

# Democratic National Committee 'threw' Congressional elections to the GOP

by Jeffrey Steinberg

It took a concerted effort by Republican Party "moles" inside the upper echelons of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Clinton re-election campaign, to deliver control of the 105th Congress to the Republicans. This is the unavoidable conclusion drawn by *EIR* researchers, based on interviews with leading Democratic Party officials from all over the United States, and a detailed analysis of the final results of the Nov. 5, 1996 elections.

Not only did the DNC abandon 63% of the Democratic Congressional nominees—failing to provide either campaign funds or get-out-the-vote resources to nearly 300 out of a total of 435 Democratic Congressional candidates. In some instances, high-ranking state and national Democratic Party officials actually campaigned for Republican candidates!

The most egregious case of this perfidy was in Arizona, where LaRouche Democrat María Elena Milton, with the backing of organized labor and senior citizens groups, won 34% of the vote against incumbent Rep. John Shadegg, chairman of Newt Gingrich's GOPAC political action committee. The chairman of the state Democratic Party organized a group called "Democrats for Shadegg," and helped finance Milton's defeat. As you will read below, in a number of Congressional Districts all across the South, state and national Democratic Party leaders campaigned *against* Afro-American Democrats—including at least one incumbent.

The legacy of departing DNC Chairman Donald Fowler, and President Clinton's discredited campaign "guru" and self-confessed GOP mole, Dick Morris, is that, by a margin of fewer than 11,000 votes, the Democratic Party lost the opportunity to take back control over the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), the general chairman of the Democratic Party, acknowledged a day after the elections that the Republicans had outspent the Democrats by \$150 million. Yet, Democratic Party sources have told *EIR* that, on Election Day, the DNC had \$64 million—unspent—in its coffers. These sources estimate that, had half of those funds been released for get-out-the-vote operations, the Democratic Party would have swept into control of the Congress, and President Clinton would have been freed, during his second term, from the stranglehold of Newt Gingrich and company.

The failure to do this, was reflected in the low voter turn-

out. According to political analyst Curtis B. Gans, the director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, "GOTV no longer means 'get out the vote.' It now means Go TV." Gans lamented that the percentage of eligible voters who actually voted on Nov. 5 was the lowest since 1924, and the second lowest since 1824. "The reason that the record sums of money poured into this year's election produced a near record low turnout was that the overwhelming majority of this money was plowed into television advertising which, for one to two hours a day on every broadcast outlet, tells us how awful our choices are and why we shouldn't vote for them."

## Battle of the pollsters

One consequence of the treachery by the DNC and the Dick Morris crew, is that a policy brawl is raging inside the Democratic Party, over the issue that Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Lyndon LaRouche both raised, following the 1994 Republican sweep of the mid-term elections, and which came back with a vengeance in 1996: The American people *do not* need or want two Republican parties.

The first signs of this renewed battle appeared on the front page of the Nov. 21, 1996 *Washington Post*, under the headline, "Split of Clinton Pollsters Reflects Party Debate." The article reported on two different post-election evaluations, produced by two leading Democratic Party pollsters, Stan Greenberg and Mark Penn. Greenberg was the chief pollster for President Clinton's 1992 campaign against George Bush. Penn, along with his partner, Doug Schoen—both protégés of Dick Morris—handled polling for President Clinton's 1996 campaign against Bob Dole.

By Greenberg's well-documented account, the increase in President Clinton's vote, between 1992 (43%) and 1996 (49%), was from non-college-educated, lower- and middle-income families and other traditional Democratic Party voters—not from Republican voters attracted to President Clinton's appeasement of Congressional conservatives. A press release by a new Democratic Party- and labor-linked political group, Campaign for America's Future, described the results of the Greenberg poll:

"The poll found strong support for the idea that voters were rejecting the extremes of the Newt Gingrich conservative revolution. . . . The poll finds that voters define the new

'center' that won the election for Clinton and many Democrats to mean a staunch support for Medicare and Social Security, increased spending on education, jobs and new technologies, and strong government regulation to get private corporations to support families, increase wages, stop jobs losses due to trade, and prevent destruction of the environment. . . . The voters defeated enough Republicans to blunt the Gingrich revolution and point the way back for Democrats."

The Greenberg poll also found that 70% of the public would support "creating U.S. bonds to increase our investment in public infrastructure, and almost two-thirds of the public would raise taxes on the wealthy and corporations to increase spending on domestic programs, like education."

By contrast, Mark Penn, in his post-election survey, claimed that "Clinton won the election because on every issue that the Republicans hoped to dominate—balancing the budget, welfare, crime, immigration, and taxes—Clinton staked out a strong centrist position early on. . . . Unlike President Clinton, whom voters perceive as a 'new' or centrist Democrat, Congressional Democrats are perceived as still clinging to old-style liberalism."

But, a careful review of the Penn poll, which was commissioned by the Democratic Leadership Council, shows that almost all of the questions were skewed to produce results justifying the Morris/Fowler sabotage. Even Penn, however, had to admit that, contrary to his own claims, only 9% of the voters polled indicated that they considered a balanced budget their top priority.

### **The sabotage pattern**

The inside sabotage of the Democratic Party's drive to retake the Congress began early in the 1996 election campaign, before the first primary votes were cast. Last year, a group of urban political leaders created CityVote, an alliance aimed at rekindling urban voter involvement and clout in the 1996 elections. CityVote staged a series of Presidential candidates debates in cities, small and large, all across the United States. Lyndon LaRouche was one of the few candidates who actively participated in those debates, after senior officials of the DNC and the Clinton campaign decided to boycott, and, eventually, sabotage the CityVote effort. As a consequence, there was no significant mobilization of urban voters, a traditional Democratic Party stronghold. When President Clinton capitulated to pressure from Morris and others (apparently including Vice President Al Gore), and signed the draconian welfare bill, this turned away many urban voters, particularly among minorities.

At the beginning of the year, a group of senior Senate and House Democrats launched a drive to define the decline in real wages and living standards for working households as a crucial policy issue. Sen. Jeff Bingaman (N.M.), Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (S.D.), Senator Kennedy, and House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (Mo.), among others, released a series of policy studies advocating an overhaul

of the corporate tax codes, to provide incentives to corporations that invest in education, decent wage and benefit packages, and investment in research and development.

Through Labor Secretary Robert Reich, President Clinton had, at the beginning of the year, signalled that he was sympathetic to some of the ideas being put forward. Lyndon LaRouche, Clinton's only challenger for the Democratic Presidential nomination, had thrown his support behind the Daschle-Bingaman-Kennedy-Gephardt initiatives, which were, in fact, based on LaRouche's own 1992 campaign writings on the need to create 6 million new productive jobs, and how to do it.

However, as President Clinton fell further under the sway of Morris, Fowler, et al., the Congressional Democratic Party leadership was told, in no uncertain terms, to drop the issue of wage disparity between working families and the rich—until after the November elections.

The cumulative effect of these rotten compromises with the "Gingrich Democrats," is the failure of the Democratic Party to take control of the Congress.

The same mistake cannot be made again. Lesson to be learned: Where organized labor joined with LaRouche Democrats, senior citizens, and civil rights organizations, to wage war against the conservative revolution, Democrats scored decisive gains. Where Democrats sought to "out-Republican the Republicans," they lost in nearly every instance. As *EIR* researchers Philip Valenti, Rochelle Ascher, Suzanne Rose, and Mark Sonnenblick document below, even where candidates campaigned against Gingrich's Jacobins *without an iota of support from the Democratic Party*, they scored far better than the "pundits" expected.

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## **Pennsylvania state elections**

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### **Hazleton**

The most hotly contested state House race was the 116th district in Hazleton, where Democrat Todd Eachus challenged Republican incumbent Tom Stish.

Stish was the major statewide target of the Democrats and of organized labor. He was elected as a Democrat in 1994, but switched to Republican within two weeks of the election. This betrayal gave the Republicans a 102-101 majority in the House, which allowed Republican control of the legislature. Gov. Tom Ridge (R) would never have been able to pass his killer cuts in medical care, or other parts of his Conservative Revolution agenda, without Stish's back-stabbing.

As of late October, the election was still too close to call. Ridge was personally spending a lot of time and money in the district to back Stish. At that point, LaRouche spokesman Phil Valenti contacted labor and Democratic leaders in Hazleton, who invited LaRouche supporters to come in and organize against Stish and Ridge. Democratic leaders made the LaRouche pamphlet, titled "Impeach Gov. Ridge for Nazi

Crimes Against Humanity,” available at party rallies going into the election, while each union local took several hundred copies to circulate. Volunteers distributed pamphlets door-to-door, with the help of local Democratic committeemen.

Stish conceded defeat less than two hours after the polls closed on Nov. 5.

## Reading

In the 126th legislative district in Reading, veteran Democrat Thomas Caltagirone was on the target list of both the state Republican Party and Newt Gingrich’s GOPAC slush fund. Caltagirone is the Democratic chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and a signer of the Open Letter to President Clinton calling for the exoneration of Lyndon LaRouche.

Republican money poured into the district to pay for a mud-slinging campaign against Caltagirone, including scurrilous allegations involving his former wife. When polls showed the Republican, Robin Costenbader-Jacobson, gaining on the incumbent, Democratic leaders suggested that LaRouche supporters blanket key areas of Reading with the “Impeach Ridge” pamphlet.

Pamphlets and fliers, in both English and Spanish, were delivered door-to-door and store-to-store throughout targeted areas. On the suggestion of one Democratic activist, the shift change at a large manufacturing plant was pamphleted as well, with the local union leader taking 300 copies to circulate among his members. Pamphlets were also going out from Reading Democratic headquarters.

Caltagirone won the election by an almost two-to-one margin, and the role of the “Impeach Ridge” campaign was acknowledged by everyone involved.

## Lancaster

In the 96th District, consisting of the City of Lancaster, Democratic incumbent Michael Sturla was challenged by Republican Ted Darcus, an African-American community activist. Republican money poured into Darcus’s campaign, in an effort to split the Democratic vote.

Here, the “Impeach Ridge” campaign was interjected into the race by a vicious dirty trick against Sturla, apparently engineered by the Republicans. Someone had photocopied parts of the LaRouche-inspired “Impeach Ridge” pamphlet, but added a completely bogus page, falsely accusing Sturla of being a member of the Ku Klux Klan! The bogus page featured a doctored photo of a Klan rally, with Sturla’s face superimposed on the head of a Klan member in a white robe. The bogus pamphlet was circulated widely around town, but especially in the African-American community.

In fact, the genuine “Impeach Ridge” pamphlet contains a photo of Sturla, with a quote from him attacking Ridge’s medical cuts. With over 1.2 million “Impeach Ridge” pamphlets circulating in Pennsylvania, including thousands in Lancaster, someone was evidently trying to confuse things by identifying Sturla with the hated Ridge. Certain Democratic leaders asked LaRouche supporters to set the record straight,

so Lancaster was blanketed with authentic pamphlets in the two weeks before the election.

Sturla was reelected with 57% of the votes, a margin of about 2,000 votes.

## Philadelphia

In the 149th District of Montgomery County in suburban Philadelphia, Republican incumbent Coleen Sheehan was challenged by Democrat Connie Williams, in a very tight election. Both candidates spent over \$100,000, including GOPAC contributions to Sheehan, but the outcome was in doubt up to election night.

Williams was the beneficiary of an active intervention by the “Impeach Ridge” campaign into a close Congressional election in Montgomery County, where Democrat Joe Hoeffle came within 100 votes of ousting Gingrich Republican Jon Fox. Democratic committeemen were organized to circulate “Impeach Ridge” pamphlets into the 149th District, as part of the campaign to defeat Fox. This hurt Sheehan, who had voted with Ridge, including supporting Ridge’s killer cuts in the state medical assistance program.

Williams won the election by 506 votes out of over 26,000 cast.

## Northampton County

In the 183rd District, Democrat Frank Yandrisevits challenged Republican freshman Julie Harhart (Harhart had unseated Yandrisevits in 1994 by only 63 votes). Harhart had voted for Ridge’s killer medical cuts, but the Yandrisevits campaign declined the proposal for a coordinated “Impeach Ridge” organizing blitz into the district.

Yandrisevits lost again, this time by close to 300 votes, out of about 16,000 cast.

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## The South

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The Democratic Party lost 30 Congressional seats in the South in the 1992 and 1994 elections combined, including five candidates who switched and became Republicans after having been elected as Democrats. In the view of many African-American legislators, with even a minimum input from the Democratic National Committee (DNC), many of the Southern states could have gone for Clinton in 1996, and many Congressional seats could have been retaken. According to one member of the Congressional Black Caucus, after the election, the Democratic Party had \$65 million unspent, which could have made a crucial difference in winning a Democratic Congress. Nowhere is that more clear than in the deep South, especially in the Afro-American community.

In November 1995, Arkansas state legislators friendly to the President visited the DNC in Washington, looking for voter registration and “get out the vote” (GOTV) money. They were told that the money would be spent on the convention, period.

Another factor was that the Republican Party spent a fortune financing black Republicans, even where the chance of unseating the incumbent was virtually non-existent. This meant that whatever money was available for Democrats, was spent defending existing Democratic seats. For example, in Mississippi, the Republicans recruited Danny Covington, who was living in Virginia, to move back to Mississippi to run against black incumbent Congressman Benny Thompson (D). The Republicans spent as much money as Thompson, even though he was unheard of, hadn't lived in Mississippi in years, was not even a registered voter until less than a year before the election, didn't live in the district, and may not have even met the residency requirement to run for Congress. He ended up with as much money from the Republicans as Thompson got from Democrats. While no prominent Democrats came in to campaign for Thompson, Gingrich came to the district (the poorest in the nation, with a per capita income of \$10,000) to campaign for Covington. Similarly, in Arkansas, virtually every leading member of the legislative Black Caucus had an extremely well-financed black Republican opponent.

## Mississippi

The Fourth CD was occupied by Mike Parker, elected as a Democrat, who switched to Republican the day after Gov. Kirk Fordice (R) was re-elected in November 1995. The Fourth CD is heavily Democratic, and with the anger at Parker's switching parties and close alliance with Gingrich, this was considered a seat that could definitely be retaken by the Democrats.

The state Democratic Party supported the head of the Jackson City Council in the primary, a white woman, who was challenged by Kevin Antoine, an Afro-American. Despite the city council president receiving \$350,000 from the Democratic Party (whose racist view is that they had to have a white candidate, despite the fact that the district is 40% black), Antoine won the primary overwhelmingly, spending only \$14,000. At that point, the Democratic Party made the decision to throw the race: that they would rather have a white Republican than a black Democrat. Not only did Antoine not get *one dime* from the state party or the DNC, but the Democratic Party did not even endorse him. In the Third CD, the Democratic Party was outspent by nearly two to one, for the Democratic seat vacated by Sonny Montgomery.

In the general election, Parker spent \$235,000, Antoine \$18,000, and yet, with no money and no support from the Democratic Party, Antoine took almost 40% of the vote, indicating he could have won, with serious backing.

Statewide, all requests for voter registration money and GOTV went unanswered. This is a state in which, without any party backing, over 50,000 new voters registered last year, in an attempt to unseat Governor Fordice, and where the Black Caucus and civil rights layers successfully took seven of the eight statewide races (including lieutenant governor)

for the Democrats, added many seats to the Democratic majority in both the state Senate and House, and gave Clinton many more votes than he had in the 1992 election. Had there been a serious voter registration drive and GOTV, Clinton could have carried the state.

Clinton had originally been scheduled as the keynote speaker at the Jefferson-Jackson dinner, the weekend of the state convention. Not only did he not speak, but he did not visit the state even once during the campaign.

## Arkansas

As mentioned, several black legislators reported that they could get no money for voter registration or GOTV, despite their close ties to the President. In the primaries for the state legislative races, the Democratic Party refused to provide funds, even though the Black Caucus members were targeted by well-financed black Republican opponents. The rage against the Democratic Party was so great, that the kind of mobilization necessary in the African-American community to elect a Democrat, did not occur, resulting in Arkansas electing its first Republican senator in almost 100 years.

## Tennessee

A prominent black legislator, who has a very well-organized political machine which has had great success in voter registration and GOTV, was told that if he "jumped through hoops," he could get a measly \$3,400 for GOTV. He refused.

## Georgia and Louisiana

At the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation meeting in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 11-15, two members, Rep. Cleo Fields (D-La.) and Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) detailed the Democratic Party's treason. Fields, who won the Democratic primary in the state's 1995 gubernatorial race, commented to the gathering that after winning the primary, he "couldn't find a Democrat with a search warrant." White Democratic elected officials refused to endorse him. McKinney's campaign manager described how the Georgia Democratic Party spent \$350,000 to unseat her, the incumbent, because, after redistricting reduced the district from 60% to 40% black, the white Democrats were convinced that only a white candidate could win. She won the primary with 67% of the vote, and then, despite dirty tricks by the Anti-Defamation League, won the general election with 58% of the vote.

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## South Dakota: Johnson defeated Pressler

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The hotly contested election campaign for South Dakota's Senate seat between Republican incumbent Larry Pressler and Democrat Tim Johnson, holder of South Dakota's one House seat, resulted in the only defeat of an incumbent

Republican senator in a state where the majority of voters are Republican. The campaign had been bogged down through most of its duration, with warring television ads, as Pressler attacked Johnson for being “too liberal,” and Johnson attacked Pressler for being “out of touch,” and “controlled by special interests.”

Two things happened in September which put a political edge on the race, and gave Johnson a winning margin. This, despite the fact that the Republicans achieved a stronger grip on the statehouse in the election, that Dole carried the state by 46% to 43%, and that the open House seat, formerly held by Johnson, was captured by the Republicans by a sizable margin.

One, was the “LaRouche factor.” Farm activist Ron Wieczorek defined for voters the murderous content of the “Contract on America” policies. Two, was the fight which Johnson put up against Republican thug strategist Arthur Finkelstein. At the point that Johnson decided to conduct a serious fight against Pressler, with real issues on the table, the LaRouche forces were able to shape the battle lines.

South Dakotans had tolerated Pressler through three Senate terms and two House terms, primarily because, though Oxford-educated and trained by Henry Kissinger, he maintained a profile as a local farm boy, and catered to the needs of his constituency. With falling farm prices hitting South Dakota’s beef production, the mainstay of the income in the state, the task of satisfying constituents proved more difficult. For the 1996 race, Pressler hired as campaign strategist, a protégé of mobster Roy Cohn, Art Finkelstein, from the stable of New York Sen. AID’ Amato, who runs the National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. Finkelstein is known for his “hot button” campaigns, in which the opponent is branded as a liberal and savagely done in. Pressler’s farm boy image was shattered when Finkelstein urged Pressler to say that Johnson had spread a false rumor that Pressler was a homosexual. Johnson counterattacked and successfully made Finkelstein himself an issue in the race.

Ron Wieczorek, former independent candidate for Congress (who received 10,000 votes as an independent Democrat running in the 1994 election), and representing Lyndon LaRouche’s FDR-PAC, jumped into the race after Labor Day, and helped to define the political battleground. Wieczorek and other LaRouche associates took the issue of the George Bush’s links to the Contras’ crack cocaine trafficking, to big public events in South Dakota. Wieczorek and others distributed at least 20,000 pieces of literature attacking the murderous policies of the Conservative Revolution. At every public meeting, Wieczorek put forward a resolution calling for a Congressional investigation into the evidence that Bush, while vice president, spearheaded drug-funded covert operations around the globe. The climax of the Wieczorek intervention was the circulation of a leaflet, “Defeat Larry Pressler and the Conservative Revolution—Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush,” at a candidates’ debate on Oct. 22.

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## Connecticut: Democrats could have defeated Johnson

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The *Hartford Courant* was not the only newspaper which went to press on election night with headlines announcing veteran Republican Congresswoman Nancy L. Johnson’s defeat. After tallies switched back and forth on Nov. 6, Johnson emerged re-elected, by just 2,182 votes, for her eighth term. Johnson in 1993 was one of the most powerful opponents of health care reform. Her husband is a wealthy physician and the Hartford insurance industry—one of the few “industries” left in Connecticut—is her biggest financial backer.

As chair of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, Johnson has charge of investigations into allegations of ethics violations against Speaker Newt Gingrich. She ran a masterful stalling action until after the 1994 elections. Then, she dropped all but one set of charges against Gingrich. These charges involve using a tax-deductible educational foundation for political purposes and prevaricating to the Ethics Committee about it. Only under a daily barrage from Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich.) did she appoint an outside counsel to investigate. She blocked publication of the counsel’s report until after the elections. Her defeat would have put Gingrich on thin ice. Koskoff pounded Gingrich incessantly during her campaign.

In her concession speech, Koskoff declared, “The closeness of the results is testimony to the power of our message, our attempt to get the truth out about the so-called Republican Revolution, and the effects which that revolution would have had on the people of this district: destructive cuts and changes to Medicare, Medicaid, and education.”

All that Koskoff lacked was money, according to the candidate herself and other sources. Johnson was able to spend three times Koskoff’s \$250,000. State Democratic Chairman Edward L. Marcus commented, “Another \$100,000 and she would have easily won. . . . Unfortunately, Charlotte did not have the resources to get on TV. If she had, Nancy Johnson would have been history.” Her press secretary confirmed to *EIR* that she had, for over a year, explained to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee how her race could be won, but she never got a penny from the national party until shortly before the election.

Even when Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, the party’s co-chair, witnessed the outpouring of support for her from seniors while campaigning for her in Bristol on Oct. 24, “he stopped short of committing more funds on the non-targeted race,” the *Courant* reported. The weekly *Roll Call* also noted, “Koskoff was given little chance to win, and her campaign was virtually ignored by her own party.”

Koskoff outpolled the President in eight of the biggest formerly industrial towns in her district, including Johnson’s home base of New Britain.