Conservative Insurgency

by Phyllis Schlafly May 3, 2006

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A new conservative uprising is stirring and no one should be surprised. The Republican Establishment has been drifting leftward, and a backlash had to come against the Big Government spenders in legislatures and against supremacist judges who order the spending.

Witness the conservative complaints against the Texas Republican leadership for trying to railroad through, in a special legislative session, a brand new tax on businesses. This would impose $3 billion in new taxes on the most productive workers in Texas.

Is this justified by a shortfall in the budget? No; Texas has a budget surplus of over $8 billion this year and business is booming.

Contrast that with California, which runs annual multibillion-dollar budget deficits and has a bond rating that ranks as low as hurricane-damaged Louisiana. The major difference is income taxes; California has the highest effective top rate (factoring in lack of deductions), while Texas has no personal or business income tax.

If Texas Republicans think they are helping their state or party by imposing a new tax on business, they are badly misguided. Despite carefully obtaining the blessing of key leaders in both political parties, the grassroots are rising up against higher taxes.

The revolt is a replay of what happened after President Bush lined up bipartisan support for his personal top choice for the Supreme Court, feminist Harriet Miers. Conservatives rallied against her nomination, and Bush replaced her with Sam Alito.

The failed Dubai Ports deal gave us another example of how the conservative natives are getting restless. Despite Bush's threat to veto any legislation to kill the deal, Congress heeded the loud and clear message from the grassroots and did exactly that.

Apparently these lessons were lost on Republican leaders in Miers' home state of Texas. Her chief booster (the one who assured us that Miers is conservative), Texas Justice Nathan Hecht, writing for the state supreme court, ordered the Texas legislature to revamp its public school funding by June first.

Activist judges in other states, notably Kansas and Arizona, have been ordering the state legislatures to appropriate more funding for public schools. The judges have convinced themselves that only judges are wise enough to know how much taxpayers' money is "equitable" or "adequate," and Justice Hecht is apparently infected with that same judicial conceit.

Conservative Texas Supreme Court Justice Scott Brister wasn't fooled by his Court's decision, and he dissented vigorously. The Texas legislature should not be fooled or intimidated because levying taxes and appropriating money are legislative, not judicial, powers.

It is long overdue for state legislatures to educate state judges about the separation of powers and the fact that state courts should defer to elected representatives on taxes and spending.

Instead, Texas Republican legislators are jumping in Pavlovian response to the Court's arbitrary demands and deadline. A lame-duck session of the legislature has convened to try to increase taxes to appease the Court.

The Republicans rallied behind a tax increase recommended by Democrat John Sharp, who said, "I view this as my last shot to do anything significant in government." Is imposing new taxes now a badge of honor?

One business, Braidwood Management, wrote Texas legislators that its taxes will increase tenfold from $5,000 last year to $55,000 under the proposed bill. Is budget-surplus Texas now heading down the road of near-bankrupt California?

The teachers unions, with their overwhelmingly Democratic membership, are tickled pink that Republicans are doing this unpopular work. The unions can blame the tax hike on Republicans and laugh all the way to the bank as they soak up the new revenue.

Enter stage right. Conservative radio personality Dan Patrick declared "I cannot and will not support a tax increase on homeowners or business owners." Patrick just upset the Republican Establishment by winning a landslide victory in the primary for a Texas state senate seat.

Missouri has shown what the real conservative position is on taxes. Thanks to the Hancock Amendment of 1980, a surplus in tax collections must be refunded to the taxpayers, and nearly $1 billion was refunded to individual and corporate taxpayers during 1995 to 1999.

Conservative challenges to tax-and-spend Republicans are gaining around the country. Despite strenuous efforts by the Republican National Committee to prop up U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island for reelection, this tax-and-spend RINO (Republican In Name Only) ran dead last among his major primary and general election opponents in fundraising this past quarter, and his wife has now appealed to Democrats to change their registration to vote for him in the Republican primary.

The politically tone-deaf White House, which is still trying to shove a very unpopular amnesty bill through the Senate, should listen to the grassroots. The sooner there is a reconciliation, the better off our country, our economy, and the Republican Party will be.