

South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford on how to fix the Republican Party

For all Americans, this election represents another glass ceiling broken, and in the words of my 16-year-old, "That's very cool." The election of the first black president is an inspiring and transformational moment for our country.

I am happy for President-elect Barack Obama, and for many who supported him. They and, in many cases, their ancestors fought for this day for centuries as they experienced first-hand the unthinkable wrong of segregation. As an American, I wish him every success.

Beyond the presidential race, it goes without saying the Republican Party took a shellacking nationally. Some on the left will say our electoral losses are a repudiation of our principles of lower taxes, smaller government and individual liberty. But Tuesday was not in fact a rejection of those principles -- it was a rejection of Republicans' failure to live up to those principles.

I believe in the Biblical notion of taking the log out of your own eye before worrying about the splinter in someone else's. Accordingly, let me focus on my own party and the way Ted Stevens personifies what went wrong in the [election](#).

As a senior ranking Republican from Alaska, he was a proud champion of pork barrel spending and bridges to nowhere, and stayed so long that he developed a blind eye to ethical lapses that would be readily seen by scout leaders and soccer moms alike.

[Republicans](#) have campaigned on the conservative themes of lower taxes, less government and more freedom -- they just haven't governed that way. America didn't turn away from conservatism, they turned away from many who faked it.

So during our "time in the wilderness," it's my hope that we go back to the basics of conservatism -- what it stands for and its real-world implications for people's lives. The sooner we do, the sooner we will see good policy from Republicans, and the sooner I suspect we will return to electoral favor.

A political party works much like a brand. Companies like Caterpillar and John Deere earn loyal customers by consistently delivering what they advertise -- they walk the walk. The same is true of brands like Fed-Ex, the Boy Scouts of America, or the Marine Corps.

I'm always struck by the degree to which the rank and file indeed know what they're about. I'm equally struck by the degree to which those in office don't always act on the same.

Chick-fil-a does not say to its franchisees, "However you want to cook the sandwiches is cool with me." They are precise in what they expect, and it's my hope going forward more conservatives in all corners of America will be equally precise and exacting in making sure their views are reflected by the party that supposedly represents them.

The time for doing so is short. President-elect Obama proposed \$1 trillion in new [spending](#) on the campaign trail with no clear plan for paying for it. As a nation, we're on the hook for \$52 trillion -- that represents an invisible mortgage of nearly \$450,000 held by every household in America.

We've thrown \$2.3 trillion toward bailouts and stimulus this year with little to show for it in the way of results, and Congress is already contemplating yet another \$150 billion to now bail out states that spent faster than even the federal government. I fear an Obama administration will welcome this.

Borrowing from Medicare, Social Security, our grandkids and the Chinese to remedy a problem created by too much borrowing strikes me as odd, and hardly the "change" Americans really want. Accordingly, on these and other issues that involve borrowing to spend, I will work with others to change this kind of change.