

Demanding Progress, Not Promises in November

By *Stephen Leech*

Posted: 09/16/2010

The smart money is on the Republicans capturing the House of Representatives, and possibly the Senate, in this November's elections.

Instead of fixating on election returns, though, the better question to ask would be: should the Republicans be returned to power? After all, the GOP was voted out for very good reasons in 2006 and 2008. The answer, unfortunately, is that Democrats have left Americans no choice but to put the Republicans back in power.

When Republicans were voted out of office initially, it was as a consequence of grave missteps both at home and abroad. They led the nation into an unpopular war in Iraq at a price tag of nearly \$1 trillion. Domestically, they created huge deficits that left a sagging economy, mismanaged basic administrative tasks such as disaster relief, abused executive power and presided over what Democrats were able to call a "culture of corruption."

Sadly, these faults have been exacerbated during the last two years while Democrats have maintained large majorities.

With the war in Iraq winding down, President Obama has had an excellent opportunity to do the same in Afghanistan. Instead Obama's efforts in the Middle East have yielded more casualties in Afghanistan than during the entirety of Bush's term. There is still no clear objective put forth as to what victory means or what the American mission there is. And as far as anyone can tell, there is no end in sight. Sound familiar?

At home Democrats have only aggravated the mistakes made during Bush's term. Faced with the same massive deficit that Democrats complained about during the Bush years, the Democrats made their priorities at the onset of the 111th Congress a \$787 billion stimulus bill and a health-care bill that they claimed would cost \$900 billion — and that's the optimistic estimate. The Cato Institute estimated the cost at \$2.7 trillion.

It's yet another case of *déjà vu*. Bush passed a \$168 billion stimulus in 2008 that was supposed to stave off a recession. He also passed a health-care bill in 2003 that he claimed would cost \$400 billion, but ended up costing \$1.2 trillion.

Bush and Obama both tended to vastly underestimate the costs of legislation and were content to let taxpayers pick up the tab. Unfortunately, Obama seems to have done so in even larger quantities.

Hurricane Katrina was probably Bush's worst moment as President — after the hurricane hit, aid never arrived where it was needed, the government was slow to respond and harm resulted from this lack of action. With a Democratic administration at the helm, however, the same incompetence prevailed when the oil spill hit the Gulf Coast. The Obama administration failed to make decisions on accepting high-tech aid from abroad, which would have allowed Louisiana to place oil-stopping booms around its wetlands.

Bush also was roundly criticized for supporting warrantless wiretapping and refusing the right of *habeas corpus* to terrorist suspects, and generally abusing his presidential power — yet Obama has not only continued both of those policies, he has fired automotive industry CEOs and used money meant to save banks to prop up car companies despite a specific vote of Congress against bailing out these companies. Not exactly the great reining-in of executive power we were promised in 2008.

In Congress, Democrats ran against a culture of corruption and promised the "most ethical Congress in history." Yet when it emerged that the man in charge of writing tax law, the Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Charlie Rangel, cheated on his taxes, the Democrats merely asked him to surrender his chairmanship. Should this inspire confidence in Democrats' commitment to ethics?

So what has changed since Americans cast aside the Republicans in 2008?

The economy is still terrible, the debt is more than all of the Bush years combined and Democrats have failed to provide either competent or ethical leadership in Congress or in the White House. The only option available now is to return the Republicans to an oppositional role — maybe then we can get something resembling real change, not just empty words and bad results.

What could possibly go wrong?

Stephen Leech is a College sophomore from Pasadena, Calif.