

Donald Trump and the 2022 Midterms

Sometimes it's important to state the obvious, just to make sure everybody is on the same page, to make sure that we all accept certain basic assumptions. So here goes: Democrats are in trouble. If the polls are right, they're in big trouble. And they will know just how much trouble they're in later this year, when if nothing unforeseen gets in the way, Republicans will be celebrating their victories in the 2022 midterm elections.

Yes, a lot can get in the way between now and November. But one problem for the GOP is no mystery. It's not some unknown factor. It's a problem that's already in the mix. And it's a problem that may stand in the way of that red wave the Republican Party is anticipating.

The problem is Donald Trump.

It's no secret that Trump still thinks he won the 2020 presidential race. Just the other day he said that the "real insurrection" happened not on January 6, 2021 – but on the day in November that he lost the election. And any Republican running next year who doesn't buy into his delusion would not only have a Democratic opponent to contend with – but there's a good chance he or she will have Donald Trump to contend with also.

As the New York Times has reported: "One year after his defeat, Mr. Trump is not only still looming over the G.O.P., but also – along with his imitators – posing the biggest threat to what is shaping up to be a fruitful year for Republican candidates. With President Biden's approval ratings mired below 50 percent – in some surveys, below 40 percent – and voters in a sour mood, Republicans are well positioned to

make gains in Congress and statehouses across the country.”

They may be “well positioned” to chalk up victories next year, but Donald Trump will have a lot to say about whether they actually do. And when Donald Trump talks, Republican voters listen. A Quinnipiac University Poll late last year found that Donald Trump has an 86 percent favorable rating and just a 10 percent unfavorable rating among Republicans.

While most former presidents keep a low profile – at least for a while – that’s something Mr. Trump’s ego won’t allow. He’s a man who holds grudges – against all sorts of people, including more than a few fellow Republicans. He recently said that, “Saving America starts by saving the G.O.P. from RINOs, sellouts and known losers!” If you’re a Republican who’s ever disagreed with the former president, there’s a good chance you’ll wind up in his crosshairs, if you’re not there already.

“Moving beyond the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach him this year, Mr. Trump is now threatening to unseat lawmakers who voted for the bipartisan infrastructure bill,” the Times reports. “He taunts Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell as an ‘old crow’ on a near-daily basis, while demanding that Mr. McConnell be removed from his leadership post.”

It’s one thing when McConnell takes potshots from Democrats. That’s to be expected; it goes with the job. But taking shots from the former Republican president is something McConnell, and more importantly, the GOP in general, don’t need – not less than a year away from the midterms. Shooting inside the tent is never a good idea.

So why can’t a few Republican heavyweights take a trip to Florida and tell the former president that the Republican Party will be better off if he spends his time hitting golf balls instead of bad-mouthing Republicans he doesn’t like.

When Barry Goldwater had had enough of Richard Nixon he, along

with the GOP minority leaders in the House and Senate, went to the White House and told the president his support on Capitol Hill was gone, that it was time to go. And when someone with Goldwater's gravitas said it was over, Nixon knew it was time to leave office. He resigned the very next day.

But what Republican could go to Mar-a-Lago and tell Donald Trump that he needs to pipe down, that his feuds with Republicans won't help them in the midterms? If Mitt Romney or Liz Cheney said, "For the good of the party, please stop attacking Republicans," would he even listen? Of course not! They're among the Republicans Trump sees as "RINOs, sellouts and known losers."

But what about all those other Republicans, the ones who are more conservative, less Republican-in-name-only? Is there anyone he respects enough to listen to? Is there anyone with the heft to get the former president to stop tearing down his fellow Republicans?

I can't think of anyone.

Besides, most Republicans in Washington don't have the courage to stand up to the former president – not when they read those polls and understand how much respect the GOP base still holds for him. Most Republicans are afraid of the blowback that likely would come their way.

For all his faults, Richard Nixon was a long-time Republican who cared about his party and the institution of the presidency. Trump is a relative newcomer to the Republican Party – and I wouldn't bet two cents that he's capable of separating his own interests from that of his party – or from the office he held for four years.

As I was at my desk recently, I heard a ping on my computer, indicating someone has just sent me a text message. It said, "Trump is making his comeback with a social media platform all his own, and we want YOU to join! Will you join?" A link

follows taking me to a place where I can sign up.

Just imagine, Donald Trump free again on social media – free to say whatever he wants, whenever he wants, about whomever he wants. What could go wrong?