



Party line

I wince every time I hear people compare the Trump administration to Nazi Germany. It seems far too extreme to liken the people in our government to the evil architects of the Holocaust. And yet, I understand what people see in the immoral and corrupt actions of Trump and his henchmen and women—white supremacy, a dictator-like insistence on proclaiming lies as truth, concentration camps full of undocumented children separated from their parents, and the silence of complicit elected officials who are too scared of primary voters to say the emperor has no clothes.

Occasionally, an elected Republican somewhere in the nation will announce they've reached a breaking point and denounce Trump, usually when the person is going to retire from office or, more rarely and bravely, switch parties or become an independent voter. But I can't think of one Nevada Republican official this year who has condemned Trump's racism or misogyny, nor has anyone actively and publicly criticized the

president at all. Instead, like lemmings, they seem ready to follow the president off the cliff rather than face the wrath of his followers.

Nationally, the late Senator John McCain is one prominent Republican who refused to vote for Trump and then continued to resist many of his worst impulses despite the president's continuous vile tweets denigrating McCain's public service. Even as he lay dying of brain cancer, McCain kept his composure and his dignity. I like to think that our own Senator Bill Raggio, a Washoe County Republican who served nearly 40 years in the state legislature, would have done the same had he lived to endure the Trump era.

After all, Raggio had a history of rebuking his party's leadership. He did it in 2009 when scandal-ridden Republican Governor Jim Gibbons vetoed a record 41 bills passed by the Legislature. Raggio allowed 25 of the vetoes to be overridden, including a tax increase. When the Tea Party attempted to recall him, furious over

what they saw as a betrayal in his acquiescence to a tax hike, Raggio defended his actions to fund essential services saying, "You have to do what is right for the state and not play party politics, or in this case, divisive politics."

Raggio retired just before the 2011 session as the Tea Party and its anti-everything philosophy ascended in Republican politics, but he was honored by many as a statesman who put the constituents he served above the political objectives of his party. Don't misunderstand. Raggio was a fierce partisan and a brilliant negotiator, someone who could see three steps ahead on the legislative chessboard. But while he was a strong advocate for big business and the upper classes, he deeply understood the social contract government must have with those disadvantaged by life circumstances.

Raggio's unforgiveable sin that forced his retirement was his decision to deny his support to Tea Party darling Sharron Angle when she ran against Harry Reid

for Nevada's U.S. Senate seat. Raggio was called a RINO and much worse by party-first Republicans, including some of his own caucus members who had no qualms about throwing away his consummate political skills and decades of public service to appease Republican extremists.

When Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, a Democrat, named the private Senate conference room after Raggio, there were few Republican legislators who bothered to show up for the dedication. Raggio was moved by the honor and tried to lighten the atmosphere by joking about his ostracism, but he was obviously wounded by their disrespect.

Nevada's Republican leaders have only grown more obsequious in their allegiance to party extremism since that time, recently canceling the Republican caucus for President to spare Trump's ego from a competitor's criticism. It's clear there are no Bill Raggios left in Nevada's Republican party. □