

THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW



THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW

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Vanderbilt's first and only multi-partisan academic journal featuring essays pertaining to political, social, and economic events that are taking place in our world as we speak.

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A PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE: DR. MONIQUE LYLE



INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
ALLEGRA NOONAN AND
MATTHEW TAYLOR
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIBED BY
GRACE AVILES

VPR: What do the results of the 2010 midterm elections say about the electorate? Have we seen a permanent shift to a more conservative electorate or was the vote simply against Obama's agenda?

ML: Well, I don't think that the midterm results suggest a permanent shift towards a more conservative electorate. In terms of President Obama's agenda, I personally have some serious questions about the extent to which the American electorate is either significantly aware or informed of what the President's agenda is. I believe that there were a few factors that contributed to the results. For one, historically, the president's party typically loses seats in the Congress during the midterm. For two term presidents the greatest loss occurs during the first midterm. Based on history the fact that the Democrats lost seats was not atypical. However, they did lose a great number of seats, more than we've seen in a very long time. Also, in addition to the fact that the president's party loses seats dur-

ing the midterms, there are other factors to consider. For example, groups that typically comprise the Democratic Party's base were not very mobilized for the midterm elections. Young people were not as mobilized as they were in 2008, for example. African Americans were not as mobilized as they were in 2008. Not to mention, turnout is just lower during midterm elections anyway. The Democratic Party base was not as mobilized by the party, whereas people who comprised the Republican base were highly mobilized this particular election season in part due to the Tea Party movement. However, I think that the most important factor in the outcome of this election was people's evaluations and perceptions of the economy. Economic evaluations are strongly associated with vote choice and people evaluate the economy negatively right now. More Americans feel that the economic situation is getting worse than getting better, and voters tend to punish the party in power when the economy is faring poorly. Further, economic issues tend to comprise the bulk of campaign communication, and Republicans, historically, have appeared more adept at using economic messages to their advantage.

VPR: I wanted to bring up something you said at the beginning of that. You said that the American public isn't informed on Obama's policies. Do you think its disinformation, like, due to what the Tea Party said about death panels and all that or do you just think its that they don't know?

ML: A little bit of both but primarily the latter. There certainly is a lot of confusing information out there right now, however, Americans generally are not particularly informed about government and politics. That

doesn't mean that Americans don't have real attitudes, that doesn't mean that Americans don't have a sense of what's important to them, but Americans aren't always particularly knowledgeable about public affairs. So I don't think it's entirely just misinformation, I think that Americans just aren't as knowledgeable or engaged in politics as some would expect.

VPR: Do you think that the results of the 2010 midterm elections change any possible outcomes of the 2012 elections. Do you think that Obama's reelection prospects will be helped, harmed, or not affected by the Republican victories.

ML: I should preface my statements by saying that, despite having a Ph.D. in political science, I am by no means a political prognosticator. I am not one to make sweeping predictions about the future. But, with that said, I will say that I don't think that the 2010 midterm elections portend any permanent changes, like the electorate moving in a more conservative direction, nor do I think they definitively suggest President Obama not being reelected in 2012. Part of the reason I feel this way with regard to Obama's reelection prospects is that midterm elections are, historically, poor predictors of presidential elections, so I don't think we can definitely say that what happened in 2010 tells us anything definitive about 2012. However, some of what you've been hearing is that this portends doom for him. Even though I don't want to make a prediction about the future, I don't think that this portends doom for him as some would suggest. It actually could work to his advantage in some ways. For example, with Republicans capturing a majority of the seats in the House, if they end up being as unwilling to compromise as some of them have

suggested they will be, then it could contribute to a situation of gridlock and he might be able to effectively leverage this and blame Republicans for this stagnation. Also, if the economy improves it could work to his advantage. So I guess the long and short of it is no, I don't think the midterms say anything definitive about Obama's reelection prospects.

VPR: Interesting, quickly, when you say that the midterm elections are a poor indicator of 2012 elections, is it because of the low voter turnout and other factors?

ML: I mean, that's part of it. Parties work harder at mobilizing voters in presidential elections than in midterm elections. Also, things just happen. As I mentioned before, economic considerations are more associated with Americans' voting decisions than social considerations, and some research suggests that, when it comes to economic considerations, people tend to only look back at the previous year, not the last two, three, four years. So what happens in 2012 is likely to matter more than these midterm elections.

VPR: The Tea Party managed to elect 5 Senators, 30 House Representatives, and numerous officials on the

state and local levels. Do you think that the Tea Party will be a lasting force on the American political landscape? Do you think the Tea Party will be more willing to compromise with Democrats and Moderate Republicans as time goes on? Do you think they will become more pragmatic or remain ideological?

ML: At the moment, I don't have any reason to believe that newly elected officials associated with the Tea Party will be any more willing to compromise in the future than they have already suggested. However, the essence of politics is compromise. If they are unwilling to compromise on anything, then they are not likely to get much accomplished and are not likely to be a lasting force in the American political landscape. If they would like to remain a powerful force in American politics, then they are going to have to compromise on some issues. But, right now, whether they will become more willing to compromise is unclear. I have no reason to believe that they will, but it remains to be seen.

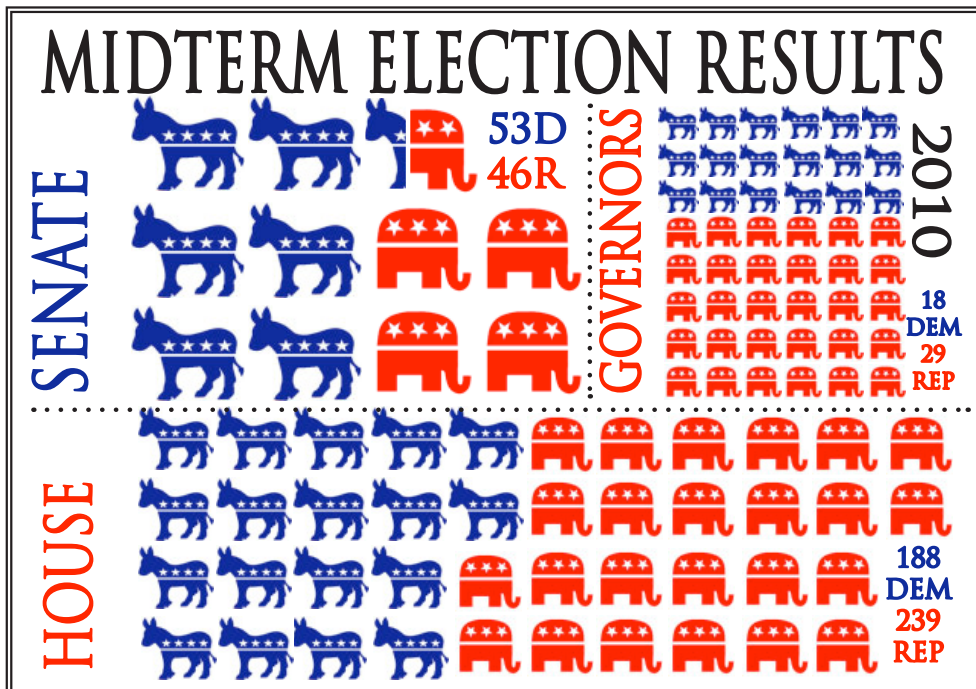
VPR: So many states that went blue during 2008, such as North Carolina and Virginia, swung back this past election. Will these states be-

come permanent swing states or do you think that the 2008 presidential elections were an exception?

ML: This past week we have heard a lot of talk about Virginia, North Carolina, and Indiana, but the extent to which they've "gone red" or will go red in 2012 seems somewhat dubious. In North Carolina, for example, only one representative lost his seat to a Republican, and that's it. Republican incumbents held on, but I'm not sure that you can call that a massive shift or say that it signals something about future presidential elections. In Virginia and Indiana, 2 or 3 House seats went from Democrat to Republican, and Republicans did pick up a Senate seat in Indiana. These are meaningful changes, but it still doesn't necessarily mean that these states will be red in 2012, though it won't be incredibly surprising if they are.

VPR: So, you don't think this is the end of the southern Conservative Democrat?

ML: Not necessarily. The Blue Dogs got hit hard in this election; their caucus got cut by more than half. The Progressive Caucus tends to be from more left leaning districts, while the Blue Dogs are not. Blue Dogs tend to be from districts that are more centrist ideologically. When you have a situation where people are not highly ideological, given the economic situation, those people are more likely to switch than those who are ideological. I can't say I was anticipating the Blue Dogs losing as many seats as they did, but in hindsight it might not be incredibly surprising. If the economy recovers, however, perhaps conservative Democrats could do better. Also, given that the Blue Dogs lost so many seats and so you have fewer centrist Democrats now in the House, Congress could appear or actually become more polarized than it currently is, which could contribute to more gridlock and fewer things getting accomplished. This could work to con-



servative Democrats' advantage in 2012. They could run as uniters or ideological moderates who are more capable of reaching across the aisle, so we could see a resurgence of conservative Democrats in 2012.

VPR: Do you think there is a chance of third parties become more viable in 2012 as a result of the increasingly polarization of the parties?

ML: It's hard to say. Some certainly believe that there is an emerging moderate or centrist revolution that's coming, so we might see the emergence of a successful centrist third party. Right now, honestly, I'm not sure. It's definitely possible, and there are political scientists who believe the emergence of a kind of militant middle is imminent, but that remains to be seen.

VPR: What do you think about the Republican pledge to overturn Obama's healthcare legislation?

ML: Will they succeed in overturning it? Absolutely not. I don't think that will happen. They could conceivably slow down its implementation by using the subpoena power to bring various bureaucrats charged with implementing it before Congress for hearings and such. So they could slow down its implementation. But I don't think they will be successful at overturning it. I can't say that I think that they won't make an effort. Even if Republicans in Congress realize that the prospect of overturning this is dim, they still might make a real effort because it sends a message to their constituents. At the very least they will try to hinder it or its implementation, I just don't think they will be able to repeal the whole thing.

VPR: Final comments?

ML: The only final comment that I'll make is that we should be careful about the extent to which we think that the 2010 midterm election results portend future events.



FROM THE BOARD: PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S CALL TO VANDERBILT STUDENTS

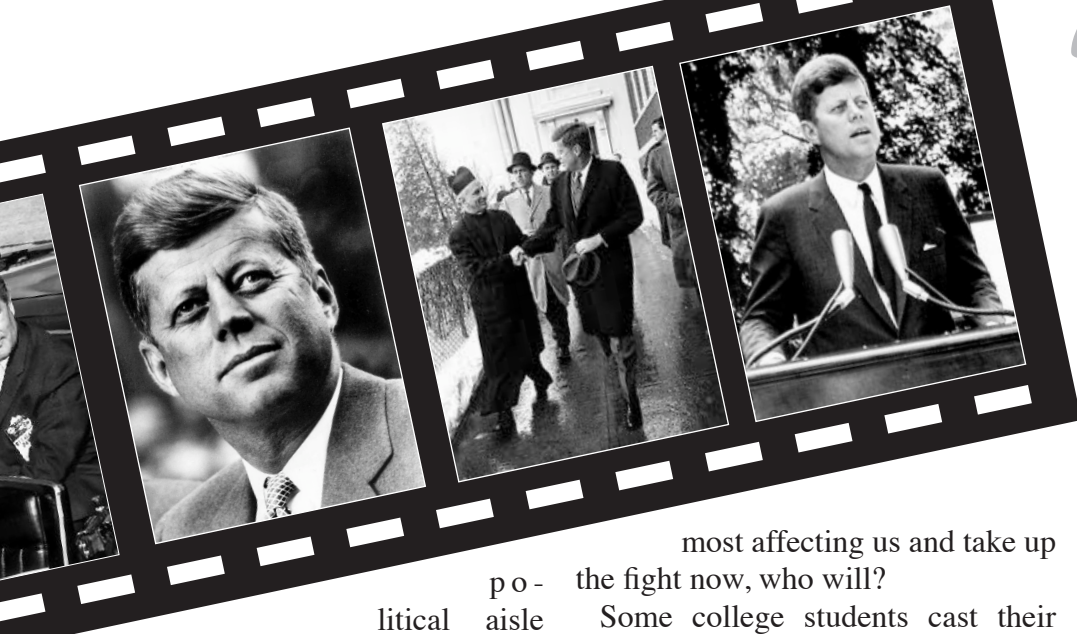
GRACIE SMITH
CO-PRESIDENT, VANDERBILT
POLITICAL REVIEW
CLASS OF 2011
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

Forty-seven years ago this May, President John F. Kennedy delivered an address at Vanderbilt University to celebrate the school's ninetieth anniversary. During his speech, President Kennedy said, "I urge all of you today, especially those who are students, to act—to enter the lists of public service and rightly win (or lose) the prize." Even though 1963 was not an election year, President Kennedy's asked Vanderbilt students to transform academic ideas into action for public service, whether it was as "a precinct worker or a president."

The words that President Kennedy spoke on this campus in 1963 still hold true today. Even while he deliv-

ered his speech to an audience in the Deep South during a time of racial discrimination and gross inequity, President Kennedy maintained that "the natural aristocracy of character and talent" could overcome barriers. President Kennedy was dedicated to the idea that students have the power to improve society when they take the initiative to be civil leaders. In fact, almost three years earlier, the sit-in movement had already proven the substance of his speech to be true. After college students from Fisk University, Tennessee A&I State University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary led the Nashville sit-ins in 1960, institutional segregation began to crumble, and the Civil Rights Act passed four years later in 1964. Even though demons of prejudice continue to haunt our society, the community-driven leadership of college students half a century ago is directly responsible for the progress our society has made. If these students had decided to stand aside instead of becoming involved in changing the world, it is disquieting to imagine how the world we live in today might be different from inaction.

Unfortunately, many young Americans became discouraged by the onslaught of negative campaigns and personal attacks from both sides of the



“...I URGE ALL OF YOU TODAY...TO ACT, TO ENTER THE LISTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND RIGHTLY WIN (OR LOSE) THE PRIZE.”

political aisle during the recent midterm election. Many college-age voters who cast their ballots for the first time in 2008 failed to reappear at the voting booth in 2010. At the same time, students across the nation marveled at the emotional fervor of the Tea Party reported in the media, and enjoyed keeping up with the latest ridiculous comments made by various candidates on the campaign trail. It seems that the college-age electorate was caught somewhere between jaded apathy and concerned amusement, with many voting for whom they saw as the least bad of two bad candidates, if they voted at all. Today’s college students are understandably disillusioned by polarized politics, a strained health care system, the largest federal debt in history, and two seemingly endless wars.

However, we must remember what students in Nashville were able to accomplish 50 years ago in the face of incredible opposition. Vanderbilt students must also remember that one of the most influential presidents in our nation’s history directly called this student body into public service. The noble ideals that defined Vanderbilt as an institution of learning and service then do so even more today. The future of the nation’s policies may seem discouraging, but if we as individual students do not rally around the issues

most affecting us and take up the fight now, who will?

Some college students cast their votes this November, and others decided not to vote at all. Either way, all students now have the opportunity to make a lasting impact each day, whether or not it is Election Day, through direct service to their communities. For those students who are disenchanted with the political system, now is the chance to rise above the partisan schism and come together in public service. While voting is an important duty and right of American citizens, it is not the only duty we as citizens are called to. I encourage college-age voters to not wait for 2012 to get involved in the political process again, but to get involved in actively making the world a better place through service to the community. Let’s answer President Kennedy’s call forty-seven years later with a resounding yes.

You can read President Kennedy’s 1963 address to Vanderbilt here: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkvanderbiltconvocation.htm>

BEFUDDLED BOEHNER AND THE AMERICAN BRAIN DRAIN

NOAH FRAM
CLASS OF 2013
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

In 2000, the country swallowed a hefty dose of “politics as usual.” The two candidates for President that year—the sitting Vice President, Al Gore; and the Governor of Texas, George W. Bush—fought a sometimes uneven, always vituperative campaign. Gore claimed to be more qualified (which he was), and Bush claimed to be more normal (which he was). In a wholly predictable turn of events, the country decided it wanted to have a collective beer with the President, sent the Harvard graduate Gore off on his lecture circuit, and handed the keys to Garry Trudeau’s cowboy hat with a drawling “stay the course.” Naturally, your friendly neighborhood President crashed the car, and the rest is history.

In 1960, the attractive and friendly John Kennedy defeated the arguably more impressive Richard Nixon in the first-ever televised Presidential debate but lost the radio audience. Apparently, viewers were unable to get past the simple fact that Kennedy looked like...well, Kennedy,

and Nixon closely resembled a toad. War heroes are popular (think Andrew Jackson, Ulysses Grant, Dwight Eisenhower, and probably many more to come), while actors tend to fare well in elections of all stripes (Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others). Visibility and communication skills are, it seems, the most important qualifications for political office, as far as the general public is concerned. Hence the dumbing-down of political platforms. Gone are the halcyon days of elegance and eloquence, exchanged for an era where speeches are reduced to chains of four-second sound bites strung together with conjunctions in between. Successful politicians are now infinitely quotable, and if your opponent shows the slightest crack in their simplistic “man-of-the-people” façade, they are clearly unqualified. Apparently, I want my Representatives and Senators to explain international relations and the budget deficit to me in one- and two-syllable words, and if they dare to show that they understand economic theory, they are elitists.

This election cycle, the incumbent Democratic Party was portrayed as out of touch with the needs of the common man. Their failure to reconstruct the economy in less than two years was a capital offense. By the end of the campaign, Iraq was simply a non-topic, since combat troops were successfully removed and there appeared to be no more sensational (read: violent) news on that front. This was always going to be a bad year for the Democrats, and perhaps deservedly so. But the Republicans’ admitted goal of un-seating Barack Obama has them turning to that time-honored tactic of demonizing your opponent’s intelligence. Admittedly, Obama comes across as a professor, and such an image does not fly with the often easily-insulted public. But still, this trend away from obvious

intelligence carries with it the risk of electing people who really have no clue how to run a country. For proof, see the first paragraph.

Of course, this situation is different, since at least one normal citizen actually has had a beer with President Obama. The President has proven himself a very personable professor. But since he is also smarter than the common man, he must be incapable of understanding our plight, and so (according to the Republicans, at least) he is unelectable for a second term. We are expected to elect the un-extraordinarily adequate candidates, waving their pom-poms and chanting to “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue.” Even the entrenched leadership has begun catering to their anti-intellectual constituency; why else would Lindsay Graham tout his less than satisfactory SAT scores to generate political cache among recent college graduates? Tea Party extremists are also being claimed by the traditional right, regardless of some serious ideological and...shall we say, rhetorical...differences (recall the brilliant oratory of Rand Paul and Sharron Angle or the peerless debating skill of Carl Paladino). Thank you, John Boehner, for building such an inclusive coalition.

But, on a more serious note, we now

face the problem of governing with half of Congress hamstrung by internal struggles among its majority and the other half dedicated to unseating the sitting President. On top of that, neither side commands a veto-proof majority in either house. So, if Boehner and Reid stick to their respective golden guns and biodegradable plowshares, we have that most delightful of political scenarios: gridlock. In fact, if a certain Representative Darrell Issa of California has his way, the government will be hobbled by, and I quote: “seven hearings a week, times 40 weeks.” And, in a time where something is certainly rotten in the state of America (in particular, the state of South Carolina), gridlock will doom us “common men” to a steady diet of decaying and dysfunctional policy. Perhaps it’s the Tea Party’s fault, that the public has voted out many Democrats rather than genuinely support an alternate candidate. Or maybe, like everything else political these days, Nancy Pelosi and her marijuana-addicted constituency are to blame. Whoever is culpable, the fact is that these newly elected ideologues must find a way to heal our country hand in hand with their bitter foes from across the aisle. I wish them luck.



ERIC LYONS

HIGH HOPES FOR CALIFORNIA

MATT SCARANO
CLASS OF 2014
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

I am a proud Californian. But like most Californians these days, I am worried about the future of my great state. California is bankrupt; her prisons and public schools are overcrowded and underfunded, and the esteemed Universities of California are in increasingly dire straits. Enter Proposition 19, the Regulate, Control, and Tax Cannabis Act, also the 2010 midterm election's chance to combine two worthy Californian causes: fixing the state budget, and producing and consuming the world's best weed.

As its extended title suggests, had Prop 19 passed on November 2, it would have legalized marijuana for recreational use, heavily regulated its growth and distribution, and taxed it for projected state revenue of over one billion dollars per year. Unfortunately, it was defeated in the polls with 56 percent voting no and 44 percent voting yes.

However, this election represents only the beginning of what promises to be a long battle over what the Yes on 19 Campaign called "marijuana prohibition." Supporters of legalization claim that legal marijuana would provide much needed tax revenue for California, while alleviating numerous other problems that the state has faced in recent years. It would significantly reduce overcrowding in prisons, where hundreds of thousands of inmates are incarcerated on marijuana charges, and would free up law enforcement to focus on more pressing issues than soft drug use prevention, which currently eats through hundreds of millions of dollars of funding each year. If California can't find alternative ways to shore up her

deficit, economy, and infrastructure, then future initiatives like Prop 19 are bound to reappear and eventually succeed.

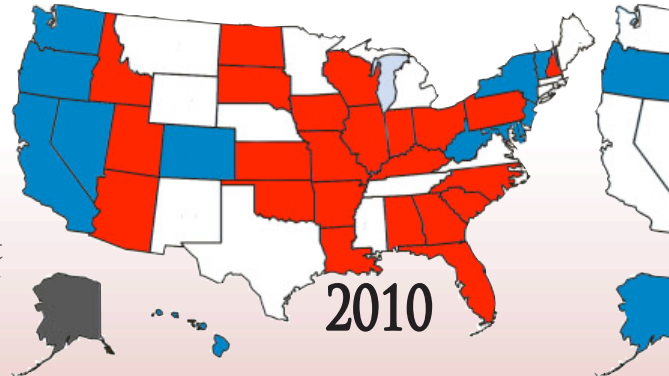
Marijuana prohibition has also been compared to alcohol prohibition of the 1920's, which failed because of violence and widespread disobedience of the law. Despite marijuana's illegality, Californians still smoke it,

THE REDDIE

A look at how the
Midterm elections
the political landscape

MAPPING THE PROGRESS

Senate election results
2006-2010
Republican ■ Democrat ■
No Race □ Other Party ■



REID BEATS ANGLE IN NEVADA SENATE

ANGLE (R) REID (D)

"Reid may have his union thugs and the 'community organizing' get-out-the-vote infrastructure left over from President Obama's election in 2008, but we're counting on dedicated patriots..."

"Today Harry Reid is the Majority Leader in the U.S. Senate, a man who commands the respect of colleagues from both parties, and a powerful advocate for Nevada's middle-class families."

MURKOWSKI WINS ALASKA WITH WRITE-IN

MURKOWSKI (I) MILLER (R)

"...Senator Murkowski has already made many strides on issues facing Alaskans. As she advocates for legislation on the Senate floor, her passion for improving the state of health care, education, energy, veterans' affairs and infrastructure development in Alaska is unquestionable."

"Lisa Murkowski and her friends in the media have misled you...[She] is forcing the count in Alaska - by ignoring the primary process, and conducting a write-in campaign costing millions of dollars. Lisa ensured a drawn-out counting process would be required to determine a victor."

WEBSTER BEATS GRAYSON IN FLORIDA

WEBSTER (R) GRAYSON (D)

"Through experienced eyes, Webster sees many unspectable practices going on in Washington today. He knows first hand how to fix broken government, restore forgotten values and create effective practices and policy..."

"Daniel Webster wants to impose his radical fundamentalism on us. Webster tried to deny battered women medical care, and the right to divorce their abusers. He wants to force raped women to bear the child. Taliban Dan Webster. Hands off our bodies and our laws."

HEARING THE VOICES

A look at what candidates in the elections said. All information is from candidates' campaign websites.



WINNING

the 2010
s changed
andscape.

SKY

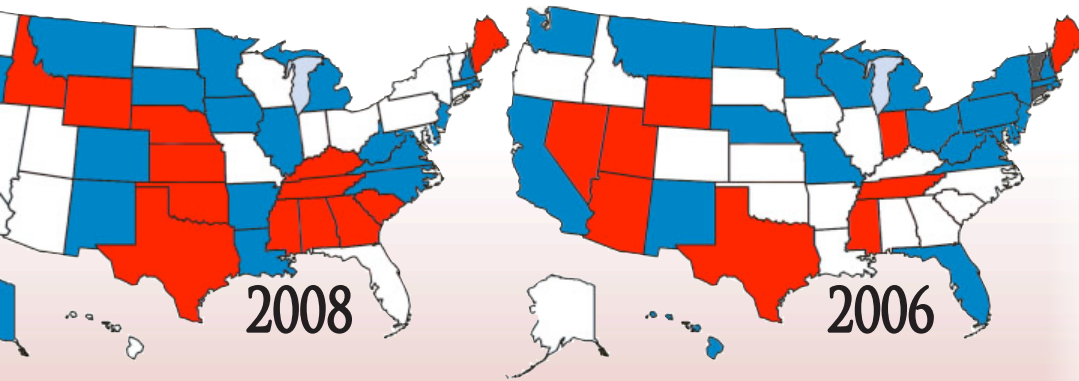
and there are no signs that they will stop. And although there is not significant marijuana-related violence inside America's borders, profits that Mexican cartels make selling pot illegally in America contribute to dangerous conditions south of the border. Supporters of legalization remind us that rather than funding Mexican criminals, we could be supporting le-

gitimate entrepreneurs and filling tax coffers inside California.

Though pushed into the limelight by pragmatic considerations, much of the current support for legalization comes from individuals and groups who have simply decided that there is no reason for marijuana to be illegal. Many liberals have come to view the right to smoke pot as a civil liberty, and strict Libertarians view smoking as a personal choice with which the government should not interfere. Young voters are most supportive. Pre-election polls indicated that 80 percent or more of Californians under 30 would vote for Prop 19. This demographic is, however, the least likely to vote in elections in general. As some comedians have retorted in recent days, perhaps California's youth would have voted for Prop 19...but then they got high.

There is also, of course, an opposition camp that has fiercely campaigned against Prop 19. They argue that tax revenue from marijuana would be offset by medical costs that use of the drug would cause, and that other social benefits would be nullified by increased criminal activity and decreased motivation among the populous. Legal marijuana inside California, they say, would attract drug users to the state, who would then become burdens on the health and welfare system.

There is no denying that some of this may be true, to some extent. However, the primary reason Prop 19 failed is the negative stigma that marijuana has traditionally been tinged with in the American public sphere. Many Americans believe, perhaps due to years of anti-drug education and public service advertising, that smoking marijuana is dangerous and perhaps even morally wrong. They believe that marijuana is more harmful than alcohol, that it is a gateway drug, and that it is harmful to American youth. But scientific studies and statistics are



ROBY BEATS BRIGHT IN ALABAMA 2ND DIST.

ROBY (R)



BRIGHT (D)



"...Now after bailouts, buyouts, failed stimulus, cash for clunkers, higher taxes, trillion dollar deficits and government-run health care, Bobby Bright is asking us to give him another opportunity so he can try and get it right? That is one chance Alabama can't afford."

"Bobby Bright is proud and humbled to serve Alabama's 2nd congressional district. Whether he's home in the district or at work in Washington, his door is always open for constituents... He is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition."

RUBIO BEATS CRIST FLORIDA SENATE RACE

RUBIO (R)



CRIST (I)




"Because of your support and dedication, we are on the road to Reclaim America. Now the real work begins. I'll need your continued support as I go to Washington to serve Florida and and fight to keep America exceptional."


"Join our campaign to stop Tea Party extremist Marco Rubio, and help give Florida a brighter future."

DESJARLAIS BEATS INCUMBENT DAVIS

DESJARLAIS (R)



DAVIS (D)



"In the past few years, we have witnessed our country being swallowed by Big Government, runaway spending and increasing deficits that will plague generations to come."

"I will take positions because they are right for the people of Tennessee's Fourth District, not because they are right for Democrats or Republicans alone."

"I'M NOT RECOMMENDING FOR EVERY FUTURE PRESIDENT THAT THEY TAKE A SHELLACKING LIKE I DID LAST NIGHT."

President Obama, November 3, 2010





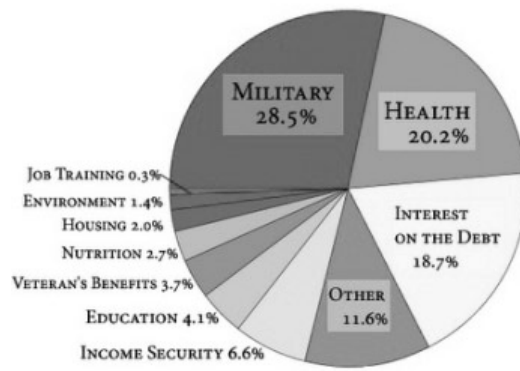
demonstrating that the latter conclusions are unfounded, and if Prop 19's political viability proves anything, it is that American (or at least Californian) attitudes toward marijuana are rapidly changing.

So although Prop 19 may have failed this time, legislation like it will almost certainly reappear in the 2012 election. The campaign for medical marijuana began in California in 1991, but Proposition 215 did not legalize it until 1996. These things take time. And once legal pot does become a reality, perhaps it will be the financial and social saving grace that California needs. Perhaps not, but at least then we'll be able to roll up a legal fatty and smoke our worries away.

OBAMA IS OKAY

IAN DUNCAN
CLASS OF 2014
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

On November 3rd, Barack Obama addressed the American people on a different note with a different tune. Those of us who remember may have



noticed that Barack Obama's speech that Wednesday did not sound like his 2004 senate victory. It did not sound like the optimistic presidential-hopeful Obama on the 2008 campaign trail. It was not the Barack Obama who waved a heavy stick at the Supreme Court and Congress earlier this year, pressuring that his agenda be fulfilled. No, that Wednesday, after the midterm elections, Obama's plea was not a "Yes we can" as much as "Please! I can!"

The night before, Republicans made some big gains. A whopping 60 seats in the House exactly, more than either party since the 1930's. John Boehner is expected to become Speaker of the House of Representatives with a Democratic Party that holds less than 200 seats for the first time since 1946. The Democratic majority in the Senate has been hit hard as well. The Republicans simply out-fundraised, out-campaigned, and ultimately out-did the Democrats this round.

And yet President Obama should not be as worried as others suggest. In my home district, the Massachusetts 6th, Congressman John Tierney's wife created a scandal when she committed gambling fraud with her brother, but, nevertheless, Democratic incumbent Tierney beat the Republican challenger with 60% of the vote. Other than New Hampshire, the northeast remains under Democratic control. The large amount of victorious Congressional Republicans in up-state New York cannot come close to turning the state purple. In the west, Democrats retained control of the

Senate seats in California and Washington, and even Reid's Nevada seat, despite confident pollsters' predictions that Reid was sure to lose. The Democratic powerhouses in Northeast and West remain stable.

However, the red revolution of the Great Lake states has Democrats shaking in their shoes. Swing states Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana have gone from Democratic control in the house to large Republican majorities. Ohio, specifically, has always been an accurate barometer for presidential elections, but despite large gains in the swing state, Republicans took the governorship by only 2 points—a small margin of victory that Democrats can easily close. This region has not grown more conservative overnight since 2008; perhaps regional voters have merely become less employed.

Ben Bernanke announced last week that the Federal Reserve would pump \$600 billion through bond purchases. This may take a whole year to set in to the economy, but it's certainly better than the alternative. It seems like only a small margin of victory for my fellow Republicans. Americans cast a vote against Obama's economic proposals, but interpreting this as a ballot for more conservative governance would suggest a more fickle electorate than public opinion suggests. Legislative fiscal policy of the next two years may not exactly emulate the Reagan wave of the early eighties, but at this point, American voters are willing to reward the President for any sign of improvement. Reagan and Clinton rode landslides into their second terms. If President Obama can turn the economy around just a little, I'm confident he can too. This midterm election could easily prove irrelevant with the way things are going now.

BOILING IN A POT OF TEA

CHARLES BUDDEKE
CLASS OF 2013
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

Last week was notable for two major developments. First and most headline grabbing, the Republican Party experienced a historic revival after being completely broken in the 2008 election. However, it is not wholly accurate to call this a resurgence of the party. The main driving force behind these electoral results was the enigmatic Tea Party, who rode general discontent with the economy in to office. However, the great irony is that the Tea Party is the single greatest hindrance to economic recovery.

The second important development last week was the announcement by the Federal Reserve of its intent to purchase 600 billion dollars worth of US Treasuries (also known as quantitative easing.) The goal of this program is to incentivize the purchase of assets by making the costs of holding on to capital higher and lowering long-term interest rates to facilitate business borrowing for investment. As soon as this was announced, condemnation came from many high profile Tea Party members.

Sarah Palin, the figurehead of the movement, implored Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke to “cease and desist” this policy. Not only is Mrs. Palin lecturing a PhD of economics on economics, she is doing so without grasping the complexities of the situation. Mrs. Palin cited international condemnation of these policies as additional evidence to her usual rant about government excess. Since Germany “knows a thing or two about the dangers of inflation,” Mrs. Palin reasons the Federal Reserve should listen to them.

In reality, the international outcry is not out of concern for the world economy, but rather their own dependence on U.S. consumption as the engine of growth for their economies, which is a flaw in the workings of the world economy. The German economy and most developing economies are based largely on exports, the recovery of which would be severely hurt by a weakened dollar. A strong dollar would make US exports more competitive, and it would reduce US demand for foreign products due to higher cost. Just because she fails to capture this detail does not mean, however, that Mrs. Palin is wrong. She is right in that there are serious dangers to the U.S. if these policies cause inflation to take off, and Mrs. Palin doesn’t even touch on the possible danger to the world economy due to the currency wars resulting from methods like quantitative easing.

Why then is Mr. Bernanke using these potentially risky policies? Ironically, it is the Tea Party that forced Mr. Bernanke’s hand. This group has made any fiscal stimulus (government spending) beyond politically toxic. Adding to the already considerable irony, fiscal

stimulus would have a much greater effect due to the already low interest rates in the U.S. However, the Tea Party’s campaign against government spending has prevented and will continue to prevent Congress from enacting any additional spending to spur economic growth.

This is incredibly dangerous. The current unemployment rate is in danger of becoming structural if rates of economic growth do not pick up, and this risk is several orders of magnitude more dangerous than the one posed by the short term deficit spending. Therefore, something must be done to drive demand. Enter Mr. Bernanke. Since the Federal Reserve is currently the only body both capable and willing to stimulate the economy, albeit in an usual way, it must be done despite the dangers. The Tea Party would do well to ignore the short term deficit in favor of stimulating the economy. Instead, it should focus on putting in place plans to reduce, if not eliminate, the medium term deficit, which is where the real danger from fiscal policy exists.

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A PREMATURE END TO CHINA’S PEACEFUL RISE?

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Give Beijing some credit; it hasn’t been easy concealing their delight in the surprising aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. Prior to the crisis, it was a widely-held opinion that China’s meteoric rise dating back to 1979 was just one major Western financial crisis away from collapse.



ERIC LYONS

Instead, stoked by a 4 trillion yuan stimulus package, China rolled on to 9.1% growth in 2009 following the near collapse of world credit markets, and is forecast to expand at an even more impressive 9.9% this year even as the government enacts tightening measures. Two years later, the PRC's historic sprint towards development looks more unstoppable than ever.

In 2010, the PRC will for the first time in its history overtake Japan to become the second largest economy in the world, trailing only the United States. However, the PRC, and the Chinese Communist Party in particular, do not have the luxury of allowing their astronomical growth numbers to falter. Unlike the economies of Japan and the United States, China's economy must support a population of more than 1.3 billion. In 2009, this meant that that GDP per capita in China was



less than 1/10th that of Japan and 1/12th of America. The party fears that growth below 8 percent could trigger discontent among the throngs of lower and newly middle class workers, undermining the party's strongest argument for continued authoritarian rule. As far as the party is concerned, discontent could quickly manifest itself into widespread domestic instability, which would then jeopardize both China's continued development and the very structure of the People's Republic. It has consistently (and quite successfully) utilized this fear as a tactic to brush aside concerns that Beijing's movement towards political and economic reform seems to have ground to a halt. In the developed world, this approach has often been regarded as one of diversion. However, the growth and stability versus chaos argument has gained considerable traction domestically, where the party has been able to attach itself to the notion of economic growth, inextricably tying its own success to that of the economy.

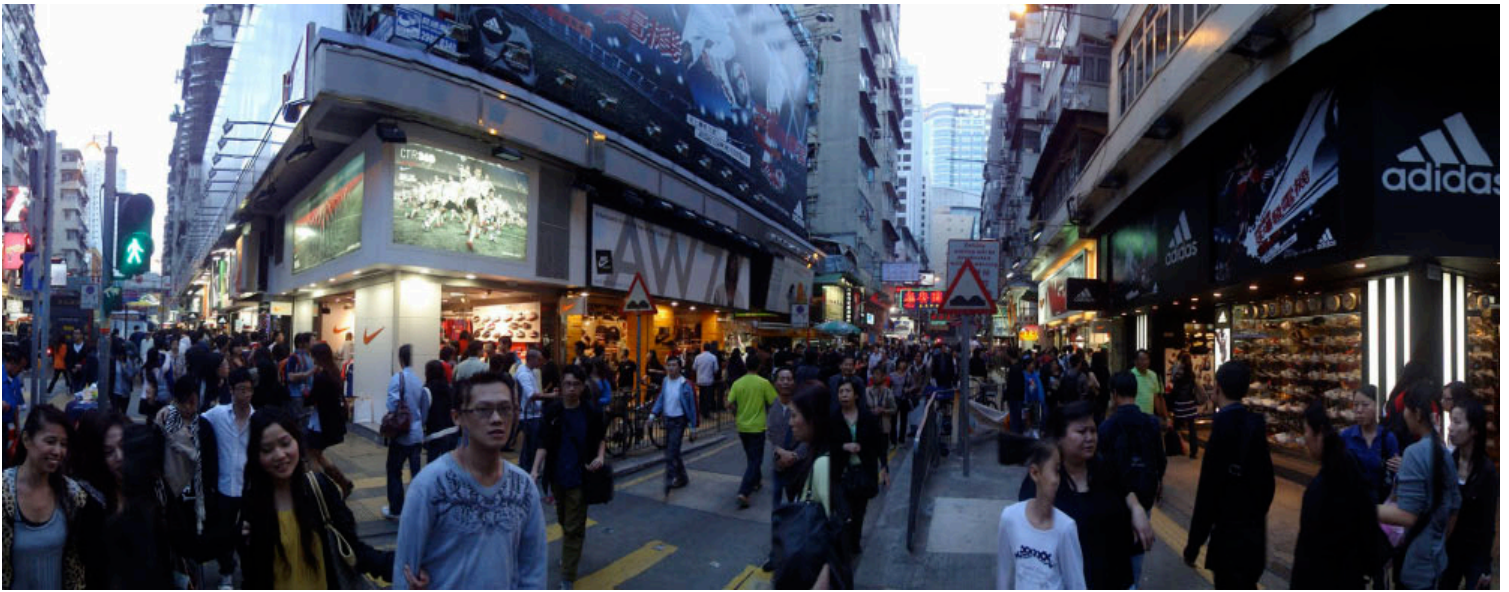
The concept that a developing economy requires strict government regulation and intervention in opposition to more typical Laissez-Faire doctrine has come to be known as the "Beijing

Consensus". It must be noted that the party is extremely adept at using the 'consensus' as a tool of oppression, clamping down even further on Internet use and freedom of assembly, speech, and the press. India's raging economic growth notwithstanding, the party continues to claim that these actions are necessary to maintain the path towards growth and development in such a large country. Reading between the lines, it is not hard to determine that the party is increasingly insecure about its ability to remain in power as China becomes richer, and that perhaps its greatest fear is its own people. Since the events leading up to the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989, when the party was by many accounts at death's door before it decided to activate the "People's Liberation" Army against its own people, it logically follows that the CCP has been acutely aware of its tenuous hold on the vast Chinese population.

Considering the deluge of international criticism regarding the party's continued oppression of freedoms, the CCP has found itself in the awkward position of attempting to maintain normalized relations with the developed world while stoking nationalism domestically. One must look no further than the party's decision making in recent incidents such as the imprisonment of Australian businessman Stern Hu, the continued and ongoing failure to allow the Yuan to rise naturally, and the virtual manhandling of Japan's legal system during the Senkaku Islands row to illuminate the tightrope on which it now treads.

In the case of Australian citizen Stern Hu, the government arrested four executives of Australian mining firm Rio Tinto right at the climax of an impasse in negotiations between the firm and Chinese state-owned aluminum producer Chinalco. The coincidence of such a monumental decision (Hu is now serving a ten year prison sentence), casts considerable





doubt on the state of “Rule of Law” in China, and should be taken as a warning to a number of other foreign companies doing business in China. When Australia expressed concern about the opacity and harshness of Stern’s sentence, China responded with the typical call to respect its sovereignty in so-called “domestic” affairs. Ironically, it would be just over a year before China would throw its growing might behind a forceful attempt to free one of its own citizens from another “sovereign” territory, Japan. The Japanese, though, would buckle under increasingly heavy-handed pressure from the PRC in the release of the Chinese sea captain charged with deliberately crashing into a Japanese Coast Guard vessel, but not before China had once again exposed its hand to the world. In late September, China began to deny exports of rare-earth metals, necessary in the production of a number of high-tech goods, to Japan. Though the policy was officially denied by the CCP, it became ostensibly clear that China was becoming increasingly willing to throw its economic weight around in order to achieve whatever objectives it sees fit.

More recently, the party has shown signs that it will assert this will even in the face of global economic imbalances. Despite China’s gigantic

economy, it remains reticent to allow its currency to decouple from the embattled United States dollar. The Yuan-manipulation, which has been an ongoing policy for years, is basically an export subsidy meant to keep Chinese goods cheaper than they would naturally be. Again, though it is widely agreed that the Yuan must be allowed to float freely if China is to be a more equitable partner in the global economy, the CCP refuses to act accordingly, asserting that it will not cave to what it predictably defames as “Western pressure.” Domestically, the party disseminates editorials via state controlled media inaccurately blaming Japan’s lost decade on American pressure to allow the Yen to rise in the late 1980’s to again instill irrational fear in its citizens.

Such behavior indicates that the party may indeed fear more for its domestic legitimacy than its international relationships. But China would be wise not to forget Deng Xiaoping’s 24-character admonition, which reminded the party that it must “bide [its] time and conceal [its] abilities.” Increased unilateral assertiveness against developed powers that are becoming more willing to treat China as a new partner in the international system, at a time when China has still not yet fully arrived, might effect a pre-



mature end to the “Peaceful Rise,” if the party continues to expose its lust for power. Such an outcome could spell calamity not only for the Chinese people, but for the party itself.

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THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP... IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

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With the current state of the economy, most talk show correspondents and politicians are focusing on jobs, taxes, the Federal Reserve, and so forth. While these things are important, we are forgetting about one of the government's most recognizable organizations – NASA.

The International Space Station celebrated its ten year anniversary about a week ago, bringing some attention back to the cutbacks and uncertain future of the space program. The Constellation Program, designed to send astronauts back to the moon before heading to Mars, was cut earlier last month by President Obama, who has decreased funding for NASA since taking office.

Cutting spending on NASA might seem like a logical thing to do in times of economic crisis. But while reducing some areas of funding is excusable, cancelling an entire program and reducing NASA's missions are self-effacing.

I will readily admit to my bias on this issue. My hometown is Huntsville, Alabama, a city whose nickname is "the Rocket City." We have one of the highest concentrations of PhD holders and rocket scientists in the country, and cutbacks at NASA have hurt our town. Usually when people think of someone getting laid off, they do not picture a middle-aged man in a suit walking out of the Space and Rocket Center with his office supplies in a box, or the thousands of workers at private defense companies who were working with NASA to develop new technologies.

But these people need jobs too, and cutting NASA funding to help save money the government can use to create more jobs is counterproductive.

Obama's decision also ignores the technological breakthroughs NASA's continued missions in space have resulted in, and how they help increase the efficiency of American companies and products. Advancements in science creates better products that are more competitive on the global market and bring more income to American workers.

Though Obama's plan calls for including private companies to supply the International Space Station after the last shuttle flight this February, these companies cannot be re-

“...WE WILL BE FORCED TO RELY ON THE GENEROSITY OF RUSSIAN ROCKETS”

lied on to replace NASA altogether. Why give the reins to a new startup when NASA has the experience of flying astronauts to the ISS and to the moon? Commercial space flights have caused little technological advancement besides the debris currently floating in low-earth orbit and the burning of rocket fuels harmful to the earth.

Without our own rockets to send astronauts to the ISS, we will be forced to rely on the generosity of Russian rockets. Until we develop a new fleet of shuttles, the United States, Europe, Canada, and Japan will have to get their astronauts in space via Russian Soyuz rockets, and each seat costs the government \$50 million. Grounding our fleet is not only dangerous to the security of American presence in space but extremely expensive, weak-

ening the argument that the act is designed to cut costs.

The commercial companies Obama wants to rely on to create new jobs and cut the costs of sending Americans to space? None of them have developed and successfully tested a manned rocket flight, nor do any show inevitable progress in the near future. And what about regulating these companies once they do make the advancements necessary to enter space? Will NASA be in charge of who gets to go in space? What requirements will be set for someone to be allowed to go to space via one of these rockets? The amount of rockets, the specifications and materials for rockets, the number of and qualifications for this new generation of astronauts, the legal code surrounding these independent space missions, and the amount of government support for each venture are unknowns that will need to be worked out and carefully regulated by the government before we can use commercial rockets as a substitute while our next fleet is being built.

That seems like too many unknowns and too much waste to be a legitimate substitute for a program that had already been in existence for five years and was being managed by NASA, the experts who actually got us to the moon in the first place. Obama should listen more to the rocket scientists than the politicians when it comes to managing our space program.

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MIDTERM 2010: READING BETWEEN THE LINES AND REDRAWING THEM

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Losses by the incumbent party during a Midterm Election are often predictable. Given the relative unpopularity of President Obama, unemployment rates at almost ten percent, and an overextended Democratic Party, especially in the House, the results on November 2nd were foreseeable. At a national level, things are looking stark for Democrats, with the largest party turnover since 1948. But was it not just two years ago that TIME Magazine deemed Republicans an “Endangered Species”? We have heard a lot of talk about what 2010 means for 2012, but what about 2014, 2016, 2018, and even 2020? As if Democrats did not already have enough to worry about after disappointing midterm losses, they must also begin to consider another important implication of the results—the makeup of state legislatures and its impact during a census year like this one.

The governors and state legislatures elected in this cycle will have the coveted privilege of drawing the electoral map for the next ten years starting in 2011 - a practice commonly referred to as gerrymandering. After November 2, 2010, there are more Republicans in state legislatures than any point since 1928. At least eleven states, including Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Maine, and Alabama, have switched party control from Democrats to Republicans. This is the first time Republicans have controlled the Alabama state legislature since Reconstruction, and for the

first time in history, the GOP controls the Minnesota Senate.

Although rules vary across states, most states have their legislatures and governors approve an updated map of legislative districts to meet the “one person, one vote” constitutional standard. This means that the resounding Republican victory in 2010 could cost Democrats congressional seats for the decade to come. According to political strategist Karl Rove, as many as ten states will have to combine districts as they lose house seats, and eight states are expected to gain at least one seat each. Many of the gains are expected to come in faster growing Sunbelt states like New Mexico, whereas losses are expected in shrinking Rustbelt states like Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Regardless of whether or not a state wins or loses seats, lines may be redrawn. Chris Bell, the Texas Democrat who lost his seat after the infamous mid-decade redistricting that took place in 2003, will not soon forget the dangers of being part of the out-party during a redistricting year. At the time, former House Majority Leader Tom Delay helped Republicans gain several new seats through a highly controversial redistricting process, which increased the number of Republicans in the Texas delegation from sixteen to twenty-one. The effects of this redistricting are still being felt by Texas Democrats. Chet Edwards, a twenty-year house incumbent lost to Republican challenger Bill Flores in 2010, after being cast into a significantly less favorable district starting in 2005.

As one CNN spokesperson reported, a big loss for Democrats in 2010 is like “acing all your practice

exams, and then failing on the SAT.” In spite of the many legislative accomplishments made by Democrats after 2006 and 2008, the significance of those years for the future political landscape may be eclipsed by 2010. We can likely expect a net loss of safe Democratic districts in years to come. The red is about to get redder, and the blue may turn purple.

However, there is a glimmer of hope for Democrats. With Republicans holding a majority of seats, particularly in traditionally non-Republican areas, new GOP house districts can only be created by redistricting Republican supporters out of the existing Republican districts. No politician who cares about his own career will vote for a plan that dilutes his or her own district of supporters. Intra-party battles could prevent the redistricting process from being as brutal as one might expect. Additionally, in states like Tennessee where the GOP has now claimed seven of nine congressional districts, with the remaining Democratic strongholds in metropolitan Nashville and Memphis, it is difficult to imagine Republicans creating a more favorable landscape than currently exists. Regardless of how things “shape” out for Democrats after the redistricting process is over, with GOP seats now exceeding 235 in the House, Republicans sitting in traditionally purple or “light blue” seats are left somewhat vulnerable in at least the next cycle.

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THE ISSUE: URBAN FOOD DESERTS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: Ever since the term "food desert" was coined (defined as a "district with little or no access to foods maintaining a healthy diet"), the concept has received national attention. First Lady Michelle Obama has made the eradication of such deserts, as well as the obesity epidemic that they inevitably promote, an issue that is assured to stay atop the national policy agenda.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED: Food deserts hit close to home for the Vanderbilt community. The South, East, and North Nashville communities have been recognized as food deserts. A study completed by Community Food Advocates found that 50% of residents in South Nashville had to travel for two hours round trip to reach the nearest grocery store; 70% of those individuals used transportation other than their own cars. Help make healthy food a reality for our neighbors by volunteering with The Nashville Mobile Market or The Commons, both of which are finding innovative ways to combat the problem of food deserts. Check out the issue at: <http://www.nashvillemobilemarket.org/>.

THE ISSUE: IMMIGRATION REFORM.

Why it's important: Immigrants have, and will continue to, represent a significant part of the American experience. However, anti-immigration legislation has made the much-needed discussion on immigrant rights take on new urgency.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED: Volunteer with the Vanderbilt Advocates for the Immigrant Community (VAIC) to learn about how you can impact legislation right here in Tennessee that are of crucial importance to our immigrant community. To learn more, visit the website: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10150090466335720>

THE ISSUE: POLITICAL DISCOURSE.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: Other than the fact that every individual should strive to be a well-informed global citizen, as a member of the Vanderbilt community, the importance of political discourse becomes even more important. No matter what side of the aisle you happen to sit on, hearing and learning from great political thinkers and discussing policy issues will only thrust you further into the vibrant intellectual community that should encompass all universities. Who wouldn't want that?

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED: Promote political discourse on campus through the Vanderbilt Speaker's Committee, that brings notable speakers to campus all year round, but especially during their IMPACT Symposium; the Vanderbilt Service and Public Policy group, dedicated to combining relevant service and policy discussions; and the Vanderbilt Political Review, which combines online discussion of current topics and interviews with individuals who carry considerable policy influence with a print edition showcasing undergraduate writing on current policy issues.

THE ISSUE: GLOBAL LITERACY.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: With 774 million people in world illiterate, 75 million children not attending primary school, and 42% of girls in developing countries not enrolled in school, the fight for global literacy seems as large and important now as ever. In fact, this fight is so important that the United Nations named Universal Education as one of its Millennium Development Goals, striving to "ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling."

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED: Room to Read, a national organization committed to global literacy, is coming to Vanderbilt. Get involved by supporting their mission of universal education right here in Nashville.

Find out more about the national organization at: <http://www.roomtoread.org>.

CHANGE THE WORLD



COMPILED BY ALLENA BERRY



VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW



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