

**Heartless Republicans:** Those of us who have spent our political careers trying to keep taxes low and rein in government overspending are often called "heartless" by the opposition. I remember a time in the California Assembly when a Democratic colleague went to the floor and accused me of killing children, an accusation which she was forced to retract. Another time on that same floor, a different Democrat inquired how blood ran through my body since I clearly had no heart to pump it.

It is unfortunate that many in society seem to find fiscal responsibility and caring for the needy to be mutually exclusive objectives. It is so unfortunate because it is not true. In fact, I firmly believe that one is necessary to do the other.

As regular readers of this missive know, I believe that it is our moral imperative to care for those in need around us. But, where I differ from some of our more liberal friends is on the means to accomplish that goal. President Lyndon Johnson declared "war on poverty" back in the 60s. Tons of new programs were set up and tens of trillions of dollars have been spent on this "war" in the intervening 40+ years. And, after all this time, effort and money, the poverty rate in the United States is only down 0.4% from where it stood when Johnson made his declaration. Had this been a shooting war, we would have withdrawn or regrouped years ago. Had this been a business objective, the strategy would have long since been thrown out and restructured.

Democrats and Republicans do not have disparate objectives here. We only differ on how to accomplish the objective. Frankly, whether it's the needs of the poor or a military matter or an environmental policy, throwing money at a problem without achieving results does not exhibit compassion. In fact, doing so can even be counterproductive to the very goal we all wish to achieve.

Therefore, there are 3 principles which I use to guide my decision making on caring for the needy in our communities:

**1. Accountability:** We always talk about providing for the poor, the sick and the disabled. Again, there is no disagreement that this is a worthy goal. But, the fact is that many programs set up to help these people are taken advantage of by the corrupt, the dishonest, and the lazy. It may come as a shock to some of us, but not all human beings are good and honest. When someone who is able to work simply decides not to and takes money intended for those who

cannot work, he or she takes that money directly from the mouths of the needy. Programs must have the ability to actively exclude the one group in order to provide for the truly needy, or they will not succeed in their mission.

**2. Community:** No matter where you live in America, you have needy people nearby. It could be a homeless person or a person whose home was just destroyed by natural disaster. It could be the victim of a crime or the victim of a terrible disease. It could be an orphan or a widow. And, yes, there is tremendous human suffering occurring all over the world. We have compassion for it and we want to stop it. But, charity begins at home. I have always felt that our first obligation is to our family, our friends, our neighbors, and our community. Afterwards, we can look to the rest of the world. America is a wealthy nation. But, it is abundantly clear that we are not rich enough to police the world with our military or to feed and clothe the world with our tax dollars. Federal policy should not ignore starving children in Africa, but our first obligation should always be to hungry Americans. Those of us who believe in strong borders and firmly enforced immigration laws hold this as a fundamental maxim. We cannot have every needy person from other countries come to America illegally and then demand free benefits or expect to be taken care of for life. Our boat will sink if we do that, and then we cannot help anybody.

**3. Private Partnerships:** Government organizations give aid to the needy. And, faith-based organizations give aid to the needy. I have closely observed both. The faith-based organizations, because of the depth of commitment and passion guiding their service, are undeniably more effective and deliver a much more personal and lasting impact than a bureaucratic program. That is not to say that all aid should be dispensed by faith-based groups. But, we should certainly be supporting, and not hindering, private and faith-based aid groups so that they can grow and expand their philanthropic mission in this nation.

The Democratic Party does not have a monopoly on compassion. When Democratic politicians accuse Republicans of "heartlessness" because the latter are merely disagreeing about effective methods of help, they are wrong. It is just as wrong as when Republicans accuse anti-war Democrats of not being patriotic. The fact is that it is neither unpatriotic nor cruel to have a different view on how to deal with threats to our security or the problem of poverty.

And, yes, my doctor has recently confirmed the existence of a heart beating within my chest.