commentary

from other pens...

Independent majority has parties scrambling

Democrats have been told in a new book that there is an "emerging Democratic majority." Republican strategists are scrambling to make sure that doesn't happen.

The most dramatic political trend over the past few decades, however, has been the rapid growth of independents.

"There's no realignment," said conservative political analyst Marshall Wittmann. "There's dealignment."

The independents have increased to 17 percent in the states where voters have to register their affiliation. In 2000 exit polls, 27 percent of voters described themselves as independents.

In polls this year by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 39 percent described themselves as independents. About three in 10 in those same polls described themselves as Democrats; about the same number said they were Republicans.

"The movement over the last three decades has been a movement away from the Democratic Party toward independents, and some movement toward the Republican Party in the South and away from Republicans toward independents outside the South," said Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

Democrats and Republicans are as evenly matched in polls on the 2002 congressional races as they were in the 2000 presidential race.

While Democrats are working hard to hang on to their one-vote lead in the Senate and regain control of the House this election, their activists got a soothing message in recent weeks from authors Ruy Teixeira and John B. Judis, in their new book "The Emerging Democratic Majority."

Their book explains in great detail how Democrats have done better with minorities, women and professionals and appear well positioned to build a majority from an increasingly sophisticated, diverse and centrist electorate.

Wittmann calls it "literary Viagra" for cautious Democrats.

Judis, a New Republic editor and writer, and Teixeira (pronounced Tesherra), a frequent writer on voting trends, explained recently at a forum how the domestic issues tend to favor the Democrats. They point to Bill Clinton's presidential election victories in the 1990s and Al Gore's ability to get the bigger popular vote in 2000 despite losing the presidency.

"History is working against them," Teixeira said of Republicans. He acknowledged the growth of independents, but said when pushed they lean toward supporting a party.

"It is a simplistic assumption ... that different segments of the population which have traditionally supported Democrats will continue to go blindly with the Democratic Party," Republican National Committee spokesman Jim Dyke said. Republican programs in areas like education, job creation and tax relief appeal to voters from all groups, he said.

President Bush's political strategists, led by Karl Rove, have worked on broadening the Republican base, with a special emphasis on building support among women, labor groups and the fast-growing Hispanic population.

Polls have suggested Bush is popular with Hispanics, though it's unclear if that appeal will benefit Republicans further down the ticket. University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato says the theory

about the Democrats' growth is intriguing, but he's not convinced. "They assume Republicans will not be able to broaden their appeal

to minorities," he said. "They assume that professionals who have been switching to Democrats because of social issues will continue to do so."

Michael Meehan, a senior Democratic adviser, acknowledged the dominant trend is toward voters who are not affiliated with either party. That has led both parties to increase efforts to reach potential voters in person.

"We still only have half the seats in the Senate," said Meehan. "We're six seats down in the House, and we don't have the White House. 'Emerging, yes. ... Are we there yet? No. EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers politics and polling for The Associated Press.



Remembering the tragedy of Sept.

I don't know about you, but I participated in a service of remembrance for September 11, 2001. I don't know that I'll do it every year, but the

catastrophe seemed still too fresh to not remember. I can't believe it has been a whole year since the tragedy happened.

I would never want to minimize the hurt that many families suffered.

The only thing I have had directly affected by it is my patriotic pride and my mutual funds. But I ors. can recover from those things; God is still in control.

There have been many heroic and worthy efforts sparked by meaningless acts of violence. They are to be commended—especially because they prove that human beings can really put their own interests behind those of someone else. Yet I am skeptical of some of them. It seems like we should be generous (of our caring and finances) people all the time, and not just when it's newsworthy. We



need to be realistic with our generosity and hon-

I've read many stories of good things that have transpired since 9-11.

This week I heard about an effort to start a fund for all the people whose birthdays are celebrated on September 11th. Their celebrations will forever be tainted by the images of twin towers burning, the Pentagon smoking, etc.

So? Many of us have sadness mixed with celebration - my husband died in a plane crash just before Mother's Day. And then a few years later,

my mother died just before Mother's Day. My Mother's Day will never been the same again; I'll always have memories of the way it was, with wishes that it were different. But I'm not alone. Any number of people can tell you of similar changes in their lives. And that's what they are - "changes."

Long ago I learned that the one thing I could count on was change. Many of the changes have been good, some have not been. But life has to go on.

Sept 11th was a horrible thing, but the best way to remember it is to be better for it. Hopefully the world has learned some lessons from the evil. If not we're doomed to suffer more — either through more disasters or our own unwillingness to be taught.

Remembering is fine, a blessing. But we need to remember to do better, to treat each other better, not just remember so we can keep on hating. We all need to be more loving and generous to each other every day, not just when bad things happen.

Working through those new security checks

And a bag came shooting out of the X-ray machine, flying down the short ramp and slamming into the stop.

No wonder they have to warn the workers.

Welcome to airport security in the first weeks of the Transportation Security Administration.

Procedures are obviously tighter. Shoes that used to pass the metal detector now sound an alarm. More people are being searched. The fact that it's Sept. 14 may affect the security level.

bumped up against the new wave right away. The cloth for the explosive sniffer, then went through the flexed and examined my soles. skycap said we were flagged for a "random security" check" and had to take our bags inside. He thought it was because we'd switched airlines. (We were booked on Frontier, and moved to United after a schedule change.) At the counter, United checked us in and set our bags on a cart. A skycap took them to the X-ray machine, set up behind a screen by the front window. He told us to go to the other end.



An agent grabbed the bag which had come flying out of the machine, wary not to be smacked by the next one. He asked permission to search it, and the owner, Arriving at the Portland airport Saturday, we having no real choice, said yes. He rubbed the bag with "You can go," he said with a smile.

I asked if there was a supervisor to complain to about the baggage breaker.

"The TSA's in charge," he said, though he was still wearing the uniform of a security contractor. "There's no one here. Our bosses are out wandering around." I was steamed enough that I figured I'd better not

track one down, lest I wind up in detention. At the checkpoint, everyone smiled, everyone was polite, and the search was thorough. As I had in Denver a few days before, I had to take my shoes off and have my feet scanned with the wand while an agent

Everyone was polite, asking for permission to touch and pat, and everyone had a smile and "have a good day" for the pattee. It helps a little. At the gate, probably marked as subversives from Frontier by now, we were again pulled out for a "random security check." More patting, more shoe tying, By the time you get on the plane, you're not sure whether you're flying home or checking into the county jail. The heck of it is, airport security, as far as I know, has never caught a terrorist. Security agents have caught plenty of ordinary citizens with nail clippers and, occasionally, a knife or gun. Plenty of people have been hassled for petty drug offenses and other minor crimes which otherwise would never have turned up. But you can't say that terrorists haven't been deterred. The lack of outrage may equal success. And no one would disagree with the need for security in this day and age. The special searches, the metal detectors, the explosive sniffers, they're all necessary. It's a hassle, start to finish, but I agree, it needs to be done But do they have to break our luggage? Who designs these machines, anyway? People without much common sense, I'd say. It's government work for sure.

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compartments.

Then he stamped the baggage tag. "Clear!"

Wham!

Our first bag came flying out, followed by the other three, smashing into one another.

"Are they trying to break everything?" I asked. An agent stamped our tags and stacked our bag on a cart, then compared our ID to the tags.

Thanks for support of telethon

To the Editor:

CB

2002

I'm sending a huge "thanks" to Goodland for its generous support of the Muscular Dystrophy Association on Labor Day weekend! Because of your help, our MDA Telethon raised a record \$58,276,118 in contributions and pledges.

It was heartwarming to see people across the country - from celebrities to unsung heroes - coming together to help families affected by neuromuscular diseases. As our nation marks the first anniversary of Sept. 11, it's clear that we remain true to our most cherished values.

I want to thank you not only for calling in pledges to the Telethon broadcast on KAKE, Channel 10, but for supporting MDA programs throughout the year, including Shamrocks Against Dystrophy sales, MDA Lock-Ups, and Fill-the-Boot drives by fire fighters.

Your support makes it possible for MDA to keep the engines running at full speed on worldwide research seeking treatments and cures. We've made



so many significant gains in recent years! Besides research, your donations fund other vital programs, including some 230 clinics, help with medical equipment and - the favorite of "my kids" - summer camp

If you'd like to get involved with these great MDA programs year-round, call your local MDA office; call our national headquarters at (800) 572-1717; or visit our Web site at www.mdausa.org. Goodland, you're the best! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Jerry Lewis

National Chairman Muscular Dystrophy Association

berry's world

NOBODY IN OUR SQUADRON 15 CARRYING THE WEST NILE THING IS SHE?

In Blog

