



Whatever happened to Republicans for Environmental Protection?

by Martha Marks, board chair
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As you may remember, I retired as the president of Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP) at the end of 2008. New leaders took charge, and over time the focus of the organization evolved.

The name was changed to ConservAmerica—which had been the name of REP’s charitable affiliate—because some of the new leaders believed the word “environmental” was a liability.

Also, as a result of the Supreme Court’s 2010 “Citizens United” decision—allowing 501(c)(4) organizations like ConservAmerica (formerly REP) to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money to support political campaigns—the organization’s main focus changed to that.

Because of that new focus, ConservAmerica saw no need for grassroots membership and state chapters, so those were dropped. Unfortunately, neither members nor chapter leaders were informed of the change. They simply were left to wonder, “Whatever happened to REP?”

ConservAmerica may be filling a useful niche these days, but it is distinctly different from REP, which combined grassroots advocacy, local presence, and strong policy direction to advance its mission. REP members like you and me, acting through the national organization or state chapters, or simply as individuals—with our energy, passion, and ability to speak openly and frankly as Republican constituents—were what made REP such an effective advocate.

I believe that something very important was lost when the organization abandoned both its honest “this is who we are” name and its emphasis on grassroots advocacy. Engaged members, well-organized chapters, and a strong, fact-based message are necessary to drive the kind of change America needs.

Responding to this situation, the board of the 501(c)(3) charitable affiliate that I and others incorporated in 1999 (and previously called “ConservAmerica”) repurposed its mission to fill the voids left by the new ConservAmerica’s change of direction. We renamed it **Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship**, or **CRS**.

In essence, we’ve created a new version of REP that, while non-partisan, still has a distinctly conservative brand that allows it to influence thinking on the political right.

Under the skillful leadership of David Jenkins—who was REP’s Vice President for Government Relations and is now the President of Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship—we are reviving the non-partisan, non-political elements of REP within the framework of a 501(c)(3) grassroots organization committed to safeguarding our environment, amplifying the voices of our members, and putting the “conserve” back in conservative.

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In a nutshell, here is what you need to know about this exciting new effort:

Name: Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship (CRS)

Website: <http://www.conservativestewards.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/conservativestewards>

Tax Status: 501(c)(3), which means donations to CRS are fully tax deductible and our advocacy can be aggressive but not partisan or overtly political.

President: David Jenkins (djenkins@conservativestewards.org)

Board of Directors: includes four people who previously served as board members of REP—Martha Marks, Sam Booher, Chester Sansbury, and Robin Tyner—as well as Steve Bonowski, a leader of REP’s Colorado chapter, and Gregory Morris, a leader of REP’s New York Chapter.

Mission: To safeguard the air, water, land, wildlife and natural systems that sustain and enhance life on earth by promoting responsible stewardship and conservation, empowering our fellow conservatives, and advancing the original conservative philosophy that compels us to be good stewards of our natural heritage.

