

**THE BLOG**

The Bumminess of the Bums

By Marty Kaplan

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As the battle over the election narrative rages, the MSM will, as usual, give disproportionate airtime to the far right's attempts to spin this story.

Already Tom DeLay has been all over the place saying it wasn't about corruption (because everybody does it); Tom Reynolds has been telling anyone who'll listen that it was 435 separate races, and not a wave of revulsion; the usual clowns have been bloviating that the newly-elected Democrats aren't really Democrats because they're centrists, and that Nancy Pelosi had better break with her San Francisco base (nudge nudge, wink wink) and get with the DLC triangulation program.

No matter that Bush, Rove and Mehlman turn out empirically to be the opposite of geniuses — their media enablers are so practiced at declaring black to be white that denial, stenography and ersatz balance have practically become journalistic norms. That's what makes the blogosphere's distribution of counter-narratives so disconcerting to conventional wisdom, and such a useful reality check.

There were not 435 separate races. When there are, 99 percent of incumbents win. That did not happen this year. Bums were thrown out because they were bums. Their bumminess consisted of their corruption, their slavishness to the extreme right and their Rovian rubberstampery.

The center is not where the Republican Party has been, and not where they have moved it. The center is not the average of Orrin Hatch and Hillary Clinton. The center is not Joe Lieberman. The center is where most of the country actually is, right now. Don't listen to the gasbags and the losers. Look at the exit polls.

The center is opposition to Bush Iraq policy, opposition to Bush dismantling Social Security, opposition to Republican earmarking, opposition to the Bush transfer of wealth from the middle to the top, opposition to the politicization of science, opposition to wedge-issue culture wars. The center's platform is accountability, competence, pay-as-you-go, constitutional civil liberties, affordable health care, living wages, a planet that's not dying, and a response to terrorism that doesn't create more of it.

I wouldn't be surprised if many of the bums just thrown out are already in conversation with the networks about their new gigs as commentators. To the spincentric media, there's nothing sacred about reality; there's nothing Democrats

can say or do that a little Rick Santorum can't reframe and demonize. Compared to the struggle over the meaning of victory, winning may turn out to be the easy part.

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