

Washington Whispers

By Paul Bedard



Republicans scoff at claim the presidential electorate is so Democratic that Obama can presume re-election

ED WEXLER FOR USN&WR

Obama's Got It Made

Could **President Obama** be the luckiest guy in politics? Maybe so. Despite the November 2 election debacle, his cellar-dweller ranking in approval polls, and his status as Washington's modern-day **Rodney "I don't get no respect" Dangerfield**, the best and brightest of the Democratic Party see him as a virtual shoo-in for re-election. Don't laugh. Democratic consultant **James Carville** and his Democracy Corps partner pollster **Stanley Greenberg** have an understandable explanation: The Democratic presidential electorate is younger, less white, unmarried, and growing. Democrats outnumber the GOP's older, whiter base—if they show up.

"When you get into a presidential election, it decidedly favors Democrats, and every year it is going to decidedly favor them more and more," says Carville. The duo, armed with polls, detail the changing demographics: Younger voters are leaning Democratic more, as are Hispanics, blacks, and unmarried women—all expanding constituencies. "Look at what's coming in 2012. Every election becomes less white," says Carville. "Republicans are forced to double down on older whites, which is, long-term, not a very productive place to be," he adds.

The result is so baked in that Obama won't have to work hard to win re-election in 2012, says Carville, **Bill Clinton's** political guru. "He has to do somewhat



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better; he doesn't have to do a whole lot better." Adds Greenberg, Obama probably won't even face a primary challenge, he "will be there by himself."

Then why did Obama's party lose control of the House, and get crushed in the Senate, in the midterms? They say the Democratic base doesn't vote heavily in those elections. In fact that trend, Carville suggests, could result in a reversal of the pattern that Democrats win congressional elections while Republicans take the White House.

Keep dreaming, says GOP pollster **David Winston**. "While there is still a lot of work for Republicans to do, the re-establishing of the center-right majority coalition was a key first step," he says, explaining that in the midterms the GOP won Catholics and suburban voters, and improved among Hispanics and younger voters. "But the critical change was winning independents by 19 points, after having lost them by 18 in 2006," he says. Victory, Winston adds, is based not on voter demographics but on issues. "This was not a tactical loss, it was a strategic one in large part due to the lack of recognition by the Democrats of the center-right nature of the country."

Richardson Rejects Politics

Democratic New Mexico Gov. **Bill Richardson** says he's done with politics. Once his second term expires in a few weeks, he'll be "fading away into the sunset." That means no second try for the presidency by the former Clinton-era energy secretary and United Nations ambassador—not even a cabinet post like the one Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** is expected to leave. In fact, he sees an Obama second term. "I

think he will be able to be bipartisan, and if Republicans don't respond to his efforts of bipartisanship then they'll be the ones that will suffer," says Richardson. The governor's future: "I'm becoming a gentleman rancher."

A Bushism Keepsake

Most politicians, especially those running for president, try to contract out fundraising chores. But evidence has surfaced that **George W. Bush** dove into fundraising during his first presidential campaign in 2000. Alexander Autographs is selling a handwritten note from Bush that blasts the Clinton-Gore years and promises a "fresh start" on issues like taxes, Social Security, and especially, education. "My real problem is politicians who never stop talking, and children who never start reading. I will rescue children from failure," Bush wrote. The best part: It reads just like he talks. "I will work to cut taxes for everyone who pay taxes. American wants a leader who put behind us the daily attacks, constant polls, partisanship, and gridlock." He calls his predecessors "the Clinton/Gore." Bush letters are so rare that auctioneer **Bill Panagopoulos** says it should bring \$9,000 at his company's December 16 sale.

The Whispers Poll

President Obama is at his lowest point, and he blames his poor communication for most of his troubles. How could he better connect with the nation?

Hold more press conferences	63%
When traveling, stay overnight in homes of Americans	18%
Open a Twitter account	7%
Star in a reality show as does Sarah Palin	6%
Get a celebrity spokesman	6%

Source: The Synovate eNation Internet poll was conducted November 19-23 among 1,000 nationally representative households by global market research firm Synovate.

REPORT CARD



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"Obama reaches his lowest approval rating ever: 39 percent. To scratch back, he needs to win over his base, then independents. But the TSA airport pat-down controversy is tripping him up."

National pollster John Zogby for Washington Whispers

Rookies Cheer Boehner's Style

New members will account for about one-third of all House Republicans, and incoming Speaker **John Boehner** is bending over backwards to make them feel wanted. "He's been waiting for a group like us," says Oklahoma Rep. **James Lankford**. "This gives him the help to reform things." Illinois Rep. **Robert Dold** says Boehner, in several meetings with freshmen, sounded the right tone in urging bipartisanship to solve big issues. "It's important that we reach across the aisle," he says. "What's done is done; now it's time to fix things." •

With Caitlin Huey-Burns