

The Big Bamboozles by the GOP

Over the past 50 years, the United States has been subjected to major Republican Bamboozles which have inflicted significant damage on our country. Promoters of many of these have been GOP leaders, legislators and/or party members that through either outright activism or willful negligence have demonstrated a failure to protect democracy in the face of ethical, moral, and legal incorrectness.

Fresh in our memory is Trump's "Big Lie," alleging the 2020 Election was stolen. The egregiousness of this proven deceit, still denied by many in the GOP, was amplified by the January 6, 2021 planned insurrection at the nation's Capital. Intended to prevent the peaceful transition of power to a democratically elected president of an opposition party, the Big Lie was followed by additional deceptions in states and counties controlled by the GOP. These consisted of MAGA followers' fabricated claims of voter fraud and the inappropriate actions of election officials with the goal of ensuring continued political control in voting districts by manipulating and threatening voter demographics.

Also grave are three other BIG Bamboozles of the GOP; the key factors driving their political strategy for the last fifty years. These shams include: 1) Reaganomics (a.k.a. Neoliberalism), 2) The "Citizens United" ruling, and 3) Republican Judicial Activism. These three elements have been central to the GOP political blueprint and their implementation has been disastrous for America's political and economic order.

Bamboozle 1: Reaganomics and Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism as an economic philosophy originated in the 19th century by free-market capitalists. It was reintroduced in the 1970's by conservative and right libertarian organizations encouraged by the market-oriented economic teachings of Milton Friedman and his Chicago School of Economics. It then gained favor with the challenges of "stagflation" and the persuasive 1981 GOP political campaign of Ronald Reagan. Reagan and his supporters challenged the growth of big government as well as the cost and benefits of the New Deal and Great Society programs launched by preceding Democratic Party administrations.

The four key elements of Reagan's "Program for Economic Recovery" were the following:

1. Reduced government spending - especially in the areas of social services
2. Inflation reduction - by decreasing the money supply
3. Broad and deep deregulation of businesses and markets, including financial and energy, in addition to rolling back other environmental, health and regulatory protections which allegedly place costly burdens on businesses
4. Tax cuts - especially for corporations and the wealthy - also known as "Supply-side Economics"

Fundamentally, Reaganomics says that government is the problem and cannot be a part of the solution. It posits that government should be smaller, more efficient, and that it should be run like a business on behalf of all businesses. Reaganomics postulates that government's role should not be to provide social services, regulations, standards, or a level playing field. Rather, it asserts that the private sector should be left alone to drive the economy and that the government should stay out of it altogether, save for the national defense. Reaganomics affirms that government governs best when it governs least.

As reasonable as it sounds, it is a myth and a lie: i.e., a BIG Bamboozle. The reality is that government is an essential part of the solution in a democracy, it is NOT the problem. It provides safeguards for the rights and freedoms of its citizens, arranges for the common security and defense, and seeks to provide equal opportunities for the common good and well-being of all its citizens.

Reaganomics supply-side ideology believes that lower taxes will spur economic activity creating jobs, more taxpayers, and increased tax revenues. On the face of it, it sounds quite reasonable. After all, who among us prefers to pay higher taxes and wouldn't prefer a smaller more efficient government?

Though it may appear logical, the supply-side has never delivered on its promise, though the Republican Party continues to promote it as gospel today. It was originally known as the "Horse and the Sparrows Theory" and is now more often known as the "Trickle Down" Theory.

The underlying idea is that you need to feed the horse first and overfeed him whenever possible because the horse is the powerhouse of the economy. The sparrows will take care of themselves, because even when the horse is overfed, there is plenty of nutrition rendered through the process. The Sparrows eat well once the horse has ingested and digested all the oats it can.

Americans have bought into the supply side theory heavily since the days of Reagan. The results have been that middle-class working people have been betrayed and disinherited, while the wealthy classes have gotten richer. (A Rand Corporation study found that from 1975 through 2018 \$50 trillion of wealth has moved from the bottom 90% of Americans to the top 1%.)

When taxes are reduced on corporations and ultra-wealthy individuals little, if any, of their tax relief is reinvested into the underlying economy. This happened after the Trump tax cuts of 2017. Following these cuts, companies have used most of the tax savings to pay shareholders higher dividends and to buy back company stock in the equity markets. These actions increase the share value simply by reducing the number of shares outstanding – without doing anything to improve or expand the underlying business itself.

The above ideas are based on the fact that many conservatives believe that the world is fundamentally fair, and their mission is to preserve the status quo. They think the lazy and irresponsible fail and can't afford the necessities of food, shelter, and medical insurance with only shameless moochers asking for help from public programs. The irony is that apart from rich energy states, red states (Republican) are consistently more dependent on federal funding than blue states (Democratic) and experience higher mortality and lower economic growth.

Bamboozle 2: Citizens United – The Political Corruption Corollary

So how has the GOP gotten away with deceiving Americans into believing the trickle-down theory? That's where the Citizens United Bamboozle comes into play. Thanks to the 2010 Supreme Court ruling, corporations and wealthy elites (our American oligarchy) spend a great deal of their tax relief on political campaign contributions. The only word for it is bribery, because the GOP is attempting to establish the "Best Democracy Money Can Buy." And thanks to Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission (FEC) it is totally legal!

The court ruled 5-4 that the [free speech](#) clause of the First Amendment prohibits the government from restricting [expenditures](#) for political campaigns by corporations, including nonprofit corporations, labor unions, and other associations. In other words, political corruption and the bribing of politicians is perfectly legal under the First Amendment of the Constitution according to this ruling.

We know that the First Amendment applies to individual persons – i.e., individual citizens and taxpayers, and we recognize that a corporation is not a person or a citizen. Corporations are structured purposefully

under business laws so that they are *not* like human beings. This deliberate structuring enables corporations to have limited liability and not be subject to extinction. A corporation can be closed by its shareholders, or bankruptcy, but otherwise cannot “die.”

The Supreme Court, in the Citizens United ruling, created a political donor class that can legally purchase an unlimited amount of influence. Unfortunately, money was equated with First Amendment Rights of Free Speech. This is essentially the legalization of the corruption of our political system or the Political Corruption Corollary.

Bamboozle 3: Republican Judicial Branch Activism

Decisions in SCOTUS cases are influenced by the values of the justices serving on the court. In the consideration of the facts and issues of cases with competing interests there exist two schools: 1) the originalists (i.e., conservatives) who proclaim to just follow the text of the U.S. Constitution and 2) the non-originalists (i.e., liberals, progressives) who seek decisions rooted in U.S. Constitutional principles and the needs of modern society.

The Originalists, supported strongly by the GOP, view jurisprudence as frozen in time. They adhere to the belief that provisions be interpreted exactly as the framers intended in their original meaning. That requires, however, a very firm understanding of history, a knowledge that SCOTUS judges and their clerks don't necessarily have.

Opposing the above view are the non-originalists, strongly supported by Democrats. They view the U.S. Constitution as a living and breathing document and that the enactment of new laws brought to the SCOTUS must be analyzed and decided depending upon both the Constitution and the changing attitudes and needs of the general populace.

Of greater concern to the country than these opposing judicial philosophies, should be the documented multi-year effort by the far right, begun in the Reagan years, to influence and reshape federal courts and the SCOTUS by promoting conservative policies and installing conservative judges. In other words, by reshaping the judiciary, the GOP has achieved in recent years its goals all while failing to accomplish anything significant through legitimate legislation.

SCOTUS, with its new supermajority of the right since 2020, has made a pronounced lurch to the hard right in its decisions. These have been highlighted by its recent rulings which: 1) in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned the constitutional right to abortion regardless of legal precedents and wide popular sentiments for its continuance, 2) sharply limited the authority of the EPA thereby reducing the possibilities for successfully combatting climate change despite the mounting worldwide perils and 3) its significant loosening of curbs on guns amid a nationwide epidemic of mass shootings.

Today's SCOTUS, with its supermajority, is actively embracing legal theories such as “originalism” that will affect thousands of cases throughout the country and is setting the country back on reproductive rights, gun safety, racial justice and voting rights, with more damage likely to result. An additional peril is that the public's approval and confidence in the institution is significantly falling as the high court is becoming too closely aligned with far-right political ideology. Many key prior legal decisions and precedents are being changed or reversed contributing to a widening gap between the high court's decisions and the viewpoints and sentiments of the majority of the public, thereby further eroding its perceived legitimacy to many citizens and voters.

Moreover, their effort has been shrewdly coordinated and orchestrated by the Federalist Society with the backing of influential ultra-wealthy donors prepared to extend very generous and undisclosed personal favors. These issues have been recently highlighted by media disclosures of SCOTUS judges receiving

special gifts and courtesies from large influential business magnates affiliated with the political far right. Such initiatives have been facilitated since 2010 by the Citizens United decision of SCOTUS.

The nomination processes and appointments to state and federal courts, as well as SCOTUS, have become heavily politicized in the last 50 years. An epic moment occurred in 2016 when the Senate GOP Majority Leader Mitch McConnell refused to hold confirmation hearings for a vacant justice position because the nomination had been made by a Democratic President in an election year even though it was

approximately 8 months prior to the election. Four years later, McConnell ruled in the opposite manner when a nomination was made by a GOP president just weeks before a presidential election. These two actions by one individual directly served to achieve a majority for conservative judges on the court.

Additional concerns have arisen due to the conservative court's increased use of shadow dockets where cases, often consequential, are decided, without full briefing or oral argument and without any written opinion. These shadow docket orders often do not include information about how each Justice voted or why the majority came to a certain conclusion, potentially leaving lower courts and the public in the dark about the reasoning behind decisions and how to apply Supreme Court precedent moving forward.█

So where do we go from here?

What follows is a modest proposal for the Democratic Party. Forget about campaigning primarily on all the subordinate issues. It's a fool's errand. Though they are on the right side of history, these debates cannot help the overall cause. It will be a major challenge to change many minds on any of the underlying issues: immigration, climate change, abortion rights, gun control/2nd amendment rights, voting rights, LGBTQ rights, and more. Positions and grievances on all these issues are firmly entrenched.

Instead, Democrats should focus primarily on the myth of supply-side economics and the other big bamboozles that the GOP continues to push. It is not difficult to prove to the public that only the ultra-wealthy have received tax cuts and benefited! The rest of us have been legally and constitutionally deceived.

Joe Biden is on the right path speaking about the need to "build up and out" and not from the top down, and that's a good start. But the Democratic Party needs to hammer this point home as its fundamental and central campaign focus.

Democrats need to call out the Big Bamboozles including the mythology of Reaganomics, the sham (and shame) of Citizens United and the disgrace of policy-centered judicial activism. Joe Biden and Hakeem Jeffries have articulated their positions well. **But what needs to be pounded home is the message that 99% of all Americans are demonstrably better off with "demand-side" economic policies and less than 1% are better off with the "supply-side."**