

MEMORANDUM

To: Jeff Frederick, Chairman
State Central Committee, Republican Party of Virginia
Activists and Members of the Republican Party of Virginia

RE: A Modest Proposal

We know this, whether we are prepared to admit it publicly or not. The Republican Party of Virginia is broken, but not on ideas or principle.

The Republican Party of Virginia *logistically* is a wreck. Talk of throwing any part of our coalition overboard is both premature and unsound. Good candidates will no longer be able to paper over the severe disadvantages we have placed ourselves under. Until Virginia Republicans recognize and correct this problem, we will continue to slide further into a minority status.

Quick reforms are needed. This approach – even if taken in parts over time – will allow RPV's infrastructure to make immediate strikes into our 2009 races now, while allowing Virginia Republicans the “long game” to re-ignite the entrepreneurial spirit we have arguably lost.

These reforms are:

- 1. Define where we are going.**
- 2. RPV is the aggregated voice of our unit committees.**
- 3. Unit committees are old. Shake them up; start over!**
- 4. RPV HQ? Start over.**
- 5. Restart the Joint Republican Caucus; headquarter it at RPV HQ.**
- 6. RNC Voter Vault and the RPV Voter List should be vastly improved and made freely available (with certain strings attached).**
- 7. Winning and being right are not mutually exclusive terms**

These reforms (or if not reforms, then the ideas and positions on which solid reforms should be made) are not the result of panic, nor is this memorandum written in haste or without deep consideration as to the recommendations made. Some old hands will scoff at the practicality of implementing such reforms, while others are just now realizing how the landscape has changed.

Many will insist that we copy the opposition – the Democrats tried this with talk radio and got nowhere.

Instead, we have to focus on the advantages we have as a party and foster those values. Entrepreneurship. Free markets. Free minds. A free society and the ideas of a meritocracy.

Those are the values that wake me up in the morning, that encourage me to volunteer, to knock on doors, to get others thinking about what it means to be a Republican.

If Jeffersonian conservatism has a definition, those values come pretty darned close. And quite honestly, the days when our party was best were the days we thought (and fought) along those lines, isn't it?

It's about time we started acting on those principles as a party.

If you want to adapt to change, rebuild the Republican Party of Virginia, and capitalize on the new landscape to the advantage of our principles *and* our candidates, then the following ideas are for you to consider – and perhaps adopt.

(1) Define where we are going.

While there are plenty of observations to this effect, and plenty of blame being doled out or denied, what is not clear – and what we are not hearing – is how we should go about fixing it.

After all, this is *our* party. The responsibility for fixing it lies with *us*.

So we should start with some first things. Which goals? Whose voice? **The initial question we have to ask ourselves is “Quo Vadis?” Where are we going? What are we about?**

I'll start with the basics.

For too long, RPV's front office has been used as a tool, either by elected officials or those seeking higher political office. That perception needs to reform *immediately*.

In addition, there needs to be a very frank and open discussion of the future of the party – in terms of mission, in terms of organization, and in terms of its relationship with the Virginia House and Virginia Senate Caucuses.

Few people understand the relationship between the Senate Republican Leadership Trust (SRLT) or the House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC). Many grassroots activists and volunteers wrongfully blame RPV for problems regarding many of the caucuses traditional roles – candidate recruitment, fundraising, strategy, and the allocation of resources.

In addition, internally RPV from the top down is a mess. Unit committees expect the state party to provide items only to be let down, district committees find themselves somewhere in between, and RPV leadership has an alarming tendency to be managed from the top, rather than providing our elected officials with the perspective of our grassroots principles.

So what does RPV actually do? Perhaps a better question to ask is to whom RPV is held accountable? The answer to this is simple: our unit committees. To our grassroots, our volunteers, our activists, and no one else is RPV responsible for mobilizing, preparing, activating, and energizing for any campaign at any level of government.

To that end, and with that in mind, it's easy to identify whose voice we really are...

(2) Define our Voice: The Republican Party of Virginia is the aggregated voice of our unit committees.

That is it.

There is no science.

It is no small secret that many Republican activists are fed up with the Republican label, both in terms of the party apparatus and mostly identifying (and taking out this frustration upon) our elected officials, either by running candidates in the primaries or simply not showing up to the polls – or worse leaving the ballot blank.

One could argue endlessly with a “chicken or the egg?” philosophical question as to whether or not strong unit committees or dynamic leadership will resolve our problems. I firmly side on the former: strong unit committees will produce dynamic leadership. Strong unit committees are far more insulated against swings in the electorate produced by the national climate or marketing/communications strategies.

Moreover, strong unit committees will produce stronger district committees, and a stronger RPV to boot. This sort of decentralization puts the power of RPV’s bully pulpit squarely back into the hands of the grassroots, and away from the strongly centralized (and disappointingly ineffective) RPV we have today.

Current elected officials will more than likely not warm up to this prospect of strong unit committees, fearing primary challenges or a more demanding home front.

The alternative for our elected officials is something far more grim – our current predicament of unit committees too weak to effect change plus Republican candidates losing to well mobilized, well funded, and strong Democratic challengers.

As it stands, the Republican grassroots (conservatives, moderates, and lowercase l-libertarians alike) have no voice in the party structure, hence the outcropping of several organizations attempting to duplicate what our party structure should be accomplishing.

Therefore, not only should RPV assume the mantle of being the aggregated voice of the unit committees, the state party should recognize the rot has reached all the way down to the roots.

(3) Unit committees are old. Shake them up; start over!

Unit committees are currently organized off of some variation of Roberts Rules of Order. Perfect for the time they were created (the 1920s) but wholly unsuited for a modern method of outreach.

In this light, RPV should reapproach its entire Party Plan and start from scratch. Instead of fighting the “last war” with 1980’s-era tactics, we should be preparing to fight the next war with better tactics, a more flexible approach to unit organization structure, and complete willingness to surrender message control to our grassroots.

Once our unit committees are liberated from the rules and regulations, the outmoded bylaws and dry meetings, and start approaching grassroots mobilization as entrepreneurs in the cause of advancing our shared values and principles, only then can we reignite the grassroots.

“New Media” has captured the imagination of many, from the grassroots all the way to our GOP leadership. New believers, who months ago were highly critical of the impact of the blogosphere, are bringing on new talent as we speak to prepare for the 2009 Virginia House races.

It is here where we have to find what works *for Republicans*, because what worked for the Democrats simply will not work for us. Talk radio, columnists, and direct mail have never had the same degree of success for the liberals as they have for conservatives. In a similar fashion, we have to be brave enough to challenge ourselves to find out how new media can help Republicans share the message and get out the vote.

Experimentally, unit committees should consider reorganizing along the following lines and principles:

- **All unit committees must radically commit themselves to new media.** That means a community blog focusing on issues pertinent to the locality in which they live, open to all the members of the committee (Democrats tend to use *SoapBlox* as their platform of choice; *Drupal*, *Joomla*, or even *WordPress* is suitable).
- **Chairman is elected as the lead community organizer.** As a first among equals, the chairman co-ordinates as a garden-variety chairman would.
- **All districts and precincts are given a chairman.** These individuals form the Executive Committee of any given unit committee, and targets the specific race (supervisor, city council, school board) under their jurisdiction.
- **The idea of “district and precinct chairman” should be expanded to advocacy groups as well.** This means anything from minority outreach¹ to youth advocacy, from Republican Womens’ units to Young Republicans, all the way down to Republican Liberty Caucus organizations or Taxpayer Alliances within a locality. Every group with a “tribe” should have a seat at the table.
- **The Executive Committee subsumes the role of Finance, Communications, and all grassroots activity.** No vice chairs for finance, communications, membership, or any of the nominal. The Napoleonic dictum “Every soldier carries a marshal's baton in his pack” is the rule.
- **A strong focus on driving a narrative both within the online community and in the traditional media should be imperative.** Perception is reality; MSM outlets are

¹ Minority outreach is a term I have particular hatred for. There should be no such thing as “Catholics for McCain”, but rather the campaign itself should be talking about Catholic issues. Same with any demographic group. Take note of how the Democrats – who are much more fractured than Republicans are – approach coalition building. Note that there are no groups titled women, African-American, Hispanic, environmentalists, union workers, etc. for Obama. While nominally such groups might exist, their candidates and party structure create an environment where various minorities coalesce around a single idea. Republicans in general would be wise to imitate Reagan’s example in this regard, much as the Democrats have done in the years after Reagan.

typically hesitant to challenge a strong new media culture. Moreover, strong alternative outlets for information attached to the unit committee are essential.

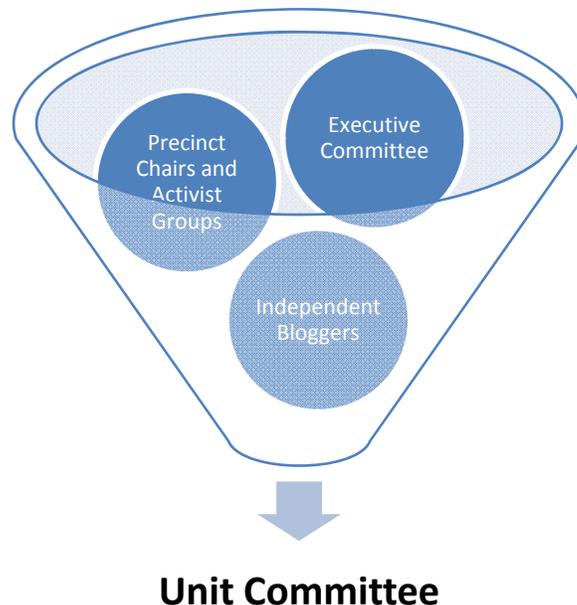
- **Surrender the message control.** This is probably the most difficult thing for unit committees to learn, but increasing participation means a decrease in message control. Jefferson’s advice still rings true. “We are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it” is wonderfully appropriate advice. After all, are we the party of free minds, free markets, and a free society – or are we not? It is far better to be bold (*fortuna audaces juvat?*) than it is to remain safe... and losing.

What is being advocated at the local level is a bold, spirited return to the principles of *direct action* and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Republican Party, and a direction away from the top heavy role imposed by an outmoded system of unit organization.

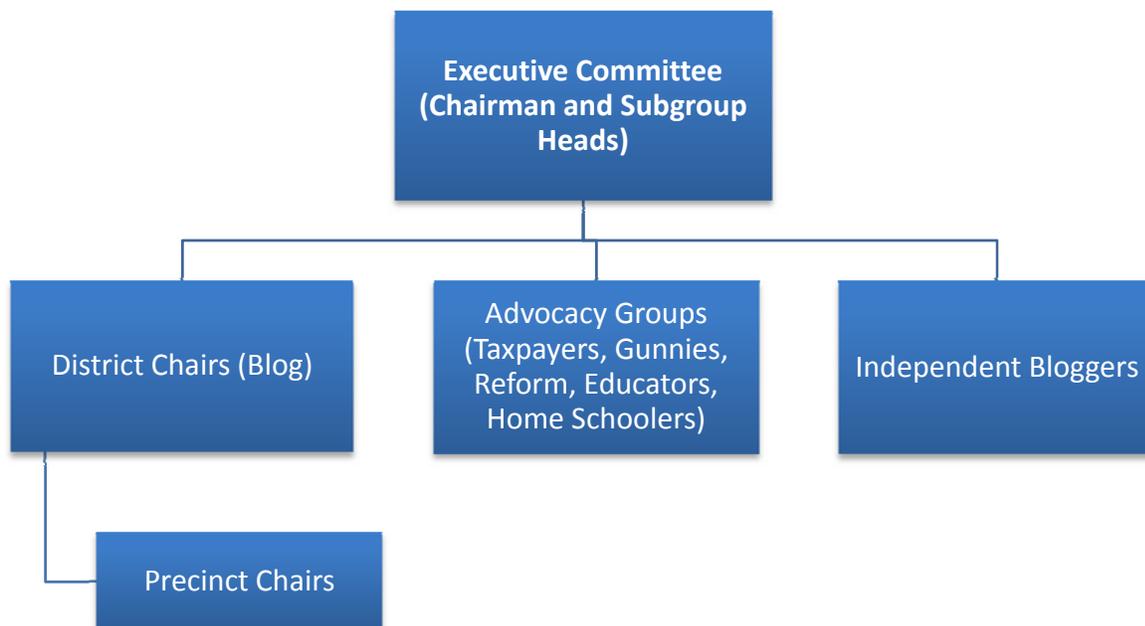
This form of direct action consists of four core ideas:

- (1) A handful of individuals willing to invest in their principles
- (2) These same individuals should be a self-reliant group
- (3) Action must be demonstrated in exciting, participatory ways
- (4) The atmosphere must provoke curiosity, build momentum, and maintain a high level of morale.

Just to give an idea as to how a sample unit would appear (as distinct from a hierarchy), here is an idea:



For something a bit more traditional to emphasize the egalitarian nature of a unit committee reorganized along the principles of new media:



Now as a former unit chairman, I know what the immediate question is. What's this going to cost? Surprisingly... you'd be surprised at how little a move to new media really costs.

Let's take a sample committee of seven districts and three advocacy groups (a YR unit, a Republican Women's unit, and a Republican Liberty Caucus of Virginia organization for all those new Ron Paul supporters). Let's also say you have two hotshot bloggers in your locality.

The costs are as follows:

Staff Member	Salary/mo.	# of Staff	Subtotal
Chairman	\$0/mo	1	\$0/mo
District Chairs	\$0/mo	7	\$0/mo
Unit Committee Website (Blog)	\$10/mo	0	\$10/mo
Advocacy Groups	\$0/mo	3	\$0/mo
Independent Bloggers	\$0/mo	2	\$0/mo
TOTAL PER MONTH:		13	\$10/mo
TOTAL PER ANNUM:		13	\$120/yr

The most demanding investment – frankly – is *time*. Someone has to be committed to the idea, and committed to writing. Like any garden, they take *time* for things to get started, and blogging is no different. Reputation matters in the blogosphere (no pseudonyms, please). And quality content will attract quality readers.

Want to get fancy? Buy your own domain? Let's say that your advocacy groups want to "break off" and start their own blog with three or four active members? Excellent! Let slip the blogs of

war! Let's say every district chairman has three or four people blogging about issues specific to their locality? Go for it. Let's say you don't want a blog at all and want to go with a forum? Let 'er rip!

The bottom line is that blogging is an incredibly cheap exercise. The real difference will be the quality of your blog and the community that reads the blog. Obviously, a unit committee who wants to go down this route will need to clearly identify an audience (*unit members? community leaders? the liberal rag downtown?*) and write intelligently, with an audience willing to give-and-take in a comments section, then you're ready to go.

Need a platform from which to blog?

- **Blogger** has long been the gold standard for most novitiates. It's easy to use, works with everything Google, and has the Google brand to keep it constantly updated and afloat
- **WordPress** is the 201 class for bloggers. Not only is it more customizable, it allows for different layouts and much more versatility through plug-ins. The downside is that it relies on a much more complicated programming language (PHP) that is less forward than the HTML-based Blogger layout. WordPress also has the advantage of either being hosted on WordPress servers, being upgraded over time for a small fee, or if you are ready to take the plunge to simply move the entire system over to a hosted server of your own.
- **TypePad** is another reliable platform that finds favor in some quarters. I am not a particular fan, but others have spoken well.
- **Movable Type** is an oldie but a goodie for content management system (CMS) platforms. I have never been a fan, but some folks are.
- **Drupal** is the 301 class for blogging... Drupal carries over all of the benefits of WordPress (and its downsides) while consisting of a much more robust platform for multiple users. Drupal also has several plug-ins for small to medium sized organizations and has a very strong open source community built around it for these purposes.
- **Joomla** is the granddaddy of all platforms. The Washington Post uses a version of Joomla for its website. Some developers prefer Joomla, but tread here only if you are absolutely certain you can take advantage of its features.

Other outlets such as FaceBook, Twitter, and Ning all help emphasize the connectivity of the group, and help turn direct action into real results. Utilizing other resources for online fundraising (RedStormPAC², which is a free service for Virginia Republicans similar to ActBlue) means that all of the tools the left has used to make social networking and Web 2.0 work are available *right now* for our local committees.

² RedStormPAC is a Virginia political action committee started by myself and my brother, Jason Kenney, for the exclusive purpose of giving elected officials, candidates, and center-right organizations the ability to fundraise online. Most notably, there are no fees. \$100 contributed through RSPAC means \$100 to your candidate or cause – which is a drastic change from other orgs like ActBlue (2.5% fee), SlateCard (4% fee), PayPal (3% fee), or what many private vendors will charge for their clients. This means RSPAC operates at a loss, but is kept afloat by good people willing to donate to keep this resource available. If interested, learn more at <http://www.redstormpac.org>.

What is the direct impact? Advocacy groups now get a seat at the table within unit committees, freely allowing members to create groups of interest where unmet needs within the locality become present.

Such an organization would have to allow these advocacy groups to carry the same weight as any precinct would. The specific “heat barrier” for which an advocacy group would meet the litmus test for relevance would obviously be dependent upon the temperament of the committee, but the intent would be to stretch the invitation to create new sub-groups under the umbrella of the unit committee to be as wide and as broad as possible.

Let’s be honest. For the “party of entrepreneurship” we sure do a lot of whining about what RPV is going to do for our candidates, our committees, our local races, our party call, our speaker for the next big event, our mail, our TV ads, taking on the mainstream media, handling the blogs, producing better lists, paying for postage... *ad nauseam*, the list continues.

Worse still, most unit committees simply have the life stomped out of them, partially because of the constant, ongoing nature of Virginia elections. Having said this, unit committees need to realize that there will be no cavalry charge to save the day, RPV will not be coming to the rescue, nor should they. Local Republican units should rely on each other for assistance or funds – a principle of self-reliance that Republicans used to demand of others! After all, it’s far easier to dig deep and make a one-time \$200 contribution than to pay that amount yearly in higher taxes.

Unit committees are old school. If you’re in my age bracket, they are piloted by “old people” (anyone over 40, sadly) who don’t understand new media, don’t interact on social media sites, have no idea how to text message³, don’t speak to their issues (*property taxes? social security? medicare? who cares when most 18-35 year olds rent, and we all know these programs are failing and won’t be there for our generation -- though we will most certainly have to pay for it...*), and frankly treat these young new recruits as backbenchers – though they probably have more experience mobilizing people for a Friday night on the town than most committee members could organize on Election Day.

Ron Paul’s presidential campaign is a perfect example of what we’ve lost in the GOP. They are young, energetic, want to donate, want to participate, and want to help change the world.

What young Republican voters *don’t* want is to be pandered to, patted on the head, or used (or worse – *abused*). When leaders are willing to loosen up and give new Republicans a shot at influencing the debate, this will be the moment when we’ve figured out how to turn the ocean of angst against the GOP into the coalition-building efforts we need to win.

(4) RPV HQ? Start over.

Let’s get down to the nitty-gritty of the front office. It too is stuck in the past, and what I offer here are not criticisms of those in current roles (in fact, they might fit in splendidly), but rather ideas that hopefully spur conversation about how to tackle over a hundred independent unit

³ For instance: f U cnt rED DIS o dun undRstNd a bit of DIS, datz a pritE clr sgn dat teknoloG hz muvD beyond U.

committees and 11 independent district committees – all with the new found freedom of entrepreneurship they've been bestowed.

It won't be an easy task... but with the right mindset and approach, it could be a lot of fun!

So let's get down to the basics of what I'll call a "**New Media RPV**":

First, a New Media Executive Director understands the difference between tactics and logistics; amateurs talk about the former while professionals discuss the latter. A good New Media Executive Director will know how to raise money; a good New Media Chairman will know how to stand out of his/her way, and knows that the Chairman's role is to stay quiet and use the bully pulpit as sparingly as possible (think Atom Bomb) – and mostly for fundraising and not photo ops.

Second, a New Media Finance Director should be acquired and compensated well for their work. This should include mostly running the direct mail program and organizing fundraising events.

New Media Communications and New Media Political positions should be conflated into one role, that of a Political Director savvy enough in new media and social networking principles to operate as effectively online as they do in their districts.

NOTE: Under no circumstances am I advocating moving away from in-the-trenches ground-pounding grassroots activity into a nice clean air-conditioned office, sitting behind the desk with an Apple laptop astroturf (i.e. fake grassroots) mentality.

Personal contact remains the best way to change the world – any so-called "new media consultant" who tells you otherwise is a fraud. New Media Political Directors should feel just as comfortable online as they do in our neighborhoods.

Our District Chairmen should be offered one position each as a Political Director for the congressional district. That individual should organize the District Committee along the lines of the unit committees:

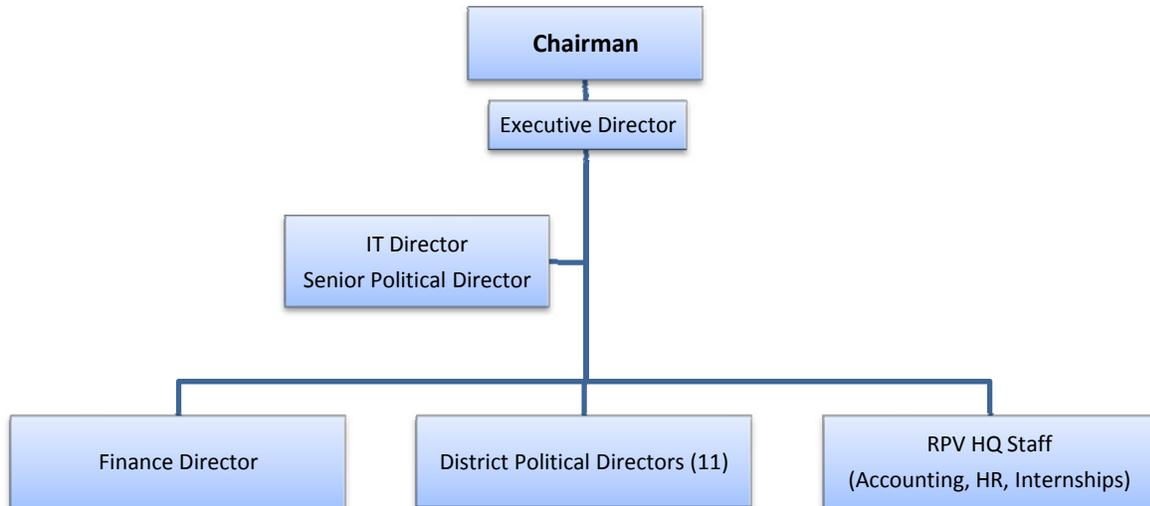
- Build a district blog that focuses exclusively on promoting unit committee content.
- Serve as the Chief of Staff for the district chairs.
- Be a reliable, internal activist known to the people within the district and the congressional member (or lacking a Representative, known to the state delegates and state senators).
- Serve as the liaison for unit committees and RPV HQ.
- Maintain a reliable network of activists, local elected officials, unit chairs, and State Central leadership as a database.

Our New Media IT Director at RPV HQ should perform much of the backend support for all IT efforts. While unit committees should rely upon what works for them (and not expect support from RPV), the district offices should expect that help.

Furthermore, there is no reason why RPV should be paying \$85,000 for its current website, when one experienced New Media specialist could have been hired to not only maintain the site, but

serve as a “New Media Director” (or preferably given the title of *Senior Political Director*) to maintain constant contact with independent bloggers.

Organizationally, this is how a **New Media RPV** would appear:



Total cost breakdowns for all of RPV staff should run as follows:

Staff Member	Salary/mo.	# of Staff	Subtotal
Executive Director	\$10,000/mo.	1	\$10,000/mo
IT Director	\$8,000/mo	1	\$8,000/mo
Senior Political Director	\$4,000/mo	1	\$4,000/mo
Political Director	\$3,000/mo	11	\$33,000/mo
Finance Director	\$5,000/mo	1	\$5,000/mo
Comptroller	\$6,000/mo	1	\$6,000/mo
Human Resources	\$3,000/mo	1	\$3,000/mo
Executive Assistant	\$4,000/mo	1	\$4,000/mo
TOTAL PER MONTH:		18	\$73,000/mo
TOTAL PER ANNUM:		18	\$876,000

That might seem like a terrifying number, but there are corners to cut. If the district committees commit to raising half of the salary (\$18,000) for each district Political Director, that slices \$216,000 right off the top of the budget. That becomes a staff budget of \$660,000. Likewise, if there remains a commitment to online fundraising *and direct mail fundraising*, this number is not insurmountable. In addition, if the chairman remains committed to doing what professionals do best – logistics and not tactics – then mobilizing the additional funds for such an ambitious reorganization is not as terrifying as first glance.

In addition, we shouldn't be afraid to expect good things in fundraising.

Need examples? Frederick raised \$1.3 million in his House of Delegates district alone. Hager had excellent contacts in the Richmond business community. Gillespie was able to bring a legion of Washington names to Virginia to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in a remarkably brief period of time. Kate Obenshain pulled RPV out of a near million-dollar hole all while keeping the ship afloat.

Raising the money for capable staff is not an impossible task. In fact, *it is a requirement if we are to start winning again.* Virginia Republicans shouldn't ignore these challenges or try to mitigate their costs; we should do as our character dictates and meet this challenge head on.

One gaping hole the reader might have noticed. No communications staff?

That is absolutely right.

This resolves two problems. First, "new media" blurs those lines between activism and outreach, much in the same way that an inclusion of new media in a Political Director's position recognizes that the Internet – in and of itself – is utterly worthless unless it translates into action and results.

Second, RPV should not react to policy decisions it does not affect, participate in, or in all practical terms set. Keep in mind that it is the Virginia House and Virginia Senate caucuses that set the tone for policy, candidate recruitment, and strategy... RPV doesn't do this – so why explain it?

More importantly, a strong communications department at RPV reinforces the idea that grassroots and unit committees should march to the RPV drum, when the reverse is the case – RPV HQ acts on behalf and speaks for the grassroots.

(5) Restart the Joint Republican Caucus; Headquarter it at RPV.

Here's a shocker for most political activists: RPV doesn't choose which races at the state level to focus on. That role and responsibility falls squarely on the Senate Republican Leadership Trust (SRLT) and the House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC).

Unfortunately, when the tough decisions get made on which races get funded and which ones don't, many challenger races still end up contacting RPV HQ...

Worse still, many activists don't understand the role of these organizations. First and foremost, they are incumbent protection machines – and nothing more. That's not a slam against either... the Democrats do it the same way. But that really is what they are designed to do, even at the national level.

Aggregating a majority is a secondary concern, while helping challenger races is a distant, tertiary idea.

Whatever bad blood exists or had existed before, in the 2009 cycle we have to be able to put it aside. The Senate and House should not only restart the Joint Republican Caucus in good faith, and those offices should be run out of the RPV HQ for maximum co-ordination with the grassroots. Information should be shared to the greatest extent possible, and strategy (ideally) planned in tandem with RPV.

This resolves three problems.

- One, it increases the comfort level with RPV staff and Executive Committee members as to the grand strategy for the year.
- Two, it enables the Caucus to get the on-the-ground intelligence from unit committees as to what is really occurring on the ground.
- Three, if RPV can serve as the mortar that keeps the House and Senate together, so be it. Communication tends to solve things so nicely.

The tough part is this – it will require a strong chairman with a good reputation in the General Assembly to accomplish this. This more than anything else is a goal which RPV should commit itself towards resolving.

Unfortunately, as high as the hurdle is to clear for 2009's House races and our statewide seats, some degree of co-ordination will be absolutely critical to ensuring that our State Senators are as invested in preserving our House majority as can possibly be expected.

Can it be expected? It should...

(6) RNC Voter Vault and the RPV Voter List should be vastly improved and made freely available (with certain strings attached).

The lists are terrible. They've been terrible for awhile. Worse still, people actually use them (!) and then never give those lists back to RPV to update.

Here's another problem: there is no clean way of educating activists on (most of whom have day jobs) the ins and outs of creating a good voter contact program while surfing through our antediluvian RNC Voter Vault process. It simply can't be done well in an afternoon, and most folks simply don't have the time (or the talent of a gymnast) to go through all the hoops.

Political Directors should be training our unit chairmen directly on this process as a requirement of their office. Political Directors should also coach campaign managers (local and state) on how the process is done. It should take no more than 15 minutes to actually break down a good list for a specific campaign based on certain requirements or needs (e.g. GOTV, door knocking, or direct mail).

If the Political Director has no idea how this is done, they should be sacked *immediately* and replaced with someone who cares to learn.

Better than RNC Voter Vault in terms of quality, there is the additional problem of the RPV Voter List which is just slightly better than the RNC Voter Vault... but not by much.

The politics of the RPV Voter List are a bit difficult to understand. Obviously, it would be great if RPV could offer – free of charge – quality lists to any Republican who needs them. That’s good news for everyone... except elected officials greatly concerned about the prospect of primary challenges. As elected officials have and commit the resources, manpower (through campaigns), and finances to build excellent voter contact lists, there is zero incentive to turn these lists over.

The resolution is simple. The RPV Voter List belongs to the unit committees. Elected officials have no responsibility to turn over their lists... so let’s quit whining about reality and move on!

Unit committees through State Central Committee should demand and expect good, quality lists from RPV HQ, and there are many resources available that will not only offer updated lists (through the State Board of Elections and a simple National Change of Address bump), but will also give us access to microtargeted data in key areas (Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, Richmond, et al.) where Republican drift has been experienced.

In as such, those lists should be made available to unit committees and elected officials free of charge. Post-primary, Political Directors should make every effort available to using these lists. Pre-primary, campaigns on either side (challenger or incumbent) should be made available the list for common and accepted rates of charge.

Beyond this, our lists are our life. RNC Voter Vault for instance has scantron capacity available, and RPV should do the same for their lists. Political Directors and unit chairs when making their calls should demand receipt of completed call lists before new lists are issued to campaigns, thus ensuring a history of voter intent and information.

(7) Winning and being right are not mutually exclusive terms.

It’s worth repeating: Winning and being right are not mutually exclusive terms.

There is no reason for us to surrender either. And frankly, what we have lost is our fighting spirit, those “Jeffersonian conservative” principles that won us our majority so long ago.

We seem perfectly willing to surrender to public opinion, the media, special interests, lobbyists, or monetary gain – anything but our own judgment.

And while these groups and interests are all augmenting factors, it is to our unit committees and our grassroots that we owe our voices.

Beyond this, Republicans understand that we are a coalition of conservatives, moderates, libertarians, pro-lifers, home schoolers, entrepreneurs, Second Amendment activists, pro-family organizations, liberty-minded individualists, and countless other members of the “Leave Me Alone” coalition that seeks *limited* government, *lower* taxes, and *maximized* liberty.

Again, winning and being right are not mutually exclusive terms.

The Republican Party alone stands as the party of free minds, free markets, and a free society. Reagan knew this, ran on it without compromise, and won – building a legacy that 28 years later, we still rely upon.

Yet we don't need more Reagans or Goldwaters today. We need the next generation of leadership to rise up.

But so long as our organizational structure snuffs out innovation for the sake of titles, new media for the sake of message control, challengers for the sake of the status quo, and individual entrepreneurship for the sake of internal bureaucracy, we will never right the ship.

If we cannot right our own ship, the voters of the Commonwealth of Virginia have no business entrusting Virginia Republicans with public office.

Unfortunately, we have months – not years – to sort this out for 2009's contests. If there is any time to act, that time is immediately.

(8) Final Thoughts

We desperately need to start thinking of fresh ideas, reinventing our outreach, looking for new ways to inspire change. Whatever we have been doing simply isn't working.

Hopefully this memo inspires some new thinking and conversation to the better. Most importantly, I hope our leaders and our volunteers begin to see the value of the untapped resources around them – youth, new media, entrepreneurial values, and a basic assessment of first things – and that RPV is wise enough to capitalize on these quickly for 2009 and beyond.