



[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Newspaper Ads](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)

---

---

## Archives

---

---

### Article Search Results (Articles older than 7 days)

[Archive Advanced Search](#) | [Archive Search Help](#)

Search  for

**Note:** Searching is always free. There is a \$2.95 fee to view the full-text of any article.  
[Check out our Pricing Options.](#)

## Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

November 8, 2005

**Section:** MAIN

**Edition:** ONE-THREE

**Page:** 13A

**Column:** BOB PERKOWITZ

### REPUBLICAN PARTY NEEDS NEW CONTRACT

STOP SACRIFICING OUR VALUES AND INTEGRITY FOR LOYALTY AND POWER

*BOB PERKOWITZ - SPECIAL TO THE OBSERVER*

Since Republican congressmen coalesced around Newt Gingrich's Contract with America in 1994, lockstep loyalty has been a defining characteristic of the party. The contract marked the end of moderate and progressive Republicans' influence in the party.

In the ensuing years, Republican leadership has provided political and financial support only to staunch loyalists. Dissenters have been compromised or exorcised. As a result, before his indictment, majority leader Tom DeLay could count on Republican representatives voting with him 97 percent of the time. Given a majority of 231 members, House Republicans have been able pass legislation without effective opposition. The institutionalized loyalty Gingrich brought to the House spread to the Senate and White House. Republicans now have coordinated control over Congress and the executive branch, which means they control the entire federal government.

\*

#### Principles abandoned

If you are a lifelong Republican, this control of the federal government should be good news. Unfortunately, things are not working out as planned. The Republican Party has gone astray on two major fronts.

First, since Republicans have taken power, they have jettisoned most of the party's legacy, including many of the principles embodied in the Contract with America. There's no need to go back to 1994 to see how the party deviated from its principles. In the 2000 presidential campaign George W. Bush cloaked himself with commitments to the party and the nation that reflected traditional Republican priorities.

In his speeches, debates and the party's 2000 platform, Bush advocated fiscal responsibility, elimination of governmental fraud and abuse, a restrained foreign policy and open, honest

government. These seem like quaint anachronisms now. With the exception of "morality" policies, Bush has abandoned Republican principles.

Bloated, intrusive government is now OK, so long as it is Republican bloat and control. The deficit doesn't matter. America can afford to subsidize the world, so long as we call it free trade. Why are we sacrificing American lives and dollars "nation building" in Iraq at the expense of investing in America? And how in God's name did the United States become a state sponsor of torture?

This new phenomenon of "big government conservatism" practiced by Bush Republicans was unthinkable a few years ago. Even more unfathomable for a party that espouses Christian and sound business principles is the seemingly unending stream of malfeasance, incompetence, cronyism, mendacity and corruption flowing from Washington.

Unfortunately, we have not seen the last of the scandals and other fiascoes. The economic tidings are ominous. Ignoring the warnings on America's trade and federal government deficits, our lack of domestic job creation, inflated real estate markets or overdependence on consumer deficit spending could all lead to an extended economic crisis.

\*

Where do we turn?

Four years ago it was hard to find any Republican who was not wholeheartedly supportive of the Bush administration. That's not the case today. Republicans disturbed by the party's shift away from its roots and the condition and prospects for the nation are seeking new answers. Where do they turn?

For most of us, a switch to the Democratic Party remains unthinkable. Democrats are a leaderless, inconsistent bunch. Half are for the war in Iraq, half against. Half vote for the fiscal irresponsibility, half against. No one is proud to be a Democrat anymore. Around Charlotte and perhaps across America, Democratic candidates are too embarrassed to note their party affiliation on their own lawn signs, bumper stickers and Web sites.

Some Republicans are joining the ranks of the Independents. They become swing voters, supporting candidates from either party who best reflect their values. Still others might rightly be called Yellow Dog Republicans, loyal to the party no matter what it does.

If you really care about the traditional values of the Republican Party, none of these reactions is adequate.

Progressive, moderate and conservative Republicans need to take the party back. The reckless experiment with big government conservatism needs to come to an end. We need the commitment to honesty and values of Reagan and Barry Goldwater, and the commitment to people and good government of Teddy Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Republicans need a new Contract with America that reaffirms and recommits the party to the values that brought us to power, and leaders with enough integrity to stick to it.

\*

Observer community columnist Bob **Perkowitz** of Charlotte is a businessman and environmentalist. Write him c/o The Observer, P.O. Box 30308, Charlotte, NC 28230-0308, or at [rperks282@aol.com](mailto:rperks282@aol.com).

---

Copyright (c) 2005 The Charlotte Observer