



## “Conservative” Republicans Seek to Impose Litmus Test for Candidates

In an effort to rid the GOP of what some of its members derisively call RINOs (Republicans in Name Only), self-styled conservative party leaders have developed a 10-point loyalty scorecard by which it intends to measure every Republican seeking elective office in the upcoming 2010 election cycle.

Many observers detect the influence of the “Tea Party” movement in the proposal as they reckon that the Republican Party is hemorrhaging right-wing adherents, as many of them perceive that the national party has drifted toward the center of the political spectrum in order to be more attractive to the moderate bloc of voters and thereby expand the vaunted “big tent” of Republican tolerance.



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Regardless of motivation, authors of the petition are circulating it among Republican National Committee (RNC) members to gain their support in advance of the organization’s annual confab being held in January in Hawaii. Promoters of the resolution assert that while heading off any centrifugal splintering of their party caused by the exponential acceleration of the momentum of tea-party activists is certainly one of the reasons for the planned purge, the greater long-term purpose is to “make the party more consistently and reliably conservative by promoting lower taxes, keeping spending levels in check and focusing on national security.”

The practical application of such an agenda-based winnowing is to obviate electoral mishaps like that the GOP recently suffered in the special election held in New York’s 23rd Congressional District last month. In that contest, the moderate Republican candidate, Deirdre “Dede” Scozzafava, eventually bowed out and instead of endorsing the Conservative Party candidate, Doug Hoffman, she threw her support behind the Democratic choice, Bill Owens, the man ultimately elected to represent the district.

The most irritating aspect of the electoral debacle in New York was not Scozzafava’s apparent defection, rather it was the fact that Michael Steele, chairman of the RNC, authorized the contribution of large sums of money to her campaign, and then upon learning of her intent to exit the contest, he made no attempt to convince her to withhold her support altogether or, as many in his party would have liked, to openly back the Conservative Party candidate. Steele’s stutter step and his history of often backing the wrong horse in intraparty races has repeatedly rankled the so-called conservative wing of the GOP. “The problem is that many conservatives have trust in the conservative credentials of the Republican Party. So the task is to restore our conservative bona fides,” declares James Bopp, Jr., RNC



committee member from Indiana and chief architect of the checklist.

Specifically, the proposal being offered for ratification by the whole of the RNC requires that in order for a Republican candidate for the House of Representatives or the Senate to receive financial support from the National Republican Congressional Committee or the Republican Senatorial Committee (the two arms of the Party tasked with distributing RNC funds) he or she must not “disagree with 3 or more of the above stated public policy positions.” This threshold level of fidelity to these 10 Republican articles of faith is inspired by an aphorism attributed to Ronald Reagan that held that someone who agreed with him 80 percent of the time was his friend, not his enemy. Authors of the measure are such dyed-in-the-wool acolytes of the late President that they have styled their proposal the “Resolution on Reagan’s Unity Principle for Support of Candidates” and they invoke his mighty name in the first clause.

The exact text of the resolution follows:

Proposed RNC Resolution on Reagan’s Unity Principle for Support of Candidates

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan believed that the Republican Party should support and espouse conservative principles and public policies; and

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan also believed the Republican Party should welcome those with diverse views; and

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan believed, as a result, that someone who agreed with him 8 out of 10 times was his friend, not his opponent; and

WHEREAS, Republican faithfulness to its conservative principles and public policies and Republican solidarity in opposition to Obama’s socialist agenda is necessary to preserve the security of our country, our economic and political freedoms, and our way of life; and

WHEREAS, Republican faithfulness to its conservative principles and public policies is necessary to restore the trust of the American people in the Republican Party and to lead to Republican electoral victories; and

WHEREAS, the Republican National Committee shares President Ronald Reagan’s belief that the Republican Party should espouse conservative principles and public policies and welcome persons of diverse views; and

WHEREAS, the Republican National Committee desires to implement President Reagan’s Unity Principle for Support of Candidates; and

WHEREAS, in addition to supporting candidates, the Republican National Committee provides financial support for Republican state and local parties for party building and federal election activities, which benefits all candidates and is not affected by this resolution; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Republican National Committee identifies ten (10) key public policy positions for the 2010 election cycle, which the Republican National Committee expects its public officials and candidates to support:

- (1) We support smaller government, smaller national debt, lower deficits and lower taxes by opposing bills like Obama’s “stimulus” bill;
- (2) We support market-based health care reform and oppose Obama-style government run healthcare;



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- (3) We support market-based energy reforms by opposing cap and trade legislation;
- (4) We support workers' right to secret ballot by opposing card check;
- (5) We support legal immigration and assimilation into American society by opposing amnesty for illegal immigrants;
- (6) We support victory in Iraq and Afghanistan by supporting military-recommended troop surges;
- (7) We support containment of Iran and North Korea, particularly effective action to eliminate their nuclear weapons threat;
- (8) We support retention of the Defense of Marriage Act;
- (9) We support protecting the lives of vulnerable persons by opposing health care rationing and denial of health care and government funding of abortion; and
- (10) We support the right to keep and bear arms by opposing government restrictions on gun ownership; and be further

RESOLVED, that a candidate who disagrees with three or more of the above stated public policy position of the Republican National Committee, as identified by the voting record, public statements and/or signed questionnaire of the candidate, shall not be eligible for financial support and endorsement by the Republican National Committee; and be further

RESOLVED, that upon the approval of this resolution the Republican National Committee shall deliver a copy of this resolution to each of Republican members of Congress, all Republican candidates for Congress, as they become known, and to each Republican state and territorial party office.

While the movement's promoters, supporters, and allies attest that the resolution is not a litmus test, other Republicans oppose the erection of a few narrow planks of the Republican platform as a gate through which all Party hopefuls must pass before receiving the imprimatur of Party potentates. One Party strategist, for example, defended his resistance to adoption of the test by explaining, "We already have screen tests in place, and they are called Republican voters. If a candidate doesn't support the principles of the party, Republican voters aren't going to choose them as a candidate, which renders the whole coordinated-funds issue completely moot." Notably, the strategist spoke only on condition of anonymity, perhaps an indication of the powerful sway already held by those seeking enshrinement of the proposal in the RNC's operating by-laws.

Finally, while the strategist's assessment of the situation is accurate, there are other tests already in place — the Constitution of the United States, specifically Articles I and II, enumerating the limited powers granted to Congress and the President respectively. And, curiously, were the proposed standard in place in 2000, then it is unlikely that George W. Bush would have merited RNC sanction.

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