



The **Phyllis Schlafly Report**



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Do Party Platforms Really Matter?

One of the main features of any political convention is adoption of the platform, a statement of Party principles and goals. Some people take party platforms very seriously; others think they are a waste of time. Of course, they are often very wordy, not like the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, which gives you more facts in fewer words than anything in print.

A party platform is like a creed. Most Christians recite their creed over and over again to strengthen their faith in what they believe. A party platform is also like the flag soldiers carry into battle. It's the symbol of what we think is worth our work and sacrifice. A party platform is published in the hope that like-minded Americans will join our cause. A party platform is the standard to which public officials may be held accountable.

Munich in Manhattan

At the 1960 Republican National Convention in Chicago, then-Vice President Richard Nixon was expected to be the presidential nominee. New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller nursed a lifetime ambition to be President, but when he finally realized he could not beat Nixon for the nomination, he decided instead to make a fight to put his liberal planks in the Platform.

Rockefeller was the head of the New York, liberal, Big-Government, internationalist wing of the Republican Party that supported foreign and domestic policies similar to those of the Democrats, and whose me-too candidates had led Republicans down to defeat again and again.

If Rockefeller were alive today, he would be called a RINO (Republican In Name Only). Conservatives' animosity toward Rockefeller was a matter of geography, ideology, policy, and even morality. He walked out on his longtime wife and mother of his five children and stole another man's wife. As New York Governor, he signed one of the first laws legalizing abortion, before *Roe v. Wade*.

The week before the 1960 Convention, while the Platform Committee was hammering out its document in Chicago, Richard Nixon made a pilgrimage to New York City where he met

for eight hours with Rockefeller in his Fifth Avenue apartment.

At the end of the day, Nixon agreed to support all the changes in the Platform dictated by Rockefeller. Nixon returned to Chicago and handed the Platform Committee its orders: throw out your week's work of hearing witnesses and drafting a document and accept all 14 Rockefeller demands.

There wasn't much substance in Rockefeller's changes, but in politics perception is reality. Nixon's acceptance of Rockefeller's language meant much more than mere changes in words. It meant that Nixon had purged himself of his independence and made himself acceptable to the Rockefeller wing of the Party.

The *Chicago Tribune* headlined its editorial "Grant Surrenders to Lee." Senator Barry Goldwater, who was very popular at the 1960 Convention, promptly labeled the new Nixon alliance a "surrender to Rockefeller" and "a bid to appease the Republican left." Goldwater said, "I believe this to be immoral politics." He said the Rockefeller-Nixon agreement will "live in history as the Munich of the Republican Party" and predicted it will guarantee "a Republican defeat in November."

Unfortunately, Goldwater's prediction was accurate. Richard Nixon lost to John F. Kennedy in 1960. Goldwater sadly said, we lost "not because we were Republican, but because we were not Republican enough."

Americans then endured the presidential terms of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, which gave us major disasters from the Bay of Pigs to the Vietnam War.

When Richard Nixon was finally elected President in 1968, he turned out to be a RINO on almost every issue. He appointed Nelson Rockefeller's protege Henry Kissinger to direct all our foreign policy and national defense issues, which meant cuddling up to Soviet Russia and Red China. Nixon signed the infamous ABM treaty from which, 30 years later, the United States finally withdrew. Domestically, Nixon raised taxes and even imposed wage and price controls.

The Watergate debacle was followed by the accidental presidency of Gerald Ford, who also proved to be a RINO by choosing Nelson Rockefeller as his Vice President.

Turning the Party Right

By 1976, conservatives were so dissatisfied and angry with those RINO administrations that California Governor Ronald Reagan was inspired to challenge incumbent President Gerald Ford. That was a daring move because it's seldom that an incumbent is defeated in his own party primary. The Republican National Convention in Kansas City in 1976 was very close; Reagan narrowly lost the presidential nomination to Ford by only 117 Delegate votes.

With hindsight we can see that the real importance of the 1976 Convention was the Platform. A first-term Senator from a southern state named Jesse Helms decided that the 1976 Republican Platform was the forum on which to rebuild the conservative movement that had eroded under Nixon, Ford, and their chief adviser, Henry Kissinger.

Jesse Helms wanted the Convention to adopt a strong Republican Platform that really stood for principles we could be proud of, such as military superiority "second to none," instead of Kissinger-style appeasement and retreat.

Helms also called for an approach that was unthinkable to establishment Republicans: a direct attack on the policies of the incumbent Republican President.

So, at the 1976 Republican National Convention in Kansas City, Jesse Helms led the battle to adopt a Platform based on what he called "morality in foreign policy." It promised "a realistic assessment of the Communist challenge" and bluntly criticized any giveaway of the U.S. Canal in Panama or unilateral concessions to the Soviet Union.

In an upset victory, the 1976 Convention adopted the Helms Platform repudiating the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger foreign policy of détente, and promising that we would "never tolerate a shift against us in the strategic balance."

That was the moment when the Republican Party turned toward victory over the Evil Empire and laid the basis for Ronald Reagan's principled campaign four years later. It set the stage for Reagan's determination that our attitude toward the Soviet Union should be "we win and they lose."

The 1976 Platform was not just about foreign policy; 1976 was the first Republican National Convention when the emerging pro-family movement raised its voice in politics. The 1976 Platform opposed "intrusion by the federal government" in education and called for constitutional amendments to restore prayer to schools and "to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children."

The 1976 Platform showed the country that the majority of Republicans disavowed the so-called moderates and RINOs and were determined to rebuild the Republican Party based on conservative principles — even if this required criticizing the Republican Executive Branch and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Correcting a Platform Mistake

In 1980 when Delegates gathered in Detroit for the Republican National Convention, the fact that Ronald Reagan was going to be nominated wasn't big news any more, so the media focused on the Equal Rights Amendment as the hottest Platform issue, giving ERA enormous publicity.

Regrettably, previous Republican platforms had endorsed ERA, and the feminists were determined to keep it that way. I was just as determined to take it out. Reagan had already announced his opposition to ERA, and we did not intend to let him be embarrassed by the feminists on this issue.

The radical feminists enjoyed the full support of the media for their street demonstrations and news conferences featuring the wife of the Michigan Governor, a Congresswoman, and the co-chair of the Republican Party.

Nevertheless, StopERAers and pro-lifers won big, both in the Platform Committee and the full Convention. ERA was permanently removed from the Republican Platform, and the Platform again affirmed "support of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children."

After the Platform vote was taken, RNC Co-Chairman Mary Dent Crisp, another RINO, shed real tears for the benefit of television cameras — and then she walked out of the Republican Party to support John Anderson, who ran as a Third Party candidate trying to defeat Ronald Reagan. You may have lost track of John Anderson; he later showed his true colors by becoming the head of the United World Federalists, which keeps trying to put the United States under world government.

Defining Conservatism in Dallas

At the 1984 Convention in Dallas where we renominated Ronald Reagan, the Platform did not duck any controversial issues. It took a strong stand against taxes, ERA, gay rights, quotas, government daycare, federal control of education, activist judges, pornography, gun control, the United Nations, and UNESCO, and a strong stand in favor of an anti-missile defense, parents' rights in public schools, and the protection of human life.

1984 was the year when Henry Hyde and I were the Illinois delegates on the Platform Committee, and the Party adopted this beautiful statement: "The unborn child has a fundamental, individual right to life which cannot be infringed."

Ronald Reagan offered us a vision of morning in America, reminding us: "Don't give up your ideals, don't compromise. Don't turn to expedience. . . . We can have that shining city on the hill — but we can have it only through God's grace, our own courage, and our own will to abide by the faith of our fathers." Republicans standing tall for conservative principles were rewarded by Reagan's 1984 landslide victory, which doubled the votes received by Barry Goldwater in 1964.

Defending the Pro-Life Plank

At the **1992** Republican National Convention in Houston, the renomination of the first George Bush was not controversial. The hottest issue became the attempt by some RINOs (they usually call themselves Moderates) to remove the pro-life plank from the Republican Platform. This effort was started by Mary Dent Crisp, the former RNC co-chair who had walked out of the Republican Party 12 years earlier to support a Third Party. Republicans had gotten along jolly well without her during the Reagan years but, in Houston, Crisp threatened to leave the Party again if we didn't remove the pro-life plank from the Platform.

That's when Colleen Parro and I founded Republican National Coalition for Life, a new organization with the specific mission of preserving the pro-life plank in the Republican Party Platform. Despite much hammering against us by the media, and equivocation by Republican Party officials, we were successful in Houston.

In **1996**, two prominent RINO Republicans ran for nomination for President: California Governor Pete Wilson and Senator Arlen Specter. Both made removal of the pro-life plank from the Republican Platform the centerpiece of their campaigns. You've probably forgotten that they ran for President — their campaigns fizzled out so early.

At the 1996 National Convention in San Diego, the Platform Committee, which usually includes some members of Eagle Forum, stood like the Rock of Gibraltar in writing a splendid Platform of conservative Republican principles on political, economic, cultural, life, and national sovereignty issues.

Our presidential nominee Bob Dole then insulted the Delegates by announcing to the press, "I haven't read the Platform and I'm not bound by it anyway." His managers censored out of Dole's campaign the moral, cultural and sovereignty issues, which had been emphasized in the Platform, and Bob Dole lost to Bill Clinton.

The Platform W. Ran On

By **2000**, when the Delegates gathered in Philadelphia for the Republican National Convention, it had become very clear that the Republican nominee for President must be pro-life. Not a single pro-abortion candidate entered the race for President in 2000, and the pro-life plank in the Platform was adopted again by the Convention with little opposition.

George W. Bush ran and was elected on the strong Republican Platform adopted in Philadelphia in 2000. Here are a few of its planks in addition to the traditional language that "the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life."

"We support the traditional definition of marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman. . . . We do not believe sexual preference should be given special legal protection. . . . We stand with the Boy Scouts of America, and support their positions. . . . We defend the constitutional right to keep and

bear arms. . . . We support the recognition of English as the nation's common language. . . . We affirm the right of public schools, courthouses, and other public buildings to post copies of the Ten Commandments. . . . [We support the appointment of] judges who have demonstrated that they share . . . conservative beliefs and respect the Constitution. . . . We believe the military must no longer be the object of social experiments. . . . We affirm that homosexuality is incompatible with military service. . . . We support legislation prohibiting gambling on the Internet. . . . America must deploy effective missile defenses. . . . American troops must never serve under UN command or be subject to the jurisdiction of an International Criminal Court."

The Non-Grassroots Platform

The Platform Committee (officially called the Resolutions Committee) at the Republican National Convention consists of one man and one woman from each state. You also must be elected a Delegate. The usual procedure is that Platform Committee members are elected by each state's Delegates at their first caucus. The procedure is rather democratic (with a small d), so that the Platform Committee is usually representative of grassroots Republicans.

Unfortunately the Platform Committee at the Republican National Convention in New York in **2004** was very different. President Bush and Karl Rove gave orders to Republican State Chairmen not to let anyone on the Platform Committee who was not a public official or a Party official who could be told how to vote; and so 90% of Platform Committee members fit those categories. Senator Bill Frist, chairman of the national Platform Committee, ran it with a tight hand to exclude any plank that Bush didn't want and to praise George W. Bush on 89 of the Platform's 98 pages. Except for the pro-life plank and an excellent plank urging Congress to use its Article III power to limit the rule of supremacist judges, conservatives were unable to add strong planks on other issues they cared about, such as immigration.

Looking to the Future

We cannot allow the **2008** Platform Committee to be controlled by Party bosses or by the presidential nominee, *first*, because they support positions that are contrary to what the majority of Republicans want, and *second* because the Platform Committee should be a genuine grassroots voice.

The history of the battles over Republican Platforms teaches us that standing on principles of authentic conservatism and traditional values is the road to victory. Strong principled platforms are worth all the agony we put into writing and getting them adopted. They show that conservative Republicans do not have to settle for a liberal or a moderate or a RINO masquerading as a conservative because conservatives have the majority to demand candidates with the right stuff.

The voters will back a party that offers a pro-American foreign policy and trade policy, real tax cuts, and support for the Creator-endowed right to life and liberty of every individual. The voters will back *opposition* to United Nations treaties, federal control over classroom curricula, federal health care, and Open Borders policies that admit terrorists.

It's our job to get the Republican Party back on track after eight years of George W. Bush deviationism. We must establish conservative grassroots Republicanism as different from a Bush party. We made a great start in doing this by killing his deal to turn over our seaports to a Middle East government, Dubai Ports. We scored again by defeating his nomination of feminist Harriet Miers for the Supreme Court. We had a smashing third victory by defeating his cooperation with Ted Kennedy to pass an amnesty bill in the Senate. The 2008 Platform must maintain our conservative momentum.

Key Issues for Grassroots Conservatives

- 1. American Self-Government vs. Rule by Supremacist Judges.** We must reject all rule by judges who believe the U.S. Constitution is a "living" document that they can re-interpret according to their own biases about "emerging standards." We cannot allow judges to declare unconstitutional the Pledge of Allegiance, the Ten Commandments, the Boy Scout oath, the traditional definition of marriage, or parents' rights in public schools.
- 2. Immigration/Border Security.** We must not allow amnesty to be passed incrementally under dishonest labels like "comprehensive." We must demand border security, a double fence, increased border guards, employee verification, the tracking of visas for visitors, cooperation with local police, and an end to granting citizenship to "anchor babies." We must adopt English as our official language. We must recognize that the billions of dollars we've spent on the so-called war against drugs is a sham so long as we allow illegal drugs to come over our southern border.
- 3. American Sovereignty.** We must defeat all UN treaties such as the Law of the Sea Treaty, which was rejected by Ronald Reagan so long ago. This treaty would give control of all the oceans and the riches at the bottom of the sea to a UN organization, set up a world court to decide disputes, and have the power to impose taxes on us. We cannot allow the elites to push the United States into a North American Union modeled on the European Union because that is a terrible threat to the continued independence of the U.S.A. The globalists are running away from the term North American Union, but they are frank in calling their goal "economic integration" and "labor mobility"—and that means open borders for cheap labor. "Economic integration" is already taking place in allowing Mexican trucks access to all our highways, in

the TransTexas Highway that is planned to grow into a NAFTA Superhighway, and in Bush's Totalization plan to put illegal aliens in Social Security. Our schools must not teach our youngsters to become "citizens of the world."

4. Protection of American Workers. We must **stop** the changes in our Patent law that benefit foreign countries at the expense of American inventors, the trade agreements that pretend to promote free trade but actually are a cover for the outsourcing of good American jobs, the insourcing of foreigners to take jobs away from Americans, the foreign countries' discrimination against U.S. products with their Value Added Tax, and foreign countries' shipments to us of foods and prescription drugs that contain poisons.

5. Life, Marriage, and Traditional Morality. The pro-life plank in the Republican Platform is essential both to the pro-life movement and to Republican victories. The Republican Party cannot win without the support of its pro-life constituency. Marriage amendments will be on the ballot in California and Florida this year, and Americans must make sure they win. The overwhelming majority of Americans support the retention of marriage in its traditional definition of the union of one man and one woman.

Strong words about the need for grassroots action came even from an establishment Republican, former Republican National Chairman and now Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour. He told the Republican National Committee at its January 2008 winter meeting, "We've become a top-down party. . . . We have to become a bottom-up party again. . . . This is the year we have to maximize grassroots participation."

Ronald Reagan said that God's hand is on America in a very preferential way. We have inherited a wonderful land of liberty and prosperity. It's our duty to safeguard our magnificent heritage. One way we do this is by adopting a Republican Party Platform that designs the plan to rebuild the conservative movement, sets the standard for public officials, and then tries to hold them to it. We must use the procedures in the U.S. Constitution, and the mechanisms of self-government and of party politics to preserve our heritage.

It's up to grassroots Americans to rebuild the conservative movement and take back the Republican Party from the RINOs (as we did in 1964 and 1980).

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<http://www.eagleforum.org>

eagle@eagleforum.org