

Editorial

Bad Blood

In the movie “The Godfather,” while Clemenza gives Michael small arms training he counsels the young Don not to worry about the coming Mafia war...“these things have got to happen every ten years or so;” says Clemenza, “it cleans out the bad blood.”

Forgive Republicans for watching the calendar and stubbornly focusing on Washington state, but it has been ten years since the last gubernatorial election was arguably stolen from them. The year was '94. The state was Maryland. The candidates were Republican Ellen Sauerbrey and Democrat Parris Glendening. In '94 in Maryland, the last Republican to hold the Maryland governorship was Spiro Agnew. He'd been elected in 1964. On election night the vote showed Glendening had won only three of Maryland's 24 counties, Baltimore County and the two Washington D.C. suburban counties, Montgomery and Prince Georges County, yet he still carried the state by 6,000 votes.

Republican Sauerbrey sued to have the election overturned, arguing that 5,000 ballots were cast by prison inmates and that several hundred ballots were cast by voters who voted twice, gave home addresses of abandoned buildings or were deceased. A Maryland judge eventually threw out Sauerbrey's suit ruling that only 3,700 votes were in dispute and that they would not be enough to change the election outcome. Glendening went on to the governorship and four years later defeated Sauerbrey in a rematch.

It would not be until '02, when Republican Robert Erlich defeated Democrat Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, that Maryland would get its first Republican governor in four decades. The picture of thousands of crooked ballots in Maryland in '94 coming from the state's largest counties became an unsettling image for Republicans nationally, reminding them of the 1960 presidential election when Mayor Daley illegally delivered Cook County and Illinois to JFK and consequently the presidency.

The 2000 presidential election didn't help calm Republican fears about electoral shenanigans by Democrats in big city counties. Remember Al Gore wanting a recount, but only a recount in Florida's three largest counties...all Democrat counties.

And now in 2004, Republican Dino Rossi has lost the closest gubernatorial election in American history, 129 votes, to Democrat Christine Gregoire. Washington state, like Maryland in 1994, and like Oregon today, has not elected a Republican to the governorship in two decades. The last Washington Republican governor was John Spellman, elected in 1980, but defeated for reelection in 1984 by Democrat Booth Gardner.

Rossi, who won the election in the first count and also won in the second count, and who carried 31 of 39 of the state's counties, eventually lost the third count, the manual recount. While Rossi is expected to take the Nixon route and (for the good of the state) not sue, still, questions remain. Republicans are experiencing a growing sense of uneasiness that in very close elections Democrats will always prevail because of the

straggling and questionable votes that Democrats always seem able to produce from their large, urban counties.

Some of the more troubling aspects of the Gregoire/Rossi election:

Why were large Republican counties, Clark and Spokane, able to do their manual recount and change the outcome by only 2 and 7 votes respectively, while King County's recount meant a change in favor of Gregoire of 179 votes? (*And in this election those 179 votes meant everything.*)

Why was King County, a county which is two-thirds Democrat, the only county in the state to find uncounted ballots at the county's election headquarters? (And how convenient was it that one of those uncounted ballots just happened to belong to a King County councilman, immediately giving the uncounted ballots credibility with the media they would not have had otherwise.)

And why was King the only county to be allowed to count an additional 500 previously rejected ballots?

And why, as in Maryland in '94, did *every* post-election ruling go in favor of Gregoire and against Rossi?

And, of course, why did King county take six more days than any other Washington county (December 23rd) to certify their manual recount?

Non-partisan analysts will answer the last question by pointing out that the reason King County took six days longer than any of the other Washington counties is because King County has double the population of the next largest Washington county. Yes, but ...

Together these questions/doubts add up to one thought in the minds of Washington Republicans about their state's '04 gubernatorial election—and that is that King County would have produced, in this extraordinarily close election, whatever number of votes needed to keep the governorship in Democrat hands.

If Gregoire needed 100 votes, King County would have produced them. If she needed 500 votes, King County would have produced them.

And if she needed 1,000 votes, King County would have produced them.

Yes, one can call this cynicism on the part of Republicans, but keep in mind that from the moment Rossi won the second machine count, every break, every court ruling, every discovered extra ballot went in favor of Gregoire. As it did in Maryland ten years before.

Memories of Richard Nixon in 1960, or Ellen Sauerbrey in Maryland in '94, or Al Gore looking to cherry pick Florida Democrat counties, and now Dino Rossi in Washington winning two counts, but losing a third in '04 have left Republicans with one sobering

realization. Republicans cannot win razor thin close elections—because big city Democrat counties will create enough confusion and extra votes to steal these elections.

Republican fear of Democrats stealing elections may be the reason Republicans were so successful in turning out the red-state vote in last year's presidential election. President Bush was reelected by three percentage points, not because the middle of the country had gone on some crazed evangelical frenzy, but because Karl Rove was warning Red Staters that if they didn't turn out in huge percentages and give the President a comfortable win, they would have a hard time getting an honest count.

In the movie "The War Room," the movie's star, James Carville, who was also the star of Bill Clinton's '92 presidential campaign, lays out the reason his candidate will defeat the incumbent president. Says Rajun Cajun Carville in his Louisiana drawl about President Bush (Sr.), "He is so yesterday, he just reeks of yesterday."

Well, the overturning of Dino Rossi's victory by Washington's King County, and the tactics used by Washington Democrats just "reeks" of the state's professional union class. And we know too well in Oregon, that those unions don't exactly play "softball."