

November 12, 2014

**Jennifer Rubin** picks Scott Walker as the Distinguished Pol of The Week.

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Walker was also the subject of the **WSJ Weekend Interview**. Hearing how he addressed the headquarters crowd election night, you would think he just participated in a Passover Seder. And remember, he is the only potential 2016 candidate without a college degree. We've had enough of government by A students. We need drop-outs and C students.

**'Wow. First off, I want to thank God for his abundant grace and mercy. Win or lose, it is more than sufficient for each and every one of us,'** Scott Walker said, taking the podium on Tuesday night at the Wisconsin state fair grounds after being re-elected for governor. It was a curious register, given that Mr. Walker's religious faith, even though his father was a pastor, has never seemed central to his economic and political identity. But then maybe the intervention of a higher power is as good an explanation as any for the commanding victory that unions and liberals went all-out to prevent. ...

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Surveys indicated that Mr. Walker and Ms. Burke were statistically tied through the summer and most of the fall, though Mr. Walker observes that “those polls consistently showed that the opinion of the state in terms of right-track/wrong-track was still very positive. A solid majority felt the state was headed in the right direction.” He was confident that he would receive those votes in the end.

...

Before the election, Victor Davis Hanson posted on the campaign the Dems could not run.

... Foreign policy?

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Remember “Julia?” Kevin Williamson says she lost last week.

*A funny thing happened in the “war on women” — Mia Love and Joni Ernst won, Wendy Davis and Sandra Fluke lost. The representative who will be the youngest woman ever to have served in Congress, Elise Stefanik, is a Republican who won a formerly Democratic seat — not in Oklahoma or Texas but in New York. Senator-elect Ernst is a 21-year veteran of the Army Reserve and National Guard who served overseas during the Iraq war; Representative-elect Love, a daughter of Haitian immigrants who came to the United States fleeing the Tonton Macoutes, is a former city councilman and mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah.*

*The difference could not be more dramatic: The Democrats’ vision of an American woman’s life was best expressed in the Obama campaign’s insipid “Julia” cartoons, in which a faceless, featureless woman at every crossroads in her life turns to the federal government, as personified by Barack Obama, for succor and support. From negotiating a salary to managing her pregnancy, Julia cannot do anything for herself — at every turn, she is reminded that she enjoys political patronage “under President Obama,” in the campaign’s psychosexually fraught and insistently reiterated phrase. So much for the Democrats. And the Republican women of 2014? They helped*

*fight wars and made new lives for themselves on foreign shores. They were women who ran for office on policy platforms, not on their uteruses. ...*

**Peter Wehner** comments on the GOP wave.

*... There are plenty of reasons for Republicans to be buoyed. They have very impressive people, including people in their '30s and '40s, at every level. Of the two parties, the GOP seems to be the one of greater energy and ideas. The Democratic Party, and liberalism more broadly, seems stale, aging, and exhausted. And of course the GOP has now strung together massive, back-to-back midterm wins. But it's still worth keeping in mind that Republicans had spectacular showings in 1994 and 2010—and they were defeated by rather large margins in the presidential races two years after those wins. The danger is that a victory like the one Republicans experienced on Tuesday creates a false dawn, a sense of false confidence. Winning midterms elections is important; but midterm elections are different than presidential elections. The GOP still has repair work to do and things to build on. But progress is being made—and the results of this week's election are the best evidence of that fact.*

**WSJ's Allysia Finley** says "teacher's unions flunked their mid-terms."

*... Reformers like Republican Govs. Rick Snyder in Michigan, Scott Walker in Wisconsin, Nathan Deal in Georgia and Sam Brownback in Kansas did cut through a torrent of negative union ads and prevailed.*

*Teachers unions this election provided an object lesson in how to lie with statistics by lambasting school reformers across the country for "cutting" education spending. According to one ad, Mr. Brownback signed the "largest single cut to education in Kansas history." Florida Gov. Rick Scott stood accused of taking a \$1.3 billion sledgehammer to schools, and Mr. Snyder of slashing \$1 billion from education.*

*Yet in Kansas, total per pupil spending has increased to \$12,960 from \$12,283 since Mr. Brownback was elected in 2010, despite a \$412 per pupil decline in federal aid. Mr. Snyder has increased education spending by \$660 per student over his four-year tenure, while Mr. Scott has increased annual state funding for schools by 20%—nearly \$2 billion—over the past four years.*

*The teachers unions also whacked Mr. Scott for expanding private-school scholarships for low-income kids, eliminating tenure, and linking pay to performance for new teachers. "Florida's private-school voucher programs are a risky experiment that gambles taxpayers' money and children's lives," Florida Education Association vice president Joanne McCall warned in a local newspaper op-ed. "Voucher schools are largely unregulated."*

*So far as we know, there have been no reports in Florida of death-by-voucher. ...*

More on the union losses from the **Washington Post**. There was an interesting contest in CA where two Dems squared off for state schools superintendent. The reformer was narrowly beaten by the old pol in a race that served as a metaphor for the problems facing Democrats throughout the country.

*... And in the white-hot battle in California for state schools superintendent, the union's choice, Tom Torlakson (D), was narrowly reelected, beating back Marshall Tuck (D) by 52 percent to 48 percent.*

*While both are Democrats, they differ over the best way to improve public education, reflecting a schism within the national Democratic Party. Torlakson pushed for more investment in public schools, does not believe student test scores should be used to assess teachers, and said charter schools need more oversight. Tuck supports expansion of public charter schools, argued for more accountability for teachers and said California's teacher tenure laws are an obstacle to improving schools.*

*The down-ballot contest generated \$30 million in spending, three times as much as the race for governor, with money pouring in from around the country. Torlakson received heavy support from teachers unions while Tuck had the backing of billionaire philanthropists such as Bloomberg, the heirs of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton, and Laurene Powell Jobs, the widow of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. ...*

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## Right Turn

### Distinguished pol of the week

by Jennifer Rubin

Every Republican winning Senate candidate deserves kudos, as do the RNC, the NRSC and establishment donors and groups like the Chamber of Commerce and American Crossroads. All contributed to a huge victory and found conservative and *electable* challengers to oust Democrats. One losing candidate, Ed Gillespie in Virginia, earned enormous respect from both sides for a classy, substantive campaign. Both Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), soon to be the majority leader, came out more powerful and impressive than ever.



But this week special praise goes to Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker who won his third race in four years, once again standing up to Big Labor and withstanding an influx of out of state money. As [Betsy Woodruff wrote](#), “While Walker was repeating the same simple pitch throughout the state, national labor organizations were running ads targeting the governor and [Mary]Burke was hobnobbing with the president and first lady in the state’s two most liberal cities, Madison and Milwaukee. If Burke bet on this being an anti-incumbent election cycle, Walker bet on its being anti-Washington. And he bet right.”

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Every prominent politician these days is evaluated as a prospective presidential candidate. Walker may lack foreign policy know-how or charisma, but his skill and competency in his present role are evident. He is an excellent governor who was able to show results from his reforms. And he is a model campaigner for Republicans trying to break through in purple and blue states. And for that we can say, well done, Gov. Walker.

**WSJ**

### **How Scott Walker Keeps Winning**

***Wisconsin governor Scott Walker on his brawls with public unions and the key to conservative governance in a state with populist liberal traditions.***

by Joseph Rago

‘Wow. First off, I want to thank God for his abundant grace and mercy. Win or lose, it is more than sufficient for each and every one of us,’ Scott Walker said, taking the podium on Tuesday night at the Wisconsin state fair grounds after being re-re-elected for governor. It was a curious register, given that Mr. Walker’s religious faith, even though his father was a pastor, has never seemed central to his economic and political identity. But then maybe the intervention of a higher power is as good an explanation as any for the commanding victory that unions and liberals went all-out to prevent.

Mr. Walker suggests a more secular reading: “People actually saw, they saw with their own eyes,” he says. “Once they got past the myths and the half-truths and sometimes the outright falsehoods, they could see in their own families, in their own homes, they could see in their own workplaces and towns and cities and villages and counties that life was better.” In a word, despite the political convulsions of his first term, his reforms worked, and voters rewarded him for the results.

In a wide-ranging phone interview from Madison on Thursday night, Mr. Walker sounded exhausted but joyful after his third statewide election since 2010. The governor laid out how he thinks center-right reformers can succeed among Democratic-leaning bodies politic—Wisconsin hasn’t broken for a Republican presidential candidate since 1984, when he was in high school—and why he doesn’t think the same trend is inexorable in like-minded states in 2016.

The race Mr. Walker won this week was close-run and became a referendum on his first term. His opponent, Mary Burke, a former executive of Trek Bicycle Corp., ran as a not-Walker. The governor calls her “almost the bionic candidate,” in the sense that her intelligence, business

experience, gender and noncommittal up-the-middle platform were focus-group-tested as the perfect foil for his agenda and his track record of the past few years.

In June 2012, Mr. Walker became the only governor in American history to survive a recall election—initiated to reverse his enormously controversial 2011 budget-repair bill, Act 10, which limited the collective-bargaining powers of public-employee unions, as well as automatic dues collection and health and pension benefits. Big Labor and national Democrats returned this year to avenge their loss, though the irony was that Ms. Burke declined to relitigate Act 10 or even take a coherent position. The election turned on competing accounts of economic progress under Mr. Walker, such as job creation and rising household incomes.

Surveys indicated that Mr. Walker and Ms. Burke were statistically tied through the summer and most of the fall, though Mr. Walker observes that “those polls consistently showed that the opinion of the state in terms of right-track/wrong-track was still very positive. A solid majority felt the state was headed in the right direction.” He was confident that he would receive those votes in the end.

Act 10’s collective-bargaining reforms allowed the state to balance the budget, and counties to restrain or even reduce the property taxes that had increased 27% over the decade before Mr. Walker. But the legislation also improved Wisconsin in ways that “wouldn’t seem quite as obvious,” he says. By eliminating tenure and seniority work rules, “we can hire and fire based on merit and pay based on performance, we can put the best and brightest in our classrooms—and voilà, graduation rates are up. ACT scores are up, now second best in the country. Third-grade reading scores are up. The left certainly doesn’t acknowledge this: Our schools are better.”

Mr. Walker also believes that the national intervention on Ms. Burke’s behalf—including visits from President [Obama](#), first lady Michelle Obama (twice), Bill Clinton, Elizabeth Warren and AFL-CIO head [Richard Trumka](#)—backfired. “Our opponent, you know she’s aligned with these Washington-based special interests, particularly the unions. I’m aligned with the hardworking taxpayers of Wisconsin,” he says, recapping his closing argument.

In an anti-Washington year, that may have made the difference: He won independents by a 10-point margin as some 56.9% of registered voters came to the polls this year, the second-highest share in the nation.

Mr. Walker also inspires acute loyalty among Wisconsin Republicans, and he has built a remarkably durable political coalition to overcome the state’s Democratic tilt. He won 52.2% of the vote in 2010, 53.1% in 2012, and won 52.3% to 46.6% against Ms. Burke. He prevailed in 59 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties four years ago, 60 two years ago and 56 this year, winning the same 54 all three times. Though you’d never know it from the media coverage, Mr. Walker’s support runs deeper than the antipathy of his opposition.

Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) (R., Wis.) attributes this loyalty in large part to the ruction over Act 10, a period that he recalls as “unbelievably vicious.” Mr. Walker notes that thousands of state protesters occupied not merely the capitol building in Madison but picketed his private family residence in Wauwatosa.

Yet Mr. Walker says that as he commuted the 75 miles on I-94 during that time, “handmade, hand-painted signs started to pop up out in the fields, these big four by eights, that would say ‘We Stand With Walker.’ You’d see one, and the next day you’d start to see some more, and so on, and eventually you’d see them not just in the fields, but then in the cities and little towns. It was a visible reminder of how intense people felt.”



Mr. Walker returns for his second term with larger Republican legislative majorities in the assembly and senate. “I said throughout the campaign that anyone who wants a job should be able to find a job,” and he will outline a pragmatic agenda to lower the cost of doing business, reduce the tax burden and promote “learn more to earn more” skill training. Mr. Walker pushed through both corporate and individual tax cuts last year, amounting to about \$1.9 billion. Yet Wisconsin’s top personal income-tax rate is the 10th highest among the states and per capita state and local tax collections rank 12th, according to the Tax Foundation.

Republicans are often instructed that tax cutting, especially the rates on marginal income, is tapped out as a political issue, and that the GOP must find other methods to appeal to the middle class. “Boy, I don’t buy that at all,” Mr. Walker says. “Like the Midwest I come from, we respect quality in government, but we want a good deal for it.”

Mr. Walker has also been one of the few GOP governors to manage ObamaCare’s take-the-money-and-run Medicaid bribe competently. His Democratic predecessor opened the program to twice the poverty line, but lacked the funding to cover the flood of new patients. Mr. Walker reduced eligibility to 100% of poverty but also took everyone off the wait list. “Silly me, I actually thought Medicaid was meant for poor people,” he says.

Another politician from the Great Lakes region often says that when you die, St. Peter won’t ask you what you did to keep government small but he will ask you what you did to help the poor. “It’s probably not fair to ask the son of a preacher to use biblical metaphors,” Mr. Walker says. “My reading of the Bible finds plenty of reminders that it’s better to teach someone to fish than to give them fish if they’re able. . . . Caring for the poor isn’t the same as taking money from the federal government to lock more people into Medicaid.”

Mr. Walker’s advice to the new GOP majority in Washington is to craft its own “positive reform agenda” that gives voters a reason to choose Republicans, rather than merely vote against the status quo. Regardless of what President Obama will support, Mr. Walker urges national Republicans “to set the table for what I hope will be a conservative presidential candidate who can finish the connection.”

There is no point now in asking Mr. Walker if he will try to be that candidate, but he has obviously devoted some thought to the matter. He liked [Mitt Romney](#) personally and thought he would make a good president, but thinks he erred by making the 2012 election a referendum on Mr. Obama. Mr. Walker says he “pleaded” with the campaign to use Wisconsin as an example of how economies can improve with the right policies, instead of “coming into states like mine and telling voters how awful it was” and placing the “blame on President Obama, when I just spent \$37 million in the recall election telling people how much better things were.”

Mr. Walker adds: “Not just here in Wisconsin, I think any number of us as governors can offer something to point to—‘Hey, this isn’t just talk, this isn’t just theory, look what we did to transform our states.’ Focus on the R, for Reformer, not just for Republican.”

Neither does Mr. Walker see the larger, younger, more diverse electorate of presidential elections as a lock for Hillary Rodham Clinton. “I think we can make inroads against that old, tired, worn-out, top-down, government-knows-best approach, because people in these battleground states want to be inspired,” he says. He points to an exit poll showing that 18- to 24-year-olds broke for Ms. Burke only 49% to 48%, which he attributes in part to his tuition freeze for the University of Wisconsin campuses.

In his victory speech, Mr. Walker went on to develop a “Wisconsin versus Washington” theme that notably differed in tone from his previous speeches and could be a prelude to a White House run. As a conviction politician with a substantive record and a chain of victories, Mr. Walker could be a formidable candidate. He has “put the state back on the right path and shows what we need to do in America,” says Sen. Johnson.

The challenge for Mr. Walker as a potential candidate and president would be broadening his appeal beyond regionalism, and persuading independents that he is not the radical monster of liberal caricature. Achieving the second goal, but maybe not the first, would be made easier because he is decent and affable in that familiar Midwestern manner.

But Mr. Walker is also notably redefining the progressive political tradition in Wisconsin, which was the birthplace of collective bargaining for public unions, in 1959. The progressivism that stretches from Robert La Follette to Sen. Tammy Baldwin has always emphasized protecting the common man from special interests, usually meaning business. Mr. Walker’s pitch is that government excess has emerged as the new threat. Though La Follette’s politics were “the polar opposite end” of Mr. Walker’s, the governor says that he belongs to “that proud tradition of people who are aggressive and not afraid to take on big challenges. I actually think I’m a progressive too, I think I fit in that tradition.”

In any case, Mr. Walker says he jokes with his wife that he is “kind of on a two-year campaign cycle”—he won a special election for Milwaukee county executive in 2002, the regular election in 2004, contemplated a gubernatorial run in 2006, and then the latest string of 2010, 2012 and this year. It may be that, in 2016, he’s due.

## **Pajamas Media**

### **Democrat Dilemmas**

by Victor Davis Hanson



Here is the problem with the old-style Obama strategy of slicing and dicing the electorate into aggrieved minorities and then gluing them back together to achieve a 51% majority. On almost



every issue in this election that they should be running on, they simply cannot. And on those that they are running on, they probably should not be.

Let me explain.

## **We Didn't Do What We Did**

Foreign policy?

Consider the failed Russia “reset,” the bugout from Iraq, the “leading from behind” in Libya, the Benghazi scandal, the Iranian soon-to-be bomb, the smearing of Israel, the special relationship with a thuggish Erdogan, the dissolving Middle East, the eroding NATO, and an ever more bullying China. No Democrat will run on something like, “I fully support the Obama foreign policy initiatives and the brilliant work of Secretaries Clinton and Kerry.” Foreign policy, then, cannot be a campaign issue, in the positive sense of defending the status quo. No Democrat even made the attempt.

How about bigger and competent government?

No Democratic congressman would wish to campaign on, “Obama made government work for you — just look at the new and dynamic IRS, VA, ICE, GSA, NSA, and Secret Service.” “Not a smidgen of corruption” is not a viable campaign theme. No candidate even tried that.

Why don't Sens. Landrieu, Pryor, and Udall play up their support [for the Obama economy](#)?

We did not see a candidate commercial like the following: “I was instrumental in keeping interest rates at zero percent for six years. I made sure that we borrowed another \$7 trillion and oversaw the \$1 trillion stimulus. We kept GDP above 1% and unemployment below 7%.” Apparently avoiding a depression is not felt to be an economic renaissance, and thus not a winning message.

How about Democratic ads trumpeting new big-ticket government initiatives?

Do any local, state, or national Democrats barnstorm on, “Soon Obamacare really will lower costs, expand coverage, and reduce our deficits in 2015 — just wait and see”? Or how about, “We almost had cap and trade in 2009; I'll make sure Obama finishes the job and gets it passed in 2015”? Or perhaps, “Thanks to my efforts, we stopped all new fracking leases on federal lands”? Bragging on record oil and gas production despite, not because of, Obama is not a rallying cry either.

Maybe immigration could have been a Democratic winning issue?

No Democrat aired a radio spot like, “Those Central American children are just the beginning of what we can accomplish on the border. Let's keep our borders open and welcome in more of our neighbors.” Democrats privately concluded that subverting immigration law to gain constituents was something to keep quiet on rather than boast about.

In other words, most of what the Democrats have done since 2009 has either failed or was contrary to what most voters wished when they voted for Democrats in 2008. That is not my summation, but the Democrats' own, given that they chose not to run on anything they had done or might do with another Democratic victory.

So if Democrats cannot run on what they have done or plan to do in the next two years under Obama, what are they running on?

## **There You Go Again**

They are mostly back to the old race/class/gender incitement that seemed to have worked in 2008 and 2012. But the problem here is not that in theory it cannot work yet again. Ginning up women, the poor, and minorities by depicting Republicans as [19<sup>th</sup>-century racists](#), exploiters, and sexists is not necessarily a losing strategy. Race and gender baiting appeals not just to the special interests that benefit from such smears, but influences the proverbial “swing” voter as well, who privately does not wish for the social stigma of voting for Republicans, if such support is branded by the popular culture as illiberal and uncool.

That said, after several past successful assaults, the latest version of “Sexist!/Racist! /Homophobe! /Nativist!” seems to be so predictable that it is becoming flat and boring. In other words, after six years of the constant race and gender barrage from Obama, Eric Holder, Harry Reid, the Congressional Black Caucus, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, and the Elizabeth Warren and Wendy Davis wing of the Democratic Party, lots of people are not only unreceptive, but snoozing. That indifference only causes the Democrats to turn up the volume even higher, which in turn puts even more people off. It all reminds me of the last days of the 1980 presidential campaign, when in the final week Reagan finally broke through the distortions and media bias to expand his tenuous lead in the polls, which in turn prompted Carter to go lunatic [in his venomous charges](#).

## **Mythologies Are By Nature Untrue**

Is “hands up, don’t shoot” a winning slogan, when most Americans either don’t know what happened in Ferguson, or believe that Michael Brown committed a strong-armed [robbery of a small business](#), stormed out high on drugs, walked down the center of the street, assaulted a police officer and was fatally shot in the fray? Statistically, have even liberal papers since Ferguson been more likely each week to report serial Fergusons, in which police are on a shooting rampage against unarmed African-Americans, or reluctantly cover disturbing interracial violent crime, in which young black males this autumn have been involved in well-publicized violent attacks on police or unarmed innocents?

Evoking Ferguson may galvanize more African-Americans to vote, but the distorted “hands up, don’t shoot” slogan is just as likely to turn off others. When Barack Obama goes on the demagogue Al Sharpton’s radio show, [he polarizes as many](#) as he energizes.

On all the other hot-button social issues — abortion, birth control, gun control, immigration — it may be easy to contort positions and caricature Republicans, but do Democrats really believe that most Americans support late-term abortions, or are being shut out of the overpriced condom market, or want to make it hard for the middle class to obtain firearms, or wish to see another Central American children’s crusade at the border?

Polls suggest that this time around Democrats are on the wrong side of all these various wars against women, Latinos, blacks, gays, etc., in the sense that voters do not necessarily believe that there are any wars at all against anyone. And if there is a so-called war, many voters believe it is mostly waged by the alliance of the upper-class liberal aristocracy and the dependent underclass against the over-taxed, under-employed, often smeared, and widely reviled middle class.

A final note on the final desperate Democrat attempt to deal the race card. The mythical average voter is, again, probably confused because it presents a heads-you-lose/tails-we-win dilemma for

him: if you elect Obama twice as president, then you are — for a while — granted probation as not being a racist. But if you just once falter and tire of his failures, [then you are racist](#) in a way you were not actually when you gave him your unthinking vote of confidence.

Voters realize that such a paradox is unsustainable, sort of like the so-called “dreamers” disrupting lectures to rag on the speakers about the absence of amnesty. Think of that contradiction: Is it lawful Americans’ fault that Mexican citizens broke American law in entering the U.S. country? Are Mexican nationals to show their love of America and their desire to stay in the U.S. permanently by blasting American citizens as nativists if they do not grant blanket amnesty, while showcasing ethnic chauvinism? In terms of electoral strategy, that, too, is not necessarily a winning formula to convince Americans to grant amnesty.

## **Tuesday Will Tell**

I am cautiously optimistic about Tuesday, even without a major Republican blowout. Of course, we should not assume that just because the race/class/gender wars of the Democrats are absurd that they will finally fail this time around. Who, after all, could be so confident in an America of 2014 that has been conditioned for six years to identify people by appearance and assumed identity rather than by their character and achievement?

My point is, instead, that about half the country is tired of a failed foreign policy, a failed economic recovery, and a failed big and corrupt government. All the venom and the smears cannot hide that fact. The fed-up half is nearing 51% of the electorate. Democrats embraced the Obama-style community-organizing in hundreds of elections, given the failed substance of Obama himself — and yet still will not quite win lots of races. On Tuesday we shall see whether Americans would prefer to be poorer, fleeced, and less safe just as long as they are not smeared as racists, sexists, homophobes, greedy, and selfish.

In politics, if you lose more races than you win, it doesn’t matter that you lost most of them by 51-49%.

You are still a loser.

## **National Review**

### **[Julia Lost](#)**

***Perhaps American women aspire to more than receiving political patronage.***

By Kevin D. Williamson

A funny thing happened in the “war on women” — Mia Love and Joni Ernst won, Wendy Davis and Sandra Fluke lost. The representative who will be the youngest woman ever to have served in Congress, Elise Stefanik, is a Republican who won a formerly Democratic seat — not in Oklahoma or Texas but in New York. Senator-elect Ernst is a 21-year veteran of the Army Reserve and National Guard who served overseas during the Iraq war; Representative-elect Love, a daughter of Haitian immigrants who came to the United States fleeing the Tonton Macoutes, is a former city councilman and mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah.

The difference could not be more dramatic: The Democrats' vision of an American woman's life was best expressed in the Obama campaign's insipid "Julia" cartoons, in which a faceless, featureless woman at every crossroads in her life turns to the federal government, as personified by Barack Obama, for succor and support. From negotiating a salary to managing her pregnancy, Julia cannot do anything for herself — at every turn, she is reminded that she enjoys political patronage "under President Obama," in the campaign's psychosexually fraught and insistently reiterated phrase. So much for the Democrats. And the Republican women of 2014? They helped fight wars and made new lives for themselves on foreign shores. They were women who ran for office on policy platforms, not on their uteruses.

Wendy Davis came to national prominence after filibustering a Republican-backed bill that would have enacted some restrictions on abortion in Texas. Fighting such modest restrictions has become a leading "women's issue," even though American women, like American men, broadly support policies such as restrictions on late-term abortions. Some 80 percent of Americans believe that third-trimester abortions should be illegal — but only 19 percent of Americans say that they could only support a candidate who shared their views on abortion, while 28 percent say that abortion is not a major issue to them and about half say that it is one important issue among many. Which is to say, for most Americans — including American women — abortion is not a make-or-break issue, and most Americans — including American women — hold views on the subject that are much closer to George W. Bush's than to Wendy Davis's. But Wendy Davis is a women's champion for attempting to conscript women into support for a position that few of them actually hold.

Democrats believe that women have a congenital duty to support Democrats, as though being in possession of ovaries should naturally make a human being more eager to submit to Harry Reid. (One would think the opposite would be the case.) Jessica Valenti, writing in the *Guardian*, makes this line of thought explicit: "In a way, female Republicans almost bother me more than their male counterparts. I can almost understand why a bunch of rich, religiously conservative white men wouldn't care about the reality of women's day-to-day lives — they've never had to. But throwing other women under the bus? For what? Lower taxes? Three minutes on Fox News in the 3 p.m. hour? It makes me wonder what is wrong with you." Thus do the champions of diversity and women's autonomy reveal themselves: If a woman believes that perhaps Barack Obama and Harry Reid are doing the country more harm than good — if a woman believes that lower taxes are in fact a pretty important issue — that's not a disagreement: It's a sign that something is "wrong with you." Pro-choice? Sure, but not when it comes to your politics — on that subject, the Left is as anti-choice and ruthlessly conformist as it is possible to be.

American women and other traditional Democratic client groups did not seem particularly eager to knuckle under to the Left's demands for supine fealty in 2014. Davis not only lost Texas; she lost spectacularly in a 21-point blowout, barely outperforming pro-forma Democratic candidates for other offices who did not even campaign. In Texas as in the rest of the country, big cities tend to be solidly Democratic, but Davis lost liberal-leaning Houston and vast swathes of other metropolitan areas. She didn't even secure a majority of women's votes, and she lost white women by a two-to-one margin. Her own Fort Worth state-senate seat was taken over by Konni Burton, a pro-life tea-party activist and Ted Cruz ally.

Meanwhile, the Battleground Texas campaign, which used Davis as a fund-raising totem to pour money into the real contest — potentially competitive state-house races in largely Hispanic areas — was a bust. The Democrats lost every one of these races, and most of them were not even close. Texas Republicans, unlike their national counterparts, have figured out that the way to win Hispanic votes is to recruit good candidates and campaign like they mean it in Hispanic areas. The purported white man's party put up some great women this year and, thanks in part to the efforts of

George P. Bush, is developing a deeper Hispanic bench: Hispanic Republicans won state-house races in west San Antonio (63 percent Hispanic), Kingsville (64 percent Hispanic), and Pasadena (75 percent Hispanic), while the mostly Anglo suburbanites of Round Rock and northwest Dallas also sent Hispanic Republicans to the state house.

Maybe Mexican-Americans don't want to be condescended to by politicians, either.

Recruiting good candidates — or at least candidates who are not committed to remaking themselves into the cartoon version of Republicans offered by the media — makes a big difference, as does having a “Recovery Summer” that has now had more sequels than the *Star Wars* franchise. But there is something else at work here: Who do Americans want to be when they grow up? Do women aspire to a life like Julia's, or to one more like that of Lieutenant Colonel Joni Ernst? Would you rather be a sanctimonious sack of woe, like Wendy Davis, or a happy warrior, like Mia Love? Would you rather vote for a party that speaks to you as a citizen, family member, entrepreneur, taxpayer, etc. — or one that insists you owe it not only your *vote* but your *obedience* simply because you have a certain configuration of chromosomes or a certain surname?

It is one of life's little ironies that it is the feminists and the party of so-called women's issues who in the 21st century still have not quite figured out that women are individuals, and that there is more to them than the sum of their parts.

## Contentions

### After the GOP Wave

by Peter Wehner

Some post-election thoughts in light of the GOPs tidal wave on Tuesday:

1. The majority of Republicans have reacted to their victories in an impressive fashion. Their rhetoric is restrained, serious, and mature. They know that while they did extremely well in races at every level, they still have a ways to go to earn the trust and loyalty of most Americans (that's more true of congressional Republicans than those who are governors). Republicans in the Senate and House are signaling a willingness to work with the president if he's willing to show some flexibility. (The president's apparent commitment to go forward with an unconstitutional executive amnesty order will be all the evidence we need that Mr. Obama is determined to further polarize our politics and rip apart our political culture.) Speaker Boehner and the next Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, have already put forward their [to-do list](#); so have [others](#). There's evidence that Republicans—most of them, anyway—have internalized the need to show they're more serious about putting forward a governing agenda and solving problems facing middle class Americans than [“telegenic confrontations” and “volcanic effusions.”](#) The GOP's detoxification effort is well under way.

2. What ought to encourage Republicans isn't simply that their ranks have swollen, but the *quality* of many of the new arrivals, from Tom Cotton and Ben Sasse in the Senate to Elise Stefanik and Barbara Comstock in the House to many others. The GOP does best when it's seen as the home of individuals with conservative principles and a governing temperament. A winsome personality doesn't hurt, either.



3. The GOP's victory was the result of many things, from President Obama's unpopularity and the awful political environment Democrats faced to the superior quality of the Republican candidates, their disciplined, gaffe-free campaigns, successful fundraising, and the select intervention by various groups into Republican primaries (ensuring that the most electable conservative was nominated). But not to be overlooked is that Republicans did a much better job than in the past with their Get Out The Vote effort, including turnout of low-propensity voters. As *National Journal's* Ron Fournier [put it](#):

A review of the RNC's targeting operation (including a preelection sample of specific projections) suggests to me that the GOP has made significant advances on targeting and mobilizing voters. While the Democratic Party may still own the best ground game, GOP Chairman Reince Priebus has narrowed, if not closed, the tech gap.

A few Democrats saw this coming. "Our side has underestimated the GOP ground game," Democratic pollster Celinda Lake told me Tuesday morning. "Their electorate doesn't look like ours, so we don't recognize or respect what they're doing."

4. The most surprising outcome of the evening may have been how well Republicans did in governor's races around the nation. They were predicted to lose several seats; instead, they made a net gain of three. Among the most impressive was Ohio's John Kasich, who won by more than 30 points. He carried heavily Democratic counties like Lucas and Cuyahoga. In fact, in a key purple state, Kasich carried 86 of Ohio's 88 counties and a quarter of the African-American vote. Mr. Kasich has amassed an impressive record as governor—and a popular one, too. He's one of America's most engaging and interesting politicians. If he wants to run for president in 2016, he certainly helped his cause on Tuesday.

5. There are plenty of reasons for Republicans to be buoyed. They have very impressive people, including people in their '30s and '40s, at every level. Of the two parties, the GOP seems to be the one of greater energy and ideas. The Democratic Party, and liberalism more broadly, seems stale, aging, and exhausted. And of course the GOP has now strung together massive, back-to-back midterm wins. But it's still worth keeping in mind that Republicans had spectacular showings in 1994 and 2010—and they were defeated by rather large margins in the presidential races two years after those wins. The danger is that a victory like the one Republicans experienced on Tuesday creates a false dawn, a sense of false confidence. Winning midterms elections is important; but midterm elections are different than presidential elections. The GOP still has repair work to do and things to build on. But progress is being made—and the results of this week's election are the best evidence of that fact.

**WSJ**

### **Teachers Unions Flunked Their Midterms**

***A torrent of negative union ads couldn't hold back education reformers, who won almost across the board.***

By Allysia Finley

Teachers unions took a drubbing on Tuesday after spending more than \$100 million to try to elect their allies and steamroll education reformers. Like good Democratic team members, now the unions are blaming President Obama for their sweeping losses while taking credit for their few slim, hard-fought wins.

“The Republicans successfully made it a referendum on the president,” American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said on Wednesday, by way of explaining the union’s thumping. “In the few places where you had issues like education and you had a good candidate who could get through the torrent of negative ads, we were able to win.”



*Teachers-union leader Randi Weingarten and Florida Democratic gubernatorial candidate Charlie Crist in Miami, Nov. 3, on the campaign trail that led to nowhere.*

Kudos to Ms. Weingarten for her optimism and ironic humor in the wake of defeat. Reformers like Republican Govs. Rick Snyder in Michigan, Scott Walker in Wisconsin, Nathan Deal in Georgia and Sam Brownback in Kansas did cut through a torrent of negative union ads and prevailed.

Teachers unions this election provided an object lesson in how to lie with statistics by lambasting school reformers across the country for “cutting” education spending. According to one ad, Mr. Brownback signed the “largest single cut to education in Kansas history.” Florida Gov. Rick Scott stood accused of taking a \$1.3 billion sledgehammer to schools, and Mr. Snyder of slashing \$1 billion from education.

Yet in Kansas, total per pupil spending has increased to \$12,960 from \$12,283 since Mr. Brownback was elected in 2010, despite a \$412 per pupil decline in federal aid. Mr. Snyder has increased education spending by \$660 per student over his four-year tenure, while Mr. Scott has increased annual state funding for schools by 20%—nearly \$2 billion—over the past four years.

The teachers unions also whacked Mr. Scott for expanding private-school scholarships for low-income kids, eliminating tenure, and linking pay to performance for new teachers. “Florida’s private-school voucher programs are a risky experiment that gambles taxpayers’ money and children’s lives,” Florida Education Association vice president Joanne McCall warned in a local newspaper op-ed. “Voucher schools are largely *unregulated*.”

So far as we know, there have been no reports in Florida of death-by-voucher. In fact, scholarship recipients in Florida have posted academic gains equal to their public-school counterparts despite coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Mr. Scott's challenger, Democrat [Charlie Crist](#), in a previous life as the state's Republican governor vigorously promoted vouchers; he quietly walked back his support during the campaign.

Scott Walker also got whipsawed for expanding vouchers and reforming public-worker collective bargaining, which Wisconsin Education Association Council President Betsy Kippers claimed in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel was really "aimed at tearing down the strongest advocates for public education: teachers." Meantime, the union chief grouched that the governor was "slipping tens of millions of dollars to those bent on privatizing education, along with handouts to businesses and the wealthy."

Last year, thousands of teachers stormed the barricades in Raleigh, N.C., to protest legislation that Thom Tillis had quarterbacked in the state House reforming tenure and creating a modest voucher program. Sen. Kay Hagan —whom he unseated on Tuesday—this fall also ran ads charging Mr. Tillis with phantom education cuts: "The fact is: Thom Tillis hurts North Carolina students." Voters clearly didn't agree.

Unions unsuccessfully sought to erect a firewall in Illinois, where Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn faced a formidable challenge from Bruce Rauner, a Republican businessman. Mr. Rauner has personally financed some of Chicago's highest-performing charter schools and campaigned to reform teacher tenure, lift the cap on charters and introduce private-school scholarships for poor children.

"We've got a system rigged to protect the bureaucracy of the school system rather than set up to advance the agenda of kids and their parents," Mr. Rauner declared last month. The Republican governor-elect can now claim a school-reform mandate, and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has won an ally in Springfield in his brawl with the teachers union.

Unions also got clobbered in statehouse elections and, in some cases, on Democratic turf. A pro-charter group defenestrated three Democratic state senators in New York, giving Republicans control of the upper chamber. School reformers warned that re-electing the Democratic senators would give [Bill de Blasio](#), New York City's progressive mayor, and his union cronies hegemony over Albany.

The American Federation for Children, which supports private-school scholarships, elected all 13 of its legislative candidates in Alabama despite being outspent by the state teachers union 27-to-1. In Tennessee, the pro-school-choice outfit toppled Democratic state Rep. Gloria Johnson, a teachers-union favorite.

A rare silver lining for the unions was California State Superintendent Tom Torlakson's slender victory over school reformer Marshall Tuck, a fellow Democrat and former head of the nonprofit Los Angeles-based Green Dot charter schools. Mr. Tuck, who was backed by other Democratic school reformers, including San Jose Mayor [Chuck Reed](#) and Sacramento Mayor [Kevin Johnson](#), was blasted by teachers-union ads as a creature of Wall Street who would turn "our schools over to for-profit corporations motivated by money" and "those who profit from high-stakes testing would take the joy out of learning."

Perhaps no candidate for political office in California has posed a greater threat to the teachers unions than Mr. Tuck, an articulate, congenial and unassuming Democrat who ripped wide open the crack in the party over school reform.

The California State Democratic Party, progressive groups such as Planned Parenthood and the Sierra Club, in addition to nearly every Democratic legislator and statewide officer—save one—backed Mr. Torlakson. A profile in courage, Gov. Jerry Brown refused to weigh in on the contest. Had the governor endorsed Mr. Tuck, there is little doubt that the reformer would have won and realigned the tectonic plates in Sacramento, hardening the backbone of Democrats who are afraid to buck the unions.

Yet Mr. Tuck can claim a moral victory, since he prevailed in most low- and middle-income communities in the state, including San Bernardino, Riverside and Fresno counties, and led in polls among minority groups. Mr. Torlakson won by racking up large margins in the Bay Area and other tony coastal areas—with voters unlikely to be sending their children to the schools in urgent need of help.

On the whole, teachers unions got crushed in the midterms, and their biggest victory—the defeat of Marshall Tuck—was decidedly hollow.

## **Washington Post**

### **Teachers unions spent \$60 million for the midterms but still lost many elections**

by Lyndsey Layton

The nation's major teachers unions suffered losses across the country Tuesday, despite pouring about \$60 million into federal, state and local races in the midterm elections.

"We knew this was going to be an uphill battle," said [Lily Eskelsen García](#), president of the National Education Association, the country's largest labor union. "But I don't think anybody on our side, and we've got some very savvy people, anticipated going over the falls like this. Tectonic plates have shifted. And we're going to have to come back with a new way of organizing for these kinds of races."

The unions, which are traditionally closely aligned with the Democratic Party, tried but failed to defeat Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican who was a top target because he limited collective bargaining and ended automatic dues deductions for public sector unions in the state. In Illinois, Maine, Georgia and Kansas, union-backed candidates all fell to Republicans.

"Our union and members and the kids that we serve have more challenges today than they had yesterday," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, which spent \$20 million on midterm races. She blamed the defeat on the GOP's ability to nationalize many state races.

"The Republicans successfully made it a referendum on the president," she said. "In the few places where you had issues like education and you had a good candidate who could get through the torrent of negative ads, we were able to win."

But the union also lost ground to Democrats who embrace policies that labor opposes, such as expansion of public charter schools, reform of public-employee pensions and the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers.



In Rhode Island, Democrat Gina Raimondo was elected governor in the face of opposition from teachers and other public-sector union members whose pensions she cut when she was state treasurer.

“The surprising thing is you now have Democrats who are willing to buck the union,” said Howard Wolfson, an adviser to former New York mayor Michael R. Bloomberg (I), who contributed to Democratic and Republican candidates around the country who want to introduce more choice and competition in public education, and greater accountability for teachers. “You can take reform positions and be successful not only in general elections, but in primaries. It’s a major sea change in the Democratic party that you can now oppose the union and be successful.”

The unions did have two bright spots Tuesday.

In Pennsylvania, Democrat Tom Wolf beat incumbent Gov. Tom Corbett (R).

Corbett was a major target of the teachers unions after he made deep cuts to education spending and battled the unions over the Philadelphia school system.

And in the white-hot battle in California for state schools superintendent, the union’s choice, Tom Torlakson (D), was narrowly reelected, beating back Marshall Tuck (D) by 52 percent to 48 percent.

While both are Democrats, they differ over the best way to improve public education, reflecting a schism within the national Democratic Party. Torlakson pushed for more investment in public schools, does not believe student test scores should be used to assess teachers, and said charter schools need more oversight. Tuck supports expansion of public charter schools, argued for more accountability for teachers and said California’s teacher tenure laws are an obstacle to improving schools.

The down-ballot contest generated \$30 million in spending, three times as much as the race for governor, with money pouring in from around the country. Torlakson received heavy support from teachers unions while Tuck had the backing of billionaire philanthropists such as Bloomberg, the heirs of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton, and Laurene Powell Jobs, the widow of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

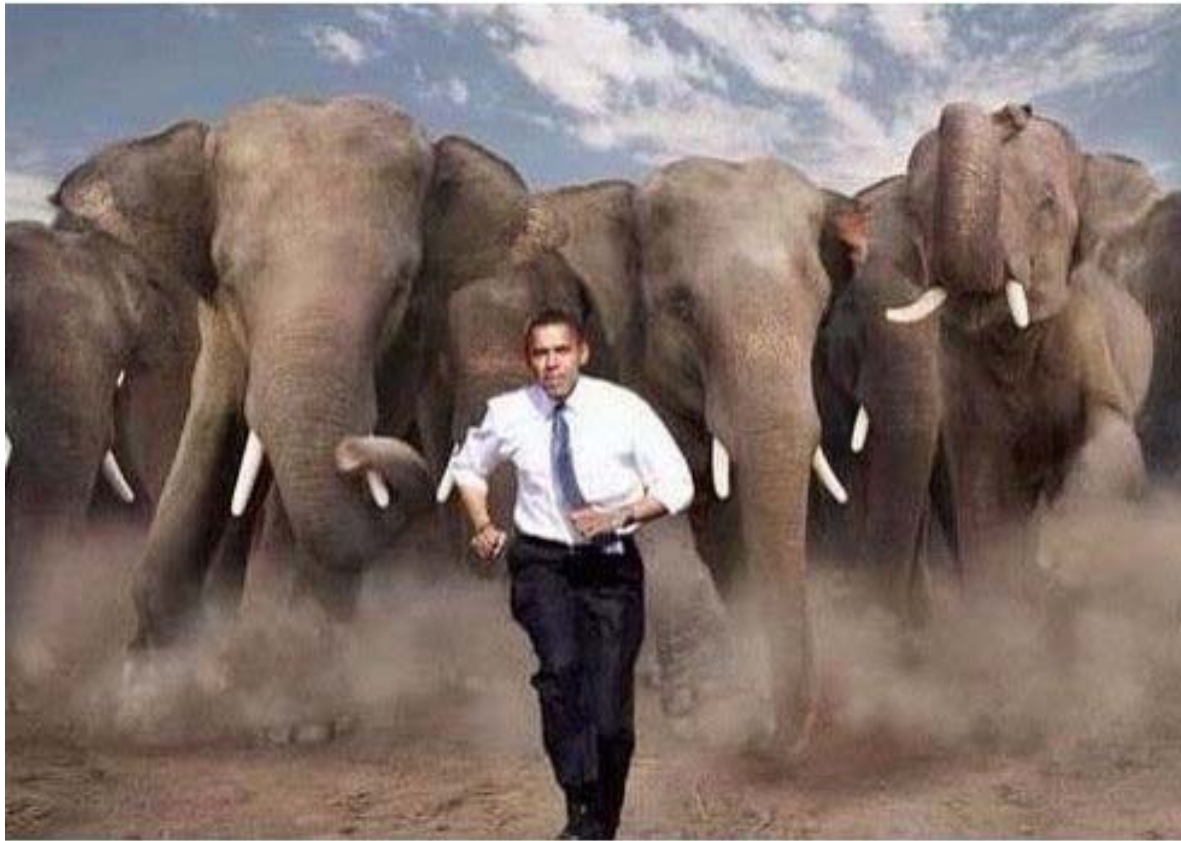
“We knew it wouldn’t be easy,” Torlakson said in a statement. “They were strong, but we were stronger. They were tough, but we were tougher. After all, we’re teachers — we did our homework.”

Torlakson, 65, is a former high school biology teacher who became active in union politics. After his teaching career, he spent more than a decade serving in the state legislature, winning seats in the Assembly and the Senate.

Tuck, 41, had never run for elective office. He is a former president of Green Dot Public Schools, a chain of Los Angeles charter schools. He also is a former chief executive of the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, a nonprofit school-turnaround group that operates more than a dozen public schools in that city. Before his work in education, Tuck was an executive at a software company and worked for two years in mergers and acquisitions at the investment bank Salomon Brothers.

The stark contrast between the two was crystallized in their reaction to the landmark Vergara case, in which a state judge in June struck down California’s teacher tenure laws as unconstitutional and damaging to students. Tuck celebrated the ruling; Torlakson moved to appeal it.





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*'If I had a son,  
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