

Mike Pence Has Become the Leader of the Conservative Movement

Back during the 2016 Republican National Convention I said that after his acceptance speech then-vice-presidential nominee Mike Pence had become the de facto leader of the conservative movement.

Pence's steady performance during the 2016 campaign only served to convince me that I was right, as he steadily and solidly shored-up candidate Donald Trump's right flank during the often-chaotic days of the campaign.

And once in office Pence has continued to quietly and steadily offer leadership to conservatives on a wide variety of issues, while serving as the steady conservative voice whispering in President Trump's ear.

Now, some of my conservative friends are going to speak-up at this point and say, "But Richard, Pence was silent when this or that issue hit the front page."

Or some other friend is going to pipe-up and ask me what kind of "leadership" is it when Vice President Pence didn't publicly disagree with the president on some issue where President Trump deviated from the four corners of our conservative agenda.

And someone else will point-out that the vice president hasn't joined us in our justifiable frustration with the lack of legislative progress on the conservative agenda and hasn't publicly criticized the failures of the Republican leadership on Capitol Hill.

My answer to these friends would be, "It's smart leadership."

I'm reminded that in my 56+ years of involvement in the conservative movement at the national level we've only had one conservative president – Ronald Reagan.

When Senator Barry Goldwater suffered his spectacular—but principled—loss in 1964, it wasn't a given that Ronald Reagan would become the leader of the conservative movement.

But as I pointed out in my book TAKEOVER, Ronald Reagan fulfilled what I call “Viguerie's Four Horsemen of Marketing”:

- Position (a hole in the marketplace)
- Differentiation
- Benefit
- Brand (it's what makes you singular or unique)

Reagan became the leader of the conservative movement by filling the hole in the marketplace left by Goldwater's epic defeat.

In 1964 Reagan was a fresh face, different from the Old Right conservatives. Probably his greatest benefit when compared to other potential candidates was his skill as a communicator, which made him electable; and his position, differentiation, and benefit established his brand, and his days on TV and in the movies had made it trusted.

In other words, conservatives needed a salesman, and Ronald Reagan, his skills honed in Hollywood, television and on the dinner circuit, was the best salesman for conservative ideas the self-made entrepreneurs of his early “kitchen cabinet” ever saw.

Through Reagan's leadership we conservatives won a historic victory in 1980, and we were anxious to get everything done at once.

It didn't happen that way, and we were often frustrated.

Few seem to remember it now, but conservatives didn't get

everything we wanted, on the schedule we wanted it, when Reagan was president—and we were not bashful about criticizing the President when we felt he wasn't producing.

And President Reagan—the wise leader that he was—responded.

For example, when conservatives expressed dissatisfaction with the Reagan administration's efforts to get restrictions on abortion passed through Congress, the President acted by issuing an Executive Order.

Sometimes there was debate, sometimes he was clearly annoyed, but we always knew that we had a seat at the table and that we were being heard.

And we knew that our agenda was not being ignored, even if it was not being worked on at the speed we wanted, and in the exact order we wanted things done.

And that is the same kind of leadership style I see in Vice President Mike Pence.

We all know President Trump isn't a movement conservative, he's a patriotic businessman with some conservative instincts—and that's left a hole in the marketplace.

I see Mike Pence doing the same things Ronald Reagan did to fill that hole; differentiating himself from other conservative leaders, demonstrating the benefits of his steady and effective advancement of our cause and building his brand.

If there's a conservative group that Mike Pence hasn't spoken to I'm unaware of it. And if there's a conservative leader whose advice and input he hasn't sought, I don't think I've met him or her.

And more importantly, if there's an issue of concern to conservatives that the Vice President hasn't been willing to take to the president, I haven't heard about it.

It would be a lot more fun and exciting if Mike Pence were the kind of leader who would lead us in a charge up Capitol Hill, but that's not likely to happen—and for good reason.

I know it will shock many of my longtime friends who know me as one of the original conservative insurgents—one who worked against the Republican establishment for Senators Bob Taft and Barry Goldwater and who helped elect President Ronald Reagan—but that, in my opinion, is not the kind of leadership we conservatives need right now.

What the conservative movement needs right now is a leader who will be effective in quietly pushing President Trump and Congress to the Right, and who in so doing will prepare our movement for its next great opportunity—the election of our second conservative president of the modern era. And today, more than any other public figure, Vice President Mike Pence is filling that hole in the marketplace. {eo}

Richard Viguerie transformed American politics in the 1960s and '70s by pioneering the use of direct mail fundraising in the political and ideological spheres. He used computerized direct mail fundraising to help build the conservative movement, which then elected Ronald Reagan as the first conservative president of the modern era. As the "Funding Father of the conservative movement," Viguerie motivated millions of Americans to participate in politics for the first time, greatly expanding the base of active citizenship. He is our era's equivalent of Tom Paine, using a direct mail letter rather than a pamphlet to deliver his call to arms.

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