

Michigan Republicans are not winning

SUTTONS BAY, Mich. — Come for the stunning Great Lakes views. Come for the strawberries, just beginning to appear on roadside stands. Come for the planked whitefish dinners, fresh from the cool waters of Lake Michigan. Come for the biking on miles of flat trails. Come for the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation and the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.

Come for the vicious infighting that is tearing apart what once was one of America's great state Republican parties.

Donald Trump came the other day, and the Oakland County Republican Party named him "Man of the Decade."

This is the industrial state — the prototypical target of New Deal and Great Society entreaties — that nonetheless sent Republicans Arthur Vandenberg and Robert P. Griffin to the Senate in Washington, D.C., and installed William G. Milliken and George Romney in the governor's chair in Lansing.

But wait. This is no longer Mitt Romney's father's Michigan Republican Party.

The new chair of the state Republican Party believes public schools are "government indoctrination camps." A group called Ottawa Impact asked candidates for local office to oppose what it calls "unconstitutional orders" such as mask and vaccine mandates. In Grand Rapids, home of Michigan's only president, the Republicans spurned an incumbent GOP lawmaker who voted to impeach Trump and paved the way for the election to the House of the first Democrat in 110 years. All three of the party's statewide candidates last year ran on average 10 points behind their Democratic opponents — an unusual level of poor performance.

Meanwhile, the Democrats are united. They control both houses in the state legislature for the first time in four decades, but their control is slim: two seats in each chamber. They have a Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer, and, because they can't afford to have a lawmaker defect, have displayed great discipline. They are looking at their Republican rivals — who over the past dozen years came to think of themselves, with some justification, as the natural party of governance in the state — and cannot believe their good fortune. They seem to be wondering: Where is the old Republican Party we used to like to beat up?

The answer: Like the power of the automobile industry, which disappeared decades ago, and like the influence of the labor movement, which once held an iron grip on the Democratic Party, the old Republican Party has, like Joe DiMaggio in the old Simon and Garfunkel tune, up and gone away.

Actually, it is maybe more like down and gone away. Seven of the 11 Michigan Republican House members voted to support the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As governor and as a presidential candidate, George Romney was an ardent supporter of civil rights. Milliken, the longest-serving governor in the state's history, led amid deep economic distress and distressing racial conflict. Nonetheless, he supported affirmative action; appointed Blacks such as Roy Levy Williams, later an NAACP chair, to his administration; and had a warm relationship with Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, whom he considered a supporter. In its 2019 obituary of Milliken, *The New York Times* cited his "soft-spoken graciousness and decency and [his] talent for building political bridges."

"This used to be a place where Republicans were the kind of people who looked at problems and tried to fix them," said Field Reichardt, a longtime Republican activist who worked on the presidential campaigns of George Romney, Nelson Rockefeller, Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush. "Now Republicans here are prioritizing an extremely conservative social agenda based on Christian nationalist views. These are not the moderate Republicans I grew up with. That type is gone. The party has become extreme and nutty."

Reichardt, who counted former President Ford as a family friend, has left the Republican Party. Thousands of people who had no Republican affiliation, and in some cases no history of voting, have joined it. The result is a complete makeover of a party that once claimed the site of the first official Republican event, in Jackson, Michigan, in 1854, about two years before Abraham Lincoln joined what became known as the Grand Old Party.

"Politics in Michigan," said Charles Greenleaf, who worked for Sen. Griffin and was deputy director of polling and research in Ford's 1976 presidential campaign, "are almost unrecognizable from the time I was involved in them."

Ford, who became president when Richard Nixon resigned in 1974, was until recently the symbol of Michigan Republicanism. Though he was capable of back-room battles (that's how he climbed into the Republican hierarchy in the House of Representatives) and was no pushover for the Democrats who had a lock on House power (which is why he remained minority leader for nine years), Ford is remembered as a conciliator and, in the White House, sought bipartisan solutions to the country's mid-1970s challenges of inflation and post-Vietnam fatigue.

That Michigan moderation is out of style. Michigan Republicans now have a new style of politics.

Conciliation in this tense atmosphere is in the past tense only. Indeed, when former Republican Gov. Rick Snyder and millionaire Republican donor Bill Parfet announced an effort to raise money for the state House and Senate caucuses, party chair Kristina Karamo described the initiative as "horrific," arguing, "People are tired of the squishy, wishy-washy Republicans."

While the state party still has some old-fashioned country-club Republicans, some evangelicals and a handful of former Democrats, the party infrastructure is firmly in control of Trump supporters.

"The most Trumpian parts of the party have emerged as powerful elements," said Matt Grossman, director of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University. "That meant the party has been running uncompetitive candidates."

One of them is Karamo, who was defeated by 14 percentage points in last year's Michigan secretary of state race. Less than four months later, she won the leadership of the state party, prompting Trump to describe her as "a powerful and fearless Election Denier." She has since argued that Democrats and Gov. Whitmer are "hard at work trying to make Michigan's and America's economy dependent on the Chinese Communist Party," adding, "These are the actions of traitors."

That term is tossed around promiscuously in Michigan politics today.

"Today, being a 'small-C' conservative is not enough in Michigan Republican politics," said Richard Norton Smith, author of a new biography of President Ford. "You have to be a 'big T' Trumper to fit in."

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Letters to the Editor

Are you following Jesus' instructions?

To the editor:
When I was in basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, we had double flights (64 men instead of 32). One day they took six flights (384 men) to a drill field. Our six Tactical Instructors stood in the center calling marching movements. We had to follow our TIs voice or chaos would occur.

I went to Germany for three years. At one time I was on a German Air Base. They used a shepherd and a large flock of sheep to "mow" the grass between the landing strips. When an area was shortened, the shepherd would move down a way and the sheep followed him.

The Bible calls Jesus the Good Shepherd and his followers know Him and follow His instructions. Are YOU doing that?

Ken Wilcoxson
Auburn

Words of the woke

To the Editor:
Cultural Marxists have a deceptive vocabulary, Wokespeak, concealing the Neo-Marxist nature of wokeness.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is Wokespeak for woke indoctrination programs.

DEI programs are being implemented in schools, corporations and governmental organizations as the woke continue their long march of conquest through the institutions.

A breakdown of this phrase is useful for understanding characteristics of wokeness.

Diversity is the first word. Diversity means identity-based approaches to society. Identity groups are defined by woke ideology based on Neo-Marxist categories of oppressor and oppressed.

Diversity purports to recognize diverse identity groups.

Diversity, in practice, requires uniform consensus on the beliefs and agenda of wokeness and excludes those considered as oppressors.

Whiteness is the original sin of wokeness. The white, hetero-

sexual, cisgender (non-transgender) Christian male is the ultimate oppressor.

A sense of inferiority and guilt for evils perpetrated by other white individuals throughout history, especially slavery, is perpetrated through DEI programs.

Sadly, anti-white racist indoctrination through DEI is foisted upon school children lacking intellectual and emotional defenses to combat it.

Black conservatives like Clarence Thomas or Thomas Sowell are not considered diverse because they are critical of wokeness.

Thomas' confirmation hearing, led by former Senator Joe Biden, was an exhibition of unmitigated leftist hatred toward Black conservatives.

Equity is the second word.

Equity sounds like equality, an American virtue, but has a far different meaning.

Equality means protection of individual rights and opportunities regardless of immutable characteristics like ethnicity, sex and national origin.

Equality emphasizes and rewards individual responsibility, stewardship, and initiative.

Conversely, equity focuses upon equal outcomes for woke-defined identity groups.

Equity emphasizes state management over society and governmental redistribution of wealth, income, influence, and power, with the state and its minions enriching themselves from the loot.

Equity requires dismantling free societies, and enacting policies favoring some identity groups over others.

Unfavorable disparities between woke-defined identity groups and majority culture are assumed to result from systemic oppression/racism.

More credible explanations are discounted.

For instance, fatherless children of all skin tones perform poorly on metrics like poverty, addiction, incarceration and physical and sexual abuse.

Absent or uninvolved fathers are a common characteristic of recent school shooters, too.

Involved fathers are crucial to raising well-adjusted children.

Prevalence of fatherlessness within identity groups correlates with these unfavorable disparities. However, fatherlessness is rarely mentioned as a cause.

Why? The importance of father-led natural families is denied by the woke, feminists and their sycophants.

What caused the increased frequency of fatherlessness in America?

The Sexual Revolution detached sexual activity from fruitful marital relationships honoring God. LBJ's Great Society and its welfare programs provided financial incentives promoting fatherless households.

Wokeness, empowered by the Democrat party, perpetuates the war on natural, father-led families.

Defying God's created order ensures future personal and societal chaos.

Inclusion is the final word. The woke profess to be inclusive of diverse points of view and voices.

Public schools and libraries expose children to inappropriate materials and depraved individuals like drag queens under the banner of inclusion.

Inclusion incorporates only woke-approved voices, creating a self-affirming echo chamber. Voices of critics are considered hate speech, microaggressions, disinformation, and pseudo-science, which must be silenced.

In their worldview, words of critics are considered as a type of violence. It is therefore appropriate to reciprocate with real violence.

Incidences of violence perpetrated by them are often underreported by media allies, who support the woke agenda and run interference for them.

A recent example of woke violence is the assault and confinement of swimmer Riley Gaines at San Francisco State University after speaking on the unfairness of female athletes competing with "transgenders" like William (Lia) Thomas.

Robert Sparkman
Rome City

What Others Say

Hoosier consumers need right to repair

Farmers in Indiana and all across the country scored a hard-won victory this year.

As outlined in a CNHI news article by Carson Gerber in early June, John Deere and three other major manufacturers have agreed to give farmers the right to repair their own equipment.

Tired of manufacturers' high fees and sluggish schedules, farmers have been lobbying for this seemingly self-evident right for years. After Colorado passed a law in April guaranteeing farmers the right to repair, manufacturers representing nearly three-quarters of the agricultural machinery sold in the United States finally agreed to make parts, software and tools available nationwide. They also released codes and passwords so that farmers could access the computer systems of their equipment.

The manufacturers will provide

documentation of how to make repairs so that farmers can fix their own equipment or take it to independent repair shops.

While Colorado, New York and Minnesota have led the charge in this battle, Indiana has been quiet.

In 2023, no bills addressing right to repair saw action in the Indiana General Assembly. That's odd, since our state is known for its acres upon acres of corn and soybean fields, and agriculture remains one of the state's biggest economic drivers.

The issue, of course, extends far beyond farm equipment to virtually any purchase with a technological component. That includes automobiles, video game consoles, televisions, children's toys, personal computers and more.

In May, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed a groundbreaking law requiring electronics manufacturers to allow repair shops and consumers to buy parts and tools to fix equipment. Exempted from the rules, however, are farm equipment,

medical devices, game consoles and motor vehicles.

A right-to-repair law in New York has even more exceptions. A provision in California promises more protections for consumers but is still in the legislative process.

The agreement signed by John Deere and the other major farm equipment manufacturers signifies that constant pressure from consumers and their advocates can force right-to-repair concessions from an industry.

But so many other industries remain stubbornly opposed. That's because retaining exclusive repair rights means they can charge exorbitant repair fees or push expensive new products to replace worn or broken equipment.

Hoosiers need Congress or the state legislature — or both — to take up the battle for consumers' rights to repair across a broad spectrum of products.

Herald Bulletin, Anderson
June 29