

Conservatives for Unity

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Memo to: Members of the Board, American Conservative Union and American Conservative Union Foundation

From: The Undersigned – Conservatives for Unity

Date: February 7, 2011

Subject: **CPAC and Future Alliances for Conservatives**

With CPAC 2011 only days away, we are concerned about a controversy that may detract from a unified conference that will encourage new leadership for a revitalized conservative movement. We understand that eligibility to be a participating sponsor of CPAC depends on agreement with the ACU Statement of Principles. The ACU website displays those principles, which were adopted in 1964, and the Sharon Statement that young conservative leaders set forth in 1960.

We support these founding documents, which have provided consistent, principled guidance for conservatives for more than five decades. We note, however, that both were written at a time when issues that are prominent today were virtually unknown—before the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision (1973), the emergence of LGBT (gay) activism (1993), and before the terrorist attack on America (9/11, 2001).

Perhaps the time has come to update the list of principles that conservatives stand for, and apply those principles to decisions made regarding CPAC. New leadership will be needed to succeed in the next presidential and congressional election cycles. Although it is unlikely that current controversies will be resolved at this time, we wish to lend support to leaders who might lay the groundwork for future success at CPAC by fostering unity among conservatives, not division.

A coalition of economic and foreign policy conservatives existed prior to 1980, but President Ronald Reagan redefined conservatism by welcoming into his coalition a powerful new faction, the pro-family movement. This grassroots movement was motivated by the successful ten-year battle to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment, the *Roe v. Wade* decision, and by excesses of feminism that became apparent in the late 1970s. Some observers at that time warned that it was necessary to support feminist causes in order to win elections. On the contrary, the pro-family movement joined with economic and national defense conservatives to build a strong and effective political force.

The result of this political convergence was Reagan's famous "three-legged stool"—a platform giving strong support to economic issues, national defense, and traditional family values. The combined platform appealed to "Reagan Democrats" and voters nationwide, many of whom had not been active in politics before.

Today's grassroots-centered Tea Party movement, which has renewed interest in the U.S. Constitution and its founding principles, has emerged to confront the big spending, big government policies of the Obama Administration and the Pelosi/Reid 111th Congress. Con-

vergence of this Constitution-centered movement with pre-2009 conservatives brings the entire movement to a turning point that is not a crisis—it is an opportunity.

Some activists who claim to be conservative do not understand this. In November, for example, the GOProud group initiated [an open letter to Republican leaders](#) suggesting that the Republican Party should respond to the Tea Party movement by concentrating on economics and dropping “special interest” social issues.

It is beyond irony that here we have a gay activist group centered on a controversial “special interest” social issue, which is trying to exclude the majority of conservatives who have been a key element in recent election successes and many more prior to 2010. We cannot recall a time when social conservatives ever suggested that groups concentrating on economic or defense issues should be dropped from the conservative coalition.

We believe that, in general, the conservative movement is strengthened by the presence within it of organizations that give priority to particular, even single, issues. It is not necessary for each group within a political movement to embrace the full agenda of others. But it is necessary for each group within any coherent movement not to stand in diametrical *opposition* to one or more of its core principles.

It is our conviction that the institution of marriage and the family qualify as such principles. Public conditions of economic freedom and national strength cannot endure when government policies subvert or weaken the institutions of marriage and family.

As Professor Robert George of the American Principles Project has noted, basic shared principles should lead serious social conservatives to be economic conservatives, and serious economic conservatives to be social conservatives. The same principles lead to support for limited government, restrained spending, a strong national defense and low taxes, while at the same time upholding the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage, and protection of children.

The conservative movement can tolerate divergent views on certain issues, and CPAC can provide a useful forum for panel discussions on current matters on which conservatives disagree. In considering the activist agenda of groups such as GOProud, an offshoot of the Log Cabin Republicans, the question that naturally arises is whether this is the same kind of issue—allowing toleration of divergent views within the movement—or whether it is different.

We believe that it is different. Unlike disagreements over economic models, systems for taxation, or foreign policy, the moral and adversarial dimension involved here is not shrouded in murky theoretical analysis. Permitting GOProud to affiliate with CPAC is tantamount to tacitly removing the social conservative leg from the movement’s metaphorical three-legged stool.

Social conservatives perceive a genuine hostility and fundamental incompatibility with the overall agenda of such groups. It extends far beyond the current controversies such as marriage protection amendments, which have enjoyed overwhelming public support among voters of 31 states, or the imposition of LGBT Law on our military. It matters that GOProud has even been critical of Sen. Jim DeMint, recently named by *Human Events* as “Conservative of the Year.”

GOProud's agenda may be compatible with libertarianism but it is not compatible with conservatism.

CPAC welcomes thousands of young students, all of whom are exposed to socially liberal messages in all forms of popular culture, on a daily basis. In our view CPAC should reflect a different culture, advocating higher standards and principles that are consistent with traditional conservatism, including family values.

We understand that the status of GOProud as a participating organization, unlike that of vendors present at CPAC, permits them to claim affiliation with CPAC and to help in planning the agenda of the conference. We urge you to reconsider the decision to accept GOProud as a participating sponsor, or provide some assurance the board will seriously consider avoiding this sort of divisive dilemma at this time next year.

We also urge you to update the list of principles that guide the ACU, to include meaningful and consistent support for pro-family principles. We hope that principles of conservatism will be honored in decisions made regarding future CPAC conferences.

We appreciate the work of the American Conservative Union, and look forward to a prompt response.

Sincerely,



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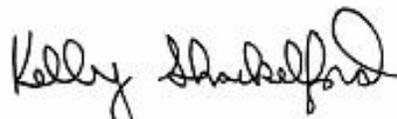
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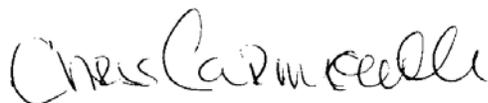
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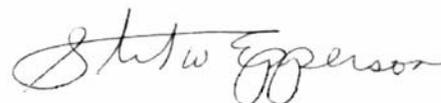
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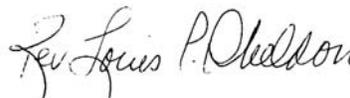
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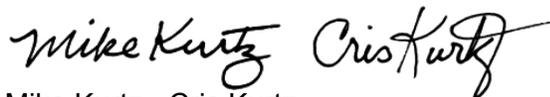
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