

TO PAY OFF HIS ELECTION DEBTS, TRUMP SEEMS PREPARED TO DESTROY THE UNITED STATES

Kimberly Strassel is struggling with cognitive dissonance. She's trying to convince Republicans to reject the nomination of RJK Jr, whom she believes Trump named to head Health and Human Services only as electoral payback.

Welcome to the Robert F. Kennedy Jr. nomination, one of the more counterproductive Washington charades in recent history. Donald Trump has, in payback for late-stage election support, nominated a man for the vital cabinet position (health and human services) whom he once labeled a "Democrat Plant" and a bigger threat to the country than Joe Biden. Now meet the Republican senators, activists and influencers who are so clueless—and so blindly eager to salute the leader—that they can't see the opportunity to save Mr. Trump from a deal he would never have made in other circumstances.

[snip]

It seems not to have occurred to Senate Republicans—who ought to have learned a little bit about Mr. Trump by now—that he needs a rescue here. No insider believes this is a heartfelt pick. Even political naïfs understand what happened: This agreement was entirely transactional. Mr. Trump saw an opportunity to gain RFK's endorsement. The price was a promise of a big post. The president-elect is holding true to that deal as a businessman, so he won't

dare whisper misgivings for fear of leaks.

Instead Senate Republicans are playing monkey-see-monkey-do to an extent that even Mr. Trump must be exasperated. Nearly every GOP senator looks at Mr. Kennedy with wincing concern—knowing the havoc the anticapitalist big-government regulator can and will wreak on a Trump agenda. Yet no one steps up to save the president. If Joe Biden chose Hulk Hogan to be Treasury secretary, does anyone think Democrats would have let him step into that trap? But so desperate right now are Republicans to nod along that they are abdicating the real job of advice and consent—and protection.

Murdoch's top columnist believes Trump needs to be saved from himself.

It comes with no small discomfort to admit that my approach to Trump's nominations is not much different than [gulp] Strassel's. I think Democrats, rather than fostering polarization by attacking Trump's nominees as the partisan hacks they are, should instead frame the question in terms of the damage they'll do to the US, the damage Republican Senators will own if they confirm them.

How hard can it be, after all, to convince Republicans that they don't want to be responsible for letting Bobby Kennedy get rid of childhood vaccinations, revoking approval for the polio vaccine entirely, with the resultant death and destruction that'll directly cause in their own states (as it did already in Samoa)?

How hard can it be, after all, to convince Republicans that the same billionaires who bankrupted Silicon Valley Bank then promptly begged for and got bailed out, shouldn't be recommending the elimination of the FDIC?

That is, I think Democrats would be best served by laying out that if the Republicans approve

these charlatans, they cannot claim they were not warned. They own the destruction Trump is embracing. If Trump gets his way on all these picks, it will be more destructive to the United States than dropping a nuke on NYC. And Republican Senators have a choice to sanction that ... or try to prevent it.

All that said, in her valiant struggle to make sense of why the man she has blindly defended for years might take steps that will foreseeably do grave damage to harm the US, Strassel may simplify things somewhat when she imagines this is just about electoral payback.

For starters, much of the criticism Trump launched against RFK during the campaign was kayfabe, an attempt to appear to be on opposite sides as him, in a ploy to harm the Democratic ticket. That "charade," as Strassel calls this, was about stealing Democratic votes, not feigned approval for RFK now.

Plus, Donald Trump is famous for reneging on his debts, whether personal or financial, and he would happily do so with RFK if he saw an advantage in it. Hell he has already reneged on the offer to Bill McGinley to be White House Counsel and given the job instead to David Warrington. While Elon Musk likely has a great deal of leverage over Trump for the foreseeable future, it's hard to see how RFK could enforce any deal they made, if indeed they had one.

On the contrary, at least according to Trump whisperer Marc Caputo (citing Roger Stone, who has long been a professional Kennedy conspirator), Trump has affirmative reasons he wants RFK and ... Tulsi Gabbard.

But the most critical fights for the president-elect, at least in regard to his immediate political legacy, center around Tulsi Gabbard and Robert Kennedy Jr., former Democrats tapped to head the nation's sprawling intelligence and health bureaucracies, respectively.

Gabbard's and Kennedy's nominations,

like Hegseth's and Patel's, have met resistance in pockets of the Senate. But Trump allies view the stakes differently. Confirming Gabbard and Kennedy is seen as an opportunity for the president-elect to cement his legacy of broadening the Republican coalition to include disaffected Democrats and independents. They note that the two are considered Blue MAGA rock stars among the Trump faithful. They're both loved by the new influential podcasters whom Trump courted this election and give Trump the chance to burnish his anti-establishment bona fides.

"The appointments of RFK and Tulsi Gabbard represent a realignment in American politics that you saw in the election," said Roger Stone, a longtime Trump friend and adviser. "He understands the historical significance of that realignment."

For that reason, there is an expectation in Trump world that the president-elect will expend more of his political capital on Gabbard and Kennedy than on any of the other nominees. And that he could go apoplectic if their prospects begin to dim.

"Frankly, Pete [Hegseth] might not make it," said one Trump adviser. "We'll see. I'm not sure if the boss is willing to fight for that because there are people in our own camp who aren't sure it's worth it. But Kash [Patel] should get confirmed. And if they try to touch Tulsi and Kennedy, then it's war."

Added a second adviser: "If Tulsi or Bobby face real trouble, that's when Trump will really start to fight. They represent the challenging of the status quo of the bureaucracy. That's what MAGA is about."

Now, Caputo is incredibly well-sourced in the vicinity of people like Stone, but he can be credulous.

And I'm not sure *I believe* that *his sources believe* what Bobby and Tulsi give you is some magical realignment among actual Democrats, who long ago dissociated from these nuts.

But I don't doubt that the rat-fucker wing of Trump's advisory team believes that Bobby and Tulsi do accomplish *something*. The question is whether some really smart politicians believe it'll be a good thing to kill children and give dictators America's secrets and let the richest men in the world destroy America's banking system and the dollar exchange – whether they believe this will win lasting approval from America's great disaffected masses. It might well! It certainly will expand the pool of disaffected Americans, and with it, increase the market for a strong man to respond to it all.

Or whether there's some reason Trump is tempting Republican Senators to defy his plans to do great damage to the United States. Perhaps he intends to dare them to start defying him in bulk.

Or perhaps the rat-fucker wing of Trump's entourage simply has an unknown reason they want to destroy America. Maybe Trump has *other* election debts – debts he'd get in more trouble for ignoring – that make him amenable to dropping policy bomb after policy bomb on America's children.

But that's sort of the point. You've got Kimberly Strassel up in arms because Trump is going to the mat for a conspiracist with a Democratic name who'll get children killed. But it's more likely to do with the policy bombs that RFK will help Trump drop than the specific conversations that led Bobby Jr to drop out of the race.