

The Ugly Truth About Politicians

A while back, in writing about Senate candidate Christine O'Donnell, I accepted the rumors about her financial difficulties. Since then, I've heard that she has explained them all away. I wouldn't know. My point in writing about her alleged problems in the first place was that I didn't care. I wanted her to win the Senate race in Delaware because if elected, she would vote the way I wanted.

Some people were disappointed in me. I hate to disappoint people, but if I'm not going to write what I believe, why bother?

I'm afraid that a lot of people, especially among the ranks of my fellow conservatives, confuse electing politicians with selecting a pastor or a priest. Politics is not a higher calling. It's not a calling at all, even though politicians would have you believe that theirs is a life of self-sacrifice that compares favorably with Mother Teresa's. The world of politics primarily provides an escape hatch for failed lawyers, rich people who want to add "celebrity" to their resumes, physicians who have grown weary of dealing with bureaucratic paperwork, and other various mediocrities seeking to put some buzz into their humdrum lives.

If people asked me to list the qualities to which I aspire, they would be honesty, reliability, courage, kindness, loyalty and optimism. They are the qualities I look for in my friends. They are not the qualities I expect to find in politicians. What's more, when I hear people go on about how wonderful their favorite office holders are, I think they sound like very naïve children.

The fact is, most of us don't know the people we're called

upon to elect. We may hear their speeches or see them interviewed on TV. We might even hear them debate their opponents, but we don't know what sort of parent they are, what sort of neighbor or sibling, what sort of boss.

Let's face it – every single time a politician is caught having an adulterous affair or taking a bribe or trying to pick up someone in a men's room or selling out his country for the sake of his party, millions of people react exactly the way young children do when they find out the truth about Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. But not I.

I think that, by and large, politicians are a bunch of weasels. I wouldn't trust them to tell me the time of day. I only ask that they vote exactly the way I would, if I had nothing better to do with my life than constantly raise money so that I could retain my cushy job; a job, by the way, that really only requires casting votes.

When you get right down to it, voting is something we all do. The difference is that these stiffes get paid to do it, and then have bridges and airports named in their honor, as if they'd covered the construction costs with a personal check.

Speaking of votes, I can't help noticing how many Democrats seem to be running against Obama. In order to carry off the illusion that these schmoes are independent-minded individuals, they're running ads proudly proclaiming their opposition to, say, ObamaCare or the stimulus bill. These lumps aren't blue dog Democrats, though, they're yellow dogs. These were the folks who were given dispensation to vote with the Republicans because Pelosi and Reid had counted noses and concluded they had more than enough votes to pass whatever piece of left-wing lunacy they were shoving down our throats that particular day.

In its own way, those dispensations were every bit as sleazy and cynical as bribing Ben Nelson and Mary Landrieu to get

them aboard the ObamaCare express.

If, like me, you have ever wondered how these people can bear to look in the mirror, I think the secret is that when you spend day after day looking at the likes of Harry Reid, Alan Grayson, Nancy Pelosi and Anthony Weiner, after a while the loathsome creature in the mirror doesn't look so awful.

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True Believers Make Me Nervous

☒ True believers make me nervous, and not just the lefty true believers with whom I have virtually nothing in common. Conservative true believers make me uneasy too. They're too rigid for my taste. They won't budge from their rock-solid principles, no matter what. They are purists who would rather lose an election than compromise, a word they spit out with contempt.

Call me crazy, but I'd rather win. And while being pure is just great, if say, you're a monk, it's not so wonderful in the real world of politics.

During the 1964 presidential campaign, Barry Goldwater, the leading conservative politician and true believer of his day, spelled out the philosophy when he said, "I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice

is no virtue!" That may be so, but Goldwater carried just six states, and in terms of the popular vote he lost in the fifth most lopsided presidential election in U.S. history.

At least he didn't compromise on his principles, right?

And now we have Christine O'Donnell, the winner in the Delaware Republican primary for the U.S. Senate. No, she's no Barry Goldwater, in terms of stature. But she did manage to do something Goldwater wasn't able to do: she pulled off a major upset. O'Donnell beat a moderate Republican, Mike Castle, who by every count would have been a shoe-in come November. Now, the odds are long against O'Donnell.

It's no secret that winning a primary, which normally attracts the most ardent voters on both extremes, is not the same thing as winning a general election. Castle is a RINO, a Republican in Name Only – not Rush Limbaugh's kind of Republican, and not mine either. But Delaware isn't Idaho or Alabama. The conventional wisdom says a staunch conservative like O'Donnell, who was supported by the Tea Party, can't win a general election in Delaware.

But the purists says it's way too early to be writing Ms. O'Donnell's obituary. And truth be told, even if she doesn't win, the purists would still rather have her running than a RINO. A win with the likes of Mike Castle is no win at all as they see it. A loss, if it comes to that, with O'Donnell would be a principled defeat.

I get it but I don't buy it. Let's say Castle votes with Republicans only half the time. Isn't that better than having a Democrat from Delaware in the Senate, who will vote with the Republicans none of the time? Isn't it better to have two (barely) Republicans like Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe in the Senate from Maine – than two Democrats? If Republicans want to truly be a national party, they will need not only conservative candidates who can win in solidly Red States, but

moderates (another word the purists spit out with contempt) who can win in states that often vote Blue.

Jim DeMint, the conservative Republican senator from South Carolina – who backed O'Donnell – once said that, **“I would rather have 30 Republicans in the Senate who really believe in principles of limited government, free markets, free people, than to have 60 that don't have a set of beliefs.”** Me too, Jim, but in the real world, the Democrats would shove whatever left-wing programs they want down those 30 conservative throats – and there wouldn't be a damn thing DeMint and his 29 conservative pals could do about it.

I prefer a more realistic conservative's take. I want the most viable conservative to win, Bill Buckley used to say. Viable, as in *electable*.

Conventional wisdom says O'Donnell doesn't stand a chance. But this may be the year conventional wisdom takes it on the chin. This may be the year when there are enough disaffected independents, and even Democrats – enough folks out of work or worried about keeping their jobs and their homes – to elect a supposedly unelectable right-winger. Despite the odds, it could happen. If it does, the true believers will look mighty good. And that would be just fine with me.