



## ***The Free Congress Commentary***

### ***The Next Conservatism #24: The Next Conservatism and the Republican Party***

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While culture is more important than politics, and the next conservatism must include a new movement to restore our traditional culture, politics remains important, too. The political question is, what vehicle should the next conservatism choose in politics? Even a powerful new culturally conservative movement will need a relationship with a political party.

Some conservatives will argue that we should create a new political party. I understand that sentiment. In many ways, the Republican Party has been a disappointment.

But the fact remains that our whole political system is tilted powerfully against third parties. Third parties can and do play useful roles, especially in raising issues the two main parties would rather avoid (like immigration and the damage done by free trade). But in the end, it is virtually certain that national elections will be won by either the Republican or Democratic Party.

In my opinion, as someone who has spent most of his life in politics, that means the next conservatism must attempt to re-take the Republican Party. We have to do again what we did starting in the 1960s and ending in the nomination of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Of course, many Republicans will tell us, "You don't need to re-take the Republican Party for conservatism. It is conservative now." Well, that isn't exactly accurate. On some issues it is true. The Bush administration has nominated good judges, and most Republicans in the Senate have tried to get them confirmed. We have cut taxes again. There are other examples of real conservatism in today's Republican Party.

But there are too many issues where the Republican Party, openly or covertly, has sold us out. Its policy of promoting democracy around the world through wars is Wilsonianism, which is the opposite of conservatism. On immigration and trade

issues, it could hardly be worse. On the culture, it tells cultural conservatives it agrees with us, but what it actually does behind closed doors is often another story. Frankly, many Washington Republicans look on our beliefs on issues like feminism and “gay rights” with secrete derision. They tell us what we want to hear to our faces, but they don’t believe it. They have accepted the rules laid down by Political Correctness, at least to the point where they aren’t willing to break them.

So, again, in my view, unless we are prepared to be used and then disregarded by Republicans over and over, we need to re-take the Republican Party. How?

First, we will have to get behind a candidate. The candidate has to be really one of us. The candidate has to be willing to fight for our issues and to articulate our viewpoint. And the candidate has to agree that when elected he will put our people in positions of power. If we can get that kind of commitment, then we should back this candidate in every precinct caucus beginning in Iowa. Then we should be prepared for the states which have primaries. If we can nominate this candidate and elect him President then we can take over the Republican Party.

Just as George W. Bush appointed Ed Gillespie and then Ken Mehlman, two very able technicians, the candidate we back in 2008 must be ready to appoint the best political technician in the country - someone who knows about re-taking the party. That will be done state-by-state and, eventually, precinct-by-precinct.

Unless we have a Presidential candidate who will give us the best political operative in the country, we won’t get control of the party. The Goldwater people worked their hearts out all over the nation and were able to win state after state. But before long, the man who had brilliantly engineered the Goldwater primary victories, F. Clifton White, was out on the street replaced by an establishment GOP Chairman and an establishment manager. To this day many believe Goldwater’s devastating defeat could have been less severe had White been in charge for the general election. It is not sufficient to take over the party at the precinct level without a commitment that the right people will be in charge at the national level.

Once we have succeeded in re-taking the Republican Party for the next conservatism, we cannot stop. As surely as anything, the usual Washington types will re-take it from us under our noses, telling us what we want to hear while doing the opposite. The next conservatism needs a virtually automatic mechanism to primary any Republicans who stray. We have to make absolutely certain that any Republican who sells us out pays a price.

If we succeed in re-taking the Republican Party, and then keeping hold of it, we will have a powerful ally in keeping the state out of our faces and off our backs as we work to recover our culture. That is why politics must remain important to all of us.

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