The Establishment Looks for a New Plan B

by Phyllis Schlafly

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The Republican Establishment designed the process to deliver the 2016 presidential nomination to a business-friendly moderate who avoids so-called social issues. The consultants who rewrote the party rules after 2012 are now trying to explain to their patrons what went wrong and how to fix it.

Plan A, of course, was to assure the nomination of Jeb Bush, whose views are the perfect reflection of the Republican donor class. But despite many months of campaigning, $114 million of political funds raised through June 30, and two presidential debates watched by a record-setting average of 24 million people, Jeb Bush has dropped to sixth place, registering only 4% in the latest Pew poll.

One reason for Jeb's poor performance is that he never learned from Ronald Reagan's example how to prepare for a presidential campaign after his narrow defeat at the 1976 Convention in Kansas City. Reagan then traveled the country speaking to small audiences of grassrooters and fielding their questions.

The immigration issue, and the way it has grabbed the attention of the grassroots, made it difficult for Jeb Bush to secure the Republican Party nomination in the usual way. Bush will continue to try, of course, and may be able to play insider politics to line up more endorsements and donors with wads of political money.

But the kingmakers always have a Plan B if their first choice stumbles. In 1964, for example, Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton was carefully groomed as a second-choice alternative who could jump in the race after Nelson Rockefeller failed to stop the conservative Barry Goldwater.

Speculation has been in the media that Marco Rubio, Scott Walker, or Chris Christie is the Plan B for the Establishment in case Jeb Bush fails to gain popular support. But Rubio is tied for only fifth in Iowa and fourth in New Hampshire, Christie has failed to gain any real support and Walker has dropped out completely.

The abrupt withdrawal of Scott Walker is the clearest indication of the Establishment trying to regain its control of the process. Walker admitted that his early withdrawal is part of a donor-driven strategy to "clear the field in this race" to pave the

way for an "alternative to the current frontrunner" (Donald Trump) -- and, he said, "I encourage other Republican presidential candidates to consider doing the same."

Walker insisted that candidates should have a "positive" message and that only "candidates who can offer a positive conservative alternative to the current frontrunner" should be considered. He stressed that "Ronald Reagan was good for America because he was an optimist," and complained that "the debate taking place in the Republican Party today is not focused on that optimistic view of America."

Contrary to Governor Walker, who may not have realized that the words "positive" and "optimistic" are consultant code for "business as usual," every poll shows that the voters, by a margin of nearly 3 to 1, say the country is on the "wrong track" or headed in the "wrong direction." Those voters don't need more happy-talk; they're looking for a candidate who's willing and able to turn the country around and "make America great again."

When Jeb Bush and some of these other candidates tried criticizing Trump, polls showed that any loss in support for Trump simply went to another outside-the-Establishment candidate, such as Ben Carson or Carly Fiorina. So Plan B is striking out as badly as Plan A did.

It may be that the only alternative left for these Republican would-be kingmakers is the late entry of a new candidate to enter the race. We are already hearing rumblings about resurrecting Mitt Romney.

On the Democratic side, Vice President Joe Biden has been considering whether to enter the race, so it is obviously not too late for a new candidate to emerge. Indeed, an entirely new candidate could be nominated as late as the Republican National Convention next summer in Cleveland, as occurred at the famous Republican convention of 1880.

The grassroots must be vigilant to anticipate and counter the attempts by Republican insiders to impose an unwanted candidate on the American people. When we fought for and nominated Barry Goldwater in 1964, we did not win the general election that year but we built the conservative movement and laid the foundation to win five out of the next six presidential elections.

When the Establishment is allowed to pick the Republican nominee, a candidate unable to win the support of the all-important middle-class America results. Establishment candidates have been unable to win the popular vote in five out of the last six elections, and that outcome is not something any Republican should want to repeat.

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