

Mid-term elections: President Clinton has no more excuses

by Debra Hanania Freeman

Over Labor Day weekend, as the most intense period leading to the November general elections was getting into gear, things were looking very bad. The assault on the Presidency had intensified way beyond what anyone, either inside or outside Washington, had anticipated.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), long considered an ally of the President, had just delivered a vicious personal attack on the President on the floor of the U.S. Senate. The speech was given live national coverage. Within hours, leading Democrats, including House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (Mo.), Sens. Daniel Moynihan (N.Y.) and Robert Kerrey (Neb.), and another so-called "friend" of the President, Rep. Jim Moran (Va.), joined Lieberman in his treachery. Maryland's Democratic Gov. Parris Glendening, who was involved in a tough reelection campaign, announced that he was withdrawing an invitation he had extended to the President to come to Maryland. Rumors were flying that a high-level delegation of Democrats was preparing to visit the White House to urge President Clinton to resign "for the good of the Democratic Party."

Jump ahead to Nov. 3, Election Day. Despite two months of increasingly arrogant assertions by Republican leaders that the elections were sure to increase the Republican majority in both houses of the Congress by wide margins, early returns indicated that nothing of the sort was occurring. When the dust settled, and the final returns were tallied, the results seemed startling. With the entire House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate, and 36 gubernatorial seats up for grabs, not only did the Republicans make no significant gains, but they suffered some important losses.

The partisan breakdown in the Senate of 55 Republicans and 45 Democrats was unchanged. And, while Gingrich had bragged that Republicans would substantially widen their fragile 11-seat edge in the House, Democrats defied months

of dire predictions and picked up at least five seats. But, of far greater significance than those discrete numbers, Democratic candidates won impressive victories in what were considered crucial races around the country.

Gray Davis, the Lieutenant Governor of California, defeated Dan Lungren, the Republican Attorney General, to become the first Democrat to be elected California's governor in 16 years. In what had been viewed as an excruciatingly close race in that state, Democratic incumbent Sen. Barbara Boxer scored a solid victory over State Treasurer Matt Fong.

The biggest upset of the day was the ouster of Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who as chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, was responsible for particularly vicious attacks on both the President and the First Lady. In another major upset, John Edwards, a Democratic trial lawyer who has never held public office, defeated North Carolina's Sen. Lauch Faircloth, who, along with North Carolina's Jesse Helms, engineered the installation of attack dog Kenneth Starr as Independent Counsel.

In South Carolina, Sen. Fritz Hollings held his seat despite a challenge from Republican Bob Inglis, who gave up his Congressional seat to run. And, Jim Hodges, a former Democratic state representative, ousted Gov. David Beasley, considered a rising star in the GOP and chairman of the Republican Governors Association.

In Alabama, a state everyone wrote off as Republican turf, Lt. Gov. Don Siegelman toppled incumbent Republican Gov. Fob James, Jr. In a race to replace Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia, Roy Barnes, a Democratic state legislator, defeated Republican Guy Millner. Iowa elected a Democratic governor for the first time in 32 years, and, in Maryland, Parris Glendening, following a rapid reversal of his Labor Day rantings, won a solid victory over Phil Gramm protégé Ellen Sauerbrey that was spurred by a much-better-than-expected voter turnout.

And, finally, Democrats picked up several state legislative chambers and seats. Expanding their majority for the second election cycle in a row, Democrats captured the New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin Senates, and the North Carolina, Washington, and Indiana Houses.

As political analysts scrambled for explanations, Democratic Party leaders, including many who just months ago were distancing themselves from the President, declared the elections to be a repudiation of Starr and the GOP impeachment drive. The Democratic National Committee claimed that it had made history, with “the biggest sixth-year election victory for either party in 176 years.” (The last time a President’s party won House seats in a sixth-year election — i.e., the midpoint of his second term — was 1822.)

Republicans badly shaken

Meanwhile, badly shaken Republicans turned on each other. Gingrich, who had vowed to transform the 1998 elections into a public outcry for Bill Clinton’s impeachment, scrambled to change the subject. In what was called an astonishing statement, Gingrich said, “Republicans have never been particularly fixated on the issue of impeachment.” By Nov. 4, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.), who has made no secret of his intention to challenge Gingrich for the Speaker’s seat, had already placed a phone call to Gingrich, suggesting that Gingrich could “save face” by stepping down.

Many are now openly calling for changes in the GOP leadership, and a parade of others are now testing the waters for possible leadership races. And, in a surprise press conference on Nov. 5, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) announced what amounted to a major scaling down of the impeachment inquiry against the President. Hyde said his panel would meet and call just one witness — Independent Counsel Starr — for two days of questioning beginning on Nov. 19. Hyde’s announcement indicated an abandonment of previous plans to take testimony from all the central players in Starr’s X-rated soap opera, including Vernon Jordan, Betty Currie, Monica Lewinsky, and the President himself. Many Republicans are hysterical at the prospect, saying that a Starr appearance on Capitol Hill would be a total spectacle, with the Independent Counsel, who may be the most hated man in America, forced to defend his indefensible four-year multi-million-dollar witch-hunt. Either way, Hyde’s announcement of the truncated schedule is being called a dramatic concession to public demands for a resolution of the Lewinsky scandal, which is the message *both* parties took from the surprising election results.

Americans to Save the Presidency

And, that was indeed the obvious message. But, only a few, well-placed, honest individuals close to the situation have been prepared to publicly characterize what changed between Labor Day and Election Day.

No one can deny that the election results represent a decisive repudiation of the Starr-Gingrich gang. But, the largely unspoken truth, is that the Nov. 3 vote constituted an equally decisive repudiation of what Lyndon LaRouche called the “deviant Democrats” — those Third Way, Dick Morris followers, who had joined in the attacks on the President, while abandoning the traditional base of the Democratic Party.

The fact is that what accounted for the “historic” Democratic victory was the mobilization of the very people, largely labor and minorities, that the New Democrats have recommended abandoning in favor of the so-called “swing,” suburban voters. What spurred that mobilization? Over the Labor Day weekend, during an international conference of the Schiller Institute, Lyndon LaRouche’s wife, Helga Zepp-LaRouche met with a group of current and former elected officials from across the nation. It was at that meeting that Americans to Save the Presidency was born.

Rep. Harold James, the chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, and one of the initiators of Americans to Save the Presidency, reflected on the election results, “My commendations to the Schiller Institute, and to Helga Zepp-LaRouche. I think the election results had a lot to do with the mobilization started by the Schiller Institute, with the petition of Americans to Save the Presidency, and our coming to the defense of President Clinton when *no one else* would take that leadership, and then, our targetting of those Democrats calling for the President’s resignation. . . . It was this mobilization that was responsible for the Democratic surprise, by taking leadership and rallying the community with the Americans to Save the Presidency; this is what helped motivate a lot of our voters, both in the African-American community, other minorities, and with labor, to get our people out at the polls. The fact that we challenged those Democrats who attacked Clinton, and took leadership in mobilizing the real vote of the Democratic Party was thanks to this initiative. The coalition that came together . . . has to be developed further now, because we mobilized and successfully got people out to vote, but now, we have to increase that participation.”

James’s views have been echoed by many others. Ironically, the victory has actually increased the pressure on the President. Now, with the impeachment forces forced to retreat, the President has no excuse not to act aggressively on the mandate first delivered by the Americans to Save the Presidency initiative: to address the break-up of the bankrupt global financial system. It is in the coming days that President Clinton faces his greatest challenge. How he will respond to that challenge is an open question. But, there is no question, that the only way for President Clinton to avoid a strategic catastrophe is to tell the American people the truth about the economy and the financial system and, in the tradition of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to take decisive action. An important first step would be to formally accept the assistance offered him by American statesman and economist, Lyndon LaRouche.