

The Hotline

April 9, 2012 Monday

GOP to focus efforts on races with weak state parties.

In an effort to maintain control of the House and take over the Senate, national GOPers are targeting "orphan states" in which "there is no competition on top of the ticket but which feature a number of pivotal Senate and House contests." These states include "behemoths with traditionally weak parties" like CA, IL, and NY.

The RNC has allocated \$10 to 15 million to aid candidates in such states; "Half of the money will go to the states with hard-fought House contests, including the blue mega-states, and the other half will be directed to states like Montana and North Dakota, where there are crucial Senate battles."

"The cash disparity is stark in California, where redistricting could bring more than 10 competitive House races this year. State Democrats began the year with \$9.3 million ... while California Republicans had less than \$439,000"

(Martin/Burns, Politico, 4/9).

And They're Off

Conservative super PAC American Crossroads is set "to begin its first major anti-Obama advertising blitz of the year, a moment the Obama re-election campaign has been girding for and another sign that the general election is starting in earnest."

"Combined with expected activity from a pro-Romney super PAC, Restore Our Future, and a Republican National Committee with better finances than expected, Crossroads is helping to ease fears among some Republicans that Mr. Obama's projected financial advantage -- with more than \$80 million on hand and expectations to have raised at least \$750 million all told -- would overwhelm Mr. Romney, who had \$7.3 million on hand in his last filing report from February, especially at the start"

(Rutenberg/Zeleny, New York Times, 4/8).

The Backlash

"The tea party may have won Republicans the House of Representatives in 2010, but in 2012, it's looking like it could help Democrats retain the White House. Now nearly three years old, the tea party has fallen out of favor with Americans, and Democrats are prepared to use it against Republicans in this year's elections."

"The fervor and enthusiasm spurred by the tea party in 2010 appears to have dissipated, with no major tea party rallies taking places this year and fewer Republican candidates latching on to the label. On the presidential campaign trail, the tea party is rarely mentioned. In contrast, Democrats are actually starting to wield the tea party label as a tool in their campaigns. Dem media strategist **John Lapp**: "It's no longer viewed as a populist, grass-roots organization, but a dangerous

group with extremist views that don't reflect the mainstream values of America's middle class."

GOP strategist **Chris LaCivita**: "Some of the negatives come out of the fact that there isn't anyone defending the tea party as a political party. They have as many factions as they do members, and speaking behind a cohesive central message is foreign to who they are, not only as a 'party,' but what they believe in" (**Blake, Washington Post**, 4/6).

House Majority Leader **Eric Cantor** (R-VA) has come under fire within his own party because "in the waning days of a bruising primary between Illinois GOP Reps. **Adam Kinzinger** and **Don Manzullo**," he "donated \$25,000 to an anti-incumbent super PAC for use against Manzullo -- a move that may have helped swing the contest in favor of Kinzinger."

Cantor spokesman **Ray Allen**: "Leader Cantor does not support the actions of this organization in any other election." The Campaign for Primary Accountability "spent a whopping \$222,000 on Kinzinger's behalf in the race. The six-figure sum is more cash than the controversial, Texas-based PAC has spent in any other race this cycle" (**Stanton, Roll Call**, 4/6).

CPA's **Leo Linbeck**: "There's no earmarking of those dollars. We told everyone the races we were engaging in. They looked at that and said, 'Hey, that's a race we'd like to engage in'" (**Pierce, Roll Call**, 4/6).

"The news of Cantor's contribution" to the super PAC "was said to have taken party leaders by surprise. ... By Friday evening, Cantor launched an outreach effort to quell the damage caused by his donation ... multiple House GOP aides said the Virginian Republican had begun phoning colleagues who the Campaign for Primary Accountability had targeted to smooth over any hurt feelings" (**Isenstadt/Bresnahan, Politico**, 4/7).

Oilnomics

GOPers "sought to keep the pressure" on Pres. **Obama** "over high gas prices" on April 7 with a radio speech "claiming his 'lack of leadership' is creating an 'energy crisis.'" OK Gov. **Mary Fallin** (R), during the weekly GOP address: "Americans are paying the price for his failed policies. Finding fewer jobs, higher gas prices and less opportunity."

Fallin "criticized" Obama's approach on the Keystone XL pipeline, "saying the full pipeline would create thousands of jobs and improve oil production." She "challenged Obama's statements that domestic oil production is up. She said the increased production is on privately owned land," while the Obama admin "puts more drilling restrictions on public lands" (**Jackson, "The Oval", USA Today**, 4/7).

Getting Rough In The Workplace

The RNC "continued its efforts" on April 6 to "push back on the 'war on women' line of attack." In "response to the March jobs report that shows hiring slowed" and just 120K jobs were created, "the RNC is focusing in on how the sluggish economic growth is affecting women in particular."

An RNC research document: "Today's jobs report clearly shows that Obamanomics is leaving women behind." The RNC "also had a female co-chair, **Sharon Day**, offer the official response to the jobs numbers, highlighting the effect specifically on wives, mothers, and businesswomen" (**Davis**, "On Politics", **USA Today**, 4/6).

That's Vague, Care To Be More Specific?

The House GOP pledge "to justify the constitutionality of each bill they introduce has yielded mixed results one year after the rule was instituted, with even GOP Members keeping their explanations short." While Members "do submit the statements - the Clerk of the House will turn away their bills if they decline - hundreds of the statements on both sides of the aisle are anything but specific."

The Republican Study Cmte "tracks each statement and sends out a 'Questionable Constitutional Authority Statement of the Week' email highlighting what RSC member" Rep. **Justin Amash** (R-MI) "recently called on his Facebook page 'an example of constitutional illiteracy or outright ignorance.'"

A "tally kept by the RSC" shows 616 of the more than 3K bills introduced "in the first session of the 112th Congress listed just 'Article I, Section 8.'" Dems "introduced 319 of those," while GOPers "sponsored 297." RSC spokesperson **Brian Straessle** "defended the group's decision to target" Dems only, "saying that Members of the minority are more prone to offer the most vague definitions" (**Newhauser, Roll Call**, 4/9).

NR, Eh?!

The American Legislative Exec. Council "is getting attention lately for its behind the scenes work pushing conservative legislation in the states."

"Less well known" is that the NRA "has also helped ALEC spread other conservative laws that have nothing to do with gun rights." The NRA worked with ALEC "to spread similar laws that are on the books in at least 25 states."

ALEC "drafts and shares model bills with state legislators to promote corporation-friendly and conservative social policy." A watchdog group called the Center for Media and Democracy "first documented the NRA's role in these bills with ALEC" (**Lewis**, "Political Ticker," CNN, 4/6).

Woman's Roar

Salon's Walsh writes, when GOPers "are repealing equal pay laws and proposing federal budgets that disproportionately hurt women, as well as restricting funding for contraception, who's playing politics with women's issues? ...Yes, it's an election year, so everything the president does will be scrutinized for its political agenda. That's fine. But I continue to find it hilarious" that GOPers "insist that their troubles with women are the fault of nasty" Dems. "Contraception aside, they're the ones cutting programs for women and repealing equal pay protection" (4/6).

One Heck Of A Conkochion

National Review's Healy and **Taylor** write that five weeks ago, billionaires **Charles** and **David Koch** "filed suit against the **Cato Institute**, seeking

to gain majority control of the institute under a shareholders' agreement that had lain dormant for nearly three decades. Immediately all hell broke loose. Did the Kochs have a moral right to commandeer the **Cato Institute**? Could an institute literally owned by Charles and David Koch have any credibility with the general public? Did the Kochs intend to plug Cato into a vertically integrated, right-wing political machine?"

Those questions "persist because the Kochs have offered shifting and contradictory rationales for their lawsuit, rationales that have increased the heat without adding much light. The Kochs' public case for the hostile action they've taken has proceeded in three distinct stages and at each new stage, the arguments they've offered have been even less convincing than those that came before."

It's "still unclear to us what is driving the Koch brothers. They've changed their story repeatedly, going from 'we seek no 'takeover' and this is not a hostile action' to a nine-page philippic by David Koch about why Crane and the board need to go" (4/9).