

The Tea Party Wins in Nevada

Michael Sean Winters | Jun. 9, 2010 NCR Today

Be careful what you wish for is an admonition that suddenly applies to both parties. In Nevada, the Tea Party candidate for the GOP Senate nomination, Sharron Angle, scored a significant victory over two more mainstream opponents. She will now take on Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

Reid's campaign was thrilled at the prospect. Angle's views on a number of subjects are far outside the mainstream: She wishes to abolish the Energy and Education Departments and to privatize Social Security. This last will not go down well with older voters who have moved to Nevada for its climate and lower cost-of-living, secure in the fact that their Social Security checks would provide them at least a decent retirement. Many of those same older voters saw their 401ks and other forms of private retirement accounts get wiped out in the past few years, so it is doubtful that privatizing Social Security will sit well with them.

Still, I remember the way Democrats in 1979 and 1980 pondered the prospect of running against Ronald Reagan. He, too, had given voice to some radical views and Democrats were sure that moderate voters would not risk their votes on someone who had once blamed trees for most air pollution, opposed the Civil Rights Act, and supported an economic agenda that his running mate had once labeled "Voodoo Economics." But, support him they did. Voters will overlook a person's stance on the issue if the candidate appears accessible and reasonable and if the economic and/or social conditions at the time are so bad as to lead voters to embrace almost anyone who is carrying the banner of change.

That said, Ms. Angle is about to be exposed to the kind of intense media coverage that turned Kentucky GOP Senate nominee Rand Paul from a primary victor into a national punch line within 48 hours. She wanted to win last night and win she did. But, it remains to be seen if she will be up to the challenge of a general election against a well funded incumbent who can spend millions of dollars introducing her to the rest of the Nevada electorate before she has much of a chance to introduce herself. If, on the other hand, she finds creative ways to portray herself as a viable alternative to the Washington establishment, I would not count her out.

So, Angle got what she wanted and Reid got what he wanted. But, it is not difficult to foresee circumstances in which both might come to regret getting what they asked for.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/30/2015 - 19:09): <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/tea-party-wins-nevada>