

By **Stuart Stevens**

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Stuart Stevens is a writer and Republican political consultant who has advised a pro-Bill Weld super PAC in the 2020 election. His book about the Republican Party, [“It Was All A Lie,”](#) will be published next month.

Don't just blame President Trump. Blame me — and all the other Republicans who aided and abetted and, yes, benefited from protecting a political party that has become dangerous to America. Some of us knew better.

But we built this moment. And then we looked the other way.

Many of us heard a warning sound we chose to ignore, like that rattle in your car you hear but figure will go away. Now we're broken down, with plenty of time to think about what should have been done.

The failures of the government's response to the [coronavirus crisis](#) can be traced directly to some of the toxic fantasies now dear to the Republican Party. Here are a few: *Government is bad. Establishment experts are overrated or just plain wrong. Science is suspect. And we can go it alone, the world be damned.*

All of these are wrong, of course. But we didn't get here overnight. It took practice.

Long before Trump, the Republican Party adopted as a key article of faith that *more* government was bad. We worked overtime to squeeze it and shrink it, to [drown it in the bathtub](#), as anti-tax activist Grover Norquist liked to say. But somewhere along the way, it became, “*all* government is bad.” Now we are in a crisis that can be solved only by massive government intervention. That's awkward.

Next, somehow, the party of idealistic Teddy Roosevelt, pragmatic Bob Dole and heroic John McCain became anti-intellectual, by which I mean, almost reflexively opposed to knowledge and expertise. We began to distrust the experts and put faith in, well,

quackery. It was 2013 when former Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal said the Republican Party “[must stop being the stupid party.](#)” By 2016, the party had embraced as its nominee a reality-TV host who later suggested that perhaps [the noise from windmills causes cancer.](#)

The Republican Party has gone from admiring William F. Buckley Jr., an Ivy League intellectual, to viewing higher education as a left-wing conspiracy to indoctrinate the young. In retribution, we started defunding education. Never mind that Republican leaders are among the most highly educated on the planet; it’s just that they now feel compelled to embrace ignorance as a cost of doing business. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, as an example, denounces [“coastal elites”](#) while holding degrees from Princeton University and Harvard Law School and having served as a Supreme Court clerk.

The GOP’s relationship with science has resembled some kind of Frankenstein experiment: Let’s see what happens when we play with the chemistry set!

Conservatives have spent years trying to cut funds for basic science and research, lamenting government seed money for nearly every budding technology and then hoping for the best. In the weeks ahead, it’s not some fiery, anti-Washington populist with an XM radio gig who is going to save folks’ lives; it is more likely to be someone who has been studying this stuff for decades, almost certainly at some point with federal help or outright patronage.

Finally, there is the populist GOP distrust and dislike of *the other*, the foreign. Yes, it is annoying that the Chinese didn’t come clean and explain everything to us from the start. But it appears that [a Swiss company](#) is helping to jump-start us in testing; and it is [a German company that American officials reportedly tried to lure](#) to the United States recently to help develop a vaccine for the virus. We talk about how we need to be independent even as we do all kinds of things that prove we aren’t.

What is happening now is the inevitable result of a party that embraced fear, weaponized xenophobia and regarded facts as dangerous, left-wing landmines that must be avoided.

Over the past few years, when ramming through conservative judges, Republicans have crowed, “Elections have consequences.” That’s true.

It’s something to think about when sitting at home *not* watching sports and wondering how long it will be until you can find out if that nasty cold you have is something more.

Yes, elections have consequences. Those of us in the Republican Party built this moment. Now the nation must live with those consequences.