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ROOF DECK

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# BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW

## CATCHING COALITION FEVER

BY MICHAEL STEELE

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### CHAPTER SIX

### COALITIONS

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ROOF DECK

# CATCHING COALITION FEVER

## 1. EMULATING ACTIVIST PASSION

Our Party is blessed with a vast constituency whose passion for Republican ideals must be a part of creating vigorous coalitions beyond our traditional base of support. Notable for the passion that fuels their organization, operations and messaging, this constituency—small businesses, affiliated organizations, and others — incubate the fiery spirit that motivates smart dialogue and vigorous activism across the country.

But as the 21st Century unfolds, we must recognize that there are other constituencies that are ready to receive a new message, a fresh perspective on the problems we face and the solutions necessary to solve those problems. These are the individuals and groups with whom we will build new coalitions. And it will be through these relationships and coalitions that the Republican Party will be an advocate on the important issues of the day, to represent local and regional priorities, and to give voice to those who have too long been without a voice. In each instance, we want the members of our communities to be connected to enthusiastic, self-starter Republican activists. Ultimately, the Republican Party must reach into every community, touching minority populations and small businesses, speaking daily not only to traditional members of the base, but identifying new opportunities, new constituencies to translate conservative philosophy into practical solutions.

Unfortunately, outside of sporadic fundraising efforts, we have not harnessed the full power of RNC-coalition collaboration. Coalition building and, more importantly, building the enduring and mutually beneficial relationships between coalitions and the RNC, has to be more than a slogan. We must focus every functional group within the RNC on reaching out to and fostering coalition partnerships as a means to knowing and growing the grassroots. Their knowledge and counsel will help to guide our activities to grow our Party.

## 2. ELEVATING THE EFFORT

So often “coalition building” really means message harmonizing. It’s true, we need to be sure to offer articulate and thoughtful messages across the spectrum of Republicans and the voting public, but coalition partnerships can be so much more for the RNC. What excites me about the power embedded in both storied and emerging coalitions is the diversity of thought, the pluralistic expression of activism. Around sets of issues, many come together to define ideology and to change the societies in which they live. In other words, coalitions have become the “first stop” for activists with a desire to get involved and with values aligned to our own.

We Republicans must do a much better job of networking into our communities. We spend far too much time talking to ourselves instead of spreading the gospel of 21st Century conservatism to potential believers. Active participation in local Chambers of Commerce, the Jaycees, PTAs, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Kiwanis, Rotaries and veteran organizations is an important first step in reshaping our public image in the community.

Therefore, we will make our coalition effort a part of the business of the RNC and state parties across the country. We will speak to and work with our coalition partners to identify and welcome into our circle of activism new voices and new ideas. We will provide access to the technology and training that the RNC itself uses to connect its grassroots activists and campaign workers directly to the community in which they live, work and play! By extension, party organizations such as College Republicans, Young Republicans and the Federation of Republican Women will each have a role to play in our coalition efforts. Their efforts, technological savvy and proven skill sets will only compliment our overall goals of broadening our dialogue and attracting new members to our Party.

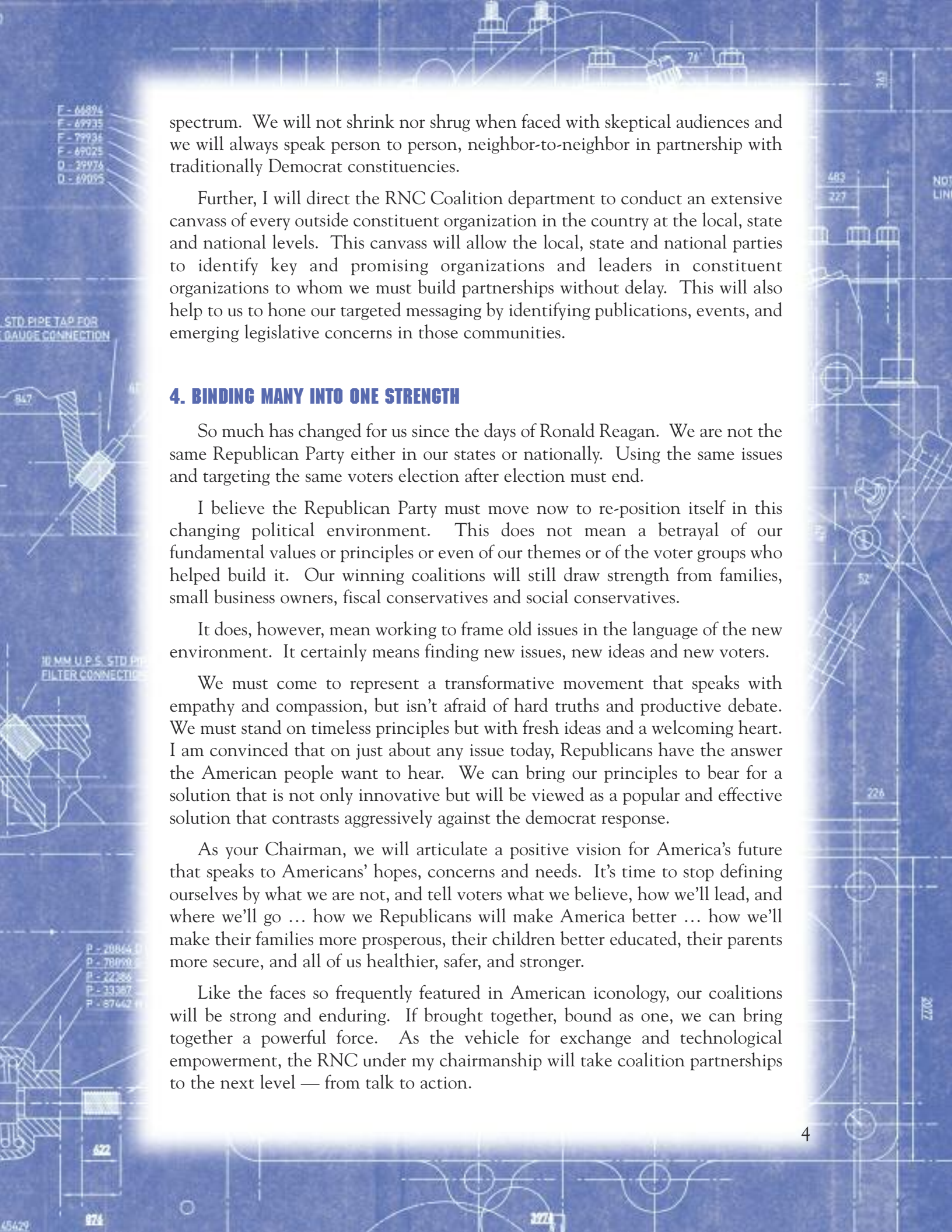
As Chairman, developing a relationship with our coalition partners and, ultimately, the grassroots activists they represent, will start with me. I will hold regular coalition meetings with established partners and will also travel throughout the country to begin a constructive dialogue with groups who share our values but have not traditionally aligned with the Republican Party. A particular focus of my energy will be minority communities where our Republican message of traditional values and individual liberty will resonate strongly. It is time to open the bridges between us and shape a future that preserves opportunity for all.

While my responsibility as RNC Chairman will be to meet with and engage diverse communities in a national dialogue with our Party, it will also be the responsibility of State leadership — Chairmen, National Committeeman and National Committeewoman — to establish communication with state and local organizations as well. Working together, we can build a stronger and more lasting bridge to new coalitions. After all, the best way to know about the Republican Party is to know a Republican!

### **3. PROFESSIONALIZING COLLABORATION**

In view of the necessity to build coalition partnerships and to integrate them into our Party's future, I will establish a free standing Coalitions Department at the RNC equal to the Political, Finance and Communications departments. The Coalitions director will report directly to the Executive Director and will maintain a working, dedicated staff and operations budget.

The RNC Coalition department will serve as the nexus for efforts between the RNC, State and Local Parties, and coalition partners to strengthen Republican capabilities and voices across the ideological, religious, economic and ethnic



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spectrum. We will not shrink nor shrug when faced with skeptical audiences and we will always speak person to person, neighbor-to-neighbor in partnership with traditionally Democrat constituencies.

Further, I will direct the RNC Coalition department to conduct an extensive canvass of every outside constituent organization in the country at the local, state and national levels. This canvass will allow the local, state and national parties to identify key and promising organizations and leaders in constituent organizations to whom we must build partnerships without delay. This will also help to us to hone our targeted messaging by identifying publications, events, and emerging legislative concerns in those communities.

#### 4. BINDING MANY INTO ONE STRENGTH

So much has changed for us since the days of Ronald Reagan. We are not the same Republican Party either in our states or nationally. Using the same issues and targeting the same voters election after election must end.

I believe the Republican Party must move now to re-position itself in this changing political environment. This does not mean a betrayal of our fundamental values or principles or even of our themes or of the voter groups who helped build it. Our winning coalitions will still draw strength from families, small business owners, fiscal conservatives and social conservatives.

It does, however, mean working to frame old issues in the language of the new environment. It certainly means finding new issues, new ideas and new voters.

We must come to represent a transformative movement that speaks with empathy and compassion, but isn't afraid of hard truths and productive debate. We must stand on timeless principles but with fresh ideas and a welcoming heart. I am convinced that on just about any issue today, Republicans have the answer the American people want to hear. We can bring our principles to bear for a solution that is not only innovative but will be viewed as a popular and effective solution that contrasts aggressively against the democrat response.

As your Chairman, we will articulate a positive vision for America's future that speaks to Americans' hopes, concerns and needs. It's time to stop defining ourselves by what we are not, and tell voters what we believe, how we'll lead, and where we'll go ... how we Republicans will make America better ... how we'll make their families more prosperous, their children better educated, their parents more secure, and all of us healthier, safer, and stronger.

Like the faces so frequently featured in American iconology, our coalitions will be strong and enduring. If brought together, bound as one, we can bring together a powerful force. As the vehicle for exchange and technological empowerment, the RNC under my chairmanship will take coalition partnerships to the next level — from talk to action.