

So reading the New York Times with my breakfast this morning I came across a front page story that really took my breath away. No, it wasn't the story about the disastrously low approval ratings of Congress (25%) or the President (37%), and it wasn't the one exposing that four investigators at Gale Norton's Interior Department had filed suits charging corruption and tolerance of industry malpractice. Nor was it the one about the Holocaust denying president of Iran. No, the front page story that caught my attention was the one about how Neil Young — that iconoclastic musician who has taken a musical ride with his fans from the early Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young up to his most recent album slamming the Bush administration and its prosecution of war — that Neil Young is a model railroad enthusiast who has gone so far as to conceive a system for realistically reproducing the sounds of railroads, and then acquired a minority interest in Lionel Trains to further develop it. Neil Young is now behind a project to capture the sounds of the New York City subway for inclusion in a new model version to be released by year end.

Boy, talk about eclectic. Neil, we hardly new ye!

-+-+-+ In my most recent rant about the nature of opposition, I presented several bullet points about now versus 1994, when Republicans took 52 (not 54 as I stated) House seats from the Democrats. I forgot to include an especially salient point, which is this: Unlike 1994, when 100 House seats were considered in contention, this year only 40 are.

This is do to the rigorous application of micro-targeted demographics by, predominately, the Republican party in the laying out of district boundaries. This has the effect of securing districts safely for the incumbent, even when approval ratings are as low as they are - The congressmen are choosing their voters rather than the voters choosing their congressmen. District boundaries, in all states but Iowa, are drawn by the state legislatures. This makes it more important than ever to win those state level seats if there will ever be hope of winning national ones. Iowa deserves both praise and study for its approach. Since adopting their solution, wherein a non-partisan panel handles redistricting, the percentage of competitive races has increased.

<http://www.fairvote.org/redistricting/reports/remanual/ianews.htm>

-+-+-+ In light of the recent war of words between an amazingly naive Pope Benedict and the various voices of Islam, I am reminded of a Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel headline from September 12th. It ran above an AP story about a Baylor Univ. study, "More of us active in religion than thought" it read. Now I know they mean that more of us than thought are active in religion, but I read it as more of us are praying than thinking.