The Mourning After The 2002 Election

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Democrats are going through a process of self-flagellation trying to figure out whom to blame for their election-day debacle. Some blame their own lack of a message, some blame candidates' mistakes, some blame fallout from 9/11.
The Democrats are having a hard time dealing with the double Bush victory in Florida after Democratic National Chairman Terry McAuliffe had targeted that state as his priority. Jeb Bush's impressive 13- point margin, combined with Republicans winning a nearly two-thirds majority in both Houses in Tallahassee, wipes out all the sour-grapes whining about George W. Bush's narrow win in 2000.

But leave it to the New York Times op-ed page to come up with the most ridiculous reason why the Democrats lost: Media bias in favor of the right wing!

Paul Krugman's column the day after the election explained it: "Talk radio and Fox News let the hard right get its message out to its supporters."

Krugman must have been reading the New York Times best-seller lists, which reveal the amazing popularity of the books that document the real left-wing bias of the media (Ann Coulter's "Slander," Bernard Goldberg's "Bias," and books by Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity), and figured that the left can use the same message. But Krugman's complaint that "some of the major broadcast media are simply biased in favor of the Republicans" doesn't pass the laugh test.

Krugman's argument reveals his own liberal bias. Note his choice of words that talk radio and Fox News "let" the right get its message out. I thought the purpose of the media is exactly to let candidates get their issues out for the public to decide!

In their search for the cause of their defeats, the Democrats should examine the stranglehold that the feminists exercise over their Party, its candidates and its politicians. EMILY's List, which raises funds only for Democratic pro-abortion feminist candidates, is by far the largest political action committee, and money talks.

The EMILY's List website boasts that Tom Daschle said, "The reason I'm here today as Senate Majority Leader can be said in two words: EMILY's List," and Rep. Nancy Pelosi said, "I know that I would not ... be the Democratic Whip of the House without the work that was done by EMILY's List."

However, EMILY's donations, combined with Hillary Clinton's political contributions, came back to sting Democratic candidates in 2002.

It didn't help EMILY's List candidate Senator Jean Carnahan that she aggressively played the abortion card. Election-day polls conducted by Opinion Dynamics Corporation reported that, after the economy, abortion was the second most important "issue that mattered most" to Missouri voters, and 80 percent of those voted for pro-life Jim Talent.

With big bucks for television ads from NARAL (National Abortion Rights Action League), Tom Strickland expensively advertised his support of abortion during the last weeks of his tight campaign. David Hill's Research Associates of Houston reported that the TV spots were counterproductive and had a "rebound" effect that enhanced pro-life Wayne Allard's unexpectedly strong reelection as Senator from Colorado.

Pro-life conservatives played a huge role in the Republican sweep of Georgia, electing pro-life Saxby Chambliss over a pro-abortion genuine war hero incumbent. Likewise for the stunning election of the first Republican governor in Georgia in 130 years (another pro-lifer), plus taking more congressional seats than anyone anticipated after redistricting was loaded for the Democrats, and the toppling of the longtime Democratic leaders in Georgia's Senate and House.

The other candidate EMILY's List was counting on to play a role in a Democratic Senate next year, Jeanne Shaheen, bit the dust after flaunting her pro-abortion advocacy. It turned out that John Sununu's pro-life position suited New Hampshire voters better after all.

After Paul Wellstone's death opened up Minnesota's seat to Walter Mondale, he tried to show his vigor by telling the voters how pro- abortion he is. Contrary to predictions, his career was ended by pro- life Norm Coleman.

You would think that a Democrat named Shannon O'Brien would coast to easy victory in Massachusetts, even if her style is "unbecoming" (in the tactful word of her opponent). But her extremist pro-abortion positions, including cutting the age of parental consent for abortions to 16, plus rubbing elbows with those well-known advocates of feminist policies Bill Clinton and Ted Kennedy, helped pro-life Republican Mitt Romney win election as Governor.

In one of the most encouraging sidelights of the 2002 election, the media admitted that the Kennedy name helped defeat another EMILY's List favorite hoping to capture a governorship, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend in Maryland. It must be salt in the wounds of the pro- abortion lobby that she didn't even carry a majority of women.

In the U.S. House, the gain of seats by pro-life candidates exceeded even the unprecedented off-year gain in Republican seats.

The Democrats have figured out that they have been on the wrong side of the gun issue and are trying to crawl back toward common sense, but it is unlikely that they can extricate themselves from their fatal embrace with the feminists.