

# 'Going Gingrich'

**By Howard Rich**

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Have recent elections taught Republicans nothing?

Routed from power in 2006 and 2008 for their wholesale betrayal of the American taxpayers, the GOP was granted a new lease on life because Democrats chose to put Bush-era bailouts and deficit spending on steroids while forcing a socialized medicine monstrosity down the throats of the American people.

Yet scarcely a month after being handed control of the U.S. House, Republicans are already losing sight of why they were given another chance. In retreating from their commitment to cut \$100 billion from the budget (which let's face it – will barely make a dent in our \$14 trillion debt) the GOP is demonstrating a fundamental but all too familiar lack of courage. Republicans are also refusing to address the entitlement behemoths of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security – ticking time bombs that pose even graver dangers to our nation's long-term solvency.

Such squeamishness is not surprising given the party's recent pattern of backing down in the face of an ideologically inferior foe. In fact, I refer to this flight reflex as "going Gingrich."

Riding a similar wave of limited government fervor in 1994, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich's "Republican Revolution" promised taxpayers balanced budgets, less government and term limits – but quickly caved on all fronts. As a result the "era of big government" that Democratic President Bill Clinton promised was "over" ended up coming to pass – under GOP rule.

"The party that in 1994 would abolish the Department of Education now brags in response to Clinton's 2000 State of the Union Address that it is outspending the White House when it comes to education," Cato Institute founder Ed Crane wrote a decade ago, noting that "the combined budgets of the 95 major programs that the Contract with America promised to eliminate have increased by 13%."

Far worse was coming. With Republicans holding the purse strings, federal spending jumped from \$1.79 trillion in 2000 to \$2.73 trillion in 2007 – a 23.5 percent increase after adjusting for inflation. By contrast, America's population grew by just 9.7 percent over the course of the entire decade.

Where was Gingrich during this then-unprecedented orgy of new spending? Embracing the fuzzy science of global warming in a television commercial with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

“Our country must take action to address climate change,” Gingrich said in the ad.

Pelosi took action – spending billions of American tax dollars to create “green jobs” in other countries.

Gingrich also helped advance the Pelosi agenda in other, more direct ways. In a 2009 special election in New York he endorsed Dede Scozzafava – the union-backing, stimulus-supporting “Republican” who later dropped out of the race and campaigned against Conservative Party candidate Doug Hoffman.

“If you seek to be a perfect minority, you’ll remain a minority,” Gingrich said in justifying his decision.

Translation? Principles be damned.

No wonder Gingrich has dismissed the tea party movement as nothing more than the “militant wing of the Republican Party.” And no wonder he refused to defend the tea party when the NAACP played the race card against it last summer – calling the unfounded assault a “teachable moment.”

Of course Gingrich is as shameless as he is spineless.

In a recent editorial in The Wall Street Journal, he was rightly assailed for pandering on ethanol subsidies in corn-fed Iowa – where he is actively courting 2012 GOP Caucus voters.

“Even Al Gore now admits that the only reason he supported ethanol in 2000 was to goose his presidential prospects, and the only difference now between Al and Newt is that Al admits he was wrong,” the editorial observed.

Meanwhile, in an effort to burnish his credentials with social conservatives, Gingrich has said that he supports a Singapore-style drug enforcement program that would “dramatically expand” random testing and make rehabilitation mandatory for anyone who fails these tests.

Apparently his support for individual liberty is as dubious as his support for limited government.

Gingrich is also leading a highly-publicized movement to ban sharia law in U.S. courtrooms – despite the fact there is precisely one docket in America in which a family court judge ruled in accordance with its tenets (a ruling which was quickly struck down on appeal). Nonetheless, Gingrich recently told a group of social

conservatives that “stealth jihadis” were conspiring to “replace Western civilization with a radical imposition of sharia.” He then chided liberals for ignoring this “direct mortal threat” to American values.

For this irrational fear-mongering, Gingrich was rightly pilloried by the left.

“There is no left-of-center movement dedicated to fighting the steady, stealthy insinuation of sharia into America’s legal system because no such thing is happening,” Eugene Robinson of The Washington Post noted.

“Gingrich invents an enemy and then demands to know why others haven’t sallied forth to slay it,” Robinson added.

Sadly, in the fight to protect our liberties and our tax dollars there is no need to invent enemies. There is, however, a need for defenders of freedom and free markets to stand firm against those who would encourage us to cave against these enemies.

After all, “going Gingrich” is one of the reasons we’re in such a fine mess in the first place.