



From the Empty Closet Editor: Tying up some loose ends (and means)

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Election 2006 is history. The war in Iraq and corruption in high places seemed to matter more to voters than the Right's "culture war" against their longtime scapegoat, lgbt Americans. Heterosexuals may not be ready to permit the M word to be used by non-straight, but they apparently feel that the surging number of real casualties in Iraq is a greater problem than the rightwing fantasy that marriage will somehow become a casualty, if same sex couples are allowed access even to civil ceremonies. **The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force noted that support for our families is no longer a "liability" for politicians, whereas support for the Radical Right is.**

Many conservatives (and too many liberals) now support non-legal civil unions as the alternative to legal marriage rights. This represents a big jump from their initial negative reaction to the Vermont civil union decision. The backlash to the Massachusetts ruling legalizing same sex marriage was even more hysterical. By comparison, the New Jersey decision raised the blood pressure of only the most extreme bigots.

Evidently The American People (or TAP, as that cliché has been called) are disillusioned with conservative self-righteousness. After Foley, FEMA/Katrina, Iraq/Halliburton, and the fall of Tom DeLay, Ralph Reed and Jack Abramoff's many other buddies, the Republican claim to be moral arbiters of the universe has passed its sell-by date.

Some loose ends were left over from 2006. One was the report in The Advocate on Oct. 10 that Karl Rove, architect of the demonize-gays-to-get-"values"-votes strategy, had a gay stepfather, to whom he was apparently close. This family tie did not keep Rove from attacking gay citizens' civil rights. Family Values indeed.

Another loose end, or loose cannon: Rush Limbaugh showed his usual class when he mocked Michael J. Fox's trembling in that pro-stem cell research ad. We can be sure that Rush never forgets to take HIS meds.

A local loose end: This column has mentioned before that issues of the Empty Closet are often hidden under other publications in area stores. On Nov. 2, this reporter was in an East Avenue coffee shop and noticed that as usual the ECs had been deliberately concealed.

Homophobes seem to prefer anonymous sabotage -- silencing people and ideas they don't like -- to taking responsibility for their actions. The GAGV website was hacked twice last fall, and although this was quickly fixed, and new security measures are in place, it was a reminder of the cowardly nature of the fanatics who think they are on a mission from Jehovah to make the world safe for straight white men.

To the fanatics, the end (power and control) always justifies the means (lies, censorship, trashing, dirty tricks). OK, politics is like that – but it's the hypocrisy of the Right's claim to be morally superior, and their identification of religion with their extremist political agenda, that are so Taliban-like and such a threat to democracy.

When the Right took power six years ago, gay Americans knew their "jihad" against us would continue. But few foresaw that the Bush regime would create this culture of war, torture and corruption. The question now is, is that culture really on the way out, or was the midterm election of 2006 just a passing phenomenon? Two years of hard work lie ahead.