

Why Career Politicians are Cowards and How Americans are Getting Hurt

Chris Ryan February 12, 2010



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Once upon a time, politics was about service. People who felt profoundly impacted by their communities showed that impact by getting involved and trying to make things happen. In between making a living and supporting their families, these men and women felt obligated to help out in their communities, and later to represent their communities in the hallowed halls of Congress. It was a hobby, a calling, rather than a sought-out career. It was an inevitable extension of their involvement with their community.

Now people run for office in cities they barely know, and they get in, because they run TV ads that tell stories people want to hear. These TV ads are financed in part by corporate donors, to whom these people sell their Congressional votes. Their "communities" consist of the people who pay them, rather than the people whose district or state they represent.

Passion for the community and passion for the culture is the substance of true leadership. Why is it that when we look at our politicians on the television and read what they have to say, we see a remarkable lack of passion for the communities of people they espouse to represent? Passion is not without its difficulties - passionate people tend to run into opposition, particularly from other passionate people. That's the world the founding fathers of the United States lived in - a world in which legitimate passions collided in government. That's why they invented the democratic system that they did, in which conflicting passions can be most effectively channeled into action to help the nation as a whole.

But what kind of person becomes a politician today? I would argue that cowardice, not passion, is the main character quality in the career politician. Everybody in government is terrified of rocking the boat. As a result, the boat is being steered by lobbyists, bankers, corporate executives, and anyone with money to pay. These people, only interested in lining their own pockets with gold, have little care for the pain of average Americans. Americans are being hurt by career politicians' cowardice and inability to take a sincere stand on behalf of the communities they supposedly represent.

The recent Supreme Court decision to allow corporate bodies to spend unlimited amounts of money on political advertisements in support of or in opposition to a particular candidate is a terrible development, but it is only an indication of how broken the system is.

The cowardice of career politicians is evident in their absolute inability to buck party lines, even if the party line goes against whatever little shreds of conscience might exist within their hearts. The debacle over health care is a perfect example of this.

The Republican party believes, because of inappropriately large campaign contributions from health insurance corporations which could finance its return to power, that it should sabotage health care reform at any cost. Meanwhile, people all over the country are dying and the country is spiraling into debt, all because the health care system is broken.

The Democratic party believes, due to terror of not being re-elected, that it shouldn't press hard for vital elements of

health care reform like a public option or even a Medicare buy-in. If senators and congressmen can tell their constituents, "if only there were more Democrats in Congress, I could get you what you want. But we didn't have enough votes, therefore, we couldn't stand up for our beliefs," then they can blame the Republicans and convince the people to re-elect them. Meanwhile, people all over America are suffering.

The Democrats are so terrified of being on the wrong side of an issue and losing electability that they fail to take any side. The Republicans are so terrified of not having enough campaign money to be re-elected that they take the side of whoever is going to finance their barrage of advertisements. Meanwhile, the American people are going bankrupt because of hospital bills, the country is borrowing grossly beyond its means, and Social Security and Medicare are set to collapse within ten years!

Do career politicians care? The only care inasmuch as they can blame this crisis on their "opponents," and I use that term loosely, because their opponents only care about the crisis facing our country inasmuch as they can cast the blame right back. They're more similar than they are different. Whoever does a better job of blaming gets elected or re-elected. That's the substance of our government - which party is better at blaming? The invention of the career politician whose sole job is to be re-elected is the ruin of American democracy.

What is this? Why is it that politicians always look so much better when they're trying to sell themselves to the public? Why is it that politicians present such stirring speeches at the podium, yet in the hallowed halls of Congress they're just another faceless face in the crowd on the left side of the aisle or the right? Would you vote for a number to represent you? Or do you want someone who actually knows what you're about?

The third element of this triad, which consists of the cowardly politician too terrified of making waves and losing re-election and the corporate lobbyist seeking unfettered profits at the expense of American health and financial stability, is the media professional whose salary is paid by the corporate lobbyists, whose job is to misdirect the American people from the grave injustices committed upon them by ultra-wealthy business and banks, through the cowardice of their elected officials. From the holy altar of your TV, these media professionals tell you that politicians have good intentions, that corporate entities are great because they provide you with fast food and cheap gas, and that U.S. Democracy is the best system of government in the world. They convince you that voting is your civic duty and that Democrats and Republicans are more different than they are similar.

They support the cowardly career politicians who are nothing but mouthpieces for corporations whose only interest is in their own profits. Education? Not important. Environmental issues? Counter-productive. Combating racism, sexism, poverty? A waste of money. The arts? Don't make me laugh. Health reform? Only if it makes them more money, likely through mandatory, private, expensive health care. War? Hell yes! More war, more war, it's great for the oil companies and great for the arms dealers! Deregulating banks? That's what they're talking about!

What happened to this country? What passions drive the people who supposedly run it? Don't be fooled by their campaign speeches. They poll their audience then say what the polls show they ought to say. Career politicians are some of the most pathetic beings today. The only passion they've got is making sure they have a job in two, four, or six years. Everything they do is geared toward getting re-elected. If that means selling out your vote to the highest bidder, they'd do it in a heartbeat.