

Why Donald Is Trumping the Republican Party

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Once in a while I come across something so powerful I want my readers of The Strang Report to read it. This op-ed by Iowa journalist Bob Eschliman gives interesting insight into the 2016 presidential election:

Is the GOP Missing the Boat?

By Bob Eschliman

“Conventional wisdom”—the collective knowledge of “experts” who have been following politics for years—has seemingly gone out the window this presidential election cycle, particularly in the Republican primary race.

Some blame the sheer number of candidates; depending on who you ask, there’s anywhere from 15 to 18 major candidates seeking the GOP nomination. Others blame the media and its secular/leftist bias, which mutes conservative Christian candidates and the grassroots base that supports them.

The solutions many have attempted, however, suggest maybe they’re missing the boat. Conventional wisdom isn’t working, so they dig deeper into the annals of conventional wisdom to look for answers. Except that doesn’t work.

Doing the same thing over and over again—like nominating candidates who are neither conservative nor Christian—and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.

First, we need to address the white elephant in the room: the health and long-term survivability of the Republican Party. I hate to break it to you all, but the Grand Ol' Party is dead, and we're left to pick over its bones.

Don't expect the lamestream media to pick up on its death, not for a while anyway. That's because they miss the boat on just about everything, having been conditioned and devolved to the point where they simply parrot and regurgitate whatever they're told by the secularists/leftists they idolize.

Just trust me on this. The long-awaited end has already arrived, with little warning or fanfare.

The GOP died because the party establishment could care less about you and your principles so long as the lobbyists on K Street keep sending in the checks. You figured that out a few election cycles ago, and you started to push back.

But the establishment, so intent on holding on to power, squeezed everyone who challenged its authority—the Tea Party, the liberty movement, authentic Christians and constitutional conservatives—out of the “big tent.” It replaced them with crony corporatists (there is nothing wrong with making a buck, except when you steal two from the taxpayers and still keep what you make) and Log Cabin Republicans.

Despite that, in a complete repudiation of everything Barack Obama has done to destroy the United States of America, you went to the polls and gave the Republican Party control of both chambers of Congress. You did it with the express purpose of turning back Obama's socialist agenda and his reckless lawlessness.

That's not what happened in January, though, was it?

Instead, you learned the hard, bitter truth: The GOP “leadership” in Congress doesn't have the fortitude to stand up to Obama or the Democrats. And finally being sick and tired

of being sick and tired, you did what any self-respecting human being with just a shred of dignity would do: You walked away.

While it's not unprecedented in American politics, it's something that hasn't happened in a long, long time—more than 150 years—and technology has had an impact on the way in which we organize, communicate, and associate with each other. So, rather than watching the Republican Party wither and die, replaced by something new over the next few congressional election cycles—much the way the GOP replaced the Whigs in the 1850s—it happened in the historical blink of an eye.

Enter Donald Trump.

Love him or hate him, you cannot argue that he's certainly gotten the pulse of a large swath of the American populace. Even if he's just pretending—I know many of the folks working for him, and I doubt any of them would waste their talents or put their careers on the line for a publicity stunt—he's accurately assessed what the winning messages are this cycle.

As a result, he's doing something that is completely unprecedented in American politics. He's running a third-party presidential campaign within the apparatus (albeit deceased) of one of the two main parties, and he's succeeding—another sign the GOP really is dead.

To see how it's happening, you need to get down to ground level. And what better place to look than my home state, Iowa, which gets first crack at the presidential candidates every four years.

The state's largest newspaper has been conducting its own poll, called The Iowa Poll, for decades. But in the past 20 years or so, it has been far from accurate in describing the on-the-ground situation in Iowa. That all changed with its most recent poll, which showed nearly a third of those who said they would be voting as a Republican at the Iowa Caucus

in February were backing Trump.

That, of course, was just the headline. If you dig deeper into the numbers, you see the real story: He's getting that support from three main groups. First, there are the fiscally conservative Tea Party Republicans, who like his take on government spending and the economy.

Then, you have the state's largest voting bloc—the “no party” independents—which traditionally favors Republicans, but can swing like a pendulum based on “checkbook politics.” The independents like his no-holds-barred rhetoric and willingness to take charge and lead from the front, even in the face of intense backlash.

Finally, you have a smaller group of conservative Democrats, who are completely turned off by the hard-left swing their party has taken in the past few election cycles. Seeing Option 1 as the Socialist (Bernie Sanders) and Option 2 as the Socialist-Lite (Hillary Clinton), they decided to go with Option 3, The Donald.

We know The Iowa Poll is accurate because Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, in response to the decision to forego the Iowa Straw Poll this year, created his own straw poll at the Iowa State Fair. The numbers from the straw poll show the same, startling dynamic: Nearly twice as many voted for Republicans as voted for Democrats.

This isn't a Trump-only phenomenon in Iowa, though. The top four, based on polling averages over the past month, includes Carson, Cruz and Fiorina. None of them are considered darlings of the Republican establishment.

But of the four, only Trump is actively engaged in the process of turning poll numbers into actual votes on Caucus night. He has a team of staffers traveling a tour bus, affectionately referred to as The Trump Bus, going around the state, not just advocating for Trump, but educating nontraditional voters on

how to participate in the sometimes-complicated caucus process.

Now, each of those three groups closely identifies with Trump, even though they very likely have little in common with the multibillionaire businessman. So, when one of the other candidates, or another outside observer, makes the suggestion Trump isn't [fill in the blank—conservative, Christian, etc.] enough to run as a Republican, they take it as a personal affront.

They're not particularly beholden to constitutional conservative ideals, and for the most part, they aren't necessarily concerned with social issues (at least not as their primary issue). So, attacking his credentials in those areas have no effect, or very likely have the opposite effect when attacks on Trump are perceived as personal attacks on themselves.

And as these are not your traditional Iowa Republican Caucus voters, should Trump be pushed out of the party, there's little hope they will remain with the GOP.

Relying on the old, faulty conventional wisdom, however, the Republican establishment probably doesn't care. They likely see Trump supporters as yet another threat to their power. In fact, conventional wisdom suggests that in the absence of Trump, the establishment and conservative Christian elements would duke it out for the GOP nomination.

But there's just one small problem. Actually, it's a rather big problem, also indicative of the Republican Party's recent demise. Of the 16 mainstream candidates, 14 are polling in single digits in Iowa, meaning everyone is within a point or two—factoring in the polls' margins of error—of being in the top three.

More conventional wisdom: There are traditionally three to five "tickets" out of Iowa to have a legitimate shot at

competing for the party nomination. With several candidates focusing their attention on New Hampshire rather than Iowa, in a misguided attempt to jump-start flagging campaigns, that notion is also busted.

So, there has to be some coalescing for anyone to win.

The establishment considers the following candidates in their “camp”: “Jeb” Bush, Scott Walker, Marco Rubio, John Kasich, Chris Christie and Lindsey Graham. Combining their current Iowa polling averages, you’re looking at about 22 percent of the vote. Even if they coalesced behind Fiorina, or Cruz, the best they could muster alone is 30 percent—a statistical tie with Trump.

The conservative Christian elements probably claim the following candidates in their “camp”: Ted Cruz, Mike Huckabee, Bobby Jindal, Rick Perry and Rick Santorum. Combining their current Iowa polling averages, you’re looking at about 17 percent of the vote. Even if they coalesced behind Carson, the best they could muster alone is 35 percent—also a statistical tie with Trump.

To soundly defeat Trump, both sides must come together. And in Iowa, that’s just not going to happen. Christians and conservatives in my home state have been burned too many times by the GOP establishment in the past few months for that to happen.

A little over a year ago, the Republican Party of Iowa’s State Central Committee saw a changeover from conservative Christian control back to establishment control. As a result, the God-fearing Christian who was serving as chairman of the party was ousted and replaced by one of the establishment SCC members. It was a move unprecedented in the history of the state party.

A few months later, Gov. Terry Branstad spent more than \$200,000 on an advertising campaign—in an election in which he was assured victory—to win one county, meaning he carried all

but notoriously liberal Johnson County in a race he won by nearly 22 points. That was money that could have gone toward electing conservatives in the Iowa Senate, which still remains in Democrat control.

Once the Iowa General Assembly went back to work in January, the establishment immediately went to work to pass a 43-percent increase in the state's motor fuel tax. To ensure the bill got to the floor in the Republican-controlled House, legislators were removed from their committees and replaced by establishment Republicans who would vote in favor of the tax hike.

And then, after the legislative session was over, the Center for Medical Progress began releasing its investigative videos, exposing Planned Parenthood's profiting from the sale of the body parts of aborted children. Outrage in Iowa was strong, and calls immediately went out for the state to stop providing taxpayer support for Planned Parenthood.

Branstad instead shrugged his shoulders and said there wasn't anything he could do. He correctly pointed out there wasn't a specific line item in the budget going directly to Planned Parenthood that he could veto. (Iowa governors have line-item veto authority.) However, he initially ignored the fact that federal block grants administered by the state's Human Services and Public Health departments were still going to the abortion provider.

The state-funded University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics also perform abortions in Iowa, and have notoriously avoided Medicaid billing for those procedures to keep Branstad from being placed in the awkward position of having to reject the charges. Planned Parenthood's Medicaid contract remains in place, as well, ensuring it receives hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from taxpayers.

Conservative Christians in Iowa have been calling for that to

end for weeks now, including a rally at the Statehouse to demand action. Instead, the only response they've gotten from Branstad is a very weak assurance that his administration would ensure no taxpayer dollars are spent directly on abortion services.

Any taxpayer dollars given to Planned Parenthood to keep the lights on, so to speak, for "women's health care services"—which are already available from local hospitals and clinics throughout the state—frees up donor dollars to subsidize its abortion procedures. It's a property of money called fungibility.

Pro-life activists and legislators in the state have since called upon Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, a Democrat, to launch a criminal investigation into Planned Parenthood's operations in the state. Branstad didn't join in, nor did the outgoing or incoming Speakers of the House (both Republicans), nor did the Senate Minority Leader (also a Republican).

Much like those who have been taken advantage of time and time again by the national Republican Party establishment, Iowa conservative Christians have had enough. They're just not going to play ball with the establishment anymore. As was evidenced in 2012, they would rather walk away than support someone who doesn't hold with their principles, especially "establishment RINOs."

So, given this scenario, and not a lot of mathematical probability of it changing between now and February, it seems inevitable that Trump will win the Iowa Republican Caucus, launching a chain reaction in several other early states that turns into a political tsunami the likes of which we haven't seen since 1980. And if that happens, the conventional wisdom says he will get hammered by either Sanders or Clinton—or even Vice President Joe Biden, should he run and win the Democratic nomination—in the general election.

Or will he?

The following should not be construed as an endorsement, but rather as something to ponder as you make your own informed voting decision. But, what if Donald Trump, the thrice-married, four-times bankrupted businessman, has been appointed by God to lead us?

What if he is a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar?

With the armed forces of Babylon on the verge of sacking Jerusalem, God used His prophet Jeremiah to instruct the Israelites that He was about to inflict his punishment upon Judah and the Temple, and that if they wished to survive, they must follow Nebuchadnezzar and willingly go into bondage. Those who did as they were instructed were blessed.

As He has always done, God followed through on His promise. It was through another of His prophets, Daniel, that He was able to move the Babylonian ruler's heart. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged Daniel's God was the One True God.

Could the same thing happen again? I don't know, but if you take an honest look at what our nation has become, it's not difficult to imagine God has had enough too. It's something I will continue to prayerfully consider over the next few months.

But there is one fact of which I am absolutely certain: The Republican Party is dead. You can also be certain that Donald Trump's emergence as a political force is a direct result of that fact.

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it), the media and the GOP establishment missed the boat on that one.

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politics for more than 16 years. He may be contacted at bob@.

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