



Christie's 'Grade B' candidacy

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Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is getting a lot of media — way out of proportion to the impact he has made as a candidate, measured by his low standing in the polls and the very modest amount of money he has raised.

The explanation for this seems clear. The media loves his sharp and aggressive animosity to and criticism of former President Donald Trump.

But the American people are looking for a leader. Could Chris Christie be that man?

If Christie wants to be that man, he is going to have to do a better job showing how America gets back in the race and focus less on what's wrong with other candidates.

The Cato Institute publishes a biannual fiscal policy report on the nation's governors. It rates each governor according to success in cutting taxes and spending. Governors are scored and ranked A, B, C, D or F.

Christie was rated three times during his two terms as governor of New Jersey. Each time he came in with a solid B.

But Americans are looking for, Americans need, an A leader.

When asked on CBS' "Face the Nation" about the new Black history curriculum in Florida, which teaches "how slaves developed some skills which, in some instances, could be applied for their personal benefit," Christie replied as a politician and not as a leader.

With little knowledge of the full thrust of this curriculum, Christie immediately attacked Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, including calling the Stop Woke Act as “micromanaging curricula in schools.”

Regarding Black history in particular, the passage quoted above is taken totally out of context and in no way can be construed as justifying slavery. The point is to show that despite the evil and oppression, the spirit of those enslaved prevailed.

Moreover, included in the curriculum is the directive to “analyze the contribution of founding principles of liberty, justice and equality in the quest to end slavery.”

Of course, the real answer is competition, and DeSantis has been superlative in making school choice available throughout the State of Florida.

But as long as many kids are still in public schools, responsible leadership means pushing back against woke content and making sure truth about American history and culture are taught. The Stop Woke Act signed by DeSantis accomplishes this important objective.

Christie deserves credit for saying we need to reform our entitlements — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid.

In this regard, he distinguishes himself from Trump, who somehow does not think he needs to address this huge problem facing the nation.

What does Christie say? “We need to make sure we preserve the systems, but we have to do it honestly.”

But this itself is not honest, because we cannot preserve the systems as they are.

Regarding Social Security, he wants to means test so that higher-earning Americans do not get benefits and he wants to raise the retirement age for younger Americans.

However, if we remove Social Security benefits for high earners, Christie surely doesn't mean they also stop paying payroll taxes. So, he proposes to transform Social Security into a welfare program, where higher earners pay in and only lower earners get benefits.

Regarding raising the retirement age, can we tell someone 40 years old that has been paying taxes for 20 years, under the assumption of a certain benefit structure, that suddenly we are changing the rules?

If Christie means only raising the retirement age for those who will be entering the workforce after the change is made, this won't work because the current projection from Social Security trustees shows insufficient funds beginning in 2034, just 11 years from now.

Chris Christie is energetic and provocative. But he needs to move from grade B ideas to grade A ideas — or soon the Sunday morning talk shows will no longer have him around.