

October 24, 2006

## Bleak House

Republicans deserve to lose, but what happens if Democrats win?

By Pete Du Pont

Two weeks from tonight America is going to be different--first politically and then substantively--for Democrats will likely take control of the House, and move public policy in very liberal directions.

Major polling organizations--the Cook and Rothenberg Political Reports and Congressional Quarterly--have been estimating that the Democrats will make a 16- to 18-seat gain in the House, where they need just 15 to take control. But the number of projected Democratic victories may be climbing: Sunday's New York Times analysis--entitled "Hope on the Left"--projects a gain as large as 30 seats.

In the Senate the Democrats have a tougher task--they need to win six Republican seats to take control. A look at the eight closely contested races suggest that incumbent Republican George Allen in Virginia and Democrat Bob Menendez in New Jersey are likely to be re-elected, so the Democrats would have to win all six of the remaining seats. The polls show four likely gains--defeating Republicans Rick Santorum in Pennsylvania, Lincoln Chaffee in Rhode Island,

Conrad Burns in Montana, and Mike DeWine in Ohio. In the last two races Republican incumbent Jim Talent in Missouri seems likely to win a very close race and the open seat in Tennessee is too close to call.

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If the Democrats do take the House, what changes might be made in America's public policies?

First, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has promised that election of a Democratic House would insure "a rollback of the [Bush] tax cuts." Rep. Charles Rangel of New York, who would be chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, would make sure no tax cut extension bill would ever get to the floor. He voted against the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts and the bill that later extended the tax cuts until 2010 (as did all but seven of the 205 Democratic House members). In September Mr. Rangel said that he "cannot think of one" Bush tax cut he would agree to renew.

Investors Business Daily recently pointed out that since the Bush tax cuts took effect in 2003, "the

economy has added \$1.26 trillion in real output, \$14.4 trillion in net wealth and 5.8 million new jobs." But that progress doesn't seem to matter to the liberals, whose primary goal is to raise income tax rates. "Taxing the rich" will be the leading economic argument of a 2007 Democratic House, and a rollback tax bill of some kind will reach the floor.

Second, President Bush will not be able to re-energize his effort for individually owned Social Security accounts, for "preventing the privatization of social security" is in the Democratic National Committee's "6-Point Plan for 2006." Democrats don't trust people to own or invest their own retirement funds--better to let a wise government do that, for as socialist Noam Chomsky says, "putting people in charge of their own assets breaks down the solidarity that comes from doing something together." And since Congress gets to spend Social Security tax receipts that aren't needed to pay benefits, letting people invest their payments in their own retirement accounts would be a costly revenue reduction that the new, bigger-spending Congress won't allow to happen.

"Reducing dependence on foreign oil" is a good Democratic goal, and there are a number of ways to accomplish it. Building more nuclear power plants is one. Offshore drilling for oil and natural gas is another. Oil reserves in the Outer Continental Shelf and Alaska could replace foreign oil imports for 25 years, and there is a known 19-year OCS supply of natural gas.

But liberal Democrats are opposed to all of these solutions. Hillary Clinton is opposed to the construction of nuclear plants and offshore drilling. Every Democratic senator on the Environment and Public Works Committee voted against allowing the building of new oil refineries on closed military bases. When the House voted 232-187 in June to allow and encourage OCS oil and natural-gas drilling, 155 of 195 Democrats voted to block it. The Democratic alternative is to eliminate the \$18 billion the oil companies now get in various business tax deductions and thereby impose a higher income tax on them.

As for the war in Iraq, Mr. Rangel observed that "You've got to be able to pay for the war, don't you?" In other words, end it by simply defunding it. Rep. John Murtha of Pennsylvania calls for "immediate redeployment of U.S. troops" and intends to run for majority leader if the Democrats take control of the House. Ninety percent of House Democrats

opposed the terrorist surveillance program, and 80% voted against the recent terrorist interrogation legislation.

Finally, when we see what the new leaders of a Democratic House are likely to do, their views are--well--very different from most Americans. Rep Henry Waxman of California would become the Government Reform Committee chairman, and believes domestic terrorist surveillance is "illegal." He would use his subpoena power to launch investigations to try and limit the president's anti-terrorism powers.

Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, who would become chairman of the Judiciary Committee, has talked about subpoenaing "Bush administration officials to answer questions and face the consequences for their abuses of power." In other words, impeachment.

Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi has indicated she would like to put Rep. Alcee Hastings of Florida in charge of the House Intelligence Committee. As a federal judge, he was impeached in the House by a 413-3 vote, and removed from the bench by the Senate for bribery, corruption, and perjury. Rep. Hastings would lead the oversight of America's antiterrorism policies.

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Most Americans have not yet thought much about this agenda,

or the leaders who will set it. But they are tired of the Republican congressional performance. The latest NBC/Wall Street Journal poll shows 16% of Americans approve of congressional performance while 75% disapprove.

No wonder: Republicans gave line-item veto power to the Democratic president in the 1990s, but refused to give it to the current Republican president. They haven't made the Bush tax cuts permanent. They wouldn't bring individual ownership of Social Security retirement accounts to a vote. They haven't done anything on health care. And they have raised federal spending by \$750 billion since 2001 and for fiscal 2006 approved 10,000 earmarks costing \$29 billion. Conservative principles seem to have faded away, and ethical principles have weakened--names like DeLay, Ney, and Foley make the point.

It is possible President Bush and Karl Rove can stem the anti-Republican political tide. But more likely on Nov. 7 American voters will send the Congress a strong disapproval message by voting out the current Republican majority. In politics as in other jobs, there is a price to pay for poor performance.

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