

Republican Perspective
18 January 2017
by John Littig

Calexit

It sounds sort of silly, but I imagine the proponents are quite serious: California should secede from the Union. The impetus, of course, is the looming presidency of The Donald.

Press and pundits initially scoffed and proclaimed his candidacy a joke. Some media outlets even refused to dignify the Trump candidacy as political news---relegating coverage to the entertainment section. Celebrities threatened to leave the country if Trump won (I believe Cher said she would move to Jupiter). But the unthinkable has happened.

The very thought of Mr. President The Donald is apparently so hard to swallow that there is now a movement afoot in our State to secede from the Union. This has been in the news lately. Here is a sampling.

“Secession: California Liberals Want to Leave U.S. Over Trump Win” in townhall.com.

“Californians are calling for a ‘Calexit’ from the U.S.---here’s how a secession could work” in businessinsider.com.

“California secession organizers say they’ve opened an embassy---in Moscow” in latimes.com.

“California must lead, not secede” in sfchronicle.com.

And from whatsupwiththat.com: “Some private citizens in California, distraught at the prospect of an America under President Donald Trump, are advocating that the State secede from the Union.”

So, nutty or not, there is a movement underway that hopes to put a secession initiative on the ballot in 2018. Here are some thoughts about the November election which might shed just a ray of light on that thinking.

Nationally, Trump lost the popular vote with 63.0 million to Clinton’s 65.8 million---a deficit of 2.8 million. In California, Trump lost with 4.48 million to Clinton’s 8.75 million---a deficit of 4.27 million. Californians voted almost *two-to-one* for Clinton over Trump.

Now get out your pencil and exclude California from the national totals. In all States combined (including D.C.) except California, Trump got 58.5 million, Clinton 57.1 million---a difference of 1.4 million *in Trump's favor*.

In a nutshell: Mathematically, Clinton's entire 2.8 million popular vote margin over Trump came from California. If not for California, Trump won the popular vote by 1.4 million.

(Just an aside: one jurisdiction gave Clinton an even larger share of votes than her 2:1 margin in California. That was Washington, D.C., where Clinton's Soviet-sized margin was a whopping 22:1. But back to California.)

There's no denying California's blessings. The beauty of its coastline, Mt. Shasta, Yosemite, the Sierras, the Golden Gate. The agriculturally rich central valley and the energy resources beneath our feet and offshore. Arguably the best climate of all States except Hawaii. California---the Golden State--- truly a gem.

Unfortunately, California's one-party-governance has not matched its natural splendor and great economic resources. According to taxfoundation.org, California has the highest State income tax rate in the nation, and among the highest State gasoline tax and State sales tax.

Despite these sky-high taxation rates, nationsreportcard.gov lists California's public school children's test scores as 48th in the nation. The original Bay Bridge took only 40 months to construct; the recent eastern span replacement took over seven years---not counting the years lost to squabbling over the design. California has the 16th highest poverty rate among all States, and The California Budget and Policy Center says "When you factor in our high housing costs...California has the highest poverty level in the nation." World class potholes and other disrepair in Berkeley and on I-880 are legend. But the nanny State of California leads the way in mandating such things as what kind of grocery bags and soft drinks are permitted.

A Manhattan-based film critic and writer for The New Yorker magazine famously said "I can't believe Nixon won. I don't know anyone who voted for him." This illustrates the provincial thinking that can develop in an echo chamber, where diversity of opinion is scarce. The lopsided political environment in California, where one-party rule prevails, has left scant tolerance, let alone encouragement, for dissenting thought or expression.

Based on the November election results, Californians are certainly politically out of step with the nation as a whole. Like the Manhattan film critic of five decades ago, the Calexit folks likely don't know anyone who voted Republican. Marinating in their insular bubble, they don't see this as an opportunity for introspection. Instead, they are sure it's the rest of America that's out of step.

Really?