

Why GOP majority is dead

WASHINGTON — If in November Republicans lose control of the House of Representatives, April 5 should be remembered as the day they demonstrated that they earned defeat. Traducing the Constitution and disgracing conservatism, they used their power for their only remaining purpose — to cling to power. Their vote to restrict freedom of speech came just as the GOP's conservative base is coming to the conclusion that House Republicans are not worth working for in October or venturing out to vote for in November.

The "problem" Republicans addressed is that in 2004, Democrats were more successful than Republicans in using "527" organizations — advocacy groups named after the tax code provision governing them. In 2002, McCain-Feingold banned large "soft money" contributions for parties — money for issue-advocacy and organizational activities, not for candidates. In 2004, to the surprise of no sensible person and most McCain-Feingold supporters, much of the money — especially huge contributions from rich liberals — was diverted to 527s. So on April 5, House Republicans, easily shedding what little remains of their belief of belief in freedom and limited government, voted to severely limit the amounts that can be given to 527s.

David Dreier, R-Calif., explained, sort of. He said he voted against McCain-Feingold because "dictating who could

give how much to whom" violated the First Amendment, but now he favors dictating to 527 contributors because McCain-Feingold is not violating the First Amendment enough: It is "working as it was intended." That is, it is not sufficiently restricting the money financing political advocacy.

Candice Miller, R-Mich., said that restricting 527s would combat "nauseating ugliness, negativity and hyperpartisanship." Oh, so that is what the First Amendment means: Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech unless speech annoys politicians.

Improving the tone of politics, leveling the playing field, fulfilling the intent of McCain-Feingold — the reasons for expanding the restrictions on political advocacy multiply.

McCain-Feingold restrictions on the amount, timing and content of political speech were ratified by the Supreme Court, which embraces this perverse idea: Because elected officials are experts about politics, they deserve vast deference when they write rules governing speech about, and campaigns against, elected officials. When the court gave its imprimatur to McCain-Feingold's premise — that big government should have big power to regulate speech about itself — it guaranteed that what happened April 5 will happen incessantly: The First Amendment is now permanently in play, its protections to be trun-

cated whenever congressional majorities envision short-term partisan advantages.

The Washington Post, exemplifying the media's hostility to speech rights other than their own, eagerly anticipates the next fiddling. As it crouches behind its media exemption from the restrictions it favors for rival sources of political speech, the Post eggs on the speech regulators and hopes for "future legislation" if money diverted from 527s flows, as surely it will, into other political uses. And so the regulatory regime metastasizes, nibbling away at what McCain-Feingold enthusiasts evidently consider the ultimate "loophole" — the First Amendment.

Fortunately, the measure the House passed on April 5 will not become law this year. Not because Republican senators are too principled to pass it, or because Democrats have a truly principled opposition to it, but because Senate Democrats will have 41 votes, enough to block action on it.

The Democrats, who favored McCain-Feingold and now are as cynical as Republicans about defending free speech only when it serves their competitive interests, will someday win control of

Congress. Then they can wrap their anti-constitutionalism in the Republicans' April 5 rhetoric. They can say:

"In 2006, you Republicans said that because Democrats have done better than Republicans with 527s, the 527s should be restricted in order to 'level the playing field.' Now we will level the playing field by restoring the 'fairness doctrine' to broadcasting, thereby eliminating conservatives' unfair domination of talk radio."

The 211 Republicans who voted for big government regulation of speech will have no principled objection. How many principled Republicans remain? Only 18. The following, who voted against restricting 527s:

Roscoe Bartlett (Maryland), Chris Chocola (Indiana), Jeff Flake (Arizona), Vito Fossella (New York), Trent Franks (Arizona), Scott Garrett (New Jersey), Louie Gohmert (Texas), Jeb Hensarling (Texas), Ernest Istook (Oklahoma), Walter Jones (North Carolina), Steve King (Iowa), Connie Mack (Florida), Cathy McMorris (Washington), Randy Neugebauer (Texas), Ron Paul (Texas), Mike Pence (Indiana), John Shadegg (Arizona) and Lynn Westmoreland (Georgia).

On this remnant of libertarian, limited-government conservatism a future House majority can be built. The current majority forfeited its raison d'être on April 5.

George Will is a syndicated columnist.



WILL



... AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RISE AGAIN

Evidence for Easter

Editor's Note: The following column appeared previously in The Herald. An Eagleton Institute poll released last week found that 56 percent of New Jersey residents believe the Easter events happened as recorded in the Gospels.

Today the Christian world celebrates the culmination of events which occurred over a weeklong period about 2,000 years ago. The God-man — Jesus Christ — who rode into Jerusalem to the cheers of his followers shouting "Hosanna!" would be betrayed, denied and deserted by his closest friends, reviled and cursed by an angry mob, beaten and spit upon by a group of Roman soldiers and ultimately crucified on a cross between two thieves outside the city of Jerusalem at a place called Golgotha — "The Skull."

He died alone and in unspeakable agony. So intense was Jesus' suffering on the cross for sin those last hours that God the Father pulled a black veil over Calvary to shield us from that awful visage.

Yet His death is not the most important element of Holy Week. It is His resurrection, without which Christ's death would have been in vain and there could be no true forgiveness for sin.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that aspect of Christianity that sets it apart from all other religions. Christians worship and serve a living God.

The apostle Paul reminded the church in Thessalonica of this truth stating: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ... whom he raised from the dead..."

The well-known speaker and author of several books on biblical apologetics, Josh McDowell, set out as a young man to debunk the claims of Christianity. "I aimed to show everyone that Christianity was nonsense," he explained in an article entitled "If I Had Faked the Resurrection," which recently appeared in "Focus on the Family Magazine."

"I thought it would be easy. I thought a careful investigation of the facts would expose Christianity as a lie and its followers as dupes. But then a funny thing happened. As I began investigating the claims of Christianity, I kept running up against the evidence. Time after time, I was surprised to discover the factual basis for the seemingly outlandish things Christians believe. And one of the most convincing categories of evidence I confronted was this: The resurrection accounts found in the Gospels are not the stuff of fable, forgery or fabrication."

McDowell goes on to say that if he had wanted to fake the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he would have waited a prudent amount of time before publishing the events of Holy Week, publish the account far from where it actually happened, select his witnesses very carefully, avoiding the use of any names and certainly no promi-

nent figures, disguise the actual location of the tomb and attempt to squelch any inquiry or investigation.

But the apostles broke all of these rules.

Not only did they preach about the risen Christ boldly and almost immediately — within 50 days of the resurrection — but written accounts of the events of Holy Week appeared as early as two years later, originating in Jerusalem — the very city where they took place.

No less than 16 witnesses of the resurrection are mentioned by name and one was a very prominent member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea, who was present when they buried Jesus Christ in Joseph's own tomb.

"As a member of the Sanhedrin, a Jewish Supreme Court, he would have been well-known," writes McDowell. "No one could have invented such a person who did not exist and say he was on the Sanhedrin if such were not the case."

Additionally, over 500 witnesses were mentioned by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "After that, he (Jesus) was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present (time)..."

The theologian Dr. Edwin Yamauchi, commenting on this passage from First Corinthians writes, "what gives special authority to the list (of witnesses) as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, 'If you do not believe me, you can ask them.'"

But the testimony of the apostles did not end with their fervent preaching of what was and still is the greatest and most powerful story ever told.

Many of them willingly died a martyr's death for what they believed.

Bible scholar Lee Strobel writes, "People will die for their religious beliefs if they sincerely believe they're true, but people won't die for their religious beliefs if they know their beliefs are false. While most people can only have faith that their beliefs are true, the disciples were in a position to know without a doubt whether or not Jesus had risen from the dead. They claimed that they saw him, talked with him, and ate with him. If they weren't absolutely certain, they wouldn't have allowed themselves to be tortured to death for proclaiming that the resurrection had happened."

Because of the power of the resurrection, for the past two millennia, Jesus Christ has changed the lives of all those who believe on His name.

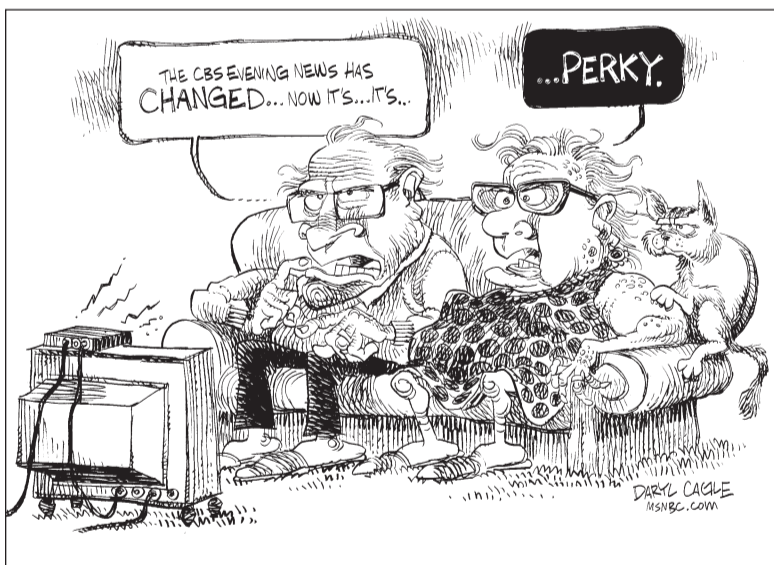
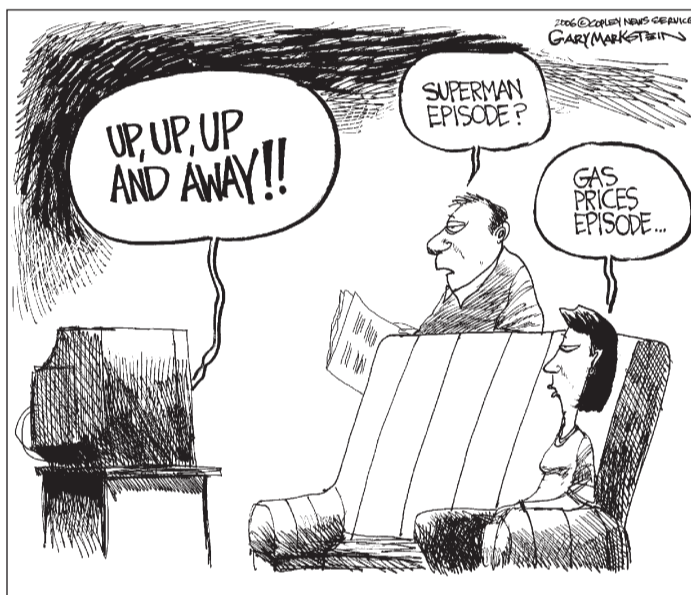
He is risen! Hallelujah!

Greg Rummo is a syndicated columnist and businessman in Bergen County.



RUMMO

WEEKEND GALLERY



If they really want to fix immigration

AUSTIN, Texas — Personally, I think this is a really good time not to keep up. The more you try, the less sense it makes, although getting us used to having it all make no sense at all may be an extremely sneaky Karl Rove ploy to justify the war in Iraq. Hard to say.

The latest development to which the only appropriate response is, "Huh," is the news that the "mobile weapons labs" introduced to us by President Bush before the war as conclusive evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were not evidence — conclusive or otherwise — of WMD and were not, in fact, mobile weapons labs.

The only thing new here is the news that George W. Bush likely knew a couple of days before he talked about them in public that the Defense Intelligence Agency had found they were not mobile weapons labs.

OK, given everything we already know about the lies before the war, this is not particularly startling — although I do think it's long past time we stopped referring to the campaign of disinformation and false information that we were fed as anything but lies. No, the startling and funny part of the "mobile weapons lab" lie is the administration's defense of it, which is so batty it's an instant classic.

According to White House spokesman Scott McClellan, the DIA report debunking the "weapons labs" is "a complex intelligence white paper and it's ... one derived from highly classified information (and) takes a substantial amount of time to coordinate and to run through a declassification process."

If I understand what McClellan is saying, Bush leaked bad information from a classified intelligence report because there wasn't enough time for the contradictory DIA report to go through a declassification process. All of which would make more sense if we hadn't just gone through this Valerie Plame episode, where the White House says if the president leaked it, then it's legal to leak it. No problem, the president can declassify at will, they said. I don't know about you, but none of it is becoming clearer for me. Does anyone understand why we have to bomb Iran yet?

Meanwhile, Congress can't figure out how to do a deal on immigration. I'd like to stick my two cents in here to say the reason that deal fell apart and the reason it won't come back together is because of American business, which hires the illegals and donates the campaign money. Bless your sweet heart if you think

the deal came unglued over the Republicans ignoring their base or some other political problem. Money, my friends, talks, and bull walks. Look at who wants illegal workers here. Look at who controls Congress.

Courtesy of the Daou Report on salon.com, I found this item on a blog called The Shape of Days, about the recent demonstrations: "There's really no other way to say it: Being here is weird. To be surrounded by a crowd of thousands of people, all of whom look alike, none of whom look like me, many of whom are decorated with our flag, none of whom are speaking our language, on our national Mall ... it's a surreal experience. Despite my best judgment and best intentions, I feel the inklings of xenophobia bubbling up inside. This place isn't for me; I don't belong here. It's time to go."

I suppose this citizen deserves credit for honesty, but I'm so much more amazed by his or her provincialism. I feel one of those rants about suburbia coming on. Never been in a public place before sur-

rounded by people who speak a different language and look different from you? Can you live in a city and not have experienced that?

I was high just from seeing them all — 500,000 in Dallas! Of course, most of us know the immigrants are there — it's just so interesting to see them en masse. If you've ever wondered what this country would be like without illegal workers, now you've got the answer. It would come to a halt.

Let me point out again, I don't have a dog in this fight. There are just some things I know from living in Texas all my life. One is, don't bother to build a fence. Two is, if you want to stop illegal immigrants, stop the people who hire them — quit punishing people who come because there are jobs. Three, this border has always been porous, and it has always worked to the advantage of the United States.

If you want to do the smart thing and look for a long-term solution, try fixing NAFTA and helping with economic development in Mexico. Meantime, I could do without the drivel about how these people are so different. Of course they're not. Try getting out a little more.

Molly Ivins is a syndicated columnist.



IVINS

Voices

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Jose Padilla

The Vindicator, Youngstown, Ohio

The Supreme Court of the United States has delayed for no good reason the day when it will have to address whether a president can order the indefinite detention of an American citizen without filing specific criminal charges.

The court had the opportunity to take the case of Jose Padilla. ... Padilla ... was a dangerous terrorist, the government said.

But throughout the first years of his detention, the government maintained that it did not have to charge Padilla with anything because he had been declared by President Bush as an enemy combatant and ordered him held indefinitely and without charge in a military prison. ...

Padilla was arrested as a material witness in Chicago in May 2002.

... The first time he sought habeas corpus, in New York, the Supreme Court turned down his petition on procedural grounds. ... Padilla's attorneys refiled ... and again the case landed on the doorstep of the Supreme Court.

When it did, the Bush administration brought criminal charges against Padilla in Miami and transferred him to the federal prison system.

This week the Supreme Court again denied his petition on the grounds that Padilla had gotten what he sought. ...

The high court acknowledged that ... the administration might again declare him an unlawful combatant. ... If that were to happen, the Supreme Court said ... the federal courts would rule "quickly" on any challenge by Padilla. ...

But that court fight could take years. Padilla should have long ago been tried. ...