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Post-election worries: Immigration reform a challenge for GOP

ET Republicans: Stick to conservative principles

By Michael Collins

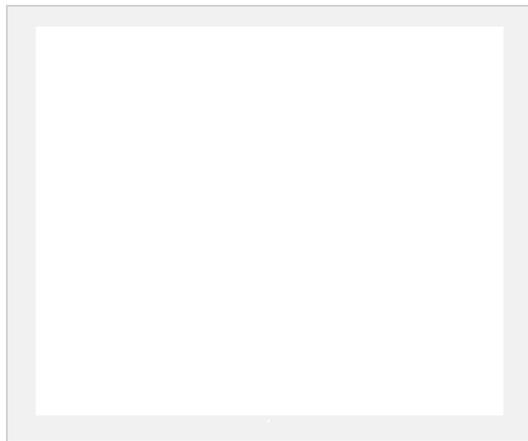
Posted February 11, 2013 at 5 a.m.

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U.S. Congressman John J. Duncan, Jr.

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. John J. Duncan Jr. concedes Republicans must do a better job of reaching out to Hispanics. They are the largest minority group in the United States and, as the results from last November show, they are a formidable voting bloc that can be the difference between winning and losing an election.

At the same time, Duncan cautions the GOP must be careful not to stray from its principles as it takes on immigration reform and other culturally sensitive issues.

"Most Hispanic people are very hard-working people and culturally very conservative," the Knoxville Republican said. "I think the longer they stay here and the more they find out about the differences between the parties, I think the Republican Party in the long run will do just fine with the growing Hispanic population. Now, in the short term, we do have a problem."

Thus is the predicament facing the GOP: How do you appeal to Hispanics, achieve real immigration reform and still stay true to your deeply held beliefs about law and order?

To U.S. Rep. Chuck Fleischmann, the answer is not that difficult: Stick with your principles. But refine your message.

"We just need to do a better job of reaching these new voters and making sure we articulate our message in a better and clearer fashion," the Ooltewah Republican said. "Once that happens, I think the Republican ideals are going to be very attractive to all new legal immigrants."

The GOP's Hispanic problem appears to be helping drive Congress' latest push for immigration reform, with House Speaker John Boehner and other Republicans now expressing an eagerness to find common ground on what in the past has been a bitterly divisive and largely partisan issue.

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators that began meeting shortly after last November's election recently unveiled what it calls a tough but fair framework for overhauling the nation's immigration system. The plan calls for securing the nation's borders, increasing guest worker permits and providing a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million people already in the country illegally.

President Barack Obama, who won 71 percent of the Latino vote on his way to a second term, has offered his own vision for immigration reform that in some ways is more lenient than the Senate plan. Obama wants to provide a pathway to citizenship, for example, but has suggested the legalization should not depend upon securing the border first, one of the conditions set forth in the Senate proposal.

Members of East Tennessee's all-Republican congressional delegation say there is no doubt the immigration system is broken and in need of repair. But they are withholding judgment on the proposed fixes until the plans — currently no more than a broad blueprint of ideas — are fleshed out and written into actual legislation.

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"The details really matter," said U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, a Chattanooga Republican.

The Senate legislation should be ready for review by the end of March, said U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander, a Maryville Republican.

"The details will make the difference," Alexander said. "Fundamentally, I want, and I believe most Tennesseans want, a legal immigration system that supports the rule of law and helps new citizens learn English, learn about our country and contribute to our society."

U.S. Rep. Phil Roe, a Johnson City Republican, said Congress may actually pass some form of immigration reform this time around because "both sides of the aisle realize you can't continue to do what you're doing."

But Roe said the GOP cannot abandon its principles just to appeal to a growing and influential minority.

Roe said he agrees the border must be secure and that more guest workers are needed to help farmers and other employment sectors where labor is in short supply. But he said he would have a hard time granting citizenship to people who entered the country illegally.

"I don't think you should ever allow somebody who has been here illegally to get in front of the line," Roe said. "You're just encouraging the wrong behavior by doing that."

Duncan said that while he would not favor blanket amnesty for people who are already in the country illegally, he would be willing to look for ways to help ease problems with the current system, such as more guest worker permits. But, he said, Republicans don't have to forsake their beliefs to create such a program or to appeal to Hispanics.

In Tennessee, home to an estimated 140,000 undocumented immigrants, supporters of immigration reform are encouraged by the proposals that have been offered so far, said Eben Cathey, spokesman for the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition.

But while political considerations may be helping to drive immigration reform, Cathey said, lawmakers should focus more on setting policies that are in line with American values, such as keeping families together.

"The decision-makers shouldn't do things because of cold political calculations," Cathey said. "They should do them because they are right."



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February 11, 2013
5:33 a.m.

MOD_4_MY_DAY_JOB writes:

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Since the GOP does not want illegals sponging off the American worker, they have to cater to the lib way and buy the votes. Since MOST American workers don't like illegals sponging off their tax dollars, they have to play along, too. No problem with anyone trying to better themselves, just do it the right way, like we have to. But since most libs don't want to work anyway and love freebies for votes, these kinds of people are a drain on society and always will be.

February 11, 2013
6:05 a.m.

The7thSon2010 writes:

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The untrustworthy trustees daddy, finally is at least, paying 'lip service' to address the problems of the republican party, the rightwing agenda, yet is vague, and 'sketchy'.. How can the party that campaigned, won, over and over using the 'southern strategy', saying youre 'either on of them, or one of us', in regards to minoritys, now suddenly embrace the hispanics, suddenly 'reverse', denounce the hatred, prejudice, and fear, they spread?? Greed has become confused with thrift, pretending 'concern' for future generations, the greed of the wealthy, WallStreet, big oil, the KOCH Bros and their keystone pipeline, isnt justified by the sudden opposition to 'spending', yet pretend taxcuts for the wealthy, oil depletion allowances, and the low percentage rate on capital gains, arent the same, acheive the same results, less money in the US treasury..

by Zakaria, CNN:

China is indeed America's biggest foreign lender - it owns about 1.2 trillion dollars of debt - more than Japan, the UK and Brazil.

A little-known fact is that most of America's debt - 14.3 trillion and counting - is owned by Americans in Social Security trusts, pension funds, and by the Federal Reserve.

.....

So, why are the republicans yelling about debt to China, yet try to avoid repaying the borrowed and already spent, IOUs, treasury notes, that make up the Social Security trust fund? Its like the immigration issue, as Duncan says:

" Duncan cautions the GOP must be careful not to stray from its principles as it takes on immigration reform and other culturally sensitive issues " ..

So the 'deport them all', seal the borders with armed guards and electric fences, kill zones, and let them stand in line, for a lifetime, with very little chance of regaining their positions, jobs, lives in America, yet, somehow persuade the hispanic voting block, to change party loyalty, vote against their own self interests.. Seems as if the republicans have the senior, retiree, white male WASP, demographic, doing just that, voting against their own self interests, voting to chop their medicare and Social Security benefits, out of the 'hate Obama' agenda, and now the republicans seek the same from the 'blame immigrants', for the economic downturn, voting block..

Some sort of racial loyalty, to the republicans, has been translated in to twisted 'patriotism', some sort of 'divine insight', that persuades the fading demographic, of older WASP males, to throw away their earned and paid for benefits, to defeat a 'minority' in the whitehouse.. By pushing forward a Cuban hispanic, Rubio, and hoping the minority voters will ignore their agenda, and rhetoric, of anti-immigrant, blame the poor, and the reality that nothing much has been offered these illegal workers except some 'lip service'.. Its looney tunes time..

The old misdirection, smoke and mirrors, grin, bare the abuse, and vote for your oppressors, probably wont succeed..

February 11, 2013
6:26 a.m.

The7thSon2010 writes:

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[in](#) response to [MOD_4_MY_DAY_JOB](#):

Since the GOP does not want illegals sponging off the American worker, they have to cater to the lib way and buy the votes. Since MOST American workers don't like illegals sponging off their tax dollars, they have to play along, too. No problem with anyone trying to better themselves, just do it the right way, like we have to. But since most libs don't want to work anyway and love freebies for votes, these kinds of people are a drain on society and always will be.

....

What are you saying? The republicans, rightwingers, keep spouting hatred, prejudice and fear, yet, expect to persuade this huge voting block, over in their camp? By what method? Shameing them, by acting as if, they dont work hard, take the hard, lowwage, hard labor, jobs, call them lazy and moochers? You need to realize, a lowwage, GED, working poor, southern WASP, isnt the role

model, most young folks, immigrants, women, the educated, the next generation, visualize as the 'saviors' of society..

The drain on society, is the lowwage southern states that take back almost twice as much in federal funding as they pay in.. Like Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, you know, the states Romney and the Republicans carried by big margins.. The 'drains on society' as you put it, the 47% that don't pay taxes, Romneys' moochers' are the Republican base, mostly in the lowwage, high unemployment, south, the home of the heavily armed, lowwage, under educated, Bible Belt, Republican dedicated, radical rightwing..

Seems your words aren't encouraging immigrants, Hispanics over to your side, your philosophy, your agenda.. LOL.. Of course, they have that Republican southern strategy, of 'joinin' up' with the howling, discontented, 'hate Obama' and all things progressive crowd, being 'one of us, not one of them', minority bashing and blaming, bigoted radical rightwing.. Way to sell your party to the voting block, they will exert a huge influence on future elections.. How could any immigrant refuse that much charm and persuasion?? LOL..

February 11, 2013
8:26 a.m.

MaryQueen writes:

Typical Redneck's who live in southern states shows their ignorance of facts on a daily basis. Red states historically are the poorest & use the American tax payer, in the form of welfare, than any other region. Is it minorities using it? NO, its white GOPers. These idiots want to believe illegals are all on welfare, when the facts show they are afraid to apply due to being sent back. It's no accident the highest welfare & lowest educated is located in the Red southern states. It's not just Hispanics the GOP has insulted, but the largest "so-called" minority, Women. The GOP is a dying breed due to cleaning up the ignorance of the party to the point the only ones left are the extreme. Which in short time will go the way of the Wigs.

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February 11, 2013
8:54 a.m.

ciberjim396 writes:

"We just need to do a better job of reaching these new voters and making sure we articulate our message in a better and clearer fashion," the Ooltewah Republican said.

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Translation, do a better job of lying to them.

February 11, 2013
11:36 a.m.

Sfernand writes:

It is hard to imagine that the Republicans will attract many Hispanic voters with the message that those that come here with no expectation other than to work at an honest hard job, receive no government benefits, and to be arrested and separated from their families at any time are sponges and takers. Hispanic citizens watch how just these policies are to their families and neighbors. At that point, no amount of messaging is going to matter.

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February 11, 2013
1:29 p.m.

KingRobertsKin writes:

In spite of the fact that Republican principles are more consistent with Hispanic culture than anything the Democrats believe, they voted so heavily for Obama for one reason and that was his "executive order" bypassing Congress and promising to not enforce the laws of the US and pick up illegals here. This bought the support of the majority of Hispanic voters which was Obama's only intent. When Hispanics learn the Obama despises everything they believe in, they will shift parties. Meanwhile the Republicans will compromise basic values to find a way to solve the "broken" immigration system (as in deliberately not enforced) and wonder why the base is deserting them. Yes, the Republicans have a delicate job of balancing. The Democrats have no principles, so there is not a problem for them. But the Republicans have principles, and they need to be careful how many of the base they offend to try and buy minority votes.

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