FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: NOVEMBER 20, 1986

WHY REPUBLICANS LOST THE SENATE

No, the 1986 election wasn't a repudiation of Reaganism. Ronald Reagan wasn't on the ballot. No, it wasn't a rejection of tax reform, tax reduction, low inflation, SDI, conservative judicial appointments, or any of the indicia of the Reagan Administration.

The 1986 election was just another example of the political axiom that "all politics is local." The news media worked overtime to make a national election out of what happened on November 4, but in reality it was just a lot of local elections on the same day.

Why was it that so many Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate were defeated, but so many Republican candidates for Governor were elected? No issue distinguished Republican senatorial from gubernatorial candidates.

The winning Governors had the good judgment to welcome local grassroots leaders into their campaigns in order to develop strategy, handle issues and media, and build organization. Most of the losing Republican Senators, on the other hand, rejected this help from local leaders, ignored local party officials, and relied instead on polls, massive fund-raising, and "Spot Wars" on television.

The Republican Senatorial Committee has a mindset that money is the key to winning elections. Whoever has the most money is believed to be able to buy the most television advertising, and therefore woo and win the most voters.

The Republican Senatorial Committee has the most sophisticated and successful fund-raising techniques of any political group raising money today. On top of that, the Committee is able to call on the services of THE single most successful fund-raiser in history, Ronald Reagan, thereby enabling Republican candidates, generally, to spend about twice as much as their Democratic opponents.

The money mindset is false. Campaign money is certainly vital, but it does not assure success even if it is spent wisely. That brings us to the next problem; it wasn't.

Republican Senate campaigns in 1986 were run on a track of polls, media, and television and radio advertising. The conductors of the campaign "engine" were the slick

salesmen who presented themselves as "experts" in the intricacies of the new "campaign technology." Their modus operandi is to try to sell candidates by the same techniques that are used for soap and cereals, namely, market research followed by media advertising.

This is the way the scenario plays out in a Senatorial campaign. A pollster is hired to make an in-depth survey of voters in the state. The pollsters talk to only about 800 voters at most, asking a lot of questions with multiple-choice answers.

The answers are fed into a computer which spits out a hundred pages of percentages, all layered over with the mystique of "computerese" and the pompous but unproven pronouncement that the results "have a plus or minus error factor of three percent." Of course, if the pollsters ask the wrong questions, they will get the wrong answers, no matter how accurate their computer calculations.

The computer printout of the poll then goes into the hands of the high-priced advertising firm which structures the television advertising to pander to the voters' views as identified by the poll percentages. Then starts the expensive roller-coaster ride known as "Spot Wars." One candidate runs a nasty 30- or 60-second TV ad, the other candidate retaliates, and the escalation continues until the election.

Meanwhile, the pollster conducts "tracking polls" to evaluate public reaction to the TV ads, and of course the media consultant and advertising firm recommend that more TV spots are needed. The more TV and radio advertising that is bought, the more money the advertising firm makes, because it gets a percentage of the "media buys" in addition to a consulting fee. This consortium of pollsters, campaign managers, and advertising firms (often all out of state) are usually ignorant of local issues, politics, and people. In 1986 they often alienated local party officials, the very people who delivered the votes so well for the winning Republican Governors.

The high-tech campaign co-opted all the campaign money. What came across on the tube was often completely irrelevant to the candidate and his policies, to the real issues that concern the voters, and to the local organization and volunteers that genuinely wanted the candidate to win.

One hopes that the Republican Senatorial Committee and the remaining Republican Senators learned some lessons from the 1986 election.