



Written by [James Murphy](#) on September 12, 2018

Ahead of Midterms, GOP Considers New “Contract with America”

Faced with an apparently uphill battle to keep their majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Republican Party is looking back nearly a quarter of a century to a strategy that helped them gain a majority for the first time in decades. A movement in the party looks to recreate the hugely successful [Contract with America](#).



Written by Newt Gingrich (shown) and Dick Arme, the 1994 document was historic in that it made the midterms a more national election. Rather than just running against their local opponent, Republicans could also point to an agenda with a simple, unified message of reform that all candidates for Congress could reference during their individual campaigns. After the Contract with America was released, six weeks before the 1994 midterms, Republicans gained 54 seats in the House of Representatives and 9 seats in the Senate.

The 1994 version of the Contract with America was seen as a major victory for America’s conservative movement.

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Pollster John McLaughlin has tested one version of the new “contract,” which includes term limits, paid parental leave, and more tax cuts. The new version also included a plan to create a “workfare” program, which would require able-bodied people receiving government benefits to prove that they are looking for work in order to keep receiving those benefits. Fifty percent of those polled said they were more likely to back Republicans who embraced such a plan. Among independents, 45 percent were more likely to back Republicans running on that platform as opposed to 31 percent who would back Republicans who didn’t back such a plan.

“I think there is a lot of interest in trying to figure out how we can focus our message and how we can maximize the impact of what we are accomplishing and draw a contrast with the Left,” Gingrich said.

Drawing that distinction should be easy. The Democrats are also considering a more unified platform which they are calling [“A Better Deal.”](#) The proposals in the Democrats’ plan include rebuilding America’s infrastructure, universal high-speed Internet, and more public housing. Curiously absent in the plan are impeaching President Trump and [abolishing ICE](#), which appear to be the two biggest issues that today’s Democrats are most concerned with.



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In a recent paper, Gingrich espoused the differences between the two major parties. “[Republicans] represent lower taxes, more jobs, rising take-home pay, the lowest black unemployment rate historically recorded, fewer people dependent on food stamps (because they are getting jobs), better trade agreements, less bureaucratic red tape and skyrocketing small business confidence,” Gingrich wrote. “The left represents higher taxes, more bureaucratic red tape, more people dependent on food stamps and bankruptcy through a totally unaffordable government-run healthcare system. The opportunity for defining two alternative universes has seldom seen better, nor the choice clearer.”

While parallels certainly exist between this year’s proposed “contract” and the 1994 version, the circumstances surrounding the two versions are in stark contrast. In 1994, Democrats controlled the presidency and both legislative chambers. This year, the opposite is true. Also, this year an extremely hostile mainstream media is more complicit with Democrats than ever before. Gingrich for one, believes that this year is more comparable to 1980, when a much younger Gingrich helped organize a unified strategy between candidate Ronald Reagan and GOP congressional candidates.

“That year everyone was shocked,” Gingrich said. “We picked up 12 seats.”

A strategy similar to that of 1980 would involve GOP congressional candidates getting on the same page with President Trump about a lot of issues, including building the border wall. It’s a risky strategy because, while the president has many ardent supporters, he also has many fierce and energized enemies.

It’s also risky to blindly follow any strategy advocated by Gingrich. The former speaker of the House has always talked a good conservative game but [his deeds have not always matched his rhetoric](#). Gingrich’s membership in the Council on Foreign Relations further complicates the issue. Where, exactly, do the former speaker’s loyalties lie? With America or with the globalists?

On its face, many of the tenets of the proposed new “contract” sound good — great even. Most conservatives would support some sort of “workfare,” where able-bodied people receiving benefits would have to prove they are looking for work to continue receiving them. Others, such as paid parental leave seem like they might be punitive to businesses — which is far from a conservative ideal.

Winning the midterm elections is important for the GOP — but not important enough to sell its conservative soul.

Photo of Newt Gingrich: Gage Skidmore



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