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Republican Revival?

The Democratic brand has been losing luster. But we're not seeing any surge of confidence in the Republicans. In the May CBS News-New York Times poll, 37 percent of Americans expressed a favorable opinion of the Democratic Party. The Republican Party? 33 percent.

President George W. Bush got us into this mess. President Barack Obama can't seem to get us out of it.

After suffering big defeats in 2006 and 2008, you might expect the Republican Party to try to recapture the center. That's what Democrats did in the 1990s. Instead, something very different has happened since Bush left office.

The Republican Party is being taken over by fundamentalists. Not religious fundamentalists. The religious right has gained influence in the party but never quite managed to take it over. Now it's political fundamentalists: the tea party movement. Their successes are mounting.

Religious fundamentalists have a total commitment to faith. Any wavering or compromise

is unacceptable.

Political fundamentalists have a total commitment to principle. Any politician who wavers or compromises is cast out as a heretic. That's exactly what happened to Sen. Bob Bennett (R-Ut.). He was

rejected by tea party fundamentalists who took control of the Utah Republican convention. Bennett's sin? His opponents taunted him with shouts of "TARP! TARP!" as he addressed the convention.

Religious fundamentalists scorn unbelievers. So do political fundamentalists. Florida Gov. Charlie Crist was forced out of the Republican Party for embracing Barack Obama, the anti-Christ. John McCain is in a race for

his political life because he has collaborated with Democrats, i.e., unbelievers.

Religious fundamentalists believe in the total inerrancy of the Bible. Tea party supporters believe in the total inerrancy of the United States Constitution. As originally written in 1787.

Tea party supporters were horrified to learn that Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan once



Republicans who voted for...

	HOUSE	SENATE
2010 Financial regulations*	0	4
2010 Health care reform	0	0
2009 Economic stimulus	0	3
1965 Medicare	70	13
1965 Voting Rights Act	111	30
1964 Civil Rights Act	136	27
1935 Social Security	81	16

Democrats who voted for...

	HOUSE	SENATE
2001 No Child Left Behind	197	43
2001 Bush tax cuts	28	12
1981 Reagan tax cuts	47	37

* Votes on initial bill. No vote yet on final bill.

wrote a law review article in which she seemed to agree with the late Justice Thurgood Marshall that “the Constitution, as originally drafted and conceived, was ‘defective.’”

She was attacking Scripture! Republican National Chairman Michael Steele advised the Senate to investigate Kagan for heresy. Only it turns out the “defect” Marshall was referring to was slavery.

GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

Democrat **43%** | **49%** Republican
Gallup May 24-30

Democrat **42%** | **36%** Republican
Quinnipiac May 19-24

Democrat **41%** | **41%** Republican
Fox News May 18-19

Rand Paul is the new tea party hero. He slew the establishment candidate in the Kentucky Republican primary. Paul caused an uproar when he raised doubts about whether the federal government can outlaw discrimination by private businesses.

Fundamentalists emerge whenever they believe Establishment Republicans have failed—or betrayed them. The Goldwater movement felt betrayed by Eisenhower Republicans after twenty years of Democratic rule. The Reagan movement emerged after the failed presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. The tea party movement is not just a reaction to the sins of President Obama. It’s also a reaction to the failures of George W. Bush and his “big government” Republicanism. When “moderation” fails, fundamentalism rushes in.

How do we know it’s taking over the Republican Party? Because Republicans are refusing to commit the cardinal sin of collaborating with Democrats.

With the impending passage of the financial regulation bill, President Obama will have achieved three major legislative breakthroughs: the economic stimulus, health care reform and financial reform. None of them has gotten more than a few Republican votes. Bipartisanship has disappeared.

In the end, the only force that can defeat fundamentalism is pragmatism. Religious fundamentalists fail because they seem out of date in the modern world. Political fundamentalists fail because they seem out of touch with reality. Like Paul, who said it was “un-American” for President Obama to hold the BP corporation responsible for the Gulf oil spill.

Most Americans are religious, but they are not fundamentalists. Most Americans agree with the principle of limited government, but they are not tea party activists. That doesn’t mean Obama’s achievements are safe. Only



one thing can protect them: the perception that they are working. Pragmatism. So far, that perception has not taken hold.

Until Americans are convinced these laws are working, Obama’s legacy remains vulnerable to fundamentalist damnation. Obama’s legislative achievements are partisan. Fundamentalist Republicans can’t wait to undo them. ■

Drill and Spill

Public support for oil drilling has certainly dropped. But as of late May, it hadn't quite collapsed.

The number who "strongly favor" more drilling has dropped by nearly half, to 27 percent. But a total of 57 percent are still O.K. with drilling (either mildly or strongly).

According to the Pew Research Center, support for drilling has held up among Republicans (76 percent). It's dropped sharply among Democrats (41 percent). It's an issue on which President Obama risks alienating his political base, who were already upset over the President's decision in March to allow more offshore drilling.

President Obama is already facing intense opposition from Republicans over big government and from Independents over the economy. He doesn't need a third front of opposition from his own party.

How do you feel about increased drilling for oil and natural gas offshore in U.S. waters?

	2008	2010
Strongly Favor	52%	27%
Mildly Favor	22%	30%
Mildly Oppose	11%	16%
Strongly Oppose	13%	25%

CNN/Opinion Research

Gays in the Military

Congress is moving toward repeal of the 1993 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law, even while the military is conducting a survey to determine how "ready" U.S. service members are for the change in policy. (Imagine polling southern whites in 1964 to determine how "ready" they were for civil rights.) But here's one thing we do know: the American public is ready.

There's been a huge shift in public attitudes toward gays in the military over the past 17 years. Three quarters of Americans now favor allowing openly gay men and women to serve. That's up more than 30 points since 1993. And no longer much different from the number who favor allowing closeted gays to serve (83 percent).

Democrats in Congress want to act quickly, before the military study is completed, because they are concerned that they may not have sufficient votes after the midterm to repeal the policy if Republicans make big gains. But here's a surprise. In the Gallup poll, 60 percent of Republicans favor allowing openly gay men and lesbians to serve.

Do you think homosexuals who DO NOT publicly disclose their sexual orientation should be allowed to serve in the military?

	1993	2010
YES	63%	83%
NO	35%	15%

Wash Post/ABC News

Do you think homosexuals who DO publicly disclose their sexual orientation should be allowed to serve in the military?

	1993	2010
YES	44%	75%
NO	55%	24%

Wash Post/ABC News

Incumbents Who Lost Renomination

As of June 4th, just four members of Congress (Bennett R-UT; Specter D-PA; Mollohan D-WV; and Griffith R-AL) have failed to secure their party's nomination. But 66% of House races (287 Congressional districts), 72% of Senate races, and 73% of gubernatorial races have not yet held primaries.

