

GOP Wants To Take Congress Without Telling Voters Why They Should

A funny thing happened last week: a Washington politician displayed leadership, vision, and courage — all at the same time, no less!

His name is Rick Scott, the junior U.S. senator from Florida, and the former governor of that free state. He released an 11-point, 60-page agenda explaining what he thinks are the biggest problems America faces today. Not only that, he offered common-sense policy fixes. This was particularly notable because Scott is chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which is responsible for electing more Republicans to the Senate.

Scott is a principled conservative, so it came as no surprise that Democrats attacked. But what Scott might not have anticipated was how many in his own party would pile on. First behind closed doors, and then in public, senior Senate Republicans not only disavowed Scott's policy agenda, but criticized him for even offering it. It is the second part that's the real problem.

Nothing Is Being Done

Republican leadership in the Senate had already announced they would not release an agenda. Apparently the issue here was less the policy ideas themselves than Scott's courage to offer them at all. Why? Because doing something makes everyone else look bad.

Yes, because hardly anyone else is doing anything. The [Politico story](#) planted by Republican leaders to punish Scott for his impertinence includes this bizarre paragraph:

[Senate Republican Leader Mitch] McConnell wants to avoid giving Democrats things to criticize over the next eight months, hoping to keep his party on offense. He believes that focusing on Biden's low approval ratings and running as a check on the Democratic Party is the most effective midterm strategy. He's also reluctant to embrace specific policy measures after the Senate GOP failed to repeal Obamacare after a years-long campaign against the law.

This, unfortunately, is how Beltway elites have approached politics for years: say little, do less, and wait for the pendulum of public opinion to swing back your way. In Washington, this passivity is seen as the height of strategic sophistication and message discipline. But outside the nation's capital, with citizens playing an increasingly activist role in public affairs, its adherents have become ever more unpopular.

Both parties in Washington have adopted this hide-the-ball strategy for too long — and Congress deservedly posts public approval ratings in the 20s. More to the point, what exactly has this strategy ever delivered to Americans?

In the decades that Scott's critics have been in office, the federal budget and national debt have exploded. Our middle class was hollowed out by corporatist deals with authoritarian China. The GOP establishment never managed to secure our borders (the success during the prior administration was largely due to the unilateral actions of President Trump). It further waltzed America into wars without plans to win them. They put quacks like David Souter and John Roberts on

the Supreme Court.

What about school choice? Budget cuts? Health care reform? Entitlements? For decades, nothing to see here from them.

The Culture War Isn't a Side Issue

Republican elites have for too long downplayed cultural issues because they are supposedly “divisive.” But it’s those cultural issues — not business tax cuts — that propelled Donald Trump to the White House and Republicans to their congressional majorities in 2016. They are the very issues that yielded the stunning gubernatorial win in Virginia in January and, in turn, the ones Democrat campaign chiefs are finding “alarmingly potent” heading into the 2022 elections.

They are also the issues at the heart of Scott’s agenda: illegal immigration, crime, election integrity, critical race theory, cancel culture, and defending religious freedom and the unborn. Scott wants to end Biden-flation, rein in Big Tech, and grow the economy. Those are all problems people want solved.

Wokism, socialism’s 21st-century manifestation in modern society, is making everything worse. Conservative reforms like Scott’s would improve them.

Scott is doing what he thinks is right, and is being punished for it, by his own leaders. I know the feeling. When I served in the Senate, I regularly tried to force votes on issues that divided Democrats from the public: earmarks, amnesty, runaway spending, and debt. Since my Republican colleagues paid lip service to things like border security and limited government, I assumed they would support me. But at every turn, this

same Senate leadership team tried to stop me.

"Why don't we just do what we said we would do?" I would ask them. I usually got their answers in hit pieces, which were also frequently planted in Politico.

But it has always been conservative outsiders who win public support and policy fights: Ronald Reagan, Trump, Ron DeSantis, and my friends at the House Freedom Caucus. These leaders have risen to the occasion by driving straight toward challenges, not hiding from them behind squishy language and canned promises.

Some will inevitably ask, "Why is Rick Scott laying out a new Republican agenda?" The question that should be posed, however, is, "Why is he the only one?" The answer has more to do with Scott's courage than his critics' cleverness.

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