



2010 Election Over; Seven-Point Plan for 2012

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Election day 2010 is so yesterday. Today and tomorrow, progressive women - who constitute up to 60 percent of the Democrats' base - had better regroup and start a vigorous push not just to regain ground lost, but to take back the message and advance a strong agenda for 2012.

Let's face it - Democrats (do they ever learn?) and all progressives are in for a very rough ride again, after only the briefest of post-Bush respites.

But we have to remember that the political process is an oscillation, not a straight line between two points. Count on it: Every political defeat sows the seeds of the next victory, and every victory sows the seeds of the next defeat. This year's defeat was sown not by moving too

fast or thinking too big, but because Democratic leaders with President Obama at the top failed to keep the electorate thinking expansively and courageously enough.

Contrast this with Republican performance during the last two years. Did they wait even one minute to begin their battle to regain control of Congress? No, they redoubled their efforts. Instead of licking the wounds of their 2008 defeat, they set about opposing Obama, vilifying Nancy Pelosi, and obstructing the legislative progress. They unabashedly blamed the Democrats in power for not passing the very legislation they themselves killed - and worse yet, the Democrats let them get away with it.

Here's a seven-point plan so progressive voters can celebrate like it was 2008, come November, 2012.

1. Carpe the chaos. Post-election regrouping with its inevitable shifting boundaries and jockeying for power is the perfect launching pad for victories ahead. Far from being a time to step back, it's an opportunity for progressive women to assert leadership and do things differently while people are searching for new solutions. Defeated Tea Party candidate Christine O'Donnell said the Republican Party will never be the same because of her candidacy. If that's true, progressives have an ideal opportunity to stage a come back in 2012.

2. Opt out of being co-opted. Some say, "You lost, so change your platform to be more like those who beat you." That's a losing strategy.

Insist, instead, that the Democratic Party recant its lose-lose, Blue Dog recruitment and focus on beefing up support for the 60 percent of their voter base that is women, largely progressive women. Democrats can't win without those votes. [Period](#). Notably, many [Blue Dogs](#) lost their seats despite "running against their party" in futile attempts to placate conservative constituents.

3. Embrace the power of choosing. Nonpartisan women's political groups like the White House Project and the 2012 Project should rethink their missions and set standards for helping only women who support a pro-woman agenda, if not by party affiliation, then on key issues. Many women resist choosing sides in an ambivalent relationship with power. Time to get over that.

4. Articulate a bold and righteous agenda. What Obama promised before he was elected is a good start. That would define new terms for the debate. For example: health reform with universal coverage and full reproductive health care (NOT starting with yet another compromise as he is already offering to do); the [Paycheck Fairness Act](#); quantum leaps to stimulate the economy with green jobs, investment in education and technological innovations; the [Freedom of Choice Act](#) to guarantee reproductive self-determination. And while we're at it, let's raise the need for quality, affordable day care. We should be gearing up to run a progressive woman for president in 2016, or 2012 if Obama continues to throw women under the bus. (Yes, I have someone in mind, but the truth is, that because of her, there will be a solid bench of qualified female candidates in the pipeline.)

5. Learn from the mama grizzlies. They embrace that which is uniquely female - childbearing (82 percent of women, including progressive women, are mothers). Emulate their fierceness and moral certainty, and the energy of their insurgency. But fight their attacks on policies designed to help our children. And call out the \$11,000 pay [disparity](#) that mothers face by proposing real solutions such as [Moms Rising's Motherhood Manifesto](#).

6. Shape and monitor [media coverage](#). Make sure that more progressive females are represented, and represented in a [positive light](#). The right has played the news media like a virtuoso on a Stradivarius, while the ever-appeasing talking heads tack to the middle of the road, where it's said there's nothing but a yellow stripe and a dead armadillo. [Enough of that](#).

7. Don't play so darn nice. When reminded that he isn't giving us the change we needed, Obama shakes his professorial finger and chides, "You weren't listening." Oh, but we are listening. Women's groups and progressive women voters were seduced by fool's gold, thinking that the 2008 victory represented lasting change. But it's not a place of power to confuse access for influence, or any one election for lasting change.

The way forward is to carpe the chaos, opt out of being co-opted, and never ever get off the offensive. Progressive women must embrace their power to put themselves not just back into office, but back into political ascendancy.