

Rick Perry: Best Hope for Solid Conservative in 2012

I have good news and bad news for conservatives. But the good news and the bad news are both the same thing: We have six very impressive, lifelong conservative candidates running for the presidency.

They are the smartest candidates, the most principled candidates, the most patriotic candidates, the most persuasive candidates and the candidates with the best ideas.

The problem lies in the fact that conservatives do not have a single favorite candidate. They have six favorite candidates! And as long as they remain split between each of their six “favorite” candidates, they will eventually help nominate Mitt Romney—the very candidate they least trust on the issues.

There are three fairly cohesive voting blocs that make up the Republican primary coalition.

The first and largest group is the social conservatives, who are comprised of primarily evangelicals and pro-life Catholics.

The second group is the GOP establishment, which primarily consists of Republican Party leaders, and big money and corporate interests.

The third, and newest group on the scene within the Republican coalition, is the dynamic—but not as predictable—tea party supporters.

Each of these three coalition groups could potentially control the nomination process if—and only if—the members of that group unite behind one candidate.

William F. Buckley used to say that he was not for “the most

conservative" candidate. He said he was for "the most conservative candidate that is electable." Unfortunately, conservatives today are not following Buckley's wise advice and strategic counsel.

The GOP establishment behaves almost entirely pragmatically. They typically try to find the Republican most likely to be elected and back that candidate (irrespective of what that candidate believes) in order to ensure party insiders retain control.

Former Republican and former Florida Gov. Charlie Crist is the best example of how the GOP establishment will elect any Republican that they think can win. Currently GOP establishment types are doing the same thing again with Mitt Romney. Party regulars are uniting rapidly behind Romney and as a result, GOP insiders are controlling the nomination.

On the other hand, many evangelicals and tea party supporters are behaving as ideological purists. In their effort to choose the most conservative candidate (irrespective of their ability to win) they are violating Buckley's principle and as a result are unknowingly helping the GOP establishment secure the nomination of Mitt Romney.

There is only one scenario where this can be stopped: Evangelical and tea party conservatives must immediately unite behind Texas Gov. Rick Perry. Perry is the most conservative candidate who is also electable. Perry is our last and best hope to send a solid conservative to the White House.

On all three legs of Ronald Reagan's winning issue coalition, economics, social issues and foreign policy, Perry should be the conservative's choice.

Perry is also the most electable candidate in the general election. The campaign in November of 2012 will be about one thing—jobs. Perry has the best record on creating new jobs and revitalizing the economy.

In contrast, Romney is one of the most problematic candidates in the general election. With Romenycare, his flip-flops on social issues, his inability to carry Southern states and his lack of appeal to the critical Latino swing vote, Mitt Romney is another John McCain waiting to happen.

There is no way the base is going to be excited about and pour themselves into a Romney campaign.

Principled politics is an art form. Participating in it with as many candidates as there are now is like a complex chess match. You must capture the tension between principle and pragmatism. Rick Perry captures it perfectly. He is the William F. Buckley candidate.

Be sure to check out the November issue of Charisma magazine for our exclusive interview with Michele Bachmann.

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