

**CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE
2006 POST-ELECTION BRIEFING**

**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
BY ROBERT L. BOROSAGE**

Thursday, November 9, 2006
National Press Club
Washington, D.C.

“A MANDATE FOR CHANGE”

The Campaign for America's Future is pleased to sponsor this discussion of the extraordinary sea-change that took place in the elections on Tuesday. Stan Greenberg will discuss the Campaign for America's Future election survey – done in partnership with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research to enable us to look closely at contested GOP districts in the election. We're pleased that Eli Pariser, the extraordinary leader of MoveOn.org's political action efforts, has agreed to join us to discuss MoveOn's remarkable program and the results of their poll, looking in depth at how voters felt about the war in Iraq.

In addition, today CAF is releasing a study of 11 races – five in the House, four in the Senate and two gubernatorial races – in which we analyzed how candidates chose to present themselves to voters. I will preview a synopsis of that study.

Election 2006.

Obviously, this election represents an extraordinary mandate for change – and a repudiation of one party misrule in Washington. Democrats captured both houses of Congress despite formidable Republican advantages in incumbency, gerrymandered districts, money, mobilization capacity and party machinery.

Democrats picked up 28 seats in Congress – and still counting – and six seats in the Senate, displacing five incumbents. Not one sitting Democrat lost his or her seat. Democrats gained six governor's offices for a total of 28 and gained 275 state legislative seats. They now control both houses in 23 state legislatures, as Republicans fell from controlling 20 to 10. The vote for change went up and down the ballot.

With this election, Republican dreams of consolidating a governing majority for a conservative era have run aground, shattered against the hard shoals of a reality that conservatives simply got wrong.

Before this election, Americans had already turned against the signature conservative initiatives of the Bush administration and the DeLay Congress – the pre-emptive war in Iraq, the trickle-down economic agenda, the privatization of Social Security and the right-wing social agenda as

- more -

POST-ELECTION BRIEFING -- 2

reflected in Schiavo and stem cell research. In this election, Republican incumbents struggled to survive an angry electorate looking for a change.

At the beginning of the year, Karl Rove summoned Republicans to turn the election into a choice on terror and taxes. The president stumped on those themes to the end. They generally succeeded in getting that message out. Nearly three-fourths of voters in contested GOP districts thought there were real differences between the parties on Iraq and over two-thirds thought so on taxes. But Americans wanted to change course in Iraq, not stay the course. And large majorities rejected the president's argument that his economic policies were working. Working families under more and more stress from rising prices and stagnant wages voted for change.

Our poll suggests that voters still are not clear on what Democrats stand for. But on the war, Democrats grew bolder as the election went on. They began the cycle sounding much like Hillary Clinton, hesitant to present a clear position on Iraq. They ended sounding much like Ned Lamont, buying ads scouring Republican opponents for supporting Bush's failed policy.

On the economy, Democrats, across the country in red states and blue, ran remarkably populist campaigns. More money was spent on ads painting Big Oil and Big Pharma as threats than on ads warning about bin Laden. Exit polls show corruption was a major concern of voters – but Democrats generally linked corruption to economic woes, charging incumbents with being in the pocket of big oil and doing nothing about gas prices, or in the pocket of the drug companies and doing nothing about rising drug prices.

The populist message was reinforced by growing sophistication, activism and strength of the progressive base of the Democratic Party. As Eli Pariser will report, MoveOn.org led a remarkable expansion in citizen action, enlisting thousands of volunteers, calling literally millions of voters to get out and vote, and raising nearly \$30 million in donations from small donors. The unions, led by the pact forged by the AFL-CIO and CTW confederations and buttressed by Working America with associate members in key states like Ohio, provided Democrats with much of their ground operation. America Votes coordinated increasingly sophisticated efforts among a range of progressive groups in registering, persuading and getting out the vote. The bloggers once more revealed their growing strength in supporting some candidates and challenging others, like Joe Lieberman. No progressive will claim that we are now able to match the resources and sophistication of the Republican Party's mobilization effort. But there is no question that progressive activists are playing and will play an ever-larger role in driving elections.

These realities are reinforced by the results. Democrats of all stripes got elected on Tuesday. Yet, for all the attention paid to the conservative Democrats coming to Washington, the remarkable change in the U.S. Senate is the election of strong progressive populists – Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, and John Tester of Montana. Bob Casey and Claire McCaskill also owe their victories in large part to an appeal based on bread and butter issues. These candidates mark the end of the corporate consensus on trade and globalization. They will challenge Democrats to put forth an economics that works for working people – from fair trade policies, to investment in education, to action on affordable health care.

POST-ELECTION BRIEFING -- 3

In the House, similarly, many of the big surprises were victories by obscure progressive challengers – Carol Shea-Porter, the social worker, who beat Jeb Bradley in New Hampshire; Bruce Braley, the populist lawyer, who won in Iowa 1; McNerney beating Pombo in California; Yarmuth beating Northup in Kentucky. The Progressive Caucus anticipates it will grow to 71 members. And of course, progressive champions – Henry Waxman, George Miller, Barney Frank, Dave Obey, John Conyers and others – will take over committee chairs and help drive the legislative agenda. Even those the press describes as more conservative Democrats tend to be socially conservative but economically progressive or populist. In 15 districts, fair trade advocates displaced those who voted for corporate trade accords. For example, Heath Shuler from North Carolina joined Sherrod Brown and Steelworker President Leo Gerrard in a telephone press conference on fair trade yesterday. This is a Democratic caucus that will be much more populist on economic issues.

The signature race in this cycle was surely that of Sherrod Brown against Mike DeWine in the critical, bellwether state of Ohio. DeWine assailed Brown for voting against the Patriot Act, against warrantless wiretapping, against the war, against the gay marriage amendment – and for taxes. Brown responded by leading, relentlessly, with an economic populist message – assailing tax cuts for the wealthy and trade agreements that ship jobs abroad – asserting the need to stand up for working families. In Ohio, suffering deeply from the flight of manufacturing jobs, the economy was the number one issue on voters minds, according to an October *New York Times* poll. And Brown won big in a socially conservative state.

If populism rose in prominence, conservatism went into hiding. Republicans distanced themselves not just from George Bush but from their own conservative beliefs. Conservatives have been mugged by a reality that they got wrong. They were wrong on how to keep America safe. Republicans made no defense of pre-emptive war, and tried to distance themselves from the fiasco in Iraq. They were wrong in scorning government. Republican incumbents in fact painted government as a solution, not a problem, bragging on delivering the goods – on prescription drugs, on pork, on saving bases and jobs, even – Dick Cheney notwithstanding – on alternative energy. They were wrong on their “You Are On Your Own” economics. By more than two to one, voters prefer fair trade that protects jobs to free trade that imports cheap goods. And by similar majorities, they want government to drive the move to alternative energy, not leave it to the market. Republicans walked away from privatization of Social Security. By two to one, voters think religious groups have become too involved in politics. Only on taxes – and the threat that Democrats will raise taxes – did Republicans sing loudly from the conservative hymnal. Not surprisingly, economically pressed voters are sympathetic to lower taxes.

This election marks the end of one party misrule in Washington. Voters are looking for a change in course in Iraq. And they’re looking for legislators who will put government on their side, challenge entrenched corporate lobbies and policies and change an economy that doesn’t work for them. The election also marks the end of a conservative era that has been mugged by a reality that it got wrong. Now the struggle begins for what comes next.

###