

# GOP struggles

**B**eing born in 1981, I'll admit to only having the ability to offer observations of the last four presidential elections. My first experience with national politics was the Clinton/Dole race in which I was too young to vote, but still worked the polls in my suit, tie and Dad's London Fog trench coat. I thought I looked so cool in that thing, even though it was a bit big on my 15-year-old frame.

While I wasn't yet old enough to register with a political party, I knew that I would become a Republican. Even as a young man, I was attracted to the party of the Gingrich Revolution that spoke of a smaller, less intrusive federal government and was repulsed by the very notion of budget deficits. The party that promoted work over welfare and was solidly in the corner of the American entrepreneur. The party that vowed to bring responsibility to the earmark process and protect our tax dollars against wasteful spending. Even as a teenager, I could project that keeping more of my own salary would be far more beneficial to the economy than allowing a grossly oversized federal bureaucracy to spend it in what was sure to be an irresponsible manner. Yes, I would be involved in the political process, and this would be my party! However, after this historic election, this party ... my party ... finds itself searching for answers as to why it all went so horribly wrong.

Now, I am not naïve enough to believe that there is only one problem within the GOP and its current leadership, but the very first issue that must be addressed is our party's lack of a clear, decisive message on how to fix the broken economy. One would think that a party that is rooted in fiscal conservatism would champion a smaller govern-

## Op-Ed \_\_\_\_\_

—By *Jesse Topper*

ment that requires less tax dollars. Instead, the main argument that many Republican candidates seem intent on making to their constituencies is that they will grow government and entitlement programs, just not as fast as the other guy. Wow! Such an inspiring vision for conservatives (he writes with tongue firmly in cheek).

Many congressional Republicans sold their soul to the devil while in power and became entwined with the very lobby-driven, big-spending, pork-laden process that they vowed to change. Gone were the days of discipline that energized Americans to

tity. Now we talk of bailouts and government takeovers of banks and private industries; we promote disastrous legislation that expands entitlement programs that even at current levels threaten to bankrupt our future. Where are the ideas of personal responsibility and allowing the markets to work free from the strong arm of Washington? Who are the leaders bold enough to suggest that the greatness and resiliency of the American people is the answer to our current economic crises and not the very institution the created this mess ... the federal government? Is it that difficult to articulate a conservative message on the economy?

I believe that Republicans are afraid. We're afraid to be perceived as the big, bad party that won't allow the government to hand out money on a silver platter to all who want a

piece of the pie. We're afraid that if we're unable to match the Democrat's budget-busting campaign promises, we'll never be able to win elections. Let me be clear; that line of thinking is flawed and has no place in the platform of the Republican Party. It's time for the GOP to realize that the

change the American people truly seek has yet to be on a ballot and I believe it's time for this party to find leaders who are willing to offer that change.

Yes, the voters have spoken clearly and they have made the point that if there are two parties offering liberalism, they'll choose the one that knows how to implement it best. Until Republicans decide to find a fiscally conservative voice, well ... let's just say we should get used to governing in the minority.

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vote for the GOP in record numbers in 1994. From 1998 through 2006, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish the difference between Republicans and Democrats. Both seemed content to allow massive growth in government programs and shrinking opportunity for businesses and the private sector. From record spending to monumental deficits, Republican leadership in Congress and the White House refused to adhere to the economic principles of Reagan and, more recently, the Contract with America that ushered in Republican control of the House in 1994.

We, as a party, lost our iden-