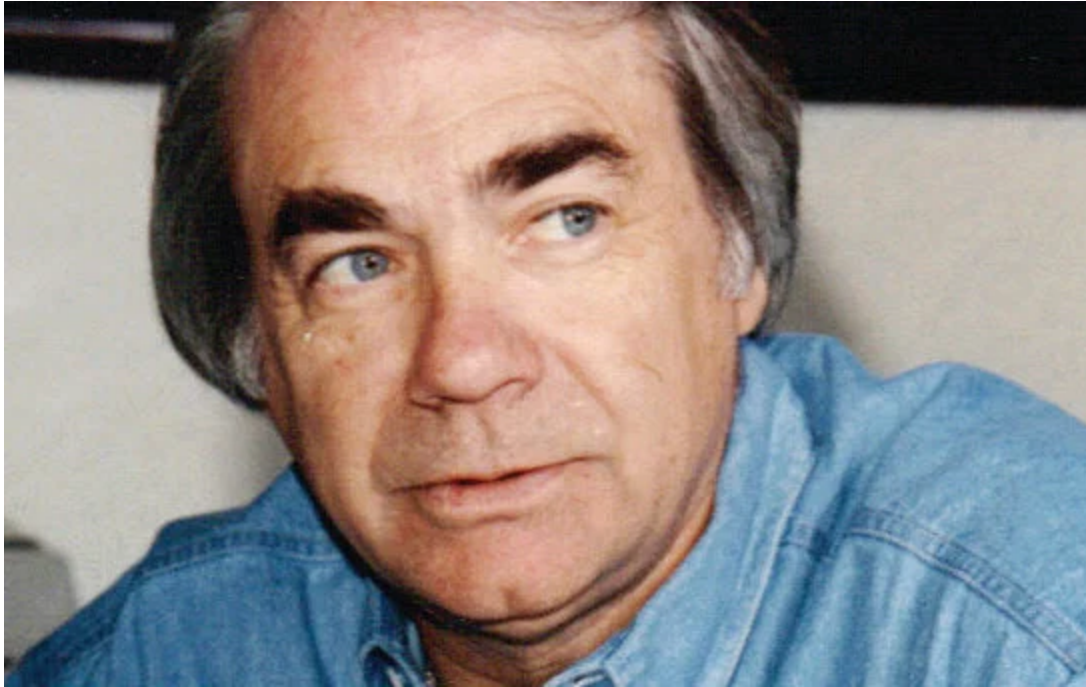


Carl Golden: Republicans biggest foe heading into the midterms? Donald Trump.

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By Carl Golden

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By all accounts, it is a near certainty the Republican Party will regain control of the House of Representatives this year and is well-positioned to gain one seat and secure a Senate majority.

The only thing standing in the way is Donald Trump.

If the national party leadership enters the midterm campaign season as the cult of Trump, the odds of returning to congressional power for the first time since 2014 will plummet.

With an unpopular President Biden, a bitterly divided Democratic Party and national dissatisfaction with the country's direction, the Republican future is bright.

It is time to cut ties with the ex-president and halt the damaging debate over his insistence he was cheated out of re-election in 2020.

His recent unhinged rally harangues have astonished even many of his hard-core supporters and created a narrative that, left unchecked, will turn voters away from the party's congressional candidates.

For more than a year, Trump has insisted the election was stolen despite not a shred of credible supporting evidence has been presented in the more than 60 court challenges.

His response has been to stoke outrage by claiming Vice President Mike Pence had the unilateral power to overturn the election results – an argument with no constitutional or statutory foundation.

He most recently urged his followers to erupt in national mass protests if charges are lodged by “vicious, racist prosecutors” investigating allegations of illegal activities by his private businesses as well as by accusations he interfered in the balloting process in Georgia.

It was a call to arms to promote civil uprisings to discredit the established legal system if he or his businesses are found culpable. He followed by pledging that if elected president in 2024, he would issue pardons to anyone found guilty of Federal charges for participating in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U. S. Capitol building.

It was the kind of fist-shaking rant history has recorded as shouted from balconies to mass audiences below.

Republican leaders are likely aghast at Trump’s language and threats, but those few who have spoken out have been measured while the vast majority have remained silent.

It is indicative of Trump’s iron grip on that portion of the party base that shouts in agreement when he speaks and it creates a fear that crossing the former president would alienate his dedicated followers.

His calls to cast aside the constitution and place his interests above it, incite potentially violent street protests and abuse presidential pardon authority to absolve rioters who threatened duly elected members of Congress, can no longer go unanswered.

Dismissing his actions as simply “Trump being Trump” is wishful thinking, a belief that Americans will grow weary of his histrionics, and he’ll fade into irrelevancy. They rightly point out that without the national stage given him by the White House, his voice and authority are seriously diminished. His banishment from social media platforms has hampered his reach as well.

He remains, though, a shrewd manipulator of the mainstream media. They cover his rallies, tout his fund-raising prowess and assess the strength of his candidate endorsements.

Trump’s guiding principle is that the American people can never hear enough from him and the media is a willing accomplice in achieving it.

He understands that the greater his outrage, the more inflammatory and personally coarse his language, the more widespread is the coverage.

The damage inflicted on the Republican Party, though, will continue to pile up and, in the absence of a response, will become a crushing burden.

While Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell – a frequent target of some of Trump’s cruelest attacks – has ignored him, it is a position that will become untenable over time.

It is time to acknowledge that Trump will not go away anytime soon, he’ll not retire gracefully like his predecessors and will continue to strew political havoc throughout the Republican Party.

Congressional elections are 10 months off, but serious campaigning and fund raising have already begun.

The party leadership can no longer afford a delay and drift strategy and hope Trump will talk and bluster his way out of relevancy.

The leadership must move decisively to isolate Trump and break cleanly from his incendiary rhetoric.

If not, Trump will isolate the party.

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