

**THE BLOG****The “Suck” in “Thumbsucker”**

By Marty Kaplan

12/29/2005 10:33 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

It's end-of-year thumbsucker season at the Washington Post, and the White House has graciously thrown some freshly-spun talking points to the unlucky reporters who actually have to work this week.

Packaged by the Post under the headline “Bush Team Rethinks Its Plan for Recovery,” the Republican PR offensive it summarizes reminds me of a saying in Hollywood: “You’re either in denial, or in recovery.” Rove & Co clearly want us to believe that W’s denial bubble was *so* 2005. It’s the Beltway equivalent of announcing you’re checking in to the Betty Ford Center.

Since some of the Post piece is encrypted in leakspeak, here’s a decoded guide to the key points:

“[A]ccording to Republican strategists... [t]he public wants a balanced appraisal of what is happening on the battlefield as well as pledges of victory.”

Translation: Your lies will be way more believable when you toss in a little bit of truthiness.

“Writing off 30 percent or more of the public as adamantly against the war, his advisers focused on winning back a similar-size group that had soured on Iraq but, they believed, wanted to be convinced victory was possible.”

Translation: Size *doesn't* matter. If you hate homos, Darwin or *Roe*, even if there’s only 30 percent of you, you get the full pander. On the other hand, if you’re pissed about those WMD and Saddam/AQ lies, it doesn’t matter how many of you there are to tell you to go Cheney yourself.

“The humility theme was woven into speeches, often in the first two minutes to keep viewers from turning away.”

Translation: The problem with Poppy’s “Message: I care” message: Wasn’t *woven*. Wasn’t *prompt*.

“The idea, one senior official said, was like fighting with a spouse: ‘You need to give voice to their concern.’”

Translation: Bush men are from Mars. Girly-men are from Planet Gullible.

“‘The lesson from this year,’ said Grover G. Norquist, a GOP activist close to Rove, ‘is you cannot do anything dramatic unless you have 60 votes’ in the Senate, where Republicans are five shy of the count needed to break a filibuster.”

Translation: Frist can't count. (He's not much of a doc, either, but that's another story.)

"Bush...has been reluctant to look outside his inner circle for advice, and even some closest to Bush call that a mistake because aides have given up trying to get him to do things they know he would reject."

Translation: Extortion. Every Republican lobbyist and strategist-wannabe in town is gonna keep bad-mouthing you to the press unless Rove returns their calls and tells them how big and wise they are.

"We view this as not mission accomplished,' one top aide said. 'It's going to need to be sustained.'

Translation: That idiotic sign on the battleship wasn't *my* idea.

Holy New Year, everyone.

Translation: Happy New Year (and screw those damn liberal secularists).

**Follow Marty Kaplan on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/martykaplan](http://www.twitter.com/martykaplan)**

*Do you have information you want to share with HuffPost? Here's how.*



**Marty Kaplan** 

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director