



The Real Mandate

by Grover Norquist

On November 3, 43 percent of American voters cast ballots for Bill Clinton. Clinton won thirty-two states while polling three percentage points below Michael Dukakis's losing showing in 1988. *USA Today* helpfully explained that this was a "landslide." *Time* and *Newsweek* found decisive "mandates," mandates for "change."

But just what message were voters sending? When voters rejected President Bush—who had himself rejected the low-tax policies of President Reagan—were they demanding a return to Reaganism or a leap forward to the even higher taxes implicit in Clintonism? A poll by Fabrizio, McLaughlin and Associates found that 40 percent of conservatives and 30 percent of Republicans voted against Bush. Were these voters repudiating their long-held principles?

Or were they reacting to the Bush Administration's orgy of spending increases and its regulatory binging?

The nation is stuck with Clinton for the next four years, and both the Clinton Administration and Republicans eager to recapture the White House need honest answers to the question of whether the low-tax, limited-government, strong-defense, traditional-values Republican coalition is finally broken, or whether it simply failed to find a presidential candidate among Clinton, Bush, and Perot. If the latter, then another Reagan could reunite the coalition and defeat Clinton if he governs as a liberal. If, however, the nation has truly moved left and would welcome—even demand—higher taxes for more government programs, then Clinton can move strongly left and win popular support.

The Democratic Leadership Council,

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created to move the Democrats back from knee-jerk leftism, argues that Clinton's centrist positions on welfare reform, the death penalty, and the line-item veto won the day. The DLC argues that the mandate for moving left is limited at best. Hillary Clinton's coterie argues that any vote against Bush was a vote against the "Reagan/Bush years." Raw political power, they think, will allow them to act on their left-wing principles.

The Republican party has similar divides. Reagan Republicans are wearing flashing neon "I Told You So" neckties. Bush, they argue, abandoned Reagan's most successful policies: low taxes, spending restraint, deregulation, and confrontation with the Democratic leadership in Congress. Bush raised taxes, increased spending more than even Jimmy Carter, added 20,000 new regulators to the public payroll, and cut secret deals with House speaker Tom Foley and Senate majority leader George Mitchell—whom he called his "friends" after each date-rape. Reagan Republicans argue that their coalition simply lacks a leader.

Liberal Republicans—led by Warren Rudman of New Hampshire, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, and Tom Campbell of California—hold that it was the pro-life language in the party's platform, and appeals to evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics, that cost Bush the election. This wing of the party has formed a "Republican Majority Coalition," which is given a more than respectful hearing by the press corps. No member of the Washington press has been rude enough to point out that the abortion language in the 1992 platform is the same as the language in the winning platforms of 1984 and 1988 or that 40 percent of George Bush's 1992 vote came from evangelical Protestants. The media's lack of critical analysis is matched only by that of Specter himself,

who—after admitting that the "religious right" was responsible for his come-from-behind 1992 re-election—is now trying his hand at Christian-bashing.

Unsurprisingly, as pollsters and pundits on both sides busy themselves torturing data and reformulating questions, liberals find that the nation has moved left, while conservatives are more convinced than ever that the Reagan coalition will hold. More instructive than theoretical speculation, though, is a look at the fate of initiative questions on ballots in forty-three states.¹ And not surprisingly, the establishment media has all but ignored the mandate from America's other national plebiscite:

Term Limits. Term limitations for members of the House of Representatives and the Senate were on the ballot in fourteen states. The *Wall Street Journal* noted that this was as close to a national referendum as the United States has ever known. Clinton, in obeisance to congressional barons Mitchell and Foley, opposed term limitations; Bush, while in favor of them, chose not to campaign on the issue. The verdict? All fourteen constitutional amendments passed, with an average of 66 percent in favor. In the fourteen states that voted on such measures, term limits took 20 million votes, while Clinton took only 14 million. Wyoming and Florida cast 77 percent of their ballots for term limits. California, home to fifty-two House members, passed limits by 63 percent. The closest call came in Washington state, where a strongly financed campaign—courtesy of House speaker Foley's ability to "encourage" donations to the anti-term limit

¹The states with no initiatives or referenda were Delaware, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Vermont.

cause—narrowed the margin to 52 percent.

Imagine for a minute that fourteen states had banned the death penalty or raised taxes on the rich or passed a mandatory recycling law: it would have been seen as a historic shift, and the press would have touted it as one of the major stories of the year. But the silence of the press should fool no one as to the seriousness of the term limits movement: November 3, 1992 changed the face of American politics forever.

With the 1990 victory for limits in Colorado, the 1992 tidal wave means that 156 members of the House and 30 senators are now under limits. In most states, that means six years for House members and twelve for senators. Four states allow eight years for House members, and the two Dakotas allow a total of twelve years in Congress. In 1994, eight other states will vote on the issue. If successful, they will bring the number of statutorily limited House members to 205 and senators to 46.

Note that these are not advisory votes, like the “nuclear freeze” referenda of 1982: *they are the law*. In six years, Tom Foley is out. John Dingell, scourge of whole industries, will be a private citizen. And term limits have had two further victories in Congress already: first, pro-limit Dick Arney of Texas defeated anti-limit Jerry Lewis of California for the chairmanship of the important House Republican Conference; and Republican freshmen forced a successful vote to limit the terms of all ranking Republican members of congressional committees to six years.

“*Fairness.*” Clinton argued that taxes should be raised on the “rich” as a matter of fairness. But while Clinton was “picking the Republican electoral lock” on California, the state was voting on Initiative 167, which would have raised taxes on the wealthy—corporations and those making over \$250,000 a year. The higher taxes would have paid for reducing the sales tax by a quarter-point and repealing the sales tax on snack food. This measure—the Clinton campaign slogan writ large—was voted down, 58 to 42 percent.

South Dakota voters rejected an initiative that would have imposed a personal and corporate income tax of between 2 and 5 percent to replace the sales tax on groceries, clothing, and utilities. This “progressive” measure was rejected, 74 to 26 percent.

Infrastructure. Gov. Mario Cuomo campaigned vigorously for a bond initiative that would commit \$800 million to “create jobs” building “infrastructure” in New York state. While giving Clinton a plurality of the vote, New Yorkers nixed this Keynesian measure, 56 to 44 percent.

In recently rehabilitated Jimmy Carter’s home state, voters were offered the chance to create a “Transportation Trust Fund.” Monies were to be raised through higher gasoline and aviation fuel taxes and spent by the General Assembly. Georgians demurred, 63 to 36 percent.

In North Dakota, voters said no to Initiative 4: higher taxes for more water projects.

“*Investing in Our Children.*” Hillary Clinton’s favorite theme was addressed by the people of Colorado on November 3. Democratic Governor Roy Roemer put on the ballot an initiative neutrally titled “Pennies for the Children,” which would have increased the sales tax by “only a penny” to pay for, well, more of the same stuff the public schools of Colorado have been providing its children for the past several decades. Even with the deck stacked by Roemer’s propagandists, Coloradans declined to shell out for more of the same, 54 to 46 percent.

The Environment. Green impulses appear in the body politic in vague answers to general questions about the desirability of trees and parks; but it seems unlikely that Al Gore’s environmental awareness will supplant the Republican coalition’s Kempite fixation with economic growth. Environmentalism as a political force appears a “paper tiger,” to quote Jerry Taylor of the Cato Institute. Massachusetts voters opted, by 60 to 40 percent, against a “modest” proposal to establish an “Environmental Challenge Fund” by levying a two-cent tax on each 50,000 gallons of toxic material manufactured in, or imported into, the commonwealth. Voters also rejected, again by 60 to 40 percent, a measure to require reduced packaging and greater use of recycled materials, starting in 1996.

Ohioans said no thanks, by a whopping un-Green margin of 78 to 12 percent, to a penny-a-pound tax on toxic chemicals.

Health Care. The central plank of Clinton’s health plan—to require employers to provide health care to all employ-

ees—was offered as Proposition 166 to Californians, who rejected it by 68 to 32 percent. California is now home to one of every ten voters in the nation. Enough said.

Crime. Voters in five states addressed the right of crime victims to be heard at sentencing, parole hearings, and other junctures in criminal proceedings. Voters in Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and New Mexico cast an average vote of more than 80 percent in support of the victims’ rights agenda. Supported by the NRA’s Crime Strike project, which works with victims’ groups nationally, these initiatives also forbid a repetition of the Mike Dukakis scandal (allowing criminals furloughs and early releases without notifying victims and their families).

Tax and Spend. Six of eight tax and spending cuts or limitations offered to voters passed. Of the twelve major tax-increase and bond initiatives, eleven were defeated; only a cigarette tax hike of 25 cents passed in Massachusetts—still the home of the Puritans.

Arizona taxpayer leader Sydney Hoff points out that not since 1978—in the heady days of Proposition 13 (Jarvis-Gann) in California and copycat measures elsewhere—had there been so many anti-tax initiatives on the ballot. Strong pressure from the National Education Association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees unions makes the anti-tax mandate of 1992 all the more impressive.

California rolled back part of Governor Pete Wilson’s massive 1991 tax increase by repealing part of the sales tax on snack foods.

Connecticut, Colorado, and Rhode Island voted in spending limitation measures.

Maine voters outlawed the state legislature’s practice of mandating spending for local government without providing the funding.

Florida adopted a “taxpayer bill of rights.”

Arizona passed Proposition 108, which amended the Constitution to require a two-thirds vote of the state legislature to enact any new tax increase. Should the governor veto a tax bill, three-quarters of both houses would be needed to override. Seventy-two percent of Arizonans voted for the measure.

Colorado went Arizona one better. Question 1, passed with 54 percent of the



All You Can Eat

by Sandy Hume

vote, requires that all tax hikes or bond issues at the state or local level be put to a popular vote. Such votes can only take place in general elections—not in by-elections or primaries, when government workers remember to vote and the rest of us forget. Moreover, voters must be mailed a set of arguments for and against. And to guard against federal funds sneaking into Colorado to replace state and local funds, jurisdictions cannot increase their spending faster than inflation and population without a vote of the people. In Colorado it will be “No taxation without direct voter approval.”

For those willing to listen, the voice of the people came through loud and clear on November 3, 1992. They voted in favor of constitutional restraints on spending, against higher taxes, and against individual programs for new spending (even when these were gussied up as guaranteeing “better” education, environment, infrastructure, or health care). Voters still feel less compassion for William Horton than for his victims. Only the vote against re-establishing capital punishment for murder in the District of Columbia can give liberals any comfort (and it may be cold comfort, as many liberals are soon to be punished for their electoral success by having to live there). So while *Newsweek* is imagining gale winds to the left, the American public is still listing comfortably center-right.

The initiative results do more than simply reassure the Reagan coalition that its premises and electoral support remain intact, if ignored. The success of the term limits movement in creating what amounted to a national plebiscite suggests a strategy for conservatives. U.S. Term Limits, the national group supporting the term limitation initiative movement, predicts eight more state referenda on the issue in 1994. Taxpayer groups in several states plan to marry the Arizona and Colorado initiatives—requiring a legislative supermajority and a popular vote to raise taxes. And victims’ rights groups are planning more initiatives to toughen penalties for violent repeat offenders.

There now emerges a strategy recommended by the late Mao Tse-tung. Let the opposition have the capital city—seize the countryside. Washington will fall soon enough. □

Unlike recent Republican Presidents with their bland palates, Bill Clinton knows what he likes to eat, even if he only has fifteen minutes at his disposal. At the urging of many Americans concerned that we give the man a fair shake, we offer him this guide to a few Washington-area spots where he’s certain to feel at home:

(1) **Burger King**, 1606 K St., NW. You’ll find this elegant two-story BK two blocks away from the White House, possibly within jogging distance. Directly across the street are the offices of NOW, so it’s a great spot to meet Hillary for lunch. (As Betsey Wright might advise, better to buy Hillary a Whopper than tell her one.) Visit the NOW gift shop on the ground floor and stock up on bumper-sticker mementoes for the many gals on your team: “Anita Told the Truth,” “Honk If You’re Codependent,” and—sounds like Hillary—“God Is Coming and She’s Pissed.” There’s even one for Governor Casey: “Against Abortion? Have a Vasectomy.”

You’ll be happy Hillary can’t bake when you finish off your meal with a dozen chocolate chip delights at **Mrs. Field’s**, a few blocks down at 1903 K St.

(2) **McDonald’s**, 2705 Martin Luther King Ave., SE, a favorite hangout of one of your predecessors, Marion Barry. It’s located in Ward 8, which he represents on the City Council. Just don’t jog to these Golden Arches. Anyone running in this neck of the woods is invariably thought to be carrying someone’s car stereo.

(3) **McDonald’s**, 1401 K. St., NW. It’s close to the White House and open every night till two. And they’ll treat you just like an ordinary American. “President or no president,” said one

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worker, “he’s getting the same greasy food that everyone else gets.”

(4) **McDonald’s**, 1916 M St., NW. Nearby is Dupont Circle, known to Washingtonians as the “Fruit Loop.” Bring some of that hesitant Pentagon brass over for serious lunch and recruiting for the New Clinton Military.

(5) Kennedy had his Camelot, and you can have yours. **The Camelot Nite Club**, 1823 M. St., NW, offers the finest in exotic dancing. You’ll like Angie’s performance. She’s blonde and aging, a Marilyn Monroe for the nineties. You could honor her at the Kennedy Center. On your birthday.

(5a) **La Brasserie**, 239 Massachusetts Ave., NE. Fancy French food served by French waitresses, preferably in the privacy of the (Ted) Kennedy room.

(6) **Mother Nature’s Store**, 1429 Center St., McLean, VA. Hold on to your quarter-pounder, Bill—you and Al are in this thing together. But when you sink your teeth into one of Mother Nature’s famed tofu veggie burgers, you’ll probably want to send him back to Antarctica.

(7) **Hogs on the Hill**, 732 Maryland Ave., NE. Don’t worry—it’s named after the Washington Redskins offensive line, not the porkers of Congress. This is where the ‘Skins devour their weekly team dinner, and the hickory barbecue menu will allow you to test your appetite against the city’s real men. Even in the absence of cheerleaders, Hogs will loosen your belt. You’ve probably heard of **Red, Hot and Blue**, Lee Atwater’s old rib joint at 1600 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. Look for the mascots—two little pigs playing guitars. They need someone on horns.

(8) There’s one other place you’ll die for. Thirty-plus varieties of homemade ice cream. That’s a lot of sundae and shake possibilities. Wish I could give you its name but I can’t—my girlfriend works there, and she’s California blonde! A fair shake, yes; a milk shake, no. □