

A Real Job for the Vice President: Leading Congress

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The vice presidency has been a joke for most of the nation's history. The first vice president, John Adams, said it was "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived." Woodrow Wilson's VP, Thomas Marshall quipped "Once there were two brothers. One went away to sea; the other was elected vice president. And nothing was heard of either of them again." FDR's first vice president, John Nance Garner, who had served as a powerful speaker of the house, said his new office was "not worth a pitcher of warm piss."

The Constitution simply provides that "The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate;" however, the actual job is whatever the incumbent makes of it.

The master manipulator, Dick Cheney demonstrated how it is possible for a savvy insider to adroitly seize unprecedented power; however, the incumbent, Joseph Biden plays a more compliant role, having an opinion about most issues and responsibility for none. He is "committed to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history" and "cutting waste," but he rarely shows up for work at the Senate, unless a tie vote is expected.

There are "majority" and "minority" offices in Congress, but what it lacks is leadership dedicated to the welfare of the People, rather than the sinecure of its members.

The Vice President should actually occupy the constitutional office of President of the Senate every working day. He or she should be responsible for enacting laws benefitting the people of the United States, managing passage of the government's budget, securing tax resources to pay for expenditures, avoiding graft and corruption, obtaining a timely vote on all presidential appointments and encouraging civility by all members of Congress.

Most American People are worried sick about having a job to pay for housing, clothing, food, education and health care for their families. They look to their government for a helping hand, but there is no relief in sight - not from their president, nor from their congress.

Although power has been increasingly aggregated in the presidency, the United States is not yet a dictatorship and the legislative responsibility remains with Congress. Rather than actually doing anything to improve the lives of those who elect them, senators and representatives of both parties play "gotcha" politics and ignore the pain of the People.

Is there any wonder that all major opinion polls find that more than 80 percent of the public disapproves of congressional performance?

Franklin Delano Roosevelt demonstrated what can be accomplished by a strong president

with vision. Responding to the nation's demand for "action, and action now," and a belief that the government has a "social duty" to help those who "could not help themselves," FDR pushed 15 major bills through Congress during his first 100 days in office.

The Vice President should be given the day-to-day responsibility of managing the budget and legislative program of the administration. He or she should be accountable to the President, but more importantly to the People for the performance of Congress in attending to their needs.

The Congressional leadership should share lunch with the Vice President every day to discuss the priorities of the People and what is being done to solve their problems.

The Vice President should avoid the spotlight and should actually do something to earn the \$230,700 annual salary paid to him or her by the American People. The Vice President should get a real job, and the People should get their money's worth.

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