

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Republican National Committee

FROM: Michael Leavitt, Chief of Staff

DATE: December 1, 2010

RE: RNC success at maximizing electoral gains

Several members of the Republican National Committee have asked us to provide information regarding our tremendous success at maximizing electoral gains in the 2010 elections. I am delighted to do so. In short, reports that have attempted to minimize the focus, energy and leadership of the RNC in securing the Republican successes of November are simply wrong. They rely on baseless allegations and are inaccurate. I feel that to allow these negative accounts to go unrebuted would be to allow a distortion of the truth, the truth that you and others at the RNC worked diligently and cohesively to achieve our historic gains and that millions of RNC donors, volunteers, and Republican voters organized and spoke forcefully on Election Day to reclaim our nation's future. I do not ask that you take my word for it. Instead, I simply encourage you to review the undisputed facts as they speak for themselves.

Background

Historic Electoral Gains. The Republican Party achieved historic gains on Election Day:

- Republicans will win 63 House seats, **the biggest gain since 1938.**
- Republicans won the most House seats en route to winning a majority since **the 1800s.**
- **For the first time in U.S. history**, a party that suffered losses in consecutive elections as catastrophic as Republicans did in 2006 and 2008 **rebounded to win a majority** in the U.S. House or Senate in the next election.
- Republicans won the **greatest share of state legislative seats** since **1928.**

Record Turnout. Republican GOTV efforts achieved record turnout in 2010:

- **Over 44 million voters** turned out to cast ballots for Republican candidates for the U.S. House in 2010. That number is, by a huge margin, **the highest midterm turnout for any party in any midterm election in U.S. history.**
- Republican GOTV efforts **smashed multiple voter turnout records:**
 - Approximately **8.5 million more Republican voters** went to the polls in 2010 than in the last midterm election, a stunning **24% increase** and **the biggest single jump in voter turnout in U.S. history for either party.**
 - The 24% jump in Republican voter dramatically **reversed very poor GOTV trends** evident in recent elections; prior to 2010, Republican turnout in midterm elections actually had **declined** over four successive elections.
- The **RNC played a critical role** in driving record Republican turnout in 2010.
 - The RNC worked to establish and fund a **record 360 Victory offices** across the country with paid staff persons in the 2010 cycle, compared to just 154 Victory offices in 2008 and 140 in 2006. Moreover, the RNC established Victory offices **earlier** than in the past, **further boosting GOTV efforts.**
 - The RNC made over **45 million voter contacts** in the 2010 cycle, far more than in previous elections, including presidential years as well as midterms. These contacts were critical: the number of voter contacts this year, as it had in the past, **correlated very strongly with actual voter turnout.**
 - Our “Fire Pelosi” RNC bus tour conducted **hundreds of rallies** and countless media events in **48 states** in the weeks leading up to the election, energizing voters across the country and generating earned media for candidates and the Republican message.

Response to Media Reports

The historic Republican gains of the 2010 election were possible only because the Party, supported consistently and vigorously by the RNC, implemented a highly effective and well-funded GOTV effort that maximized Republican gains.

After the election, however, the efficacy of the RNC’s GOTV efforts has been called into question. That assertion is so inconsistent with the facts —as noted, the Republican turnout this fall was the highest midterm turnout for any party in any midterm

election in U.S. history, a particularly remarkable feat in view of the anemic Republican turnout in recent midterms. The RNC trained its focus to GOP turnout efforts, confident that the voters' desire to be heard could be stoked and directed toward change. This focus resulted in the reversal in decline of Republican turnout over a span of four midterm elections ending in 2006.

The RNC has been, and will be, focused on a single goal: building an enduring majority party—from the grassroots up. For that reason, the only meaningful metrics of our success are how many voters cast ballots for Republicans, and how many elections, as a result, we win. Though the RNC broke fundraising records this cycle, all should recognize that money is just one means to an end. Our true and shared goal is winning elections. I can with gratitude and satisfaction assure you unequivocally that the RNC provided the resources and leadership required to help win so many bitterly fought elections.

Maximizing Gains of House Seats. As noted, Republicans made historic gains in 2010, mounting the greatest electoral comeback in American history and picking up the most House seats since 1938, among other achievements.

Yet some media reports assert that we failed to win as many seats as we could have, specifically identifying 21 seats, all of which were held by Democrats who had won in the previous election by margins ranging from comfortable to overwhelming, where Republicans “could have been competitive”.

At the outset, it should be noted what an extraordinary assertion that is—had Republicans won an additional 21 seats, for a total of 85, that would have been the second highest gain in U.S. history, and the highest overall since the 1800s.

Also worth noting is the inclusion of numerous districts among the 21 in question where Republicans have not been competitive for some time, if ever. For example, Arizona-7 has *never* been won by a Republican, and over its history prior to 2010 the district has elected a Democratic representative by an average of 26.3%; even Arizona’s own John McCain lost to Barack Obama there by 15%. Similarly, Democrats have won New York-4 over the last five elections, a range which includes strong Republican years, by an average of 22.5%.

Nonetheless, despite a history of lopsided Republican losses in these 21 districts, they were strongly contested in 2010, and Republican candidates made strong showings in each. Actual election data, available for review, shows convincingly that, contrary to claims that Republicans “could have been competitive” in these districts, Republicans ***very much were competitive in these districts***, thanks to the ***most successful voter turnout effort in history***:

- Across the country, Republican turnout increased an historic 24%, with the single largest increase ever in the number of votes cast for a party’s candidates from one midterm to the next. However, in these 21 districts, the **jump in voter turnout**

was an even more dramatic 27% over 2006 levels. To appreciate the magnitude of that achievement, recall that over the previous four midterm elections, Republican turnout actually had **decreased**.

- The jump in voter turnout was particularly pronounced in the areas that had been most hostile to Republican messaging in recent elections, such as the heavily minority Arizona-7 or the Northeastern inner-suburban New York-4. In Arizona-7, **Republican turnout from 2006 increased by 42%**, and the Democratic margin of victory from the last election was slashed from 60,000 to 6,000. In New York-4, **Republican turnout increased 61%** from the last midterm.

Together with our historic gains of some 63 House seats, the results in these 21 races are conclusive proof that, in fact, the Republican GOTV effort, in which the RNC played a critical role, was an unprecedented success. We have succeeded in reaching a wider audience who will be ready to receive our message in 2012 and we have eroded Democrat strongholds deep “behind enemy lines.”

Also contrary to some claims, the RNC and Republican candidates were particularly effective in two tasks essential to achieving our historic gains—maximizing gains among potentially winnable seats, and coming out ahead in the closest elections:

- **Republicans won a remarkable 92%** of the races RealClearPolitics rated as at least slightly more favorable than “Toss Up”, but less than “Safe”, **picking up 44 Democrat seats** in the process. By comparison, in the last midterm, Republicans won only 65% of seats with **identical ratings** by RCP, and every single one of those seats already was held by a Republican.
- Republicans also **picked up 20 additional Democrat seats** rated by RealClearPolitics as no better than “Toss Up” and, in some cases, “Lean Democrat” or “Likely Democrat.” By contrast, in 2006, Republicans failed to pick up a single Democrat seat, the first time the Party had **failed to do so since 1948**.
- Republicans **won most close races** (decided by less than 2,000 votes) in 2010, reversing the pattern evident in recent midterms in which the GOP gained seats: in 1994 and 2002, Republicans lost more close races than we won.
- Karl Rove acknowledged in a *The Wall Street Journal* op-ed published before the election that the maximum achievable GOP gains, that is, “a net Republican pickup of 64 to 69 seats in the House,” would be possible only if we had an extremely effective GOTV effort. RNC implemented a superlative turnout operation, and **the maximum gains were achieved**.

Contrary to a handful of slanted reports, **Republicans won virtually every House seat at which we had a good shot and a great many more**. None of this was an accident, and reflects the careful planning and very hard work of countless patriotic Americans

who were committed to getting as many potential Republican supporters to vote as possible. To assist their efforts, the RNC implemented new strategies that worked, such as an increased reliance on extremely effective yet extremely inexpensive new media and voter contact methods, rather than return to old strategies that failed, such as incurring the considerable expense of flying, housing, and feeding Washington staffers to make calls from a phone bank in the field that they could make from home. As we committed to do, we leveraged and deployed technology in ways that amplified our effectiveness.

Maximizing Gains of Senate Seats. Similarly specious claims have been made about the ultimate effect of the RNC's GOTV efforts in this year's Senate races. Again, the numbers simply do not support these claims.

Media reports cite a “study” by an obscure private group that does not appear to do campaign work. That “study,” **which totals a mere 18 sentences (including quoted text)**, is little more than a comparison, of final RealClearPolitics poll averages to actual election results. The “study” claims that the slight differential in the averages reflects poorly on RNC turnout efforts. The “study” specifically criticizes the RNC’s decision to end the costly 72-hour program, which the “study” refers to as the “the famously successful 72-hour GOTV program,” a curious characterization in light of the fact that it actually led to a decline in Republican voter turnout over a 12-year period, a record of campaign failure almost without precedent in American history, and “succeeded” in winning precisely zero Democrat seats in the last midterm, the first time in 28 elections dating back to 1948 that Republicans had failed to do so. The “study” offers the further insight that Republicans who won had more success in having people vote for them than Republicans who lost.

Again, the facts, for those who seek them, tell a different story. The “study” states that in the nine most competitive races, actual vote totals favored Democrats by an average of 3.9% more than RCP final poll averages. By far, the biggest discrepancy was in Nevada. Yet, as the sole link included in the “study” points out, Nevada’s early voting would have rendered a 72-hour program ineffective. Even including the Nevada results, however, a *nearly identical* margin between RCP averages and actual results existed in the last midterm, when “the famously successful 72-hour GOTV program” was fully implemented. In 2006, of the 13 Senate races rated as most competitive by RCP, Republicans outperformed RCP poll averages in only two, falling short by an average of 2.9%. For good measure, Republicans won a much higher share of the races in 2010 than in 2006.

Citing the “study,” some media reports also have asserted that two Senate races may have been lost due to GOTV efforts: Washington and Colorado.

Two different data sets directly contradict such claims regarding the Washington Senate race.

First, because of the state’s reliance on mail voting, the final RCP averages are not meaningful as they factor in only the polls done immediately before Election Day,

after most people already had voted. A reasoned and thoughtful calculation of poll averages from mid-October (10/15-20), which are more reflective of voter sentiment when ballots actually were cast, would have found that the final result comported almost exactly, within less than one percent, with the actual outcome. Failure to recognize the importance of such a fact to a meaningful analysis seems to betray a lack of general understanding of campaign data.

Second, as most of you familiar as you are with campaigns and polling have long recognized, RCP has consistently understated Democrat support in its final poll averages for Washington statewide races. In the 2010 Senate race, that differential was 3.5%; in the 2008 governors' race, it was 3.4%; in the 2006 Senate race, it was 3.6%. The "study" apparently is unaware of that pattern, which would be critical to an unbiased analysis. It is clearly wrong to attribute that differential to factors specific to 2010, for it has recurred every cycle.

The Colorado Senate race, unlike the Washington race, did have larger significance, but not because of what it suggested about the RNC's turnout efforts. Instead, Colorado presented the most prominent example of how the Republican Party could be badly hurt by a schism among its supporters.

The RNC's most important achievement this cycle has been to ensure that the disaffected conservatives who abandoned the GOP in recent elections, yet still accounted for a plurality of voters, supported Republican candidates in 2010. With them, the GOP is a majority; without them, a directionless minority. The RNC welcomed the energy and limited government principles of grassroots conservatives and worked hard to ensure that their views found expression within the Republican Party – and not in a potentially ruinous third party movement. As a result, the party has been strengthened, the grassroots have been revived and energized, and an important national dialogue has begun. Instead of fighting the Party, these grassroots movements have expanded our reach in 50 states and broadened the common base of support for limited government.

Colorado did, indeed, present a cautionary tale about what can happen if a schism develops among potential GOP voters. In the Colorado governor's race, a third party bid arose at the expense of the Republican nominee, who won barely 11% of the vote. The Senate race also was affected adversely, as internal disagreements prevailed and voter energy on the Republican side dissipated. The rift also helped Democrats portray the Republican nominee as extreme, which in turn led to a drop in support among suburban swing voters. That dynamic is what led to the party's underperformance in Colorado. Yet that dynamic also tends to highlight the RNC's successes rather than reveal any shortcomings, for the RNC has been the leading force in ensuring that such schisms are averted elsewhere. We are glad to have saved other candidates from these distractions and disarray and will carry forward with us the lessons of Colorado.

Maximizing Gains of Governors Seats. Media reports also cited claims that Republicans could have won three additional gubernatorial races. Several statistics relating to the governors races merit further study. However, I believe that the adverse

outcomes among gubernatorial races are in spite of, rather than attributable to, highly effective turnout efforts, and are largely as a result of the idiosyncrasies of each election. For that reason, I am quite confident that we, as a party, maximized our gains in governors races.

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Again, thank you for all the hard work each of you have done to make the Republican Party's historic victories in the 2010 possible. Without your efforts, none of our success would have been possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments.