SOME MAY ARGUE THAT NOVEMBER 7, 2006, SIGNALS THE END OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT IN AMERICA. SOME WILL SAY THAT THE DEMOCRATS WON THE ELECTION. I DON’T BELIEVE EITHER ARGUMENT.

SADLY, TOO MANY POLITICIANS WHO CLAIMED TO BE CONSERVATIVE LOST THEIR WAY LONG BEFORE THE FALL ELECTIONS. THE REPUBLICAN RHETORIC IN WASHINGTON DID NOT MATCH THE RECORD OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. THE VOTERS TOOK NOTICE AND KICKED THEM OUT OF OFFICE.

REPUBLICANS IN WASHINGTON (AND MANY IN WISCONSIN) FORGOT THAT WE ARE THE PARTY OF REAGAN. THEY FORGOT THEIR ROOTS.

RONALD REAGAN BELIEVED IN LIMITED GOVERNMENT, LOWER TAXES, AND A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE. HE KNEW WHO HE WAS, WHERE HE WAS GOING, AND HOW HE WAS GOING TO GET THERE. IT DIDN’T MATTER IF YOU WERE A PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT GEOFFREY UNIVERSITY OR A CAB DRIVER TRAVELING THROUGH GEOFFREY, EVERYONE KNEW WHAT REAGAN STOOD FOR—BECAUSE HE TOLD US AND THEN ACTED ON IT.

IN 1994, REPUBLICANS WHO TOOK BACK THE GOVERNMENT UNDERSTOOD THOSE PRINCIPLES. YEARS LATER, REPUBLICANS IN DC FORGOT THEIR ROOTS. THEY FORGOT REAGAN.

TWO DECADES AGO, REAGAN VETOED A BILL JUST BECAUSE IT HAD JUST OVER A HUNDRED EARMARKS. LAST SESSION, THE GOP MAJORIES IN WASHINGTON SENT PRESIDENT BUSH A BILL WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND EARMARKS.

THEY GAVE US THE BRIDGES TO NOWHERE IN THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY BILL AND A $50 MILLION RAIN FOREST STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY IN IOWA. NOW I DIDN’T MAJOR IN GEOGRAPHY IN COLLEGE, BUT I DON’T RECALL ANY RAIN FORESTS IN THE MIDWEST.

SPENDING GREW OUT OF CONTROL.

WHEN NEWT LEFT IN THE LATE 1990S, SO DID THE PROMISE OF A NEW DIRECTION. REPUBLICANS WENT FROM THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF IDEAS TO THE IDEA OF ABSOLUTE POWER.

FREE SPENDING AND POWER HUNGRY—REPUBLICANS IN WASHINGTON HAD BECOME WHAT THEY Sought TO REPLACE IN 1994.

I GIVE VOTERS MORE CREDIT THAN DO MOST ELECTED OFFICIALS. I BELIEVE THAT VOTERS WANT TO SUPPORT CANDIDATES WHO STAND FOR SOMETHING, AND THEY WANT TO BOOT THOSE WHO BREAK THEIR PROMISES. ELECTIONS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT TRUST. REPUBLICANS LOST THE TRUST OF THE ELECTORATE.

SCOTT WALKER (R) IS THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE.

WHISCONSIN INTEREST 39
torate by giving up on their claim to want less
government.

Still, like President Reagan, I am an opti-
mist. I have hope that Republicans in
Washington (and in Madison too) will return
to their roots.

In 1992, Bush lost to Clinton. After two
years of Bill and Hillary, Americans were
ready for a new course. In 1994, conservatives
presented a strong agenda through the
Contract with America and the GOP reclaimed
the majority in the House for the first time
since President Eisenhower.

If Republicans learned from their defeats
this past November, they can reconnect with
the voters in 2008—but they must return to
their roots. That is an agenda based on the
principle of less government (not slower
growth than the liberals), the protection of per-
sonal liberties (not just lip service), and the
promotion of real freedom (to speak, pray, act,
and live the way we want).

Republicans will win again if they return
to Reagan’s conservative agenda and conta-
gious enthusiasm for the future.