from Phyllis Schlafly

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Lessons of the Elections

Nothing is certain but death and taxes, says the old adage. But political consultants who are mapping strategy for the big presidential election year of 1992 should face up to the new axiom of current politics: Nothing is certain but taxes and abortion.

No doubt the majority of candidates, like Dick Thornburgh, hope that those issues will go away. Some high-priced consultants are advising their candidates not to talk about these controversial issues in the effort to keep them out of the campaign, but that's impossible.

It takes two to tango or to fight, but it only takes one side to create a political issue. The anti-tax movement is on a roll, and the pro-abortionists, in tandem with the media, have made it clear that they will make abortion a front-burner issue in almost every campaign.

One of the big stories of the November 1991 elections was the amazing upset defeat of the school tax increase in a Missouri referendum. It's not the kind of news that the national establishment media like to report, but voters in the Show Me State know that its political effect
is stunning.

This school-tax-reform package had the support of "everybody," including a popular conservative Republican Governor, all the leading public officials and business leaders, and the media, and it was predicted to pass easily. But it was crushed in a two-to-one landslide, and the size of the defeat (622,468 to 303,653) has the politicians shaking in shock.

The anti-tax success in New Jersey was even more dramatic. Before the November election, the Democrats enjoyed comfortable majorities in both the State House and the Senate. The election results gave Republicans a tremendous veto-proof majority in both houses of the Legislature.

The Richard Thornburgh loss in Pennsylvania attracted the most attention in the national news, as indeed it should because Thornburgh's 50-point drop public support over two months is one for the record books. Of course many factors

played a part, but a major one is that Thornburgh, with a reputation as a pro-life Republican, alienated his natural constituencies by refusing to endorse either a tax cut or a pro-life constitutional amendment.

The election for mayor of Dallas was a textbook case in what happens when the feminists play what they think is their “abortion card.” Democratic candidate Kathryn Cain raised this issue through every possible venue with the full support of the media, waging almost a one-issue campaign.

The weekend before the election, Ms. Cain sent a large and slick mailing to Dallas residents with a highly emotional pro-abortion-choice appeal, mercilessly attacking her opponent's pro-life position. When the votes were counted, she was defeated two-to-one by Steve Bartlett, a former Republican Congressman with a consistent pro-life record who had resigned from Congress to run for mayor of that big Democratic city.

The referendum in Washington State on a proposition to make abortion permanently legal after Roe v. Wade is overturned was another upset defeat for the pro-abortion-choice faction. Washington State had legalized abortion even before Roe v. Wade and was considered safe hunting grounds for any pro-abortion vote.

The abortion proposition was defeated in 31 out of 39 counties, carrying only in the Seattle area. As this is being written, the statewide result is not final and there may have to be a recount. A 50-50 “draw” in what was conceded by all to be a sure pro-abortion state amounts to a tremendous defeat for the abortion cause and all the prominent abortion advocates (including Geraldine Ferraro, Gloria Steinem and Faye Wattleton) who trekked to Washington to sell the proposition.

Coming up within a few days is the gubernatorial election in Louisiana. Abortion is not an issue between the two finalists in the runoff, but it was a major factor in how Edwin Edwards and David Duke got into the runoff.

The incumbent Governor Buddy Roemer had been a Democratic Congressman with a consistent pro-life record. But when an anti- abortion bill was passed by the Louisiana Legislature, Roemer vetoed it, saying he could not sign any bill prohibiting abortion unless it had exceptions for rape and incest.

Taking the Governor at his word, the Louisiana Legislature then passed another bill prohibiting abortion but allowing exceptions for rape and incest. Roemer vetoed that bill, too, and the legislature overrode his veto.

The pro-lifers were very angry. Their votes were dispersed among Clyde Holloway, Edwin Edwards, David Duke, and none of the above. Roemer ran third; he fell seven percentage points short of enough votes to make the runoff.

If Governor Roemer had signed a pro-life bill, there is no doubt he would have made the runoff. And if he had made the runoff, he would certainly have been reelected Governor against either Edwards or Duke.

The 1991 elections teach the clear lessons that (a) there is no way to avoid the abortion issue, and (b) a pro-life candidate who flip-flops or waffles on that position commits political suicide.