

SOUTH STRAND NEWS

EDITORIAL: Gov. Haley stayed tone-deaf to her coastal citizens

Saturday, April 9, 2016

Over the past few months, there has been a lot of talk about a disconnect between Washington, D.C., and, well, everyone else.

We are told it is why the candidacies of Bernie Sanders, for the Democrats, and Donald Trump, for the Republicans, have found deep roots in the discontentment of voters. Both candidates, who are as far apart from one another as politically possible, have found their campaigns bolstered by citizens who are looking for a voice much like their own.

Making political hay out of Washington politicians is easy, and it's certainly nothing new. In fact one of the best political jokes comes from Mark Twain: "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

In fact, those in Washington are easy pickings for the discontented and the comedians. It's hard to tell which is which sometimes.

But you don't have to go all the way to Washington, D.C., to be discontented with politicians. Columbia isn't that far away, after all, and Gov. Nikki Haley is often as out of step as anyone in Washington.

When the Obama administration announced last month that it would not open up the Atlantic coast to oil exploration, coastal communities from Myrtle Beach and Pawleys Island to Georgetown and Hilton Head celebrated. For too long, residents braced for a future that could have included oil rigs off our coastlines. They also feared the worst if the unthinkable – a BP Horizon-like spill – occurred.

All in all, 23 municipalities representing every coastal town and city in the state formally opposed oil exploration off the coast.

But that wasn't enough for Haley, who when not campaigning for no-go presidential hopefuls like Marco Rubio, seemed stuck in the morass of Columbia and completely lost on the feelings of South Carolinians who don't hang around the state capital.

When the decision was announced that drilling would not be allowed, Haley offered a tone-deaf comment. “Just another disappointment from D.C.,” she said.

The federal government, the governor went on to say, pulled “the rug out from under us.”

Not really.

The federal government actually listened to thousands of voices along the Atlantic coast, from Florida to the Carolinas. U.S. Rep. and former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford got it right.

“This is fantastic news for the coast of South Carolina,” Sanford said. “Residents along our coast should be proud of the way they united on this issue and sent a compelling message to Washington.”

How can Sanford and Haley, both Republicans, be so far apart on this one issue? How can they be so far apart in understanding the pulse of whole regions of the state?

More than 400 businesses had called on Haley to not support oil exploration off the Atlantic coast, and towns, cities and communities along the coast called on the federal government not to let it happen. They also implored the governor to stand with them. She refused.

As far back as 2012, Haley was a champion for the oil companies, rather than her coastal citizens. In a press conference with U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, the governor said, “Offshore drilling is where we need to be.”

Even while she espoused her disappointment in the federal government’s decision not to allow offshore exploration last month, Haley tried to have it both ways by saying risky drilling would never have been allowed. “Tourism,” she said, “is too huge to South Carolina to take that chance.”

That’s right, it is. But it’s more than just dollars and cents, it’s about protecting what is uniquely ours, given by God and entrusted to the people to nurture. It’s also about listening to citizens and not being blinded by politics.

It’s become a go-to political line to say Washington, D.C., politicians don’t listen to – and, in turn, don’t represent – the electorate, but the same can be said about Gov. Haley and others in Columbia. When an entire region from the northern to the southern end of the state begs to be heard, it shouldn’t be that hard to hear their voices.

<http://www.southstrandnews.com/article/20160409/GTT3201/160409888/1178>