HARRY REID'S PRICE OF FAILED LEADERSHIP

Harry Reid is in trouble in his reelection effort in Nevada. From the Las Vegas Review-Journal's report on a new poll by Mason Dixon:

> Nevadans say they're ready to replace longtime Democratic incumbent Sen. Harry Reid with an untested Republican.
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> Which Republican? Undecided.
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> But of their top two picks — former GOP party official Sue Lowden and real estate developer Danny Tarkanian — either one would unseat Reid if the election were held today, according to a poll commissioned by the Review-Journal.
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> Lowden and Tarkanian are in a statistical tie atop a list of nine primary candidates, according to the survey of Nevada registered voters.
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> In one general election scenario, 49 percent of respondents picked Lowden and 39 percent chose Reid. In another, 48 percent picked Tarkanian to 43 percent for Reid. That poll, which surveyed 500 voters Tuesday through Thursday, has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.
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> In Clark County, where Reid needs to dominate to win another term, he is in a statistical tie with either Lowden or Tarkanian.
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> "That is the bad news," UNLV political science professor David Damore said of Reid's Clark County numbers. "That tells you there is a disaffected base there."
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> For months the perception of Reid among voters has been fixed, with near 100 percent name recognition and a high number of voters viewing him

> unfavorably. In the latest poll, 38 percent of voters viewed Reid favorably compared to 50 percent with an unfavorable view.

Chris Cillizza, the David Broder wannabe and heir apparent, draws the knee jerk Villager conclusion that Reid's troubles result from Nevada voters viewing him as too liberal and carrying too much water for Barack Obama.

But Cillizza typically ignores that Barack Obama won Nevada over McCain by a huge margin, 55% to 43% ten short months ago. And Cillizza ignores that Nevada is populated by a huge community of service employees in the Las Vegas and Reno metropolitan areas, and generally a poor to middle class populous in the remaining areas, all of whom are dying for healthcare reform and relief. It is not that Democratic votes are not there for Reid; it is that Nevadans are fed up with his inability to get the things done that they want, and healthcare with a strong public option that will actually help them, is undoubtedly the leader in their clubhouse of reasoning.

The depth of Reid's problem should not be underestimated. Nor should the challenge of Republican businessman Danny Tarkanian. Tarkanian grew up in Las Vegas, was a top student and Rhodes Scholar candidate, and was point guard on the first of the famous UNLV Runnin Rebel basketball teams that held forth for the better part of two decades at or near the top of the NCAA standings. Oh, by the way, those famous UNLV teams were coached by Danny's father Jerry "Tark the Shark" Tarkanian, probably the most beloved name in Nevada sports history. Tarkanian's mother was a Las Vegas City Councilwoman and active philanthropist. The guy has some serious juice from his name and background and will get major support from the GOP assuming he continues to climb in relation to GOP official Sue Lowden, which he is expected to do.

The conclusion here is that Reid has serious problems and they are of his own making. Unless Reid gets with the program, exercises some party discipline from his Majority Leader position and starts working earnestly for the causes, first and foremost the strong public option, of Democratic voters, he will not get any support from the activist base. As Jane Hamsher says:

> There are 51 Senators who will vote for a public option, something 77% of the country wants. It would win a majority in a floor vote. We were told that we needed 60 votes in the Caucus so we'd have a filibuster-proof majority – so that the GOP would never block a bill from getting to the floor. The only reason not to put the HELP Committee public option in the Senate bill is because Joe Lieberman and other "ConservaDems" are conducting a silent filibuster – they won't say it publicly but they'll say privately that they will vote with the GOP to filibuster the bill.
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> That means the Democratic caucus will now filibuster itself.
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> Either you're going to enforce caucus discipline or you don't have a party. You have instead a collection of self-interested narcissists, each one with the ability to derail any legislation they don't like. Every Senator who derives their political power from membership in the caucus is thereby granted the power to torpedo any piece of legislation from coming to a vote, with no consequences. It's an outrage.
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> So if Reid won't enforce caucus discipline, if as Majority Leader he now says it's acceptable to use the "60 vote" threshold to water down the bill, he has to wear it. No matter how he votes personally. No matter how much the

> White House makes a fetish of bipartisanship and courts Olympia Snowe. No matter what cover anyone else tries to give him.
> …
> I don’t care if we have to recruit a Democratic primary challenger. Maybe someone from the Culinary Workers? I don’t care it we have to blitz the Nevada airwaves with ads about Reid’s coziness with DC lobbyists, or maybe how his son – who is running for Governor – just sits back while his father adds $2000 a year to Nevada health insurance premiums at their behest. And I sure don’t fucking care if Danny Tarkanian becomes the next Senator from Nevada, because at that point 60 votes don’t mean anything anyway.

And that, as Walter Cronkite would say, is the way it is. Harry Reid needs to wake up and get with the program the voters overwhelmingly want; if he doesn’t, he is going to be sucking on a wet towel by himself out in his trailer in Henderson. Sucking on a wet towel is what Tark the Shark was famous for (along with fast, exciting and winning teams); wouldn’t it be ironic if Tark’s son is the one who sent Hanoi Harry Reid to that ugly end of the road?