

Republicans, It's Time to Deal with the Elephant in the Room

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AUSTIN, March 7 - Tuesday night's defeat in the Republican Primary of Railroad Commissioner Victor Carrillo sent shockwaves throughout the state, and rightly so. How could a well-funded, conservative and proven incumbent go down so handily in defeat? And he isn't the only one.

Incumbent, qualified, well respected Hispanic candidates down the ballot, such as Harris County Tax Assessor Leo Vasquez and others faced the same fate. In the aftermath, as we ponder the question, several theories have emerged.

However, pinpointing the reason is less important than recognizing the effect. The unfortunate reality is that the win-ability of Hispanic candidates in Texas Republican primaries has become the elephant in the room for the Party.

And it's time for us to do something about it.

Just last week the *Dallas Morning News* released an article entitled "More than Half of Hispanics self-identify as Conservative." So as I see it, there's opportunity knocking at our door.

It's time for GOP leaders to embrace the situation and take significant steps to build a foundation for Hispanic candidates to come up through the ranks of our party and be successful.

We can achieve results by making by taking these steps:

Commit significant resources to identifying, developing and integrating a network of Hispanic leaders into the Republican Party's strategic plan.

Support candidates who take the chance and run in Republican Primaries and adequately fund PACs and other leadership efforts that will build a farm team of candidates.

Finally, we must commit resources to building a network of grassroots Hispanic activists who can share our common values and believe in freedom, hard work, less government, entrepreneurship and family values.

Republicans should not pander to Hispanics to bring them into our fold, that's not our style, nor is it what Conservative Hispanics expect from us.

But we should work harder to welcome these individuals to our Party with open arms.

The sign at RPT headquarters should read; "the Republican Party is where you belong, you add value to our party and we want you to give us a chance. "

As we move forward today, our commitment to implementing these key strategies is of the utmost importance. And there is a sense of urgency.

We are fortunate to have a crop of rising stars in the Texas GOP who are on the horizon for greatness as elected officials, and many of them happen to also be Hispanic. Young, Hispanic leaders such as newly appointed Supreme Court Justice Eva Guzman, former State Solicitor General, Ted Cruz, George P. Bush, and Larry Gonzales, a candidate for the Texas House of Representatives, to name a few, have all proven themselves in the private sector and deserve the opportunity to reach their potential as Republican elected leaders in Texas.

The perspective they can bring to governing and addressing the major issues of the state are unique and unparalleled.

These Republican leaders and others to follow them deserve our commitment to building the infrastructure to support them.

It's imperative that the Leadership of the Texas GOP and the conservative grassroots leadership that I know and respect make the commitment today to building a welcoming party that can embrace the ideas and the activities that will unite us all.

Suzanne Bellsnyder is a consultant who works with Conservative Hispanic leaders nationally and in Texas on outreach and leadership development. She is a long time activist in the Republican Party, serving as a past Chairman of the Texas College Republicans and aide to numerous elected officials and Republican candidates. The above column first appeared in TexasInsider.org.