

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: Thomas Tucker thtuck@undisclosed.com

To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com

Date: May 14, 2015

Subject: Re: New Essay Expose on Our Federal Government & What to Do About It

Dear Sir,

Mr. Pell's article is accurate on several points. The political process is awash in money and it undoubtedly has a negative effect both on the electoral process and the legislative process. Candidates with the most money behind them generally win, and issue positions with the most lobbying muscle behind them generally prevail. But while money may contribute to the paralysis in Washington, it is not the driving force.

The article actually hints at the issue when it says - "what if Washington's failures result not from ineptitude but from motivation of the players?" But its answer seems to be found in its continued emphasis on the impact of money.

Unfortunately, the real answer to why Congress can't get anything done is because the Republican Party does not want to allow it to get anything done. The "party of no" dislikes President Obama intensely and is willing to go to great lengths to prevent any record of achievement by him. Remember that shortly after he was elected the first time, Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican Senate leader, said basically that it was his job to stop Obama from getting anything accomplished.

But personal animosity (and likely racial prejudice) towards the President is only a current motivation for the Republicans to stymie the governmental process. The bigger, and more long lasting motivation, is the Republican Party's long-term conviction that the Federal Government is way too big, that many of its functions can and should be handled by the states, and that the entire New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt and a lot of its regulations on private industry should be undone.

These have been basic Republican tenets since the middle of the last century but it was not until Goldwater, and even more the Reagan Administration, that a real strategy to achieve their goal of shrinking the Federal Government began to take shape. First, starting with Reagan's rhetoric that the Federal Government was the problem and not the solution, they began their campaign to undermine public support for the Government which they treat as basically the enemy. The next step was tax cuts to reduce the amount of money the government had to spend. (Reagan didn't really have the guts to carry that policy out as he made up the loss of tax revenue by increasing deficit spending.) George W. Bush made additional significant cuts (acquiesced in stupidly by the Democrats who were afraid of voter reaction) which created huge deficits because of the massive costs of his war on terror, the elective Iraq war and his failure to cut government

expenses. Now, because of the massive federal deficit, and their fear of electoral punishment for proposing increased taxes, the Democrats have been forced to agree on reducing federal expenditures on everything except, of course, the Defense Department which is the only department the Republicans love.

But the genius move to bring about the Republican goal of undermining the Federal Government came initially from Newt Gingrich who began the Republican tactic of hardball confrontation and deliberately throwing monkey wrenches into the political gears. Now this has given birth to the Tea Party which will only support Republican candidates who agree with conservative Republican goals of a reduced federal role and size and will employ confrontational tactics to achieve their goals. The result has been the governmental disaster of the last several years with record low achievements in legislation passed and judges and federal officials appointed, crumbling national infrastructure, periodic financial crises and, best of all for the Republicans, crumbling public support for the Federal Government.

The most direct way to address the Washington paralysis is to stop electing Republicans until they become willing to support the Federal Government and uphold their oaths of office. While Mr. Pell's idea of an additional pledge has some merit, I also think that we could rightfully insist that no federally elected official take Norquist's "no increase in taxes" pledge as it is clearly inconsistent with their oath of office.

By the way, for years, until the 80's, I was a registered Republican. Since then, I have been an independent. I am not now, nor ever have been, a registered Democrat.

Thomas Tucker

Thomas Tucker is a graduate of Yale College and Harvard Law School and served on active duty for three years as an officer in the US Navy. After graduating from Law School, he spent six years as an attorney with the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Federal Trade Commission in Washington. For the last 38 years, until his retirement, he practiced law in Boston and Duxbury, Massachusetts.