

## **The New Republican**

*How to build the GOP's next generation.*

By Alex Castellanos  
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Their party was out of ideas and out of office. It had grown preposterously out of touch, a caricature of economic irresponsibility and elite, Washington-dinner-party values. Then along came Bill Clinton to return Democrats to the political center and teach them how to win.

For the party seared by McGovern, Carter, Mondale, and Dukakis, the birth of the New Democrat in 1991 was a renaissance. Clinton was not afraid to march over the traditionally Republican ground of tax cuts, deficit reduction, and welfare reform to advance the Democratic party from its Dark Ages. In its founding documents, the Clinton-inspired Democratic Leadership Council reaffirmed Jefferson's belief in individual liberty and capacity for self-government, a credo with which no Republican could quarrel. He even put people first, taking on Washington insiders with his optimistic, good-ole-boy populism.

Unfortunately for his party, the 42nd president had not finished unpacking before he tilted left and fell off the New Democratic wagon, so a Republican majority was sent to Congress to supervise. Re-inspired to steer his party to the center, Clinton memorably declared that the era of big government is over. Our job here, he told a joint session of Congress, is to expand opportunity, not bureaucracy, to empower people to make the most of their own lives, and to enhance our security here at home and abroad. We must not ask government to do what we should do for ourselves.

Clinton won and re-won the center, but his theft brought howls from Republicans. David Broder of the Washington Post wrote, Clinton pirouetted and placed himself at the head of the fiscal responsibility parade. He called the man from Hope, Ark., a master at such publicly justifiable thievery. Bill Clinton changed the political dynamic, resuscitating his party and confronting Republicans with a new generation of opponent. Fiscally irresponsible limousine lefties, far removed from the working class, were no longer easy pickings at the poker table. Deal New Democrats in.

If Democrats could win the center advocating Republican ideas, why can't Republicans? We can. Last year we took our first steps.

First, let's give credit to the leader of the Republican party: Thank you, President Obama, for Republican victories in recent elections. In the Bay State, which finally froze over and gave the people's seat to truck-driving Scott Brown after a populist campaign, RNC data reveals that 53 percent of all voters and 67 percent of independents were not satisfied that Democrat Congressmen and Senators are listening to the concerns of people like you. An internal RNC survey found that 68 percent of Christie voters in New Jersey and 74 percent of McDonnell voters in Virginia cast their ballots to send a message to the Obama administration that I am

unhappy with the direction they are taking Washington and the country. Obama promised change. He's brought it to the GOP, contributing more to our renewal than any Republican since Ronald Reagan. We should not confuse the Democratic party's breakdown with Republican achievement, however. Three Democratic errors doesn't mean we hit a triple. It just brings Republicans to bat.

Many voters, especially independents, have made clear they are looking for an alternative to the Obama administration's reckless spending, precipitous accumulation of debt, and impulsive experimentation with American society. They are looking for leaders who will reverse our debt spiral and help us restore employment and prosperity. They are looking for leaders who will do something about education, energy, and health care so we can grow America's economy. They don't see that alternative in our Republican party. A recent nationwide poll by a pro-Republican organization found that when voters were asked which party has new ideas for America's future, over twice as many chose Democrats as Republicans, 47 percent to 22 percent. Even a sputtering old gas-guzzler is preferable to a car with a dead battery.

A recent Rasmussen poll found that more Americans identify with the tea partiers than with Republicans. There's a sign our party needs to reassess its game plan. When Republicans refuse to lead, when we refuse to offer solutions to America's imposing challenges, our party becomes worse than irrelevant: It becomes dangerous. In an increasingly turbulent world, a party of no solutions is an organization that invites chaos. Republicans who only say "No" are seen as selfish, laissez-faire advocates of uncertainty and enablers of anarchy. And so we hand our adversaries the car keys. European-style socialism ascends, not because it works, but because it is the only idea contending for social responsibility in the vacuum of a leaderless world.

The 2010 wave that threatens to wash Democrats from power won't sweep Republicans into office if we remain an unacceptable and regressive alternative. A GOP that only says "No" is, at best, a prescription for permanent minority status. At worst, it is a death sentence for the conservative cause, the free-enterprise system, and the party that should be home to both. Why maintain a political party if we have no confidence we can govern? Why apply for a job, promising only to critique our competitor's work?

Our reluctance to lead is profoundly misguided. After all, as President Clinton found, Republican ideas are hot sellers. More important, they happen to work. The Republican party's faith in liberty and in the American people's God-given capacity to govern themselves has produced the best-governed and most successful country in history. Our ideas have enabled 4 percent of the world's people to create 25 percent of the world's wealth and prosperity. Compassionate capitalism has become the world's greatest source of good, lifting billions from poverty and becoming the glue that holds together free, civilized nations.

Our beliefs have an unequalled track record. Now we must explain that our principles are not yesterday's notions. We must make clear they remain the best way to meet our country's current challenges and lead us to a new era of American progress and prosperity.

Much as Bill Clinton helped New Democrats emerge from the old, and the Reagan generation

arose from our founding generation of Goldwater Republicans, the time has come for a new generation of Republicans to step up and lead. We are New Republicans: This is our moment to speak and to introduce ourselves to the world.

#### THE DEFINITION OF NEW REPUBLICAN

A New Republican accepts that our world has changed. He sees America moving from the top-down industrial age of the factory to the bottom-up communications age of the Internet. He sees a more diverse America, with more ingredients in the great racial and ethnic melting pot, women with increasing economic and cultural power, and 4.5 million new millennial voters under age 30 annually.

A New Republican sees a more complex, fast-moving society in which we are more highly leveraged, our lives are more intricately structured, and our social institutions are both more sophisticated and more vulnerable. He sees the promise and peril of globalization. He knows we must compete and win in a global economy whose overall wealth is expected to double within the lifetimes of Americans under age 40. A New Republican understands that the global economic frontier stretching before us is exactly the kind of opportunity that American excels at making the most of.

A New Republican doesn't respond to this new world with new principles but with timeless ones, ever-fresh conservative ideals of individual empowerment and responsibility. A New Republican understands that those principles are even more timely in the communications age we are exploring than they were in the industrial age we are leaving behind. A New Republican, for that reason, is no less conservative than an Old Republican: He is more conservative.

A New Republican believes his principles are not only morally compelling but also pragmatically irresistible, since they produce the greatest prosperity and security man is capable of achieving in an era of complexity and change.

To a New Republican, an Old Republican who believes his principles are good only for saying No is only half a conservative.

Few conservatives have done more good for this country than Dick Armey, one of the principal authors of the Contract with America. He is now helping to organize and inspire the bottom-up tea-party movement that has energized freedom-loving Republicans and independent voters. But when Mr. Armey says, "You don't attract people with pragmatism but with commitment to principles and purpose," a New Republican finds him myopically wrong, not because we should choose pragmatism over principle, but because we don't have to choose at all. A New Republican understands that what we believe is not only right and true also works better than what collectivist industrial-age planners believe in. Pragmatism is a problem only for conservatives who believe our principles can help us talk a good game but don't work in real life.

#### A NEW GOP BRAND FOR A NEW WORLD

A New Republican is actually, well, new. He believes the outmoded, top-down mechanisms of the industrial age cannot keep up in a communications society marked by escalating velocity and

complexity. Limiting ourselves to the paralyzingly slow, inflexible instruments of one-size-fits-all public-sector solutions, he believes, is primitive.

Government programs are poured cement. Their crushing, inflexible weight is a burden in an age that requires adaptation and originality. Old, top-down, industrial-age schemes, still popular in Washington, excel at enforcing discipline and uniformity, but not at achieving growth or innovation. Assembly lines produce cars, not miraculous cures. Armies march, they don't invent the iPhone or eBay. The soul-crushing conformity of the factory, which has characterized government, is an archaic governing model in a new and complex society. Even the best of intentions can't lend a woolly mammoth agility or train it for a new century's ballet.

It is our work as New Republicans, for example, to build the economy of the future. What if we could suddenly invent a dynamic, living, breathing, economic ecosystem that could elegantly and almost instantly adjust billions of subtle financial relationships and trillions of complex economic transactions? What if we could create an economy that could almost magically balance the diverse interests of those in need with the capacities of society's greatest innovators and producers? What if we could bring to life an economic ecosystem that could learn, adapt, and grow organically, overcoming its own failures to inspire incredible technological breakthroughs while harmonizing the dreams and desires of people across the planet?

Folks, we already have. It's called the free market. Politicians and bureaucrats in Washington, with their crude economic levers, cannot manage such economic complexity, even if they are as smart as Tim Geithner, Larry Summers, and President Obama.

A New Republican offers an intellectual alternative to the Left's outdated, top-down, command economy and government. He has a coherent theory of how society is better served by his principles. He believes his ideas will organize our complex country more efficiently and produce greater social good. And he can explain why they will.

#### SELF-ORGANIZING STRUCTURES VS. TOP-DOWN ORDER

The power of self-organizing, adaptive systems to create and manage a higher level of order is just beginning to be understood by science. Steven Johnson writes elegantly about this exploding field of study in *Emergence*.

Everywhere in nature and recently in what is man-made, Johnson notes, we see the power of self-assembly to create something lifelike and organic, capable of open-ended learning and adaptation.

Individuals self-organize into neighborhoods. Ants form intelligent colonies. Pattern-recognition software learns how to recommend books, help us find a mate, or recognize our voices. A city creates a system to deliver food to millions of inhabitants, as if by design, but without central planning. The human immune system learns how to recognize unwelcome guests and adapts to manage them. One brain cell that can't think unites with others and becomes a brain that can.

As Stuart Kauffman, perhaps the leading thinker on the science of complexity, writes in *At Home*

in the Universe, everywhere we look in the natural world what strikes a normal eye is the extraordinary rush toward order. Whether in the formation of clouds or the branching of a tree, science sees a world in which god did not roll the dice and order is not an improbable accident. Structure, organization, and even life itself emerge naturally in a beautiful three-dimensional tapestry of intricate, co-evolving relationships.

In the age of instantaneous global communication, the hand of man is also sparking new ecosystem-like structures. Facebook, the open-source movement, and the connective power of the Internet display the exact opposite of our government's outdated, top-down, command thinking.

In fields ranging from biology to physics and from sociology to mathematics, we see the non-linear emergence of structure, micro-motives generating macro-behavior. We see simple, bottom-up behavior producing and managing complex organization that cannot be otherwise created, understood or managed. In economics, the study of bottom-up behavior is at last making the invisible hand visible. To borrow again from Johnson, a free economy also self-organizes out of millions of individual decisions, a global order built out of local interactions.

The more complex the world becomes, the better it is to manage it bottom-up and organically. Republicans who believe in individual freedom don't support anarchy. We support a modern, natural, intellectually superior alternative to outdated, artificial, top-down, command government. Populist empowerment of individuals to govern their own lives isn't an old idea. It's cool. It actually is what is next.

#### THE END OF NEWTONIAN GOVERNMENT

The world, Sir Isaac Newton told us, is a clock. Understand the laws of physics, conceive a design, assemble the cogs and gears, and wind it up. The world works because simple, linear forces determine simple, linear behaviors.

Similarly, we were led to believe, societies and economies needed design, or they would not run. The alternative, we were told, was chaos. Many of our best and brightest stepped up, over the years, to design the society that would save us. All we needed was single-payer health care, a factory-like public-school system, and that patent-medicine solution to every social problem, the five-point government program.

This thinking continues into the present. President Obama's economic-recovery package, for example, is based on an over-simplified, Keynesian cooking recipe of aggregate inputs and outputs. He holds the establishment view that the only factors that count are the ones Washington can measure. Damn the interests of distant individuals and their ability to adapt and work around Washington's schemes. Ignore the inevitable, unintended consequences of high-handed establishment planning. The public-sector lords of design know better. Let Washington build a big, simple vending machine and put in a trillion dollars' worth of quarters at the top. Jobs, energy, or health care will come out at the bottom.

Unfortunately, you and I are not cogs and gears, and our relationships, rich in connections and

complexity, are not at all simple or linear. The end of the industrial age means that everything in our economic ecosystem is woven together in a delicate web composed of relationships. We are all tied together in ways Washington can't see, much less manage. Yet our governing intellectual establishment still lives in its old, clocklike, Newtonian universe—even as their giant clocks break down and the age of the machine gives way to the era of the organism and the network.

Perhaps, in time, this new generation of Republicans will come to be known as natural Republicans, bottom-up Republicans, or even organic Republicans. Whatever we will be called, we will not be the first stewards of liberty to see ourselves as cultivators and planters. Friedrich Hayek, in his 1974 Nobel acceptance speech titled *The Pretense of Knowledge*, urged us to cultivate, not manufacture, social progress. If man is not to do more harm than good in his efforts to improve the social order, said Hayek, he will have to learn that in this, as in all other fields where essential complexity of an organized kind prevails, he cannot acquire the full knowledge which would make mastery of the events possible. He will therefore have to use what knowledge he can achieve, not to shape the results as the craftsman shapes his handiwork, but rather to cultivate a growth by providing the appropriate environment, in the manner in which the gardener does this for his plants.

#### HOW NEW REPUBLICANS WIN

Having a better concept for organizing society is far different from winning elections with it. How do we bring the ever-fresh principles of liberty to power in a new political era? George Lakoff, the father of cognitive linguistics and author of *The Political Brain: Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century Politics with an 18th-Century Brain*, has brought new understanding of the political power of metaphor.

Lakoff tells us that political arguments resonate only when we understand them in terms of larger and familiar narratives. Republicans, for example, have long been seen as the daddy-bear party, ensuring order and security, while Democrats have been the mommy-bears, the caregiving and nourishing figures in our political family.

Even after wake-up calls in Virginia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, this White House is still trying to find a narrative to sell Americans what they don't want to buy: big old machine-age government run by a privileged elite in Washington. They won't have much luck, even if they bring in David Plouffe and reinvent this Harvard president as a populist fighter. Even communications-age framing can't sell industrial-age policies. That's why establishment political leaders so often look like a gold-braided marching band at half-time trying to play the day's latest hit song. Every note says, *I just don't get it.* The Left's problem is that its understanding of the world, not its language, is from another time.

Many Americans had hoped President Obama would move the Democratic party into the future. At times, in style and language, candidate Obama seemed to augur a new era—one in which government looked more like the open-source movement and less like the top-down command structure of the Army.

The Obama administration, however, seems to be incapable of promoting any change that

diminishes its own power and importance: It is changing everything in America but Washington. The masters of the educated class, as David Brooks calls them, are not proposing new, organic, bottom-up solutions to society's problems. They are still prescribing a federal pill for every ill, the same old organizing concept that underpinned the Great Society.

In contrast, a New Republican lives in the communications-age world of the network and the human-rights movement that respects the individual over the state. His metaphors are the Internet, the ecosystem, and the living organism, all of which convey the idea that relationships are non-linear, complex and networked.

If New Republicans paint their house the same colors as the Old did, no one will notice: New metaphor and fresh language are essential. A New Republican values freedom as if it were invented today, specifically to deal with the challenges ahead of us and he expresses those principles in the language of the moment, not just the lexicon of the past.

A New Republican is not an insider. He's an outsider. He believes in authentic, bottom-up solutions not top-down public sector schemes and policies. A New Republican believes in natural solutions, not artificial ones imposed by faraway politicians and mechanisms in Washington. A New Republican is an optimistic economic populist: He believes our economic ecosystem works better without artificial political ingredients imposed by an uninformed, self-empowered elite. As Scott Brown said in his election night speech, "It's us against the machine . . . this is not their seat, it is yours."

Does a New Republican have a plan to stimulate the economy? You bet. A New Republican believes the best way to stimulate the economy is with more spending. The difference is he wants people to do that spending, naturally and bottom-up, not politicians, top-down, artificially and mechanically. He believes in tax cuts that grow the hopes and dreams of the 300 million American people. And tax cuts are not one idea. They are millions of ideas, suddenly and imaginatively empowered. Sending our money to Washington for the machine to spend is only one idea, and an old, rusty one, at that.

A New Republican might tell young, jobless millennial voters, "I think the best way to grow the economy is bottom-up and organically like Facebook. My opponent, like most Washington insiders, thinks it is top-down like an assembly-line or the army. What do you think?"

A new organic generation of GOP leaders can also advocate natural, bottom-up GOP policy, on education and health care, for example, where we would put the cost control mechanisms at the bottom with doctors and patients, not at the top with political insiders and bureaucrats. He could support an open energy economy that used the full diversity of American energy sources, not a Washington run energy machine, restricted by political insiders.

Where populism and conservative principles meet, you will find a New Republican and the spirit of a new age.

THE GENERATION OF BOTTOM-UP CHANGE

In 2008, the candidate who understood the spirit of our times was Barack Obama. Throughout his remarkable campaign he promised: change starts from the bottom up. He said the same about prosperity. But the bottom-up candidate has become the top-down president. At almost every opportunity, he has chosen the opposite of his promise: He's trusted old, machine-like, command-and-control government to tackle society's ills.

This could cost Democrats the most valuable political real estate they gained in the 2008 election. Without a doubt, the millennial generation Obama inspired is the most empowered generation of Americans in history. They have never been told what to do by anybody. They especially do not like being told what to do by the machine. What an old-fashioned conservative might call individualistic or entrepreneurial they might describe as independent or organic, but what these self-directed souls believe is no different from what freedom-loving conservatives cherish.

Not that long ago, a similar generation of young Americans joined the Republican cause. The party of new ideas attracted them. The principles of Ronald Reagan were our magnet. Republicans again have an exciting intellectual framework to offer that is consistent with the dynamic nature of society and the principles we still treasure. The Facebook generation has been abandoned by a Democratic party that has regressed to obsolete, machine-age thinking. Let's scoop them up. They are ripe for the empowering ideology of a new day.

#### NEW REPUBLICANS OR NEW DEMOCRATS?

This is a time of peril and promise for the Republican party. The Obama administration and its supporters in Congress have moved so far left on the ideological spectrum and so far up the elite vs. populist axis that they have left a hole in the political center. Nature and politics abhor vacuums. This one, too, will be filled. If New Republicans don't step up and advance our principles, the perspective that a new and complex world demands, this vacuum will be filled by Clintonian New Democrats. Since they already put people first and declared that the era of big government is over they won't hesitate to do it again.

Some Republicans, of course, will say this is not the time to put forward a new vision for the Grand Old Party. They will caution, Why give the Democrats something new to shoot at? Why interfere, they will ask, when they are doing such a good job at defeating themselves? These Republicans may urge that our leaders sit back, say No, and focus only on the Democratic party's failures. Obama won, they may point out, running mainly as an undefined alternative to George W. Bush.

And this is the trap for Republicans in 2010.

Yes, Republicans should make the midterm election a referendum on our opponent's failure. The runaway Democratic machine in Washington is out of control, and we should ask voters to help stop it. We should focus relentlessly on Democratic insiders who don't listen or understand, their failure in creating jobs and success in creating debt.

But the Republican brand is not a blank page like Obama's was. It is an old and wounded brand

that many voters find unacceptable. Even as Democratic stock has declined, Republican favorability has not improved. Since the November 2008 election, the number of self-described Democrats in the electorate has fallen by 7 percentage points, but the Republican share has not grown. In fact, it has fallen by 1 point. Independents are up by 8 points as a result. As voters attempt to escape the Democratic house, on fire with uncontrollable spending, they find the GOP house isn't particularly hospitable. It wouldn't hurt to unlock our door and be welcoming. Scott Brown is not the only Republican in country forced to cloak his brand and run as an Independent. Even in his victory speech after he was elected, Brown could not embrace his own party's name.

This will be a good Republican year if we do nothing. If we repair our brand, however, it could be a Republican renaissance. We can learn from Massachusetts and Virginia, where the Republican resurgence began in 2009. With a positive, solutions-oriented campaign, Bob McDonnell offered an embraceable alternative to national and local Democratic fiscal irresponsibility. He turned a 5 percent Obama state into a 17 percent Republican landslide.

Democrats will not sit still in 2010. If elite, liberal Washington insiders aren't safe in Massachusetts, they know they can't hide anywhere. They know they have rebranded themselves as the party of elitism and fiscal irresponsibility and hit the panic button. Democratic pollster Geoff Garin is already telling his clients to abandon defense of their brand and make the 2010 race about the other guy. These old Democrats hope to sit across the poker table and play one more hand against Old Republicans.

Will we let them? Or will a New Generation of Republicans ante up and say, Deal us in ?

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