

Three Small Items

By Glenn Harlan Reynolds

One of the big questions about the Trump phenomenon is this – is it actually just a Trump phenomenon, or is it a movement? That is, is the movement based on personality, or is it based on a deeper seated desire to, I dunno, *make America great again* that goes beyond support for Trump himself?

If it's a personality-based movement, then it's unlikely to bring lasting change. A respite, maybe, as the leftist attempt to gather all strands of social power into the hands of the blob is set back and defunded, but only a respite, as the leftists never give up on trying to gather all strands of social power. *Gleichschaltung* isn't just a pretty word, as Morticia Addams might say.

If it's a deeper-rooted movement, though, it's likely to have a major impact. A lot of voters are unhappy with how things have been going, but they'll have to build an infrastructure, and a movement, that will outlast Trump. Trump is 78 now; he'll be 82 when he leaves office, and even if he keeps an active hand in politics, I very much doubt he'll have influence for long. (Though Obama was basically ruling from behind the scenes for the entire Biden Administration.)

The real test, or at least *one* real test, of this phenomenon will be the coming special elections in Wisconsin and Florida. A lot of people are saying that Trump voters only turn out to vote for Trump. If those elections go badly for the GOP, that will be a sign that Trump's appeal is the main driver of Republican victories, which would be bad news for long-term change because his impact is time-limited. On X, Scott Pressler was sounding a bit discouraged a few days ago about Republican get out the vote efforts in those races, though it sounds like maybe things are going better now.

But in my neck of the woods I noticed three small signs in one day yesterday, and according to Kaus's Rule of Punditry, three instances make a pattern. Well, maybe, but let's share.

The first was a small pro-Tesla demonstration outside my local Tesla dealer. (Knoxville has a pretty big dealership, right at

West Town Mall).



Okay, it's

not a big crowd. But notice that the signs aren't about Trump. They're about Elon, J.D. Vance, and Doge. And 2028. (Photos above by my lovely wife, who was driving by).

And just as important is that people were doing it. Again, not a big crowd, but when people on the right turn out to demonstrate, it's a man-bites-dog story because that happens far less often than with people on the left. That people are doing this at all in my not-heavily-politicized town is a sign of sorts. There's energy there and people wanting to do something.

A much bigger sign was Saturday's GOP reorganization convention. The Knox County Republican Party has been pretty stagnant and inactive for years. The county as a whole is red, but the city of Knoxville within it is pretty blue. The city is still about 40% Republican voters, and the generally absurdly small turnout in city elections means that a Republican organization with good turnout skills could easily win elections – we're often talking about only a few thousand votes, or less, being needed to swing an election in which most people don't vote at all.

The Democrats have been highly organized along these lines with a lot of paid operatives (we now have some idea where that money was coming from!) but the GOP hasn't done much by comparison.

That looks likely to change. Yesterday's convention was packed beyond capacity – they were set up for like 500 people and by Helen's estimate had more like 700, with people standing in the back for lack of space, and being kept out if they arrived late.



(These photos, too, by the Instawife, who was quite the little newsgatherer yesterday.)

There was much enthusiasm, and Martin Daniel, a former State Representative and friend of mine, was elected the new chair. He ran on a much more activist program, focusing on registration, turnout, and better candidate selection, all things that the local GOP apparatus has neglected for years. This degree of enthusiasm for grassroots grunt-level politics suggests something that goes beyond any Trump “cult of personality.”

And finally, here’s something I saw yesterday in the parking lot of a suburban Food City.



I've actually seen a few of these stickers around, but this was the first one I got a picture of. I'm on record as saying, even [before the election](#), that the suburban "health mom" contingent is a source of unappreciated strength for the GOP; the willingness of suburban women to display these stickers says something about the waning hegemony of Democrats in that cohort, too.

In geometry, three points define a plane. In punditry, according to Mickey Kaus, they define a trend, at least for purposes of a column. In real life, well, we'll see. But in each of these I saw some hope that there's more going on than just celebrity appeal. In the end, of course, that depends on what people, including you, dear readers, decide to do

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