

Since Bill Clinton's election, the Republican Party has defeated two sitting Democratic senators, won 32 of 66 state legislative races, and elected the first Republican mayor of Los Angeles since 1961. But the most heartening sign of the health and smarts of today's post-Bush Republican Party has been the swiftness with which party leaders have focused "like a laser" on the lessons presented by the election last May of 34-year-old Bret Schundler for a full term as mayor of Jersey City, N.J.

Governed by Democrats since 1917, this is the city where fabled boss Frank Hague (1917-1949) accurately announced "I am the law." Mr. Schundler won 68 percent of the vote in a city that defined big-city machine corruption, and where only 6 percent of voters are registered Republicans. Mr. Schundler's victory over the machine was complete — his entire slate of nine city council members was elected with him.

While the defeat of a corrupt Democratic Party machine is noteworthy, it has gone largely unreported that Mr. Schundler carried more than 40 percent of the black

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Victory in Jersey of rainbow Republicanism

vote, a stunning development for a Republican. Newt Gingrich and Jack Kemp have already debriefed Mr. Schundler — and Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour has invited Mr. Schundler to address the entire Republican National Committee — about the secret of his success with black and other minority voters. (Jersey City is 65 percent minority. Mr. Schundler won 75 percent of the Hispanic vote and 85 percent of the Asian vote.) If the Republican Party can find a way to win 40 percent of the black vote nationally, then the Democrats might as well stay home on Election Day.

Mr. Schundler is convinced that the black support he received was no fluke. "I unequivocally think our campaign is a model for others," he says. "Ronald Reagan's message that 'government is not the solution, it is the problem' is self-evident to many voters stuck in corrupt cities. No one needs to tell the black voters of Jersey City that they shouldn't trust politicians with their lives and their money.

To their credit, Republicans from Washington to Los Angeles are asking Bret Schundler about his suc-

cess in winning minority voters. How'd he pull it off? The Schundler campaign offers six lessons to Republican candidates:

(1) To win the votes of black Americans, you have to ask for them. Mr. Schundler spoke at black churches and campaigned heavily in predominantly black public housing projects such as Marion Gardens, where he received a majority of votes. Too often, traditional campaign consultants redline black districts, assuming there are no Republican votes to be had. Mr. Schundler argues that the failure of the liberal welfare state and its policy of entitlement has created a "time of great depression" in cities and that Republicans can now compete in "historically hostile districts." As a result, Mr. Schundler says, "history is not a guide to the future."

(2) Speak directly to black voters — not through so-called black leaders. Not a single black elected official would endorse Mr. Schundler. The Democratic National Committee spent \$35,000 to bring Jesse Jackson to town for a two-day attack on Mr. Schundler a week before the May election. But neither Mr. Jackson nor the local nomenclatura

could deliver the black vote in Jersey City. Republican candidates can and must be their own Radio Liberty, speaking over, under and around the establishment leaders to reach black voters.

(3) Expect to be called racist. Jesse Jackson went so far as to call a vote for Bret Schundler a vote for the "values of the Union of South Africa." But crying wolf wears thin over time.

Mr. Schundler would not allow Mr. Jackson's scare tactics to keep him from highlighting crime as a key issue. His demand that all criminals — even youthful offenders — receive some punishment proved very popular with black voters. So, too, his call for requiring prison inmates to work, not to mention welfare recipients. In countless races nationwide, conservatives have been intimidated by cries of racism into backing away from discussions of crime and welfare reform that would have won them serious support among black voters.

(4) Campaign on a unified message — not on separate messages that balkanize the electorate. Mr. Schundler campaigned in all neighborhoods in favor of his package of

putting prisoners to work for their upkeep, welfare work requirements, lower taxes, more police patrols, and school vouchers. The myth peddled by liberal Republicans for decades, that Republicans must shift left to win black votes, can finally be put to rest. A Jersey City poll produced by Fabrizio, McLaughlin and Associates found that black voters were every bit as concerned about fighting crime and drugs as white voters, and "black voters were more likely to support cutting the sales tax, school choice, and requiring prison inmates to work in jail to pay their own cost."

A national study in June 1992 by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found that 33 percent of blacks identify themselves as conservative, 30 percent as moderate, and 28 percent as liberal. Given that the study also found that only 8 percent of blacks identify themselves as Republicans, that 33 percent figure gives Republican candidates a huge target of opportunity.

(5) As with all voters, establish confidence and trust with the black voter. Mr. Schundler didn't squander the window of opportunity open to

him before the May runoff. (He was initially elected in a special election last Nov. 3. Against 18 other candidates, Mr. Schundler won with 16 percent of the vote.) Having promised last fall to oppose any tax increase, to cut property taxes and increase the percentage of cops on the beat, he did all three well before the runoff. "Once I made it clear that I wouldn't raise taxes, it made everything easier," Mr. Schundler says. In a climate of trust, Jesse Jackson's name-calling didn't stand a chance.

(6) Commit to choice in education. Republicans sometimes forget how important this issue is to lower-income voters. Mr. Schundler calls its potential for "empowering black parents and communities as great as that of the civil rights movement of the 1960s." He sees no end in opportunities for candidates campaigning on platforms of low taxes, seriousness about crime, and educational choice in cities across America.

Richard Nixon used the issues of crime and national defense to bring the Democratic Southern states solidly into the Republican fold. Mr. Schundler's success charts a strategy for Republican victories in the previous Democratic strongholds of the inner city. Success here would radically alter the correlation of forces in American politics, not only in urban areas, but in House and Senate races as well.