



INSIDE POLITICS

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It's Always Something

Remember Roseanne Roseannadanna? She was the character created by Gilda Radner on "Saturday Night Live" in the 1970s. Roseanne was the ditzzy, frizzy-haired, ethnic commentator who would start to talk about a news story and then wander off into some outlandish — and usually disgusting — personal anecdote. Exasperated anchor Jane Curtin would finally interrupt her and ask, "What is your point?" Roseanne's reply: "Well, Jane, it just goes to show. It's always something."

Hence the Roseanne Roseannadanna Theory of Midterm Elections: it's always something. If it's not one thing, it's another. Take the last five midterms...

In 1994, it was angry white men. Their fury at President Clinton propelled Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh, to overthrow the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives for the first time in forty years.

In 1998, it was impeachment. Democrats gained only five House seats that year, but it was the first time in more than 60 years that the President's party picked up House seats in a midterm. The result was so sensational that Newt Gingrich resigned as Speaker.

In 2002, it was 9/11. The country had just come out of a recession and the President was a Republican, so Democrats naturally assumed



they would gain House seats. But damned if the same thing didn't happen again, this time to the benefit of Republicans. Karl Rove had told a Republican National Committee meeting a few months after 9/11, "we can go to the country on this issue."

Democrats were furious. They accused Rove of trying to politicize 9/11. But that is exactly what Republicans did. For the second time in a row, the President's party gained House seats in a midterm election. Bill Clinton summed up the 2002 midterm this way: "Strong and wrong beats weak and right."

In 2006, it was Iraq. A wave of popular revulsion over the war gained Democrats 30 House seats and six Senate seats, giving them control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1995. In state after state, voter disapproval of the war matched voter disapproval of President Bush and drove down the Republican vote for Congress.

In 2010, it was the Tea Party. Rage over President Obama's big government programs—particularly health care—plus dis-

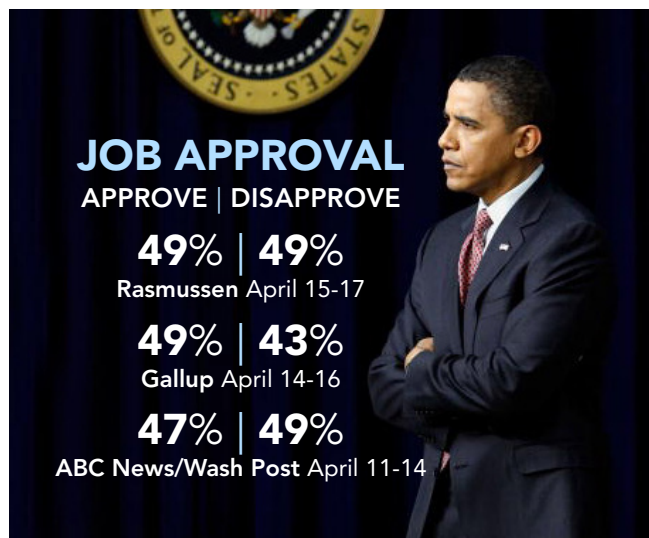
appointment over the stalled recovery gave Republicans a sweeping victory in 2010: 63 House seats. At the same time, extreme Tea Party candidates in several states (Delaware, Nevada, Colorado) managed to save the Democratic majority in the Senate.

What will it be in 2014? Nobody knows. There are no signs of a trend building for either party. We do know that Democrats face structural difficulties going into next year's midterm. Democrats will be defending 20 Senate seats, Republicans 14. Seven of those Democratic seats are in states carried by Mitt Romney last year. Only one of the Republican seats up next year is in an Obama state (Susan Collins in Maine).

On the House side, the parties appear to be about evenly matched. The Cook Report sees competitive contests in 35 current Democratic seats and 30 current Republican seats. The Rothenberg Report counts 26 competitive Republican seats and 25 competitive Democratic seats. Romney carried nine of the competitive congressional districts now represented by a Democrat. Obama carried ten of the competitive districts now represented by a Republican.

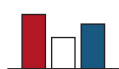
An even match is not good news for Democrats. They are aiming to take back the House of Representatives in 2014. They need to gain 17 seats to do it. That looks tough. No

President's party has ever gained as many as 17 seats in a midterm election. Still, something is likely to happen. Why? Because elections have become nationalized. We saw that in the last five midterms. All politics is not local



any more. If something happens next year, it could sweep local factors aside, just as it did last year when Republicans expected to gain control of the Senate.

A politician once said, "A week is a long time in politics." Eighteen months is an eternity. Between 1994 and 1996, Bill Clinton was resurrected. Between 2004 and 2006, George W. Bush was undone. It's hard to predict what it will be, but like Roseanne Roseannadanna said, "It's always something." ■



POLLS vs. POLS



Would you support or oppose a law requiring:

A nationwide ban on the sale of **assault weapons**?

SUPPORT	OPPOSE
56%	42%

A nationwide ban on **high-capacity** (10+ bullets) **ammunition clips**?

SUPPORT	OPPOSE
56%	41%

Background checks on people buying guns at gun shows or online

SUPPORT	OPPOSE
86%	13%

Washington Post/ABC News Poll, April 11-14th, 2013. Available at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2013/04/16/National-Politics/Polling/release_226.xml