

## The 2016 Punditalia Political Platform

15 February 2016

We have been writing our political platform since 2008. The first of our forty-one suggestions in 2008 was to restore the Constitution, an important idea and one which has not yet been attempted. The problems which the US faced then, and the solutions we've proposed, remain largely unchanged so you can read our earlier platforms on this site.

The larger problems facing humanity and Americans, who, like it or not, do comprise a significant part of that category of life, concern the conditions of the planet on which we live. The American public is not sufficiently evolved at this juncture to deal with those concerns, so what are the issues that can be addressed via the political process?

First of all, people can take steps to insure that the political process is not permanently altered to prevent citizens from acting on specific issues as those issues enter the collective consciousness. There are currently two major threats to the possibility of democratically decided action. The first is a corrupted electoral system, reinforced by the overreaching decision of the Supreme Court in Citizens United to equate money with speech and corporations with people. This followed an earlier enabling decision, Buckley v Valeo, in 1976. Gerrymandering, voter suppression, and computer rigged election fraud have also played a major role in eliminating majority rule.

The next gorilla in the room is the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), now awaiting final Congressional approval. TPP will effectively end national sovereignty in all member states, including the USA, passing de facto legislative control to a cabal of unknown and unelected corporate lawyers and lobbyists. On the heels of the TPP, the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) is now being drawn up in secret to disenfranchise Europeans in the same way. This attempt at a global coup d'état, or series of "trade agreements", as its sponsors prefer to call it, can be voted on by Congress at any time, since the President has allowed its classified secret text to be published more than sixty days ago. However, the current plan appears to be to wait until after the November elections to avoid seeing the incumbents who support it being voted out of office. A lame duck Congress could vote on it before the new Congress is seated so democracy remains very much at risk. For those who haven't been paying attention, these trade agreements have been proposed by President Obama with the support of an overwhelming majority of Republicans and a disturbing number of sold out Democrats. As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton could have killed these trade agreements, which she supported at the time. She now says that she no longer supports them since they don't measure up to her standards, (Due to the Fast Track Act, the provisions of the agreements can not be modified by Congress.) although she won't campaign against them. Is she simply bending to the desires of Democrats to gain the nomination or does this represent a genuine change of heart? Your guess is as good as ours.

Bernie Sanders has opposed TPP and TTIP from the start. If they are approved in the lame-duck session of Congress, it isn't clear what he can do to restore democracy, as there is no provision for repeal, but he would appear to be our best hope. He certainly represents the one chance we have to reverse the corruption of the electoral process. On the Republican side, there has been some opposition to TPP, with at least Trump and Cruz speaking out against it. Mitch McConnell has apparently changed from being a supporter to opposing it because the final text carves out an exemption for the tobacco industry, one of his principal backers, so that they cannot sue governments for restrictive laws against tobacco, the way that all other producers of things will be able to sue governments which seek to regulate their products.

In the overlong presidential campaign, few authentic issues have been brought up by the GOP candidates, now down to six from the original nineteen. The three issues most dear to the Republican hopefuls are:

- repeal of Obamacare, although reasons for so doing are never discussed.
- Illegal immigration- the mostly agreed on solution is to build a huge wall along the entire Mexican border.
- fear of ISIS- the solution appears to be to instill more fear. Also, arm the “good guys” and kill the “bad guys”, or just kill everybody in the area.

“Debates” among these candidates have resembled an 8<sup>th</sup> grade detention hall when the teacher in charge leaves the room. To the delight of the media seeing their ratings soar, these childish bragging bouts and displays of the cowardice of bullies attract viewers weened on reality shows. With Rand Paul out of the race, there is no reason to consider any of these specimens as worthy of working anywhere other than in a carnival freak show.

If the Republican candidates have all excluded themselves from serious consideration, we can say that Hillary Clinton is an intelligent woman, vastly superior to any of her potential GOP opponents. However, she comes with a lot of baggage. As a recipient of a vast amount of Wall St largesse, she is an unlikely candidate to reform the financial sector. In addition to her weak stance on TPP, she has conspired with giant corporations to gain acceptance of GMOs. Her term as Secretary of State was marred by her involvement in the overthrow of governments in Honduras, Ukraine and Libya, all with disastrous and on-going consequences. She encouraged the growth of a new Cold War and did nothing to promote peace between Israel and Palestinians. The country (and the world) has suffered through a criminal invasion of Iraq based on George Bush's Oedipus complex. We can do without a president who appears to need to show she can be as ruthlessly belligerent as any man.

The news arrived yesterday of the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. The infighting and strategies for his succession have started before his body is cold, with Republicans vowing that no successor will be approved before a new president is sworn in, i.e. eleven months from now. This could be a blessing in disguise.

To sum up this year's punditalia platform in a few words:

- We support Bernie Sanders for president and urge our readers to support his campaign with money, time, enthusiasm and votes.
- We support any candidate, for any office, within reason, who has endorsed him.
- We oppose any candidate for any office, from any party, who supports TPP and TTIP and we urge everyone to battle to remove them from office in the primary or general election. We extend our opposition to all those who have voted for the DARK Act. If you don't know what that is and who voted for it, look it up.

We cannot fathom how President Obama can propose his patently unconstitutional “trade agreements”. We won't question his motives, other than to say that any we can imagine are all bad. Nonetheless, given his promotion of the corporate coup, it might be best for the country if Scalia's successor is appointed by the next president, one who is more sensitive to the Constitution.