

Seven Questions for Republicans

NOTE: In response to Bryan Miller's invitation for members to guest-write the Kenosha County Democrats' monthly column in The Kenosha News, I submitted the following seven questions and they were chosen by the Party to appear in the paper as the May, 2007 entry. In a note to Bryan, the editors of the News have refused to publish the piece. I regret that I did not understand that the News's offer to print our views would be cancelled the instant we dare to express them aggressively.

As the title suggests, I intended them to be strong but fair, polite and serious questions for Republicans, and I am distressed that our friends in the other party will not have the opportunity to reflect upon them. Our party has kindly permitted me to print them here in case they strike you as useful for you to pose to Republican friends in person. I had intended to ask these questions in the column and include a link to our website for the answers, both so interested readers could see them and also to encourage readers to visit the site. Instead, I have included the questions and possible answers together below.

-- Steve Butts

ONE. Conservatism has a proud history. Distinguished thinkers from Plato to William Buckley have eloquently argued for its principles.

Question: Why then does the public face of American conservatism consist almost entirely of people such as Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter and their ilk, who are the nastiest, most brutal and shallow voices in American public life?

(Bonus question: when will decent, thoughtful Republicans repudiate them?)

Answer: *Americans are rhetorically conservative but operationally liberal. We love to hear about small government, low taxes and how bureaucrats are ruining our lives. But we like our Social Security checks and federal oversight of what goes into our tailgate bratwurst. It is always easier to pander to emotions than to people's true needs.*

(Bonus Answer: *when decent Republicans actually sit and listen to what is being said in their name.)*

TWO. Four years ago, a Republican administration, with the support of all but eight Republicans in Congress, initiated the war in Iraq. Since then, a series of atrocious judgments, idiotic decisions and reckless actions, completely unchallenged by a Republican- controlled Congress, have been taken by the Republican administration, and the war is a complete disaster.

Question: When finally we leave Iraq in defeat and disgrace, whom will Republicans blame: (a) themselves, or (b) the Democrats?

Answer: *(b), of course. Republicans always blame Democrats for everything. However, there is a bright side: since Democrats will be blamed for losing the war whatever we do, we are perfectly free to try to end it now rather than later.*

(By the way, don't let Republicans say "You Democrats flip-flopped on the war – first you voted for it, and now that it is going badly you're against it." In fact, in the crucial vote in 2003 authorizing Bush to invade Iraq, a majority of the Democrats in Congress voted against the war, and have done so ever since.)

THREE. Please estimate the minutes spent by Milwaukee right-wing radio hosts to express sympathy for the following defendants wrongly charged in politically tinged prosecutions:

(a) "Animal House" athletes at Duke University who hired two strippers for an underage drinking party, but were represented by the finest lawyers their rich parents could buy and who did not spend one night in jail (Democratic prosecutor);

(b) A decent Wisconsin state employee who lost her savings and house and spent four months in prison before being released (Republican prosecutor).

Answer: *(a) Lots and lots. (b) Zero.*

FOUR. Why do many Republicans who unquestioningly accept the science that enables them to board a jet airplane and fly six miles up at 500 MPH blindly reject that same science when it shows that the earth is more than 6,000 years old, or that human activities are causing it to

become warmer?

Answer: *Someone once said that it is very difficult to believe "X" when your entire financial or social position depends on believing "not-X." (Note to Democrats: this general statement applies to us too.) Combating global warming will require many of the governmental intrusions into personal and economic life that conservatives abhor and that Democrats don't mind. Aside from this general human characteristic, however, the Republican rush to throw science overboard whenever it contradicts an ideological position is quite disturbing.*

FIVE. Here is a list of four possible national health plans. Next is a list of the sponsors of each plan. Please match each plan with its sponsor:

Plan 1. If you get sick, you pay.

Plan 2. If you get sick, nobody pays – it's free!

Plan 3. If you get sick, everyone pays a little, because we're all in this together.

Plan 4. If you get sick, IT'S YOUR OWN STUPID FAULT!

- (a) Canadian Health Plan
- (b) Republican Health Plan
- (c) Democratic Health Plan
- (d) Conservative Health Plan

Answers: 1. (b); 2. (c); 3. (a); 4. (d). *Nothing better shows the profound differences between conservative and liberal values than the fight over society's role in providing for the health of its members.*

SIX. Many Republican lawmakers argue that carrying a concealed weapon is protected by the 2nd Amendment and that doing so will increase public safety.

Question (a): Where in the Constitution are concealed weapons mentioned?

Question (b): Why does public safety increase when people are prevented from knowing who is carrying a gun?

Answers: (a) *Nowhere.* (b) *It doesn't.*

It has always puzzled me why all the argument is about the "carry" part of "concealed carry", and none of it is about the "concealed" part. There is nothing in the Constitution that says John Wayne wannabes have the right not to pack their 45's in full view so the rest of us can get the heck out of the way of their adolescent fantasies. And I bet far fewer of them would be so keen to "carry" if told they had to do so openly. Just ask their wives.

SEVEN. Why do so many conservatives who strongly oppose the ending of a human life by abortion also oppose the use of condoms, which greatly lowers the rate of abortion? And why do so many of them strongly favor ending a human life by capital punishment?

Answer: *Sorry, at this point I'm tired of trying to figure out why Republicans and conservatives think the way they do. Go ask one. If he or she can explain it, think a bit more about your own position. If he or she cannot, push harder. Maybe if we all do this we will get a bit closer to agreeing about what needs to be done. That would be good.*