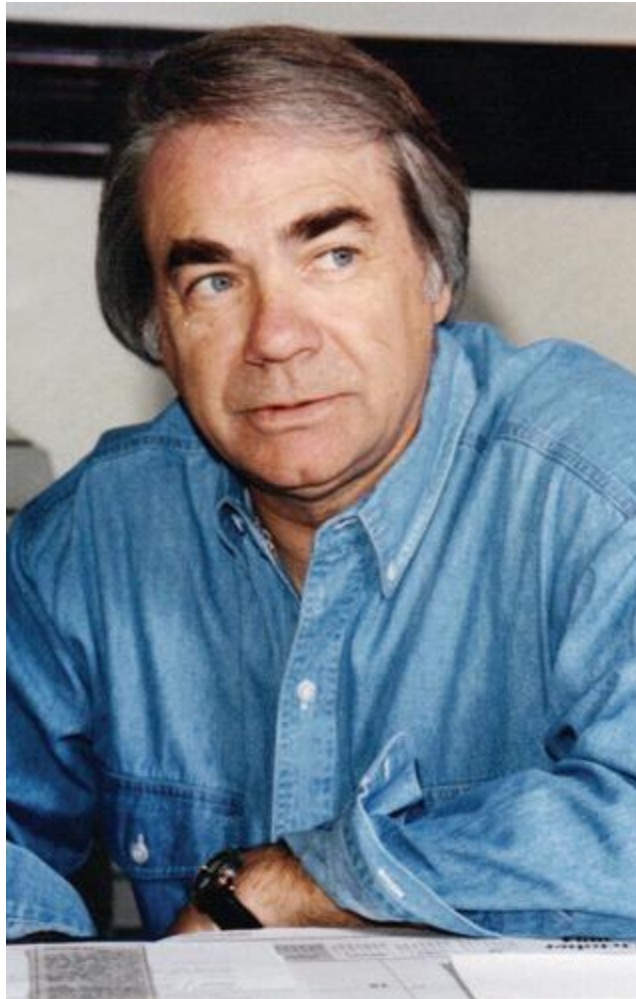


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Pelosi versus the progressives

By CARL GOLDEN Syndicated Columnist
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It took more than a year, but Congressional Democrats, facing the prospect of losing their majorities, have concluded the most effective way to mitigate disaster during the midterms this November would be to erase the public perception that it is controlled by far left socialism.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi signaled she understood the political imperative to break with her party's vocal progressive wing with a blunt declaration that defunding the police – a core progressive principle – is not a Democratic Party position.

Pelosi deliberately chose rejecting the most visible and most destructive policy position of the left to attract maximum attention to her remarks and highlight the seriousness with which the leadership views as the greatest threat to Democratic candidates.

Pelosi's "it's not the party position" assertion was quickly met with a rebuttal from Missouri Rep. Cori Bush who said, in effect, "oh, yes it is" teeing up what may be a continuing running intra-party battle over its direction.

While defunding the police was blamed by establishment Democrats for the dismal showing in the 2020-21 election cycle, it was merely one in a series of issues that created the image of a party that had lurched too far to the left and embraced an ideology out of step with Americans.

The progressives' support for abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), relaxing illegal border crossings, closing federal prisons, ending deportations, dismissing dramatic and tragic increases in violent crime, eliminating cash bail even for repeat offenders while refusing to prosecute lower level offenses, minimizing civil unrest, and pouring trillions of dollars into untested social programs all combined to portray a fringe party rather than a broad-based appeal to moderate and centrist voters.

It is not an agenda around which large numbers of Americans can rally, particularly at a time when income-robbing inflation shows no signs of abating and cost of living increases inflict daily punishment on middle class families.

Pelosi took the lead in moving toward offloading the left's ideological baggage and pulling her party back to mainstream thought.

Hillary Clinton joined in support with a warning that Democrats should pay greater attention to addressing issues with a chance to win voters over rather than clutching an ideological purity that turns voters away.

The progressives, however, have been clear they will not fold or go quietly, insisting the party, rather than going too far left, failed to go far enough and suffered losses because of timidity and a lack of conviction.

They've thrown support to primary election challengers against their incumbent colleagues and, in an unprecedented and astonishing act, one of their number will deliver a rebuttal to Biden's State of the Union speech, highlighting and exacerbating party divisions.

Combined with President Biden's public approval mired in the low 40 percent range and below in some surveys, Democratic angst is understandable – a record 30 House Democrats have announced retirement rather than seek re-election — – and has produced a late game strategy re-set.

Rather than confront an all out Republican assault and defend the drift to the left, Democrats have been advised to promote the administration's successes, emphasizing the multi-trillion-dollar rescue plan that sent cash directly to Americans to help weather the COVID-19 devastation and passage of a \$1 trillion infrastructure program to rebuild roads and bridges across the country.

They've been urged to call for approval of the Build Back Better social infrastructure package and voting rights legislation, even though both have failed in the Senate.

Former president Donald Trump will remain a target with Democrats reminding voters of his chaotic four years, his evidence-free insistence that he won re-election in 2020, and his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U. S. Capitol by his supporters.

Republicans are convinced Democrats are vulnerable on the cultural issues embodied in the progressives' agenda as well as the boiling controversy over parental involvement in public education.

The stars are in alignment for massive Republican gains in November, sufficient to control House and Senate for the first time since 2014.

And, despite intra-party upheavals of their own, victory has a way of smoothing over differences.

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