

EDITORIAL

Majority might not be enough for GOP

Amid the euphoria of their dramatic takeover in last week's election, Republicans in Congress — particularly those in the House of Representatives — are making dramatic promises to the nation.

The question is, will they be able to deliver?

Rep. Newt Gingrich of Georgia, the inside favorite for Speaker of the House, has led the GOP in making those promises as one of the principal architects of the so-called "Contract with America." The contract, signed by more than 300 House candidates before the election last week, pledges those candidates to support a variety of causes now that they are in Congress. Among these promises are a balanced budget amendment, tax cuts, welfare reform, a tougher crime bill and a debate on term limits.

But the newest promise is not about what the new Republican majority will do, now that it is in place. It's about when it will do it.

Both Gingrich and Rep. Richard Army of Texas, the new majority leader, have said they will push for a vote on the contract's provisions within 100 days of taking control of the House, even if it means working as long as 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

It is highly doubtful Republican leaders will make good on the 20-hours-a-day promise — let's hope they can get more sleep than that — but the message is nonetheless clear: They will waste no time pursuing their agenda.

In their enthusiasm, they seem to have forgotten a lesson that they, very recently, were adept at teaching. That a minority in Congress can still be a powerful adversary.

During the Democrats' reign in Congress — 40 years long in the House of Representatives — Republicans were often very effective in derailing the Democratic agenda. During the first half of the Clinton administration, Republicans, aided by occasional divisiveness within the Democratic Party, were instrumental in defeating a number of Democratic proposals, including Clinton's flagship, health care reform.

No one should argue with the Republicans' desire to set ambitious goals, even if the goals themselves may not seem entirely palatable. But the GOP is setting itself up for a major league fall if it thinks its slim majority, no matter how emphatically obtained, will be enough to push its agenda through Congress, or past President Clinton's veto power, especially considering that the GOP's majority is slimmer than any majority enjoyed by the Democrats in recent years.

By bringing about this change in leadership, the voters have sent a mandate of sorts to Capitol Hill. But the Democrats who survived last week's electoral assault, as well as the handful who were newly elected, cannot be expected to abide by that mandate.

Perhaps the Republicans should listen to the advice of retiring Rep. Bob Michel, who is leaving the House after 38 years: "Boy, I hope you guys aren't over-promising what you can't deliver."

If the new Republicans don't do all they say they will, they may find themselves in a tough situation. After all, the next election is only two years away.



LETTERS

Why, Womack

This letter addresses Brian Womack's column in the Nov. 11 Emerald explaining why the GOP picked up so many House and Senate seats in the last election. His main explanation: We (Americans) love Republicans. We love Republicans. We love Republicans. I have another explanation: We live in denial. We live in denial. We live in denial.

The Republicans have promised us a balanced budget, increased defense spending and more tax cuts (for the rich of course). Hello. Were these not the same inane policies enacted during the Reagan and Bush years? The same policies that brought us a \$3 trillion deficit?

And for the love of God, why would we want to increase defense spending Brian? Is it so we can keep more dictators like Noriega and Saddam Hussein in check that our own CIA and military created, nurtured and financed before we invaded them? Maybe it is the nostalgia of defense spending scams like the \$9,000 pliers, \$5,000 Allen wrenches, \$600 toilet seats, or the \$1 billion per plane B-1 Bomber that doesn't even work. I remember the good old days, too.

Anyway, the next few years should be interesting now that the Republicans have to produce concrete policies to stay elected instead of just obstructing, filibustering and blathering idiotic catch phrases like "get big government off our backs."

Gerry Rempel
Eugene

EWEB freebies

One of the ironies of life is that those who benefit most from the sacrifices of others are those who appreciate them the least. Thus I was not surprised to learn that, unlike every other public entity in the community, EWEB does not honor veterans on Veteran's Day.

In the world of EWEB such people are not considered politically correct. However, that does not mean that EWEB employees have sacrificed an opportunity to obtain a day off with pay at public expense. The utility has simply decided that it would be

more appropriate under the EWEB religion if its employees were paid instead to stay home the day after Thanksgiving.

While EWEB is a political subdivision of the City of Eugene, its management's primary concern is entitling itself to the best that both the private and public sectors have to offer. Thus, EWEB employees get both relatively higher private sector pay and more generous public sector benefits concurrent with exemptions from both the stress of private sector corporate downsizing and the strains of public sector revenue limitations.

Under its current management, EWEB has evolved into what is essentially a sheltered workshop for the economically over-privileged. And, while it is debatable as to whether EWEB's Veteran's Day policy is representative of a management that is extremely arrogant, extremely naive, or just plain dumb, it is evidence that this private party at public expense has gone on long enough. It is time that we rate payers/owners took the punch bowl away.

Nicholas J. Urhausen
Eugene

Party is off

To the over 350 pledges of the greek system who were invited to the 16-way pledge party at the Fiji house on Wednesday, Nov. 16: We regret to inform you that it has been canceled.

Apparently a few overzealous members of the Fiji pledge class decided to invite, and keep inviting, pledges from almost every fraternity and sorority on campus. Most of the the inviting was done behind our backs and the membership had no idea of how big the party was getting.

Having a party of this magnitude would put our chapter at great risk, a risk we do not wish to take. Had the party taken place, we would have broken the University's Student Conduct Code and the Interfraternity Council's risk management policy as well as the law.

We realize the extensive effort put forth by some of you and we're sorry about canceling on such short notice. We would have canceled earlier had we known what was truly going on.

If you're that upset about it,

feel free to ask the members of your chapter if they would consider having a pledge party of this size at their house. I can guarantee their answers would all be quite simply "no."

Tim Thoren
Phi Gamma Delta

Paid petition

On June 30, 1994, Wal-Mart obtained an injunction through the courts to prevent me from circulating petitions in front of their store. Circulating petitions has been protected by the U.S. Supreme Court many times as freedom of speech, as petitions and civil war have historically been the peoples' only course of action when the government ceases to represent the people.

One of the petitions I was circulating failed to make it on the ballot. I believe I can prove that it would have qualified had I been permitted to circulate it at the store during the time of the injunction.

My attorney filed a counter suit for \$8,000 in financial damages, \$50,000 in damages to my business reputation and \$500,000 in punitive damages (which is to discourage the same action on others not informed of their rights).

My attorney agreed to help start a class action lawsuit to represent the voters of Oregon, for each to receive \$2,500 in damages for their losses since they could not vote on the petition that didn't make the ballot.

Since contact with Wal-Mart's attorneys, my lawyer has been refusing to take action on the class action suits, and has been trying to force me to settle out of court cheap. As far as I know, he hasn't even mentioned the class action suit to Wal-Mart. Sometimes I wonder whose side he's on! I believe he thinks I cannot afford his fees (which at present I cannot) and has used this to discourage me.

With a little financial help, a motivated attorney and a lot of concerned citizens, we the People can protect our civil rights. Anyone interested in participating please contact me.

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