

GOP committee aims to promote, not enforce, party principles

I feel compelled to reply to a report in the April 17 Gazette which mischaracterized the goals and intent of the newly formed Republican Study Committee of Colorado, as well as the context of my comments (“Some lawmakers seek GOP purity”). The article set a negative tone by using language reminiscent of Stalin or Trotsky, talking about Republican “cells” and “purging” the Republican Party — implying that the committee is actively supporting or opposing political candidates. Readers should note that I did not make those inflammatory statements and I reject those notions entirely.

The RSCC is not a political action committee, but rather a voluntary group of elected legislators committed to core Republican principles. If the RSCC can encourage legislators to embrace our party’s core principles, more consistency in their votes on key issues will result. However, we cannot and will not dictate members’ votes; nor will the RSCC directly support or oppose candidates.

The RSCC was formed following the model of the Republican Study Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, which is now the largest caucus in the U.S. Congress.

All RSCC members have agreed to support a Declaration of Principles based on the Republican Party platform, and to apply those principles to our daily business inside the Capitol. Most Republican voters expect no less from their Republican candidates, and RSCC membership gives our elected members an opportunity to confirm and work together to apply those principles. Members of the RSCC typically do oppose big government, oppose increasing the burden on taxpayers, favor pro-life values and support traditional marriage, because those are consistent with Republican principles and are in agreement with mainstream American values. The RSCC has not excluded any elected Republicans from joining. If the Republican Party is a “big tent,” those adhering to core Republican principles can be found at the center pole of that tent.

Speaking personally, Republicans must remind themselves that loyalty to our party philosophy should be more important than loyalty to individuals who consistently violate it. The re-election of President Bush and the success of other centerright candidates and issues across the country show that common-sense Republican principles are growing in popularity.

Unfortunately, some politicians have wrapped themselves in a Republican cloak to get elected, only to discard those principles when they get into office and away from their districts. It is very interesting that mainstream Republicans are routinely accused of not supporting candidates who have a near-100 percent record of voting against Republican principles, while the divisiveness of liberal Republicans who refuse to support mainstream Republican candidates is never considered divisive. After serving for several years on committees with Republicans who frequently aligned themselves with Democrats to oppose Republican-sponsored legislation, many of us look forward to the day when more of our colleagues are committed to the core values of the party.

The Gazette also seemed intent to convey the incorrect notion that the RSCC favors urban Republicans and opposes rural supporters of limited government and the Second Amendment. That is totally ironic since many RSCC members come from rural and agricultural counties and are the most active supporters of limited government and the Second Amendment.

Perhaps the most laughable statement in the article claims that Minority Leader Joe Stengel has “reversed course [on the state budget bill] under pressure from conservative Republican House members,” implying that the RSCC is orchestrating his decisions. Although it might elevate the RSCC’s stature to claim we somehow dictate Stengel’s policies, it would be incorrect, patronizing and ludicrous to think that he somehow caved in to our study committee.

The fact is that most Republican representatives oppose an unnecessary \$3-billion grab of taxpayer refunds, and as with almost all other issues, RSCC principles reflect that mainstream Republican thinking.

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