

# RETURN TO REAGAN ROOTS NEEDED FOR CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

SCOTT WALKER

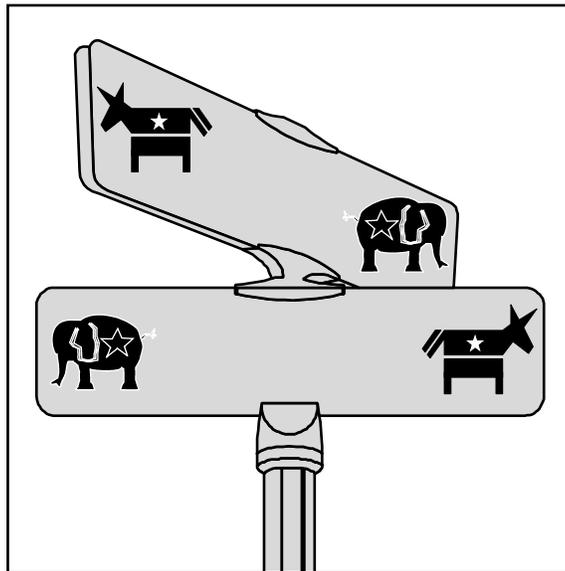
Some may argue that November 7, 2006, signaled the end of the conservative movement in America. Some will say that the Democrats won the election. I don't believe either argument.

Sadly, too many politicians who claimed to be conservative lost their way long before the fall elections. The Republican rhetoric in Washington did not match the record over the past few years. The voters took notice and kicked them out of office.

Republicans in Washington (and many in Wisconsin) forgot that we are the party of Reagan. They forgot their roots.

Ronald Reagan believed in limited government, lower taxes, and a strong national defense. He knew who he was, where he was going, and how he was going to get there. It didn't matter if you were a professor of political science at Georgetown University or a cab driver traveling through Georgetown, everyone knew what Reagan stood for—because he told us and then acted on it.

In 1994, Republicans who took back the government understood those principles. Years later, Republicans in DC forgot their roots. They forgot Reagan.



Two decades ago, Reagan vetoed a bill just because it had just over a hundred earmarks. Last session, the GOP majorities in Washington sent President Bush a bill with several thousand earmarks.

They gave us the bridges to nowhere in the federal highway bill and a \$50 million rain forest study at a university in Iowa. Now I didn't major in geography in college, but I

don't recall any rainforests in the Midwest. Spending grew out of control.

When Newt left in the late 1990s, so did the promise of a new direction. Republicans went from the absolute power of ideas to the idea of absolute power.

Free spending and power hungry—Republicans in Washington had become what they sought to replace in 1994.

I give voters more credit than do most elected officials. I believe that voters want to support candidates who stand for something, and they want to boot those who break their promises. Elections are fundamentally about trust. Republicans lost the trust of the elec-

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*Scott Walker (R) is the Milwaukee County Executive.*

torate by giving up on their claim to want less government.

Still, like President Reagan, I am an optimist. I have hope that Republicans in Washington (and in Madison too) will return to their roots.

In 1992, Bush lost to Clinton. After two years of Bill and Hillary, Americans were ready for a new course. In 1994, conservatives presented a strong agenda through the Contract with America and the GOP reclaimed the majority in the House for the first time since President Eisenhower.

If Republicans learned from their defeats this past November, they can reconnect with the voters in 2008—but they must return to their roots. That is an agenda based on the principle of less government (not slower growth than the liberals), the protection of personal liberties (not just lip service), and the promotion of real freedom (to speak, pray, act, and live the way we want).

Republicans will win again if they return to Reagan's conservative agenda and contagious enthusiasm for the future.