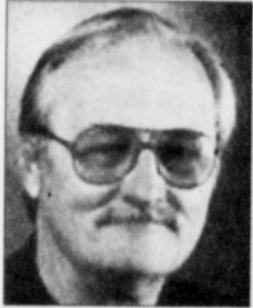


OPINION

GOP Antics Signal its Demise

They stand against everything Obama suggests

BY DONALD KAUL



Here's the question of the day: Do we really need a Republican Party? And if so, why?

Once the party of giants like Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and Nelson Rockefeller, it's now led by political Lilliputians like Mitch McConnell, John Boehner and John McCain.

Once the party of the anti-slavery and environmental movements, it has become the anti-immigrant, anti-civil rights Party of No, backwards-looking and obstructionist.

In the health-care debate, it sided with the insurance companies.

In the fight for the reform of our financial system, it supports the banks and Wall Street financiers.

On environmental and energy issues, it backs the polluters and the extraction industries.

At every turn of the road for the past 30 years the GOP has favored the rich over the poor, the few over the many. During that time, the party has never seen a war or elite privilege it didn't like.

And now, it seems to have lost its grasp on reality.

The reaction of Republicans and their media mouthpieces to the passage of President Barack Obama's historic health-care bill has been nothing short of hysterical.

In truth, there's nothing that the Democrats or Obama could have done to win the cooperation of any Republican, let alone a significant number of them.

The GOP is committed to standing together against everything Obama suggests. Republi-

cans think that is the path to victory in the coming elections.

And it may well be. The American people are famous for punishing politicians who do the right thing. When Lyndon Johnson, in an almost unprecedented act of political courage, got his civil rights legislation through Congress in the 1960s, he knew it was going to cost the Democrats their hold on the South. And it did. When Bill Clinton passed the tax increase that set the stage for the greatest economic boom the nation has ever seen, he did it with hardly a single Republican vote. And in the next election the Republicans took over the House.

That trick might work again, but I don't think so.

For one thing, these Republicans aren't serious people; they're a bunch of clowns. While the health-care votes were going on, they wandered out on the

Capitol's balcony and played to the tea party mob outside, holding up placards like cheerleaders at a homecoming rally.

For another, the modern Republican Party--having worked to win the support of white southerners in the aftermath of desegregation--is built on the ruins of an ideology that would deny equal rights to all. It's rotten at the core.

It's almost laughable to see angry Republicans warn Democrats about going against the public will.

The GOP is a party that has lost the popular vote to the Democrats in four of the past five presidential elections, and yet it has the nerve to claim to know the public's will.

If there's any justice in the world, the Republicans are going the way of the Whig Party.

Bon voyage.

Minuteman Media columnist Donald Kaul lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.



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We Must Monitor Armed Militias

Danger from extremist groups far from over

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS



Last week, the federal government arrested several members of a Midwest militia who allegedly planned to kill a Michigan police officer then wreak havoc at his funeral by attacking those who attended. Their goal? To jump-start a war against the federal government.

While these individuals are in custody and will soon have their day in court, the danger that groups like them present is far from over.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks hate groups, the number of radical extremist groups has tripled over the last year. The

government must dedicate resources to monitoring such activities and work to keep citizens safe.

Over the last several decades, militias have been known to carry out paramilitary training in rural areas; they train their members so that they are ready to engage in war. Many of these groups hold true an extreme ideology, whether it be white supremacist or anti-government; oftentimes, these views are based on some twisted idea of Christianity.

Domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh, who was responsible for the 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma where 168 people were killed, and others have expressed similar viewpoints and, at one point or another, aligned themselves with these radical groups. If the government put more energy into monitoring the activities of the members, violence could be prevented.

This is not a call for the government to infringe on the rights of individuals to gather

and express their views. Rather, the government needs to correctly identify organizations that pose a real threat to the safety of the people. We want our leaders to focus their energies on legitimate domestic terrorists and work to put an end to their violent plans.

Additionally, the government must address the factors that foster hate and allow such groups to thrive. Economic depression, easy access to weapons in certain areas of the country and lack of understanding of different cultures, races and religions all play a part. Elected officials certainly cannot control or impact all of these but job creation, community-based diversity and sensitivity training and real gun control laws can help.

In this recent case, the government intervened in time and saved lives. If efforts are made to stop the growth of these extremist groups, we may not have such a close call in the future.

Greg Mathis is a retired Michigan District Court judge and syndicated television judge.

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