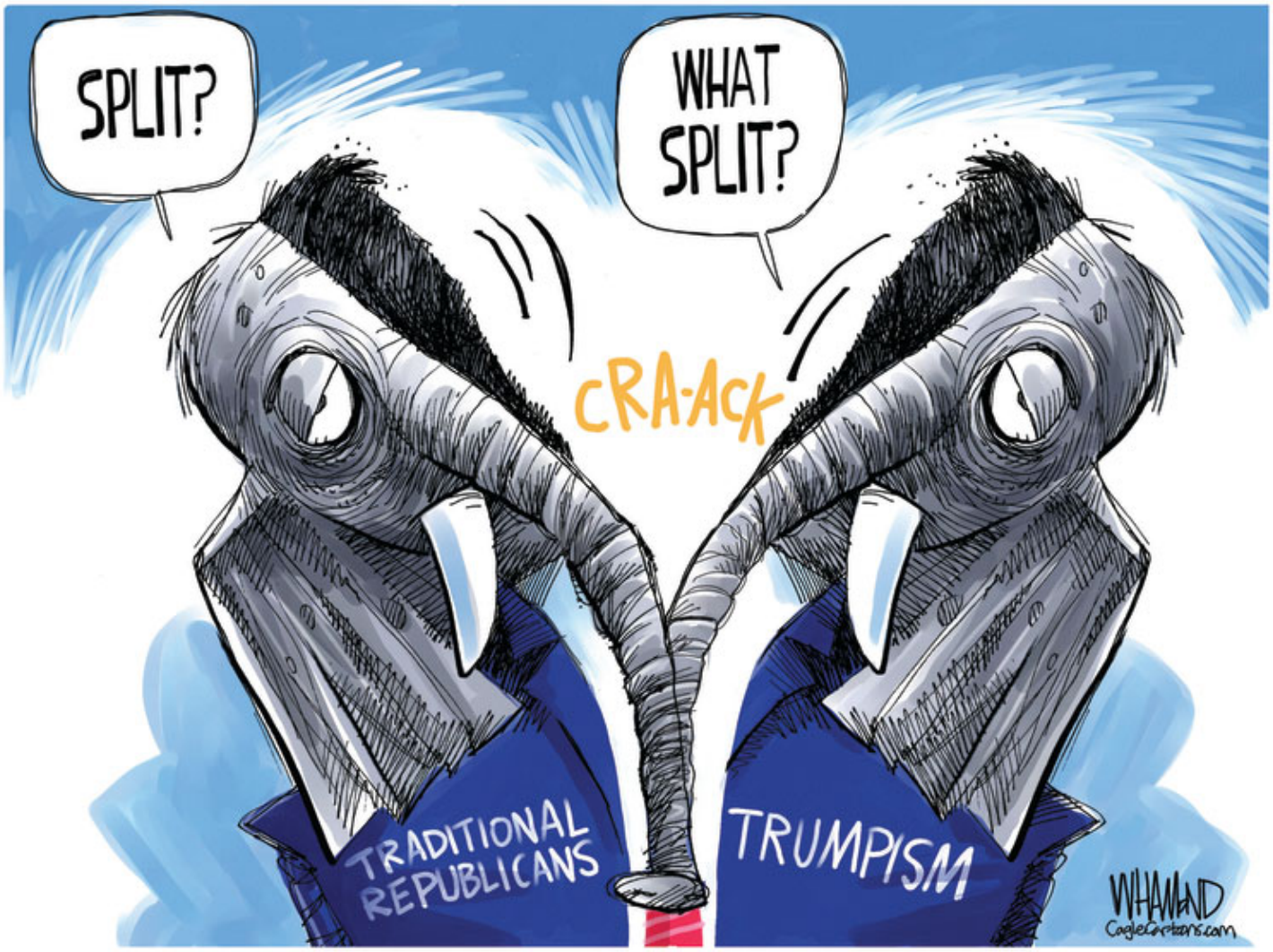
LIZ CHENEY FOR PRESIDENT?

by Carl Golden, April 28, 2021



On paper, it appears to be the kind of lopsided contest that even the Vegas bookies won't take any action on - Representative Liz Cheney, a 54-year-old two term Congresswoman from Wyoming versus ex-president Donald Trump, a 74-year-old one-term billionaire president from Florida by way of Queens.

At stake is the control of the national Republican Party at a time when prospects appear bright for the party to re-take control of both houses of Congress in 2022.

That goal is only attainable, according to Cheney, if the party leadership breaks cleanly from Trump, escapes from under his influence and leaves behind his four years of chaos, erratic behavior and bitter partisan conflict marked by two impeachment trials.

Cheney, third ranking Republican in the House and daughter of former vice president Dick Cheney, was one of 10 Republicans to support impeachment proceedings and has drawn lines in the sand for her party going forward - Trump no longer has any role in party affairs and she'll oppose him should he mount a comeback in 2024.

Her outspokenness drew furious pushback in her home state where she now faces a primary challenge as well as a cool reception from party leadership.

She has, though, forced a conversation many Republicans wished to avoid - how to deal with Trump in the 2022 midterm Congressional elections and the runup to the 2024 presidential contest.

Trump has made it clear he will not stand down, he'll endorse candidates, raise money and campaign for or against the party's selections.

His involvement, in Cheney's view, is a disaster waiting to happen and could destroy the party's chances of gaining the handful of seats it needs to win control.

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, on the other hand, believes appeasing Trump and his base of support is crucial, and the political baggage the former president brings will not turn voters against Republicans.

The relationship between Cheney and McCarthy grows frostier by the day and the prospect of a meaningful thaw seems remote. Their differences over dealing with Trump are not likely to be resolved. The best that can be hoped for is a truce and a pledge to refrain from attacking each other.

Awarding a campaign role and platform to Trump is fraught with risk. He'll re-litigate the 2020 election, insist that millions of votes were cast fraudulently or changed by mysterious forces to deny him a second term.

He has refused to move on, despite the dismissal of more than 60 legal challenges to the election outcome. His repeated complaints have morphed into irritating whining, grating on the ears of the American people.

He'll likely once again defend or rationalize the horror of the Jan. 6 assault on the U. S. Capitol, one of the blackest days in the history of the democracy.

The media will eagerly frame the midterms around Trump, challenging Republican candidates to tell voters if they agree the election was stolen and the Capitol siege was a peaceful protest.

Cheney clearly believes that if these issues and the cult of Trump dominates, Republicans will pay a price.

While her concerns are shared by others in the party, there is a reluctance to follow Cheney's lead out of a desire to avoid offending Trump's devoted followers.

Their hope is they can finesse the issue of Trump's presidency and thread the needle to demonstrate their fealty to him without appearing his captive.

Cheney appears to believe such a strategy will fail badly, that drawing that fine a line will be seen as an exercise in weaseling to have it both ways.

There is a great deal to play out as Congress acts on the Biden Administration agenda, leaving ample opportunity for Republicans to make their case that tax and spend Democrats are back in control to enact far left wing policies, bankrupt the country and pave the way for socialism.

In Cheney's strategy, campaigning in opposition to the Biden administration and his Democratic Congress will be far more rewarding than defending the Trump presidency. A clean break with the former chief executive is the most effective way to achieve that end.

In her confrontation with Trump, Cheney may be punching above her weight class, but she stands a fair chance of winning on points. Even the Vegas bookies understand that.

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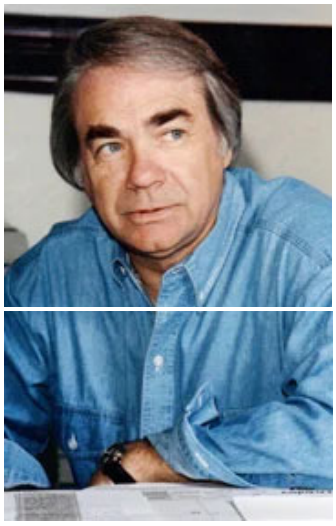
Carl Golden is a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University in New Jersey. You can reach him at cgolden1937@gmail.



Carl Golden is a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. He served as press secretary for New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean (19 1990) and as communications director for New Jersey Gov. Christie Whitman (1994-1997). His comment appears on editorial pages of newspapers in New Jersey and Philadelphia as well as on news websites.

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