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A MESSAGE FROM WILLIAM GALSTON, STAN GREENBERG AND RUY TEIXEIRA

Welcome to the Premier issue of *The Democratic Strategist*. For this first issue we asked a small group of the most thoughtful individuals in the democratic community to look beyond 2006 and to think about strategies for the Democratic Party for the next decade. Following their commentaries the three of us offer our own perspectives. Our contributors include:

- Jerome Armstrong
- Dr. Elaine Kamarck
- Kenneth Baer and Andrei Cherny
- Will Marshall
- Robert L. Borosage
- Harold Meyerson
- Donna Brazile
- John W. Wilhelm

We reached out to individuals who represent the Democratic Party's liberal and centrist wings, its grass-roots/netroots activists and its political professionals, its academics and leaders of mass organizations.

The results surpassed our expectations. Although the participants each clearly expressed their distinct perspectives, the conclusions they reached were far more often complementary and reinforcing rather than conflicting and contradictory.

We envision this initial roundtable discussion as the point of departure for a serious, sustained dialog about long-term political strategy for the Democrats that we will encourage around the publication. We invite you to join us in this vitally important intellectual project and political initiative. As our editorial philosophy states, *The Democratic Strategist* will be "proudly partisan, insistently rooted in facts and data, and emphatically open to all points of view within the Democratic community".

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REPLACING THE BATTLEGROUND MENTALITY WITH THE MAPCHANGER ATTITUDE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Jerome Armstrong

Ten years from now, the Democratic Party will have fully broadened its election strategy beyond the battleground mentality that dominates strategic thinking today. Democrats will be a national party, leaving no uncontested race anywhere in the nation, and will have rebuilt a party infrastructure down to the precinct everywhere in the nation. The Democrats will have regained their majority status as the governing party, and the mapchanger approach to elections will have been the reason.

The notion of "running Democrats everywhere" seems fanciful (to put it nicely) to DC beltway insiders and veteran political strategists. At the Presidential level, those strategists that subscribe to the beltway mentality believe that Democrats should forget about half the states, and focus all of our resources on trying to win a bare majority of electoral votes.

As the Democratic Party shrinks from a national party into a regional stronghold, the battleground also shrinks further and further. In the 1992 and the 1996 Presidential elections, with three candidates in the race, as many as 30 states were viewed as competitive battleground contests up through Election Day. In 2000, that number dropped to just 17 by Election Day. In 2004, the number of contested states early in the presidential contest stood at 18, and was whittled down to about eight by Election Day.

The battleground strategy – or more accurately obsession – that the Democratic establishment in DC pursues of narrowing electoral campaigns to ever shrinking "swing states" is self-defeating. It does not build any new converts to the party, it makes it easier for the Republicans to walk away with huge chunks of the country unchallenged and it starves the Democratic Parties in those "red" states.

At the congressional level the focus is on trying to win just enough seats to win back the majority. This incremental notion is exactly why the Democratic Party has not been able to reclaim a majority on the House side of Congress since losing control over a decade earlier. Every two years, since 1994, the congressional strategists mark out the 10 or 20 seats representing the best opportunity to win back bare control of the House, make a minimal show in 10 or 20 more, and cede the remaining GOP seats to Republican control – without even a party-supported oppositional candidate.

Those strategists have argued that they simply do not have the money and resources to fight on a broader front, and it is true – the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee was outspent by its Republican counterpart \$186 million to \$93 million in the 2004 cycle.¹ Yet, the party must have a better approach than narrowing its efforts only to the districts it sees as "winnable". That may serve the short-term interest of trying for a slim majority in the House, but it completely ignores the long-term interest of acting, behaving and campaigning as a truly national political party.

As blogger Chris Bowers of MyDD noted November 5, 2004:

Abandoning a district also has repercussions for future elections. Failing to challenge your opponent's message in an area is damaging to your message in that area in the future. Failing to provide a choice to those willing to support you – and there are always tens of thousands willing to support you in any congressional district – sends a message that you do not represent or care about those people. Even worse, failing to challenge an incumbent sends a message that you are afraid of your own beliefs and that you are not working to make this country a better Democracy.

¹ Center for Responsive Politics, Open Secrets web site, www.opensecrets.org. Accessed 4/13/2006.

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Running a candidate in each of these districts would also have helped to identify Democratic activists in each of these districts. Identifying, encouraging, and assisting potential Dem[ocratic] activists throughout the entire country would help to strengthen the Party, both now and in future elections cycles. These are the people who can help to bring the Democratic message to every corner of the country.²

The battleground mentality is cautious and narrow, and it plays to the Republican strong hand. The Republicans realize exactly which races are the battlegrounds, and focus all of their resources in kind, on the same races. This allows the party with the stronger array of resources to have the upper hand, and that is the Republican Party, which has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into new media, machine politics and database inventories that give them superior voter targeting capabilities.

In contrast, the mapchanger attitude urges an aggressive and broad challenge to Republicans. It provides the national party with the best opportunity to utilize the tens of thousands of grassroots activists in every state and congressional district. The power of people becomes the strongest resource and gives the national Party the ability to pour resources into those states or districts that become surprisingly contested.

Further, the battleground mentality leaves half the country without a contest of ideas. We abandon progressives in rural areas of the country and let Republicans rule there, without even a contest – and those Republican incumbents then go out and raise money for Republican challengers in contested races.

Challenging Republicans in "deep red" districts would force Republican incumbents to spend a great deal of time and money defending their seats instead of campaigning for other Republicans and donating to their campaigns. Walter Ludwig's Project 90, which encourages Democratic candidates to run in "red" Congressional districts, found that

between 2000-2004, Democrats failed to compete or barely challenge in over a quarter of U.S. House races, and the Republican incumbents in those districts contributed over \$60 [million] to their colleagues in closer races.³

Activist bloggers do not advocate that the people wait for the Democratic Party strategists in DC to adopt the mapchanger strategy. The Republican Party has become an election machine. The Democratic establishment, while they believed they were the party of governance, wasted hundreds of millions of dollars while ignoring what the Republicans have been building.

Instead, Democratic Party officials and politicians have been under the powerful sway of a cabal of media and polling consultants in DC, whose principle contribution seems to be an extension of this battleground mentality into decisions over campaign expenditures, advocating that the majority of funds be spent on polling and media in a strategic manner that rewards their services with increased profits.

Even for this upcoming cycle, all of the Democratic candidates in big races are going with inside-the-beltway media consultants whose best practices remain entrenched within a conflict-of-interest approach. It is a fact that consumer businesses no longer receive commissions based on the amount of advertising that is done – that racket only remains in DC (particularly on the Democratic side). And if you look closely at what media consultants are doing, they are really only project-managing the task of creating television commercials. That is, they will usually outsource the creation and the placement of the ad, and thus are merely the middleman for the politicians. As project managers, they should be paid a set monthly fee, not commissions without end that sometimes reach into the millions. The Democratic Party and its candidates who are participating in this scam are ripping off people that are contributing through donations.

² Chris Bowers, "Uncontested," <http://www.mydd.com/story/2004/11/5/115834/784>, as quoted in *Crashing The Gate* (White River Jct., VT: Chelsea Green, 2006) 157.

³ Walter Ludwig, as quoted in *Crashing The Gate* (White River Jct., VT: Chelsea Green, 2006) 158. (Ludwig's Project 90 document is available from him personally.)

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For beltway outsiders to take more of the duties of the Democratic Party apparatus is really the only option that seems to be available. Waiting for those tired and defeated Democratic consultants to "get it" means remaining in the political wilderness beyond the next decade.

The netroots and grassroots progressive community should begin to take matters into its own hands. It is time to go beyond merely collectively grouping hundreds of thousands of dollars and pushing it toward candidates and consultants that perform business as usual. Building a progressive movement is going to take more than that sort of hit-and-run attitude of activism. We should be creating institutions that effectively spend the dollars raised for campaigns, rather than relying on the establishment channels.

In order to begin the mapchanger process, and really reform the Democratic Party, progressives must organize online in a manner that takes control of the Democratic Party at the precinct level. This 'trickle up' strategy will yield results by creating a state-based power that dictates the party strategy from within the Democratic Party establishment.

Yes, the Democratic Party has a problem with branding. Yet if we can rebuild the party across the country, at this very local level, the message and branding problems will be much easier to address. They are certainly not going to be solved within DC. In fact, in many ways, the debate over strategy and tactics versus ideas and principles is a false one. The election strategies that a party puts into practice reflect its values. A national party cannot, through a slogan, say they are putting people first, and then in the next election blow off half the people of the nation.

No matter how you look at it, challenging Republicans in all races and all geographic areas is a good idea – it builds the Democratic Party's brand, it exhausts the Republicans' resources and it sows the seeds for future Democratic wins.

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SWING IDEAS, NOT SWING VOTERS*Kenneth S. Baer and Andrei Cherny*

At this spring's exclusive Gridiron Dinner, Senator Barack Obama – according to reports, as the dinner is closed press – offered up a complaint common in Democratic circles. "You hear this constant refrain from our critics that Democrats don't stand for anything. That's really unfair," he said, "We *do* stand for anything." As they say in the Catskills, the line killed. But the problem it refers to has been killing Democrats for years.

Since the end of the Clinton years, the Democratic Party has been adrift – without a coherent agenda or public philosophy. According to a poll conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research earlier this year, only 29 percent of Americans believe that Democrats have a better sense than Republicans of what they stand for as a party (while 51 percent say that Republicans have a better sense than Democrats). As Stan Greenberg has put it, the American public believes Democrats have "no core set of convictions or point of view."

Part of that is expected: when you lose the White House, a party loses a *de facto* leader who can impose message and ideological discipline. But there is more to it. The world has profoundly changed since President Clinton sat in the Oval Office: globalization has accelerated at a torrid pace as have the technological innovations fueling it, the country has become more diverse and more dispersed, changing family arrangements and workplace structures have deeply affected how people see the world, and the attacks of September 11th have brought to the surface a simmering war with radical Islamist terror.

Yet Democrats have not put forward a vision of where the country should go, where it should lead the world, and why. And absent that vision, no get-out-the-vote effort, re-messaging exercise, or charismatic candidate will help Democrats win the White House and, just as importantly, become a vibrant progressive force for years to come. That is why if Democrats want to win in 2008 and beyond, they must invest in the intellectual infrastructure that underpins a modern political movement. They need to develop coherent responses – rooted in the party's deepest beliefs about democracy, liberty, equality, and justice – that respond to the new realities that America faces.

What Democrats cannot rely on are the explanations that have cropped up in the wake of the loss of the Senate in 2002 and the failure to win back the Presidency in 2004. These include the technological – witness the huge amount of money poured into the Democratic National Committee's "Demzilla" database project, and now into the independent Democratic DataMart – but more often than not focus on the Democratic message. Here is a sampling:

- All we need to do is retool our message – a quadrennial complaint that probably extends back to Thomas Jefferson's loss to John Adams. This time this strategy has resurfaced under the rubric of "framing", otherwise known as putting old wine in new bottles.
- All we need to do is boil down our message to four phrases that have the same catchiness as the GOP's "Smaller Government. Less taxes. Stronger Military. Family Values."
- All we need to do is figure out what goes on the bumper sticker. This produced a Democratic response to the 2006 State of the Union in which Virginia Governor Tim Kaine repeated the phrase "A Better Way" nine times in his short address – using the very same slogan which the Robert Redford movie "The Candidate" mocked as the essence of vapid, meaningless political rhetoric.
- All we need to do is figure out "how to talk to" evangelical, gun-owning, Hispanic, exurban married couples in red states as if voters simply had merely not understood what we were saying.

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Tactics and targeting, media and messaging – these are the ways we try to put lipstick on a party that does not know what it stands for. Democrats today are rich in strategies and poor in beliefs. Ask most Democrats what they believe in, and they will respond with a list of policies and programs, criticisms of Republican wrongs, or a series of painful stammers.

Right now, Democrats are like the fourth-generation that takes over the family firm: we have forgotten why we went into business in the first place. As a result, we spend most of the time fighting to protect the proud heritage of our past achievements from being destroyed, a necessary assignment in the current climate, but not sufficient to provide the roadmap to the future that America needs and that a great political party should provide.

Of course, Democrats have policies – by the truckload. But policies are not ideas – and anyone who tries to conflate the two is putting the cart before the horse. A policy is the "How?" An idea is the "What?" and the "Why?". Social Security is a policy, one that has served the nation well. The notion that the federal government should mandate that Americans put money aside into a pool to ensure that seniors, widows, and orphans are not left to rot in poverty is a powerful idea, rooted in distinct beliefs about equality, justice, and the role of government in our economy.

Understanding what you believe and developing a view on how the world works and how it should are critical to the nuts-and-bolts of politics. That is to say that you cannot work on the bumper stickers or on talking to swing voters if you do not know what it is exactly you believe. Think of policy platforms, political slogans, and bumper stickers as the tips of icebergs. The ones that work are deceptively simple but strong because underneath the surface is all the substance and weight that holds them up and that most people never see.

And therein lies the strength of the conservatives' slogans. Their bumper sticker phrases were not cooked up in a focus group or decided by a central committee of Republican Party elders meeting in the wood-paneled boardroom of Dick Cheney's secure undisclosed location. They were arrived at through years of vigorous debate and discussion by people who passionately held some core beliefs – and debated them with each other and the politicians seeking their support. They were unafraid to think big and unafraid to anger those who disagreed with them – including many voters.

And, most of all, conservatives had the institutions in which to float the fanciful idea and debate it – not just think tanks and academic institutes, but also idea journals such as *The Public Interest* and *Policy Review*. In fact, almost every signature idea that we associate with the modern Republican Party – from supply-side economics to pre-emption and Social Security privatization – was incubated in one of these journals years ago. It doesn't change the fact that these policies are wrong-headed, but we cannot deny that underneath them is a well developed public philosophy.

Election Day is when the Republicans reap the rewards of this intellectual spadework. When George W. Bush, Bob Dole, or any other mainstream Republican is chosen as their party's nominee, they get placed on top of a pyramid of thinking that has been developed far in advance of their first visits to New Hampshire. It was not George W. Bush's campaign, for instance, that developed the theory of compassionate conservatism; that was done by Marvin Olasky and others before. Bush, characteristically, inherited the work that others had sowed in the intellectual vineyards. Democrats, on the other hand, tell their candidates to go into the fields and plant their own ideas six months before the first primary. As we have seen in campaign after campaign, what ends up happening is that candidates lapse into the default position: what does everyone else say or what does the most powerful interest group want.

To help Democratic candidates win and to revive the progressive movement, Democrats need to invest in ideas – and in the think tanks and journals that incubate them. They need to recognize the importance of investing in the development of a coherent public philosophy not just for its electoral implications (of which there are many), but because when a party lacks a viewpoint on the type of nation and world it seeks, then it loses its *raison d'être*.

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While winning elections is the ultimate goal for any political party and the way to affect real change, Democrats need to shed their compulsion for the transactional. Currently, candidates are selected by Party committees on the basis of their bankroll rather than their experience. Primary voters sometimes seem more concerned with that elusive quality of "electability" than with the old-fashioned notion of ability. Policies and ideas seem to be discussed by Party insiders almost exclusively in the context of which voters they would appeal to instead of what impact they would have on the nation and the world. What does it profit a political party to win an election and lose its soul?

Instead of another round of discussion over who are our swing voters, Democrats need a real debate over what are our "swing ideas": the big notions that will remake the political landscape as surely as Republican ideas have over the past generation. To do that, we need to get back to first principles, thinking deeply about the world we want to build and how we will do it. Once we do this, we will be able to build a Democratic Party that strides boldly into this new century confident about who we are and where we are headed. That is a Democratic Party that will win again – and one that will be ready to change America for the better.

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HAD ENOUGH?*Robert L. Borosage*

"Had enough?" Abramoff and DeLay, Katrina and Iraq, Schiavo and Halliburton, Big Pharma and Big Oil. Leave it to Newt Gingrich to provide Democrats with their best election year sound bite. [Surely an improvement on "Together, we can do better."] No doubt Democrats are tempted by Newt's advice to make 2006 "a referendum, not a choice." In an off-year election, with Republicans in control of everything, nationalizing the 2006 election inevitably requires making it a referendum on Republican failings and flailing – the equivalent of the 1994 election that brought Republicans to power. But if Democrats are to move toward building a governing majority, then they must use 2006 to begin posing a clear choice to voters – even while beginning the far more serious debate about the party's posture on the emerging challenges facing this country. Here is a summary of the themes for 2006 – and of the harder questions that Democrats have yet to face.

1994 in 2006

The Gingrich strategy from 1994 should inform the Democratic playbook in 2006. Gingrich began not with the reform ideas of the Contract with America, but with relentless attack on the corruption, arrogance and failures of the Democrats in control. The campaign was nationalized by linking Democratic candidates directly to what was at the time a very unpopular president, with ads morphing the Democratic candidate into Clinton's face and then back.

The Contract, unveiled late and not well known, provided Republicans with a prop that showed that they stood for change. An entire section was devoted to congressional reform, from term limits to promises of open governance. Others restated popular conservative shibboleths – a balanced budget amendment, missile defense, tax cuts. Divisive social issues, like prayer in the schools or abortion, were excluded. The document was accompanied by a promise of action – a vote on every measure in 100 days – that spoke directly to voters' frustration that Democrats had failed to deliver.

In 2006, given the breathtaking scope of conservative misrule and the growing dismay of voters, Democrats can follow the same model: relentless attack on the failures of Bush and the Republican Congress, ignoring pundits who complain Democrats have no agenda; morphing Republican candidates scrambling to establish their independence into pictures of Bush and back.

The catastrophic failures and corrosive corruptions of Bush and the Republican Congress also make it relatively easy for Democrats to frame a clear, compelling agenda that make them the party of change. The themes are simple. Had enough? Do you want more of the same – the Bush direction – or a new course? They have failed. They govern for the few – they auctioned off Congress to corporate lobbies and CEOs – and you pay the costs of this corruption. We'll put government on your side, a policy that works for all. Core elements of the agenda are logical and, not surprisingly, poll well in early snapshots by Democracy Corps, Lake Research and others.

■ **Clean out the stables.** Voters are not particularly interested in process reforms, but they are looking for change. Democrats should be the party of reform, championing bold, clear reforms to curb the corruptions of the corporate lobbies: block the revolving door, expose all contacts, end the junkets, ban the earmarks, curb the privileges. Enact a freeze on congressional pay raises until wages are going up for Americans, a position Stanley Greenberg's polling has revealed to have wide support. Pledge to root out the outrages – particularly the scandalous rip-offs in Iraq by Halliburton and other corporate cronies that not only wasted billions of dollars but contributed directly to the failure of reconstruction. With Democratic incumbents incomprehensibly unable to forge unity on a bold agenda of reform, Democratic challengers should take up the charge and make themselves the outsiders who will clean out the stables.

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- **Stand up for people, not special interests.** Democrats best demonstrate their values, their character and their courage by fighting against entrenched special interests on basic kitchen table concerns. This isn't rocket science. It starts by reversing the costs of Republican corruption that Americans pay in higher drug prices, higher college costs, soaring gas prices, and jobs getting shipped abroad. Make health care affordable, starting by taking the Medicare prescription drug plan out of the hands of private insurers and requiring the government to negotiate lower prices. Make college affordable, starting by cutting interest rates on student loans in half, raising grant levels, and providing tax credits towards college tuition. Revoke the tax breaks and loopholes that reward corporations for sending jobs abroad. Raise the minimum wage, require corporations to treat the shop floor like the top floor in benefits, and empower workers to organize to gain a fair share of the profits they help generate. Roll back the subsidies and tax breaks for oil companies, and use that money to champion...
- **A bold concerted drive for energy independence.** Champion a plan like that laid out by the Apollo Alliance, generating jobs, capturing new markets, and unleashing American science and technology, all while reducing our reliance on Persian Gulf oil. Democrats should overcome their temerity about big investments – and embrace new energy for America.

The Republican response to this assault – as laid out by Karl Rove – will be to localize elections as much as possible, while framing two national choices. We're for tax cuts and growth; they'll raise your taxes. We understand there's a war on; they don't get it and want to cut and run. Democrats should relish challenging Republicans on both of these core questions:

- **An Economics that Works for America.** To most Americans, Bush sounds out of touch as he touts the great economy. And Democrats should dramatize how these guys don't get it. Profits are up, CEO salaries are up, but wages are not keeping up with prices. We have record budget deficits, unsustainable trade deficits. Good jobs are moving abroad. The tax cuts have created more jobs in China than here. In fact, the great bulk of jobs created here have come from the growth in state and local government jobs and the military buildup. We would be better off using some of the money Bush handed over to the wealthy to invest in areas like energy independence that are vital to our future, in good schools, in rebuilding New Orleans and in protecting our homeland. That would generate more jobs here and less debt in the future. Democrats should be calling for an economic strategy that empowers workers, and holds CEOs accountable. One that benefits companies that create jobs here, and revokes subsidies for those who take jobs abroad. The party should put forth a trade strategy that will support good jobs here – not one that sits idly by while countries like China play by different set of rules.
- **A Real Security Plan for America.** Democratic strategists all intone the mantra that the party has to be "strong on security". But the overwhelming base of Democratic voters opposes the war in Iraq, and has no desire to police the world. This often leaves Democrats tongue-tied or divided. And that is why, despite growing public disenchantment with the Iraq debacle, the White House will make it a centerpiece of the fall elections: "They want to cut and run; that will hand al Qaeda a victory and provide them with a base for terror."

Many Democrats would prefer to duck: It's the president's problem; he should present us with a plan to win. No one really expects a legislator to provide the solution. But ducking is only likely to make Democrats look weak and irresponsible, playing politics with a basic security issue. Nor are the mock-tough postures once in vogue on the right of the party – urging more troops for Iraq or smarter tactics – likely to ring true given the growing civil strife in Iraq.

Democratic candidates would be well-advised to level with Americans about the reality. There are no good choices. Withdrawing could leave a divided Iraq enmeshed in bloody civil strife. But staying only involves our soldiers in that strife. And it weakens America. It isolates us from our allies, provides al Qaeda with a training ground and a recruiting boon, rouses suspicion and hatred across the Moslem world, and distracts us from the real war on terror. We freed Iraqis of a brutal dictator, now we need to put Iraqis on notice that it is time for them to take responsibility and for our troops to come home over the course of the next year. By commit-

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ting to keep them there until 2009, the president gives the Iraqis no incentive to step up. Accompany this with a real security agenda reviving collective alliances to hunt down the fanatics dedicated to global terrorism; common-sense measures to protect America, including inspecting all containers coming into our ports and demanding security plans for dangerous chemical and biological factories; and a pledge to appoint competent leaders to critical posts, not callow cronies who are not up to the task. A position stated with conviction will do much better than one that looks like it is poll driven.

Towards A Governing Majority

Democratic gains this fall in the wake of the conservative collapse should not mask how far the party is from consolidating a governing reform majority. As Karl Rove has discovered, this requires not simply skilled messaging and expert politics. Consolidating a governing majority requires a strategy that successfully addresses the fundamental challenges we face. Democrats have sensibly been unified in the face of the extreme project posed by Bush and the Republican Congress. But unity in opposition has come at the expense of defining clarity around proposition. We now witness the collapse of the conservative consensus that has dominated American politics over the last twenty-five years. Large challenges must be addressed, for example:

- **American strategy in the global economy.** The conservative strategy of the last twenty-five years has left America the world's largest debtor, borrowing from foreign creditors while shipping jobs, not goods, abroad. The Chinese are lending us the money to buy the goods they make with the jobs and technology our companies ship over to them. This year we will run a \$1 trillion current account deficit. Everyone agrees this is not sustainable. Free trade nostrums provide no answer. Are Democrats the party of Main Street and providing American jobs, or the party of Wall Street and wage insurance for those who lose their jobs?
- **Globocop or neo-realist?** Both parties have exulted America as the "indispensable nation", vital to policing the globe. But this role is both unpopular and increasingly unaffordable. Are Democrats for sustaining the costs of America as the global policeman or, mugged by reality, are they prepared to argue for collective security and reduced military commitments while championing human rights and democracy with soft power, not bombs?
- **Growing inequality and the insecurity of the American middle class.** Conservative economic policies have produced unprecedented inequality. Globalization, deregulation, privatization, corporate assaults on unions, and a decline in the social wage have put workers in a box, working longer and still falling behind. Are Democrats the party of the board room or the shop floor? The party of worker empowerment and corporate accountability or the party of deregulation?
- **Stark public investment and budget deficits.** The turn under Bush from budget surpluses to record deficits has received extensive coverage. Less visible but more telling is the growing public investment deficit in areas vital to our future – modern communications, mass transit, basic infrastructure, affordable college, adequately paid teachers, affordable housing, and basic nutrition and health care to lift children from poverty. Core investments were slashed under Reagan, deferred under Bush and Clinton and now are coming under the knife again. Do Democrats prioritize investment or fiscal probity?
- **Higher walls or rising tides?** Immigration will be a core issue by 2008. Democrats are the party of opportunity and inclusion. Will they be for building walls on the border to keep people out or opportunity across the border, so they will not want to come – or both? The former is more popular but less effective, and more likely to feed xenophobia and racism. The latter requires courage and creativity, but could be very costly politically. Do Democrats dare pose good sense against the furies?

These are only indicative of large choices that Democrats have to face if they are to build a ruling majority. Of course, Democrats have to win an election before we start worrying about governing. We have to stop the right from digging us deeper into the hole, while arguing about how we get out. But these and other fundamental questions will be answered – one way or another – before Democrats can hope to build a governing majority.

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DEMOCRACY MUST BE WON HERE AT HOME*Donna Brazile*

President George W. Bush's main foreign policy goal is to spread the fire of democracy in every corner of the globe. In almost every foreign policy address, senior members of the Administration speak of the power of freedom and democracy in giving oppressed people everywhere a seat at the table.

"Americans, of all people, should not be surprised by freedom's power," the President has said. He's right, of course. And on the basis of his words, I would expect the President to lead the cause of democracy here at home, especially the cause of electoral reform and cleaning up our dysfunctional election system. Unfortunately, he has not shown much interest.

In order to strengthen democracy here at home while continuing to export it abroad, Democratic campaign officials must make election reform a priority. Voter confusion, delays, equipment malfunction and misinformation continue to prevent many citizens from participating in the electoral process.

Democrats should support election reform on principle, and it can't be presumed that it will always and everywhere help us politically. But given that historically Democratic constituencies are disproportionately affected by voting irregularities, the right thing to do will also improve Democratic prospects in a nation so closely divided along partisan lines.

No, it is not enough to have a good candidate, a brilliant campaign plan, money in the bank and a talented and energetic group of seasoned campaign workers and volunteers. It is also necessary to understand the fundamentals of what constitutes a vote, who is behind the local election regulations and what rules apply to counting ballots in the event of a close election.

As a Democratic strategist, I witnessed first-hand the electoral irregularities surrounding the 2000 Presidential election when my former boss, Al Gore, won the popular vote but lost the election following a Supreme Court decision which halted a Florida recount. Experts agree that the 2004 national election was again rife with election anomalies including, but not limited to: excessively long lines at the polls (particularly in predominantly poor and minority precincts); insufficient and defective voting equipment; voter suppression and intimidation tactics targeting young voters, minorities and first time voters; unlawful purging of eligible voters from voting lists; and massive confusion over the issuance and tabulation of provisional ballots, absentee ballots and ballots cast by U.S. citizens living overseas.

An investigation by Democratic staff of the House Judiciary Committee disclosed massive and unprecedented voter irregularities in Ohio surrounding the 2004 Presidential election as the result of misconduct by Ohio's Secretary of State, Ken Blackwell, and negligence and incompetence among some local election officials.

After two close presidential elections, as well as state and local races that were too close to call, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) launched its own in-depth investigation of Ohio's 2004 election. "Democracy at Risk: The 2004 Election in Ohio," revealed that many Ohio voters were dissatisfied with their electoral experience. From antiquated voting machines in urban minority precincts, to untrained poll workers who turned away thousands of citizens who showed up at the wrong polling sites, to the unusually high number of provisional ballots, our study indicated that electoral inefficiencies left Ohio voters feeling cheated or disenfranchised in a very close presidential race.

As Chair of the DNC's Voting Rights Institute, I was astounded to learn just how dysfunctional our electoral system has become and why this is a serious impediment to successful elections for Democratic candidates at all levels. It's time for Democrats to get smart about election administration and take an active role in cleaning up laws and adopting new ones to protect every citizen's right to vote.

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The strength of our democracy depends on the faith of every voter in the integrity of our elections. But it is obvious from the voices of those who stood in long lines in Ohio and elsewhere that confidence in the integrity of our electoral system is waning, even as democracy blooms abroad.

The right of all citizens to vote, and to have that vote accurately counted, is the bedrock on which our democracy is founded. Nothing is more fundamental to our freedom than public confidence in the integrity of basic democratic institutions. We used to be the envy of the world because our elections were hard fought, but the results were rarely questioned. This is no longer the case.

It is America's calling to defend and expand liberty, and to take an honest look at who, and how many, were denied the right to vote in 2004. Given past endeavors by some Republicans to marginalize voting rights concerns, it is up to Democrats to push for the adoption of tough new standards to ensure that no American is ever denied the right to vote.

For starters, the Democratic Party has worked tirelessly in urging the U.S. Congress and the Bush Administration to fully fund the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and to assist states in improving election administration. While most states are attempting to comply with HAVA's mandates, there is confusion and a lack of consistency regarding the implementation of some of HAVA's requirements and many states are out of compliance.

Last year, a bipartisan Commission on Federal Election Reform co-chaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker released a report recommending, among other things, that "Congress should pass a law requiring that all voting machines be equipped with a voter-verifiable paper audit trail....(a) to increase citizens' confidence that their vote will be counted accurately, (b) to allow for a recount, (c) to provide a backup in cases of loss of votes due to computer malfunction, and (d) to test – through a random selection of machines – whether the paper result is the same as the electronic result."

Twenty-six states have now implemented requirements for voter-verified paper records and 13 more and the District of Columbia have such a requirement pending. In order to assure equal protection under the law, the independent auditability of the vote count must be consistently and legitimately protected in *all* states. We must reject the privatization of the vote count through the use of privately controlled electronic devices running on trade-secret-protected and undisclosed software. This practice is fundamentally at odds with government of the people, by the people and for the people. We must demand regulations that mandate transparent election administration, requiring voting equipment vendors to disclose their source code so that the equipment can be examined by third parties.

In addition to requiring a voter-verified paper record for every vote cast, we must urge lawmakers to require a significant percentage of random, unannounced, hand-counted audits of voter-verified paper records as a check on the results reported by electronic equipment.

We must work with local election officials to prohibit voting machines from having wireless or Internet connections and require that all voting equipment be used exclusively for voting purposes. Election officials must make certain that all eligible voters are able to cast their votes without impediment, regardless of physical or language limitation and that ballots are easy to comprehend and voting equipment is uncomplicated to use. Regulations must be adopted mandating that all voting machines used in local, state and federal elections – including, but not limited to direct recording electronic touch-screen machines – be certified as accurate and tamper-proof.

Local party officials must effectively train election monitors and poll watchers to enforce local election laws and procedures. We must continue to advocate for the adoption of election policies which require every ballot to be in a form that voters can read, verify and manually place in the ballot box.

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In the post-2000 campaign environment, we must work with local officials to ensure that manual county-wide recount procedures are in place before the vote is certified when manual vote tabulation detects a strong possibility of election equipment tampering.

Party leaders must work with state and local lawmakers to adopt regulations which preclude election officials from substituting efficiency for accuracy, so that voters can trust that every vote will be counted as cast.

It is vitally important that campaign personnel review the implementation of all HAVA guidelines, which protect voters from unlawful purges; reinforce the entitlement of voters to cast provisional ballots in federal elections; clarify the proper places and procedures for casting provisional ballots and establish a presumption in favor of validity; and clearly mandate that provisional ballots shall be counted in the most generous possible manner in every state, thereby maximizing and equalizing the value of the right to cast one.

Every Democratic campaign must work with state and local government officials prior to Election Day to ensure the equitable distribution of voting equipment and supplies to all polling places. This is crucial in order to avoid a repeat of those circumstances in 2004 when voters left polling stations out of sheer frustration due to excessively long lines and malfunctioning voting machinery.

It is also imperative that Democrats actively call upon the Republican Party to help stop voter fraud, voter suppression and intimidation, including the use of deceptive practices such as changing polling sites and placing off duty security guards at polling stations explicitly to harass certain voters on Election Day. Although it is an uphill battle, we must be relentless in pressuring federal and state lawmakers to outlaw these bogus practices.

While President Bush champions freedom and democracy elsewhere, I hope that Democrats will continue their call for clean, transparent and honest elections here at home. Before freedom marched in Baghdad, it took a stand here in America. Let's continue to fight for the right of all Americans to vote, to participate in elections to select those who will govern a free people and yes, to hold those elected accountable to our democratic principles and ideals.

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GIVE "COMPETENCE" ANOTHER TRY: THIS TIME IT MIGHT WORK.*Elaine Kamarck*

In the 1988 presidential election, Michael Dukakis was pilloried – rightly – for running a soulless campaign whose message consisted of the phrase, "It's not about ideology, it's about competence." But times change. That was before the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina so overwhelmed us with its incompetence that America was humiliated before the world. The response to Katrina, however, was only the most dramatic in a long series of government failures, from the planning of the war in Iraq, to the failure of the occupation, to the design of the Medicare prescription drug policy. At the Kennedy School of Government, where I teach, we have traditionally begun the required course in government management with a case study on the Chicago heat wave of 1995 where hundreds of people died before the government even knew what was happening. The message we try to convey to our students of government every year was brought home to the entire country in September of 2005: when the private sector fails to manage organizations well, people lose money; when the public sector fails to manage well, people die.

For decades, Democrats have suffered under the political albatross of being the party of big government. But in the past decade we have had several dramatic "teaching moments" in America; moments that just might allow us to change the political conversation going forward and get out from under this millstone. First came the government shutdown in early 1996. Lots of Americans learned that the federal government was everywhere – it was funding pieces of their state and local governments and it was funding charities like Catholic Charities. President Clinton won a fairly dramatic victory over that shutdown – to the surprise of the Republicans who had believed perhaps too much in their own small government rhetoric.

Next came the tragedy of 9/11 where the heroes were government workers – from the New York firefighters who ran into the collapsing buildings, to the cops, to the airmen, seamen and soldiers who took off into Afghanistan. In the aftermath of 9/11 "trust in government" leapt higher than it had been at any time since the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nothing like a tragedy to make people appreciate when and why government matters. While the trust-in-government numbers came down to more normal levels in the months after 9/11, the temporary spike served as a useful reminder that, in the end, the private sector does not keep us safe.

And then came Hurricane Katrina where government at all levels, but especially federal government, failed spectacularly. Once again, everyone understood that we needed a government that works. No one seriously thought that the private sector could have rescued New Orleans.

In just four years tragedy showed us that sometimes we really need government and that when we really need it we need it to work. Just as Democrats had no trouble agreeing on a message of opposition to Social Security privatization, they have had no trouble agreeing on a message about the incompetence of the current government. Focusing on competence allows those Democrats who voted for the war and those who voted against the war to have a unified message. No wonder that the opening of the Democratic response to the 2006 State of the Union focused on competence. The new Governor of Virginia, Tim Keane, summed up the argument as follows: "You know, no matter what political philosophy you hold or what state you call home, you have a right to expect that your government can deliver results."¹

Competence is not a very rousing theme. It is not easily turned into a convention cheer. But for the upcoming mid-term elections it's not a bad start for the Democrats. For six years now the Bush Administration has beaten up Democrats over values: patriotism, family, life – you name it. But they are in a tailspin now. Why? They can't deliver results. They can't get armor to troops in the field in Iraq, they can't design a Medicare

¹ Quoted in *The Washington Post*, January 31, 2006, CQ Transcript.

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prescription drug program, they can't save lives in a hurricane, they can't protect American ports. This list of what they *can't* do is fairly impressive. Think about it for a moment – maybe a political party that hates government is doomed to govern badly.

It is not just that competence is back – over the past six years the entire basis for disliking Democrats has been turned upside down. In 2001 a Republican president inherited a budget surplus; by 2008 a Republican president and a Republican Congress will have bequeathed record budget deficits. Numerous conservative think tanks and scholars have pointed this out as well as Democrats.² So just who is the party of big government these days? And, perhaps more importantly, aren't we entitled to some competence for all that money?

Republicans will try to argue that the Bush deficits are all about military and homeland defense, but the Cato Institute, not exactly a bastion of liberal apologists, has shown the fallacy of that argument. Looking at spending policy back to President Johnson, Stephen Slivinski says, "Contrast that with Bush's presidency so far. He has presided over massive increases in almost every category. This is a dramatic change from previous presidents, when increases in defense spending were offset by cuts in non-defense spending..."³

Democrats have a chance to morph their image as the party of government into the party of government that works. They should put together a robust reform agenda that focuses on the adaptations the federal government needs to make to protect America in this new era. To do that they should start with one simple but powerful proposal (championed by Senator Hillary Clinton): take FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) out of DHS (the Department of Homeland Security).

A government that can "deliver results" will stand in stark contrast to the current situation. Democrats voted for and against the Iraq War, but none of them thinks it has been led wisely. Democrats are the long-time champions of a prescription drug program, but no one thinks the bureaucratic mess that seniors are now muddling through is what the doctor ordered. Democrats do not have to solve every internal disagreement they have in order to go to the country with a pretty convincing case that the Administration is the "gang that can't shoot straight" and that allowing a pliant and beaten Republican majority to control Congress has allowed a bad situation to get even worse.

Looking beyond the mid-terms, a government reform agenda can do for the Democratic candidate of 2008 what "reinventing government" did for Bill Clinton in 1992: show that he or she is attuned to the fact that government needs to work better and more efficiently than it does now. This was an important message for Clinton to deliver in 1992 since it helped him show people that he was a "different kind of Democrat." In 2008 a new version of that message, re-worked around the theme of government competence, will be a welcome change from the record of the previous Administration.

In the long run focusing on the competence issue will be the political equivalent of making lemonade out of lemons. Democrats need to take the fact that they created the modern federal government and show that they are uniquely qualified to make it work. This means a non-stop reform effort, one that will sometimes displease the government workers unions that now constitute the largest portion of the American labor movement. This means taking on entrenched interest groups that benefit from government ineptness. This means a constant drive towards productivity in government as a way of moving the Democrats away from the party of big government to the party that provides the government that you need.

²Most conservatives are as appalled at the spend-and-spend record of the Bush Administration as are Democrats. See, for instance, "\$20,000 per Household: The Highest Level of Federal Spending Since World War II," by Brian M. Riedl, Background #1710, The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

³See, Stephen Slivinski, "Bush Beats Johnson: Comparing the Presidents," (Washington, D.C., The Cato Institute) Tax and Budget Bulletin, # 26, October 2005.

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RAID THE RED ZONE*Will Marshall*

After stewing in impotent rage for six long years, Democrats at last see their chance to stage a comeback. President Bush's public approval is in free fall, the GOP-controlled Congress is begrimed by corruption scandals and special interest pig-outs, and conservatives are falling out over basic questions of war, government spending, immigration and environmental health.

Let's enjoy the moment. But let's also resist the temptation to see the GOP's swoon as evidence of an irreversible slide, or of a chastened public finally willing to admit Democrats were right all along. The same voters who are disillusioned with the Bush Republicans consistently tell pollsters they have yet to hear a persuasive case for change from the other side.

Still, the oh-so-slender GOP majority is in trouble because independents and moderates seem ready to defect in droves. If Democrats can make inroads among these voters this year, then pick a 2008 nominee whose themes resonate in red states as well as blue, we could fashion a new progressive majority.

How to seize the opportunity? There are basically two choices. One, favored by many liberals and lefty bloggers, sees partisan belligerence as the key to mobilizing a Democratic majority. The idea is that by intensifying attacks on our opponents, we can galvanize the party faithful while also projecting the strength of conviction that swing voters have supposedly found lacking among Democrats.

But this approach is based more on wishful thinking than rigorous electoral analysis. The party's core problem is not a pandemic of cowardice among its leaders, it is that there are not enough Democratic voters. Since the late 1990s, Democrats have been stuck at about 48 percent of the vote in national elections. Moreover, polarizing the electorate along ideological lines plays into Karl Rove's hands because conservatives outnumber liberals three to two. Democrats need to win moderates by large margins, but moderates by definition resist strident partisanship and ideological litmus tests. The politics of polarization repels them.

To successfully raid the political red zone – the South, Mountain West, Great Plains and lower Midwest – Democrats instead need a politics of persuasion. It starts by acknowledging that moderates and independents have substantive reasons for swinging Republican in recent elections, including persistent doubts about Democrats on security, taxes and the role of government, as well as moral questions. Progressives need to meet these doubts head on, marshaling facts, arguments and new ideas to change the way persuadable voters think about Democrats.

For this, the party needs themes and ideas that limit its liabilities with persuadable voters and exploit growing fissures in the GOP coalition, as well as building on traditional Democratic strengths. Party strategists should pay close attention to Democrats who have won and governed effectively in red states. Tim Kaine's victory in Virginia last year was especially encouraging as he did well in the fast-growing suburbs Bush overwhelming won in 2004. No less than three red-state Democrats, Bill Richardson, Tom Vilsack and Mark Warner, are hoping to parlay their local success into a race for the White House.

Their knowledge of tricky cultural terrain is essential, because building a durable majority requires that Democrats be competitive in every part of the country. We cannot continue to spot the GOP thirty states in national elections and have any chance of recapturing Congress or the White House. But cartography need not be destiny – not if Democrats finally get serious about rolling back the GOP's red tide in America's heartland.

To do that, Democrats must craft a creative governing agenda that is credible on national security, consonant with middle-class moral sentiments and economic aspirations, and committed to the radical reform of politics-as-usual in Washington.

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Put Security First

Americans should not be complacent about the fact that we have not been hit by another terrorist attack since 9/11. The front in the struggle against Islamist extremism has simply shifted elsewhere: to Europe, Iraq, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. In fact, the jihadist contagion is spreading, not contracting, as the Bush administration has somehow managed to lose ground in the ideological war against a fanatical creed that exults in barbaric violence against civilians.

This means security will continue to dominate national politics for the foreseeable future. It is axiomatic that the American people are not likely to give power to a party they do not trust to defend their values and keep them safe.

Democrats therefore must close the national security confidence gap that has dogged them since the era of Vietnam protests. This requires reclaiming, not abandoning, the party's venerable tradition of muscular liberalism – the Truman-Kennedy legacy that helped America win the Cold War. Updated for new threats, it offers the best answer to the challenge of Islamist extremism today.

Specifically, Democrats need to do three things. First, we must put security first – and mean it. No more trying to change the subject to domestic policy, where we feel more comfortable. After World War II, the party's platforms routinely led with national security, and its leaders consciously linked America's defense of democratic values abroad to the pursuit of liberal goals at home. It is time for Democrats to be a full-spectrum party again, once more integrating our international and domestic policies in a seamless vision for advancing progressive ideals.

Second, Democrats must convince the public that we are ready to take over the fight against Islamist extremism. We must offer a comprehensive, long-range strategy that employs all our nation's might, not just the blunt instrument of military power, to delegitimize the jihadist ideology and patiently nurture the spread of liberal ideas and democratic institutions throughout the greater Middle East.

Third, Democrats must recognize that since 9/11, patriotism has become the most potent values issue in US politics. More than anything else, we need to show the country a party unified behind a progressive patriotism that is determined to defend liberal values against Salafist totalitarians, succeed in Afghanistan and Iraq, close a yawning cultural gap between Democrats and the military, and summon a new spirit of national service and shared sacrifice to counter today's politics of polarization.

Close the Cultural Gap

It is not enough to convince working families that Democrats will make them safer and take America's side in international conflicts. A winning heartland strategy must also assure them that Democrats share their values.

The perceived erosion of "moral values" has played a key role in GOP successes in this decade, especially with rural voters and women. Although married women voted for Clinton in the 1990s, they preferred George Bush over Al Gore by 15 points in 2000. By 2004, the "marriage gap" had widened to 19 points.

What is it about getting married and having children that inclines parents toward the GOP? Barbara Whitehead calls it "lifestage conservatism," noting that the transition to parenthood produces a new outlook on culture:

Parents have a beef with the popular culture. As they see it, the culture is getting ever more violent, materialistic, and misogynistic, and they are losing their ability to protect their kids from morally corrosive images and messages. To be credible, Democrats must acknowledge the legitimacy of parents' beef and make it unmistakably clear that they are on parents' side.

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Whitehead advises Democrats to begin simply by honoring the vital work parents do in teaching their kids right from wrong. We should also equip parents with better tools to shield their kids from the onslaught of the consumer culture and aggressive corporate marketing campaigns. And there is no good reason for progressives to exempt the entertainment industry from the same kind of accountability we demand from corporations in general.

Along with a progressive, pro-family policy, Democrats need to reach out to religious voters. As Bill Galston has written, religious observance is now the most important cultural fault line in U.S. politics. On religion as on other culturally fraught issues, Democrats need to define themselves, lest voters default to GOP caricatures of a militantly secular party that has launched a "war on Christians."

Democrats should start by affirming the formative role that faith has always played in shaping America's civic culture. They should engage skeptical religious voters, not to pander to them but to challenge them to look at issues other than abortion and gay rights through the prism of their faith. All major faiths enjoin their adherents to care for the sick and the poor, to work for justice, not just material gain, and to preserve the natural world. Indeed, U.S. evangelical leaders increasingly speak of "creation care" – a religious duty to be responsible stewards of nature – and some have split openly with the Bush administration, which has done nothing to curtail global warming. This opens fascinating possibilities for progressives to forge alliances with evangelicals around a "green gospel" agenda to stop doing irreversible damage to the earth's climate.

Of course it also helps to pick candidates who can relate genuinely to religious voters. A turning point in the Virginia governor's race, for instance, came when Kaine's Republican opponent attacked him for opposing the death penalty. Kaine assured voters he would enforce the state's capital punishment laws, even though his Catholic faith led him to oppose the death penalty. By affirming the role that religion plays in shaping his moral outlook, Kaine won respect from socially conservative voters without changing his stance on the death penalty.

Champion Middle-Class Aspiration

It is an article of faith among liberals that cultural politics is preventing voters from recognizing that their economic interests lie with Democrats. There are two problems with this thesis: first, in post-industrial America, economic or material concerns don't play as large a role in shaping voters' choices as they previously did. Today's voters do not neatly compartmentalize their pocketbook worries and their moral concerns. Second, as labor economist Stephen Rose shows in a forthcoming Progressive Policy Institute study, middle-class voters do not really see Democrats as champions of their economic interests. Instead, they identify Democrats most with means-tested social programs aimed at poor and working poor families.

In fact, the white working middle class (voters making between \$30,000 and \$75,000 a year) – once the heart of the New Deal coalition – is now the mainstay of the Republican majority. According to a study by Third Way, Bush beat John Kerry by a whopping 22 points among white middle-class voters.

The fast-growing suburbs and exurbs are these voters' natural habitat. Bush won them overwhelmingly. A year later, however, Kaine ran strongly in key Virginia suburbs by avoiding highly partisan attacks, affirming his religious beliefs, and addressing voters' concerns about growth, congestion and traffic.

Likewise, Democrats need a positive economic message that speaks to these voters' aspirations, not their fears. Above all, they want to hear ideas that can help them get ahead and realize their ambitions, not alarmist rhetoric about how globalization is crushing their hopes.

Push More Radical Reforms

For Democrats, there is one and only one benefit of being out of power: the chance to hang the corrupt status quo in Washington around GOP necks for a change and recast themselves as the insurgent party of radical reform. Yet we have flubbed the job so far, because we have been unwilling to embrace political

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and policy reforms big enough to match the problems before us. Faced with corruption, cronyism and misgovernment on a scale not seen since the "Great Barbecue" of the Grant years, Democrats have shown an unerring instinct for the capillaries rather than the political jugular.

Where are the big ideas that can protect our political system against the machinations of future Delays, Cunninghams and Abramoffs? Gift and travel bans and new disclosure requirements for lobbyists fall risibly short of the systemic changes we need to break up the incumbency self-protection racket, allow non-rich citizens to run for Congress and reduce the power of private money in our democracy.

At a minimum, Democrats ought to insist on replacing Congress' toothless ethics committees with an independent body that can bring criminal charges against errant lawmakers. They should also back state efforts to create nonpartisan redistricting bodies charged with increasing the number of districts that are truly competitive. That would both undermine the structural underpinnings of today's polarized politics and boost voter interest in elections. Most important, we should call for some form of public financing for Congressional elections. Nothing short of public funding will truly break the nexus between private cash, legislation and campaigns, or restore public confidence in the basic integrity of our national political system. Although pundits view it as quixotic, public financing may also be the only hope for passing progressive reforms across the spectrum of national needs, since the current system makes it very easy for special interests to block change even if they cannot always order up specific legislative outcomes.

Finally, Democrats need a broader agenda for policy reform, not just political reform. Historians likely will look back on the two Bush terms as the years the locusts ate. Our most pressing national problems – fiscal profligacy, over-consumption and regressive taxation, economic insecurity and inequality, runaway health costs and the vulnerability of uninsured millions, climate change and a debilitating petroleum addiction – have either been aggravated or ignored. Americans are tumbling to the reality that conservatives' animus toward government makes them lousy at governing.

This should be a boon to Democrats, the natural party of public remedy. But crafting new ways to modernize underperforming public sector systems will bring the party's unresolved tensions to the surface. Many Democrats, for example, cling to the illusion that Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid can be preserved in their 1935 and 1965 incarnations. They reject later retirement as well as progressive indexing or means testing of benefits – both necessary to create a modern retirement system for a rapidly aging society. Some imagine latent public support for a government-dominated health program like Britain's or Canada's. Others continue to defend an archaic public education monopoly that is chronically failing poor and minority kids.

It is time for Democrats to abandon their "just say no" stance toward Social Security reform and instead offer a progressive plan for modernizing the system. We should dramatically expand public school choice, by making it possible for every public school to become an independent, self-managed charter school freed from the stifling grip of centralized bureaucracies. We should insist on a national "cap and trade" system for carbon and other greenhouse gases, a step that would also hasten the development of plug-in hybrid cars and other clean energy technologies and fuels. We should offer a tough plan to reimpose fiscal discipline, reduce the Bush budget deficits and make America's tax code fair and progressive again. Following the example of Massachusetts, we should propose a decentralized path to universal health care, using a mix of public subsidies, access to purchasing pools similar to the one Members of Congress use and individual mandates to make sure that young and healthy people do not get a "free ride" on the system. And more.

Democrats face a big strategic choice. We can continue to be the default party, defining ourselves chiefly by partisan combativeness. Or we can become the reform party, offering compelling ideas for solving national problems. In theory we could do both but in practice it is a lot easier to unite the party around antipathy to conservatives than a new vision for governing. That is the well-worn path of least resistance, but Democrats today should play for higher stakes.

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THE PARTY OF PROSPERITY?**In the age of globalization, what's a Democrat to do?***Harold Meyerson*

We live in a time when there's no such thing as purely good economic news. When the GDP surges – as it did by 4.8 percent in the first quarter of this year – something always lags behind, and that something is almost always the income of ordinary Americans. In that same first quarter, for instance, worker compensation rose by just 2.4 percent – half the rate (4.8 percent) by which inflation grew.

Save for the wealthiest of our countrymen, we are all of us laggards. The American economy booms; the American people are left behind. Once upon a time, in the period of great post-World War Two prosperity, median income rose at precisely the same rate as productivity (both increased by 104 percent between 1947 and 1973). Since then, however, productivity gains have outstripped the average American's income by a rate of three-to-one, and in recent years, by eight-to-one. As Northwestern University economists Ian Dew-Becker and Robert Gordon have demonstrated, over the past couple of decades, all the income from productivity gains has gone to the wealthiest ten percent of Americans.

One economy vanisheth, another – a meaner one – taketh its place. GM and Ford announce they will close roughly 30 factories, while the median wage for newer hires among such industrial powerhouses as Caterpillar Tractor is now half that of their veteran workers. Or, to depress ourselves further, consider a survey of the nation's 361 metropolitan areas, which account for 86 percent of the nation's GDP. It found that the average wage of jobs lost in the recession of 2001-2003 was \$43,629, while the average wage of jobs created in 2004-2005 was \$34,378 – a cozy 21 percent decline.

Worse yet, it's no longer clear that one of the lines that Bill Clinton frequently used in his 1992 campaign – "What you earn will be the result of what you learn" – is even remotely true, now that so much highly-skilled work can be sent electronically. Last year, economists J. Bradford Jensen of the Institute for International Economics and Lori Kletzer of the University of California at Santa Cruz concluded that within the service sector, it's skilled workers in general and scientists, mathematicians, and engineers in particular who are susceptible to having their jobs off-shored. Indeed, over the past half-decade, the United States has generated just 70,000 new jobs in engineering and architecture. In such an economy, sending more people to college, while a social good in itself, may not prove an economic panacea. In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has concluded, 26.9 percent of all jobs in the U.S. required college degrees; by 2012, that will rise to 27.9 percent – one measly point.

The middle is falling out of the American economy. Globalization, immigration, de-unionization, the decline of manufacturing, and the rise of a financial sector and culture enamored solely of shareholder value have combined to imperil one of America's defining achievements – the creation of the world's first majority middle-class economy. At the same time, they have also combined to negate virtually all our theories about how to create mass prosperity. Oh, there are things the Democrats could do in power that would have very positive effects. Nationalized health insurance would take a major burden off employers with older work forces and enable them to compete on a more level playing field with foreign companies whose health care costs are picked up by their governments. The minimum wage could be raised and indexed. Labor laws could be amended so that workers could feel free again to join unions without fear of firing.

But none of these changes would basically alter the DNA of American financial and corporate institutions, which ceaselessly impels them to disaggregate firms, out-source work, and find the cheapest labor in a world brimming with cheap labor. In such a world, generating broadly shared prosperity amounts to squaring a circle.

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This is a crisis for the nation, and it is a particular crisis, and challenge, for Democrats and liberals. At bottom, the Democrats – and parties of the left and center-left across the planet – are parties of broadly shared prosperity. Since the days of Jefferson and Jackson, that has been the one defining attribute the Democrats have largely clung to (though there have been periods – the presidency of Grover Cleveland, for instance – when they have happily dropped it).

Today, there's not a political tendency on the planet that has much in the way of plausible notions as to how to preserve mass prosperity in the advanced economies in the face of the new global realities. The long-term political consequences of this dilemma, however, may not be equally distributed among all political tendencies. The alternative to a politics of economic advancement is often a politics of social and cultural resentment. The steadily declining income of white working-class males over the past several decades, for instance, correlates to their increasingly rightwing voting habits. We may not be able to prove that correlation is causal, but I doubt it's entirely coincidental.

In any given election, the inability to lay out a plausible scenario for renewing mass prosperity is not likely to leap out as the Democrats' most glaring deficiency – particularly since the Democrats' economics both are and are seen to be more friendly to the ordinary American than the Republicans'. But the objective reality of downward mobility, of the vanishing of an entire stratum of secure, middle-income jobs, creates a volatile political terrain on which nationalist, immigrant-bashing, union-hating demagogues may thrive. If Democrats can not assure broadly shared prosperity, a floodgate of reaction will at some point likely burst.

What, then, should the Democrats be advocating? I have three suggestions, in ascending order of difficulty.

First, when they retake power, the one action that could most strengthen their base, politically and economically, would be to enact the Employees' Free Choice Act, which would enable workers to join unions without fear of firing. The new Change To Win Federation estimates that there are 44 million non-union private-sector jobs in such non-off-shorable sectors as construction, hospitality, transportation and health care. Over time, the EFCA could lead to the betterment of low-wage service sector jobs, just as the Wagner Act transformed over time the economic life of America's industrial workers.

Second, they need to revive the idea of industrial policy. In such proposals as the Apollo Project (backed by unions and environmentalists), which would create tax credits for businesses that retrofit and become otherwise more efficient; or the consortium of Midwestern states (proposed by political scientist Joel Rogers and economist Dan Luria) that would improve the infrastructure of and give benefits to firms that in-source their supplies from the Midwestern region; or Barack Obama's bill in which the government assumes some of the auto companies' health care costs so long as they invest their savings in hybrid technology, we see a movement to shore up the nation's industrial sector. The nation and the Democrats would profit by more such movement.

Finally, and here we move from the difficult to what may be the near-impossible, the Democrats need to disenthral themselves from many of the values and mindsets of the financial community. They need more Elliott Spitzers and Phil Angelideses to ride herd on corporate abuses and to invest public funds with an eye to social responsibility. More sweepingly, they need to make corporate and financial institutions answerable not just to shareholders and top management, but to their employees and communities as well. Doing that will take a reform and redefinition of corporate power at least as sweeping as that of the New Deal. Given the increasingly dominant role of finance in filling the party's coffers (the Rockefeller Republicans are all Democrats now), and in defining the party's "responsible" economics, this will be anything but easy. But the grim reality is that in the age of globalization, American capitalism as currently practiced is eroding mass prosperity in the nation as a whole. In that contest, Democrats' allegiance must be to their nation.

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DO WE CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE?*John W. Wilhelm, President/Hospitality Industry, UNITE HERE*

If demography is destiny, then the Democratic Party may be destined to permanent minority status if it is unwilling to squarely appeal to the surging immigrant population, especially Latinos. Consider a few critical trends. (Hispanic statistics are used here because they are available, but similar trends pertain to those coming to the U.S. from all over the world.)

- *In just the last four years, the Hispanic population in the United States has grown by 14 percent to 40 million people versus only 2 percent growth for the non-Hispanic population. By the year 2020, the projected Hispanic population will top 60 million.*
- *As the Latino population grows, its composition is undergoing an underlying change. Births to Hispanic immigrants, rather than immigration itself, will be the key source of population growth in the near future. By 2020, second-generation Hispanics (i.e., citizens) are projected to reach 21.7 million in number, representing 36 percent of the overall Hispanic population, up from 9.9 million in 2000, when they represented 28 percent. As the white and African-American baby boom generation reaches retirement age, young Hispanics are filling in. In the year 2000, the U.S. Census reported that the median age of Hispanics, at 26 years, was nearly ten years younger than non-Hispanics. More than one-third of Hispanics are under the age of eighteen. These trends will continue regardless of our border policies, and native-born, English-speaking, U.S.-educated Hispanics will have a much greater voting impact on the country than their parents did.*
- *The Hispanic population is growing faster in much of the Republican Party-dominated South than anywhere else in the United States. North Carolina (394%), Arkansas (337%), Georgia (300%), Tennessee (278%), South Carolina (211%) and Alabama (208%) registered the highest rate of increase in their Hispanic populations of any states in the U.S. between 1990 and 2000, except for Nevada (217%). To be sure, these numbers started from a small base – between 293,000 and 1.2 million in the six southern states – but the trend is expected to continue. Notably, Hispanic voters in the South gave George Bush 53 percent of their votes in 2004.*
- *The Hispanic electorate is growing much faster than the non-Hispanic electorate. Between the 2000 vote and the election this November, the number of eligible Latino voters will have increased by about 20 percent – six times faster than the non-Hispanic population. Based on the most recent population data available, 40 percent of Hispanics, 15.7 million people, were eligible voters in 2003. Going forward, applying the same eligibility percentage to the expected 2020 Hispanic population suggests that it will grow to 24 million eligible voters, an increase of 52 percent.*

Democrats may gloat that the Republican Party's intramural brawl over immigration will do for national Democrats what California Governor Pete Wilson's Prop. 187 did in the 1990s for Democrats in California, namely turn the Republican Party into a minority party.

Not so fast. While the leadership of a number of Democrats in the current immigration debate is helpful, too many Democrats (and their political consultants) are frightened of this issue. Indeed, a March 28 survey by the Center for American Progress shows legal immigrants giving both political parties low marks for the job they have done so far on immigration policy. While just 22 percent of Republicans received a positive rating, Democrats and the President scored little better at 38 percent and 32 percent respectively. This suggests that immigrant voter attitudes are still in play. Many of these new arrivals are newcomers to the U.S. political system, with no strong loyalties to any political institution and uncertain in their partisanship.

And who knows – the enlightened wing of the Republican Party shows signs of standing up to the Tancredo wing and rescuing their party from losing this growing bloc of voters. If Democrats treat it as a spectator sport, we can expect to see a continued erosion of votes for Democratic politicians.

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The Bush experience is instructive. First as Texas governor and then in the White House, Mr. Bush has wisely tried to burnish his pro-immigrant image. And it is working. Among Hispanics in particular, he has made enormous progress. Bob Dole won 21 percent of the Hispanic vote in 1996; Mr. Bush improved that to 35 percent in 2000 and again to 44 percent in 2004.

The recent unprecedented outpouring of immigrants (not just Latinos) in marches all across the country ought to make clear that politicians and their parties risk losing this increasing bloc of voters by endorsing punishing measures aimed at immigrants.

In the context of a deeply polarized electorate, the shallow attachments many Latinos have to political parties in the U.S. make them attractive potential recruits to both parties. How attractive?

- Arizona, Florida, New Mexico and Nevada together have 47 electoral votes.
- In Arizona, where over 1.5 million votes were cast in the last presidential election, the Latino voting-age population is 16 percent of the electorate. Eighty percent of Latinos are native-born. There are about 337,600 unregistered Latino voters.
- In Nevada, Latinos make up 13 percent of the voting-age population. Since the last presidential election, the number of eligible Latinos in Nevada has increased by about 50 percent, and Latinos account for about half of all the increase in the Nevada electorate. About two-thirds of the Latino eligible voters in Nevada are native-born. There are an estimated 126,600 unregistered Latino voters.
- In Florida, 14 percent of the voting-age population is Latino. The fastest growth has been among native-born Latinos, who account for 83 percent of the new eligible Latinos. There are an estimated 568,700 unregistered Latino voters. Florida Hispanics increasingly are from countries other than Cuba.
- In New Mexico, Latinos comprise 40 percent of the voting-age population. An estimated 203,900 Latinos are unregistered.

Just over the horizon, a political tidal wave is swelling in immigrant communities. It is still anybody's guess who will get drowned out and who will ride the wave.

There is, of course, much more than the future of politics at stake here.

Economic growth is also at stake: because the native-born American work force will shrink over the next two decades, continued immigration is critical to our ability to grow the economy.

Most of all, this is a justice issue.

America was built by successive waves of immigrants, whether they came here voluntarily or involuntarily. The genius of this country has been its repeated ability to rejuvenate and re-energize itself with new immigrants, to fight against nativism and racism, to enable all of them to become Americans and to stand, eventually, alongside earlier arrivals, all woven together into the great tapestry of America.

Memories of who stands up for justice last a long time. Catholics voted overwhelmingly Democratic for generations, stemming from nativist Republican anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic positions in the first part of the twentieth century. African Americans have voted overwhelmingly Democratic for almost fifty years, in spite of the legacy of Lincoln, because of the civil rights movement.

Justice speaks loud. All Americans should follow the welcome leadership of many Catholics on immigration as a human rights issue. The fact that the political future is also at stake should be a bonus.

NOTE: This article draws from U.S. Census data, published survey data from the Pew Hispanic Center, published survey research of the Tarrance/Bendixen Firms, and published research of the Center for American Progress.

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REBUILDING A DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY BY BROADENING THE BASE AND REACHING OUT

William Galston

MAY 3, 2006

My role in this new venture is to serve as the designated New Democrat. I need not remind readers that the past two decades have witnessed a number of intra-party disagreements between New Democrats and others over policy and strategy. We have not resolved all these disputes and as will become evident in this inaugural issue, we cannot set them all aside. Still, it is necessary and proper to unite wherever we can. Fortunately the areas of potential convergence are extensive.

Short-term: the 2006 election

For 2006, the emphasis on competence (Kamarck) and the basic choice between our current course and a new direction (Borosage's classic "Had enough?" slogan) is likely to work about as well as a more substantive and affirmative message. While I have no objection to working out and advancing a policy agenda around which the party can unite, as Democracy Corps among others has proposed, I believe that 2006 will principally be a referendum on incumbents and the status quo, not a choice between two competing agendas – much as the disastrous 1994 election was more about the public's negative judgment of Clinton's first two years than about the Contract with America. I find it suggestive, and not particularly encouraging, that only one of the seven planks of the proposed Democracy Corps agenda focuses on national security issues at all, and none touches on security issues beyond our borders. Despite the polling data, I'm not sure this agenda sends the right message for 2006, and I'm positive that it's inadequate for 2008 and beyond.

Longer-term: 2008 and beyond

I turn now to a lengthier discussion of the farther future. Before turning to some nettlesome general issues, let me continue the theme of convergence and party unity.

ELECTORAL REFORM. Of course we should strongly support fair and transparent elections, as Donna Brazile urges, and link it to a broad agenda of political reform along the lines Will Marshall has proposed. The more Democrats can become the party of reform, the easier it will be to paint Republicans into the corner of defending the status quo.

LABOR LAW REFORM. Of course workers should be able to join unions without fear of losing their jobs, as Harold Meyerson points out, and we should embrace reasonable measures that are likely to promote that goal. At the same time, we should not fool ourselves into believing that legal or procedural changes will set the stage for anything approaching a 1950s-style union movement in 21st-century America.

ENERGY. If in current circumstances Democrats cannot persuade the American people to support an ambitious package of policies to diversify our energy sources while relieving pressure on the environment, as Borosage recommends, we ought to go into a different line of work and make room for someone else to confront the conservative establishment. While this may be an example of "industrial policy," I'm less confident than Meyerson that this represents a broadly effective economic paradigm for our times.

HISPANICS. Although demography isn't destiny, of course it shapes our strategic options in important ways. So it is vital to pay attention, as John Wilhelm observes, to the growing and increasingly mobilized Hispanic community. Having said this, we should not enter this venture with questionable preconceptions. While it is too early to assess the lasting political effects of the current immigration controversy, we already know that the Hispanic community does not simply mirror African Americans or other core Democratic groups. As Hispanics rise into the middle class, they become significantly more likely to vote Republican.

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When Hispanics leave the Catholic Church, as many are doing, to join evangelical Protestant denominations, they tend to become less supportive of Democratic candidates. And finally, while it is tempting to play the immigration issue for short-term political gain among Hispanics, Democrats would be well advised to shape its stance with not only the real policy problems but also the entire electorate firmly in view. While softening the distinction between legal and illegal immigrants may well make moral and policy sense, for example, we must recognize that many Americans take this distinction very seriously and have defensible reasons for doing so.

EXPANDING THE MAP. It is easy to agree in principle with the proposition that Democrats should seek to expand the map and force Republicans to defend turf they now take for granted. The real question is the opportunity cost of pursuing that strategy. During the 1790s, when revolutionary France was threatened with foreign invasion, Napoleon summoned his generals and asked each to draw up a plan for defending the country. One general suggested arraying French troops evenly along the entire border, to which Bonaparte responded, "Are you trying to halt smuggling?" I hope that in 2008, we won't be posing a similar question to Howard Dean. The sad fact is that over the past generation, more and more regions, states, and counties as well as congressional districts have come to produce not just majorities but supermajorities for one party or the other. It would be wonderful if Republicans had to divert resources from the Midwest to the South and Great Plains, but it would take a political earthquake to make that happen. In a first-past-the-post system, it's not the percentage of the vote that matters; it's whether you win or lose. So money spent reducing the opposition's margin from 16 points to 8 is money wasted . . . unless you can bluff them into believing that a safe state is actually in play. We have to face the fact that for the foreseeable future, states with high concentrations of white evangelical Protestants are likely to remain beyond reach, while states whose populations are dominated by Catholics and mainline Protestants will be competitive.

I turn now to broader and more contested issues. I begin by strongly endorsing the thrust of Andrei Cherny and Ken Baer's remarks: we must invest in the ideas infrastructure, distinguish between ideas and policies, and focus on the former. "Ideas" in the politically relevant sense of the term combine public purposes, principled public reasons supporting those purposes with a serious, analysis of how the world works. As the world changes, our ideas must change as well.

NATIONAL SECURITY. 9/11 thrust national security back to the center of our nation's challenges and therefore our politics. We cannot pretend this isn't so, nor try to change the subject. As a party, we must ask and answer the following question: what are the essential global purposes of American power today? In doing so, we must avoid a *reductio ad Iraqum*. This is not a moderate versus liberal nor New Democratic versus traditional Democrat issue. Along with some other New Democrats, I have vociferously opposed the Iraq war, well before it started and ever since. But it is wrong to reason from our misadventures in Iraq to the conclusion that the United States should retreat into a defensive crouch behind its borders.

It is easy to say that most Democrats have no desire to police the world. (Stated baldly, that's probably true for most Americans.) But the fact is that much of the prosperity and tranquility the world now enjoys, and from which the American people also benefit, stems from the fact that the United States is providing transnational public goods – for example, freedom of the seas. Yes, we must reject the unilateralism, incompetence, and ideologically-driven unrealism of the Bush foreign policy, and must remedy the administration's failure to attend to the practical requisites of homeland security. But it would be bad politics and worse policy to embrace a 21st-century version of the "Come home, America" slogan that sent the Democratic Party into the political wilderness for a generation and opened the door to our foreign adversaries, with dangerous results in areas such as Africa, Central America, and the Middle East.

And when we are compelled to oppose our government's foreign policies, we must be careful to do so, and to be seen as doing so, in the right way – that is, patriotically. I am of the generation that saw a legitimate critique of the Vietnam War shade over into contempt for our leaders, overt support for our adversaries, and outright rejection of the United States and even of liberal democracy itself, with political consequences from

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which the Democratic Party suffers to this day. We must not allow the Michael Moores and Cindy Sheehans to lead us down this road again. And if this stance makes a portion of our "base" angry, so be it – just as the Republican party would have been better off resisting its base on the Terry Schiavo affair rather than pandering to it.

ECONOMICS. Harold Meyerson helps us get the analysis right by pointing to the ways in which globalization has changed the rules of the game, jeopardizing the Democratic Party's historic pursuit of broadly shared prosperity. Indeed, the challenge is in some respects graver than even Meyerson suggests. As pressure on U.S. corporations has intensified, the post-World War Two social contract has crumbled: health insurance is being slashed, traditional pensions are being frozen or terminated outright, and productivity gains are no longer being translated into fatter paychecks. Not surprisingly, despite healthy improvements in many of the traditional economic indicators, the majority of Americans register anxiety and insecurity as their dominant economic mood.

The real question is what to do about all this. One possible strategy is to use public power to force the private sector to resume its post-World War Two role. There is, for example, no good reason why the minimum wage shouldn't be raised and then indexed so that its purchasing power doesn't undergo extended periods of decline. But prospects of success are limited; there seems little chance that public policy can reverse the flight from defined benefit pensions or low-copayment health insurance. (Imagine trying to force automakers or airlines to do anything of the sort.) The conclusion I draw is that we need an entirely different strategy. We should free up the private sector to promote economic growth while using public instruments to foster economic security and equal opportunity. We will need a rejuvenated public sector to pick up economic security responsibilities that the U.S. private sector assumed almost by accident, as an outgrowth of World War Two-era wage and price controls. The choice for the next generation reduces to this: a significantly larger public sector, or a far meaner and less equal society.

That does not mean that progressive governance should revert to business as usual. Along with many others, I have concluded that the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) offers a better model for expanded health insurance than does a single-payer approach. Retirement security will require not only a sound Social Security system, but also mandatory savings with progressive matches for low and moderate income workers. Income growth and stability will require not only a higher minimum wage, but also an enhanced Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and a contributory program of wage insurance as well.

CULTURE AND RELIGION. While it is true that the U.S. population is somewhat more secular and more likely to be single than it was a generation ago, we remain the most believing and observant of advanced industrial societies, and 63 percent of the electorate is married. In this context, it is hardly reassuring to learn that according to a 2005 Pew Research Center survey, only 29 percent of Americans regard the Democratic Party as friendly to religion, down from 40 percent a year earlier. Nor is it comforting that Al Gore lost the married vote by 9 points and John Kerry by 15. (Bill Clinton just about broke even among these voters in both 1992 and 1996.) And it is astounding to learn that Republicans are winning majorities among voters who are moderates on abortion. We can debate the finer points of Will Marshall's suggestions for addressing these problems. What we cannot debate is the need to do so, as an urgent priority. In part this is a matter of public policy. For example, the "strict separation" between church and state that has hardened into orthodoxy among key Democratic interest groups is questionable as a matter of constitutional interpretation and lethal as a political stance. Another example: as Republicans have shifted from a frontal attack on the core holding of Roe to a focus on smaller questions such as parental notification and the partial birth procedure, Democrats have lost ground on the issue. The 2004 Republican convention featured an array of pro-choice Republicans in prime time speaking slots. Meanwhile, moderate Catholics still remember, and resent, pro-life Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey's exclusion from the 1992 Democratic convention. In the same vein, long-time Democrat and author Caitlin Flanagan reports receiving a torrent of contemptuous abuse from prominent Democratic women for publishing a book describing and defending her choice to be a "traditional" wife. We cannot go on like this and hope to regain lost cultural ground.

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I end this memo with American Politics 101. Because there are at least 50 percent more conservatives than liberals, Democrats can win national elections only if they gain supermajorities of voters who are neither liberal nor conservative. John Kerry's 54 percent of the moderate vote was good, but not good enough. And while moderates are a bit more like liberals than conservatives, their outlook and policy preferences are not identical to those of our liberal base, which gave 85 percent of its vote to Kerry. There is no – repeat, no – possibility that a politics of liberal purity that fully satisfies the base can garner a national majority anytime soon. Yes, we can choose to mount our own version of the Goldwater campaign and hope against hope that the politics of purity eventually turns into a majority. But given our country's downward slide, are we really willing to wait another 16 years to regain power? The alternative is a coalition in which the base understands that the majority of our majority can only come from people unlike themselves. And that means paying attention to what people in Columbus and Scranton think, not just California and the Upper West Side.

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COMMON GROUND EXPOSES HOW BIG ARE THE CHALLENGES

Stan Greenberg

MAY 15, 2006

This first online issue of *The Democratic Strategist* has brought together some of the most important strategists for the Democratic Party. What is most striking for me is how complementary and reinforcing are their contributions, unless one is looking to recreate old fights. While we face daunting challenges if we are to meet our goal – a Democratic Party with a sustainable majority in the country in 10 years – at least we begin on a lot of common ground. We do not begin this exercise and first issue deeply polarized over first questions. Not one of the papers led me to knock myself on the head and say, "Oh God, do we have to fight over that old ground again? Do we really have to spend time on these kinds of issues?"

That said, the papers leave us with some very big challenges with no guarantee that we will succeed.

I do take solace, as do most of the authors, in the disastrous state of the conservative regime that now governs the country. Its challenges are greater than ours. And while all of us agree that we have to do more than kick up the rubble, the "collapse of the conservative consensus," as Bob Borosage describes it, creates an important context for own narrative and agenda.

The common ground begins with 2006 and the voter revolt against their failure in government, starting with Katrina and Iraq, the corruption and special interest orgy, out-of-control public finances and a rising economy that lifts few boats. As Elaine Kamarck points out, Dukakis could not convince the country that competence should trump ideology, but now voters just might settle for some competence after this orgy of ideology. That might be enough to win in 2006, and some Democrats want to run under the banner of "Dangerously Incompetent," but that misses the opportunity to turn 2006 into something bigger because the Republicans are losing the country on both ideology and competence. In the latest Democracy Corps survey,¹ 61 percent of white rural voters say the country is headed in the wrong direction; in an earlier one, 61 percent of *all* voters thought the Congress needed to head in a significantly different direction.

I search these contributions in vain for anyone who thinks Democrats are succeeding in the development of ideas, an agenda, sharp distinctions or even effective base politics. I fully accept that the heightened unity of the Democratic caucuses in the House and Senate has contributed to the Republicans' problems and exposed their fractures, but that has not translated into new respect for the Democrats or their ideas. Democrats have unveiled their program on national security and clean government; Democracy Corps has suggested a list of concrete issues that are signals about Democrats' priorities. Those may begin to be heard as Democrats engage and pose clearer and clearer policy choices, as they unveil their program and as Democratic challengers run as reformers. That is important to 2006 but not very instructive for the long term.

Looking past 2006 to 2008 and beyond, the articles outline an impressive set of challenges for Democrats to address. Nearly all the authors acknowledge the uncertainty of the answers, but they break convention and new ground. Together, they begin to look like a reform project on at least the scale of the New Democratic effort that allowed Democrats to win the White House in 1992 and 1996. Unfortunately, the country and our times may demand even more.

RADICAL REFORMERS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT. The authors share a disdain for the corruption of Washington and corruption of the public purpose embodied by today's Republican governance. There is no ideological divide here. Donna Brazile's contribution makes us take electoral reform seriously. Both Marshall and Borosage want to "clean out the stables" and go beyond the "toothless" reforms being talked about in the current Congress. Marshall specifically endorses an independent ethics committee with ability to prosecute and public financing as the only ways to address our agenda.

If we had given Brazile more space, I am sure she (and the other authors) would endorse a bold agenda of public funding of campaigns, same-day registration and weekend or holiday voting, support for universal

¹ http://www.democracycorps.com/reports/surveys/Democracy_Corps_April_20-24_2006_Survey.pdf

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vote-by-mail – steps to greatly expand the electorate and the integrity of the process. Democrats have the opportunity to be the party of civic engagement, to draw heavily on new Internet activism (Armstrong) and the grassroots networks that brought millions to peaceful immigration demonstrations (Wilhelm), and perhaps to construct a new legal framework for organizing and representation in the work place (Myerson). Democrats' approach to civic engagement could make them the natural party to advance the public interest.

FROM RED STATES TO NATIONALIZED POLITICS. I am taking some license with the authors, but I believe we all want to escape the boundaries of the *Two Americas*, Karl Rove's trap of polarized politics. His strategy won some important elections but it did not win the country. The strategy gave Republicans the chance to govern, but it did not give them a mandate beyond the important task of making the country secure. If we have learned anything in the last decade, it is that polarization doesn't take us to a sustainable majority.

Breaking out of the Two Americas framework means running in Red America, not defensively, but because voters there share our values and aspirations for their families and America. While the authors are understandably tentative on the right formula, I agree with Marshall when he says we somehow have to bridge the cultural and religious gap. It is not good enough to say we are the secular party or declare that our material positions are really values positions. The experience of the increasingly secular national Democratic Party that lost ground here from 1998 to 2004 is not the right test of reach into the so-called red states. Many barriers to electoral success are falling today, as white rural voters and older blue-collar ones are turning against the Republicans. We should stop wondering about who lost Kansas and reach out to these voters at many levels.

That means running nationally, not just in the battleground states defined by 2000 and 2004 – Jerome Armstrong's call for changing the map. I appreciate this is hard to do. In the 2006 election, control of the U.S. House will be decided in some 50 seats and control of the U.S. Senate in perhaps 8 states. It would be malpractice to diminish our concentration there and fail to win the Congress.

Similarly, it would have been malpractice to have failed to pour our heart and soul and organization and money into winning Florida and Ohio in 2004. I remember Bush wandering down the Pacific coast in 2000 in the last week and nearly losing the Electoral College in the process.

But the future is also now and every year we will have a good reason to fail to build a national Democratic Party. I remember the old debates about whether to prioritize voter registration. It is never cost effective for a campaign in any one election to invest in registration but we now know the long-term cost of those short-term decisions as the Republicans invested in their church-based networks and increased registration year after year.

But going national is not about putting an organizer in all fifty state parties. That trivializes the task. It is about our values and cultural reach; it's about having a vision and ideas and as Baer and Cherny point out, investing in ideas and developing a clear perspective on how we will address our biggest problems. I fully support Jerome Armstrong's inspired idea of escaping the constraints of battleground-thinking that makes the party tactical and smaller. As I argued in *The Two Americas*, the hegemonic parties in our history established that they uniquely could take on big tasks for the country.

John Wilhelm is right to point out how central Hispanic voters are to our national future, not just the current battleground states. Our country is inescapably diverse and multicultural. He highlights immigration and the invisibility of the Democrats. I have written for Democracy Corps that the road to a national Democratic majority goes right through the Hispanic community, whose values, views on work and the economy, tolerance and diversity, and the world we should embrace as our own. I think we will find a common ground that is expansive on immigration and the path to citizenship, but with a strong commitment to acculturation and respect for law.

NATIONAL SECURITY FIRST. I am impressed with the commonality of positions on national security, even Iraq. I know the devil is in the detail, but Borosage and Marshall offer converging critiques on security and even the Iraq war. Both argue that we have to make the case up front that the Republican policies have

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failed to keep our country safe. I agree that there are no longer off-year elections on security. In the set of policies for 2006 developed by Democracy Corps, there is a commitment to implement the 9/11 commission recommendations and for 100-percent inspection on containers, but that is clearly not enough.

While the energy issue is broader than security, it could be the starting point for a radical break with our traditional energy use and a bold national approach to alternative energy and energy independence. Borosage and Myerson both raise the banner for Apollo, an attempt to revitalize American industry around the energy security issue. The failure of the U.S. auto industry in the face of global competition ought to lead us to even more radical thinking about energy independence.

Globalization and middle class prosperity. Common to virtually all these essays is the question and challenge of how to ensure middle class prosperity in a global age. I will raise it only briefly as it gets serious attention in these pieces, particularly Harold Myerson's. What is clear is the problem is deepening as Bush policies make the problems worse and the American people wait for the country's leaders to recognize and do something about them.

I can begin to imagine a Democratic Party – reformist, civically engaged, and nationalized – accepting the challenge. These papers have only hinted at the scope of policy innovation necessary in the face of globalization. The Massachusetts experiment in universal health care could be an opening to vast state innovation, pressed by a more committed federal government and president. It could also be an opening to a shift of social insurance to the individual and away from employment – again, within a whole new national commitment to universal social insurance in key areas of life.

I am not at all sanguine that the Democrats will accept the challenges of this essay, however. Thinking the Democrats will not act because of a cabal of consultants is actually thinking too small about the problem.

Why is it that Democrats opted for a minimalist campaign in 2002 and failed to challenge the Bush budget or tax cuts? Why did John Kerry run a campaign in 2004 devoid of ideas or an overriding reason to change the leader of the country? It cannot be that Democrats in Washington are just stupid or kept under wraps by their handlers.

Reforming our politics is not just about the corruption of the Republicans; it is also about liberating the Democrats from the lobbyist world and campaign fundraising to address the issues raised by these essays. We should ask why congressional Democrats have failed to challenge the top-rate and corporate tax cuts in 2002 and now; why they have not challenged rising drug prices or supported re-importation; why they have not supported an excess-profits tax for the oil companies, diverting the money to alternative energy; and why their congressional reform proposals are so limited.

In some ways, I think Democrats may actually be more constrained by their coalition than the culture of corruption in Washington. Democrats have lost white working-class voters over the last decade, particularly the men, without losing a lot of sleep over it. Since 1994, Democrats have done better and better in the suburbs and with college voters; virtually all our new congressional seats since 1994 have come in districts with average incomes above the national median.

So, I am struck that when it comes to Supreme Court nominees or heads of new regulatory agencies, Democrats seem only animated by issues related to choice, not consumer or workplace issues. I am skeptical that Democrats can reach instinctively for red state voters when their secularism is so second nature. I wonder whether Democrats can step up boldly to the problem of globalization and middle class prosperity when they do not seem particularly animated by its central facts, particularly declining incomes.

Fortunately, the authors have raised these issues in time, so that we can begin to tackle the problems in the online pages of *The Democratic Strategist*.

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A NEW SYNTHESIS?*Ruy Teixeira*

MAY 12, 2006

These contributions confirm the broad basis for strategic unity that exists today in the Democratic Party and indicate the contours of a new synthesis that could help define and focus the party for the years ahead. At the same time, the contributions highlight several challenges this new synthesis will have to confront to maximize its political effectiveness.

The Basis for Unity

The old debates between "populists" and "New Democrats" have clearly run out of gas. Most of our contributors have been associated in the past with one side or another of this debate. But it is striking how little appetite there seems to be for re-fighting those old battles. Nobody seems much interested in drawing lines in the sand that will differentiate real Democrats from those who would ruin the party and/or betray its principles.

Instead, contributors have focused their attention on providing concrete suggestions on where and how the party can focus its energies to be more effective. Most, if not all, of these suggestions should meet with broad approval across the Democratic Party. They include the following:

1 – MAKE ELECTIONS FAIR AND CLEAN. If electoral reform had predated, rather than postdated, the 2000 election, Al Gore probably would have won that election, a change in outcome whose significance would be hard to overestimate. And the persistence of voting irregularities in the 2004 election, as Donna Brazile reminds us, shows that we are not out of the woods yet. The country gains as a whole when electoral reform is effective, but so does the Democratic Party, given the type of voters that tend to be disenfranchised by a poorly-running system.

2 – SUPPORT AND PROMOTE UNIONS. Union household voters have been a consistently strong constituency for Democrats and the 2004 election was no exception. These voters supported Kerry by 59-40. Moreover, they made up an impressive 24 percent of the voting pool.

A careful look at data from different sources suggests that this latter figure has remained fairly stable for the last couple of decades. Given that union density has been declining, simply keeping the proportion of union household voters at around a quarter of the electorate must be reckoned a significant accomplishment.

However, there is clearly little potential here for growth of the union vote, since it is already so highly mobilized. But if union density starts to rise again, then increases in the union vote might indeed be possible. That is one among many reasons why, as Harold Meyerson argues, Democrats should strongly support labor law reform, including especially the Employees' Free Choice Act, which would enable workers to join unions without fear of being fired.

3 – CATCH THE DEMOGRAPHIC WAVE. John Wilhelm rightly stresses the centrality of maintaining strong Democratic support among the burgeoning Hispanic population. Only 2 percent of voters in early 1990's, they are now somewhere in the 6-8 percent range and within ten years may be approaching blacks as a proportion of actual voters.

But Hispanics have famously been more volatile than blacks in their support for Democrats. In the 2004 election, it was initially reported that they gave Bush 44 percent of their vote. However, that initial exit poll figure is now widely acknowledged to have been flawed and the generally accepted estimate is that Kerry carried Hispanics by a 58-40 margin. Still, that represents a significant improvement of 5 points in Bush's support among Hispanics over 2000 and a substantial compression of the Democratic margin among this group.

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However, it is worth noting that, if you compare the two Bush elections of 2000 and 2004 to the two Reagan elections of 1980 and 1984¹, the average level of Hispanic support for the Democrats in the Bush elections has actually been slightly higher than in the Reagan elections. And in the next election following Reagan's relatively good performances among Hispanics – 1988 – the Hispanic presidential vote moved sharply Democratic, to 69-30.

The potential for such a surge is well-illustrated by the most recent national poll of Hispanics, conducted by the Latino Coalition, a conservative group close to the GOP. In this poll, Democrats have a stunning 61 percent to 21 percent lead over the GOP among Hispanic registered voters, which translates into a 50-point lead (75 percent to 25 percent) among those who express a preference. By way of comparison to the last two off-year elections, 2002 and 1998, Democrats carried the Congressional vote among Hispanics by 24 and 26 points, respectively.

The new poll also finds Democrats with a 35-point lead (58 percent to 23 percent) in party identification among voters. Also among voters, Democrats have huge leads over Republicans as the party better able to handle a wide variety of issues: being in touch with the Hispanic community (+41 points); providing affordable health care (+40); improving the economy (+31); improving education (+30); and representing your views on immigration (+29). The one exception to this pattern is on "keeping America safe and fighting terrorism," where the parties are dead-even. And even here, this tie is a sharp decline from Bush's 13-14 point lead over Kerry on this issue before and during the 2004 election.

These are promising data. And it seems likely that the current battles over immigration are only serving to alienate Latinos even further from the Republican Party. But, as Wilhelm emphasizes, nothing should be taken for granted. Democrats should and must work hard to convert this potential support into actual support.

4 – GET BACK TO COMPETENCE AND REFORMING GOVERNMENT. As Elaine Kamarck puts it, it's time to give competence another try and make Democrats the party of "government that works". Will Marshall and Bob Borosage also stress the need to identify Democrats with the cause of political reform. This does not seem arguable at this point, given the performance of the Bush administration and the distaste with which voters now regard it. Voters are looking for change and Democrats must provide it.

Over the longer term, the ability of Democrats to promote the kind of programs they believe in, even if they are electorally successful, very much depends on building the belief among voters that government can, in fact, be competent and work well. Otherwise, voters will fear that, even with the best intentions, Democrats will wind up wasting their money.

5 – CHANGE THE MAP. As Jerome Armstrong argues, Democrats must jettison the battleground state mentality and replace it with a "mapchanger attitude", where Democrats look beyond the most immediately competitive states and districts and seek to run Democrats – and build the party – everywhere. That will, over time, put more and more of the country in play and allow for the building of substantial Democratic majorities, rather than razor-thin victories based on swinging a few battleground states. Such an approach, Armstrong further argues, necessitates a break with the business as usual attitude of the party establishment, where the allocation of party resources to the same old consultants running the same old races in the same old states continues despite the obvious failure of such a strategy in recent election cycles.

Will Marshall also argues for changing the map by, as he puts it, "raiding the red zone" – the South, Mountain West, Great Plains and lower Midwest. In his view, that translates into going after persuadable voters throughout the country, rather than being satisfied with mobilizing the Democratic base, which tends to be concentrated in the blue zone.

¹ Using an apples-to-apples comparison; see my explanation of the relevant data in this post on Donkey Rising (<http://www.emergingdemocraticmajorityweblog.com/donkeyrising/archives/001227.php>).

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6 – GO AFTER MODERATE AND INDEPENDENT VOTERS. As Marshall stresses, there is no way a serious majority Democratic coalition can be built in this country without substantially improved performance among moderate and independent voters. For example, Kerry won independent voters by a point and moderate voters by 9 points. That obviously wasn't enough. A serious Democratic majority – barring radical changes in turnout by partisanship and/or ideology – needs a 5-10 point margin among independents and a 15-25 point margin among moderates. The mathematical underpinnings of this point do not seem particularly debatable, even if the methodology for reaching such voters is.

7 – GIVE VOTERS CLEAR AND BIG CHOICES. Several contributors, including Borosage, Marshall, and particularly Baer/Cherny, stress the need for Democrats to pose clear, big choices to voters and to know what they stand for. As Baer/Cherny put it, Democrats need to go beyond their focus on swing voters to develop the "swing ideas" that can remake the American political landscape and move a majority of voters into the Democratic camp.

Baer and Cherny note that Democrats need a coherent public philosophy to underpin the development of swing ideas and an infrastructure committed to the development of such ideas. A focus on the short-term and the elusive quality of "electability" – still a party obsession – will undercut the long-term project of majority-building.

I think these seven goals should meet with broad agreement within the Democratic Party. Of course, there's plenty of disagreement about *how* to pursue these seven goals, but surely that's an improvement over trying to read the faction you don't like out of the party.

The Challenges

This "new synthesis" is a good start. But how can it be deepened to provide a strategic framework capable of powering a new Democratic majority? To my mind, this involves addressing challenges that have arisen in three big areas. In each case, Democrats need to adapt to big changes that have profoundly altered the terrain on which the party operates. And, in each case, Democrats need to avoid twin temptations. One is to focus on inoculating themselves against public doubts that have emerged about the Democrats in that area. The other is to rely on mobilizing the faithful by sounding traditional Democratic themes in that area. Neither, in this era of rapid change, is likely to work.

THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGE Harold Meyerson well captures the nature of this challenge. Globalization and technological change really have undercut the basis for broadly-shared and fairly rapidly advancing prosperity. Prosperity is now not so broadly shared, advances far less rapidly for most and is fraught with considerably more uncertainty – from trying to find and keep "good" jobs to coping with health care, retirement and education expenses.

It's a different economic world out there and, so far, as Meyerson reminds us, "there's not a political tendency on the planet that has much in the way of plausible notions as to how to preserve mass prosperity in the advanced economies in the face of the new global realities". Certainly, Democrats have some reasonable ideas – fundamental health care reform and energy independence, for starters – but it that really enough? Probably not, and that's where our thinking needs to start.

THE FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGE On September 11, 2001, Americans were forced to confront, in the most unpleasant possible way, new global realities that pose new threats to America's national security and call for a new international order to confront those threats. The Bush administration's approach to these threats has proven ineffective and Americans are looking for an alternative. But Democrats have yet to coalesce around a clear alternative approach and, until they do, voters will have difficulty coalescing around the Democratic Party. In this area, voters definitely want to know what they're buying.

THE CULTURAL CHALLENGE Social change is making our society more diverse both racially and in terms of family structure, more gender-equal, more tolerant of homosexuality, more secular and much more. Modernity is here and Democrats are its party. That's not likely to change anytime soon.

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But social change has its dark side as well and Democrats have done a poor job explaining to voters what they propose to do to protect and stabilize family life and promote strong communities as social change proceeds. This issue cannot be elided if Democrats hope to win an adequate number of more tradition-minded voters – especially white working class voters – to their side.

Meeting these challenges will, I suspect, depend importantly on goal 7 above: "Give voters clear and big choices", especially on the need to articulate a clear public philosophy. From that, answers to the three challenges may flow. My nomination for a public philosophy, explained in my paper with John Halpin "The Politics of Definition"² and in Michael Tomasky's "A Party in Search of a Notion",³ is a focus on the common good. And in my paper with Halpin, we do make a beginning attempt to use the common good framework to formulate responses to all three of these challenges. I refer you to the paper for details.

The debate on this and other nominations for the Democrats' road forward has already begun. May the debate continue and deepen. That's what this magazine is all about.

² <http://www.americanprogress.org/atf/cf/%7BE9245FE4-9A2B-43C7-A521-5D6FF2E06E03%7D/DEFINITION.PDF>

³ <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.ww?section=root&name=ViewPrint&articleId=11400>

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