THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT

Trump, the Great Communicator on Twitter

by John and Andy Schlafly

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How did it happen that a man we were told could not possibly be nominated, let alone elected, is about to take the oath of office as the 45th president of the United States?

Part of the reason is that Donald Trump spoke to a set of hot-button issues (immigration and trade) that no other Republican was willing to touch, and those issues resonated with thousands of Americans who had previously voted for Obama. But even with the right issues and a brilliant slogan, "Make America Great Again," Donald Trump still had to bypass the mainstream media in order to speak directly to the American people, as Ronald Reagan did a generation earlier.

For the benefit of Americans too young to remember, Reagan was called the "Great Communicator" because he effectively used television to connect directly with voters. Reagan frequently won people over with a folksy story or a perfectly timed joke, like the way he deflected a hostile question about his age during the final presidential debate by leaving everyone, even his opponent, in congenial uproarious laughter.

Having grown up in the construction industry, Trump uses a blunt and caustic style that is the direct opposite of Reagan's affable avuncularity. But Trump has mastered the art of the tweet, sending out very short messages on Twitter, which provides an effective way to connect directly with the public.

Consider the tweet he sent out just before Christmas: "The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes." The media thundered in outrage, claiming the tweet endangered national security and could spark a new Cold War with Russia.

But Vladimir Putin, who controls Russia's nuclear weapons, dismissed the tweet as "nothing out of the ordinary" because Trump had already promised

many times to rebuild U.S. military forces. Most foreign leaders, whether they are friends or adversaries, respect a President who says what he means and means what he says.

Limited to 140 characters (20 to 25 words), Twitter would not have been much help to Reagan, but it has been a perfect fit for Trump's blunt candor. Trump has a genuine style on Twitter and his voice comes through loud and clear in that medium, as authentic as Reagan's mastery of speaking on camera.

Effective use of Twitter requires an economy of style and expression comparable to a great bumper sticker, such as "If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns." Phyllis Schlafly, a master of political communication herself, emphasized the value of honing her message to an effective sound bite, presenting "more facts in fewer words" than other conservatives.

A good example of Trump's mastery of the media happened in November when a student at tiny Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts burned the American flag to protest the election results, and the liberal college president responded by removing our flag from its place of honor on campus. More than 1,000 veterans gathered to protest that cowardly response, but the incident drew little national attention until Trump unloaded a tweet: "Nobody should be allowed to burn the American flag - if they do, there must be consequences - perhaps loss of citizenship or year in jail!"

The media jumped on Trump with a fierce intensity, keeping the story alive for days, until they realized Trump was being helped, not hurt by their criticism. Most Americans agree with Trump's opinion even if a divided Supreme Court ruled otherwise.

Even Obama's press secretary weighed in, saying Trump should submit himself to "skeptical questioning from an independent news media" at a formal press conference with its built-in advantages for the liberal media. As skillful as Reagan was, at times he struggled with rude reporters repeatedly trying to trip him up.

Instead of taking the media bait, Trump lobs Twitter bombs like this one, two weeks ago: "Just watched @NBCNightlyNews - So biased, inaccurate and

bad, point after point. Just can't get much worse, although @CNN is right up there!" He doesn't spare the late-night shows, either: "Just tried watching Saturday Night Live - unwatchable! Totally biased, not funny and the Baldwin impersonation just can't get any worse. Sad."

When the media feel compelled to report President-elect Trump's tweets, repeating his own unfiltered words, it means he and not they control the daily news cycle. When they have to interrupt their own agenda to report how politicians and pundits respond to what Trump just said, media-created stories get lost in the shuffle.

Without press conferences, liberals have difficulty setting the agenda for a Republican president. The first President Bush held three times as many press conferences in four years as his predecessor Ronald Reagan did in eight, and the outcome was a disastrous defeat in 1992. Americans do not want a president whose agenda is set by the press corps in Washington, D.C.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, ***The Conservative Case for Trump****, was published posthumously on September 6.*