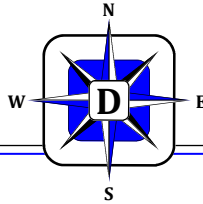


# John Davis Political Report <sup>©</sup>

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## Never Waste a Crisis (Unless you are a Republican)

**John N. Davis, President**

*John Davis Political Report is an in-depth summary of the key political trends and events impacting North Carolina politics. You may circulate as you wish with attribution. John Davis has followed NC politics for 23 years, serving as President of NCFREE and Editor of the Almanac of North Carolina Politics. He is President of John Davis Consulting, specializing in political analysis, corporate & PAC briefings, and campaign planning.*

The 2009/2010 election cycle is heating up. Challengers throughout the state are beginning to move about, stewing over their potential for picking off an incumbent in next year's congressional and legislative races. They sense that the national and state budget crises give them an opportunity to pounce on vulnerable prey.

In the absence of sustained economic recovery, next year's political atmosphere will be dangerously unstable as competing groups and individuals maneuver to place the blame for our state and national ills on the opposition, while laying the better claim for a brighter future.

*“This crisis provides opportunities to do things you could not do before.”*

*Rahm Emanuel,  
 White House Chief of Staff*

President Obama's Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.” Why? According to Emanuel, “Crisis provides opportunities to do things you could not do before.”

The Obama administration is clearly using the national economic crisis to advance issues like health care reform and energy policy. The “never waste a crisis” strategy, coupled with the president's residual positive public opinion despite his occasional gaffs, are yielding impressive legislative successes ... granted in the Democratic dominated U.S. Congress. But are they playing right into the hands of the Republicans?

With every legislative success comes political risk. If a frightening economic crisis allows the president to sell the Democratic congress a frightening bailout and economic stimulus package, no doubt Republicans will have more than enough for their attack ads. If an unprecedented budget deficit in North Carolina forces politically risky tax increases

and the elimination of important programs and services by the Democratic legislature and Democratic governor, no doubt Republican admeisters are drooling in anticipation.

Oh, but wait ... I forgot the ads have to be aired ... and that costs money ... and North Carolina Republicans never seem to have enough of the faithful willing to write a check to amass a competitive war chest. Republicans can't raise money because they are disorganized and don't trust each other.

Republicans in North Carolina don't trust each other because they are entrenched in uncompromising ideological factions ... factions who couldn't care less that a crisis offers the best opportunity to make political gains if those gains have to be paid for with compromise and collaboration ... factions with a history of opting to be on the right side of issues rather than on the winning side of campaigns.

Back in the day, the Democrats were disorganized and politically incapacitated in much the same way as Republicans today. The faces of the Democratic Party in the 1970s and 1980s were the left wing extremists ... extremists who frightened Middle America much like right wingers do now. But then a group was formed by those around the country who were tired of losing campaigns ... called the Democratic Leadership Council.

The Democratic Leadership Council argued that the party should shift from the radical left agenda and work to synthesize those views with the best from all political camps, including the political right. Under Democrats like U.S. President Bill Clinton and N.C. Governor Jim Hunt, conservative issues like welfare reform, getting tough on crime, and building more prisons were advocated with ardent political fervor.

Both parties did well in the 1990s, in great part because the country didn't trust either party with all of the power. That's what I see coming in 2010 ... divided power. However, if history repeats itself in 2010, North Carolina Republicans will once again snatch defeat from the jaws of an opportunity crisis because they won't work together.

There is another way for the GOP in the Ole North State ... a way that synthesizes the best ideas from all Republicans; a way that provides a means for shared responsibilities among the leaders from all Republican camps.

There is another way ... a way that reluctant financial backers, burned too many times by losing political investments, take even greater risks earlier on in the cycle; a way that accepts the reality that you can't influence legislation if you don't influence campaigns, and that hiring the best political advisors and recruiting the best possible candidates is the only way to have a reliable positive influence on the outcome of a campaign.

What is the other way? Collaborate.