

[Opinion](#)

[News](#)



(RNS/Matt Johnson, Flickr)



by Pat Perriello

[View Author Profile](#)

perriello@aol.com

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

March 15, 2018

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

As a member of the "never Trump" contingent, it is so easy to see all the reasons why Donald Trump is unfit to be president of the United States. It is, in fact, difficult to see why everyone else does not recognize this reality as well.

I might just mention a few of these reasons: President Trump has coarsened the presidency and level of civil discourse.

He endangers our country on the national stage through his lack of knowledge of foreign policy issues and his bizarre attachment to the president of Russia.

He espouses an extremist immigration policy that includes separating parents from their children.

His anti-Muslim policy is not only immoral, but it endangers our safety by diminishing our ability to work with the American Muslim community to ferret out extremists in their midst.

His elimination of large numbers of governmental regulations has damaged the environment, worker safety and the stability of banks and financial institutions.

He has hollowed out the State Department and other agencies to the detriment of our ability to conduct government business.

Finally, he continues to manifest authoritarian tendencies that have included [joking about](#) becoming president for life.

I am only scratching the surface and could easily go on and on. Yet, in a [recent Marist Poll](#), 42 percent of the country believes President Donald Trump is doing a good job. Why?

Obviously, the economy is strong. One could argue how much credit is due to Donald Trump, but certainly every president claims credit when the economy does well. If anything, Trump may not be getting sufficient credit in the polls for the strong economy.

The new tax bill is growing in popularity. A few extra dollars in one's pocket is meaningful to those struggling to make ends meet. There are many, long-term reasons why the tax cut may have been a bad idea, but it is difficult to make this case to the voters.

Beyond these policy issues, I believe it is his style that continues to endear him to his base. His ability to distract the public from damaging news is a significant strength. He can change the subject from the Russia investigation to a gun policy debate, and the media rushes to cover the story.

He not only distracts us, but he controls the media coverage. His savvy on media matters makes him the subject of 24/7 coverage. Even negative coverage keeps him constantly in the public eye.

He has a remarkable ability to connect with his supporters. He pushes all the right buttons. His [speech in western Pennsylvania](#) on Saturday night is a case in point. If you watch him deliver the speech, you will see his skill at connecting with the crowd. It was masterful. The danger of his demagoguery is real.

His populist message to the coal miners and steel workers of America resonates, even when his policies fail to address the issue. Never mind that Trump can't bring steel or coal mining back. People want to believe him, so they do.

Advertisement

He successfully plays into our fears. He exacerbates our fear of the other — immigrants, Muslims and minorities. His attacks on government overreach and fake news from the mainstream media strike responsive chords, as his followers see themselves as victims of forces they can't control.

It is time to acknowledge that Trump is good at what he does. Now, the future will truly be up to the American people. They will decide who we are as a people and what kind of country we choose to live in. The November Congressional elections will go a long way to answering those questions.

We may have received a clue from Tuesday's special election in Pennsylvania's 18th Congressional District. It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from a special election that ended in a virtual tie. Yet, the district is a Republican stronghold that Trump won by 20 points in the 2016 election. Even Trump's vintage stump speech on Saturday does not appear to have been enough to eke out a victory for the Republican candidate, Rick Saccone.

This is [not good news](#) for Trump and the Republicans. Voters came out in large numbers to voice their opposition to where Trump wants to take this country. While Republican voters also turned out in large numbers, it does not appear to have been enough.

There is no guarantee where this country will be after the midterm elections. This week's results do seem to show, however, that if voters stay engaged and continue to turn out in large numbers, they can dramatically alter the course of history in this country in November.