

Rep. Tim Burchett: Is the 'Class Clown' the Most Serious Guy in Congress?



by Roger L. Simon

Rep. Tim Burchett (R-Tenn.) is a fan of *The Epoch Times*, because, as he told me during a Zoom interview on Jan 13, “I sneak around the paywall all the time to read the articles.”

“I’m a fiscal conservative,” he added with a grin.

I guess he is.

Burchett, the representative from Tennessee’s 2nd Congressional District (Knoxville area), is said to be the funniest guy in Congress, at least if you are to believe Politico—and, in this rare case, I do.

On the Senate side, John Kennedy (R-La.) might give him a run

for his money, but both men would do a lot better as late-night hosts than our current crew of woke bores with their endless tedious Trump jokes.

Politico's Olivia Beavers wrote of the Tennessee congressman:

"Every class has its clown, and in the House GOP, no one has earned that reputation quite like Rep. Tim Burchett."

She recounted how "[Burchett invited](#) media, colleagues, and staff to a holiday party set to last 15 minutes, and said there would 'possibly' be refreshments." It turned out those included a "'charcuterie' board that was just Burchett spraying Cheese Whiz on Ritz crackers."

The Politico piece goes on in that vein, but it struck me, while reading it in early December, that the concept of "class clown" itself needed examining. Wasn't that person often the smartest guy or girl in the class that, out of boredom with the whole stodgy school thing, wanted to stir things up and have a little fun in the process? Think [Jeff Spicoli](#), the surfer dude played by Sean Penn in "Fast Times at Ridgemont High."

I'm not saying Burchett is quite that wacky—he's not turning Congress into "Animal House," although that might not be such a bad idea—but he certainly caught my attention when I read the article back in early December.

I started observing the congressman's non-comic behavior in Congress, and what was going on beneath the surface, and was immediately impressed. This man, like so many humorists in the past, was using comedy to illuminate the serious.

Or, in the words of [W.S. Gilbert](#) of the immortal Gilbert & Sullivan: "For he who'd make his fellow creatures wise/Should always gild the philosophic pill."

Burchett—whether a G&S admirer or not (I didn't ask)—certainly

follows the advice of the brilliant Gilbert.

In so doing, he has been able to maintain cordial relations with some with whom he has less than zero ideological agreement, from AOC to former Speaker Nancy Pelosi to, most amazingly, fellow Tennessee Rep. (Memphis area) Steve Cohen, who falls somewhere to the left of Trotsky in his beliefs.

But none of this has stopped Burchett from being unwavering in his conservative principles or in his support of them.

He isn't a member of the Freedom Caucus; he told me he's sometimes to the right of them. Not a joiner, he keeps with the Groucho Marx tradition of "I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member."

But when I asked Burchett how he judged the actions of those I called "[The Magnificent 20](#)" in their withholding Kevin McCarthy's speakership until they had sufficiently reformed the House rules, he was 100 percent supportive. He concurred when I enquired if he would describe himself as their "fellow traveler," something I had already suspected from his responses in interviews and sound bites.

He further stated he didn't believe that what had gone on was in any way the "chaos" the legacy media, Democrats, and even some Republicans (including, regrettably another Tennessee Congress member, Diana Harshbarger, who took that position in an email to her constituents) would have us believe.

In his own words, the events of that week were "the first instance of democracy" he had seen in the four years he had served in Congress since January 2019.

I also asked Burchett about the even more dramatic scandal du jour: the revelation that President Joe Biden, when he was vice president and such things were illegal, hid or simply forgot (which is worse?) top secret documents in various venues, including his garage in proximity to his Corvette and

a hitherto ignored University of Pennsylvania think tank endowed in the tens of millions by Communist China, with Biden family members apparently attached.

Suddenly, the putative “class clown” turned utterly serious—no quips, no jokes—as if to emphasize what a grave situation this was. He said Congress is back at their home bases this week, but as soon as they returned, this would be the most important matter before them, as it should be. Something had to be done.

I wouldn't be surprised if the “class clown” were at the forefront.

First published in the [*Epoch Times*](#).