

Nov. 17, 2007  
Progressive Ponderings  
Campaign Paradox

We have a paradox: On the one hand the front-running Republican presidential candidates, all holding a minority position in the polls regarding the Iraq occupation, are campaigning zealously in a pro-war manner; on the other hand the front-running Democratic presidential candidates, all holding a majority position of supposedly opposing the war, are gradually abandoning the position of leaving Iraq immediately and talking in terms of troop involvement for years to come. The Republican contenders are attempting to “out-macho” each other in appealing to their base constituents while their Democratic counterparts are acting embarrassed by their anti-war base. Democratic anti-war voters who carried the Democrats to victory in 2006 are going to be without an anti-war choice on the ballot unless they actively and vociferously demand change in the Democratic presidential candidate’s slide to militarism.

Polls indicate that on a wide variety of issues Progressives are in the majority while right-wingers are in the minority. Yet, the same phenomenon is occurring. Republican contenders push Republican positions forcefully while Democratic candidates avoid positions held by the majority of the electorate, such as single payer health care, a decrease in military spending, a more progressive income tax, money’s influence in elections, and mileage standards.

Congressional approval ratings mirror the above. The minority Republicans support positions disapproved by the majority in the polls while Democrats half-heartedly back citizens’ majority positions thus failing to do the “people’s business.” Unless things change within a year, that 20-24% Congressional approval rating might foretell the 2008 election.

Our elections are backward, upside down, inside out. We let—expect—the candidates to take a Madison-Avenue approach, traveling the country trying out ideas that might gain election momentum. A government-of-the-people approach would cause them to listen to the people’s desires and needs, explaining how they would implement single-payer health coverage, how they would bring the troops home and rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan, how they would change the American imperial corporate agenda into cooperative agreements with the international community, how they would replace polluting non-renewable energy with clean renewable sources.

Citizens of the U.S. have said loud and clear that we need a new direction. For two decades public opinion polls have shown that we favor a progressive agenda that rejects corporate-driven militarism. But main-stream media and campaign/money-driven elected officials dismiss the polls. The reelection of officials occurs about 90% of the time, so why would they want to consider public opinion?

We must insist that the critical issues that are important to us are the dialog of every political campaign! The 2006 election was a beginning; more incumbents were replaced than usual. Citizens need to demand that every official voted into office respond to us, their constituents.

Right now, outside of Democrat Dennis Kucinich and Republican Ron Paul, all presidential candidates promise more of the same. U.S. citizens and the world cry out for change. Unless candidates overcome their inability to confront lies and threats, corporate cabals and financial attachments, voters will have only candidates with a muffled message. We still have time to require candidates to respond to the principles at the heart of our concerns.

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