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# BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW

## BUILDING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT: A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE AND LOCAL PARTIES

BY MICHAEL STEELE



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### CHAPTER THREE

### STATE PARTIES

# 1. THE URGENT NEED

In a life spent advancing our conservative principles, I have had the privilege to serve as a county chairman, a state chairman, a candidate and an elected official. But my greatest appreciation for the important work our party came from my time door knocking, stuffing envelopes and talking to voters. These experiences have each consistently illustrated for me a key lesson: the road to victory is paved by discipline, hard work and collaboration. In each instance, I've had the opportunity to view the RNC through various lenses and can bring to the chairmanship a local activist's and candidate's sensibilities. Yet, that alone will not be enough. No one person's experiences will be enough to transform the RNC. To bring as much insight and wisdom into our operations as possible, I will build strong bridges to state party officials and develop a seasoned staff who will support my efforts to create build a party unified in message but also in operation.

My plan for winning the future relies on collaboration as the foundation to the road to victory. We need to forge a new working relationship between the RNC and state and local parties that will deliver a unified message and assure an amplification of resources. This will require constant dialogue. It will require a free and open exchange of ideas. And, it will require an immediate and collaborative examination with the Republican leaders of every state and the leadership of the RNC on what is and isn't broken. Each State Party must examine how the Republican brand, and Republican ideals, can best be advanced in their ongoing efforts to improve. As leaders, our role is to listen to a broad universe of stakeholders, to unify around our common goals and then to create solutions that work.

As history has repeatedly shown us, our success depends on winning campaigns at all levels of government: local, state, and federal. This will demand a heuristic approach with its roots in a strong relationship between those local, state, and national activists.

While each State Party is different — with different constituencies and different needs — we must position the RNC to extend itself to each as a trusted and constant teammate as we develop messages, recruit candidates, reach out to new voter groups, organize volunteers, and raise money. And it starts with making you a partner in the process at the inception of our plan for 2009 and beyond.

# 2. DRIVING CHANGE THAT DELIVERS

I propose that the most effective RNC would be one that views itself and organizes itself as a conduit for action, knowledge, and resources. Designed to support Republican candidates and activists in all 50 states, the RNC I seek to

lead would work as a team in order to harvest the very best ideas and the brightest talent from across the nation.

- **Build an Intranet** between all State Parties to enable constant and ongoing communications. This simple but game-changing technology will transmit in real-time the mood and tempo in each district to all stakeholders and will enable powerful sharing of best practices as collected at both the state and national levels. This intranet will be the vehicle to developing that behavior.
- **Create an Ethical Review Committee**, comprised of RNC members, that articulates plainly and unambiguously a code of ethics that reflects the value we put on energized but principled contest. This code will apply to all RNC staff, consultants, and vendors regardless of tenure or supposed favor. This code will apply first and foremost to the RNC and will help to ensure that state parties are never again compelled to employ “preferred” vendors.
- **Regional field directors** will be the synapses of the Republican system. Their ability to rapidly comprehend the situation on the ground and to ensure a smooth flow of information and resources between State Parties and the RNC will be critical. As a result, the RNC will work with State Party leaders to chart ideal qualifications and identify the best candidates. There is too much talent within the RNC membership to leave candidate recruitment solely to the campaign committees. We need to work together to get the best candidates into the race. After all, state and local parties know their local players and dynamics better than Washington DC. This can set the stage for expanding the playing field with more competitive races as the overall environment changes.
- **A 50 state plan** is necessary to develop a national dialogue but also to tap into the vision and experience embedded in State Parties that have too long been neglected as “too blue”, “too red” or “not strategic.” We must construct a more collaborative relationship between the RNC and state and local parties. The RNC will work with each State Party to ensure Republicans are competitive in every corner of the nation.
- **Leveraging fundraising resources** requires a close partnership with State Parties. The RNC will freely offer resources and know-how to our State Party partners in order to recruit the best fundraising experts in each state or region, experts who will not just advise state leaders but who will work hand-in-hand to build successful strategies and raise actual money. Our fundraising must employ every strategy, every tactic, and every technology; it will only work if we become the party of ideas for the future of America.

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- **Hold regular regional meetings** and conference calls with State Parties to maximize collaboration and communications. Collaboration will be the cornerstone of my plan. The RNC, under my chairmanship, will be committed to facilitating both telephonic and personal meetings to keep us connected today and extending into our shared future. Member-only conference calls and meetings in which we enjoy a candid discussion of the various issues confronting our Party — everything from strategy and messaging to structure and organization — will be a regular and integral part of protocols put in place immediately.
- **Refresh our political training program.** We will identify, train, and support a new corps of top-notch candidates and committed operatives who will carry our message in every congressional district and legislative district in this nation. We'll also recruit candidates who can cross the ethnic, gender, and demographic divides that too often separate our country and cause confusion about our Party. We will establish training programs dedicated to utilizing the latest technology innovations and establishing new media outlets. With the right people in place, firm goals and the tools to achieve those goals, we will — from the bottom up — begin to change the way we communicate to voters and elect Republicans.
- **Building our grassroots** will be paramount to winning elections. We must do a much better job of networking into our communities. We spend too much time talking to ourselves instead of spreading the gospel to potential believers. As a Party we need to focus on the people who live and work in our districts. We need to speak to them directly and we need to facilitate their grassroots and turnout. We must build and energize new volunteer networks. Without them, we lack the most important means of communicating our message — word-of-mouth and neighbor-to-neighbor. To that end, I plan to recruit and train 25,000 new activist leaders by 2012. Many of these folks will become campaign managers. Most will help organize, train and lead volunteer organizations in their communities. Activist enthusiasm and energy has to be fed with knowledge and resources. We will lead the way in cultivating activists through training tailored to their strengths, interests and the needs of our Party on the ground. As their enthusiasm matures into success we will continue to invest in their growth and will recognize and celebrate outstanding accomplishments annually in Washington, DC. We need to ensure our grassroots activists never have cause to doubt the immense value we place on their contributions.
- **Organize a speakers' bureau** of national Republican leaders of national prominence who are passionate about state and local activism. Our Party's high-profile leaders have a remarkable ability to message our

common vision and are, in turn, educated and inspired by the meaningful day-to-day efforts of our state and local activists. The creation of a bureau, managed by the RNC and available to State Party partners, will ensure that State Parties and local candidates can quickly identify and connect with these leaders for media, fundraisers, rallies, and Lincoln Day dinner appearances.

- **Showcase Republican Governors and Legislators** who have consistently served as an idea factory for conservative policy. Innovative policies like welfare reform and tax reform came from Republican governors during Bill Clinton's Presidency. We need to promote more aggressively the best practices and successful initiatives of state and local legislators and policy organizations to highlight Republican innovation and success.
- **Prioritize resources for redistricting** at the Republican National Committee. Preparation for the reapportionment and redistricting process is essential to Republican political success in the second decade of the twenty-first century. We will utilize the resources necessary to ensure a fair reapportionment process in all 50 states, encompassing the full spectrum of elected offices. We will develop state-of-the-art technology for assembling, accessing, and mapping relevant demographic and vote history data; while providing the most talented redistricting experts available to consult with and assist each state work group.

Ambitious change requires time, it's true. But, with the right people in place, firm goals and a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, we will — from the grassroots up — begin to change the way we communicate to voters and elect Republicans. Our Party's success in 2010 and beyond counts on the bonds we forge with Republicans making a difference outside of Washington, in all 50 states where the American people live and work.