

Could Romney Beat Obama by Running Right of Center?

The day before **Paul Ryan** was announced as Mitt Romney's running mate, many conservatives still wondered if Romney was a Republican they could work for and support, not just vote for.

In the aftermath of the choice of Paul Ryan as his running mate, the adoption of the 'best yet' Republican platform for conservatives, and the emergence of the private **Mitt Romney** as a man of faith and conservative values, those doubts have been largely dispelled.

Let's be clear: Romney hasn't changed and neither have we.

However, as the dust has settled and the bruises of the primary season have begun to heal, conservatives have been able to make a more measured assessment of Romney's character and policy priorities and have begun to warm to what has emerged.

What we see is a candidate who approaches problems as the businessman he is, and has always been, but who has heard the conservative grass roots of the party and embraced much of the conservative agenda as his own.

The issues Romney will run on this fall and that were put front and center in his acceptance speech—pro-growth economic policies, respect for the federal system, shrinking the size and intrusiveness of the federal government and balancing the budget, as well as his embrace of the **right-to-life** and support for the **traditional family**—are exactly the issues conservatives were demanding the Republican nominee stand for at the beginning of the primary season, when it was unclear who the Republican nominee would be.

And the choice of **pro-life**, fiscal conservative Paul Ryan as his running mate gives conservatives a bit more confidence that a Mitt Romney administration will deliver on that agenda.

Former Gov. Romney's choice of Congressman Ryan and his readiness to move to the right to run as a conservative has energized the grass-roots conservatives who are the **Republican Party**. Without their work in the precincts knocking on doors, telephoning and doing all the other little things necessary to make a campaign go, no Republican can win.

Romney's decision to reject the usual establishment media calls to 'run to the center' and instead move to the right is in sharp contrast to establishment Republicans such as John McCain's losing campaign of four years ago, 1996 when Bob Dole led the ticket to defeat, and 1992 when George H.W. Bush garnered just 37.4 percent of the popular vote.

Those content-free establishment campaigns generated little conservative enthusiasm, hurt candidates down the ballot, and cost Republicans seats in Congress and in state houses and court houses across the country.

If Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan stick to the agenda they've outlined since Ryan emerged as Romney's running mate, that won't be a problem this election. There will be a clear conservative contrast and choice between the Romney-Ryan ticket and Obama and the liberal Democrats.

The Romney-Ryan ticket is not, however, without its challenges. Romney's ham-handed staff seems to go out of its way to step on conservative toes and to keep conservatives at arm's length, but so far there's no evidence that is how the former governor himself wants it.

Romney was not the first choice or second choice of most conservatives, but at a time when jobs and the economy are our most pressing issues, a businessman who has established an

undeniable record of achievement and excellence in that realm, and who lives according to the conservative principles of faith and family, just may be the right candidate for the times, and a winning conservative contrast with the frightening economic and social radicalism of **Barack Obama** and the Democrats.

Richard A. Viguerie is the chairman of and author of *Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause*.

Editor's Note: *The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of Richard A. Viguerie and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Charisma editorial staff.*