

Roman Sehling, U.S. Midterm Elections 2006: Einwanderungs- und Energiepolitik als innenpolitische Themen im Wahlkampf

Earlier this year, it appeared that both immigration and energy policy would become key topics in the 2006 U.S. midterm elections. However, recent developments in the national security realm are likely to relegate both topics at least temporarily to secondary importance to U.S. voters. With Iraq already on the forefront of issues for large segments of the U.S. electorate, the attempted terrorist attacks uncovered in early August are likely to refocus the attention of the American public toward the terrorist threat again. Given the traditional advantage of the Republican Party in the national security realm – polls have consistently shown that voters tended to trust Republican candidates more with the defense and security of their country than their Democratic counterparts – the Republican Party is likely to take up this issue more actively as well.¹

However, given these developments and the fifth anniversary of the attacks of September 11th, Republicans may also overcome their internal divisions on current immigration proposals to draft legislation that would address both calls for improved border security as well as offer a realistic solution that would incorporate illegal immigrants already within the United States. Similarly, we can expect that President Bush's energy policy proposals would receive further attention, as they can be easily associated not only with a stronger and more competitive economy, but also the appearance of greater energy independence and hence national security.

With Republicans in control of both Congress and the White House, and having brought both topics to national prominence earlier this year, it will be hard for them not to act on immigration issues in particular and present concrete accomplishments before the midterm elections in November 2006. While many commentators have started to predict at least a partial Democratic victory in November, the following months still contain many opportunities for Republican candidates to distance themselves from unpopular policies of the Bush administration and associate themselves actively with a push for increased homeland security and energy independence.

However, it remains to be seen whether Republicans will manage to connect the Iraq war effort with the larger war on terror in this election cycle again to credibly justify the country's costly engagement in Iraq and thus to continue to negate the Democrats a majority in Congress.

¹ Für tägliche Berichterstattung zu den amerikanischen Zwischenwahlen, würde ich Sie einladen den Blog der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Washington, DC unter <http://kasusa.squarespace.com> zu besuchen.