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Never mind the polls. The New York Times says that Rove is running a "sophisticated" campaign for Bush's Social Security plan.

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Pundits on the right say public opposition doesn't matter because the people who feel strongest about the Schiavo case agree with them. They're wrong.

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The president celebrates Easter with the troops, putting some distance between himself and the right-wing culture warriors in Florida.

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## A valentine for Karl Rove

So, it turns out that "Bush's Brain" is really smart.

That seems to be the main point of the [fawning profile](#) of Karl Rove in today's New York Times. The Times reports in on Rove's new role as deputy White House chief of staff, telling us that Rove is so knowledgeable about the details of policy decisions that he's sometimes the only person in the room who can understand complex presentations on the economics of Social Security.

In his new job, Rove is running what the Times calls "a sophisticated campaign on behalf of the president's Social Security proposals, employing all the components of the national political machine built to re-elect Mr. Bush" while simultaneously "overseeing policy meetings where the administration's senior officials analyze the competing Social Security proposals, bone up on arcane economic concepts and plot how to hit back at the substantive arguments made by people on the other side of the issue." The Times says that the president is "betting heavily on Mr. Rove's well-chronicled political skills to build public support, hold Republicans together and overcome intense Democratic opposition."

What the Times doesn't say: It's looking like a bad bet.

Although George Bush has made Social Security reform his No. 1 domestic priority this year, he has made so little progress on the issue that one Congress-watcher tells [Bloomberg](#) that getting legislation passed this year will be "no more difficult than flying to Pluto without a spaceship." The harder Bush sells his privatization plan, [polls show](#), the less the public seems to like it.

In all the marveling over Rove's mastery over politics and policy, you might think the Times would take a moment to wonder whether Rove has finally fumbled in the Social Security debate. You'd be wrong. In the penultimate paragraph of the Times' piece, there's a single mention of "grumbling among some Republicans that Mr. Rove has mishandled the Social Security campaign," but it's made without elaboration and then followed instantly by an assurance that it's not so. "Mr. Rove's allies and fans say that he anticipated the difficulties of moving the Social Security debate



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## ► Quote of the day

"No goddam chairman's ever made a difference in the history of the Democratic Party."

-- Sen. Joe Biden, responding to a [New Yorker](#) question about Howard Dean.

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[House?](#)

Tom DeLay says that withholding life support from Terri Schiavo is "murder." But DeLay "went along" in 1988 when life support was withheld from his own father.

[Fact-checking the Schiavo "experts"](#)

This week Fox News pundits showcased an "expert" doctor who supports keeping Terri alive. Never mind that they falsely awarded him a Nobel Prize nomination.

[Terri? Terri who?](#)

Republicans in Congress thought the Schiavo case offered them a no-lose political opportunity. Are they finally figuring out that they were wrong?

[On Good Friday, is Jeb Bush Pontius Pilate?](#)

The religious right steps up its demand that the Florida governor save Terri Schiavo by seizing her.

[Payback for America's closest "allies"](#)

Washington to Islamabad: No idea where bin Laden is? Hosting the global black market for nukes? Paying off terrorists? No problem. Oh, and want to buy a bunch of F-16s?

[Trashing the law to save Schiavo](#)

In arguing that Jeb Bush should ignore the courts and seize Terri Schiavo, the religious right turns its back on two centuries of American law.

[Gallup: Bush's lowest grade ever](#)

The president's approval rating drops

forward and that he and Mr. Bush remain convinced that they will win in the end," the Times says. "'Anyone who thinks otherwise,' said Charlie Black, a veteran Republican strategist, 'they're underestimating Karl and they're underestimating the president.'"

You can't accuse the Times of that.

-- Tim Grieve

[13:04 EST, March 28, 2005]

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seven points in a week. Is it Schiavo? The Republicans say no.

[Peggy Noonan's Schiavo mess](#)

The conservative columnist advised Republicans that the Schiavo case was a no-lose proposition for them. Now she says that Americans who oppose her are headed toward the "low road that twists past Columbine and leads toward Auschwitz."

[We incite, you decide](#)

The Schiavo case is almost over -- unless Fox News has its way.

[The Republican Party's Terri Schiavo "meltdown"?](#)

Numerous bloggers, many of them conservatives, continue to blast the Bush administration over the Schiavo case -- and see a Republican Party in big trouble.

[Bush's nuclear problem](#)

One of several, actually: A scandal-plagued plan for "safe" storage of the nation's nuclear waste.

[Rummy's version of Democracy 101](#)

Concerned that schoolyard rules might trump democratic ones in Iraq, Rumsfeld gives the nation's new parliamentarians a talking to.

[Meanwhile, in other news . . .](#)

As Washington focused on the fight over Terri Schiavo, there was news on Abu Ghraib, Osama bin Laden and the war in Iraq.

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The Supreme Court denies a request for an order to re-insert Terri Schiavo's feeding tube. The political repercussions of the case have just begun.

[Terri Schiavo and the fight over Bush's judges](#)

If the solution to an "out of control" federal judiciary is the appointment of more Republican judges, the Schiavo case doesn't provide much evidence of it.

[Spinning Schiavo](#)

Polls show that the GOP's actions are at odds with the views of mainstream Americans. The right-wing response? Criticize the polls.

[It's in the hands of the Supreme Court now](#)

The parents of Terri Schiavo ask for help from the highest court in the land. It appears to be their last chance -- and it's a long shot.

[Backing into cleaner cars?](#)

And now, for some good news about the fight against global warming. No, really.

[Leaders chat, border vigilantes mobilize](#)

As Bush meets with Vicente Fox and Paul Martin, is the illegal-immigration issue about to boil over?

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