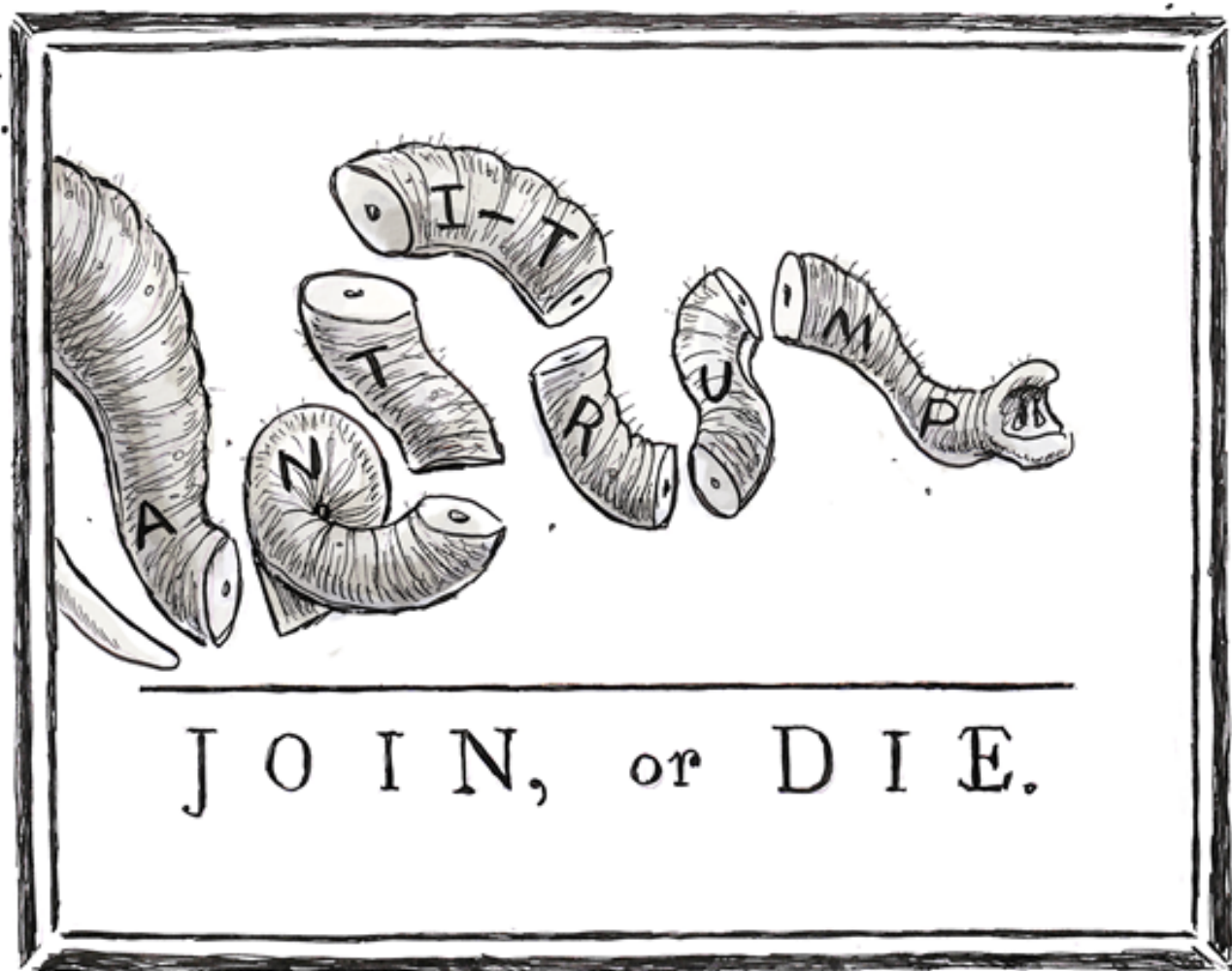


# REPUBLICANS HOPING TO DITCH TRUMP ARE FORGETTING SOMETHING

Carl Golden, May 19, 2021



When a group of 150 Republicans and independents issued its “A Call for American Renewal” manifesto, speculation abounded that it represented the first step toward creating a third party to someday compete on an equal footing with the establishment organizations that rule American politics.

In the preamble to its 13-point statement of principles, the group characterized its mission as an effort to “catalyze an American renewal and to either reimagine a party dedicated to our founding ideals or else hasten the creation of such an alternative. We call for a rebirth of the American cause and do so in partnership and loyal competition with others committed to the preservation of our Union.”

There followed its pledge to be guided by the principles of democracy, founding ideals, Constitutional order, truth, rule of law, ethical government, pluralism, civic responsibility, opportunity, free speech, conservation, common defense & welfare, and leadership.

Noble goals all, but the singular most critical objective of all is missing: Prying the fingers of former president Donald Trump from the throat of the Republican Party.

The manifesto never mentions Trump, but his presence looms large throughout the document, with such rhetoric as: “We recognize truth and reason as essential to a free and just society and expect our leaders, citizens and press to seek and promote them. We oppose the employment of fear mongering, conspiracism, and falsehoods and instead support evidence-based policymaking and honest discourse.”

Similar language crops up regularly throughout the manifesto and there is no attempt at disguising the target of its wrath.

With each passing day since Joe Biden entered the White House in January, Trump has tightened his stranglehold on the party, highlighted by its Congressional leadership bowing to his demand that Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney be expelled from her role as chair of the party conference in retaliation for refuting his claims of election fraud.

Trump has marginalized those in the party who were convinced that following his defeat he would retire to his Mar-A-Lago resort and weigh in periodically on politics and party affairs. He turned their beliefs into wishful thinking.

The constant stream of members of Congress, candidates and others seeking his support has solidified his role as the face of the party.

His suspension from social media sites Facebook and Twitter, for instance, hasn't hampered his public omnipresence or his ability to draw outsized media attention.

He's weighed in on all manner of policy and issues and the performance of his successor while critiquing in his trademark personal terms the shortcomings and flaws of those who oppose him.

Above all other considerations, though, Trump has become increasingly strident in his insistence that massive voter fraud led to his defeat. Supportive evidence is non-existent and dozens of legal challenges have all failed but more than 60 percent of self-identified Republicans agree with his contention.

His characterization of the Jan. 6 assault on the U. S. Capitol as a largely peaceful demonstration protesting the election outcome has been taken up by a few Congressional Republicans willing to exceed the boundaries of human understanding.

It is, however, testimony to the power Trump has asserted over the party. He's its most dominant figure whose favor is sought eagerly by leadership and who remains a favorite of many Republican voters as the 2024 presidential candidate.

He's given every indication he intends to play a major, if not dominant, role in the 2022 midterm Congressional elections, raising money and endorsing candidates.

If Republicans, already in striking distance of the majority in the House and in a deadlocked 50-50 Senate, regain control, Trump will emerge stronger than ever, potentially even unassailable.

Unless the American Renewal group can break that hold, it will go the way of other third party movements. This country is steeped in the two party tradition and has consistently rejected all efforts to turn away from it, no matter the circumstances.

There is no question of the sincerity of the group nor any doubt they recognize the danger in clinging to a cult-like figure such as Trump has become.

The task on which they've embarked may be the equivalent of a moon shot but it's one worth taking. It's left the launch pad successfully into the unknown. Godspeed.

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