

Performink^{Online}

Chicago's Entertainment Trade Paper. The Art, the business, the industry.

PERFORMINK "ARTS & POLITICS" COLUMN --- January 5, 1993

CHRISTIAN COALITION HELPS DEFEAT ROCKFORD CONGRESSMAN--WHO'S NEXT?

The radical right scored impressive victories in elections across America in the November elections.

The Christian Coalition is the grass roots political organization founded and led by 1988 Presidential candidate Rev. Pat Robertson. Rev. Robertson is also the president of the Christian Broadcasting Network, the producer and host of the television show, "The 700 Club," and the owner of The Family Channel.

Mary Gill, Field Director for People for the American Way, a national group dedicated to defending constitutional liberties (founded by TV producer Norman Lear) estimates that the Christian Coalition helped to elect some 200 people to various levels of government this past November.

One of them was Ron Manzullo, who is the new Congressman from Rockford. Manzullo, a Republican, defeated the incumbent, Democrat John W. Cox, with a 56% of the vote. He received about 29,000 more votes than Cox.

Manzullo benefited from the distribution of 200,000 voter guides throughout the district which were printed by the Christian Coalition. These guides were distributed door-to-door, at shopping centers and at churches.

The Christian Coalition voter guides were distributed at churches the Sunday before the election, including Catholic churches.

The Christian Coalition distributed 40,000,000 voting guides nationally.

Christian Coalition Voter Guide '92

	Raising Income Taxes	Abortion on Demand	Choice in Education (Vouchers)	Homosexual Rights	Tax Funds for Obscene Art	Balanced Budget Amendment
U.S. House District 14						
Jonathan Abram Reich (D)	D	D	D	D	D	D
Dennis Hastert (R)	O	O	U	O	O	S
U.S. House District 15						
Charles Mattis (D)	U	O	S	O	O	S
Tom Ewing (R)	O	O	S	O	O	S
U.S. House District 16						
John Cox (D)	S	S	O	S	S	S
Don Manzullo (R)	O	O	S	O	O	S
U.S. House District 17						
Lane Evans (D)	S	S	O	S	S	O
Ken Schloemer (R)	D	D	D	D	D	D

The voting guide listed 7 issues for Congressional candidates, and then indicated whether Cox and Manzullo "SUPPORTS" or "OPPOSES" that issue. The 7 issues were: (1) "Raising Income Taxes," (2) "Abortion On Demand," (3) "Choice in Education (Vouchers)," (4) "Homosexual Rights," (5) "Tax-Funded Obscene Art," (6) "Balanced Budget Amendment," and (7) "Tax-Funded Abortion."

Manzullo was listed as opposing 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7; and supporting 3 and 6. Cox was listed as supporting 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7; and opposing 3.

These positions were not derived from a questionnaire, but the guide did not reproduce the questions or explain which roll-call votes or bills were used to derive the positions.

"Tax-Funded Obscene Art." That's like the old saw about "When did you stop beating your wife?" Mr. Cox believes he received that designation by the Coalition because he voted to fund the NEA.

This is what former Congressman Cox says about his defeat (excerpted from a release sent to Greater Chicago Citizens for the Arts):

"The fundamental religious group known as the Christian Coalition, under the leadership of evangelist Pat Robertson, played an important role in elections across the country. I am still discovering just what their impact was on my own defeat November 3rd...."

"On the Sunday before the election, the Christian Coalition handed my opponent a powerful tool for persuading the uninformed voter. The Coalition's 'Voter Guide '92' was distributed at churches throughout the 16th District. In many instances, the 'guide' was inserted in the church bulletin without examination by the church pastor because the guide had been delivered to the church just that morning."

"The Christian Coalition's voter guide should be recognized as:

1. A distorted, inflammatory presentation of specific topics of special interest to the Coalition;
2. An infringement of the separation between church and state -- a basic tenet of our American democracy, and
3. A piece of campaign literature distributed in the final moments of the campaign, preventing recognition and response by those whose views were misrepresented and/or identification and analysis by news media."

"Imagine if you were a relatively uninformed voter who went to your church on Sunday and were handed a 'Voter's Guide' by an usher or other fellow member of your church. From what higher authority could you expect to receive voter 'information'?...."

"The work of the fundamental religious groups is grassroots work...In a zealous movement to 'correct' what they perceive as America's mistakes, the rights of individuals are being endangered and the importance of maintaining a separation of church and state is being conveniently ignored."

"...This is an all-powerful special interest group that is growing by leaps and bounds--using the pulpit to persuade their fellow church members that there is a war to be fought. The battleground ranges from the school board, library board, hospital board and city council to the state legislature and Congress and the White House."

Mr. Cox concludes, "...I would urge us all to become actively involved in the political process so that we don't allow the outcomes of elections to be decided by those who are on a mission that I believe really does not represent the wishes of a majority of our citizenry."

The Rockford Register Star endorsed Mr. Cox for re-election and called him "one of the leading lights of the freshman class in Congress." We lost that leadership and another friend of the arts is gone from Congress.

The Christian Coalition is congratulating itself on a job well done.

Sources: Christian Coalition Voting Guide for Northern Illinois, "The Christian American," letter from John Cox to Greater Chicago Citizens for the Arts; letter from Mary Gill, People for the American Way.

© copyright Thomas Tresser, 1/1993.

Tom Tresser is a consultant, producer, educator and trainer who can help individuals, companies and communities leverage and amplify their creative assets in order to solve problems, create economic value and trigger civic engagement. Tom has been a long-time advocate for an increased appreciation for the role of creativity in the life of the community. In 1991 he started an organization that organized artists and cultural workers for political activism and taught "Arts and Public Policy" at Roosevelt University, where he organized a center for the study of cultural policy. Tom was Director of Cultural Development at Peoples Housing, a nonprofit community development corporation operating in northeast Chicago, where he organized a community arts program that combined culture and economic development. Tom served as lead organizer for the Chicago Park District for two years in a pilot project that transformed a major regional park into a community cultural center. In April 2004, Tom was elected to a two-year term for the Local School Council for the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. He lectures on "The Politics of Creativity" and conducts leadership training sessions for artists and creative professionals. He teaches classes on arts and civic engagement at DePaul University and Loyola University.



www.tresser.com tom@tresser.com



www.100kproject.us - info@100kproject.us

We seek to recruit, train, and propel 100,000 people from the arts, nonprofit, social services, education, and science sectors (and their supporters) to run for local office or help those with our values run as champions of service, science, justice, equity, peace, creativity, and the public sector. All permitted functions inside the 501 c 3 framework. We are in the early stages of organizing. Here is our [Steering Committee](#).