

Everything to fear

One queer's analysis of the 2004 election

by Rex Wockner

Same-sex marriage may have lost John Kerry the presidency.

As you know, it all came down to Ohio. There were 5,481,756 votes cast in Ohio, with a gap between President Bush and Kerry of only 136,483 votes. Ohio also voted to amend its constitution to ban same-sex marriage by a margin of 62 percent to 38 percent.

Of the approximately 3.4 million Ohioans who voted to ban same-sex marriage, at least 136,483 no doubt dragged their asses to the polls primarily to express their anti-gay fervor. This was, after all, Bush architect Karl Rove's strategy—to fire up the 4 million evangelical Christians who didn't vote in 2000.

Meanwhile....

- Ten other states also amended their constitutions to shit on gays—Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah. The results ranged from 86 percent dumping on gays in Mississippi to only 57 percent crapping on us in Oregon.

- Queer U.S. Reps. Barney Frank of Massachusetts, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin and Jim Kolbe of Arizona were re-elected.

- At least 40 of the 64 queer candidates supported by the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund won. For full results, head to www.victoryfund.org.

- Dallas County in Texas elected an openly lesbian sheriff, 57-year-old Lupe Valdez.

What's up with that? When you look at all the hundreds of openly queer elected officials around the country, it's clear that Americans are, in general, perfectly fine with specific gay and lesbian people—even if he or she wants to be a sheriff in Texas or a mayor in North Carolina or is the daughter of the vice president of the United States.

But Americans still have some kind of problem with gays in the abstract. In Mississippi, 86 percent of voters have some kind of generic problem with gays. The only way to move people from the abstract to the personal is to come out to them—to let them know they know gay people. Gay candidates, of course, can have this effect on people also.

That's how you change the minds of conservative people like, oh, Dick Cheney.

Speaking of openly lesbian Mary Cheney and her life partner, Heather Poe, there they were on stage together again during Bush's victory speech in Washington, D.C. Good for them. As long as Mary and Heather are around, nothing too awful is going to happen to gays and lesbians on a national level. Just by existing, even if they never speak, they function as a major wet blanket on the political aspirations of the anti-gay movement.

- The move to amend the U.S. Constitution

to ban same-sex marriage remains dead. I also think Bush will let the issue drop now that he's re-elected. He was just playing to Rove's 4 million fundies.

Also, just a few days before the election, Bush came out in favor of civil unions that grant gay couples the rights of marriage.

"I don't think we should deny people rights to a civil union, a legal arrangement, if that's what a state chooses to do so," he said. "I view the definition of marriage different from legal arrangements that enable people to have rights. And I strongly believe that marriage ought to be defined as between a union between a man and a woman. Now, having said that, states ought to be able to have the right to pass laws that enable people to be able to have rights like others."

Bush specifically and clearly said he disagrees with the civil unions-bashing 2004 Republican Party platform on that point.

- One final factoid: Exit polling shows that 23 percent of gays and lesbians voted for Bush this year, down only 2 percent from 2000. On one level, of course, that's simply impossible to believe. But, actually, it's not surprising in the slightest.

I'm guessing it was mostly gay men, including sizable numbers of the authentic gay bubbas



Karl Rove's divide-and-conquer strategy succeeded

one finds in Internet chat rooms across large swaths of the mountains, plains and South. They voted for Bush for the same reasons that 51 percent of other Americans did.

As the old gay-lib slogan said, "We are everywhere." Including in America's vast bubbalandia.

How do I feel about four more years of George W. Bush? I suppose I feel some combination of angst, fear, trembling, depression, sadness, embarrassment, horror, distress—and all the words that the thesaurus lists beside each one of those words.

For kicks, let's see what's beside "fear"—"alarm, apprehension, abhorrence, agitation, anxiety, apprehensiveness, aversion, concern, consternation, creeps, despair, discomposure, dismay, disquietude, doubt, dread, foreboding, funk, jitters, misgiving, nightmare, panic, revulsion, suspicion, terror, trepidation, uneasiness, worry."

Man, that book read my mind. ☐

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Lupe Valdez, an openly lesbian candidate for sheriff, won in Dallas County, Texas, of all places