

Democrats: Districts designed to favor Republicans

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optimistic. Since early summer, he said, he has encountered a growing number of people who are upset with many of the decisions of the Republican-controlled legislature, particularly on education.

“There is a realistic plan and possibility of the Democrats being able to recapture both the House and Senate, and I would not have told you that five months ago,” he said.

Adds Democratic Party Chairman Randy Voller, “Right now, people are hot. Right now, people are feeling the pain and willing to work for change.”

But the Democrats face a tough opponent and have severe disadvantages. They need money and strong candidates and must overcome the demographics of districts designed to favor Republican candidates.

Democratic defeats

Democrats dominated the state for more than a century. But the N.C. Democratic Party in 2009 and 2010 was beset with a mix of bad luck and hubris, several of its leaders said in interviews last week.

They never thought they would lose everything.

“I think it would be safe to say that the party had become complacent in its structure and its campaigning tactics,” Glazier said.

Bonds said the party and caucus leaders failed to recruit strong candidates after 2008 or maintain the statewide fund-raising structure that kept them going in the 1990s and 2000s.

These woes added to other strikes against the party, locally and nationally, such as the severity of the Great Recession and anger at the president for his economic stimulus plan and health care reform law, activists said.

“My assessment is that 2010 was a national tsunami, and North Carolina got swept up in that tidal wave,” said Glazier. And a large number of Democrat-favoring voters who voted in 2008 “kind of thought their job was done and didn’t turn out in 2010,” he said.

Mobilized Republicans

Former Raleigh Mayor Tom Fetzter was elected chairman of the N.C. Republican Party in summer 2009. He saw that with the growing public anger toward Obama, the political winds were shifting.

Democratic slide

Democrats mostly controlled North Carolina from 1898 through 2010 and in 2008 were riding high with President Obama. Now they are far behind the Republicans in the state.

These are some milestones in recent history:

2008

■ **November:** Obama wins North Carolina in the presidential election, the first Democratic nominee to win the state since 1976.

Democrat Kay Hagan defeats incumbent Republican Elizabeth Dole in the U.S. Senate contest, and Democrat Bev Perdue defeats Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory for governor.

2009

■ **Winter-summer:** Democratic state lawmakers raise sales and income taxes and reject efforts to stop city and town governments from growing by involuntary annexation. Large groups of voters are angered.

■ **June-December:** The state Republican Party foresees an anti-Obama and anti-Democratic wave building because of the recession. It recruits electable candidates, raises money and concentrates its resources on districts it can win.

2010

■ **March:** Congress approves the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, further energizing conservatives.

■ **Election season:** Private organizations spend \$2.4 million in favor of Republican candidates and less than \$220,000 for Democratic candidates.

■ **November:** Republicans take majority control of the North Carolina legislature for the first time since 1870. For the first time since the 1890s, when the state had three political parties, the Democrats are in the minority.

At the same time, tea party-backed Renee Ellmers defeats incumbent Democrat Bob Etheridge for the 2nd Congressional District seat.

2011

■ The Republican-controlled legislature redraws state legislative districts and congressional districts in ways that favor Republicans.

2012

■ **January:** Perdue backs out of a run for re-election, leaving other Democrats scrambling to mount campaigns for governor.

■ **April:** The N.C. Democratic Party executive director resigns in a sexual harassment scandal. High-level Democrats call for the party chairman to resign, but he refuses.

■ **May:** The Democratic Party chairman tries to quit, but the party leadership votes to keep him, so he stays on, generating more distraction for the party.

■ **November:** Candidates face no major-party opposition in 68 out of 170 state legislative seats. The gerrymandered districts allow Republicans to take nine of the 13 congressional seats and super-majority control of the state legislature. McCrory is elected governor.

2013

■ **February:** State Democrats elect a new party chairman. In the next six months, he creates headlines with unpaid taxes, a trip to Las Vegas on the party credit card and other actions.

Sources: Media reports; N.C. State Board of Elections; financial data from the N.C. FreeEnterprise Foundation; interviews with party officials, lawmakers and staff

He said last week that he and the House and Senate Republican leaders, Thom Tillis and Phil Berger, mobi-

lized their party to take advantage of this chance for victory in 2010.

Berger and Tillis and other

MONEY FOLLOWS POWER

Since 2008, campaign donors have abandoned the Democrats.

DONATIONS TO STATE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES			
	2008	2010	2012
Democrats	\$19,359,465	\$18,510,532	\$9,023,795
Republicans	\$7,474,776	\$14,729,039	\$24,178,277

OUTSIDE SPENDING		
	2010	2012
Spending for Democrats	\$217,781	\$853,430
Spending for Republicans	\$2,417,5172	\$1,147,111

Source: N.C. FreeEnterprise Foundation

Staff graphic

Republican leaders recruited strong candidates, said Fetzter, who now is a lobbyist and political strategist.

“And we backed those candidates with sufficient fundraising to get the job done,” he said. “... We were able to raise money because the business community saw a sea change coming.”

People who once only funded Democrats because the Democrats held power began backing Republicans, he said.

Between 2008 and 2010, Republican legislative candidates nearly doubled their fundraising, going from \$7.5 million to \$14.7 million, according to data collected by the N.C. FreeEnterprise Foundation, a business-oriented think tank.

Their Democratic counterparts saw their fundraising drop 4.6 percent in the same time period, from \$19.4 million to \$18.5 million.

Outside interest groups also spent heavily in 2010, with \$2.4 million in favor of GOP legislative candidates, the FreeEnterprise Foundation found.

Democratic candidates who used to win by vastly outspending their opponents suddenly found themselves evenly matched or worse.

On Election Day in 2010, the state House flipped from 68 Democrats and 52 Republicans to 68 Republicans and 52 Democrats. The Senate flipped from a 30-20 Democratic majority to a 31-19 Republican majority.

Legislative Democrats were completely out of power for the first time since 1898.

Losses deepen

The Democrats’ situation worsened over the next two years.

In 2011, the Republicans redrew the legislature’s districts into new shapes that clumped Democratic-favoring voters into a minority of districts, leaving Republi-

can-favoring voters in the majority.

Money followed power and poured into Republican coffers for 2012 legislative races — \$24.2 million versus \$9 million for the Democrats.

Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue dropped out of her race for re-election in 2012, and the president lost the state in November. Republican Pat McCrory handily won the governorship.

Democratic losses deepened at the General Assembly. Republicans now control the state House 77-43, and the Senate 33-17.

North Carolina’s Congressional delegation flipped from a 7-6 Democratic majority to a 9-3 Republican majority, in large part because those districts, too, were gerrymandered to favor Republicans.

The Democrats say they are buckling down to fight back.

“We can and will make pickups in 2014,” said Voller. “I couldn’t tell you exactly how many seats, but I know we will make pickups.”

Can the Dems win?

Firmly in power, the Republicans this year passed measures to reduce government regulation, cut income taxes and shift the tax burden to sales taxes.

But many decisions have rankled residents across the state and stirred up political activists.

In the spring, the NAACP and other liberal organizations began weekly “Moral Monday” protests at the legislature, complete with arrests of participants, to call attention to the Republican agenda.

Despite protests, legislators passed a law that aims to reduce access to abortion and another law to allow firearms in bars and parks.

Budget decisions led to reductions in per-student spending at public schools and to cuts at the state’s public universities. Teachers and other state employees are going

without raises while staff members and consultants in other agencies generate headlines with high salaries.

Last week a Republican lawmaker who is related to a teacher noted that a high-level employee in the Department of Health and Human Services was paid \$37,000 in separation pay after a month on the job — more than a teacher makes in a year.

Democrats such as Bonds, Voller, Glazier and former state Sen. Eric Mansfield of Fayetteville said they are seeing a growing anger from the general public toward Republicans. In that, they see an opportunity for a Democratic comeback.

Glazier said he encounters numerous people at non-partisan events who want a change.

“There are truly enormous numbers of people just enraged at what happened,” Glazier said. He thinks their anger will carry into the elections.

“We’ve got an extraordinary recruitment of candidates going on. Fundraising has far surpassed levels at this time in 2011, and has every indication of showing that we’ll be very competitive with the Republicans on the money side,” Glazier said.

The party needs to work at the precinct and county level to build a campaign structure, spread the party message and encourage people to vote, Voller said. He said he is traveling the state to make these happen.

Fetzter, the former Republican chairman, said the Democrats won’t succeed.

The Republicans can campaign on their tax cuts and reduced regulation, he said, and surveys show that North Carolinians favor most of the legislature’s initiatives.

“I think 2014 is shaping up to be as good a cycle for Republicans as 2010 was,” Fetzter said. He said there is a “strong possibility” that the GOP will keep its super-majority control.

Many voters will be upset because their health insurance prices will rise under the president’s health care reform law, Fetzter predicted.

“Given the fact that this is another Obama midterm, ... this is the last opportunity that people in North Carolina will have a chance to vote against the president, and I think they’re going to exercise that,” he said.

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NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

Social conservatives adopt a pocketbook message

By Ken Thomas

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Seeking a new generation of leaders, social conservatives are looking for a lot more than opposition to gay marriage and abortion.

An annual summit of faith leaders and conservative activists gave a platform to a new wave of Republican leaders, who derided President Obama’s health care law, his steering of the economy and foreign policy along with a more traditional litany of social issues.

In what amounted to an audition, Senate Republicans such as Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas described a nation teetering on “the edge of a cliff” while Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky said U.S. foreign policy needed to stop a “war on Christianity.” Mike Lee of Utah said the nation’s economic problems represented “moral threats” to the stability of families.

“We can’t stop talking about the importance of our values and our culture,” said Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, who joined a parade of prominent GOP leaders at the Values Voter Summit on Friday. “We can’t stop talking about them because the moral well-being of our people is directly linked to their economic well-being.”

Organizers said Saturday that Cruz won the event’s

straw poll of possible 2016 presidential candidates with 42 percent, followed by Dr. Ben Carson and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum with 13 percent. Paul and Rubio placed fourth and fifth, respectively, offering an informal popularity contest among the roughly 2,000 attendees.

Social conservatives gathered at the summit as congressional Republicans sought agreement with Obama on a way to end the government shutdown, now in its 13th day, and avoid an economic default. Few in the audience expressed interest in backing down from efforts to defund or delay the nation’s health care law, a primary driver of the impasse, and said they wanted congressional Republicans to bring down the nation’s debt.

Marlene Kellett of Columbia, Md., said Republicans needed to hold firm in their opposition to the so-called Obamacare law. But she expressed pessimism that Republicans would make progress.

“I’m very opposed to Obamacare — it’s a disaster,” Kellett said. “But I’m not feeling very positive about (the impasse). So often the Republicans cave, and they can’t seem to get what they want.”

Adrienne Grizzell of Lexington, Ky., said the accumu-

lation of nearly \$17 trillion in debt — the source of a debate over whether to raise the nation’s borrowing limit — is too often shrugged off. “It’s as if, ‘No, it’s not a problem, let’s keep spending,’” she said. “Nobody is saying, ‘OK, we’re going to start spending less.’”

While social issues touched the hearts and minds here, speaker after speaker stressed pocketbook issues a year after Democrats vilified GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney as being oblivious to the needs of middle-class families during tough economic times.

Cruz, whose speech was interrupted several times by immigration reform advocates, said Friday the health care law and Obama’s spending priorities had put the nation on the wrong track. “We have a couple of years to turn this country around, or we go off the cliff into oblivion,” he said.

Lee said economic issues such as a lack of economic opportunity, stagnant wages and spiraling housing costs represented “moral threats to families’ stability.”

Rubio said too many families are struggling to pay for child care and grappling with student loan debts. Paul devoted his remarks to foreign policy, describing attacks on Christianity in the Muslim world.

NOTICE

NCDOT TO HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING IN FAYETTEVILLE REGARDING THE PROPOSED WIDENING OF BUNCE ROAD (S.R. 1410 / 1411) FROM RAEFORD ROAD (U.S. 401) TO CLIFFDALE ROAD (S.R. 1400) (TIP No. U-3424)

The N.C. Department of Transportation will hold a public meeting on **Monday, Oct 14**, regarding a proposed project to widen Bunce Road (S.R. 1410/1411) to multi-lanes from Raeford Road (U.S. 401) to Cliffdale Road (S.R. 1400) in Cumberland County.

Bunce Road is currently two lanes and the construction of additional lanes is necessary to increase the traffic carrying capacity and improve safety for projected traffic volumes. The project is approximately 1.3 miles long.

The meeting will take place from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the **John D. Fuller Recreation Center, 6627 Old Bunce Road, in Fayetteville**. Interested citizens may attend at any time during the meeting hours, as there will be no formal presentation. NCDOT representatives will be available to answer questions and listen to comments regarding the project. Citizens will also have the opportunity to submit comments and questions in writing. A project map can be found on the NCDOT public meetings website at: www.ncdot.gov/publicmeetings.

For more information, contact Matthew Potter, Project Development Engineer, NCDOT – Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit at 1548 Mail Service Center, Raleigh 27699, by phone at: (919)707-6036 or by e-mail at mwpotter@ncdot.gov.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who want to participate in these meetings. Anyone requiring special services should contact Jamille Robbins, Public Involvement Group Leader, NCDOT – Human Environment Section at 1598 Mail Service Center, Raleigh 27699; by phone at: (919)707-6085 or by e-mail at: jarobbins@ncdot.gov as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

Persons who speak Spanish and do not speak English or have a limited ability to read, speak, or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494.