How Republicans Can Blow the Coming Election

by Phyllis Schlafly May 21, 2010

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Pundits are predicting that Republicans could pick up 40 to 100 seats in the U.S. House this November. But Democrats are about to unveil their secret weapon to keep Nancy Pelosi in her catbird seat.

What could be the magic bullet with the potential to discredit the Republican Party as a vehicle for Americans opposed to Obama's radical changes? The answer is Mexican trucks, a foolish idea left over from the Bush era, and some Republicans are on the verge of drinking the Kool-Aid.

This month, Obama's Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, the former Republican Congressman from Peoria, told a Senate subcommittee that he would soon announce a plan to allow Mexican trucks to drive their loads on U.S. roads. He said the timing of this decision is "closer than soon."

A similar promise was made in March by Obama's Trade Representative Ron Kirk. As mayor of Dallas, Kirk supported a "NAFTA Freeway" between the U.S. and Mexico.

The political danger of this issue to Republicans is best illustrated by what happened to a favorite conservative Congressman, the great track star Jim Ryun of Kansas. In 2006 Ryun unexpectedly lost his seat to Democrat Nancy Boyda, a feminist who pretended otherwise by rejecting the support of EMILY's List.

Boyda quickly cemented her popularity in 2007 by sponsoring a bill to ban Mexican trucks from venturing beyond the border zone where they were then required to transfer their cargo onto U.S. trucks. Boyda's bill passed the House by the overwhelming vote of 411 to 3, and the Senate passed a similar bill 75 to 23.

Then-Senator Obama and then-Representative LaHood both voted for the ban. The Bush administration then exploited a loophole by starting a so-called demonstration program 30 days before the ban took effect.

When Jim Ryun tried to reclaim his seat in 2008, he foolishly defended the indefensible Mexican truck plan. Because a Republican cannot win if he allows a Democrat to get to the right of him on an issue people care about, Ryun was denied renomination by his own party.

The campaign to invade America with Mexican trucks relies on misrepresentations and falsehoods, mostly designed to mislead Republicans. Among these is the claim that the Mexican truck ban is a payoff to James Hoffa's Teamsters union, which helped elect Obama in 2008.

Most Republicans instinctively oppose anything supported by the Teamsters. But the exact same position against Mexican trucks is held by the Teamsters' chief rivals, the non-union independent drivers and owner-operators, who mostly vote Republican.

Another fallacy is the argument that the United States is somehow obligated by treaty to let in the Mexican trucks. But NAFTA is not a treaty; it was never ratified by two-thirds of Senators as the Constitution requires.

NAFTA is merely a law passed in 1993 by a simple majority vote of the Democrat-controlled Congress, and no Congress can be bound by a previous Congress. The

only so-called obligation was issued by a secret NAFTA trade tribunal, not a real court whose judgments are binding.

A ban on Mexican trucks inserted into U.S. law in 2009 by retiring Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) has now expired, so the pressure to admit Mexican trucks is intensifying. On March 1, 56 Members of Congress (including 29 Republicans) signed a letter asking the Obama administration to reopen our borders to Mexican trucks.

In response, opponents gathered the signatures of 78 Members of Congress on an April 14 letter calling on Congress to permanently ban cross-border trucking. That letter included only six Republicans.

Of the 72 Democrats who signed the letter opposing Mexican trucks, many represent swing districts that Republicans expect to win on November 2. A strong position against admitting Mexican trucks could be the secret weapon that enables dozens of vulnerable Democrats to save their seats.

A Rasmussen poll, taken last August when Obama flew to Guadalajara, found that "just 19 percent of Americans say the U.S. Congress should let trucks from Mexico cross the border and carry their loads on American highways, as Mexican President Felipe Calderon requested." Sixty-six percent opposed, and 15 percent were not sure.

Mexican truck loads cannot be effectively inspected. If an occasional truck is discovered carrying illegal drugs, the cartels would consider that just a cost of doing business.

U.S. voters and truck drivers cannot be baited into ending their opposition by the reciprocal offer to allow U.S. trucks to drive into Mexico. American truckers know they would take their lives into their hands by driving into the drug-war zone south

of the border, where murders, dismemberments, and kidnappings are daily occurrences.

Republicans better act fast to get on the right side of this issue or they will risk losing the opportunity of a century to win a majority in Congress.