

# EXPOSING “PRETEND” CONSERVATIVES

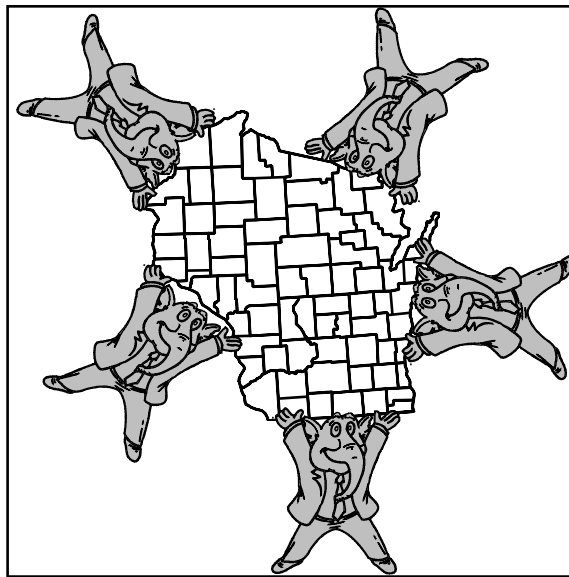
MIKE HUEBSCH

Conservative values are alive and well in Wisconsin. The truth is conservative values have fundamentally changed the debate in Madison, Washington, and all over the nation.

The values that we hold as conservatives are now the mainstream. Before I was first elected in 1994, most Democrats were in complete denial about Wisconsin's high tax problems, the destructive effect the welfare system was having on the poor families, and the need to fundamentally reform education.

Somewhere between 1994 and 2006, the Democrats figured out that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Since then, Democrats have actively supported tax cuts and property tax freezes, welfare reform, and school choice.

And why not? Wisconsin has become not just a national leader on those issues, but a world leader. Wisconsin's landmark Wisconsin Works is the world's model for welfare reform. The nation of Israel has adopted essentially the same program as Wisconsin with great success in reducing their welfare rolls and engaging more people into their workforce.



I can also tell you first hand the dramatic effect Wisconsin's School Choice program is having on the City of Milwaukee. I have toured some of the schools participating in the choice program and was amazed by what I saw and heard from the students. Don't just take my word for it. Gerard Robinson, a former senior fellow at Marquette's Institute

for the Transformation of Learning has reviewed research collected on the Choice program and stated: "A growing body of evidence suggests strongly that vouchers: improve academic performance, especially among African American students; increase parent satisfaction and involvement; and appear to have a positive impact on student achievement in public schools."

It took conservative values to help save the education system for the City of Milwaukee, but it was the children, parents, and teachers who have made School Choice succeed. All they needed was a chance.

Partly because of the success of those ideas, Democrats have realized that they can't

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beat us on the issues, so they simply stole them. Running on our values and our ideas continues to be a winning formula, for both political parties. Democrats co-opted our messages, our ideas, our values as they ran for Congress and it worked.

Democrats rode a tidal wave into power to control both houses of Congress . . . by hiding their true colors and disguising themselves as conservatives.

Most Democrats didn't even bother to announce a plan about what they would do if they were elected. The fact that it worked tells me that we didn't make our case to the people. Voters didn't see a clear difference between the two parties. Because of that, they had no reason to choose us.

What cost us in Washington especially, was not our ideas. It was a failure to not deliver on those ideas. We advertised ourselves as the party of less government, less spending, and effective leadership. But as Newt Gingrich put it, many Republicans "Forgot what Conservatism started as, which was a defense of the individual against an overreaching state."

Most of the Democrats who won their elections in November were masquerading as Republicans and the Republicans who masqueraded as Democrats lost. Here's what I mean. During the last campaign, who said:

Owning a home has always been a fundamental part of the American dream. However, the recent Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. New London* has endangered that right. . . . I strongly disagree with the Supreme Court decision and I will never support using eminent domain to take away any individual's private property. . . .

Or how about:

The church has guided my life and my career. I believe in justice, I believe in hope, I believe in salvation and I believe in the value of life in all its forms.

And finally:

[I] helped eliminate taxes on 13,000 businesses, provided tax credits to help small businesses provide health insurance and balanced the budget – all without raising taxes. . . putting these dollars in the hands of families. . . ."

All three of those quotes came from the campaign websites of Democrats and every one of those Democrats won. (In case you are wondering, the first quote is from Congressman Heath Schuler from North Carolina, the second from Congressman Brad Ellsworth from Indiana, the last from Senator Jon Tester from Montana)

Unfortunately for the American people, either they immediately caught "Potomac Fever" or they committed "Voter Fraud" on the American people, those same Democrats immediately abandoned those stances and have moved farther to the left than a bicyclist on a highway in England.

Recently, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution that has done more to boost the morale and fighting spirit of our enemies than any video tape Bin Laden has ever released from a cave in Afghanistan. And Congressman Murtha wants to strip our troops of their armor and defund their mission. Yet, they continue to say they support our troops. These days, the only requirement to be a Democrat nominee for president is to name the date you want our nation to surrender to the terrorists.

Recent national polls show that the voters are no more happy with the Democrats they elected than they are with the Republicans they voted out of office. The Democrats are giving us a golden opportunity to reintroduce conservative values to the voters. However, we must learn from our mistakes and the mistakes the Democrats are now making. The voters are fed up with politicians who fail to deliver on the values they hold dear—conservative values.

The issues that conservatives in Wisconsin will tackle in the coming year are taxes and reforming our health care system. The Democrats have introduced a budget that would raise taxes by more than \$1.7 billion. That's a tax increase of at least \$310 on every man, woman and child in our state! Under their plan, property taxes would go up at least \$350 million. Republicans in the Legislature will stand up to these tax increases. Wisconsin residents are already the 7th highest taxed people in the land. Tax hikes are the last thing people can afford.

In health care, conservatives have an opportunity to change the debate in the same way we revolutionized welfare a decade ago. The biggest problem with the American health care system is that it is no longer American! Consumers have no idea what they are buying

or what it costs and have no reason to learn. By giving people like you and me the information and purchasing power to compare quality and cost, we make decisions that are best for each of us. Ronald Reagan called it the "magic of the marketplace." A health care system that is now run by politicians and bureaucrats is on the verge of collapse and the cure lies within us. The only way to save health care is to empower the American consumer, in a competitive free market.

There are other issues that we conservatives can and will tackle. We have never feared a challenge and are driven by the very ideals that shaped and built this country into the greatest nation in the history of the world. And Wisconsin will continue to lead our nation as a model for reform using conservative ideals.