

How Phyllis Schlafly Beat Liberal GOP Kingmakers and Paved Way for Reagan

In her long and consequential career, Phyllis Schlafly accomplished many amazing things, including her almost single-handed defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, but none of them had a more lasting effect on American politics than her 1964 publication of a paperback book titled *A Choice Not an Echo*.

In the late spring of that year, Sen. Barry Goldwater was on his way to winning the Republican nomination for president, but had yet to win a major primary. That made the California primary pitting the conservative Goldwater and the liberal Nelson Rockefeller of New York all the more important. Even Goldwater had suggested privately that if he did not win California he might withdraw from the race.

The early polls favored Rockefeller, then-New York governor, but Goldwater stepped up his campaigning and narrowed the gap, helped by an army of conservative volunteers armed with an unusual weapon—Schlafly's "little" book, *A Choice Not an Echo*.

Schlafly pointed out how liberal GOP "kingmakers," using every dirty trick in the political playbook, had been dictating the Republican presidential nominee for decades. But now conservatives had the candidate, Barry Goldwater, who could turn the party and the nation in the right direction.

More than 50,000 copies of *A Choice Not an Echo* were handed out in key precincts up and down the state of California. Later surveys revealed that Goldwater had edged Rockefeller in many of those precincts, providing the margin of victory for the conservative senator.

What difference did *A Choice Not an Echo* make? If Goldwater

had not won the California primary, he might not have won the Republican presidential nomination. If Goldwater had not been the 1964 nominee, Ronald Reagan would not have been given the opportunity to make his historic TV address “A Time for Choosing.” If Reagan had not delivered that talk, he would not have been asked to run for governor of California. If he had not been governor of California, there would have been no President Reagan, no Reagan Revolution and no end to the Cold War without a shot being fired.

Big things can come about through seemingly little things like *A Choice Not an Echo*, written by a remarkable lady—Phyllis Schlafly, the first lady of American conservatism.

{eo}

This article originally appeared on The Daily Signal.