

Experts Analyze 2002's Historic Midterm Election



Sanctity of Human Life

by Michael Schwartz, Vice President for Government Relations

George W. Bush was not on the ballot in 2002, but no president ever worked harder for the candidates of his party, and none was ever rewarded so well in an off-year election, as the Republicans gained control of the Senate and increased their majority in the House.

History indicates that the president's party almost always loses ground in mid-term elections. There was no reason to think 2002 would be an exception. President Bush had squeaked into the White House after losing the popular vote to his Democratic opponent. The Republicans had more Senate seats to defend (19) than the Democrats (14), and the Republican majority in the House, slowly but steadily diminishing since 1994, was down to just six seats.

Extraordinary Results

Reapportionment and redistricting appeared to give neither party a significant advantage in House races.

Democratic gerrymanders in Georgia and North Carolina made up for losses in Michigan and Pennsylvania. More Republicans than Democrats had announced their retirement, and a majority of the 40 or so House seats that had fairly competitive races were currently held by Republicans.

Worst of all, in the Senate, where the Republicans needed a net gain of one seat, all four retiring members were Republicans. The Republicans had to hold four open seats and also defeat at least one incumbent, while protecting two extremely vulnerable and two other fairly vulnerable incumbents of their own.

Given these circumstances, the results on November 5 were extraordinary, as the Republicans won six of the eight Senate races still in play and increased their majority in the House by seven seats. President Bush received, and deserved, a great share of the credit for this outstanding

performance for his party, and there is no denying that the President's popularity was a big factor on Election Day.

Principles on Top

But a closer look shows that pro-family principles fared even better than Republican Party identification. For example, the only Republican senator who was defeated, Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas, lost because, after winning election as a "family values" candidate, he divorced his wife of 29 years and quickly married a staff aide 14 years his junior. If not for that, the Republicans would have been within a few hundred South Dakota votes of sweeping every competitive Senate race.

The most liberal Republican in the House, Connie Morella of Maryland, was defeated after serving eight terms—one of only four incumbent House members to lose a re-election bid. Morella's defeat is a setback for GOP homosexual activists: The head of the Log Cabin Republicans, a "gay" lobby group, said Morella did anything the group asked her to do.

Three of the incoming freshman Democrats—Mike Michaud of Maine, Tim Ryan of Ohio, Lincoln Davis of Tennessee and Rodney Alexander of Louisiana—are pro-life, which means the 108th Congress will have more new pro-life members than new Republican members. Michaud defeated a pro-abortion Republican in a very competitive race. Another surprise winner for the Democrats was Rep. Tim Holden of Pennsylvania, who was pitted against fellow incumbent Rep. George Gekas in a Republican-leaning district. Holden emerged the

winner, in large part because of his strong record on life and family issues.

Support for abortion was, in fact, an albatross around the necks of many candidates, and abortion lobby endorsements were the kiss of death. The feared pro-abortion Emily's List supported only five winning candidates and 16 losers. Only one of 11 candidates supported by the National Abortion Rights Action League won his election. By contrast, the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List counted 22 winners among its 30 candidates, and the up and coming Concerned Women PAC, in its first year of operation, saw nine out of 14 of its endorsed candidates victorious on election night.

Historic Election

Never in history had the party of a president done so well in a mid-term election. The consequences of that electoral triumph were immediate and dramatic.


The United Nations gave President Bush the resolution he had been seeking to place united world opinion behind the U.S. demand that Iraq divest itself of weapons of mass destruction. And Saddam Hussein, facing an antagonist who had not only the United Nations but the American people firmly behind him, decided not to resist the admission of U.N. weapons inspectors.

The "lame duck" United States Senate, still under Democratic control, gave President Bush the Homeland Security bill he had been seeking. And for good measure, the Senate cleared the calendar of judicial nominees, confirming every one that had been acted on by the Judiciary Committee.

The two-year total for judicial confirmations reached 100, but 30 other Bush nominees never even reached the hearing stage.

And in the House of Representatives, a bankruptcy reform bill that had the support of every Republican and almost half the Democrats was defeated because it contained a provision that unfairly targeted certain pro-life activists. On a procedural vote to bring the final version of the bankruptcy bill to the

floor, 87 Republicans broke with their party leadership and with the financial services interest to demonstrate their loyalty to the pro-life community.

This was as unexpected as it was unprecedented. No one on either side of this issue had anticipated this result. But the careers of members of Congress depend on adjusting to changes in public opinion, and they could see that the political wind was blowing in a pro-life/pro-family direction. 

Homosexual Activism

by Peter LaBarbera, Senior Policy Analyst:

The 2002 election that saw Republicans sweep into power in the Senate was a mixed bag on homosexual issues, with Nevadans voting to protect marriage but pro-family activists losing four local initiatives. A good sign for the election was that in competitive races, candidates who defended pro-family positions opposed to the “gay” agenda—on such issues as defending the Boy Scouts and opposing “gay marriage”—cruised to victory.

There were plenty of examples where support for homosexual activism was a loser on election night. In Georgia, Sen. Max Cleland (D), who opposed a Senate bill that denied federal aid to schools that punished the Boy Scouts, lost after the state Republican Party pounded him on the liberal Scouts vote in TV and radio ads. In Florida, Gov. Jeb Bush, the President’s brother, defended the state’s law banning homosexual adoption, and was victorious against a Democratic opponent who strongly backed homosexual adoption and

other “gay” agenda goals.

Perhaps the most encouraging victory on November 5 of all for those who oppose the mainstreaming of homosexuality was Mike Gabbard’s lopsided victory for a seat on the Honolulu City Council in Hawaii. Gabbard—the founder of Stop Promoting Homosexuality Hawaii and the liberal state’s most vocal foe of “gay marriage” and homosexual activism in schools—coasted to victory with 62 percent of the vote.

His campaign literature criticized “homosexual extremists” who sought to demonize him and his family. (Gabbard’s daughter also won election as a state representative on November 5, and his wife sits on the state School Board.) Gabbard, who ran as an independent, says the key to his victory was going around the media and meeting thousands of people in their homes. He said people would recognize him for his work in defeating “gay marriage” on the island, and say, “Hey, you’re the marriage guy!” as they welcomed him.

Meanwhile, several of the losing Democrat candidates in the Senate contests were strong supporters of the homosexual political agenda, while victorious Republicans, such as Jim Talent of Missouri, hold great promise for natural family advocates.

The Democratic loss of the Senate ends the already dim chances for passage of pro-homosexual bills, such as homosexual-inclusive “Hate Crimes” legislation and the “Employment Non-Discrimination Act.” But this does not end the matter. These bills are a top priority for homosexual pressure groups who will do all they can to revive them at every opportunity.

The election was a disappointment for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest homosexual lobby group. Besides Cleland, several other Democratic senatorial candidates it supported lost, including Tom Strickland (Ohio), Walter Mondale (Minnesota), and Sen. Jean Carnahan (Missouri).

Big Win in Nevada

Five state and local initiatives dealing with directly homosexuality were also decided last November 5. The greatest victory took place in Nevada, where Question 2, which bans recognition of out-of-state “gay marriages,” easily passed by a margin of 67 percent.

This was the second of two popular votes needed to enact the constitutional amendment; seven out of 10 voters passed the ballot measure in 2000. Nevada becomes the 36th state since 1995 to enact legislation defending marriage from being redefined to accommodate homosexual relationships.

Four local “gay” initiatives,

however, didn’t fare so well.

- ★ Tacoma, Washington: An attempt to repeal a new city law in Tacoma, Washington, that banned discrimination based on “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” failed 58 to 42 percent.
- ★ Westbrook, Maine: The effort to repeal a new pro-homosexual law in this city outside Portland lost by just 190 votes out of 6,442 cast.
- ★ Ypsilanti, Michigan: Voters rejected by a 2 to 1 margin a measure that would have invalidated the city’s pro-homosexual nondiscrimination law and precluded further efforts to add pro-“gay” language to existing city laws.
- ★ Sarasota, Florida: A pro-homosexual amendment to the city charter was approved by 73 percent of voters.

Grassroots organizers of the pro-family initiatives pointed to two decisive factors in the losses: ‘Gay’ activists surpassed them tremendously in finances and manpower. In Tacoma, homosexual activists outspent *Help Us Take Back Tacoma Again* by more than 12 to 1, and HRC and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force sent field workers into the city to fight the initiative. In Westbrook, the money spent by homosexuals was nearly 6 to 1, and they again recruited outside workers.

Clearly, for the picture to change in upcoming referenda, Christians—along with their pastors and churches—must become as committed to this issue as are homosexual activists. 