

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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Over the years, I have often wondered why people tend not to vote in their own best interests. As we approach the mid-term elections on November 2, I find myself particularly amazed at the polling trends that seem to be emerging in this election cycle. I understand the anger and frustration people are feeling about the economy and the job market. Families are hurting, money is tight, jobs are scarce and the economic recovery is proceeding at a slower pace than we had hoped. We all have legitimate concerns about our economic future; and, certainly, we are in for some difficult times over the next several months, if not longer. But returning to the very policies that put us in this mess in the first place is not going to turn our circumstances around. In fact, it will ensure that we will not be climbing out of the deep hole previous economic policies have dug for us any time soon.

As Americans, we tend to have short attention spans. The current crop of ultra right-wing conservatives, who are essentially funded by and apologists for the corporate elite, exploit that fact to fan the flames of hatred and discontent that characterize movements like the Tea Party. The reality is that the deep recession we are experiencing did not suddenly emerge during the current administration's watch. They inherited a trillion dollar deficit as well as massive unemployment. Eight years of economic policies that provided tax breaks to the wealthiest among us and deregulation loopholes which banks, brokerages, insurance companies and other corporations jumped through to line their own pockets resulted in the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression. The previous administration and the previous Congress bailed out Wall Street, the very people whose greed and reckless behavior put all of us in this position. As a result, these people and their companies are back on their

feet, once again handing out millions of dollars in bonuses to themselves. But when it came time to bail out Main Street (us), the minority party continued to protect the interests of their constituents (big business) while voting against the interests of working men and women.

Much of the problem that the current administration has had in trying to implement policies to pull the country out of this economic morass relates to the rules that govern how Congress conducts its business. In the House, the progressive majority that we elected in 2008 pushed forward with legislation geared toward the needs of working families. In the Senate, the minority party (which essentially became the “Party of No”) was able to impede the passage of needed legislation to address our many issues. A perfect example is the Stimulus Bill. What was really needed was a larger infusion of money to stem the flow of lost jobs and to create new jobs; but in order to get enough support to halt a filibuster, the majority party was forced to scale back the package. So, while the Stimulus was effective in stopping a further deterioration in our economic condition, it was not sufficient to generate as many jobs as are needed to facilitate a faster recovery for the average worker. Similarly, the progressive majority has been thwarted in their efforts: to provide needed relief for those who are out of work and are relying on unemployment benefits to bridge the gap; to eliminate tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans; and to require the oil companies to shoulder their fair share of the tax burden. They were able to pass Health Care legislation, an issue that everyone agreed during the 2008 campaign needed to be addressed but one which the minority party preferred to ignore. Over the past two years, the “Party of No’s” strategy has been to block the agenda the progressive majority was elected to enact. In other words, it was more important to them to pursue political goals rather than to address the serious problems facing our country. Is this really the kind of leadership we need or want at this juncture in our history?

I understand and respect that good people can have legitimate differences on certain hot-button issues. However, I do not respect the way the right-wing and the corporate elite exploit these issues to further their self-absorbed agenda. They use the tactics of confusion, distraction, fear-mongering and fabrication to keep us from focusing on the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, and the shrinking of the middle-class. As letter carriers, it is essential for us to have the right representatives in place in Congress as we move forward with our strategy to preserve the Postal Service and protect our jobs, wages and benefits. The next few years will be critical for our success in achieving these goals.

At this point in time, I am just as angry as everyone else. We should be angry; but we need to be directing that anger at the people and policies that are undermining the financial welfare of our families and destroying the American Dream for our children. This election is too important for us to be staying at home or to be swayed by slick ads that tug at our emotions while distracting us from the reality of our lives. Get the facts; think through the arguments; then go to the polls. Vote in your own best interests and those of your families; and vote for the candidates who will best represent those interests in the years to come.

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