

Fear usually leads to bad decisions, and that principle was confirmed for us all at the Alaska Republican State Convention held this last week. The state convention is the one time every two years that the Republican Party decides on changes to the platforms and rules and elects their state officers. This one was conducted in a presidential election year which added a delegate selection process to the mix. The victories that the progressives achieved in the 2008 election put a lot of pressure into this process, since the complete obliteration of all of our rights and freedoms is on the horizon.

It started out on Thursday night with a meeting of the state central committee, the group of local officers that makes decisions for the body of the party in-between state conventions. An interim rule was introduced that would require all of the national delegates for any one candidate to be approved by a "duly authorized representative of that Qualified Presidential Candidate." It turns out that a lot of those who supported some of the presidential candidates had a lot of fear that their delegates would be taken. They formed a coalition and brokered a deal to have this rule passed quickly with very little discussion. The envisioned situation actually couldn't happen, because in Alaska those delegates are allocated by the Presidential Preference Poll that was conducted in March; so any delegates selected are bound to their specific candidate for two rounds of voting at the National Convention. If our delegation breaks this rule then the entire delegation can be disqualified or penalized. No one on any side would jeopardize the votes they did have for a protest vote. The real problem with this rule is that there was no language whatsoever on how those campaign representatives were to be chosen. They could have just been taken off of the street by one party official and appointed to be the campaign representatives. The rule had a similar look and feel to the NDAA and the Patriot Act giving godlike powers to specific individuals, who were enabled with veto power over anyone the Nominations committee might choose.

In point of fact, some of the campaigns sent their representatives and they were not allowed to speak to the Nominations committee. The committee ultimately was left the decision on how to pick the representatives, and decided to choose the campaign representatives from their own committee (with the exception of one campaign that had no supporters on the committee). In the end, the result turned out just fine with a fair delegate slate that was unanimously approved. I talked to all four of the campaign representatives and they were all satisfied with the way the process worked out. It's good that the results were positive, and I believe that we are sending a great group of folks to Tampa to represent us, but I hope the party never again allows a spirit of fear to dominate, driving them to implement such a shortsighted rule.

A big surprise awaited most of the delegates who showed up on Friday morning. There were armed security guards at the doors of the convention hall only allowing primary delegates to enter. There was a separate small room off to the side for guests and alternates where they had to watch the proceedings on a big screen.

This was pretty disheartening to some who had driven over 350 miles to attend, paid the same fee as the primary delegates, all so that they could watch TV separated from most of their district. There were some spouses at the District conventions who had volunteered to be alternates so that others could be primary delegates, not knowing that they would be separated from their spouse for the entire convention. A huge ramification of this decision was that if a primary delegate was away from their district table when a vote came up, there were no alternates in the room to take their seat. This caused districts with alternates to be disenfranchised in some of their votes. This whole situation has never happened before, and hopefully will never happen again.

When all the dust had settled the only fear that came true was that there wasn't enough time to take care of business. The convention was adjourned while waiting for the second round of ballots for officers, with the condition that it would be reconvened at the June SCC meeting. It was important to reconvene because party rules can only be changed at a convention and the Rules committee hadn't got to address the convention and have the rules voted on. At the post-convention SCC meeting the election results came in resulting in a new party chair and vice-chair. Party rules still have the current chair serving until February 1<sup>st</sup> of next year, with the chair-elect serving as the State Finance Chair.

The reconvened convention was set for June 9<sup>th</sup> in Anchorage. All delegates are encouraged to attend so that a quorum will be in effect, so that some critical party business can be conducted. They will provide for teleconferencing, but I would ask all those who can to make it in person so that it will run smoother. The numbers needed for a quorum are approximately 240 delegates with 27 districts represented. Please save your delegate tag.

The big picture view of the convention just held is that a lot of excited conservatives have gotten involved with the Republican Party and are pulling it back to its limited government roots. The future will show us if they have the long-term vision and work ethic to stay involved and change the shape of Alaskan politics.