



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 30, 2012

Republican Convention Rules Changes: How the Establishment Stole the GOP

On August 28 the Republican National Committee (RNC) allowed representatives of the Mitt Romney campaign to seize control of the Republican Party. [As *The New American* has reported](#), Ron Paul delegates from Maine were improperly denied credentials, robbing Paul of a majority of that state's delegation. One disgusted Maine delegate described this decision as a "huge slap in the face."



That slap hit more than just Maine. Maine's Ron Paul delegates were roughly shoved out of the Republican Party's quadrennial convention, and as a result of events surrounding the proposal and adoption of new rules to govern the presidential nomination process, every potential Republican presidential candidate with a message that doesn't parrot the party line has been effectively ostracized. Forever.

The story of how a very small cabal of monied Republican activists [carried out their coup d'etat](#) has been chronicled in every major news outlet August 28 and 29.

[The *New York Times* reported](#), "Over loud boos Romney supporters pass new rules."

The [Washington Post wrote](#), "Amidst a contentious scene on the floor of the convention, House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) ruled that the committee rules had passed by a voice vote — despite loud protest from many in the arena."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported "the RNC laid the groundwork to change its rules in a maneuver that would effectively make it harder for a Paul-type candidate in future elections."

In order to make the nomination of Mitt Romney a *fait accompli* and to ensure that only those in his mold would ever carry the banner of the GOP, the RNC sacrificed adherence to its own rules on the altar of obedience to the Establishment.

In an exclusive conversation with *The New American* August 29, a longtime Republican activist recounted a tale that is at once incredible and unconscionable.

Richard Engle has served the Republican Party in Oklahoma diligently since 1988. His role in moving the Sooner State to the political right cannot be overstated. He has represented Oklahoma in the Republican National Committee and has sat on the RNC's standing committee on rules.

Engle is intimately familiar with the proper Republican rules-making process — he has participated in it — and he recognizes how that process was hijacked by members of the Romney inner circle at the meeting of the Convention Rules Committee.

Before rules are considered by the Republican Convention Rules Committee, they percolate up from proposals made by the state delegates of the Standing Rules Committee. This group of dedicated Republican officials meets three times a year to discuss suggested changes and prepare a draft of new rules to be considered by the Convention Rules Committee that meets every four years.



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Unlike the RNC's Standing Rules Committee, the Republican National Convention Rules Committee ("Convention Rules Committee" for short) meets only once every four years and is composed of two delegates from each state (one man and one woman). These people are "good Republicans" and are unquestionably well-intentioned, but they often have little or no experience with the party's rule-making procedures. This body is an ad hoc committee brought together for the sole purpose of receiving and reviewing the rule changes proposed by the standing committee.

As the Convention Rules Committee met August 28, the Romney campaign lawyer, Ben Ginsberg, showed up and in the words of Engle, "pressured for significant and dramatic" changes to the party's rules governing the binding of delegates and the way rules are to be revised in the future.

According to the revised Rule 15 (to be renumbered as Rule 16 in the new rule book) as proposed by Ginsberg, every state must amend its nominating process to ensure that their delegations are bound to vote in accordance with the winner of the popular vote as cast at state caucuses or primaries.

Ginsberg's version of Rule 12 empowers the RNC to bend its own rules to suit their needs at any time without submitting the changes to party members gathered at the quadrennial convention. This unprecedented revision places the control of the GOP in the hands of the Establishment candidate without suffering the inconvenience of listening to dissenting voices. As Engle reckons, in the future the nomination of an incumbent Republican president is guaranteed and upon leaving office, he will be able to name his chosen successor through manipulation of the party rules.

When it comes to all this "radical" rewriting, Engle admits that he doesn't know whether Ginsberg acted on his own or on behalf of Governor Romney. He does know, however, that the sweeping revisions of Rules 12 and 15 (now 16) "changed the nature of the Republican Party and returned it to the smoke-filled rooms of the past."

So drastic were the revisions that Engle compared the convention to the Soviet Politburo, a sham with no more legitimate power than to rubber stamp their leaders' directives.

To their credit, Engle relates that upon hearing Ginsberg's suggested rules changes the delegates on the Convention Rules Committee "of every stripe" reacted negatively. All of them realized that if the changes were adopted by the convention, the populist influence would be eliminated and all non-Establishment voices within the Republican Party would be silenced. Engle worries that the rules package proposed by Ginsberg would have the effect of putting "a certain type of party member in charge of the GOP."

Evidence of the delegates' displeasure is found in the attempted filing of a Minority Report. According to [Rule 34 of the Republican Party rules](#) in effect at the August 28 meeting:

No resolution or amendment pertaining to the report of the Committee on Resolutions or the Committee on Rules and Order of Business shall be reported out or made a part of any report of such committee or otherwise read or debated before the convention, unless the same shall have been submitted to the chairman, vice chairman, or secretary of such committee or to the secretary of the convention in writing not later than one hour after the time at which such committee votes on its report to the convention and shall have been accompanied by a petition evidencing the affirmative written support of a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the membership of such committee.

The Minority Report opposing the Romney lawyer's rule changes was signed, sealed, but was never delivered. Curiously, the delegate in possession of the Minority Report was riding a bus denied entry to



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the Tampa Bay Times Forum.

Virginia delegate Chris Stearns was on a bus of delegates blocked from stopping at the Convention. “They’re keeping us all on a bus and not allowing us in the security perimeter,” Stearns [posted on his Facebook page](#).

Without a timely filed Minority Report, Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) proceeded to call for a vote on Ginsberg’s rewrite of the Republican rulebook.

Standing at the podium and reading from a teleprompter, Boehner instructed those in favor of the rules to say “aye” and those opposed to say “nay.”

According to Engle, who was on the floor at the time, “in my hearing the ‘nays’ had it.” He admits the vote might have been close and as such Boehner should have called for a roll call vote rather than a voice vote. In another example of unexplained deviation from applicable Republican Party protocol, Boehner ignored the dissenting delegates for “division,” which is a roll call vote.

Whether it was the will of Mitt Romney or the independent work of one of his key counselors, Engle fears that the new rules governing the Republican Party’s method of selecting a presidential candidate nailed closed the coffin of the GOP. This week observers may be witnessing “the last Republican National Convention as we know it,” he added.

A small coterie of Establishment Republicans have wrested control of the GOP and formed the mold into which any Republican wanting to run for president from now on must fit.

Photo of Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., August 29: AP Images



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