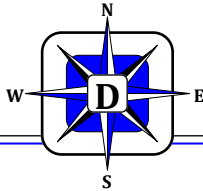




John Davis Political Report ©



P.O. Box 30714 Raleigh, NC 27622
 johndavis@johndavisconsulting.com
 www.johndavisconsulting.com



Premium Subscription
 \$500 for weekly reports!
 Mail your check today.

A Checkers Player in a Nation of Chess Players

How Obama's Hubris Cost Him Kennedy's Seat and May Destroy His Reform Legacy

John N. Davis, President

John Davis Political Report is a weekly essay about the political trends impacting North Carolina politics. A Premium Subscription through the 2010 elections is only \$500. **Make checks payable to John Davis Consulting, EIN 26-3064837, and mail to P.O. Box 30714, Raleigh, NC 27622.** Davis has followed NC politics for 24 years, serving as President of NCFREE, a political research group, where he was Editor of the *Almanac of North Carolina Politics*. Davis specializes in analyzing political trends, candidates and campaigns.

*"Governments at every level had become too cavalier about spending taxpayer money. Too often, bureaucracies were oblivious to the cost of their mandates. A lot of liberal rhetoric did seem to value rights and entitlements over duties and responsibilities."*¹

U.S. Senator Barack Obama, 2006

Hu-bris (hyoo'bris) n. Overbearing pride or presumption; arrogance.

In his book, *The Audacity to Win*, President Obama's campaign manager David Plouffe writes about Obama's "significant self-confidence." What Plouffe calls significant self-confidence is also hubris, excessive pride or arrogance; the trait most responsible for Obama's failed first year.

The year was 2003. Plouffe was meeting with Obama in Chicago for the first time to talk about his 2004 race for U.S. Senate. He was trying to persuade Obama of the importance of allowing campaign professionals to run the campaign. "You just have to let go and trust," Plouffe told him. "I understand that intellectually," said Obama, "but this is my life and career. And I think I could probably do every job on the campaign better than the people I'll hire to do it."²

Sound familiar? President Obama's big mistake was assuming that his historic election was a mandate to do as he pleased ... putting healthcare reform ahead of concerns about jobs with a dismissive attitude as to fears about costs, deficits and taxes associated with healthcare reform. President Obama and the Imperials, the Democratic Congressional leaders, need to think about Scott Brown's now-famous answer to David Gergen's question about responsibility for the maintenance of "Ted Kennedy's seat." "Not Kennedy's seat," Brown replied, "the people's seat."

¹ *The Audacity of Hope*, by Barack Obama, Three Rivers Press, Pg. 31.

² *The Audacity to Win*, by David Plouffe, Campaign Manager for Obama for America, Viking Press, Pg. 8.

It's not Obama's "big bang agenda" that's important to Americans struggling to deal with the worst economy in 70 years, it's the "people's agenda." And who are these people? Well, 8 out of 10 voters in America are either conservative or moderate.³ It's no wonder that a liberal president leading a liberal congress is having trouble getting his legislation supported.

Thomas Edsall, Political Editor of the liberal-bent *Huffington Post*, noted this week that *The Pew Center* polling found that during Obama's first year the percentage of voters saying he listens to liberals in his party more than moderates grew by 9 points, from 34 percent to 43 percent. "And, so now a Democratic Party that seemed poised for electoral greatness has reverted back to the debilitating political condition that ailed it during the 1970s and 1980s," said Edsall, "It is increasingly perceived as too liberal."⁴

Obama has run the healthcare debate behind closed doors, bribing senators to get their support with outrageous deals worth hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, even though he promised eight times during 2008 that the healthcare reform debate would be on C-Span. That's hubris. Obama expects the American people to sit idly by until after the bill becomes law, at which time, according to the President, you will "suddenly learn this bill does things you like."

Thus far, Obama has ignored the early signs of trouble. It's no wonder that the Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor poll conducted last week shows that only 39% of Americans would vote to re-elect the President to a 2nd term, and only 23% say they definitely would do so.⁵

David Plouffe concludes his book saying, "Obama is a chess player in a city of checkers players." That much may be true in Washington, DC among his fellow Democrats. But out here among regular folks, in states like Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts, Obama's hubris problem has made him look like a checkers player in a nation of chess players.

Obama's Hubris Disenfranchises the *Majority* and Taints Democratic Brand in States

"When there's trouble in Massachusetts, rest assured, there's trouble everywhere," said Scott Brown, GOP winner of Ted Kennedy's Senate seat. Brown said that the healthcare bill was being "forced on the American people" and was "not being debated openly and fairly."⁶

Thus far, the anti-incumbency vengeance has been directed exclusively at Democrats ... further evidence that the Democratic brand has been tainted from the top. It is playing out in the form of angry in-your-face voters like those who crowded last summer's congressional town hall meetings; it's seen in the about-face independent voters in November 2009 in Virginia and New Jersey, and in liberal, Democratic Massachusetts on Tuesday. The disenfranchised *majority* is tired of being ignored and is taking back political authority. Incumbents are in trouble, especially Democrats who put all of their political eggs in President Obama's basket.

³ Gallup Poll, *Conservatives Finish 2009 as No. 1 Ideological Group*, January 7, 2010; www.gallup.com

⁴ The Huffington Post, *Ghost Story* by Thomas Edsall, 1/20/10

⁵ Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor poll conducted by Financial Dynamics, Jan. 3-7, 2010

⁶ Scott Brown, Republican winner of U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy's seat, campaign victory speech 1/19/2010

Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, a Democrat up for reelection this year, fears that under Obama the party has moved too far to the left. "If you lose Massachusetts and that's not a wake-up call, there's no hope of waking up," he told ABC News.⁷ "It's why moderates and independents even in a state as Democratic as Massachusetts just aren't buying our message," he said.

America's disenfranchised *majority* has now been heard loud and clear.

Is Obama's Hubris Problem a Solution for North Carolina Republicans?

Here in North Carolina, Democrats face the politically devastating prospects of corruption scandals multiplying as a result of the federal grand jury investigations into allegations of illegal activity by former Gov. Mike Easley, as well as scandals associated with allegations of insider trading by state Sen. Tony Rand and assault charges against Sen. R.C. Soles, Permanent Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus. To what extent scandal will impact the Democratic Party leadership and their fundraising organization is anyone's guess.

While the Democrats' world has been shaken, Republicans appear to be pulling together for the first time in recent memory. GOP State Chairman Tom Fetzter brings a unique set of skills to the Republican Party that gives him greater potential than recent predecessors. Fetzter was a three term mayor of Raleigh; an experience that taught him how to manage disparate factions. That experience also made him a seasoned candidate and established his extraordinary skills as a fundraiser. Throughout his first year as party chairman, news stories have surfaced time and again showing Fetzter, State Senate Minority Leader Phil Berger, and State House Minority Leader Paul Stam, traveling the state as a team, issuing press releases as a team, setting the example on the importance of unity for Republicans and their allies throughout the state.

Will Democrats recover in time for the November elections? President Obama earned the body blows to the ego he took in Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts. But, early signs are that he is in denial (hubris) and is blaming those election losses on the residual anger of the American public left over from the Bush/Cheney Administration. If that attitude continues, Democrats in North Carolina will suffer. Cooler heads in the Democratic Party, like former Gov. Jim Hunt, need to step in and help Obama manage his agenda and style while there is still time.

Meanwhile, there is a book Obama needs to read. It's called, *The Audacity of Hope*, written by a newcomer to the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 2006. The author wrote:

"Governments at every level had become too cavalier about spending taxpayer money. Too often, bureaucracies were oblivious to the cost of their mandates. A lot of liberal rhetoric did seem to value rights and entitlements over duties and responsibilities."⁸

Obama's hubris cost him Kennedy's seat and may destroy his entire reform legacy. Perhaps the author of *The Audacity of Hope* can help him get back on track. If he doesn't, Republicans are going to have a big year in North Carolina and elsewhere and he is going to continue to look like a checkers player in a nation of chess players.

⁷ http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0110/31703_Page2.html#ixzz0dBnQJQTK

⁸ *The Audacity of Hope*, by Barack Obama, Three Rivers Press, 2006, Pg. 31.