

A Bold Proposal for Conservative GOP Candidates

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brothers, by those who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this is what I mean: Every one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ’” (1 Cor. 1:11-12).

As Jesus warned, “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:25). Nothing has borne out this reality in recent decades like that exasperating spectacle called the Republican presidential primary. These last few GOP horse races have been jam-packed with would-be conservative presidents who, after infighting with largely simpatico opponents, have canceled each other out, limped off to lick their wounds and left the perpetually underwhelmed GOP base to stay home and not vote for “imminently electable” establishment paragons like Presidents Dole, McCain and Romney. Divide and conquer. That’s how the “moderate” RINO establishment plays the primary.

And then they lose the general.

Albert Einstein famously quipped that the definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” In that sense, we conservatives are insane.

How about trying something new?

As John Fund told Newsmax TV in January: “If Mike Huckabee and Rick Santorum both run for president in 2016, they will split the primary votes of most conservative evangelicals and open the path for the nomination to somebody else.”

I agree, but I’ll take it further. Add Ted Cruz to the mix and

you divide the conservative Christian vote—the majority base of the Republican Party—three ways. I’ve had the distinct honor of visiting with each of these fine leaders and could enthusiastically support any of them in a general election. But if they all run, chances are neither I nor anyone else will have that opportunity.

Still, it gets worse. Add Bobby Jindal, Scott Walker, Rick Perry and Ben Carson to the mix and the pie pieces turn to slivers. Lop on a scoop of Rand Paul to keep the libertarians happy, slice in Marco Rubio, Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin and others, and the votes become crumbs.

I’m not alone on this.

“What has happened in the last two presidential election cycles is that the candidates that the Christian conservatives favored split the votes up,” Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association told CNN in a recent interview. “When you get three or four social conservative candidates splitting up the vote, McCain and Romney are going to win.”

Or Jeb Bush.

I promise you that for 2016, Bush and the Republican congressional leadership are salivating over the prospect of a packed conservative field. They’re hoping that every conservative Christian pol in America will soon announce his presidential bid. As they offset one another, Jeb (or some other establishment candidate) will, once again, be the last man standing.

And, once again, he’ll lose.

Admittedly, there is no easy answer. “A major roadblock in unifying behind a singular candidate,” observes CNN, “is the deep, personal relationships that social conservative activists and leaders have developed with individual candidates over the years. As one activist noted, ‘You bleed

with them in battle. There are alliances, friendships ... people who worked hard for you. You don't want to burn them.'"

So here's my proposal. Don't burn them. Let's take "social conservative activists and leaders" out of the picture on the front end. Let's let the candidates decide who should run. Let's let them "unify behind a singular candidate" and then the rest of us can follow suit.

A Conservative Presidential Primary Summit

Maybe I'm dreaming, but I think it could happen. It would take tremendous courage and conviction on the parts of each of the aforementioned candidates (and any other credible conservative who might decide to run), but if a majority of them signed off on the idea, this thing could happen.

I'll let them hash out the details, but here's the general idea. Before too many of them officially declare, I propose that all prospective conservative candidates gather at a predetermined, undisclosed location. They could then shut themselves in a room, alone (with no staff or supporters), for as long as it takes. Each candidate would have an allotted amount of time to make his or her case to the others as to why he or she is best suited to take on Jeb Bush and the GOP establishment in the upcoming primary. Q&A, open discussion and collective prayer and fasting would play a critical role.

After everyone is satisfied, they would then vote, via written ballot, for the one candidate (other than themselves) who they believe can take it all.

Having signed an agreement beforehand, they would then publicly announce their support for the candidate with the most votes. In the months leading up to the general election cycle and beyond, they would actively campaign on behalf of that candidate and strongly encourage their supporters, including potential voters, activists, leaders and organizations, to likewise band together behind that

candidate.

To the victor go the spoils. But not all the spoils. If the winning conservative candidate ultimately defeats both the GOP establishment in the primary and Democrats in November, then perhaps it could be agreed that the other candidates be given, in reward, the vice presidency, a Supreme Court nomination, a Cabinet-level appointment or the like.

We saw a national thirst for true conservative leadership on display in the 2014 mid-term elections. In addition to being a repudiation of Barack Obama's insane, cultural Marxist policies, the election was a firm rebuke of the Democrat-lite GOP establishment. It is the conservative candidate, *not* the establishment candidate, who will defeat Democrats in 2016.

But only if we have a conservative candidate.

Recently, several of the individuals mentioned above attended a California event organized by the Family Research Council. According to Newsmax, "One woman who took part in efforts to identify a single candidate acceptable to social conservatives addressed [Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal] with what sounded like a supplication: 'I would love to see you godly leaders pray and fast and see who God would be anointing to raise up.' Adding, 'We would rally behind him. We cannot be so divided. Our money, our time, our loyalty is so divided.'

"Jindal responded: 'Amen.'"

To which I respond: Amen.

Can you make it happen, Governor?

(Note: Political strategist Deryl Edwards contributed to this column.)

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