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A look at the Republican platform

Pat Perriello | Sep. 5, 2012 NCR Today

Now that the 2012 Republican National Convention is history, it should be useful to take a closer look at the party platform from that convention. Michael Cooper in *The New York Times* [1] illustrates how far right the platform has moved since the days of Ronald Reagan. Some might say that a party platform doesn't matter, but I think that in this case, few would doubt it represents the views of the average Republican in America today.

Party leaders might try to distance themselves from the platform, but if you look at the direction state governments have gone under Republican administrations and what the Republican Congress has done or not done the last two years, it is pretty clear where the center of Republicanism is today. Just one example is the Republican governors' attack on public employee unions. These workers form the bulk of the state government workforce and yet are treated as if their work has no value. They teach the children, put out fires and keep the peace. They deserve to be treated with respect.

Health care is a major Republican platform plank. While their recent rhetoric attempts to portray them as the party intent on saving Medicare, the platform paints a different picture. It makes clear the plan is to radically transform Medicare and repeal Obamacare. The result will leave untold millions in America without health insurance. The platform offers no replacement for the health care system it plans to eliminate. Also, the Medicare voucher it will provide will be insufficient to purchase adequate health insurance in the future.

The platform also contains harsh language on immigration. English is supported as the nation's official language. State governments are to be free to impose the most draconian laws against illegal immigrants. Even though the Constitution specifies immigration is a federal issue, the platform seeks to cut the federal government out of the process completely.

Its vision of gun control in the face of the almost-weekly tragic shootings we have been experiencing is frankly incomprehensible. The wording supports "the fundamental right to self defense wherever a law abiding citizen has a legal right to be." In other words, it advocates taking your guns to church, school, work, football games, etc. Is this really the vision of a country you want to live in and where you want to raise your children?

Overall, it calls for a government that is smaller in size and reduced in scope. It wants lower taxes so government will not have the revenue necessary to do things we have depended on government doing for generations. Somehow we have been led to believe that government shouldn't be doing anything except making war. But what about the new levees in New Orleans that worked during Hurricane Isaac; safe bridges, roads and other critical infrastructure; safe meat and produce; school teachers, firemen, policemen and the FBI? I'm sure you could add many of your own government greatest hits to include Medicare and Social Security.

There is a harshness and meanness to the Republican proposals. It seems they just don't care about people except for the winners, the wealthiest in our society. Where is the compassion for illegal immigrants who were brought to this country as young children, are here through no fault of their own and are Americans in every meaningful way? Do they care about the rising number of poor in our country and the additional hardships their policies would create for them? Does their right to bear arms trump the right of our citizens and our young

people to be safe in their places of work, school and worship?

The policies seem to be based on an unhealthy individualism. The notion seems to be a selfish one that as long as I can protect myself and get ahead, I have no responsibility for the rest of my fellow citizens. This might be a great credo for the world of capitalism, but it is difficult to square with Christianity. It's clear we will all have a lot of soul-searching to do between now and the election. I, for one, find it difficult to feel at all comfortable with the document that is the 2012 Republican Party platform.

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Links:
[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/us/politics/republican-platform-takes-turn-to-right.html