



# THE VIEW

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## THE NOVEMBER MID-TERM ELECTIONS AND BEYOND

BY  
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Normally at this time of year in the political cycle we would be preparing to take a deep breath of the muggy August air in anticipation of a last push before the potentially monumental mid-term elections. After last August, however, no one who practices the art of representation under the dome of the nation's capital will take the month of August and its grassroots political campaign for granted ever again.

Now the temperature is rising on the pivotal 2010 mid-term elections. Over the past couple of weeks, both the Republicans and Democrats have developed decidedly bewildered demeanors. The following is a quick overview of a few of the issues that will likely crop up in debates across the country, and also some speculation of the possible implications for the big Presidential rumble in 2012.

To repeal or not to repeal. The Republican leadership now has two promises to repeal legislation on the table. Of course there is the promise to repeal the health care legislation, and now House Minority Leader John Bahner has added the new package of financial regulations to the list. Perhaps the Republicans are banking on the fact that the staggering number of new health care provisions will not have taken effect in time to create a critical mass of supporters by election time. This is tricky. They have to wonder if they are successful in using a new Republican majority to scuttle the health care bill after the 2010 elections whether it will be possible for the Democrats to portray them as the bad guys going into 2012.

Spending more to create jobs vs. tax cuts to promote hiring. Both the Republicans and the Democrats have swallowed deeply on their previous positions over the last few days. Economists of all stripes have warned about the dangers of the continually expanded deficit and the federal debt, but many of these same economists have spoken in ominous terms about putting the government brakes on programs designed to create jobs lest this major source of money dries up and the country is thrown into a dreaded "deflationary spiral."

The Democrats advocate continuation of unemployment programs beyond the statutory limits and many advocate consideration of new stimulus programs designed to put more people to work despite the certainty that they will add to the deficit. The Republicans argue that preserving tax cuts from the Bush era, rather than letting them rise back to the level they were during the Clinton years, is preferable to further spending. The Republican claim is that cutting taxes actually leads to more revenue -- a claim that is being widely disputed by the Democrats. In the past few days, however, the Democrats have seemed to waiver on whether it is a good idea or not to let the higher tax rates go back into effect on the upper income brackets, and the Republicans seem concerned that they may have ceded the moral high ground by being portray as opposing more unemployment benefits.

There are other issues that appear to have been affected by the jitters over the elections. Any environmental legislation such as that so prominent in President Obama's Presidential campaign seems headed for the back burner. It will be interesting also to see what happens with the BP oil spill disaster now that the emergency has passed. Oddly, at least one free market economist has stated that one of the problems has been that the \$75 million cap on damages was insufficient to cause BP to be vigilant in enforcing safety regulations. Isn't this the case that those opposed to tort reform have made?

You can bet that the campaign strategists from both parties, while concentrating on the 2010 task at hand, are keeping one eye on the 2012 presidential elections. In addition to the congressional elections there are 37 races for governor's mansions this year and of these 24 are for seats in which there are no incumbents. These battles for the governorships of these 37 states comprise Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour's home turf. Former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin is on a popularity trajectory that no longer makes her potential Presidential candidacy a laughing matter. But at the end of the day Governor Barbour may have staked out a solid base with Republican governors that would portend his being favored by the governors and their states' delegates across the country. This may be what he needs to get on the ticket as the vice-presidential candidate regardless of what the voters do in the party primaries and caucuses.

As for incumbent President Obama, more than a few Democrats as well as Republicans have opined of late that his 2012 chances of reelection may be improved if the Democrats lose one or both houses in 2010. Their thinking is that the whole country needs to see if Republican policies that would limit government-sponsored employment programs would indeed turn the country around in two short years. This would be oddly similar to the 1948 election following the takeover of both houses of congress in 1946 by the Republicans for the first time since 1928. The Republican slogan in the Dewey vs. Truman race in 1948 was "Had enough?" Truman upset Dewey in 1948 and the Democrats retook both house of Congress.

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