Assault On Ashcroft Spikes Bipartisanship

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In an era when we have endured so much scandal, so much embarrassingly improper behavior by high public officials, one might have reasonably predicted that Senator John Ashcroft would be the least controversial of all George W. Bush's Cabinet nominations. Ashcroft has the cleanest record of any of the nominees.
Ashcroft is known as a man of honor and integrity, respected by both friends and ideological opponents. In the many times he ran for public office, no enemies ever produced a scent of scandal.

Do the prevailing powers in Washington, D.C. feel threatened by the very presence of a man who can't be bought with sex or money and who has no past liaisons with which he can be blackmailed? Do they feel uncomfortable with a man whose most playful escapade is singing in a barbershop quartet?

To use a famous political line uttered in another context, "Have the Democrats no sense of decency?"

There probably has never been a man nominated for Attorney General with better qualifications for the post. If one were to write a job description for U.S. Attorney General, it would be John Ashcroft's resume: law professor, two-term state attorney general, two-term governor, U.S. Senator serving on the Judiciary Committee.

Ashcroft has another asset that makes him particularly qualified in the 21st century and will mark a dramatic turnaround in the technology area from the current Administration. Ashcroft is a leading defender of the right of individuals to use computers and email without the sort of government spying advocated by Janet Reno and Louis Freeh.

Where are all those liberals who have been saying that qualifications are the only factor that matters, that we should never use an ideological litmus test? Are they fearful that John Ashcroft will clean out Janet Reno's corrupt Justice Department?

The most insulting question being asked is, will Ashcroft enforce the law? Ashcroft is obviously a man who believes deeply in the rule of law. The Democrats' real fear is that he will enforce the law instead of bending it for partisan political purposes as Janet Reno has done, or bypassing it altogether as Bill Lann Lee has done.

The liberals are trying to make a case against Ashcroft for voting against one of Clinton's nominees to the federal bench, Ronnie White. As a state judge, he had voted to overturn the death penalty for a notoriously vicious murderer, James R. Johnson (who happens to be white).

Ronnie White's confirmation was predictably and vehemently opposed by the Missouri law enforcement community. The Democrats are trying to change this clear law-and-order issue into allegations of "racism" and other inflammatory epithets, but the facts of the case are not in dispute.

Johnson killed a deputy sheriff in the back of the head and then shot him in the forehead to make sure he was dead. Then Johnson drove to the home of the sheriff and fired a semiautomatic rifle five times at the sheriff's wife while she was leading a prayer service; she died in front of her family.

Johnson then went to the sheriff's office, shot the sheriff four times and killed him. A female deputy sheriff happened to arrive at the office and Johnson shot her as she was getting out of her car; she died on the pavement.

Johnson was convicted of four counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. Judge White disagreed.

Every single Republican in the Senate voted against rewarding Judge White with lifetime tenure on the federal court, and their vote had nothing to do with racism. Actually, the Republicans should have voted against most of Clinton's nominees because they are reliably activist liberals who have passed his pro-abortion litmus test.

If voting against a black judicial nominee is "racist," then it's also fair to call "racist" the Democratic Senators who voted against Clarence Thomas in 1991. Twenty-two of them are still in the Senate.

When the Ashcroft nomination was announced, his Senate colleagues generally spoke well of him and the big Missouri radio station (which had relentlessly urged the voters to vote for a dead man instead of Ashcroft on November 7) was unable to find any Democratic Senator to do an on-air interview against him. Former Illinois Senator Paul Simon said about Ashcroft, "He'll call it straight and I don't think any political pressures are going to force him into doing something that he thinks is wrong."

Ever since (but certainly not before) George W. Bush was proclaimed President-elect, the Democrats have been bleating about the Republicans' obligation to be "bipartisan." So Trent Lott and the Senate Republicans gave them a sweetheart deal of 50 percent Democrats on each Senate committee and 50 percent of Senate committee funding.

The assault on Ashcroft shows that the Daschle Democrats have no intention of being bipartisan or even fair or civil. "Bipartisanship" is a one-way street that leads to policy and personnel victories for the Democrats.