

## **Obama's Victory: Hope Still Exists for America**

While Barack Obama was reelected President of the United States on Tuesday, the problem of political gridlock in Washington remains, exemplified by a dysfunctional Congress. But with right wing forces unable to control the White House or the Senate, at least the politics of austerity will not be adopted in this country. Its effects have already driven much of Europe into economic stagnation and vast unemployment.

President Obama's reelection is a blessing for the working people of America. There is hope that discretionary spending – on food stamps, unemployment insurance benefits, tax credits – will be protected from draconian cuts. Hopefully, President Obama will be able to fashion a budget for next year that will not be devastating to those most vulnerable of our citizens – children, many of whom already live in poverty, older people on fixed incomes, the unemployed and uninsured – those who are without the political clout to protect themselves in an era of cutthroat politics. And earned income tax credits and child tax credits for working families will not be held hostage to more tax breaks for the nation's wealthiest people.

The president's reelection means that the Affordable Care Act is safe for now. Its full effects will not be felt until 2014, when millions of uninsured Americans will finally have the security of medical care coverage. Had right wing politicians been able to repeal the Affordable Care Act and block grant Medicaid to the states – two issues on which they campaigned - it would have precipitated a health care disaster. Analysis from the Commonwealth Fund reports that repealing the Affordable Care Act, block granting Medicaid, and giving tax incentives to individuals to purchase their own insurance would lead to an estimated 72 million uninsured Americans by 2022.

### **Staying Competitive**

The most important area that the president and Congress must address is the question of the core competitiveness of the United States. If the federal government doesn't concentrate our resources on expanding educational opportunities and upgrading the nation's infrastructure, we are in danger of becoming a second rate power. We need enormous investment in education and infrastructure in order to compete successfully in this new age of global economics. This is nothing less than a national security issue.

The president must make his case for government action even when it means an expansion of the federal government's authority. There is a debate in this country between those who want to shrink government, especially the federal government, and those who see a strong central government as necessary to our health and safety as a nation. It is a debate that has raged since the founding of our nation.

During the election campaign, right wing politicians talked about shutting down the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and off-loading disaster relief to the states. How well would that have worked after Hurricane Sandy slammed into a number of states on the eastern

seaboard? Could you just see these individual states – with their budgets at the breaking point – dealing with billions of dollars of devastation?

The bailout of the auto industry – which saved millions of jobs – was possible only by the federal government. No other entity, public or private, could have accomplished it. And when President Obama did so, the right wing naysayers – who wanted the auto industry to go bankrupt - were on hand to predict the end of auto makers in America. How well did that work out? Now the industry is booming.

The president must again work on getting people together to concentrate on the urgent needs of the nation. Job creation is picking up. But many jobs created in the past few years are low income with few, if any, benefits. Worker protection is crucial and this means that the war on unions must be combated. There are many people who look at our limping economy and its consequent endemic poverty and believe that there is nothing that can be done to change it. But political decisions got us into this mess. And it will take the courage of political decisions to get us out.

### **America's Choice**

On Tuesday, America's voters made a choice. In an election where billionaires publicly spent millions to try to defeat him, where state officials tried to shut down early voting and even tried to prevent people from voting in heavily Democratic precincts, when right wingers screamed "socialism" at every attempt to stimulate the economy, the voters rejected the fear mongering, the outright lies, the hypocrisy, the intolerance, and the hatred, and reelected Barack Obama. And they returned a Democratic U.S. Senate.

Roger Cohen, in the online edition of *The New York Times* on Election Day, wrote: "America, alone among nations, is an idea; and that idea dies when hope and possibility disappear." Well, they didn't disappear this year. The politics of fear didn't work in 2012.

---

David R. Jones, Esq., is President and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers for over 168 years. The views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer. The Urban Agenda is available on CSS's website: [www.cssny.org](http://www.cssny.org).

**From the New York Amsterdam News**  
November 8 – November 14, 2012