

<https://npa31.org/spip.php?article4411>



USA

The Real John Kasich

- IV Online magazine - 2016 - IV494 - March 2016 -

Publication date: Sunday 27 March 2016

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

It's hard to believe that our twitchy governor, John Kasich, is thought to be the most reasonable and moderate of the Republican presidential candidates. He's never been that sensitive, no matter how many hugs he gives on national television. This is the governor who, after being ticketed for a traffic violation, called the policeman an "idiot;" the man who went to Cleveland and told Browns football fans that he rooted for their arch-rival, the Steelers.

by Bob Fittrakis

But Kasich's real loyalty has always been to the rich and powerful. In the era of the 1970 Kent State shooting, he was one of Nixon's Stepford-clone youth. His new allegiance is to his media mentor, Rupert Murdoch. In 2012, the creator of right-wing agit-prop and faux news gave \$1 million to the Republican Governor's Association to get his bloviator elected in his first election. Kasich has returned the loyalty by pledging eternal fealty to "unnatural persons" called corporations.

John Kasich.

After working for Murdoch and prior to being elected, Kasich spent his time hawking junk assets for the now-defunct Lehman Brothers investment bankers. He helped sell these worthless assets to the tune of \$500 million into Ohio's public retirement system, particularly the State Teachers' pension funds. He made untold millions, which he refused to disclose, while looting the pensions of schoolteachers and public employees.

No sooner did Kasich enter office than he attacked the public employees he had just ripped off. On March 31, 2011, Kasich signed the draconian Senate Bill 5 into law. The new law required that no salary increases could be based on seniority and it drastically limited collective bargaining for the 360,000 public union workers in Ohio. Kasich told them to "get on the bus, or get run over." The quirky governor's campaign commercials claimed he "listened." Indeed, the bus was hijacked by working people in the form of 1.3 million signatures to repeal the bill. On election night 2011, Issue 2 supporting Kasich's anti-union law failed 61%-39%.

Who Kasich really listens to is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). More than three decades ago, this corporate front masquerading as an advocate for "limited government" and "free markets" began plotting to make the 1% richer and steal the wealth of our nation's working class. ALEC lists among its key founders Paul Weyrich, who openly advocates suppressing poor and minority voters, as well as the white supremacist, the late Senator Jesse Helms. Also on the ALEC website there's a note stating "Among those who were involved with ALEC in the formative years were... John Kasich of Ohio." ALEC, now primarily funded by the notorious Koch Brothers, provided Senate Bill 5 as its model legislation and its legislation is a manual for destroying workers' rights under the guise of "saving taxpayers money."

Attacking Workers

Under Kasich, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Ohio stood as one of the two worst economies in the nation at the end of 2013. When he took office in January 2011, Ohio ranked 26th in private sector job growth. Kasich ran hard as a "job creator" in his 2014 re-election. At the time, the U.S. Department of Labor noted that his state was 46th nationally in job creation. From January-August 2014, the Buckeye state gained a mere 5,289 jobs.

The Kasich campaign keeps reiterating that "Kasich works." The question is, for whom? Here's is what the Bureau of

Labor Statistics points out about Kasich's record: At the end of 2015, so-called "temporary workers" make up 2.5% of the workforce, a 50% increase over 2009 levels. During 2015, employment rose by 4.3% among temporary workers, while Ohio's overall private sector employment grew by a mere 1.7%. Ohio's temporary workers make only \$30,785 a year compared to \$45,482 for non-temporary workers. Rumors persist that Kasich plans to turn Ohio into a "right to work" state before leaving office.

Leaving Children Behind

Kasich's ALEC handbook includes the destruction of public education. In his first term as governor, Kasich cut more than half a billion dollars from public education in Ohio. He increased charter school funding by \$57 million, in particular, rewarding White Hat Management which runs many of Ohio's charter schools and whose owner is a big Republican donor. After announcing his run for the presidency in 2015, Kasich minimally increased school funding. At the same time, he increased tax cuts, mainly benefiting the wealthiest Ohioans. The think tank Innovation Ohio points out that four out of ten Ohio school districts have less government funding now than they did prior to the Kasich administration.

He also failed to change the unconstitutional funding formula for the state's K-12 school system. The Ohio public schools have been declared unconstitutional five times by the Republican-dominated Ohio Supreme Court because their reliance on local property taxes has created massive disparity between schools in wealthy and poor areas. Ohio ranked 5th in EdWeek's public education performance rankings before Kasich took office. The state now ranks 23rd.

Environmental Neglect and Poisoned Water

When Governor Kasich first took office, he killed a train line meant to restore passenger service between Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. Kasich's reasons may have made sense in a Tea Party world. But some \$400 million had already been secured. When it died, all that money left the state, along with untold jobs and income. Hugely expensive highway projects have followed with intense environmental damage and instant obsolescence. Columbus may be the western world's largest capital city without passenger rail service.

In June 2014, Kasich signed the controversial Senate Bill 310 that froze Ohio's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards at their present levels for two years. A report from the Ohio Advanced Energy Economy documented that between 2009 and 2013, the law Kasich overturned—the Renewable Energy Standards (RES) law—cost \$456 million to implement, but saved Ohio residents \$1.03 billion. Since RES was implemented, more than \$1 billion had been invested in Ohio by private renewable energy companies, some who now say they will move out of the state. Six weeks prior to Kasich signing S.B. 310, oil magnate David Koch donated \$12,155 to Kasich's re-election campaign, the maximum allowed under law.

On people's right to clean water, Kasich has been a complete failure. Not only has he allowed the people of Toledo to be afflicted by toxic water, he has also permitted radioactive fracking water to be dumped in our state from Pennsylvania and West Virginia. And the city of Sebring, Ohio is now afflicted with lead, much like Flint, Michigan, with the same slow response from state environmental regulators. In one of the most cynical moves imaginable, when it was discovered that the fracking water being shipped into Ohio from Pennsylvania and West Virginia had high rates of radioactivity, Kasich assigned the rangers of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to solve the problem, relieving the more competent Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and Ohio Health Department of duty. These were the agencies that uncovered the radioactivity. And following in the footsteps of his original mentor Nixon, Kasich developed a fracktivist "enemies list" targeting environmentalists for harassment.

Slashing Women's Health

While Kasich's commercials made him sound like the next best thing to feminist Betty Friedan, the June 2014 *Cosmopolitan* magazine ran an article entitled: "How Ohio Became One of the Worst States for Reproductive Rights in the Country." It is like a time machine taking us back to the 1950s. He supported a gag order on rape crisis counselors on talking about abortion and the "heartbeat bill" banning abortions on pregnancies over 20 weeks. Because of Kasich's and the state legislature's new laws, abortion clinics all over the state are closing.

Ohioans protest Kasich's attacks on women and education.

Kasich defunded Planned Parenthood in Ohio by signing House Bill 294 in February 2016, cutting funds for programs that delivered critical preventive care services like contraception, sex education, cancer screenings, HIV/AIDS testing and abortion. In January 2015, Kasich came out strongly against parental leave, stating that paid leave hurts "equal pay." Regarding women's income and employment rates, the Institute for Women's Policy Research ranked the Buckeye State a mediocre 33rd out of 50 states in 2014 in economic opportunities for women.

Opposing Marriage Equality

On marriage equality, Kasich is a hater. He fought alongside Ohio Attorney General Michael DeWine to overturn federal rulings supportive of same-sex marriage in Ohio. One would think the ambitious Kasich would at least adopt the decade-old 2004 George W. Bush strategy of supporting "civil unions." He briefly embraced the position in 2013, before his spokesperson stepped to clarify things that Kasich didn't really understand what civil unions meant, and the governor would not support any recognition of any same-sex relationships.

In his last year in Congress in 2001, the Human Rights Campaign gave Kasich a 10% out of 100% rating for supporting equality for LGBT people. Kasich still clings to Issue 1 from 2004, telling the *Columbus Dispatch* that "marriage is between a man and a woman" (even if he occasionally invites a four-way with the Koch brothers).

Tax Cuts and Service Cuts

Kasich decided to balance the state budget on the back of local governments. He not only stripped half a billion from schools, but has decreased funding intended for cities, townships, and counties. One of his techniques was ending the Ohio inheritance tax. The bulk of the proceeds from the inheritance tax went to counties and municipalities. The tax was progressive in nature, falling heaviest on the 1% (wealthiest people in the state).

Kasich's much-touted state income tax cut benefited his rich friends as well. The 21% decrease, to be fair, started under Governor Bob Taft, but the net effect embraced by Kasich was that very few of the tax savings were passed on to working and middle class Ohioans. If you made \$40,000 a year, you paid \$72.88 less in state tax under Kasich. If you made \$206,250 a year, you'd pay \$977.63 less. If you were one of Kasich's millionaire donors you would have saved thousands of dollars a year. Kasich has announced his goal to totally eliminate Ohio's income tax by 2016. He plans to use the money in Ohio's nearly \$2 billion "rainy day fund" for a sound bite about how he'll eliminate the income tax in Ohio as he runs for president.

Ohioans will be further plagued by unconstitutional schools, vicious prisons, declining public services, deteriorating roads, bridges, and sewage treatment facilities—public services formerly funded by the state income and inheritance taxes. Budget analysts predict that Kasich's defunding of public education and his inheritance and income tax cuts will raise property taxes by 12.5% to continue to fund schools. Meanwhile, Kasich eliminated a homestead property tax exemption, thereby cutting funds to thousands of seniors and disabled Ohioans. Seniors on fixed incomes will be hit the hardest.

In a cynical and shocking move, Kasich rejected a federal waiver in 2013 and instead reinstated Dickensian work requirements for the poor. With a bad economy, the federal government was allowing Ohio not to require hundreds of thousands of welfare recipients to report for make-work jobs. Social welfare agencies pointed out that it would cost more to pay staff to supervise the workers than the value of their work. The Columbus Dispatch quoted Marilyn J. Tomasi, Vice President of the Mid-Ohio Food Bank, as stating, "What happened is the state rejected the waiver. 134,000 Ohioans showed up at food pantries."

Rigging the Vote

In a state where Democrats, Republicans, and Independents are fairly evenly divided, Kasich and his Republican cohorts gerrymandered the Congressional districts to give 12 out of the 16 Congressional seats to Republicans and make sure that the seats are non-competitive. Kasich also tried to eliminate his own competition in 2014. Federal court records document that Kasich's office directed the removal of the Libertarian Party from the ballot in Ohio prior to his run for re-election. On the day when Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Charlie Earl announced his campaign and was showing 6% in the polls, Kasich and his Republicans partisans in the legislature set out to destroy the third party.

First they outlawed the party, but a federal court blocked their attempt. Using Republican political operative Terry Casey, the governor then orchestrated a challenge to signatures on the Libertarian Party candidates' petitions. The Libertarians sued. Then Kasich had his lackey, Jon Husted, appoint well-known Republican partisan Brad Smith as the supposedly neutral arbitrator in the case. Smith was the intellectual force behind the infamous "Citizens United" decision that proclaimed corporations are people and donations to candidates are the same as free speech. Kasich was successful in keeping a Libertarian opponent off the ballot and made the state even more repressive toward minor parties, other points of view, and democracy.

Prisons for Profit

One of Kasich's original budgetary plans was to further privatize Ohio's prisons. He didn't succeed with that plan, but did save the state money by hiring Aramark for prison food service, a company that is famous for serving prisoners maggots. A recent demonstration by prison workers and unions was prompted by budget cuts to prison security staff. The Ohio Civil Service Employees Association called our prisons "violently dangerous" for prison workers. Under Kasich, the prison population has risen, causing overcrowding and dangerous conditions for both prisoners and prison staff.

Of course, Ohioans could not have asked Kasich about any of these issues, since he refused to debate his opponents. But now that he is running for president in 2016, he's become Mr. Congeniality, ready and willing to debate and to hug it out.

March 23, 2016