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The **Democratic Strategist** is a web-based publication edited by three leading American political strategists and thinkers—political theorist William Galston, polling expert Stan Greenberg and political demographer Ruy Teixeira. It seeks to provide a forum and meeting ground for the serious, data-based discussion of Democratic political strategy.

The **Democratic Strategist** has three editorial goals—(1) to provide an explicitly and unapologetically partisan platform for the discussion of Democratic political strategy, (2) to insist upon greater use of data and greater reliance on empirical evidence in strategic thinking and (3) to act as a neutral forum and center of discussion for all sectors of the Democratic community.

As **The Democratic Strategists'** editorial philosophy states, the publication will be "proudly partisan, firmly and insistently based on facts and data and emphatically open to all sectors and currents of opinion within the Democratic community".

## A DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST STRATEGY MEMO

**A MESSAGE STRATEGY FOR  
COMBATING THE "ENTHUSIASM  
GAP" – THEME: THIS ELECTION IS  
NOT ABOUT WASHINGTON. IT'S  
ABOUT RESISTING A CONSERVATIVE  
ATTACK ON "PEOPLE LIKE YOU".**

**BY JAMES VEGA**

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**TDS STRATEGY MEMO – A MESSAGE STRATEGY FOR COMBATING THE “ENTHUSIASM GAP” –  
THEME: THIS ELECTION IS NOT ABOUT WASHINGTON. IT’S ABOUT RESISTING A CONSERVATIVE ATTACK  
ON “PEOPLE LIKE YOU”.**

By James Vega

In recent weeks the DNC, OFA and other Democratic campaign organizations have refined their message strategy to define the coming election as a stark choice between two vastly different alternative futures rather than a referendum on Obama’s first year and a half in office and to suggest that a wide range of distasteful policies will be pursued if the Republicans win control of the House of Representatives.

This is fine as far as it goes but it does not bring into focus the distinct and uniquely aggressive threat that the militarized and hyper-ideological “take back our country” campaign poses to Democrats across the country.

The key message that needs to be communicated to “stay at home” Democrats is this: 2010 is not a typical election. It is a bitter nationwide conservative political offensive that is aimed directly and specifically at “people like you”.

If the Republicans win control of the House of Representatives it is not a loose collection of conservative candidates who will declare victory but an organized and militant conservative movement. This movement will take complete credit for the victory, assert that the results provide complete vindication for its views and argue that it demonstrates complete majority support for its agenda. The movement will redouble its efforts, increase its pressure, seek new targets and intensify its activities.

There will be three very dramatic consequences:

First, there will be a congressionally based attack on the White House similar to what occurred during the Clinton years – a blizzard of subpoenas regarding phony scandals like Whitewater, the “murder” of Vince Foster, “drug dealing” in Arkansas and so on. This is already in preparation. As an [article in Politico](#)<sup>1</sup> notes:

“if Rep. Darell Issa becomes Chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in 2011, he is making plans to hire dozens of subpoena-wielding investigators...Issa wants to be to the Obama administration what Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) was to the Clinton administration – a subpoena machine in search of White House scandals. “

Second, there will be a vastly increased range of attacks against liberal and progressive organizations modeled on the attacks on ACORN. One can get some flavor of the coming

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0610/38697.html>

attacks from a *Playboy* article<sup>2</sup> written by one conservative political operative.

...a large number of people in our group have military backgrounds. Their catchphrase is “remember guys, the enemy is to the left”

...The ACORN blood tasted good.

...we’ve acquired Service Employees International Union tea shirts to wear at Tea Party rallies...

...there will be more stings. If you are part of a large organization with a vested interest in the Obama administration, be afraid.

Third, many issues and policies that are now considered “extremist” will gain credibility and move toward the mainstream. Initiatives that have been launched by individual congressmen or enacted in particular states, school districts or organizations will be promoted nationally. For example:

- Requiring all elementary and middle school teachers to report suspected illegal aliens to the INS
- Opening congressional investigations into the research of climate and environmental scientists whose work has been challenged by conservatives with the goal of damaging their academic reputations and “defunding” their research.
- Radically downgrading the role and stature of Thomas Jefferson in American history curriculums nationwide and revising textbooks to deny that the founding fathers supported the separation of church and state.
- Revising the Civil Rights act to allow private businesses to discriminate against blacks and other minorities (Of course, only for the most completely noble and altruistic reasons of libertarian ethical philosophy).
- Encouraging the “open carry” of guns in public places across the nation, and especially at political events.
- Opening impeachment proceedings against Obama on grounds of his ineligibility for office or his conduct as president.

It is the strong likelihood of these “extremist” results of a Republican re-conquest of the House of Representatives and others like them that need to be communicated to the current “unenthusiastic” Democratic voters. It is probably impossible to convince many Democrats not to feel at least somewhat disappointed that Obama has not been able to accomplish more than he has, but it should be entirely possible to convince them that – to put it colloquially – “they better get off their asses and vote” if they don’t want to face far worse consequences in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.playboy.com/articles/rogues-of-k-street/index.html?page=1>

Here is one example of the way such a message can be framed:

***Why “disappointed” Democrats should still get out and vote***

*This election is not about Obama or Washington or anybody on the ballot – it’s about you*

*When the Republicans say they want to “take back our country” in November, they mean that they want to take it away from people like you.*

*When Sarah Palin says her “mama grizzlies” and “pit bulls” are getting ready to snarl and bite, the people she’s threatening are people like you.*

*When John Boehner gives a speech with the refrain “hell no you can’t”, he’s talking directly to people like you.*

*You see, the Republicans think they know what makes a “real” American – and that they’re the only ones who qualify. They think anyone who thinks or acts differently – like you – just isn’t quite as “real” an American as they are. And they think that gives them the right to try and make you live and think and behave the way that they think you ought to.*

*This election isn’t about stuff going on far away in Washington. It’s about things that are going to start happening right next door. It’s about whether you let a conservative coalition get into power because of low off-year turnout that is going to tell you that this isn’t really your country, that your opinions don’t count and that “hell no you can’t” have any of the things that you and a majority of other Americans voted for two years ago.*

*If you don’t vote to stop them now, you’ll meet them soon enough when they start showing up at your front door. They won’t stop trying to take back what they call “their” country from you and people like you until enough Americans stand up and say “Alright, damn it. That’s enough. I’m an American too, every bit as American as you are.”*

*This November will be your one big chance to send them that message – and if you don’t vote, the only message you’ll be sending is that they can go right ahead and do whatever the hell they want – to you, to your family and to all the people you care about – because you won’t lift a finger to stop them.*