



MSNBC Tweet, Republican Outrage, Highlight Divisive Party Politics

[Julia Waterhous](#), February 3, 2014.

MSNBC targeted the rightwing in a tweet Wednesday night, sparking outrage from Republicans and highlighting how divisive party politics have become. In the tweet, the network commented that the new Cheerios [commercial](#) might be hated by the rightwing, but loved by everyone else. The offending tweet also pointed out that the commercial features a biracial family, further insinuating that Republicans are racist.

In response, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus declared that nobody from the [party](#) would appear on MSNBC until the network issued an apology. MSNBC President Phil Griffin apologized for the network on Thursday, and while the apology was accepted, Priebus also said that he would continue to monitor the network and speak out against stereotypes of his party.

Opinions aside, the MSNBC tweet targeting Republicans and the outrage it caused highlight the stalemate that divisive party politics have caused in nationwide advancement. The fact that the network issued any statement targeting one party highlights the political divide that has caused an impasse in legislation in recent years.

The 2011-2012 Congress has been called the most unproductive in history, based on bills and legislation passed. It should be noted that this does not take into account the type of legislation passed. For example, the 2009-2010 Congress similarly passed little legislation, but what was passed was substantial, including the Affordable Care Act and the Dodd-Frank Act.

Still, the two parties' vastly different fundamental views prompted Sheldon Danziger, president of the Russell Sage Foundation, to say that the impact of the economic recession will continue to be felt for some time. Danziger spoke as part of a Brookings Institute panel Thursday morning that presented [studies](#) on the impact of federal assistance programs during the recession.

The studies showed that federal government intervention programs significantly blunted the force of the recession, especially for those living well below the poverty line. Although jobs were still lost and inequality increased, without assistance programs the poverty rate would have been 12 percent higher in 2012, according to findings from a Columbia [University](#) research team.

The findings caused four of the five Brookings Institute panelists to declare federal programs successful, and to advocate for more intervention in the future. But the fifth panelist, Cato Institute Senior Fellow Michael Tanner, disagreed, and the ensuing debate quickly honed in on fundamental party differences.

Tanner championed the view that increasing federal assistance would create a welfare state where people would become dependent and lose the incentive to work. He cited the decrease in upward mobility shown by one of the studies as proof that poverty was becoming more comfortable. President of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Bob Greenstein, responded that there is less correlation between benefit levels and [employment](#) rates during the recession than when the economy is doing well. Greenstein also said that when current benefits expire, the United States is on track to have the highest number of unemployed on record.

The conversation then nose-dived into party politics, with Tanner countering that the best government policy is to do nothing, and Danziger firing back that big business is the problem. Tanner claimed that the stimulus was a façade for government inadequacy. Danziger responded that misguided advocacy for trickle-down economics furthered inequality and necessitated the federal assistance that Tanner opposed.

With many studies on the impact of federal assistance, a consensus still could not be reached on how these studies should inform policy initiatives. The Brookings Institute dialogue morphed into divisive party views, and hope for agreements to further economic recovery diminished. Republican or Democrat, party politics create an impasse on moving forward with policy to benefit the nation, and the divisive MSNBC tweet further highlighted the issue.

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Sources:

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