

Craven Caving by Dan Jacoby

Yesterday, Congressional Democrats formally surrendered their hard-won initiative to George W. Bush. Take cover, for the fallout could hit anywhere.

Congress passed supplemental funding for the continued occupation of Iraq without any kind of provision for withdrawing our troops – ever. To their credit, most House Democrats voted against the bill. Most Senate Democrats, however, chose not to stand up and be counted; two-thirds of them voted to give Bush exactly what he wanted.

Meanwhile, Democratic leaders also surrendered the high ground on ethics, dramatically watering down a lobbying reform bill en route to final passage. Gone is the provision delaying the “revolving door” from working for Congress or the White House to lobbying Congress or the White House. Also gone are disclosure requirements for lobbyists who went through that revolving door.

Apparently, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid have forgotten how they came to power.

Last November, voters made it clear what they wanted. First, they wanted us to get out of Iraq as quickly as possible. Second, they wanted Congress, as Pelosi so elegantly put it, to “drain the swamp.” To that end, they put their trust in Democrats, hoping that Democratic leadership would get us out of the mess that Republicans got us into.

Now we find out, in one fateful day, that Democratic leaders have no intention of doing what they were put in power to do. Instead, they have taken the coward’s way out. They failed to stand up to a president whose poll numbers are lower than ever. They failed to stand up to lobbyists (many of whom are their old friends). They failed utterly, miserably, pathetically, and without even a shred of hope or decency to redeem their acts.

The 2008 election is just around the corner, and for all of the talk of how short voters’ memories are, this disgusting display of dishonor can only portend more rottenness at the zenith of the party power structure. Unless there is a coup d’etat within the Democratic Congressional caucuses, and soon, Republicans will show the fastest, most astounding reversal of fortune in recent memory.

What’s worse than a defeat for Democrats will be a defeat for democracy. If the Bush/Cheney/Rove administration of arrogance is allowed to continue having its way, and then followed by yet another supremely egotistical Republican administration (did someone say, “Giuliani”?), our liberty, and our concomitant American way of life, will be in grave danger.

For the good of the party – for the good of the country – Pelosi, Reid, and the rest of the Democratic “leadership” had better begin to show a collective spine, or they should be removed from leadership roles. They are currently demonstrating only that they are useless, worthless, feeble pretenders to the mantle of power.

Fortunately, there is hope.

Freshman Democrats are already showing they are very upset with the leadership. They are starting to flex their muscles, and are clearly “like greyhounds in the slips, straining upon the start.” It won’t take many more demonstrations of gutlessness on the part of the current leadership to push the newcomers over the edge.

Will Rogers was fond of saying, "I'm not a member of any organized political party, I'm a Democrat." If Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid want to see what happens when what passes for Democratic organization fall completely apart, they should continue down the road they have chosen. But if I may venture a word to the unwise, they should know that they will be the first ones trampled in the chaos.

Meanwhile, unless they learn – oh, so quickly – how to take a stand, the current Democratic "leaders" will find their backs to the wall far sooner than they think.

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