

Hamilton County Lincoln Day Dinner  
April 13, 2016  
Ritz-Charles  
Carmel, Indiana

As we struggle to come together as a party in this contentious election year, it is critical to remember that we are not a party of personality but rather a party of ideas. It is neither about personality nor individuals but rather about what ideas will allow the greatest number of people in our country to thrive and prosper.

As Republicans, especially in a difficult election year such as this, it is vitally important we are able to effectively communicate those ideas and principles that have been the bedrock of our party and have brought the members of our party together over the decades since its founding.

As we struggle to unite not only our party, but our country, we need to be able to explain clearly why we are Republicans and what that really means. We must repeatedly explain Republican ideas and principles to new voters, to immigrants that have chosen to become Americans as well as the many discouraged citizens unhappy and disappointed in our political system of representative government.

We are here tonight, to celebrate Abraham Lincoln. He was our party's first president and one of our national heroes. He remains one of the finest our party ever had the honor to count among us and it is proper and right to review the principles by which he lived and governed.

So, what were the principles that guided Abraham Lincoln?

Lincoln believed there should be equal opportunity for all regardless of where comes from, their parents economic status,

their race or anything else. He believed that government needed to ensure fair and equal opportunity for every citizen.

He further believed that government should do only what is necessary to allow the individual to thrive and prosper and have that equal opportunity.

Lincoln believed that the government that governs best is the government that is closest to the people. This means that more power should lie with local government and not the federal government.

Abraham Lincoln believed that the rights of an individual, as laid out in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, need to be protected and that people should be free to live their lives as they choose, without governmental interference, so long as there is not a negative impact on others.

What did Abraham Lincoln have to say about campaigning?

In his 1842 speech, Lincoln criticized the demonization of individuals.

In fact, during that same campaign, when encouraged by advisors to engage in negative campaigning, he said:

*I should very much like to go to congress, but unless I can get there by fair means, I shall not go. If it depends on some other course, I will stay at home.*

Lincoln also said, in regards to campaigning, that one who makes an assertion without checking whether it is true or not is guilty of fraud regardless of whether it turns out to be true.

In other words, the fact that you didn't bother to check the validity of a point you are making was as bad to him as making

a false statement. He valued the principles of honesty and integrity and that is what brought him the trust of the people.

We have to recognize that Abraham Lincoln became one of our greatest presidents while the odds were not in his favor.

The historian Norton Garfunkle wrote that Lincoln worked his way up the social and economic ladder of success, from humble beginnings, by sheer discipline, persistence and force of will. Remember those principles: Discipline, persistence and force of will.

Let's really think about that for a moment. This was a man who shaped our country for generations to come, whose prose we still quote today and whose ideals and morals are still the foundation of our country and yet, if he were born today as he was then in a three-sided hut, he would be considered homeless by our standards.

Yet, he rose to the highest office in our land and was and remains a national hero in spite of his background and because of his ideas and principles.

Abraham Lincoln didn't ask for handouts and he did not let his humble circumstances define him.

Abraham Lincoln believed in compromise. He believed in working with others who had different opinions. He believed in governing with pragmatism, he wasn't rigid or inflexible except, in the words of one of his biographers, when it was a matter of great moral principle or involved his oath to protect and support the principles in our Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Lincoln recognized and openly spoke about the fact that life is sacred and needs to be protected. He not only explained and wrote that life was sacred but also demonstrated this conviction

by pardoning and commuting the death sentences of hundreds of war deserters that had been court martialed.

Lincoln was persistent

In 1862 Lincoln's comments regarding persistence Lincoln said, "If I were to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop would be closed for any other business." (And, that was in a time before social media. I can imagine what he would think of Twitter and other forms of immediate social commentary) He was not deterred by his detractors, instead Lincoln said, "I do the very best I know how - the very best I can and I intend to keep doing so until the end...If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the ends brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

Instead of worrying about those who tried to criticize, Lincoln said he focused on doing "*the greatest good for the greatest number.*" I might add, for those that thought that quotation originated with Star Trek, it didn't.

It is important to remember that Lincoln lived at a time when representative government was under attack. It was at a time when most European commentators were still predicting that men and women weren't capable of governing themselves. America was torn at the seams by a war between regions. Lincoln had the persistence and determination to show that our American Republic was the best form of government and that it could evolve and it could work. That challenge still exists, it is under threat daily and it is important to remember who we are as a party and that we must constantly communicate our ideas and principles.

We must focus not on squabbles within our party but rather on the great principles and ideas that unite us.

If, indeed, we are able to communicate that we are the ideas and principles expressed by Abraham Lincoln we will win elections and more importantly we will govern in a way makes our country, our state and our cities better places for all Americans.