

Commentary

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Americans Had Better Pay Attention

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Want to blame someone for the \$1 trillion bailout of Wall Street with your money? Look in the mirror!

We as a nation have absolutely no one to blame but ourselves. Yes, there were crooks who fleeced us, but we allowed it to happen by not demanding more from our government. We blindly trusted our government's acts of deregulation on our greedy march to "free markets".

By our lack of attention, poor judgment, we have put our children's future at risk. Let's not make the same mistakes again.

Remember the policies of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush or "trickle down" or "supply side" economics, which pushed deregulation, increasing national debt and led to the largest division of wealth in the history of this country? What short memories and how quickly we as a nation forgot.

Despite our past knowledge of these failed economic policies and this president's support for them, we as a nation chose this president because he was someone "to have a beer with" and was likeable. What kind of standard is this for choosing someone to lead the most powerful nation in the world?

During this administration's first four years, we learned, among other things, that this president makes decisions based upon his "gut". Despite this and other shortcomings, we as a nation wrongly chose him again in 2004 and now we, our children and possibly our children's children likely will suffer the future consequences. However, now is the time to wake up and pay attention.

While we as a nation were distracted with our next consumer-financed or home-equity-based purchase, this administration was issuing no-bid contracts worth billions of your dollars to its supporters (Remember Haliburton, KBR, Bechtel and Blackwater?) and creating a national debt that is the highest in history. It was pushing a foreign policy that has seriously damaged America's reputation abroad (Remember the torture and prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib?) and negatively affected our armed forces. Additionally, it was trampling on the Constitution and affecting your rights all in the name of "national security" (Remember "signing statements," telephone tapping, the political firing of U.S. attorneys?).

While we as a nation were preoccupied with Brittany Spears and "American Idol", this administration reduced the level of enforcement of regulations at the nation's coal mines and factories (Remember Sago?), reduced federal food and drug inspectors (Remember tainted food and the drugs pulled from the market?), allowed poisoned toys to be imparted (Remember lead-painted toys?) And hired unqualified persons to run some of our most important government agencies (Remember Katrina?).

Now we learn that this administration failed to regulate the financial industry. When adding this enormous expense to the record deficit, this one is going to hurt all of us.

Here's the reality: 1/3 of our nation is aging. We have a very costly healthcare system, a Social Security system that is, to say the least, financially unstable. Many have little or no savings and seriously underfunded defined benefit pension plans for those who have them. We have record deficits, a deteriorating infrastructure, no sound energy policy for the future, and a questionable reputation in the world.

We have about five weeks until we choose the next president. We need to start paying attention and understanding all of the issues. We need to judge these candidates on their positions on the issues, on their intelligence, judgement, temperament, experience and education, and not on the made-up images presented. We need to "think" and avoid being distracted by misleading, one-issue ads and sound bites from persons with financial or other interests in the outcome.

Otherwise, instead of looking into the mirror, we may be looking into the faces of our children and trying to explain why we failed to pay attention to our government and protect their futures.