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More Election Analysis: Chris Korzen

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Distinctly Catholic

Instead of the usual Q & A, this week and next, I am running a series of commentaries on the election results. Today's comes from Chris Korzen, head of the progressive Catholic group, Catholics United.

Chris Korzen: Americans know who they voted against on Election Day. Do they know who they voted for?

The GOP owes its Election Day victories to several factors: gobs of corporate cash, the Democratic Party's failure to communicate its many positive accomplishments, and poor turnout from African Americans, Latinos, and young people. But it was the electorate's frustration with slow progress on the economic front that ultimately drove many to pull the Republican lever. It remains to be seen whether these voters will come to wish they'd put more thought into their decisions.

Warning signs began to emerge even before the votes were cast. A Mercyhurst College/Erie Times-News poll released in mid-October found that despite Republican Congressional candidate Mike Kelly's strong lead over incumbent Democrat Kathy Dahlkemper, an astounding 38% of respondents did not even recognize his name. This infuriated the Times-News editorial board, as did Kelly's inability to do more than throw bombs at Dahlkemper. "Kelly likes to compare the field of politics to the sport of football," it warned, "but winning coaches and quarterbacks draw up specific plays; they don't just spout general platitudes about beating the opposition." Despite his disturbing lack of name recognition and political acumen, the voters picked Kelly over Dahlkemper by an 11-point margin.

Unfortunately, a similar dynamic is afoot in the Republican leadership. Instead of meeting the economic crisis head on this week, House speaker-in-waiting John Boehner pledged to make health care reform repeal a first order of business - as if somehow health care, and not years of war, real estate speculation, and lack of financial regulation were responsible for near double-digit unemployment. It's an arrogant and

pointless move that disregards Tuesday's exit polls, which show that for every American who opposes the health care reform law, there's another who either supports it as is or wishes it were stronger. Moreover, the Democratically-controlled Senate will never vote to overturn its signature legislative accomplishment, and even on the off chance it did, a repeal bill would surely die by presidential veto.

?Small government? and ?lower taxes? make great campaign slogans. But absent a workable policy agenda they constitute little more than blind ideology. Boehner and the rest of the Republican leadership need to recognize ? and soon ? that the only mandate that emerged from Tuesday's election is for good governance, smart politics, and, above all, results. If the GOP continues to prioritize political showmanship over addressing the economic crisis, it's the Democrats who will be celebrating on election night 2012.

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