
POLITICO

What's wrong with the GOP?

By: Roger Pilon – November 8th, 2012

What's wrong with the GOP? To generalize in a short post, let's start by noting that many 2012 races, including for president, were close. We're a deeply divided country, with two very different visions of the proper role of government. That's a constant today. But it means that elections turn on getting "undecideds," without such views, to one side or the other. Cynical? No. That's the world as it is. For most people, politics isn't the whole of life.

So how do you reach those people? As compared to the finely-honed Obama machine, Republicans were asleep at the switch, stuck in "old media." They've got to recognize that for many Democrats, politics is everything. Part-timers in the mechanics of the game will lose every time.

But once you reach the undecideds, there's the message - and the messenger. In too many GOP primaries it's been a bland establishment incumbent against an unschooled or inept upstart - a disaster-in-waiting either way. The party simply has to put more effort into finding smart, credible candidates, people far more conversant with political issues than those who sought to be even at the top of the ticket this time around. Romney was a decent enough man, and he ran a credible campaign, but he was no natural politician with a deep understanding of the issues of the day. How much worse it often was down ticket. And it's not simply knowledge of issues; it's also the message itself, as with immigration, and how to frame issues in ways that reach those undecided.

America remains a center right country. Far more people want to be independent than dependent on government, as Obama's "Life of Julia" would have us believe. Candidates who can communicate that kind of message, as Ronald Reagan did, will be successful with all but those for whom the absence of politics and political power would mean an empty life.