



Florida House of Representatives

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To: House Republicans

Fr: Adam Hasner

Re: Looking Ahead to 2010- Back to Basics

How's that for Change?

For all the analysis of individual candidate strengths and weaknesses, local issues and campaign tactics, what really changed from November 2008 to November 2009? The economy is still struggling, high unemployment remains in the headlines and there is still real concern for the economic future of our country. What's changed? Voters have now seen the policies that President Obama, Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic Congress are planning to enact.

For those who will say that these elections had nothing to do with President Obama's policies, it is worth pointing out that just four years ago Bob McDonnell and Creigh Deeds opposed each other in the Virginia Attorney General race in which McDonnell won by just over 300 votes- the closest statewide race in Virginia history. Yesterday, Bob McDonnell became Governor-elect by a 58 to 41 percent margin.

Again, what changed? President Obama's policies and a reformed Republican approach.

Voters in Virginia and New Jersey rebuked the Democratic policies of unfettered and unsustainable government spending, Big Labor's card check, cap and trade on energy, and a government takeover of the nation's health care system that Americans believe will cost too much, cover too little and lead to their quality of care being diminished.

It was also a reaffirmation of the core common sense Republican message of lower taxes, less government and personal responsibility. Both of the successful gubernatorial candidates ran as fiscal conservatives who sought to assure voters that their top priority was to create jobs, rein in spending and get their states' economies recharged. Bob McDonnell was unwavering in his focus on that positive message, while his allies at the RNC and RGA made sure that voters knew of Deeds' support for Obama's policies like higher taxes, cap and trade and card check. Chris

Christie focused on New Jersey's property taxes- the highest in the nation- and had a message of real reform in Trenton.

This focus on the economic issues that most concerned voters successfully appealed to independents who came back to the GOP candidates in overwhelming numbers. Just how important was issue discipline and message focus in the shift of independent voters yesterday? **Connecting with independents was worth a 19 point swing to the GOP in New Jersey from 2008 and a stunning 23 point swing in Virginia.**

But change in yesterday's election went beyond independent voters. For all the talk of a new Obama Democratic majority- the new voters, young voters, new suburban Democrats, the so-called surge voters and high percentage minority voters- it did not carry over into this year. Voter intensity was solely on the side of the GOP. While it is too early to make the declaration that the make-up of the 2008 electorate was a one-time phenomena, it is increasingly unlikely that this fragile coalition will turn out for anyone other than Barack Obama.

Finally, for those who will still insist that these elections were unrelated to the President's policies, consider this. For weeks, the White House spin has been that Creigh Deeds was losing Virginia because he did not embrace President Obama enough and that he did not follow the White House's political advice. Two weeks before the election, White House political officials told the *Washington Post* that Deeds had no chance to win because he did not follow the course laid out by the President and Virginia Governor/DNC Chair Tim Kaine.

Yet they can't have it both ways. No one this year embraced President Obama more closely than Jon Corzine- he ran as a "partner" of President Obama, the White House bragged how they had instituted a turnaround in the Corzine campaign this summer, Obama's lead pollster was brought in to reshape the campaign- and Corzine lost as well.

So the options this year for Democratic gubernatorial candidates were: don't follow the advice of the White House and lose, or follow the White House's advice and lose. Sometimes spinning works, but sometimes it just makes you dizzy.

We have long said the GOP resurgence starts in state capitols. The results in Virginia and New Jersey are a promising beginning. Each of you is on the front lines of our parties' efforts. The voters sent a clear message last night: get back to basics, offer common sense solutions and deliver on jobs and the economy.

This election should be a wake-up call to those who are ready to rush headfirst into hasty, unchecked and unsustainable spending programs and bigger government. The bottom line is voters favor candidates who offer common sense solutions and alternatives on the issues that are important to them now over those who simply say no. They want something to vote for, not simply someone to vote against. They want real results and are willing and ready to reject ineffectiveness. Substance is once again more important than style.