

3/18/96

Tobacco Industry Switches Brands

After Favoring Democrats, Cigarette Firms Shift Donations to GOP

By Glenn Frankel
Washington Post Staff Writer

When Speaker Mark Killian of the Arizona House of Representatives got a surprise phone call at home from Haley Barbour last spring, he assumed the chairman of the Republican National Committee was calling to compliment him on the legislature's groundbreaking work in passing welfare and prison reforms.

But Barbour had something else in mind. As Killian recalled it, the chairman urged his fellow Republican to release for a vote a pro-tobacco bill that the speaker was holding up.

"The speaker was a little bit surprised and a lot disappointed," said Killian's spokesman, Jack Lavelle. "He understands the tobacco industry is a very powerful force and gives money to a lot of people in Washington. He was just kind of sad that the chairman of his party

called for that reason." And unmoved: Despite Barbour's phone call, Killian proceeded to kill the bill, which would have allowed the state to override tough local restrictions on cigarette smoking.

For the Republican national chairman to reach down to a state legislator on behalf of the tobacco industry suggests how strong the industry's clout within the party has become. Indeed, both Democrats and Republicans, as well as lobbyists and public-interest groups all agree that a historic shift is taking place. After decades in which the industry took pains to spread its influence and campaign contributions evenly between the two main parties, Republicans are increasingly becoming the party of tobacco. And as Killian's response suggests, some Republicans are not happy about it.

"We're not Republicans and we're not Democrats—our politics are the politics of tobacco," said Walker

See TOBACCO, A14, Col. 1

TOBACCO, From A1

Merryman, veteran lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute, the industry's prime lobbying group. "But there's definitely been a sea change.

"Up until 1994 we were a lot more oriented toward the Democratic Party because virtually every elected official in the [tobacco-growing] Southeast was a Democrat—congressmen, governors, state legislators. But that's rapidly changing. At the same time, we have the most hostile administration in history in office. You deny reality at your peril."

One way to measure the change is money. Two reports released yesterday by Common Cause and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group show the industry, reacting to increased government efforts to restrict its products, is giving record amounts of cash to political parties and individual congressmen, and that the vast majority of the money is going to Republicans. During the last off-election year in 1993, tobacco political action committees gave \$477,000 to Democratic candidates and \$422,000 to Republicans. Last year the same PACs sent \$841,000 to Republicans and only \$281,000 to Democrats.

A similar shift has occurred in the giving of "soft money," unrestricted donations to party organizations. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, in 1991 the industry gave \$1,170,724 in soft money, 62 percent of it to Republican organizations. By last year the amount had risen to \$2,793,496, and 85 percent went to Republicans.

"Historically, tobacco industry giving has been relatively equal . . . with slightly more given to the political party in power," said Matthew Myers, general counsel for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, financed by a coalition of anti-smoking groups, who presented the two reports at a news conference yesterday. "But these studies show the industry has chosen to make this a highly partisan issue through unusually lopsided giving to one party—the Republican Party."

Part of the reason is ideological; the

Republican pro-business and pro-de-regulation agenda is a comfortable fit for an industry that senses it is under siege in the halls of the federal government's regulatory agencies and in court. Tobacco companies are battling the Food and Drug Administration's plans to begin regulating nicotine as a drug, as well as federal proposals to restrict workplace smoking and require states to tighten restrictions on tobacco sales to minors.

At the same time, six states are suing tobacco companies to recover Medicaid costs of treating smoking-related illnesses. Earlier this week the Liggett Group broke ranks with the rest of the industry to agree to settle a huge class-action lawsuit and withdraw from the fight against the FDA's proposal.

Part of the switch to the GOP is also due to the aggressive fund-raising tactics of Republicans who have sought to take full advantage of their domination of both chambers of Congress. And part is due to the demise of traditional "blue dog" Democrats from tobacco-growing states who sided with the industry and their replacement by conservative Republicans.

Republican officials deny that the industry's sharp increase in contributions means it has effectively bought GOP support. "We've always taken the Reagan view on contributions, which is we assume that people who are contributing to the campaign are supporting us and not the other way around," said Tony Blankley, spokesman for House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). "We are in favor of free markets and freedom, and anyone who feels they are having their freedom taken away from them would be attracted to our party."

Both Republican leaders and tobacco spokesmen point out that the Democratic Party is the leading recipient of soft money from trial lawyers and law firms, which stand to benefit from the anti-tobacco suits. Last year, the lawyers gave the party nearly \$1.8 million, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Still, the GOP leadership's embrace of tobacco is causing consternation

among some Republicans, who fear their party will be seen as the captive of America's most controversial industry, and that President Clinton and the Democrats will turn this to their advantage in November.

"I'm sorry to say this, but I think what is happening to the Republican Party is a tragic mistake," says Elizabeth Whelan, a conservative Republican who is a prominent critic of federal regulatory agencies but opposes the party's identification with the tobacco industry. "Republicans are basically allowing the liberals to monopolize an important public health issue."

THE WASHINGTON POST

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 1996

TOUP/GS/day
L. Hunkle
Jock! BC

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On the most important issue involving the federal government and the tobacco industry—the Clinton administration's push pushing for increased government regulation—Republican congressional leaders have been vocally supportive of the industry. Gingrich said the FDA had "lost its mind" for seeking regulatory authority over tobacco and has branded Food and Drug Commissioner David A. Kessler "a thug and a bully."

The GOP presidential front-runner, Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (Kan.), whom Common Cause says has received nearly \$46,000 in tobacco

PAC contributions over the past decade, also has attacked the FDA proposal.

Portraying the administration as anti-tobacco could have tangible benefits for the GOP in Kentucky and Tennessee, tobacco-growing "swing" states that Clinton won in 1992. And the tobacco industry is ready and willing to make the case. "Even before the inauguration Hillary Clinton announced she was banning smoking in the White House," said the Tobacco Institute's Merryman. "Then there was the proposed \$2-a-pack excise tax increase to pay for health care reform. Now there's the FDA's assault. Any one of these would have been enough to upset a lot of people. The fact is the Republican Party is attractive because they're not the party that has sought to attack tobacco."

But White House plans to frame the issue in a different way. "They'll say we're anti-tobacco; we'll say we're pro-kid," said a Clinton aide.

In his State of the Union address, the president warned the industry: "Market your products to adults if you wish, but draw the line on children." It's a message the administration hopes will sell not only in health-conscious California but also even in tobacco-growing regions.

One place it is not selling is Congress. When Reps. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) and James V. Hansen (R-Utah) got together to circulate a statement committing signers to supporting the administration's goal of decreasing children's access to tobacco products, they tried to make it a bipartisan effort. They even obtained an endorsement from Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Coalition, in hopes of attracting more Republicans. But as of last week, of the 90 signatories all but 17 were Democrats.

An opposing letter objecting to the FDA's proposals was signed by 32 senators and 124 House members. The signatories received a combined \$3.4 million in tobacco industry contributions over the previous 10 years, according to Common Cause, three times the average of lawmakers who did not sign the letter.

Whelan, who heads a public advocacy research group in New York that has criticized regulatory agencies such as the FDA and the Environmental Protection Agency, organized a letter to Gingrich last July—signed by 42 Republican physicians and scientists—that called on him to take a firm stand against "the grave public health danger caused by tobacco."

The letter said conservatives should seize the issue from "well-meaning social engineers and safety alarmists" who see the answer as an expansion of government regulatory power, and instead promote "an anti-smoking agenda consistent with personal freedom, commercial free speech and minimal government." It called on Gingrich to acknowledge that cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, to dissociate himself and his colleagues from the tobacco industry, and to push for tougher state restrictions on cigarette sales to children.

Gingrich never replied to the letter. Instead, spokesman Blankley questioned the Republican credentials of the signatories. "They can call themselves anything they want but how many elected offices have they held?" asked Blankley. "The speaker gets thousands of letters. He responds to ones he feels are of some national import."

A spokesman for Barbour denies the Republican national chairman was seeking to pressure fellow Republicans to aid the industry when he placed his phone call to Arizona Speaker Killian last spring or a similar call to the office of Texas Gov. George W. Bush (R) last summer. "He makes calls all the time to check on bills he's interested in," said spokesman Ed Gillespie.

Another tobacco "preemption" bill is moving toward the Arizona House again this year, but Killian has made clear he has not changed his view. "The speaker has six kids, he's a scoutmaster, and he's very opposed to children becoming involved with tobacco," said spokesman Lavelle. "He's let it be known if the bill gets over here people are wasting their time. I believe he said, 'I'll tube it again.'"

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN
3/18/96

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VP
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Copies to
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Bill Clinton

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

5-7-96

Alexis

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Mayor Schuckler's
house, a black
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Corp of Engineers
wasn't letting any
8(a) contracts + Mr
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BC

President of the United States

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PHOTOCOPY
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Bill Clinton

5/6

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

5-7-96

VP

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copy to
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President of the United States

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THE WHITE HOUSE 517196
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Judge Helen White
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J Quinn

Is she up for a judgeship
(in Alaska I think)? A
supporter asked about
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Bill Clinton

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5-7-96

Alexis

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from us because of it)

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help if appropriate —

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President of the United States

copy to
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VID

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efforts—

BS

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

My Answer

Billy Graham

Q. MAYBE THERE isn't any answer to this, because I know they didn't have television in Biblical times, but do you think we ought to control what our children watch on television? My husband says we shouldn't bother because they need to know what the world is like anyway, but I'm concerned about what the violence and immorality they see on TV might do to them.

A. NOT LONG AGO I read about some wells in our part of the country that were contaminated because of a nearby chemical waste dump, and you have probably read similar stories. Now let me ask you a question: Would you allow your children to drink water from such a well? Of course not, because you know it could seriously harm them physically.

The same thing is true with our children's moral and spiritual health. Just as they are affected physically by the things they eat, so they are affected morally and spiritually by the things they see and hear — whether on television or elsewhere. Yes, they need to learn what the world is like — but they will learn that soon enough anyway. I would strongly encourage you, therefore, to control what your children watch and set forth some clear-cut guidelines for their viewing habits. That is not to say all television is a bad influence, any more than all wells are poisoned, but you need to exercise discernment. The Bible says, "Listen, my son. . . . Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men" (Proverbs 4:10,13-14).

Beyond that, however, ask God to help you make your home a place where Christ is honored. Your example of love and purity and commitment to Christ will be the greatest influence on your chil-

Mr. President —
This is the
article I told
you about. L

PHOTOCOPY
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ARKANSAS GAZETTE

Friday, February 5, 1988

Kathie McGinty
See note on back -
As have him called,
see if we can help

BC

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2-21-96



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DEREK OWEN

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PROBLEM

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2/5/96

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Leon

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Leon Fyl

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2/26/96

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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2/27/96

CT Smith

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1st Deputy John Wright!

2/26/96

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WASHINGTON

* Briegleb Advertisers

Muscare

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program for kids in neighborhood

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