

# New Haven Register

## Forum: GOP silence is deafening

*By Edward Marcus*

March 20, 2016

The Republican Party, on a national basis, has imploded. State GOP leaders, like Nero of ancient Rome, are “fiddling” and watching the collapse. Isn’t it time to speak up?

Mitt Romney did. Romney, the party’s nominee for President in 2012, declared Trump simply unfit to be president. As we have seen, Trump responded by calling Romney a “choker” and a “loser.” Sounds like a grade-school playground. As a result, I am convinced that many moderate Republicans have, in effect, turned in their “memberships.” Silence from Connecticut Republican leaders.

Trump remains attractive to those who, in addition to feeling that government has not worked for them, are nostalgic for the “old days” when the man had absolute control as a patriarch, when there were no Voting Rights Act, and when African Americans were routinely prevented from voting, let alone holding major public offices. Is Connecticut Republican leadership now also longing for those same “old days?”

The national Republican Party has forced its candidates to go far right, despite what I believe are the views of the party’s moderate majority. Are there no more moderates among our state GOP leadership?

Sometimes you get what you wish for and Trump is a product of years of Republican rhetoric on the national level — although no one can be certain as to where he really stands on a given issue since what he says is not necessarily what he means a few days later.

We get it that Trump believes bigger is better — the discussion in the last debate about the size of his “member” aside. Is that what he will discuss in meetings with foreign heads of state? Is that what we want to hear him discuss, say, in front of Congress or the United Nations? This is grade-school playground childishness, not presidential statesmanship!

Trump seemingly took forever to disavow the former national Klu Klux leader, David Duke, keeping the country's bigots happy right before Super Tuesday. Trump has cobbled together supporters that would make any bigot proud.

Any rational person clearly understands what Trump is — and why he should not be nominated or elected. Why, then, has there been total silence on the part of the Republican leadership in Connecticut? Yes, it is smart politics when faced with the likes of Trump to duck and hope that just like a tornado it will pass and leave you safe. But there's a huge difference between smart politics and good politics. Good politics requires leadership. Taking a position is what leadership is all about.

Does Connecticut GOP leadership believe that Trump did the right thing when he stiffed so many people with his seemingly bogus Trump University? Did he do the right thing when he hired so many immigrants to work at his businesses instead of qualified U.S. citizens?

There is still an opportunity in Connecticut for the GOP party leadership, which includes legislative leadership, to take a position. Unless they truly believe in Trumps bigotry, and extreme right wing positions, we need to hear from Republican State Chairman JR Romano, state Senate Minority Leader Len Fasano, House Minority Leader Themis Klarides, and other Republican leaders such as Mayors Erin Stewart of New Britain, and Mark Boughton of Danbury and Tim Herbst, first selectman in Trumbull. Just like Mitt Romney, they need to show courage and clearly state that Trump is a disgrace and unfit to be President.

Connecticut is not a state of extreme right-wing voters. By remaining silent, our state's GOP leaders risk allowing their party to become irrelevant to all but handfuls of bigots. To compete in future elections, the state GOP leadership must appeal to moderate voters — as they have in the past. They must be clear they do not support the extreme right-wing positions of its current leading candidate for President.

Silence is not the answer.

*Edward Marcus is former chairman of the Democrat State Central Committee in Connecticut, former state Senate majority leader, and principal of Branford-based Marcus Law Firm. He can be reached at 203-481-3330.*