

Enough chutzpah to go around

I decided on the night of November 8, 1980 to never get actively involved in a political campaign on behalf of an independent candidate in a partisan race. It was obvious to me that a third party candidate not only cannot win a presidential race - nor likely any congressional contest either - but also that they cannot be competitive and they would be highly unlikely to win even a single electoral vote.

Yet I've never stopped longing for a candidate that could leave partisan wrangling behind and prevail as a candidate truly acceptable to a majority of voters. We've reached a time where presidential elections are about voting "against" one candidate, not "for" the other.

In 1972, Richard Nixon could have been shown on videotape inside the Watergate offices with the "burglars" and George McGovern still could not have beaten him in that November's election. Bill Clinton was almost shown flagrante delicto and still Bob Dole could not win.

It has become "the lesser of two evils" instead of the "best choice."

Voters often decide "I would never vote for 'x' and even though 'y' is a dodo, he/she is on the same side as I am on the don't ask, don't tell issue, so I'll vote for them. That's all we agree on but 'x' thinks members of the same sex should have legal rights and I believe homosexuality is an abomination, so 'y' gets my vote."

As examples of what politics has become, I offer you these two Wyoming stories:

First, the Democrats. The Party put out the national propaganda spin on the new minimum wage, going so far as to say 17,000 Wyoming residents will get a raise as a result of the increase. Beyond that, they pounded themselves on the chest for the singular fete of getting the minimum raise increased after far too long without an increase. So far, so good.

But nowhere in the press release do they level with readers. It is never revealed that the only way they got an increase in the minimum raise as was promised to voters last Fall, was to attach a rider to the Iraq funding bill.

To pass a bill the president would sign, the Democrats swallowed their integrity and voted for \$120 billion in additional money to fight a war voters told them they abhor and also agreed to include over \$4 billion in tax relief for small business, ostensibly to reduce the impact of the higher minimum wage.

They did not force Republicans to take a stand on the minimum wage issue. By attaching it to a bill Republicans WOULD support, low paid workers across America cannot now be sure just who got them the increase in wages.

Beyond that, the Wyoming Dems press release labeled Senator Mike Enzi and

U.S. Representative Barbara Cubin, both Republicans, "obstructionists."

The vote on this bill in the Senate was 94-3 with 3 absent. The three voting "No" were Coburn (R-OK), Kyl (R-AZ) and DeMint (R-SC). Absent were Johnson (R-SD), Schumer (D-NY) and Inhofe (R-OK).

Nowhere in the Democrats press release did it mention that one of **THEIR** principal leaders, Chuck Schumer, did not think the measure important enough to show up and vote for it. But, Enzi's name does not appear in opposition. And, Mrs. Cubin has not been showing up often enough to "obstruct" anything.

The compromise bill, one that the president would sign, passed the House 280-142 with 80 Republicans voting "Yes" and in the Senate 80-14. The Dems press release stated: "While Republicans like Cubin and Enzi joined the rest of the Bush Republicans in putting their special interest friends ahead of the American people by trying to block a minimum wage hike, Democrats delivered on our promise."

Talk about misinformation.

Many Republicans in the House (80) and at least 29 Republicans in the Senate voted for the entangled legislation. And, was it "the American people" who clamored for an increase in the minimum wage for 4% of the work force or the elected Democrats, playing to their base?

Is the only way Democrats can deliver on their promises to attach that promise to a bill on which they made a major surrender, what kind of delivery is that? The bill Bush finally signed had removed the withdrawal date for troops in Iraq. Didn't Democrats promise that to voters also?

Not to be outdone, Barbara Cubin once again has taken the position that she has never voted herself a pay raise. That is technically true. **103 Stat. 1769** of November 30, 1989, removed the need to annually vote on pay raises. They are basically automatic. A Representative's pay when Mrs. Cubin took office in 1995 was \$133,600. It is expected to increase to \$169,700 on January 1, 2008.

What she does not say is that she has never refused to accept the congressional pay hike. It was chutzpah for legislators to call the automatic raise(s) "The Ethics Reform Act of 1989". The only ways maximum pay hikes do not take effect are: (1) Congress statutorily prohibits the adjustment; (2) Congress statutorily revises the adjustment; or (3) GS employees receive a lower rate of increase.

A fair question of Ms. Cubin, who claims to be a fiscal conservative, is if she's ever introduced legislation provided by (1) or (2) above? How, in good conscience, can she accept a pay raise (even if she didn't have to vote for it) when the budget is hundreds of billions in the red and the national debt is \$8.8 trillion?

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Cheyenne Day needs to go

There is no good reason to pay public employees to go home a half day early on the Wednesday of Frontier Days.

Instituted so employees could partake of the events at Frontier Park when Frontier Days did not extend into two weekends, the generosity with public funds needs to end. It is an unnecessary, costly gesture.

There is simply no justification or need to grant public employees that time off with pay any longer. Cheyenne Day was not initiated, according to historians, so employees could scoot to the Cheyenne Club, Crown Bar or other watering hole. The purpose was to allow employees an opportunity to attend Frontier Days, especially the rodeos, that they would otherwise not have had a chance to attend.

Not all public employees are shown the same generosity with taxpayer money. But many are.

If granting paid time off for a special CFD event made any sense anymore, Wednesday morning would be a better choice than Wednesday afternoon. There is but one chance to view the Thunderbirds Air Show. There are also no weekend days to attend the free pancake breakfast but they begin early enough for public employees to indulge in the straw-flavored Krusteaz 'cakes.

With a \$30 million plus annual payroll, an

extra half day off with pay for city employees for no other reason than it's been traditional, costs taxpayers about \$60,000.

There are some things that could be done to legitimize the granting of that Wednesday afternoon off for public employees.

One would be to authorize all employees to take the afternoon off, **WITHOUT** pay, but require that they schedule the time off at least a month in advance. There wouldn't be much of a crew around but Friday afternoons in the City Building aren't exactly crawling with employees now. It would probably be the same.

For public employees who still believe this afternoon off with pay is necessary so they can partake of the drinking and other horseplay that only occurs at Frontier Park, they would be allowed the afternoon off with pay conditioned on their having to sign in and out at the Park. A minimum of four hours in attendance would be required. A trustworthy member of the clergy would be asked to verify - insuring no cheating occurred. In other words, unlike punching in and out on a time clock for fellow employees, public employees being paid to take the afternoon off would actually have to physically be present at Frontier Park. They would be given free admission but the beer is their own expense. Who could object to this condition? All who want to go home and sleep the afternoon away and be paid for it.