

July 2022

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Ritch K. Eich
ritchreich@gmail.com

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Recommended Citation

Eich, Ritch K. (2022) "Republicans in Congress Today: Against Everything and For What?," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22543/1948-0733.1415>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol15/iss2/4>

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Republicans in Congress Today: Against Everything and For What?

In a recent nonbinding vote, 63 House Republicans shamefully refused to support NATO

— Ritch K. Eich, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA

Auto executive Lee Iacocca's blockbuster book, *Where Have All the Leaders Gone*, was published 15 years ago in 2007, but you could ask the exact same question today with regard to the Republican Party in Congress.

Are Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, and Rand Paul the best the GOP can offer? Critical, brash and obstructionist, they seem to stand *against* everything, and stand *for* nothing at all.

And then there are the renegades prone to conspiracy theories who have ties to far-right groups or have said bizarre, outlandish things about Jewish space lasers and orgies or have made other insidious comments in Congress, led by Madison Cawthorn, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Matt Gaetz, and Lauren Boebert. These members of Congress represent the party's younger side and possibly its future in the post-Mitch McConnell era. What do these junior members stand for? Will they embrace true Democracy and bipartisanship or continue to claim – falsely and without evidence – that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump?

It's questionable they will back democracy when our nation calls for their support. Earlier in April, the House of Representatives passed a nonbinding, bipartisan resolution reaffirming its unequivocal support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an alliance founded on democratic principles. It's shocking that this resolution passed 362 to 63, with all 63 of the "no" votes coming from Republicans, most of them major Trump supporters. Have these Republicans lost their minds? Wrecking or at least weakening NATO is among Russian President Vladimir Putin's major goals, and sadly, dozens of Republican members of Congress are playing right into his hands while Russia continues to brutally attack Ukraine, a sovereign nation.

The GOP seems to be becoming the party of people with fringe ideologies. The party once had clear, well-developed principles, but is no longer a functioning party. Republicans in Congress seem more loyal to one man and his angry white followers than the Constitution or all Americans. Taylor Greene has promoted baseless conspiracy theories, stalked school shooting victims on the street, and even suggested that school shootings and 9/11 were staged – not to mention her rambling Facebook post about the Jewish space laser conspiracy. Cawthorn falsely accused his own party of drug use and orgies. Texans may never forgive Cruz for running off to vacation in Cancun while his state was in the midst of a deadly deep freeze that killed 246 people when the power failed throughout much of the state.

There was a time when the Republican Party stood for important values and was led by respectable people with solid conservative beliefs. Conservatism meant fiscal responsibility, supporting the military, and promoting smaller government. Few of today's Republicans in

Congress appear to practice any of these things, and in fact, they frequently denounce the military as “woke” and expand the government’s reach into our personal lives with new “culture war” laws and restrictions. They would rather fight over culture than deal with important issues like Medicare and Social Security before both programs go broke.

Gerald Ford, Margaret Chase Smith, Nelson Rockefeller, Arlen Specter, John McCain, Chuck Hagel, Robert Dole, Richard Lugar, John Warner, Olympia Snowe, Robert Taft, Susan Collins, Everett Dirksen, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Edward Brook, Arthur Vandenberg, Jacob Javits, Nancy Landon Kassebaum, Clifford Case, Mac Mathias, Bob Michel, Liz Cheney, Mitt Romney, Lisa Murkowski, the late Orrin Hatch, and Governors Mike DeWine and Larry Hogan and others like Elliott Richardson are all GOP leaders, past and present, who distinguished themselves as honorable and bipartisan on more than one occasion and served their constituents, party and country with distinction. Peter Meijer, a principled, industrious, and thoughtful congressman who represents Gerald Ford’s old Michigan district, is an up-and-coming conservative with strong bipartisan leanings who shows much promise.

Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, a Republican from Maine, issued her *Declaration of Conscience* in 1950, asking for bipartisan cooperation to protect national security as McCarthyism began to divide the nation and Congress. “It is high time that we stopped thinking politically as Republicans and Democrats about elections,” she said, “and start thinking patriotically as Americans.” Susan Collins, another Republican senator from Maine, Lisa Murkowski, and Mitt Romney were the only members of the party to vote to confirm a clearly qualified nominee, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, to the Supreme Court. Richard Lugar, the late GOP senator from Indiana, was known for solving the nation’s problems through collaboration and bipartisanship. After he was voted out of office following six terms in the Senate, Lugar continued to call out the United States government for being dysfunctional because he wanted Congress to do better. Lugar founded the non-profit *Lugar Center*— a think tank that studies and promotes bipartisanship, better government, and global issues. Our democracy works best with vigorous competition between strong political parties.

It's hard to imagine what Marjorie Taylor Greene’s or Rand Paul’s legacy will be after they leave Congress. They likely won’t be remembered for creating any ground-breaking legislation or for making America a better place. They won’t be remembered for promoting true conservative ideals. They will be remembered for obstructionism and creating chaos. Unfortunately, our government should not be the place for either.

In the words of *Washington Post* journalist E.J. Dionne, commenting on the recent January 6th Committee hearings, “Architects of future hearings will no doubt learn from the media pizazz of the past week. But all the production values in the world won’t matter without two parties equally committed to a common quest for truth.” Underscoring this observation, I would like to emphasize that:

Our democracy works best with vigorous competition between strong political parties.

About the Editor

Dr. Ritch K. Eich

Ritch K. Eich, former chief of public affairs for Blue Shield of California, has authored five books on leadership and is a retired Naval Reserve captain. Eich has served on Congressional committees for U.S. Senators Carl Levin of Michigan and Dan Coats of Indiana. He is the past chairman of the board of trustees at Los Robles Hospital and lives in Thousand Oaks, California. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He can be reached at ritcheich@gmail.com.