

BACK TO BASICS

By Wanda Franz, Ph.D.

[New York Senator Schumer:] "I called Governor [X] and I said, 'Who is the best candidate?' ... And he said, 'Only one person can beat [Senator Y] but ... you wouldn't want him to run' Well, I said, '... why wouldn't I want him to run?' And he said, 'Because he's pro-life.'" Mr. Schumer pauses here, to make sure the next part is clear. "I said, 'Governor, the days are over when a Democrat has to check 28 boxes before they get our support.' So we actively recruited him, and once he entered the race, he was never behind." The New Yorker, here, looks pleased as punch.

-- Wall Street Journal, 11/11/2006

Chuck Schumer says that the single greatest failure of the Democrats as an opposition party was allowing Samuel Alito to join the Supreme Court.

"Judges are the most important," said Mr. Schumer, who orchestrated the implausible Democratic takeover of the Senate last week. "One more justice would have made it a 5-4 conservative, hard-right majority for a long time. That won't happen."

From now on, all the President's judicial appointments will need to meet the requirements of Mr. Schumer [emphasis added], the ... power broker who has happily accepted the mantle of chief architect for the Democrats' effort to build a majority for the 2008 elections and beyond. ...

His book, Positively American: Winning Back the Middle Class Majority One Family at a Time, will be released right around the President's State of the Union address, and will fit neatly into the role that Mr. Schumer now envisions for himself as tactician in chief for the newly ascendant Democrats. —The New York Observer, 11/20/2006

Some pro-lifers could profit from the example of Chuck Schumer, who may not have a pro-life bone in his body. Schumer, the "tactician in chief," goes for the attainable (a Democratic Senate majority) by supporting even candidates who don't share his pro-abortion convictions in order to advance his long-term strategy: "no more Alitos," as some newspapers headlined his goal. Schumer knows that abortion "rights" were invented, imposed, and imbedded into law by an activist Supreme Court. And Mr. Schumer fears such "rights" could be found invalid by a constitutionally oriented Court; hence he wants "no more Alitos." His election efforts paid off: "From now on, all the President's judicial appointments will need to meet the requirements of Mr. Schumer"—so says the New York Observer.

On this page, we have frequently urged pro-lifers to heed the practical wisdom expressed by two sayings: "the point is not to make a statement but to make a difference" and "the perfect is the enemy of the good." During this and past elections there were instances where the refusal to support a less than perfect candidate in order to make a "statement" led to an unintended "difference": the less than perfect candidate lost to the Schumer-type candidate. And now we are told "the President's judicial appointments need to meet the requirements of Mr. Schumer" instead of meeting the requirements of those who respect the Constitution. How will this advance pro-life principles? Are future justices meeting Schumer's approval likely to

overturn *Roe v. Wade*? Wouldn't pro-lifers rather see their requirements met by future justices?

Let's remind ourselves of our purpose as pro-lifers: We want to secure the right to life as a fundamental right in our legal system. We want abortion to be made illegal. We want to safeguard the life of the infant born with weaknesses and imperfections. We want to protect the Terri Schindler Schiavos of this world from cruel "treatment" meant to kill them. We want to stay the hand of the euthanasia enthusiasts who would kill the inconvenient. But we should not want to engage in posturing destructive to the right-to-life cause.

In other words, we want to put into practice important and fundamental principles. But how on earth can we achieve any of that if we busy ourselves with "making statements" instead of working to make the crucial difference? Impatient pro-lifers, seeing how obviously right our cause is, sometimes make the mistake of assuming that others have the same insight. Indeed, it would be very convenient if pointing out the obvious, with a "principled statement" or two, would change people's minds and turn our "culture of death" into a "culture of life." It would be nice if we always had an abundance of perfect pro-life candidates successfully running for public office. In reality, of course, effecting a huge cultural change—as we aspire to do—requires clear thinking, tactical flexibility, commitment to a long-term strategy, hard and tiring work, substantial sacrifice, and prayerful patience.

As our campaign to ban partial-birth abortions demonstrated, we can move public opinion in the pro-life direction, but such shifts come not in big chunks but in increments. By the mid-nineties, just before we started our campaign to ban partial-birth abortions, the percentage of the public favoring unlimited abortion had settled to around 30-35%, whilst those favoring a ban of all abortions were around 12-15%. In 2005, after ten years of campaigning against partial-birth abortions, the support for unlimited abortion had dropped as low as 23%, while the pro-life position had reached as high as 22%. Anyone who doubts that the campaign to ban partial-birth abortions had anything to do with this shift should consider the intense opposition which this campaign still elicits among pro-abortionists.

There are two points here: public opinion can be moved towards the pro-life position, and the large "middle" of the public is still not ready to ban abortion altogether.

The obvious lesson is that our work, if done right, can produce results, but realistically it will take a lot of work over a long time to achieve the cultural change we seek. Thus we must go back to what made us successful: developing pro-life chapters in every county, identifying the pro-lifers in your area, raising funds so that contributors have a stake in our cause, mobilizing the grassroots pro-lifers, and coordinating all local efforts with NRLC's initiatives.

Our country's motto is "e pluribus unum"—"out of many one." It should be the pro-lifers' motto, too.