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## Speaker: GOP can make comeback (with video)

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With a popular Democratic president in the White House and an unpopular Republican predecessor, the GOP is the midst of building a new identity.

Eleanor Clift, a contributing editor for Newsweek, told a crowd at a Livingston Economic Club luncheon at Cleary University on Monday that, according to a recent Washington Post-ABC News poll, only 21 percent of respondents identified themselves as Republicans. Thirty-five percent identified themselves as Democrats.

"The Republican Party can come back. These things come in cycles," said Clift, who covers politics and has reportedly has liberal leanings. "The biggest challenge for the Republicans is demographics."

While Republicans used to rely heavily on a white, Christian base, Clift noted the country itself is becoming more diverse, and "millennials," or those born after 1978, are tending to lean more to the left.

She added the GOP is starting to capitalize on some of President Barack Obama's policies and moves, including its almost unanimous opposition to his approved \$787 billion stimulus plan.

" 'The Party of No' is now seen as a label that some want to embrace," Clift said.

She compared a group, the National Council for a New America, aimed at rebranding the GOP as comparable to the Democrats' response to Democrat Walter Mondale's thumping in the 1984 presidential election at the hands of Republican Ronald Reagan. Shortly after that election, the Democratic Leadership Council was formed to address the party's focus.

Regarding Obama's presidential tenure thus far, Clift said she still isn't sure why the president treated repairing Wall Street differently from the auto industry. She did note, however, Obama had to "manage that anger" of the populace following a series of successive loans and bailouts by calling for the ouster of General Motors Corp. CEO Rick Wagoner.

"They were put through the ringer much more than Wall Street," Clift said of the Big Three automakers. "It almost felt like a class difference."

Clift, who also sits in on the televised "McLaughlin Group" show, noted Americans are looking for someone to lead them out of the recession and that they believe Obama is their man. She added, contrary to some arguments that Obama is trying to create a socialist government, that instead, he is trying to "save capitalism" from greed and lack of regulation.

Attendees from both sides of the political spectrum agreed with some of Clift's talking points.

"I think she was pretty balanced in her description of what's going on," said Judy Daubenmier, chairwoman of the Livingston County Democratic Party.

Daubenmier said she also found interesting Clift's personal background, which included being born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and serving as a pundit on "The McLaughlin Group."

Mike Murphy, chairman of the Livingston County Republican Party, said he was disappointed in Clift's short answer to a question about why Obama promoted transparency, then refrained from revealing

details about Troubled Asset Relief Program money — more commonly known as the government's financial bailout money. Clift noted "nothing is perfect in Washington."

He agrees with Clift that Americans are looking to their government for help in getting out of the recession, but he said he doesn't think that's a good thing.

"If you look at what's happened since (the baby boom), you have more people who are takers" rather than hard workers, Murphy said.

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