

confused his own base, with no gain among Latinos, for whom it was socially unacceptable to vote for a man endorsed by Wilson. Latino voters will support a friendly Democrat wrong on social issues over a more *simpatico* Republican. Like the Irish Catholics once drawn to the Democrats, Latino Catholics are drawn to a Party that includes them. Latino Republican legislators just elected can be powerful symbols.

The debacle in California may not be unique if Democrats repeat the formula elsewhere. The Party's left allows the nomination of a law-and-order Democrat who says his priority is education. He plays footsie with big business that wants a winner. Republicans? Lacking a strategy, they obsess with trivia. Like defending secondhand smoke while opposing marijuana for cancer patients. That's a winner.

CPR



'Vote Republican because ... uhm ... err ... well'

CPR's panel of
*independent** experts
sorts through the
electoral disaster.



WILLIAM E. SARACINO

Old sayings and adages — though sometimes irritating — are often also true. The 1998 elections speak to the truth in the old saying that you can't beat somebody with nobody; and you can't beat something with nothing. Nobody and nothing is exactly what the national Republican leadership offered the American people as a reason to vote Republican. Other than the hard core Clinton haters who were going to vote for us anyway, the national GOP message was "Vote Republican because ... uhm ... err ... well ... vote Republican because we say so." That the voters rejected this non-message is actually a tribute to their intelligence. It is also indicative of how

ideologically sterile and tactically tentative the leaders of the 1994 revolution had become by the fall of 1998.

The media has spent much time harrumphing amongst themselves that the election results represent a repudiation of the conservative agenda. This is silly and patently false on its face — since the conservative agenda was not presented to the voters in any organized fashion. In fact the few GOP bright spots around the electoral map — the brothers Bush; Senators Bunning and Fitzgerald in Kentucky and Illinois; Governors Thompson and Engler in Wisconsin and Michigan — represent the few places where positive conservative ideas (in addition to "throw Bubba and Evita out of the White House")

**Legislative Republican leaders Senator Ross Johnson and Assemblyman Rod Pacheco were invited to participate in this discussion, but were precluded by deadline constraints from doing so. Thus, the panel consists exclusively of experts with no direct stake (as candidates for any office) in this election's outcome.*

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were presented in various ways to the voters. As they always do, voters responded positively to our core conservative ideas when they were presented in positive and interesting ways. As ol' Willie Shakespeare had Cassius say to Brutus, the fault lies not in our stars, but in ourselves. Our nominees and leaders forgot Ronald Reagan's banner of "bold colors" and opted for the "pale pastels" of moderation to get us through on the historical tide of sixth year defeats for the incumbent White House Party. Such a result was not in the stars.

Here in California the Lungren campaign was a case of suicide. As nice as the people who ran that campaign are, there wasn't a seasoned political warhorse among them. By that I mean someone who had gone up against the best and the brightest that the Democrats have. Because of this, Lungren was out-maneuvered almost daily during the critical last three weeks of the election, a time when most voters solidified their choice. The result was sadly predictable. We sent the political equivalent of our junior league board of directors into the Oakland Raiders locker room and expected them to emerge on the other side without a hair out of place. The resulting unsightly carnage should not have surprised anyone.

That's the past now — what of tomorrow? One of the few advantages of getting older is the perspective it provides. My first political campaign was the 1964 Goldwater for president effort, which received all of 34 percent of the vote in California. As I tell friends of mine, when *that* is your first election night, things never, ever get any worse.

However, I still carry lessons from that debacle. The main one being that the press and the moderate Republicans are always wrong in their postmortems. Literally every two years since 1964 I have heard exactly the same thing. "So and so" was just too conservative to win. That's when the GOP loses. When the GOP wins, it is "well, the victory would have been much more sweeping if the right-wingers had just shut up." It never fails. These people said Barry Goldwater had destroyed the Republican Party as a viable institution and had single-handedly killed the two-party system. They really said that! These same people — the forebears of our John Jacobs, George Skeltons, and Tony Quinns — said it was pure idiocy and suicide to nominate Ronald Reagan for governor. All the "realists" in the GOP knew Reagan would be annihilated by Pat Brown. All the "realists" in the GOP

knew San Francisco Mayor George Christopher was the *only* Republican with a chance of getting elected. On and on it went — and on and on it goes, every two years like clockwork. When Senator-elect Fitzgerald won his primary in Illinois, these Cassandras moaned that we had just re-elected Carol Mosely Braun. The same with Jim Bunning in Tennessee. These folks never tire of being wrong and never, ever change their tune. Which is fine — unless we forget history and start to believe them!

Your hear now that the issues of guns and abortion killed the GOP. Lungren botched the abortion issue sadly, and neither he nor anyone else on the statewide ticket engaged on the gun issue. In fact, the *only* legislative campaign where guns were a major factor saw pro-Second Amendment Democrat Joe Baca defeat GOP nominee Eunice Ulloa for a Senate seat.

Ulloa attacked Baca for being too close to the NRA. Sarah Brady even mailed against Baca. Baca got 60 percent of the vote. Don't look for this analysis in your local newspaper.

The conservative banner has many bold colors to it. It is up to us to be bright enough to know how to sell our philosophy as a whole to an electorate that agrees with us overwhelmingly — on the whole.

The immediate future might look dark. The next two years will bring us setbacks and defeats. Yet a new day will dawn, as surely as the previous day set. The great conservative victories of this century — 1966, 1980, and 1994 — took place for two reasons: First, because liberals let their mask slip and accidentally revealed their true selves and true plans to the American people; Second, because the conservative movement was ready for that moment with a broad-based, positive, and persuasive agenda to present as an alternative.

We can't control the timing of the next liberal meltdown. But we can be certain it will come. It's up to each of us to make sure our movement is ready to seize the moment and lead our state and country to a bright tomorrow.

TIM W. FERGUSON

It's pretty well established by now that, contrary to what we were told on Election Night, this was not a national or state election that was decided by ethnic or ra-

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