

A Way Out of the Wilderness

By Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) [Edited for length]

Well, we Republicans have just made history. Not the type of history we wanted to make, mind you, but history nonetheless. Not only did we lose the White House but, after losing our House and Senate majorities in 2006, we followed it up with even steeper losses in Congress.

In January, Democrats will enjoy lopsided congressional ratios not seen since the 1970s. Let's face it: We Republicans are now, by any reasonable measurement, deep in the political wilderness.

The temptation for Republican members of Congress today will be to assume the role of the post-Watergate Republicans of 1974 and accept minority status as a per-

manent condition. Indeed, the terrain is more difficult for us now than it was in 1992. Then, Republicanism was still largely defined by the Reagan years. Today the party is defined in the public mind by the Bush presidency. We've got a steep hill to climb.

Much of the backroom maneuvering and media speculation in the coming weeks will focus on identifying new standard-bearers for the party. This is important, and after a second straight drubbing, the House Republican leadership should be replaced. But the far more critical task is determining what standard these new leaders will bear.

I suggest that we return to first principles. At the top of that list has to be a recommitment to limited government. After eight years of profligate spending and soaring deficits,

voters can be forgiven for not knowing that limited government has long been the first article of faith for Republicans.

Of course, it's not the level of spending that gets the most attention; it's the manner in which the spending is allocated. The proliferation of earmarks is largely a product of the Gingrich-DeLay years, and it's no surprise that some of the most ardent practitioners were earmarked by the voters for retirement. Few Americans will take seriously Republican speeches on limited government if we Republicans can't wean ourselves from this insidious practice. But if we can go clean, it will offer a stark contrast to the Democrats, who, after two years in training, already have their own earmark favor factory running at full tilt.

Second, we need to recommit to our belief in economic freedom. Adam Smith's "The Wealth of Nations" may be on the discount rack this year, but the free market is still the most efficient means to allocate capital and human resources in an economy, and Americans know it. Now that we've inserted government deeply into the private sector by bailing out banks and businesses, the temptation will be for government to overstay its welcome and force the distribution of resources to serve political ends. Substituting political for economic incentives is not the recipe for economic recovery.

Most House Republicans opposed the recent bailout and will be in a strong position to promote economic freedom over central planning as the

Obama administration stumbles from industry to industry trying to determine which is small enough to be allowed to fail and which is not. Since timetables will be in vogue, perhaps Republicans could even insist on a timetable for getting the government out of the private sector.

There are, of course, other pillars of the Republican standard - strong national defense, support for traditional values and the Second Amendment - but these are not areas where voters question Republican bona fides. In any event, as we have seen over the past several months, economic woes tend to subsume other concerns. We shouldn't complain. We can now play our strongest hand.

In some respects, raising a new standard was made easier by the recent elec-

tion. The Republican Party is not bound by election-year promises made by its presidential nominee. More important, the party is finally untethered from the ill-fitting and unworkable big-government conservatism that defined the Bush administration.

This is not to say that it will be an easy transition. Congressional Republicans picked up some unattractive habits over the years in an effort to hold on to power. Whether it was relying on the redistricting process to help us choose our constituents, using the appropriations process as an ATM or passing legislation - such as a generous prescription drug benefit and a bloated farm bill - to pacify individual constituencies, these habits and voting patterns will be hard to break.

But there is reason for Republicans to feel optimism. Politically, America remains a center-right country, and America loves a chastened and repentant sinner. As surely as the sun rises in the east, the Democrats will overreach.

As long as we Republicans are willing to admit our folly, get back to first principles and work like there's no tomorrow, we've got 'em just where we want 'em.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All Letters To The Editor Must Have Name, Address, Phone Number, And Be Signed To Be Printed In This Column. Only The Name And Town Will Be Printed.

Beyond the Aisle

Letter to the Editor:

We have had a historical moment in the election of Barack Obama. I, as I am sure many readers are, am looking to the future, not the past presidencies. We are looking to a government that will take the bull by the horns and make sensible changes for our country.


Here are some of the changes I would like to see made as our new year is celebrated.

1. I would like to see all our elected officials to come together and stop the bickering and make legislation that would benefit our country as a whole.
2. I would like to see the immigration problem solved, not just talked about.
3. I would like to see new companies begin and old companies and their CEO's move to the country of their workers.
4. I would like to see white collar workers pay for their crimes, as they expect thieves who rob their homes to be punished.
5. I would like to see our new president stop the corruption of special interest groups embezzling funds in the name of global charity, and see our government helping the down-trodden of our own country, with oversight.
6. I would like to see our new president talk to other world leaders with respect and a willingness to compromise for the global good.
7. I would like to see our government officials come together and create a new ideology based on honesty and hard work, not greed and self-indulgence.
8. I would like to see our country, as a real democracy, not an overt tyranny.
9. I would like to see our country as one nation, not many large conglomerates.
10. I would like to see someone stand up and say, "The party is over, boys."

Valerie Gamblin - Cleveland, TN



Don't Get Stung
Advertise
 In The
PEOPLE
News
559-2150



NEW HOPE
 PREGNANCY CARE CENTER
has opened a second center to serve you
New Hope East
 1075 Blythe Avenue, Suite 10
 (Family Support Center)
 Get the facts you need to make
 an informed choice!

Free & Confidential

- Free Pregnancy Test
- 24-hour Hotline - 479-6683
- Options Counseling
- Learning opportunities to earn baby and maternity items.
- Parenting Classes
- Opportunities to earn baby and maternity items.

For more details please call 479-7960
 Hours: Monday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Thursday 10:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**For an appointment call 479-7960
 or 479-6683**
You're not alone!