



## The Values We Share (or Why I Am A Republican)

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I've been a Republican since I was 18-years-old. I hardly recognize the party today—at least, the party in Washington, D.C. But even in the distressed state it's in, I would rather fix the Republican party than leave it.

The Republican party I joined on the eve of the Reagan era brought different people and ideas together. That was the secret of its widespread support. But although it was diverse, it was not unprincipled. When Republicans remember the good old days, we remember the values we share.

What do we share? First, Republicans are conservatives. We value order, stability, prudence, honesty, and the preservation of our republic. We have always put a premium on respect for established institutions: they can be improved, but they should not be denigrated or assaulted.

What else are we? We are patriots. We love the Constitution, revere the Madisonian system for the political work of art that it is, respect those who defend our way of life, and are watchful against those who would threaten it.

We love freedom, and our heritage of freedom. I've always said I want the government out of your pocketbook and out of your bedroom. That basic American tradition of individual liberty—and personal responsibility, because to be free you must run your own life—goes back to Madison, Jefferson, and the Founders, who gave us not only our laws, but our greatest words.

We are capitalists. We might differ on any number of policies, but we firmly believe there is no such thing as “government money,” only taxpayer money. In my time as governor of Massachusetts, I was named one of the two most fiscally conservative governors in the United States by the Cato Institute. But I don't consider it just a matter of pinching pennies. It's about a genuine belief that people are wealthiest and happiest when the government stays away from micromanaging their work, and that if you produce something, it's yours to keep.

And we are republicans, in the original sense: We believe, as Lincoln put it, in government of the people, by the people, and for the people, not that government is a separate entity that dominates its citizens. There's a place for government, but fundamentally it is there to *protect* your rights, not to dictate what they are.

From time to time, I've differed with the majority of my party on some issues, but not on ultimate ends. When I say we have to do something to avert catastrophic climate change, it's because we should be protecting our citizens' welfare, not limiting growth or socializing the economy. When I am skeptical of wars in the Middle East, it's because I think there's a better way to conserve American power, not because I want to weaken our position. Bottom line: I believe in the Republican party's core principles, even if I sometimes differ in how I would apply them.

The Republican party should return its focus on the 18 issues we agree on, not the 8 we disagree on.

We need to get our fiscal house in order and stop running trillion-dollar deficits that are going to destroy us.

We need to figure out how to preserve American power and influence in the world while on a budget. (I have some thoughts.)

We need pro-liberty judges who will not up-end the Bill of Rights. (I oppose many of President Trump's policies, decisions, and actions, but I think Neil Gorsuch was a good Supreme Court pick.)

We need a real, and humane, border strategy instead of a wall that is a combination of a government land grab and a slogan.

We need to go back to supporting free enterprise and entrepreneurship.

We need free trade, and trade organizations with international allies, and an end to uncertainty about trade wars.

We need a solution to healthcare that brings prices down while turning patients into customers, not supplicants to a state-operated system.

We need to protect religious freedom.

And we could go on, because there's a lot of work for us to do.

Only by rallying around our core principles again and remembering who we really are can the Republican party become a real governing party again.