

### Viewpoint

BY EILEEN E. PADBERG



## CHANGE IS GOOD

The state GOP needs to rebuild and reach out.

Change is good. I know that Trent Lott did not mean to infer that he or the Republican Party support segregation, but in fact a picture is worth a thousand words then the Republican Party is in fact the party of the white male. And, over the years, not much has changed. We definitely need to look at the message that we are sending.

New blood is what our party needs in Washington and in California (and I suspect many other states as well). Faced with two major issues – participating in solving the budget crisis and joining to find a way to attract voters to the Republican Party – not one significant Republican leader has emerged. The Republican Party in California is handcuffed not by issues or age but the inability to see the forest for the trees. Our party leaders have come to enjoy the power of being big shots, as opposed to enjoying the power to actually solve problems.

While our party suffers loss after loss and while women continue to leave the GOP, party leaders

continue to point the finger at everyone else and blame everything on the Democrats. "They have all the money, they have the unions, and California is a liberal state." Most recently, our Republican leadership was quoted as saying, "This state is going to need strong executive leadership, and so far we haven't seen it." Well, frankly, we haven't seen any leadership at all – from anyone. Voting against a budget is not your only job. Your job is to participate by coming up with acceptable, achievable solutions and finding ways to compromise. Sitting on the sidelines is not the answer. We need a change of leadership in California at all levels, but that will take guts and guts are not a requirement for political office.

As to the diminishing strength of the Republican Party, our leadership blames our losses on bad candidates – Dan Lungren in 1998 and Bill Simon Jr. in 2002. In both cases, none of our Republican Party leadership did anything to change what everyone knew was a

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train wreck about to happen. If we have such brilliant leadership, why didn't someone try to influence the outcome of these campaigns? At some point in time, Republican leaders must accept responsibility. We need to take a serious look at our own messages: What is this big tent thing? Are we really welcoming people to the "big tent?" We spend great effort trying to attract minorities while ignoring women who are the largest bloc of voters. We should be asking ourselves how we are going to attract women back to our party. Our leadership here in California pretends to reach out to women, but it is a game that is never meant to be won.

We can broaden our base without giving up our soul. Let's go back to the basics. We are the party of individual liberty and justice, individual responsibility, fiscal conservatism and a party

that has always railed against government intrusion into our personal lives. What have we become except a bunch of followers and whiners. What we need to do in California is start over again. Our current leaders have a confused understanding of values and power.

We need two very fundamental things: first, a resolve to build our party by putting aside the pettiness of the social issues that keep women from supporting Republicans. And begin to show leadership in creative ways to govern without decimating women, children and families who are struggling.

Let us kick off 2003 with a resolve. Let's get our party back and show Californians what leadership is really about!

Leadership does count. OCM

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