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REDSTATE

An Open Letter to Establishmentarians re Donald Trump

By Matt A. Mayer

Let me start by stating unequivocally that the members of the Establishmentarians (Republican, conservative, and libertarian) are among the smartest men and women I've ever known. I own and have read many of their books. Their work greatly influenced my intellectual development over the years. I have enormous respect for them and fully understand their dissatisfaction with Donald Trump.

For those who missed it, Charles Murray defined Establishmentarians in his piece "[Why 'Hillary Is Even Worse' Doesn't Cut It](#)." Murray noted Establishmentarians are "all over the map, from talk-show hosts with audiences of millions (Limbaugh, Hannity) to politicians who directly shape policy (Ryan, McConnell) to academics who write technical papers read exclusively by their peers." Murray argues why Establishmentarians (and a strong plurality of voters) shouldn't support Trump.

My great respect for Murray and his co-Establishmentarians notwithstanding, they are simply wrong to continue to flail against Trump's position as the Republican nominee.

They aren't wrong because he is, in fact, the lesser of two evils; they aren't wrong because he is, on the whole, closer to our positions on the spectrum of issues as compared to Hillary Clinton. They aren't wrong because he will, in stark contrast to Clinton, appoint Supreme Court nominees more in the Antonin Scalia mold. They aren't wrong because he has, against conventional wisdom, earned more votes in the Republican primary than any other candidate in history and did so, like Ronald Reagan, by earning votes from Democrats and Independents.

They are wrong because, ironically, Trump just may make it possible for their ideas to actually get implemented. Trump may be their greatest chance to win.

Here's the rub: few of the Establishmentarians' ideas have ever been actually adopted in federal policy. Establishmentarians' ideas are among the best ever put down on paper, but their effectiveness in getting those ideas implemented into law is dismal, at best. As a close friend remarked:

The fundamental problem the Beltway "establishmentarians" haven't yet confronted is the complete and utter lack of demonstrable evidence America is better after 25+ years of their telling us what the agenda should be. They lost the culture wars completely and totally except on abortion. Government is bigger and worse than ever; America is less safe in the world; the economy is subpar; and on and on and on. The

emperor has no clothes and Americans get it.

We can't just blame Barack Obama for the state of the country. Republicans controlled the presidency and/or the Congress for periods of time over the last three decades. Our best moment came when Newt Gingrich squeezed welfare reform out of Bill Clinton...twenty years ago! Other than that, Republicans pushed or acquiesced to policies that grew the federal government, increased deficits and the debt, and engaged in ill-advised nation-building.

Establishmentarians have made millions of dollars from books sales, speaking fees, and selling donors on what could be. Scores of Republican politicians retired as or quickly became millionaires even though they utterly failed to enact what they promised us they would. What did the Right get in return for our investment in them? Great theories, but a government so dysfunctional, corrupt, and expensive that a significant number of Americans voted for Trump, despite all of his known warts and outlandish statements.

Did it ever occur to Establishmentarians that a Trump presidency could make it more likely their ideas get enacted? A Clinton presidency most assuredly won't result in freer markets, lower taxes, less regulations, increased competitive federalism, or a federal policy apparatus (the bureaucracy and the courts) more conducive to conservative and libertarian ideas. It will, however, keep the Establishmentarians firmly in control of the Right and comfortable along the DC-New York corridor.

Trump is inherently unpredictable, especially for the Establishmentarians.

So, yes, Trump likely will destabilize Washington, D.C., and foreign policy substantially. Are those outcomes really that bad? Maybe Hurricane Trump is exactly what needs to hit the federal leviathan so we can make a solid break from the status quo and rebuild anew. Perhaps, like a forest with layers of undergrowth, a lightning strike that causes a massive fire will lead to a more vibrant and healthier ecosystem. Imagine the opportunities for innovation once the status quo comes crashing down.

Maybe our allies and our enemies need a little uncertainty, too. Our allies have come to take America for granted. The American taxpayer and our young men and women pay dearly to protect the world. Perhaps Trump will force them out of their dependency on us and spur them to invest in their own defense. After all, they are the ones in closest proximity to the world's tyrants and terrorists.

As for our enemies, the uncertainty that comes with a schizophrenic Trumpian foreign policy will keep them on their toes and perhaps lead to better results than we've gotten from walking small and carrying a twig. It seems to me North Korea will be a lot more careful with Trump holding America's nuclear codes than the Clinton gang who last gave us the failed Agreed Framework. The same goes for the mullahs in Iran and the communists in China.

Many of the same complaints being made about Trump were thrown at Reagan prior to his presidency. I'm not suggesting that Trump is Reagan, but maybe he'll surprise critics, too.

The Establishmentarians can continue to do all they can to ensure a Clinton presidency. I just hope they realize that perhaps the wisdom of the masses outside of the Beltway whom they love to claim make great choices in a free market may, just this once, know something about politics they don't know.

America is sick and needs something more than the Left-Right Establishment status quo. Trump may not be the cure, but he may be the shock treatment that begins the healing process in which the Establishmentarians' cures get a chance to work. Isn't that possibility worth fighting for—or at least not fighting against?

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