

[Wilson] My Choice to Head the RNC

by Amile Wilson
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In 2005, I was involved in an inner-party election that was every bit as vitriolic as the most recent presidential election, but that time it was Republicans fighting Republicans. Ever since, I have tried to remain neutral on party leadership elections. But this year, the chatter is so great surrounding the RNC chairman election that I have decided to endorse someone for chairman. So here goes: Saul Anuzis of Michigan.

A Harley-riding, blue-collar, first-generation American currently chairs the Michigan Republican Party and is one of the best, most forward-thinking men I have had the pleasure of knowing in my years in politics.

Saul left college to run campaigns and eventually left politics to start a media company that he has turned into quite a successful business. A self-made businessman and a bit of a wily prankster, Saul has run extremely effective ground campaigns for Republicans in Michigan and has made direct efforts to incorporate youth and bring new ideas into the leadership of the party.

I first met Saul at a Republican conference in Memphis. He was hosting a dinner for some of the state chairmen to meet the presidential candidates. Saul walked by our group of five—clearly College Republicans—and spun around asking, "Hey, do you guys want to meet the presidential candidates?"

For the next several hours we were part of a group of only 20 people who watched candidate after candidate parade in front of us and give us their stump speech while we ate, drank, and enjoyed the company of the RNC co-chairman and a posse of white-haired elder statesmen from across America.

Saul then made it a point to let everyone know why he had invited the college kids.

Saul doesn't believe the youth are the future of America; rather, he places them in the present. His campaign style has a youthful vigor and sense of innovation that was sorely lacking in the 2008 presidential race.

When he announced his candidacy, Saul did so via Web cam and YouTube. While others talk a lot about integrating new technologies into Republican campaigns, I've seen Saul do it. His knowledge of new media and his fun personality make him the kind of strategist we need to lead the party.

The other, more well-known candidates are good men and, because I know people out there are curious, I will address two of them: former Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and Newt Gingrich.

Outspoken, articulate and conservative, Steele made national news not only for his service as lieutenant governor, but for his race. Steele is an African-American in a party that is often characterized as far too monochromatic. While the presence of an African American in the RNC chairmanship may seem to bolster the diverse image of the GOP, it is worth noting that President Bush's Cabinet, judicial appointments and other nominations have been more diverse in race and gender than any other president in history. The Cabinet's diversity, however, has made virtually no impact on people's perceptions.

For this reason, I believe that Steele would better serve as an outreach director for the RNC. He is passionate about the African-American "family" and believes the ideology of the GOP provides the greatest opportunity for Americans of any color to succeed.

Steele is certainly the most intellectual of the three candidates, but that may not be to his advantage. Of the many choices the Democrats had several years back, Howard Dean was certainly not the most intellectual. But he was great at organizing and exciting people. And that is what the job demands.

On that point, Newt Gingrich is extremely strong. I have met Gingrich on several occasions, each time in conjunction with a speech he delivered to a crowd of "adoring fans." The man has a "rock-star aura." Gingrich motivates and excites people on the right and has the personality to move people to action.

Additionally, his 2005 book outlining a plan for "Winning the Future" is one of the most thought-out and articulated platforms I have seen. His "Renewed Contract" addresses the problems America is facing head on, and offers real and innovative solutions. Notable is a reformatting of the national education system and new federal scholarship money for college students studying science and technology-related fields.

But, like Steele, Gingrich's strengths seem to be best suited in the activist sector rather than party leadership. I would love to see a Newt 2012 presidential campaign, and I am a bit concerned that his ascension to the RNC chair would be too partisan to make his candidacy viable.

There are some small policy differences between the three, but on most major issues they agree. All three support smaller government, lower taxes and pro-life judges, but each one has slightly different emphases. The one notable exception is that Steele is reported to support affirmative action.

Campaigns, by their nature, contain a bit of vagueness on certain issues, and this election is no exception. But we do know that Anuzis believes much stronger in party discipline—keeping Republican officials in line with the party platform—than the other two. Anuzis is more economically focused, Gingrich more socially focused, and Steele the most balanced. But these are only small degrees of separation. All three support personal responsibility, individual liberty and a strong national defense.

The Republican Party doesn't need to change its platform to "better reflect America;" it needs to actively communicate why its platform is the right choice for America. Expand the party by winning more people to our beliefs, not changing our beliefs to include more people.

More than any other candidate, Anuzis has shown his ability to do that across economic, generational and racial lines.