

The Delray Democrat

Democratic Gardens; Republican Jungles¹

Florida Senator Lori Berman

It's said that anything put in the ground in Florida grows. But gardens need to be cared for. Otherwise, as the Bard wrote, they go to seed, and "things rank and gross in nature" consume them utterly.

The same may be said of government. From the New Deal through the Great Society, from Obamacare through Build Back Better, Democrats have tended to the needs of the American people.

In stark contrast, from Nixon's Southern Strategy through Reagan's Raw Deal, from Newt Gingrich's Scorched Earth through Trump's Unapologetic Racism, Republicans have sown hatred and ignored the needs of Americans.

They've starved government and brag that their ultimate goal is to cut it "down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub." They don't care that when government is drowned, people drown, as we saw when Katrina battered New Orleans.

They don't care that when government fails to protect the public from rogue actors, people lose their homes and life savings, as we saw when Republicans let the banksters crash the economy in 2008. And Republicans don't care that when sociopaths and incompetents are the gardeners, people are choked, as we saw when the pandemic arrived in 2020.

When that happens, Democrats are summoned to clean up the garden. Perversely, Republicans are still able to benefit because the catastrophes they create are so enormous as to defy quick fixes.

Putting party before people and country, Republicans then kneecap Democrats' rescue efforts. It's not long until the public begins to blame Democrats for the economy wrecked by Republicans. Rinse and repeat.

Only three Republicans voted for the Obama stimulus. It averted another Great Depression, but the recovery was slow and uneven, helping Republicans to flip first the House and then the Senate.

Americans soon forgot that Obama created 11 million jobs while in office or that his signature achievement, the Affordable Care Act, saved tens of thousands of lives every year.

Not until Republicans were finally in a position to repeal the Affordable Care Act did the public begin to appreciate Obama's stewardship of the garden. Obamacare was saved, but a madman was

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), December 2022, page 1.

in charge of the garden and a pandemic was coming.

Trump left office with an economy more devastated than the one inherited by Obama, with more than 9 million jobs lost in 2020. And Biden was also faced with the worst public health crisis over in a century.

Once again putting party before people, not a single Republican supported the Biden stimulus. At first that seemed to be a bad bet, since the Biden recovery was the fastest ever recorded. Jobs had returned to pre-pandemic numbers within 6 months, and more than 11 million jobs were added by November 2022.

But then inflation spiked, and Republicans once again seized the opportunity to attack Democrats' stewardship of the economy that they themselves had just trashed. In a gross oversimplification, echoed by the media, they claimed that the ARPA stimulus was responsible for the worst inflation in four decades.

Completely ignored in this analysis was a Perfect Storm consisting of choked supply chains, corporate profiteering, the unexpectedly slow reopening of the service economy, and oil company gouging, not to mention the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At worst, stimulus payments played a minor role, and at best they helped ensure there was enough food for everyone in the American garden following the worst economic collapse in nearly a century.

As to the small role played by the stimulus, it's worth reciting FDR's response to Republican accusations *he* had been too generous:

“Better the occasional faults of a government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference.”

The Republican Jungle Emerges

The only thing that prevented Republicans from duplicating the Red Wave of 2010 was a slow public awakening to the Republican approach to gardening.

Republicans have always been content to starve the garden and ignore the presence of things “rank and gross in nature.” But when the rankest and grossest of those things was chosen to manage the garden, that personification of pestilence began ridding the garden of anything remedial or healthful.

Republicans celebrated as he applied pesticide to personal rights protected for a half-century. They were silent as he launched an insurrection and sought to destroy the foundational document that governed the garden. It became increasingly clear to all but the blind and the brainwashed that his ultimate goal was to destroy the garden itself.

The choice facing American over the next two years is whether they want to live in a garden or a jungle.