

Sum of Our Parts

Mixing 28 flavors of Democrats.

More good news this time. It used to be when we were frustrated with the Democratic Party – and what it wasn't doing or saying – that well, we could blame the Democratic Party.



Happily, we don't have to anymore.

Legal changes, created by the 2002 McCain-Feingold campaign finance law, actually make it illegal for the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to create the coordinated plans for winning presidential states – and of course, that's how we make a president.

So – cue trumpets – we're going to have to do it all by ourselves – using existing coalitions, new creativity and a bottom-up, grassroots organizing model that blends high-tech and high-touch approaches.

Confused? Think of it this way:

Every four years there are about 50 million Democratic voters who get counted, more or less, depending on Florida's mood.

The rest of the time, the Democratic coalition divides up into card-carrying party activists, passionate environmentalists, pro-choice voters, trade union members and at least 28 more great flavors of Baskin Robbins/Democratic/Green/Progressive/liberal values-based, you name-its. Of course, we're all individuals, we all *hate* being labeled (so no letters about this!), and we all want more community and more cooperation. Yet somehow we're less than the sum of our parts – and expecting "the Democrats" to fix this situation is no longer an option.

So how can we rally our troops, state by state? Frankly, it's an open question and there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Here in Oregon, for example, it may take an army of angry parents to step up and demand serious action to preserve and enhance public education – rather than more bickering over Band-Aid solutions. Doing that right may require organizing every living room, school, place of worship, workplace and mall into a new network that Salem can't ignore. It certainly will require "strange bedfellows" politics – since we'll want business leaders to join in and say we need a well-educated workforce if Oregon is to incubate new ideas, technologies and jobs. This new movement will probably also have to take positions on issues besides education – by painting a new vision of Oregon's future. Long-term success may also involve creative "Civics 101" efforts to make clear to voters that sidewalks and fire trucks are not free.

What will this new network be called? Well, it probably won't be called just the Democratic Party. Because it can't involve just Democrats. It probably won't live under just one roof. But this emerging network will end up serving as a focal point for growing new community leaders and inspiring a return to old-fashioned, face to face conversations about our future. Hell, under some scenarios "politics" could even become fun – or gasp, about real issues.

Look at Engage Oregon and The Oregon Bus Project (www.secretplan.org) for a promising start down this new path we'll need to walk. Better yet, check out their Hood River conference Nov. 13-16.

In other states, the focal point for organizing new hybrid state Democratic networks might involve health care (the lack of it), ending special interest corporate welfare (too much of it) or investing in green growth or some other rallying cry that ties together neighbors and communities across the state.

For many political folks used to simpler times, the substitution of loose-knit, state networks for the ease of shopping at "Window A" at the DNC is a sad day. Mixing back together all 28 flavors of Democrats into a new, tastier milkshake will take a while.

Yet while a new era has dawned, it need not be dark. State networks, not national parties, will be the easiest place to gain traction and drive social change. Optimism is key – and it's worth remembering that there are more of us little "d" democrats than Republicans. Lots more.

Beyond the proven recipe of hope and hard work, we must also be open to some strange ingredients. All groping aside, the emergence of a Republican like Arnold Schwarzenegger, who actually favors big values like tolerance, privacy and some respected role for government (read his acceptance speech), could be the biggest thing since Oregon's Tom McCall.

But don't hold your breath – pick up a hammer instead. We've got a lot to do between now and Nov. 2, 2004.

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ever after. We thumbed our American nose at the U.N. and waged our "pre-emptive" war against Iraq. As we wake up from Bush's fairy tale, we learn that the Iraqi people are complex just like us. And we find there was nothing to preempt. But our soldiers die every day, and we beg the United Nations to send troops and money to share the burden the UN warned us against.

Bush now asks for another \$87 billion to cover the poor judgment and arrogance that got us in over our heads. We cannot trust the Bush team's motives and judgment any more. We, through our senators and representatives, must shake up this arrogant administration and demand that it get real about the mess it has created. We must:

- Have a clear budget for any money allocated, and a clear exit strategy for both Iraq and Afghanistan. And watch out for well-connected gougers like Halliburton.
- Invite the U.N. to join the effort on a cooperative basis, instead of our we'll-do-it-our-way attitude.
- Fire the Pentagon team, Rumsfeld first, that lied and exaggerated to get us into the war.
- And if they can't get real, we must throw the entire administration out!

*Eldon Haines
Eugene*

THAT TRUTH THING

It now seems to be common knowl-

edge that George W. Bush has trouble with the truth thing. Add to that the inherent dishonesty of television commercials and we the people have been getting a bucket full of lies about marijuana.


First the Bush administration said we are terrorists. But they backed off of that. I am not sure now if the Bush administration thinks we were terrorists but are no longer terrorists, are terrorists but not too dangerous, or if they think we never were terrorists – again that pesky truth thing really trips up this administration.

Now we are being told people who use marijuana shoot each other, get pregnant or run over little kids.

If Bush were an intelligent person he might check out the statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (www.samhsa.gov) where he would find the National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2002 and under Illicit Drug Use he would find that over 14 million Americans used marijuana in the last 30 days. That's one out of every 20 people in the U.S. We can't all be terrorists and baby killers.

After Bush leaves office I do not think he should go back to Texas. He should move to California. I think he has a future in writing fiction for Hollywood.

*Chris Pender
Eugene*



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