



Where's the Outrage?

Description

USA: *Where's the outrage?* Bob Dole asked in the middle of the scandal-plagued presidency of Bill Clinton scandals. Voters, it turned out, cared more about prosperity.

But as U.S. politics has descended into tribal warfare, that blinding emotion has become the default position of both major political parties. Each sees the other side as more than outrageous – as threats to self-government itself. Democrats are trumpeting the upcoming midterms as a battle for democracy against their “semi-fascist” enemies; Republicans are largely running on the promise to investigate and punish the Biden administration.

Lost in this Revenge Play politics is thoughtful discussion about how to address our nation's pressing problems. Yes, politicians issue policy statements and even pass legislation, but where are their specific plans to reduce the national debt, tame brewing foreign threats, tackle crime, and whip inflation? We now know the Biden administration cynically used the name, “Inflation Reduction Act,” to drum up support for [climate and health care initiatives](#) it had failed to pass before and that had nothing to do with corralling price increases. At a time when about 70% of Americans believe the country is on the wrong track, does anyone believe either party knows how to set things right?

The GOP still pretends to be the party of small government and fiscal responsibility, but it has not only failed by any measure to achieve either, it no longer even tries. It's just *words, words, words*.

Democrats have long claimed that they know how to fix things through government action, but six decades of failed social policies have thoroughly undermined that notion. Joe Biden's recent declaration that he will erase a massive tranche of student debt is remarkable for many reasons. His unilateral, probably unconstitutional, move is a sure sign of our broken government drift towards authoritarianism. The wildly different estimates of its costs, which range from \$300 billion to nearly \$1 trillion, are yet more evidence that nobody knows what they're doing. Can you imagine running a business like that? The truly astonishing thing is that no one is claiming it addresses the immense and urgent problem of the high cost of college, which is strongly tied to wrongheaded federal loan policies. Democrats don't even pretend to have the answer. They are raising the red flag, finally admitting they only know how to throw money at the issue (using taxpayer money to buy votes in the midterms).

Republicans are pointing this out, but where's their plan?

Then, of course, there is the abject failure by both parties to deal with the COVID-19 crisis that has already taken more than 1 million American lives.

Recent studies show that the lockdowns that kneecapped our economy [were not an effective deterrent against the spread of the disease](#). The closure of schools set back, perhaps irreparably, the education of millions of children. The trillions of dollars the federal government rushed out the door to mask the problems their policies created are now a case study of waste, fraud, and abuse. In the Aug. 16 article, "Prosecutors Struggle to Catch Up to a Tidal Wave of Pandemic Fraud," which detailed how "those dollars came with few strings and minimal oversight," the [New York Times reported](#):

In the midst of the pandemic, the government gave unemployment benefits to the [incarcerated](#), the [imaginary](#) and the dead. It sent money to "[farms](#)" that turned out to be front yards. It paid people who were on the government's "[Do Not Pay List](#)." It gave loans to 342 people who said their name was "[N/A](#)".

Those COVID failures, and myriad others, underscore the incompetence of our leaders. At bottom, the Democrats have mostly bad answers for our problems and Republicans have almost no answers at all.

In this context, the furious outrage that drives our politics is revealed as a cynical act of bipartisanship: It is the intentional effort by leaders from both parties to protect themselves. They have weaponized anger, keeping we the people's eyes fixed on each other's throats so that we don't hold them to account for their failures. *Don't blame us, it's your neighbor that's the problem. Why worry about policy when we are battling existential threats to the nation's soul?*

The culture war is real and it is important. But our high-dudgeon focus on woke leftists and extreme elements on the right is also a top-down strategy aimed at drawing attention away from Washington's ineptitude. Our leaders are fiddling while the country burns: When will we stop dancing to their outrageous tune?

J. Peder Zane

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