The Pelray Pemocrat

December 2021

Debunking the Republican Big Lie That Biden Has Been "Captured by 'The Left'"

Michael K. Cantwell

If President Biden sounds more progressive than the centrist Democrat he's been for decades, it's because he's been listening to what the American people say they need and trying to respond to those needs. To conclude that he has been "captured by the 'Left'" (scare quotes) simply because those needs happen to align with policies advocated by progressives is to confuse correlation with causation.

The American Jobs Plan was designed to address the urgent need to repair our decaying infrastructure and the even more urgent need to respond to the existential threat of climate change. Despite its price tag (over \$2 trillion), polls showed strong public support for the plan, with a 64-34 margin reported in a *New York Times* poll and a 60-22 margin in a *Politico* poll.

Asked specifically about the importance of "passing a bill to address climate change and its effects," 64% of respondents to the *Politico* poll rated it "important" or a "top priority" (versus 27% who rated it "unimportant" or "not worth doing"). The *Times* poll also found 65% of Americans supported funding the bill by raising taxes on large corporations. Thus not only the bill but the portions most identified with the Left were supported by substantial majorities of Americans.

Despite having added \$1.9 trillion to the deficit with Trump's *unfunded* tax cuts enjoyed predominantly by the largest corporations and wealthiest Americans, Republicans rejected a bill that addressed urgent public needs and was actually *funded*. Their counterproposal was barely one-quarter the bill's original size. Biden ultimately turned negotiations over to a bipartisan group of senators, who removed the climate change and tax provisions. The bill that passed the Senate was less than half its original size. So much for being controlled by the Left

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Have the Democrats Gone Too Far to the Left? Biden's Winter of Discontent

June Sandra Neal

Back in 2019, former president Obama was clearly worried that some of the Democratic presidential candidates were situating the Party too far left. Speaking to the National Democratic Alliance, he was blunt. "The average American doesn't think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it." Nor agree with "certain left-leaning Twitter feeds or the activist wing of our party," referring to Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

It was more than cautionary; it was predictive. President Biden's favorability ratings have tanked, especially among independent voters who are critical to a Democratic win in the upcoming elections.

A recent Quinnipiac University poll showed "Biden's current 37% approval rating among independents is his lowest to date and 24 points below his personal high of 61%. Two-thirds of Biden's slide among independents since he took office has occurred in the past three months."

Is it because of the high-relief congressional progressives? The confluence of Afghanistan, gas prices, and the ongoing pandemic? Or the foul air of racism and tyranny let loose by Trump that's made voters angry at government in general?

A standoff in the House emerged as progressives refused to support the neutered bill without a vote on the "human infrastructure" bill known as the Build Back Better Act that was languishing in the Senate.

Build Back Better

The tortuous path of BBB also gives the lie to the claim Biden is in thrall to "the Left." Bernie Sanders initially proposed spending as much as \$6.5 trillion over 10 years, but the version that emerged from his committee was priced at \$3.5 trillion. It included paid family and medical leave, a universal pre-K program, and an expansion of Medicare to include dental, vision, and hearing coverage. It was to be funded by raising taxes on capital gains exceeding \$1 million, raising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 25%, and reducing Medicare costs by allowing the government to negotiate lower drug prices.

<u>Polls</u> again showed substantial levels of public support for the cost, the importance of finally taking meaningful action to address climate change, and the tax provisions (*all by 61-30 margins*), Once again, however, the bill had no traction in the Senate.

That's because we don't have a real democracy, but a democracy that falls short of the ideal is still better than no democracy at all. And if we weaken Biden and lose the midterms, that is what is coming.

That's why I am sick and tired of hearing from centrist Democrats that Biden must disavow the progressive agenda he has been spearheading. It capitulates to the false Republican narrative, and it relinquishes our strongest argument going into the midterms, namely, that Democrats are working for the American people while Republicans are working for the 0.001%.

It's time to stop apologizing. It's time to celebrate what Biden and the Democrats have done for the American people since taking office during the worst public health crisis in a century and the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression:

- 5,875,000 jobs created in ten months
- 5.5% GDP estimated for the year
- 4.2% unemployment (6.3% in January)
- 69.7% of Americans over 12 fully vaccinated
- 86.5% of Americans over 65 fully vaccinated

If Biden sounds more progressive than the centrist Democrat he's been for decades, it's because he's been listening to what the American people say they need... To conclude he's been "captured by the Left" because those needs happen to align with policies advocated by progressives is to confuse correlation with causation.

Because BBB was delaying passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill in the House, Biden announced a version that was literally half the size (\$1.75 trillion). It passed November 19, but only because "the Left" abandoned their months-long demand that the two bills be considered together. That's not what I'd call persuasive evidence of a Biden in thrall to the Left.

And now Build Back Better is again languishing in the Senate because the entire Republican party (along with a small number of Democrats) consider their constituents to be the people who fund them rather than the people who vote for them. Biden is not controlled by the Left, but Congress is controlled by lobbyists, and the American people are the losers.

Further cuts are coming in order to satisfy Senators Manchin and Sinema. Manchin is now saying that there may not be enough time to pass Build Back Better this year. Indeed, despite the clear wishes of the American people, we have to face the possibility it may never pass.

We should celebrate the bipartisan infrastructure bill, which addresses an urgent need even if it ignores a more urgent need. We should never stop reminding voters that Marco Rubio and Rick Scott were so afraid of the traitor in residence at Mar-A-Lago that they voted against the interests of Floridians.

Finally, we progressives should celebrate that Biden accomplished as much as he has despite our razorthin majority. We are, and should be, disappointed that he was unable to accomplish more, but we need to refrain from blaming Biden or Democrats for that.

The Affordable Care Act polled weakly because the questions were binary, "yea" or "nay." Pollsters are now only asking people whether they "approve" or "disapprove" of Biden. They really don't care why, and we won't get a chance to explain our answer. So if you're asked to rate Biden's job performance or his handling of the economy, give him the highest grade available. Our democracy, our freedoms, and our planet depend on it.

(Continued from page 1, Too Far)

But here's the irony. An <u>NBC News poll</u> reported "2-to-1 national support for the two pillars of Biden's agenda: the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and the \$3.5 trillion package of economic and social programs. Yet despite the backing for these measures, Biden's approval rating has ticked down to a new low, [41%] driven largely by more negative views among Democrats and independents." Washington Post-ABC News poll.

They like the book but not the author.

Black voters' views. The <u>Pew Research</u> <u>Center</u> found "...black voters aren't the monolith exit polls make them out to be. *A quarter of black Democrats identify as conservative, and 43 percent identify as moderate."* [author's emphasis].

Unfortunately, polls have no nuance; we must sort out the reasons. We know the Leftist label came from proposals for the Green New Deal and Medicare for All, and from calls to de-fund the police although they were never from the Democratic Party. Agree or not, that's what it is.

Who are they talking about? Biden is and has always been a good and decent man who has consistently worked for "people like them."

What's hard to reconcile is why. The latest <u>Pew Research survey</u>: "Compared with March, fewer adults say Biden cares about people like them, and fewer describe him as standing up for his beliefs, honest, a good role model and mentally sharp."

Who are they talking about? Biden is and has always been a good and decent man who has consistently worked for "people like them." He was integral in the passage of President Obama's Affordable Care Act which provided critical health care "for people like them."

A good role model? Is there another politician who surpasses Biden in his devotion to his family and friends, to our troops, to his country? What is their comparison, Trump?

Biden, always center-left, took office facing historic crises, while shepherding a concomitant historic agenda; like Goldilocks, he's had to navigate between not too left and not too right. A major goal was to substantially boost minority communities and the poor, finally giving them a chance to achieve a level of economic justice. Dignity is a mighty gift.

But surveys show the Democrats seriously misread

CNN analyst Harry Enten warned "...it should be alarming to Biden that the recent downturn in his approval rating has come disproportionately from independents...he won the 2020 election in large part because he was able to win the center." Biden won by 13 points, but his personal rating was just +6 points; Trump's was -18. In other words, there was a greater dislike for Trump than approval for Biden. An NBC News poll reported similar results.

Remember 2020, "Losing is not an option?" Now it damn well is, the immutable result of a binary system.

We can no longer be cocky or defensive. We either make a wholesale change in branding or cry over our bucket of ideals when we lose. We must show the independents—and the cohort of sagging Democrats— a Democratic vision for the country that is solid, sober and steady.

Obama said he wasn't criticizing party activists; of course, they're our oxygen source. But he emphasized that "Whoever the candidate is, their ultimate job is to get elected." God help us if they don't.

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Eliminate the Filibuster for Legislation Affecting Constitutional Rights

Michael K. Cantwell

Republicans don't like it when every citizen has an opportunity to vote. It is called "democracy" but it is spelled "defeat" for Republicans.

That's why, after Joe Biden's landslide victory and the narrow wins by Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in Georgia, Republican-controlled states immediately set to work enacting highly restrictive voting laws.

This exacerbated the already tenuous protection for voting rights following the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* that gutted the heart of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by holding its "preclearance" provisions to be unconstitutional. No longer would states with discriminatory practices be required to submit any proposed changes in their laws to the Department of Justice

In response to the explosion of discriminatory laws, the House passed the **Freedom to Vote Act** and the **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**, both now pending in the Senate and arguably the most important legislation introduced by the Biden administration.

Freedom to Vote Act					
	Support	Unsure	Oppose		
Overall	61	13	26		
Democrats	83	7	7		
Independents	53	30	17		
Republicans	39	11	50		

Source: Navigator.

The Freedom to Vote Act would establish national standards, require every state to have automatic voter registration, make Election Day a holiday, restore federal voting rights to formerly incarcerated Americans, and address "dark money" in the electoral process by modernizing and expanding federal campaign finance reforms.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act, ensuring that any changes to local or state elections are federally reviewed so that everyone's equal right to vote is protected. As reported in the charts below, both enjoy strong public support, but both have been filibustered repeatedly by Republicans and have no chance of chance of passing the 117th Congress.

Senators Manchin and Sinema refuse to eliminate the filibuster because they fear what will happen if Republicans regain the Senate in the midterms. Of course, unless we pass one of these Acts we're less likely to hold the Senate. The solution is clear, however, we eliminate the filibuster for legislation affecting people's constitutional rights.

John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act					
	Support	Unsure	Oppose		
Overall	69	14	17		
Democrats	88	8	4		
Independents	60	27	13		
Republicans	50	16	34		

Source: Navigator.

The Supreme Court Gets Ready to Pile on "the Stench"

Michael K. Cantwell

At oral argument in the Mississippi abortion case, Justice Sotomayor asked whether the Supreme Court could "survive the stench" of being considered a political institution. It's a fair question.

Given the overwhelming stench of two stolen Supreme Court seats and the stolen election of 2000, and given the stench of the overtly political decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* that gutted the heart of the Voting Rights Act, one is tempted to respond with a different question: "What's a little additional stench?" But perhaps this will be the decision that finally causes America's collective gorge to rise.

That was clearly on the mind of Chief Justice Roberts, the most political of the Justices. Messrs. Alito, Thomas, and Gorsuch would overrule *Roe* because they are zealots and judicial activists with no respect for long-standing precedent. Roberts is a judicial activist but not a zealot. He understands the political consequences of overruling Roe, so he is pushing to merely hobble it.

However this plays out, we must ensure that Republicans pay the price in next year's midterms.

Thank a Democrat

1964 Civil Rights Act 1965 Voting Rights Act Affordable Care Act AmeriCorps CDC Family and Medical Leave Act Food Stamp Act
Freedom of Information Act
GI Bill of Rights
Medicare and Medicaid
Minimum Wage Act
National Labor Relations Act

National Science Foundation Act
National Voter Registration Act
(a.k.a) Motor Voter Act
Social Security Act
Unemployment Compensation Act
Workers Compensation Act

American Rescue Plan Act, Signed March 11, 2021

- Provided \$1400 to every taxpayer and each of his or her dependents
- Expanded coverage and reduced premiums under the Affordable Care Act for 9 million Americans.
- Expanded and extended unemployment benefits.
- Increased SNAP benefits
- Increased and expanded Child Tax Credit
- Made largest investment in child care assistance since World War II
- Increased the Earned Income Tax Credit for frontline workers who helped their communities through the COVID crisis

- Invested \$160 billion to provide supplies and vaccines to combat COVID's heavy toll
- Distributed \$360 billion in emergency funding for local governments to help keep front line public workers on the job and paid
- Provided emergency grants and loans to hard-hit small businesses
- Established a special sign-up period for the Affordable Care Act, adding 800,000 previously uninsured to the ranks of the insured.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Signed November 15, 2021

- Makes the largest federal investment in public transit ever
- Makes the largest federal investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak
- Makes the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system
- Makes the largest investment in clean drinking water and waste water infrastructure in American history, delivering clean water to millions of

- families
- Ensures every American has access to reliable high-speed internet
- Helps us tackle the climate crisis by making the largest investment in clean energy transmission and EV infrastructure in history; electrifying thousands of school and transit buses across the country; and creating a new Grid Deployment Authority to build a resilient, clean, 21st century electric grid

Build Back Better Act, passed by House, November 19, 2021

- Provides \$555 billion for climate change programs
- Provides \$382 billion for childcare and universal preschool
- Provides \$205 billion for family and medical leave
- Provides \$198 billion to extend Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Credit
- Provides \$150 billion for home care

- Provides \$166 billion for housing
- Provides \$130 billion to expand Medicaid to cover the uninsured in states whose Republican legislatures and governors would rather let their citizens die than accept 90% funding provided by the Affordable Care Act
- Provides \$35 billion to expand Medicare to cover hearing aids and tests

2022 Membership

Char Lane

It's already December and we're about to welcome 2022. It's time to renew your Club membership, and if you're not yet a member of the Democratic Club of Delray Beach, please consider joining. Membership is on a calendar year basis and your dues help provide funding for operational projects, such as *The Delray Democrat*, our meetings, other working supplies and signage for our sign waving events. Our meetings are on the second Thursday of each month, currently via zoom but we're hoping to be able to resume live meetings as soon as it's deemed safe to do so.

We're optimistic that we can help to turn Florida BLUE by electing a Democratic governor (to replace DeSantis) and a Democratic U.S. Senator (to replace Rubio) in 2022. Our goal is to educate people as to

why they should vote Democratic and use Vote-by-Mail as a critical tool in support of this goal. We'll be very busy in 2022 and we'll need you to help with our sign-waving, phone calling, postcard writing, canvassing and participating in other projects.

Visit our website at <u>www.demclubofdelray.org</u>, our newsletter <u>The Delray Democrat</u> and our <u>Facebook</u> Group.

The website also features a link so you can watch the videos of our prior meetings at https://www.youtube.com/playlist? list=PLSKbVrZSWAjNnX2BFJry0PuOXS09J5GiI.

We're looking forward to you being a member of our Club in 2022.

Volunteer to Help Us Turn Florida Blue in 2022

Char Lane

We'll be very busy next year as we work to elect a Democratic governor and Democrat senator. There are many ways that you can help us to achieve these goals. Please contact us if you're interested.

Consider becoming a precinct leader. Delray is divided into 40 voting precincts and there are precincts that lack and need leaders. You'd be responsible for interacting with and getting the vote out in those precincts. It's a vital and rewarding job.

Volunteer to make phone calls. We'll have phone banks informing voters, encouraging voters to sign up to vote by mail, and ensuring that get out to vote next year.

Volunteer to write post cards. We'll have postcards with our messages printed on one side and our return address printed on the other side. You would just have to write names and addresses.

Volunteer to help with community projects in underserved neighborhoods. We have a list of local projects for which you can volunteer to help.

Volunteer to help canvass our local precincts.

Join us on our sign waves.

Write letters to the editors of the Palm Beach Post and Sun Sentinel newspapers to voice your concerns.

Contact us at membership@dcdb.us or president@dcdb.us to volunteer or obtain additional information on how you can help or how to become a precinct leader. Or you can contact me or Michael using our personal emails if you have them and / or live in our community.

Not everyone wants or is able to join in on these activities. If you'd prefer to help defray the costs of our activities by making a donation to the Club, that would also be very much appreciated.

After the first of the year we will need help in our sign-waving events, phone calling, postcard writing and canvassing. Get involved, volunteer and help us turn Florida BLUE in 2022.

Democratic Club of Delray Beach Officers and Directors

Michael Cantwell, President; Char Lane, Vice-President; Sandra Elaissen-Cantwell, Secretary; David Kulick, Treasurer; Robert Resnick, Parliamentarian, Robert Averack, Peter Camacho, Mary Fader, Charlie Holbrook, June Neal, and Cheryl Perry, Directors; Patricia O'Hearne and John Ramos, Directors Emeritus.

What They Need

Michael K. Cantwell

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.

"Food for Powder" in the Culture Wars

Michael K. Cantwell

Tut, tut, good enough to toss; food for powder, food for powder They'll fill a pit as well as better. Henry IV, Part 1

Omicron is here. Vaccination and masking are the most effective tools in the battle against COVID.

Unvaccinated Americans are <u>5.8 times as likely</u> to be infected and 14 times as likely to die as are vaccinated Americans. The overwhelming majority of Floridians in ICUs with the Delta variant were unvaccinated, as were the overwhelming majority of those who died. And every study published by a peer-reviewed scientific journal, including such renowned publications as <u>Journal of the American Medical Association</u>, <u>Nature</u>, and <u>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</u>, has reported that masking is effective in reducing transmission of the virus.

These facts are incontrovertible. Only an ignorant man would be unaware of them and only a stupid man would challenge them. Ron DeSantis does not strike me as either, so why does he virulently oppose vaccination efforts and mask mandates?

Does he believe phony appeals to "free-dumb" will motivate his base and ensure his reelection? If so, he might ask himself how many will be around and able to vote next November. Falstaff cynically characterized the sickly, scrawny soldiers he conscripted into the English Civil Wars as "food for powder." So too are DeSantis's COVID victims — food for powder in the culture wars.

What We're Reading

After Success in Seating Federal Judges, Biden Hits Resistance, Carl Hulse, New York Times: "Mr. Biden's nominees are extraordinarily diverse in both legal background and ethnicity. The White House and liberal interest groups have been promoting public defenders and civil rights lawyers in addition to the more traditional choices of prosecutors and corporate lawyers. According to the White House, 47 of the 64 nominees are women and 41 of them identify as people of color, allowing the administration to record many firsts across the judiciary."

Republican spin on Biden is off the mark, Albert Hunt, *The Hill*: Biden's initiatives are in line with his campaign's promises. The Democrats' more progressive liberal agenda reflects ten years of pent-up frustration over Republicans blocking most everything. Biden's domestic policies, almost without exception, are popular with the public, though the White House foolishly has allowed the focus to be on the size rather than the specifics.

What 'My Body, My Choice' Means to the Right, Michelle Goldberg, New York Times: "As the feminist Ellen Willis once put it, the central question in the abortion debate is not whether a fetus is a person, but whether a woman is."

Is Florida really the safest state in the U.S. for COVID? Don't trust this CDC map that went viral online, Cindy Krischer Goodman and David Schutz, *Sun-Sentinel*: "The delta wave is like the wind. It came from the south, hit Florida, and now it's hitting other states to the north and eventually their case levels will come down, too,' said Dr. Ali Mokdad with the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, who works on global COVID-19 data predictions. 'What we are looking at in Florida is not a success story. It's a failure. We saw a lot of mortality. *The fact that it hit Florida earlier and is now coming down is because it ran out of people to infect.*"

He Is Black. The Victims Were White. 'It's an Allegation as Old as America," Margaret Renkl, New York Times: "Mr. Jones's execution would have followed less than a month after the execution of John Marion Grant, the first in Oklahoma since 2015. Mr. Grant's death by lethal injection on Oct. 28 was accompanied by several minutes of vomiting and convulsions. The horrific spectacle of his death fueled renewed criticism of the state's execution method as a violation of the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment."

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