

Sample Op-ed on Republican Failures and Democratic Accomplishments

As we rush headlong into this fall's election, what can we learn from the eight years we've just been through? Without the White House, and with slim majorities in Congress, Democrats have spent the past two years working to bring change to our country.

But most of the past eight years has been a story of conservative control: Republicans have had two terms in the White House and six years at all the levers of power—something not even President Ronald Reagan had. Their ideology was put to a definitive test.

And that ideology failed. Given a tremendous opportunity to govern, Republicans have left our nation in a deep hole.

Take the economy, which is even now spinning into recession and a Wall Street crisis. Republicans had the opportunity to head off that crisis, but they ignored its signs instead. In all their years in control of Congress, Republicans failed to address the safety and soundness of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. They failed to prevent the abusive lending practices at the root of the subprime debacle. And they prided themselves as deregulators, taking the economic referees off the field when we needed them most.

At the same time, the Bush Administration saddled America with record deficits and debt, setting off a crisis of confidence in our financial system. The combined result of all that recklessness has been a financial meltdown and deep economic uncertainty.

What about the economic impact on families? A few months ago, President Bush said, "In the long run, our economy is going to be fine." We all believe in a bright future for America, but that attitude glosses over the millions of working Americans who are hurting right now. Since President Bush took office, nearly six million more Americans are living in poverty. And last month, America lost 159,000 jobs, bringing us to three quarters of a million jobs lost just this year.

What about energy policy? How that's worked out really depends on your perspective. If you're an oil company executive, Republican policies have been a tremendous success. They've helped you to the biggest profits in American history, and you've been getting billion-dollar subsidies on top of them.

But the rest of us are stuck with gas prices that have more than doubled since President Bush took office. Meanwhile, Republicans have voted against nearly every single piece of legislation we've brought to the House Floor to confront high gas prices.

On healthcare, President Bush vetoed the very same Children's Health Insurance Program expansion he called for when he was trying to get reelected. Most House Republicans backed him up, and 4 million eligible poor children lost out on health insurance. In all, the number of

Americans without health insurance has increased by more than 7 million over the last eight years.

Foreign policy, too, is a story of failed promises. As America began the Iraq War, Donald Rumsfeld predicted, "It could last six days, six weeks. I doubt six months." Today, of course, that war has stretched on longer than World War II, costing us 4,168 American lives and some \$600 billion and stretching our military to the breaking point. Meanwhile, Afghanistan smolders, and al Qaeda is regrouping.

In contrast, Democrats have focused on using our slim majority to change what we can for working Americans. We enacted a 21st-century GI Bill to guarantee college for all of our veterans; a raise in the minimum wage for the first time in more than a decade; the most sweeping ethics reform since Watergate; and implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations to make our country stronger.

On energy, we boosted fuel efficiency standards for the first time in more than 30 years, and increased investment in renewable energy.

To confront the recession, Democrats passed a job-creating stimulus package at the beginning of the year and a landmark housing rescue bill this summer. We passed comprehensive lending reform to attack the root of the financial crisis. And when President Bush came to us last month with a flawed economic recovery plan, we improved it significantly by protecting taxpayer money, blocking golden parachutes for CEOs, and helping homeowners renegotiate their mortgages to stabilize home values for everyone.

In the next Congress, Democrats will continue to heed the call for change, focusing on the needs of the working Americans who elected us to a majority two years ago.