

Title:

Will 2006 Be A Turning Point In American Politics?

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Summary:

A look at the 2006 mid-term elections and their possible effect on American politics.

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Article Body:

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The 2006 Congressional mid-term elections are just around the corner. In many ways this election is a pivotal point for both the Democrat and Republican parties. For over a decade the Republican party has maintained control of both the Senate and House of Representatives. Though due to many issues that now face the country that may very well change.

Whether Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, most americans agree the problems this nation and the world face are serious and need to be addressed. Unfortunately it appears that within the United States partisan politics and an unwillingness to compromise has prevented any real progress.

In the House of Representatives the Democrats need to gain 15 seats to achieve a majority vote. Many political pundits from both parties believe this will be the case and some say the net gain will be much higher, though most qualify their opinion with a healthy "anything can happen".

The Senate race is much tighter with the Dem's needing 6 seats to gain a

majority position. The outcomes of the various Senate races seem to be much harder to predict. Opinion polls (something all politicians and news agencies rely on) vary from day to day though most show that at least two of the Senate races are impossible to predict.

If the Democrats take control of congress what will change? It is a good question but difficult to answer. The executive branch will still be Republican and a "divided government" as it is sometimes called has proven problematic in the past.

The American style of democracy relies on a system of checks and balances with a congress providing the role of oversight as one of its functions. Most if not all political analysts agree that Congress has been rather lax recently in exercising that particular responsibility.

The war in Iraq, terrorism, immigration, social security and health care reform seem to be the issues most Americans are concerned with. Whether or not any one or all of these issues are addressed and resolved after the mid-terms remains an open question.

Recently Republicans have had a difficult time responding to the various problems and scandals that have plagued them, with the Rep. Tom Foley / page situation only adding to the list. The base, or core of the Republican party which includes conservative evangelicals have voiced serious concern over the direction of the party and the apparent drifting from core Republican values.

Fiscal responsibility, smaller government and personal freedoms have historically been major parts of the GOP platform. Federal spending, the deficit and the federal government are at this point larger than ever before and growing, and many would argue that personal freedoms are being threatened in the war on terror.

The Democrats do not have it any easier. Unable to communicate a clear message and an inability to provide a new direction for the country, most Americans find themselves forced to choose between two apparently dysfunctional political parties.

The possibility exists that after this election cycle both parties will try to set aside their differences and tackle the major issues. If the Dem's do gain a clear majority in both houses, then both parties will be forced to at least try to work together if they are to get anything done.

The President will have two years left in his second term and with the situation

in Iraq no where near resolved and a majority of Americans feeling the war was a mistake, it is likely both parties will work towards a quick if imperfect solution.

A "divided government" situation, where one branch (for example: the Executive) is controlled by one party and another branch of government (Legislature) is controlled by the political opposite can have both positive and negative aspects.

Proper Congressional oversight has a better chance of being exercised and maintained and a larger proportion of the population will generally have their concerns heard and addressed. Two political parties with an equal share of power will leave a smaller unrepresented minority (in theory).

The down-side is the very real possibility that nothing gets done. Both sides so entrenched and unwilling to move on an issue that if the Executive branch is presented with a bill to sign it is vetoed and any proposals made to Congress are rejected out of hand.

An honest willingness from both parties to work on the demanding issues of the day will not only serve their own individual interests but serve the country as a whole, which is why they were elected in the first place.

The 2006 Congressional mid-term elections may provide a new dynamic to Washington and a real opportunity to address some of the problems that face this nation. With the middle-east more volatile now rather than less, North Korea and Iran working towards nuclear weapons, America's damaged reputation in the eyes of the world and the serious reality of America's domestic problems, both Democrats, Republicans and the Nation would be best served by setting aside partisan politics and setting to work on the difficult issues we now face.