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'New' Inglis stirs some on the right

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By his own admission, Republican U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis is a different person -- and congressman -- from the Bob Inglis who went to Washington for six years in the 1990s.

Re-elected in 2004, Inglis says he's brought a new perspective to the job.

Gone is the sanctimony.

The old Inglis shunned PAC money, lived the term limits ideal, and rarely saw a federal dollar for his district that didn't waft a porcine odor.

Advertisement "I was pure as the driven snow, and the rest of my colleagues were swine," he recalled last week. "Then I had six years to sit in the audience," courtesy of a "crushing" defeat in 1998 at the hands of now-retired Democratic U.S. Sen. Ernest F. Hollings.

But has he crossed the line, horrors, from conservative to moderate? Or worse?

There are indistinct rumblings from the right about the re-election of Inglis, but getting a handle on them is like trying to pick up a blob of mercury.

It's there, but you just can't get to it. 'He's different'"He is different from the last time," observes Dave Woodard, Clemson University professor and Republican consultant-pollster who has worked with Inglis in the past. "He's definitely a different congressman from his first stint, in allegiances and some of his votes."

Last summer, Inglis joined 14 House Judiciary Committee Democrats to create a 15-15 tie on a bill that would have protected the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. It was part of the GOP's "American Values Agenda" and would have removed federal courts jurisdiction in cases involving the pledge.

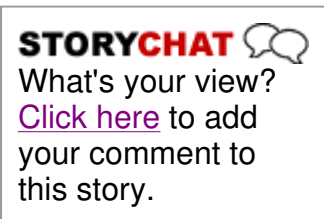
Afterward, Inglis told The Associated Press he was concerned that if a Republican-controlled Congress passed "court-stripping" legislation, a future Congress held by Democrats might seek to deny the courts a role in other issues.

In August 2005, John DeVries of USA Political Research used 30 House votes to determine the most and least liberal Southern Republicans and Democrats. Inglis, at 27 percent, ranked third among the purportedly most liberal Republicans.

Columbia Christians for Life isn't in the Inglis fan club.

In an Oct. 11 e-mail, the organization urged allies to support Libertarian Party candidate John Cobin and scored Inglis for, among other things, voting for an appropriations bill it contended would send public dollars to Planned Parenthood, whose centers perform abortions.

Inglis, devoting 1,700 re- buttal words on his Web site, says the legislation marked the first time that no funds could be used for abortion, except those financed by Medicaid to cover cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother. More pragmatismAnd the National Right to Life organization rates him at 100 percent, based on 10



key votes in the current Congress.

To Greenville management consultant Hollis "Chip" Felkel, "no one in their right mind could ever accuse Bob Inglis of being a liberal. He does appear to be more pragmatic, and if that offends some people, that's too bad."

Inglis has a respectable 80 percent lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union, although it's below his South Carolina colleagues, who range from 91 percent to 99 percent.

He scores well, though, with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, where his 85 percent rating on business legislation was enough for an "automatic endorsement," according to spokesman David Felipe. Other GOP congressmen from South Carolina scored 80, 85 and 93 percent.

Inglis gets some kind words from some with impeccable conservative credentials.

Bob Taylor, a Greenville County Council member and Bob Jones University official, said he hasn't heard from any detractors and finds this second congressional incarnation to be exhibiting a refreshing dose of realism compared to the 1993-99 stint.

But, he said, the Pledge of Allegiance vote raised questions by a lot of folks on the right: "That may be the one vote I had the most problem with."

Lisa Van Riper, an anti-abortion activist from Greenville, has "heard rumblings" from the right, but is supporting Inglis.

"A critical look shows he's a conservative," she said. Heard the talkInglis says he's heard the talk, but still sees himself on the right side of the spectrum.

Quoting Solicitor Trey Gowdy of Spartanburg, he said, "If you're on Inglis' right, you need rappelling gear."

Then Inglis shifts to the new Inglis mode, the one he calls "Inglis 2.0," and steers the conversation to global warming and the need to "do some work on repositioning the Republican Party as the party of conservation."

"Contrary" to some right-wing pundits and talk radio, he cites a growing list of Christian leaders who now see it as a matter of stewardship. "Getting some elements in our party to come to that understanding takes a bit of work."

It's possible to get to his right. It just hasn't worked so far for anyone.

Stephen Brown in the 1998 Senate primary came at him from the right and lost.

This year, it's Libertarian Cobin.
