

## NOTHING GETS DONE

Former U.S. Sen. Ernest F. "Fritz" Hollings (D-SC)

DEC. 15, 2009 -- *Time* magazine this week had a special issue, "The Year in Pictures." Now we should take the picture of this year in politics. People, places, and politics are never the same, so a snapshot in words forbids exceptions for a quicker and better understanding of the politics.

Democrats are for spending and understand that you have to pay the bill with taxes. Regularly responsible, the Democrats instituted the budget process, and according to President Reagan supported Gramm-Rudman-Hollings to "end deficit spending." In 1993, the Democrats raised taxes on income, tobacco, gasoline, liquor, even Social Security, for the eight years of the best economy in the nation's history. This gave President George W. Bush "surpluses as far as the eye could see."

Republicans are against spending and against taxes. In fact, a controlling number of Republicans come to Congress having pledged to Grover Norquist and Americans for Tax Reform against all taxes. In 1993, the vote for cutting spending and raising taxes that gave us the best economy was opposed by every Republican in the House and Senate. The 1993 tax increase caused the Democrats to lose the Congress and the snapshot today shows both Republicans and Democrats are against taxes and increasing the national debt.

President Bush cut taxes and approved every spending bill but one. It was vetoed mainly for the stem cell research provision. President Bush increased the national debt by \$5 trillion. Increasing the

national debt by \$5 trillion, Republicans can no longer be called conservative.

Republicans are for war and Democrats are against war. Obama ran for President pledging to get out of Iraq. After a year, President Obama still has 124,000 troops in Iraq and it could be years more before we are out. Marc Sageman, a former CIA officer, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently to the effect: "There's no Qaeda in Afghanistan and no Afghans in Qaeda." Even the former NATO Commander and now Director of the National Security Council, Four Star Marine General James Jones, said that there were no more than a hundred Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

After eight years of war in Afghanistan and ending up with a corrupt government, a corrupt election, and desertions from its army, with warlords in charge of the country growing poppies, we have yet to change the Muslim culture to democracy. Calling it a "necessary war" to continue force feeding democracy creates as much terrorism as it eliminates.

Democrats and Republicans used to be for international trade. We passed several trade bills only to be vetoed by Presidents, both Republican and Democrat. When we lost the Congress in 1994, President Clinton panicked. For re-election in 1996 he kicked over his labor support and put the white tent out on the White House lawn for the Fortune 500, who came with the campaign contributions. Now both parties refuse to compete in globalization and stop the off-shoring of jobs in order to keep the contributions coming.

Corporate America was always concerned about the nation's economy because their investment, development and production were in the United States. But Jack Welch of GE made it kosher to oppose the nation's economy by stating at the annual meeting of his stockholders in the early 1990s that subcontractors for GE had to move to Mexico or else would no longer be considered suppliers for GE. More jobs have been lost to off-shoring than to the recession. In globalization any company facing off-shore competition has to also off-shore to survive.

The stark reality is that with off-shore competition you can't produce for a profit in the United States. But both Democrats and Republicans ignore this reality when it comes to jobs. So does the media. I watched the weekend shows from *Meet the Press* to, finally, last Sunday's *Sixty Minutes* with President Obama. All the programs were on jobs, but no mention of trade or the loss of jobs to off-shoring. Regardless of stimuli, we'll continue to lose more jobs to off-shoring.

Former Senator Phil Gramm told me twenty-five years ago in the Senate: "When the Democrats give up labor, the Republicans will give up the money." Now both Democrats and Republicans have given up labor and gone for the money. The Congress is in a marathon fundraising for the campaign. It's morning, lunchtime and evening. It's Mondays, Fridays and on the weekends. It's all six years. Policy committee meetings are canceled to fundraise, and both the Republican and Democratic leaders in the Senate earmark for the candidates up for re-election. The Senate Chamber is no longer for the country. It's just one grand campaign headquarters for both parties.

Democrats are for government, but Republicans oppose government. Ever since Ronald Reagan, Republicans feel that government is not the solution but the problem. Republicans campaign for office on getting rid of the government. Democrats elected to office feel that you've got to get something done. But with the filibuster rule of sixty votes prohibiting anything being accomplished, Harry Reid can't call up anything in the Senate to be passed unless it's approved by the minority.

The Senate was intended to cool passions and for issues to be deliberated. We Southerners corrupted the filibuster rule to prevent civil rights. With the Senate on TV, a Senator can't get home before his phone is ringing with somebody bitching. With the internet and instant communication worldwide, the filibuster rule today is used not to deliberate but to kill. The cardinal rule of pollster politics is not to divide the voters. Never be for. Never be against. Merely comment on both sides of an issue and tell of your concern.

The filibuster allows both Democrats and Republicans to take a position without losing votes. We could easily return to democracy by the majority by changing the 60-vote rule in the Senate to so-many hours to deliberate and debate an issue. But now we suffer the embarrassment of a leading Republican Senator following the President to Copenhagen, telling Copenhagen not to listen to the President because the minority controls in America. Next time, the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee better pick a bunch of losers so we can get into the minority and take control.

The United States is a democracy with minority rule. Nothing gets done.

Merry Christmas!

*Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the recently published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).*

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