

## The Harbour League Articles



### What is to be done for conservatives' future?

**Grover G. Norquist**

Republicans lost 30 House seats, six senators, six governors and 325 state legislators this past November. The Republican percentage of the House vote fell from 52.5 percent in the last off-year election of 2002 to 45.9 percent in 2006.

Conservatives have had bad election nights before: Goldwater was crushed in 1964. Nixon beat Reagan in 1968. The Watergate year of 1974. Ford defeated Reagan in 1976. Reagan lost 26 house seats in 1982 and nine senate seats in 1986. Conservatives couldn't win the Republican nomination in 1988 or 1996.

Conservatism must avoid learning the wrong lessons from 2006. Maybe 10 congressmen and Senators lost due to sui generis personal problems: e-mailing pages, throttling mistresses, breaking the law. The rest fell to the tsunami of unhappiness with the seemingly unending occupation of Iraq.

No Republican lost because he or she was for lower taxes, or pro-second amendment, or committed to parental rights in education, or for their commitment to property rights or abolishing the death tax.

Two lessons: No more throttling mistresses or selling earmarks. And the occupation of Iraq needs to be in the rearview mirror in 2008, not the windshield.

The modern conservative movement is a coalition of groups and individuals who wish to be left alone. On their primary, vote-moving issue, what they want from the government is to be left alone.

Taxpayers wish lower taxes. Gun owners wish to be left alone to defend themselves. The NRA does not demand that schools teach books titled, "Heather Has Two Hunters." Homeschoolers wish only to be able to educate and raise their own children.

Businessmen and women want their businesses left alone by the regulators and tax collectors. Property owners do not want to hear that it rained last night and now

Al Gore owns their backyard. The growing investor class who build IRAs, 401(k)s and mutual funds for retirement do not want their retirement looted by trial lawyers or tax collectors. The various communities of faith: evangelical Protestants, conservative Catholics, Muslims, Mormons and orthodox Jews wish to be left alone to practice their faith and to raise their children in that faith.

Some have argued that parts of the Leave us Alone/center-right coalition could break away and work with the Democrats. Really? Small government libertarians tired of hanging out with folks who go to church could find what allies for tax cuts, tort reform or less spending in the Pelosi/Reid Democrat party? A social conservative indifferent to individual liberties issues could cut exactly what deal with the modern Democrat party obsessed with government-funded abortions?

The Leave us Alone coalition is like a loyal and fractious family. We are stuck with each other. So, what is to be done?

1. Work. Work. Work. Whining is not work.
2. No conversation should begin with "Bush should. ...". The only useful conversation begins with "I will ...". I will register to vote. I will get my siblings to vote properly. I will speak with my kids and my co-workers about politics. I will call a talk radio show or write a letter to the editor. Only Laura Bush is allowed to give George Bush To Do lists.
3. Maintain bi-focal vision. Focus sometimes on the long-range goals of radically lower taxes and smaller government. Then look down at your feet to take surefooted steps forward. Taking small steps forward is winning slowly, not treason.
4. Remember that every voter group in the center-right, Leave us Alone coalition is a minority when standing alone. Together we are the majority of America.
5. Do not complain that politicians lack backbones. Vertebrates have backbones. Those are endoskeletons based inside the body. They are not visible. You cannot judge a candidate's backbone by looking at them.

The Leave us Alone coalition must build an exoskeleton for all political leaders. Exoskeletons exist outside the body. Lobsters, oysters, clams have exoskeletons. Our job is to provide support for our elected officials to withstand the power and pressure of the establishment press, the hordes of appropriations lobbyists and the natural tendency of government to grow.

We will win.

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