

# THE RINO VIRUS

DIAGNOSIS, CURE,  
AND RECOVERY



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## Diagnosis

Years ago, a friend told me about something he calls the 'baby test'. To take it, raise either arm straight up so your upper arm touches your ear. Bend the arm at the elbow. If you can make a 90-degree angle, you're not a baby.

There is a similar test for whether you're a Republican, although it's philosophical rather than physical. The test is simple. If you believe that it's more important to achieve particular outcomes than to preserve a set of principles, you're not a Republican.

Does that seem unreasonable? The following is the most important statement in the Republican platform, which has contained some version of it since 1854:

We believe our constitutional system — limited government, separation of powers, federalism, and the rights of the people — must be preserved uncompromised for future generations.

It's right there in the party name: *Republicans* are supposed to be concerned primarily with *preserving the republic*, and only secondarily with *using* that republic to pursue their personal goals. They are supposed to be caretakers first, heirs second.

If you've reversed the order of those priorities, then you're a Republican In Name Only. You've been infected by the RINO virus.

How do you know if you've got the virus? While they work on a blood test, here's a way to check. Do you find yourself saying things like 'At the end of the day, it's all about better outcomes' for children, or the elderly, or employees, or employers, or families, or some other group of people who are alive right now? If so, you're almost certainly infected.

And once you're infected, you'll be willing to pay for the outcomes you want now, by spending the inheritance that you're supposed to be passing on *uncompromised* to future generations. You'll be willing to place your desires, your comfort, your safety, ahead of their freedom.

At the end of the day, Republicans have to be about principles, rather than outcomes. If not, there's really no reason for the party to exist. There's already another party that takes the alternative view.

And at the end of the day, this is *why* it's so important that government remain as small as possible. It's not just a preference, or a convenience. It's a sacred trust. The inheritance you're supposed to be caretaking is liberty. And governments eat liberty the way locusts eat crops.

What if you've been infected? Well, there's a cure.

## Cure

When Republicans do manage to regain control of the state government, it seems that not a week goes by that we don't hear conservatives and libertarians moaning, 'Why did we bother to elect Republicans if they're just going to \_\_\_\_\_?'

Republicans seem to have forgotten what a political party is for. It's a way to focus time, effort, energy, and money so those limited resources don't get dissipated. It's a way of saying, 'Instead of chasing all these rabbits, and not getting any of them, let's just chase this one'.

I've been a delegate to one Republican convention. One was enough. (As they say, there are two kinds of fools: Those who have never climbed Mount Fuji, and those who have climbed it twice.)

It was enough because currently, the way it works is that some party insiders get together and come up with a party platform, and the delegates meet to rubber-stamp it, possibly making a few symbolic changes around the margins, so they get to feel a sense of ownership.

Which in itself isn't a bad thing. It would be impractical to hash everything out in a general meeting. But where it goes off the rails is that the planks of the platform only have to be approved by a bare majority vote.

Why does that matter? Well, it means that there are 'Republicans' walking out of the convention who disagree with the platform. So when legislation comes up, they end up crossing the aisle (so to speak), and the next thing you know, school choice bills are failing while Medicaid expansion bills are passing, and it's back to another round of 'Why did we bother to elect Republicans if they're just going to \_\_\_\_\_?'

The hardest thing to protect yourself from is friendly fire, because you never see it coming until it's too late.

Just to use some numbers to think with, there are 400 seats in the House. Suppose 220 of them are Republican, but on a particular issue, 10% of them defect. That's 22 votes, which is enough to lose control of the issue.

So suppose that the convention required, say, 95% approval to put something in the platform. Think about how that would change things.

To begin with, the friendly fire problem would go away.

Also, the platform would be really small – small enough, probably, to fit on one page. This would be a big benefit when campaigning, because it would make it easy for everyone to stay on message, and for that message to be understood by voters.

Best of all, the platform would amount to a legislative agenda — a list of things that could be passed and signed into law without having to consult, let alone court, members of other parties. If it's on the list, you do it. If it's not, you don't.

(Except for repealing existing legislation, which would *actually* make Republicans 'the party of smaller government'. More about that later.)

Basically, it would restore an important principle that seems to have been forgotten: *To be effective, the members of a political party don't have to agree on everything. They just have to figure out what they do agree on, and focus on that to the exclusion of everything else.*

And the rock on which to build that agreement should be that statement from the Republican national platform:

We believe our constitutional system — limited government, separation of powers, federalism, and the rights of the people — must be preserved uncompromised for future generations.

A party platform with 95% support, based on the core Republican mission, is the cure for the RINO virus.

Is it going to happen? Not a chance. One unfortunate side effect of the virus is that it makes you *feel good*, because you're being charitable (with other people's money), or helping people lead moral lives (which happen to be aligned with your values, rather than with their own), and so on. .

And that's so much more *enjoyable* than having to tell someone: 'Well, it might be nice if we did \_\_\_\_\_ for you, but we can't do that *and* pass on our legacy uncompromised, so we're going to have to say no.'

So it's almost certain that the Republican party will keep doing what it's been doing, and keep getting the results it's been getting — continued growth of both the cost and intrusiveness of government, all while *claiming* to be 'the party of small government'.

But the cure is there, in case anyone wants it.

## Recovery

Led by Marie Kondo, a wave of tidying up is sweeping the nation. People everywhere are going through their belongings, posing some simple tests, and getting rid of the items that fail those tests.

In Ms. Kondo's case, the test is: Does this item spark joy? If it does, you keep it. If not, you thank it for being part of your life, and send it on its way (to a friend, or a thrift shop, or Goodwill, or the transfer station).

In the case of some 'minimalists', the test is: If you didn't already have this item, would you buy it again? If not, get rid of it.

I think the latter attitude may be the key to getting the Republican party to regain its focus on its primary purpose: preserving the republic.

Once again, here is the most the most important statement in the Republican party's national platform:

We believe our constitutional system — limited government, separation of powers, federalism, and the rights of the people — must be preserved uncompromised for future generations.

That is, as the party's name implies, the primary mission of the Republican party is *preserving the republic*. (As opposed to, say, promoting conservative values, or creating jobs, or policing the world.)

Embracing this mission leads directly to a four-part version of the minimalist test. That is, imagine going through every existing RSA and departmental regulation, holding each one up (like an old sweater, or a chipped porcelain figurine), and asking:

- Does this (a) *limit*, or (b) *expand* the size or power of government?
- Does this (a) *promote*, or (b) *undermine* separation of powers?
- Does this (a) *promote*, or (b) *undermine* federalism?
- Does this (a) *protect*, or (b) *abridge* the rights of the people?

If the answer is ever (b), it gets tossed.

In other words: If we didn't already have this statute or regulation, would a *Republican Party focused on its mission* pass it today?

Now, the beauty of Ms. Kondo's test, and the minimalist test, is that they cut through the rationalizations that people might otherwise use to hold on to stuff they really should be discarding, like:

- But it might be *useful* someday.
- But I paid so *much* for it.
- But it was such a *steal*.
- But it would make such a nice *gift* for someone, someday.
- But *someday* I'll have time to finish (or repair, or read, or use) this.

They go right to the heart of the matter: Is owning this thing consistent with who you are right now, and who you want to be in the future?

Similarly, what we might call the 'missionalist test' can cut through the rationalizations that some Republicans might otherwise use to hold on to laws that they really should be discarding, like:

- But those people need our *help*.
- But those people are *harming* themselves.
- But it doesn't cost *that* much.
- But those people can *afford* to pay for it.
- But the polls say a majority of people *want* it.

If it expands government, or undermines separation of powers, or undermines federalism, or abridges the rights of the people, then it gets repealed. Period.

Ms. Kondo's book is called *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. It's life-changing, she says, because

basically, when you put your house in order, you put your affairs and your past in order, too. As a result, you can see quite clearly what you need in life and what you don't, and what you should and shouldn't do.

Whatever's happened in the past, the Republican party *can* once again be the party of small government, the party whose mission it is to first restore and then preserve our constitutional republic, *uncompromised*, so that future generations can benefit from the freedoms it protects.

The first step would be rededicating itself to that purpose.

The second step would be get started on some serious de-cluttering of the government it's helped create – beginning with the repeal of the Emergency Powers statute and every statute or regulation that requires begging the state for permission – in the form of an occupational or business license – to earn a living.

Why start with licensing? Look at how easily the state has been able to kneecap every business that needs a license to operate. Without licensing, there would be no leverage for the state to micromanage the entire economy into the ground.

Every person who has a skill or service to offer would benefit; as would every person who would like to hire someone without having to pay what licensees get to charge because they are part of a state-enforced monopoly.

This shouldn't even be a hard sell. Article 83 of the state constitution says: 'Free and fair competition in the trades and industries is an inherent and essential right of the people and should be protected against all monopolies and conspiracies which tend to hinder or destroy it.'

Constitutionally, you can't require people to get licenses to compete in trades or industries any more than you could require people to get licenses to keep and bear arms.

Republicans who think it's a good idea to require permission to exercise inherent and essential rights should think about what's going to happen when their opponents gain the kind of control that the GOP has now, and decide to apply that logic to gun ownership.

I'll close by reminding you of what an *actual* Republican sounds like, when asked about exercising emergency powers:

Our constitution ensures that the citizen's rights are protected. I agree with the role of our government as set forth in our state and in our national constitution.

The people themselves are primarily responsible for their safety. They are the ones that are entrusted with expansive freedoms. They're free to exercise their rights to work, to worship, and to play. Or to even stay at home, or to conduct social distancing.

– Kristi Noem, Governor of South Dakota

Here, in contrast, is what a RINO sounds like when asked the same thing:

I believe that public health trumps everything.

– Chris Sununu, Governor of New Hampshire

Which brings us to one final consideration.

When I approach people about about introducing bills to repeal the Emergency Powers statute, licensing laws, and a thousand other encroachments that government now makes on the rights of the people, the most common answer I hear is: 'Oh, that would never pass, and if it does, the governor would never sign it.'

But this isn't a reason. It's an excuse.

First, think about how often constitutional carry had to be introduced before it was finally enacted into law. Ideas have to be heard and debated many times before they finally gain acceptance. This takes time, and persistence.

Also, unless these ideas are heard, and debated, and *voted on*, there's no way to know where the RINOs are hiding, because when they put on suits and put up yard signs, they look just like actual Republicans. But if they consistently have to go on record as voting against chances to reduce the size of government, it makes it harder for them to hide.

In particular, a governor who is presented with hundreds of bills that would reduce the size of government, but chooses to veto them, would be making it crystal clear that he's infected with the RINO virus.