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Republican Perspective

By John Littig

Presidential U-Turns

President Obama has often said “I have always been consistent” on this or that issue. Really? Let's take a look at some dramatic reversals.

On same-sex marriage

In an October 2004 interview with WTTW Chicago: “What I believe is that marriage is between a man and a woman”

And again in a November 2008 interview on MTV: “I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I am not in favor of gay marriage.”

But in a May 9, 2012 interview on ABC News, following days of speculation about his “evolving” stance on the issue: “At a certain point, I've just concluded that for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”

On presidential power to take military action

In a 2007 interview with the Boston Globe, then-Senator Obama declared: “The president does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.”

But then as president, in March 2011, Obama launched military action against the Libyan regime without Congressional authorization.

On the threat from Iran

On May 18, 2008, campaigning in Oregon, Obama had this to say about Iran: “I mean think about it. Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, these countries don't pose a serious threat to us the way the Soviet Union posed a threat to us.... You know, Iran, they spend one one-hundredth of what we spend on the military. If Iran ever tried to pose a serious threat to us, they wouldn't stand a chance.”

But the very next day campaigning in Montana: “Iran is a grave threat. It has an illicit nuclear program. It supports terrorismŠIt threatens Israel's existence. It denies the Holocaust.”

On the Patriot Act

In response to a NOW questionnaire in 2003, senate candidate Obama wrote: “Yes, I would vote to repeal the U.S. Patriot Act, although I would consider replacing that shoddy and dangerous law with a new, carefully crafted proposalŠ”

That caused then-rival Hillary Clinton to say concerning his February 2006 vote “You said you would vote against the Patriot Act. You came to the senate and voted for it.”

And as president, on May 27, 2011, Obama signed into law a four-year extension of that same Patriot Act.

On patriotism and debt

In our final example, we get two reversals for the price of one. Obama skillfully scored a two-fer, managing to reverse himself on two seemingly unrelated issues (patriotism and the debt) in three interlocking statements.

First, on June 30, 2008: “So let me say this at the outset of my remarks. I will never question the patriotism of others in this campaign.”

Then only three days later, at a Fargo, N.D., campaign event on July 3, when the national debt was \$9.5-trillion: “The problem is, is that the way Bush has done it over the last eight years is to take out a credit card from the Bank of China in the name of our childrenŠNumber 43 added \$4-trillion by his lonesome, so that we now have over \$9-trillion of debt that we are going to have to pay backŠThat's irresponsible. It's unpatriotic.”

Finally, in a March 13, 2013 interview with George Stephanopoulos, when the debt was \$16.7-trillion (a 76 percent increase in just under five years), the level of debt was no longer irresponsible or unpatriotic: “We don't have an immediate crisis in terms of debtŠIn fact, for the next 10 years, it's gonna be in a sustainable place.”

These reversals do not reflect a simple failure to keep campaign promises, which is a politician's typical ailment. These are Obama's outright reversals of his own previously espoused positions. If a man can reverse himself this easily, without embarrassment, what does this say about his trustworthiness?

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