

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

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**By Kenn Gividen**

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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 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.

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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.

### **A Clear Direction After Election Day**

**By Angela Winters**

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Like everyone else, I was confused by the vast contradictions of the exit polls and the actual results of this election. If I were the news stations, I would want my money back. For all the excitement, waiting and tension, somehow I fell asleep at 10:30. When I woke up at midnight, I was like "Oh hell, here we go." Then, this morning I felt a little better about it. I don't think this will drag out for another couple of months.

My sympathies to those who worked so hard for Kerry. They really did, but I think the reality is that the country is going in a clear direction. I was surprised, but it's pretty much in plain view. America is moving to the right. The White House, The Senate, The House and pretty soon, The Supreme Court is steering us in the direction of conservative values. Well, all that except for fiscal conservatism which in my opinion is the best aspect of conservatism. Bush's spending is a mess and I'm not talking about the war.

If the Democrats are going to have a chance in any upcoming elections, they have to expand their base. They can only do that by electing more moderate, likeable candidates. Obama is a good example. Regardless of the fact that he was basically running the equivalent of unopposed, the middle is their only chance. They need a candidate who can appeal to the base and not just steal Independents, but steal Republicans the way Clinton did. They need a candidate that people want as opposed to a candidate that will do as long as the other guy doesn't win. If they continue to rely on college kids and African Americans, they are going to stay where they are. The minority party.

So here we are. A President in power with the support of a little over half the people, but more than he got the last time. What are you thinking? What are you feeling? Barring something really unusual, Bush is going to win. What do you want him to do differently? What can all politicians do to quell some of this partisan hatred?

Angela Winters is a freelance writer and author of over twelve novels. She writes articles on race, politics and diversity. Located in the Washington DC area, Angela has written for The Laurel Leader, Popandpolitics.com, Watchblog, Centerfield and Politopics among others.

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