

The Delray Democrat

What They Need¹

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Remember the Twilight Zone episode “What You Need,” in which a peddler (able to see into possible futures) gives people what they need before they even know they need it? The episode opens with him entering a bar, where he gives a woman a vial of cleaning fluid and a washed-up ballplayer a bus ticket to Scranton.

Then the pay phone rings and the ballplayer gets a coaching offer in Scranton. He worries about the stain on his jacket, but the woman cleans it for him and you can see the beginning of a romance.

Another man in the bar immediately realizes the potential of the peddler’s talents and begins to hound and menace him. Seeing the possible future in which the man ends up killing him, the peddler gives him a pair of shoes with slippery soles. They cause him to slip and fall into the path of an oncoming car and be killed. The peddler could have provided the sticky-soled shoes the man actually needed, but, as the peddler explains to the corpse, the slippery shoes were what *he himself* needed.

One doesn’t have to be clairvoyant to know that both our planet and our democracy are facing death, and that, unlike the villain in the Twilight Zone episode, both deserve saving. One also doesn’t need to be clairvoyant to know that this will require us to hold the House and Senate (indeed, to increase our margins) in the midterms, no easy task and one that the media have already declared all but impossible. Here’s how we prove them wrong:

- “Moderates” must stop echoing the Republican Big Lie that Democrats have moved too far to the Left.
- “Progressives” (and here I am speaking to myself) must be satisfied with what we’ve achieved, however much it falls short of what we want and what the American people want and need.
- Party “leaders” must improve our branding and our messaging. It’s not just that Americans don’t know what’s in the groundbreaking legislation we’ve enacted; they don’t even know what to call it. Biden’s original slogan “Build Back Better” morphed into a legislative agenda that included (1) The American Rescue Plan, (2) The American Jobs Plan, and (3) The American Families Plan. The first was enacted as titled but the second and third were relabeled the “physical infrastructure” and the “human infrastructure” bills, respectively. Then they were again relabeled, this time as the “bipartisan infrastructure” bill and the “Build Back Better” bill. That is no way to run a railroad . . . or a country.

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), December 2021, page 7.