

Trump Could've Done Worse

The deafening silence the national media heard from the conservative movement when word leaked out from the Trump campaign that Indiana's Governor Mike Pence is among the final three candidates Donald Trump is considering as his running mate speaks volumes about how far Pence has fallen in the estimation of conservatives since he left a safe seat in Congress to run for Governor of one of the country's most reliably Republican states.

When Pence left Washington he was known as one of the original insurgents against the John Boehner-Dennis Hastert Republican establishment.

Pence served as chairman of the Republican Study Committee when it truly was the voice of conservatives in the House, and he parlayed that into election as chairman of the House Republican Conference, a position often viewed as the fourth-ranking leadership position in the House.

And Mike Pence, unlike many other successful conservatives in DC, did not surrender to the inside-the-Beltway political consulting class: He built a team of cultural conservative political operatives to help him run the House Republican Conference and the Republican Study Committee.

Pence is known as a deeply religious man, a staunch social conservative and devout evangelical Christian who was a regular attendee at a Capitol Hill Bible study group that includes members of Congress.

During Pence's chairmanship the House Republican Conference was a veritable conservative policy factory, turning out conservative position papers and talking points that guided Republican communication and legislative opposition to the Obama-Pelosi-Reid agenda during the first two years of Obama's presidency.

In the waning days of the George W. Bush administration while Democrats and President Bush pushed for what eventually became the car company bailout and the Wall Street bailout, Pence showed real courage and principle.

Mike Pence led the House opposition to TARP, and to the auto bailout, even though Indiana is an automobile manufacturing-heavy state. He circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter, urging GOP members to vote "no" on the bailout. "Nationalizing every bad mortgage in America is not the answer," Pence wrote to colleagues.

Facing down the President and Speaker, and threats from the House Republican leadership and Wall Street to initially defeat the bill, Pence remained among the principled Republican opponents even as a half-dozen House members switched their votes to help the bill pass.

That took real courage and the willingness to put it all on the line for principle—which makes Mike Pence's lack of courage as governor of Indiana so strange.

After the Indiana General Assembly passed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act that Mike Pence had initially supported, he caved-in to the radical homosexual lobby and abruptly demanded amendments to the bill he had just signed.

But Mike Pence's betrayal of conservative principles, and his conservative supporters, after selling himself to the public as a limited government constitutional conservative and supporter of traditional values, really should not have come as a surprise to conservatives.

Mike Pence did much the same thing on Common Core and earned the enmity of Indiana's grassroots local control and education reform movement in the process.

And while we conservatives need to continue to educate Donald Trump on our issues, no one doubts that Trump has the courage

to stand for what he believes, no matter who or what the opposition.

The same cannot be said for Governor Pence who, although already well-versed in limited government constitutional conservative policy principles and Christian thinking about government, abandoned those principles in the face of opposition from radical homosexuals and principle-free business interests.

Frankly, the spineless retreat of Mike Pence in the face of pressure from the radical homosexual lobby is indicative of a problem we face throughout our culture, and especially in the conservative movement, and that is a lack of moral courage in the face of evil.

Then again, if we Christians won't speak-up and say we stand only with those who are willing to put their political careers on the line to defend us, what should we expect from malleable elected officials like Governor Mike Pence?

Donald Trump could do a lot worse than Mike Pence as his running mate. However, if he expects that the selection of Pence will close the deal with conservatives he is sadly mistaken, because Pence has shown that he lacks one of Trump's most admirable qualities—the willingness to fight for what he believes in.

Mike Pence as Governor of Indiana has not been a fighter for our values. While many in the conservative movement think well of him for his leadership in Washington, before we can be fully on board with him as Donald Trump's running mate we need to hear that Governor Pence recognizes his errors, particularly on RFRA, that he wants forgiveness and our support, and most importantly, that he has recovered his moral compass and will rejoin the fight for our values.

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.