

# The WCYR Advocate

## Williamson County Young Republicans

August, 2004

Joshua Edlin, editor

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### Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 14, 2004  
Executive Meeting: 6:00 PM  
General Meeting: 6:30 PM  
Location: Republican Headquarters  
Speaker: TBA

### Announcements

- The Williamson County Republican Picnic will be held August 21. We will be hosting a beer tent to raise funds for the WCYR. Please attend to support the Williamson County Republican Party; any help running the beer tent will be appreciated.
- The YR fundraiser "Night with the Sounds" will be held August 29. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased from Nicole Lamb.
- Please remember to notify Brandon of any volunteer work you do. No hours have yet been reported. Our goal is 200 hours (5 per member).

### Now Is the Time

Campaigns are under way, and requests are pouring in for volunteers. As Young Republicans, we represent one of the most desirable pools of labor for fundraisers and campaign workers. In the last two months, we have received requests for volunteers for the campaigns of Janice Bowling and Phillip Johnson; we have received requests for volunteers to help with at least three fundraisers; and we have received requests for volunteers to work at several related events. At no other time have we been requested to do so much, and at no other time have our opportunities been so good.

While Williamson County's elections may seem uneventful, given the number of unopposed seats being defended, this year's elections as a whole are as heated as any in recent history. Much hangs in the balance, and we are set to contribute to the outcome. Opportunities like this don't come every year, or even every four years, by all accounts. So take time to volunteer. Join a campaign, or simply volunteer as we get requests. You won't regret it.

And when the results are in, you can say that you were there. ♦

### A Turning Point at the Party Convention

By Josh Edlin

The presidential candidate for the Republican party has been nominated on the first ballot in every convention since 1952. The convention has become a rallying point, with the candidate determined long before the convention begins, but it has not always been this way. In the past, representatives of potential candidates campaigned against each other until one candidate received the required majority to win the candidacy. The most vicious battles in a campaign were often fought at the party conventions rather than in the general election.

A number of conventions have seen conflicts that threatened to tear the party apart. The longest contest in Republican convention history came in 1880, when 36 ballots were required to nominate dark horse James A. Garfield over front-runners James G. Blaine and Ulysses S. Grant, who was campaigning for an unprecedented third term. However, the most important convention in Republican history came in 1912.

Theodore Roosevelt had become William McKinley's Vice President in the 1900 election. Upon McKinley's assassination in 1901, Roosevelt had become President. Roosevelt was a popular president - the first to seize upon the public's desire for progressive reforms. During his two terms as President, Roosevelt enacted conservation laws, increased anti-trust measures, and promoted a host of social and political reforms.

When it came time to nominate a candidate for the 1908 elections, Roosevelt was bound by a promise he had made to limit himself to two terms. In his place, he endorsed his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft. As Roosevelt's hand-picked successor, Taft was expected to continue Roosevelt's reforms, and his platform reflected that.

Once in office, Taft continued many of Roosevelt's policies and even exceeded the former President's zeal in prosecuting anti-trust cases. However, not everything Taft did met with Roosevelt's approval. Despite promising Roosevelt's cabinet that they could keep their positions as desired, Taft decided cabinet members of his own choosing could serve him better. It was the beginning of a rift not only in Taft and Roosevelt's friendship, but in the Republican party itself.

The real break between Roosevelt and Taft came when Taft began the process of reforming the tariff. Lowering the tariff had been a key plank in both Roosevelt's 1904 campaign and Taft's 1908 campaign. To accomplish the reform, Taft knew he would have

## Upcoming Events

|         |                       |
|---------|-----------------------|
| Aug 21  | County Picnic         |
| Aug 29  | Night with the Sounds |
| Sept 11 | NatureFest            |
| Sept 14 | September YR Meeting  |

## Service Opportunities

Volunteers are needed for the following duties / events. Please contact Brandon Ryan if you are interested.

- WCYR has agreed to man the Republican headquarters on some Saturdays. Volunteers will be needed for two hour slots.
- The Williamson County GOP Picnic is August 21. WCYR will be hosting our annual beer tent. Please contact Brandon Ryan to volunteer.
- Senator Bryson has requested YR volunteers to man Phillip Johnson's booth at NatureFest on Sept 11.

A number of positions with WCYR still haven't been filled. If you have an interest in any of the following positions, please contact Brandon Ryan.

- Fund-Raiser Chairman
- Liaison to U.S. Senator Alexander
- Liaison to State Representative Sargent
- Media Chairman
- Constitution and By-Laws Chairman

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to negotiate with the conservative faction of the party. He turned to Republican Senator Nelson Aldrich, who, along with Speaker of the House "Uncle" Joe Cannon, led the conservatives. Aldrich cooperated with Taft, however he never intended to lower rates. When the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Bill came out, lowered rates were few, while many rates had been increased significantly. When Taft signed the bill, Roosevelt took it as a betrayal of his legacy.

Roosevelt and Taft drifted apart after that, and rumors arose about Roosevelt's possible candidacy in 1912. Meanwhile, the party's conservative faction and its progressive faction, led by Senator Robert La Follette, split apart. By the time the election approached, the progressives had drifted further left, while the conservatives had dug in. Frustrated at the direction of the party, Roosevelt entered the race.

Roosevelt's platform was decidedly more progressive than his 1904 platform. While some of the issues, such as women's suffrage, are widely accepted by both major parties today, the platform also promoted more radical social programs. Fred Warren, writing to socialist candidate Eugene Debs, said "My prediction that Roosevelt would steal our platform bodily has been fulfilled." The election of 1912 had become a battle for the Republican Party between conservatism and progressivism.

The primaries heated up, with Roosevelt and Taft both touring the country, making Taft the first president to openly campaign for reelection. Initially, the primaries went well for Taft, with southern states giving him 252 delegates towards the 537 needed to win. However, the southern states were solidly Democratic, and the delegates pledged were entirely due to Republican patronage, which Taft controlled. Roosevelt won his first delegates with Oregon and Nebraska, and his campaign picked up speed from there. By the end of the primaries, Taft had the delegates, but the Roosevelt campaign contested 254 seats, enough to change the results. The Republican National Committee awarded 235 to Taft and 19 to Roosevelt.

Roosevelt needed 70 delegates to win, and with 72 of the contested delegates still within his reach, he decided to attend the convention himself, the first candidate to ever do so. The key to victory now rested on the election of the chairman of the convention. Taft, fully in control of the party machinery, supported Elihu Root as temporary and then permanent chairman. Root had served in Roosevelt's cabinet, and in his own words "care[d] more for one button on Theodore Roosevelt's waistcoat than for Taft's whole body." However, Root was determined to nominate Taft and preserve the conservative platform of the party. Root won the chairmanship 588 to 502, essentially defeating Roosevelt's hopes for the nomination.

As the 72 contested delegates were ruled upon, sentiments ran high, and with each successive delegate awarded to Taft, the tension increased. Cries of 'steamroller, steamroller' rang out. Finally, on Saturday, June 22, Root called each state to sustain or reject the credentials committees decision. Taft's men won the vote, and fist fights erupted. Delegates had to be forcibly removed from the floor to restore peace.

Roosevelt, defeated, requested not to even be nominated for the running, and most of his delegates failed to vote at all. Taft won the nomination with 561 votes to Roosevelt's 107. The battle was decided; the Republican Party would be conservative.

After the convention, Roosevelt's loyal delegates created the Progressive Party and nominated Roosevelt. Taft, knowing that he couldn't win the general election, failed to campaign; his Presidential legacy ends with his victory for a conservative party. The Democrat's nominated Woodrow Wilson, a hard-liner Democrat who made a Kerryesque switch to progressive values rivaling Roosevelt's own. After a hard-fought campaign, Wilson defeated Roosevelt.

The election of 1912 ended 20 years of Republican control of the White House, but it set the Republican Party on the conservative path it remains on today. Meanwhile, the Democrat party, long the party of states' rights and small government, became the party of social welfare and big government. 1912 was a significant turning point in American political history, all decided by the seating of 72 contested delegates. ♦