Autopsy for the Republican Party

by Phyllis Schlafly

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A claque of liberals and media bigwigs are calling RNC Chairman Reince Priebus's 97-page political opus an Autopsy, which the dictionary defines as the dissection of a body after death. Some people are hoping the Republican Party is dead, but the grassroots are raring to rise up and fight.

Support for the Republican Party is down, but the number of people who call themselves conservative is holding steady. They face the same old choice-not-an-echo battle: grassroots conservative Republicans vs. the liberal, globalist Establishment RINOs (Republicans in Name Only).

The Priebus manifesto was written by Party insiders who are very Establishment (i.e., associates of one of the two Bushes, and no local Party conservatives or Tea Party types), so we can't expect the authors to take blame for their disastrous election loss in 2012. After all, they predicted their victory right up to and including Election Day.

The Autopsy included a lot of chatter about "growth" and "opportunity," plus 30 mentions of the need to be more "inclusive," but that warm and fuzzy invitational language didn't extend to those who want to do something so daring as to nominate conservative candidates who aren't afraid to talk about the right to life and traditional marriage.

The Autopsy pompously declared, "You have to have candidates who don't make tragic mistakes." But the worst mistakes were made by the Establishment's own candidate, Mitt Romney, who failed to use so many issues that connect with the American people. The dozen losses of Establishment-selected candidates for President and Senate show that the people writing the Autopsy have a worse record of picking candidates than the grassroots, who picked winners such as Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, and Mike Lee.

It's too bad Pat Caddell wasn't on the Autopsy drafting committee. Of course, that wouldn't have been appropriate because he is a Democrat, but he could have given the committee a big dose of reality.

Caddell saved his comments for a brutal speech to those who attended the annual conservative conference called CPAC. He said, “The Republican Party is in the grips of what I call the CLEC – the Consultant, Lobbyist, and Establishment Complex,” which he defined as a “self-serving interconnected network of individuals interested in preserving their own power far more than in winning elections.”

“Just follow the money,” Caddell reminded us, commenting on the hundreds of millions of dollars this group spent while losing most of their so-called “moderate” candidates. Despite losing with their candidates, wasting so much donors’ money, and being so well-paid for zero results, the same Establishment strategists have the impudence to tell us we should hire them to reform the Republican Party.

The Autopsy stated solemnly that a “healthy debate of ideas is fundamentally good for the Republican Party.” Agreed. But the Establishment is always determined to suppress all debate or discussion of social, moral, or national security ideas by Republican candidates.

The Autopsy even gave the back of its hand to Republican hero Ronald Reagan, implying that he is now ancient history. But Reagan gave us a model of defeating the Establishment candidate, George H. W. Bush, in 1980, and then going on to win two spectacular national elections, and roughly half of today’s electorate was old enough to vote for Reagan in 1984.

The most insufferable part of the Autopsy is the way these losing Republican strategists presume to tell us that the way to attract new voters is to embrace comprehensive immigration of Hispanics. All available evidence shows that endorsing any form of amnesty, or legislating any part of it, will produce votes for Democrats, not Republicans.

The Autopsy recommends a bunch of changes in Party rules, all of which would make it harder for grassroots candidate to compete against moneyed Establishment candidates. The Autopsy fails to recognize Early Voting as a major factor that produced Democratic votes, and presents no plan to encourage state legislatures to eliminate or reduce it even though Republicans control half the state legislatures.

The Autopsy wants the Establishment to “become much more intentional about candidate recruitment,” especially by working with state parties to identify candidates for local office, such as mayor, county commission, and city council. The national Party has a lot to do without butting into local elections.

The Autopsy fails to encourage a commitment to traditional Republican principles, such as marriage and military superiority, which are all clearly enunciated in the national Republican Platform adopted in Tampa last year. Some have forgotten that Ronald Reagan advised us to run on a platform of “bold colors with no pastel shades.”