



**Team of Leaders: Renewing Our Majority**  
*Unity—Visibility—Strategy*

**Mike Pence**

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## *Unity—Visibility—Strategy*

### Mike Pence

*“The heart of what a statesman says is in simple words that draw their force from the compelling circumstance that they are true.” – Mark Helprin*

#### Introduction

I believe we did not just lose our Majority, we lost our way.

I believe this happened to us because somewhere along the way we lost our willingness to fight for limited government, fiscal discipline, traditional values and reform. And, I believe that millions of our most ardent supporters figured this out.

As Mark Helprin wrote, “The Republican Party was unwilling and unable to go into battle to defend American exceptionalism, to defend the idea that our politics depend on self-evident truth...that the modern Republican Party fails to defend because its leaders are interested not in truth but in power.” Election Day was not a rejection of our agenda as the opposition party will allege. It was a plaintive cry from millions of Americans who had grown weary of the expansion of government, fiscal mismanagement and outright corruption that has beset our Majority in recent years.

While the scandals of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress harmed our cause, the real scandal in Washington D.C. is runaway federal spending, and our voters said, “Enough is enough.”

After 1994, we were a Majority committed to a balanced federal budget, entitlement reform and advancing the principles of a limited federal government. In recent years, our Majority voted to expand the federal government’s role in education by nearly 100 percent, created the largest new entitlement in forty years, and pursued spending policies that created record deficits, national debt and rampant earmark spending.

This was not in the Contract with America. Our opponents will say that the American people rejected our Republican vision. I say the American people did not quit on the Contract with America—we did. And in so doing, we severed the bonds of trust between our government and our most dedicated supporters.

As we choose who will lead us in the days ahead, it is important we learn the right lessons from 2006. It is even more important that we move forward with a renewed commitment to do our duty. While tragic necessity has placed us in this position, I urge you to seize this day and join me as we return our Conference and our party to the principles of the Reagan Revolution.

Our new Republican Minority in Congress must be rededicated to the conservative principles that minted our Majority in 1994. We must reject the path of big government Republicanism that led us into the box canyon of 2006. Only by renewing our commitment to fight for conservative values of limited government, traditional values, fiscal discipline, and reform, can we hope to have the credibility to earn back the opportunity to lead this national legislature.

We are in the wilderness because we walked away from the principles that brought us our governing Majority. I believe there is a way out. “The way out of the wilderness is the truth; recognizing it, stating it, defending it, living by it,” wrote Mark Helprin.

It is time to act without inhibition or fear and to believe in our principles and our people. We must have faith in our ideas, be bold, and trust the innate wisdom of the American people.

It is time to remember the vision of a freedom-loving party championing limited government, a strong robust national defense, and traditional moral values. That is the vision we advertised to our constituents, and it is what they expect from us. If we offer that, *they* will renew our Majority and put us back in charge. Here is my plan:

### Reaffirm First Principles

Let me be very clear. I do not believe we need to figure out what our vision should be. I do not think we need to go back to the drawing board and mix and mash into place a set of principles to guide us. We already know what those first principles are – the same ones articulated by Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, and the authors of the Contract with America. We just need to *remember* them and why we came here.

We came here to promote freedom and opportunity. We came here to allow American families to keep more of their hard-earned money and spend it on their own priorities rather than Washington’s, a reality that only can be accomplished through less government, lower taxes, less federal spending, and economic prosperity. We came here to rekindle the fires of men, material, and morale that warm the warriors who stand on freedom’s ramparts in far-off lands. And we came here to assert again the constitutional rule of law, an unalienable right to life, and the traditional values shared by millions of Americans.

That is our vision. It does not need to be constructed out of papier-mâché or run through a focus group. Instead, it must be remembered, embraced in our hearts, and endlessly articulated, even in the midst of adverse political winds.

### Unity

Once we remember what we stand for, it is obviously important to execute, but we cannot execute until we unite. What defines us can no longer be about membership in this faction or that. Our Minority can no longer be riddled by the sort of divisions that have recently characterized our Conference. We must put aside the petty and instead create consistent opportunities to promote the personal ties that bind us.

It is important for you to know that as your Leader, you will have my ear. Leading is listening to the entire Conference and shaping a unified message and agenda for us to act upon, and I will do exactly that.

At the Republican Study Committee (RSC), we fostered a spirit of unity—a sense that we are all in this together with an understanding, borne of experience, that no matter how dark the day, our friends would be at our sides. This focus caused us to revamp our annual retreat so that colleagues and their spouses could talk, get to know each other, and be refreshed anew as they heard the ideas

and insights of guest speakers. We continued these gatherings or “mini retreats” throughout the term to give members an opportunity to take a deep breath and reflect on the road just traveled and the road ahead. And on a weekly basis, as other groups within the Conference do, the RSC continued its lunch meetings to share news and opportunities to help each other.

These family-friendly events are important. For this reason, I would plan seasonal “unity dinners” in which the Conference would gather for nothing other than food, fellowship and inspiration. No fundraising, no leadership pitches—just fellowship. In addition, our weekly Conference meetings, which will undoubtedly focus on the important matters of tactics and policy at hand, would still retain a sliver of time to promote smaller, less formal unity opportunities—not all of which will be the brainchild of the new Leadership team. We will rely on your initiative. However, by focusing on it each week, the concept of remaining united will be foremost in our minds.

### Visibility

One of the most important responsibilities of any minority is to articulate a credible alternative to the Majority that governs. Minorities that are unsuccessful either fail to construct such an alternative or fail to communicate it. We will not fail to do the former, and we cannot neglect the latter. To that end, we must not shy away from the media either within the Beltway or back home in our districts.

We need leaders traveling to support our candidates and campaigns. But we do not just need leaders in the air — we need leaders on the air. It is important that our Leadership and every single Member be on the public airwaves, articulating our message, and encouraging by example the entire Conference to follow suit.

That credibility will be essential for our primary task these next two years: to expose, dismantle and defeat the “principles to which we have been forced to succumb.” The primary mission of the Republican Party in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will be to defeat the agenda of the Democratic Party in Congress. Each of us must dedicate ourselves to using our talents and expertise to dismantle Democratic arguments and expose their liberal, big government agenda at every turn.

Overall, our Minority must jettison the habitual disdain that all too often takes root with respect to the media. The media does not always consist of our friends, but neither should they be viewed as our enemies. Treating the media with suspicion does us no good in the long run. Our ideas can be communicated and they must. We cannot offer the needed and endless jeremiads to failed Democrat policies (and the new ones they come up with that *will* fail) if we are silent and invisible.

### Strategy

Without the votes necessary to stop the advance of Democrat priorities, our mission will be one of persuasion and tactics. We must offer this nation a compelling vision of renewal and reform. It is written, “Without a vision, the people perish.” We have learned, through arduous trial, that what is true of a nation is also true of a governing Majority. Our duty in the Minority is to communicate a forceful vision of limited government, traditional values and reform that will propel our party back into the Majority in 2008.

After an election defeat, Winston Churchill described the duty before us. Churchill quoted the late Lord Salisbury who wrote in 1867, “It is the duty of Englishmen and every English party to accept

political defeat cordially and to do their best endeavors to secure the success or to neutralize the evil of the principles to which we have been forced to succumb.” Churchill added in his own words, “It is good that we have no wish to be unfaithful to so wholesome a tradition.”

The days ahead will be challenging, but I relish the opportunity to be faithful to so wholesome a tradition. Our duty in the Majority was to govern. Our duty in the Minority is to propose solutions based on Republican principles and tear down every Democratic argument that sets itself against our agenda. We must look for every strategic opportunity to stand in the gap.

We must not grow complacent, neglecting to learn the procedures of the House of Representatives — relying on auto-pilot special rules that require no more from us than to show up and vote. Our Minority Leadership team must be present on the floor and practiced at maximizing our procedural posture.

Newt Gingrich once said, “The number-one fact about the news media is that they love fights. When you give them confrontations, you get attention. When you get attention, you can educate.” More than anything, our Minority must educate the American people about our renewed vision and thus, we must choose our battles wisely. Whether it be discharge petitions, extensive use of the unfunded mandates and earmark reform rules, vote-a-ramas, timely motions to adjourn, and filibusters by amendment during the appropriations season, rest assured our Minority will confront.

This will not be a new terrain for me or my team. At the RSC, we used or advocated for many of these tools to move our agenda when appropriate. In addition, we initiated an internal rewrite of the House Rules that led us to offer numerous proposals to improve the rules to control spending and legislative transparency. While most were voted down, the effort deepened our understanding of the Institution and the specific levers at our disposal. Our team is knowledgeable, our team is motivated, and our team is prepared for the House floor.

That is not to say that we will only obstruct. Certainly not. We also will attempt to restart the old GOP-Boll Weevil coalition that proved so successful in the 1980s to advance President Reagan’s revolution with a Democrat House and a Republican Senate. There are Blue Dog Democrats that want to balance the budget, address our nation’s abounding debt, strengthen Social Security, and protect life and marriage. Our Minority will look for opportunities to work with them when there is agreement, and our hope will be that these occasions will not be few and far between.

### **A Positive Agenda**

It is important to get one last thing straight. As your leader, I will not encourage you to use negative personal attacks on the floor or in your campaigns. The American people are weary of the personal invective of modern politics. Some of you may not know that it took me a long time to get to Congress. I lost two races, in 1988 and 1990. Those experiences were not fun, but they taught me an important lesson, prompting me to pen an article called “Confessions of a Negative Campaigner.” My realization was not that negative personal attacks cannot “work.” At times, they very well may, but they have an opportunity cost. They squander priceless opportunities to define how we would govern differently, what our ideas are, and why they are better. When we resort to the politics of personal destruction, we are inherently off-message.

Our campaigns must value winning, but as candidates we cannot be seduced by the political opportunities of the moment and find ourselves swayed from our principles just to win the next election. As I wrote then in defeat and believe now, in order to attain a strong and lasting Majority we ought to be a new breed of candidates that seek to leave a foundation of arguments in favor of policies that will stand the test of time. We must run not just “to win,” but “to stand.” And if we stand on that foundation, we *will* win and usher in a new Majority—one that will be concerned with far more than continuing to retain itself.

### Conclusion

In 1995, House Republicans wrote the following in one of their first governing documents:

*America stands at a crossroads. Down one path lies more and more debt and the continued degradation of the Federal Government and the people it is intended to serve. Down the other lies the restoration of the American dream...we choose the second of these roads. We do it because it's right. We do it because it's sensible. We do it because America's future does not belong to the Congress, or the administration, or any political party. It belongs to the American people themselves.*

We are once again at a historic crossroads in the nation's future. Unfortunately, the result of this week's election means that America, with Republican losses in both the Senate and the House and a President with only two years left to serve, is poised to go down the other path — the wrong one. Our Minority must stand in the gap and point the path to the other road. We must be a light in the darkness. For these two years, my friends, that must be our legacy. It is the only legacy the American people will accept from us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Pence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.