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Rise of the Swamp Creatures

By Matt A. Mayer

It started a few weeks before Election Day. With the polling data almost universally showing that Joe Biden would win the White House and a ‘blue wave’ would sweep Mitch McConnell into the Senate minority, creatures of the Washington swamp started becoming emboldened enough to publicly buck Donald Trump and his team.

I don’t mean, of course, the NeverTrumpers who opposed Trump during the primary and general elections in 2016. Those ‘brave’ souls assumed Trump wasn’t going to beat Hillary Clinton so spoke out against him with incredibly judgmental letters and tweets by the dozens, telling voters Trump was unworthy of the presidency, as if Bill Clinton never happened. They had nothing more to lose by hitting Trump relentlessly over the last four years with more signed letters and tweets showing their seriousness.

No, I’m referring to the swamp creatures whose livelihood largely entails of having a parasitic relationship with the federal leviathan. The scores of lawyers, lobbyists and consultants who ply their trade by ingratiating themselves and their clients with the current administration’s political appointees in the hopes of landing billion dollar and multi-million-dollar contracts. Typically, Republican and Democratic swamp creatures rise and fall as their political allies win and lose.

As with all things, Trump changed this pattern too.

The first sign occurred when a former low-level colleague of mine from the Department of Homeland Security during the George W. Bush days posted a statement on LinkedIn that he was supporting Biden. His statement came out about a week before the election. He noted he had been a ‘quiet supporter’ of Biden and tried to pitch Joe ‘[put y’all back in chains](#)’ Biden as a bipartisan, decent guy. In fairness, he is probably too young to remember what Biden did to Justice Clarence Thomas in 1991. Nonetheless, you can figure out for yourself why he didn’t issue the statement much earlier in the year.

The next sign happened after Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency director Chris Krebs got fired by Trump for issuing a statement clearly intended to cut the legs out from under Trump’s legal contests of the election results. As a political appointee and smart operator, Krebs had to know his statement was going to get him fired. In fact, it isn’t too hard to believe that Krebs *wanted* to get fired to keep his name off of the AOC blacklist, so his future Beltway employability, like so many Trump alumni, wasn’t entirely diminished. In today’s hyper-partisan environment, having the Trump administration

on your résumé just isn’t a plus.

More interesting was the number of people who posted comments on social media unequivocally in support of Krebs, in which they took direct or indirect shots at Trump. What surprised me was that the people speaking up had never expressed opposition to Trump until their Krebs posts. Again, it was just another indication of how the DC swamp works — keep silent about those in power when you want something from them, then feel free to rip them once they lose power. It is the way of the swamp.

The final sign came when Carl Bernstein of Watergate and the virulently anti-Trump *Washington Post* [tweeted a list](#) of 21 Republican senators who he said ‘expressed extreme contempt for Trump and his fitness to be POTUS’. Most of those on the list weren’t surprising given their status as NeverTrumpers or Establishment Republicans. For example, Sen. Rob Portman of my home state, Ohio, is a longtime close friend of the Bush family; seeing his name on the list wasn’t a shock. Telling Bernstein about their disdain for Trump is a classic swamp creature move, knowing it wouldn’t likely hurt them now that Trump was on his way out. It also smacks of cowardice, as Bernstein properly pointed out.

The only names on Bernstein’s list that surprised me were Sen. Rick Scott of Florida and Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, given their good relationships with Trump and their likely interest in running for president in 2024. Seeing Tim Scott’s name likely pleased former South Carolina governor and UN Ambassador for Trump Nikki Haley, as he may be her strongest primary opponent should she run in 2024. Trump won’t forget who was on the list in four years’ time, when his endorsement will matter enormously. If he doesn’t run himself, of course.

The swamp creatures think things will return to normal now that Trump and his loyalists are leaving. They now walk around spouting off about how bad Trump and his team were, in the hope no one notices how silent they were for the last four years. You see, courage isn’t a high commodity in Washington; cowardice is. Who do you think truly has courage? The men or women who loyally served Trump because he was the President and asked them to serve, knowing it would curtail their future employability and they would be relentlessly attacked by Democrats and the media? Or the swamp creatures who revile Trump once they think it’s safe to do so?

Trump had some success in draining the swamp, but he clearly needed more than four years to fully get the job done. It's now evident that the swamp is so vast and full of creatures with a vested interest in keeping it full that draining it just might be impossible.

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