

The Columbus Dispatch

Column: Trump has been breath of fresh air

Posted at 5:00 AM

It was momentous, an achievement beyond belief: The inevitable election of Hillary Clinton as president had been averted, leftism was down on its knees and the issue was whether President Donald Trump could follow through. A year has passed, and he absolutely has, but a question lingers.

This is no longer America, or is it?

Trump is kooky, after all, and someone who has given fresh meaning to the cliché of being one's own worst enemy. By way of alienation, he is rife with insults, vulgarity, juvenilia and narcissism. He has given us a White House reality show, and, by way of supposed rescue, we've had politicians, bureaucrats and others behaving worse than he has, dropping every pretense of old standards or honesty by way of impeachment ambitions.

Even being a successful president when everyone is cooing sweet tunes in one's direction is tough. Crazy Trump has been successful when the cooing has been replaced by cursing, and the biggie, of course, was getting Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court. The issue here was not so much rounding up the votes — the GOP Senate majority had them — but picking a man of solid integrity, deep intellect and, astonishingly enough in this day and age, respect for the Constitution.

The court long ago began discovering rights where there were none while rewriting American culture. Progressive justices have tended to see the Constitution as a weary, old, out-of-tune document. Yes, it could be brought up to date by amendments, but legitimacy of that kind didn't happen often. So they resorted to their own moral intuitions, using obscure legalese to explain how their decisions somehow related to hints of broad principles maybe in the document that they were slowly destroying.

Other Trump victories?

Getting record numbers of appellate judges appointed to the relief of a federal system beleaguered by justices with progressive handicaps. A tax reform that could render all kinds of economic benefits. Repealing the Obamacare individual mandate. Getting the toughest U.N. sanctions ever against North Korea. Vitalizing our energy markets by approving pipelines and other moves. Facilitating the defeat of the Islamic State through affording generals more say in combat. Taking important steps to obstruct Iran's imperial dreams emboldened by Obama's deal. Getting tough with Russia on Ukraine.

Often called an autocrat, Trump has contrarily helped defeat autocracy of the past through dismantling economically harmful regulations, insisting young illegal immigrants be legalized constitutionally and negating much of the Clean Power Plan that would illegally wipe out state laws.

He has delivered more support to beleaguered Israel, one of our greatest allies, which was as much as betrayed by the Obama administration. Through support of police and other steps, he has helped achieve a crime decrease after President Barack Obama helped a crime upsurge by calling police systemically racist and making them less proactive. By refusing to spur gun sales with threats of purchasing impediments, he has presided over a drop in gun sales far greater than any proposed new law could achieve.

A list of embarrassments could go on longer than this, but overall, on policy terms, this Trump year has been a significant boost to this country of ours, something far better than the debilitation likely under Hillary Clinton. His low approval ratings, however, reflect his misconduct, something foreign to what this country has seen in its presidents, and for that and other reasons, we could see Republicans lose control of the Senate or House or both. That could mean impeachment. It would certainly mean an end to any legislative advantages.

The call then is for Trump to try self-improvement, which he won't, but more importantly to work with Congress to ameliorate the debt, reform welfare to actually help the poor, end mass incarceration through better crime-deterrence policies and maybe pursue an infrastructure plan. There are serious foreign challenges, and what is finally required is firm determination to do what's needed.

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