



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 28, 2012

McCain Wants GOP Mum on Abortion

There should be no talk of abortion — or as little as possible, anyway — in the “bigger tent” Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) recommends for the Republican Party. Republican candidates should “leave the issue alone,” McCain said in his November 25 interview on [Fox News Sunday](#). The 2008 GOP presidential nominee offered that advice in response to a question from host Chris Wallace about demographic groups that voted overwhelmingly for President Obama in this year’s election.



“You lost unmarried women by 36 points, Hispanics by 44 points. Young people by 23 points,” Wallace said. “Does your party need to change, especially in its outreach with those groups, on social issues like same sex marriage, on immigration reform?”

“I think we have to have a bigger tent,” McCain said in a reply that made no mention of same-sex marriage or immigration reform, but spoke in general terms about having “a much more positive agenda.” He continued, “It can’t just be being against the Democrats and against Harry Reid and against Obama. You have to be for things, and we have to give them something like the Contract with America, that we gave them some years ago. We have to give them something to be for.” But not the right to life, apparently.

“And as far as young women are concerned, absolutely — I don’t think anybody like me, I can state my position on abortion, but to — other than that, leave the issue alone when we are in the kind of economic situation and, frankly, national security situation we’re in.”

Wallace drew the obvious conclusion, even if McCain would not.

“When you say leave the issue alone, you would allow, you’d say, freedom of choice?” the Fox News host asked.

“I would allow people to have those opinions and respect those opinions,” McCain answered. “I’m proud of my pro-life position and record. But if someone disagrees with me, I respect your views.”

McCain’s view of the ‘bigger tent’ certainly got attention, though perhaps not the kind of respect he hoped for, in the conservative press, where the senator’s call for a truce on abortion drew sharply critical reviews. Writing in the blog called “The Corner” in [National Review Online](#), Frank Cannon and Jeffrey Bell took note of what does and does not arouse McCain’s indignation:

For McCain, this represents a very different moral calculus from his criticisms of the Obama administration’s handling of the terrorist attack on U.S. personnel in Benghazi. With Benghazi the larger principle is that when U.S. personnel stationed abroad come under attack, the government must make every effort to come to their aid and protect them. Expressing sympathy with brave Americans under assault is not enough; we should have executed a plan to try to save their lives in a timely fashion.

Indeed, one could hardly imagine Sen. McCain offering to respectfully disagree and then “leave the



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issue alone” if someone were to tell him that the lives of the Americans in our consulate in Benghazi were not deserving of protection. Such a statement, it seems safe to say, would arouse the fighting side of John McCain, former navy pilot and decorated Vietnam War veteran, who endured five and a half years as a prisoner of war. His response would rightly be clear, forceful, and unequivocal. A minimum amount of respect and civility might be included, but chances are they would not be the most noticeable features of his reply. Simply put, such a foolish and uncaring statement would make McCain very angry.

So why does he recommend quietly dropping the subject when “abortion rights” lobbyists demand and “pro-choice” politicians promise to protect the “right” to kill innocent, pre-born babies as a matter of personal “choice”? McCain seems to think a pro-life advocacy, though seldom heard from Mitt Romney and most of the other candidates in this year’s elections, is somehow to blame for the party’s poor showing at the polls. David O’Steen, writing on [lifeneews.com](#), challenged that widespread belief, citing data from The Polling Company that showed only four percent of voters said they based their vote on the abortion issue and of those, the Romney and Obama votes broke even. According to a Gallup Poll published last May, a majority of voters (51 percent) identified themselves as “pro-life,” while 48 percent chose the “pro-choice” label. “A plurality, or even majority, of the public continues to oppose the vast majority of abortions that are actually performed,” O’Steen wrote.

Conservative columnist David Limbaugh noted that traditional views on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage, to the extent the party promotes them, have the power to draw many of the same voters that McCain and others say Republicans need to attract.

“It is no small irony,” Limbaugh [wrote](#), “that those urging a remake of the GOP to bring it in line with changing demographics could unwittingly alienate Hispanics and other minority recruits who might be receptive to social conservatism.”

Ken Connor, a pro-life attorney who heads the Center for Just Society, [told](#) lifeneews.com that the nearly total silence by Romney and the Republicans on the party’s pro-life stand was anything but golden for the Grand Old Party in this year’s election:

One thing is certain, Neither Mr. Romney nor the Republican Party ever made the case for the sanctity of life or marriage in this election season. Consequently, when [U.S. Senate] candidates like Todd Aiken [in Missouri] and Richard Mourdock [in Indiana] fumbled the ball with their ham-handed responses in their own campaigns, their remarks took on national significance and were imputed to Romney as the GOP’s representative in the presidential contest.

Two paragraphs are all it takes to make the case for life, yet the subject never got more than two sentences in any Romney stump speech. As a result, his position on abortion was mischaracterized by the Obama machine as a “war on women.” Had he been willing to devote a few moments of his time to develop the case for the sanctity of life he could have been seen as a protector and advocate for children and the elderly and the handicapped. Sadly, he was unwilling to make the case, and so was the GOP.

Cannon and Bell also questioned the political as well as the moral “calculus” of McCain’s assumption that, in their words, “remaking the party into a pale social-issue copy of the Democrats will bring electoral nirvana by 2016.”

“We find it puzzling why McCain believes such a stance would improve Republican election chances or even enhance respect for Republicans among our opponents,” they wrote. “We would reveal to tens of millions of social-conservative voters that Republicans will never lift a finger on behalf of human life,



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even though we supposedly share their view of the issue. We would at the same time be telling them and everyone else that, whenever Republicans express a principle, it's anyone's guess as to whether we care enough to act on it."

Photo of Sen. McCain: AP Images



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