Where Did the Reagan Votes Go in the 2008 Election?

by Phyllis Schlafly November 21, 2008

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Where did the super majority of votes gathered by Ronald Reagan in his Presidential campaigns go in 2008? Can they be reclaimed by future Republican candidates?

Reagan's 1980 and 1984 victories were based on a coalition of three different groups. He attracted the fiscal-integrity/limited-government conservatives who had not given up since Barry Goldwater's campaign, the social conservatives who newly came into the political process to be active against the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion, and the Reagan Democrats (mostly blue-collar, Catholic and/or Irish) who sought a change from the stagflation of the Jimmy Carter years.

In 2008, the first two groups shrank because of lessened enthusiasm for the Republican candidate. Sarah Palin brought new life to the Party, but it wasn't enough.

The Reagan Democrats were the biggest loss to Republicans when the number-one issue turned out to be the economy and the loss of good jobs. A New York Times headline gleefully proclaimed: "Goodbye Reagan Democrats."

That's why Barack Obama carried Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. John McCain got 300,000 fewer votes in Ohio than George W. Bush got in 2004.

The marriage amendment in Ohio won big in 2004, carrying Bush to victory in what turned out to be the crucial state. In 2008, there was no overriding social issue, so the Reagan Democrats returned to their comfort zone in the Democratic Party.

Neither Democrats nor Republicans offered any good solution to the challenge of a depressed economy, but John McCain was particularly insensitive. In the presidential TV debates before the Michigan primary, he brushed off economic questions by pontificating that manufacturing jobs are gone forever and workers should go to a community college and get retrained.

He repeatedly reminded voters that he is the "biggest free-trader" they'll ever meet, a line that may resonate with a few libertarian think tanks but is a poke in the eye to blue-collar guys whose jobs have gone overseas to Chinese working for 30 cents an hour.

McCain could have called for a level playing field for international trade, such as by changing the discriminatory trade agreements that allow foreign countries to replace their tariffs with a Value Added Tax of a comparable percentage, or by repudiating the World Trade Organization, which has ruled against the U.S. in 40 out of 47 cases. But he didn't.

McCain did a lot of railing against earmarks (not a big issue with the voters), but he didn't criticize the political PAC contributions and high-paid lobbyists who promote policies that advantage the multinationals at the expense of manufacturing jobs and small business. Then McCain joined Obama in endorsing the bailout of the big firms at the expense of the taxpayers.

Obama didn't have any solution to these problems, but the Reagan Democrats needed a reason to vote Republican and they didn't get it.

The young people who voted 2-to-1 for Obama were another group that Republicans lost in 2008. They are the generation that has come out of the public schools since they have been teaching political correctness, multiculturalism, diversity, William Ayers-style "social-justice," self-esteem and other nonsense instead of reading, math, and American history.

It's time for the conservative movement to restore parents' rights over public-school curriculum and not leave it up to the anti-parent, pro-diversity policies endorsed by the National Education Association.

The third group that Republicans lost in 2008 was unmarried women. By a colossal 40+ point spread, unmarried women voted for Barack Obama by 70-to-29 percent.

One explanation is economic: the women who cast off husbands look to Big Brother Government to support them. They vote for the party that promises more benefits from the Welfare State.

The other explanation is social: the feminists have carried on a 40-year campaign to destroy marriage and what they deride as the patriarchy. They want to replace it with a matriarchy.

In the 1970s, the feminists achieved unilateral divorce-on-demand from state legislatures, unilateral abortion-on-demand from the courts, and unilateral control over children in the welfare class by taxpayer handouts to women that made husbands and fathers unnecessary.

The feminists have continued their campaign against marriage through Joe Biden's favorite legislation, the Violence Against Women Act, which provides a billion dollars a year to feminist centers to promote divorce and oppose reconciliation. VAWA is based on feminist ideology that women are naturally victims entitled to tax-paid legal and financial assistance while men are naturally batterers who are not entitled even to due process protections.

The United States today has 24 million children growing up in a household without their own father, and 17 million of those are in mother-headed households. Why is anybody surprised that the dissolution of marriage, depriving kids of their own fathers, and the widespread acceptance of matriarchy, produces eager supporters of Obama's promise to "spread the wealth around"?

If Republicans want to win future elections, they will have to field candidates who defend U.S. jobs, parents' rights in public schools, and the institution of marriage.