

2008 Primaries  
Special Edition

THE GOP AND THE BLACK VOTE:  
A Q&A with J.C. Watts



# The Rippon Forum

December 2007/January 2008  
Volume 41, No. 6

## Why I am a Republican

Orrin Hatch      Jo Ann Emerson      Chuck Norris  
Heidi Gansert      Lynn Swann      Frank Guinta

Plus: Landon Parvin on the importance of tone in politics

And: John Feehery on the virtue of silence  
in a soundbite political age

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# The Ripon Forum

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Volume 41, No. 6, December 2007/January 2008

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## A Note from the Chairman Emeritus

Branding is one of the hottest buzzwords in advertising circles. It's catching on in political circles, as well. It's easy to understand why.

You see, branding has to do with image repair and reputation management. In Washington, there's been something of a demand for those two things of late. Polls are down on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, and public distaste for partisan bickering is at an all time high. The mood is restless in the American countryside. The yearning for change is real.

As both parties try to figure out how to handle this mood and prepare for the elections, we thought it would be helpful to ask a question that, we believe, is fundamental to the GOP brand and any effort to repair the party's image. The question is why people become a Republican in the first place? What issues are driving them, and what do they think the party stands for today?

We asked this question of six prominent Republicans. The individuals we talked to serve at every level of government and work in the private sector, too. Two serve in Washington, while the rest live and work outside the Beltway. We hope you find what they say enlightening. We also hope you find interesting the rest of this special 2008 Primary Edition of THE RIPON FORUM.

Of course, any look at the Republican Party must also include a look at Abraham Lincoln, and we do so with an essay by Judge Frank Williams on Lincoln's origins in the GOP. We also focus on the elements of good political communications with two experts on that topic – speechwriter Landon Parvin and strategist John Feehery. We consider the impact of Iraq on Northeast Republicans with New York pollster John McLaughlin. And we examine the youth vote and ask the \$64,000 question – will this be the year they finally turn out?

We begin this edition, though, with a serious topic – the Republican Party's relationship with African American voters. According to former Congressman J.C. Watts, there is little to no relationship at all, which is why the GOP consistently loses the black vote and is alienating a potential constituency along the way.

As always, we would like to know what you think. Please e-mail us at [editor@riponsociety.org](mailto:editor@riponsociety.org) with your thoughts and views on anything you read or would like to see written in the FORUM.

Bill Frenzel  
Chairman Emeritus  
Ripon Society

# The Republican Party and the Black Vote

## *A Q&A with J.C. Watts*

When J.C. Watts was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Oklahoma's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in 1994, he became only the second black Republican elected to the House since 1928. During his term in office, he rose to become the Chairman of the Republican Conference, the fourth ranking position in the House leadership. He retired from office in 2002.

Since that time, he has been active in a variety of pursuits, including serving as Founder and Chairman of the J.C. Watts Companies, a consulting consortium that offers strategic advice and turn-key solutions for the emerging marketplace at the nexus of business and government, economics and culture. He is also a regular analyst on CNN, and writes a twice monthly column for more than a dozen newspapers.

This past October, he wrote a column that offered a frank and critical assessment of Republican efforts to win the black vote. THE FORUM recently spoke with him about the column and his thoughts on the GOP's relationship with the African American community.

**RF: Earlier this fall, you wrote a column in which you criticized the Republican candidates for President for failing to show up at a debate and a forum geared toward African American voters. Why do you believe they were wrong not to appear at these events?**

**JCW:** I think the Republican Party, when it comes to the black voter, needs some tough love and I think they need to know the bare-knuckled truth. I've had some that take an exception with some comments that I made, but the fact is the truth always hurts before it helps.

I think if you are to be an alternative, you have to be where the alternative is needed. One of the basic problems with the Republican establishment is that they don't show up. Republicans don't understand that the majority of African Americans are living black. That is, they live, they worship, they socialize exclusively, for the most part, with each other.

In fact, diversity for most African Americans, as with most Americans, occurs in the workplace. The white community, when they get diversity, they usually get it in the workplace.

One of the reasons that Don Imus got in the trouble that he got into is because I believe Don has no -- and I'm just guessing, I don't know -- but I'm going to suspect that Don has very little diversity in his personal life. He doesn't hang out with black females. You know, and I say this respectfully, I bet when you go out to dinner or, I don't play golf, but if we go and play golf or we go to a football game, a Redskins football game, or wherever, we usually go with people who look like us.

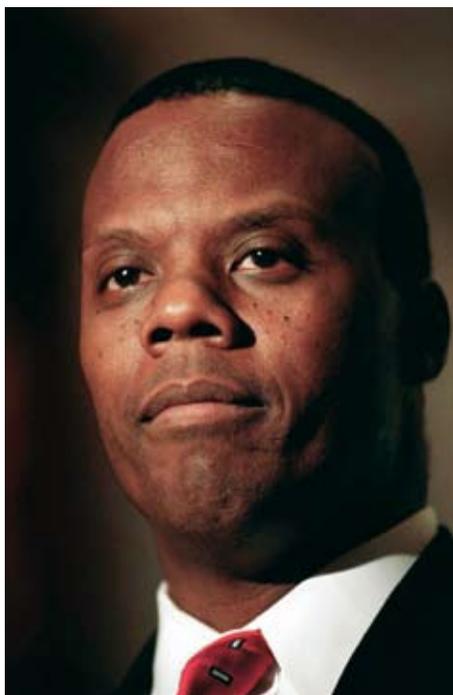
We worship on Saturdays or Sundays or whenever; we go to our places of worship; we usually worship with people who look like us. And so again, as with most Americans, diversity occurs primarily in the workplace.

Otherwise, black people are reading black newspapers, black magazines, visiting black websites, listening to black radio, watching black programs on television. Then, here's a forum to speak to African American voters who, by the way, aren't saying, "We want anything, something that nobody else is getting." They're saying, "What is your plan on taxes? What is your plan on health care? What is your plan on minority health care disparity? What is your plan on the war? What is your plan on education?" So, if you're not showing up to talk about your plan,

then you're not speaking to this demographic.

Well, if you're not showing up to give your point of view, how do you expect to get more than eight percent of that vote? It seems to me when the black community says, "you're not showing up to speak to us" -- and, by the way, I don't believe the black voters are enamored with the Democrat leadership -- I think there's probably 35 to 40 percent of the black vote that says, "Just give us your plan, we don't have anybody speaking to us." But I think if you're not showing up, if you are to be an alternative, you have to be where the alternative is needed.

You know, we talk a good game but we just have not



[shown up.] I continue to be disgusted with the Republican establishment. And I say the Republican establishment because I think that most Republicans in the trenches are trying to figure out ways reach out and be inclusive. On a national level, the experts and the consultants and the political folks say, "No, you don't need to go to Morgan State. You don't need to go to the Urban League. We'll just use as an excuse it didn't work in the schedule."

Well, that's about the same as the kid saying, "The dog ate my homework." It just doesn't have a lot of credibility.

**RF: Over the past several years, the Republican Party stepped up its outreach efforts to the African American community, yet the GOP's share of the black vote was actually lower in 2006 than it was in 2004. Is that because the outreach failed, or is it due to issues and events beyond the party's control?**

**JCW:** Two things. One, if it's not in your DNA, it's not going to work. I give Ken Mehlman some credit for making some effort. That's one person -- it's not institutionalized. It's not a part of the Republican establishment's DNA to do outreach, to be inclusive. I give Ken some credit for doing that, but that's about like me as a quarterback calling a play and we go to the huddle and the other ten guys, when the ball is snapped, they just stand around and watch and then I'm the only one running the play. Again, I don't believe that Republicans have filtered it into the institution of the party.

Rich Bond was the RNC Chair back in 1992. Rich and I had this conversation back then. We were talking about growing the base of the party and outreach and so forth and Rich said, "J.C., until we make the institution of the party available for outreach and for growth, it's never going to happen." And I have seen, in terms of the results of the vote, it just hasn't been. There's so much opportunity, but there hasn't been a lot of growth in the numbers because it's never been institutionalized.

And as I said earlier, when they talk about reaching out, many in the establishment say, "Well, when you reach out to the black community, we're not going to play special interest politics." It's all special interest politics! I mean, we have Republican candidates, and they're for gun control but they went to the NRA and talked to the NRA. We have Republican candidates who are pro-choice, but they go and talk to pro-life organizations. Why? Because they want the

vote and they take the approach that Bob Dole took to say, "I stayed up all night trying to figure out who I didn't want to vote for me, and I couldn't figure out anybody." Well, it seems as though we say, "Yeah, we've figured out somebody that we didn't want to vote for us -- the black community."

Last night, I was listening to the [November 30<sup>th</sup> GOP presidential] debate. And I thought it was very telling when this black guy comes on and he says, and I'm paraphrasing: "Black people by and large are very conservative, pro-life, pro-family, pro-tax relief, pro-choice in education, but why don't we vote for you guys?"

As it turned out, Giuliani and Huckabee were the two guys that answered the question, and Giuliani basically said, "We need to do a better job communicating our plans." And I thought, but you don't show up! Then he went on to say,

"We need to take black people off of welfare." And that was code word for the white conservatives. I say that respectfully, but that's what his consultants would say: "Well, we gotta take black people off welfare."

Huckabee, on the other hand, I thought his language was very interesting. He basically said "there are issues that disproportionately affect underserved communities. As governor, I recognize that, so I'll disproportionately target the black community and other communities that need attention with dollars to target AIDS, health care disparities, and other pressing problems." Mike Huckabee was speaking to the people that he needed to be talking to by answering that question. When the black gentleman said, "Why don't we vote for you guys?" Giuliani and most of those candidates would have been talking to white conservatives, as opposed to talking to the guy that asked the question!

Again, it all gets back to diversity and infrastructure. If you have no diversity in your inner circle, those

stupid mistakes -- those stupid things -- happen. I'm not saying this out of anger. I'm not saying it out of anything other than I think the Republican Party has been very, very shortsighted and even stupid in so many respects. I think they've just been naïve or indifferent to what it takes to really impact the black vote.

And I had so much hope for George W. Bush because I thought -- and I do think -- that George W. gets it. He got it as Governor of Texas, but his lieutenants, I think, have just totally been out of touch. And it's sad because I think there continues to be a lot of opportunity there.



**One of the basic problems with the Republican establishment is that they don't show up.**

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**RF: What is more important in winning support among African Americans – is it having the right infrastructure, as you discuss, or having the right candidate and being right on the issues? Or is it all of the above?**

**JCW:** Well, it's all of the above. Use the analogy of being a parent: I've had to discipline my kids, as we all do as parents, and I'll tell you what -- discipline without relationship, in a parent-child relationship, leads to rebellion on the part of the child. If I discipline my kids and I don't have a relationship with them, they're eventually going to rebel. Now, if there's a relationship, they'll take that discipline much better.

The same holds true for outreach. Outreach without relationship leads to rejection. Republicans want to say we reach out. But what we do instead is 60 days before an election, we'll spend some money on black radio and TV or buy an ad in *Ebony* and *Jet*, and that's our outreach. People read through that.

And so I think it's all of the above. To give you some idea of how outdated we are, every Republican candidate invokes the name of Ronald Reagan. I don't think they've ever stopped to think that you've got voters out there who don't know who Ronald Reagan is. We're still living in the decade of the '70s when it comes to campaigns and elections, and most of our candidates run very consultant-driven campaigns. And those consultants, they don't know out of the box. They don't know demographics. They know the old traditional way of doing things that says because seven out of ten voters are white, we have to compete there.

**RF: If you were Chairman of the Republican Party today, how would you go about winning the black vote? What issues would you stress? What messages and themes would you convey?**

**JCW:** First of all, I would say, if you don't want me to do moral, legal, ethical things to grow the base of our party, don't vote for me as Chairman of the RNC. Don't ask me to do it, if you don't want to be serious.

Secondly, I think Republicans aren't losing black voters on social issues. I couldn't have told you what a liberal or a conservative was when I was a junior in college. But I could have told you how I was raised growing up in rural Oklahoma. You treat people the way you want to be treated. You don't waste. I was a conservationist long before I knew who Al Gore was or before I knew what climate change was. And I learned how to be a conservationist from my parents.

I think that Republicans and Democrats both get caught up protecting their conservative or their liberal credentials. And they do that, in my opinion, to protect "my deal." And when you are out to protect your "deal," you can't get out of

the box. You can't look at what works. You can't look at what makes sense. I think we have to seek the truth. And we have to look for the truth.

Republicans like to see black people through the prism of Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton. I talk to Jesse from time to time. I talk to Al from time to time. And you know, there's a side of me that makes me thankful for those guys being out there agitating. Because if they were not out there agitating, think of where it might be? I think that there's a side of what they do that holds systems accountable. Now do I think they abuse the system from time to time? Yes, I do. Do I think they cross the line from time to time? Yes, I do. But still, I think there is a place for them and thank God for them.

Thank God for those conservative activists who are out there agitating, those liberal activists who are out there agitating. It should caution all of us from time to time to take a step back, take a deep breath and say, "Are you doing this because you're Republican or are you doing it because you're right?" You know, I think we all need that -- that pause and that accountability in our lives.

So I think you need to show up. I'm not worried about black people and the social issues. I'm worried about the black community and the opportunity issues. DoD, aerospace -- less than one percent of procurement opportunities. Telecom, homeland security, transportation -- just go down the list and you can see not many opportunities. There should be more opportunities in each of those sectors for African American business. Am I saying that we should favor African American business over any other business? No, that's not what I'm saying. The reason I believe that is this: in the city of Chicago, you know who employs the most black people? Black people. And so, I don't think you need more taxes. I think you need more taxpayers.

How do you create more taxpayers? You encourage people to start businesses. You help them grow those businesses. I don't necessarily believe that the reason that they don't have more minority businesses in their procurement system is because they're racist. I believe a lot of it is simply because they have no diversity in their infrastructure, and they think that diversity is giving \$250,000 a year to the Urban League or giving \$250,000 a year to the NAACP, and God bless them for doing that. They should be doing that. But if that's going to be your diversity, you ought to be giving \$2 billion a year to the Urban League, \$2 billion a year to the NAACP.

So, I believe that we need to help minority business, help small business, help businesses start and grow in these communities. Now, they have a lot more interest in your tax plan. If you're talking about eliminating the death tax, if they have nothing to protect, if they have nothing to pass on, the

**Republicans want to say we reach out. But what we do instead is 60 days before an election, we'll spend some money on black radio and TV or buy an ad in *Ebony* and *Jet*, and that's our outreach. People read through that.**

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death tax means nothing to them. Lowering tax rates means nothing to them.

If you give people a stake in the system -- red, yellow, brown, black, or white -- people fight and protect and defend the system a whole lot more and a whole lot better, and they are a lot more passionate about it.

**RF: If Barack Obama captures the Democratic nomination, should the Republican Party just write off the black vote in 2008?**

**JCW:** There's a side of me that says the Republican Party has already written off the black vote. I'd forget about 2008. Let's think about 2006, 2004, 2002.

It seems we've resigned ourselves to being content with getting eight or nine percent of the black vote. I can make a pretty strong argument after the election that every demographic out there wants to say, "If it hadn't been for us, the President wouldn't have won."

When President Clinton won in '92 and '96, the unions wanted to take the lion's share of the credit. The trial lawyers would say, "We're responsible for the President getting elected or reelected." And, you know, you go to the Republican side and the evangelical community and Christian conservatives would say, "Oh, we're responsible for the President getting elected or reelected." Everybody wants to take more than their share of the credit for a President being elected or reelected on both sides of the aisle.

President Bush went from, I think, nine percent of the black vote in Ohio in 2000 to 16 percent of the vote in Ohio in 2004 because the marriage issue was on the ballot. I can make a strong argument that had President Bush gotten only 13 percent of the black vote in Ohio, he wouldn't be President.

I think the Democrat establishment takes the black vote for granted, and they say, "We're going to get 90 plus percent of the black vote, so we can do whatever we want to do." And then the Republican Party says, "We have to win without them," so they ignore the black vote. You've got 35 to 40 percent of the black vote that says, "We feel like we're in a political twilight zone. We don't feel like either party is speaking to us and that they have any interest in what we are, what we're concerned about."

So I think, in '08, Barack Obama makes this thing very interesting for Republicans and Democrats. I think we probably lose the black vote with Barack Obama. With Hillary Clinton, I think, we still have an opportunity.

**RF: Finally, you were one of only two black Republicans to have been elected to the House of Representatives over the past 50 years. Looking back on your time in office, what do you see as your legacy and your greatest contribution to the country?**

**JCW:** I was proud to have been a part of providing tax relief for all Americans. Abraham Lincoln said something to the effect that "that which you earn by the efforts of your own hand, you should be able to keep as much of, as possible." I believe that.

When you look at those things I was a part of that really changed the culture or had an impact -- a serious impact -- on people's lives, I think of my work with regard to minority health care disparities, historical black colleges and universities, American community renewal, and new markets tax credits.

I even think of the faith-based initiatives. It was very controversial, but I don't believe that faith organizations should be discriminated against in receiving federal dollars to deliver community services. I was talking about that long before President Bush came to town. I think that those types of things -- you take the politics out of them which is difficult to do -- made a difference and had a good impact on the quality of people's lives.

But you know, politics these days has gotten so crazy and so wrapped up into trying to protect my deal. I've become a bit disillusioned about it all. In some respects, I've become a little bit cynical. I've

tried to work to not become cynical, because I think that's often a sign of laziness. But my cynicism hasn't come from laziness. It's just come from operating in and out of the system for 12 to 14 years on the state and federal level and then, having looked at it over the last five years, thinking, my God, I don't know if we solved the problems.

Because it's not about solving problems, it's about protecting my deal for Republicans and Democrats. **RF**



**If you give people a stake in the system -- red, yellow, brown, black, or white -- people fight and protect and defend the system a whole lot more and a whole lot better, and they are a lot more passionate about it.**

# “Why I am a REPUBLICAN”

If one believes what one reads in the newspapers and sees on TV, a branding effort is currently underway to rebuild the Republican Party’s image leading up to the November general elections.

The effort is being led by House Minority Leader John Boehner in Washington, and Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue in the states. There is no indication that the two are coordinating their actions. In fact, by some accounts, there may be some disagreement over the direction of the effort and where it may end up. One thing is certain, however – this kind of rehabilitation project is needed. Some would say it is also long overdue.

In light of this effort, the FORUM thought it would be helpful to ask a question that is critical the GOP brand. The question is “Why am I a Republican?” On its surface, the question seems simple enough. But underneath, we believe this question gets to the heart of not only how Republicans define their party, but how the party, ultimately, defines itself.

We asked six prominent Republicans to write short essays explaining why they joined the GOP, what they believe the party stands for today, and the issues they believe the party should promote to achieve electoral success in the coming year. Four of our writers serve at different levels of government. Two are known for their work and achievements in their respective fields.

All of them, we believe, represent viewpoints that will be critical to the effort to repair the GOP’s image and ensure its success in the elections in 2008.

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## Orrin Hatch United States Senator Salt Lake City, Utah



I haven’t always been a Republican. I was raised in a Democrat, union family. Growing up, my family was poor, and I bought into the need for many of the so-called government give-away programs. I learned a skilled trade and became a union card-carrying journeyman metal lather.

But as I went to college, on a Mormon mission, and to law

school, I recognized government was liberal programs. The grand power of the United States hinges on a competitive, free market economy in order to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Compassionate conservatism works in the best interests for those struggling in America. The more we become dependent on the federal government, the more we frustrate our individual liberties. Instead of the Democrat-style of compassion shown through government handouts we must create an environment that inspires communities and individuals to take advantage of opportunities to improve their condition. Individuals have the power to change, and government can help them lead better lives.

**I RECOGNIZED  
GOVERNMENT WAS NOT  
THE ANSWER TO EVERY  
PROBLEM.**

**ORRIN HATCH**

I have found that conservative Republican policies lead to greater liberties, freedom, and prosperity – policies like lower taxes, less bureaucracy, stronger national security, greater enforcement of criminal law,

school, I recognized government was not the answer to every problem. I learned that personal responsibility and a government closer to the people was supremely better for businesses and individuals than an intrusive federal government that led to personal dependency through

vigilance against terrorism, and free market competition in health care and other compassionate programs.

Republicans are also best suited to maintain the balance of power between the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. Conservative Presidents and Governors nominate, and conservative Senators confirm, good, honest judges who interpret the laws and who do not act like super-legislators from the bench.

The Republican Party is the only party that stands for these true principles. In every way I am glad that I made the switch as a young man to become a conservative Republican.

---

**Jo Ann Emerson**  
**United States Representative**  
**Cape Girardeau, Missouri**



Republicans come from many backgrounds, but we are united by our desires for responsible leadership, principled but limited government, a belief in free markets, and respect for the rights of the individual.

These commonalities create a Republican philosophy which can be applied to solve any policy problem, or to argue that any problem should be exempted from a governmental solution. No matter our reasons for becoming Republicans, we are charged with expanding a common sense view of public policy to ensure the future health of our nation, as well as our party.

Today, the Republican imperative is to be problem-solvers in a nation where the short-term solution often comes at the expense of personal or constitutional freedoms, in the form of higher taxes, and with a necessary prescription for bigger government. Taking the long view is never so easy, but it does pay dividends (especially in terms of our national security and economy) to Americans intent on getting to the heart of big problems.

Immigration is certainly a case in point. Proposals of amnesty would certainly reduce the number of illegal aliens in America on paper for the short-term. But providing a tremendous incentive for future illegal immigration is sure to create more problems than can be solved with citizenship for lawbreakers. Health care is another example. A heavily-

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*JO ANN EMERSON*

regulated market economy is not today meeting the goals of Americans who eschew insurance and preventative care at the risk of relying on emergency room medicine and Medicaid. The conservative approach to immigration hinges on capable enforcement of U.S. laws and assessments of the need for specialized workers' visas. Health care and entitlement spending, on the other hand, require us to balance fiscal concerns with moral ones in a far more complicated analysis. But access to affordable health care, unlike free passage to America for illegal immigrants, has become a valued and important right to the American people in this day and age.

To succeed in national politics today, Republicans must return to the foundation of our philosophy: sound tax policy and balanced budgets, a strong national defense, robust diplomacy and a focus on the ever-evolving rights of individuals.

The new twist is that we must earnestly apply these principles to new policy problems for the 21st Century, problems like health care, energy independence, and even the environment.

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**Chuck Norris**  
**Actor, author, and businessman**  
**Tarzana, California**



There are several reasons why I am Republican.

First and foremost, I believe that it is people not government that are granted power by God to make a difference in the world. And as such we should seek in society to maximize the roles of people and minimize the roles of government. As the Declaration of Independence declares, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." Or as our Constitution begins, "We the people of the United States..."

Second, I believe free enterprise and a free market create the basis for the expansion of capitalism, which produces jobs, goods, competition, income, etc. Government should promote not restrict or control these economic freedoms, as the Republican platform espouses.

**I BELIEVE FREE ENTERPRISE  
AND A FREE MARKET CREATE THE  
BASIS FOR THE EXPANSION OF  
CAPITALISM...**

*CHUCK NORRIS*

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We should encourage financial independency from, not financial dependency upon, governmental aid.

Third, I believe in defending our freedoms and property, personally and nationally. Thomas Jefferson put it well, "For a people who are free, and who mean to remain so, a well-organized and armed militia is their best security." From the Second Amendment to our military forces, Republicanism seeks to defend what we establish and possess.

Fourth, I believe in protecting the right to life. Again, the Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." I believe those rights extend to the unborn, represented in the traditional pro-life stand of the Republican Party.

In addition to these four reasons, I also believe the Republican party puts better emphasis and more resources into fighting crime and illegal drugs, encouraging educational reform and options, providing energy independence, restricting illegal immigration, assuring health care, limiting taxes, and esteeming traditional marriage and family values.

In short, what I believe and value has led me to register and remain Republican.

That is a part of why I choose to be a Republican.

---

**Lynn Swann**  
**Businessman, Hall of Fame**  
**wide receiver**  
**Sewickley, Pennsylvania**



Why am I a Republican?

The "why" part of this question is something we should ask ourselves about everything we do, think, and believe.

Being a Republican is something that comes easy to me, because the Republican Party represents the values and ideals I identify with. Because of these values, I am free to choose to be

a Republican. So who am I that the Republican Party fits me better than the alternatives?

I am a Christian who believes in the right to say "Under God" in our Pledge of Allegiance or have a prayer in school, but my party respects the right to not have to say that prayer or to face East at the appropriate time to pray to Allah if that is your belief. My party is committed to helping

**I DO NOT TAKE THE  
POSITION THAT MY PARTY  
IS PERFECT OR WITHOUT  
FAULT IN ITS HISTORY OR  
PLATFORMS.**

**LYNN SWANN**

strengthen our Constitution. The foundation, for our nation to advance, is education, integrity and selflessness. These are a part of my core beliefs, and the Republican Party fits my position better than the other political parties.

As a Black American, the history of support from the beginning of the Republican Party -- from Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglas -- has been without political peer. From slavery to civil rights to the most important political appointments, the deeds of the Republican Party outweigh the rhetoric of the Democrats.

I do not take the position that my party is perfect or without fault in its history or platforms. What is most important is the party listens and evolves to continue to represent the needs and thinking of the people of the United States of America.

With that in mind, my voice within the Republican Party can be heard and be an agent for productive change. That is a part of why I choose to be a Republican.

---

**Heidi Gansert**  
**Minority Leader,**  
**Nevada State Assembly**  
**Reno, Nevada**



When the question was posed "Why I became a Republican," I can tell you that I never considered being anything but a Republican.

When I first checked the box to register to vote, there was no hesitation. My innate nature is one of self-reliance and personal responsibility which, in my opinion, are fundamental to a Republican.

When I analyze how I evolved to where I am in a political sense, my desires to help my community, participate in discussions involving what is suitable for my state, and how Nevada can be the greatest place to live, are the reasons I ran for office. What overlies these desires is a recognition that self-reliance, a sound education, and plain hard work can get you anywhere in our great country.

---

**FREEDOM CAN ONLY EXIST  
IN STATES AND NATIONS  
WHERE SELF-RELIANCE AND  
RESPONSIBILITY ARE TAKEN  
ON BY INDIVIDUALS.**

**HEIDI GANSERT**

As a relative newcomer to politics, I have never viewed myself as a “politician” as that conjures up negative connotations for many. I am a community member who has chosen a high level of civic involvement. I am a Republican because I believe all individuals can accomplish great things. I am also a Republican because I support the freedom provided by our country.

Freedom can only exist in states and nations where self-reliance and responsibility are taken on by individuals. I am thankful everyday that I live in this country where nothing is impossible and everything is possible.

---

**Frank Guinta**  
**Mayor of Manchester,**  
**New Hampshire**



To answer the question, “why I am a Republican,” I go back to Ronald Reagan and the incredible legacy he left for America.

I am 37 years old, so my formative years were during Reagan’s time in office. It was his influence that helped develop my political beliefs and my approach toward public service.

**TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, “WHY I AM A REPUBLICAN,” I GO BACK TO RONALD REAGAN AND THE INCREDIBLE LEGACY HE LEFT FOR AMERICA.**

**FRANK GUINTA**

He knew that challenging – not appeasing – tyrants benefited America and the rest of the free world. But most importantly, Reagan loved America and what it stood for: rugged individualism, a commitment to freedom here and abroad, and limited government.

In my role as Mayor of Manchester, I have developed a similar governing style. In my first term, my top priority was to provide residents with tax relief and responsible budgets while enhancing public safety, lowering crime in the city and improving the city’s educational system. Because the city’s 14-member Board of Aldermen consists of 11 Democrats, I often have to work with them to forge important policy initiatives. However, I always kept my principles intact and was still able to pass most of my agenda in my first term.

As I embark on a second term, I will continue to highlight the issues that we Republicans support: fiscal responsibility; the right to live safe from crime; an education system that doesn’t fail our children and limited government that rewards, not punishes, entrepreneurship.

This is the path I have forged and one I plan to stay true to in the coming years. **RF**

He was someone that had that rare ability to talk tough to the most powerful figures of his era while being able to communicate to the common person. He understood that government helped people the most when it let them be entrepreneurs and pioneers, not wards of the state.

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# Why Lincoln was a Republican

FRANK J. WILLIAMS

As Republicans prepare to select their nominee for President in 2008, it is a good time to reflect on the one decision that probably did more to shape the GOP than any other decision in the Party's history – the decision by Abraham Lincoln to become a Republican.

It was not a decision that Lincoln took lightly. He was a staunch member of the Whig Party up until that point. Yet events in the country caused him to change course. Indeed, the birth of the Republican Party and Lincoln's transformation from a local Midwestern politician to the greatest American President are intimately connected to the extraordinary tumult of mid-19th century America.

Any effort to consider why Lincoln became a Republican and his role in the formation of the Republican Party must begin with two basic points. First, a single issue united early Republicans – strenuous objection to the extension of slavery into the territories. Second, Lincoln's passion was always for the principles of liberty in the Declaration of Independence, especially the principle that "all men are created equal." Lincoln abhorred slavery, a position that led him to the Republican Party. Once a Republican, his broader philosophy made its mark on the party.

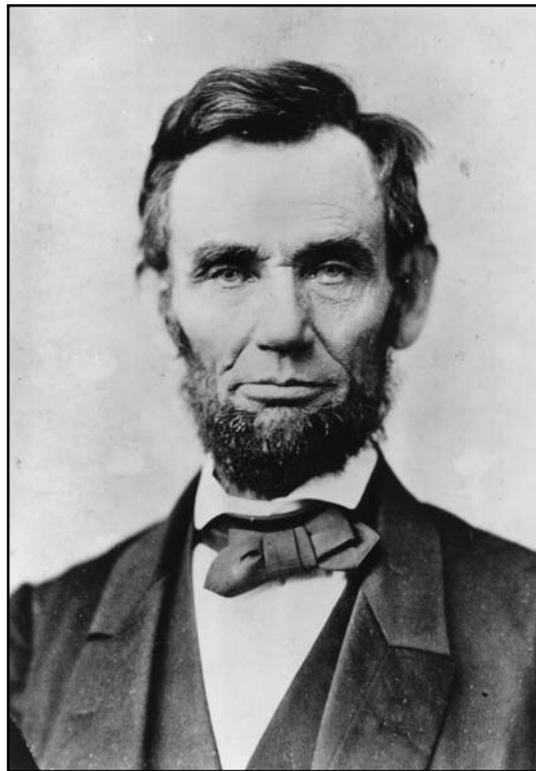
Lincoln was a moderate in a radical party. His Whig

roots and his faith in America's founding principles made him an eloquent spokesman for the Republicans. Lincoln was attracted to the party by his unwavering faith in the ideas espoused in the Declaration of Independence, even when faced with civil war. He was no partisan zealot. He simply recognized that "the man who is of neither party, is not — cannot be, of any consequence." Above all, Lincoln's loyalty was to the Union and its founding ideals.

The story of the first Republican presidency begins with the divisive Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which abrogated the Missouri Compromise and ignited fears that Kansas or Nebraska might join the Union as slave states. An "anti-Nebraska" movement, soon to become the new Republican Party, took shape across the North. Lincoln was not initially inclined to align with the Party, even though he was invited to be member of its central committee in 1854. He declined the invitation, claiming he was still a Whig.

As it was, Whigs were becoming less relevant because they refused to face the growing crisis over slavery. Finally, in 1856, Lincoln attended Illinois's anti-Nebraska conference and announced his desire to run for the United

States Senate. He helped organize the first convention of the Illinois Republican Party, closing the convention with a speech "universally acclaimed as the best speech of his



**Lincoln was attracted to the party by his unwavering faith in the ideas espoused in the Declaration of Independence, even when faced with civil war.**

life.” Later, his name was offered as a vice-presidential candidate at the 1856 Republican National Convention. He did not receive the nomination, however, and returned to Illinois to continued prominence in the state party.

In 1857, the Supreme Court handed down the infamous Dred Scott decision in which Chief Justice Taney declared that blacks “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” The Dred Scott decision asserted that the Declaration of Independence did not apply to blacks. This decision was offensive to Lincoln and acted as a catalyst for him to reenter the national debate.

In 1858, the Illinois Republican Party nominated him for the United States Senate. During this campaign, Lincoln participated in the now-legendary series of debates with his political rival and the incumbent Democratic Senator, Stephen A. Douglas. In these debates and throughout the campaign, he perfected his moral rhetoric on the question of slavery, defining it as an eternal struggle between two opposing rights. “The one is the common right of humanity,” he declared, “the other the divine right of kings.”

Despite his soaring rhetoric, Lincoln was defeated by Douglas in the election. But his defeat set the stage for the presidential election of 1860. Lincoln emerged as the only Republican candidate who could unify the fractured elements of his young party. His election to the White House was secured against a divided opposition in the South, making Civil War all but inevitable.

Lincoln’s rise to the Presidency, his achievements once in office, and his eventual success in keeping the country together transcend party politics. His memory belongs to the history of the nation, and in some sense the history of democracy itself, not a political party. It is only natural that Republicans today would wonder about the lasting impact on their party of such a colossal figure. The answer begins with Lincoln’s original decision to leave the Whigs and become a Republican.

Lincoln was hesitant to leave the Whig party, so it

only makes sense to consider the influence of his long held Whiggish principles. Lincoln, after all, attracted many former Whigs to the party. Who were the Whigs? Above all, they were economic optimists who believed wholeheartedly in the power of the individual to better himself, so long as society was properly ordered.

In Lincoln’s words, “[E]very man can make himself.” His strongly held notions of liberty combined with his “self-made man” ideal led naturally and forcefully to the right of free labor. This provided Lincoln with a natural transition from Whig to Republican. It also provided the GOP with a philosophical underpinning that remains critical to its political identity.

Lincoln’s powerful influence on his young party helped transform Republicanism from a single issue party to one devoted to broader ideals of liberty and optimism. His influence brought success to the anti-slavery cause and transformed it into an enduring political party still relevant today.

Times have certainly changed since Lincoln’s day, and now everyone takes Lincoln as their own: liberals, conservatives, labor, and business; but he remains the quintessential Republican. For his part, Lincoln became a Republican because he believed people are at their best when they are free.

One hundred and sixty one years later, that sentiment has become a bedrock principle of our Nation and has taken hold around the world, as well. **RF**



Judge Frank J. Williams

**Lincoln’s powerful influence on his young party helped transform Republicanism from a single issue party to one devoted to broader ideals of liberty and optimism.**

*Frank J. Williams is a life-long student of the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. He is also the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island and the founding chair of The Lincoln Forum, an international organization devoted to the study of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. A member of the U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, he is the author of the 2002 book, “Judging Lincoln.” He would like to thank*

*Terrence Haas, Esq. for his research assistance on this essay. This article is purely historical and does not represent the political views of the author.*

# Running on Iraq: What's a Northeast Republican to do?

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

All during the 2006 campaign, our Republican candidates for U.S. Senate, Congress and local offices knew that they were headed for the worst election for Republicans since Watergate.

With every poll last year, we knew that the Iraq war was the defining issue of the election. As support dropped for the war, and raised the President's unfavorable ratings, it created a catalyst for Democrats to win. Certainly there were other issues: a broken immigration system; out of control spending and corruption in Congress. All of these issues defined a failure by the Republican majority in Congress, but none was more problematic than the war in Iraq.

Our November 7, 2006 national post election survey of 1,000 voters showed that the damage was particularly acute in the Northeast (New England and Middle Atlantic States). Just two years ago on the national level, in our 2004 post election poll, affiliated Republicans outnumbered Democrats 44 percent to 40 percent, but in 2006 Democrats outnumbered Republicans 42 percent to 39 percent. In the Northeast in 2004 Republicans outnumbered Democrats 44 percent to 39 percent, but last year Democrats now led affiliated Republicans 43 percent to

40 percent. In the lower turnout of the midterm elections two results clearly occurred. First, a significant number of Republicans were so disgusted they did not vote. Second, some voters who in 2004 thought of themselves as Republicans had now left the party.

The 2006 election was a 5 to 4 vote against the war. Nationally, voters opposed the war 52 percent to

War 53 percent to 45 percent. In 2006, support for the war among Northeast voters plummeted 12 points, to 41 percent, while opposition rose 13 points to 58 percent -- a 25 point turnaround.

With the drop in support for the war, also went the President's approval ratings. In direct correlation with public opinion's support for the war in 2004 voters had approved of the job President

Bush was doing 54 percent to 45 percent. In the Northeast in 2004 the President's approval rating was a net positive 52 percent to 46 percent.

By 2005 the President's approval rating became a net negative nationally 46 percent approved and 53 percent disapproved. In the Northeast it was 45 percent approved and 54 percent disapproved.

In the midst of this shift on the polarizing issue of the electorate, there was also a direct correlation between the voter's attitude toward the war and their vote for Congress. Among voters who opposed the

war they voted Democratic for Congress 83 percent to 15 percent. Those voters who supported the war voted Republican for Congress 79 percent to 20 percent. So if you knew whether the voter supported or opposed the war you had an



**In 2006, support for the war among Northeast voters plummeted 12 points, to 41 percent, while opposition rose 13 points to 58 percent -- a 25 point turnaround.**

45 percent. Just two years before, the country supported the war 53 percent to 44 percent. Now it was reversed by 16 points. In the Northeast it was an even more distressing turnaround. In 2004 the Northeast voters supported the Iraq

---

80 percent chance that you could predict their vote for Congress.

Nationally while Republicans had split their vote virtually evenly in 2004, last year they voted Democratic 54 percent to 45 percent -- a national 8 point drop for Republicans. However, once again it was more pronounced in the Northeast. In 2004, Northeast voters preferred Republicans 51 percent to 44 percent. Last year, they chose Democrats for Congress 56 percent to 43 percent. This was a 19 point overall reversal against the Republicans, which made it the worst region in the nation for the GOP.

When we asked the 2006 voters: "Regarding your vote for Congress, was it more in support of, or in opposition to the War in Iraq? If your vote was based on other issues, just say so." Only one in four of all voters, 22 percent across the nation, said that their vote was a vote in support of the war. Four in ten voters, 42 percent, described their vote as a vote against the war. One in three voters, 32 percent, claimed they decided their vote on other issues. In the Northeast, 23 percent voted to support the war, while almost half -- 48 percent -- said they voted to oppose the war. Those who said their vote was to oppose the war voted at an eight to one ratio for the Democrats - 88 percent to 11 percent.

## Outlook for 2008

The 2006 election is history. The war in Iraq has been the dominant issue in the previous two national elections and certainly it will be an important part of the November 2008 election. But Republican incumbents did survive the anti-war tsunami.

In our work for incumbents who faced strong Democratic challengers we found that as we defined our candidate's incumbency on a broader agenda, they were more likely to win. Nationally, those who decided their vote on issues other than the war voted Republican 58 percent to 40 percent.

Also, whenever possible, if we could counter Democratic attacks on the war by defining our Democratic opponents

as wrong on that same agenda, it really undermined the Democratic attack on the war.

Basically we were fighting over a narrow middle segment of the electorate that was heavily independent and had no allegiance to either party. In this year's polls we are seeing the same opportunity, with about 6 in 10 independents undecided in their generic choice for Congress.

So what has changed about the War in Iraq as an issue?

America might be winning.

Americans don't like war, but what they hate more is losing a war, especially at the sacrifice of precious American lives.

In 2004 President Bush and the Republican won the national elections precisely because the majority of Americans believed that his policies

## **The difference now is that American opinion appears to have shifted to give the President enough time to allow his policies to succeed.**

against terror, on the war and for the post-9/11 economy had been successful. However, by 2006 the plurality of Americans thought we were losing the war. As such, the majority of voters cast their ballots against losing.

The difference now is that American opinion appears to have shifted to give the President enough time to allow his policies to succeed. This cross pressures the Democratic candidates with a base that was overwhelmingly anti-war and currently favors a relatively immediate pullout.

The Republican base was never really anti-war, they just became discouraged by the time and toll the war was taking. In campaign focus groups, liberal Democrats would say that they were opposed to the war. "We should never have invaded Iraq, period,"

some stated. "The President lied about weapons of mass destructions to get us into Iraq," others declared.

In contrast, Republicans did not complain about the war itself. Rather their focus group comments would go along the line of reasoning as follows: "We were right to go into Iraq, but we should have left by now." Republicans and Independents who supported the President and the war were disillusioned that we would "lose" the war.

So what are we seeing in current polls that look at the war as an issue for 2008? Our major findings of recent surveys in the Northeast generally find the following:

- The war is part of an election agenda which includes energy costs, the economy, health care, terror, immigration, taxes and spending. As long as the "surge" succeeds and eventually Iraq becomes stable, the war will not be the Democratic silver bullet as it may have been in 2006.

- As economic concerns rise, three in four voters still think that the country is headed in the wrong direction, but this time Democrats and Congress share the blame with Republicans.

- The President remains largely unfavorable, but the Republican Party is in the midst of a great volatile nomination battle that will redefine its image and its coalition.

- As unpopular as the President may still be, Hillary Clinton is not far behind. Nationally four in ten voters are unfavorable to her and they are polarized along partisan lines. No way is Mark Penn, Hillary's pollster correct that she will get 25 percent of the Republican women vote. Her negatives among Republican women are about 80 percent -- even in the Northeast. Last November among Northeast voters, even before the campaign started Senator Clinton had a 41 percent unfavorable rating. For every ad that a Democrat attacks a Republican with, there may be one to put some distance between the Democrat and Senator Clinton. Senator Clinton, as the nominee of her party, will be a catalyst for a better Republican turnout than

in 2006. Also she will be a cause for ticket-spitting for Congress. Among those voters who may vote for her, a sizable segment do not want her to rule with unchecked control of government and will split their ticket as they did with her husband in the '94, '96 and '98 elections.

- If Senator Obama wins the nomination, the Democratic Party will have gone even farther to the left and become even more anti-war. This will leave more of the middle and independent vote available to the Republicans.

- The majority of voters in the Northeast are now giving the "Democratic majority in Congress" a net negative job rating. This holds true among independents and even among Democratic voters in key swing districts. Along with the Democratic majority, Speaker Nancy Pelosi now has a net unfavorable rating in key districts.

- Democratic efforts to push a tax increase on middle-class and upper

middle-class economy are undermining the Democrats credibility that they are actually cutting taxes for the middle class.

- In key districts, the majority of Northeast voters support a gradual

**As long as the "surge" succeeds and eventually Iraq becomes stable, the war will not be the Democratic silver bullet as it may have been in 2006.**

withdrawal of troops from Iraq and are opposed to an immediate withdrawal that leaves an unstable Iraq.

- Democrat missteps fueled by New York Governor Spitzer's very unpopular proposal to give illegal aliens drivers' licenses and the tacit support by Senator Clinton gave Northeast Republicans an important wedge issue to regain lost ground on security as an issue.

- Last November six in ten voters, 59 percent preferred "smaller government with fewer services", over "larger government with many services", 28 percent. In the Northeast the plurality of voters preferred smaller government 48 percent to 36 percent. Fiscal conservatism will be an important opportunity once again for Republicans.

- With the retirement of incumbents and the opportunity for new challengers the Republican Party once again has the opportunity to become the party of new ideas, new faces and change precisely at a time when voters will be looking for independence and change once more.

The 2006 election is history and we should learn from it. The 2008 election can be an election of opportunity rather than an election of decline. The changes are coming. **RF**

*John McLaughlin is the CEO/Partner of McLaughlin & Associates.*

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# The Youth Vote in 2008: Up for Grabs or Staying at Home?

GARY L. ROSE

Although political pundits and analysts are currently preoccupied with forecasting the voting behavior of women, senior citizens, Hispanics, and evangelical Christians, the fact of the matter is that the voting behavior of young persons between the ages of 18-30 will likely decide the outcome of the 2008 election.

The newest generation of American voters, contrary to conventional wisdom, is closely following the current campaign and planning to vote on election day.

In a nationwide telephone poll of 400 young Americans conducted from October 5-13 by the Sacred Heart University Polling Institute in partnership with the "Rock the Vote" project sponsored by World Wrestling Entertainment, 77 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18-30 were discovered to be very focused on the presidential campaign. Moreover, 87 percent of those surveyed indicated a desire to vote in the November election, and 85 percent replied that

their individual vote does in fact count. The younger generation of American voters from all indications is characterized by an impressive sense of political efficacy.

This intriguing resurgence of political interest among young persons suggests the beginning of a new trend in American politics which

Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) based on U.S. Census data discovered that 55.4 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18-29 voted in the 1972 election. In 1984, 49.1 percent of eligible voters in this age group cast a ballot. By 2000, voter turnout among young voters precipitously declined to 40.3 percent. Thus, from 1972 to 2000, voter turnout among young persons declined by an astonishing 15 points. In the election of 2004, the downward trend in voter turnout was finally reversed, with 49 percent of young voters appearing at the polls.

According to the CIRCLE study, although all age groups in

2004 recorded a rise in voter turnout, the rise in turnout among young voters was the most pronounced. The Sacred Heart University/WWE Poll suggests that the spike in voter

turnout among young Americans in 2004 will carry over into the 2008 election. Clearly, there is something about modern presidential politics that is capturing the imagination and



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began during the election of 2004. Prior to 2004, voter turnout among young persons was rather abysmal and on the wane. Figures calculated by the Center for Information nad

interest of young voters; this change is a most positive and welcome development for those who believe that voter participation is requisite to democratic government.

In addition to voter turnout, the Sacred Heart University/WWE Poll also explored how young persons plan to vote next November.

In response to voter choice questions, 35.3 percent of the sample replied that they plan to vote all or mostly Democrat, 31.0 percent expressed their intention to vote all or mostly Republican, while 29.5 percent indicated that they plan to split their ticket between the two major parties. This is somewhat

startling when examined against the voting behavior of young person in the 2006 congressional election. Examining 2006 exit poll data in "The Sixth Year Itch," Professor Larry Sabato discovered that 60 percent of young persons between the ages of 18-29 voted Democrat, while only 38 percent of young

persons in this age group voted Republican.

The latest Sacred Heart University/WWE Poll indicates that young voters have by no means permanently realigned themselves with the Democratic Party. Effective messaging and presidential

**The war in Iraq, perhaps not surprisingly, is one of the most important issues identified by young voters. However, unlike other demographic groups, young voters are not necessarily in favor of an immediate withdrawal.**

candidates, regardless of party, who can capture the imagination of young voters will likely win a plurality, or perhaps a majority, of this vitally important segment of the electorate.

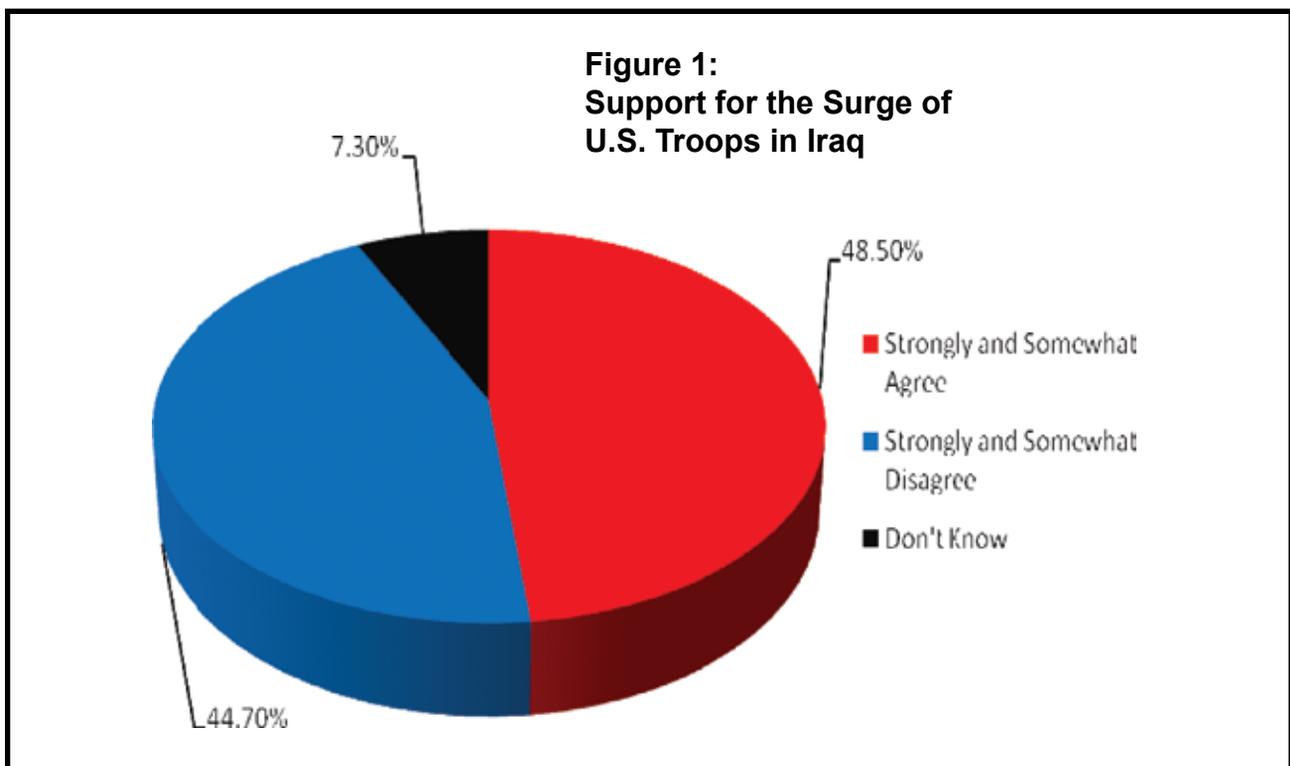
With respect to effective messaging, it is essential for presidential candidates within both parties to understand what issues

are foremost in the minds of young voters. The Sacred Heart University/WWE Poll is most instructive for this purpose.

The war in Iraq, perhaps not surprisingly, is one of the most important issues identified by young voters. However, unlike other demographic groups, young voters are not necessarily in favor of an immediate withdrawal. The poll discovered that 49.3 percent of persons in this particular demographic group favored an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq, while 48.5 percent perceived the "surge" in American troops as beneficial to the stability of this war torn country.

In short, young voters cannot be described as intensely opposed to the war, nor can they be described as deeply pessimistic about the future of this highly contentious foreign policy (see Figure 1).

The poll also suggests a certain hawkishness among this new generation of restless voters. Two-



thirds (66.8 percent) of young voters favored the use of military force to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, and 58.3 percent of the respondents favored the use of the U.S. military to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing in Darfur, as well as in Iraq (see Figures 3 and 4).

The poll reveals that 18-30 year olds are not by any means a timid generation when it comes to using military might to achieve American foreign policy objectives.

Young voters are also focused on an array of issues beyond Iraq and American foreign policy. Concerning the issue of Social Security, 82.5 percent of the respondents expressed serious doubts that social security would be available for them in their retirement years. Seventy-six percent of persons polled also felt that federal, state, and local taxes were too high, and only 33.3 percent viewed the American economy as "in good shape."

The poll also discovered that 81.8 percent of young voters believed that college tuition is too high, 65.3 percent believed that the

U.S. government should establish a system of universal health care for all American citizens, and 67.5 percent felt that global warming is a serious threat. Regarding the highly volatile issue of immigration, 67.5 percent of young voters favored guest worker passes for illegal immigrants, a position endorsed by President Bush, moderate Republicans, and many

### **The poll also suggests a certain hawkishness among this new generation of restless voters.**

Democrats.

When one reviews the collective results of this particular poll, two major conclusions emerge. First, young voters between the ages of 18-30 are going to be a very important force in the election of 2008. Although it is highly unlikely that 87 percent of persons in this age group will actually vote, there is reason to believe that a large percentage of young voters will

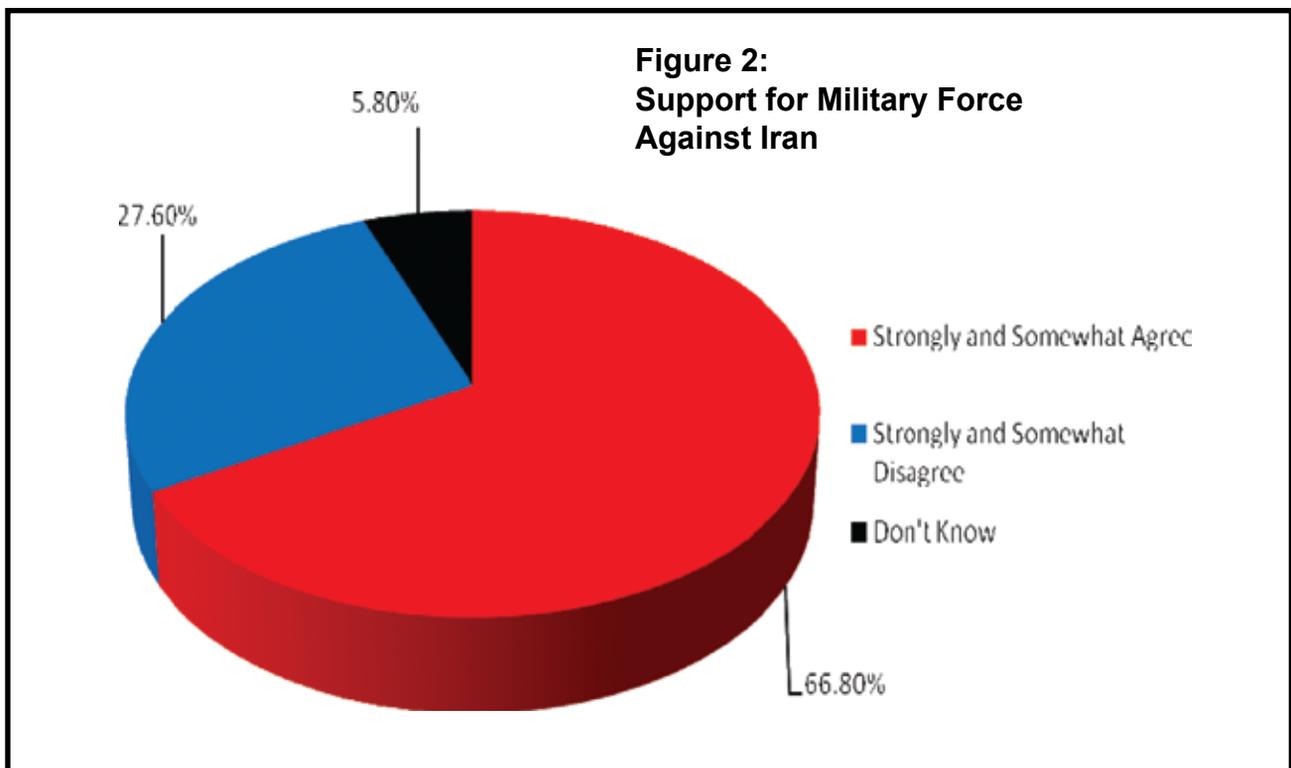
be at the polls on election day. Of that we can be reasonably certain.

Second, as we approach the 2008 election, the issue positions of young voters seem to indicate that neither of the two major parties can take the political support of young voters for granted. Approximately one-third of young voters are undecided in their voting preference, and their stance on issues indicates little coherence and consistency with respect to ideology and partisan values.

Quite simply, young voters between the ages of 18-30 are "up for grabs," and whichever party's presidential nominee can strategically appeal to the imagination and concerns of this key demographic group will likely be the next president of the United States.

**RF**

*Gary L. Rose is professor and chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Sacred Heart University. The charts were prepared with the assistance of Teresa Fennell.*



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# It's More Than Just Words

## The importance of tone in politics

LANDON PARVIN

One of my best friends is a retired clergyman. When he was in seminary, a professor told him that he could wander around

theologically wherever he pleased, as long as he chained himself to the rock on which was written the word "Resurrection."

Some words are like that, abiding and meaningful, words like love, kindness, friendship, integrity, and we should chain ourselves to them as we go through life.

The current problem is that many Republicans have chained themselves to a number of words that they use as incantations, somehow believing their repetition will guarantee them victory or protect them from defeat. Instead, whether you agree with the words or not, their constant use — without intellectual challenge or support — deprives us of the political depth and vitality that gives a party strength and confidence.

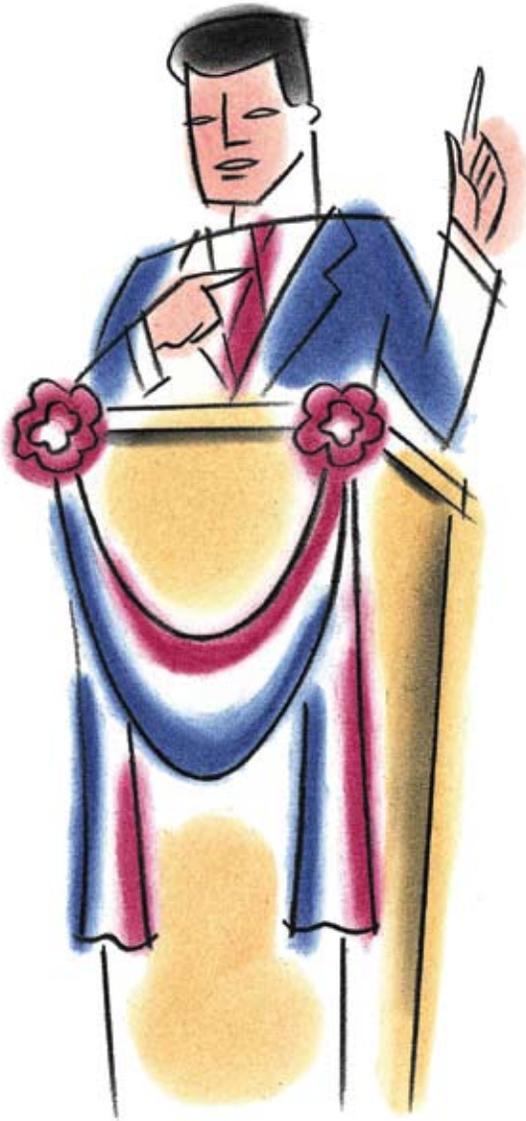
Today's Republican stump speech is the political equivalent of a PowerPoint

presentation. Here is a typical Republican congressional candidate's speech in PowerPoint form:

- REAGAN REPUBLICAN
- HILLARY ZINGER (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE)
- WASHINGTON'S WASTEFUL SPENDING
- LIMITED GOVERNMENT
- OUR TROOPS (STANDING OVATION)
- PRO-LIFE/FAMILY VALUES/SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE
- GREATEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

Sometimes, when I hear Republican speeches larded with the knee-jerk, base-tested words, it reminds me of the worn Henny Youngman story about the group of comedians who had a numbered list of the world's best jokes. One of them would say, "Number 17" and all the others would double over laughing hysterically.

Today a Republican candidate will call out "Number 8" and expect the audience to react with applause



**The current problem is that many Republicans have chained themselves to a number of words that they use as incantations, somehow believing their repetition will guarantee them victory or protect them from defeat.**

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and knowing validation. But is that the basis for a political party?

These commonly invoked words have lost the power they once had. This certainly doesn't mean there aren't words with power. Democrats rightfully should be afraid of the words, "driver licenses for illegal aliens." But you cannot sustain a party on wedge words alone or on the tired, tried and true old favorites. Times change.

Take the popular and much-used words, "Reagan Republican." I hear candidates running around saying they are Reagan Republicans, meaning, among other things, that they are optimists, because as everyone knows RR was an optimist. But he had a darker Armageddon side that tempered his blind optimism and made him more intellectually interesting. He was not the Republican version of Hubert Humphrey, the Happy Warrior. Reagan had a seasoned and developed political philosophy that was based on far more than a buoyant heart.

Or consider "Washington's wasteful spending." When it comes to Republicans reining in spending on pork, they are Profiles in Porridge. Backbones of oatmeal. To mean something, words must have some credibility behind them. Let's face it, we have lost our credibility on fiscal prudence. The majority of Republicans in the Congress prefer earmarks over the earnestness of real convictions. They have spent their children's inheritance, which they bemoan as if they were not involved in the plunder, and they have also spent their party's own political inheritance, which had been earned over the decades.

"Limited government" should be a Republican strength, but we have lost credibility. Can someone tell me what we Republicans were doing in the middle of the Terri Shiavo case? Talk about government sticking its nose in the

middle of a private family decision. It appears we abandon the core principle of limited government if it involves one of our powerful constituencies.

Anyway, you get the point. We Republicans have kept repeating the same words long after we abandoned them. The voters finally noticed. So, the road back is about more than using or finding the right words; it is about regaining the credibility behind those words, whether they are old or new.

It is also about changing the tone that Republican words have acquired over the years.

Psychological/physiological research shows that a soft voice relaxes the body of the listener. In

## **What is the voice of Republicans today? Is it firm, reasonable and reassuring or is it a more strident voice with harsher words but weaker will?**

fact, therapists sometimes use an established technique called guided imagery, where a soothing voice leads the individual to a different inner time and place to encourage reflection.

Parties and politicians have voices, too.

If someone wants to be a real Reagan Republican, he should listen to the tone of Reagan's voice. It could be firm, absolutely, but its natural tone was relaxed and reassuring. The power of his tone came not just from the warm, golden-honeyed radio announcer's physical voice but from an underlying reasonableness and approachability.

As one of his speechwriters, I would sometimes write a line that I thought he would deliver with

force, and he would surprise me by delivering it softly. I would feel disappointed that he did not go for the applause line; it took me years to understand why he didn't. Sometimes those applauding are not the ones you want to reach.

His famous question in the 1980 presidential race, "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" is both subtler and stronger than a pedestrian applause line like, "My fellow Republicans, this country is worse off after four years of the Carter Administration and it is time for them to go!"

Which tone is more reasonable, more inclusive, more thoughtful?

What is the voice of Republicans today? Is it firm, reasonable and reassuring or is it a more strident voice with harsher words but weaker will? The Republican voice certainly is not more strident than the Democratic voice, but that is faint praise.

My instincts tell me that a change in tone could liberate the Republican Party, free us from the straitjacket of increasingly empty words and begin to rebuild a connection to the voters.

This party needs to relax and breathe. It needs to take some risks. It needs to actively encourage a greater range of views and to take confidence in that variety.

The Republican Party will be on the path to renewal when it puts away the worn-out buzzwords aimed at a shrinking base and decides to develop the confident, credible, reassuring attitude necessary to reestablish our political integrity and energy.

If we get the tone right, the words will follow. **RF**

*Landon Parvin is a ghostwriter for political and corporate leaders.*

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# Why Silence can be Golden

## The virtue of keeping quiet in a soundbite political age

JOHN FEEHERY

The longest political campaign in history is just now closing in on its official start. All the Presidential wannabes are furiously trying to get their message out. They are investing in all forms of media, not certain which one will break through.

In a campaign atmosphere like this, it may seem ridiculous to preach to the candidates the virtues of virtual silence. But in this era of the 24-hour cable news cycle, at times, keeping quiet can be an effective strategy.

Theodore Roosevelt once quoted an old Native American saying when talking about his strategy for dealing with Central and South America: "Speak softly but carry a big stick." The modern day equivalent is "speak often and to the biggest audiences." But does that strategy always work? Does it always help to always be in the media spotlight?

I argue that in these times of dripping voter cynicism, letting your opponent stew in the media glare can often be an advantage. This is especially true when your competition is busy slitting their own throats. As Napoleon once said, never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.

Quite often, those in office (and those running for office) seem to

be auditioning for the job of pundit rather than public servant. But there is a big difference between pundit and politician. Being a pundit means saying whatever you want about any situation. Being a politician means measuring your words carefully so they have the intended impact on

always a new crisis right around the corner to talk about. The other job fits uneasily in the spin cycle, because if a politician isn't careful, the story can get away from them, and they can go from the person spinning the news to the person being spun by the news.

It was my working assumption in the 2006 election that the party who would last be in the spotlight would lose the election. That assumption proved to be correct, as the Mark Foley scandal shined the light on an ailing Republican Majority, and prevented the GOP from putting the spotlight squarely on the Democrats.

From my experience on the Hill, I observed many instances where overexposure meant political death and where strategic silence proved to be the right strategy.

Newt Gingrich was a perfect example of overexposure, when he swept into power after the 1994 elections. He thought he could use his newfound fame to drive change. So he commenced to turn the daily Speaker's huddle with reporters into a media event. But with television cameras catching Newt's every word, the event became a circus, and he quickly had to turn the reigns of the daily briefing to his number two, Dick Armye.



**Quite often, those in office (and those running for office) seem to be auditioning for the job of pundit rather than public servant.**

the right audience.

One job fits well in the 24 hour cable news cycle, because there is

The overexposure of Newt hit its apex when he went to a Sperling breakfast and complained that the President made him walk off the back of Air Force One, after a long trip to the Middle East. THE NEW YORK POST ran a front page caricature of Newt, with the headline “Crybaby”. Newt would never be the same again.

Newt’s continuing troubles with the media caused consternation and frustration among his colleagues, especially his leadership colleagues, so much so that they entertained the idea of toppling him. The plan backfired when they couldn’t agree on who would replace him.

I was working for Tom DeLay at the time. He ordered me to keep quiet in the aftermath of the so-called coup. His silence (and my silence) stretched for a week, as press reports leaked out about the efforts of Dick Armey, Bill Paxon, DeLay and John Boehner to conspire with angry freshman conservatives, who were tired of Newt’s erratic leadership.

DeLay refused to publicly comment to the media, building up speculation that his future as the Whip was in danger. DeLay kept his public silence until explaining first to his colleagues in a dramatic conference meeting about his role in the coup. His public silence only helped him with his colleagues, and as the media acknowledged afterwards, he was the only conspirator to actually survive the coup effort stronger than he was going into it.

Denny Hastert learned well the lessons of overexposure. When he was sworn in as Speaker, he promised “regular order,” messaging designed to provoke yawns with the national

media. He decided not to do regular briefings with the media, leaving that task to his lieutenants.

In his first budget showdown with President Clinton, at his direction, I played down expectations of fireworks, explaining to THE NEW YORK TIMES, that Hastert “dared to be dull.” He cultivated the image as a listener more than a Speaker,



**...Hastert “dared to be dull.” He cultivated the image as a listener more than a Speaker, and showed that he was more of a workhorse than a show horse.**

and showed that he was more of a workhorse than a show horse. He called the Senate a “bunch of prancing ponies who want to be President,” but largely kept the spotlight off of himself and made

stars of his colleagues. That strategy worked. He left Congress as the longest-serving Republican Speaker in the history of the House.

Press Secretaries have a natural instinct to want to get their bosses in the news, and many politicians measure their self-worth with the number of press clippings they get. But the smart leaders see the game of politics much as a card player sees the game of poker. Keeping your cards close to your chest allows for maximum flexibility. Showing all your cards gives your opponent the advantage.

The media’s job is to expose the politicians’ hand, and once they see the cards, they focus exclusively on their weakest ones. And in this era of blog-world and the 24-hour news cycle, the relentless pressure to find the weak cards only increases the more the candidate becomes the pundit.

Message discipline means keeping the media focused on the high cards. Feeding the beast means giving the media dirt on the opponents’ weakest cards. And the best way to win the game is to resist the temptation to become a media pundit.

Calvin Coolidge was the first to make his silence a virtue. It will be hard for any modern candidate to replicate Silent Cal’s parsimony with words.

But sometimes the less said, the better. **RF**

*John Feehery is a former congressional aide. He is also the founder and president of The Feehery Group, a boutique advocacy firm that focuses on communications and government affairs strategy.*

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# The Real Barometers of Congressional Success

WILLIAM CONNELLY

Congress has been called the “broken branch” of our government. But is it still broken now that Democrats hold the majority on Capitol Hill?

Are Democrats in the House and Senate behaving as a responsible, governing party effectively legislating policy in the national interest? Or are they instead being merely responsive to their liberal base, intent upon playing the politics of opposition to President Bush, thereby inviting gridlock?

Clearly, majority Democrats have shown discipline in keeping the legislative trains running as witness the legislative productivity numbers they publicize. Upon regaining the majority in the 2006 election Democrats promised “an end to the two-day work week,” substituting a Monday through Friday schedule for the supposedly lackadaisical Tuesday through Thursday Republican schedule.

By the end of this October, Democratic leaders could brag about their approximately 150 days in session and 1200 hours hard at work. Most noteworthy perhaps, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress eclipsed the voting pace of any previous Congress with a record 1,000 roll call votes by late October, something, THE

WASHINGTON POST intoned, had “never before achieved in a single year in the history of recorded House votes.” Indeed, when measured by roll call votes, Congressional Democrats have succeeded in outpacing the productive first year of the Gingrich-led “House Republican Revolution” in 1995 and



**By the end of this October, Democratic leaders could brag about their approximately 150 days in session and 1200 hours hard at work.**

the famously energetic “Watergate Baby” first year Democratic majority in 1975.

On the face of it, that’s quite an accomplishment. Unfortunately, while statistics such as these are useful measures of congressional workload, they fail to fully capture legislative

productivity, including the impact of legislation on people’s lives.

For instance, by August 1, 1996, the House had cast only 397 votes (compared to 790 this year), but it had also approved a landmark bill to reform the nation’s welfare system, along with measures to improve health care (PL 104-191) and strengthen retirement security (PL 104-121). Similarly, during the first year of “united Republican government” under President Bush in 2001, the House had cast only 318 votes, yet it had also approved the largest tax cut in a generation and the No Child Left Behind Act.

What do Congressional Democrats have to show for their days and hours at work and all their roll call votes this session? Early in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Speaker Pelosi touted the legislative accomplishments of her first 100 hours. These accomplishments included passage of legislation to raise the minimum wage, reform lobbying and ethics laws, improve veterans benefits and college loans, and implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations. They were also part of the Democrats’ Six for ’06 campaign agenda. But according to one expert quoted in CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY, they also amount to “very

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small potatoes.” Meanwhile, on the big issues like Iraq, immigration and health care, Democrats have little to show for their efforts. Instead, the naming of courthouses and post offices accounts for almost half of the bills signed into law this year. In addition, Congressional Democrats are further behind in completing the budget process than at any time since 1987.

Poll numbers are another way of gauging legislative success. Unfortunately, Congress’ poll numbers suggest Democrats’ bragging rights may be limited. CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY reports Congress currently suffers from “rotten reviews.” In August, Congress’ job approval rating tied the historic low of 18 percent in 1992 – when Democrats last ran Congress. CQ recently concluded that “plummeting poll numbers put Congress in a bind, threatening to continue the very paralysis and partisanship that got them there in the first place.”

Paralysis and Partisanship?

Surely Democrats do not deserve all the blame for paralysis and partisanship, anymore than Republicans deserved all the blame they received for the same prior to the 2006 midterm elections. After all, it takes two to tango.

It takes two parties, two chambers and two branches to legislate.

Democrats deserve neither all the blame, nor all the credit, for paralysis and partisanship. Credit? Certainly. Low poll numbers do not represent monolithic disgust with the meager legislative productivity of Congressional Democrats. Some of the “rotten reviews” reflect voters who are not at all interested in advancing Democratic legislative ambitions. Indeed, the low poll numbers may be one measure of a lack of consensus in America on some of the difficult issues confronting Congress and the President.

When confronted with a lack of consensus should Congress legislate? If the active production of

legislation is the sole measure of a good Congress, then the quantifiable measures of productivity listed above – hours, days, votes – are just the ticket. However, such a perspective presumes, as Democrats often do, that good government is activist government.

Congress scholar Charles O. Jones argues that governing may include halting legislative productivity. What if gridlock is governing? Jones notes “the prevention of legislation may also represent effective governance.” At times the status quo may be an improvement over legislative change. (Who has not agreed with this observation at one time or another?) Republicans believe good government means limited government.

The idea that Congress is meant

**Unfortunately, while statistics such as these are useful measures of congressional workload, they fail to fully capture legislative productivity, including the impact of legislation on people’s lives.**

to be a lean, mean legislative machine constantly cranking out legislation ignores the fact that Congress is also meant to be representative and deliberative. The Founders purposely did not design Congress to act with energy and dispatch; rather, they meant Congress to be broadly representative and deliberative. Congress should represent the diversity of the nation, including when consensus is lacking. At all times, Congress should deliberate carefully and forcefully. As I. M. Destler notes, the genius of Congress is democracy, diversity and debate.

Sans consensus, should Congress act? Or should Congress as a deliberative institution exercise its responsibility to promote public deliberation to educate citizens about

public policy? Contentious debate and polarizing partisanship help sharpen the issues, providing voters with a choice, not just an echo.

Partisan polarization is not new, and bipartisan responsibility for partisan rancor is hardly surprising. Partisanship is both good and bad. Partisanship sometimes diverts Congress from more serious issues and hinders the day-to-day legislative work preventing compromise. But friction creates light as well as heat. In the words of Frederick Douglass: “If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning.”

Our Constitution invites “the spirit of party” and constructive partisanship, including often cacophonous, cantankerous partisanship. The principled differences between our two great parties – whether over the Iraq War or SCHIP – matter, and should be given voice.

Scholar Jeremy Waldron underscores a major purpose of lawmaking in a democracy, namely, that of displaying disagreement: “Legislation is the product of a complex deliberative process that takes disagreement seriously and that claims its authority without attempting to conceal the contention and division that surrounds its enactment.”

Paralysis and partisanship may be productive. Perhaps we need to lower public expectations of Congress and government. Members need to spend time on the Hill and at home with constituents.

Limited government is good government, especially in response to public sentiment. **RF**

*William F. Connelly, Jr. is the John K. Boardman Politics Professor at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.*

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# Done on the Cheap

## The 24/7 news cycle and its impact on politics today

DAN RATHER

The ongoing presidential election campaign will be, by its end, the longest in American history. It will also be the campaign to receive the most media coverage—an inevitability owing to the omnipresence of media and the accumulation of network and cable news hours, column inches, and web pages over the many days that will have passed between the candidates' announcement speeches and Election Day.

We might ask what relation all this quantity has to quality: Does more equal better? Or does more, in this case, actually amount to less?

The advent of 24/7/365 news coverage, with the proliferation of cable news stations that followed CNN's launch in 1980, has carried a great but largely unfulfilled promise to those who care about the state of our nation and our world. The promise is—or, at least, was—that, freed from scheduling and time constraints, these outlets (and the new media that have followed) would have a chance not only to cover breaking news in a way that the television networks cannot or will not, but would also be able

to devote time to a more in-depth exploration of news stories that are either woefully condensed or passed over entirely by the networks' half-hour, evening news programs or even their hour-long "magazine" programs.



**It must be recognized that the idea of 24/7 news coverage counts for little without the will to make meaningful use of all that time and, significantly, the resources to make that will a reality.**

Instead, we have seen 24/7 news outlets play a leading role in propagating many of the trends that most threaten our news and our politics. Among these are: the growth of soft news, infotainment, and

celebrity coverage; the filling of time with video footage masquerading as news stories; and the in-studio shouting matches that, these days, pass for reasoned debate of political positions.

This is a short list of areas that should give particular concern (and one from which network news—in which your writer spent 44 years as a correspondent, anchor, and managing editor—cannot be and should not be exempted). Taken together, they lend themselves to a news environment in which the primary focus of political coverage is on process (e.g., fundraising, polls, campaign strategies

and image-building) rather than policy, in which “stories” such as the “Dean scream” are given prominence far beyond their importance, and in which political discourse is reduced to opposing and unyielding talking points in a way that suits perfectly the goals of political strategists but which does harm to this country and its citizens (including their attitudes about politics and government).

It must be recognized that the idea of 24/7 news coverage counts for little without the will to make

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meaningful use of all that time and, significantly, the resources to make that will a reality. A day in its entirety amounts to a lot of time to fill. To gather, produce, and transmit news continually requires many highly-skilled and educated professionals and therefore a large payroll. To do it with a modicum of depth requires more of the same—having producers, correspondents, and crew persons in sufficient numbers to devote a certain percentage of one's news resources to exploring stories that might not bear immediate fruit, such as investigative pieces, or detailed, nuanced examinations of policy. If these resources were available and brought to bear, we would come to understand that there really is no such thing as a "slow news day"—there is always something happening somewhere that bears closer examination, always a story that demands further scrutiny.

The evidence, from the news we see emanating from the eternal flicker of 24-hour news, suggests that the resources that are being provided are not adequate to realizing the promise of continuous coverage. Indeed, what the troubling trends outlined above have in common is they are cheaper and easier to produce than news of substance and depth.

Unfortunately, this is not only a matter of 24-hour news media failing to realize its potential; there is, of course, room for improvement in how everyone does the news. But a non-stop news cycle creates its own dynamic, one that amplifies the effects of cheap news and news done on the cheap. The quick and easy "stories"—the aforementioned whoop by Howard Dean during the 2004 campaign, the raft of syntactical miscues by President Bush through his campaigns and presidency, John Edwards' \$400 haircut, and on and on — not only

serve as a sorry substitute for more substantial news; they also, through the repetition and elaboration of the 24-hour news media machine, lend our political debates and campaigns an atmosphere of superficiality and lowest-common-denominator characterizations more befitting a schoolyard than the democratic deliberations of the world's sole economic and military superpower.

It is impossible to ignore the role (or roles) that the Internet, despite its own promise and the difficulty of treating it as a monolith, has come to play in this dynamic. On the news-gathering side, certain precincts of the web offer a backdoor through which rumor and innuendo can enter traditional news organs—

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unverified stories, at times conceived anonymously and therefore without hope of holding their authors to account, can be covered by journalists who otherwise would not touch them, if they do so in the context of reporting "what people are saying online."

On the news reporting side, the Internet sites of traditional publications and broadcasts (which are updated continuously, unlike their print and television parents) and Internet-specific sites such as blogs serve to generate, accelerate the growth of, and magnify the apparent importance of stories of dubious value. And so a political one-liner meant to provoke becomes,

overnight or over the course of a day, a fusillade of soundbites exchanged between candidates or partisan interests—while substance and facts are crowded out. A speaking gaffe comes to dwarf a policy and serious discussion of its implications. And a lie, with apologies to Mark Twain, gets halfway around the world while the truth is still getting its boots on.

In a republic such as ours the news that comes out of our most prominent news organizations is of fundamental importance. What's more, news consumers, along with journalists, news executives, and the people and corporations who own news organizations must understand that the constant proliferation of trivial stories, all day and every day, also has an effect on what goes in to the news. It affects the way our candidates for elected office communicate with us, and the ways in which those who gain office frame debates on issues touching on every aspect of our lives. This is the feedback loop of superficial coverage begetting superficial politics begetting superficial coverage that has enriched so many political media consultants while leaving our democratic institutions the poorer.

It has been said that a nation gets the politicians—and the politics—it deserves. If we as a nation truly feel we deserve a higher level of political discourse than we have seen in recent years, we must direct our calls for change not only at our politicians but also at our news organizations and those who own them. For it is they who facilitate and in no small degree make necessary the devolution of our campaigns and our national conversations into divisive name calling, empty talking points, and endless spin. **RF**

*Dan Rather is the anchor and managing editor of Dan Rather Reports on HDNet.*

# Economic Diversification: Hedging Against Families' Risk without Harming the Economy

MAYA MACGUINEAS

Harry Markowitz's 1952 essay *Portfolio Theory* broke new ground in developing ways to diversify financial portfolios. By the time he won the Nobel Prize nearly four decades later, countless financial innovations to help spread risk had been introduced, making the risks associated with investing more acceptable — particularly to the American middle class. Sure the markets are taking a hit now, but those with diversified portfolios are certain to weather this downturn better than those without.

U.S. economic public policy would benefit from a similarly innovative approach to managing risk. The economy is facing growing pains that go deeper than just the current financial market turmoil. Despite progress in bringing down international trade barriers and an impressive period of economic growth, we are facing unprecedented levels of income inequality and a host of new economic risks — everything from disappearing pension plans to entire industries moving abroad. If the economy turns down as it appears to be doing, these challenges will only become more pronounced. Unfortunately, views on how to deal with this issue are polarized and neither side has a viable strategy for dealing with the more tumultuous side of the modern economy.

There are the rosy eyed optimists who focus on the strengths of the new economy while ignoring the pitfalls. Their

interpretation does not fit the facts: the top 20 percent of U.S. households now earn well over 50 percent of all income while the top 5 percent earn close to a third. There have been mass layoffs at the kinds of companies once considered the backbone of the U.S. economy, including Hewlett Packard, Boeing, Procter and Gamble, and Sears. Laid-off workers who find new employment often end up in jobs that pay far less than what they were earning before. Even for families



**...we need to acknowledge that many families that play by the rules still run the risk of economic ruin.**

who have health insurance, a serious injury or illness can send them tumbling towards financial hardship. The success of this country was never based on guaranteeing economic outcomes, but we need to acknowledge that many families that play by the rules still run the risk of economic ruin.

On the other side, there are those

who have focused on the problem, but too often ignore the critical contributions of economic growth, suggesting stale ideas that are more likely to harm than help the economy. They've honed in on free trade and the Bush administration's tax cuts as the major culprits of economic inequality, turning to the tired favorites of protectionism and repealing the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans in favor of new targeted tax cuts for the middle class as remedies. Neither will work. The

first would diminish the large economic gains available from trade. The Institute for International Economics estimates that globalization has increased the standard of living in the US by \$1 trillion a year and that further economic integration could lead to increases of another \$500 billion per year. The second approach would worsen both the budget deficit and economic incentives. The outcome would be to undermine the building blocks of a stronger economy.

Instead, the goal should be to ensure that the benefits of a growing economy are spread more fairly. A multi-pronged approach focusing on investment, a more progressive and efficient tax code, and most importantly, economic diversification to create a "hybrid economy" where all workers have access to income from a variety of sources would help insulate them from the swings and potential pitfalls that appear to be a permanent condition of the modern-day economy.

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## Investments and Tax Reform

Much of the growing income gap can be attributed to higher returns to higher-skilled workers. Thus, one of the most important things we can do is to invest in the education and skills of the U.S. labor force, expanding investments in life-long education—starting at pre-K and continuing through the working years. However, the payoffs from education will be slow to trickle into the economy, and it is not enough to say that one or two generations from now the gap will close. A more immediate fix is also in order.

Fundamental tax reform can make the tax code both more efficient and progressive. Switching from an income tax to a “progressive consumption tax” for instance, where taxes are levied on consumption through progressive rates, would lead to higher levels of saving — stimulating economic growth — while allowing more progressive rates to help those who have not fared so well in the recent economic boom. Also, the \$800 billion worth of targeted tax cuts that run throughout the tax system (including everything from the home mortgage interest deduction, to the deductibility of employer-provided healthcare, to tax breaks for vacation homes, fertilizer, and film productions) should be dramatically scaled back.

These tax expenditures are inefficient, regressive, they often pay people to do what they would be doing anyhow, and ironically, they drive up the cost of the goods that we are trying to make more accessible, such as housing and health care.

Reforming the tax base would be a huge step to making the tax code both more fair and helping the economy to prosper. Another interesting proposal by Robert Shiller of Yale University, would index tax brackets and tax rates to income inequality.

As the gains from economic growth became more (or less) concentrated, tax burdens would be adjusted accordingly.

## Economic Diversification

Calls for higher levels of investment and fundamental tax reform are nothing new. The most important contribution in helping workers deal with the risks and inequities of a more competitive economy would come from an updating of the country’s social contract to help broaden the economic streams available to families.

Our current social contract—consisting mainly of the major health and retirement entitlement programs for the elderly—focuses on the risks in retirement of outliving ones savings or not having health insurance. But while those were the major risks of decades ago, they are not today. Retirees have become one of the more financially secure cohorts. Meanwhile the insecurity

### **The most important contribution in helping workers deal with the risks and inequities of a more competitive economy would come from an updating of the country’s social contract to help broaden the economic streams available to families.**

of working families and children has risen. For too many workers their income remains primarily, if not purely, “wage-based”. This is less problematic when wages are growing steadily along with the economy; more so when, like now, wages are at historic lows as a share of GDP. The global economy will continue to put downward pressure on wages in many areas, leaving wage-dependent families vulnerable.

As any financial adviser will tell you, the key to dealing with risk is diversification — managing risk exposure through multiple investments. In order to increase economic security, we need to diversify personal economic situations just as the titans of Wall Street do their portfolios.

## *Moving past wages - mandatory saving*

The first step is to expand capital ownership. Returns to capital have outweighed labor returns in recent years, leaving workers without investment portfolios at a disadvantage. Attempts to increase personal saving levels in the U.S., however, have not been successful. Our patchwork savings policy relies on tax preferences for various forms of saving—from 401(k)s, to IRAs, to targeted saving for education, health, or other tax subsidized activities. The government has spent trillions of dollars trying to encourage people to save, with a dismally low personal saving rate to show for the effort. One reason efforts have not been successful is because our current system of social insurance causes workers to believe they will be cared for in retirement through government programs—never mind that we have no plan for how to actually pay for these promises.

A better approach than providing tax-carrots and unsustainable promises is to rely more on personal responsibility. All workers should be required to save a percentage of their annual earnings to build a pool of personal savings. From an economic perspective, 10 percent might be desirable; realistically, something between 2 and 5 percent is more likely. Workers’ savings would build up

and, over time, they would accumulate significant levels of capital with which to generate an alternate income stream. The expansion of asset ownership for many individuals would help smooth out economic fluctuations. Assets could be drawn down during periods where wage income would otherwise be insufficient to meet a family’s needs, such as during a period of unemployment, time off from work, or retirement.

Recognizing how difficult it is to save for families who are barely getting by as it is, individual saving should be supplemented through progressive matches for moderate and lower-income savers. And since minimum wage workers can hardly be expected to live on less than they are already earning, the Earned

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Income Tax Credit, a government program that is used to augment low worker's wages while maintaining positive work incentives, should be expanded to a "Super EITC".

### *Real insurance for real risk*

The social insurance system of the past half-century has focused on supplying benefits for likely occurrences such as routine medical costs in old-age and retirement. What we need in the more turbulent economic environment is real insurance for the many things that are not certain to occur but would be devastating if they did. While millions of people are insured for things like contact lenses purchases, they lack coverage for calamitous unanticipated events — anything from cancer to Katrina — that can cause unlucky families to fall off track into financial catastrophe and never find their footing again.

Employers, who have traditionally been in the business of supplying many of these basic insurance benefits, are scaling back because of rising costs. This in fact, gives us the opportunity to update the employer portion of the social contract out of necessity. Moving more towards an individual-based system is likely to improve on the current system which leaves gaping holes in coverage, hides the real costs of these benefits, and creates multiple problems concerning portability, flexibility, and proper targeting of benefits. A new partnership between individuals and government is needed, with workers held responsible for purchasing their own insurance along with sliding-scale subsidies from the government for those who cannot afford the additional costs.

With the recent advances in financial and insurance instruments, the risks of job loss, wage decreases, catastrophic injury or illness, disability, or asset depreciation are all potentially insurable. Vacation insurance is already available. Housing bubble insurance has potential as well. Robert Shiller has developed a real-estate index that allows homeowners to hedge against the risk of the housing market turning down—

or for that matter, renters from the risk of it not. Or we could create estate tax insurance: rather than repealing the estate tax, small business owners and family farms could purchase insurance to cover any estate tax liability their heirs might face down the road. These new financial instruments make hedging against all types of potential loss more manageable. Some of these insurances, such as health and long-term care, should be mandatory and government-subsidized; others such as wage, disability insurance should be highly encouraged through automatic default mechanisms; and still others such as estate tax insurance should be totally voluntary and purchased depending on an individual's personal needs.

### *A well-targeted safety net*

But even with a more balanced combination of wage income, capital income, and a mixture of insurances, some workers will inevitably fall on hard times. No level of diversification can eliminate economic risk completely. This new system of risk diversification should be paired with a guaranteed government-financed social safety net to provide minimum levels of income, health care, and retirement payments to the people in greatest need.

The most obvious way to do this, again, comes from updating the current social insurance system. Many of the government's unaffordable programs such as Social Security and Medicare will have to be reformed regardless of other changes. Given the choice between cutting benefits for everyone and cutting benefits for those who need them least, the choice is clear. Transforming the current system of social insurance away from a universal program to a strong safety net would save needed resources while putting the government in the more appropriate role of the insurer of last resort.

While there is sure to be resistance to transforming the current social insurance system from a universal program to a more targeted means-tested system, it has to be acknowledged

that the existing system is already on the decline: there are many types of risks that are not covered, the universal system diverts hundreds of billions of dollars to recipients who do not need them, creating a perverse subsidy from poor to rich, and the major government programs that constitute social insurance are unsustainable. Shifting some resources away from the most well-off in society to help give economic security to those who need it is most appropriate in this time of growing income inequality.

## **Nothing Comes for Free**

Revamping the social contract to increase economic security will not come without a cost. Upper-middle-class earners and the well-off would be required to pay for more of their own benefits by shouldering the costs of the new savings and insurance mandates. Government programs would be scaled back for those who don't need the help so that resources could be diverted to those who do. The elimination of many current regressive tax breaks could easily generate \$200 billion a year. And another \$200 billion could be saved by scaling back benefits that go to well-off citizens in programs ranging from agriculture subsidies to Social Security to Medicare.

The need to rethink the United States' social contract provides us with the opportunity to give it a much-needed facelift. A new system consisting of a diversified economic portfolio of wage supports, mandated saving, new insurances targeted at real risk, and a strong safety net will both help to counter negative trends in income inequality and provide a new level of individual economic security. Last century's social programs were aimed at helping retirees; this century's should be aimed at increasing the opportunity and security of workers and their families. **RF**

*Maya MacGuineas is the Director of the Fiscal Policy Program at New America Foundation.*

# Ripon Profile

**Name:** Charlie Crist

**Hometown:** St. Petersburg, Florida

**Occupation:** Governor, State of Florida

**Previous Jobs:** Attorney General, State of Florida 2002-2007;  
Commissioner of Education, Florida Department of Education 2000-2002;  
Senator, Florida Senate 1992-1998

**Individual(s) who inspired me as a child:** I am inspired by my grandfather Adam Christodoulos, who came to this country in 1914 from the island of Cyprus. He arrived nearly penniless at Ellis Island in New York City and worked hard as a shoeshine boy in Altoona, Pennsylvania. My grandfather's legacy and love of freedom remind me that future generations in Florida will be shaped and inspired by decisions made today by state and community leaders.

**Historical figure(s) I would most like to meet:** Abraham Lincoln. He understood leaders must stay focused on serving the boss – the people. His words, “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” have timeless purpose for all who serve in a position of public trust.

**Issue facing America that no one is talking about:** While some are calling for action on climate change, I believe we must focus more on renewable sources of energy. During a recent trade mission to Brazil, I learned about the ways the country has reduced their reliance on other nations through ethanol production. Ethanol is cheaper and cleaner and can be produced in Florida from sugar or citrus waste. We can do more with less if we place more emphasis on alternative fuels.

**What the GOP must do to reclaim its congressional majority:** We must govern with common sense, understanding that we are here to make a difference, not to mark time. If we listen to the people who have given us their trust, we can do good rather than divide, and we can restore confidence in our party and the path we believe is best for America.

# The Walls have Fallen, but the Pillars Remain

My wife and I are in the process of renovating our house. It's a great home, a 1940s colonial that was built right after the war. The kind with a solid structure and a solid foundation and walls made of plaster two inches thick.

It's a mess right now, with wires hanging from exposed ceilings and piles of brick and other rubble cluttering the floor. What had been the back of the kitchen is no longer there; what had been the master bath is nowhere to be found.

As I was looking at it the other day, the whole scene kind of reminded me of the Republican Party. The GOP is a party in ruins. Its poll numbers are down. Its image is in the dumpster. The candidates vying to be the party's next nominee for President are trying to be the next Ronald Reagan but are failing to catch on.

The mood is indeed grim inside the Republican Party. It's grim because the party is living in the house that Reagan built, but it's trashed the place and the walls have fallen down. And now the house needs to be rebuilt. It needs to be restored. It needs to be renovated.

As any homeowner will tell you, successful renovations generally begin with hard truths. Some truths are good; others are bad. Before we began our renovation, my wife and I faced some hard truths about money and space. We also faced two other truths that are relevant to Republicans as they work to restore the party.

*Truth #1: We had to find a new architect* – since our home was built nearly 60 years ago, it was safe to assume the man who designed it was no longer around. This was not unexpected, but it was still unfortunate – as stated, the man built a great house. We didn't let nostalgia over what he could have done get in the way of what needed to be done, however. We simply went out and found someone who could get the job done now.

As much as Republicans may hope, and as much as their candidates for President may try, Ronald Reagan cannot be replaced. His vision helped lead America out of a period of weakness and disillusionment and into an era of prosperity and strength. He was the right man at the right time. But he is gone, and this is a different time.

Republicans need to be looking for a new architect, a leader who will help them meet the challenges our nation faces ahead, not the road we have left behind.

*Truth #2: For all its faults, our house was structurally sound* – oftentimes during home renovations, you hear horror stories of termite-infested wood or cracked basement walls or problems

that threaten the integrity of the entire house. With our home, that has never been a problem. As stated, the walls are thick. The foundation is solid.

The foundation of the Republican Party is solid, too. Yes, the party is facing pressures related to Iraq and Iran. And yes, the party had its head in the sand when it came to Katrina and spending and ethics. But on the key issues that continue to define the Republican Party – limited government, lower taxes, and a stronger national defense – poll after poll shows that America is a center-right nation, and that the American people are on the party's side.

These issues are the pillars of the GOP, and the pillars around which the party can be rebuilt. Not with old strategies that take 1980's-era solutions and try to impose them on the problems of today. And not with DeLay-era tactics that try to demonize the Democrats and anyone else with whom the party may disagree. But rather by doing what any good architect will do – updating the pillars so they are relevant and have a positive impact on people's lives.

It's what Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan and other Republicans in the House are trying to do with their "Taxpayer Choice Act," a bill that, among other things, would give Americans fed up with the current tax code the option of continuing to pay taxes under the current system or opting into a new "Simplified Tax" system with just two standard rates.

It's what New Hampshire Senator Judd Gregg and other Republicans in the Senate are trying to do with their "S-O-S Act," which would get the federal budget under control by putting caps on both discretionary and entitlement spending and reforming the budget process so the government has a fiscal blueprint it can follow instead of a pointless document that is too often ignored.

And it's what Maine Senator Susan Collins is doing by working across party lines with Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman to pass the "Bombing Prevention Act," which attempts to get ahead of the IED curve by making sure the kind of Improvised Explosive Devices that are being used against our troops in Iraq are not used by terrorists against Americans here at home.

Efforts like these are critical to rebuilding the GOP. As with any renovation project, it won't happen overnight. There's still work to be done. The key thing is to keep moving in a forward and positive direction, with an eye on the pillars that keep the party standing, and a vision for the walls that have yet to be built. **RF**



*Louis M. Zickar is the Editor of The Ripon Forum*



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