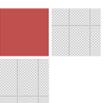


2009

Platform Committee

Platform Report – Executive Summary

This summary explains the need for a RPOF Platform. A more detailed analysis is available for review at <http://PlatformYES.com>



INTRODUCTION

ⁱOn June 6, 1864, Abraham Lincoln received a telegram from friends at the Republican National Convention. As was the custom then, Presidential contenders did not attend the nominating convention of their party, and Lincoln remained in Washington while the convention took place a few miles away in Baltimore. It would be another two days before the convention would nominate him for a second term, but his friends were seeking Lincoln's opinion about several prospects for Vice President. Lincoln politely responded by telegram that those mentioned for Vice president were good men, but said ***"Wish not to interfere about V.P. cannot interfere about platform. Convention must judge by itself."*** Abraham Lincoln was just one of many Republican candidates who believed that the convention, as the highest authority of a party, was the architect of the policies.

The platform convention can seem relegated to a procedural burden that has to be accomplished because of rule. Many if not all recent Republican Presidential Nominees have insisted that the platform fit their philosophical agenda. They do so with the risk of exclusion of the Party grassroots.

The Republican Party of Florida (RPOF) needs a platform declaring our principles and beliefs. Our leaders would be wise to follow the precedent exemplified by Abraham Lincoln who refused to interfere in the process that convention delegates used in developing the 1864 platform, or even choosing a Vice President. A collaborative effort between county executives and the state committee will produce a broadly representative document reflecting the beliefs of our grass roots base. The mechanics of this process are still being refined. Future reports will outline in detail the process by which a grassroots platform is to be developed.

WHY THE RPOF NEEDS A PLATFORM

The RNC Platform is only a guide and does not address the nuances of every state, especially Florida's unique conditions and needs. We have unique ecological diversity, including potentially vast offshore energy resources in forms of waves, winds and oil. Florida's unique weather patterns influence the administration of property insurance. Any future Cuban policy will more directly affect our State because of our proximity. In education, our support of charter schooling is strong. Our GOP voters hold opinions on all of these and many other issues unique to our state.

The planks in the RNC Platform are not written based on Florida's specific interests and some barely represent our views at all. As a state party, we must speak with a unified voice by declaring our intent to shape the debate on Florida matters. These issues will not go away, and if we do nothing, the issues will be decided by someone other than our party base. Allowing the few to speak for the many is a progressive's mantra.

Failing to define what Florida Republicans are, also invites others to define us. We can no longer afford to allow this. We must take charge of shaping our own image and direction by clearly stating what our message is. Empty slogans and clichés of "returning to our roots" and "the Party of Lincoln and Reagan" do not define us. They lead to conjecture and open-ended speculation.

Arguments that a platform is too "controversial" or "divisive" are baseless. Although developing a State party platform will at times address controversial issues, this is not necessarily a bad thing. Controversy provides opportunity for dialogue and debate, that when conducted under fair rules and procedure, can produce constructive and unifying results. Men far wiser than me have recognized that agreement on 80% of ideals makes more friends than enemies. This will prove true within the RPOF. Many in our great party do hold differing philosophies on some issues, and very few will exactly align on every issue and belief.

However, at the end of a deliberate process a majority can produce a broad consensus on 80% of the positions we hold. Once that congruence is achieved, our party can continue to grow over time through continuing dialogue over the difficult issues.

Over the years, some have argued that developing a platform is much too difficult and that our sole focus should be on electing Republicans. This argument has even been used immediately after successful elections. A process towards the objective of defining where our party stands on resolving twenty-first century issues will only make it more relative to the voters and competitive at the polls. Developing a platform will provide a sense of participation and ownership, especially to our loyal base of financial contributors.

Developing a platform will dovetail with our party's outreach efforts to bring in new persons from the widest possible range of ages, ethnic origins and backgrounds. Clearly articulated ideas and values in a document that all Floridians can read will draw both new party activists as well as people more likely to vote Republican to the polls.

A party platform is defined as "a declaration of the principles on which a group of persons stands". Until now, only a very vocal few who control the party machinery have claimed to define us through press releases and speeches. Our party image therefore, essentially has evolved to reflect the narrow philosophy of a few individuals. This can continue only at the expense of a widening divisive chasm and continued erosion of our grassroots base that will rapidly grow to catastrophic proportions. This can be reversed by a unifying platform that is developed from the grass roots-up and reflects the values of the whole party.

Over the past two years, I have publicly interviewed RNC members, state party officials and GOP elected officials from several states that have all been instrumental in the development of their state parties' platforms. They have generously given me countless hours of their time. It has given me a clear understanding of how the process works - a process already designed and proven successful. You can listen to these interviews by visiting <http://PlatformYES.com>. Several nationally-known Republicans have personally committed themselves to lending their expertise and experience to our effort when the RPOF is ready.

Those who say, "Florida is a leader among state Republican parties," or "Our voice is loud; we are looked to as a leader," fail to recognize how severely our fortunes have reversed. After two elections, we have failed to carry Florida for our Presidential nominee, have three fewer Congressmen, no longer control the entire Florida cabinet and have fewer seats in the state legislature. We are nearly one million fewer in registered voters than our competitors. Our fundraising dollars are dwindling. We are losing our regular members to the Independent ranks daily. Fox News and talk radio clichés alone will not reverse this. Neither will a platform derived from a top-down autocratic process.

We must come together now and declare our beliefs in writing, putting our ideals on paper for the entire State and Nation to see what our core values are. Let us invest the time and effort to truly bring our grass roots into the process. A ratified document reflecting of ideals defined from the bottom-up will tell every voter in our great state of Florida what it means to be a Republican.

Respectfully Submitted by
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ⁱ Adapted from Conventional Wisdom A History of Endorsing the Republican Platform – Kirk Overbey