

US Elections 2010: Learning From Defeat

By [Eric Walberg](#)

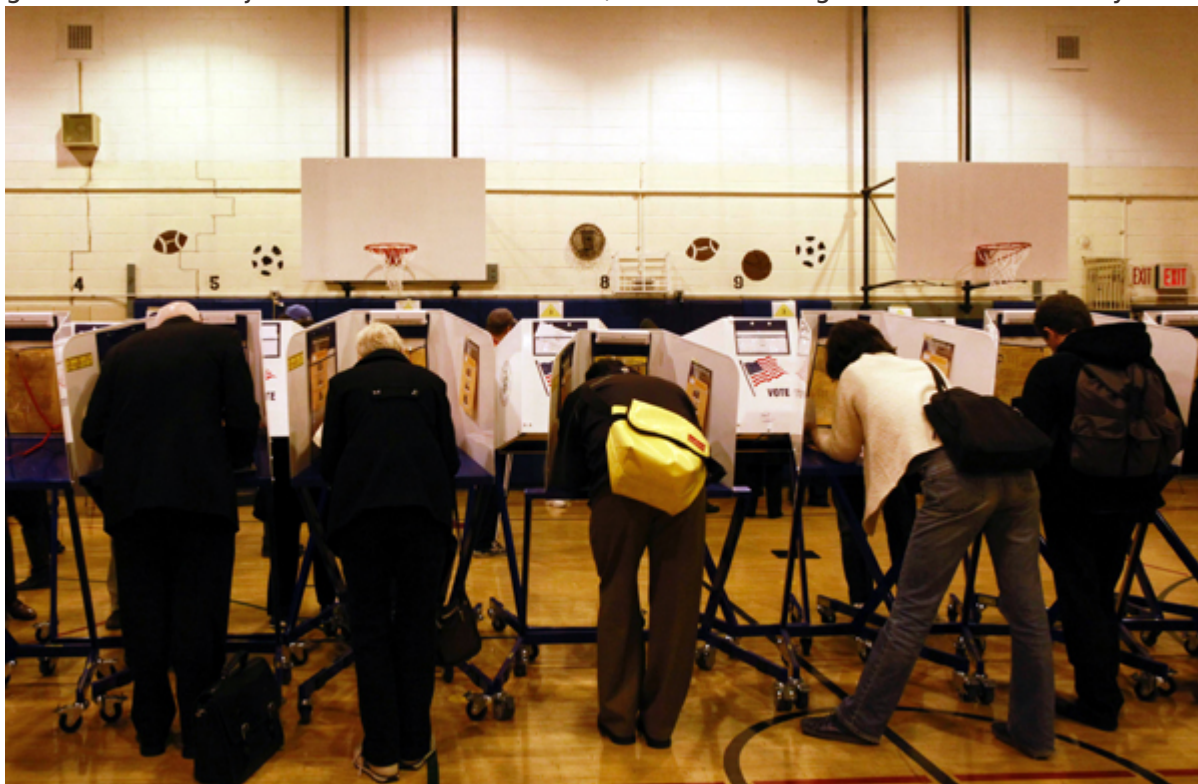
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Region: [USA](#)

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In the US mid-term elections, Republicans picked up approximately 65 seats in the House for a 237-198 majority, and six seats in the Senate — including the Illinois seat formerly held by President Obama and that of liberal icon Russell Feingold of Wisconsin — for a 49-49 tie in the Senate, where two independents will hold the Democrats ransom. Republican leader John Boehner of Ohio will succeed Democrat Nancy Pelosi of California as speaker of the House. Republicans gained eight governorships, but Democrats hold the two biggest states: Andrew Cuomo beat Republican Carl Paladino in New York, and Jerry Brown returned to the governor's job in California, defeating former eBay Chief



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cutive Meg Whitman.

This was a clear repudiation of Obama's Bush-lite presidency. By failing to find a way to undo Bush's policies, and introducing a healthcare policy that mostly benefits corporate insurance providers, the enthusiasm Obama gave rise to, gave way to an extreme rightwing Tea Party movement reaction which has elected more Bush-like politicians than ever.

The only Democratic ray of hope was Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada whose Tea Party opponent advocated ending Medicare and Social Security, abolishing the Energy and Education departments, and vastly reducing the size of government, turning even Republicans against her.

But the real problem is more Congress than Obama and will continue to fester. Seventy-three per cent disapproved of Congress and only 49 per cent of the job Obama is doing as president. An almost identical 72 per cent disapproved of Congress in 2008 while an unprecedented 73 per cent disapproved of Bush in his final year.

Obama has nothing to lose now by sticking to his principles. He can still rally Americans by pushing ahead with arms control and climate change measures, carrying through on his vow to end the war in Afghanistan next year, pressuring Israel to abide by international norms, thereby showing the Washington beltway cabal for what it is.

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Canadian Eric Walberg is known worldwide as a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. He has lived in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. Presently a writer for the foremost Cairo newspaper, Al Ahram, he is also a regular contributor to Counterpunch, Dissident Voice, Global Research, Al-Jazeera and Turkish Weekly, and is a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. Eric Walberg was a moderator and speaker at the Leaders for Change Summit in Istanbul in 2011.

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