

Going Beyond Headlines and Stereotypes,

A History of the GOP

From the beginning

Abolishing slavery. Free speech. Women's suffrage. In today's stereotypes, none of these sounds like a typical Republican issue, yet they are stances the Republican Party, in opposition to the Democratic Party, adopted early on.

Reducing the government. Streamlining the bureaucracy. Returning power to the states. With a core belief in the idea of the primacy of individuals, the Republican Party, since its inception, has been at the forefront of the fight for individuals' rights in opposition to a large, bloated government.

The Republican Party has always thrived on challenges and difficult positions. Its present role as leader of the revolution in which the principles of government are being re-evaluated is a role it has traditionally embraced.

At the time of its founding, the Republican Party was organized as an answer to the divided politics, political turmoil, arguments, and internal division, particularly over slavery that plagued the many existing political parties in the United States in 1854. The Free Soil Party, asserting that all men had a natural right to the soil, demanded that the government re-evaluate homesteading legislation and grant land to settlers free of charge. The Conscience Whigs, the "radical" faction of the Whig Party in the North, alienated themselves from their Southern counterparts by adopting an anti-slavery position. Moreover, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed territories to determine whether slavery would be legalized in accordance with "popular sovereignty" and thereby nullify the principles of the Missouri Compromise, created a schism within the Democratic Party.

A staunch Anti-Nebraska Democrat, Alvan E. Bovay, like his fellow Americans, was disillusioned by this atmosphere of confusion and division. Taking advantage of the political turmoil caused by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Bovay united discouraged members from the Free Soil Party, the Conscience Whigs, and the Anti-Nebraska Democrats. Meeting in a Congregational church in Ripon, Wis., he helped establish a party that represented the interests of the North and the abolitionists by merging two fundamental issues: free land and preventing the spread of slavery into the Western territories. Realizing the new party needed a name to help unify it, Bovay decided on the term Republican because it was simple, synonymous with equality and alluded to the earlier party of Thomas Jefferson, the Democratic-Republicans.

On July 6, 1854, in Jackson, Mich., the Republican Party formally organized itself by holding its first convention, adopting a platform, and nominating a full slate of candidates for state offices. Other states soon followed, and the first Republican candidate for

president, John C. Frémont, ran in 1856 with the slogan "Free soil, free labor, free speech, free men, Fremont."

Even though he ran on a third-party ticket, Frémont managed to capture a third of the vote, and the Republican Party began to add members throughout the land. As tensions mounted over the slavery issue, more anti-slavery Republicans began to run for office and be elected, even with the risks involved with taking this stance. Republican Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts experienced this danger firsthand. In May 1856, he delivered a passionate anti-slavery speech in which he made critical remarks about several pro-slavery senators, including Andrew F. Butler of South Carolina. Sumner infuriated Rep. Preston S. Brooks, the son of one of Butler's cousins, who felt his family honor had been insulted. Two days later, Brooks walked into the Senate and beat Sumner unconscious with a cane. This incident electrified the nation and helped to galvanize Northern opinion against the South; Southern opinion hailed Brooks as a hero. Nevertheless, Sumner stood by his principles, and after a three-year, painful convalescence, he returned to the Senate to continue his struggle against slavery.

The first Republican

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the Republicans firmly established themselves as a major party capable of holding onto the White House for 60 of the next 100 years. Faced with the first shots of the Civil War barely a month after his inauguration, preserving the Union was Lincoln's greatest challenge--and no doubt his greatest achievement. However, it was by no means his only accomplishment.

Amid the fierce and bloody battles of the Civil War, the Lincoln administration established the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and a national banking system. Understanding the importance of settling the frontier, as well as having a piece of land to call your own, Lincoln passed the Homestead Act, which satisfied the former Free Soil members by offering public land grants. Hoping to encourage a higher level of education, Lincoln also donated land for agricultural and technical colleges to the states through the Land Grant College Act, which established universities throughout the United States.

Fully sensitive to the symbolism of their name, the Republicans worked to deal the deathblow to slavery with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the passage, by a Republican Congress, of the 13th Amendment, which outlawed slavery. The Republican Congress, worked to turn back the Democratic advance in the South, immediately after the Civil War the Republican Congress continued to push through legislation to extend the full protection of civil rights to black Americans.

During Reconstruction, the mostly Democratic South, which had seceded from both the Union and Congress, struggled to regain its footing. Meanwhile, the Republicans took advantage of their majority and passed several measures to improve the quality of life for blacks throughout the entire Union. First, the Republicans passed a Civil Rights Act in 1866 recognizing blacks as U.S. citizens. This act hoped to weaken the South by denying

states the power to restrict blacks from testifying in a court of law or from owning their own property.

Continuing to take advantage of their majority, Republicans proposed the 14th Amendment, which became part of the Constitution in 1868, stating, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

That same year the Republican Congress also passed the National Eight Hour Law, which, though it applied only to government workers, brought relief for overworked federal employees by limiting the workday to eight hours.

Leading the way on the issues

Some people have argued that Republicans fought to give blacks equal rights and then the vote as a way of wresting control of the South away from the Democrats. While it is true that almost all blacks voted Republican, these were very dangerous and controversial issues at the time. For whatever reason, many Republican politicians risked their careers on that period's "third rail" of politics. Nevertheless, they still managed to abolish slavery, and eventually established the right to vote for black American's as well. In fact, many blacks even held elected office and were influential in state legislatures. Moreover, in 1869, the first blacks entered Congress as members of the Republican Party, establishing a trend that was not broken until 1935 when the first black Democrat finally was elected to Congress.

Meanwhile, Republicans continued being elected to the White House. In 1868, Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant won the presidency easily and was re-elected in 1872. Although he seemed a bit bewildered by the transition from the military life of a general to being president, under Grant the Republican commitment to sound money policies continued, and the Department of Justice and the Weather Bureau were established. The Republicans in Congress continued to boldly set the agenda, and in 1870, they proposed and passed the 15th Amendment, which guaranteed voting rights regardless of race, creed, or previous condition of servitude. Setting another precedent two years later, the Republican Congress turned its sights toward women's issues and authorized equal pay for equal work performed by women employed by federal agencies.

It was around this time that the symbol of the elephant for the Republican Party was created by Thomas Nast, a famous illustrator and caricaturist for *The New Yorker*. In 1874, a rumor that animals had escaped from the New York City Zoo coincided with worries surrounding a possible third-term run by Grant. Nast chose to represent the Republicans as elephants because elephants were clever, steadfast and controlled when calm, yet unmanageable when frightened.

But, embracing a tradition established by George Washington and the Republican Party, which had gone on record opposing a third term for any president, President Grant did

not run for re-election in 1876. Instead, in one of the most bitterly disputed elections in American history, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes won the presidency by the margin of one electoral vote. After the election, cooperation between the White House and the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives was nearly impossible. Nevertheless, Hayes managed to keep his campaign promises. He cautiously withdrew federal troops from the South to allow them to shake off the psychological yoke of being a conquered land, took measures to reverse the myriad inequalities suffered by women in that period and adopted the merit system within the civil service.

Not surprisingly, the Republican appeal held in 1880 when the party won its sixth consecutive presidential election with the election of the Civil War hero James A. Garfield and managed to regain small majorities in both the House and the Senate. Following Garfield's assassination, Chester A. Arthur succeeded to the Oval Office and, in 1883, oversaw the passage of the Pendleton Act through Congress. This bill classified about 10 percent of all government jobs and created a bipartisan Civil Service Commission to prepare and administer competitive examinations for these positions. As dreary as this bill sounds, it was important because it made at least part of the government bureaucracy a professional work force.

Suddenly the Republicans' fortunes changed, and embarking on a decade-long period of quick reversals, the Republicans lost the 1884 election. However, by this time the party had firmly established itself as a permanent force in American politics by not only preserving the Union and leading the nation through the Reconstruction, but by also striking a chord of greater personal autonomy within the national psyche. Yet while the presidency was regained for one term with the 1888 election of Benjamin Harrison, with the re-emergence of the South from the destruction of the Civil War the Republicans were shut out for the first time since the Civil War in the election of 1892, as the Democrats won control of the House, the Senate and the presidency.

Republican voters returned to their party with the 1896 election, electing William McKinley to the White House. His term was the start of a consecutive four-term Republican possession of the White House.

The Bull Moose

Assuming the presidency when McKinley was assassinated in 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt busied himself with what he considered the most pressing issue, ensuring the Republican principle of competition in a free market. To do so, Roosevelt used the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, passed in 1890 under Republican President Benjamin Harrison, to successfully prosecute and break up several large business monopolies.

In 1903, Roosevelt became involved with foreign policy, supporting revolutionaries who then formed the Republic of Panama. His actions in Panama resulted in the treaty that permitted construction of the Panama Canal. In 1905, Roosevelt--who popularized the West African phrase "Speak softly and carry a big stick" to explain his view on foreign policy--successfully negotiated the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the conflict between

Russia and Japan. Roosevelt's accomplishments as a peacemaker earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and the distinction of being the first American to receive this award.

Roosevelt easily won a second term and proceeded to continue to stand by his principles. Roosevelt, who was constantly bucking public prejudice, appointed the Cabinet's first Jewish member, Oscar Strauss. Then, in 1906, after reading Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Roosevelt instructed Congress to pass laws concerning meat inspection and pure food and drug legislation. Two years later, he placed 150 million acres of forestland into federal reserves and organized a National Conservation Conference. Believing in the importance of work, Roosevelt was also responsible for creating the Department of Labor.

Although his immense popularity almost guaranteed that he could be elected to a third term, following precedent, Roosevelt retired, allowing William Taft to become the next Republican to hold the presidential office.

Discord struck the Republican Party in the 1912 election as Teddy Roosevelt, dissatisfied with President Taft, led his supporters on the "Bull Moose" ticket against the president. Playing to the advantage of a split Republican vote, as they would again 80 years later, the Democrats won the election with Woodrow Wilson

Republican women

Standing in sharp contrast to the two existing political parties' present stereotypes regarding minorities and women, once again the Republican Party was the vanguard in relation to women. In 1917, Jeannette Rankin, a Montana Republican, became the first woman to serve in the House. Committed to her pacifist beliefs, she was the only member of Congress to vote against entry into both World War I and World War II.

Shortly after Ms. Rankin's election to Congress, the 19th Amendment was passed in 1919. The amendment's journey to ratification had been a long and difficult one. Starting in 1896, the Republican Party became the first major party to officially favor women's suffrage. That year, Republican Sen. A. A. Sargent of California introduced a proposal in the Senate to give women the right to vote. The proposal was defeated four times in the Democratic-controlled Senate. When the Republican Party regained control of Congress, the Equal Suffrage Amendment finally passed (304-88). Only 16 Republicans opposed the amendment.

When the amendment was submitted to the states, 26 of the 36 states that ratified it had Republican-controlled legislatures. Of the nine states that voted against ratification, eight were controlled by Democrats. Twelve states, all Republican, had given women full suffrage before the federal amendment was finally ratified.

The Republicans trip

During the Roaring Twenties, three successive Republican presidents kept a lid on government spending and taxes. Warren G. Harding (1921-1923), who, according to *A Short History of the American Nation*, balanced the budget and reduced the national debt by an average of more than \$500 million per year. Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929) and

Herbert Hoover (1929-1933). While Republicans controlled the White House and Congress, the U.S. economy expanded as free enterprise stimulated business and industry. The Republicans' sound money policies brought growing prosperity and steadily cut the federal debt.

In 1929, the Wall Street crash signaled disaster for the Republicans as President Hoover emerged as the scapegoat for the Great Depression. Despite his creation of the home-loan banks and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to save the American financial structures, Hoover's anti-Depression efforts went unheeded as people turned to the Democrats for a "New Deal."

Under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the federal government gained power and size while deficit spending rose because of increased government involvement in the economy.

Renewing the party

The next 20 years were a time of rebuilding for the Republican Party. This effort included establishing a greater role for women. Launching a tradition that the RNC chairman and co-chairman be of opposite sex, in 1937, Marion E. Martin was named first assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee. Three years later, the Republican Party became the first major political party to endorse an equal rights amendment for women in its platform.

In the post-Depression era, five presidential terms were shared by only two presidents. The Democrats ignored the two-term tradition upheld by the Republican Party and allowed Roosevelt to run for and win an unprecedented four terms. Following Roosevelt's death, Vice President Harry S Truman became president. It was not until 1946, with the 80th Congress, that the Republicans won a majority in both the Senate and the House. Notably, this Congress produced the first balanced federal budget since Republican Herbert Hoover was president.

With the Truman administration held responsible for failure to arbitrate a crippling steel strike, escalating inflation and the Korean War, in 1950 the renewed Republican Party made strong gains in Congress.

Two years later World War II hero Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president, carrying the party to its first presidential victory in almost 25 years. During Eisenhower's two terms, the nation quickly recovered from the economic strain of the war. Focusing on rebuilding the nation and re-establishing America's pre-eminence, he established the Interstate Highway System and forged ahead with America's space exploration program. Continuing the Republicans' commitment to women, in 1953 he appointed a woman, Oveta Culp Hobby, as the first secretary of his newly created Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The Eisenhower administration also made efforts to enforce the 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education Supreme Court decision that declared "separate but equal" school

accommodations unconstitutional. On the heels of implementing this decision through the protection of the National Guard, Eisenhower completed formal integration of blacks in the armed forces. Charged with upholding the rights of blacks, Eisenhower appointed a Civil Rights Commission and created a civil rights division in the Justice Department. All of these actions culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which gave the attorney general power to obtain injunctions to stop Southern registrars and officials from interfering with blacks seeking to register and vote.

Turmoil

Eisenhower's vice president, Richard Nixon, lost the 1960 presidential election to John F. Kennedy by the narrowest margin in U.S. history, and, with the establishment of the Camelot mystique, it seemed the Republican Party was again at low ebb in the political tide.

In 1968, Nixon led the party to victory in a hard-fought presidential contest. In the next four years, Nixon established his place in history as an expert in foreign affairs. He firmly believed that the United States had a form of government that was better than any other system, and therefore, the United States should play a major role in world politics in order to protect American interests as well as to promote our values.

Domestically, Nixon brought inflation under control by implementing the traditional Republican policy of fiscal control and by the innovative tactic of cutting the dollar loose from the gold standard. In addition, The Clean Air Act, which began the process of environmental controls in the United States, was crafted and passed under the Nixon administration. His administration also promoted America's manned space program.

Nixon won a landslide victory in 1972, carrying every state except Massachusetts. When Nixon resigned in the wake of the Watergate scandal in 1974, Ford assumed the presidency, selecting former Gov. Nelson Rockefeller as his vice president.

Under the Ford administration, the United States regained its confidence in politics and in the integrity of national government. At the same time, America's double-digit inflation rate was cut in half, taxes were cut significantly, and the role of municipal and state governments was enhanced by reducing federal government expansion. However, the country's first appointed president was denied election to office in 1976 by a narrow loss to Jimmy Carter.

A new renaissance

In 1980, Ronald Reagan ran for president promising a "New Federalism." On the theory that local governments reflected both the will and the wisdom of the citizenry better than the remote bureaucracy-ridden government in Washington, Reagan planned to transfer some functions of the federal government to the states.

Both the past and the future of the Republican Party were represented in Reagan's election to the presidency. His sense of humor lightened the pessimism pervading America--as when John Hinckley Jr. shot him in the chest. Although seriously wounded,

as Reagan was wheeled into the operating room for emergency surgery, he told the team of doctors that he hoped they were all Republicans. In response Dr. Giordano, a Democrat, said, "We're all Republicans today."

His sincerity and strength led to an emotional tidal wave at the polls. Reagan restored America's pride in itself. As he once commented, "America's best days are yet to come. Our proudest moments are yet to be. Our most glorious achievements are just ahead. America remains what Emerson called her 150 years ago, 'the country of tomorrow.'"

Continuing the Republican tradition of leading the way in furthering the position of women, Reagan's first term included several notable appointments. He selected Sandra Day O'Connor as the first female Supreme Court justice, Elizabeth Dole as the first female secretary of transportation and Jeane Kirkpatrick as the first female U.S. representative to the United Nations. With Dole, Kirkpatrick, and Margaret Heckler as the secretary of health and human services, it was also the first time in history three women served concurrently in a president's Cabinet.

In his 1984 re-election, President Reagan received the largest Republican landslide victory in history. Under the leadership of President Reagan and his successor, George Bush, the United States experienced the longest economic expansion period in its history--more than 20.7 million new jobs were created as a result. His steadfastness in the face of the communist threat led to the surprising--to all but himself--collapse of communism in 1989. Reaching milestones economically and diplomatically, President Reagan, "The Great Communicator," earned his place in history among our greatest presidents.

Although Reagan was a hard act to follow, President Bush's leadership was proven when he lay a solid groundwork for U.S. policy in such critical areas as nuclear disarmament, free trade, the Middle East peace process, and the future of NATO. Relying on his illustrious military experience, he brought together an unprecedented coalition to maintain the forces of law in the Persian Gulf region. In the wake of Operation Desert Storm, President Bush's popularity soared to record levels. As a result of his leadership after the war, a delegation from Israel sat face to face with Palestinians for the first time in thousands of years.

Unfortunately, President Bush was blamed for a worldwide economic slowdown triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and involving the transition of the global economy from an industrial base to a high-technology base, and he was unsuccessful in his bid for re-election in 1992. Nearly 20 percent of voters were drawn to the blunt anti-government candidacy of Ross Perot, and another 43 percent elected "New Democrat" Bill Clinton, who promised to reinvent government.