

Opinions

Watching over government

By Leo Chappelle

The people of Catahoula Parish (or somewhere, anyway) are not as indifferent to their local government as the typical attendance at a meeting of the Police Jury would seem to indicate. While there was but a single person without some professional or commercial interest in the proceedings present at the meeting of the Police Jury this past Monday, January 10th, 2022, there were by 8:00 P.M. at least 140 views of it on Facebook. One expects there will be more. Still, all I can say is thank goodness for Brad Borth or we would be in the embarrassing position of having no one in the room to represent the general public.

So, what's the big deal this week? For one thing, the people responsible for developing a sanitation plan to get rid of your garbage and for fixing your roads, and maybe even someday trying to lay out a campaign to encourage tourism and economic development (I dream) chose those who will lead those efforts for the next year or two, namely, the Police Jury President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer.

Harold Sones will be President for another year and Jeryl Evans will be the Vice-President. Patti Mizell keeps her job for at least two more years as Secretary-Treasurer if she can put up

with it. There were no other candidates nominated.

Government at the local level is the government over which we have the most influence, but it's also the people who can speak most effectively to those at the state level. It's a ripple effect that moves upward.

And what, at least in principle, is the business of our government at all its levels anyway? It's more than merely "getting out of the way", as the libertarian might wish to summarize it. There are significant moral as well as practical problems with that view. For example, should we as a community condone assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion on demand right up to birth, or even "abortion" after birth if a problem isn't discovered in time? Are those sorts of choices merely personal decisions that have no impact on anyone else? In a cultural climate that has come lately to embrace radical individualism, it may seem so. But it takes very little reflection to see that is not the case.

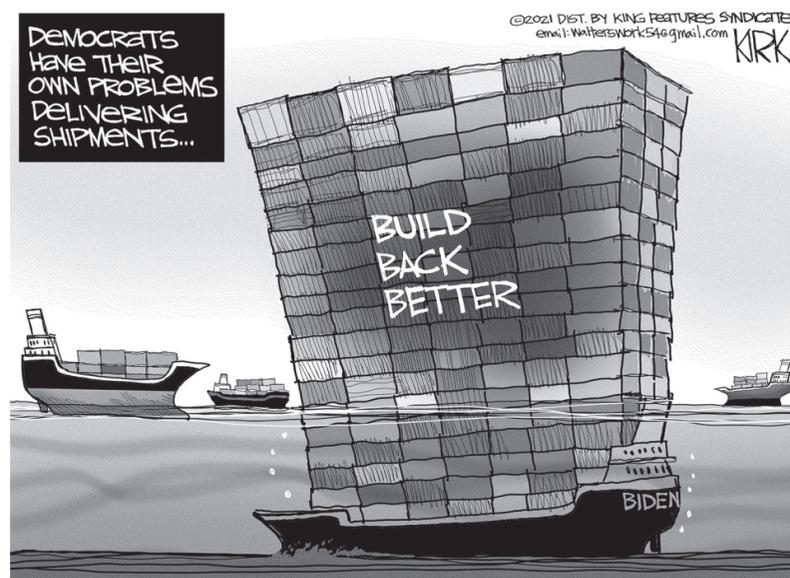
Our government, especially at the local level, is a vehicle for the expression of our values. The statements that we make through government reflect on us all, even the acts of

government with which we disagree have their impact upon us and our future thinking about government as well.

In this month's edition of The New Criterion magazine, Ryan T. Anderson, a man whose work I have mentioned several times, makes the point that only through the institutions of human law can certain human goods be realized and the "requirements of practical reasonableness" be satisfied. In other words, we can't experience the most salutary and beneficial effects of our right to choose in life just by winging it on our own.

What this suggests to me is that if a law is "just" (and we obviously don't have space for that discussion) then whether we disagree with its methods or objects, we are obliged to obey it. As an immediate example of the principle, since it seems to be legal, but despite my strong disapproval of the Police Jury's having arrogated to itself the power to tax us directly with its garbage "fee", it's nonetheless incumbent upon us to pay that tax until it's repealed or replaced at the ballot box.

If you disagree with the taxers, vote them out. But until then, a consistent respect for law seems to me to require that we pay it.



THE RICH LOWRY COLUMN

Chuck Schumer's Jan 6 Cynicism

On Jan. 6, 2021, rioters seeking to disrupt the counting of electoral votes breached the U.S. Capitol and rampaged for hours before order was restored.

This was a disgraceful spectacle that shouldn't be repeated, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer knows just what is needed to respond to the moment -- passing every progressive voting-related priority that can possibly be jammed through the Senate on an extremely narrow, partisan vote.

The defense of our democracy, Schumer maintains, demands nothing less.

The latest pitch for the Democratic voting agenda is more cynical and detached from reality than ever. We are to believe that the only way to counteract the furies unleashed on Jan. 6 is by imposing same-day voter registration and no-excuse mail voting on the states, ending partisan gerrymandering, and requiring the counting of ballots that arrive up to seven days after Election Day, among other provisions completely irrelevant to events that day or afterward.

If you're thinking that Democrats supported all of this on Jan. 5 of last year and still supported it on Jan. 7, you're correct.

Their agenda has as much to do with Jan. 6 as an annual appropriations bill or the naming of a post office.

The Democratic drive to nationalize our elections has always been a sweepingly radical step in search of an alleged crisis to address. When a version was first introduced a few years ago, it was sold as addressing "the vile voter suppression practices" of the GOP, in the words of The New York Times. The big lie of the time was that the Georgia gubernatorial campaign of Stacey Abrams in 2018 was undone by such practices. Now, the justification is the Capitol riot and subsequent GOP state-level voting changes that

have been portrayed, falsely, as the return of Jim Crow.

In reality, voting has never been easier and voters have never had so many options for how to participate in elections, whether early in-person voting, traditional same-day voting, or mail-in voting. There are partisan disputes about how to strike a balance between convenience and security, but there is no reason that these differences can't be debated at the state level, with the balance struck differently depending on the policy preferences of elected officials in each state.

Limits on drop boxes or measures to tighten up the identification requirements around mail-in ballots aren't suppressing the vote.

The true weakness of the system that was highlighted last year on Jan. 6 is the poorly drafted Electoral Count Act. It should be revised to make it explicit that the vice president can't decide which electoral votes to count and that states can't discard the popular vote if the outcome isn't to their liking. Even though changes along these lines might get bi-partisan support, Schumer is pushing to eliminate the filibuster to pass the progressive wish list of electoral non-sequiturs (although a few provisions, like prohibiting the intimidation of election officials, have been added to the Democratic package to address the 2020 post-election fight).

To wrap this push in the bloody shirt of Jan. 6 is opportunistic and irresponsible and can only serve to convince even more Republicans that the outrage over that day is in the service of a nakedly partisan agenda.

Schumer has an uphill climb to convince relatively moderate Democrats Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema to go along with kneecapping the filibuster. If the New York senator were to succeed, he would have blown a hole in the tra-

ditional practices of the Senate and set the precedent for Republicans -- should they achieve unified control of Washington in 2024 -- to impose all their own favored electoral policies on the states.

This yin and yang wouldn't do anything to restore faith in democracy, rather the opposite. But Chuck Schumer is on a mission to achieve, and to use, the power to rewrite the country's electoral rules -- justifications and consequences be damned.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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