

## **Winning Elections; Losing Americans** **by Dan Jacoby**

Once again today, the Senate failed to pass a measure to bring our troops home and end the occupation of Iraq. This time, Democrats led by Carl Levin and Jack Reed couldn't even muster 50 votes, much less the 60 needed to bring the bill to a final vote, but landed in a 47-47 tie. The constant failure to pick up Republican votes, and the continued refusal of Senate Democrats to seem willing to compromise, might seem like a sign of stubborn weakness matching only a similar set of traits at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. On the other hand...

Could there be a method to this madness?

For a long time political insiders have understood that the easiest way to win an election is to allow your opponents to block a popular initiative and then blame them for the failure. This "failure and blame" strategy was spectacularly employed by Harry Truman to win reelection in 1948 by attacking the "do-nothing Congress."

Now, the Democratic leadership seems willing to adopt a similar strategy. By forcing multiple votes, and losing, on variations of the same theme – withdrawal of occupation forces from Iraq – Democratic leaders in the Senate seem to believe that this will lead to victory in the 2008 elections.

They may be right. The problem is, while a few politicians in Washington are plotting an electoral victory that is far from certain. Americans are being wounded and killed every day in an occupation that gains nothing, produces nothing, and only bleeds us of our money, what's left of our global popularity, and our troops' actual blood.

It's enough to make a loyal, patriotic American retch.

If Democrats wanted to win the next election, and the election after that, and do some good, they could get the job done. All they have to do is put together a group of 41 senators who are willing to force the issue. If those 41 senators refuse to allow passage of the defense appropriations bill without a plan to withdraw from Iraq, Republicans from George W. Bush to John Cornyn, James Inhofe and Mitch McConnell, will be forced to negotiate some sort of plan.

Then Americans in Iraq can start to come home, Democrats can claim the victory they need to win the next election, tens of billions of dollars can be freed up to pay for education, healthcare and true security, and things will finally begin to get better.

All it takes is 41 Democratic senators with a spine, and a leader who is capable of leading. Unfortunately, the Democratic leader in the Senate is Harry Reid, so the chances are many more hundreds – or thousands – of Americans will die.