

# The Delray Democrat

## Charlie Crist Will Be Florida's Joe Biden<sup>1</sup>

*Michael K. Cantwell*

A year ago I [suggested](#) that Charlie Crist could be Florida's Joe Biden. A month ago the claim would have been greeted with howls of laughter, and perhaps will be so greeted even today. It would be "the laughter of fools."

The parallels between Biden and Crist are obvious and many, the most fundamental being that both are decent, competent men running against cruel, incompetent megalomaniacs. Stated more simply, the contest is between a mensch and a miscreant.

Donald Trump mocked a reporter with a physical disability. Ron DeSantis bullied a schoolchild whose mother was immunocompromised into removing his mask. Trump's colossal incompetence in responding to COVID killed hundreds of thousands of Americans needlessly. DeSantis's refusal to push vaccinations and his ridiculing of masks killed tens of thousands of Floridians needlessly. His refusal to expand Medicaid kills thousands of Floridians every year. And the megalomania displayed in his "Top Gov" campaign ad makes him a subject of ridicule.

Crist's humanity was on display when he granted clemency to 155,000 Floridians permanently disenfranchised by the Post-Civil War provision in the Florida Constitution that was subsequently revised by Amendment 4. It wasn't in Crist's political interest to do so, since he was a Republican and those he re-enfranchised were disproportionately people of color and thus unlikely to vote for a Republican.

In his single term in office, Charlie re-enfranchised twice as many Floridians as did Jeb Bush and 50 times as many as Rick Scott, each of whom served two terms. He also re-enfranchised more Floridians than any *Democratic* governor. Decency. Humanity.

Both Biden and Crist were labeled losers. Biden had failed twice in bids for the Democrat nomination for president, and after leaving the governor's office and the Republican Party in 2010, Crist twice failed to win statewide elections. Yet Biden was not only nominated but elected president in 2020. And in 2016, Crist flipped a Congressional district that had been Republican for 60 years. They did more than "fail better." They succeeded.

Joe Biden entered office in the midst of the worst financial collapse since the Great Depression and the greatest public health crisis in over a century. Democrats held a scant 5-seat majority in the House, and the Senate was split 50-50, with the histrionic Kyrsten Sinema and the grandstanding Joe Manchin being Democrats in name only.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Delray Democrat*, September 2020, p. 4.

Biden promised that bipartisanship was not dead, but right out of the gate Republicans made clear that they were sticking to their playbook from the Obama era — monolithic, malevolent opposition. Putting party before country, not a single Republican in Congress voted for the American Rescue Plan Act. The year before, Democrats put country before party when not a single Democrat in Congress opposed Trump's \$2.2 trillion CARES Act.

Despite the odds being stacked against his accomplishing anything, within six weeks of his inauguration, Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act, saving the country from a second Great Depression and propelling the economy to a record increase in jobs and an unemployment rate not seen since 1969. Earlier this month, he signed legislation that was not only America's largest investment in combatting climate change but also will substantially reduce the price Americans pay for pharmaceuticals.

In between, he made good on his promise to pass bipartisan legislation: he signed an infrastructure bill that had eluded his two predecessors, the first gun safety legislation in nearly three decades, the biggest expansion of veterans' benefits in over three decades, and an investment in microchip production that will make America competitive with China and decrease our reliance on foreign suppliers.

I expect great things from Charlie. You should too.