from Phyllis Schlafly

November 18, 1993

LESSONS OF THE 1993 ELECTIONS

The upset defeat of George Bush's close friend, Dick Thornburgh, for the Senate from Pennsylvania in 1990 sent a clear message to Republicans that health care is a major election issue. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration turned a deaf ear, and Republicans are three years late in trying to be players in the game on that issue.

The voters, who are usually smarter than their leaders, have just sent another powerful message, and I hope the Republicans are smart enough to catch on this time. This month's three stunning Republican victories were not due to luck or charismatic candidates, but were due to gut issues that the majority of voters really care about.

The voters didn't follow the script that the media had written for them. The pollsters were all left with egg on their faces.

The upset victory of Christine Todd Whitman over incumbent Governor Jim Florio in New Jersey proves that the anti-tax issue is alive and kicking. Bill Clinton's chief campaign strategist, James Carville, ran Floria's campaign on the premise that voters will forget and forgive a tax increase inflicted early in an administration.

But George Bush's tax increase mistake changed the landscape on that issue (forever, we hope). The voters didn't forget and forgive Bush's tax increase, or Florie's, and they are not going to forget or forgive Clinton's 1993 tax increase (which he rammed through Congress over the unanimous opposition of the Republicans).

Florio and Carville were so oblivious to how anti-tax Americans have become that they tried to make an issue of ridiculing Christine Todd Whitman's campaign promise to reduce taxes 30 percent. However, the voters took her seriously and think that cutting taxes drastically is a neat idea.

The stunning victory of George Allen as Governor of Virginia over Mary Sue Terry proved that the "issue" of the so-called "religious right" is an advantage for Republicans and that, when Democrats try to use it to attack Republicans, it boomerangs.

Six months ago, the political pundits all thought that Mary Sue Terry was unbeatable. She started out with a 30+ point lead in the polls, plenty of money, and the name recognition advantage of being the incumbent State Attorney General.

After her campaign began to falter, she decided she could win by "running" against Pat Robertson and the "religious right" instead of against her Republican opponent. Her advertising tried to paint George Allen as a fundamentalist linked in an unholy alliance with Robertson, and she boasted about her pro-abortion and pro-gun-control views and credentials.

The liberal Democrats, who used to inveigh sanctimoniously against what was called "guilt by association" when it was used in the debate about Communists, launched a savage attack against the Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Michael Farris. They painted him as a right-wing fundamentalist book-burning censor, hoping the "dirt" would spill over on George Allen.

Allen is actually moderately conservative on practically all issues. But, in politics, perception becomes reality, and so the false negative attacks against Republican candidates were considered to be smart politics.

But again, the voters were smarter than the campaign managers. The Democrats defeated Farris by outspending him ten-to-one with clever TV ads such as the one falsely accusing him of trying to ban "The Wizard of oz," but the thousands of voters he brought to the polls gave George Allen his great margin of victory.

According to the Mason-Dixon exit polls, 41 percent of white voters said they consider themselves "evangelical" or "born again" Christians, and they amounted to about 34 percent of the total vote. They voted 77 percent for Allen and 22 percent for Terry.

But what about the abortion issue, which the media constantly tell us is supposed to be so hurtful to Republicans? Of the 18 percent of Virginia voters who said they voted because of the abortion issue, 54 percent voted for George Allen and only 45 percent for Mary Sue Terry.

Once again, the pro-life issue proved to be a net advantage for the Republican candidate.

The Democrats in New Jersey and Virginia also thought that gun control was their issue and that they could use it to advantage against Republican candidates. Wrong again. That turned out to be another Democratic mistake that boomeranged.

The remarkable victory of Republican Rudolph Giuliani over incumbent New York Mayor David Dinkins proved that crime is a bigger issue than race. The Democrats tried to play the race card, but it didn't work because crime, regardless of race, is a more powerful issue.

Senator Arlen Specter is currently conducting a traveling roadshow to try to sell the notion that a pro-life position is a loser for Republicans and should be abandoned by the Party. His two forums, held recently in Washington, D.C. and in Chicago under the pretentious masthead of "Republican Majority Coalition," attracted almost no grassroots Republicans, but of course plenty of media coverage.

Senator Specter and company should read the Virginia election returns. The Republican Party would be well advised to nominate candidates whom the media-despised "religious right" will support.