



## TWO YEARS DOWN, TWO TO GO, AN ASSESSMENT

*Gene Goldwasser*



When Congress passed the tax cut bill last year, it was championed by the President and members of the Republican Party as a “middle class tax cut.” According to the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans, “supporters of the tax cuts claimed that workers would see a \$4,000 wage hike, but the opposite has been true. Corporate profits have jumped 8.2 percent, while tax revenue from those same companies have plummeted 44 percent and workers’ wages have remained stagnant. In fact, only four percent of workers have received a bonus or a wage increase since the tax law was passed, and most were not even close to the \$4,000 promised.”

The tax bill promoted a lower corporate tax rate as well as a tax cut for wealthy individuals making many times more than the members of our association earned during their active years. These cuts have resulted in a major loss of revenue for the government which will have a deleterious effect on social security and Medicare, as well as other programs that serve the poor and the middle class. It seems that the idea is to starve Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, as well as Head Start and public schools in general. Claiming a lack of funds to pay for these services, there will be a push to raise the age for social security eligibility and to eliminate unsustainable programs.

What’s more, the cabinet secretaries appointed by President Trump have corrupted the role of their agencies, so much so that:

- the Environmental Protection Agency can now be called the Environmental Pollution Agency as it supports coal and oil production instead of protecting clean air and water programs and promoting higher miles per gallon rates for cars and trucks
- the Interior Department is in the process of opening pristine wilderness lands to mining and oil exploration instead of protecting and enhancing our national parks, national forests and monuments

- the Department of Education is undermining public schools while promoting charter schools and “for profit” institutions
- the Department of Housing and Urban Development is trying to roll back Obama-era policies dealing with fair housing and anti-discrimination practices and
- the Department of Energy has been criticized for demanding price supports for coal and nuclear power instead of supporting sustainable energy options.

The standoff at our southern border is curious. Claiming that the caravan of Central Americans wending their way North from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador is comprised of terrorists, drug dealers, criminals and worse, our President wants a wall, a physical structure to keep them out. Never mind that most illegal immigrants enter through approved ports of entry and apply for asylum, while the drug cartels get their drugs across the border using tractor trailers, airplanes, and boats. Border Patrol agents have difficulty detecting these shipments because of the sheer volume at the ports of entry and the lack of high tech surveillance options. One would think that an upgrade regarding surveillance, manpower, high tech and other methods would do a better job than a wall, which, in the words of one Republican senator, people who want to get in can go over, under or around. Never mind that most of the land that the wall would be built on is privately owned by ranchers whose grazing rights would be damaged by a wall. Who will benefit from the building of a wall and who will it hurt?

During the recent government shutdown and in his negotiations with congressional Democrats, the President refused to change his position on the wall other than to change what it could be made of, claiming if he gave in, “I would look foolish.” The longer the shutdown drags out, and the more recalcitrant and intractable he is, the more foolish he looks.

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