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Republican House, democrat Speaker: Could that happen?

Steve Bakke  April 1, 2024



The Keystone Kops

The so-called “Keystone Kops” are fictional, silent movie policemen, whose comic incompetence displayed chaos and confusion in slapstick comedies produced by Mack Sennett for his Keystone Film Company between 1912 and 1917. Let’s examine a striking similarity with some of our politicians.

Why are some republicans repeating past strategic mistakes and expecting different results? Perhaps I should ask myself a similar question. Why do I keep complaining about those mistakes and expect anything to change.

First let’s look at a report from the “pick-up-my-ball-and-go-home” department. Texas GOP Rep. Kay Granger, soon after being appointed to the powerful and coveted position of House Appropriations Committee chair, announced she would not seek reelection and last week she stepped down early from her position as chair. Perhaps her decision is understandable considering the dysfunctional structure that exists in Washington, the House of Representatives, and the republican party in particular.

Ken Buck of Colorado and Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin are two republican representatives who’ve recently announced they won’t be running again for the U.S. Congress. And to make matters far worse, they’ve now decided to leave the House by mid-April. Perhaps they can personally rationalize their actions, but the House republicans can’t afford to lose these two votes. What are these two guys hoping to accomplish by jumping mid-term?

This comes at a time when the republican majority is so thin that after mid-April, and for an uncertain amount of time thereafter, they can afford only one defection on floor votes and still be expected to win them. Given the uncertainties of illness and other personal issues, for a period of time and on any given day, it could be a last-minute determination as to which party has a voting majority.

Bad habits in republican governance have been developing over time, but the current foolish wave of “motions to vacate” have brought things to a head. A few months ago, Kevin McCarthy was forced out as Speaker, causing a vacuum of leadership and chaos for weeks. Republicans looked foolish. And recently, Rep. Majorie Green of Georgia introduced a resolution calling for Speaker Mike Johnson’s removal. Once again, the timing is a windfall political opportunity for the democrats as they seek to gain control of the House.

There is no organized plan in place for a group of rebel republicans to accomplish what Representative Green has threatened. And while it's uncertain how much support she has, she certainly doesn't stand alone. Given the thin republican majority, what could they be hoping to accomplish? Speaker Johnson has an impossible job of making policy with the thinnest House majority in history. And for those few threatening his removal, they have no successor standing by.

We need our political leaders to join forces and pay attention to the challenging domestic and world affairs which threaten America's world-wide leadership and influence. Our national budget and debt decisions are uncertain at best with repeated "stop-gap" measures to deal with funding emergencies.

The issue of border security and immigration control is on the top of most voters' priority list. And we're in the middle of impeachment proceedings of President Biden and Alejandro Mayorkas, the Secretary of Homeland Security.

While we "muddle through" at home, our politicians should be aggressively dealing with international existential threats such as Israel's attempt to destroy the Hamas terrorist organization in Gaza, the seemingly endless Ukraine/Russia war, and deciding how to deal the Iran nuclear weapons threat rather than kicking it "down the road." And we should be preparing to deal with a potential Chinese invasion of our loyal ally Taiwan.

This is no time to risk forfeiting control of the House. If the current Speaker is forced to vacate his office, think about the potentially tragic situation that sets up. In a period of a few days, what was a Republican controlled House of Representatives, could end up electing a democrat as House Speaker.

It's tough to make these things up. It's bad governance anchored in foolishness. Too many republicans are confused and divided. It appears some republicans are about to, once again, shoot themselves in the foot. I wonder how soon they'll have to switch feet.