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## Hard of Hearing

Written by Pete du Pont

Elections matter. They are sometimes governed by voters' passion; they sometimes change the course the country is following (as in 2008); and sometimes, like earlier this month, they fire warning shots across the bow of our ship of state.

On Nov. 3, the voters in just about every election told our governments they were moving in the wrong direction, and that the course must be changed.

Barack Obama carried Virginia last year, but his party lost substantially in this fall's gubernatorial election. Republican Bob McDonnell carried nine of the 11 Virginia congressional districts, including three that Democrat Congressional candidates won last year. In those three districts, Mr. McDonnell got 62%, 61% and 55% of the vote.

Over in New Jersey, a big-time Democrat state where incumbent governor Jon Corzine outspent his opponent 3 to 1, Republican Chris Christie won, 49% to 45%. Mr. Obama carried New Jersey a year ago by a margin of more than 15%, so the voter swing was 20 points from Democrat to Republican.

In Pennsylvania, Mr. Obama in 2008 carried the four counties of suburban Philadelphia with 57% of the vote. This year the Republican Supreme Court candidate won

them 55% to 45%, and six of the seven statewide winners were Republicans.

Even more important to future election results may have been the youth and senior citizen voting. In New Jersey, the 2008 youth vote was 17% of the total, and went for Mr. Obama 67% to 31%. But in 2009 the youth vote was just 9% of the total and went for Mr. Corzine only 57% to 36%. In Virginia the youth vote made up 21% of the total in 2008 and went for Obama by a 21% margin. It was only 10% of the vote this year, and it went Republican by a 10% margin.

Senior citizens' voting patterns were even more interesting. In New Jersey they were 15% of the vote in 2008, with a 6% majority for John McCain; this year, they were 19% of the vote and went for Mr. Christie by 15%. In Virginia, they were 11% of the voters in 2008 and went for Mr. McCain by a 7% majority; this year, they were 18% of the voters and McDonnell won them by 20%.

So while the youth vote dropped and shifted pro-Republican, the senior citizen vote increased and went even more Republican.

To put all this in pollster perspective, Gallup reported that Democrats led the generic ballot question--"Which party do you

support in local congressional elections?"-- by 15 points last December and six points in July. Last week Republicans had a four-point lead.

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You may recall February's Newsweek cover story "We Are All Socialists Now," forecasting that the "America of 2009 is moving towards a modern European state," and as it does it "will become even more French." So there will be "more government taxing and spending" and "more government intrusion in the economy will almost surely limit growth."

We have already seen an explosion in spending, and higher taxes will be with us on Jan. 1, 2011, when the Bush tax cuts expire. If Congress does nothing, the tax rate on capital gains will rise from 15% to 20%. The House health-care bill contains a 5.4% surtax, brainchild of Rep. Charlie Rangel, that would take the rate up to 25.4% for higher-income taxpayers. The two increases together, as The Wall Street Journal pointed out, amounts to a 69% hike.

The Joint Tax Committee reports that one-third of the project \$460 billion revenue from the Rangel tax would be paid by small-business owners, who are employers and job creators. Says the New York Times: "It is fitting that they pay a heavy share of the cost of health care reform." And since none of these taxes are indexed for inflation, 10 years from now this tax bite will apply to

people and small businesses with incomes equivalent to perhaps \$335,000 today.

Facing the prospect of higher taxes, government-managed and -controlled health care, and the huge costs of the pending global-warming bills, people at home and now people in the Congress are beginning to have second thoughts. According to Rasmussen's recent polls, 42% of Americans strongly oppose the health care bill while only 25% strongly support it, and according to Gallup only 29% of people would advise their congressmen to vote for it-- substantially down from last month's 40%.

Members of Congress of course pay close attention to their constituents. Of the 80 Democratic House members whose districts were carried by either George W. Bush or Mr. McCain, 9 voted against the "stimulus" bill, 21 voted against a budget resolution for doubling the national debt in four years, 36 voted against "cap and trade," and 36 voted against the health-care bill.

What we don't know is if this trend will continue as the Senate votes on health care (if it can get past a filibuster), and both houses vote on any conference bill, or whether many Senate Democrats will want nothing to do with a climate bill or, most important, will attempt to slow the massive growth of annual spending. But if the Democrats ignore the public's growing skepticism, the Republicans will do very well in the 2010 elections.