

Undoing the damage

For all the reasons that make this election important, two are especially significant: the health of our democracy and the future of the middle class.

As to the former, the Republican Party has ruled Ohio for nearly 16 years, controlling all three branches of state government.

In that respect, Ohio is a microcosm of the national political reality. So thoroughly has one-party rule been established in both Columbus and Washington that the truth of Lord Acton's observation has been inevitably demonstrated: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The scandals, corruption, arrogance and malfeasance that now typify GOP governance are, more than anything else, the product of unchecked and unbalanced power. Democracy cannot survive in such an environment.

This unfortunate state of affairs has come to pass in large part because middle-class America has become complicit in its own demise; we've bought the Republican Party lie that it represents our interests. Anyone who doubts this needs only to drive the streets of middle-class Cuyahoga Falls and observe the withering array of GOP yard signs. And then ask, what's wrong with this picture?

Here's a middle-class reality check: On their 16-year watch, the cost of in-state higher education has become virtually unaffordable to people of average means; more of us are without adequate health care because it, too, is unaffordable; our public schools lurch from one crisis to another, out of sight and mind of a Republican executive and legislature that have no trouble funding school vouchers and charter schools run by their friends.

On their watch, the divide between the rich and poor has widened dramatically, with more people falling into poverty than at any period in our lifetime; while children of the affluent go off to college, too many children of the poor and middle class go off to Iraq. And we lead the nation in jobs lost, and stand near the bottom in job creation.

Middle-class support of the Bush/Taft Republican Party is nothing short of assisted political suicide, an opting for our own destruction.

We must make a different decision Tuesday, for our own well-being and the restoration of checks and balances in our democracy.

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