

Economic woes expose sins of both political parties

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By Paul Gottfried

With the president pushing an unpopular health plan and with only 38 percent approving of his handling of the economy, it seems that his administration may be headed south.

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Obama has made the grave mistake of identifying programs aimed at his pet constituents with plans to revitalize the country economically. A trillion-dollar approach to socialized medicine and a series of bailouts favoring unionized auto workers and the president's buds in corporate finance may not help restore a competitive economy to America.

Obama is also revealing a less-pleasant side than that what we saw during his presidential run. His interjection of himself into the tiff between black advocate professor Henry Louis Gates and the Cambridge police department was unbecoming. It reminded voters that Obama's career, particularly in Illinois, had not consisted of healing racial division.

As syndicated columnist Thomas Sowell recently observed, when Obama was not courting Jeremiah Wright as a Chicago politician, he was railing against "racial profiling," on the grounds the police were stopping more young black men than young white ones for random searches. (Obama would have done well to check the disproportionate crime rates between the two groups and how often black policemen stopped other blacks in the line of duty.)

One could also mention the rash of scandals stalking the Democrats, typified by Sen. Dodd of Connecticut benefiting from companies that had taken advantage of the subprime rate loans that Dodd had advocated in the Senate. The Dems, who won decisively in November, may now be losing their hold on the public.

Unfortunately, the GOP does not offer a particularly appetizing alternative. Republican politicians and their media boosters have misrepresented or hidden their party's sins.

With Obama's health plan as a congressional issue, the opposition has gone into an attack mode. And one way it's done this is to focus on the Massachusetts health care plan, which is now creating disastrous overruns.

For two months we've heard commentaries from talk-show host Sean Hannity, National Review, and other Republican sources about the fiasco of Massachusetts' attempt to insure the medically uninsured. This supposedly indicates where the Obama plan may lead the entire country, if put into effect.

But this was not the view that the same critics, with the honorable exception of the CATO Institute, were presenting when Mitt Romney was running for president. For those who may have forgotten, Romney was the governor who introduced the plan now under attack in 2006.

For at least two year thereafter, GOP spokespersons, led by Heritage Foundation, which in April 2007 presented the Massachusetts plan as a national model, were praising Romney as a health planner. But once Obama had become president, Heritage and other GOP advisers felt free to assault the Massachusetts plan they had helped to draft as a "middle class tax" and as a catalyst for further state regulation of insurance companies.

The same usual suspects also played down Romney's dizzying about-turns on such issues as abortion, gay marriage and illegal immigration.

The efforts by candidates Romney and Giuliani to reinvent themselves just in time for the presidential primaries were truly remarkable.

It would also be nice if GOP advocates would come clean about the role played by the Bush administration in encouraging subprime-rate mortgages.

Conservative investigative reporter Steve Sailer has documented on the Web site VDARE exactly how the former president and his adviser, Karl Rove, tried to "reach out." Whether it was "regularizing" the status of illegals or leaning on bankers to provide Hispanics with mortgage money in return for minimal down payments, Rove was able to bring Bush and other party leaders along.

If the Democrats had pushed sub-prime-rate loans to hold on to their minority base while making money for themselves, the Rove-controlled GOP wooed the Hispanics with similar tricks.

In 2004, Bush raised his share of the Hispanic vote to a bit over 40 percent, but that figure plummeted in 2008 to 30 percent.

Another Fox News regular, Congressman Michael Pence, whom the conservative weekly Human Events selected as "Conservative Man of the Year" in 2005, took a leaf from Rove, when he began advocating in 2006 a "conservative" form of the Immigration Bill then being sponsored by Sen. Kennedy.

Under Pence's plan, illegal immigrants would have to return to their countries of origin for one week, until they had been granted guest work visas, at which point they would be able to return with their families.

Presumably, no more illegal immigrants would be let in, until the business interests that Pence was catering to wanted new sources of undocumented labor or until immigration lobbies went on the warpath again.

The Rove strategy also may have motivated some Republican senators to lavish praise on Sonia Sotomayor. These senators obviously back the Hispanic, feminist candidate for the Supreme Court for the same misguided reason that Karl Rove used to get Bush to browbeat banks into making bad loans.

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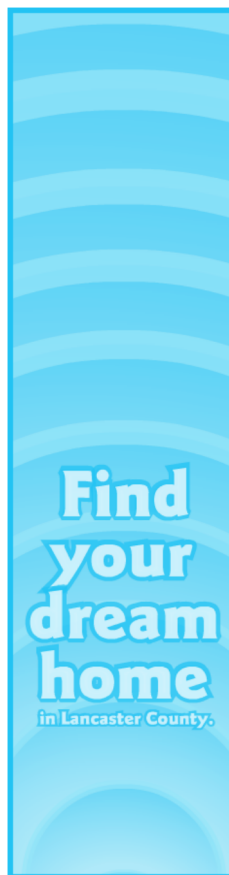
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