

Effort to Recall Jewel Hurtado Fails

The vitriolic, mean-spirited right-wing recall attempt of Kingsburg City Council Member Jewel Hurtado has failed. The *Fresno Bee* reported that, according to James Kus, Fresno County’s registrar of voters, although 423 signatures were turned in to his office, only 310 were valid, and 354 valid signatures were required for the recall petition to move forward.

Hurtado received backlash and death threats for her attempt to urge the Kingsburg City Council to fly the Gay Pride flag at the Kingsburg City Hall during Gay Pride Week.

Arambula on a Roll in the State Assembly

Dr. Joaquin Arambula (D–Fresno) is apparently on a legislative roll as the 2021 legislative session came to an end. He reports to us that out of the 10 bills he introduced in this session, eight of them were signed by Governor Gavin Newsom. These bills include the following:

- AB 600: Treating crimes committed against people due to their immigration status as hate crimes
- AB 263: Requiring private detention facilities to comply with state health orders
- AB 347: Requiring insurance companies to be more transparent about “step therapy,” which allows insurance companies to approve the use of drugs for patients that are not necessarily effective
- AB 690: Tightening supervision of non-licensed personnel performing work when employed by licensed marriage and family therapists
- AB 451: Requiring acute psychiatric hospitals to provide emergency care and services for the treatment of psychiatric emergencies
- AB 559: Bringing \$15 million to the San Joaquin River Parkway
- AB 1094: Improving the collection of data on the sexual orientation and gender identity of victims in violent death investigations (first of its kind law in the nation)

Way to go, Dr. Arambula!

Democrats’ National Situation

A year from now, on Nov. 9, 2022, President Biden will walk up to the Presidential podium during a news conference and will probably do one of two things: 1) he will talk about how the Democrats in the midterm elections were able to cling to their majorities in the House and Senate, or expand on them, because Democrats and some independents liked the job Democrats did in passing legislation that has demonstrably improved the lives of Americans, or 2) he will acknowledge that Democrats took a “shellacking” in the midterm election, to quote President Barack Obama from his Nov. 3, 2010, news conference, regarding the beating our party took in those midterms.

Despite the nascent Tea Party’s yearlong vitriol, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed by slim margins in 2010, before the midterm election. The ACA, with all its faults, and a conservative Supreme Court gnawing pieces of it away, managed to survive, and gives millions of Americans access to healthcare and health insurance.

Never mind the good it did, and the good it continues to do. McConnell introduced a bill to repeal it the day after it passed.

The Tea Party’s megaphone got bigger and louder, and the perception of omnipotent federal government control and “death panels” led to the 2010 midterm “shellacking.” Today’s equivalent of the Tea Party is, of course, the cancerous Stop the Steal/Trump movement and its exponentially louder megaphone of lies and vitriol.

Add to the current mix the following: The Covid-19 pandemic; anti-vaxers and anti-maskers telling their lies; a minority of angry parents disrupting school board meetings across the nation over their lies about masks, vaccine mandates and the non-issue of critical race theory; and, increasingly, domestic terrorism.

All of this noise blocks the true signal: The legislative accomplishments Democrats have passed and the executive measures President Biden has taken, which are slowly beginning to improve the lives of Americans, including the passage and signing of the American Rescue Plan (approved by a party line vote in both chambers, except one House Democrat who voted against it); the reversal of many heinous Trump executive orders dealing with the Environmental Protection Agency; rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement, and more.

Meanwhile, President Biden and the slim Democratic Party majorities in the House and Senate are doing what they were elected to do: They are the adults in the room, because they are governing, and they are doing so with no votes from their Republican counterparts.

The sausage factory on Capitol Hill is operating, albeit too slow for most in our party, and too fast and too loose with the purse strings for nine of our own House members and two of our own senators.

Until now, it was easy to blame McConnell. As we know he will oppose anything Democrats in either chamber propose anyway, it is those 11 Democratic elected officials who are causing the factory to grind to a near halt but mainly two senators—Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona—because of the filibuster.

Democrats are allowing 4% of its elected federal leadership to hold up the remaining 96%, who want to help the American people now. Is that fair, when polls indicate that more than 70% of Americans favor the proposals in the \$3 billion Biden Build Back Better plan?

Senator Manchin—an anomaly in his state given that Trump won West Virginia in 2020 by 41%—seems to adore all the media attention he is getting. He’s willing to speak to the media, as far as it goes, wants everything to be bipartisan in a clearly polarized environment and is concerned about an “entitlement society.”

Well, cows can fly, and pigs are halal and kosher, too, Senator Manchin. You might get bipartisan agreement on the shape of the negotiating table, and that’s about it. What about those 10 Republicans you said you could get to come on board with your Freedom to Vote Act? The response? Crickets, of course.

Some of his constituents recently protested against him in Washington, D.C., by kayaking next to his houseboat in a marina and shouting their displeasure to him, as he leaned over the aft of his boat.

Senator Sinema, whose seat is already being threatened in 2024 by Arizonans who are frustrated with her cozy relationship with large corporations, has a modus operandi of avoiding answering to her constituents through the media—hiding in elevators and restrooms, and such. It’s not a good look.

Yet, the *Washington Post* recently reported that people closest to her assert that her tight-lipped style of avoidance is a perception because she has been quietly meeting behind the scenes with key legislative players in the negotiations over the \$3 billion Build Back Better Biden agenda.

According to *Washington Post* reporters Seung Min Kim and Ashley Parker, her absence at a weekly Senate lunch in late October is “emblematic of her actual approach, according to people directly familiar with it: Eschew all but a select few congressional colleagues, focus on negotiating directly with the president and his senior aides, burrow in on policy details—and ignore the frustration of those not privy to her thinking.”

The author of this column recently called the Charleston, W.V., office of Senator Manchin and the Phoenix, Ariz., office of Senator Sinema, and as soon as someone answered, he played through the phone the already cued-up YouTube video of Pete Seeger singing the old coal miner strike song, “Which Side Are You On?” The reaction on the other end of the phone was not pleasant.

While Manchin and Sinema play their games, too much is at stake. Voting rights, expansion of Medicare benefits, subsidies for childcare, paid family leave—all the things that President Biden ran for office on—are all queued up outside the sausage factory because of 4% of federally elected Democrats and an archaic rule in the U.S. Senate that isn’t even in the Constitution: the filibuster.

Meanwhile, the Trump factor looms large, as all indications are the twice-impeached former president, who might well be indicted by prosecutors at the state level in Georgia and New York for various crimes and could be subpoenaed by the House Select Committee investigating the Jan. 6 right-wing terrorist attack on the U.S. Capitol, seems to be the heir apparent to the 2024 Cult Party, that is, the Republican Party, nomination for President.

That’s despite his latest attempt to launch his own social media platform in lieu of his banishment from Twitter being hacked, and the hackers easily posting a photo of a defecating pig on the platform. No matter: The Cult members are worshipping the Orange Messiah. As Maine independent Senator Angus King recently opined: “This is how and why democracies die.”

Call to Action

- Attend the Nov. 2 redistricting hearing.
- Volunteer now to prep for 2022.
- Interested in seeking elective office?

Contact us at

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