

Who is Taking Advantage of John Fetterman?

To hear the Republicans talk, the Democrats are putting poor ill John Fetterman through the ringer by “making” him run for election when he should be home tending the garden. John Fetterman’s wife, the Republicans would have you believe, is a scheming woman who seeks to elevate her husband into a position of power, when he cannot even speak a coherent sentence in a short debate with his opponent. There is no doubt that the Democrats have tried to capitalize on Fetterman’s disability, by suggesting that those who have suffered debilitating physical conditions need representation in Washington, D.C., and John Fetterman is just the guy to do it. The sympathy factor probably will not hurt the Democrats.

The Republicans have no particular concern about John Fetterman’s health, the stress on his not so frail physique from running for the Senate or deep seated concerns about the man’s mental status. This is an opportunity for the Republicans to show Pennsylvanians the utter bankruptcy of the Democratic Party’s selection process.

The Republicans, by and large, are disinterested in John Fetterman’s health but rather are interested in winning an election. The Democrats likewise are happy to use John Fetterman as a saber in their campaign to show that Republicans do not care about women’s bodily rights, the poor, the needy, or the ill.

A shame on both parties. They both exploiting John Fetterman. Pennsylvanians probably know better than the politicians in either party. Hopefully, they will look past the issue as to whether the electorate should feel sorry for Fetterman or exclude him due to his post-stroke recovery issues. Rather, does he believe in issues that Pennsylvanians care about and, even more importantly, is he capable of promoting those issues in Washington to the satisfaction of the millions who live in this great Commonwealth? In other words, can John Fetterman do the job, can he do it well, and will he be responsive not to the needs of a narrow constituency, but rather to the majority of Pennsylvanians? Does the candidate have the skillset, the robustness and both the physical and mental stamina to do the job and to do it well? Neither pity nor anger concerning John Fetterman’s limitations should have anything to do with how Pennsylvanians vote.

However, the reality is that both Republicans and Democrats figure that John Fetterman will be a shill for their issue. A prominent Democrat recently told me that Fetterman will support the Biden agenda, unflinchingly, and that is reason enough to vote for him. Oz, this same Democrat told me, will vote for whatever Mitch McConnell wants and McConnell is a stand in for the devil himself, in the eyes of Democratic voters. At least no one is saying that Fetterman will be another Hilary Clinton or that Oz is simply a warmed over Herbert Hoover. However, there are plenty of people accusing Oz of being a stalking horse for Donald Trump.

Perhaps the only politician who has not had much to say about Fetterman’s health condition is Dr. Oz. He knows better. He realizes that it will not help him any to be seen as beating up on his beleaguered opponent and it might even do it him some good to show a fair sense of decency.

Another Democratic friend of mine referred to Oz as a “sleazeball.” “What makes you call him a sleazeball while apparently giving Fetterman a free pass on the ‘sleazeball’ designation?” I did not get much of an answer, except for the fact that Oz is rich, polished, and well, just a bad-ass Republican. The thinking behind anti-Fetterman sentiment, other than the fact that he is too sick to serve in office, is that he has no experience, lived with his parents until age 49, and will vote with the most evil Democrats under the sun.

It is unfortunate that we no longer look at issues, but rather at 30-second tv ads. A woman recently told me that she was going to vote for Oz but changed her mind when she heard a tv commercial that he “killed puppies.” Never mind whether that is true, and research that is routinely performed on animals, the soundbite caught this woman’s attention, and that was enough to alter her vote.

More than once I was involved in managing campaigns. I was informed early on that negative advertising worked much better than positive. Those who raise money for campaigns and help to run them are routinely told that between 50-75% of money raised should be used in negative campaigning. “It sticks,” I was told. I would wager a bet that since I was involved in the process, the percentage of money that goes for negative campaigning is far higher than the old 50-75% ratio. John Shapiro has not had to do a lot of negative campaigning, because the super PACs have done that job for him, and he is far enough ahead in the poles to stand tall as the “good guy.” In addition, there is really not a lot of awful things that can be said about Shapiro other than the fact that he is a Democrat and must have views antithetical to the well being of the Commonwealth and the United States of America. In terms of what he actually things or cares about, most people will not bother to check that out, given that all the information needed is contained within the 30-second tv commercials.

If this all sounds a bit pessimistic, it is for good reason. While American political campaigns have never been the punctilio of virtue, even before this Republic was formed, most people would agree that we have descended into the gutter further than we might have imagined in an early point in our history. I like to remind people that the anti-federalists, as the Wigs and Jefferson were later called, accused George Washington of being senile and his righthand man, John Adams, as being an agent of the British. Federalists, for their part, said that Jefferson’s intent was to bring the guillotine to American shores. James Callender and Benjamin Franklin Bache, well known newspaper publishers at the time of the Washington presidency, were not any more honorable in their attacks on candidates they approved of, than today’s reporters and publishers.

As Solomon said in Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), the sun turns about on a circuit, and returns to the same place.

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