

Reflections on A Failed Administration

Two articles in the paper recently demonstrate convincingly why Democrats must – and will – win the White House this November.

In the first, Homeland Security Secretary, Tom Ridge, is reported to have told colleagues he will resign after the election because he's not earning enough money as a Cabinet officer to be able to put his teenage children through college when they are old enough to go. Secretary Ridge is paid \$175,000 per year.

Welcome to Bush County, Secretary Ridge!

If a \$175,000 per year job doesn't provide sufficient income to pay for college, how is a minimum wage earner, working 40 hours a week to earn barely \$10,000 per year, supposed to do it? How do Republicans expect a middle income family, making \$30,000 or \$40,000 or \$50,000 per year, to give their children the chance to get ahead that only a college education can provide?

Republican policies have produced an economy in which wages of average Americans have declined year after year (to a point more than \$1,500 per year below the average of most Americans four years ago) at the same time college tuition has skyrocketed – more than 40% on average. If a \$175,000 per year government official cannot afford to save money to send his kids to college when they are ready, how does President Bush expect the rest of middle America will be able to? (Oh, I forgot – probably by giving huge tax cuts to millionaires and other folks making even more than a Cabinet secretary, I suppose. Surely that will enable middle class Americans to send their kids to college!)

Secretary Ridge's job is to make America safe from terrorism. But because of the failures of this Administration's economic policy, he cannot afford to do that and take care of his own family at the same time.

So this President has given us an economy in which the person most qualified to lead us in the war on terrorism (according the Administration when it selected Secretary Ridge) cannot afford to do so because it costs too much to pay for health insurance and health care and gasoline and home insurance and college tuition and all the other things families need – even on a salary of \$175,000 per year!

Perhaps like many Americans Secretary Ridge should take a second job – if he can find one in a country with millions fewer jobs today than existed when this bunch came to Washington.

President Bush can stump all he wants with the slogan the economy has “turned the corner.” But his own Secretary of Homeland Security has effectively labeled that claim a lie: he doesn't believe that things are improving enough that he will be able to provide a college education for his two kids in the future – even with a salary of \$175,000 per year.

President Bush has put this country in a position where his own Secretary of Homeland Security had to choose between protecting the nation from terrorism and providing for his family's basic needs. Secretary Ridge has apparently chosen the later and for that decision, I cannot and do not blame nor criticize him. I can and do, however, condemn the Chief Executive whose disastrous economic policies put our country in a place where we have to choose between defending the Nation from terrorism and taking care of families, and where parents cannot afford to provide a college education for their children even on \$175,000 per year.

The other article which caught my eye was one reporting President Bush's new campaign slogan: "We Got It Done."

Yeah, they got it done, alright! They got done the elimination of nearly two million jobs, and a cut in the average salary of the few replacement jobs that were created of over \$9,000 per year. They got done riddance of a multi-trillion dollar surplus and creation of a projected \$5 trillion national debt. They got done the largest deficit in the history of the nation – \$447 billion this year alone. They got done giving away billions of dollars to millionaires and the upper 2% of wealthy Americans (and big pharmaceutical companies). They got done \$2 per gallon gasoline and college tuitions even the Secretary of Homeland Security can't afford. They got done the most divided, partisan, uncivil congress anyone can remember. They got done dismantling Executive Orders the Clinton Administration had put into place to protect the environment. They got done being able to keep secret from the American people the names of oil company executives and polluters who met with the vice-president to plot the nation's energy policy. They got done the paying of billions of dollars of taxpayers money to the vice-president's former employer, Halliburton, without so much as getting competitive bids from other prospective contractors. They got done the out-sourcing of millions of American jobs, which they claim is good for the American economy. They got done destruction of respect for the United States throughout the world. They got done squandering of the worldwide support and empathy this nation enjoyed just after 9/11.

And if the current situation in Iraq is this Administration's idea of "getting it done" – of "Mission Accomplished" – the Bureau of Measures and Standards should investigate this bunch for using a scale entirely disconnected from reality.

So, George Bush says, we should re-elect him because he "got it done." In truth, we got it done to us.

But there is much that does need to get done – like providing affordable health care and universal health insurance for all Americans, especially children, funding the No Child Left Behind program and Head Start and after-school programs, restoring respect for America in the world, protecting our ports and chemical plants from terrorist invasion, creating good paying jobs for Americans, raising the minimum wage above \$5.15 per hour, protecting workers rights to organize, providing a real prescription drug benefit for seniors, and keeping faith with the veterans who have served us so nobly and so bravely by providing them with health care and other benefits they deserve when they return from service. And much, much more. In all of those areas (and many others), the Bush White House didn't get it done at all.

Of course, there is a lot more this Administration wants to “get done” in a second term – like appointing Supreme Court justices (there will surely be two to four appointments to be made during the next four years) who will overrule a woman’s right to choose, privatizing social security, giving even more tax cuts to millionaires and other wealthy campaign contributors, abolishing the ban on assault weapons on the streets, abrogating the Voting Rights Act of 1965, wasting billions of dollars on the so-called “Star Wars” missile defense system, developing first strike nuclear weapons, withdrawing from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and other international agreements, and amending the Constitution to prohibit states from deciding for themselves what their family laws should be and to modify the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution to officially sanction discrimination for the first time since the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments were passed more than 150 years ago – just to name a few.

So when the president says, as he regularly does now in his standard stump speech, “We got it done,” that should be a clear warning to the American people. If what he has gotten done to date is an indication of what he regards as “getting it done,” that tells us a lot about what this Administration regards as its mission, its priorities, its agenda, its standards, and its values. And its vision for America.

And that’s reason enough to send this bunch back to Crawford. And when we do, we’ll be able proudly to say, “We got it done!”

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