

A Divided House, a Divided Nation

Republicans are being criticized for looking passive or even dour during the recent State of the Union address.

New York Times journalist Andrew Rosenthal accuses GOP members of “looking callous” during the president’s speech.

“Time after time tonight you saw Republicans sitting on their hands when the president was calling on the country to move forward,” Maryland Democratic Rep. Chris Van Hollen (and former chair of the Democratic National Congressional committee) commented. Leftist filmmaker Michael Moore tweeted, “Funny watching the Republicans refusing to applaud the fact the insurance companies can no longer deny ANYONE because of a pre-existing cond[ition].”

Whether one is a Democrat or a Republican, unifying themes produce applause. Heroic Sgt. First Class Cory Remsburg received a one-minute, 34-second bipartisan ovation for his service to our country. Both sides applauded loudly when the president noted that the son of a barkeep is now speaker of the house and that the son of a single mom is president. And some of the president’s gallery guests received a warm response.

But that was about it for bipartisan togetherness. On issue after issue, the stark divisions between Republican and Democratic convictions were displayed in the rising of one side and the stolidness of the other.

Regrettably, they seem to be reflecting the feelings of their countrymen. According to a recent Gallup poll, “Obama’s fifth year in office ranks as the fourth-most polarized presidential year in Gallup’s records, which date back to the Eisenhower presidency. In fact, all five of Obama’s years in office rank

among the 10-most polarized, with his fourth year edging out George W. Bush's fourth year in office for the top overall spot. Four of Bush's years in office rank among the 10-most politically polarized in terms of presidential job approval."

Mr. Obama is a man of the left who uses the terminology of the right to soften the blow of his political agenda. This is not unique; political pollsters of both parties have produced reams of paper devoted to rhetorical dos and don'ts.

However, what is clear is that in Mr. Obama's case, his efforts to cloak his ideas in the language of common sense are not succeeding, as the Gallup survey indicates.

Why? To a substantial degree, because he has lost the confidence of the American people. His assurance that we could keep both our health plans and our doctors under Obamacare proved to be false. That he gave this assurance repeatedly and with the same somewhat pained weariness of tone that imbued his State of the Union message does not encourage confidence in his leadership.

That's why the latest *Washington Post*/ABC News poll shows, "Just 37 percent say they have either a good amount or a great deal of confidence in the president to make the right decisions for the country's future, while 63 percent say they do not. Those numbers are the mirror image of what they were when he was sworn into office in 2009 and lower than at any other time the question was asked by *The Washington Post* and ABC News."

This is not to say that most Americans didn't like what the president said; one poll shows that many of his proposals and ideas were viewed favorably by those who watched his State of the Union speech.

But liking ideas and trusting the idea-giver, who in this case is also the leader of our country, are two different things. Christians must always pray for Mr. Obama and his family,

respect him as the magistrate God has raised up over us (Rom. 13:1-7), and support him when his policy decisions reflect sound judgment.

Sadly, though, the erosion of confidence Mr. Obama has brought about in his own leadership is not something that readily can be remedied. This means believers in the King of kings should pray for our president, our other leaders and our country with renewed fervency (James 5:16) and that we should redouble our efforts—graciously but without moral compromise—to defend and advance human dignity, the sanctity of life, religious liberty and the historic (and biblical) vision of the family in American public life.

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