

Bad News on the Doorstep



But February made me shiver

With every paper I'd deliver.

Bad news on the doorstep;

I couldn't take one more step.

American Pie

President Obama got his own bad news on the doorstep at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. It came not in February but September – on page one of The New York Times no less.

Under a headline that read, “In Poll, Support for Obama Slips Among Base,” this is how the story began:

“President Obama’s support is eroding among elements of his base, and a yearlong effort to recapture the political center has failed to attract independent voters, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll, leaving him vulnerable at a moment when pessimism over the country’s direction is greater than at any other time since he took office.”

It’s a safe bet that bad news like that is making a lot of folks in the West Wing shiver.

The poll came out just a few days after the president got a double dose of bad news when Democrats lost two special elections for House seats in New York and Nevada. “Both races turned into a referendum on President Obama, who again proved how unpopular he is,” as Karl Rove put it in the Wall Street Journal.

The New York district, Charles Schumer and Andrew Weiner’s old district in Queens, has been in Democratic hands since 1923.

If a Democrat can lose in that district, a Democrat can lose anywhere. And they know it!

Just one day after those twin losses, a Field Poll came out in California, where the president has always done well, no matter how crummy he had been doing on less friendly places. Not anymore.

“For the first time since Obama became president in January 2009, fewer than half (46 percent) of California voters approve of his performance as president – a figure that’s dropped eight percentage points in three months,” as the San Francisco Chronicle put it.

There’s more.

A Bloomberg poll shows that a majority of Americans don’t believe the president’s \$447 billion job plan will help lower the unemployment rate – and, according to Bloomberg, “Americans disapprove of his handling of the economy by 62 percent to 33 percent.”

As they might say in Schumer and Weiner’s old district, which is heavily Jewish: “Oy Vey.”

According to the New York Times/CBS News poll, Obama is losing support all over the place – especially among the group he most needs – independents. The Times reports that, “The president’s support has fallen to its lowest levels across parts of the diverse coalition of voters who elected him, from women to suburbanites to college graduates. And a persistent effort over the past year to reclaim his appeal to independent voters has shown few changes of bearing fruit, with 59 percent of this critical electoral group voicing their disapproval.”

Compare that to 2008, when Barack Obama won 52 percent of the independent vote while John McCain got just 44 percent.

Here’s the president’s dilemma: If he tries to drum up

support among his progressive base, he will lose even more independents. If he tries to win the independents, his base will become even more disillusioned.

Bad news on the doorstep, indeed.