

Election Results - Time to Organize!

**National Committee Report, Communist Party USA
November 7, 2010**

Joelle Fishman, Chair Political Action Commission

Introduction

The struggle for the direction of our country and for jobs and relief in this economic crisis, for equality, democracy and peace, is dramatically escalated by the 2010 election results.

Republicans won control of the House and many governorships in a sweep election. But the Republican priority to protect tax cuts for the wealthy is in opposition to the top election issue of voters - to create jobs.

This was a hard fought campaign within the long-term struggle to defeat the right wing. While there were some significant victories, overall it is a big setback.

Senate: *Democrats 53 (-6), Republicans 47 (+6)*
House: *Democrats 189 (-61), Republicans 240 (+61) (6 races still too close to call)*
Governor: *Democrats 19 (-7), Republicans 29 (+6)*

Lenin observed that no strike is lost, because workers learn from the experience and become stronger. Similar could be said about this year's election.

Within this campaign, tremendous organizing took place especially through the labor movement that has raised class consciousness. Thousands of union members have become engaged for the first time. The seeds of new coalitions locally and nationally have been planted.

When Mitch McConnell so brazenly says his number one priority is to defeat President Barack Obama in 2012, he has placed a bullseye on the labor movement and all the core forces for social change, as well as on Obama. He and John Boehner say not a word about the mandate of this election -- for the jobs and economic relief that people are crying out for.

From the moment Barack Obama was elected President, the right-wing, funded by the most reactionary sections of capital including energy, finance and military, went into full gear to destroy the presidency and the huge labor and people's alliance that voted him into office.

I remember a comment from George Meyers, a great leader of our Party, in 1991 when a progressive third party People for Change won election in Hartford, replacing all the Republicans on the City Council. George said, "Congratulations!" Then he said, "Watch out -- the corporations will bust this up when they decide it is too dangerous." And that is just what they did, by creating disunity among the leaders. But now, years later, the Working Families Party has won those seats back.

This is a tough time. Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Florida, Texas, Missouri, very tough. The attacks on living and working conditions will be very severe. The question is how to educate, build unity and keep the momentum going to protect our gains and to protect democratic rights. As many progressive groups are saying, this is a time to organize, organize, organize. It is a time to build coalition around a bold program. And it is a time to build the Communist Party and YCL which is the biggest unity builder and bridge to the future.

Dynamics of this election and the ideological battle

Karl Rove, Dick Armev and company wasted no time after the 2008 election.. They adopted the Republican strategy to block any progress in Congress and then blame the Democrats for gridlock.

They unleashed the Tea Party, busted up town hall meetings with lies about death panels in the health care reform bill, tested the waters with the election of Scott Brown in Massachusetts, and attacks on ACORN, Van Jones and Shirley Sherrod. They attempted to isolate progressive candidates with anti-communist red-baiting and anti-immigrant bigotry.

They seized on the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision and created shadow groups which spent unlimited amounts of money anonymously, and poured hundreds of millions of dollars into an avalanche of negative hate and smear ads full of lies, creating an atmosphere of fear and confusion to discourage people from coming out to vote.

For example, Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS spent \$4.4 million against Illinois Senate candidate Alexi Giannoulias who lost to Mark Kirk by two points. GPS does not disclose their donors, a practice that only became legal with *Citizens United*.

For its part the labor movement set out to counter this onslaught with massive one-on-one personal conversations with their members and their families, discussing the issues and workers' interests. Richard Trumka reports that 200,000 Labor 2010 volunteers knocked on 8.5 million doors, passed out 19.4 million fliers at workplaces and made millions of phone calls. In addition, Working America knocked on 800,000 doors in 80 races.. SEIU made a similar and parallel effort.

"As a result," says Trimka, "we held the Senate and some House seats and were the firewall in places like Nevada, West Virginia and California."

In the process, the organizing and political structures of participating unions were greatly strengthened, contributing to a new level of political independence and class consciousness. The national AFL CIO prioritized five pilot project cities including Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and New York to invest in phone equipment and organizing to get out the vote.

This was a sharp ideological struggle. The Obama administration accomplished many things, but economic relief was small and slow and demoralization and disappointment became widespread. Any talk about the economy beginning to recover rings hollow when you're unemployed or have lost your home.

The tea party Republicans fed into this uncertainty and anger with a lot of falsehoods and half truths.

They say "The stimulus is another Wall St bailout" This is a clever lie that continues to create confusion..It deliberately confuses the bailout -- passed under the Bush administration -- with Obama's stimulus which has created between 2 and 4 million jobs. It is an attempt to allow Republicans to pose as champions for jobs and against Wall Street. It is meant to divert attention from the local projects undertaken by the stimulus and the jobs that were created. The Republican Promise to America calls for cutting off stimulus funding, which would cause teachers, first responders and construction workers to lose their stimulus-funded jobs. The need to create jobs and fix the economy was the top mandate of voters in this election. That requires a struggle for large scale government spending.

They say "Obama and the Democrats created the deficit" This covers up the Bush policies that caused the deficit with tax cuts to the wealthy and the war in Iraq. It covers up the biggest cause of today's deficit -- the ongoing economic crisis and sky-high unemployment. The uproar about the deficit scared people that their children and grand children would be left with the burden. By creating the Deficit Commission Obama played into this myth.. Public workers and the services they provide are on the front line of attack. The Republican Promise to America and the Deficit Commission support cuts to Social Security. In polling, voters do not support privatizing or raising the age for Social Security eligibility, and they do not support extension of the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy. This is a huge post-election struggle.

They say "Death panels are part of health care" This persistent rumor came up in the one-on-one conversations with retirees. It influenced the senior vote. Negative ads against Democratic candidates who voted for health reform went farther. In Connecticut outside groups took out ads in the two most vulnerable districts claiming that the candidates supported "Viagra for sex offenders". . Insurance companies raised rates, falsely claiming it was the result of the health care bill. In the 112th Congress the fight for implementation and improvement of health care will be at loggerheads with the Promise to America Republican program to repeal health care reform.

The racist and divisive content of the hate and smear ads was an attempt to peel off support of white swing voters for Democrats. Call-in comments on C-Span on election night reflected this poison - that Obama is not a capable or worthy President.

White voters in the South were 73% Republican, where union density is low and the legacy of racism is strong. White voters in other parts of the country were 59% Republican. More than half of single white women voted Republican. However, the amorphous category of "white voters" obscures the class nature of voting patterns and hides progress made, especially among white union members, thereby minimizing the potential for further gains in overcoming racism based on common interests and struggle.

The national board is scheduling a discussion to examine voting trends and the level of class, democratic and anti-racist consciousness. A deeper understanding of contradictory voting patterns is especially needed to build strength in rural America.

Anti-immigrant ads and messages that Latinos should not vote because immigration reform was not passed were part of the voter suppression efforts targeted especially to the Latino community..

At the same time, the Republican party sought to peel off Latino and African American voters from the Democrats by fielding Latino and African American candidates on the Republican Party line, of whom

several won. However, the African American and Latino vote was overwhelming for the Democratic candidates.

The African American vote was 90% Democratic. In Nevada, Colorado, Arizona and California the Latino vote provided the margin of victory for many key races. In Nevada, the Latino vote was 90% for Harry Reid and 8% for Sharon Angle. In California, where Latino voters were 22% of the total turnout, those voters supported Democrats Jerry Brown for Governor and Barbara Boxer for U.S. Senate by 86% enabling California to buck the national trend.

The One Nation Working Together rally on October 2 of which we are an endorser, was a conscious effort to bring together all those who agree that government has a role to play in the well-being of the people, for Jobs, Justice and Education. It is now considering what role it can play in the future.

The majority sentiment that "we're in this together," is opposite from the tea party Republican approach that "your are on your own....I want the money the government takes for taxes." The fact that the Republican Promise runs counter to majority opinion provides leverage for organizing .and winning back independents and swing voters who supported Obama in 2008 but either did not vote or voted Republican in 2010.

Post-election, President Obama acknowledged that he could have been a better leader in reaching out and persuading the country, but he stood behind his agenda to move the country forward. While we do not agree with everything the administration has done, and have said so at the time, overall the accomplishments in 20 months in spite of extreme opposition are remarkable including judicial and Supreme Court and Department of Labor appointments, the Lily Ledbetter act, aid to states and cities (although more was needed), and the health care and financial reforms (although weakened). The Republican Promise to America calls for repeal of these advances.

Obama made a strong appeal during his Moving America Forward tour. In Bridgeport, Connecticut two days before elections, the arena was filled, the crowd of thousands was diverse, pumped up and ready to go. The overwhelming sentiment to back up the President, was in response to his message, and in reaction to the crude and ugly tea party Republican campaign. Bridgeport voters surged to the polls in such numbers that ballots ran out and a court order was required to keep polls open late. The Bridgeport vote, inspired by Obama's visit, put Rep Jim Himes, Dick Blumenthal for Senate and Dan Malloy for Governor over the top.

Obama's most important statement during his national tour was, "2008 wasn't just about electing a President, it was about building a movement." We can add, without the movement the ability to accomplish anything is very limited. As we examine the results of this election, it should be with that movement building in mind.

Election Results and next steps

Within the Republican sweep of the House, many high profile tea party candidates who invested huge sums of their own money were defeated in Delaware, California, Connecticut and New York. However Ron Paul in Kentucky and Marco Rubio in Florida were elected to the Senate, and anti-immigrant Lou Barletta won election to the House from Pennsylvania among others.

Republicans won open seats of retiring Democrats and defeated some long term House members including John Spratt (SC) Ike Skelton (MO), Chet Edwards (TX), Ciro Rodriguez (TX), and Jim Oberstar (MN).

Republicans also reclaimed the seats of 27 members of the conservative Blue Dog Caucus (more than half of the Caucus), and 24 members of the centrist New Democrat Caucus (41%).

The Blue Dogs were elected from traditionally Republican districts in 2006 and 2008. This enabled Democrats to achieve majority control of the House. They voted for Nancy Pelosi to be Speaker, but they also voted with Republicans on key issues including voting against health care reform and unemployment compensation extensions. Without their numbers, the Democrats could not hold onto a majority.

The Progressive Caucus, which lost only three members out of 80, will now have a more prominent role within the smaller minority Democratic caucus. Co-chair Raul Grijalva of Arizona, who was among those targeted by the right-wing because of his stands for immigration reform, defeated his tea party opponent with an outpouring of support from labor, peace and immigrant rights groups..

Of the 25 Congressional candidates endorsed by the Peace Action PAC, 16 won election, strengthening the possibilities to challenge the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and bloated military spending.

Progressives Alan Grayson of Florida and Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin did not survive.

As predicted, voter turnout was the key to this election. Where Democrats were successful at inspiring a high turnout they won. With low voter turnout, Republicans won. We need a fresh look to see what barriers there are to voting and how they can be removed in 2012.

In at least two districts in Ohio, for example, while there was no increase in Republican votes, the number of Democrats and Independents who voted was way down.

Young voters supported Democrats by 56%, but their turnout was much lower than in 2008 or 2006. Voters ages 18 to 29 who made up 18% of the voters in 2008 were just 11% of voters this year, although they favored Democrats by 56%. In 2006 the youth vote was 12.5%.

The organization Headcount, which registered 15,000 young people to vote at concerts and got 25,000 pledges to vote said, "The political climate was pretty nasty this year and – let's face it – turned many people off."

Exit polls showed that the higher your income the more likely you were to vote Republican, as shown in the chart below:

How different incomes voted (+ is Democratic advantage, - is Republican advantage)

\$0 - \$30,000	+14%
\$30,000 - \$50,000	+4%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	-11%
Over \$100,000	-18%

But exit polls also show contradictions.

53 percent of voters in House races had an unfavorable view of the Republican Party and only 41 percent had a favorable view. Their vote was a protest. Pollster Stan Greenberg says "Voters are looking not for a cramped vision, but a way for the country to reverse the current decline."

Those who said they were worse off economically than a year ago voted 65% Republican. Even though the Republican Party opposes funds for job creation and aid for the unemployed, Republicans were able to create the perception that they will get small business to create jobs. Two years ago, those who said they were worse off economically voted 70% Democrat.

An interesting study of Jewish voters shows they supported the Democrats by 66%. In Pennsylvania, 77% of Jewish voters supported Joe Sestak for Senate irregardless of constant Israel-related attacks from right-wing groups.

All of these findings further underscore that the election is not a mandate for a right-wing agenda. They also point to the need for a deeper look at the thought patterns in our country today and what is driving them. And the need to work with labor, African American, Latino, women and youth constituencies to reach out broadly as in 2008 to rural areas, small business, independent and other swing voters.

The impact of the Republican sweep at the state level is devastating. Governors and State Legislatures are responsible for drawing the lines of election districts based on the census. Republicans gained 680 state legislature seats. They will hold 53% of the total number of legislative seats, the most since 1928.. They will have control over redistricting in 190 Congressional Districts (*National conference of State Legislatures*)

And in the face of state and local budget deficits, Republican attacks on public workers and education, health and other services will intensify.

There were some positive results at the state level. In California and Connecticut, and in Vermont on a program for single-payer health care, the governor was shifted from Republican to Democrat. In New Jersey, 30 union members were elected to municipal offices.

The tea party Republicans will attempt to use their gains and the big shift in Congress to press their reactionary Promise for America policies and repeal what was passed in the last session. Already they have called for a vote to slash spending in budget bills this month..

President Obama highlighted his first priority -- to extend the tax cuts for incomes under \$250,000 and extend unemployment compensation. He said he would consider a compromise. The demand to "extend unemployment benefits, not tax breaks for the rich" should become a public outcry.

Sen. Reid promised to bring the Dream Act up for vote in the lame duck session as well. Repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the START treaty are also in contention for action during the lame duck session.

On January 3, 2011 the 112th Congress will be sworn in. The new political landscape will demand a lot of street heat and unity and tactics to enlarge the coalition and keep the Republicans in check

Our long-term strategy for a broad all peoples front, and within that to build the independent strength of labor and allies, remains an essential concept in the face of tea party Republican extreme reactionary policies.

Vicious attacks on labor and democratic rights, including attempts to curtail the right to organize are already underway in some states. Issues of states rights are already being posed to whip up a racist atmosphere. Women's rights are being targeted.

As the economic crisis continues, the need and possibility to rebuild the broad alliance of 2008 will become more apparent. The struggle for jobs is number one. Every point in the Republican Promise to America, from tax cuts for the super-rich to cuts in social programs and social security are all job killers. From now to the 2012 elections, the ideological battle over the economy and who gets the blame will be fierce.

Role of the Party

Our Party was in the thick of the battle of 2010. We contributed and we learned a lot. We have found an openness to our ideas and our participation. We have deepened our relationships with other organizations and activists.

We have brought new members into our Party even during the campaign. There is a new club in Ohio, new members in the South, new members in several Connecticut clubs and YCL, new youth around the Party in Oakland, to name a few.

Therefore, we should be optimistic and confident about growing more in the months ahead. However, this does not happen spontaneously, there must be a plan and it must be connected to the ongoing struggles before our communities and the country.

The People's World is a wonderful tool. The articles are interesting and informative and John Wojick's are award winning.. This is a great time to consolidate lists of new friends and make a concerted effort to get them signed up for the e-mail headlines and the Facebook page. In compliment to that, we continue door to door work with the local print edition in Connecticut and it continues to enable us to grow our clubs and contribute to an increased readership on-line.

Many people are coming to the conclusion that there is something terribly wrong with a system in which so many people are unemployed, so many youth incarcerated, where the wealth gap is so huge, so much is spent on the military while children go hungry, and there is so much injustice.

A recent poll shows that a majority of young people have a negative attitude toward capitalism, and a favorable view of socialism. This should be part of our post-election thinking.

Our Party offers an opportunity to come together around the immediate needs of the neighborhood or workplace, but also with a broader vision for a more equal and just future.

We bring our world view based on class struggle and social solidarity. We bring our understanding and

experience that it is both necessary and possible to overcome racism and bigotry as a precondition for unity. We bring our historical experience that tells us we have to recognize the existing balance of forces and join with others to overcome the most reactionary sections of capital.

Perhaps most important, we bring our knowledge that our Party and the movement grow when we put ideas into action.

We should think out how to carry through from the election into neighborhood organizing and organizing of the unemployed for jobs and relief. How to contribute to exposing the negative impact of the Republican program on the working class and the majority of people, and deepen broad unity against it.

This election setback reflects anger at the bad economy and searching for solutions. We have solutions to offer which we should bring forward. Our jobs program connects to every issue and can be developed and joined with labor and others.

Coming out of this election struggle, all the people's organizations are taking stock, just as we are. If ever there was a time to come together, this is it. We played a modest role around making the October 2 One Nation Working Together march a success. The One Nation leadership has requested of every endorsing organization to give their thinking on what role if any it should play now.

Locally there is a great opportunity to participate in, or help initiate discussions about what issues, what organizational forms, how to come together and build a much stronger and more visible and bolder movement on the ground. What are the possibilities for a launch on Martin Luther King's birthday, January 2011, of a two year offensive on behalf of the people?

At our convention we said that we want to examine how to increase the number of candidates we field on one line or another. Union members are running for local office and winning, one example is in New Jersey. There are candidates running jointly on the Democratic and Working Families lines, and there are other independents. We should be part of these discussions, in the context of the unity required to defeat the extreme right wing.

Especially, we should be out there with our media, our commitment and our optimism - even in hard times. The ability of our Party to grow is a critical part of the upcoming fight, to deepen class consciousness, organize for economic needs, and stick together for 2012 and beyond.

Action Proposals based on National Committee Discussion

1. Post and circulate National Committee report
2. Encourage discussions city wide and state wide with people we worked with in this election to consider tactical questions going forward. Raise the idea of making the MLK birthday in January, 2010 the kick-off of a two year offensive for people's needs, against racism and bigotry and for a record voter turnout in 2012.
3. Schedule a national board discussion to examine voting trends and the level of class,

democratic and anti-racist consciousness.

4. Prepare a memo to districts and clubs encouraging them to get active around the issues of the lame duck session of Congress including extension of unemployment benefits, no extension of Bush tax cuts for the rich, the Dream Act and others. Provide an approach to our work at the Congressional District level in general.
5. Write an article for the People's World regarding the filibuster rule in the Senate and efforts to eliminate it.
6. Ask the committee on jobs to present to the national board projections on how we carry through from the election to build the movement for jobs, especially among the unemployed, at the club neighborhood level, and what kind of literature to be issued by the Communist Party.
7. Write an article for the People's World around the idea of linking every question to jobs and exposing each Republican program point as a job killer.
8. Write an article for the People's World about the pending attacks on the labor movement, and circulate that article.
9. Get every member to receive People's World headlines. Invite new contacts and friends from the election to subscribe on-line to People's World headlines, and to the People's World Facebook page.
10. Invite new club contacts and friends from the election to come to events and club meetings.

Communist Party USA
www.cpusa.org