



Stratagem

From Jim Eskin, *Public Affairs Strategist*

June 2009

President Obama made one of the toughest calls of his young administration in nominating Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. If confirmed, as expected, she'll become the first Hispanic and only the third woman on the high court.

The selection process for justices, like our democratic system itself, has been a work in progress. Appointees have all been lawyers, although there is no such constitutional or legal requirement. From its inception in 1790, the U.S. Supreme Court has included 108 diverse personalities (each serving an average of 16 years) spanning the political spectrum, from brilliant jurists and scholars to seasoned politicians.

Over time the make-up of the Supreme Court has tended to reflect—though perhaps too slowly—the changing face of America. All the justices were Protestants until 1835, when Andrew Jackson appointed Roger Taney, a Catholic, as Chief Justice. Woodrow Wilson selected the first Jewish person, Louis Brandeis, as an Associate Justice in 1916. The first African American justice was Thurgood Marshall, appointed by Lyndon Johnson in 1967.

The glass ceiling that had barred women was finally shattered in 1981 when Ronald Reagan's nominee, Sandra Day O'Connor, was appointed. Twelve years later, Bill Clinton's nominee, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, became the second woman to sit on the Supreme Court. ■

No Respect

While Republicans and Democrats disagree over most people and issues, they have one low opinion in common—the U.S. Congress.

When Rasmussen Reports asked all voters which branch of the federal government they trust the most, 34% said the Supreme Court, while 27% chose the president, or the Executive Branch.

Only 13% said Congress is the branch of government they trust most, and twice as many voters (27%) were undecided. ■

Political ID

The decline in Republican Party affiliation in recent years is well documented, but a Gallup analysis now shows that the slippage has occurred among nearly every major demographic subgroup. Since the first year of George W. Bush's presidency in 2001, the Republican Party has maintained its support only among frequent churchgoers, with conservatives and senior citizens showing minimal decline.

So far in 2009, **the divide on leaned party identification is 53% Democratic and 39% Republican**—a marked change from 2001, when the parties were evenly matched. That represents a loss of five points for the Republicans and a gain of eight points for the Democrats. ■

Attitude Shift

A new Gallup Poll finds 51% of Americans calling themselves “pro-life” on the issue of abortion and 42% “pro-choice.” **This is the first time a majority of U.S. adults have identi-**

fied themselves as pro-life since Gallup began asking this question in 1995.

This represents a significant shift from a year ago, when 50% were pro-choice and 44% pro-life. Prior to now, the highest percentage identifying as pro-life was 46%, in both August 2001 and May 2002.

The percentage of Republicans (including independents who lean Republican) calling themselves “pro-life” rose by 10 points over the past year, from 60% to 70%, while there has been essentially no change in the views of Democrats and Democratic leaners. ■

First Art

The Obamas are sending ripples through the art world as they put the call out to museums, galleries, and private collectors that **they'd like to borrow modern art by African-American, Asian, Hispanic and female artists to exhibit in the White House**. In a sharp departure from the 19th-century still lifes, pastorals and portraits that dominate the White House's public rooms, they are choosing bold, abstract art works.

The overhaul is an important event for the art market. The Obamas' art choices could affect the market values of the works and artists they decide to display. ■

Timing Is Everything

Speculation continues to grow that Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison will resign from Congress sometime this fall to run for governor full time.

If Hutchison were to resign too

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early, Texas election law would force a special election in May. If Hutchison waits until the fall to leave Congress, Republican Gov. Rick Perry could appoint a replacement to fill the seat until a May 2010 special election.

Such a move could give Republicans a leg up as they work to keep the seat in GOP hands. ■

Specter World

Sen. Arlen Specter boosted his 2010 re-election prospects by switching to the Democratic Party, but may be vulnerable if the GOP can persuade former Gov. Tom Ridge to run (though Ridge is saying he won't).

A survey by Quinnipiac University showed Specter, as a Democrat, with a large lead—53% to 33%—over former U.S. Rep. Pat Toomey, a Republican.

But the poll also found Specter, 79, and Ridge, the former governor and former Secretary of Homeland Security, virtually tied. ■

Boss Over Money

When it comes to sizing up the quality of their workplaces, **federal workers value strong leadership and straight answers from their bosses even more than pay and benefits.**

This Partnership for Public Service study also places the Nuclear Regulatory Commission atop the list of best places to work in the federal government. Other top performers among large federal agencies include the Government Accountability Office, NASA, the intelligence community and the State Department. ■

Good Edwards/Bad Edwards

A poll of voters in North Carolina finds that John Edwards registers a record low approval rating. On the other hand, his wife is even more popular than President Obama in the state, **which has fueled speculation that Mrs. Edwards might run for the Senate.**

The Public Policy Polling poll indicates that only 19% had a positive opinion of the former Democratic senator, and vice presidential candidate. Overall, his disapproval rating was 69%.

Elizabeth Edwards has garnered a great deal of sympathy in her home state, despite her release of a new book that has stirred controversy. She has an approval rating of 58%, which is higher than any politician in the state. ■

Play Ball

With Congress and the White House in their control, this summer the Democrats hope to take something else away from the Republicans—supremacy on the baseball diamond.

For the past eight games (and most of the past five decades), Democrats have fallen to Republicans in the Annual Roll Call Congressional Baseball Game.

The Democrats will take their first step toward capturing the coveted Roll Call trophy on June 17, when they take the field at Nationals Park for the 48th edition of the annual contest. The game will kick off a new best-of-five series, because last year's victory gave the GOP a 3-0 sweep and ownership of their 10th Roll Call trophy; Democrats have retired just two. ■

Who's Happy?

Despite economic woes, once again, 35% of Americans are very happy in the Harris Poll Happiness Index.

Women are slightly happier than men (36% vs. 34%) and among women, 38% of married women are very happy compared to 34% of single women. **The more education one has the happier one is, as 33% of those who have a high school or less education are happy; 36% of those with some college and college graduates are happy, and 39% of those with a post graduate education are happy.**

Income, however, is not the same,

as the happiest income group is the group making between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (39%) followed by those with incomes of \$75,000 and up (36%). ■

Blame the Media

More than three-quarters of consumers believe that the media's coverage of the economic downturn has increased fear among the public and magnified the market's difficulties.

In a Zogby poll, 53% of respondents said that journalists can be impartial while covering economic conditions if they are also affected, while 41% said they cannot. Six percent were unsure. Thirty-two percent believe that the media in other countries report on the economy as much as media outlets in the United States do. ■

Stimulus Quiz

The \$787 billion economic stimulus plan will add jobs to every state. Money will also be spent on infrastructure and housing, but will not be distributed evenly. Match the following states with their projected monetary benefit from the stimulus package. Answers presented below. See you next month. ■

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|------------------|------------------|
| 1. California | a. \$1.1 billion |
| 2. Florida | b. \$2.1 billion |
| 3. Massachusetts | c. \$3.4 billion |
| 4. New York | d. \$3.7 billion |
| 5. Texas | e. \$4.8 billion |

Answers: 1=e, 2=b, 3=a, 4=d, 5=c.



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