

November 10, 2014

We start today with a [WaPo blog post](#) on how Harry Reid's senior aide ripped the administration.

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"At a March 4 Oval Office meeting, Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) and other Senate leaders pleaded with Obama to transfer millions in party funds and to also help raise money for an outside group. "We were never going to get on the same page," said David Krone, Reid's chief of staff. "We were beating our heads against the wall."

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Here's the [Post article by Phillip Rucker and Robert Costa](#). (Costa, btw, was a reporter for The National Review until the start of this year.)

One night in early September, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell called a longtime colleague, Sen. Pat Roberts, from his living room in Louisville, furious about the 78-year-old Republican's fumbling and [lethargic reelection campaign](#).

Roberts had raised a paltry \$62,000 in August. He was airing no ads. His campaign staff, mostly college students, had gone back to school. Most worrisome, McConnell had in his hands a private polling memo predicting Roberts would lose in Kansas — an alarming possibility that could cost the GOP a Senate majority.

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But none of that would work if Republicans did not get the right candidates, a basic tenet that had eluded them in recent elections. This time, party officials pushed bad candidates out, recruited and coached contenders with broad appeal and resuscitated two flailing incumbents, Roberts and Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi. ...

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But just such a candidate was on the rise down in Mississippi.

[Chris McDaniel](#), a tea party conservative and former talk-radio host, was making a run for the Senate. Republican leaders, wary about McDaniel, had lined up Mississippi Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann to run against him, on the assumption that [Sen. Thad Cochran](#) would retire.

Cochran upended those plans when he made a surprise announcement in December, a day shy of his 76th birthday, that he would seek a seventh term. The primary was set: the firebrand McDaniel vs. the veteran Cochran.

Republicans across the country worried that Democrats would turn McDaniel, with his history of inflammatory statements, into the face of their party and link every other candidate to him. Just last month, Collins pulled an anti-McDaniel mailer out from his desk and opened it to play sound of McDaniel referring to Hispanic women as “mamacitas” — demonstrating that McDaniel as the nominee would have been what Collins called “an existential threat to the entire party.”

Researchers at the NRSC pored over McDaniel’s radio tapes, searching for damaging audio. Within a month, they had uncovered a slew of incendiary racial remarks. But fearful that McDaniel could still win the nomination, they leaked only a small slice of the material — about “one-50th,” Dayspring estimated.

For much of the primary, Cochran was sleepy and might have been defeated outright were it not for a late push from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which aired a pro-Cochran testimonial from football legend Brett Favre on his farm in Hattiesburg, Miss.

McDaniel, a state senator, won the primary — though not by enough to avoid a runoff. The Republican establishment, as well as some black Democrats, rallied to Cochran’s side, and [the incumbent narrowly prevailed](#).

McDaniel, bitter to this day, has refused to concede. “You had the entire Republican Party in Washington doing everything they could to keep the true conservative out,” he said. ...

[Joel Kotkin](#) says changing demographics hurt Dems this year.

... It can be argued that changing demographics will make this year’s blowout a temporary setback. Among Latinos, a key constituency for the Democrats’ future, economic hardships and disappointment at the Democrats’ failure to achieve immigration reform have blunted but hardly reversed voting trends. This year, according to exit polls, Latinos remained strongly Democratic, but down from the nearly three-quarters who supported President Obama in 2012 to something slightly less than two-thirds.

One encouraging sign for Republicans: Texas Governor-elect Abbott won 44% of the Hispanic vote.

Perhaps the more serious may be shifts among millennials, a generation that, for the most part, stands most in danger of proletarianization. Once solidly pro-Democratic, this generation has become increasingly alienated as the economy has failed to produce notable gains. In states across the country, the Republican share of millennial votes grew considerably. According to exit polls, their deficit with voters under 30 has shrunk to 13%. The Republicans actually won among white voters under 30, 53% to 44%, even as they lost 30- to 44-year-olds, 58 to 40. If these trends hold, the generation gap that many Democrats saw as their long-term political meal ticket may prove somewhat less compelling. ...

A **Power Line** post highlights Dem malpractice.

1. Reid cleverly gets Baucus (MT) to resign early to be appointed ambassador. The Dem governor then appoints a senator who can run as an "incumbent." They appoint a guy who has plagiarism problems and has to drop out. They can only find some whacko woman to run instead. Easy R pick up.

5. Mark Uterus (CO) runs a campaign focusing on the war on womyn, disgusting almost everyone. R pick up.

10. Mary Landrieu claims her independence from Obama, but because Reid won't let anything of substance come to the Senate floor her voting record is 97% with Obama. She will lose the run-off in December.

Michael Barone on the shrinkage of the obama majority.

Some observations on the election:

(1) This was a wave, folks. It will be a benchmark for judging waves, for either party, for years.

(2) In seriously contested races Republican candidates were generally younger, more vigorous, more sunny and optimistic than Democrats. The contrast was sharpest in Colorado and Iowa, which voted twice for President Obama. Cory Gardner and Joni Ernst seemed to be looking forward to the future. Their opponents grimly championed the stale causes of feminists and trial lawyers of the past.

Democrats see themselves as the party of the future. But their policies are antique. The federal minimum wage dates to 1938, equal pay for women to 1963, access to contraceptives to 1965. Raising these issues now is campaign gimmickry, not serious policymaking.

Democratic leading lights have been around a long time. The party's two congressional leaders are in their 70s. The governors of the two largest Democratic states are sons of former governors who won their first statewide elections in 1950 and 1978. ...

Peggy Noonan turned out her best column in years.

The drubbin', thumpin', poundin' was a two-part wave, a significant Republican rise in the U.S. Senate and a Democratic collapse in the governorships.

It was one of those nights neither party ever forgets.

Republicans won not only because of a favorable map. In solid Democratic states, they won big or came close. Nor were the results due only to low midterm turnout. Nate Cohn, in the New York Times, noted that turnout in Colorado was up over 2010, yet Republican Cory Gardner beat incumbent Sen. Mark Udall with room to spare. The sheer number of blowouts was mind-boggling.

...

... But that is only one of the amazing things that happened this week. The second is how the president responded.

A sweep this size tends to resolve some things. The landscape shifts, political figures accommodate themselves to it.

Common sense says a chastened president would acknowledge the obvious—some things aren't working, he has made some mistakes—and, in Mr. Obama's case, hit the reset button with Congress. Reach out, be humble. Humility has power. It shows people that you have some give—you get the message, you are capable of self-correcting.

That is not what he's doing. The president is instead doubling down on hostility, antagonism and distance.

What a mistake. What a huge, historic mistake, not only for him but also for his party. ...

... The president here is doing what he has been doing for a while, helping Republicans look good.

...

Washington Post

[Harry Reid's top man tears apart the White House](#)

by Zachary Goldfarb.

You almost never see this in politics. David Krone, the chief of staff to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D), launches a major attack on the White House in this [blockbuster story](#) by my colleagues Philip Rucker and Robert Costa:

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[...]

"I don't think that the political team at the White House truly was up to speed and up to par doing what needed to get done," Krone said.

You should go [read the story](#), but it signals that the chilly relationship between President Obama and Senate Democrats is now entering a deep freeze.

Senate Democrats aren't likely to care at all about Obama's attempts to burnish his legacy in his final two years. They're going to be laser-focused on winning the Senate back.

As he looks toward his final two years, Obama is looking toward a Congress with few friends, and many enemies, on both sides of the aisle.

Washington Post

[Battle for the Senate: How the GOP did it](#)

by Philip Rucker and Robert Costa

One night in early September, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell called a longtime colleague, Sen. Pat Roberts, from his living room in Louisville, furious about the 78-year-old Republican's fumbling and [lethargic reelection campaign](#).

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Eleven hundred miles away in Richmond, Va., Chris LaCivita, a hard-charging Republican fixer, was on his back deck picking apart steamed crabs and drinking beer with friends when he got the order to fly to Kansas. The Republican rescue was underway.

While Republicans were moving to address their problems, Democrats were trying to overcome problems of their own — including difficulties with a White House suspicious of their leadership and protective of the president's reputation, his political network and his biggest donors.

After years of tension between President Obama and his former Senate colleagues, trust between Democrats at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue had eroded. A fight between the White House and Senate Democrats over a relatively small sum of money had mushroomed into a major confrontation.

At a March 4 Oval Office meeting, Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) and other Senate leaders pleaded with Obama to transfer millions in party funds and to also help raise money for an outside group. “We were never going to get on the same page,” said David Krone, Reid’s chief of staff. “We were beating our heads against the wall.”

The tension represented something more fundamental than money — it was indicative of a wider resentment among Democrats in the Capitol of how the president was approaching the election and how, they felt, he was dragging them down. All year on the trail, Democratic incumbents would be pounded for administration blunders beyond their control — the disastrous rollout of the health-care law, problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs, undocumented children flooding across the border, Islamic State terrorism and fears about Ebola.

As these issues festered, many Senate Democrats would put the onus squarely on the president — and they were keeping their distance from him.

“The president’s approval rating is barely 40 percent,” Krone said. “What else more is there to say? ... He wasn’t going to play well in North Carolina or Iowa or New Hampshire. I’m sorry. It doesn’t mean that the message was bad, but sometimes the messenger isn’t good.”

This account of the battle for the Senate is based on four dozen extensive interviews with candidates, campaign operatives, party leaders and super PAC strategists on both sides, as well as current and former White House advisers. Several officials were granted anonymity to speak candidly in advance of Election Day.

From the outset of the campaign, Republicans had a simple plan: Don’t make mistakes, and make it all about Obama, Obama, Obama. Every new White House crisis would bring a new Republican ad. And every Democratic incumbent would be attacked relentlessly for voting with the president 97 or 98 or 99 percent of the time.

But none of that would work if Republicans did not get the right candidates, a basic tenet that had eluded them in recent elections. This time, party officials pushed bad candidates out, recruited and coached contenders with broad appeal and resuscitated two flailing incumbents, Roberts and Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi.

Rival organizations also improved coordination with each other and beefed up their opposition research to wreak havoc on Democrats, while the party closed the gap on data, digital and voter turnout programs.

“We had to recruit candidates, and we had to train them,” said Rob Collins, executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC). “We had to bring back our incumbents. We had to modernize creaky campaigns. And we had to prevent the mistakes that have plagued our party.”

Democrats began the 2014 campaign with a big disadvantage: They had to defend seats in six deeply Republican states — enough to lose the Senate — and a handful of others in swing states.

Burdened by the climate, Democrats believed they still could win if they localized races and framed each as a choice between two candidates. The strategy worked in 2012. On his office windowsill at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the group's executive director, Guy Cecil, displayed a beer mug shaped like a cowboy boot with the name "Heidi" on the side — a reminder of how Democrat Heidi Heitkamp won a Senate seat that year in heavily Republican North Dakota.

Senate Democrats calculated that to win in red states, they also had to alter the midterm electorate.

"There's basically two Americas — there's midterm America and there's presidential-year America," White House senior adviser Dan Pfeiffer said. "They're almost apples and oranges. The question was, could Obama voters become Democratic voters?"

Another question hung over the party, as well: Could the White House and Democrats on Capitol Hill work together?

Aboard Air Force One on Nov. 7, 2012, as Obama returned to the White House from Chicago after celebrating his reelection, two of his top political advisers, Pfeiffer and David Plouffe, chatted about how difficult the midterm map would be.

Obama told his team that his No. 1 political goal was to keep the Senate under Democratic control. "He was very focused on that," said a senior White House official. "We made a decision to be pretty deferential to the candidates and the campaign committee about how to go about doing that."

But what the White House saw as deference and support, Senate Democrats viewed as "lip service," in the words of Krone.

This past Sunday, two days before Election Day, Krone sat at a mahogany conference table in the majority leader's stately suite just off the Senate floor and shared with Washington Post reporters his notes of White House meetings. Reid's top aide wanted to show just how difficult he thought it had been to work with the White House.

With Democrats under assault from Republican super-PAC ads, Reid and his lieutenants, Sens. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.), went to the Oval Office on March 4 to ask Obama for help. They wanted him to transfer millions of dollars from the Democratic National Committee to the DSCC, a relatively routine transaction.

Beyond that, they had a more provocative request — they wanted Obama to help raise money for the Senate Majority PAC, an outside group run by former Reid advisers.

Despite his deep aversion to super PACs, Obama in early 2012 reluctantly sanctioned Priorities USA, a super PAC set up to back his reelection, and allowed White House and campaign officials to appear at the group's fundraisers. But Reid and Senate Democrats thought the president was not giving the same level of support for Senate Majority PAC.

Lawyers negotiated for months over legal minutia, with Obama's counselors insisting that the president appear only as a guest and do no donor solicitation, which would have violated federal law. After Obama appeared at two Senate Majority PAC events — June 17 in New York and July 22 in Seattle — the president's lawyers demanded that no staffer follow up with the donors for at least seven days.

These contingencies were so strict, Krone argued, that it would be fruitless to involve the president at all. “They were setting the rules as they saw fit,” he said. “For some reason, they hid behind a lot of legal issues.”

The White House maintains that it was prudent in protecting the presidency and avoid any appearances of a quid pro quo. The senior White House official voiced displeasure with Senate Majority PAC’s methods: “They were calling Obama donors who we had long relationships with and making asks that annoyed the donors.”

The disagreements underscored a long-held contention on Capitol Hill that Obama’s political operation functioned purely for the president’s benefit and not for his party’s, although Obama allies note that the president shared with the Senate campaigns his massive lists of volunteer data and supporters’ e-mail addresses, considered by his advisers to be sacred documents.

All year, Obama traveled frequently to raise money for the party. On June 17, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough offered to increase Obama’s appearances at DSCC fundraisers and to give donors access to the president through a “Dinner with Barack” contest and high-dollar roundtable discussions.

Republicans captured control of the Senate and tightened their grip on the House Tuesday night in elections certain to complicate President Obama's final two years in office. (AP)

But Krone said McDonough told him there would be no cash transfer to the DSCC, because the DNC still had to retire its 2012 debt. On Sept. 9, Reid pressured Obama to take out a loan at the DNC to fund a DSCC transfer, Krone said. The DNC did open a line of credit and sent the DSCC a total of \$5 million, beginning with \$500,000 on Sept. 15 and following with \$1.5 million installments on Sept. 30, Oct. 15 and Oct. 24.

“I don’t think that the political team at the White House truly was up to speed and up to par doing what needed to get done,” Krone said.

The feeling about Krone in the West Wing was mutual. Although married to [Alyssa Mastromonaco](#), one of Obama’s closest aides until she left in May, Krone was seen as an antagonist. He acknowledged that was his prescribed part: “Guy [Cecil] could be a good cop, and I was the bad cop.”

The senior White House official said, “David was complicating things significantly in our ability to work with the Senate.” The official said a “fundamental game changer” that “broke trust” came in August, when a [story in the New York Times](#) included unflattering details about the president from an Oval Office meeting. White House officials, famous for their loathing of leaks, believed Krone was behind the story.

Krone said that the White House “likes to cast aspersions and point fingers at us.”

“No member of the Democratic caucus screwed up the rollout of that health-care Web site,” Krone added, “yet they paid the price — every one of them.”

Exacerbating matters was Obama’s Oct. 2 [speech in Chicago](#), in which he handed every Republican admaker fresh material that fit perfectly with their message: “I am not on the ballot this fall. . . . But make no mistake — these policies are on the ballot, every single one of them.”

“It took about 12 seconds for every reporter, every race, half of the Obama world to say that was probably not the right thing to say,” said a senior Democratic official.

It was so problematic that many Democrats wondered whether Obama meant to say it. He did. “It is amazing that it was in the speech,” the official said. “It wasn’t ad-libbed.”

It was just the kind of unforced error that Republican leaders had worked all year to avoid.

Republican reboot

Minutes after landing at Reagan National Airport one day early this year, many GOP Senate hopefuls found themselves besieged at baggage claim by people with cameras yelling questions at them about abortion and rape.

This was no impromptu news conference but rather Republican staffers in disguise, trying to shock the candidates into realizing the intensity of what lay before them.

From the airport, the startled candidates were whisked off to NRSC headquarters for a series of meetings. There were policy briefings led by Lanhee Chen, Mitt Romney’s former policy director, as well as communications boot camps and media training from Roger Ailes associate Jon Kraushar, who has mentored Fox News personalities.

Looming large were the ghosts of combustible campaigns past: Todd Akin, Richard Mourdock, Ken Buck, Christine O’Donnell, Sharron Angle.

“How do you fundamentally go about making human beings who are wildly unpredictable more predictable?” the NRSC’s Collins said. “It’s not about replacing what they believe. Pro-life is a majority view in this country, so how do you talk about it in terms that are relevant and not characterized as extreme?”

The efforts were not just an attempt to coach up their candidates; they were also designed to prove to donors that Republicans had what it takes to win.

After Romney’s devastating defeat in 2012, many donors “stood on the edge of throwing in the towel,” said Karl Rove, who spent 2013 trying to raise money for American Crossroads, a GOP super PAC. “They had real doubts about whether it was possible to get back in the game.”

When Sen. Rob Portman (Ohio), the NRSC vice chairman, met with major donors in New York early last year, he heard harsh complaints. “You guys blew it,” donors told Portman, according to a GOP official. “We blame you. It’s not just bad luck. You guys don’t know what you’re doing.”

After hearing similar grievances, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus narrowed the RNC’s core mission to data, digital and field operations, ceding expensive TV ads to outside groups.

Targeting vulnerable Democrats became a priority. Party honchos tapped former Romney campaign manager Matt Rhoades and star operatives Joe Ponder and Tim Miller to start America Rising, a group dedicated to digging up damaging information on Democrats.

American Crossroads and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce played aggressively in primaries to boost the candidates they believed could win general elections — including Thom Tillis in North Carolina and Dan Sullivan in Alaska.

The GOP establishment pulled off two major recruiting coups.

In Colorado, Buck, a controversial former Senate candidate, was running again, this time against Sen. Mark Udall (D). And even though party leaders had brought him to Washington to try to smooth out his rough edges, they were working behind his back to replace him with [Cory Gardner](#), a fresh-faced congressman.

The NRSC's political director, Ward Baker — a tough ex-Marine who decorated the office with camouflage netting and sandbags and earned the moniker “Hurricane Ward” for his relentless nudging — called Gardner regularly. In February, he got his man — and got Buck to step aside by engineering a switch whereby Buck would run for Gardner's House seat.

“[Democrats] wrote the playbook for Ken Buck — and failed to adjust when it wasn't Ken Buck anymore,” said Brad Dayspring, the NRSC's communications director.

In New Hampshire, Scott Brown, the former senator from neighboring Massachusetts, waffled about taking on Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D). Brown said he would pull the trigger only if the party met an eight-point list of demands that included not allowing another government shutdown or a loose-cannon conservative like Akin to become the nominee in another state. Party operatives assured him they would do their best, and Brown was in.

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Cochran upended those plans when he made a surprise announcement in December, a day shy of his 76th birthday, that he would seek a seventh term. The primary was set: the firebrand McDaniel vs. the veteran Cochran.

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McDaniel, bitter to this day, has refused to concede. "You had the entire Republican Party in Washington doing everything they could to keep the true conservative out," he said.

Primary season was far from over. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) was so flustered by the prospect of losing his August primary to a conservative insurgent that he was unable to sleep at night. In middle-of-the-night calls with trusted aide Tom Ingram, Alexander obsessed over the finite details of radio and TV ads.

But he survived and, exhausted, went off the grid to go fishing. The kind of troublemakers that had plagued the party in the past had been conquered.

'Make 'em squeal'

Republican research efforts weren't just paying off against their own. On a Monday morning in March, [a new video](#) arrived at America Rising's war room. It showed Rep. Bruce Braley, the Democratic Senate candidate in Iowa, speaking at a Texas fundraiser next to a cart of whiskey. Braley disparaged Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), a popular figure in line to chair the Senate Judiciary Committee, for being "a farmer from Iowa who never went to law school."

Watching the video, Rhoades thought, "That's pretty bad, man." Tim Miller sent the footage to Dave Price, the political reporter and anchor at WHO-TV in Des Moines. A scoop was born.

"Iowa was not on people's radar at all," Rhoades said. "But after that, it was 'Braley this,' 'Braley that.'"

Republicans sensed weakness. Steven Law, president of American Crossroads, wrote in a confidential memo to the super PAC's donors on March 25 that Braley was "a poor fit for the state: an urban, liberal trial lawyer who looks like he is more comfortable in an office building than on plowed ground."

At that point, five Republicans were competing to take on Braley on — and nobody knew much about a farm girl and National Guard lieutenant colonel named [Joni Ernst](#).

Ernst broke through with what became the ad of the year, in which she says she grew up "castrating hogs on an Iowa farm" and knew how to "make 'em squeal" in Washington.

Ernst easily won the primary, but, as with other GOP nominees, [conservative positions](#) she had taken — opposing the federal minimum wage and supporting a "personhood" amendment to Iowa's constitution stating that life begins at conception — became easy fodder for Democrats.

Joni Ernst (R) became the first woman ever elected statewide in Iowa on Tuesday after defeating Rep. Bruce Braley (D) for the open U.S. Senate seat. Ernst, a little-known state senator who made national headlines with her campaign ad "Squeal," steadily rose in the polls over the last months of the campaign. Her win marks the first time in 30 years the seat will be held by a Republican.
(KCRG)

Republicans worked to polish Ernst's presentation and policy platform. "She is naturally disciplined, and I assume that has a lot to do with her military training and her farm-girl roots," said David Kochel, an Ernst adviser.

Meanwhile, the Braley campaign had problems. With each of his missteps — a gaffe about towel service at the House gym, hostile questioning of witnesses in committee hearings and a local fracas over a neighbor's roaming chickens — Braley caused heartburn in Washington.

When the chicken incident became public, Reid called and said, "Bruce, look, you just have to be smarter than this — or you're going to lose," according to Krone. Schumer, the party's message maven, called Braley repeatedly to help him become more disciplined.

"Braley listens for a minute and then sort of just continues back on his merry way," said a senior Democratic official. "He's not a good politician, which may seem like a compliment but it's not. ... He comes across as arrogant, and I think it's because he is."

Democratic leaders also had problems in Kentucky, where they were aiming to defeat McConnell. In early 2013, actress Ashley Judd flew to Washington to tell party bosses she wanted to run. The DSCC's Cecil curtly ended her flirtation, telling Judd she was too liberal to win in Kentucky.

Next, Democrats turned to Alison Lundergan Grimes, Kentucky's youthful secretary of state. [Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton](#), longtime friends of Grimes's father, Jerry Lundergan, called Grimes repeatedly, encouraging her. After some initial trepidation, she was in.

Although Grimes exhibited strength as a candidate, Democrats in Washington thought her campaign was troublesome. Lundergan, a former state Democratic Party chairman and owner of a catering empire, ran the operation. Grimes prioritized staffers with local knowledge and rejected the national party's recommendations on hires and advice about messaging.

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) declared victory on Tuesday, easily defeating Senate candidate Alison Lundergan Grimes (D). The Republican leader made repealing Obamacare the center of his campaign and painted his opponent as a "rubber stamp" for the president's agenda. (Associated Press)

Asked last week about the tensions, Lundergan said: "I'm not going to say anything about folks in Washington, D.C. That's what we're running against — Washington, D.C."

Democrats who had been otherwise impressed with Grimes's performance were agog at her refusal to say whether she voted for Obama in 2012. As a senior White House official said jokingly, "It would be interesting to have been an Obama delegate to the [2012] convention yet [to have] voted for Romney, but anything's possible."

In October, Cecil, who had last spoken with Grimes during a spring fundraising tour with female senators, decided the DSCC would stop running TV ads in Kentucky. The news did not sit well with Grimes, who called Reid and a number of female senators to protest. The following week, the DSCC went back on the air.

Ground game

With the field aligned against them, Democrats banked on their celebrated [digital and data supremacy](#) to stay in the game. The DSCC spent \$60 million on its “Bannock Street Project” to maximize turnout of the “Obama coalition” — blacks, Latinos, unmarried women and young people. The committee hired former Obama 2012 campaign officials, including Jennifer O’Malley Dillon, Stephanie Cutter and Teddy Goff, to guide the effort.

But the Republicans were catching up. The RNC spread young staffers and regional political directors across the country, armed with new mobile applications to better coordinate volunteers’ door-knocking and to feed fresh data into the party’s models.

Americans for Prosperity, a super PAC funded largely by the billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch, also emphasized early voting. AFP spent [upwards of \\$60 million](#) on its own ground game, hiring 500 paid field staffers in pivotal races.

In the final weeks of the campaign, Obama craved on-the-ground intelligence. He asked aides for daily updates on the early vote in Iowa and Colorado. Last week, the president called Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.), friends from his Senate days, to check in and offer counsel.

With Obama largely benched, Democrats leaned heavily on the Clintons to galvanize voters. Hillary Clinton, a likely 2016 presidential candidate, held 45 events across the country. Bill Clinton or his chief of staff, Tina Flournoy, called Cecil daily for updates on internal polls or ad buys. Clinton was especially hands-on in his native Arkansas, where Pryor was headed toward defeat.

All year, the Kochs were a target for liberals. Reid drew attention to the brothers in March when he [denounced them](#) by name from the Senate floor. “What is un-American is when shadowy billionaires pour unlimited money into our democracy to rig the system,” Reid said.

Demonizing millionaires was a go-to strategy for Democrats. In Georgia, Democratic Senate candidate Michelle Nunn was relentless in her attacks on her Republican opponent, David Perdue, a former corporate chief executive. [She hired ad man Saul Shorr](#), who made some of 2012’s most effective attack ads going after Romney’s Bain Capital career, to produce similar spots about Perdue.

Despite his corporate pedigree, Perdue was one of the few Republicans running without the backing of the U.S. Chamber. In late 2013, the Chamber’s Rob Engstrom scheduled an endorsement interview with Perdue in Atlanta at 8 a.m. Perdue arrived at 8:35 and did not apologize for being late, according to three people familiar with the exchange. Sitting with his arms folded, Perdue told Engstrom, “I don’t give a damn about the U.S. Chamber.” Perdue put his finger on the table and said, “You’re either going to endorse me right here, right now, or you’re wasting my time.”

Seven minutes in, the meeting was over. Perdue spilled his bottle of water on the way out. A couple of hours later, he called Engstrom to apologize and asked for a do-over. But it was too late. The Chamber endorsed rival Jack Kingston, a longtime congressman, and stayed neutral in the general election.

Perdue ran into trouble in October when his sworn testimony surfaced from a [2005 deposition](#) in which he said he spent “most of my career” outsourcing jobs overseas.

In the fallout, Perdue [mangled his message](#). He kept trying to explain the mechanics of business and the intellectual rationale for outsourcing.

Kevin Madden, who counseled Romney through similar pitfalls in 2012, flew to Georgia to re-brand Perdue. He coached the multimillionaire to channel everyday people's pocketbook concerns, trying to avert a potential disaster.

But another source of Republican chaos was playing out on the plains of Kansas.

Rescue mission

It was Republican former Senate leader Robert J. Dole, 91, who first sensed trouble for Roberts. Amid a tour of Kansas, Dole in May called Scott Reed, his 1996 presidential campaign manager and now an adviser at the U.S. Chamber, with a warning. "There wasn't the enthusiasm I expected for Pat," Dole said.

To McConnell and party officials, Roberts was a concern from the start. McConnell was uneasy with Roberts's coterie of aging aides who were known to cocoon the senator from negative news and to urge him to rest at his home in Alexandria, Va.

Roberts had no home of his own in Kansas. He rents out the Dodge City property he owns, and his voting address is at the home of two donors. In June 2013, senior NRSC officials met privately with Roberts and warned him that his residency would be a problem. The senator, his glasses drooping down on his nose, was defiant. He was adamant that he knew Kansas better than anyone and would not be taking advice from the party's whippersnappers.

When confronted about his residency that summer by Towns, then his campaign manager, Roberts became angry and told him to never bring it up again.

Roberts's problems became precarious two months ago, when Democrat Chad Taylor, encouraged by some in his party, surprisingly dropped out of the race, leaving Roberts to face wealthy independent candidate [Greg Orman](#). That prompted McConnell to confront Roberts and demand the shake-up.

Towns was replaced by Corry Bliss, a LaCivita protege who had never set foot in Kansas. When Bliss arrived in Wichita on Sept. 5 to meet Roberts and prepare him for a debate the next day at the Kansas State Fair, the senator held a thick binder of prep papers. After awkward introductions, Bliss told Roberts the binder was unnecessary. He handed the senator a piece of paper with a simple strategy: Tie Orman to Obama and Reid.

Roberts was energetic and brusque in the debate. Within days, the NRSC started sending a never-ending stream of surrogates to bring money and attention to Roberts's survival effort, from Dole and Romney to Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) and [Sarah Palin](#). Roberts effectively moved into the Residence Inn in Topeka, where he and LaCivita swapped Marine stories.

By late October, Roberts's sagging poll numbers improved. Still, Dole called Bliss regularly to bark at the young manager. "Damn it," Dole would say, "put more signs on Route 81." On Halloween, Dole told Bliss to issue a provocative news release about Orman's "Democratic costume."

Not everyone was on board. As Roberts prepped for the final debate, his wife, Franki, and their daughter, Ashleigh, confronted LaCivita. They wanted the senator to dial back his newfound aggression.

LaCivita said that he appreciated their suggestion but that the senator would not be changing course. "It's all about Obama," the strategist told them. "That's the way we win."

New Geography

The Demographics That Sank The Democrats In The Midterm Elections

by Joel Kotkin

Over the past five years, the Democratic Party has tried to add class warfare to its pre-existing focus on [racial](#) and [gender](#) grievances, and environmental angst. Shortly after his re-election in 2012, President Obama [claimed](#) to have “one mandate ... to help middle-class families and families that are working hard to try to get into the middle class.”

Yet despite the economic recovery, it is precisely these voters, particularly the white middle and working classes, who, for now, have deserted the Democrats for the GOP, the assumed party of plutocracy. The key in the 2014 mid-term elections was concern about the economy; [early exit polls](#) Tuesday night showed that seven in 10 voters viewed the economy negatively, and this did not help the Democratic cause.

“The Democrats have committed political malpractice,” says Morley Winograd, a longtime party activist and a former top aide to Vice President Al Gore during the Clinton years. “They have not discussed the economy and have no real program. They are offering the middle class nothing.”

Winograd believes that the depth of white middle- and working-class angst threatens the bold predictions in recent years about an “emerging Democratic majority” based on women, millennials, minorities and professionals. Non-college educated voters broke heavily for the GOP, according to the exit polling, including some [62% of white non-college voters](#). This reflects a growing trend: 20 years ago districts with white, working-class majorities [tilted slightly Democratic](#); before the election they favored the GOP by a 5 to 1 margin, and several of the last white, Democratic congressional holdovers from the South, notably West Virginia’s Nick Rahall and Georgia’s John Barrow, went down to defeat Tuesday night.

Perhaps the biggest attrition for the Democrats has been among middle-class voters employed in the private sector, particularly small property and business owners. In the 1980s and 1990s, middle- and working-class people benefited from economic expansions, garnering [about half the gains](#); in the current recovery almost all benefits have gone to the top one percent, particularly the wealthiest sliver of that rarified group.

Rather than the promise of “hope and change,” according to [exit polls](#), 50% of voters said they lack confidence that their children will do better than they have, 10 points higher than in 2010. This is not surprisingly given that nearly [80% state that the recession has not ended](#), at least for them.

The effectiveness of the Democrats’ class warfare message has been further undermined by the nature of the recovery; while failing most Americans, the Obama era has been very kind to plutocrats of all kinds. Low interest rates have hurt middle-income retirees while helping to send the stock market soaring. Quantitative easing has helped boost the price of assets like high-end real estate; in contrast middle and working class people, as well as small businesses, find access to capital or mortgages still very difficult.

The Republicans made gains in states in New England and the upper Midwest where the vast majority of the population, including the working class, remains [far whiter](#) than the national norm of 64% Anglo, such as Massachusetts, where a Republican was elected governor, Michigan,

Arkansas and Ohio. Anglos constitute 89% of the population in Iowa and 93% in the former working-class Democratic bastion of West Virginia, two states where the Republicans picked up Senate seats. In Colorado, another big Senate pickup for the GOP, some 80% of the electorate is white. In Kentucky, where Senator Mitch McConnell won a surprisingly easy re-election, [only 11% of voters were non-white](#), down 4% from 2008.

A more intriguing danger sign for Democrats has been the surprisingly strong GOP performance among the educated professionals that embraced Obama early on. This can be seen in gubernatorial victories in deep blue Massachusetts and Maryland, and a close race in Connecticut; in all three states [concerns over taxes](#) have shifted some voters to the GOP. Voters making over \$100,000 annually broke 56 to 43 for the GOP, according to [NBC's exit polls](#). College graduates [leaned slightly toward the Republicans](#), but among white college graduates the GOP led by a decisive 55 to 43 margin.

In Colorado, Senator-elect Cory Gardner, like many successful GOP candidates, also did well with middle-income voters (annual salaries between \$50,000 and \$100,000), who basically accounted for his margin of victory. These are voters that some Republicans are targeting to instigate a new "[tax revolt](#)," like the one that helped catapult Ronald Reagan into the presidency. The potential may be there if the Republicans can wake up from their blind instinct to protect large corporations and big investors. Certainly Obama's call for higher income taxes on the wealthy has alienated small business owners and professionals, though barely impacting tech oligarchs, whose wealth is taxed at far lower capital gains rates.

It can be argued that changing demographics will make this year's blowout a temporary setback. Among Latinos, a key constituency for the Democrats' future, economic hardships and disappointment at the Democrats' failure to achieve immigration reform have blunted but hardly reversed voting trends. This year, according to exit polls, Latinos remained strongly Democratic, but down from the nearly three-quarters who supported President Obama in 2012 to something slightly less than two-thirds.

One encouraging sign for Republicans: Texas Governor-elect Abbott won 44% of the Hispanic vote.

Perhaps the more serious may be shifts among millennials, a generation that, for the most part, stands most in danger of proletarianization. Once solidly pro-Democratic, this generation has become [increasingly alienated](#) as the economy has failed to produce notable gains. In states across the country, the Republican share of millennial votes [grew considerably](#). According to exit polls, their deficit with voters under 30 has shrunk to 13%. The Republicans actually won among white voters under 30, 53% to 44%, even as they lost 30- to 44-year-olds, 58 to 40. If these trends hold, the generation gap that many Democrats saw as their long-term political meal ticket may prove somewhat less compelling.

If they are losing the middle and working classes, and even some millennials, what are the Democrats left with? They did best in states like California and New York, where there is a high concentration of progressive post-graduates and non-whites, and where many of the sectors benefiting most from the recovery have thrived, notably tech, financial services, and high-end real estate.

Yet these areas of strength could also prove a problem for the Democrats. A party increasingly dominated by progressives in New York, Los Angeles, the Bay Area and Seattle may embrace the liberal social and environmental agenda that captivates party's loyalists but is less appealing to the middle class. Unless the Democrats develop a compelling economic policy that promises better

things for the majority, they may find their core constituencies too narrow to prevent the Republicans from enjoying an unexpected, albeit largely undeserved, resurgence.

Power Line

Ten strikes and you're out

by Paul Mirengoff

A friend takes us on a stroll down memory lane with the top Democratic swings and misses of 2014.

1. Reid cleverly gets Baucus (MT) to resign early to be appointed ambassador. The Dem governor then appoints a senator who can run as an "incumbent." They appoint a guy who has plagiarism problems and has to drop out. They can only find some whacko woman to run instead. Easy R pick up.
2. The Dems get excited about picking up a seat in Mississippi because there was a primary fight. The Dems are smoking way, way too much dope whether it is legal or illegal. This issue faded away quickly.
3. Dems try to paint Tom Cotton as out of touch. They bring Bubba and Bubbette in to salvage Pryor's back side. Cotton wins going away by 17. R pick up.
4. The open seat in SD looks good to Dems because former senator Larry Pressler runs as an independent, potentially siphoning away R votes. When he admits to voting for Obama his campaign loses what little air it has. Easy R pick up.
5. Mark Uterus (CO) runs a campaign focusing on the war on womyn, disgusting almost everyone. R pick up.
6. Joni Ernst is painted as another warrior on womyn. She is indeed a warrior and beats a trial lawyer who told a small group of Texas lawyers what he really thinks of Iowa farmers. She wins by 7.
7. The Dems get excited about firing Mitch McConnell and run a woman who pretends to care about coal and guns. McConnell wins by 16.
8. The Dems get excited about firing Pat Roberts who has been in DC too long. They persuade their own candidate to withdraw from the race in Kansas, running a Trojan horse as an independent. Roberts wins by 9.
9. The Dem cypher incumbent in NC runs a perfect campaign and loses in the tidal wave.
10. Mary Landrieu claims her independence from Obama, but because Reid won't let anything of substance come to the Senate floor her voting record is 97% with Obama. She will lose the run-off in December.

Delicious.

Examiner

The shrinkage of the Obama majority

by Michael Barone

Some observations on the election:

(1) This was a wave, folks. It will be a benchmark for judging waves, for either party, for years.

(2) In seriously contested races Republican candidates were generally younger, more vigorous, more sunny and optimistic than Democrats. The contrast was sharpest in Colorado and Iowa, which voted twice for President Obama. Cory Gardner and Joni Ernst seemed to be looking forward to the future. Their opponents grimly championed the stale causes of feminists and trial lawyers of the past.

Democrats see themselves as the party of the future. But their policies are antique. The federal minimum wage dates to 1938, equal pay for women to 1963, access to contraceptives to 1965. Raising these issues now is campaign gimmickry, not serious policymaking.

Democratic leading lights have been around a long time. The party's two congressional leaders are in their 70s. The governors of the two largest Democratic states are sons of former governors who won their first statewide elections in 1950 and 1978.

This has implications for 2016. Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee, worked in her first campaign in 1970. She has been a national figure since 1991. The Clintons' theme song, "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow," was released in 1977. That will be 39 years ago in 2016.

(3) The combination of Obama's low job approval and Harry Reid's virtual shutdown of the Senate insured a Republican Senate majority. Reid prevented amendments — Mark Begich of Alaska never got to introduce one — that could have helped them in campaigns.

Votes were blocked on issues with clear Senate majorities — such as the Keystone XL pipeline, medical device tax repeal and the bipartisan patent reform bill backed by Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.

That left Democrats running for re-election stuck with 95-plus percent Obama voting records. It left them with no independent votes or initiatives to point to. Reid kept Democratic candidates well stocked with money. But not with winning issues.

(4) Democratic territory has been reduced to the bastions of two core groups — black voters and gentry liberals. Democrats win New York City and the San Francisco Bay area by overwhelming margins, but are outvoted in almost all the territory in between — including, this year, Obama's Illinois. Gov. Jerry Brown ran well behind in California's Central Valley and Gov. Andrew Cuomo lost most of upstate New York.

Democratic margins have shrunk among Hispanics and, almost to the vanishing point, among young voters. Liberal Democrats raised money to "turn Texas blue." But it voted Republican by wider than usual margins this year.

Under Obama, the Democratic base has shrunk numerically and demographically. With superior organization, he was able to stitch together a 51 percent majority in 2012. But like other Democratic majority coalitions — Woodrow Wilson's, Lyndon Johnson's, even Franklin Roosevelt's — it has proved to be fragile and subject to fragmentation.

(5) In many states — including many carried twice by Obama — Republicans have been governing successfully, at least in the estimation of their voters. Gov. Scott Walker has won his third victory in four years in Wisconsin against the frantic efforts of public employee unions.

Gov. John Kasich won a landslide victory against a flawed opponent in Ohio, and Gov. Rick Snyder won solidly in Michigan after signing a right-to-work law hated by private sector unions. In Florida Gov. Rick Scott's second consecutive one-point victory means that Republicans will be in control for 20 years in what is now the nation's third largest state.

Democratic governance, in contrast, was rebuked by the voters in Massachusetts, in Maryland (with the nation's fourth highest black population in percentage terms), and in Obama's home state of Illinois.

(6) The Obama Democrats labor under the illusion that a beleaguered people hunger for an ever bigger government. The polls and the election results suggest, not so gently, otherwise.

The fiasco of healthcare.gov, the misdeeds of the IRS, the improvisatory warnings of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — all undermine confidence in the capacity of big government. Looking back over the last half-century, the highest levels of trust in government came, interestingly, during the administration of Ronald Reagan.

(7) This election was a repudiation of the big government policies of the Obama Democrats. It was not so much an endorsement of Republicans as it was an invitation to them to come up with better alternative policies.

In the states some Republicans have. At the national level they are just getting started. We'll see how they do.

WSJ

[A Message Sent to a Grudging President](#)

After a thumpin', Obama doubles down on hostility, antagonism and distance.

by Peggy Noonan

The drubbin', thumpin', poundin' was a two-part wave, a significant Republican rise in the U.S. Senate and a Democratic collapse in the governorships.

It was one of those nights neither party ever forgets.

Republicans won not only because of a favorable map. In solid Democratic states, they won big or came close. Nor were the results due only to low midterm turnout. Nate Cohn, in the [New York Times](#), noted that turnout in Colorado was up over 2010, yet Republican Cory Gardner beat incumbent Sen. Mark Udall with room to spare. The sheer number of blowouts was mind-boggling. Sen. [Mitch McConnell](#) was supposed to win in Kentucky, but not by 15 points. In Arkansas the

Republican challenger, Tom Cotton, beat Democratic incumbent Sen. Mark Pryor by 17 points. In Georgia, where the Senate race was assumed to be close, the Republican won by eight. Republican Pat Roberts, left for dead in Kansas months ago, won by 10.

Among the governors, Republican John Kasich won re-election in swing-state Ohio by an astounding 31 points. In South Carolina, incumbent Nikki Haley beat her Democratic challenger by 15 points. In solid-blue Illinois, the Republican challenger, Bruce Rauner, turned out the incumbent by five points; in solid-Democratic Maryland, the Republican candidate for governor won by a solid five. Scott Walker, perpetually under siege in Wisconsin, the focus of public-employee-union ferocity and targeted nationally by Democrats who needed to knock him off, also won by five.

It was not in the least a charisma election, a sweeping expression of support for a character or personality or movement. It was a message election. Sweeps like this come down to policy and governance. America on Tuesday told one party no, you're not doing it right, we don't like what we're seeing, and your preoccupations (birth control, "War on Women") are not our priorities.

The president said he was not on the ballot but his policies were. Those policies were resoundingly repudiated.

But that is only one of the amazing things that happened this week. The second is how the president responded.

A sweep this size tends to resolve some things. The landscape shifts, political figures accommodate themselves to it.

Common sense says a chastened president would acknowledge the obvious—some things aren't working, he has made some mistakes—and, in Mr. Obama's case, hit the reset button with Congress. Reach out, be humble. Humility has power. It shows people that you have some give—you get the message, you are capable of self-correcting.

That is not what he's doing. The president is instead doubling down on hostility, antagonism and distance.

What a mistake. What a huge, historic mistake, not only for him but also for his party.

In his news conference on Wednesday, Mr. Obama was grim and grudging, barely bothering to hide suppressed anger. "Republicans had a good night." He was unwilling to explain or characterize what happened. "I'll leave it to all of you and the professional pundits to pick through yesterday's results." He took no personal responsibility: The people sent a message and it is that Washington must work "as hard as they do." He was unwilling to say what went wrong, why his party's candidates didn't want him near them on the trail. His answers were long, filibuster-y, meant to run out the clock. It was clear the White House wanted to say he met with reporters for more than an hour. He did. At one point he tried to smile but couldn't quite pull it off; it came across as a Nixon-like flexing of the rictus muscles. (I tried to describe it in my notes. "Hatey" was the best I could do.)

There were airy generalities—"This town doesn't work well"—and a few humblebrags: "I have a unique responsibility to try and make this town work"; "I'm the guy who's elected by everybody."

Most seriously and consequentially—the huge mistake—is that Mr. Obama said he will address immigration through executive action unless Congress sends a comprehensive bill to him that he finds attractive. He said this just after a news conference in which the presumed next Senate

majority leader, Mitch McConnell, in a post-election statement that was actually conciliatory and constructive, said any such move by the president would “poison the well” with Congress. It would be experienced by Republicans on the Hill as pure aggression.

The president’s use of broad executive action would kill any chance of compromise or progress with Congress. And the amazing thing is that this isn’t even in his interests.

What is in his interests is for him to go forward in a spirit of compromise and try to reach agreements on the Hill through negotiations. This would be a relief after six years of nonstop acrimony. Republicans need an end of acrimony too: They want to show that they’re not just shutdown artists, as their foes say, but that they are a governing party in whose hands the country is safe. After a few bills were passed, people would start to feel that they were seeing progress. This would help the president get a new sentence defining him. The current sentence is something like, “Wow, that didn’t work, he really had the wrong skill sets.” Two years of governing peace might get him, “He had a dynamic first two years, lost the thread, was re-elected, then there was a lot of mess but he stabilized and got serious.” That’s not a bad sentence.

It is confounding—not surprising but stunning, unhelpful and ill-judged—that the president is instead going for antagonism, combat and fruitless friction.

This is not just poor strategy, it seems to me to be mildly delusional. Chris Matthews erupted on MSNBC: “There’s something in this guy that just plays to his constituency and acts like there’s no other world out there!”

That’s true. And deeply strange in a politician. It’s as if he doesn’t think he has to work with others, he only has to be right. I think Mr. Obama sees himself as a centrist because he often resists the pressures of the leftward-most edge of his base. Therefore in his imagination he is in the middle, the center. If he is in the middle of a great centrist nation, how can they turn on him? The answer: They are confused. This is their flaw, not his. He’s not going to let their logical flaws change his game.

And so the future may well be nonstop combat between the Hill and the White House. If the president does a big executive action, the Republican Congress will no longer think negotiations and deals are possible. They will over the coming years send him legislation that they can pass with the support of their majorities and moderate Democrats. If he vetoes, they will try to override.

The Republicans will be set up as the party passing bills that go in certain directions on certain issues, and those bills will no doubt be generally popular, or popular with the Republican base. If the bills are vetoed and can’t be overridden, Republicans will say they are frustrated by that willful loner—that obstructionist—in the White House.

That will probably set up the GOP pretty well for 2016. It will keep the party’s activists in a constant state of agitated alert.

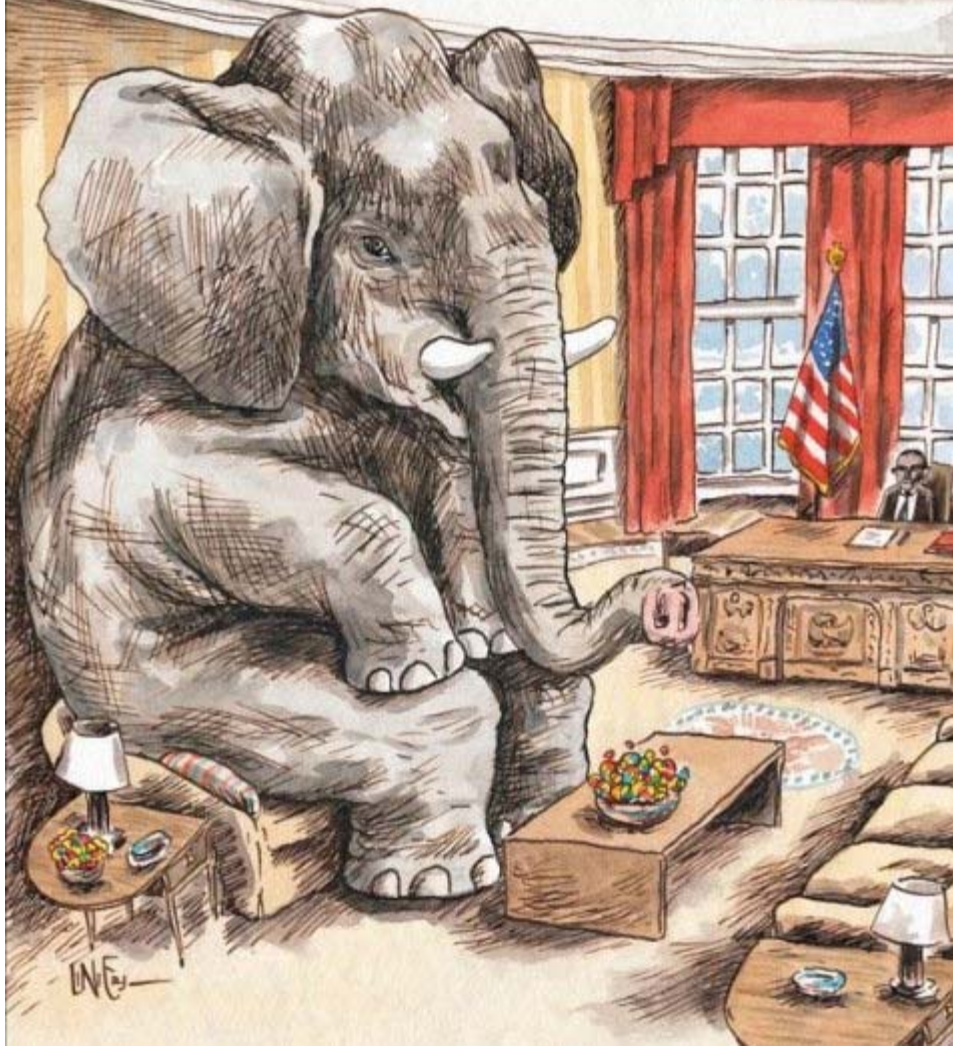
Once again the president is doing his party no favors.

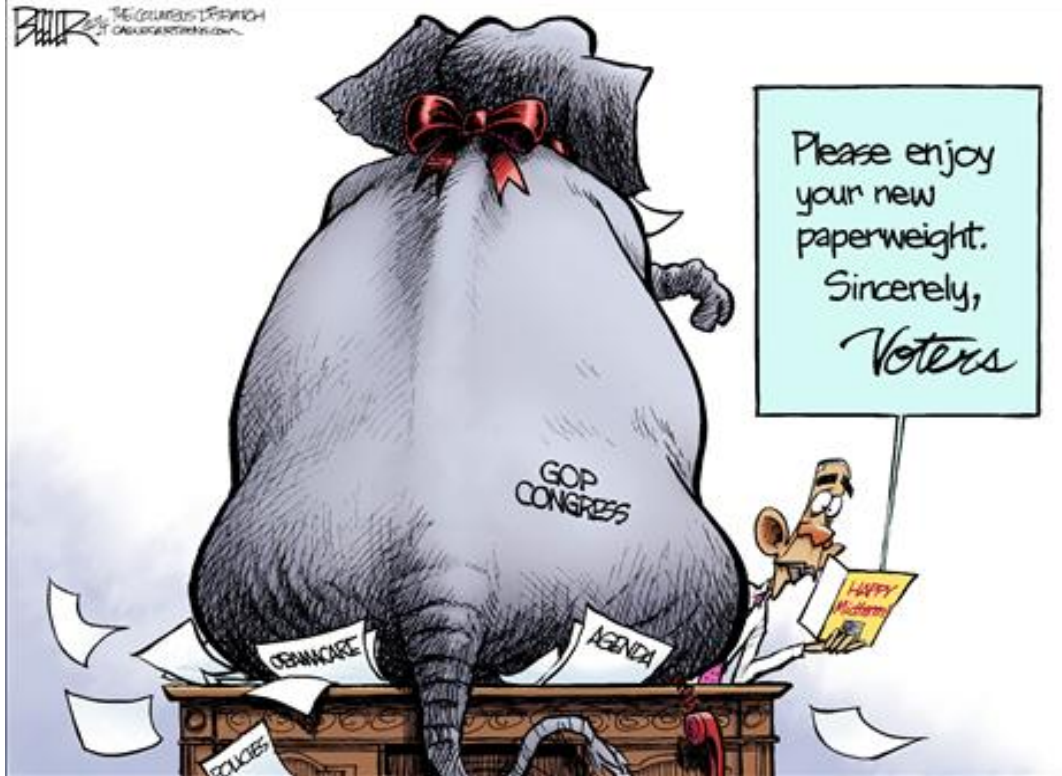
This is no way to run a railroad. The president here is doing what he has been doing for a while, helping Republicans look good. That is an amazing strategy for a Democratic president to adopt.

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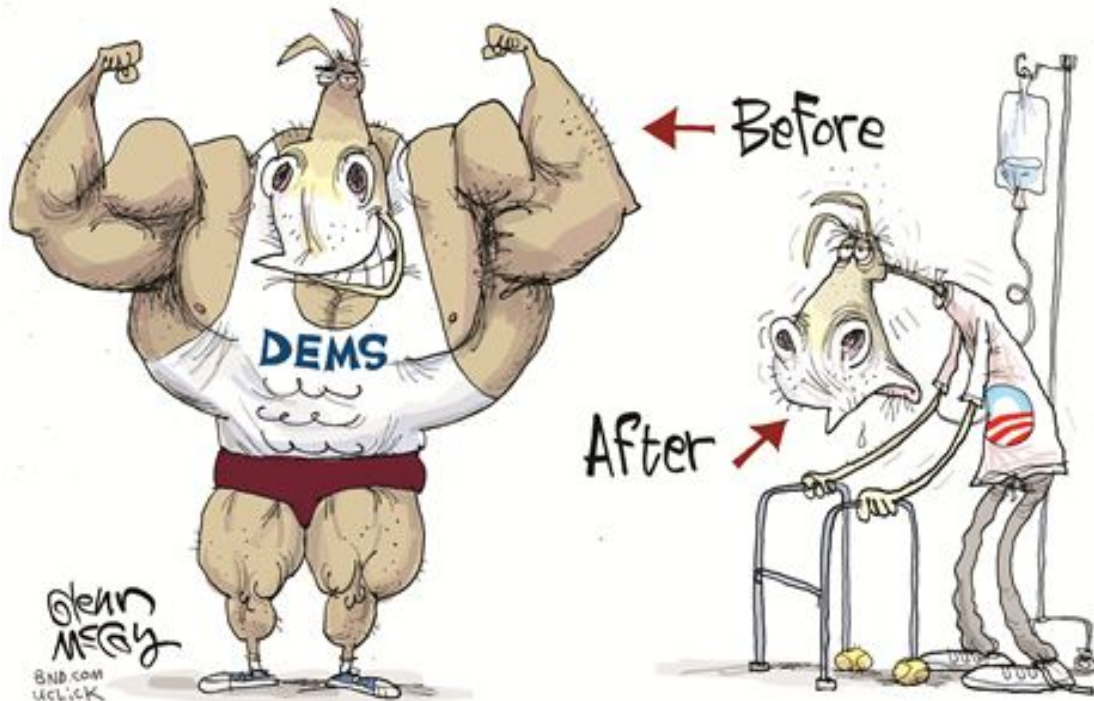
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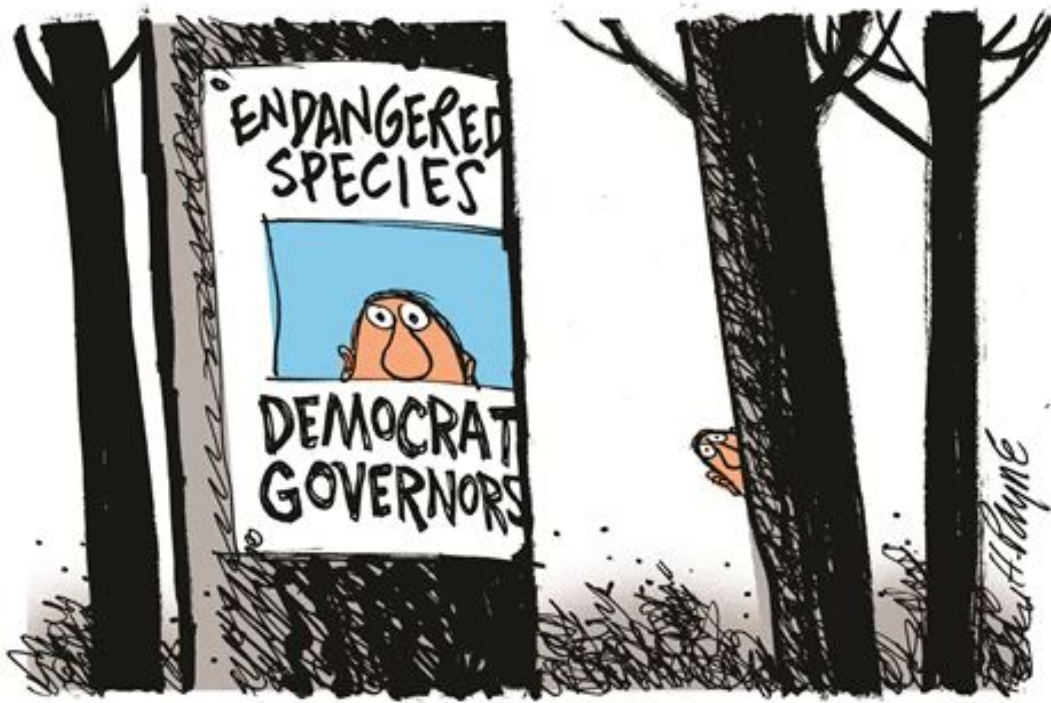
GOP



NOW WITH MORE COVERAGE THAN VERIZON

In 2008 Obama promised to fundamentally change America...





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"IT'S A LITTLE EARLY *for* THANKSGIVING... YOU MUST BE A DEMOCRAT."

