



For Whom the Bell Tolls

by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

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For the Blue Dogs, Tuesday was a fire bell in the night.

Virginia Republicans led by Robert McDonnell crushed the most conservative Democrat nominee in decades, rolling up a victory that rivaled Ronald Reagan's rout of Walter Mondale.

New Jersey GOP nominee Chris Christie, whose campaign had been the despair of its backers, won a 5-point victory over Jon Corzine, despite huge Democratic advantages in money and voter registration, two visits by Barack Obama and the presence on the ballot of a third-party candidate who took votes away from Christie.

Maine has gone Democratic in five straight presidential elections. Yet voters overturned a gay-marriage state law, 53-47, the 31st straight victory for traditionalists. This replicates California's rejection of gay marriage, 52-48, in a year Obama carried the state by 24 points and 3 million votes.

Democrats see green shoots in the capture of New York's 23rd congressional district, which has been Republican since Ulysses Grant. Yet, even here, the conservative showing was impressive.

GOP candidate Dede Scozzafava is a fellow traveler of the Albany crowd of Gov. David Paterson. She is pro-choice, pro-gay marriage, pro "card-check" -- a euphemism for eliminating the secret ballot for workers deciding on whether they want a union.

Disgusted with a choice between liberals, the Conservative Party put up Douglas Hoffman. While he did not live in the district, his views did reflect the district's views.

Hoffman was going nowhere, however, until the Tea Party and town-hall activists and Club for Growth sent contributions and troops. Hoffman got ignition when Sarah Palin joined Fred Thompson in endorsing him. He began a rapid ascent from last to first, dumping Dede into third place. When Dede fell to 20 percent, the weekend before the election, she dropped out and endorsed Democrat Bill Owens, who won.

Nevertheless, Hoffman had come, in a month, from nowhere to knock a liberal Republican out of the lead and out of the race and out of the party, and closed to within two points of taking the seat.

The good news for the GOP is that, despite the unpopularity of their brand name -- Republican identification is down to 20 percent -- this is no longer the impediment it was in 2006 or 2008. The 40 percent who call themselves conservative will rally with energy and enthusiasm to Republicans willing to go to their capital, be it Trenton, Richmond or D.C., to battle Big Government.

As for the Democrats, their problems are not easily soluble, in the short term.

In 2006, the war in Iraq cost Republicans the Congress. Now, Iraq, like Afghanistan, is Obama's war. In 2008,

the financial collapse on George W. Bush's watch enabled Obama to retake the lead that Sarah Palin's nomination had given to John McCain. Now, the economy is Obama's albatross and his party's responsibility.

Going into 2008, 27 percent of Americans approved of Bush. Eighty percent thought the country was headed in the wrong direction. Over 90 percent thought the economy was bad or poor.

If we can't win with those numbers, said James Carville, we ought to go into a new line of work.

Obama won, but only because of those appalling numbers. In every state except Missouri where Bush's approval was above 35 percent, McCain carried the state.

In 2010, Obama will not have George W. Bush to kick around anymore and Republicans will not have "Bush's war" or "the Bush economy" to defend.

If Americans think the country is still on the wrong course, as most now do, and the economy is still dismal, as most now do, the only way to protest will be to vote against the party that controls Congress and the White House.

Despite all the media mockery of the "Birthers," "Truthers," Tea Party and town-hall "Nazis," it is the populist-conservative center-right that is not only on fire but came out to vote in 2009.

Young voters and African-Americans who came out in record number in 2008 stayed home in 2009. What will cause them to rally to endangered Democrats in 2010, after they have endured another year of what they are enduring now?

After Tuesday's defeats, Obama flew to Madison, Wis., on the first anniversary of his victory, to remind Americans what a terrible hand he had been dealt. We had, said Obama, a "financial crisis that threatened to plunge our economy into a Great Depression. We had record deficits, two wars, frayed alliances around the world."

Since then, the financial crisis has eased. But millions more are now unemployed. And deficits are now three times as large as Bush's largest. And America's prospects in those two wars are more grim than a year ago. And the Middle East peace process is moribund, and there is the threat of a new war with Iran. What has the outreach to Chavez, Castro and the Ayatollah produced?

President Obama is today the victim of a disillusionment caused by the excessive hopes and expectations that were raised by candidate Obama.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)
