

Sans Obama, GOP's platform is serious business

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This time next year, the Idaho GOP may have realized what its delegates meeting in Twin Falls last week collectively prayed for: Republican President Mitt Romney presiding over a GOP-led House and Senate.

What then?

No longer will the Idaho political establishment deflect attention to Democratic President Barack Obama.

Instead, it must answer for what it has done - or tried to do - at home.

For starters, it will have to explain the Idaho GOP platform.

Delegates departed Twin Falls having made just a few editing tweaks. With the phrase "naturally born" erased, the party maintained its definition of traditional marriage as between a man and a woman. Whether to reopen the GOP primary was put off for study.

And the loyalty oath requiring GOP candidates to embrace the platform or spell out where they disagree was deemed redundant because the party rules already say so.

Otherwise, the platform is the same Tea Party doctrine the GOP cobbled together two years ago in Idaho Falls.

With one difference.

As long as Obama sits in the White House, the platform is, at its best, an exercise in the absurd and, at its worst, a crackpot agenda of no importance.

If Romney is inaugurated Jan. 20, it becomes a blueprint for governance among a group of leaders with omnipotence at home and real influence in Washington, D.C.

By then, someone might ask Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, when he intends to repeal the 17th Amendment, which gives you rather than the Legislature authority to pick your U.S. senator. Labrador said he supported the entire 2010 platform with no exceptions.

Likewise, Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, would be compelled to take a stand on abolishing the Federal Reserve and returning to the gold and silver standard - and with it the financial instability that marked the 19th century.

For Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter, the platform raises this point: Does he pursue the radical idea of Idaho defying federal laws under the debunked concept of nullification? It's one thing to raise the spectre of rebellion against Obamacare. What if the next health care reform plan down the pike is Romneycare?

The platform puts newly anointed GOP Chairman Barry Peterson of Mountain Home, Idaho, in a box. He can follow his predecessor, Norm Semanko, and House Speaker (Boss) Lawrence Denney, R-Midvale, by continuing to fight a citizen's commission to conform legislative and congressional districts to Idaho's changing population. Or he can ignore a platform that pledged to repeal two decades of work, and hand that job back to the state politicians.

What about state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna? If he's on the ballot two years from now, how will he respond to a state GOP platform that says it's a good idea to pull what limited dollars Idaho now spends on its public schools and hand them over - in the form of a tax credit - to the parents of privately schooled children?

The platform has all kinds of land mines every Idaho Republican may wind up dodging. Privatizing Social Security? Privatizing other state services - possibly more prisons or state liquor stores? Putting the state in charge of federal lands? Rejecting spending more money as a way to improve public schools? Next time out, ask GOP candidates what they say about those issues.

In the reddest of the red states, such political aesthetics have taken a back seat to ousting the dreaded Democrat in the White House.

The minute Obama leaves office, the conversation in Idaho changes. Each one of those platform planks becomes an albatross around some Republican's neck. - M.T.