



# Quail Creek Republican Club



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## Quail Creek Republicans

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## Quail Creek Republican Club

### President's Message

As we celebrate July 4th and our American freedoms, one of our basic freedoms is under assault: free speech. Democrats are increasingly upset about the popularity and impact of conservative talk radio. The Democrats' solution is not to join the public debate and to discuss their ideas for a better America, but rather to remove conservative talk radio from the airwaves. In a radio interview on WNYC's The Brian Lehrer Show, Senator Kerry said he thought the (Fairness) doctrine (requiring opposing views to be given equal opportunity on the air) should return. Calling it one of the "most profound changes in the balance of the media," he said conservatives have been able to "squeeze down and squeeze out opinion of opposing views. I think it has been a very important transition in the imbalance of our public dialog," he said.

Seems like Senator Kerry is joining with Hugo Chavez of Venezuela to silence their critics in the media; however Kerry's view are shared by Senators Feinstein, Durbin, and Lott (a Republican!!) The success of talk radio is driven by the market place. If folks weren't listening, the sponsors would not buy commercial time and there would be no conservative talk radio. That is pretty simple Economics 101. However, the Democrats' response is that government knows best, which is in reality nothing more than an obvious attempt to quiet citizens who do not agree with them. The success of conservative talk radio is due, in large part, to the rabid and overwhelming liberal bias of the mainstream print and television media. What better way to ensure a complete liberal takeover of the press than by taking a page from the Marxist playbook and eliminate opposing views. Be aware of what is happening and protect your freedoms! In June the QCRs exercised our first amendment rights and we heard from speakers on the immigration issue. The meeting was well attended with nearly forty persons present. While there certainly was not unanimity among the audience, we were polite, listened, asked probing questions, and some of us came away with a better understanding of the issue. This is how free speech works, at least for Republicans. Our next meeting will be Friday, September 21. The speaker has yet to be determined. Have a great 4th of July and a wonderful summer.

John Chernoski, President

## **June News Recap**

### **Bruce Walker - June 3**

Bob Beckel, the Democratic commentator, stated that Thompson is the man that the Democrats fear most.

Two months ago, I wrote an article, The Next Reagan, in which I outlined many of the reasons why Fred Thompson will be the next Ronald

Reagan. Events since then have confirmed my arguments. I predict that Fred Thompson will enter the Republican nomination, that he will win

it fairly easily, and that he will also defeat Hillary comfortably in the presidential election. Why? First, no Republican since Ronald Reagan draws remotely as much genuine enthusiasm among conservatives as a serious presidential candidate. Both of the Bush presidencies have been mild disappointments. Though respect for our current commander-in-chief is

high, President Bush is simply not an effective communicator or articulator of conservative principles. President Bush, however, is

light years ahead of Senator Dole, the 1996 nominee, and also better as a communicator and campaigner than his father. That is how bad

things have been for conservatives since the Gipper left the White House. Fred Thompson, in stark contrast, is a phenomenal communicator.

His background as a film and television star combines perfectly with his background as a very persuasive trial lawyer so that he is not

only comfortable in front of the camera or at the microphone, but his skills in rhetoric are unequaled in any major political figure since

Senator Robert Taft over fifty years ago.

Second, Thompson has always walked the walk on ethical issues. When he was Republican counsel in the Watergate hearings - the same hearings in which

Hillary cut her teeth in politics as a Democrat - Fred Thompson did not tolerate the corruption of the Nixon Administration.

He can effectively point out that both Hillary and he were on the same side in opposing corruption when it was his political party that had

problems. Thompson also, though, was unrelenting in his opposition to the corruption of the Clinton Administration and stood out as the lone

Republican senator with real guts during the impeachment trial of Clinton. The combination of these two principled stands will allow

Thompson to relentlessly condemn Hillary as an accomplice in her husband's thoroughly corrupt eight years in office, to ask her

point-blank about how she became the best investor in America (with no experience), and otherwise to do more than simply suggest that Hillary

is a liar, a hypocrite and a bully.

Third, Thompson would unite the whole leadership of the Republican Party. No one dislikes him and almost everyone likes him. Although

some conservatives may worry about his friendship and past support for John McCain, the critical fact is that friendship is reciprocated:

McCain would be a very active and passionate supporter of Fred Thompson in the presidential election.

Fourth, the rap on Thompson is that he was "lazy" when he was in the Senate. This is precisely the same sort of rap that Leftists made about Ronald Reagan.

In fact, this is a strength. Because Thompson acts from principle, he does not need to engage in the Machiavellian machinations which pass for "work" in Washington. The reality is that it is absurd to consider Thompson, who has worked during his life in more real jobs than almost any politician in Washington and who today stars in two television programs as well as being the substitute for Paul Harvey and a frequent commentator in conservative periodicals as "lazy" at

all. Like Reagan, he probably works harder than anyone in Washington.

Fifth, because he was an extremely popular Tennessee senator, Thompson would completely sweep the South, including problematic states like

Arkansas, Florida and Virginia. Thompson, like Reagan, is one of the few modern candidates who has true regional drawing power. Thompson, though, would run very strongly in swing states outside the South like Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, Oregon and New Hampshire.

Sixth, Thompson cannot be demonized. His whole life has been a study in how the American Dream works. His blue collar background, his constancy of moral purpose, his lack of ambition for power for its own sake, his palpable decency - all of these will make anyone who tries to slime him look awful and any attempt will backfire in sympathetic support for him.

Seventh, because Thompson cannot be hurt in the usual ways that Leftists hurt conservative Republicans, Hillary will have to campaign

him on the issues. This will create an insurmountable problem for her because, like all Leftists, Hillary has no stands on any issues. She just wants power.

Thompson just wants what is best for America. We have our Reagan.

### **Evans-Novak – June 3**

#### **President 2008**

**GOP Debate:** Last night's Republican debate was free of any major gaffes. But the reminders were constant of how and why each of the top three candidates is so unacceptable to Republican voters.

**Former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani:** Giuliani had the strongest performance of the three major candidates. Although it was no fault of his own, a possible divine intervention highlighted once again his inability to keep his story straight on abortion. When he was asked about the topic, lightning actually knocked out his microphone, preventing his answer from being heard. Giuliani was very strong in explaining the complicated topic of health insurance.

**Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.):** McCain preached to the New Hampshire crowd about the need for comprehensive immigration reform, but he was preaching to the opposition and not the choir. He was most moving, however, when he brought up the topic of Hispanic war veterans on the Vietnam Memorial Wall and in Iraq. Responding to criticism that he was too intense in earlier debates, he entered this one by overcompensating, speaking and acting in an extremely sedated fashion.

**Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney:** Pollster Frank Luntz's focus group gave Romney the highest marks, but he did not respond well to clever questioning from Wolf Blitzer about his views on homosexuals in the military. On yet another issue (after abortion and immigration), Romney appears to have moved from one side to the other. He has gotten better each time in talking about his religion, but his refusal to answer a simple question on Iraq was a bit clumsy.

**Former Sen. Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.):** The case for Thompson, we have argued many times, is based on the fact that Republican voters disagree with Giuliani, dislike McCain and distrust Romney. Although he did not appear in the debate, Thompson did appear on Fox News's "Hannity and Colmes" afterward. While endorsing a reversal of Roe v. Wade, Thompson appeared ready to say that he did not approve of criminalizing abortion. Hannity stepped in and interrupted, saving him from a gaffe. Although he still trails in most polls, Thompson now leads in the futures markets, with Giuliani and Romney close behind and McCain a distant fourth place.

**Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee:** Huckabee was roundly appreciated as the rhetorical winner of the debate, and the one with the best jokes in all three debates -- even though no one gives him a chance in the race. His successful performance comes at the expense of Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), who appeals to the same set of social-conservative voters.

**Democratic Debate:** The latest Democratic debate in New Hampshire reflects the present status of the Democratic race:

**Sen. Hillary Clinton (R-N.Y.):** She never looked better physically, and she keeps out of trouble. She is running like a front-runner, rejecting former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards' claim of a "bumper-sticker" War on Terror. She is slow-walking her way toward the nomination, which is often a path leading to defeat. She also is less than pleasant with her stentorian tones -- she shouted through most of the debate, just as she shouted out most of her speech at the Iowa Democratic Hall of Fame Dinner. We find a good deal less certitude in Democratic circles that she will be nominated, but nobody is abandoning her.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.): He is still a little rough around the edges, but getting better. He is smart enough not to attack Clinton in debates, and he is quick enough to ask Edwards where he was on the war issue four and a half years ago. There are a surprisingly large number of Democratic insiders who now believe Obama will be the nominee.

Former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.): He was probably the winner of the New Hampshire debate on style points and dynamism. But the consensus of Democratic insiders is that his sharp criticism of Clinton was an act of desperation that only hurts him. Actually, his strategy is based entirely on winning the Iowa caucuses -- which could happen. Edwards is unlikely to get the labor support he once hoped for, so he needs to look different from Clinton and Obama -- and that is what he did in the debate.

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.): He has pushed himself to the top of the second tier of candidates, though he exceeds even Hillary Clinton on the noise meter. The dramatic high point of the debate was when he called for an expeditionary force to Darfur. If Biden had some funding, he might be a contender.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson: He appeared totally unprepared at the debate. It was a continuation of his disastrous performance on NBC's "Meet the Press" last Sunday -- perhaps the worst performance in the show's history. On "Meet the Press," Richardson had seemed unprepared for host Tim Russert's questions on Iraq, immigration, gun control and his own record, culminating in his declaring he is simultaneously a Red Sox and a Yankee fan. Longtime Richardson-watchers say he has been flying by the seat of his pants his whole career, and this time he crashed and burned.

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.): He still cannot shake off the Senate style of oratory and is fading after early high expectations.

Taxes: Obama, Edwards and Clinton were all willing to admit in debate that they want to raise taxes. This opens up a clear ideological battle over taxes that Democrats have never won in any previous election cycle. Former Vice President Walter Mondale famously tried to shame Ronald Reagan on the issue of taxes, and it did not help his campaign.

Clinton has actually gone further than the others. Little noticed in her May 29 Manchester speech was a call for higher individual tax rates and also higher corporate income tax rates. Giuliani: Giuliani supporters are changing New Jersey's longtime proportional representation rules for allocating national convention delegates to winner-take-all, seeking a coup to give Giuliani all of the state's 52 votes in the February 5 Super Tuesday primary date next year.

1. Under the current rules, each primary voter picks a slate of 16 National Convention delegates -- three from his district and 13 at-large delegates. Giuliani's Jersey coup is engineered by his liberal supporters in the state allied with the conservative David Von Savage, Republican chairman of Cape May County.
2. A June 14 meeting of New Jersey's Republican State Central Committee will determine this outcome. The committee is expected to adopt a February 5 presidential primary procedure giving the first-place district-wide finisher all three delegates in each of the state's 13 House districts, and the statewide leader all 13 at-large delegates. In the past, delegates were divided among candidates according to their share of the vote.
3. Giuliani was stung by a column directed at him by Catholic Bishop of Providence Thomas Tobin, excoriating the candidate for his position on abortion. Tobin compared Giuliani to Pontius Pilate, who allowed Jesus Christ to be crucified even though he did not believe him guilty of any crime. Rhode Island is a thoroughly Blue state, but it could be an easy place for Giuliani to pick up some delegates in case the primary chase is close. Thanks to Rhode Island's heavy Italian population, it is not incredible to imagine Giuliani making some inroads there in a general election and perhaps picking up some key Democratic endorsements.

**London Telegraph – June 18**

**Powell ready to jump on Obama bandwagon**

One has held high office in both the United States armed forces and President George W Bush's Republican administration. The other, a Democrat, is seeking to become America's first black president.

Now Washington is buzzing with talk that Barack Obama, the candidate for the White House, and Colin Powell, the former general and secretary of state, may join forces.

New alliance: Colin Powell, left, has served three Republican presidents, but he is now willing to throw his lot in with Democrat Barack Obama

Last week, Mr Powell revealed that he has been advising the senator from Illinois on foreign policy - provoking a flurry of speculation about the plans and ambitions of both men.

Mr Powell, 70, who left office in January 2005 under a cloud left by the war in Iraq, has served three Republican presidents, but made clear that he is considering backing a Democrat to succeed his former boss, George W Bush. He disclosed that he has twice met Sen. Obama, at the request of the White House hopeful. "I make myself available to talk about foreign policy matters and military matters with whoever wishes to chat with me," Mr Powell said. "I'm going to support the best person that I can find who will lead this country."

He ruled out any speculation that he may seek the vice-presidency. But asked if he would accept another senior post, he said: "I would not rule it out. I am not at all interested in political life if you mean elected political life. But I always keep my eyes open and my ears open to requests for service."

Mr Powell was the first black secretary of state, under the current President Bush. Before that, he served Mr Bush's father as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was national security adviser to President Ronald Reagan.

In 1995, Mr Powell was wooed by senior Democrats as well as Republicans who wanted him to run against Bill Clinton for the presidency in 1996. He eventually ruled it out because his wife did not wish him to become a target for racist assassins. Sen. Obama, 45, has already received unspecified death threats.

Otherwise, they are not obvious partners. Sen. Obama, alone among the Democrat frontrunners, opposed the Iraq war from the start - a war that Mr Powell's now discredited testimony before the United Nations on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programmes is seen to have helped bring about.

A former adviser to President Bill Clinton - whose wife, Hillary, is the other leading Democratic candidate - welcomed Sen. Obama's links with Mr Powell as a sign that he wants to heal the divisions in American society.

Philip Crowley, the director of homeland security at the Centre for American Progress and a former White House special assistant, said: "It's refreshing that we have a candidate that wants to craft a centrist policy that will reach out across party lines."

He added: "Mr Powell is a unique individual. He was chairman of the joint chiefs; he's been national security adviser and the secretary of state, so he's uniquely positioned to look at foreign policy from multiple points of view."

Polls show that while Sen. Clinton has most support from registered Democrat voters, Sen. Obama's appeal is greater than hers among independents, who are expected to hold the key to the election. Opinion appears unusually volatile: a poll of likely primary voters on Friday put Sen. Obama on 32 per cent, only four points behind Sen. Clinton, who last month led by 13 points. Other polls, which have featured more independent voters not certain to vote, have put Sen. Obama level.

In many ways, Mr Powell is closer to Sen. Obama and independent voters than he is to the Republicans. He was also frustrated that his "Powell Doctrine" of military operations - that overwhelming force should be used but only with international support - which he developed after his experiences in Vietnam, was ignored in Iraq. In an interview with the television programme Meet the Press last week, he also distanced himself from President Bush, declaring that he would close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp "this afternoon".

Sen. Clinton still enjoys a lead over Sen. Obama among black voters - though that gap has narrowed - and both candidates have sought to woo prominent blacks. The author Maya Angelou endorsed Sen. Clinton last week.

But her support is concentrated among poor blacks, many of whom are yet to be convinced that Mr Obama - who does not share the slave heritage of most black Americans - is one of their own. He does better with university educated voters, both black and white.

The blogger Too Sense, who writes on racial issues, said: "Powell's meeting with Obama is a brilliant move.

Obama's association with another one-time potential black president, a black man who white America has found so non-threatening that he was held up as a model for 'the rest of us', can only increase his appeal."

**Senator John Kyl**

**Immigration Reform Update - June 19, 2007**

I am writing to follow up my recent letter and provide you with an update regarding the Senate's work on its immigration reform bill.

On June 7, the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Harry Reid, twice moved to end debate on the bill and proceed to a vote on it. I voted against the motion both times, recognizing that a number of our conservative Senators still had amendments they wished to offer.

Senator Reid has since agreed to bring the bill back to the Senate floor in the near future. When the Senate returns to the bill, it is expected to consider more than 20 additional amendments from both Republicans and Democrats, including an amendment I am drafting with Senator Lindsey Graham to substantially strengthen enforcement capabilities.

Few issues have generated the volume of calls, letters, and faxes to Senate offices as the immigration bill. The extended time for debate, coupled with the intense scrutiny that the legislation has received from the American people and the media, has helped to identify ways that the bill could be improved. And in response to concerns that our constituents have raised, Senators have already adopted a series of amendments – and additional amendments are on track to be approved when we return to the bill.

For example, during the course of the two-week Senate debate that has already occurred, we approved amendments to:

- \*Declare English the national language of the United States, provide that English
- \* is the default language for government communication, and stipulate that no person has a right to have the government communicate in any language other than English unless specifically stated in applicable law (adopted 64 to 35);
- \* Eliminate Earned Income Tax Credit benefits to Y or Z visa holders, unless and until they become legal permanent residents (adopted 56 to 41);
- \*Enhance the border security and enforcement triggers in the bill, increasing the number of Border Patrol agents from 18,000 in the base bill to 20,000, the number of vehicle barriers along the border from 200 miles to 300 miles, and the number of detention beds from 27,500 to 31,500 (adopted by voice vote);
- \* Prohibit Social Security benefits based on earnings from illegal employment (adopted by voice vote);
- \* Clarify that the revocation of an alien's visa or other documents is not subject to judicial review (adopted by unanimous consent);
- \* Provide minimum sentences for aliens who reenter the United States after removal (adopted by unanimous consent and express the sense of the Senate that undocumented immigrants receiving legal status must pay back taxes (adopted by unanimous consent).

Additional amendments are on track to be approved:

- \* Many people have rightly criticized a provision of the bill requiring that a background check be completed within 24 hours for those seeking probationary status, a requirement that would be difficult, if not impossible, to meet. I anticipate that an amendment will be adopted when we return to the bill to eliminate the 24-hour requirement and ensure that probationary status is not granted until a background check is completed, no matter how long that takes.
- \*To counter concerns that visitors will continue to overstay their visas, we'll adopt an amendment to increase mandatory minimum sentences for people who do so.
- \* And, perhaps most importantly, in response to concerns that the President and Congress will not fulfill all of the promises of improved enforcement made
- \* in the bill, the bill will include an advance appropriation of \$4.4 billion – an unprecedented step – to fund the next five years' worth of critical border enforcement efforts.

Besides fighting to ensure that the resources are made available to enforce the law, I intend to pursue vigorous oversight to hold this administration's (and the next administration's) feet to the fire so that promises made are promises kept.

As I said in my previous correspondence, the reform bill is not what I would have written if I could have written it on my own, but it represents the first strong, bipartisan consensus for enforcing our laws and securing the border in a long time. Much of the existing law, enacted in 1986, is unenforceable – especially the requirement that employers verify eligibility for employment. To cite just one problem, employers have to rely on documents that are easily counterfeited. So it is not enough just to say “enforce the law” – existing law needs to be strengthened.

While I agree with many who say we should focus first on enforcement, the reality is that Republicans no longer control the House or Senate, and the chances that Democrats would allow an enforcement-only bill to be considered, let alone pass, are slim to none.

Some suggest delaying action altogether so that we can take our case to the American people and let them decide at the next election. But immigration won't be the only issue voters consider, and it is certainly possible that Democrats will not only retain control of the House and Senate, but win the White House as well. And you can bet that the conservative gains we've made in the current reform bill – significant new resources to secure the border and enforce the law in the interior, including at the workplace; the use of triggers to require that these enforcement resources are in place before other parts of the bill are implemented; an end to chain migration; and a temporary worker program that is truly temporary – would be lost with Democrats dominating Congress and the presidency. Still others argue that no bill is better than this immigration bill. That's a hard argument to make when illegal immigrants (over 10 percent criminals) continue to pour across our borders, burdening our schools, hospitals, and judicial systems, and crime and violence are rampant. Moreover, doing nothing really equates to silent amnesty for those who are here illegally.

Arizona is suffering because of illegal immigration. Every day that we delay action, an estimated 5,000 new illegal immigrants cross over our borders. Every day the situation continues to get worse, and something has to be done about it. Doing nothing is not an option. Existing law is not enforceable (employee work eligibility requirements, as I said, are a joke) – so, only by passing a new law that is enforceable can we end illegal immigration. For further information, you may wish to review an op-ed I wrote for the Arizona Republic further explaining the status of the bill, a column from the Weekly Standard, as well as a list of 10 key reforms included in the legislation. There is no political benefit to what I've tried to accomplish, only political criticism. There is only one reason to do what I am trying to do here, and that is to solve a very serious problem – with serious repercussions for Arizona – in a way that helps restore confidence in our government and respect for the rule of law.

Please let me know if you have any comments or questions, or if you would like further updates on the status of the reform bill. Your support is important to me, and I will continue to work hard to earn it.

### **Chicago Tribune – June 21**

#### **Democrats promised way more than they've delivered so far**

In the heat of their successful campaign last year to retake the House and Senate, Democrats made voters promise after promise.

They promised to end the war in Iraq. They promised to expand federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. They promised to lower prescription drug prices for seniors and raise the minimum wage.

But six months after taking over Congress, Democrats find they have accomplished little of their agenda. Perhaps not coincidentally, Congress' job approval rating has reached a dramatic low, tumbling 13 points since February to 24 percent, according to the Gallup Poll.

Republicans, damaged by a faltering war in Iraq, corruption scandals and a politically weakened President Bush, happily cite such figures to argue that the Democrats are incapable of governing. "The American people are smart enough to know when they've been had," said Ken Spain, spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, which seeks to elect Republicans to the House.

Democrats are scrambling to find a way to explain to voters, and themselves, why they have accomplished just one of their heralded objectives - raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. The high-profile failure to strike agreement on immigration reform has added to the public's discontent, and on Thursday the Senate was struggling to rescue a much-touted energy bill.

If they can't reverse the trend, some Democrats are starting to worry, their majority could be short-lived. This week, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) reviewed the grim polling data for his Democratic colleagues during a senators-only lunch. Similarly, House Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.) shared his view of the polls in a closed-door meeting with Democratic representatives.

Durbin's explanation for the Democrats' plight is that Republicans, in Congress and the White House, are blocking Democrats at every turn. And without bigger majorities in Congress—and perhaps the presidency as well—there is little they can do.

Democrats, after all, count on a slim 51-49 advantage in the Senate and a 15-vote majority in the House. Just this week, Bush highlighted Democratic frustrations by vetoing a stem cell research bill that had passed both houses by comfortable—though not veto-proof—majorities.

"For many people on the outside, they were expecting dramatic change," said Durbin. "Unfortunately, we don't have a dramatic majority."

While there is still time for the Democrats to push through additional measures, it will only get harder as the months drag on and the presidential campaign heats up even further.

Many voters in particular hoped a new Congress would make substantial changes in the Iraq war and begin bringing American troops home. Congress' inability to do that so far may be the biggest factor in the public's disenchantment.

Each month, the Gallup poll asks voters what should be the highest priority for the president and Congress. More than 70 percent cite the war.

"There has been no meaningful action on Iraq. And that's what people want," said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of the non-partisan Gallup poll.

Despite months of tough talk on the House and Senate floors, Democrats have achieved little on the war other than giving the president additional billions to fund it. Durbin called the polling data troubling, and said Democrats need to show voters they are trying hard to effect change.

"We have to let them know we have done everything in our power to bring the troops home and have run into a roadblock with the Republicans in Congress and the Bush White House," Durbin said.

In addition to his stem cell veto, Bush also has rejected a bill to tie war funding to a requirement that he begin withdrawing troops as early as July. Again, Democrats did not have the votes to override.

Republicans also blocked Democratic efforts in the Senate to require that Medicare negotiate with drug companies to provide lower cost prescriptions for senior citizens.

To Sen. John Ensign (R-Nev.), chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the polls are proof that the Democrats have failed.

"The Democrats were given an opportunity to see what they could do, and they aren't making good use of that opportunity," Ensign said. "They railed on us for not working across party lines, but they're trying to ramrod things down the minority's throat."

Democrats say they must convince voters that what they need is more Democrats. The Senate, in particular, requires 60 votes to get anything of importance accomplished, and the Democrats are short by nine votes.

"In the next election, people will judge whether they want a return to the Bush agenda or more troops to help us fight our battles," Durbin said.

Emanuel insisted the Democrats are better positioned than Republicans for 2008 because they are on the right side of many issues and the public will see they are working to make progress. In addition to efforts to end the Iraq war, Emanuel cited the minimum wage hike and House passage of large increases in veterans' health funds and college education assistance.

Emanuel also pointed out that 72 percent of people think the country is headed in the wrong direction and the president's approval rating is only marginally better than that of Congress. That means voters are broadly unhappy with the country's course, Emanuel said, not mad at congressional Democrats in particular.

Republicans mocked such explanations, saying they echoed their own rationalizations before last November's rout.

"Wow, does that sound like the Republican leadership last year or what?" marveled David Winston, a Republican pollster. "When you have a general mood that Congress isn't doing well, whoever is in the leadership position pays a price for it."

But Geoff Garin, a Democratic pollster, said it is more important to measure where Democrats stand versus Republicans than to look at the Democrats' job approval in a vacuum or count the number of bills that get signed into law. "Voters are smart enough to know that Democrats can't do it by themselves," Garin said. "They like the Republicans even less."

Rep. Ray LaHood (R-Ill.) said he believes that voters are just plain mad - about high gasoline prices, the lack of border security and the Iraq war.

"I don't know if it would be different if we were in the majority," said LaHood. "We didn't deal with immigration reform, we've continued to go along with what the president wanted on the Iraq war, which is what the Democratic majority has had to do, and when we were in the majority we didn't bring down gasoline prices."

Congress, he said, is an easy target for an impatient public.

"I think the American public is mad at all of us," said LaHood, "Republicans and Democrats."

