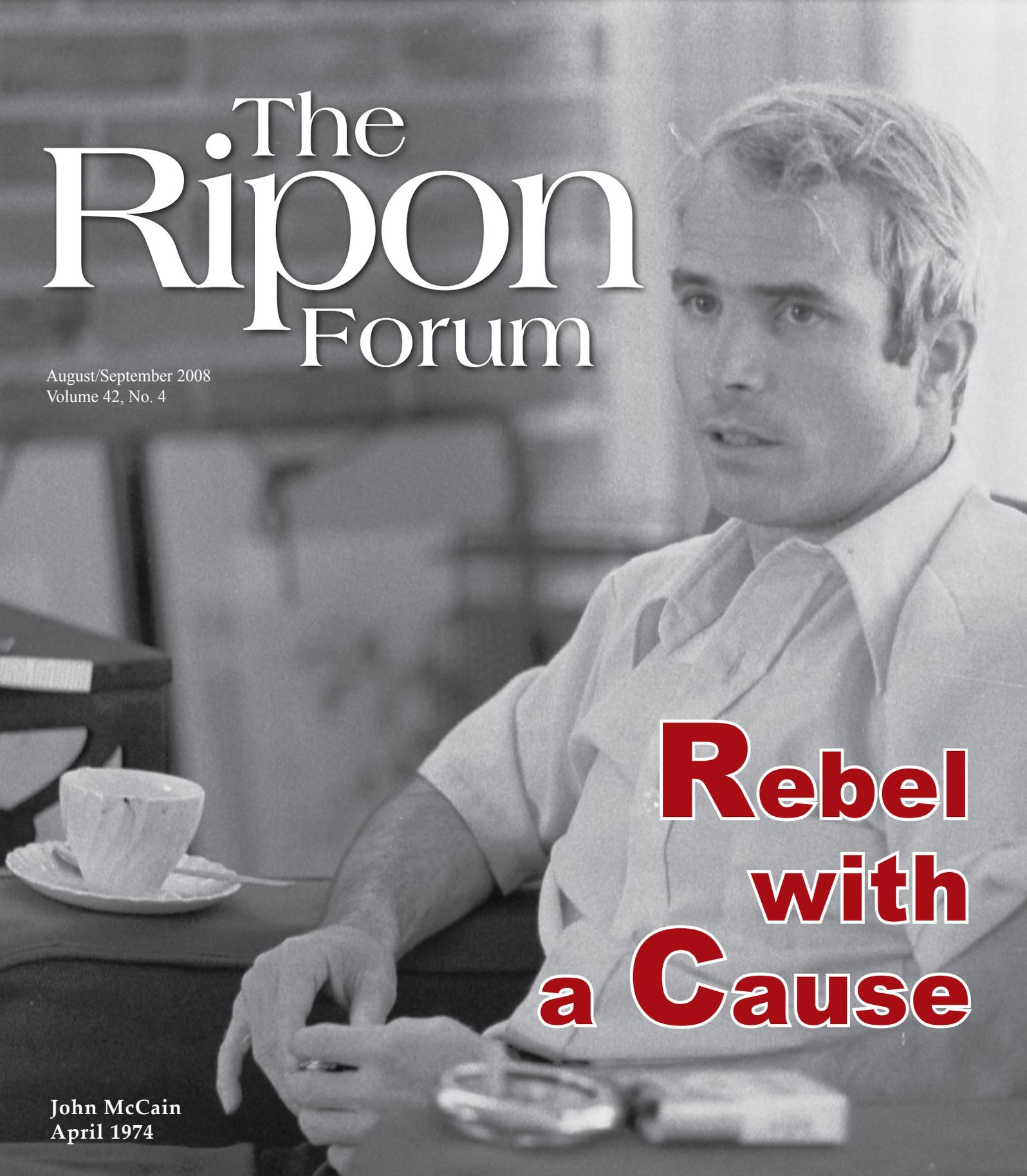


The Rippon Forum

August/September 2008
Volume 42, No. 4



**Rebel
with
a Cause**

John McCain
April 1974

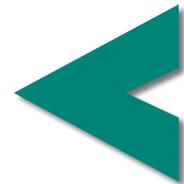
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Note from the Chairman Emeritus

When it comes to the media's reporting of political conventions, a favorite storyline has emerged in recent years. It goes something like this:

"Political conventions used to be occasions of high drama, where candidates were considered and reconsidered and a nominee eventually emerged. Today, conventions are highly scripted events, where nothing is left for chance and the outcome is preordained."

No doubt most of this storyline is true. But missing from the media's lament is one indisputable fact – political conventions are also about ideas, and for as predictable as the quadrennial party gatherings have become, the issues and ideas that animate them are anything but.

Who would have predicted a month ago that gas prices would have fallen twenty cents in two weeks? Or that Russia would have invaded Georgia? Or that Brett Favre would be playing for the Jets? Uncertainty in politics – like uncertainty in sports – catches us all off guard. Which is why the most important story of the upcoming conventions is not their predictable outcomes, but the issues and ideas the candidates will have to contend with once the conventions conclude.

In this Special Commemorative Edition of the RIPON FORUM, we take a look at one of the most important challenges our Nation faces with the presumptive Republican nominee for President. John McCain is one of America's foremost experts in the area of foreign affairs. We are honored to feature his insights in this area and learn more about his vision for U.S. policy and America's place in the world.

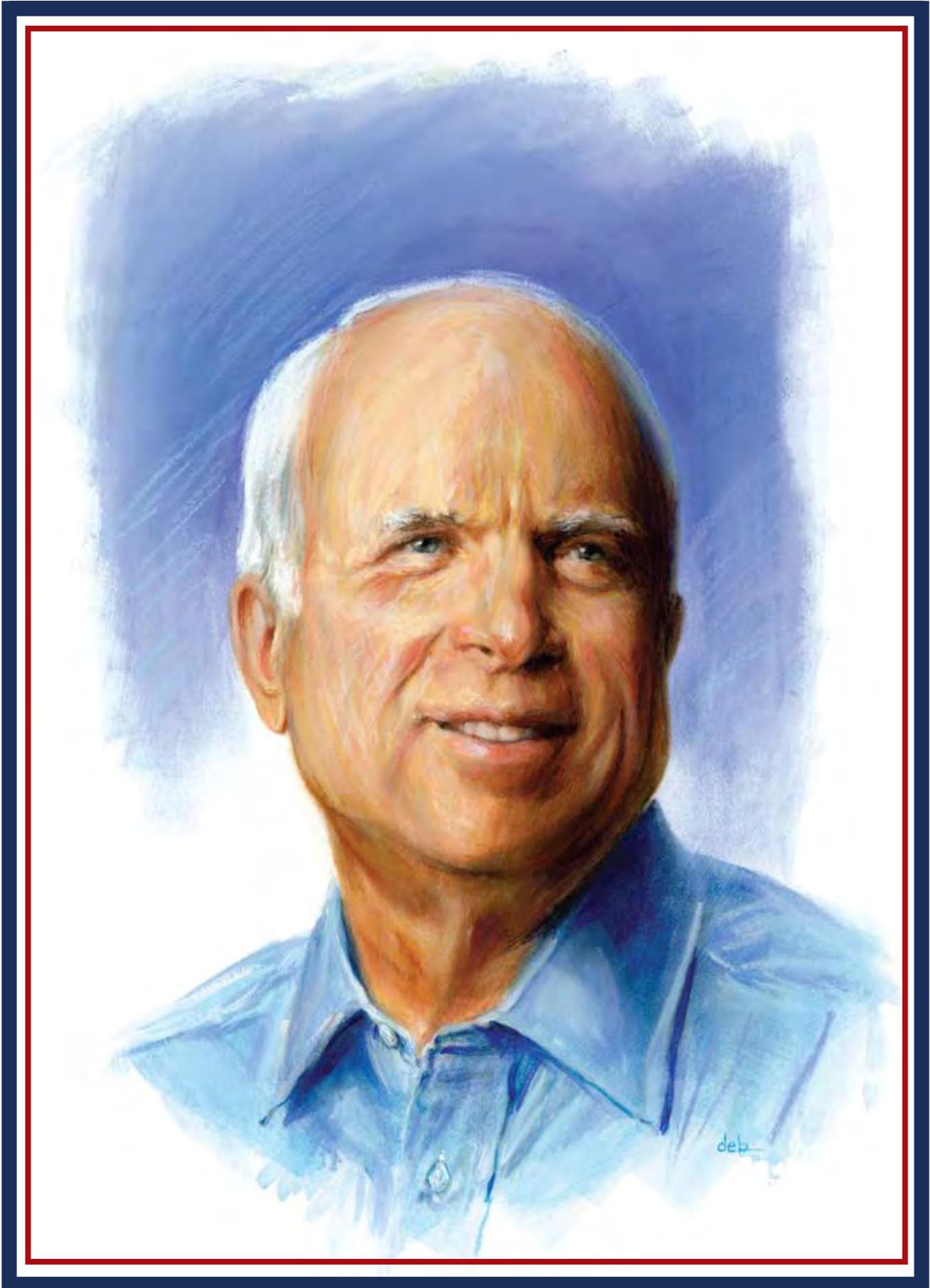
In addition to his reputation as a global leader, Senator McCain also has a well-established reputation as a political maverick. Strategist Reed Galen writes about this reputation in our cover story, finding that the true hallmark of McCain's career is not his rebellious streak, but the larger cause for which it serves – the safety and security of the American people.

In its 40-plus year history, the FORUM has featured exceptional essays by some of the Nation's leading thinkers in politics, business, and academia. We thought this would be a good occasion to reprint some of the more recent ones. The essays and interviews in this "Best of the FORUM" collection address fiscal restraint, tax reform, health care, and other issues our party – and our next President – will have to deal with in the coming year.

Finally, we profile the host of the 2008 Republican Convention and one of the brightest voices in politics today, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, who shares with us not only his thoughts on the issue facing America no one is talking about, but the historical figure he would most like to meet.

We hope you enjoy this Special Commemorative Edition of the RIPON FORUM, and encourage you to write us at editor@riponsociety.org with any questions or comments you might have.

Bill Frenzel
Chairman Emeritus
Ripon Society



AN ENDURING PEACE

A Q&A with
John McCain

Over the course of a career in public service that took him from the U.S. Navy to the United States Senate, John McCain has made a name for himself as a leader of men and as a maverick – someone who is willing to take an unpopular position because he believes it to be the right thing to do. But he has also established himself as an expert in the areas of national security and foreign affairs.

As he prepares to formally accept the Republican nomination for President of the United States, the FORUM asked Senator McCain for his views on America's place in the world, the challenges we face in Iraq and elsewhere abroad, and how the United States can achieve what he calls, "an enduring peace."



RF: What are the broad principles that would guide foreign policy in a McCain Administration?

JM: I am an idealist, and I believe it is possible in our time to make the world we live in a better, more peaceful place, where our interests and those of our allies are more secure, and the American ideals that are transforming the world — the principles of free people and free markets — advance even farther. But I am, from hard experience and the judgment it informs, a realistic idealist. I know we must work very hard and very creatively to build new foundations for a stable and enduring peace. We cannot simply wish the world to be a better place than it is.

We face a new set of opportunities, and also new dangers. The developments of science and technology have brought us untold prosperity, eradicated disease, and reduced the suffering of millions. We have a chance in our lifetime to raise the world to a new standard of human existence. Yet these same technologies have produced grave new risks, arming a few zealots with the ability to murder millions of innocents, and producing



a global industrialization that, in time, can threaten our planet.

To meet this challenge requires understanding the world in which we live, and the central role the United States must play in shaping it for the future. Undoubtedly, the United States must lead in the 21st century, though unlike in the years after World War II, today we are not alone. There is the powerful collective voice of the European Union, and there are the great nations of India and Japan, Australia and Brazil, South Korea and South Africa, Turkey and Israel, to name just a few of the leading democracies. There are also the increasingly powerful nations of China and Russia that wield great influence in the international system.

...I am, from hard experience and the judgment it informs, a realistic idealist.

RF: What is the greatest threat facing America today?

JM: The transcendent challenge of our time is the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. Though there are many dangers in today's world, the threat posed by the

terrorists is unique. They alone devote all their energies and indeed their very lives to murdering innocent men, women, and children. They alone seek nuclear weapons and other tools of mass destruction, not to defend themselves or to enhance their prestige or to give them a stronger hand in world affairs, but to use against us wherever and whenever they can.

Any president who does not regard this threat as transcending all others does not deserve to sit in the White House, for he or she does not take seriously enough the first and most basic duty a president has — to protect the lives of the American people.

RF: What is the appropriate role of the United States in promoting democracy abroad?

JM: The United States cannot lead by virtue of its power alone. We must be strong politically, economically, and militarily. But we must also lead by attracting others to our cause, by demonstrating once again the virtues of freedom and democracy, by defending the rules of international civilized society and by creating the new international institutions necessary to advance the peace and freedoms we cherish. Perhaps above all, leadership in today's world means accepting and fulfilling our responsibilities as a great nation.

One of those responsibilities is to be a good and reliable ally to our fellow democracies. We cannot build an enduring peace based on freedom by ourselves, and we do not want to. We have to strengthen our global alliances as the core of a new global compact — a League of Democracies — that can harness the vast influence of the more than 100 democratic nations around the world to advance our values and defend our shared interests.

RF: What role will public diplomacy play in a McCain Administration?

JM: Our great power does not mean we should do whatever we want whenever we want, nor should we assume we have all the wisdom and knowledge necessary to succeed. We need to listen to the views and respect the collective will of our democratic allies. When we believe international action is necessary, whether military, economic, or diplomatic, we will try to persuade our friends that we are right. But we, in return, must be willing to be persuaded by them.

We will not engage in unconditional dialogues with dictatorships such as Syria and Iran, however. Instead, we will work with the international community to apply real pressure to induce such states to change their behavior.

RF: Do you believe trade plays a role in our national security?

JM: Yes. Free trade plays a huge role in American competitiveness and jobs, and without it, a weak economy would undermine our ability to deal with threats to our national security. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers live outside the U.S. Our future prosperity, and in turn our national security, depends on opening more of these markets, not closing them.

America is the biggest exporter, importer, producer, saver, investor, manufacturer, and innovator in the world. Americans don't run from the challenge of a global economy. That's why I reject the false virtues of economic isolationism. Any confident, competent government should embrace competition — it makes us stronger — not hide from our competitors and cheat our consumers and workers. We can compete and win, as we always have, or we can be left behind.

RF: The surge has clearly helped increase stability in Iraq. What is your definition of victory that would allow our troops to come home? How will achieving that victory help make Americans more secure?

JM: The surge has succeeded. That is why the additional surge brigades are almost all home. We can and will win in Iraq. I'm confident we will be able to reduce our forces in Iraq next year, and our forces will be out of regular combat operations and dramatically reduced in number during the term of the next President. We have fought the worst battles, survived the toughest threats, and the hardest part of this war is behind us. But it is not over yet. And we have come too far, sacrificed too much, to risk everything we have gained and all we could yet gain because the politics of the hour make defeat the more convenient position.

If we withdraw prematurely from Iraq, al Qaeda in Iraq will survive, proclaim victory and continue to provoke sectarian tensions that, while they have been subdued by the success of the surge, still exist, as various factions of Sunni and Shi'a have yet to move beyond their ancient hatreds, and are ripe for provocation by al Qaeda. Civil war in Iraq could easily descend into genocide, and destabilize the entire region as neighboring powers come to the aid of their favored factions. I believe a reckless and premature withdrawal would be a terrible defeat for our security interests and our values. Iran will also view our premature withdrawal as a victory, and the biggest state supporter of terrorists, a country with nuclear ambitions and a stated desire to destroy the State of Israel, will see its influence in the Middle East grow significantly.

These consequences of our defeat would threaten us

The transcendent challenge of our time is the threat of radical Islamic terrorism

for years, and those who argue for it are arguing for a course that would eventually draw us into a wider and more difficult war that would entail far greater dangers and sacrifices than we have suffered to date.

RF: Are you concerned that the U.S. has become so focused on the war on terror that we have lost sight of other growing powers such as China?

JM: Dealing with a rising China will be a central challenge for the next American president. Recent prosperity in China has brought more people out of poverty faster than during any other time in human history. China's new found power implies responsibilities. China could bolster its claim that it is "peacefully rising" by being more transparent about its significant military buildup, by working with the world to isolate pariah states such as Burma, Sudan and Zimbabwe, and by ceasing its efforts to establish regional forums and economic arrangements designed to exclude America from Asia.

China and the United States are not destined to be adversaries. We have numerous overlapping interests and hope to see our relationship evolve in a manner that benefits both countries and, in turn, the Asia-Pacific region and the world. But until China moves toward political liberalization, our relationship will be based on periodically shared interests rather than the bedrock of shared values.

RF: Who are your role models when it comes to U.S. foreign policy? What past Presidents do you look up to? What other officials do you admire?

JM: I have the utmost respect for Ronald Reagan, whose unwavering, determined approach to foreign policy helped bring about the end of the Cold War. President Reagan had remarkable confidence that a new age of freedom was upon us, when the rights of man would be ascendant in many of the darkest reaches of tyranny.

Ronald Reagan was a proud Cold Warrior; proud to be an enemy of the forces he justly denounced as evil.

But being an anti-Communist was never enough for him. He knew that America's efforts to help humanity secure the blessings of liberty are what truly distinguish us from all other nations on earth. He knew it was necessary to defeat communism to protect ourselves. But he also fought communism because it threatened America's sublime legacy to the world.

I also admire Theodore Roosevelt for his staunch commitment to conservationism. He was America's foremost conservation president and rallied Americans behind unprecedented efforts to save our wild landscapes, important watersheds, and migratory bird corridors.

In my home state of Arizona, Mo Udall and Barry Goldwater taught me to believe that we are Americans first and partisans second, and I want to be a President that honors their faith in us.

RF: Finally, do you think the federal government is effectively structured to meet the global security challenges we face as a Nation? If not, what changes and reforms would you propose?

JM: I will work aggressively to reform the defense budgeting process to ensure that America enjoys the best military at the best cost. This includes reforming defense procurement to ensure the faithful and efficient expenditure of taxpayer dollars that are made available for defense acquisition. Too often, parochial interests — rather than the national interest — have guided our spending decisions. I support significant reform in our defense acquisition process to ensure that dollars spent actually contribute to U.S. security.

While spending reform has been necessary, I have been a tireless advocate of our military and ensuring that our forces are properly postured, funded, and ready to meet the nation's obligations both at home and abroad. I have fought to modernize our forces, to ensure that America maintains and expands its technological edge against any potential adversary, and to see that our forces are capable and ready to undertake the variety of missions necessary to meet national security objectives.

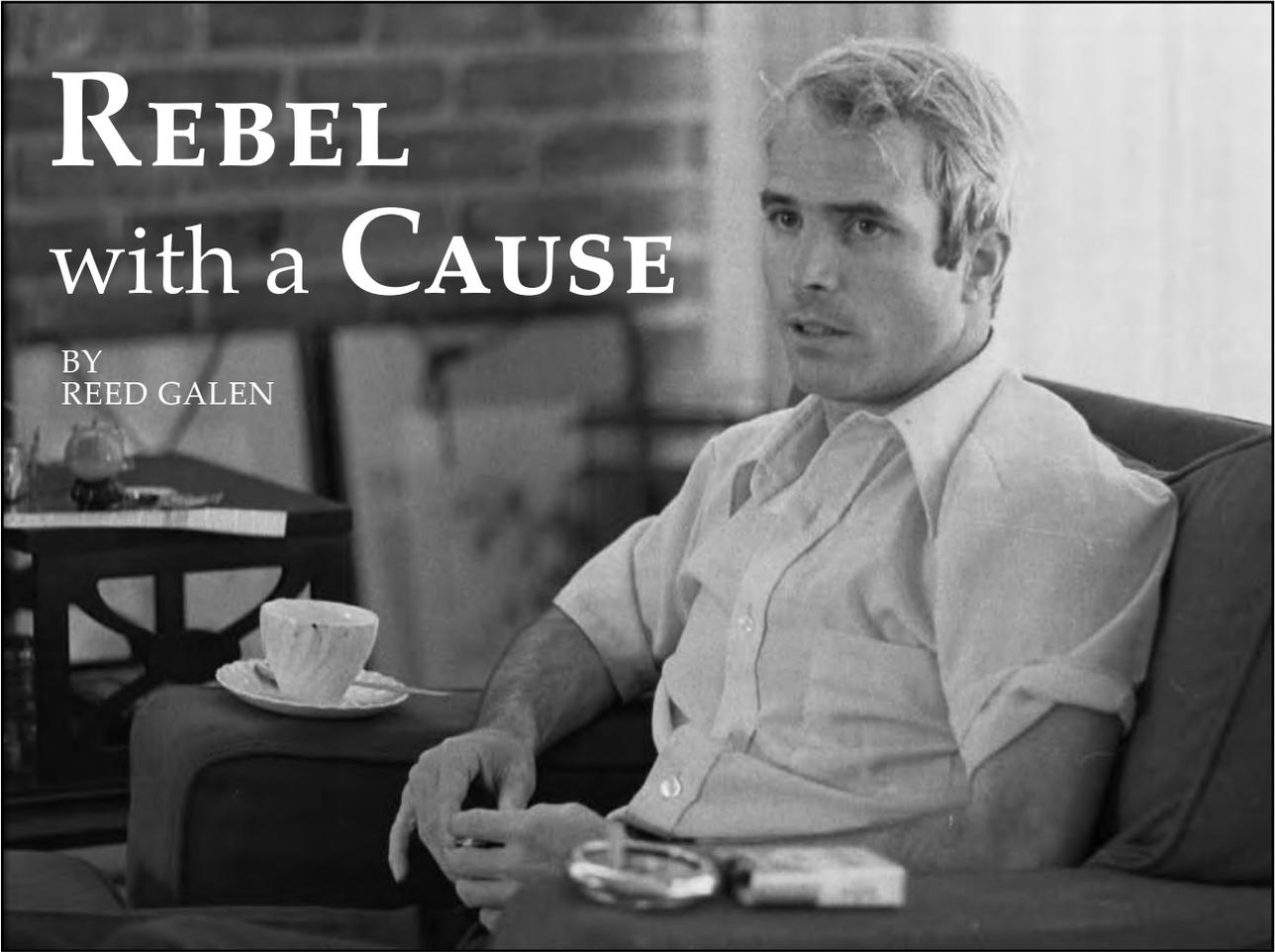
RF



Any president who does not regard this threat as transcending all others does not deserve to sit in the White House...

REBEL with a CAUSE

BY
REED GALEN



The picture is classic cool. A cup of coffee in front of him, cigarettes and an ashtray to his left, the young man stares past the camera, a look of burning intensity in his eyes. His hair is slightly tousled. He looks like he could be James Dean. But it's not — it's John McCain.

Taken in 1974, just over a year after McCain was freed from captivity in Vietnam, the picture strikes a chord because it captures a spirit shared by both men — the spirit of independence. But that's where comparisons must end. For if James Dean is remembered for being a rebel without a cause, John McCain is known for being just the opposite. He is a rebel *with* a cause, that being the United States, the country he has served his entire adult life.

Indeed, since his 18th birthday, John McCain has served the United States in one capacity or another. First as a midshipman at the Naval Academy and subsequently as an aviator over the skies of North Vietnam, John McCain's devotion to duty was borne not only of his legendary Naval bloodlines but of an overarching commitment to the idea that the United States is, first and foremost, a force for what is good and right in the world. Continuing his service in the United States Congress, McCain has displayed convictions that sometimes put

him at odds with those in his own party and built his reputation as a maverick. But he never deviated from his ideals. No where have those principles shown through more than in the areas of national security and government spending.

McCain's military service to his country is the stuff of books, movies and military folklore. His upbringing and career in the United States Navy provide him keen insight on matters of international security. This vision goes far beyond the experience he gained in the cockpit of an A-4 Skyhawk, however. Because of his unique experiences in the military and afterward, McCain understands the nature of armed conflict, what exactly it means to put young men and women in harm's way, and that war is not an effort to be lightly undertaken. Having personally seen the face of evil and its lack of conscience, McCain is uniquely qualified to lead the United States in its continuing efforts against the likes of Al-Qaeda and similar extremist organizations. He understands that, while negotiations and diplomacy should generally be preferable to military force, there are instances in which an implacable enemy will see any such discussions as a sign of weakness. Much like Teddy Roosevelt a century ago, John McCain knows that positions of strength often

lead to peace faster than those of weakness.

In our current conflicts, John McCain has been outspoken in his criticism of strategies he believed, and turned out to be, flawed and unnecessarily imperiling those in uniform. As far back as 2003, he beat the drum that securing the peace in Iraq would be a far harder goal to accomplish than winning the military conflict. His calls for additional troops were finally heeded early in 2007. While knowing full-well that supporting General David Petraeus' surge-strategy might be politically risky, McCain pulled no punches. As he famously stated, he would, "rather lose an election than a war." Taking a critical look at the security situation in Iraq, sitting down with General Petraeus to get an unvarnished view of the plan, McCain knew that the surge must be given the time to accomplish its goals; indeed it has paid dividends with increased security for Iraqis and combat casualties among American troops falling precipitously. While the surge has shown short-term success, McCain knows the conflict is not yet over.

In a speech given in mid-May, McCain outlined what he believed would be accomplished at the conclusion of his first term as president. Amongst the goals are bringing home most combat troops from Iraq while leaving a small security presence; Iraq and the Middle East will continue to be potential hot buttons for violence and unrest. In addition, he would keep up the pressure on al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, understanding that a forward-leaning posture against

potential terrorists is far more likely to keep Americans safe at home. However, our security concerns don't end with Iraq and Afghanistan. In an increasingly dangerous world, McCain proposes to work with powers such as Russia and China to ensure that the nuclear programs of rogue states are abandoned in the name of international peace and security.

In concluding his plans for the military during his administration, McCain makes note that he would overhaul the way the Pentagon acquires new weapons systems and bids out contracts providing enough money to pay for an enlarged armed forces. On this particular topic, John McCain has rankled both sides of the aisle as he has time-and-again brought daylight to poorly executed acquisition contracts. Most notably, he saved the Treasury billions of dollars when he publicly objected to a program to award an Air Force tanker deal that could be considered no less than a boondoggle. In its wake, the contract has been re-let and officials from both Boeing and the U.S. Air Force went to prison.

When it comes to wasteful government spending, McCain has never shied away from the opportunity to call out the most egregious examples. In the wake of the disastrous 2006 mid-term elections, McCain blamed his own party for the outcome. "We went to change Washington and Washington changed us," he often says during town hall meetings. Well aware that the spending excesses of the Republican-controlled Congress severely damaged the brand, McCain is fighting to regain the mantle of fiscal conservative for the GOP.

Congressional earmarks and other forms of "pork-barrel" spending have been some of McCain's favorite targets. Boondoggles such as Alaska's "bridge-to-nowhere" have provided him with unfortunate examples of what can happen when the majority party becomes too comfortable with itself. Several times, to the chagrin of both fellow Republicans and Democrats, McCain has pushed to ban earmarks from any and all legislation. As President, he's vowed to veto any bill that comes to his desk that contains earmarks with a promise to "make the authors famous."

More than reining in earmarks, however, McCain is committed to the very Reaganesque ideal of reforming the federal government as a whole. In addition to providing increased efficiency across the bureaucracy, the resulting reduction in outdated and unnecessary programs would help alleviate some of the pressure on the already burgeoning federal deficit. This coincides nicely with his opposition to tax increases; after all, the less money the

government needs, the less it has to take from the people to whom it is supposed to answer, namely its citizens.

When voters go to the polls this November, the contrast between their choices for President will be clear. When it comes to two of the most pressing issues our country faces today, the threat of terrorism and government spending, John McCain's long and distinguished positions on both will be on display.

He is a realist, someone who understands not only that the world remains a dangerous place, but that mortgaging our children's future under a mountain of debt will make us less secure. Beyond that, he is also someone who is unafraid to go against the grain and buck conventional wisdom if he believes it will help the American people.

John McCain truly is a rebel with a cause, and someone whose life has uniquely prepared him to be our next President of the United States. **RF**

Reed Galen is a political strategist and former aide to John McCain.

McCain has displayed convictions that sometimes put him at odds with those in his own party and built his reputation as a maverick. But he never deviated from his ideals.

“Why I am a REPUBLICAN”

If one believes what one reads in the newspapers and sees on TV, a branding effort is currently underway to rebuild the Republican Party’s image leading up to the November general elections.

The effort is being led by House Minority Leader John Boehner in Washington, and Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue in the states. There is no indication that the two are coordinating their actions. In fact, by some accounts, there may be some disagreement over the direction of the effort and where it may end up. One thing is certain, however – this kind of rehabilitation project is needed. Some would say it is also long overdue.

In light of this effort, the FORUM thought it would be helpful to ask a question that is critical to the GOP brand. The question is “Why am I a Republican?” On its surface, the question seems simple enough. But underneath, we believe this question gets to the heart of not only how Republicans define their party, but how the party, ultimately, defines itself.

We asked six prominent Republicans to write short essays explaining why they joined the GOP, what they believe the party stands for today, and the issues they believe the party should promote to achieve electoral success in the coming year. Four of our writers serve at different levels of government. Two are known for their work in their respective fields, but have no government experience.

All of them, we believe, represent viewpoints that will be critical to the effort to repair the GOP’s image and ensure its success in the elections in 2008.

Orrin Hatch United States Senator Salt Lake City, Utah



I haven’t always been a Republican. I was raised in a Democrat, union family. Growing up, my family was poor, and I bought into the need for many of the so-called government give-away programs. I learned a skilled trade and became a union card-carrying journeyman metal lather.

But as I went to college, on a Mormon mission, and to law

school, I recognized government was not the answer to every problem. I learned that personal responsibility and a government closer to the people was supremely better for businesses and individuals than an intrusive federal government that led to personal dependency through

liberal programs. The grand power of the United States hinges on a competitive, free market economy in order to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Compassionate conservatism works in the best interests for those struggling in America. The more we become dependent on the federal government, the more we frustrate our individual liberties. Instead of the Democrat-style of compassion shown through government handouts we must create an environment that inspires communities and individuals to take advantage of opportunities to improve their condition. Individuals have the power to change, and government can help them lead better lives.

**I RECOGNIZED
GOVERNMENT WAS NOT
THE ANSWER TO EVERY
PROBLEM.**

ORRIN HATCH

I have found that conservative Republican policies lead to greater liberties, freedom, and prosperity – policies like lower taxes, less bureaucracy, stronger national security, greater enforcement of criminal law,

vigilance against terrorism, and free market competition in health care and other compassionate programs.

Republicans are also best suited to maintain the balance of power between the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. Conservative Presidents and Governors nominate, and conservative Senators confirm, good, honest judges who interpret the laws and who do not act like super-legislators from the bench.

The Republican Party is the only party that stands for these true principles. In every way I am glad that I made the switch as a young man to become a conservative Republican.

Jo Ann Emerson
United States Representative
Cape Girardeau, Missouri



Republicans come from many backgrounds, but we are united by our desires for responsible leadership, principled but limited government, a belief in free markets, and respect for the rights of the individual.

These commonalities create a Republican philosophy which can be applied to solve any policy problem, or to argue that any problem should be exempted from a governmental solution. No matter our reasons for becoming Republicans, we are charged with expanding a common sense view of public policy to ensure the future health of our nation, as well as our party.

Today, the Republican imperative is to be problem-solvers in a nation where the short-term solution often comes at the expense of personal or constitutional freedoms, in the form of higher taxes, and with a necessary prescription for bigger government. Taking the long view is never so easy, but it does pay dividends (especially in terms of our national security and economy) to Americans intent on getting to the heart of big problems.

Immigration is certainly a case in point. Proposals of amnesty would certainly reduce the number of illegal aliens in America on paper for the short-term. But providing a tremendous incentive for future illegal immigration is sure to create more problems than can be solved with citizenship for lawbreakers. Health care is another example. A heavily-

**NO MATTER OUR REASONS FOR
BECOMING REPUBLICANS, WE
ARE CHARGED WITH EXPANDING
A COMMON SENSE VIEW OF
PUBLIC POLICY...**

JO ANN EMERSON

regulated market economy is not today meeting the goals of Americans who eschew insurance and preventative care at the risk of relying on emergency room medicine and Medicaid.

The conservative approach to immigration hinges on capable enforcement of U.S. laws and assessments of the need for specialized workers' visas. Health care and entitlement spending, on the other hand, require us to balance fiscal concerns with moral ones in a far more complicated analysis. But access to affordable health care, unlike free passage to America for illegal immigrants, has become a valued and important right to the American people in this day and age.

To succeed in national politics today, Republicans must return to the foundation of our philosophy: sound tax policy and balanced budgets, a strong national defense, robust diplomacy and a focus on the ever-evolving rights of individual.

The new twist is that we must earnestly apply these principles to new policy problems for the 21st Century, problems like health care, energy independence, and even the environment.

Chuck Norris
Actor, author, and businessman
Tarzana, California



There are several reasons why I am Republican.

First and foremost, I believe that it is people not government that are granted power by God to make a difference in the world. And as such we should seek in society to maximize the roles of people and minimize the roles of government. As the Declaration of Independence declares, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." Or as our Constitution begins, "We the people of the United States..."

Second, I believe free enterprise and a free market create the basis for the expansion of capitalism, which produces jobs, goods, competition, income, etc. Government should promote not restrict or control these economic freedoms, as the Republican platform espouses.

**I BELIEVE FREE ENTERPRISE
AND A FREE MARKET CREATE THE
BASIS FOR THE EXPANSION OF
CAPITALISM...**

CHUCK NORRIS

We should encourage financial independency from, not financial dependency upon, governmental aid.

Third, I believe in defending our freedoms and property, personally and nationally. Thomas Jefferson put it well, “For a people who are free, and who mean to remain so, a well-organized and armed militia is their best security.” From the Second Amendment to our military forces, Republicanism seeks to defend what we establish and possess.

Fourth, I believe in protecting the right to life. Again, the Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” I believe those rights extend to the unborn, represented in the traditional pro-life stand of the Republican Party.

In addition to these four reasons, I also believe the Republican party puts better emphasis and more resources into fighting crime and illegal drugs, encouraging educational reform and options, providing energy independence, restricting illegal immigration, assuring health care, limiting taxes, and esteeming traditional marriage and family values.

In short, what I believe and value has led me to register and remain Republican.

That is a part of why I choose to be a Republican.

Lynn Swann
Businessman, Hall of Fame
wide receiver
Sewickley, Pennsylvania



Why am I a Republican?

The “why” part of this question is something we should ask ourselves about everything we do, think, and believe.

Being a Republican is something that comes easy to me, because the Republican Party represents the values and ideals I identify with. Because of these values, I am free to choose to be

a Republican. So who am I that the Republican Party fits me better than the alternatives?

I am a Christian who believes in the right to say “Under God” in our Pledge of Allegiance or have a prayer in school, but my party respects the right to not have to say that prayer or to face East at the appropriate time to pray to Allah if that is your belief. My party is committed to helping

**I DO NOT TAKE THE
POSITION THAT MY PARTY
IS PERFECT OR WITHOUT
FAULT IN ITS HISTORY OR
PLATFORMS.**

LYNN SWANN

strengthen our Constitution. The foundation, for our nation to advance, is education, integrity and selflessness. These are a part of my core beliefs, and the Republican Party fits my position better than the other political parties.

As a Black American, the history of support from the beginning of the Republican Party — from Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglas — has been without political peer. From slavery to civil rights to the most important political appointments, the deeds of the Republican Party outweigh the rhetoric of the Democrats.

I do not take the position that my party is perfect or without fault in its history or platforms. What is most important is the party listens and evolves to continue to represent the needs and thinking of the people of the United States of America.

With that in mind, my voice within the Republican Party can be heard and be an agent for productive change. That is a part of why I choose to be a Republican.

Heidi Gansert
Minority Leader,
Nevada State Assembly
Reno, Nevada



When the question was posed “Why I became a Republican,” I can tell that I never considered being anything but a Republican.

When I first checked the box to register to vote, there was no hesitation. My innate nature is one of self-reliance and personal responsibility which, in my opinion, are fundamental to a Republican.

When I analyze how I evolved to where I am in a political sense, my desires to help my community, participate in discussions involving what is suitable for my state, and how Nevada can be the greatest place to live, are the reasons I ran for office. What overlies these desires is a recognition that self-reliance, a sound education, and plain hard work can get you anywhere in our great country.

**FREEDOM CAN ONLY EXIST
IN STATES AND NATIONS
WHERE SELF-RELIANCE AND
RESPONSIBILITY ARE TAKEN
ON BY INDIVIDUALS.**

HEIDI GANSERT

As a relative newcomer to politics, I have never viewed myself as a “politician” as that conjures up negative connotations for many. I am a community member who has chosen a high level of civic involvement. I am a Republican because I believe all individuals can accomplish great things. I am also a Republican because I support the freedom provided by our country.

Freedom can only exist in states and nations where self-reliance and responsibility are taken on by individuals. I am thankful everyday that I live in this country where nothing is impossible and everything is possible.

Frank Guinta
Mayor of Manchester,
New Hampshire



To answer the question, “Why I am a Republican,” I go back to Ronald Reagan and the incredible legacy he left for America.

I am 37 years old, so my formative years were during Reagan’s time in office. It was his influence that helped develop my political beliefs and my approach toward public service.

He was someone that had that rare ability to talk tough to the most powerful

**TO ANSWER THE QUESTION,
 “WHY I AM A REPUBLICAN,” I
 GO BACK TO RONALD REAGAN
 AND THE INCREDIBLE LEGACY
 HE LEFT FOR AMERICA.**

FRANK GUINTA

rest of the free world. But most importantly, Reagan loved America and what it stood for: rugged individualism, a commitment to freedom here and abroad, and limited government.

In my role as Mayor of Manchester, I have developed a similar governing style. In my first term, my top priority was to provide residents with tax relief and responsible budgets while enhancing public safety, lowering crime in the city, and improving the city’s educational system. Because the city’s 14-member Board of Aldermen consists of 11 Democrats, I often have to work with them to forge important policy initiatives. However, I always kept my principles intact and was still able to pass most of my agenda in my first term.

As I embark on a second term, I will continue to highlight the issues that we Republicans support: fiscal responsibility; the right to live safe from crime; an education system that doesn’t fail our children and limited government that rewards, not punishes, entrepreneurship.

This is the path I have forged and one I plan to stay true to in the coming years. **RF**

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The Ripon Forum

Ideas that matter, since 1965.



Why IDEAS MATTER

HALEY R. BARBOUR

“Ideas matter,” said Margaret Thatcher on her march to become Britain’s Prime Minister in the late 1970’s. For some of us, that was not very long ago. We can recall the steely confidence she maintained in the face of long odds and the advice to avoid alienating voters by presenting clear thoughts about what needed to be done to reverse the downward spiral her country had seemed unable to end.

Mrs. Thatcher understood that, in a democracy, what excites voters and makes them activists is the chance to support candidates who have clearly articulated ideas about policies that will improve their lives, their communities and their country.

People don’t get involved in politics because of the thrill of knocking on doors, asking people for money, or attending precinct meetings. They get involved to help elect candidates who will implement policies they believe will solve problems.

It is wrong to consider this a selfish act. My experience shows me those who are most involved in politics and political campaigns are individuals who care deeply about their community, state and nation. They understand that what government does

and does not do makes a difference; and they understand that the ideas surrounding campaigns direct, or should direct, what elected officials do in office.

Nothing focuses the mind so much as a defeat. In victory, there is a tendency to think everything is great, that our approach is right on target. When we lose, unless we want to repeat the experience, we rethink things. We examine what is right and what is wrong.

While the Republican defeat in 2006 was predictable, that defeat requires our party and its leaders to carefully review what happened and why. As always, we must start with policy issues.

“Be For What You’re For”

After President George H. W. Bush lost his bid for re-election in 1992, I was elected Chairman of the Republican National Committee (RNC). Before and after being elected Chairman, I said many times that Americans had not changed their minds about the policies they had voted for in 1980, 1984 and 1988; rather they had changed their minds about us. Millions of our voters had decided by 1992 that we were not adhering to the principles and policies they had voted for in the previous three national elections.

From my first day as Chairman of the RNC, I was determined to restore the Republican Party to its rightful position as the “party of ideas.” It was one of the four promises I made in that campaign (the others were to bring back our small donor base, rebuild self-reliant state parties, and assure the GOP was on the cutting edge



of communications technology.)

There was not a shred of doubt in my mind the victories won by Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984, as well as that of George H. W. Bush in 1988, were the result of Americans sharing with us a common vision about what was needed for our country – lower taxes, limited government, and a strong national defense. Voters wanted results on important issues, and they

knew good policies would produce those results. Reagan proved them right. As he often said, “Good policy is good politics.”

One of the first things I did at the RNC in 1993 was to send out a letter to 280,000 Republican leaders and donors. We specifically told the recipients, “Don’t send money.” Instead, we asked them to complete a long questionnaire that seriously explored various options on critical public policy issues. It took about an hour to complete the survey, yet more than 80,000 took the time to do just that. It was a powerful affirmation of how central ideas are to political participation and involvement.

The results of the survey weren’t surprising. They confirmed the GOP is the center-right party of the United States, but it is a broad, diverse party. Yes, we’re the conservative party, and the Democrats are the liberal party; but you don’t have to agree with Haley Barbour on everything to be a good Republican. Recognizing that Republicans earnestly wanted a platform to debate and refine policy ideas on critical issues, we formed the National Policy Forum (NPF). It helped the GOP regain the position as the party of ideas.

Similarly and not coincidentally, the historic 1994 Republican victory was a victory for ideas. “The Contract with America” was an agenda of ten policy proposals, all positive. The “Contract” never mentioned Bill Clinton or the Democrats. It was an unprecedented – and many thought risky – effort to nationalize a midterm election as a positive referendum on an alternative policy platform offered by the minority party. The result was the greatest midterm majority sweep of the 20th century.

Belief in the power of ideas and good policy shaped my campaign for Governor of Mississippi as well, and it has directed my work in office. Throughout the campaign I talked about the problems facing our state, and I offered policy solutions for those problems. In the campaign we called it “Haley’s Plan.” When I was elected, “Haley’s Plan” became the governing agenda. Despite having Democrat majorities in both houses of the Legislature, “Haley’s Plan” has largely been enacted in the last three years.

I believe good policy is good politics. I always tell candidates and office holders: “The best thing is to be for what you’re for. Don’t try to be for what’s popular; be for what you really believe is right.”

Set Priorities and Keep Your Word

Leaders don’t give into pollsters or advisers who counsel ways to evade. Instead, you should trust

yourself and trust the voters. Voters don’t expect any candidate to agree with them 100% of the time. But voters do expect you to keep your word. Even those who disagree with you on an issue will respect your leadership and recognize your trustworthiness when you do what you said you were going to do.

In the 2003 campaign, voters consistently heard me repeat policy themes: comprehensive tort reform to end lawsuit abuse in Mississippi; an honest balanced budget without raising anybody’s taxes; and education as the number one economic development issue, with a new emphasis on workforce development and job training.

Our state had suffered a net loss of 38,300 jobs during my predecessor’s term, and I recognized people elected me to turn that around. I saw those three issues as central to achieving that. Tort reform was a bloody fight in the House, where the Speaker and the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee were strongly opposed to my ideas for reforming the civil justice system. After a month-long battle, including a Special

Session I called for the sole purpose of passing the tort reform bill that the Senate had already passed three times in Regular Session, the House leadership allowed the bill to get to the floor. By large majorities, Mississippi passed what the Heritage Foundation called “the most comprehensive tort reform bill any state has passed.”

New emphasis on workforce development and job training was much easier, as it received

overwhelming bipartisan support in both houses. Two other priorities clashed in the first half of my term: getting the budget balanced and funding education.

The year I was elected governor, state government had a \$720 million budget shortfall, with a General Fund budget of only \$3.6 billion. The gap had been made up by a variety of gimmicks, but it was clear that our state wasn’t going to dig out of this worst financial mess at least since the Depression without tough decisions.

Of course, many in the Legislature plus their editorialist allies preferred raising taxes to controlling spending. I knew raising taxes is the enemy of controlling spending. As I had said many times during the campaign, “We’re not in a \$720 million budget hole because we tax too little; it’s because we spend too much.”

The tax increase argument never took hold, so we began two years of tough choices in spending. Education spending went up, and we funded two consecutive 8% teacher pay increases – the two largest in history.

We must give voters something to be for – superior ideas for public policy about the issues that count.

But the education leaders didn't get as much as they wanted. We did, however, get spending under control, and in two years, that \$720 million shortfall became a \$70 million surplus. And this year's surplus will be larger. This was achieved without raising anybody's taxes. A big part of this was our economic turnaround. After losing more than 38,000 jobs the previous four years, we've gained a net of more than 30,000 in these three years – despite Katrina, which caused 70,000 people to lose their jobs.

Not only are more people working, but incomes are up substantially, as well. More taxpayers and more taxable income mean more state revenue. State tax collections will increase by more than 35% over these four years. At the same time, we've kept spending under control. In the last fiscal year, state spending increased less than 1%!

Let me emphasize that we didn't control spending by shortchanging our priorities. While the education community didn't get everything it wanted, in the four years of my term as governor state spending for K-12 schools will have increased by 25%, or nearly \$480 million – the largest increase in K-12 spending in any four year period under any governor in Mississippi history.

Spending for higher education, our universities and community colleges will go up more than one-fourth, while funding of workplace development and job training has doubled. We've also prioritized state law enforcement. As in most states, drug crime is the major crime problem in Mississippi. With strong bipartisan support, we've taken a multifaceted approach to attacking crime. Our Legislature has made the raw ingredients for crystal meth harder to purchase. We have increased the number of state troopers and narcotics agents. We are running our correction system at a significantly lower cost per prisoner, while expanding alternative punishment programs.

I've asked that mandatory prison time be lengthened for both committing a crime with a gun and for a felon being caught in illegal possession of a gun. This way, we can attack gun crime without infringing on law-abiding citizens' constitutional rights to keep

and bear arms.

In the process, we've stayed faithful to the policies laid out in the campaign in 2003.

Policies Based on Principle

Good things are happening in Mississippi, and good policy is key to the turnaround. I believe voters will reward that at the ballot box just as I believe politicians pay a price for not staying true to their policy promises. My own view is that the GOP losses in 2006 are at least partially attributable to our voters' view that Republicans had strayed from the policies we had campaigned on during and since 1994. Complaints about excessive spending and

bigger government were heard in every precinct where Republican voters gathered. Corruption and scandal also made voters feel betrayed. Both took a toll at the ballot box.

Of course, long wars are unpopular in America, and the Democrats' ability to make many voters see the 2006 midterm election as a referendum on Iraq was the biggest factor last November.

The good news is the Democrats didn't offer the electorate any alternative policies. Even on Iraq, the Democrats either couldn't agree or feared their alternatives would be unpopular. The Democrat messages were simply, "It's time for a change," and, "We're not

the Republicans." Despite the six-year itch, an extremely unpopular war, the President's low job approval and the GOP base's unhappiness over excess spending and scandal, the Republican loss was about average, and we start off far ahead of where we were after the 1992 election. We have 49 Senators (versus 43 after 1992); 202 Members in the House (versus 174 after 1992); and 22 Governors (versus 17 after 1992). Plus we know the American people haven't bought into the Democrats' governing agenda. The Democrats haven't offered one!

So what do we need to get back in the majority? The key is the same as always. We must give voters something to be for – superior ideas for public policy about the issues that count. Spin has to take a backseat to substance. Our biggest advantage in doing this is that most Americans agree with Republicans on most issues. Our ideas of



**I believe good policy
is good politics.**

individual freedom and personal responsibility trump Democrats' belief in government control and government responsibility. Lower taxes for all are preferred to government's taking more and more of what people work for and earn.

Just go down the list, and you'll find most Americans agree with basic Republican policy and principle on most issues. More Americans are center-right, which is why the Left has tried to banish the word "liberal" from the lexicon. Obviously, not everybody agrees with the Republicans on everything, because we don't agree with each other on everything. Ours is a large, diverse, broad-based party, and it would be silly to think that in a party which can win a majority of governors, senators, and congressmen six elections in a row, everybody would agree on everything.

My wife of 36 years and I don't agree on everything! Yet, our values, principles and policies are what unite us as Republicans. We agree on a whole lot more than we disagree on, and we must emphasize those things that unite us.

Moreover, we must improve these policies and constantly update them and their implementation. Just as the issues change over time, we can't stand still. Our fundamental values and principles are extremely adaptable to the changing issue set because they are tethered to such a strong, durable foundation. It stands the test of time.

A corollary to building your party and political support on policy is to not only admit but also to value that not every good Republican will agree with you on every issue. As my old boss Ronald Reagan used to say, "A fella who agrees with you 80% of the time is your friend and ally, not some 20% turncoat." Amen.

So, for me, I look forward to a lively, inclusive debate on how to best solve the problems facing Americans. Good policy proposals will be refined and polished; some will be old ideas, updated for the issue as it confronts us today. Others may seem new to us, as when Reagan embraced supply-side economics. But they should all be rooted in the values and principles that bind us together as Republicans.

Then, if we articulate these effectively, most Americans will agree with us, and we'll soon be back in the majority. And, if we continue to adhere to those policies and principles, we will stay in the majority for a long time. Because ideas matter. **RF**

Haley R. Barbour was elected Governor of Mississippi in 2003. From 1993 to 1997, he served as Chairman of the Republican National Committee. This is an abridged version of an essay he wrote for the February/March 2007 edition of the FORUM.



We're always quick to respond to emergencies. Like global warming, for instance.

There is no single solution to climate change. Conservation of electricity and natural gas is still the quickest and least expensive way to cut pollution levels. Expanding renewable resources is the next critical step. That's why PSEG has committed \$105 million to a solar energy loan program for homes, businesses and municipal buildings in our service area. We've also begun replacing our automotive fleet with hybrid vehicles. And, for the long term, we all must begin to think about making a commitment to new, low- and zero-carbon electric generation, such as nuclear power. To learn more about PSEG's "Green Initiatives" and things that you can do to save both energy and money, please go to pseg.com/camden/climate.





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HELPING DOCTORS HELP PATIENTS

Limiting Spending

We've done it before. We can – and must – do it again.

JOHN KASICH

Growing up in Pennsylvania, in a blue-collar family in a blue-collar town, I learned some valuable lessons as a kid; lessons like being accountable for your actions, having respect and compassion for others, and understanding the value of hard work and character.

I carried these values with me to Washington, and they matter as much today as they did when I became chairman of the House Budget Committee in 1995.

Back then we, as Republicans, understood the significance of the opportunity we had been given, and we put forward, for ourselves and the country, a set of core principles to guide our efforts. These were common sense ideas rooted in the notion that Washington should have less power and individuals, families and communities should have more.

First we sought to limit the size and scope of government, pruning government to keep it from growing in distorted ways. Second, we honored the fundamental American value that you shouldn't spend more than you take in. Finally, we committed to do everything possible to keep from passing more debt on to our children and future generations.

We agreed that these core values were worth sacrificing our political futures for. Our commitment was so strong that we forced a government shut down in 1995 to prevent another phony economic plan from being put into place.

Eventually we forged a bipartisan coalition of leaders in Congress who set aside their differences and stood for something. We balanced the first budget since man walked on the moon. We reformed the welfare system, which is still being heralded as a success. We eliminated government agencies. We limited the growth

of government spending including in entitlement programs. With the help of capital gains tax cuts and lower interest rates we generated government budget surpluses well into the future, and ushered in an era of explosive economic growth. Our policies worked, and we were successful because those policies flowed from our common sense, limited government principles.

But times and priorities have changed. War, terrorism, gas prices and immigration have all but saturated the news, and it's obvious that voters are frustrated with the current political environment. These issues are important, but have caused so much partisan bickering that they've become a distraction. I can't help but think our leaders are too busy painting the walls to notice the cracks in the foundation of the nation's economy.

Where is the discussion on issues of fiscal responsibility like restraining government spending, reducing bureaucracies, controlling a ballooning debt, and addressing the economic impact of the retiring baby boom generation? As these issues continue to go unchecked, their solutions become more difficult to achieve.

Despite cutting tax rates in 2003, which helped the economy grow and increased revenues, Washington's fiscal house is not in order. When I left Congress in 2001 the budget was balanced, \$453 billion of debt had been paid

down, and there were future surpluses of \$5.6 trillion that could be used to save Social Security and Medicare. Now, however, the deficit sits at \$260 billion and is projected to reach \$328 billion by 2010. Yet the spending continues. Government spending is likely to increase by 7.7 percent



**...government can't
be all things to all
people.**

this year, outpacing economic growth.

The simple truth is that there is a lack of political will to curtail the growth of government spending, particularly the wasteful government spending stemming from many lawmakers' pet earmarked projects.

Congress and the Administration must answer the fundamental question of what should government do. Government should help people who can't help themselves, and we need government to protect our borders, build roads, fight wars, and be there when natural disasters wreak havoc on people's lives. But government can't be all things to all people. Our leaders must systematically identify the things that the federal government is doing that don't work and turn them over to the private sector. They must also identify the things the federal government is doing, but shouldn't be, and turn those responsibilities over to the state and local governments. They must stand up to special interests, inside and outside of Washington, and be willing to make political enemies for the greater good of the country's economic health. Finally, they must look forward to the fiscal tsunami about to overtake the budget as the baby boom generation retires, finding innovative solutions for reform in healthcare, Medicare, and Social Security.

Yes, many Republicans have lost their way; resigned to the idea that deficit spending isn't all that bad and big

government isn't that big a deal. But whatever problems the Republicans have in this election year don't compare to the complete lack of vision by the Democrats. Where is their plan, where is their alternative? They continue to offer little in the way of solutions other than raising taxes and shrill political partisanship. My question is; where does this leave the country?

People ask me all the time if I'm disheartened and disillusioned. They want to know how I feel about having all the hard work the Budget Committee team and Republicans did back in the 1990s washed away.

My answer is simple. While our work has largely been undone, the model we established still stands. The problems we faced back then are essentially the same problems we still face now. At the end of the day, our approach of standing on principle and reaching across the aisle is our lasting legacy. And I believe this approach can still work today. **RF**

John Kasich is a former Representative from Ohio and served as Chairman of the House Budget Committee. He currently hosts "The Heartland with John Kasich" on FOX News Channel. This essay originally appeared in the October/November 2006 edition of the FORUM.



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Fanning the Flames of Change

In South Carolina, tax reform begins with giving taxpayers a choice

MARK SANFORD

The writer Thomas Friedman makes the argument that the most important competition today is between “you and your imagination.”

As much as football fans may have been led to believe it was between the Patriots and the Giants at the Super Bowl – or as much as people might believe in economic terms it is between America, China and India – Friedman argues otherwise.

He believes energetic, innovative and connected individuals can now act on their imaginations farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before. He also contends those countries and companies that empower their individuals to imagine and act quickly on their imagination are going to thrive.

In short, ideas matter, and about the time you come up with a good one someone else on the other side of the world is sure to do the same. Therefore, whoever acts first wins.

Are you really free to act, much less imagine ideas on which to act, as you are rooting around shoeboxes of receipts at tax time? I’d say no, and most would admit that acting as a clerk for the government during portions of the year does not represent one’s most creative time. Sadly, whatever creative energies are mustered generally go to tax avoidance rather than building things.

Liberating human creativity and therefore providing for long-term economic prosperity has led a number of policymakers in recent years to look closer at tax policy – in particular the ways in which lowering the income tax presents lasting economic benefits. A recent report by the Atlanta Federal Reserve Board stated that, “Relative

marginal tax rates have a statistically significant negative relationship with relative state growth.” To translate that into everyday English: High income tax rates slow the growth of people’s paychecks and low rates raise them.

A quick look at the U.S. as a whole bears this out.

A recent study by Richard Vedder, Professor of Economics at Ohio University, distinguished between nine “low-tax states” and a score of other “high-tax states.” Vedder found that 41 million Americans “voted with their feet” by moving out of high-tax states and into low-tax states over the last 15 years. They wanted more time out of the shoebox filled with receipts and more time in imagining, creating and implementing ideas -- all foundational to wealth creation.

So I think we could rationally argue there are benefits tied to lowering marginal rates. The problem in the world of policy is not whether an idea is good or not, for there are scores of good ideas that go nowhere.

The question is how might you get it done?

From Pickett to Sun Tzu

For the last four years we have tried the “Pickett’s Charge” approach and advocated an abolition of the income tax.

Being straightforward fits my personality and our administration. And, as a result of this approach, we were able to get the first cut to the marginal rate in our state’s history – a cut from from 7% to 5% for limited liability companies, partnerships and sole proprietorships. Unfortunately, the head of the Senate Finance Committee in our state dug in his heels in going



any further than this, and is dead set against what he calls “cutting rates for rich folks and losing money to help people.”

So we have been forced to take the sixth-century B.C. Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu’s counsel to pursue one’s aims with subtlety. For that reason, we recently proposed an optional “flat tax.”

It harnesses three thoughts. The first is the need to expand individual freedom, time and initiative in Friedman’s flat world. The second is the simplicity of a flat tax. And the third is an incredible push by a range of interest groups in our state to raise the cigarette tax.

Our proposal would simply allow an individual the choice to either pay taxes at the current 7% or forgo exemptions and pay 3.4%. The choice would be the taxpayers, and it allows you to avoid the endless debates that stall tax reform. In general most people like the idea of moving to a flat tax. But the general public does not drive the inner workings of the tax writing process. Those debates are driven by a long list of constituencies and businesses that lose or make money with each exemption in the code. I don’t begrudge the realtors, for example, for arguing in favor of home interest deductibility. But each one of these voices collectively heard make changes that would make our overall code more competitive impossible.

So our reform is premised on what all of America seems to want these days – a choice. From restaurants to magazines and media to the car you drive, we insist on an endless array of choices. Why should it be different in the tax code given our different stations and seasons in life, if it can be done in a way so that the haul to the government is all the same?

This is where the cigarette tax comes in, because rather than taking that money to grow government, we apply it to lowering the marginal rate. And since all taxes are not created equally, raising our lowest in the nation cigarette tax of 7 cents a pack by a relatively modest 30 cents to us seems good policy. This is particularly true in our instance since anything not revenue neutral

is dead on arrival with the head of Senate Finance -- and because of the way it prevents others from taking the cigarette money and growing government.

The Benefits of Reform

We believe the benefits of taking this course would be incredible. A 3.4% flat tax would mean that people in the top income bracket – in our case those making more than \$12,850 per year, or almost everybody with a full-time job – could see their income tax rate cut by half. That kind of tax change could also lure entrepreneurs in search of better-tax environments to start businesses here. Seven other states have come to the same conclusion:

Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Utah have each implemented a flat tax.

The case for a low flat tax is now being made literally all over the world. Since enacting a flat tax, Slovakia has seen foreign investment grow by 500%. Russia did the same and saw its revenue double. So did Estonia, which is now averaging 5% yearly growth.

In short, a lowered and flattened tax represents a significant step towards making our economy more attractive, and in this debate it would be hard to improve on the words of Rhode Island House Speaker William Murphy – a Democrat. The goal of the flat tax, he said, “is to put more money directly in people’s pockets both by giving relief to those who need it and by making Rhode Island a more attractive place for business.”

Given the importance of human imagination, and the freedom necessary to see it flourish -- not to mention the fact that we’re now competing

against economies literally all over the world -- the time to re-think our tax structure is now.

A closer look at the flat tax seems to me a great place to start because, in short, I believe the system that most effectively maximizes human freedom wins. **RF**

Mark Sanford is the Governor of South Carolina. This essay originally appeared in the February/March 2008 edition of the FORUM.



**... 41 million Americans
“voted with their feet” by
moving out of high-tax states
and into low-tax states over
the last 15 years.**

What Trade Means to My State

TIM PAWLENTY

Twenty-six years ago this October, something remarkable happened in Minnesota: two governors, each from his nation's heartland, put their names to a document formalizing their friendship.

One line bore the signature of Minnesota Governor Al Quie; the other, the signature of Yu Mingtao, governor of Shaanxi Province in the People's Republic of China.

That ceremony in the fall of 1982 – a moment that would have been inconceivable just a decade earlier when President Richard Nixon paid his historic visit to the communist nation – went virtually unnoticed. Even the state's largest newspaper relegated the event to a brief buried in its B-section.

The significance of that first official meeting between Minnesota and China may have been lost on many, but visionary political, business and education leaders knew exactly what it meant. Three years had passed since the United States normalized diplomatic relations with its former enemy and it wouldn't be long before the door opened again to trade with the West.

A year later, another governor, Rudy Perpich, brought Minnesota's first official delegation to China and the state opened an official trade office to help our companies do business in markets all over the world.

And as China slowly began the economic reforms that laid the foundation for its economic success today, Minnesota companies were

among the first to invest there.

For example, 3M was the first foreign company to establish a wholly-owned subsidiary in China. Cargill also formed an investment company in Shanghai and was first to win approval to conduct business in China. And, Northwest Airlines was the first U.S. airline to provide non-stop air service between the United States and China.

By 1989, some 80 Minnesota companies were doing business in China. And today hundreds and hundreds of our small, midsized and large companies do business there,

...manufactured exports alone are responsible for nearly 111,000 jobs statewide. In fact, one in six manufacturing jobs in Minnesota is dependent on exports.

exporting more than \$1.2 billion a year in manufactured goods.

In 2005, I became the fourth Minnesota governor to lead an official delegation to China. Our delegation had more than 200 members, the largest such mission undertaken by any state. Each governor's visit was historic in its own right. And each built upon the work of his predecessor, opening doors, building bridges, and strengthening ties.

Beyond that mission, my administration launched the Minnesota-China Partnership, a nation-

leading initiative that brings together public and private organizations throughout the state to promote all facets of Minnesota's relationship with China.

Over the years, each time Minnesota has extended itself, China has responded enthusiastically. Cooperative partnerships between Minnesota and China abound in many areas. More than 25 government delegations have visited Minnesota in the past decade, including some of the most prominent and influential leaders in China. And earlier this year, Minnesota and China formalized an agreement to work together to stimulate two-way investment between Minnesota and China.

Of course, our trade relationships extend well beyond China, but I think our efforts there well illustrate the importance Minnesota places on international trade, as well as our commitment to cultivating international opportunities.

The year that the first Chinese delegation visited Minnesota, the state's total manufactured exports to all foreign markets were less than \$3 billion. In 2006, Minnesota companies exported more than \$24 billion in manufactured goods, services and agricultural commodities to 205 foreign destinations.

Those foreign sales are an important part of our state's economy – accounting for about 10 percent of our gross state product. They translate into thousands and thousands of good jobs and everything that goes with

them – house payments, groceries, health care, vacations, college tuition, and retirement savings.

Between making, selling, and transporting goods to market, manufactured exports alone are responsible for nearly 111,000 jobs statewide. In fact, one in six manufacturing jobs in Minnesota is dependent on exports.

The breadth of companies involved in international trade is amazing. A few examples:

- Satellite Industries sells portable sanitation equipment in more than 80 countries and employs 58 people in Minnesota. Export sales, up 20 percent from a year ago, represent 28 percent of the company's total annual revenues.

- **C a p i t a l**
Safety USA manufactures fall protection equipment, employing 280 people. The company's international sales, up 91 percent in the past three years, account for 9 percent of the company's annual revenue.

- **D i g i t a l**
River is a global leader in e-commerce products and services. It has six global data centers, displays in 18 languages, and transacts business in 27 currencies. International sales accounted for 41 percent of sales in 2006, up from about 24 percent in 2003. The company employs nearly 1,100 people in Minnesota and has major offices in Germany, England, Ireland, Luxembourg, Taiwan, and Japan, and customers in nearly every country across the globe.

- Excalibur Sires provides artificial insemination products and services

for the Jersey livestock market. With five full-time employees, the company markets its products and services in at least 12 countries. International sales account for 41 percent of total revenue. The company's international sales have risen tenfold in the past two years.

Even when Minnesota companies buy foreign components it can create and save jobs here at home.

Not long ago, the future was uncertain for a struggling Minnesota company that manufactures emergency lights for police cars and other vehicles. Lackluster sales and increased competition were starting to hurt.

Things turned around after the company found sources in China to build the components for an improved

Denmark's Coloplast, just to name a few. Foreign companies employ more than 83,000 people in Minnesota, an increase of 8 percent over the past five years.

The basic benefits of trade are the same for Minnesotans as all Americans: reduced prices for goods and services, boosted economic growth and well-being, enhanced productivity, and higher per capita income. But – much like Minnesota's first meeting with the Chinese governor – the significance of trade goes unnoticed or unacknowledged by many people.

Like some of my predecessors, I've led several trade missions to established and emerging markets around the world. In late October, I'll take a delegation of Minnesota business

leaders on a trade mission to New Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai to explore opportunities in India.

The missions are important for promoting our export industries to new customers and the state as a great location for foreign direct investment. But they're also important opportunities to remind Minnesotans of the stake they

have in the global economy.

In a world where sales in Beijing and Chongqing, China, have a direct bearing on life in Alexandria and St. Paul, Minnesota, it's a lesson we can't afford to forget. **RF**

Tim Pawlenty is the Republican Governor of Minnesota. He also serves as Chairman of the National Governors Association. This essay originally appeared in the August/September 2007 edition of the FORUM.



Governor Pawlenty meets with Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi during a trade mission to China in November 2005.

product line. Today, parts are shipped in and the finished products assembled in Minnesota. The company, which cut its costs in half, is now one of the largest in its industry.

The pocketbook impact of international trade in Minnesota is further magnified when you consider foreign direct investment in the state.

Today, several hundred affiliates of foreign companies call Minnesota home, including China's Laiwu Steel Group, India's Suzlon Energy, and

Health Care Reality Check:

The goal of any reform plan should be the same as the Hippocratic Oath:
First, do no harm.

MICHAEL TANNER

Health care reform is once again at the top of the nation's political agenda. But in developing health policy, it is vital to keep in mind one pertinent fact: for all its problems, the United States offers the highest quality health care in the world.

Most of the world's top doctors, hospitals, and research facilities are located in the United States. Seventeen of the last 25 winners of the Nobel Prize in Medicine either are U.S. citizens or work in this country. U.S. companies have developed half of all the major new medicines introduced worldwide over the past 20 years.

In fact, Americans played a key role in 80% of the most important medical advances of the past 30 years. Nearly every type of advanced medical technology or procedure is more available in the United States than in any other country. By almost any measure, if you are diagnosed with a serious illness, the United States is the place you want to be. That is why tens of thousands of patients from around the world come to this country every year for treatment.

Of course, critics of American health care often point out, other countries have higher life expectancies and lower infant mortality rates, but those two indicators are not a good way to measure the quality of a nation's health care system. In the United States, very low-birth-weight infants have a much greater chance of being brought to term with the latest medical technologies. Some of those

low-birth-weight babies die soon after birth, which boosts our infant mortality rate, but in many other Western countries, those high-risk, low-birth-weight infants are not included when infant mortality is calculated.

And life expectancy is a poor measure of a health care system. Life expectancies are affected by exogenous



factors such as violent crime, poverty, obesity, tobacco and drug use, and other issues unrelated to health care. Consider the nearly three year disparity in life expectancy between Utah (78.7 years) and Nevada (75.9 years), despite the fact that they essentially have the same health care systems. In fact, these exogenous factors are so distorting that if you correct for homicides and accidents, the U.S. rises to the top of the list for life expectancy.

On the other hand, when you compare the outcome for specific diseases like cancer or heart disease,

the United States clearly outperforms the rest of the world. Take prostate cancer, for example. Even though American men are more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than their counterparts in other countries, they are less likely to die from the disease. Less than one out of five American men with prostate cancer will die from it, but 57% of British men and nearly half of French and German men will. Even in Canada, a quarter of men diagnosed with prostate cancer die from the disease.

Similar results can be found for other forms of cancer. For instance, just 30% of U.S. citizens diagnosed with colon cancer die from it, compared to fully 74 percent in Britain, 62% in New Zealand, 58% in France, 57% in Germany, 53% in Australia, and 36% in Canada. Similarly, less than 25% of U.S. women die from breast cancer, but 46% of British women, 35% of French women, 31% of German women, 28% of Canadian women, 28% of Australian women, and 46% of women from New Zealand die from it.

The same U.S. advantage can be found for outcomes with other diseases, ranging from AIDS to heart disease. This should not be surprising. The one common characteristic of all national health care systems is that they ration care. Sometimes they ration it explicitly, denying certain types of treatment altogether. More often, they ration more indirectly, imposing global budgets or other cost constraints

that limit the availability of high-tech medical equipment or imposing long waits on patients seeking treatment.

For example, more than 750,000 Britons are waiting for admission to National Health Service hospitals at any given time, and shortages force the NHS to cancel as many as 50,000 operations each year. Roughly 90,000 New Zealanders are facing similar waits. In Sweden, the wait for heart surgery can be as long as 25 weeks, while the average wait for hip replacement surgery is more than a year.

And, in Canada more than 800,000 patients are currently on waiting lists for medical procedures. A study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal found that at least 50 patients in Ontario alone have died while on the waiting list for cardiac catheterization. And Canadian Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin

wrote in a 2005 decision striking down part of Canada's universal care law, that many Canadians waiting for treatment suffer chronic pain and that "patients die while on the waiting list."

Obviously, there are problems with

...in developing health policy, it is vital to keep in mind one pertinent fact: for all its problems, the United States offers the highest quality health care in the world.

the U.S. system. Too many Americans lack health insurance and/or are unable to afford the best care. More must be done to lower health care costs and increase access to care. Both patients and providers need better and more

useful information. The system is riddled with waste, and quality of care is uneven. Government health care programs like Medicare and Medicaid threaten future generations with an enormous burden of debt and taxes.

Health care reform is not a choice, but a necessity.

But in pursuing reform, we should be guided by the Hippocratic Oath: First, do no harm. We should make very certain that the cure is not worse than the disease.

We must do nothing to undermine the free-market health care system that gives us the world's best care. **RF**

Michael Tanner is the Director of Health and Welfare Studies at the Cato Institute. This essay originally appeared in the October/November 2007 edition of the FORUM.

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The Search for Common Ground

A Q&A with Howard Baker

Howard H. Baker, Jr. served three terms as a United States Senator from Tennessee (1967-1985) and was Tennessee's first popularly elected Republican Senator.

Senator Baker gained national recognition in 1973 as Vice Chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee. Three years later, he was keynote speaker at the Republican National Convention and was a 1980 candidate for the Republican presidential nomination.

He concluded his Senate career in 1985 after two terms as Majority Leader (1981 to 1985) and two terms as Minority Leader (1977 to 1981). He was President Reagan's Chief of Staff from February 1987 to July 1988. From 2001 - 2005, he served as America's 26th Ambassador to Japan.

Over the course of his long and distinguished career, Senator Baker's reputation for straight-talk, candor and honesty not only earned him the respect of his colleagues in Washington, but the admiration of the American people and countless others around the world. Moreover, his ability to bring people of different viewpoints together also won him a nickname - "The Great Conciliator."

It was in the spirit of conciliation that Senator

Baker, along with former Republican Senator Bob Dole and former Democratic Senators George Mitchell and Tom Daschle, announced earlier this year the establishment of The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), a new organization whose

sole purpose is to find common ground between the parties on some of the most pressing challenges facing our country.

The FORUM recently asked Senator Baker about the BPC, why it was established, and what he hopes it will accomplish.

RF: What is the purpose of the Bipartisan Policy Center?

HB: Too often, partisanship poisons our national dialogue. Unfortunately, respectful discourse across party lines has become the exception - not the norm. To confront this challenge, the Bipartisan Policy Center was formed to develop and promote solutions that would attract the public support and political momentum to achieve real progress. The BPC acts as an incubator for policy efforts that engage top political figures, advocates, academics and business leaders in the art

of principled compromise. In addition to advancing specific proposals, the BPC also is broadcasting a different type of policy discourse that seeks to unite the constructive center in the pursuit of common goals.



I'm a life-long and proud Republican. Unlike some, however, I don't believe loyalty to party precludes common sense decision and policymaking.

RF: How do you hope to impact the public policy debate in Washington?

HB: I'm a life-long and proud Republican. Unlike some, however, I don't believe loyalty to party precludes common sense decision and policymaking. Some of our Nation's greatest triumphs have come when political leaders have not allowed partisan differences to deter their efforts to find solutions that are in the Nation's best interest. Throughout my time as Senate Majority Leader, I took pride in seeking and heeding the advice of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle. Unfortunately, it would seem that now-a-days in many instances, times have changed and partisan rhetoric in Washington now often impedes our public policy making process.

RF: Aren't partisan differences – and the debate and discussion over these differences – an essential part of our democracy?

HB: Loyalty to one's party is critical. Adlai Stevenson once called partisanship "the lifeblood of democracy."

Differences between individuals should be civilly debated, but it is critical one never loses respect for a colleague's opinion. It is important to note that the Bipartisan Policy Center does not espouse what some have called a "trans-partisan" or "post-partisan" model. We believe that principled debate and compromise does not require one to abandon his or her party. Moreover, we seek to encourage a return of comity to congressional debate that we believe has eroded in the last decade.

RF: With the 2008 election season already upon us, are you concerned that any effort to promote bipartisanship is going to take a back seat to the rough and tumble of the presidential campaign?

HB: There will always be partisan debate; that is the nature of the presidential selection process. I think both Democrats and Republicans agree, however, that the majority of the American people are looking for pragmatic and principled leadership in their candidates.

They want congress and the president to work with each other; not against each other.

RF: Have you been in touch with any of the presidential candidates or the leadership in Congress to discuss what you are trying to do? If so, what has been the reaction?

HB: The BPC has several ongoing specific policy projects; one focusing on energy policy, one on agriculture policy, one on ways to reform national security and one on transportation. We select issues that we believe are ripe for partisan agreement. To this extent, the BPC conducts research and evidence-based surveys to compose thoughtful and pragmatic solutions that are then passed on to current members of Congress for their consideration.

Furthermore, the BPC has recently formed a working relationship with the Senate Common Ground Coalition—a group of approximately twenty sitting U.S. Senators who largely share the same goals and vision as the BPC. We are excited about this new endeavor.



Senator Baker, along with the other founders of the Bipartisan Policy Center: George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, and Bob Dole.

RF: Why is it in the best interests of Republicans to work cooperatively with Democrats

at a time when many believe that the best way for the GOP to reclaim their congressional majority is by sharpening political differences between the two parties and denying the Democrats any chance of legislative success?

HB: Our most valued public servants – whether Democratic or Republican – should be inspired by just such a sense of duty, a sense of service and a deep desire to do what is right for our Nation, whether it is politically advantageous or not. I believe the BPC will serve as an important mechanism in promoting common sense public discourse. I look forward to working with my colleagues on issues that are vital to this great country.

RF

This interview originally appeared in the June/July 2007 edition of the FORUM.

It's More Than Just Words

The importance of tone in politics

LANDON PARVIN

One of my best friends is a retired clergyman. When he was in seminary, a professor told him that he could wander around

theologically wherever he pleased, as long as he chained himself to the rock on which was written the word "Resurrection."

Some words are like that, abiding and meaningful, words like love, kindness, friendship, integrity, and we should chain ourselves to them as we go through life.

The current problem is that many Republicans have chained themselves to a number of words that they use as incantations, somehow believing their repetition will guarantee them victory or protect them from defeat. Instead, whether you agree with the words or not, their constant use — without intellectual challenge or support — deprives us of the political depth and vitality that gives a party strength and confidence.

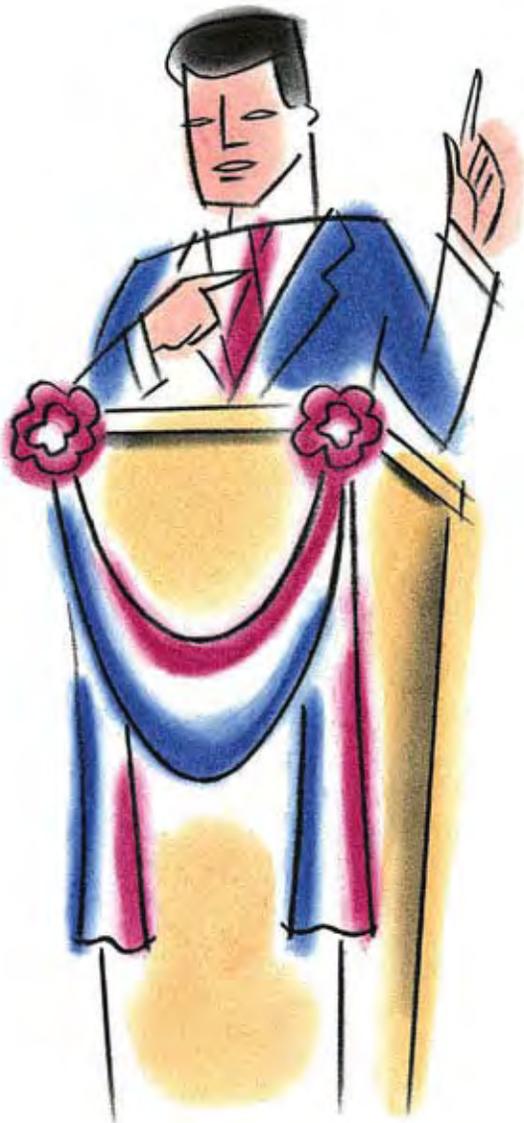
Today's Republican stump speech is the political

equivalent of a PowerPoint presentation. Here is a typical Republican congressional candidate's speech in PowerPoint form:

- REAGAN REPUBLICAN
- HILLARY ZINGER (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE)
- WASHINGTON'S WASTEFUL SPENDING
- LIMITED GOVERNMENT
- OUR TROOPS (STANDING OVATION)
- PRO-LIFE/FAMILY VALUES/SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE
- GREATEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

Sometimes, when I hear Republican speeches larded with the knee-jerk, base-tested words, it reminds me of the worn Henny Youngman story about the group of comedians who had a numbered list of the world's best jokes. One of them would say, "Number 17" and all the others would double over laughing hysterically.

Today a Republican candidate will call out "Number 8" and expect



The current problem is that many Republicans have chained themselves to a number of words that they use as incantations, somehow believing their repetition will guarantee them victory or protect them from defeat.

the audience to react with applause and knowing validation. But is that the basis for a political party?

These commonly invoked words have lost the power they once had. This certainly doesn't mean there aren't words with power. Democrats rightfully should be afraid of the words, "driver licenses for illegal aliens." But you cannot sustain a party on wedge words alone or on the tired, tried and true old favorites. Times change.

Take the popular and much-used words, "Reagan Republican." I hear candidates running around saying they are Reagan Republicans, meaning, among other things, that they are optimists, because as everyone knows RR was an optimist. But he had a darker Armageddon side that tempered his blind optimism and made him more intellectually interesting. He was not the Republican version of Hubert Humphrey, the Happy Warrior. Reagan had a seasoned and developed political philosophy that was based on far more than a buoyant heart.

Or consider "Washington's wasteful spending." When it comes to Republicans reining in spending on pork, they are Profiles in Porridge. Backbones of oatmeal. To mean something, words must have some credibility behind them. Let's face it, we have lost our credibility on fiscal prudence. The majority of Republicans in the Congress prefer earmarks over the earnestness of real convictions. They have spent their children's inheritance, which they bemoan as if they were not involved in the plunder, and they have also spent their party's own political inheritance, which had been earned over the decades.

"Limited government" should be a Republican strength, but we have lost credibility. Can someone tell me what we Republicans were doing in the middle of the

Terri Shiavo case? Talk about government sticking its nose in the middle of a private family decision. It appears we abandon the core principle of limited government if it involves one of our powerful constituencies.

Anyway, you get the point. We Republicans have kept repeating the same words long after we abandoned them. The voters finally noticed. So, the road back is about more than using or finding the right words; it is about regaining the credibility behind those words, whether they are old or new.

It is also about changing the tone that Republican words have acquired over the years.

Psychological/physiological

What is the voice of Republicans today? Is it firm, reasonable and reassuring or is it a more strident voice with harsher words but weaker will?

research shows that a soft voice relaxes the body of the listener. In fact, therapists sometimes use an established technique called guided imagery, where a soothing voice leads the individual to a different inner time and place to encourage reflection.

Parties and politicians have voices, too.

If someone wants to be a real Reagan Republican, he should listen to the tone of Reagan's voice. It could be firm, absolutely, but its natural tone was relaxed and reassuring. The power of his tone came not just from the warm, golden-honeyed radio announcer's physical voice but from an underlying reasonableness and approachability.

As one of his speechwriters, I

would sometimes write a line that I thought he would deliver with force, and he would surprise me by delivering it softly. I would feel disappointed that he did not go for the applause line; it took me years to understand why he didn't. Sometimes those applauding are not the ones you want to reach.

His famous question in the 1980 presidential race, "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" is both subtler and stronger than a pedestrian applause line like, "My fellow Republicans, this country is worse off after four years of the Carter Administration and it is time for them to go!"

Which tone is more reasonable, more inclusive, more thoughtful?

What is the voice of Republicans today? Is it firm, reasonable and reassuring or is it a more strident voice with harsher words but weaker will? The Republican voice certainly is not more strident than the Democratic voice, but that is faint praise.

My instincts tell me that a change in tone could liberate the Republican Party, free us from the straitjacket of increasingly empty words and begin to rebuild a connection to the voters.

This party needs to relax and breathe. It needs to take some risks. It needs to actively encourage a greater range of views and to take confidence in that variety.

The Republican Party will be on the path to renewal when it puts away the worn-out buzzwords aimed at a shrinking base and decides to develop the confident, credible, reassuring attitude necessary to reestablish our political integrity and energy.

If we get the tone right, the words will follow. **RF**

Landon Parvin is a ghostwriter for political and corporate leaders. This essay originally appeared in the December 2007/January 2008 edition of the FORUM.

REAGAN IN YOUNGSTOWN

WILLIAM C. BINNING

It's been said that politics these days is fought along the margins, with each party trying to motivate its political base while the political center is virtually ignored. If that is true, then perhaps it is a good time to recall a candidate who reached out toward the center and, in doing so, was able to win support that crossed and, in fact, transcended party lines.

The candidate was Ronald Reagan; the year was 1980. Reagan's overwhelming victory over Jimmy Carter that fall was not just a repudiation of a failed presidency that was preoccupied with malaise and paralyzed by hostages. It was also the result of his success in connecting with a group of voters who had spent their entire lives voting Democratic.

Much has been written about Ronald Reagan's appeal to these ethnic blue collar voters – voters who would forever become known as Reagan Democrats. But little if anything has been written about how his ability to connect with these voters matters today, and why the example he set in reaching out to them is relevant to Republican candidates trying to win election and reelection this fall.

In the wake of Black Monday

Twenty eight years ago this October,

Ronald Reagan made a campaign visit to one of the strongholds for Reagan Democrats in the United States – the Mahoning Valley of Ohio, which is anchored by the city of Youngstown and is located in the northeastern part of the state.

To get a sense of the political climate at the time of his visit, one need

and the 52 Americans who were being held against their will (“Lest We Forget, 340 Days.”)

To get a real understanding of the mood of the local electorate in the Mahoning Valley that fall, however, one really needs to look beyond the newspaper headlines of that day. One needs to go back three years, to September 19, 1977. On that day, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, one of the largest steelmakers in the world and the largest employer in the area, announced that it was eliminating 4,000 jobs. Valley residents now refer to that moment as Black Monday. Without a doubt, it changed the complexion and outlook of the area forever.

Up until then, the Mahoning Valley had been one of the centers of steelmaking in the United States. Blast furnaces lined the banks



Youngstown Sheet and Tube, circa the late 1950s. (Credit: Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor)

only look at the local newspaper, the *Youngstown Vindicator*, the afternoon after he arrived. The front page was filled with headlines that, in many ways, were very similar to those being seen today. There was a headline about the latest scandal in Washington (“Jenrette Guilty; Stays in Race”) and one about the latest incumbent Senator to lose a primary election in his home state (“Sen. Stone Is Defeated In Fla. Democratic Race”). There was also a reminder about the ongoing crisis in the Middle East

of the Mahoning River, which cut through the center of the valley. Drive across the South Center Street Bridge, and you would not only be driving over a river, but you would also be driving literally through a working mill, with molten steel being poured off to the one side of the bridge, and massive smokestacks rising up into the sky off to the other side. Attend a football game at Campbell High School stadium on a Friday night, and you would be sitting in a stadium where a layer of smoke

hung above the field of play, partially obscuring the lights above. No one thought anything of it, though, because steelmaking was the way of life. But in the years following Black Monday, it was coming to an end.

By the fall of 1980, an additional 9,000 jobs had been lost in the area. The smoke that hung in the air above the Mahoning Valley had been replaced by an air of uncertainty that was growing every day. The second and third generation children of the various ethnic and racial groups who had migrated and immigrated to the area to make steel and work in the mills were very anxious and uneasy about their future. These groups had inherited and held dear very conservative social values. Their families and their churches were the center of their lives. Culturally, many of them continued to have accents, customs, and diets from various parts of eastern and southern Europe. Politically, many also inherited loyal support for the New Deal and the Democratic Party of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In fact, the Mahoning Valley had become so Democratic that most Republican presidential candidates would not even bother making a visit. If the Republican candidate did appear, it was simply to make a brief tarmac appearance at the local airport. Richard Nixon did just that in his landslide victory in 1972. Four years later, Gerald Ford never came near the Valley at all. Despite the Republican decision to effectively write off the region, the Democrat's hold on the area became strained. In the wake of Black Monday, many Valley residents began to view the Democrat leadership in Washington as being disinterested in the economic uncertainty affecting their families and disconnected from the conservative values around which they were raised.

Pollster Stanley Greenberg wrote about this kind of sentiment in his book about Reagan Democrats in Macomb County, Michigan, *Middle Class Dreams*. "These were disillusioned, angry voters," he wrote, "but they were not Republicans. They spoke of a broken contract, not a new vision. Their way of life was genuinely in jeopardy, threatened by profound economic changes beyond their control, yet their leaders, who were supposed to look out for them, were preoccupied with other groups and other issues."

Although Greenberg was describing voters in Macomb County, he could have been describing voters in the Mahoning Valley – voters who, in the fall of 1980,

traveled to St. Rose Church in the nearby town of Girard to meet with a small group of Catholic priests and union leaders. The group had been trying to get a steel mill reopened, but had met with very little success in Washington. In their meeting with Reagan, they emphasized they did not want welfare, they just wanted to work. He listened to what they had to say, but promised them no instant solutions. Relating how his own father had once come home with a layoff notice when he was a boy, he also said he understood their concerns. According to one of the priests who attended the meeting, Reagan was well received.

The next morning, Reagan, with his entourage and the national press following, visited some of the economically hardest hit steel towns in the Mahoning Valley, touring some of the mills that were still open, as well as some of the ones that had already been shut down. David Broder covered the tour for the *Washington Post*. He wrote of one such visit. "Speaking in a largely abandoned and rusting Jones and Laughlin plant in the Mahoning Valley, where 13,000 steel jobs



Reagan addresses steelworkers and the media in Youngstown in October 1980. (Credit: Ronald Reagan Library)

were finally being given an opportunity to find out for themselves what the Republican candidate for President was all about.

Straight talk and no instant solutions

Ronald Reagan touched down at the Youngstown Municipal Airport the evening of October 7. According to the *Youngstown Vindicator*, he was "greeted by a crowd police estimated at 3,500 to 4,000. Though no speech had been scheduled, Reagan talked briefly, thanking them for coming out on a chilly night. Some had been there for hours."

At 9:30 that evening, Reagan

have been lost in the last three years, Reagan told the workers: 'We've got to protect this industry and all industries against dumping' of below-cost foreign steel in the U.S. market, 'and we've got to get rid of those thousands of regulations that make it impossible for us to compete' with Japanese and European producers.'" His message of hope, support and understanding delivered, Reagan departed the Mahoning Valley shortly after this speech.

A few days later, Clingan Jackson, the political writer for the *Vindicator* and one of the most astute observers of local politics at the time, wrote that, "Ronald Reagan undoubtedly helped

his candidacy in the Mahoning Valley in his visit here Wednesday.” A straw poll taken by the Vindicator after the visit seemed to bear that out. When the final ballots were cast on Election Day three weeks later, Reagan won 50,153 votes. This was not a plurality of the vote – ultimately, he was unable to break the political stranglehold that 50 years of New Deal politics had placed on the area. But he did succeed in capturing more votes than any Republican candidate for President had ever won in the Valley.

More significantly, in coming to Youngstown and campaigning in an area that had always voted Democratic in the past, he succeeded in charting a path that no Republican presidential candidate had ever taken before – a path across party lines and into the hearts and minds of blue collar, unionized industrial workers.

Lessons for today

How did he do this? How did Ronald Reagan connect with steelworkers and others with whom, on the surface at least, he seemingly had little to nothing in common? For one thing, what Stanley Greenberg observed about the voters in Macomb County was true for the voters in the Mahoning Valley as well. “These defecting Democrats,” he wrote in *Middle Class Dreams*, “saw in him an essential honesty, a willingness to stand tough for his beliefs and to stand with ‘small’ America against things ‘big’ particularly government.”

But there was another thing, as well. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was not running out of Washington D.C. He was an outsider and he campaigned as an outsider. His mind was not cluttered with inside-the-beltway-policy-wonk-double-talk. For the troubled people in the Mahoning Valley, he seemed like a man who spoke their language and understood their problems. He did not promise them he would bring their mills back. He did promise them an America that reflected their values, and he offered hope of a better and brighter America.

So what lessons does this hold for Republicans running for office this fall?

The challenges of 1980 were not unlike the challenges America faces now: high energy costs, stagnation, inflation and strife in the Middle East. These challenges did not deter Ronald Reagan from giving America hope for a brighter and better tomorrow. They should not deter Republicans running for office from doing the same thing today.

Of course, Republicans in 2008 now find it more difficult to run against the Washington establishment as Reagan did in 1980; Republicans help control the establishment. Still, there remain lessons to be learned from Reagan’s visit to Youngstown that could be useful to Republican candidates this year. These lessons include:

Talk Straight – Before John McCain, there was Ronald Reagan. He invented the Straight Talk Express. He didn’t

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sugarcoat the difficulties facing the Mahoning Valley; he didn’t gloss over them. He just listened to what people had to say, told them he understood their problems, and promised to work hard to solve them if he were elected. And people believed him.

Be Yourself – Reagan was comfortable in his own skin, and people could sense that. He was always able to laugh at himself, but he always took the concerns of others seriously. When David Broder derided Reagan as a “Hollywood hardhat” a few days after his visit to the Mahoning Valley, the charge didn’t stick (the Teflon was working even back then!) because the people of Youngstown sensed that he was not just some former actor and former Governor of California

running for President. Ronald Reagan was also one of them.

Throw Away the Talking Points – Reagan stuck to a script, but it was a script of his own making. The positions he took were the positions of his party, but the words that he used to sell them were his own. Campaigns today are bombarded by talking points from Washington telling them what to say. But in today’s era of 24/7 cable news coverage and Internet blogs that print things word for word, talking points have a shelf life of one to two hours at best. Candidates who simply repeat things verbatim sent to them by the RNC do so at their own peril, and run the risk of being revealed as someone who can’t think for themselves. Spout the party line – but do so in your own words.

If there is one final lesson to take away from Ronald Reagan’s visit to Youngstown, it is this – candidates should never be afraid to look beyond their traditional constituencies for votes. Reagan did not win the Mahoning Valley in 1980. But the unprecedented level of support he ended up winning in the area helped put him over the top in the state, and contributed to his overwhelming victory nationwide. It also reflected his view of campaigning.

“I don’t think of the voters as voters,” he wrote in a letter to a supporter on March 14 of that year. “They are people. And I have to tell you something else. I find it most stimulating and even inspiring to meet the people of this country as you meet them during a campaign. You learn what truly great people they are.”

Ronald Reagan viewed voters as people – not Republicans, not Democrats, but people. It’s what brought him to Youngstown 28 years ago. It’s also what made him great. **RF**

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“PART OF BEING A REVOLUTIONARY IS KNOWING THAT YOU DON’T HAVE TO ACQUIESCE TO THE TIRED OLD IDEAS OF THE PAST.”

RONALD REAGAN
1985



FOR OVER 45 YEARS, the Ripon Society has been dedicated to a simple but important notion – the notion that ideas matter in American life.

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Ripon Profile

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Occupation: Governor of Minnesota

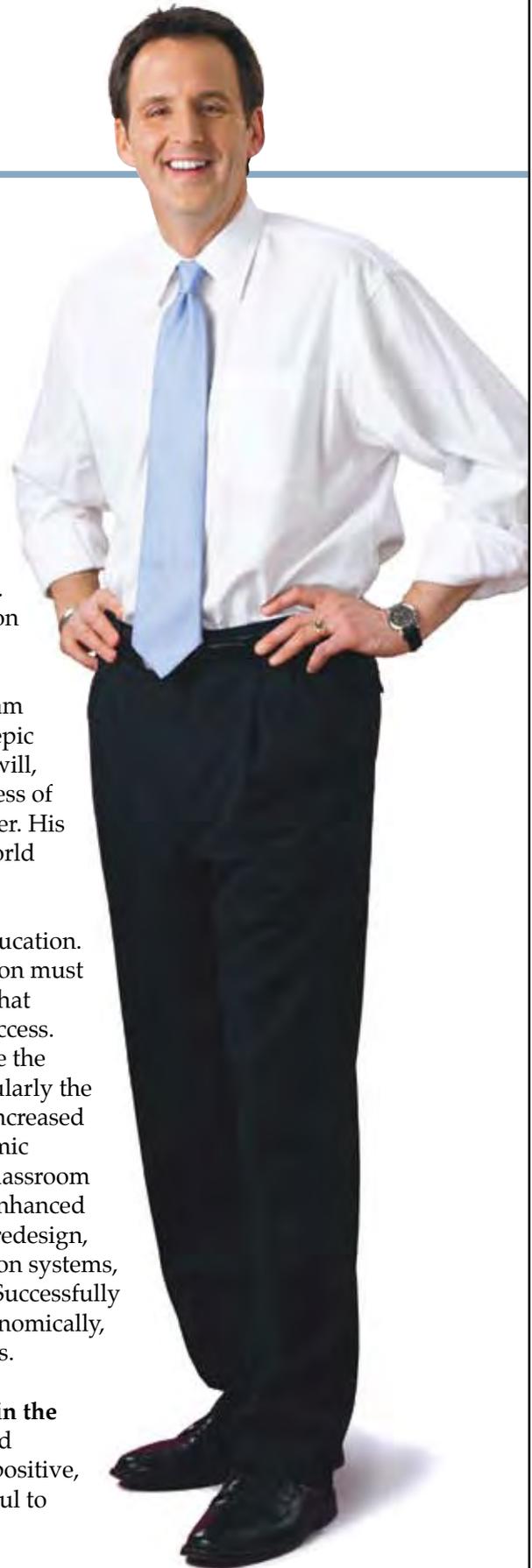
Previous Jobs: Attorney; Majority Leader, Minnesota House of Representatives.

Individual(s) who inspired me as a child: My parents. My Mom was a strong believer in the value of education while my Dad taught us the importance of hard work.

Historical figure(s) I would most like to meet: Abraham Lincoln. He successfully led our country through an epic challenge with great courage, foresight and skill. His will, wisdom, communication skills, and trust in the goodness of people made him one of the most impactful leaders ever. His commitment to liberty, prosperity and equality was world changing and remains incredibly inspiring today.

Issue facing America that no one is talking about: Education. The improvement and reform of our system of education must be addressed with the sense of urgency and boldness that it deserves as a key factor to our nation's continued success. The current system is outdated and it does not produce the results needed for far too many of our children, particularly the disadvantaged. Changes to the system must include increased parental involvement and school choice, higher academic standards, greater decision making at the school and classroom level, performance pay for teachers and staff, greatly enhanced teacher training, better use of technology, high school redesign, better alignment between our K-12 and higher education systems, more rigorous and relevant class offerings and more. Successfully improving our system of education is strategically, economically, socially and morally critical to America's future success.

What the Republican Party must do to be successful in the elections this year: Republicans must present ideas and solutions that address the concerns of Americans in a positive, hopeful and pragmatic manner, while remaining faithful to our principles.



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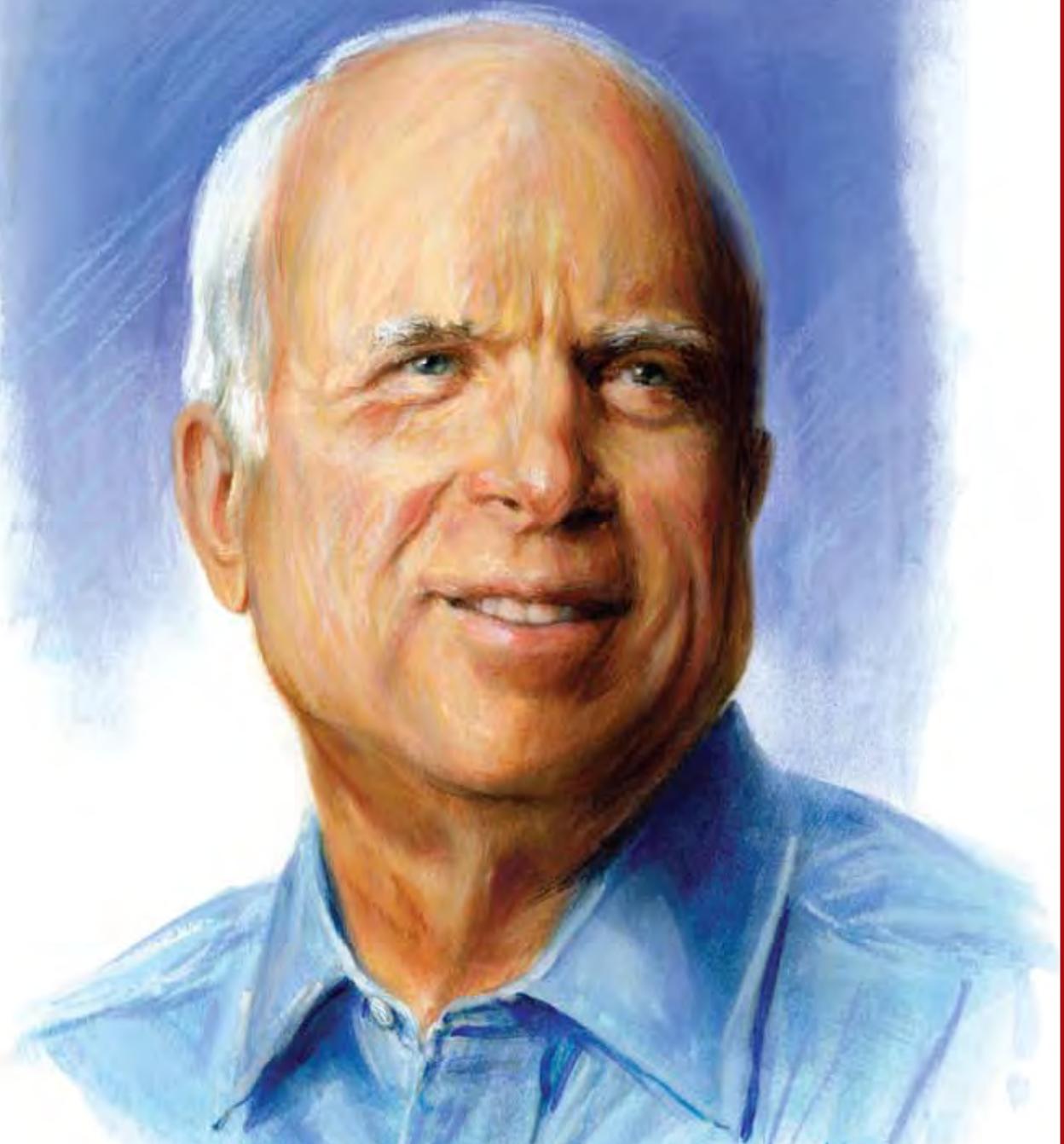
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