



DeLay Exiting
Stage Right

DeLay De-Legacy

Today, after more than two decades in the House of Representatives, former Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) resigns his seat, and sets sail across the Potomac to establish legal residence in northern Virginia. His flight to the Washington, DC suburbs is required to remove his name from the congressional ballot in Texas. There is a thick ethical cloud surrounding the departing Congressman. In Texas, DeLay is facing trial for money laundering; and in Washington, he is under investigation for his ties to convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Notwithstanding his resignation, DeLay would have remained the Republican nominee of Texas' 22nd Congressional District had he maintained his legal residence in the Lone Star State. It was obvious to political observers, as well as DeLay himself that his continued ballot presence would have placed the seat in grave jeopardy. Moreover, it would have complicated GOP efforts to protect their majority status in the House. These two factors were unacceptable risks.

Tom DeLay has dominated the House political landscape for the past 11 years, both as Majority Leader and as Majority Whip. His influence on the House Republican Conference has been broad and deep. In fact, one of his former deputies is the current House Speaker, Dennis Hastert (R-IL). In early years of GOP control of the House, Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) provided the intellectual foundation for the *Republican Revolution*, while DeLay provided the muscle. As GOP whip, DeLay was skillful at counting votes and was relentless and unrepentant arm-twister. Many of the components of DeLay's successful Whip operation continue. In addition, DeLay had a killer instinct that many of his cohorts admired and just as many feared. Love him or hate – DeLay delivered votes.

In addition, DeLay built an infrastructure on and off the Hill that strived to support the GOP Congressional authority and majority. For example, he was pivotal in the creation of the *K Street Project*, a strategy to encourage companies and lobbying operations to hire only Republican staff. (In Washington, many top lobbying firms are located on K Street.) In addition, DeLay helped to bolster the GOP majority by redrawing Texas Congressional District lines, which resulted in the defeat of four Democratic incumbents.

One of DeLay's lasting legacies is the partisan winner-take-all philosophy that continues to overwhelm the legislative landscape. For example, Speaker Hastert recently indicated that he would place on the House Calendar only a Conference Agreement on immigration reform that the majority of his majority would support. Whether, or not this attitude reflects the Speaker's personal conviction, it does represent the DeLay Legacy. For the GOP, success breeds success, and party diehards believe that DeLay philosophy works. Consequently, it will take a major attitude readjustment or electoral upheaval on November 7 for the DeLay legacy to dissipate.

Postal Conferees Meeting? Not Yet

House Government Reform Chairman Davis has been reported as stating that the Conference Agreement for H.R. 22 may reach the House floor by the July 4th Recess. To meet this target, the House must appoint its conferees next week and conclude its deliberations in short order. However, the Speaker has yet to name House Managers to participate in the long-anticipated House-Senate Conference on H.R. 22. The Chairman appears to be committed to resolving almost every issue that does not require direct Member of Congress intervention with Committee staff. House parliamentary procedures could complicate the conduct of the Conference should conferees be appointed and the Conference deliberations drag. In addition, both he and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) are striving to define and identify the range of options for pivotal conference issues prior to actually convening the Conference. In addition, both he and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) are striving to define and identify the range of options for pivotal conference issues prior to actually convening the Conference.

June 6 Election Sends Mixed Signals

California's 50th District hosted a key special election that may provide some inkling about the campaigns leading up to November 7. Convicted Rep. Duke Cunningham (R-CA) represented the San Diego area district. Cunningham resigned his seat earlier this year necessitating a special election to fill the vacancy. The outcome should not have been a big surprise. The Republican candidate, former Rep. Brian Bilbray, defeated the Democrat, Francine Busby by a four-point margin (49%-45%) in a solid Republican District.

As the result of Cunningham's bribery conviction and the perceived anti-GOP undercurrent in the country, the Democrats believed that the district would be ripe for the picking. There are two noteworthy facts about the election returns. First, Busby did not significantly boost the Democratic percentage as compared to past elections. The Busby votes were in the range that Democratic traditionally receive in this district. In addition, in an 18-candidate primary Busby took 44%. She picked up only one point since the April primary. Second, Bilbray's turnout was significantly less than previous elections. Historically, this is a district that awards Republicans over 60% of the vote. This fact should concern the GOP because in marginal districts reduced Republican voter turnout would have a significant impact on the outcome.

One of the major issues that Bilbray raised in the campaign was immigration reform. He advocated a hard line on illegal immigrants. In fact, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) cancelled a campaign appearance on behalf of Bilbray because of the hard line. McCain takes a more moderate approach on the issue. Nonetheless, anti-immigrant rhetoric played well in the San Diego district. While the issue may not resonate the same way in other areas, it may be one of those defining issues as we move closer to election day 2006.

As we watch the congressional campaign heat up, it will be interesting to note how the GOP candidates inspire unmotivated adherents and how Democrats encourage their faithful to turnout.

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