



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Okay, I've done my part. In the political blueprint for this magnificent country called The United States of America, you can choose your position in the chain of command... *sort of*. Meaning: if you want to climb above the lowest rung on the ladder, you have to get the folks on the bottom to vote you in. If you can get enough of them cheering for you, they can vote you up... way up. Once those cheered-for folks climb up - *way, way up, in some cases* - you resume your duties... down there, on the bottom of the political structure.

That's where I live, down on the bottom. I have just three operative responsibilities: 1) Vote in November, every two years; 2) Pay my taxes on April 15th, every year; and, 3) Pray for the folks up the ladder, every day (that one comes from the *Bible*, not the *Beltway*). Done; done; done. Back to work.

While those up-ladder folks get their bags unpacked and do their business, we - you and I - have our own business to do. The people "up there" have their agendas and issues and initiatives... but, so do we "little people," out here on the frontier we call "life outside the Beltway." Here's one that you and I need to work on some: *what are we going to do about "retirement?"*

In the old days (*before television went digital*), there were two widely held views about this thing called "retirement:"



1) Everyone did it, because it was the American Dream (a code word for entitlement); and,

2) The System* was going to pay you 80% of the 100% you made when you were working.

That * is supposed to tell you that this System-thing (kind of like the Matrix) expected us to sit on a three-legged stool when we retired. The legs were: 1) Social Security; 2) A Company Pension; and, 3) Personal Savings. Problem: *the stool just collapsed*.

Our buddies up-ladder are talking about the stool. One proposal to "fix" Social Security is to make it a "members only" club... and the club wouldn't be open to folks who are in that top-5% of earners (if you're receiving this **Point of View**, that probably includes you). Make that a two-legged stool. Leg #2 was that "Company Pension" thing. The Endangered Species Act ought to make some special provision for Company Pensions; they are nearly extinct, replaced by company

participation in the magic 401(k) fix-all. That way Leg #2 could glue itself to Leg #3 - the "Personal Savings" piece - and those two legs would allow you to run off into the sunset hauling your golf clubs and mountain bike behind you. *Sounds like a once-upon-a-time bedtime story, to me...*

The public equity markets have cut up those two legs and made barbecue briquettes out of them during the last 12 months. The American Dream - retirement - is a subject of discussion in Washington; *do you really want them deciding what you're going to do with the last - and greatest - season of your life on Planet Earth?*

Next week, I'm going to present to you a proposal for your very own Christian-American Dream. (All the other groups get their own hyphenated special group; shouldn't we?) If you don't have a plan for your future, someone up-ladder will come up with one for you!

Between now and next Monday, think about it: *what do you really want your best life to be?*

Bob Shank

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