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Why Trump?

By Steve Bakke  October 27, 2020

Mallard Fillmore by Bruce Tinsley, May 7, 2019



Many experts and never-Trumpers are mystified by the support Trump commands. The explanation they seek is amazingly simple.

Be assured, Trump supporters aren't blind to the outrageous characteristics of our President. Trump's popular conservative policies often collide with his controversial style. His presidency suffers from constant public relations problems, and negative references abound: crude, uncouth, cruel, coarse, imprecise, undignified, misogynist, chauvinist, racist, profane, boastful, abuser, bully, egomaniac, nasty, narcissistic, annoying. Some are false, some speculative, and some earned.

Trump has made himself into a big target with this outrageous style. He exaggerates, stretches reality, and brags a lot. There's no question his antics have isolated him politically from many otherwise supportive conservatives, much to his disadvantage.

So, it's no surprise there are confused conservatives drifting between approval and uncertainty about Trump. They ask themselves, "Has Trump been a breath of fresh air or a puff of bad breath?" Some plead for more dignity. Conservative humorist Evan Sayet explained the situation something like this: We tried dignity with Bush, collegiality with McCain, propriety with Romney, and it had no effect on the barrage of personal ridicule coming from the left.

What are confused conservatives to do? They have trouble supporting Democrat priorities such as: electoral college elimination, professed support for more aggressive pro-abortion laws, soft border control policies, unsustainable free higher-ed, and misdirected expensive Medicare-for-all. They flinch at the "Green New Deal's" unrealistic energy policies, rejection of clean nuclear energy, and much more. And let's not forget Democrat threats of Supreme

Court packing; defunding police; and embrace of permanently more powerful central government.

But undecided conservatives shouldn't be asked to simply vote against democrats. They need to be reminded of the ways Trump's presidency has been consequential. Consider his accomplishments before the pandemic: great economy; job growth; improved wages for all; lowest ever unemployment for blacks and Hispanics; 6,000,000 citizens off food stamps; stock market records, and public optimism. There's every indication that economic energy will survive, post-pandemic.

Consider these accomplishments that I closely associate with his "get-it-done" style: The Abraham Accords between Israel, UAE, and Bahrain; announced normalizing relations between Israel and Sudan, with Saudi Arabia expected to follow soon; recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital; withdrawal from the broken INF nuclear forces treaty with Russia; ending the toothless Iran nuclear deal; exiting the misrepresented Paris accords; funding 8,700 "opportunity zones"; criminal justice reforms; strengthening NATO membership financial support; creating the "space force"; strengthened immigration and border controls; brought home hostages; and originalist Supreme Court replacements. Let's give him credit for successfully applying his unusual personality and approach.

As to COVID policies. I believe it was inevitable we would arrive about where we are regarding infection and fatalities, regardless of party leadership. I say that because of our lack of knowledge and preparation in January, and our federalist style government with considerable state control over these emergencies. I am giving an advantage to Trump for keeping our economy breathing and refusing to accept lazy timetables for development of treatments and vaccines. That was almost like introducing "wartime" protocols for these projects.

There are numerous other impressive Trump accomplishments and plans: electoral college support; energy independence; supporting police; reducing ominous regulations; appointing hundreds of federal judges; overhauling harmful trade deals; right-to-life; school choice; reduced drug prices; reduced taxes for 80% of Americans; and many more policies compatible with conservative preferences.

Fortunately, if attracted by the progressive "siren song," most conservatives eventually "recover." These are devoted conservatives who will likely refuse to forsake these policy ideals and preferences to reject a temporary, yet effective, albeit outrageous, leader who advances many of those same policy ideals.

There should be no mystery as to what motivates Trump supporters to remain faithful. For some, perhaps there's a subliminal attraction to Trump's combative style, but that's not the explanation. Most of these conservatives are resolute in their opposition to democrat candidates because of their progressive, sometimes radical, policy goals. For them there is no alternative.

When difficult presidential election choices are required, the decision should be all about policy preferences. One should ask no more of a conservative than to decide on that basis. And conservatives should commit to deliver nothing less.