

#1436 The Long Legacy of Making Deals with the Devil (Bipartisanship)

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of left podcast in which we shall take a look at the history of bipartisanship and appeasement in the U S, dating back to before the civil war, and tracking it all the way up to the current negotiations over the infrastructure bill.

Clips today are from the Politics Of Everything, Politics And More from the New Yorker, In The Thick, The Majority Report, The Young Turks, On the media, CounterSpin, Vox Conversations, and the Ezra Klein Show.

The Unnatural Endurance of Bipartisanship Part 1 - The Politics of Everything - Air Date 3-4-21

[00:00:31] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** Joe Biden ran for president making one promise that set him apart from his rivals for the democratic nomination. He, and maybe only he, would be able to revive an increasingly endangered Washington tradition—bipartisanship.

[00:00:44] **PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN:** We need to revive the spirit of bipartisanship in this country. I know that sounds bizarre in light of where we are, the spirit of being able to work with one another. When I say that, and I said that from the time I announced, I was told that maybe that was the way things used to work Joe, you got a lot done before Joe, but you can't do that anymore. I'm here to tell you, and say, we can.

[00:01:08] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** There's been plenty of debate on how realistic Biden's promise was, whether we can. There's been a bit less discussion of why we should. Is bipartisanship an ideal to strive for, a tool to achieve particular political goals, a completely discredited concept? And what does a politician like Joe Biden actually mean when he refers to it?

[00:01:28] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** We wanted to figure out where Biden's particular attachment to bipartisanship

came from, so we talked to Paul Blest who's written about Biden's background as a Senator in Delaware. Paul suggested that it has a lot to do with Delaware's history is a Republican stronghold.

[00:01:44] **PAUL BLEST:** When Joe Biden was first elected, Delaware was a pretty Republican state. It was one of the classic Mid-Atlantic Northeast states that were run mostly by moderate, pro-business Republicans. Biden was one of the first Democrats elected as a Senator from Delaware in quite some time.

[00:01:59] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** In Delaware, we know it's a small state, I mean, it's a tax haven, right? Delaware is where all these corporations incorporated themselves.

[00:02:06] **PAUL BLEST:** Yes, it's definitely an on-shore tax Haven. Biden was known as the Senator from MBNA.

[00:02:11] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** MBNA was, for years, a major issue of credit cards.

[00:02:15] **PAUL BLEST:** When he was a Senator back in the 90s he authored a lot of legislation that was very friendly to financial interest. Credit card companies wrote in the legislation that you couldn't discharge student loans in bankruptcy. Banks loved him for that stuff. And that's sort of the unspoken thing about Delaware politics, is that the thing that was uniting everybody wasn't really the sense of "we can all get along because we were from a small state," it was that everybody in Delaware recognizes how important the financial industry is to Delaware, and being a corporate tax haven essentially gives the state the funding it needs to be a functional state and state government.

[00:02:56] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** And just to make it really explicit, the idea here, and I think this is true of a couple other Eastern states in a way that's less true in the rest of the country, the idea was that for years, it didn't really matter who the voters elected to put into power because there would be a sort of informal moderate power-sharing agreement between all these broadly pro-business politicians, on both sides of the aisle. So the partisan gap in a state like Delaware really didn't matter as much as it might have otherwise right?

[00:03:24] **PAUL BLEST:** Right. Yeah. It's changed in recent years, but yeah, for Joe Biden's entire career that's basically been the way that that's been.

[00:03:30] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** So when Joe Biden leaves Delaware and goes off to join the US Senate, what kinds of things does he start doing that continue this Delaware way idea?

[00:03:42] **PAUL BLEST:** So, one of his central issues, once he got into the Senate, became busing desegregation, and in Delaware, that was a very, very controversial issue. Biden had never really been given much of a chance when he first ran for Senate, he was just the County Councilman in the early 70s when he ran for Senate and beat an incumbent Senator. And so Republicans very much made this a major issue in the first couple of years that he was in the Senate. And by the time 1975 and 1976 rolls around he's working, not just across the aisle with republicans, he's working with very conservative Democrats against bussing desegregation, not just in Delaware but in places like Florida.

And then he gets into the 80s and he's working with Strom Thurmond on criminal justice legislation, basically the forerunner to the crime bill. So very early on he stakes out a claim, and there's a Philadelphia Inquirer profile that ran out of him in 1974-1975 where he is talking about George Wallace as somebody that the Democrats should look to as somebody who tells it like it is.

[00:04:43] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** George Wallace was the former governor of Alabama and a committed segregationist.

[00:04:47] **PAUL BLEST:** He's not explicitly embracing George Wallace, but he's saying the Democrats need to get back to common sense and away from this idea that liberals can save everybody. He literally calls himself one of the "new liberals"; I think there's another word for that.

[00:05:04] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** And that seems really important too, because at the time, in that very early 70s period, to be a person who sells yourself as bridging the gap, it's not strictly talking about I can work with Republicans. It was easier to work with certain Republicans at the time than it would have been to work with certain Democrats.

It was not even just a I can be bipartisan, it was that "I can find the middle ground, I can figure out what I can work with in the other side," with the other side being incredibly conservative, Southern Democrats.

[00:05:33] **PAUL BLEST:** Yeah, exactly. The famous knock against him now is that he gave the eulogy and Strom Thurmond's funeral, and there was a reason for that. He considered himself a friend of Strom Thurmond. He considered himself a friend of James Eastland, deeply, deeply conservative Mississippi Democrat, who pretty much, as soon as he got into the Senate, was a staunch opponent of desegregation.

He aligned himself with these people on, not just fringe issues, on issues that related to segregation. The criminal, the justice reform bill was bipartisan, welfare reform was bipartisan, deregulation of the financial system, all of these things were bipartisan, and we all look at these things as horrible things now. They're pretty widely accepted as bad things.

And yeah, that's how he made a name for himself as one of the Republicans' favorite Democrats in the Senate for such a long time. He was willing to work with them, and the ways in which he was willing to work with them were very bad.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Elizabeth Warren - The New Yorker: Politics and More - Air Date 10-19-20

[00:06:28] **ANDREW MARANTZ - HOST, THE NEW YORKER: POLITICS AND MORE:** on this issue of bipartisanship, I think people are very confused in this moment because, on the one hand it seems clearer and clearer that there isn't always a good faith negotiating partner on the other side of the aisle, when it comes to so many of these issues. There aren't two sides to them. And yet they're presented as if they have two sides.

Does this mean that there is no such thing as bipartisanship, right? You still hear people talking, the fever will break. One day our friends on the other side of the aisle will return to us. They'll have an epiphany. You often hear the Democratic nominee talking in these ways, and it sounds to some people just so outmoded. I mean, does that strike you as hollow or what can we do with bipartisanship as a concept?

[00:07:09] **SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN:** My view on this right now is we need to hold people accountable. And the Republican senators -- I'll speak to the side of the house that I'm on -- the Republican senators have enabled Donald Trump. When Donald Trump says he just may not follow the results of the election, unless he gets elected. Where have they been? When Donald Trump

plays footsie with Russia, where have they been? When Donald Trump says he is going to try to overturn the Affordable Care Act, but he has this secret magic health plan that no one knows what it is, where have they been? When Donald Trump calls people in Richmond who are white supremacists "fine people," and when he refuses at the first presidential debate to denounce white supremacy, where have they been?

We don't start this by saying, oh, it's all about bi-partisan and you get to do half of what you want. And we get to do half of what we want. No. This is about responsibility. You want to be a United States Senator? You have to be willing to speak up and stand up for the Constitution of the United States, for our democracy, and for the health and safety, not just a handful of people, but the health and safety of all Americans. That's where we start.

[00:08:37] **ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:** Yeah. I think this is an area where there's also just a huge generational shift in our politics. Bi-partisanship to young people seems like this kind of vintage fantasy. Like it seems like people are yearning for this time that I've never lived through.

But for young people, bipartisanship got us the Iraq war. Bipartisanship got us endless war. Bipartisanship got us bank bailouts. And we very rarely see the results of bipartisanship yielding in racial justice, yielding in economic justice for working families, yielding in improvements to health care. And in fact, the things that have yielded those things have been Democratic majorities.

I hope one day we can get to a point where our democracy is much more _____. But what we are seeing right now is that when the Republican party is given the keys to any governing body, it will yield an abuse of power, fealty to Trump or any other authoritarian that would try to assume the highest office of the land.

And, you know, I think that what we really need to examine perhaps is common ground on an issue-to-issue basis. This is not to say that I've never worked with a Republican in my life. There are some areas where we've been able to reach out with more libertarian elements of the Republican party.

There are some areas. I don't necessarily think bipartisanship for bipartisanship sake is a virtue. But just because something's bipartisan doesn't mean that it's good or that it's good for you.

The Unnatural Endurance of Bipartisanship Part 2 - The Politics of Everything - Air Date 3-4-21

[00:10:17] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** When we talk about bipartisanship, we always hear it spoken about as a virtue. So I'm just wondering how those two pieces fit together. It seems like whenever, at least in Joe Biden's career, bipartisanship has not produced results that, in the long-term, you can be proud of. What would be an example of bipartisanship at its best?

[00:10:42] **JULIAN ZELIZER:** Well, the example that's often used as a Civil Rights Act of 1964.

[00:10:48] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** This is Julian Zelizer, a professor of history at Princeton University.

[00:10:51] **JULIAN ZELIZER:** So this is a period where bipartisanship happens a lot, not just because of good feelings, but in the 1960s both political parties were internally divided in fundamental ways. Democrats divided between Southerners, Dixiecrats, who were against most civil rights legislation and against unions, and Northerners who were increasing in numbers and incredibly liberal on many of these issues. And Republicans were divided between the Midwesterners, who were staunch anti-government figures and Northeastern is like Jacob Javits or Nelson Rockefeller, who could be pretty progressive.

And so the Civil Rights Act of 64', this is the legislation that bans legal segregation and is really the first major product, legislatively, of the civil rights movement. Southerners filibustered, and in the Senate they're trying to kill the legislation by talking it to death. And ultimately the only way it passes through the Senate is when some Republicans agree to work with the Johnson administration and liberals in the Democratic party to end the filibuster.

So Senator Everett Dirksen who's the minority leader, a famous figure, ultimately is crucial to passage of the legislation. So I think that's one bill and one moment we look to when the parties working together was pretty crucial.

[00:12:12] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** At the time, is that something that's discussed as bipartisan? One thing we're trying to trace is the increasing use of the term, and the use of this term, not just

to describe the practice of people from different parties working together, but as an ideal in itself.

[00:12:30] **JULIAN ZELIZER:** Well, it wasn't an ideal actually. I mean, the interesting thing about bipartisanship is in the 1950s and 60s this phenomenon of parties working together was often discussed as a terrible thing in American politics. So the reason is, starting in 1938, you have a bipartisan coalition. It was called the Conservative Coalition, in Congress. And that was Southern Democrats and Midwestern Republicans who teamed up. They controlled most of the major committees and they blocked everything. They blocked every major liberal piece of legislation to the great frustration of movement activists and to liberal politicians.

So, starting in the early 1950s, there's all of this writing by political scientists essentially blasting bipartisanship saying that because the parties work this way and because this coalition controls everything, we get nothing done. And this is a constant theme through the early 70s, so many liberals in the 50s and 60s, they don't see it with great reverence, bipartisanship, they see it as the problem. They're calling for more partisanship in American politics. Parties that stand for something and that aren't willing to basically cut deals with the other side that ended up killing major initiatives.

[00:13:46] **ALEX PAREENE - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** That's funny then, because I think they got what they want, sort of, the parties polarized, as I think most of our listeners are well aware. It feels like, to me, bipartisanship as an ideal in and of itself coincides with that polarization.

[00:14:00] **JULIAN ZELIZER:** Well, they both happen at the same time.

[00:14:03] **LAURA MARSH - HOST, THE POLITICS OF EVERYTHING:** Something. I recall from Sam Rosenfeld's book, *The Polarizers* is that the critics of bi-partisanship at the time thought that it was very confusing for the voter. To vote Democrat or vote Republican because you don't know there wasn't an ideologically coherent party, so it's hard if you're voting for Democratic president and then you vote for your local representative, they may not agree, and you may be getting radically different things.

So the idea that you can have two fairly, what we now have, two fairly well-defined parties where you basically know what each one stands for is good. The problem you then get is they can't work together because they're very ideologically defined.

[00:14:43] **JULIAN ZELIZER:** Well, I think two things. I think that's correct. And what Sam writes about is this period, in the 70s really, where a lot of activism centered on strengthening the parties. There was a lot of attention to the rules and to the procedures, to strengthen the party leaders over the committee leaders, to strengthen the national party over local party machines.

When John F. Kennedy is elected in 1960, there is a lot of excitement, a lot of younger Americans think lots is going to happen, and then the civil rights movement is really accelerating, and nothing happens because Kennedy, until '63, is terrified of angering not the Republicans, but his own wing of the party, and he's fearful of a backlash.

And there were forums of the 70s achieve, like you said, a lot of what was wished for, and there is a "careful what you wish for" story. Meaning there is a story about, yes, we get more polarization and the electorate also strengthens that. Southern Strategy for example, produces a Southern region that is Republican rather than Democratic, also eroding the basis of bipartisanship. And you have two parties that are far apart, and the story of polarization is that when that really happens it's hard to find agreement on anything.

Exhaustion of Bipartisanship - In The Thick - Air Date 6-25-21

[00:15:58] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** Since the November, 2020 election, 18 states have enacted more than 30 laws to restrict voting, and that's according to the Voting Rights Lab. And most of these states are, no surprise, Republican led.

So this week Senate Democrats pushed for the For The People Act, which is a voting rights bill which would make it easier to vote in federal elections with provision such as automatic voter registration, ending gerrymandering, which come on, these districts that look like amoeba. You know what I mean? They never look like square districts anymore, they look like blobs. And to help restore some of the Voting Rights Act, which was gutted by the Supreme court in 2013. Think about that.

[00:16:42] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** You know, this democracy is just great, cause you know it was a supreme court that basically gutted the Voting Rights Act. Oh boy, we got to make this country better.

[00:16:50] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** So anyway, on Tuesday, Senate Republicans blocked the bill using the filibuster to prevent any debate on it. " So that's it, we're not going to talk about this. We're not going to talk about it. Moving on. Nana, Nana, Nana!" So we're seeing these clear ongoing moves by the GOP to suppress voter's rights, and when you suppress voter's rights, the next logical conclusion is that you are suppressing democracy in this country!

[00:17:14] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** And when Latinos and Latinas are the second largest potential voting bloc, there's a specificity with Black voters and specificity with targeting Latinos and Latinas, because we are the number two voting bloc.

[00:17:30] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** Right, and--although, according to Joe Biden, were afraid of getting vaccinated because we're all going to be deported. So anyway, according to the Brennan center, which we've cited in the past, they say that this rule of the filibuster has this legacy of being used to block civil rights legislation, so think about that.

At the same time we're even seeing Democrats, and I'm going to put Democrats in quotes here when it comes to Arizona, Senator Kyrsten Sinema supporting this rule. She recently wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post, where she defended the filibuster, writing, and I'm quoting, "my support for retaining the 60 vote threshold is not based on the importance of any particular policy, it is based on what is best for our democracy." Okay.

And then West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, who made Joe Manchin so powerful? He also wrote an opinion piece earlier this month, where he expressed his disapproval of the For The People Act and also supported keeping the filibuster.

Maria, let's get all geeky for a second. What do you think? I mean, I know the filibuster is used for bipartisanship, but it just seems like we're past all that now and this is a bare knuckles battle. What are your thoughts?

[00:18:45] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** Well, if you think about how the filibuster was used against the Civil Rights Act in 1957 and then in 1964, and you think about the way in which the Republicans are using it now, it feels quite undemocratic. In the sense that they can attack particular policies. I mean, the Senate is overwhelmingly white men. Hello? Can we be clear?

[00:19:07] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** And also white women, because Kyrsten Sinema is becoming all of a sudden... Let's not ignore the white women that supported Donald Trump. I'm not saying Kyrsten Sinema supported Donald Trump, but there is this white supremacy across legislation. And, and anyway...

[00:19:21] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** What makes me very frustrated is that we know right now that voter suppression is happening, that is happening as we speak. We know, for example, that mass incarceration is happening as we speak. We know that mass detention of immigrants, and people with green cards, and refugees is happening as we speak. And this is another one.

And so the fact that the world's greatest democracy cannot find a way to enhance our democracy as opposed to attacking it. So do you think they should get rid of the filibuster?

[00:19:53] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** I mean, I think for the modern political times, I don't think we're ever going to get anything done.

[00:19:57] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** If we don't get rid of the filibuster?

[00:19:59] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** Yeah. We're a 50/50 nation. You got him coming back and trying to come back. He, the former president. Greg Abbott is basically spouting the same shit that the former president is spouting and he's obviously positioning himself to run for 2024.

I just think we're at a 50/50 split, and how are you getting anything done in the right sense of getting things done? Even though the infrastructure is, supposedly there's a deal, and even though there's this bipartisan police reform deal that's happening. I don't know, when it comes to basic tenants of voting, I mean, the fact that you wouldn't even debate this is just ridiculous, that's all I'm saying.

[00:20:38] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** The other thing that a lot of people are living with is the exhaustion about being bi-partisan, honestly. And the exhaustion of "we have to reach across the aisle."

[00:20:49] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** "It's two sides, everything has two sides!" I feel like I'm in, --it's like journalism, you know, it's the same shit.

[00:20:53] **MARIA HINOJOSA - HOST, IN THE THICK:** Exactamente. And I think that's the part that we are all exhausted by, because look where it has gotten us. Y'all, you know, this fight is deep.

Behind the Infrastructure of the Infrastructure Bill & The Real American Oligarchy - The Majority Report with Sam Seder - Air Date 7-23-21

[00:21:04] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** We had Biden who came out with two tranches, approximately 2.5 trillion each; one was the, sort of, the hard infrastructure, one was the human infrastructure, they were billing it.

Yeah. And at one point, Manchin, had said, like, "Yeah, four or five sounds good to me!" There were all sorts of numbers being bandied around.

But it seemed, once that set up one away, when by provided those two and it sort of fell into this... he then started to negotiate with some Republicans; that fell apart.

And then the Portman-Sinema things started to happen. And when they announced, I don't know, this is now a month ago, six weeks ago, that they were... that they had some type of deal, and it was anemic, they announced it. It did-- obviously, didn't really, actually, have it.

It seemed to me, then, Sanders came out and said, "I want a \$6 trillion bill." And, as far as I can tell what happened there, is that, that... staking out that position provided ballast, and made it... and created some type of oxygen, essentially, and space, for people like Mark Warner to walk out of the budget hearing, uh, meeting and say, "We've got a deal. It's \$3.5 trillion. It's less than what Bernie wanted. But it's a good deal."

Is that more or less the Tiktok of what happened there?

[00:22:24] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** Yeah, there's a slight adjustment, is, I wouldn't give the... there's the second thing, which was, there was always going to be a reconciliation package in addition to the bipartisan deal.

And there were some more conservative members who were saying 2 trillion. Biden wanted 4 trillion, and now we're at about four to 4.1 trillion, if you take the infrastructure in the bipartisan deal and the two pieces, you combine that together, it's all 4.1 trillion.

I... look, I think the problem, Sam, is, and we've seen this, you and I have, frankly, been around this a long time. And we saw this at the beginning of the Obama administration. There's this bipartisan fetish among a group of Senate Democrats. And frankly, uh, Schumer-- and this is to his credit-- has actually done a lot to try to alleviate that bi-partisan fetish. But this will actually show how meaningful it is.

Because, let's go over this: democrats passed that \$1.9 trillion bill in a partisan manner. The right thing to do; it was the failure at the beginning of the Obama administration, right? Those guys... we didn't act for months. This time, Biden came in, did the right thing, with Bernie, schumer, Pelosi, and others. Bernie was chair of the budget committee. He said, "Nope, we're going to, we need this 1.9 trillion. We're doing it. Come talk to us with your ideas. But if you're just going to complain about process, we're moving forward."

Good.

Then, there have been a series of, frankly, very bipartisan bills pass through the Senate. So you've had the Asian Hate Crimes bill, which was done in a very bipartisan manner, with a very open amendment process, and it, it got 80 something votes in the Senate, and passed.

Great.

Then there was this Chinese competition bill, which, frankly got an, I think it got 95 votes and Bernie was the only Democrat to vote against it.

[00:24:19] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REORT:** That was also Schumer's pet project. He'd been working on that for quite a while.

[00:24:23] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** He had been, and he went and got Cornyn involved, and brought a whole bunch of people along, and it was fun for everybody. And it was on the floor for two weeks, and there were bipartisan

amendments, and there were, like, everybody got to have... everybody got amendment votes, or got their amendments in the bill, and it was happy and bipartisan.

So the, first off it... Schumer... and then Schumer gave these guys enough space to... you want to make a deal? You make a deal.

The problem, Sam, if I can jump slightly, is "these guys" want an impossible deal.

[00:24:58] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Who's "these guys?"

[00:25:00] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** The bipartisan caucus.

So, they want a deal that's just not mathematically possible, because, they're like, "We want... we want 500 billion, and we want it paid for, but you can't pay for it by reversing any Trump taxes; you can't pay for it with that little IRS, with the IRS money.

[00:25:18] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** That's the IRS money is literally, you can't pay for it by increasing enforcement by the IRS, on taxes that are already...

[00:25:25] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** Right. You can't by cracking down on tax cheats,

[00:25:28] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Right. That's absurd.

[00:25:28] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** Like, you literally can't... which is absurd, which by the way, they were, like, at a very low level of money there. There have been the suggestion... there had been the suggestions from people, including the IRS, that said there are trillions out there in... in money. And they were like, at this tiny percentage.

You can't pay for it. And... look, the Center for American Progress, which, center-left think tank, not a Bernie Sanders think tank, more of the... the middle of where the Democratic Party, is think tank. They came out with, I think it was, 4.5 trillion in pay for us. They have 4.5 trillion in, basically, taxes on the wealthy and large corporations that can easily be raised, uncontroversially, within Democratic circles.

So, if you told Bernie to go find 500 billion, he could literally find it in his back pocket today, right? You say, "You have to pay for 500 billion." He's got it all there, but if you put... but what they're doing is putting all these parameters on it.

That makes it... that's why this deal is always been half a loaf of BS. Because, you got to find these numbers that don't exist, and by the way, how they get to the numbers, and this gets to also why the CBO is terrible, is by trying to game the math and the CBO. That's all they're doing. They're playing little games to the test, to make up fake numbers basically.

[00:26:51] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Okay.

[00:26:51] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** And this is just... just, really quickly, this... The reason you say it's half a loaf, or a little bit ridiculous, in terms of what it accomplishes, is because, this is largely just a branding exercise for these Senators. Is it not? The need of what we're going to see in the human infrastructure element, and if they drop X, Y, and Z from the bi-partisan bill, it'll just get enveloped into the reconciliation package. That's really the function this seems to be serving more than anything, right?

[00:27:19] **ARI RABIN-HAVT:** Yeah. It's just an excuse to say, "We did something bi-partisan." Which is fine.

And, look, the truth is, from the start, internally... let's take, like, a very small item, but it provides a good example. There is very much agreement in spending a ton of money on broadband infrastructure. Like, just a ton of... just, everyone in the caucus agrees, from Bernie Sanders to Joe Manchin we should spend a lot of money on broadband infrastructure.

They were never going to fund the full Biden proposal in the bi-partisan deal. And as I understood it, they were always going to fund... they were, literally, going to take that number, and be, like, subtract the bipartisan number, and put the rest into the reconciliation package.

Because there's just general agreement among every Democrat that we need to spend a ton of this money, which isn't controversial, which isn't partisan, which, as a progressive, I'm okay with; it's not something that's going to, like, super excite me, but it's good spending and good money. And let's do it.

Manchin: Capitol Riots Made Me MORE Bipartisan - The Young Turks - Air Date 4-9-21

[00:28:16] **JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Earlier this week, Joe Manchin proved himself to be Joe Manchin by writing in an op-ed that, no, he's not going to be eliminating the filibuster, or even weakening it, as he had implied earlier, about a month ago, that he might do. But then on top of that, he had an interview where he talked about why he is now so committed to, uh, bipartisanship. Uh, and it had to do with something that happened earlier this year. Watch this.

[00:28:41] **SENATOR JOE MANCHIN:** January 6th changed me. I was very clear with everybody; I never thought in my life, I never read in history books, to where our form of government had been attacked at our seat of government, which is Washington, DC; at our Capitol, by our own people. Now, the British did it, but not Americans. So something told me, "Wait a minute, pause, hit the pause button. Something's wrong. You can't have this many people split, to where they want to go to war with each other."

[00:29:06] **JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Okay. So... he changed on the 6th, as a result of that. Which is why he now has the exact same positions he's had for as long as I've been familiar with him, as a politician. Cenk, it must've been a profound experience to change so... "notly."

[00:29:24] **CENK UYGUR - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Yeah. Well, second part of that is, let me get this logic, as it were, right.

Um, so a bunch of Republicans break into the Capitol, to try to murder the legislators; and then you take out of that, "I really got to work with Republicans! It is time to compromise with these guys who were trying to murder me a couple of months ago."

I'm not positive you learned the right lesson. Um, and... and third of all, all of this is horse crap. None of it is true. Uh, Joe Manchin is doing this, of course, to protect his corporate donors. Uh, and that is the entirety of it.

The fact that our mainstream press cannot even bring up that question, let alone stating it as an obvious reason for why he's doing what he's doing, it's just pathetic.

[00:30:16] **HEKEN HONG:** You know, I've always said that Joe Manchin is as much a... a real Democrat as Elizabeth Warren is a native American, which is hardly at all.

But the... this is the one thing that does make him a Democrat, which is that he's a "turn-the-other-cheeker". Like, the Democratic Party is the... is... they're professional "turn-the-other-cheekers," to the point where it's, like, not even turning the other cheek, it's like, "No, no, no, take my other arm. And, you know, in fact, take my balls while you're at it."

Well, how many cheeks can we frickin turn at this point? They literally busted down the doors of the Capitol to try to kill y'all, and they're still like, "You know what? Some of them are fine people. I'm sure."

[00:31:03] **CENK UYGUR - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** The Republican voters don't respect that anyway. What, are they going to vote for Manchin because they're, like, "Oh, some..." Like, if you go to West Virginia and say somebody pushed you, and... and then you said, "Oh, well, then I want to work with them, and I want to give them more." Would you respect that guy? Everybody in West Virginia would say, "No, I lose respect for that guy."

Right? Let alone try to bust down your door of your house and try to kill you. Right?

[00:31:29] **JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Yeah. And then, look, I think there's a lot of nonsense in what he said, if you take him at face value, that he actually wants to compromise, or whatever.

Another way to look at it is that, a bunch of people stormed into the place where he works, and terrorised the politicians, and those politicians are now giving the people who terrorize what they want. That's basically what he's doing. They don't want any bills to pass, and he's... he's going to give it to them.

Um, I don't... And... and also, look, he says... Let's... let's take him at what he says. And he says, you know, "Oh God, how have we gotten to this position where people would be willing to do that?"

Well, don't just ask rhetorical questions, answer it! How have we gotten to that position? Why did the people in that crowd believe what they believe? The very specific, actionable things that they believed? We don't have to speculate. We don't have to sift through desert sands. We know exactly why they believe all of

those things, because they were told those things by Republican politicians and people on Fox news, Newsmax, and OAN.

And your solution has nothing whatsoever to change... with changing their behavior. If you don't reform the filibuster, does that mean that Newsmax is going to become a responsible member of the journalistic community? Or that Trump will find a new respect for democracy? Or that all of the senators that voted to overthrow the election will suddenly greatly regret what they did?

No, he doesn't even claim that. And he certainly doesn't believe it. No rational person could. Instead, it's just, "Let's not do anything."

So, it can't solve the problem he says he's trying to solve, which is why we then are forced to try to come up with an idea of what it is that he's trying to solve. And I think that Cenk is right. It's that he doesn't want these bills to pass. He doesn't want the corporate tax to go up. He doesn't want any of this stuff to actually happen.

Why Appeasement Won't Work This Time Around - On the Media - Air Date 1-8-21

[00:33:15] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** If historic parallels about white resentment and violence have some use and understanding Trumpism and other expressions of white supremacy, they may also help us to figure out what to do or not to do next. For instance, Republican Senator Ted Cruz thinks there are lessons in the contested election of 1876 when Southern Democrats, then the party of slavery, alleged fraud in the election of Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes and his Republican party, however, alleged massive voter suppression of Southern blacks. And so Cruz told his Senate colleagues Wednesday night in his attempt to delay certification of Biden's election victory, why not do what his 19th century predecessors did?

[00:34:02] **SENATOR TED CRUZ:** This Congress appointed an electoral commission to examine claims of voter fraud, five house members, five senators, five Supreme Court justices examined the evidence and rendered a judgment.

[00:34:14] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** They sure did. But nobody in Congress paid the slightest bit of attention, resulting in a slapdash compromise on the advent of the inauguration in which Southern senators withdrew their electoral objections so long as Hayes withdrew federal troops

from the former slave states. The Compromise of 1877 meant Hayes got his presidency, and the old South regained the freedom to oppress Black Americans without federal interference. White southerners called it redemption. To Kimberly Williams Crenshaw, executive director of the African American Policy Forum, it was a catastrophe of appeasement and an object lesson in the politics of reconciliation.

[00:35:00] **KIMBERLE WILLIAMS CRENSHAW:** To some extent, there might be vague awareness that the disputed election ended Reconstruction, but I think people don't have a sense of what that means. It meant that without federal troops supporting the legitimately-elected governments of the Southern states, that white terrorism -- counter-democratic impulses -- were going to rule the day. What that meant was countless people being killed in political violence. There were coups across the south. This is part of our history. When people say "we're better than this," I'm often wondering, so what history have you not read?

[00:35:43] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** So comes now the question with history as our guide, what to do about our current divide? As recently as three weeks ago, amid "Stop the Steal" violence across the country, the president-elect pledged to foster reconciliation.

[00:35:58] **PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN:** And now it's time to turn the page, as we've done throughout our history, to unite, to heal.

[00:36:05] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** What you wrote is, quote, "Biden's unrequited national unity overtures to the Trumpist coalition of anti unionists are indeed a sad echo of ghastly overtures from our nation's past; a long-running dystopian fantasy that tens of millions are willing to fight over." Right impulse, wrong strategy?

[00:36:28] **KIMBERLE WILLIAMS CRENSHAW:** Oh, I would say wrong strategy, and wrong impulse. I think the impulse comes from the idea that there is a legitimate grievance here, and the only problem is the tactics that are used to express that grievance. The reconciliation between the north and the south after the treasonous act of the Confederacy declaring war, effectively, against the United States, was it the end of the day tap down to men of honor defending what they believe to be their way of life. So in that reconciliation is there "no harm, no foul" judgment on the most deadly war to ever consume the United States. And then that instinct to try to put the family back together again, those African Americans who sacrificed everything to support the Union were thrown under the bus.

What's so worrisome to students of that history right now is that we are seeing the same kind of treasonous actions being framed as just a difference of opinion that we can kind of work out by negotiating. Well, you cannot negotiate with white supremacy. White supremacy has got to be dealt with directly without excuse, without compromise.

And that frankly, given the fact that president Biden now has a Democratic Congress because of African American voters, because of this history. So it would be irony indeed, at the end of the day, if he negotiated the very terms of possibility that put him in the position that he's currently in.

[00:38:23] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** You don't think kumbaya, reach across the aisle, reach across the barricades approach is likely to serve this nation very well.

[00:38:33] **KIMBERLE WILLIAMS CRENSHAW:** No more than I thought that a kumbaya moment would have been the solution to the Confederacy firing on Fort Sumter. Some things are non-negotiable in a democratic republic. The idea that there are some people in some rights and some interests that are more important than others based just on who they are is an idea that was repudiated by the 13th and the 14th and the 15th amendment.

Unfortunately, that repudiation had an expiration date on it. It was 1876. And we are now living in its aftermath.

[00:39:13] **BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** As we're talking about Biden and his impulse, and you know more about this history than I do, but it does sound like just a revisiting of the Fugitive Slave Act, which Abraham Lincoln countenanced in order to appease the South, or the Dred Scott decision, that historically calamitous Supreme Court decision, neither of which prevented, let's say the Civil War.

[00:39:41] **KIMBERLE WILLIAMS CRENSHAW:** Yes. So you can't see me, my head is nodding furiously. The Dred Scott opinion was basically a Southern dream come true. We don't have to worry about the courts intervening at all in slavery because Dred Scott decided that Black people will never be citizens of the United States. That was a gift to the South.

That wasn't enough to appease them. The Fugitive Slave Act was a gift to the South. And talk about state's rights. This was an act that basically said free states really had no authority to protect their citizens from being captured,

whether slave or free, and taken to the South and sold. And that still was not enough.

I think what we have to look at is what allowed the South to believe that notwithstanding all of these efforts to appease them, they had the right to open fire on the United States and secede. That underlying dynamic is a dynamic that we need to understand very well before we move into another moment of appeasement, because that appeasement probably only encourages more of this treasonous kind of behavior, than taps it down.

Keri Leigh Merritt on the New Lost Cause - CounterSpin - Air Date 1-15-21

[00:41:08] **KERI LEIGH MERRITT:** The real drivers of all of this are the elite whites. And we see who was running this: elite white man from the heights of New York wealth and high society. And they're engendering this class hatred, and we've seen it from the first time he began running, from the first time Trump began running, it was whipping up as much hatred and xenophobia amongst poor working class people and whites as he could.

And that's just a complete continuation of the Jim Crow playbook that goes all the way back to how white supremacists, led by slaveholders and their sons, used a combination of really horrible racist rhetoric, the police state as well. They'd use police to arrest people for essentially doing nothing and incarcerated as many Black people as they could. And then also with just violence, with vigilante violence, with any kind of terroristic violence that they could get away with. Reconstruction is the bloodiest period in our nation's history in terms of this terroristic violence. We still don't understand that how many Black people were murdered and lynched during these years.

And so we're seeing today these threats of violence, threats of white supremacist backlash. And our point in writing the article for CNN is there has to be punishment. There has to be punishment for all of the leaders, very publicly and very obviously, so that we can hopefully deter this from escalating, essentially.

Well, that's

[00:42:41] **JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN:** part of the problem from the past was a lack of repercussion that essentially, in the name of things we're used to hearing today, civility and not being divisive, reaching

across the aisle. There was a desire to go forward and not back and all of that. And that has an effect that absence of repercussion.

[00:43:02] **KERI LEIGH MERRITT:** There were no repercussions for even the leaders of the Confederacy.

And so because of this, because Lincoln actually was pretty lenient then, but then of course, a white Southern zealot comes and an upper-class white Southern zealot comes and murders Lincoln. And then it's left to Andrew Johnson who killed any kind of progress that was to be made in terms of punishing the former Confederates who led this uprising against our country.

If that had happened, which was the radical Republicans plan at the time, they wanted to punish the Confederates primarily by taking away their huge plantations and then dividing those up and giving land to freed men and women.

So that would have radically changed entire trajectory of America. It would have completely, not gotten rid of, but it would have really minimized the incredible racial wealth gap we see today. It would've gotten rid of a lot of the police state, because formerly enslaved people would have land and thus they would have some power and some political and economic power.

And because we failed to punish these leaders of the Confederacy, land holding in the South never changed, wealth-holding in the South never changed. Some of these small rural areas in the South are still run by the descendants of the people who ran the big plantations, and power and wealth has never changed hands in much of the rural South.

Frances Lee on why bipartisanship is irrational - Vox Conversations - Air Date 1-21-19

[00:44:26] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** How does a more competitive political atmosphere change the incentives for politicians and for parties and how they act?

[00:44:35] **FRANCES LEE:** I think it has a wide ranging set of effects. And that's basically what my book, *Insecure Majorities*, is about. I take for granted that politicians are reacting to a change to competitive environment, that they experience it that way as something that they don't control, but that in turn

shapes their incentives. One effect is that it narrows the time horizon, that politicians have to think in short-term increments. That party control might shift in the next two years. That American politics, we hold election so frequently, that the time horizon is always pretty short, but that shortening of the timeframe is intensified when it's not just a question of facing the voters in your own state or district, but where party control might shift.

A second important change is that it reduces the incentives for bipartisanship, for bipartisan compromise. That an out party, a party not in power, needs to be able to make a case for its return to power. It has to say, why it would do a better job and why those in power are messing things up. It's hard to make that case if you're working productively across party lines with them on policy issues. How do you say they're doing a bad job if you're working together, coming to compromise, and voting together?

[00:45:55] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** Can I offer a quote that you gave in the book about this that I just think it puts such a sharp point on it? You quote the National Review, the conservative magazine, in an editorial from right after Barack Obama is elected president, and they're counseling Republicans in Congress against working with Obama on anything basically. And they, write, "if voters come to believe that a Republican Congress and a Democratic president are doing a fine job of governing together, why wouldn't they vote to continue the arrangement?"

And I think a lot of people hear that and they think, "what jerks, counseling Republicans against governing with Obama to govern the country well," but also aren't they right, rationally? I mean, if you think the best thing for the country is your party getting back into power, and the way back to power is for people to think that the governing party is bad, isn't that just a system as we've set up? It's like being angry at football players for not cooperating with each other across teams to help the otherside score points.

[00:46:53] **FRANCES LEE:** Yes, those are just the incentives. And you see Democrats confronting those same trade-offs now as they contemplate how to react to the Trump administration. That, "should we cooperate if the president offers to move forward on something we care about? Should we be willing to work with the president to achieve something on, say a major infrastructure package? Or should we instead withhold support, decline participation, in order to heighten the contrast, in order to make the case that the president is not doing a good job, or at least is unable to govern in a way that can command bipartisan support and therefore should be turned out of office?"

That that mean those are real political trade-offs involved between participating in government versus clarifying the choice for voters.

[00:47:40] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** I'm trying to think of the right way to ask this question, but as I read the theory here, and it seems correct to me, that you have a lot of quotes, particularly from the pre 1980 or Newt Gingrich era, Republicans saying, look, the problem with Republicans in Congress right now is they're so used to being the minority party that they don't believe they're going to become the majority. So they just cooperate with Democratic chairman because their best possible outcome is congressional Democrats give them some crumbs. They give them a seat at the table, but that as soon as it becomes truly competitive and you can get to get back into power, your best strategy is not cooperating with the other party it's, as you say, destroying the other party.

And it seems to me that what that means is that bipartisanship is fundamentally irrational. That in a zero-sum political context, where we have elections where only one side can win and the other side will lose, by definition, if the first side wins, that the fundamental thing that our system often needs to govern well, which is bipartisanship given all of our veto points, that it's irrational. It's actually like you'd almost have to be crazy to do it under normal competitive conditions.

[00:48:53] **FRANCES LEE:** Those are the implications that competition does undercut the incentives to work across party lines. I would say, I think that incentive structure is more pronounced for the party that has less institutional power. Presidents can get some mileage out of triangulation, out of reaching out to try to win bipartisan ascent. Now they need to do so in a way that would avoid alienating their own base voters, but if they are able to do so, then that gives them additional legitimacy. In other words, if they're able to bipartisan support for what they want to do, that's a feather in their cap.

So you'd expect more bipartisanship on the part of the party within power, but whether the out party, whether the party with less institutional power is willing to grant that, that's another question. And it's not in their interests a lot of the time to work cooperatively, because it undercuts their ability to make the case for their own return to power.

[00:49:57] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** And isn't that a very important part of the incentives as the minority party understands them? Something that it always seemed to me that Mitch McConnell understood well in the Obama era was it voters would blame the party in power for the

absence of a governing bipartisan majority, but it was the party out of power that actually controlled the resource of bipartisanship.

And when you have that kind of disjuncture between accountability and capability, you get the kind of outcomes we have here because whether or not people want bipartisanship, if the reality is that they're always going to blame the party in power for not getting it, then you would imagine that the binding constraint here is the minority party doesn't want to be blamed for being partisan and obstructionists. But if they don't get blamed for being partisan and obstructionist, cause that's not how people think about this, they just blame whoever holds the presidency for whatever is going on, then why not obstruct everything all the time?

[00:50:54] **FRANCES LEE:** I do think that there is that sort of knee-jerk assumption that a lack of bipartisanship means that those with more power are not doing their part in reaching out or trying to accommodate, but it takes two to tango and we need to pay attention to the incentives of the party with less institutional power and whether they have their own reason not to participate, even if good faith outreaches made.

What a More Responsible Republican Party Would Look Like - The Ezra Klein Show - Air Date 3-2-21

[00:51:19] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** I want to key in on that assumption that passing a big COVID relief bill would have just been a political game. Because one of your big themes and pieces you've been writing recently is that the Republican party has detached itself from policy, from putting forward proactive agendas, and turn to focus on cultural grievance and conservative entertainment.

Why do you think that's happen?

[00:51:42] **RAMESH PONNURU:** I mean, I think it's hard to deny that it has happened. You can certainly see that in the way Republicans have conducted recent elections. And not just in the way that the Republican politicians have behaved, but the way the various factions of the party have responded to that.

It's not as though you've got significant actors in the Republican party who are demanding that Republicans run different kinds of campaigns that have more of

a policy focus on it. And I think to a large extent, Republican voters are behind this. The Republican voters themselves have become post policy.

So it's not as though Republican politicians are being punished for not running on policy agendas, and then delivering on those agendas. If anything, they feel as though they're being rewarded for doing something different. Just look over the course of the last 30 years, right? So Republicans in 1994 run on a Contract with America, which is, granted, quite a lot of slogans in there, but there is some policy substance to it. There is this felt need to say we have some ideas about what we want to do if we take power. And then in the Obama years, the opposition party is much, much less eager to run on that kind of idea-based platform. There's a deliberate decision not to have an Obamacare replacement plan in the run-up to the 2014 elections, for example.

And then you get, by the time you're in the Trump administration, Republicans really only attempt two major pieces of legislation, and then call it a day when the healthcare replacement fails and the tax cut doesn't seem to yield any political returns. Republicans basically draw the lesson, well, I guess it's a waste of time to do anything on policy. And so they campaign in 2018, saying, or rather *not* saying, look, if you give us continued control of Congress and the White House, we're going to do a couple things for you. And in 2020, Trump doesn't campaign on the basis of "here's what I'm going to do in my second term" and Republican senators and house members don't campaign on "give us back control of the government so we can do X, Y, and Z."

And, look, I'm somebody who's been arguing for years that conservatives should have that kind of an agenda. But the Republicans are in decent political health without having done any of that kind of work. And so I think that there is an inclination on their part to just keep doing it.

But among the reasons why that is still worth pushing back on is that at some point, if you're involved in politics and interested in office, it's because you want to accomplish something.

[00:54:40] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW:** Well, I'm actually not sure that's true for everyone. Sometimes people are here because they want to become Twitter celebrities, which I think is actually become a more common route in to their public and congressional conference.

But you hit something there that I think is really deep that I want to focus on for a minute, which is who controls the Republican party. I think if you talk to a liberal about this five years ago, 10 years ago, the model they have of the

Republican party is it is controlled by corporations, the Chamber of Commerce, at whatever those players want, they get. And I don't think that's entirely wrong even now. They got their tax cuts even after Donald Trump ran is a quasi populist. There was the Obamacare repeal effort. So the congressional wing of the Republican party has still been pretty responsive there.

But what that wing of the party wants is pretty different than what the base of the party wants. The base of the party does not want the kinds of immigration reforms the Chamber of Commerce wants. The base of the party does want a lot more cultural grievance fighting than the Chamber of Commerce wants. And I think a reasonable model of the Republican party over the past 10 years is that those institutional players have not dissolved, but they're weakening, and the base is getting much more of what it wants. And there's actually a pretty big conflict between what the two sides want. And so where the Republican party is going right now is sort of a mush. Do you think that's right?

[00:56:00] **RAMESH PONNURU:** Well, the way I've thought about it is that Trump exploded an old Republican sort of synthesis program and agenda without really replacing it with anything coherent and fleshed out. So the Republicans are left in a kind of state of disorientation and don't really know what they stand for, and are feeling their way forward in that respect.

The divergence you're talking about between let's say the donor base and the voting base of the Republican party, there's always been a difference, there, as there is in the Democratic party.

I think that divergence got a little bit wider during the Obama years. And it's not just a matter of interest groups within the Republican party. I think it's also intellectually the Republican agenda became further and further detached from reality because it wasn't adapting with the times. And it was sort of still key towards the circumstances of America in 1981.

So I go on this tangent a little bit because there is this tendency sometimes to think of the history of conservatism as though Obama-era conservatism is the way it was always. But in some ways that kind of extremely anti-government and somewhat rigid and doctrinaire economic libertarianism was unusual for the Republican party. It wasn't the way the party was under Reagan or under George W. Bush. And so in some ways, Trump was a kind of correction to an aberration that got the party back in an odd way towards more of its historical self definition. You know, the Ryan moment, the Paul Ryan moment, where the Republican party was about makers, not takers, and was all in on entitlement reform. That wasn't the way the Republican party was between 1981 and 2008. Right? I mean, Reagan exclusively said basically he wasn't going to do much on

entitlements, and didn't. And then George W. Bush actually expanded in an entitlement with the Medicare drug benefit, and obviously was a big government guy in general.

And so the Republican party had gone down a little bit of an ideological cul-de-sac during the Obama years.

One of the reasons why that old Republican party blew up was because it had become such a brittle orthodoxy that had gotten so far detached from political reality. It was not where voters at large were and it turned out it wasn't even where Republican base voters were, where the Republican electorate was. So yeah, when you saw this in 2016, right? I mean, you'd have these ads from the Club for Growth, you know, Trump has said *this* about healthcare and Trump has said *that* about taxes and he's done *this* on trade. And there were a bunch of Republican primary voters who actively liked what Trump was saying on those issues. And then there was another group of Republican voters who just didn't care, right? They weren't so excited about any of those old Republican agenda items that they held it against him, but he wasn't for them.

Final comments on the merits of taking liars at face value

[00:59:06] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with the Politics of Everything, in two parts, discussing Joe Biden's history of bipartisanship, with some particularly unsavory partisans; Politics And More, from the New Yorker, featured a conversation with AOC and Elizabeth Warren, about the lack of inherent virtue in bipartisanship; In The Thick expressed their exhaustion with the constant striving for bi-partisan; The Majority Report looked at the infrastructure bill through the lens of bipartisan negotiations; The Young Turks reacted to Joe Manchin's comments in the months following the capital insurrection; On The Media looked to the distant past with Kimberly Crenshaw to draw lessons from the politics of appeasement; and CounterSpin also looked to the post civil war era and discussed the impact of the relative lack of repercussions.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from Vox Conversations, looking at the inherent irrationality of bipartisanship; and The Ezra Klein show conducted a thought experiment to imagine what a different GOP could look like.

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And now, just to wrap up, I have a few thoughts.

The clip about Joe Manchin just got me thinking about something, I think I've said before, but probably merits saying again. So, this was the clip from The Young Turks, they were talking about Joe Manchin's true motivations for arguing that bipartisanship is more important now than ever. And the insurrection, sort of, woke him up to how all broken our system was. And so he decided to double down on everything he's always believed up to this point.

Which is, sort of, a classic case of confirmation bias; whatever new information comes in, it's going to reaffirm what I already believed.

And so, The Young Turks had their thoughts about his true motivations and the impact of the funders who want to use Joe Manchin as a tool to derail very popular, progressive policies, uh, stop them from getting through, because they would impact those donors' bottom lines, and so forth.

And, I don't think that there was anything wrong or incorrect; I think that they made perfectly legitimate, sort of, leaps of logic on The Young Turks when... when describing that. But, I would also like to take his arguments at face value. I think doing both is merited, because I, too, worry about the deep dysfunction of our politics right now.

And, I, too, look at something like the capital insurrection, and, possibly in another case of confirmation bias, it makes me double down on the thoughts that I already had.

And so, to, potentially, give Joe Manchin too much credit, let's just take him at his word, and say that Joe Manchin wants to get back to boring normalcy, where bipartisanship is great, and normal, and things get done that way.

I, too, kind of, have a vision of a world in which we could get back to that place. It doesn't exist with our current Republican party, as it stands, but the ideas that I continue to have and... and support, and that were bolstered by events like the insurrection, are kind of radical ideas. I think people would see them as pretty

far out there, and... and making dramatic changes to our political system. But the goal of these radical changes is to get back to a relatively boring politics.

So, for instance, filibuster reform, or abolition, you know, it's been around for a while, people think getting rid of it is a big deal, but again, it's try to make our politics work again. Our politics are broken. The filibuster is part of that. If we get rid of the filibuster, maybe our politics will be less broken.

Similarly, the Supreme Court; the Supreme Court has been packed. It's already been packed, using incredibly underhanded means that are just barely within the realm of the rules. So, at this point, to advocate court-packing from the left is really to advocate un-court-packing.

Congressional districts drawn by independent commissions, rather than politicians, that's a big one to try to reduce gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is a major factor in extremist politicians being able to win primary elections. So if we want to get our politics back to, sort of, a more calm sense of normalcy, we should dial down the ability for extremist candidates to win primary elections.

Better yet, though; Proportional Representation, and have no congressional districts at all. This would be a major change. We've always had congressional districts, but what if we didn't? What if we just elected a set number of representatives from each state based on the census, and had the winners divided proportionally based on the number of votes received by each party? That would be another way to completely do away with gerrymandering.

Instant runoff voting; this one is starting to gain traction, but again, it's a... it's a way of breaking the two party stranglehold, and allowing, you know, a different in sort of more interesting mix of candidates to have a chance at winning.

Getting money out of politics; obviously, this is a big one. Replacing that with publicly funded campaigns, this would have a huge impact. It would be a big change. It would require a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court. It seems radical. It's big, it's major, but really, the intended goal is to get back to a, sort of, boring normalcy, where elected representatives represent the people they represent instead of the donors. Seems like the most obvious thing in the world.

And then, the last one on my list here, keeping in mind that a lot of what I've already said is supported by a majority of conservatives, but this last one happens to be a conservative hot button that I don't care that much about one way or the other, but maybe I could be convinced, but... Term Limits.

Conservatives love the idea of having term limits. I don't particularly care, but I would happily agree to that, if that was part of the negotiation and... and that was on the table, fine, term limits, let's do it.

Let's make all these major changes. The result of which would be super boring politics. And, at this point, after the last couple of decades we've had, that feels really appealing.

So, I think it's not only okay, but good to look for the underlying motives that politicians have, to give, sort of, a fuller picture of their actions. That's what the Young Turks are doing. I also think it's really good to confront ideas directly, and on their own terms. So, if Joe Manchin wants bipartisanship, and wants to get back to a sense of, sort of, healthy, normal politics, fine, let's start with that as our premise and find the way to get there together.

This is my list; Joe Manchin, I don't think really has a list. I don't think he has a set of ideas for how to get back to normalcy, other than, "Turn the other cheek, let them hit me again."

And, the last thing I'll say on this topic, generally, is that, the dynamics of how these arguments play out can sometimes be important.

So, if you assume that someone is lying about their opinions, and that they really just have hidden motives, you might be right; but if you're wrong, particularly if you're wrong, then you will be seen as the one not willing to debate issues on the merits. So, you should always be prepared to do both.

Sure, go after the hidden agendas, go after the hidden motives; but don't shy away from also addressing the issues at face value.

As always keep the comments coming in at 202 999 3991, or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.Com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes; Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting.

And thanks, of course, to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support or from right inside the Apple podcasts app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there always being extra content and no ads in our regular episodes.

For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes, on our website, and likely right on the device you're using the lesson.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.