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Bush remains 'eternal optimist' despite polls

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By Caren Bohan

WASHINGTON, Oct 27 (Reuters) - A lot of Republicans look at Nov. 7 and are very afraid. Not President George W. Bush. Despite polls showing his party is in for a drubbing, the cheerleader in chief sees a good day.

Sinking under the weight of grim news from Iraq, discontent with Bush's leadership and lawmaker scandals, Republicans could be on the verge of a crushing defeat in next week's congressional elections, costing them control of the U.S. House of Representatives and maybe the Senate.

But if he is worried, Bush going to lengths not to show it. He remains the "eternal optimist" against a tide of opinion polls and declaring Democrats so cocky that they are prematurely "measuring the drapes."

He insisted, "November 7th is going to be a good day for the Republicans."

That contrasts with a gloomier mood of many other Republicans who early this month began to express fears -- mostly behind the scenes -- that the Internet sex scandal involving Rep. Mark Foley had accelerated a downward spiral that would lead them to defeat in at least the House.

"It's calculated to shore up the flagging motivation of Republicans," said Bruce Buchanan, a political scientist at the University of Texas.

But even out of the public eye, Bush is not entertaining talk of a possible shift in Congress. In meetings with Cabinet officials on plans for his final two years in office, there is no contingency planning for a Democratic takeover of Congress, officials said.

"It's the only way to proceed," White House spokesman Tony Fratto said.

Bush is also talking of reviving his effort to revamp Social Security -- a nonstarter with Democrats.

Critics deride it as bravado or a sign of Bush's refusal to face realities he doesn't like. They compare it to his stance on Iraq.

"It is certainly part of an overall pattern in which the president seems to see the world differently than everybody else does," said Phil Singer, Senate Democratic campaign committee spokesman. "He seems to view things through rose-colored glasses."

BOOSTING THE PARTY

White House political director Sara Taylor readily admits the president is an optimist, but she called that a strength of his leadership style.

"There are a lot of Republicans who've talked themselves into a funk, and while certainly we get information from lots of places and hear lots of viewpoints, we believe strongly that we're going to hold both houses of Congress," Taylor said.

Buchanan said the president's upbeat stance also reflects his personality. "One of the reasons he has felt confirmed in that view is he has had a long string of personal successes."

He cited Bush's win in 1994 against the popular Democratic Texas Gov. Ann Richards when "even his own mother didn't think he could win." Bush's presidential victories in 2000 and 2004 also ran counter to a lot of conventional wisdom.

But Bush is hamstrung in his ability to help Republicans. Though he is raising a lot of money for candidates, many in the closest races are reluctant to appear in public with Bush, whose popularity is near 35 percent.

Nationwide polls consistently show Democrats favored by voters. By some measures, satisfaction with the U.S. Congress is at its lowest level since 1994, when control of the House shifted to Republicans after 40 years of Democratic control.

Linda Fowler, professor of government at Dartmouth College, said Republicans lost critical momentum when the Foley scandal interrupted their efforts to tap into emotions of the Sept. 11 anniversary and tie the war in Iraq to the war on terror.

"It was a chance for the president to frame how people thought about Iraq and it

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