

# Romney Lacks Righteous Anger

By KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ  
Universal Uclick Syndicate

If Mitt Romney wants to win the Republican nomination for president this year, which he clearly does, he has one big hurdle to overcome: it has something to do with his anger.



Lopez

During the final debate before the Florida primary, former Pennsylvania senator — and winner of the Iowa caucus — Rick Santorum took the opportunity to show some contrast between himself, front-runner Romney and former speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

He homed in, as he had in the previous Florida debate, on the health-care plan that Romney shepherded into law while governor of Massachusetts.

Romney stunned my typical tweeting-at-the-TV self into silence as he responded to Santorum: “It’s not worth getting angry about.”

For conservative voters who don’t trust Romney, period, and trust him even less on health care — who are worried that he did, in fact, set the stage for Obamacare — it was not the best answer.

It wasn’t the best answer, because Santorum’s point was that a government approach to health-care reform isn’t the best one, and that the discussion of health-care reform has to start from a position of freedom, not federal mandates.

It wasn’t the best answer because one of the most energetic and vital grassroots movements to strike a chord with voters in recent years — the Tea Party — sprung from activists angry at the terrible state of the status quo.

It wasn’t the best answer, either, because in the coming weeks and months, I predict

that we will see a whole new engagement from religious Americans concerned about the things they will be forced to accept from government-controlled health care.

The Obama administration has made clear that taxpayer money will fund contraceptives, sterilization and some drugs that could cause abortions.

Furthermore, religious organizations that oppose such things will be forced under the law to provide them in employee health-care plans, regardless.

The rhetoric this campaign season has suggested that radical, religious Republicans want to take away your personal choice to use birth control. To the contrary: This radical administration wants to insist that things like abortion are part and parcel of basic health care, and that everyone will be forced to pay for it. That’s clearly worth a little rage.

True, Romney is wise not to join the Occupy screamers, campaign-rally hecklers

and talking-head interrupters. And yet, there is clearly something that resonates with voters about Gingrich.

Is it because he is the most entertaining? Maybe for some. Because he never hesitates to challenge anyone who questions him? Maybe for others. Is it because he is the ultimate Beltway outsider? Not so much. But could it be that he seems to embody a sense of immediacy and impatience that voters across the board seem to be feeling?

When Romney quotes lyrics from patriotic songs, recalling his youthful cross-country trips with his parents in their Nash Rambler, this is actually what he’s trying to relay: a conservatism, a desire to preserve the country of his youth, the country he was raised to love — a country that won’t last, unless people are willing to fight for it, in principle and policy.

But an understandably skeptical voting public needs more. And Romney hurts him-

self — and shortchanges his experience and his message — when he dismisses anger.

People are disappointed, hurting, and yes, angry. They rightly feel this way about a government that not only gets involved in private matters where it has no business butting in, but that blatantly violates what I and many people believe, forcing mass violations of conscience.

And people are worried: Once the government gets its way on health care, what’s next? Romney doesn’t have to, and shouldn’t, raise his voice or bully anybody.

But he does have to demonstrate that he not only understands the concerns that Rick Santorum voiced, but that he can unite Americans and raise up that which is best about this land we love: her freedom.

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Thought for Today “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of God.” Ephesians 4:7

## Nation At ‘Tipping Point’

The Augusta Chronicle

What really is the state of the union? In answering that question honestly, one must look past self-serving political rhetoric and beyond the economic numbers, which could be dismal.

In assessing the state of the union, it is not even about the condition of a nation, but the foundation of the nation.

It is clear that the nation is in a state of fair-ness, not even about the condition of a nation, but the foundation of the nation.

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Then there’s the current president, who has now made a career out of using class warfare and envy to divide a nation that’s still licking its racial wounds. Although the top 5 percent of earners pay nearly 60 percent of the taxes, and half the coun-

try pays no income taxes whatsoever, the other half isn’t paying its fair share, he keeps on saying.

He jokes that it’s not about class warfare, but about the math that he’s half right: It’s about the math that the other half is wrong.

There are a lot of voters who love the math that says that the rich should pay more.

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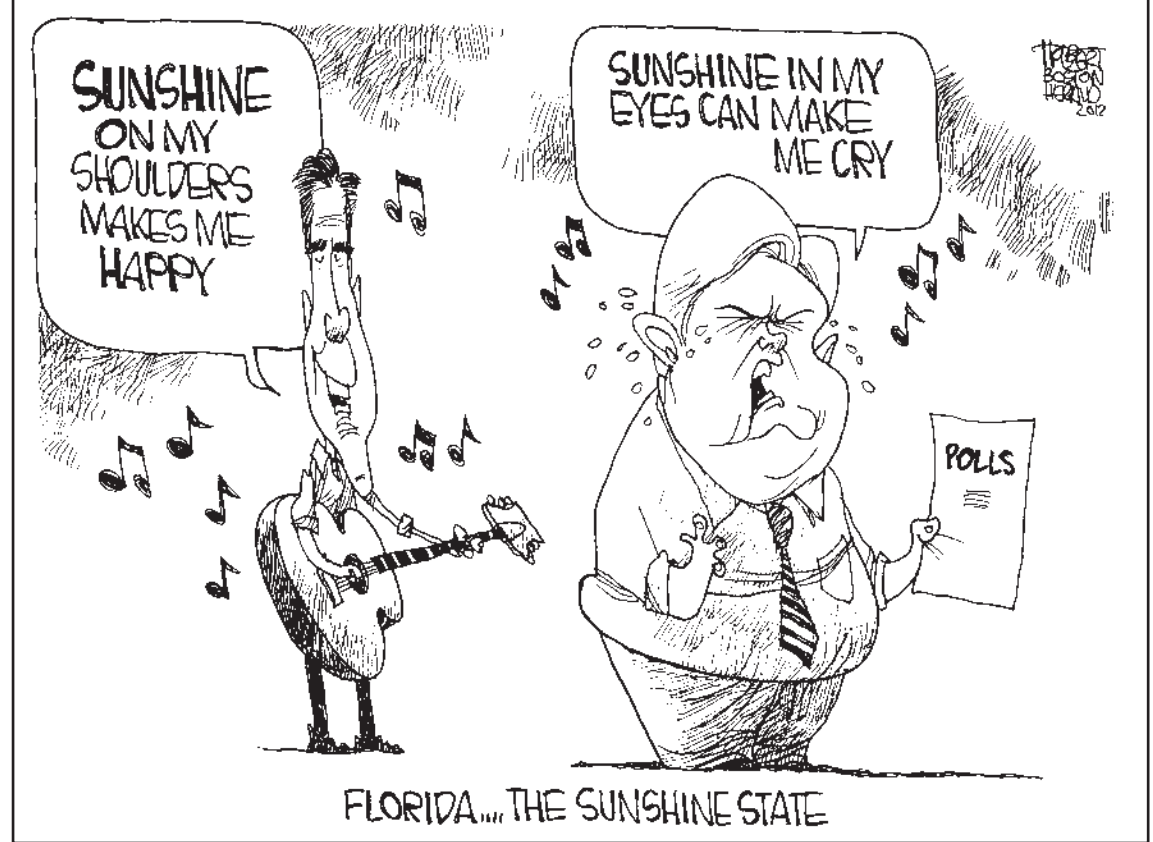
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## GOP’s Leaders Have Largely Faded Away

By DAVID M. SHRIBMAN  
Universal Uclick Syndicate

LEWISTON, Maine — Against all odds, against all expectations, perhaps even against all reason, the Republican presidential nomination fight is centered in Florida this week and then moves to a hopelessly complex process here in Maine next week. This is a far different contest than the Republicans conducted a few weeks, a few miles, and a political lifetime away across the border in New Hampshire.



Shribman

Strip the can’t from the 2012 Republican nomination fight and you have a front-runner who lost two out of the first three tests and now is barely entitled to the title; a challenger in the race to be standard-bearer of a family-values party who has had three wives, almost no allies and many blood enemies in his own party; and another contender who lost in his own state, considered essential to a GOP victory, by 18 points in his Senate re-election fight.

In the old days a formula like that would be a summons for the political establishment to do something, or anything — step in to force implausible candidates from the race, step forward with a new contender in the lists, or step up the pressure to bring order to the proceedings. But none of that is happening, or is likely to happen anytime soon.

Is it possible that in the party of the establishment there is no party establishment anymore — that in the caucus of the old guard, no one is on guard?

This is the Republican question that dares not speak its name; one that suggests that the character of a political party more than a century and a half old has shifted — startlingly, significantly — in the past decade or two.

Right now the Republicans seem to be avoiding the question entirely, speaking obliquely of a party establishment, but never identifying its members or even its inclinations.

Indeed, Newt Gingrich, who as a former House speaker would ordinarily be regarded as a charter member of the establishment, is plainly running against the establishment. “The establishment is right to be worried about a Gingrich nomination,” he said on “Meet the Press.” “We are going to make the establishment very uncomfortable.”

But here is the secret: There is no establishment to make uncomfortable — or to make things right in a party that seems to be hungry for someone, something or anything to make things right, or at least to make things clear.

“The old way of doing things in the Republican Party is gone,” says former GOP Sen. Warren B. Rudman of New Hampshire. “The party is full of independent contractors, following their own instincts.”

Gingrich is plainly ineligible to play the part of the establishment; he has the credentials but not the tem-

perament and, besides, is one of the contenders in the nomination fight. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts has classic establishment credentials — former governor of an important state, son of a respected business leader, revered Midwestern governor and Nixon Cabinet member, and possessor of degrees from Harvard Law and Harvard Business — but he’s in the fight, too.

Ordinarily, former presidents would be establishment figures, but one of them, George H.W. Bush, is frail and is to the new warriors of the GOP a symbol of easy compromise; the other, George W. Bush, is still politically radioactive. If there is a Republican establishment left, it consists of the times, rarer now than in years past, when Robert J. Dole, Howard H. Baker Jr., and Rudman, three retired senators who stay in touch but whose average age is 85, get together for dinner. None has been in office more recently than 16 years ago.

None of the other figures — not Karl Rove, George W. Bush’s aide, not Charles R. Black Jr., the veteran GOP adviser, neither of whom has held major office — qualifies as a party leader whose word might make mortals tremble or whose dictates might carry the voltage of a thunderbolt.

The Republicans have had such figures in past decades — former nominees Dwight D. Eisenhower, Thomas Dewey and Richard M. Nixon, or House Majority Leader Charles A. Halleck, Senate Minority Leader Everett M. Dirksen, or former House Speaker Joseph Martin — but they don’t have one now.

Today neither Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell nor House Speaker John Boehner can play the role. Neither can speak for his entire caucus or for the entire party; both are worried about the influence of Tea Party irregulars in their respective houses. It may be that the modern Republican establishment has been relegated to the presidents of a few Rotary clubs in cities with populations under 100,000.

The Republicans aren’t alone. Four years ago, the insurgent Democratic candidate, Sen. Barack Obama, defeated the establishment candidate, Sen. Hillary Clinton, who had the support of a former president, big labor and many liberal interest groups.

Usually the president of the United States automatically is regarded as an establishment figure, but Obama shirks from the role and, as a recent account of life within the First Family suggests, is uncomfortable with many of the rituals of political life, like sitting around after hours with people he detests and assuring them how important they are.

But a party that has specialized in toppling the powerful, as the Democrats did until recently, doesn’t need an establishment as much as one that, until recent decades, practiced a conservatism of the old definition, which was resistance to change.

That is why, in the past, Republicans selected nominees such as Dewey, Nixon, Ronald Reagan, the elder Bush and Dole, all with conventional credentials and all with presidential campaigns (and in three cases a vice presidential campaign) behind them.

## Preventing Child Obesity

The Albany Herald

Last week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a revamping of school meals that has been a long time coming — a decade and a half, to be exact.

The USDA is planning to improve the nutritional value of the meals that children get at schools. Trans fats, which are health wreckers, will be jettisoned from school meals, which will get a maximum limit on calories. All the milk served will be low-fat or fat-free, and salt will be reduced over time.

The improvements are long overdue in a nation where school lunches are a significant portion of many students’ daily food consumption, and many of those students dealing with problems associated with obesity.

In Georgia, which unfortunately, according to the CDC, is one of the leaders in the area of obesity with more than 65 percent of adults and 40 percent of children, the University of Georgia announced last week that it is launching an initiative to develop programs to help communities, schools, medical facilities and businesses prevent and reduce obesity.

Attacking the issue while a child is young and still forming habits is a good approach. It makes sense that children who develop good eating habits would be more likely to eat better as adults.

People like fats and sugar for good reason — they taste good. Vegetables have more complex flavors that have to be cultivated.

The problem is in this day of a fast-food restaurant seemingly on every corner, there is a tremendous temptation to eat high-calorie, low-nutrition food because of convenience, if nothing else.

That should extend to school cafeterias. Amazingly, Congress last year force-fed USDA a couple of laws that will make the job harder, but not impossible. USDA wanted to limit potatoes — the No. 1 “vegetable” consumed by Americans kids as French fries — to two servings a week. Congress said no.

USDA also wanted to keep school districts from counting tomato paste used on pizzas served at school as a vegetable. Congress actually passed a bill last November requiring USDA to do just that — count tomato paste atop a pizza as a serving of vegetable.

Both were ill-conceived acts of Congress that were certainly not passed for the benefit of America’s school children, but for potato producers and food service businesses pushing pizza.

And they’re a relatively small example of why America has every right to have no confidence in the current batch of lawmakers who are cooking up this type of political hash on Capitol Hill.

While we’re not fan of the way USDA ignores its own rules on signing up children for free and reduced-cost lunches, we do think everything that can be done should be to help our children live healthier, more productive lives.

The new nutrition rules appear to be a solid move in that direction.