



CONTENTS

ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE

READER RESPONSES

TASTE

CONTENTS

ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE

- Today's Featured Article

- Also on WSJ.com

- International Opinion

BEST OF THE WEB TODAY

E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Political Diary

- Free Updates

JOHN FUND ON THE TRAIL

PEGGY NOONAN

ELECTORAL COLLEGE
CALCULATOR

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

POETRY FOR THE WAR

A MARINE'S JOURNAL

READER RESPONSES

OUR FAVORITE SITES

SPECIAL FEATURES

ARCHIVES

TASTE

LEISURE & ARTS

COLUMNISTS

- Pete du Pont

- Daniel Henninger

- Brendan Miniter

- Claudia Rosett

ABOUT US

- Our Philosophy

- Who We Are

- Terms & Conditions

- Privacy Policy

- Contact Us

- How to Subscribe

- How to Advertise

- Op-Ed Guidelines

TODAY'S FEATURED ARTICLE

ELECTION 2004

The Incredible Shrinking Dems

It was an annus horribilis for
America's minority party.

BY FRED BARNES

*Saturday, January 1, 2005 12:01
a.m. EST*

George W. Bush got more votes in winning re-election than the entire population of France. He improved his share of the vote among Latinos, women, African-Americans, Jews and Catholics. Winning a plurality of states along the Mississippi River has guaranteed presidential victory since 1912. Mr. Bush won a majority. This year, says Democratic pollster Peter Hart, "a sense of Republicanism crept up the river. The president won Missouri, which was always a tossup state, by more than 7%. Iowa flipped his direction, and in Minnesota and Wisconsin, we waited all night to find out that Kerry had just barely carried those states." So the Upper Midwest, following the South, Southwest, Plains, and Rocky Mountains, is now trending Republican.

There's another measure of Republican (and Bush) success in 2004. For the first time in more than a century, a Republican president won re-election as his



January 1, 2005
10:04pm

RESPOND TO THIS ARTICLE

READ RESPONSES

E-MAIL THIS TO A FRIEND

PRINT FRIENDLY FORMAT

FEATURE ARCHIVE

 Search

GO

 OpinionJournal

WSJ Online

Wall Street Journal
Online Subscribers
GO DIRECTLY TO

Select a Page

WSJ.com Network

[Wall Street Journal](#)

[CareerJournal](#)

[CollegeJournal](#)

[RealEstateJournal](#)

[StartupJournal](#)

[WSJbooks](#)

[CareerJournalAsia](#)

[CareerJournalEurope](#)



party improved its hold on the House and Senate while increasing its majority of governorships (28 now) and maintaining control of a plurality of state legislatures (20). At the same time, Republicans held a majority of state legislators--a feat they initially achieved in 2002 after a half-century in the minority.

And don't forget what Democrats insisted for decades was their path to sure victory. If Democrats could match Republican campaign spending, energize their base, dramatically increase voter turnout, and provoke a robust debate on big issues, they'd win the White House and probably a whole lot more. Well, they managed all of that in 2004. The result: A Republican won with the first presidential majority since 1988. Mr. Bush touted an agenda of bold conservative reform. The last time a Democrat won as an unalloyed liberal was 1964.

Democrats and the media have been reluctant to spotlight the breadth and depth of Republican strength in 2004. Strangely, so have Republicans. It's almost as if they don't believe their own good fortune. "We're no longer a 49% nation," says Ken Mehlman, Mr. Bush's campaign manager in 2004 and now the Republican national chairman, in a breathtaking understatement. And Mr. Mehlman warns that the Republican majority is "not overwhelming" and won't produce "automatic victories." True, but Republicans have the presidency and the most senators (55) since 1931, and are near their modern peak in the House (232). They have all but completed the sweeping

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
ONLINE

Visit the new Video Center






Get Breaking News
and Analysis, and Insight
From Global Newsmakers with
CNBC Dow Jones Business Video

All In One Place

Brought to you by



VIEWPOINT

[The Federalist/Publius Press](#)

Cal Thomas, author and syndicated columnist, reads Patriot..."*The Federalist Patriot* interprets current issue in the conservative context of history." *The Patriot* is free e-mail.

[Townhall.com's Free Opinion Alert](#)

THE op-ed page for conservatives

[Keep Our Markets Free](#)

Investing commentary from a conservative perspective

[Help Headhunters Find Out About You](#)

Search a directory from Kennedy Information

political realignment they could only dream about a generation ago. In the dark days after the 1964 rout, those dreams seemed quixotic, farfetched, even crazed. Now, they've been realized.

Advertisement

Today, Republicans are in position to pursue a conservative agenda more sweeping than even Reagan's. Mr. Bush is preparing to propose the partial privatization of Social Security. That's ground on which Reagan feared to tread. Then Mr. Bush plans to seek simplification of the tax code far beyond what Reagan achieved in 1986. And from there, the agenda turns to curbing trial lawyers, expanding faith-based programs, filling Supreme Court vacancies with conservatives, and more.



Where are Democrats? They're desperately seeking to preserve every government program and benefit enacted since the days of the New Deal. The problem for them is that the New Deal paradigm--the belief that Washington could endlessly improve people's lives has lost its appeal. Mr. Bush discovered this the hard way. He pushed a Medicare prescription drug benefit through Congress in 2003, expecting it to boost his popularity. It didn't. The program drew disapproving poll numbers. His newer version of an "ownership society" hasn't quite replaced the New Deal paradigm, but has a chance.

Meanwhile, Republicans and Democrats are experiencing an extraordinary reversal of roles. Democrats were once the inclusive party of the "big tent." Republicans now have a bigger tent. Social

liberals like Rudy Giuliani and Arnold Schwarzenegger were prominent speakers at the GOP convention. Social conservatives were virtually nonexistent at the Democratic convention. Democrats have embraced a series of ideological litmus tests on abortion, gay rights, and embryonic stem-cell research. Republicans haven't.

What's more damaging politically, Democrats have become the party of high taxes. The debate among Democratic presidential contenders this year was over whether to repeal all or just some of Mr. Bush's tax cuts. More recently, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina has sought to win Democratic support for Social Security reform by promising to pay for it with a huge increase in payroll taxes.

On foreign policy, Democrats traditionally were idealistic internationalists in favor of an assertive U.S. presence in the world ready to oppose various tyrannies. They've abdicated that role to Republicans. The chief foreign-policy idealist today is Mr. Bush, who champions a crusade for democracy in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East and elsewhere. Democrats flirt with isolationism.

One of the most talked about political concepts of the early 21st century was "the emerging Democratic majority." It was supposed to begin emerging in 2002 and 2004, but clearly it didn't. Adherents of the Democratic idea blame the 9/11 terrorist attack for upsetting the Democratic trend temporarily. The truth, of course, is there wasn't a Democratic trend in the first place. The concept assumed that Democratic vote levels in the late 1990s among women, Latinos, African Americans and young, college-educated urbanites was a floor. And since these groups were growing at a fast pace, the Democratic vote would soar and Democrats would emerge as the dominant party again, as they did from the '30s to the '90s.

The floor turned out to be a ceiling. It's Republicans who have gained among these groups (with the possible exception of young metropolitan sophisticates). Take women. Since 1996, the gender gap--the difference between the male vote for Republicans and the female vote for Democrats--has shrunk. President Clinton won women by 16 percentage points in 1996. Al Gore won by 11 points in 2000. But John Kerry's edge in 2004 was a mere three points. And among white women without a college education, a poll by Democracy Corps found Kerry trailing Mr. Bush by 23 points.

Anna Greenberg, one of the smartest of the younger Democratic consultants, explains the Democratic trouble with women this way: "Despite the economic interests, socially conservative women, white, blue-collar women, have moved increasingly into the Republican camp, primarily around social and cultural issues that include perceived moral decline, abortion and reproductive health challenges to women's traditional roles in society and family, and gay rights. . . . These voters swung to Bush as he tapped into their social conservatism, their support for his approach to the war on terrorism, and their admiration for his faith."

With Latinos, the story is similar. Traditional values, respect for religious faith and support for entrepreneurship are tugging them into the Republican Party. The Republican share of the Latino vote grew from 21% in 1996 to 35% in 2000 and to 44% in 2004. The 44% figure in the exit poll is disputed by some Democrats, but if the jump was only to 40%, that's still a significant gain and represents an even more significant trend.

Republican gains among Jews (19% in 2000 to 25% in 2004) and blacks (9% to 13%) were smaller. And Democrats point to the youth vote as predictive of a bright Democratic future. Mr. Kerry prevailed among voters aged 18-29 by nine percentage points. But there's no evidence that younger voters are the wave of the future in presidential contests. Mr. Clinton won them by 19 points in his 1996 re-election. Democrats went on to lose the next two presidential elections.

Some Democratic strategists disparage the notion that increased Republican turnout in the rapidly growing exurban and rural areas matters in national elections. Not enough voters live there, they say. This amounts to self-justification. Democrats largely ignored these areas in their massive voter registration drive in 2004 and regarded Republican registration claims as imaginary. But with a spike in turnout outside major urban areas, Mr. Bush would have lost Ohio.

and New Mexico and perhaps Iowa, thus Mr. Kerry would be president-elect. After the election, Ronald Brownstein and Richard Rainey of the Los Angeles Times found that Mr. Bush captured 97 of the 100 fastest-growing counties in the country, most of them on the fringe of major metropolitan areas.

The Republican surge in recent years should not have been a shock. The 200 plus years of American political history have seen a series of realignments that shift power from one party to another (1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, 1932, now 2004). The chief theorist of realignment, political scientist Walter Dean Burnham, says they occur when the dominant party is unable to cope with new demands from frustrated voters. That prompts a breakthrough election, the latest in 1994 when the new political arrangement "turns out to be permanent," it's a realignment that's likely to endure for decades. The 2004 election "consolidated" the realignment, Burnham says.

There's reason to believe Republican dominance, absent a catastrophe such as a depression, will last. Yes, there are sure to be setbacks. Even as Republicans have ascended, three states--Illinois, New Jersey, and (this year) Colorado have trended Democratic. But with luck, good leadership and intelligent nurturing of the center-right conservative coalition, Republicans should have the upper hand for years to come.

LMr. Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard and co-host of "The Beltway Boys" on Fox News Channel.



[RESPOND TO THIS ARTICLE](#) [READ RESPONSES](#) [E-MAIL THIS TO A FRIEND](#) [PRINT FRIENDLY FORMAT](#)

[HOME](#) [TOP OF PAGE](#) [BOOKMARK THIS SITE](#) [ARCHIVE](#)

[SUBSCRIBE TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL ONLINE](#) OR [TAKE A TOUR](#)

Direct Access to...

Terra Nova Financial provides global access to...
www.terranovalfinancial.com

Get a \$100 Credit...

U.S. stock market info. Harrisdirect offers...
www.harrisdirect.com

QuoTrek - U.S....

QuoTrek allows you to see yourself free with...
www.esignal.com

