

Shawn Steel

From: Chairman [Chairman@cagop.org]
Sent: Friday, October 26, 2001 9:15 AM
Subject: California's GOP Revival

Members and Friends,

This is a piece we sent out this week to op-ed boards around the state. I thought you might enjoy this going into our state convention this weekend. We hope to see you at the LAX Westin on Saturday.

Sincerely,

Shawn Steel

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October 26, 2001

California's GOP Revival

By Shawn Steel, CRP Chairman

California's political tide is shifting today. The state that twenty years ago propelled Ronald Reagan into the White House has tacked to the left in recent years. In the wake of an energy crisis and recent turbulent times, many of California's voters are suggesting that it is time to come-about. Californians are ready for new leadership, and Republicans are welcoming those ready to jump ship. New voters and independents are signing up with the Party in waves, and support for Republican leaders is at an all-time high.

Building on this sentiment, President George W. Bush visited California last week to a very different political climate than he faced on his last trip. Governor Davis harshly criticized the President in May, at the height of California's energy crisis, for opposing federal price-caps on wholesale energy. Five months later the Governor is commending President Bush on his leadership. Bush's approval ratings have risen from 42% at his first visit, to 74% today (*San Jose Chronicle*, Oct. 17, 2001). In contrast, Governor Davis' approval ratings in the last Field Institute poll in September hit their lowest levels since he became Governor.

Today the GOP is attracting new members in California at astounding levels. Party efforts this year have led to over 117 thousand new Republican voters. Since February Republicans have steadily increased their percentages in California among registered voters, while over the same period Democrat levels have fallen to their lowest marks since World War II (*Strategic Information Services Report*, Oct. 16, 2001). Republicans are the majority in 34 counties across the state, with two more projected to turn shortly. These Republican gains include significant increases in Stanislaus County, home of the infamous Congressman Gary Condit. Republican levels are actually higher in California today than they were in 1980, when Ronald Reagan won the state in a commanding 53% to 46% victory.

There are many reasons for these substantial gains in ranks among Republicans. Voter perceptions of the Republican Party have changed significantly since George W. Bush was elected President. A leader of the California Republican Party's grass-roots voter registration efforts who has seen this first hand commented, "The same people that used to scowl at our voter registration table as they walked by are now signing up as Republicans in masses." These new Republican gains increasingly include large numbers of women and minorities, a voting block that has traditionally been monopolized by the Democrat Party.

President Bush's popularity among Hispanics is also drawing large numbers of new voters to the Republican Party. This is particularly substantial in California, where over the last decade the Latino vote has represented virtually all of the increase in the electorate. The California Republican Party is reaching out to these new Latino voters. Newly

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sworn-in American citizens, many of whom are Hispanic, are waiting in long lines after naturalization ceremonies to have their picture taken with cutouts of President Bush. These new voters are proud to be American citizens, and believe that their President has demonstrated a significant interest in the Latino community. The President's popularity in this ever-growing segment of the California electorate opens the door for Republican challengers at all levels of government.

In 2002 California voters will decide whether they are happy with the direction our state is going or if they are ready for new leaders to chart a new course. The campaign question will inevitably arise, are you better off today than you were four years ago? Our state budget has gone from a \$4 billion surplus in 1998 to a projected \$10 billion deficit in 2002. Our state cannot handle that kind of hit. We as California taxpayers will be forced to compensate. Voters today are hungry for Republican alternatives, and happy with our national leader. Our poll numbers prove this. Independents and new voters are switching to the Party of George W. Bush, and have faith in his leadership. I acknowledge that much can happen in a year. Regardless, the Republican Party will inevitably play an increasing role in the electorate, the direction, and the leadership of the state of California.

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