades he will get, perhaps not on the same scale as a Nobel that he so desperately wants, should suffice.

All he has to do is tell the Speaker of the House, who will do anything he demands, to restore portions of the ACA premium tax credit and the Medicaid cuts. The Democrats will also accept this compromise now because the immediate effect of not acquiescing would shift public blame for the continuing shutdown from the Republicans to them. Up until now the worst immediate effect of the shutdown, the halting of SNAP benefits for 42 million Americans, has been “potential” ---now it would be “actual.” Trump will end up the hero.

Congress, simply by doing nothing more than the President demands, will be temporarily off the hook and fulfilling their revenue raising obligation under the Constitution. However---and here's a catch---the Republicans will now be in sole possession of the health care problems and can no longer delay the action they have promised since the beginning of Trump's first term

The Republicans as we know will do anything the President tells them to doand even the most jaded progressive democrats can claim victory simply by getting a portion of their demands that they have been indicating they were willing to negotiate.

But what if the Republicans in Congress in the unlikely event that they get some backbone, stick to their guns, and will not compromise on the health care issues? Then, the Democrats take the high ground, back down on healthcare and take the lead stopping the shutdown and opening the government, and justifiably take the credit for same with an uptick in their approval rating.

Now, going forward, what can we do to bridge the divide, or recommend that Democrats do if we were developing a campaign or running for Congress in the next midterms? First, build a platform focusing on every major "end" that the opposition promotes and on which we agree, but with a "means" that is effective, legal, moral and constitutional---and meets the good citizenship criteria of Step Forward America's mission. This is 100 percent counter to the stand now taken by the Democrats which is merely to oppose everything that Trump and MAGA support. That's not getting them anywhere and won't get them elected.

Here are three issues that most all of us, from the MAGA Republicans to the most progressive Democrats, agree are top priorities---crime, immigration and cost of living---along with several bedrock Republican

principles to which Democrats also try to adhere---limited government, upholding the law, and fiscal responsibility. I will try to differentiate our means to these ends from theirs.

Combatting crime in the cities: Now, we are sending the United States military into American cities and threatening outright martial law, exceeding the bounds of Article I Section 8. What the administration should be doing is using this same funding to support existing city crime control programs and increased municipal police forces in the specific limited areas where crime is rampant. Meet with the governors and mayors and where applicable offer, but don't demand, available federal crime control services, e.g. DEA, FBI, AFT, as well as ICE if they can be strictly limited to locating and destroying the criminal element only. Not only is the military not trained for this, but they will end up as just another of the institutions in which the American people will lose trust, and their whole image until now generally revered by the public will be destroyed.

Drug cartels are a key root cause of crime and deteriorating welfare, and the administration is rightly giving them and the countries that support them a focus and priority that previous administrations have not. Certainly we now have the attention of Venezuela and Columbia, and we can keep it merely by using the same legal methods of interdiction, capture, and prosecution previously conducted by the Coast Guard, but with more intensity. And keep up the headway that Trump appears to be making with China and Mexico regarding fentanyl.

Controlling Immigration: Now, without due process we are rounding up and deporting tens of thousands of people--- children, grandmothers, cooks, landscapers, farm workers, tradespeople, students, and so many more including U.S. citizens and others who are here legally ---in many cases because they don't look or sound the way we think "Americans" are supposed to look or sound. As Unitarian Pastor Joshua Pawelek stated recently in our *News-Times* of Danbury,

CT article “A test of compassion for immigrants,” “virtually every major faith teaches its followers to treat immigrants as we would our own neighbors...supporting immigrants is the good, right, and moral thing to do.”

What the administration with the cooperation of the media should be doing first is to repeatedly clarify to the public the demographics of the total non-citizen immigrant population, clarify the definitions of documented, undocumented and illegal---refugees and asylum seekers--and the various categories of the temporary protective status population. Advise us of the numbers of each category that are authorized and the numbers that actually exist. Clarify the benefits available to these categories, e.g. health care to the extent offered, drivers licenses, etc. I would make it a budget item to have a pamphlet covering all of this available at no charge to all Americans, in post offices and/or other frequented public buildings.

With the public so enlightened, we should use the available resources to locate, capture, detain, and, only after due process, deport or incarcerate the criminal element---and continue charting a path to citizenship for those deemed eligible and a schedule for deportation for others.

Cost of Living: Use tariffs on goods primarily to lower the costs to the American consumer and/or to increase employment opportunity for America workers---as opposed to the present administration’s use of tariffs simply to punish allies and foes alike based on comparative meaningless balance of trade numbers---or retaliation for publicly disparaging us. Carve out for special treatment strategic goods strictly related to national security

Next, focus more on minimum wage increases, carving out negative effects on small businesses as appropriate.

And, prioritize consideration of the financial effects on the American consumer as well as the American worker as key criteria when authorizing and accepting immigrants as well as when deporting them, for example the cost of produce typically harvested by immigrants.

Limiting government, a Republican bedrock principle. Right now, we are arbitrarily reducing the members of the administrative state with no regard for merit or their roles as evidenced by chaotic firing and rehiring starting with the inept actions of DOGE---and elevating unqualified sycophants and hacks to key positions. Limited government shouldn't be about arbitrarily limiting the payroll, it should be about limiting the intrusion of government in our private lives. So, we should rehire all Inspectors General and others in guardrail positions that our representatives authorized for the purpose intended in accordance with the demands of the American people going back to the founders and especially to them---We should limit government by reversing the current administration's intrusion into the academic freedom of institutions of higher learning, our libraries, museums, and other institutions and edifices of arts and culture.

Upholding the Law grounded in the Constitution, another bedrock Republican principle Article II Section 3 of the Constitution says that the President "shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed...." Without going into the all too familiar details here of the many instances of the current administration's disregard for the law, this should be the headline used by the media every time the administration fails to uphold the law, e.g. in vindictive prosecutions, in pardoning criminals who broke the law, in coverups for illegal activities, etc. It will then be clearly implanted in all of us when assessing the performance of the administration as well as the elected officials supporting it.

Fiscal responsibility/balanced budget, another bedrock Republican principle. As John Danforth in his October 16 *Wall Street Journal* article “Republicans, Ditch MAGA And Return To the Basics” said “We oppose large and persistent federal deficits.” He went on “The national debt increased nearly 40% in the first Trump administration, and under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, it will grow over the next decade by more than \$3 trillion.” A good place to start would be eliminating the cap on earnings subject to social security. Other low hanging fruit to consider would be the deferred tax on unrealized capital gains or the eliminated tax on inherited capital gains. (I know, ugh for many of you).

Most Americans regardless of party affiliation agree that most if not all of the above issues need fixing. If we headline our platform with our concern for them, we’ve at least opened the door for the other side to listen to us. The point I’m trying to make is that we have an acceptable message for much of the opposition. In short, to paraphrase Annie Oakley, “Anything they can do, we can do better.”

How and why have we managed to elect a complete administration, House and Senate so lacking in leadership that we they can’t negotiate a half dozen or so key issues all of which are generally supported by the American people? Why don’t we see more of them from both sides of the aisle---those that actually do wish to put country ahead of party and self---sitting down together, hashing out the major issues identified above, presenting the compromise to their colleagues, and if unsuccessful going directly to the people via the major press outlets?

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