
GOVERNOR HALEY R. BARBOUR: MISSISSIPPI

DAVID MCINTOSH: This morning, I have the pleasure of introducing a very good friend, and in many ways a mentor. When I was a young man working in the Reagan White House for the first President Bush, I would seek his counsel as various thorny issues and fighting with the bureaucracy would come up. His advice was always wise. He went on to be selected Chairman of the Republican Party, and in 1994 thanks to him and the efforts of many people and the voters back in my home state I was selected to serve in Congress in that tidal wave. I've been thinking, as I've been mulling over what to say in this introduction, that perhaps we ought to draft him to come back to Washington and help us figure out once again how to get back to that majority.

But the people in his home state, Mississippi, called him back to service as Governor there. They did so in a prominent way. Many of us saw him bring a lot of new industry and business to that state, letting them turn the corner into the 21st century. I'd hope that some of the rumors that people were approaching him and thinking someday he could be our presidential standard-bearer were indeed true. But then the Lord intervened and sent the disaster of Katrina to his home state and hit them hard. His leadership in that state, particularly when you stand it up against others in the region showed how it could be done. He does deserve applause for that because he has turned it around. He has helped the people of his state get back on their feet, rebuild, and once again turn towards prosperity. In recognition of that, *Governing* magazine yesterday announced that he is the number one Outstanding Governor of the 50 governors in the United States. Congratulations, Governor Barbour. It is a pleasure to have him here. I do hope we will see him more in Washington. Without further ado, let me give you Governor Haley Barbour.

HALEY BARBOUR: Thank you, David. I appreciate those generous remarks very much, and I too have enjoyed our friendship, while at the White House, when you were a Congressman, and times in-between. You know, I was honored to be asked to do this, and I gave a lot of thought to what I ought to talk about. There are a lot of things that we could talk about. I do not often get a chance to speak to a

national group of leading attorneys and people who care about the principles of government that I care about. So, I thought to myself, if you want to get one message over, what should it be?

I think sometimes we see things that seem pretty obvious and get exactly the wrong lesson. That's an important point for conservatives, for people who believe in limited government, to not get the wrong lesson from the election last week. You know, I was elected chairman of the Republican Party in 1993. In 1992, we suffered the worst loss for Republicans in decades, going back to 1964. We had 174 Republicans in the House, 42 in the Senate, 17 Republican governors. And our candidate for president, the incumbent, had just got the lowest percentage of the vote for any Republican candidate for president since 1912.

What was the lesson? Well, I can tell you the lesson. Not that the American people had changed their minds about conservative policies, about the market economy or limited government. The lesson was that the American people had changed their minds about us. They thought we hadn't adhered to the principles they had voted for when they elected us in 1988. And I think we see that again in this election. The American people haven't turned their back on individual freedom and personal responsibility—the essentials of limited government. They just think we Republicans, who've campaigned on that, stood for that, and in fact practiced that a lot in recent years, strayed away in the last few years.

Part of what happened last week, of course, was a recurring historical fact that in the second midterm election of two-Republican presidencies, Republicans usually take big losses. There have only been four of them since World War II: 1958, Republicans lost 13 seats in the Senate; 1974, when we lost nearly 50 seats in the House; 1986, when we lost eight senators and lost control of the Senate; and now 2006 when, in all historical honesty, we had an average election for a two-term Republican president's second midterm election. We lost about 30 in the House, which is about average. We lost six in the Senate, which actually is a little below average, and we lost six governors. Now, that doesn't mean it wasn't a bad election. It was a bad election. But the history let us know on the front end that we were ripe for a bad

election, that we were going to be running in a bad environment.

Of course, this is greatly exacerbated by the fact that Americans don't like long wars. Don't take my word for it. Ask Lyndon Johnson or Harry Truman. The 24-hour news cycle has made it even worse, because the media thinks their job is to tell the American people the worst things that have happened in Iraq that day. The one thing I will say about President Bush, it's not news to him that Americans don't like long wars. He is very aware of that. He's been made aware of it time and again. But he's said he's going to be for what he thinks is right, whether it's politically popular or not. There's a hell of a lot to be said for that in this country, for people who will do what's right rather than what's popular.

My old boss, Ronald Reagan, used to say that at the end of the day, good policy is good politics. But sometimes, you're not still alive by the end of the day; or still in office. I do think it's important, however, that we not lose sight of the fact that since probably 1984, we've had essential parity between the two parties in this country. There's been equilibrium in American politics. It's shifted here and there, but overall it has stayed pretty close to the center. We have 49 Democrat senators; 49 Republican senators. The vote in the presidential election, 51 to 48, and before that it was 48-1/2 to 48-2/10, or whatever it was. The American people are pretty evenly split on things, and different issues can cause people to shift slightly.

I think the things that hurt us the worst, very honestly, in Congress at least, were scandal and spending. When you consider the fact that we have as a significant part of our party people who are religious conservatives, things like corruption, the Foley scandal, for instance, have a lot more impact. I remember when Gerry Stubbs was a Democratic congressman from Massachusetts; he plied a teenage page with alcohol; and then committed homosexual acts with him. Instead of the Speaker of the House doing what Denny Hastert did to Foley, telling him to resign, Gerry Stubbs was reelected five more times, served as a committee chairman, and the majority leader of the House-to-be, Steny Hoyer, voted on the floor not to censure him. Times have changed, I guess. But the fact of the matter is, his constituents were a whole lot more willing to tolerate bad behavior than are a lot of the social conservatives who vote Republican.

So, sometimes what hurts a conservative wouldn't hurt a liberal, or what hurts a liberal wouldn't hurt a conservative. But the corruption, I think, was serious. We may overstate sometimes the damage done by the perception that Congress was spending too much money. But while it can be overstated, it also is real. You heard it from the business community, particularly, more than anybody else—dissatisfaction that we were spending too much money; that we were a party of big spending just as much as the Democrats have been a party of big spending.

So as you look at the election, try to keep those things in mind. I think the real test of where we go from here, to some degree, is where the Democrats try to go. Are they going to try to be the dominant force in Washington? It's very hard for the President not to be the dominant force in Washington. But I'm more concerned personally about where the Republicans are going to go. I think it is incumbent upon us to practice what we preach. I don't think there's any cure better than what my old friend Lee Atwater used to say. "Be for what you're for; don't try to be for what's popular, don't try to be for what you think's going to be popular by the next election. Be for what you're for."

When I was political director of the Reagan White House, I can tell you, President Reagan had millions of Americans who would disagree with him on this and that, but who admired him for the fact that he'd tell you the truth, and he'd do what he said he was going to do. They voted for him because there is an enormous political premium, in America at least, for keeping the promises you make. Now, we conservatives have an added advantage there. If we will adhere to the conservative policies that we believe in, the results will be great because those policies work.

You know, the market is better for the economy than government control. I don't know why we have to prove that to ourselves about every 10 or 15 years, but we do; and if we stick with it, it works. In fact, the economy in this country today is pretty dang good.

In Mississippi, we have people who are making more money than they've ever made before. Our personal income has grown 11 percent in the last two years, despite being hit by the worst natural disaster in American history, with 70,000 people

losing their jobs overnight. That's 70,000 people who qualified for disaster unemployment. And yet, the income in our state continues to go up. The economy is growing, and it's largely because of good policies. We have stuck with the right kind of things, and if Republicans will do that on a national level, in my view it's more important than who is the next candidate for president.

We've got some good candidates running in 2008. But the more important thing in my mind is who we are as a party; what the Republicans in Congress do in terms of policy and principle. If we stand by the right policies, I promise you the Democrats will hang themselves. We just have to let them.

I remember fondly Clinton/Care, the proposal to create a government-run health care system. You know, the American people are just smarter than politicians give them credit for. Give them a little time and they'll figure it out.

Or President Clinton's economic plan—soon to be known as the largest tax increase in American history. People remember that. We're going to see that repeated.

The question is, where are we going to be? You know, every few years you can do like the Democrats and run an election that just says, "The people who are in office are bad; vote for us because we need a change." But usually in American politics, you've got to give the American people something to vote for. David and our guys did that in 1994 when instead of just saying, "We know you don't like Clinton, let's throw the Democrats out," we ran on the Contract with America and said, "Elect us and here's what we'll do." A lot of people don't remember that, in the first few years, every one of those things was acted on in some way or another. And I remember fondly President Clinton's acceptance speech at his own convention in 1996 when six of the things that he took credit for had come out of the Contract with America. Good policy is good politics.

Because we're trying to save some time for questions, I'm going to stop, except to say that we just lost one of the great economic thinkers of our side in Milton Friedman, and I think if we will hitch ourselves and stay hitched to those kinds of economic ideas and then do the same things in terms of foreign policy, national security, domestic policy, then we're going to just be fine. But we've got to prove to the

American people that we've got the discipline and the courage to do that. We're going to learn a lot about our courage and discipline in the next couple of years.

Thank you all very much.

