

# Anything Can Happen Between Now and Election Day – and Probably Will

☒ All the polls say it's going to be a good November for the Republicans. They say the GOP has a better than even chance to take control of the Senate. Some pundits are going even further, looking into their crystal balls and declaring it could be a wave election, a GOP tsunami. If you're a Republican, happy days are just around the corner.

Unless ...

Before we get to the "unless" ... let me make clear that if I were betting on the midterm elections right now, I'd put my money on a Republican takeover of the Senate and a pickup of a few seats in the House. So why do I have this nagging feeling that something can go terribly wrong for the GOP between now and Election Day? And that it just may be a self-inflicted wound that does the Republicans in; that it may be the Republicans who take themselves behind the barn and fire the shot that salvages the Senate for Barack Obama, Harry Reid and the Democratic Party.

Here's one scenario that should keep Republicans from feeling too confident ...

Remember the last time the GOP was ready to take over the Senate just two years ago? Remember Congressman Todd Akin who was running against incumbent Democrat Claire McCaskill in Missouri? Remember how he was leading until he was asked if he believes abortion is justified in cases of rape – and said this: "It seems to be, first of all, from what I understand from doctors, it's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down."

*Legitimate rape?* Nice going, slick. Way to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Then there's the embarrassment in Indiana involving one Richard Murdock, who had beaten longtime GOP Senator Richard Lugar in the state's primary. Indiana was a sure win for the GOP until Murdock said this in a debate against his Democratic opponent: "The only exception I have ... to have on abortion is in that case of the life of the mother. I struggled with it myself for a long time, but I came to realize life is that gift from God. And I think even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen."

Could be, I guess. Unlike some candidates on the religious right, I don't have insights into God's thinking on such things. But I do know this: If you're trying to win a general election, if you're not simply preaching to the choir, you don't say that if life results from rape, it "is something that God intended to happen" – however you meant it to come out. Murdock lost.

So, anyone rooting for the GOP has reason to be concerned. History has a way of repeating itself. The good news is that the Republicans have better candidates this time around. No one is declaring, "I am not a witch" in 2014. Not yet anyway.

But there are some things Republicans can't control, things that go beyond what candidates in their own party might say. What if there's an October Surprise that has nothing to do with a stupid GOP remark that puts a Senate takeover in jeopardy?

President Obama knows how bad it looks for his team. And he knows how fickle the American electorate can be; how a raid on an ISIS stronghold by an American special operations team would do wonders for his poll numbers, which could trickle down to Democrats running in close races. Imagine if the Navy

Seals captured the barbarian who's been cutting off the heads of innocent Americans and Brits. Imagine if it happens just a few weeks before the elections. I'm not saying the president would use our military to help out Democrats in trouble. But I'm not ruling it out either.

Finally, there's the public relations arm of the Democratic Party – the so-called mainstream media. As the president's poll numbers have dropped, so has their slobbering over him. But if a Republican makes an indefensibly stupid comment about rape or anything else, be assured the story will get about the same level of coverage as did Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

And if the president pulls off a surprise in October, there's an excellent chance his loyal fans in the press will write and broadcast glowing reports about how he got tough when he needed to, how he got his mojo back and how his poll numbers are suddenly going up. The midterms are almost always a referendum on the president, on how he's doing. So if there is an October Surprise, it would be no surprise if Mr. Obama's approval ratings go up, which in turn could help Democrats in close races.

Today things look good for Republicans. But I have often quoted a great American intellectual who knows the folly of looking beyond today. "Making predictions is hard," he said, "especially when they're about the future." Thank you, Yogi Berra.

So, Republicans take note. Don't get too confident. And if you feel the urge to say something stupid, keep your mouth shut until the urge passes.