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Liberals should join the gun lobby

Thomas Reese | Jul. 17, 2013 NCR Today

Now that the Republican-controlled House of Representatives has refused to pass both food stamp legislation and comprehensive immigration reform, it is time for liberals to join forces with the gun lobby to get legislation passed.

In the past, urban Democrats from poor districts joined up with rural legislators to pass agriculture bills that included both subsidies for farmers and food stamps for the poor. This political coalition worked because it got urban support for agricultural programs and rural support for food programs. The Republican abandonment of this coalition means liberals need to look elsewhere.

Likewise, immigration reform required a coalition of liberal Democrats concerned about Hispanics together with farmers and employers looking for cheap labor. Again, the Republicans, led by its tea party wing, have abandoned this coalition.

So where should liberals look for a strong ally to help get legislation passed? How about the gun lobby? After all, the National Rifle Association is one of the strongest lobbies in Washington.

Winning the gun lobby's support should be easy. For example, Congress could add a few hundred million dollars (peanuts in the federal budget) to the food stamp program to provide coupons to help poor people buy guns. After all, the NRA and its Republican allies would want the government to help poor people exercise their constitutional right to bear arms. Everyone would certainly feel safer if they knew that food stamp recipients all carried guns.

Imagine the witness of nonpartisanship if the NRA hosted a gun sale in a parking lot on Capitol Hill and black ministers bused their congregations up from southeast Washington to buy guns. I am sure the Republican leadership would enjoy a photo op with these citizens at such a gun show. Nothing should warm the hearts of their constituents like seeing their representative surrounded by smiling black faces with semiautomatics.

A similar coalition could also help pass immigration reform. With only a few slight modifications, the immigration bill could be made gun-friendly. For example, we want as citizens people who understand the U.S. Constitution, and who understands the Fourth Amendment better than a gun owner? Immigration reform already requires applicants learn English and pay their back taxes. Congress could add the requirement that applicants own a gun, and the gun lobby would be happy to support a speedy path to citizenship.

It is time to win the gun lobby over to a liberal agenda. We should not let partisanship get in the way of getting things done. Let's work together for the common good.

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.

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