

Perfecting Rules ...vs. Watching Paint Dry...

I was honored to be one of thirty-one people to sit on the Rules Committee at the Republican State Convention. Each of us represented our Senate District, mine being District 28; 51 counties strong and over 750,000 in population.

This was my first time to serve on a State level committee. Several people from the gallery commented that watching paint dry would be more exciting than the work we were doing. I guess for some people that is probably true. It takes a nerd with a little common sense and loads of patience to debate and argue over the finer points of tweaking a rule or even placing a comma correctly. I sorely missed, and we could have greatly used, my proof readers when it came to sentence structure.

Mallory Miller from Lubbock, who has attended and sat through the Rules deliberations at the State Conventions since 1992, stated, "*The principle purpose for our rules is to furnish the structure in which we may fairly deliberate on our common goals as a political party. Good deliberation yields wisdom. Corruption of the rules or the deliberative process, yields dissent, distrust, and anger. It also makes the Establishment nervous because it threatens their power. Thus, the rules are essential to maintaining our liberty to gather together to advance our common political goals. Dull, but essential.*"

The 31 was a mix of 4 or 5 attorneys, 5 SREC (State Republican Executive Committee) members, a few county chairs, former convention and committee chairs and members, veterans, an activist, a few 20 plus year veterans of the Rules Committee, a few new faces, and one media person - me - that currently is a Precinct Chair. Yes - a motley crew. In the end, it was said several times, that this was the best Rules Committee in remembrance. Nice!

Like most new experiences, it began by being a fog trying to lift in my brain. It takes a bit to get the feel of the group, both personalities and purposes being jockeyed about. Slowly it becomes clear. It was clearly evident those who were pulling for the "establishment" and those who were the new "conservative" movement. Then there were a few newbies, like me, without an agenda that were trying to weigh each point on its own merit.

The Rules Committee deals with three sets of rules. The first one to agree upon is how our committee will operate. Yes, the Rules Committee has rules

RULES!

1. You SHALL!
2. You WILL!
3. You MUST!

too. It outlines how new rules or amendments will be presented, how long a delegate can present or comment on the rules we are discussing, and what guideline we will use to operate. Thank the good Lord for Roberts Rules!

While we had a chair to oversee our work, we also had a parliamentarian to make sure we adhered to Roberts Rules correctly. At times we even had the Texas Republican Party's assistant council or general council in attendance to interject what is legal or not.

The second set of rules has to do with how the Texas Republican Convention operates. Everything has rules. Most of us never give a thought to why/how something operates or happens the way it does. It's rules!

The majority of our time was focused on how the Texas Republican Party operates. This is everything from Precinct chairs to delegates for the National convention and everything else Republican in our state. While most of this would probably be extremely boring at best, it's the stories from around the state and the problems that are happening that breathes LIFE into the importance of what we were doing.

From 8am until 10 or 11pm daily for three days, the temporary rules committee worked preparing the rules to be reported on to our Senate Districts before the permanent rules committee was voted into place. I was elated to be voted onto the permanent rules committee by my Senate District to serve to complete the rules to be presented to the full convention.

Issues that became evident that have happened and needed solutions to resolve were varied. Some counties had issues with their County Chair never calling an executive meeting for the party. The precinct chairs needed to be empowered to take action and move forward to conduct business. They also needed a means to potentially remove the County Chair if needed.

Another issue at the precinct level was the lack of people who could be delegates. In some of the larger cities, they have nominated non-precinct residents to fill delegate slates. This was discussed, but action allowing such action failed in the proposed rules. I'm sure this will be revisited in the next session.

In some of the larger cities, they are sharing facilities for multi-district conventions. This is another area that will probably be explored a bit more in coming sessions. It's hard for most of us to understand the issues faced by districts that share counties with other districts. Out west, it takes multiple counties to make a district - not multiple districts to fill a county. Crazy!

The grand finale was a new rule. While the new heading for the proposed rule was "Censure Process & Penalties" and included a means to prevent some candidates from being on the Republican ballot, it at least began a movement to take more control of who can represent our party.

This was the big daddy of debate for us, requiring even the general counsel to sit in on our meeting in fear we were venturing into an area of breaking the law. Who would imagine the day had come that even a party could no longer outline and define who they are and what they stand for by who they allow to put an (R) by their name. It's a known reality. Democrats have run on Republican tickets in order to be elected. Hence the term RINO was born.

RINO stands for Republican in Name Only. Unfortunately, the Republican Party has RINOS amidst our Elephants. Because of this, our party lines, our core principles and values have been adulterated. When our State House has 99 Republicans to 51 Democrats, you'd think our agenda items would sail right through, but they don't. Reason: RINOS.

This can and does happen even on the local level. This past primary we had a Democrat change and run on the Republican ticket in hopes of holding onto his office here in Tom Green County. He lost. He's not the first to do this and probably won't be the last either.

In the end, after hours and hours of debate on this subject, we made our first step in protecting our brand. Our new rule will allow us to withhold our support of a candidate who does not adhere to our Party's principles as outlined in our Preamble by 3 or more actions during the current biennium. This action requires a 2/3's vote on the local level and may be expounded at the state level.

While the hours and work were grueling, it was a tremendous honor to serve in this capacity. I look forward to serving again, especially since the fog of the unknown has lifted. I have a new found respect for rules.

Until next time....

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