

New Republican power doesn't mean immediate change

Republicans should not assume that their wide-ranging victories in the midterm elections signal a "mandate" to change the nation.

While the vote certainly signals a rejection of what's been going on the last two years, it's far from a license to change everything, repeal all Democrat-passed laws and return to an era of small government.

American voters don't usually give that sort of mandate. Perhaps Franklin D. Roosevelt, taking office in the depths of the Great Depression, came as close as anyone to having a license for change. Even he lost 81 seats in his second midterm.

What many don't understand about American politics is the country is more or less evenly divided on most things. The left pushes for more social programs, more government control, more spending. The right preaches lower taxes, less spending, smaller government.

But most Americans are not ideological. They lean strongly neither to the left nor the right. And, no matter what the ideologues say, change is the last thing they want.

Elections swing one way or another. Either party may be in power today. Voters may move the other way two years, four years, 10 years down the road. It doesn't take much to swing control.

The last few elections tell us as much. Republican's took over after years of Democratic majorities. They ruled for a decade, then at the start of a recession, the voters shifted enough to give the Democrats an ironclad majority.

Voters were not happy with the Republicans' performance, but they were even less impressed with the Democrats.

Last week's elections show how quickly the mood can change, and how a small shift in sentiment can produce a big swing in House seats, governor's mansions, even the more stable U.S. Senate.

But no one should confuse that kind of shift with a mandate for change. And while the Republicans may talk about smaller government, the last time around, under George W. Bush, they did nothing but grow the government.

Democrats talk about their long-cherished social goals, primary among them the health care bill. Voters were not impressed when it actually happened.

No party can control enough votes long enough in this country to simply have its way. Our system is not built for that kind of power. Yet the parties have shown they don't know how to work with each other. Each has its own pet beliefs; each is willing to sacrifice its effectiveness to push them.

Thus, the Democrats will cling to their massive health care boondoggle while Republicans insist on maintaining each and every tax cut passed under Mr. Bush. There is no bipartisan spirit, but that may not be a bad thing.

A deadlocked Congress may be less threatening than a double-majority, veto-proof juggernaut.

Now, the Republicans will try to repeal the health-care bill and cut spending. It won't happen. The Democrats in the Senate won't allow it, and little will be done without compromise.

With control of the houses split, there's little chance the GOP can trim programs or cut spending much, despite the demands of the "tea party" movement. Every program has its constituency, people who back it or benefit from it. From Social Security to Amtrak, killing a federal program is next to impossible.

So what will happen in the next Congress? Expect two years of bombast and inaction, deadlock created by the split in power among Republicans in the House and Democrats in the Senate and the White House.

While change is needed, from some of the more odious provisions of the health-care bill, to repeal of the No Child power grab over local schools, to massive spending cuts, it mostly won't come. Our system is not built for radical shifts.

The health care bill represented change, and it scared America, but the voters won't countenance radical move by the other side, either. That is the great fault, and maybe the genius, of our system. -Steve Haynes.



The future hope one item can hold for some

Just for fun and because we had heard there might be some quilting stuff, a quilting buddy and I spent a lovely fall morning at an estate sale. The selection of quilting items was small as the generous family had already given much of the fabric, bats, and backing to local churches.

I did invest in some quilting frames, sans legs. They were not priced and the cashier (the deceased's son) scratched his head when I asked. He came up with three dollars because you don't just give good clamps away!

My friend was enchanted by a baby bassinet. Her grandbabies are already too big for bassinets and any future little ones will most likely be delivered to Florida. Still it had potential for other purposes. It would be cute tucked in the corner of a bedroom or by her fireplace for pillows and blankets.

We discussed it at length. She was certain I needed it and I'm certain I don't want to pressure my kids about having kids. Besides Pennsylvania is hardly closer than Florida and babies outgrow bassinets quickly.

I never had a bassinet, though my mom did give me a fine woven wood basket she used for laundry and her babies!

I didn't use it much for mine, in my

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



mommy days infant seats were the thing! I have used the basket for various purposes over the years. Presently it sits in the living room full of snugly blankets for cold winter evenings! Besides the fact that it's got to be valuable (anything as old as me is practically an antique), I keep it because it is beautiful. Perhaps not physically or to anyone else but it is to me!

In the end we practiced self restraint and walked away from the bassinet. We both have plenty of "cute" and not so cute things tucked away in corners; some of it has taken over whole rooms!!! I even had immediate buyer's remorse about the quilt frames. I don't have a place to store them when they are not in use, how will I ever find the room to use them? (I guess the hubby can always use the clamps!)

Another friend, Patty, and I were discussing the bassinet later. She related a story to me about her mother. In the 1950's when she was expecting her first child,

she ordered a bassinet. She told Patty the happiest day of her life was the day the bassinet came. The unpacking, the assembly and the promise it held.

Personally I think a baby's true needs are rather simpler than "Babies Are Us" would have us believe. So I take it as a good sign that today's moms evidently do not require at least one thing: bassinets (or at least shabby old ones undoubtedly covered with lead paint). Truth is there is plenty I don't need yet still long for or hold on to, so who am I to criticize?

In the last hours of the estate sale the plan was to reduce every thing to half price, then haul the rest to the landfill. Someone who went by at the end of the sale reported the bassinet was still there. It seemed to me too precious an item to throw away so I'm hoping someone in the family found a new home for it!

How many of us can name the happiest day of our lives? I've thought about it a lot since my conversation with Patty. It may not be the day we get the thing we dream of but rather the day when we realize we are on the cusp and a dream will come true.

A day of hope for the future! What a happy day!

Is it best to take the path of least resistance?

We often cling to beliefs because it is more comfortable. We don't have to ask ourselves why, we just continue down the path of least resistance. But every now and then it is important to look at our beliefs and see if they continue to be supportive of our society. This often means becoming involved in situations we may not desire involvement. We may need to reassess and re-evaluate long held beliefs and have the courage to change our minds.

I remember several years ago discussing the issue of mandatory disclosure to parents of their minor daughter's pregnancy and pending abortion. I believed at the time it was essential and a parent's right and, yes, their responsibility to know, but my friend had a different perspective. She served on a pregnancy hotline and had on numerous occasions seen the disastrous effects when parents were notified. My friend shared her experiences with me and I discovered, more often than I could imagine, a young girl was either kicked out of the home and

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



onto the streets or she was beaten.

Another controversial issue is school breakfasts. Many feel this is a parent's responsibility and they are angered at government involvement. In theory I couldn't agree more. In my ideal world, all children would sit down to breakfast each morning with Mrs. Brady looking on lovingly. However, a hungry child cannot learn; an unlearned child will drop out of school; a school dropout walks perilously close to criminal activity and unplanned and unwanted pregnancies will cost our country financially and socially. A leading researcher in the field has stated: "The first three years of life are the most critical period of brain growth

and development. Child hunger causes physical and mental impairment that may never be reversed." Lest we think this is a problem in only states with large metropolitan populations, think again. In terms of young children under the age of six, Kansas ranks sixth from the top in children facing food insecurity.

A friend once told me the government can't continue to feed people, we just have to let them learn they have to take care of themselves. How do we tell a five year old they will appreciate their hunger pains when they become an adult? My friend continues to believe in government involvement in reproductive issues. How do we ease our conscience knowing a young girl faces injury because of our desire for control and idealistic, yet unrealistic values? How do we explain a loving God to children suffering preventable pain? It isn't a matter of how the law reads; it is the issue of how we treat and perceive those needing help. Do we stop along the side of road or do we move to the other side and continue on our way?

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