



Sirotablog

Real-world wisdom from outside the beltway.

Viewing By Entry / [Main](#)

3.8.07

Dems' big middle finger to the American voter

One of my idiosyncratic little hobbies of late is to keep a tally on statements by Washington politicians and pundits that express an open hatred for democracy. This hobby is a subset of a bigger collection of quotes I collect that show how Washington politicians are entirely divorced from the political reality they purport to be experts on - a classic example is [Sen. Chuck Schumer's hilariously moronic declaration](#) that strengthening the Patriot Act is politically good for red state Democrats ([thanks for your helping make the Montana Senate race that much harder, Chuck!](#)). I'm not exactly sure why I focus on this, other than because it is important to always remind ourselves just how different - and hateful - the Beltway is towards the country it purports to represent. Today, we get a beauty from South Dakota Rep. Stephanie Herseth (D).

In the [Washington Post's solid writeup](#) of the debate over Iraq in the House, a faction of Democrats continues to attack the very Election 2006 mandate they were vaulted into office on: opposition to the war. Justifying her opposition to bills that would stop President Bush's military escalation, we get this from South Dakota's lone House member:

"I don't think we should be overreacting to public opinion polls."

I give Herseth credit - her use of "overreacting" deviously implies that there are just a few very recent polls here and there showing negligible opposition to the war, and that Serious People in Congress should never "overreact" to the supposed fleeting whims of the American people. But, of course, the American public has been strongly critical of the Iraq War for almost 4 years now. [Go all the way back to August of 2003](#) - just a few months after the invasion - and polls started consistently showing that Americans felt the Bush administration misled us into war, and that Congress should put the brakes on war spending bills. By the eve of the 2006 election, [opposition to the Iraq War was at an all-time high](#). And just a few weeks ago, a CNN poll found that a [strong majority wants Congress to cut off funding for President Bush's escalation](#), while the Washington Post poll found that a [majority of Americans want a timeline for withdrawal](#), want Congress to [do what it takes to stop Bush's escalation](#), and strongly support a plan to [force the White House to adhere to strict troop training standards](#) - all positions Herseth and her small faction of "conservative" colleagues oppose in the name of faux "centrism" and "not overreacting."

Herseth, of course, is following the tried and true path of fellow politicians and pundits insulated comfortably in the Washington bubble. It was Cheney who said in November that the war ["may not be popular with the public - it doesn't matter."](#) It was David Brooks who said a few months ago that ["voters shouldn't be allowed to define the choices in American politics."](#) There was the Bush administration in August of 2006 telling the New York Times ["that they are considering alternatives other than democracy"](#) in Iraq - after repackaging the war as an exercise in pro-democracy nation building. The Times itself just recently said that Democrats pushing antiwar legislation strongly supported by the public are ["fringe."](#) And let's not forget The New Republic's Peter Beinart who trumpeted groups that - in an oxymoronic backflip - believe ["the less beholden politicians are to grassroots activists, the better they will represent voters."](#)

The message from Washington, D.C. to all of us out here in the heartland is very clear: Our government is the exclusive gated community of Big Money interests, their appointed pawns in Congress, and a select group of self-declared "experts" in the media and at think tanks (which are, of course, funded by many of those same Big Money interests). Inside this gated community, actually listening to or shaping policy on behalf of the vast majority of Americans is considered

either laughably outdated or disgustingly unsavory.

This is why we have a House lawmaker running to reporters attacking efforts to end the war as "overreacting to public opinion." This is why we have a Vice President who goes on national television declaring that what the public wants "doesn't matter." This is why the largest newspaper in America continues to publish a columnist who says voters shouldn't decide elections. This is why, months after being elected to the majority on an antiwar mandate, we have a congressional Democratic Party that still refuses to do anything to end - or even slow down - the war. Because underneath all the platitudes and rhetoric, Washington, D.C. is a place that hates democracy.

Posted by David Sirota at 10:44 AM