

## 2008, Here We Come

By Grover Norquist

By the time you read this, the voting for the 2004 Presidential election (and, one hopes, the counting) will be over. That means we are already tardy in focusing our attention where it belongs next—on the Presidential race of 2008.

The Republican Party nomination for President and Vice President is an open field with no obvious favorites. Bush is out of the running, and Dick Cheney's heart troubles make him an unlikely candidate in 2008. That leaves three tiers of politicians the GOP can draw on for a candidate four years hence.

The first tier is made up of Republican governors operating with Republican control of their legislatures: Florida's Jeb Bush, Colorado's Bill Owens, and Texas's Rick Perry. These governors would be able to campaign not on speeches and promises, but on track records. Republican voters could judge them by what they did with power. Did they cut taxes, pass school choice, limit spending, expand Second Amendment rights, pass tort reform, corral union abuses? A governor who actually enacted school choice trumps a governor who gives a great speech about it.

The second tier of candidates is made up of governors with Democratic control of one or both houses of their state's legislature: Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, George Pataki of New York, Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, and Haley Barbour of Mississippi. Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush came from this field. Reagan won some welfare reform in California, and Bush won some tax

reduction and a concealed-carry law in Texas. But mostly, Reagan and Bush foreshadowed how they would govern as President by fighting for legislation that did not pass—in Bush's case for school choice, tort reform, and state pension reform—and through speeches about what they would like to do.

Before the Republican Party took control of the House and Senate in 1995, it was a Republican President's job to show that he could successfully rein in the Democratic power base in Congress—stand up to the Democratic Congress and the liberal national media while making good on one or two campaign promises. Now, the bar has been raised. Voters want to know, "What will you actually do with your power to move and enact an agenda?"

The third tier is senators: Bill Frist of Tennessee, George Allen of Virginia, and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. Senators have several advantages: they are known to the national press, and they can make themselves known to the country by forcing through, or filibustering, major legislation. But governors have a leg up on senators in several areas: Senate staffs and fundraising bases are small, and, unlike governors, they have no executive apparatus to carry out their wishes. Also, the tendency of today's Senate Democrats to routinely resort to the filibuster to block any bold reform makes it less likely that a senator can become known by forcing through major legislation. The most interesting legislative initiatives are now likely to come from the President, and a Republican senator can't become famous by help-



ing to pass some other politician's agenda.

A Republican senator can, however, make a name for himself blocking a Democratic President's left-wing agenda. This was the pitch of Bob Dole and Phil Gramm in 1996: I'll stop Clintonism.

Someone outside these three tiers, a new face, could present himself or herself over the next four years. North Carolina Senator John Edwards, after all, was in public office less than four years when he finished second in the Democratic primaries and was tapped as a running mate. Former mayor Rudy Giuliani—neither senator nor governor—could run on his record as the crime-fighting mayor who cleaned up New York City and brought it through the early days of 9/11.

The next four years are a wonderful opportunity for the GOP. They're a chance for the party to see what its governors and senators can achieve in lowering and simplifying taxes, offering parents school choice, ending abusive lawsuits, protecting gun rights and other liberties, and furthering decent, limited government. The next Republican candidates for President will have to make their case not through "shoulda, coulda, woulda" speeches, but rather by enacting real legislation and pointing to concrete results.

And all eyes will be on this virtuous competition within the Republican Party. Why would anyone pay attention to the Democratic Party nomination process? Hillary Clinton cannot be defeated for the nomination, and she can't win the Presidency. Boring.

