

The Fiscal Cliff: The Other Storm

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As of November 7, 2012, there are hundreds of thousands of people still without power in certain parts of New Jersey and New York thanks to what meteorologists have called the perfect storm. There is another perfect storm that has come and gone now that the election is over. I am thinking about the one that hit the shores of President Obama's presidency and his family. President Obama was hit from three sides with equal force.



President Obama was hit by the Great Recession he inherited from former Presidents and Congresses—the worst since the Great Depression. It was so devastating that four years later we are still riding out its aftermath. He was also hit with the Great Obsession—a hostile weather pattern over his identity. The Birther Movement, led by Michele Bachmann and Donald Trump--euphemistically called “Birthers”--hounded him to death before and even after he produced his state issued birth certificate verifying his American citizenship. Thirdly, President Obama was hit by a weather force called State-sponsored Voter Suppression which many felt was driven by the politics of racism and political partisanship.

The question is what happens now that this perfect storm is over? Will we as political parties and citizens be able to come together and deal

with the aftermath--the devastating disappointment and despair that often accompany a major political lost?

With respect to the November 4th Presidential election, hopefully and prayerfully, the aftermath of this perfect political storm means time out for ideological warfare, the politics of hatred, misinformed obsessions, partisan ignorance and the kind of religious dogmatism that pits one religious group against another. The timing could not be better! In case you have not heard, another perfect storm is on the horizon. It is euphemistically called “the fiscal cliff” toward which our nation is headed. This storm will mean major budget cuts to our sacred cows to spare us from national death by a financial fall into the abyss of a new normal—the kind we will find virtually impossible to accept.

If we have learned anything about storms, both imperfect and perfect, it is that they provide opportunities for people to provide the kind of professional and non-professional services needed to restore lost power, sanity and dignity. In other words, once the storm is over, the order of the day is helping people regain equilibrium one day at a time. But we do not wait for the storm to hit and then simply respond. Some storms can be prepared for by acting as responsibly and judiciously as possible.

Given the fiscal cliff, if there ever was a time to act responsibly it is today! The viability of our national future as the “United” States is threatened by a sluggish economy; the politics of obstructionism; partisan stubbornness, religious self-righteousness, and sour grapes over who won and who lost; whose vision has been proven right and whose wrong; whose leadership is spot on and whose is spot off; etc. We will all be losers, indebted and/or other things to China, Brazil, and Japan if we refuse to do whatever is necessary to be more united for the sake of national domestic security.

The present state vs. federal vs. individual rights surge for control over many divisive issues threatens to further unravel our fragile unity. These issues, to name a few, include same gender marriage, insurance issues with respect to taxpayer financing of abortion, pregnancy prevention services, climate change and its impact on energy policies, education reform and the prison industrial complex reform.

We all know living wage jobs with benefits are number one on the national domestic agenda. However, our problems will not be erased by simply having a good job and more money in our pockets. We will have to be very intentional about reaching common ground when it comes to what is *more* moral, ethical and just in our relationships and domestic policies given the egregious income disparity in our great country.

In other words, though the election storm is over, its aftermath is something with which we are challenged just as much as the election campaign. We must deal with the aftermath with the same feistiness with which our nation turned out to vote despite the many obstacles and challenges. We heard that even though the election had been called by some networks at 11:15 pm, there were persons in Florida still in line to vote as of 1:45 am Wednesday morning. That is the kind of stubborn determination needed to deal with the fiscal cliff storm.

Our minds must register to vote for our nation even if it means casting a vote against our political party. We must educate ourselves to the seriousness of the fiscal cliff so we will not turn our backs on a President and Congress that will certainly call forth more sacrifices. Those who voted for President Obama must surrender the naïve belief that the change he will call forth will not include continual sacrifice on the part of the poor and the middle class.

Regardless of the obstacles, challenges and future storms on the horizon, we can learn something about ourselves from our citizens' response to New Yorkers and those in New Jersey impacted by the perfect storm. We are demonstrating we are united in ways that no storm will ever be able to divide regardless the region or neighborhood in which we live. We are being reminded that electrical power lines may be down but we are not, neither are we powerless in the face of hard times.

It is time out for political pushing and shoving. Time is in for pulling together for the sake of our nation and our families. We must show the same gracious spirit in which Governor Romney and President Obama gave their post-election speeches. Governor Romney stated we must put behind us political bickering and partisanship. He went on to say "we citizens have to arise to the occasion" by reaching across the aisle in a commitment to unity. President Obama stated we are more than a collection of red states and blue states. We must prove the pundits wrong who believe our divisions are greater than our unity; and that our past is greater than our future. With President Obama we must believe by faith that "the best is yet to come!"

Statesmanship and true citizenship are called for if we are to reverse our direction toward the fiscal cliff. The political campaign for President is over but not the get out to vote campaign for our future.