

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BREAKFAST WITH REINCE PRIEBUS

SUBJECT: THE FORWARD STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

MODERATOR: ANGELA GREILING KEANE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** (Sounds gavel.) Good morning, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Angela Greiling Keane. I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News. And I'm the 106<sup>th</sup> President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through programming with events such as this, while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). To donate to programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit [www.press.org/institute](http://www.press.org/institute).

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you in our audience at today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. If you hear applause from our audience, we'd note that members of the general public are attending as well, so it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity.

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using the hashtag NPClunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we'll have question and answer. I will ask as many questions as time permits. Now it's time to introduce our head table. I'd like each of you here to stand briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Will Lester, a desk editor with the Associated Press. Lisa Lambert, a reporter with Reuters. April Ryan, White House correspondent for American

Urban Radio Network. Tony Parker, the RNC Treasurer, Jordy Yager, a staff writer with The Hill, Sharon Day, the RNC co-Chair.

Skipping over the podium, Alison Fitzgerald, the Speakers Committee Chair and a freelance writer. Skipping over the speaker for just a moment, Jeff Ballou, deputy news editor with al Jazeera Network English and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's event. Thank you for that, Jeff. Mike Shields, the RNC chief of staff, Julie Bykowicz, reporter with Bloomberg News, Amy Fickling, a news editor with McClatchy, and Walt Cronkite, an associate producer with CBS News.

[applause]

Our guest this morning would probably love to have one wish granted today, a winning formula, candidates and money to take control of Congress, the White House, and even more State Houses. The reality, though, is that it's tough to be a political party chairman, especially one on the losing end of the 2012 campaign for the White House, and full congressional control. But, when you're a tried-and-true Wisconsin Badger, like Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, you don't give up easily.

Mr. Priebus, like his state mate longtime friend and political ally Paul Ryan, tirelessly barnstormed the country in an effort to recruit and promote candidates, push the party message, and earn votes with ticket topper Mitt Romney. Then came last November. Republicans did hold onto the U.S. House of Representatives and majority of gubernatorial seats, among other wins. Yet, given the fiery and sometimes ugly blame game that continues up to this moment, Mr. Priebus might have been wishing for the days when he was recognized among Milwaukee's Forty Under Forty and a rising star by Super Lawyers Magazine, all while taking the Republican party by storm.

He has been working on campaigns since he was 16, and wound through the Wisconsin Republican party ranks and up to the RNC. Mr. Priebus is proud to be a lifelong Green Bay Packers fan and calls Kenosha, Wisconsin his home. He earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater. And we are told he played a mean game of softball during his time working on his law degree at the University of Miami.

A time to reflect and look forward happens in any party that loses. But it doesn't lessen the sting when you are the recipient. Mr. Priebus has been working on a way to rally the Republican faithful, gain new believers, and plot a new strategy for the midterm election in 2014, and Presidential contest in 2016.

One of the silver linings that's happened along the way is getting reelected as party chairman. To create a playbook for his silver lining, he also commissioned an inward look to see why the party failed to win, and how to get a different result next time. So, what did Mr. Priebus come up with? He said yesterday on CBS's Face the Nation that the RNC will spend \$10 million dollars on staff to communicate its principles across the

U.S., shorten the time spent on election primaries, move up the convention date, and limit the number of primary debates.

Details on the findings of the so-called autopsy are what brings him here to the National Press Club this morning. He is also celebrating his 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday here on our stage-- 41. Sorry. [laughter] Young enough so the year won't make a difference. To celebrate his 41<sup>st</sup> birthday, please help me give a warm welcome back to the National Press Club to Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus.

[applause]

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Thank you. Well, I appreciate that introduction. Thank you everybody. Good morning. Thank you, Angela, for the introduction and welcoming all of us to the Press Club. I know most of you came for eggs and coffee. But thanks for staying for the speech. I want to recognize our RNC co-chair, Sharon Day and Tony Parker, our treasurer, dear friends and partners of mine at the Republican National Committee.

Most of you, and most of all, I just really want to thank-- and I want you to know how grateful I am to the leaders of this growth and opportunity project. Their work brings us here today. And I want to introduce them to you this morning. National Committeeman Henry Barber of Mississippi, Committeewoman Zori Fonalledas of Puerto Rico, Committeeman Glen McCall of South Carolina, veteran Florida national political strategist Sally Bradshaw, and former White House press secretary Ari Fleisher.

[applause]

When Republicans lost in November, it was a wakeup call. And in response, I initiated the most public and most comprehensive post-election review in the history of any national party. We wanted an assessment that was frank, thorough, and transparent. To get a fresh start, we had to be honest with ourselves and with our voters. We want to build our party. And we want to do it with bold strokes, to show that we're up to the challenge, and we're done with business as usual.

Last week I received the growth and opportunities projects report and their 219 recommendations. As it makes clear, there is no one reason we lost. Our message was weak. Our ground game was insufficient. We weren't inclusive. We were behind in both data and digital. And our primary and debate process needed improvement. So there is no one solution, there is a long list of them.

Today, I'm going to focus primarily on the five most important areas where we think that we need to take immediate substantive actions: messaging, demographic partners, campaign mechanics, technology, and the primary process. But first I want to point out that the project's recommendations are not limited to those five areas, or even to the RNC, our state parties, grassroots, allied organizations, sister committees, elected officials and candidates can all learn something from this report. Each of them is going to have a role to play.

At the RNC, we're in the campaign business. Our task will be to reach out to the most voters and build the best infrastructure ever. The policy aspects of the report are most valuable for our candidates and elected officials. A passion for the issues drives good campaigns. And voters of all races, income levels, and backgrounds need to understand that our policies offer a chance for a brighter future.

The report offered some specific examples of areas where Republicans fell short, in this regard. Highlighting the ways that some groups of voters have been turned off. It also highlighted examples of Republican innovation, particularly among our Governors, that have won over new voters. These Governors provide new ideas for the way forward. Our candidates should take those recommendations to heart, just as I have.

In addition, Republican and conservative groups outside the RNC also have a valuable role to play. The RNC will always be the leader in campaign mechanics. But, as the report makes clear, friends and allies should take up capabilities that can supplement our efforts in certain areas: voter registration, research, digital training, and more. So we'll work to ensure the sum of our efforts is greater than the parts.

But the lion's share of the work falls upon the RNC. And, if there's one message I want everyone to take away from here, it's this. We know that we have problems. We have identified them. And we're implementing the solutions to fix them. To produce their analysis, the project leaders and I have met with or received feedback from over 50,000 people. This work is the culmination of three months of crisscrossing the United States. I have eagerly awaited these results. And then last week, I saw the white smoke coming from Ari's chimney. And then I knew that it was time for the report.

But now it's time for the RNC to get to work. So I want to walk with you through some of the immediate actions that we're going to take in response to their analysis. First messaging. To be clear, our principles are sound. Our principles are not old rusty thoughts in some book. Freedom and opportunity are ever fresh, revolutionary ideas. They are the roadmap to American renewal in a new and interconnected world. But the report notes that the way we communicate our principles isn't resonating widely enough. Focus groups described our party as narrow-minded, out of touch, and "stuffy old men." I'm only 41, by the way, today. [laughter]

The perception that we're the party of the rich unfortunately continues to grow. That's frustrating, because we care about every voter. We're the party of growth and opportunity. We want families that are strong, children that are well educated. We want to lift people up from poverty, to put the American dream in reach for everybody. Our party just can't hire our way forward. It must inspire our way forward.

We will do a better job of connecting with people to our principles, showing how we can help every American climb the economic ladder. Knowing parents want the best for their children, we'll champion school choice and solutions to lowering the costs of healthcare. Instead of arithmetic, our focus should be on what helps families thrive. We

don't want to fix the debt because a balanced budget looks nice. We want to do it because it will help keep money in people's pockets and create more jobs for those who have lost hope.

The report minces no words in telling us that we have to be more inclusive. I agree. And, as President Reagan said, our 80 percent friend is not our 20 percent enemy. We can be true to our principles without being disrespectful to those who don't agree with 100 percent of them. Finding common ground with voters will be our top priority. So first, we are going to learn what works on the state level and apply it nationally.

For example, when a conservative like Steve Pierce in New Mexico wins in a predominantly Latino district, we need to glean the lessons of his approach. Second, in order to combat misperceptions, we will premiere an aggressive marketing campaign across the country, especially in committees we haven't been in a long time, about what it means to be a Republican. Third, we're going to establish regular focus groups and listening sessions to ensure we're on target in these communities. We will regularly share our findings as well as polling results with our candidates, allies, state parties, and elected officials.

Because it all goes back to what our moms used to tell us. It's not just what you say, it's how we say it. The promise of opportunity will be our message. And a spirit of optimism will infuse everything that we do. Messaging certainly overlaps with the next action area, demographic partners.

Now, I didn't need the report to tell me that we have to do-- we have to do a lot better job and do a lot more to make up ground in minority communities, with women and young voters. Specifically, for youth voters, the report outlines the need to promote forward-looking, positive policy proposals. They write that more time must be spent communicating with young voters, where they get their information.

The report also highlights the real urgency of connecting with minority communities. By the year 2050, we'll be a majority/minority country. And in both 2008 and 2012, President Obama won a combined 80 percent of the votes of all minority groups. The RNC cannot and will not write off any demographic, community or region of this country.

So here are some actions that we're going to take. One, establish senior level advisory councils for Hispanic, African American and Asian Americans that will serve as working groups, to share best practices and have a constant dialogue in each community. Two, establish swearing-in citizenship teams to introduce new citizens to the GOP, after naturalization ceremonies. First impressions count. Three, at the recommendation of the project, talk regularly and openly with groups in which we have had minimal contact in the past: LULAC, the Urban League, the NAACP, NALEO, LA RAZA.

Four, work with state parties and sister committees to build a recruitment program for minority candidates. The report underscores the need for greater recruitment. Five,

hire communications staff to promote the minority leaders in our party, and bolster our messaging efforts and publications that appeal to ethnic minority groups. Six, develop an aggressive marketing campaign to expand our footprint on college campuses, with an especially strong focus on historically black colleges and universities. In addition, create an ongoing dialogue with campus leaders.

Seven, appoint a youth liaison to work with the college Republicans, young Republicans, and teenage Republicans, to provide them with additional tools to take the party's message to their peers. Eight, Go beyond traditional news media in promoting our message, including pop culture news outlets. We have to stop divorcing ourselves from the American culture. And maybe, that might mean I could get an invitation with the ladies of The View. We'll see. [laughter] Nine, work with state parties, sister committees and the co-chair, to proactively recruit women candidates for offices at all levels. Ten, work to increase the visibility of GOP women.

Now, I want to deliberately underscore that those items are not even close to enough. So, for the first time ever, we're going to overhaul our campaign mechanic structure to fully integrate our demographic engagement strategy. For too long, our demographic inclusion efforts have been separate from our on-the-ground political activities. Well that's coming to an end.

To accomplish this, we're launching a new national field program designed to engage minority groups and communities at the local level. We will take our message to civic centers and community events, where people live, work, and worship. This new approach will be diverse, year-round, community-based, and dedicated to person-to-person engagement.

By May 1<sup>st</sup>, we will hire national political directors for Hispanic, Asian-Pacific, and African American voters. We will task each director to build a team to educate each community on the history and principles of the Republican party, and identify supporters. This will be a bottom-up approach. And we'll have a network of hundreds of paid people across America, from the community level up, to the national level, dedicated to minority, youth and women inclusion. We will conduct a pilot program in targeted urban markets to test and refine these engagement efforts.

This is a new way of doing things and should demonstrate the depth and commitment of engaging all demographic groups. It will complement and be fully integrated with our entire on-the-ground operation, which we've modeled on the same bottom-up approach, community directors that report to regional directors that report to state directors, who in turn report to national directors. Some individuals will be focused on targeted 2014 races. Others on laying the groundwork for 2016.

These staff will be in place by the end of the summer. We have never put this many paid boots on the ground this early in an off year. We have also never been this dedicated to working at the community level to win minority votes, household to household. So I am approving an initial \$10 million dollar budget for this work, for this

year. So, for the 2013 and '14 campaigns, we will deploy revamped voter contact and early voter strategies.

Further, we are going to work to strengthen our state parties and take a leading role in our new field program. I am hiring a full-time state party director who will report directly to me in addition to the political director. The future of all 50 state parties and territorial parties will be their top priority. There will be full coordination between the RNC and state parties on early planning for the 2013 and 2014 cycles with a focus on organization, data collection, and testing for digital fundraising.

To help states with their added responsibilities, we are going to reinstitute the field finance program, allowing states to be more financially self-sustaining. We'll also network with organizations that are part of the liberty movement, evangelical movement, and the tea party, to strengthen our ties and mobilize volunteers. To find new voters, the RNC will invest in a mobile voter registration program. And we will encourage our friends and allies to significantly invest in voter registration as well.

In surveys for the report, respondents expressed a desire for more training for candidates, volunteers and operatives. They especially want greater training and data and analytics. So, by May 1<sup>st</sup>, we will completely overhaul our political education department, developing new curriculum that includes data, digital, and ad buying. They will make new resources available electronically, not just to those who come to a D.C. classroom. We are committing significant resources to these endeavors.

So I want to be sure that we're getting real results for our money. Therefore, I will insist on implementing standards and quarterly benchmarks for state parties and for staff, to measure success in areas ranging from registration to fundraising. And we'll need quality metrics to gauge whether our strategy is working. Which brings me to the topic of data and technology.

Throughout this process, both the co-chairs and I have heard a great deal about the quality of our data, and how that affects our ability to target and persuade voters. Numerous voices emphasized how we must move to integrate new sources of data and expand access to the data beyond the RNC. Overhauling our data infrastructure won't happen overnight. But we'll move to invest more resources in the data collection and management and integrate data into every single thing that we do.

We'll lead by example, because we want every campaign group and committee to make data a top priority. Therefore, as recommended, we're hiring a new chief digital and technology officer who will build out and oversee three important distinct teams: data, digital and technology. Those teams will work together to integrate their respective areas throughout the RNC, and provide data-driven focus for the rest of the organization. And they'll be the new center of gravity within the organization.

Second, we're going to be working on an open data platform, where vendors, campaigns and party organizations can build data-driven apps, using a common API.

Think of it like Apple and the App Store. They can access our data, and then provide user-friendly products that will empower technology, driven voter contact. This is the first time a party committee has taken on such a task.

Over and over, our co-chairs heard of the need for an environment of intellectual curiosity that encourages innovation. So third, I want to hold hack-a-thons in tech-savvy cities, like San Francisco, Austin, Denver, and New York, to forge relationships with developers and stay on the cutting edge. Fourth, once our new operation is up and running, we'll embark on a data and digital road show to demonstrate what campaigns and state parties can do to enhance their own operations. The report recommended getting early buy-in from all partners.

Fifth, we'll upgrade GOP.com as a platform, redesigning it to better utilize social media and serve an increasingly mobile audience. Sixth, we're going to be setting up an RNC field office in the San Francisco area. As we learned with visits to the Silicon Valley, and conversations with top tech firms, many of the best minds are on the other side of the country. Having an office there will make it easier for technologists to join in our efforts. And it can serve as a hub for our data and digital political training.

By doing all of this, we will enter 2014 and 2016 with a completely revitalized approach to campaign mechanics and technology. So finally, let's discuss what we'll do to improve the Presidential primary process. In 2008 and 2012 the debates multiplied and were out of the control of the RNC. The cycle-- This cycle, excuse me, there were 20 total debates. The first, eight months before the Iowa Caucuses. The report contrasts this with 1980, where there were six debates. In 1988, there were seven.

I agree with the co-chairs when they say debates are vital to the primary process. But they must respect candidates' time and help the eventual nominee. So, with an eye toward these recommendations, the RNC will embark on creating a system that sets earlier guidelines for a more rational number of debates. We will take a leading role in organizing the debates. And we will work with state parties and our rules committee to ensure balance in every respect.

The report finds it advantageous to move quickly to the general election phase of the campaign, allowing the nominee to spend general election money sooner. To facilitate that, they recommend an earlier convention. So no more August conventions. Our convention planning commission will be tasked with finding the optimal date, in addition to improving financing, security, logistics, site selection, and the overall program.

We'll also take additional steps to make our primary season shorter. Everything I'm announcing today costs money. I've already talked to our donors about much of it. Raising money isn't always the easiest task. But I can report, with great excitement, that they're ready to go. They are supportive of these big changes and clear goals. And we'll be partnering with them to form donor councils that will help raise the money needed for implementation of these goals.

I want to ensure that we're spending the money wisely. So we'll foster competition among vendors and providers to get the best and brightest talent on our side. This is just the beginning of an unprecedented effort. The learning process doesn't stop today. This is day one. We're going to continue the listening sessions. And we're going to keep making adjustment.

In the last two years, we've overcome some pretty tough challenges at the RNC, rebuilding a broken committee, raising the money needed to serve our nominee was just the beginning. We'll bring that same spirit to meeting the challenges of the coming years. Today we mark a fresh beginning. It's about winning elections. But, more importantly, it's because we believe America deserves better than what we have today, better than a big, bloated federal government, and the same old one-size-fits-all bureaucracy, better education, better healthcare, better opportunities. These are American-- Excuse me.

There are Americans who still need jobs. Families who deserve more take-home pay. Students who must have great schools. So many of them support Democrats simply because we haven't done a good enough job offering them our alternative. We haven't been in their towns, their cities, their neighborhoods. But we're going to be. The RNC can't do this alone. So I ask my fellow Republicans to think about what you can do, and commit to building our party together.

And to anyone listening online, I want to hear from you, too. I want you join me in a Twitter Q & A this afternoon at one p.m. Eastern, just Tweet @reince with the hashtag opportunity. To those who have left the party, let me say this. We want to earn your trust again. To those who have yet to join us, we welcome you with open arms. There's more that unites us than you know. And my job is to try and make that clear. And that's the purpose of the plans that I have announced today.

Now, with that, I'm happy to take questions from all of you here, no hashtag required.

[applause]

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Do you think the most important change for the GOP is to learn to talk in a different, more voter-friendly way about the issues, while keeping the same positions on the top issues? Or do you think there is a need to shift some basic positions on some of the issues?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I think I answered that in the speech. No, I think our policies are sound. But I think that, in many ways, the way that we communicate can be a real problem. And so, you know, I think that what we need to do is understand what I just said about Reagan's 80/20 rule. You know, decent people can disagree on issues. I don't agree with my wife on 100 percent of the issues. But it doesn't mean we don't have a good marriage.

I think that we have to be a welcoming party. I think that we have to have a party that says, "Look. If you want to support our party, and you want to walk through that door, I don't need to agree with you on every single issue." I think it's an attitude of a welcoming attitude that we need to have in our party. I think that we had some biologically stupid things that were said in the last election that make it more difficult for us to make that case. And I think that we have to do a better job of making sure that people understand the issues. But it's not about altering our principles. I think it's about the way we communicate and the way we welcome people into our party.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** To that point, what do you think about Karl Rove's initiative to find strong GOP candidates and to avoid some candidates whose statements or positions have led to their defeat? Do you think that is a good idea?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** You know, we have had I don't know how many groups that are outside groups, 527s, that are and have been in the business of trying to pick winners in primaries. You know, I appreciate the First Amendment. I think any person in America that wants to file for a 527, or they want to organize a group to help a particular candidate in a primary should be able to do it. I'm not against it.

I will tell you, as far as the RNC is concerned, however, we don't pick winners and losers in primaries. It's just not something that we do, by a rule. And in fact, it's barred. And so, it's a business that we're not in. But, so it's also not our prerogative to tell other people what they can and cannot do as far as exercising their First Amendment right to get involved.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** If you could create the ideal Presidential candidate for your party for the next election cycle, based on qualities and the appeal that polling tells you the electorate wants, what would this candidate look like? Are there popular personalities today that you could take parts from, to create a composite most likely to win?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** You know, I think that we have got great candidates that we all know are probably looking already at 2016. They won't say that, but I think we know that that's happening. I mean, if you look at the youth in our party, and you look at people like Nikki Haley and Marco Rubio and Paul Ryan and Scott Walker and many others-- and I'm on a string so I got to keep going, but you get the idea. We have great Hispanic leaders in our party like Ryan Sandoval and Ted Cruz and others.

I think we have just done a real lousy job, sometimes, of bragging about the success that we've had. So I think, when it comes to youth, I think when it comes to diversity, we have made great strides. And I think that we're going to have a lot of options in 2016.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** As you hope to reach out to the African American community, what are your thoughts on ensuring that every vote counts and issues of voting rights?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I think you all know, although we're not going to bore you with the details in regard to what the consent decree says in the Republican National Committee. But I would just tell you that we believe that we need to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. And I think that can capture everything that we believe in as a party. It should be easy for anyone to vote. But it should also be hard to cheat. And that is something that we have endeavored to do. But, as a national party, we do have some restrictions on ballot security, as you know, through the New Jersey Consent Decree.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** A question about CPAC last week, where a panel on African American voters dissolved into a shouting match with at least one activist saying that-- I'm sorry, hard to read the question. Talking about voters being systematically disenfranchised. How, given that sort of backdrop in the party, do you plan to overcome those challenges in your role at the RNC?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I mean, for one thing, you have to show up, right. I mean if you're going to get the order, you have to ask for the sale. I mean that's just sort of just basic, which is why we're launching this unprecedented effort to bring in-- I'm not talking about hiring two or three people down the hallway at the RNC. What we're talking about is hiring hundreds of paid people, across the country, this year, to make the case in minority communities across America.

I would tell you that one of the things that I have found that is just a reality, is that when we walked into the RNC, and we were \$25-\$26 million dollars in the hole, we had a hard time making our first payroll. We walked into this. There were debates on the calendar all through the spring. One story that I hadn't told a lot about is that, for quite a while, when we walked into the RNC, both credit cards of the RNC were suspended. This was before I walked in.

Now, just think about this for a second. If you've got one of two of the biggest national political parties in the world, but has both credit cards suspended. And so luckily, and it's a blessing that I didn't have a balance on my credit card my wife and I used. And we took a lot of the expenses on and off of our card. The Republican National Committee paying its outside expenses in that way.

Now, we had about 80 to 100 employees in 2011. Barack Obama had hundreds, hundreds and hundreds through the entire 2011 time period. So, while we were playing footsy debating each other, the other side was employing hundreds of people, spending millions and millions of dollars, while we were debating and digging out of debt. And that should tell you everything that you need to know about ground game and mechanics and how did you get behind. It tells you a lot.

And so, this is something new for our party. We are going to be doing voter engagement at a granular community level, starting now, in 2013. That's new. I think that's big. And that's bold.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** This questioner says that, in spite of the armies of RNC staffers trying to make inroads into communities of color, there are some people with the Republican message that are saying unwelcome, if not offensive positions to communities of color. They cite Ann Coulter, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity. What is your strategy to make sure the message of interest and welcome to the RNC staffers, that they're going to be out espousing, will be making its way into the communities that you're targeting, and not subsumed by comments from Republican or conservative-leaning media personalities and others?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, first of all, I think our whole team is a blessing. So, I mean, I'm not going to -- I think that the attitude of 80/20 and the idea that everyone on the team, Republican, conservative, you're welcome in the door. That attitude goes for everybody. I think it takes a team to build out a national party. And so, one of the things that this-- I mean I keep going back to this. But, you know, if you have unscripted moments that are problematic in a campaign, and clearly there were a few, if you don't have a serious granular presence in communities to help explain, to help promote, to help educate, well then you have sort of a vacuum. And those moments end up taking a life of their own.

So, you know, look. I think it takes communication. I think that it takes a press shop and a comm. shop and a research shop to always be communicating with all of our friends and allies. But I, for one, am not-- I'm not in the business of throwing anyone under the bus. In fact, I welcome everyone into our party, no matter what spectrum in our party, and wherever they're at on the conservative-- in that bandwidth, they're welcome. And we're appreciative.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Does the 2016 Republican Presidential nominee have to speak Spanish?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** No, I don't think so. But listen. I mean it's a tremendous benefit. I mean it's a tremendous asset to be able to have. And so, I don't think it's necessary, but it certainly is a bonus.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** This questioner says, arguably, two of the biggest potential voting blocs are fiscally conservative homosexuals and women. But the GOP has seemingly turned up its nose at gays and repeatedly comes across as misogynistic. How do you rein in the anti-gay and anti-women sentiments and bring these voters into the fold? And who in the political arena do you feel are the rising stars who could accomplish this?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I mean I think Senator Portman made some pretty big inroads last week. But, you know, I think it's about being decent. I think it's about dignity and respect that nobody deserves to have their dignity diminished. Or people don't deserve to be disrespected. I think that there isn't anyone in this room, Republican,

Democrat, in the middle, that doesn't think that Rob Portman, for example, is a good conservative Republican. He is. And we know that.

At the same time, I also defend Rand Paul and what he did, in asking a legitimate question to the President that wasn't answered. I think the attitude of being open and welcoming in our party goes for both situations. And I think that it's going to take discipline. And I think that party leaders have to constantly remind everybody that we can't build the party by division and subtraction. We can only build the party by addition and multiplication. We get that. And that's going to be our endeavor.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Does the RNC support Senator Portman's decision to come out for same sex marriage?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** I mean it's his decision. I mean, you know, it's his decision. It's not a matter whether I support his decision. I support him doing what he wants to do as an elected person and as an American. If that's his opinion, then I support him having that opinion.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** What about financial support? Will his opinion and making it public affect his financial support from the RNC?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** No, not at all. I mean he will be supported.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** This questioner says, the Republican party has been fragmented over the last few years, which has hurt them in the elections. Will the strategies in the action plan you talked about today help with that fragmentation? And, if so, how? What challenges do you see in trying to bring the party back from being more fragmented?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** You know, I don't know if it's fragmentation. I just think, like any-- We don't have a monopoly on diverse opinion in our party. I'm sure the Democrats have people and groups that don't always agree with each other. And we watch debates every day on television between Democrats and Republicans. I think this is just common healthy debate and conversation.

But, you know, I go back to the same issue, which is, I think it takes leadership. And I think that it takes people that are willing to be big and bold. I think that it's a matter of having leaders in the party that don't want to waste the time of other party leaders. And I certainly don't want to waste anyone's time. I don't want to waste my wife's time or my kid's time by just going through the motions. And that's why we're moving very quickly to start implementing some of these suggestions. And I'm sure we'll have some things of our own that we want to do. But we want to build this party. We want to win elections. But we also want to do it without compromising our principles. And that's what we're committed to.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** The questioner asks, do you endorse splitting electoral votes in so-called blue states, limiting voting days, and/or requiring proof of citizenship and/or photo ID for voter registration?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I do support photo ID. I do support that. I think it's pretty reasonable, and it's an 80 percent issue that, you know what? You know, when you rent-- we used to-- I can't even say that anymore. I used to say, when you rent a movie from Blockbuster-- but I guess you don't do that anymore. You need an ID for anything. You go into any building in Manhattan, you need an ID. Proving who you are, where you live is not too much to ask. So that's number one.

But, you know, I think that that's important. But I also think that it protects everyone's 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment right to one person/one vote. What was the rest of that question? Oh, splitting the electoral-- I knew there was something else in there. You know, look. I think it's a state issue. And I said that. I've said that repeatedly. It's a state issue. And I know that states are looking at it. I think it's interesting. I've said it was interesting. I mean you all think it's interesting enough to put the question on a piece of paper. It doesn't mean I'm writing anything or I'm endorsing anything. I said it was interesting. And that's about as far as I guess I'm going to go on that.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** You have said the RNC won't get involved in primaries. But, from a practical standpoint, doesn't the party need to ensure that general election quality candidates rise to the top? If the party isn't influencing the state level parties, what, if any other actions could you take with regard to the electability issue in the general elections?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I mean you encourage people, and you find people, and you meet people along the way that indicate that they want to run. And then you set that person up with the appropriate person to talk to. But, you know, we just have a very strict rule in our party. I mean you may know about it, it is called Rule 11. And it really does restrict the ability-- which I think is a good thing-- of the state-- of the national party, for the most part, getting involved in state party decisions.

So let me contrast that with you for a second. When I was Chairman of the State of Wisconsin, our party endorsed, at our convention, Scott Walker and Ron Johnson. Now Scott Walker was challenged by a former Congressman named Mark Newman, who was endorsed by a lot of people, some national people. And our party endorsed Scott Walker. I was the Chairman of that party. And I was fully onboard with that endorsement. But that was my decision and our party's decision, and ultimately, the delegates that showed up for that endorsement's decision in the State of Wisconsin.

Now we spent a lot of time and a lot of energy and effort making sure that Scott Walker and Ron Johnson won that primary. But that was our decision. And I wouldn't have appreciated the national party coming in and telling the State of Wisconsin, "No, wait a minute. I don't know about Scott Walker. I think we're going to go with Mark

Newman.” Well that’s ridiculous. And that’s the point. It’s not that we want to handcuff ourselves, it just isn’t practical. And I don’t think it’s right.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Governors have gone on to become some of the most significant Republican Presidents in the last century, Nixon, Reagan, Bush. Is the party doing enough to support the rising star Governors once they get past that state endorsement process?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I mean, that’s the plan for 2013 and 2014. I know that our state parties sure do a lot of work. And obviously, the RGA does. And, you know, we have a different party, too. I mean, you know, I don’t know, 15-20 years ago, maybe more, there wasn’t an NRCC. There wasn’t 10, 20 different super PACs and 527s. We have a big group of organizations that are involved in getting Republicans and conservatives election. So my job is to put together not only the best infrastructure and data and mechanics. But we’ve got our primary system that needs to be looked at, and I think overall messaging.

But, for the most part, there is a lot of players out there that are doing a lot of this work. The RNC has to play a role in promoting Governors. They are the innovators. They are balancing budgets. They are getting things done. They are leading the way. And we’re going to be involved. But there is also a lot of different groups, now, that are involved in this same activity.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** The questioner asks, how will you keep Democrats from picking their preferred Republican Senate candidates by eliminating the strongest Republican candidates? They cite Nevada and Missouri as examples.

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Yeah. You know, like I said, picking candidates is a state party function. And there are lots of groups out there that are picking winners and losers. But it’s just not our business. And it’s just not something I’m going to get involved in. My guess is that the DNC isn’t picking winners and losers anyway. That’s just the thing. I mean we hear Democrats, or you hear, “They do this, and they do that. And they’re going here.” Tell me who “they” is. Because “they,” at least in our case, a lot of times, isn’t the DNC. It’s different groups that are also doing work on their side. Just like there’s different groups on our side doing the same thing.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Speaking of Democrats, you just spent the last hour or so giving us your playbook, and very publicly. Most teams keep their playbooks close at hand. Are you concerned that Democrats will take the Republican playbook and use it themselves?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Well, I mean these are things that I think people want us to be bold. And I think that it is true, this is an unprecedented thing for a national party to put their cards on the table, face-up. But this is what we’re willing to do to build our party. I think it was necessary. I think people wanted the report to be real. They wanted it to be honest. They wanted it to be-- If it had to be raw, and maybe a few pieces of china

needed to be broken. But I think this is what our party needed. And we're going to get to work in implementing many of these recommendations.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Following up on your comments about when you first started in the finance of the RNC, the questioner asks, you talked about using your personal resources to get the RNC back on track, or at least your personal credit to be reimbursed.

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** In comparison to the overall millions, it wasn't a ton. But it was--

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Sure. But it was a big deal. Are you saying that former Chairman Steele ruined the party, or at least the RNC financially?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** I'm not going to go there. Listen. I think the numbers speak for themselves.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** We're here at the National Press Club. So this questioner asks, people who identify with the Republican party seem to have an aversion to mainstream media, perhaps because that is how their fellow Republicans track. Why the disdain for a concept of free press that is written in the Constitution?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Hey. I'm here before the National Press Club on a very important day for our party. I understand the value and appreciate the free press. And I also will tell you that I feel like, for the most part, I have been treated very fairly, that I have been-- that the press has been very good to us in our working relationship. I don't have any disdain for the press. But I will just tell you that I put the burden on our party to reach out to beyond, you know, our comfort zone sometimes in the press, and go further.

I appreciate everybody in this room, and all the press that's here, and giving us an opportunity to get our message out. We can't get our message out in many regards without the assistance of a free press. So I don't want you to think that I don't appreciate it. But I also understand that we have to be sharp, and we have to reach out to many people that maybe we haven't done a good enough job in reaching out to.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** We talked about the fragmentation of the Republican party, real or perceived. I think we all know there is fragmentation in media as well, both in terms of content, as well as what viewers and readers choose to consume. Is that a problem? Does it make it harder for candidates of either party to reach across the aisle like you're trying to do with Republicans?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** So what's the question?

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Media fragmentation. Does it make it harder for you to reach the new voters that you would like to reach?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** I don't think so. I mean I just think that we have to be more dedicated. I guess I don't understand exactly the question. But I think my last answer probably answers that question, which is, to be, I think, more dedicated to reaching out to diverse groups of reporters, and not just staying within a comfort zone. But I think, for the most part, we have done that. I mean I just look at my own efforts, and the efforts of our press shop at the RNC. I don't think a lot of you believed that we haven't done a very comprehensive job in reaching out and doing everything that we can, every day, to connect. And, if we can do better, obviously please contact us.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** We are almost out of time. But, before asking the last question, there is a couple housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I would like to remind you of our upcoming luncheon speakers. On March 20<sup>th</sup> we have Kathy Calvin, who is the President and CEO of the United Nations Foundation. She will discuss the public charity's work in supporting the mission and programs of the United Nations. On March 26<sup>th</sup> we have Robert Johnson, Chairman of RLJ Companies, Incorporated. On April 9<sup>th</sup> we have John H. Noseworthy, a medical doctor and President and CEO of the Mayo Clinic. He will discuss issues facing the healthcare industry.

Second, I would like to present our guest with the traditional National Press Club coffee mug.

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** All right, thank you.

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Thank you.

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** Appreciate it very much. Thank you everybody. Appreciate it.

[applause]

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** I would like to thank our audience for coming today. I would also like to thank National Press Club staff, including its Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for organizing today's event. And we have one final question. You have told us about your plan to put Republicans into office. It's very detailed, many pages long. What is your plan to get the Packers to bring home the Super Bowl trophy in the next season?

**REINCE PRIEBUS:** [laughter] Boy, that's a tough one. But listen. I am a huge Packer fan. And I always say, you know, as long as we get to play the Bears, the Vikings and the Detroit Lions twice a year, we've got a pretty good avenue to the Super Bowl. [laughter] So I appreciate all of you. [laughter]

I appreciate all of you, everything that you have done in your careers. And obviously, in being here. but I know that we've got a lot of work to do as a national party. And I want you to know that every day, we're going to try to win the day and win the mission for the day, to build up and rebuild our national party, to compete in the next

couple years, and obviously, again, in 2016. That's our goal, and that's our mission. And that's what today is all about. It's the beginning. It's not the end. And hopefully we're going to see you again soon. Thank you. Bye.

[applause]

**ANGELA GREILING KEANE:** Finally, I would like to remind you that you can find out more information about the National Press Club on our website. Also, if you would like to get a copy of today's program, please check out our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). Thank you. We are adjourned.

[gavel]

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