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**Democrats – Where to now?**

**By Gary R. Hess**

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The presidential election just passed and as everyone knows by now George W. will be spending another 4 years in White House as Commander of Chief of the world. Err America. Not only that, the Republicans gained seats in both the House and Senate.

I have been thinking about this ever since the election ended, but where exactly does the Democratic Party go now? The Republicans went through a major change starting in 1964 to Present day making great strides, but what are the Democrats going to do about this recent trend of thinking amongst the American people?

One suggestion is that the Democrats start broadening the spectrum a little more and start pulling in more religious rural users by using "moral values" or at least touching lightly on the subject. As most liberal Democrats will agree, this is not something we as a party want to go through, it might help out more with the right wing, but definitely not the left.

Other suggestions include dropping the Gun Control agenda or simply start using more affective advertising attacking the other side.

I however believe one of these two should take place:

- 1) Make the party more liberals. This would help out on the libertarian vote as well as the more leftist groups like socialists and the Green party. As the youth of America gets older the Democratic Party needs to expand to include their views. The voting turnout was not as great as anticipated for this demographic, but if the Democrats want to compete in the New Age they must start preparing now.
- 2) Less bashing, more conceitedness. Many will agree that Kerry spent too much time talking about why Bush was not meant to be President of the United States, but what he didn't do very well was explain his views and what he will do to be a better president. Time and time again when asked why didn't you vote, the response has been "I don't like Bush, but I don't know Kerry's views."

Like me, many will say that Kerry did a good job during the debates describing his views, but for some reason or another not everyone watches these. He must get out onto the campaign trail and make

some one liners which will stick in peoples heads when they go to the polls on Election Day.

Other arguments are that he did make his voice clear, but just wasn't heard because the media only played his one liners against Bush. If this is so, don't make any one liners against him. With the FCC breathing down network throats, they have to have equal amount of time for each candidate. This means that if there isn't any audio of the Democrat bashing the Republican, they have to play one the other tape, which say something positive.

I am by no means a political expert, but I do believe whole–heartedly that the Democratic Party will have to go through major changes over the next four years to compete with the colossal machine we call the Republican Party.

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**Why Democrats Lose Elections: They aren't dumb. They're asleep.**

**By Kenn Gividen**

**Why Democrats Lose Elections: They aren't dumb. They're asleep. by Kenn Gividen**

Give the GOP credit. Unlike the Democrats — whose collective IQ seems to register somewhere between a '58 Buick and box of rocks — the Republicans are astutely aware of their political surroundings. That's why they win and Democrats don't.

In reality, the Democrats aren't dumb.

Anyone who was privileged to bask in the presence of former Gov. Joe Kernan know him as a passionate leader who truly cared for Hoosiers. The sharp mind of former Democratic Party State Chair Kip Tew was an asset to the party. And former Lt. Kathy Gov. Davis was bright, witty, and personable. In short, they were a class act.

No, the Democrats aren't dumb. They're asleep.

The GOP, by contrast, paid close attention to the elections in 2003 when Libertarian Greg Dixon took nearly 15 percent of the vote in his bid for Indianapolis City Council. That put a sizeable ding in the confidence of his Republican challenger. More bothersome was the fact that Libertarians proved they could plan and execute an effective campaign. The GOP took note. The Democrats snoozed.

That same year the Libertarians' candidate for mayor in Carmel snatched nearly 25 percent of the vote from the Republican incumbent. That was no small task, considering Hamilton County is a bastion of Republicanism. In nearby Noblesville, the GOP saw over 40 percent of its vote go to Libertarians in two of their City Council races. In Wayne County, Susan Bell flat out squashed her Republican opponent

## Democrats – Where to now?

and became the Hoosier state's first Libertarian judge. All told, twelve Libertarians are holding office across the state.

To the ears of Republicans, the above has the ring of an alarm clock. To the Democrats it's a lullaby.

Simply said, the GOP gets it. Indiana has three political parties. They are vulnerable. In 2004 they responded accordingly and won.

The Democrats don't get it. One would think the party of Birch Bayh would have the good sense to exploit the Republicans' soft spot. Exploit it? They don't even seem to know it exists.

Consider, for example, the GOP's gubernatorial primary in May of 2004. Eric Miller, a pro-life, sun-tanned poster child for the religious right, challenged the man who would ultimately become the next governor. The Republican Party was divided. To thinking folks, that translated into vulnerability. To the Democrats — who are not thinking folks — it meant nothing.

While Democrats had no chance of snatching Miller's followers, they did have a wide-open opportunity to send them to the Libertarian. It would have taken only 8 percent of Miller's supporters to tilt the election in favor of Democrat Joe Kernan. But the Democrats did nothing. Snore.

The Republicans, meanwhile, did plenty.

For starters, a here-to-fore unknown PAC dumped a ton of cold cash into a direct mail campaign. The target was Joe Kernan. The benefactor was the Libertarian challenger. The result? Kernan lost votes. Those were votes the Republicans would never have captured. Nice play.

What's more, the Republicans kept close tabs on their Libertarian opponent. Stuffing his Web site with e-mail addresses, the GOP received the Libertarian's weekly updates. Any appeal to Miller supporters was noted and challenged. The risk of losing Miller votes was a chance they would not take. Another nice play.

The Democrats, meanwhile, were sound asleep. One Miller supporter went so far as to personally appeal to the Democrats for support. A win by Daniels, he knew, would keep Miller from running in the next election. The election returns proved the Republicans right and the Democrats to be snoozing.

Another case in point was the defeat of Democratic Congressman Baron Hill by Republican Mike Sodrel. The margin of victory was less than 2,000 votes. The Libertarian challenger garnered 4,698 votes. Had the Democrats offered the Libertarian candidate even a modest amount of support, the election would have likely tilted toward the Democrat.

The groggy-eyed Democrats, meanwhile, are outside looking in, clueless as to what happened. But who knows? Maybe between now and 2006 they'll wake up.

Kenn Gividen Chair of the Libertarian Party of Bartholomew County (Columbus), coordinator of the Writers' Bureau and 2004 gubernatorial candidate.



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