

By James Walker

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Incumbents? How long is too long in office

I know on many Sundays, my column reads like a complaint form from a disgruntled citizen.

But I can't help it.

All I know how to do is write from what I have experienced, not what somebody tells me or what I see on television or read in newspapers.

That is why when I headed to the polls on Tuesday, I had a lot more on my mind than Biden or Trump.

As everyone knows, it is what happens on a local level and how our elected representatives handle our problems that is important to our well-being.

I want to turn my attention to the question of representation — and exactly what that means on a local level between the people we elect and their constituents.

What can we expect when we contact them with a legitimate problem?

I have contacted my representatives on three occasions: Once in the 1980s and twice within the last two years.

It was that first experience in the 1980s as a wide-eyed citizen nervous about contacting his representative that set the tone for how I would feel about politicians in the future.

And I admit, I was pretty naive.

I was really under the impression then because he was an elected official, that he was smart, bright with ideas, and could use his elected position to muscle-in on red tape and right the wrongs.

Man, was I surprised to learn that not only didn't he have a clue as to how to help me, he wasn't very bright and could do no more than I could as a private citizen.

But he was not a big-name politician whose name was recognizable across the nation.

I guess that is why I have been bitterly disappointed by the response or lack of response from the offices of Democrats U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro and U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal.

They are two of the most recognizable “liberal” names in politics.

I was urged by a colleague at different times to reach out to both, and despite my absolute belief that it would be useless, I eventually did, Blumenthal in 2019 and DeLauro in 2020.

And I was not wrong; it was an exercise and lesson in futility.

I know what they say in front of cameras; I know what they say when they stand at a podium delivering a speech; and I know what they say when they attend rallies using the right words to fire up their supporters or bring new ones into the fold.

They have built their reputations on helping the poor, senior citizens and veterans.

They presumably are outraged at anything that challenges the welfare of people and, as I write this, are beating up Republicans for failure to pass a

second stimulus to help people struggling financially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And I am here to tell you, they and all their liberalism are full of it — at least in my experience.

I contacted Blumenthal and DeLauro as a private citizen, not as a member of the media, which might have brought a different response.

In both cases, all they knew about me was that I was a senior citizen and a veteran, which is why I am furious at their lies.

I contacted DeLauro's office on July 27 and spoke with a Victoria Bower.

If you follow my columns, readers know that I have been on a warpath about a student loan that went into collections either at the end of the 1970s or early 1980.

I stand by my assertion that I was in VA hospitals when this happened and I should have been granted some leeway.

So I was thrilled to learn that with the president's full support, Congress passed a law that, during the pandemic, no tax refunds would be applied

toward federal loans and all loan payments were suspended from March 20 to Sept. 30.

But my income tax refund was taken anyway, which is why I contacted DeLauro's office.

I got the warm congressional embrace cuddled with appropriate outrage for my predicament from DeLauro's staff.

I was urged to send the documents and they would take care of it right away.

I sent those documents that same day and was told I would be contacted if anything else was needed.

I was feeling pretty confident that I would get the tax refund but, being a layman, I didn't have a clue how the process worked or how long I needed to wait before getting an answer.

So, on Aug. 3, I sent a follow-up email asking if there was a time frame when I could expect an answer.

But I did not get a reply.

And I have not received any more communication, despite a follow-up email on Sept. 21, two phone calls to her offices in New Haven and Washington on Sept. 23 and, eventually, two Freedom of Information requests to learn what happened.

I don't know about you folks — and maybe I am wrong — but it seems to me that though 16 weeks may not be long enough to get a resolution, it is certainly long enough to get some type of update.

But all I have gotten from DeLauro's office after our initial conversation is complete silence.

At least Blumenthal's office staff responded.

Their response about my student loan? An offer to help me fill out a form to apply for forgiveness.

But thanks to a desk jockey in Kentucky, I didn't need that. He took one look at my account and said, "This is ridiculous. This is so small and from 1976. I am going to have this discharged."

Three weeks later, he did what our mighty representatives were presumably unable to do — have the loan discharged.

And after 44 years, I am finally free of this “\$1,200” albatross that took 35 years of income tax refunds, and still left a balance of nearly \$11,000 in interest.

And I have a desk jockey from another state, not my representatives, who interceded to get it done.

So, everytime I see them on TV or read their comments about their concern for veterans and senior citizens or student loans, I just want to spit on their insincerity.

Because I keep going back to the fact that all they knew about me was that I was a “senior citizen” and “veteran” having a difficult time financially.

Maybe that is why I was ignored by one and received an offer to help fill out a form by the other.

I guess that is what is to be expected when a politician has been in office so long, they no longer have to worry about the angst of a voter who can cast only a single ballot.

So again, the question becomes, what exactly is representation and what can we, as citizens, expect from the people we put in office.

They may not be able to solve all problems — and some things are totally out of their hands — but they can show real allegiance to the citizens they allegedly represent.

I mainly write about my experiences because I firmly believe I am “everyman” and if it is happening to me, it is happening to others.

To me, experience is all we can use to guide us or shield us as we move forward in life.

But as I have written, despite her problems, I remain a fool for America and her system, which is why I went to the polls on Tuesday.

My representation turned out to be silence and ineffectual pandering and it bothered me.

And as far as I am concerned, when it gets to that point, it is time for those politicians and their staff to go.

Because all I see is how well longtime politicians like DeLauro and Blumenthal live while the people who vote for them are struggling in misery.

And how big a hand they play in that.

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