

Just how effective is Trump?

I have to admit that Trump's popularity baffles me. He never delivered on most of his signature promises. He was going to build a wall on the Mexican border and get Mexico to pay for it. That never happened. He was going to repeal and replace Obamacare. That also never happened. He was going to eliminate the national debt in eight years. That never happened and instead, the debt exploded during his time in office.

Many of Trump's greatest successes probably would have occurred under any president. Yes, the unemployment rate was very low before the pandemic. But it has been trending lower for decades, and it is low today under Biden's administration. Yes, Operation Warp Speed encouraged the quick development of Covid-19 vaccines, but a different president probably would have undertaken the same policy of committing to buy vaccines before they were shown to be safe and effective.

Trump's greatest accomplishment, at least according to his Republican base, was the huge volume of conservative judges

Joe McGarrity



who were confirmed. This probably would have happened under any conservative president. Mitch McConnell in the Senate deserves most of the credit for running a quick and efficient confirmation process.

So why didn't Trump get much done? To hear him tell it, he is a victim. It is always someone else's fault. But most likely, Trump did not get much done because he cannot work with other people. This is evident because, during and after his presidency, he seemed to always be in court. People resort to court cases when they cannot work out their differences among themselves. The ability to work out these differences, quite obviously, should be the main skill of any politician. This ability enables politicians to get things done in the political arena.

But you could argue that people are so divided in this country that Trump was a victim of the times

and that maybe he just started having trouble getting people to work together when he became president. After all, he wrote *The Art of the Deal*, a book that claimed Trump was a great negotiator and was able to bring people together toward a common goal. This is a complete myth and at odds with the truth. Trump was not good at creating harmonious relationships with people. In fact, he was involved in over 3,500 lawsuits before he was president. Conflict, not cooperation, is Trump's approach to dealing with people.

Given Trump's penchant for conflict, it is no wonder that he accomplished so little during his term. If more people evaluated just how effective Trump was as president and just how poor he is at bringing people together, I suspect that Trump would have a lot less support. I also suspect a good portion of his support rests on the myth he created about himself rather than on voters performing careful evaluations of his past performance.

Joe McGarrity is a professor of Economics at UCA. He can be reached at joem@uca.edu.