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Article published Oct 19, 2006

Oct 20, 2006

Bruderly for change

Cliff Stearns is an amiable politician who keeps in touch with the folks back home. The Ocala Republican has served 18 years in Congress and wants to make it 20.

The Sun usually endorses Stearns for re-election, even though we have severe reservations about his voting record in regard to the environment, tax breaks for the wealthy and social issues. We have done so because Stearns has a good record of constituent services and has been moderately successful in obtaining federal funds for the district.

But that's not good enough any more.

We believe voters in the 6th District should elect Democrat Dave Bruderly. We make this recommendation because we fear the country is taking a dangerous turn. And because Stearns' party — the party that runs Congress — did little but play the role of cheerleader as President Bush took America into an unnecessary war, horribly botched the conduct of that war and made a mockery of due process and the Bill of Rights on the fallacious premise that Americans can be free or they can be safe but they cannot be both.

We believe the only way President Bush can be held accountable for a long trail of bad public policy decisions that stretches from Baghdad to New Orleans is if the voters begin to elect independent-minded candidates for Congress who will go to Washington, ask hard questions and demand accountability.

So why make Stearns pay for the sins of his party? Because Stearns has been no more willing than any other member to question Bush's reasons for going to war, his conduct of the war, the administration's assumption of extraordinary, and arguably unconstitutional, powers in the name of "national security," its ineptitude in responding to Hurricane Katrina or the president's un-conservative decision to fight the war with a credit card (the debt to be passed on to our children) while handing out tax breaks like party favors.

An imperial presidency threatens the very foundations of American representative democracy. An imperial presidency coupled with a lapdog Congress dooms the great American experiment in democratic self-rule.

Dave Bruderly is a professional engineer who, unlike Stearns, takes seriously the threat of global warming and America's dangerous dependence on foreign oil. More importantly, his election would help weaken a partisan monopoly on congressional power that has been content to tolerate corruption, a culture of rank influence peddling and an unbridled, power-hungry executive branch that has not made us safer against terrorism, but has immeasurably damaged America's standing with the rest of the world.

We like Cliff Stearns. He is an amiable politician who keeps in touch with the district and knows how to bring home the bacon. But that's not enough any longer.

This election voters must restore the system of checks and balances that has kept America free for more than two centuries.
