



## Democrats and Republicans: No, Both Parties Are Not the Same

There is a certain tiresome message we've all heard: the notion that the Republican and Democratic parties are the same. It's often put forth by people who consider themselves outside-the-box thinkers, and they fancy their point of view the enlightened one. Sometimes cynical George Carlin types, their message is, "Hey, I'm smart enough to know both parties are playin' the game. Don't try to fool me!"



This attitude was apparent in a few of the comments under a recent piece I wrote about liberal immorality. One respondent [opined](#), for instance, "What still amazes [me] is that there has been definite documentation about the lack of morals that *all* politicians have. Neither side can claim to be exempt from this. Yet, there seems to be this arrogance among the right, that they can explain away any misgivings that a Republican does."

Now, the first thing to mention here is that my article's focus was on ideology — liberalism and conservatism — far more than party. However, since these ideologies are associated with, respectively, the Democrats and Republicans, whatever differences the ideologies breed will also manifest themselves in the parties to a great extent. More significantly, though, my piece was not mainly about politicians but liberals in general. This is significant because you can find a given fault in any group, but this doesn't mean that it *characterizes* the group. So, sure, there are bad politicians everywhere, one in every bunch. But how do the rank-and-file react? Do they demand a degree of virtue from their leaders or only a degree of success? Let's examine it.

You may remember Mark Foley, the Republican Congressman in Florida who was found in September 2006 to have sent sexually suggestive instant messages to teenage male pages. In the aftermath of the scandal, Foley realized he'd have to resign, as his constituents wouldn't accept such behavior from their representative. And the proof is in the pudding. Because Florida law prohibited the removal of Foley's name from the ballot so close to the November election, area Republicans had to choose the name "Mark Foley" to vote for his replacement, state representative Joe Negron. But the negative name recognition was just too much. Negron lost the election and a Democrat won the seat.

Now contrast this with the 1980s Gerry Studds affair in liberal Massachusetts. There were no instant messages back then, but, apparently, there were no instant career-enders, either — that is, if you're a liberal with liberal constituents. You see, Studds actually had a sexual relationship with a teenage boy. And how did his district react?

They elected him again and again and again — *six times* in fact — until he chose to retire and deprive us of his unique abilities.

Not unique, however, was his ability to survive scandal in Democratic areas. After all, Massachusettsans gave the same get-out-of-morality-free card to Barney Frank and Ted Kennedy.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 11, 2012

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Of course, there are profound policy differences between the major parties, too. Remember the battle over amnesty several years back? Sure, George W. Bush and John McCain were for giving illegals a get-out-of-immigration-law-free card, but they were just joining the Democratic phalanx on the issue. And why didn't amnesty become a reality? Because it was blocked by the Republicans in Congress. I'd say that's a fairly big *general* difference, wouldn't you?

The same can be said of abortion, faux marriage, and a host of other issues. While a few Republicans take the wrong positions on them, the Democrats have mastered the Zen of Being Wrong: They have become one with error.

Having said this, there are always similarities among people or groups, and this is what often confuses those who espouse Democrat-Republican equivalence. For example, we're all sinners; thus, if a person had an inability to distinguish among types and amounts of sin — and saw no difference between recognizing your transgressions and being oblivious to them and between a contrite spirit and a defiant one — he could very well believe all people are the same in this regard. But, in keeping with Saint Augustine's teaching that there's a hierarchy of sin, there's also a hierarchy of sinners. No person, group, party, or nation is even close to perfect, but they're not all equally flawed, either. And one doesn't have to be able to see nuance to perceive this. He just has to be able to see.

In reality, what drives people to say things such as "Both major parties are the same" is emotionalism. What they really mean is that both parties displease them, and they're disgusted, so they just want to white them both out of the picture with the same undiscerning brush in a fit of pique. But know that I'm not entirely pleased with any party. I'm also sometimes displeased with my fellow man and, frankly, often with myself. And that's the point: If you find a perfect party, don't join it. For then it will cease to be so.

As for reality, "Politics is the art of the possible," as Otto Von Bismarck said; it's not the art of the perfect. And it increases this imperfection when we descend into negative radicalism. One form of this would be to say that one party is angelic while the other is demonic. Another form is to say they're both the same.



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