

# The Genocide of Liberal Republicans

The wide ranging dimensions of the Obama win have grown since election night. Despite limited gains in the House and Republican gains among governors, Obama's large lead in the Electoral vote, his majority in the popular vote (51% to 48%) and the upset delivering Democrats a 55 to 45 Senate majority, have re-shaped the political landscape for both the short and the long term.

In the short term, Obama has increased leverage in the year-end budget negotiations to increase upper income taxes, close some of the most glaring tax inequities ("carried interest"), to proceed with the setting up of Obamacare and the implementation of the tough provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act, to fill any Supreme Court vacancy and to weaken the present filibuster rules in the Senate which give Republicans an obstructionist choke hold.

In the longer run, the future of the two major parties, and the Republic, is in play.

If the Republican Party continues its migration to the right, or simply fails to move back toward the center, the Democratic Party will have a growing influence on the nature of our public policy – domestic and foreign. That would be good for Democrats. It would be bad for the Republic which needs creative, responsive, responsible competition for voter support to respond to the changing needs of our democracy.

So far, Republicans are slowly lining up on roughly opposing sides. One has embraced four emerging myths about why they lost big in 2012. This version argues, first, that a major problem was that Republicans failed to explain their positions well enough. The policies were, and are, correct. They were misunderstood. Second, Obama conjured up back-room technical wizardry. Third, it was hurricane Sandy that derailed Romney's

momentum (aka, “the dog ate it” scenario). Fourth, the electorate voted for divided government to hold Obama’s rampant Executive in check.

Another Republican current argues that its loss of the Latino vote (71% to 29%) and the certainty that the Latino electorate is growing rapidly and will be ever more decisive, demands a change in Republican immigration policy. There is almost a rush among Republicans to repudiate the anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-immigrant policy positions at the state and national level that was Republican dogma until November 7. Witness the announcement of the creation by yesterday’s anti-immigrant operators of a new Republican super-PAC, “Republicans for Immigration Reform”, to elect pro-reform candidates and to encourage present Republican members of congress to get on board.

That could be an important seismic shift by the Republican establishment if not by its fire-breathing anti-immigrant base. In any event, the devil will be in the details. How far will Republicans be willing (or able) to go to enact real, comprehensive immigration reform?

There is much less sign of a change in policy concerning other minorities, women, gays and lesbians, contraception and abortion, healthcare, the environment, financial regulation. Here, the Republican idea of change is to have a kinder, gentler, nicer message.

Unless there is a serious Republican move toward the center, it is almost certain to continue to decline. Obama won with the urban vote. That segment of the electorate will continue to grow. Republicans prevailed with the rural vote. That segment is destined to continue to decline. Evangelicals and Catholic bishops were more than ever outspoken Obama opponents (as was Netanyahu) but Obama got a majority of the Catholic vote, 69% of the Jewish vote, and the Christian right lost on same sex marriage, defeat of anti-abortion Senate candidates and legalization of recreational marijuana. The religious affiliation of voters is shrinking. The evangelical share of the population is both declining and growing older. Those declaring “no religious affiliation” (the “nones”) are now about 20% of the electorate and

among 18-22 year olds, that rises to about a third. Obama won 70% of the “nones”.

The genocide of liberal Republicans began with Barry Goldwater, continued with Ronald Reagan and with the Tea Party which claimed the scalps of Richard Lugar, Christopher Shays, Olympia Snow, Bob Bennett, Lincoln Chafee and Chuck Hagel, among others . There is yet to appear an influential, or even visible, Republican to lead in the opposite direction. If a change does come, it will have to include a change in the process by which Republican leaders and candidates are chosen to reduce the influence of the diminishing far right base.

Romney in his 47% explanation of the Democratic electorate and in his post election explanation of his defeat because of Obama’s gifts of tuition to students, contraceptives to young women, Obamacare to blacks and Hispanics, amnesty for young illegals, confirmed the limited vision of a rich son of privileged parents. Obama, in his thanks to young campaign workers in Chicago saw them as he had been at their age searching for a future. He underscored the contrasting vision of a child of a poor broken minority family who chose working as a community organizer with the down and out instead of an easy career as a high priced lawyer.

The victory of the community organizer over the financial manipulator is cause enough for thanks as we say goodbye to the 112th Congress and await the new year.