

LESSONS FROM THE TRAIL



NOVEMBER 5, 2014

JOB. EDUCATION. THAT'S IT.

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Lessons from the Trail

My campaign for Governor of California obviously did not end the way I had hoped. When the polls did not move in our direction as the campaign drew to a close, I began writing down my reflections on this two-year journey. This document is my summary of what I tried to do, how I tried to do it and what I learned along the way. Clearly it is not meant to be a roadmap to electoral victory since we came up short. But my hope is future candidates may find these reflections useful as they plan their own campaigns. I found the process of running for Governor a wonderful, enriching experience that allowed me to meet the widest possible diversity of people, from homeless people living on the street, to working Californians struggling to build a better life for themselves, to some of the most successful people in the world. In the vast majority of cases the people I met were genuine and good-hearted. I am grateful so many shared their experiences and ideas with me.

I also want to congratulate Governor Brown for earning a record fourth term. I truly admire his lifetime of public service and have offered him my full support in tackling the challenges of our state.

The Idea

I first thought of running for Governor just after the November 2012 election when Governor Mitt Romney lost his campaign against Barack Obama. I strongly supported Governor Romney for President and was disappointed by his defeat. In that same election, the Democrats took a supermajority in both houses of the California legislature. The Republican Party had been cast as the party of “no,” the party that didn’t care about working families, minorities or women. It had been cast as the party that only cared about the rich and Big Business.

I knew this characterization was wrong and wanted someone to fight to change it. I have been a Republican my whole life because I believe economic growth is the most powerful force we have to lift people up. If we grow the economy, have good jobs available and make sure people have the skills they need, everyone will be better off. I do believe there is a role for government to give people a fair chance – but then it is up to people to make something of that chance.

I looked around and didn’t see a deep bench of Republicans in California ready to lead that fight – so I asked, “why not me?” I felt that my three years in Washington, DC tackling the terrible economic crisis were good training in getting things done in a bi-partisan manner, and the fact that I am young, minority, the son of immigrants, from a middle class family and a Hindu all offered the possibility of a more inclusive Republican message. My campaign for Governor would have two goals: 1) winning the election to bring major, positive changes to the state, and 2) helping rebuild our party on an inclusive platform of economic opportunity.

The Ground Rules

If I were to run – there were a few ground rules I set for myself:

First, I would never, ever compromise what I believe or pretend to be something I am not. If that meant I would lose the primary, then so be it. I was not going to move hard right in the primary and then try to reinvent myself in the general. If I would run, I would run true to my beliefs the entire time – and not hide them from anyone. I couldn’t think of many recent examples of candidates who did this, so I assumed this would be risky.

Second, I would seek every opportunity to flip the stereotypes of Republicans and Democrats. I would focus on the most important issues that mattered to the widest array of Californians. Given our schools are ranked 46th and jobs ranked 45th, the issues were clear. But I wanted to talk about them in ways not typical for Republicans. Poverty, income inequality, civil rights, economic opportunity – these are pressing issues in California. Republicans often talk about how our poor economic climate hurts businesses. I wanted to talk about how it hurts working families. I also wanted to talk about education as the fundamental civil rights issue that it is.

Third, I wanted to be the most authentic candidate possible: Not hiding anything. Not spinning anything. Just putting my ideas out there and standing up for them. That means explaining my vote for Obama in 2008 to Republicans and explaining to Democrats why I believe many of their well-intentioned policies (such as raising the minimum wage) actually hurt people they are intended to help.

The Immediate Risks to My Plan

I saw a couple major risks right out of the gate: First, minority communities I was hoping to make inroads with may not embrace me and, second, the base of the Republican Party may not welcome me because of my libertarian social views. I thought there was a reasonable chance that within six months I would spot some fundamental flaw in my plan that made my run untenable. The only way to assess how I would be received would be to run. So I was inspired by the ancient explorer Hernando Cortes who famously burned his ships to motivate his men, telling them: "If we are going home, we are going home in their ships." In January 2013 I resigned my job and told The Wall Street Journal I was considering running for office. I burned my ships.

The Experiment

Ultimately my run was a bet that I could unite voters around the message of economic opportunity. I was betting that people of all walks of life essentially want the same things: good education for their kids and good jobs. I believed that these were not partisan issues and not unique to any race or ethnic background. The question was whether I could simultaneously earn and keep the support of the Republican base while reaching out to diverse communities. I believed the answer was yes, but would know soon enough.

Flipping Stereotypes

Assuming Jerry Brown would run for a fourth term, which was not 100% certain in January 2013, if I got through the primary, the matchup of me versus Governor Brown would be ideal in terms of flipping stereotypes. In this case, the Republican was young and minority from a middle class immigrant family. And with Jerry Brown's ultimate adoption of the reelection slogan "California Comeback!" the reversal was complete: the Democrat would say the problems are behind us, while the Republican would run on a message of rebuilding the middle class and fighting for working families. In addition to these differences, at every possible opportunity, I would seek to discuss policy issues in ways that were unexpected coming from a Republican.

Going Into Diverse Communities

One of the most rewarding aspects of my run for Governor was going into diverse communities to meet people and learn about their lives, their challenges and their hopes. I remember the first time I attended an African-American Pentecostal church in south Los Angeles: People were so warm, friendly and genuine. They couldn't have cared less about my political affiliation – they were happy I was there to learn – and they were willing to share. This was true over and over in African-American, Latino, Asian and Caucasian communities. I visited churches, picked strawberries with migrant workers, slept in homeless shelters and visited free clinics, food banks, small businesses and literally dozens of schools across the state. I found that the vast majority of people across California do indeed want the same thing: good education for their kids and good jobs. Based on many, many visits to communities across California, I became increasingly confident that the issues of jobs and education do transcend partisanship, race and socio-economic status and I deeply believe that they are issues Republicans can win on by genuinely putting forth bold policy solutions to address these issues. Most importantly, we have to let people see that we care.

Rallying the Base

I received support from much of the business wing of our party fairly quickly, such as many Lincoln Clubs and New Majority groups, who embraced my economic platform immediately. Earning the support of the grassroots of our party, central committee members, and their activists, took longer. We had a hotly contested primary where many grassroots activists supported my opponent. So I had work to do to earn their support once we got past the primary.

As I had done before the primary, I met with conservative leaders and spoke to Republican organizations all across the state. I learned that, more than anything, the base of the Republican Party wants a fighter. Someone who will fight for things they believe in. More conservative elements of our party often view more moderate elements cautiously, because they view them as moderate on the issues and in their conviction. I learned that they will forgive a lot if a candidate is truly willing to fight for things we all agree on.

My agenda of bringing jobs back to California and fixing the schools absolutely resonated with the base of our party. The issues were there. But I found that I earned their support only once they saw the lengths to which I would go to fight for those issues. Crashing the teachers' union conference, living homeless for a week, and hammering Brown in our sole debate earned me a lot of goodwill with the base of our party. Many came up to me at our party convention in September and thanked me: "Finally we have a fighter on our side!"

Staying on Message

One of the best compliments I have received as a candidate is that I was always "on message." Apparently it is easy for some candidates to get dragged into other issues that can be a distraction for a campaign. When asked how I was able to be on message all the time, I honestly replied: "It's easy to be on message when you actually believe your message."

I truly do believe that most of the problems in our society stem from a failure of our education system and a lack of good job opportunities. This deep belief stems from my own life: there is no other country in the world where a middle class kid, the son of immigrants, gets to go work for the President, or become the nominee for Governor of the biggest state in the land. Ours is a great, great country, but the key to unlocking all those doors of opportunity is a good education. In our country, education is the great equalizer. With a good education, it doesn't matter who your parents are or what neighborhood you grew up in. A good education is the one remarkable gift I received growing up and that has enabled all of my success. So it was very easy for me to be on message regarding jobs and education, because I have lived it. I was simply trying to give everyone in California the same chance that I had.

Dealing with the Press

Some recent Republican candidates have had strained relations with the California press corps, where the campaign and the press seemed to be adversaries. As a party, we often lament a perceived liberal bias among the political press.

My experience in Washington was somewhat differ-

ent. Yes, every person has their own natural biases, but my experience (dealing primarily with national economics reporters) was that most were serious professionals doing their best to objectively report complex economic topics. If we treated them honestly and openly, they did their best to be fair.

Based on that experience, I assumed the same approach would work with political reporters in California. So from the earliest days of the campaign we adopted a strategy of "embrace the press." I wanted to be the most open, accessible and unfiltered candidate possible. I was betting that if I treated the California political press corps with respect and didn't try to spin them, they would treat me fairly. Why don't all candidates approach the press this way? I think many fear making a mistake and having the press corps jump on any minor misstatement.

Although I certainly haven't been happy with all the coverage we received before and during the campaign, overall I believe our strategy worked. Like the national economics reporters in Washington, the California reporters who covered the 2014 election were by and large professionals primarily concerned with reporting the news objectively. We gave them maximum unfiltered access and always were truthful and upfront about our campaign and the issues, and they treated us fairly in return. I was surprised, however, just how deferential the California press corps is to Governor Brown. Imagine Brown holding a press conference with the New Jersey press corps. That would be fun to watch.

As a first time candidate, it was important for me not to confuse the press corps with editorial boards. Reporters are supposed to objectively report the news without letting their own opinions influence their coverage. Editorial staff writers are the opposite: their very existence is predicated on having and expressing strong opinions. In many cases their unfettered liberalism and acceptance of the state's slow decline was on full display. I actually came to accept their criticisms with pride – the more intense their criticism the more likely I was on the right track raising issues uncomfortable for the Democratic Party. The more I flipped the stereotypes of Republicans and Democrats while discussing serious policy issues (such as poverty and civil rights), the more liberal editorialists were reduced to trying to disqualify me as the messenger.

Limits of Earned Media

I earned more press coverage (largely positive) than probably anyone in California over the past two years other than Governor Brown, yet we were amazed how little it translated into name identification among voters. Despite all of the press coverage across the state, in the primary I was stuck at 2% in the polls until we started our paid voter contact via mail and television ads. In a state of 38 million people, paid voter contact proved essential - especially television. We encountered a cycle that begins with television: when people see campaign ads on TV, it awakens them to the upcoming election, and they start to pay more attention to press coverage of the race. Absent that, the earned media coverage of the race was largely unnoticed. The primary was record low turnout and when all the ballots are counted I expect the general election will also have been historically low as well. Money for a lot of television is essential to start the process of getting voters engaged. Of course, money is not enough - in my opinion it has to be backed up with substantive policy ideas, authenticity and quality execution. But it is absolutely necessary and, unfortunately, something we were lacking.

The Challenge of Name Identification

I didn't appreciate how important and how hard it would be to develop name recognition in a state of 38 million people - while running against an incumbent who has universal name ID. If I had been running against almost any other candidate, we both would have been struggling to introduce ourselves to voters. As previously mentioned, all of the press coverage we earned didn't move the needle. It came down to paid advertising for which we didn't have much money. As such I didn't appreciate the advantage Governor Brown had in being the most well known politician in California. I firmly believe it is possible and important for people from normal backgrounds to enter political life and succeed. Our political system wasn't designed to simply be the domain of political dynasties, celebrities and the extraordinarily wealthy who have the resources to buy fame.

The Challenge of Raising Money

The hardest part of this campaign was raising mon-

ey. Developing substantive policies, dealing with the press, retail campaigning, and debating Jerry Brown were all straight-forward. But I did not anticipate the fatigue major Republican donors felt after very well-funded defeats in 2010 and 2012. Indeed many donors have simply given up on California and instead donate to races outside the state, such as for the U.S. Senate. I certainly hadn't expected to put my own savings into this race, frankly because on the scale of prior gubernatorial campaigns my savings wouldn't move the needle. But as the primary proceeded I realized my savings could move the needle so I felt an obligation to do whatever I could to support our campaign.

I was incredibly moved by the support I received from volunteers across the state, many of whom I had just recently met. I was honored by the support of party heavyweights like Governor Romney, Governor Jeb Bush, Governor Pete Wilson, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, and even someone who held my feet to the fire when I was in Washington, Chairman Darrell Issa. I felt a great responsibility to do everything in my power to come through for all of them.

In the general election it was less clear that the personal money I had left could move the needle, but the issues we were raising were so important that I felt obligated to try. The analogy I use is that if I am behind in the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl, I don't pull my starters - I blitz the quarterback. And that's exactly what we did. I knew I would regret not trying everything possible far more than trying and coming up short. That's just the way I am wired, and I owed it to everyone who stood up and supported me.

I am disappointed my fellow candidates Ashley Swearengen and Pete Peterson didn't have much success fundraising. They were running for open seats (Controller and Secretary of State, respectively) against largely unknown Democratic opponents. Both Ashley and Pete are highly qualified for those offices. I understand many donors' reluctance to take on the most famous politician in California, Jerry Brown, but at a minimum we need to be willing to fund strong Republican candidates in open seats, especially against little-known opponents; it doesn't get any easier than these races.

Social Media and its Limits

I fully bought into the potential of social media in campaigns and immediately became active on most social media platforms, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Foursquare, Pinterest, YouTube, among others. We recruited a talented social media team to manage our platforms, but I would be the one communicating directly with voters, in an authentic, unfiltered manner. Of course there were risks I might say or tweet something stupid and get into trouble, but authenticity was going to be a hallmark of this campaign. Our campaign team eventually grew accustomed to reading what I was saying on social media when everyone else saw it, even in the middle of the night.

The best advice I received about social media proved to be exactly right: Social media is like the sail of a sailboat. It is designed to catch the wind – but it is up to the candidate to generate the wind.

The most success we had using social media was when we released our video from my week spent homeless in Fresno. It went national and viral, generating hundreds of thousands of views across YouTube and Facebook and receiving national coverage from the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, CNN, TIME, and every major outlet in California. It generated a lot of wind. Nonetheless, we saw little success from all of our social media activities, including paid online advertising, in terms of building my name identification or moving the polls. We found social media was an important mechanism to communicate our messages to our supporters and to communicate with the press corps, almost all of whom were active on Twitter, but it did not prove very useful in introducing me to voters. Over the course of the campaign, numerous very well-meaning supporters came to me saying they knew a social media whiz who could make everything go viral. We always followed-up with their leads. Usually the whizzes were certain their approach was totally different and so much more effective than everyone else's. They weren't. It was up to me to generate the wind.

Being Creative

I believe we ran one of the most innovative campaigns people have seen in recent years. One of my favorite headlines was from the San Jose Mercury News: "Neel Kashkari is Running the Best Campaign that Money Can't Buy." Many commentators attributed our creativity to the phrase "necessity is the mother of invention" – in other words – we didn't have resources so we had to do creative, risky moves to get attention. There is some truth to that – but the bigger factor is my own personality. As long as we were advancing policies and issues I believe in, how were we taking risks? There was no risk that I would compromise my beliefs or advocate for non-sensical policies so I saw our tactics as almost risk free. Perhaps if we had tens of millions of dollars to advertise my approach would have been different, but I don't think so. Creative tactic after creative tactic landed well. Not all were touchdowns, but none were interceptions. In my view that is because they were all solidly rooted in substantive policy, advancing serious issues. In the final month of the campaign a few people outside our team suggested I focus on Ebola, which was gripping the nation. It would be a sure-fired way to get a lot of attention. But would my fanning the flames of Ebola hysteria help California or do harm? It would have been harmful. No thanks. We stuck to topics where we could help the cause by raising awareness of these serious issues.

And we were largely successful. We forced the issues of poverty, civil rights and education to the forefront of the campaign. Governor Brown and the Democratic Party were absolutely exposed for their lack of action and concern on these critical issues affecting so many Californians.

Here is a description of and thinking behind some of our more memorable creative tactics:

- **Crashing the largest teachers' union conference in America.** When we learned that the Jerry Brown would be speaking at the American Federation of Teachers conference in Los Angeles, I decided to crash his speech. I quietly listened while he rallied his supporters but declined to mention the elephant in the room: the landmark Vergara civil rights education case. So I called a press conference inside the union hall, and unloaded on him

for betraying the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This was 100% on message: advocating for the education and civil rights of poor and minority kids, while flipping the stereotypes of Republicans and Democrats. People were shocked I would go into the lions' den, so to speak, but where better to call out Brown for siding with his donors over the neediest kids of California?

- **Marching in a gay pride parade.** This actually wasn't a tactic. I was invited to participate in the San Diego Pride parade. When my team approached me with the opportunity, my response was simply: "Of course. I want to show respect to all communities and the LGBT community is an important part of California." It was really fun. People were warm and welcoming. Both the LGBT press and the mainstream press reported that I was the first California Republican Gubernatorial nominee to march in a Pride parade. It was 100% consistent with my goal of growing our party with an inclusive message focused on economic opportunity. I hope future Republican candidates marching in Pride parades will no longer be newsworthy.
- **Living homeless in Fresno for a week.** This was the boldest move of the campaign, where I literally boarded a Greyhound bus and headed to Fresno with \$40 in my pocket in search of work. Despite looking for work for 7 days, I never found any, and lived homeless for six nights, sleeping on park benches, in parking lots and next to dumpsters. The point of this week was to raise awareness of the many Californians living in poverty today (24%), the many who are homeless and the link to the poor job climate in much of the state. I chose Fresno because it has the highest unemployment rate of any large city in California. The shock of a candidate for Governor living homeless, a Republican no less, captured national attention, and while we had people's attention, we delivered a message of the direct link between poverty and the poor job market in California. No one could argue with the policy message: poverty, homelessness and joblessness are serious issues. We need to deal with them, not sweep them under the rug. Our detractors (the Democratic party and their editorialists) were reduced to attacking me as the messenger: poverty is supposed to be the topic of Democrats. How dare a Republican talk about it!

How dare someone who worked in finance! The greater their feigned outrage, the more I knew we landed this message perfectly. Once again, our creative tactic was grounded in serious public policy while flipping the stereotypes of Republicans and Democrats.

- **Playing radio show host.** This wasn't planned, but the John and Ken Show approached our campaign inviting me to serve as guest-host when John and Ken were both on vacation in June. Filling in for them for four hours was a daunting challenge: they have one of the most popular radio shows in the country. But it was a great opportunity for us: four hours of free airtime with a huge audience. I used this wonderful opportunity to talk about my platform of jobs and education, and I invited numerous other Republican candidates on to share the stage and help promote their campaigns. The guest-hosting gig went so well I was invited to guest-host multiple other shows across the state over the summer. I think in total I guest-hosted for about 18 hours, and invited 15-20 other candidates on air to support their campaigns. Pundits commented that I was taking enormous risks being on air for so many hours, unscripted, taking questions from callers. And that I was forced to take these risks because we were short on resources. I didn't see it that way at all. What risk was I taking? Again, it is easy to be on message if you actually believe your message. In 18+ hours of radio, I only got into a little hot water once, when I quipped that maybe we should drug test Sacramento lawmakers. Watching the Democrats hyperventilate at the suggestion makes me think maybe I was on to something.
- **College scholarship advertising contest.** During the Super Bowl I was reminded that Doritos has an annual contest inviting people to create innovative television advertisements. It is a very effective contest – Doritos excites people across the country to participate and the winners get prizes (and their ad played in the Super Bowl). I realized immediately we could bring this to our campaign but I wanted to target it to college students. The Republican Party in particular needs to do a better job of reaching young voters, and I thought this contest could be a good way to get college students involved and energized. I was always amazed that people would criticize me for

visiting schools and universities because young people don't vote, or at high schools, they aren't even eligible to vote. Sure, I'd say, but they will vote soon enough and they need to know that Republicans care about the issues they care about. Plus offering a scholarship to the winning political advertisement is 100% consistent with our education message. Our key question was whether to announce the contest in the primary or in the general election. We opted for the general and tried to time it when students were coming back on campus. Our detractors declared we launched this contest because we didn't have much money so we needed college students to help us. As with our other creative moves, we would have done them regardless of fundraising, so long as it advanced our message and promoted sound policies. This contest promoted our education message and positioned the Republican Party as the young, innovative party. Right on point.

- **Rallying Republicans on a message of civil rights.** One of my most memorable speeches during this campaign was my address to the California Republican Party convention in Los Angeles in September. As they say, you only get one chance to make a first impression, and my speech to about 500 grassroots activists at the convention would be that chance. I knew a few years earlier that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had given a speech at the convention where he said the party was dying at the box office and they needed to moderate their views. Apparently his speech was not well-received. Republicans are tired of everyone telling them how bad and wrong they are, especially about social and racial issues. Nonetheless, one of the goals of my campaign is to help bring the party forward with a positive, inclusive message. But I wanted to do it by celebrating good things Republicans have done and encouraging us to keep doing those things rather than admonishing us to change. I chose the topic of civil rights, and celebrated the party's proud history of leading on civil rights: From the Republican Party's founding with the express purpose of abolishing slavery, to President Lincoln doing so, to Republicans leading the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to current day Republicans around the country fighting to give poor and minority kids a good education over the objection of union-backed Democrats. There is so much we

have to be proud of, and we should stand up and celebrate these successes and keep pushing the ball forward. I think my choice of topics was pretty unexpected, but I was thrilled with the response I received. Many of these same party activists had not supported me in the primary, but the feedback I received was fantastic. They now saw me as a fighter – someone fighting for values we all deeply believe in – and they were on board. The fact that I got a standing ovation from the core of the Republican base for a speech on civil rights – not typical red meat material – was an important validation that my inclusive approach could earn the support of the base and grow the party.

- **Fighting for the civil rights of poor kids.** I decided that the final month of the campaign would be focused on one issue and one issue alone: education, specifically the civil rights case Vergara. We barely had enough resources to deliver one message, so we had to be focused, and pick a topic that cut across party lines to try to reach independents, while also flipping the stereotypes of Republicans and Democrats. The Vergara education case fit that perfectly. Education is not a partisan issue: Democrats love their kids as much as Republicans. This case, where nine kids sued Jerry Brown, was sent from heaven: the courts ruled that education is literally a civil rights issue and poor minority kids were having their rights violated by our failing schools. It was an issue I strongly believed in as a policy matter and have been talking about since the first day of the campaign. Even better, it forced Jerry Brown to make a binary choice between siding with poor minority kids or siding with the unions who have funded his political career. Shockingly, Brown picked the unions, appealed the case and is fighting those kids in court today. I wanted to make sure everyone in California knew what he had done.

With very limited resources, I wanted to create a television ad that attempted to capture the magnitude of Jerry Brown's betrayal of kids. Imagine if a Republican governor was fighting poor minority kids in court who simply wanted a good education? There would be a national outcry. Yet that's exactly what Jerry Brown is doing. Kids asked Jerry Brown to rescue them. Their futures are being destroyed by failing schools. He betrayed them.

The best metaphor I could come up with was a child drowning in a pool begging for help. Who would turn their back on that kid? Who would turn their back on a child asking for help to get a good education? Jerry Brown did. It turned out to be a very powerful ad that generated national attention and a fair amount of criticism. But for the two to three weeks that we ran the ad, one topic was raised every single day in virtually every article about the race for Governor: Vergara and Jerry Brown's decision to fight against poor kids. My tactic was controversial, but I was advocating for the serious policy issue of poor kids who simply want a good education, and we were successful in making this the dominant issue in the last weeks of the campaign. The Governor only did a few campaign events, but he was asked about Vergara at almost every stop. It landed perfectly.

The Debate

One of the high points of the campaign was my debate with Governor Brown. We knew that once voters saw me go toe-to-toe with him, they would see I was the right choice to lead California. We spent a lot of time preparing and it showed: There wasn't a question we weren't ready for. Our arguments were sound and the issues I raised serious. I forced Brown to reveal that he didn't have good answers to California's record poverty, failing schools or poor job market. He was reduced to making personal attacks on me, which I have to admit I found amusing.

But Governor Brown was smart. His campaign unilaterally negotiated debate parameters with the media sponsors, resulting in as small an audience as possible. Very few voters saw the debate because it aired on a few public television stations - at the same time as the first NFL game of the season. While the debate itself was conducted fairly, I hope future debate sponsors are less deferential to incumbents and give challengers input into debate parameters. It is in voters' interests to have as much information as possible about candidates.

Needing a Break

I recognized beating an incumbent governor who hails from one of the most powerful families in California history would be an enormous challenge. The odds were very long. Essentially we needed something to break our way to crack Governor Brown's

armor. Two years is a long time in politics when a lot of things can happen that energize the electorate. To Governor Brown's credit, he navigated extremely well with nothing spurring a widespread demand for change. A number of potential flashpoints did happen (four Democratic Senators arrested in a year, iconic companies such as Toyota and Tesla leaving California, felons on early release committing heinous crimes, the terrible drought, Brown fighting poor kids in court who just want a good education, Brown raising gas prices to fund the high speed train, etc.) but none seemed to stick to Brown.

Supporting the Rest of the Ticket

Wherever possible I wanted to use my platform as our candidate for Governor to support other good Republican candidates up and down the ticket all around the state. Whether that was helping them raise money, get out the vote, or sharing the media spotlight, I wanted to do all we could. One of the most effective ways we did this was on radio. As I mentioned previously, over the summer I was offered the chance to guest-host radio shows across California. We invited other candidates on whenever possible and ended up partnering with and supporting many candidates across the state and even spent some of our final money on voter outreach for Republicans in contested legislative races.

Selfless Acts

One of the real surprises for me was that I was the recipient of selfless acts. I never thought of politicians as selfless. But I was truly grateful when national leaders such as Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, Pete Wilson, Darrell Issa, Chris Christie, Condoleezza Rice, Rand Paul and Kevin McCarthy stepped forward to support my campaign. California GOP leaders like Senator Bob Huff, Senator Dick Ackerman, Assemblyman Rocky Chavez, and Rosario Marin all supported me before the primary, and no doubt took some heat for doing so. There was nothing in it for them other than wanting what's best for California and for the Republican Party.

The same is true for our donors. While we didn't raise as much money as we would have liked, those donors that did support us, did so for the right reasons. This was always a tall mountain to climb with long odds, so donors who supported us weren't

looking for any form of quid pro quo. They simply believed that California is too important to give up on. I was asked what my donors expected of me in return for their support. My answer was as simple as it was true: they wanted me to do a good job as Governor. I am grateful for their support.

Policy Development

I care a great deal about policy development. There are good policies and there are bad policies. California is suffering from years of bad policies coming out of Sacramento, crushing our schools and driving jobs out of state, leading to record poverty. I spent much of 2013 looking at the most serious policy issues facing California and then studying policies in virtually all forty-nine other states to understand what has worked elsewhere that we could bring to California. My time in Washington gave me significant policy development experience and a network of friends who are policy experts around the country. They were eager to share their ideas and volunteer their time to help us develop smart policies that weren't simply a rehash of prior Republican campaigns. The press corps was eager for me to release my policy plans in the first few months of the campaign and I kept saying to them: "Patience. We've got them. There's a long campaign ahead of us." We released them in March and April 2014 and silenced all doubters. We had spent a year developing serious, thoughtful policy proposals, and it showed. We never wavered from those policies and they served as the foundation for virtually everything we did for the entire campaign.

Building an Effective Team

I am very proud of the lean campaign team we built and the professionalism they brought to the campaign. Our team executed extremely well. No drama. No major mistakes. A quality job through and through. They brought their experiences from races around the country and California. I pushed them hard to be more aggressive and more creative than any campaign they had ever been on. They pushed back where appropriate and together we improved our ideas. In the end, I made all the major strategic calls of the campaign. The buck stops here. Send any criticisms my way. The team did a great job executing our strategy. I am proud to be associated with each of them. I hope they would say the same.

The Outcome

Winning the primary was a major achievement – especially considering this was my first run for office and I was largely unknown across California at the start. I am really proud that we ran the campaign I set out to run, making no compromises, and made it through the top two primary. I believe we ran a top of the ticket campaign other candidates (statewide, legislative and Congressional) appreciated and were proud of. I hope we have showed future Republican candidates that there is a viable path focused on a message of economic opportunity.

With the general election outcome a loss, was the larger experiment of unifying voters across party lines on a message of economic opportunity a failure? My honest assessment is the answer is unclear. We simply didn't have the resources to reach voters and deliver our message. So most voters, who are busy with their lives and not following politics closely, probably didn't know much about me, why I was running or my plans for the state. I know I was very well-received in virtually every community I went into, including those communities in which Republicans have recently fared poorly. But without the resources, for example, to advertise on Spanish language stations to let them know there is a Republican who cares about their families and their futures, Latino voters likely cast their vote between Jerry Brown, a Democrat they know, and some Republican they don't know. We didn't have the resources to reach them. That's on me – not them.

Running for Governor was a wonderful and enriching experience. I would recommend running for office to anyone who is interested in public service. There are personal sacrifices but the personal rewards (even when coming up short) far outweigh the costs. I am grateful to the voters who voted for me, to the volunteers who worked hard to support our campaign, to our donors who believed in our vision and to my campaign team. I am also grateful to the thousands of people I met on the campaign trail who generously shared their stories with me. I look forward to staying involved and helping move the Republican Party and California forward.

Appendix

The following are links to our policy papers, TV ads, videos, and news articles that capture what we were trying to accomplish.

[Education Plan](#)
[Jobs Plan](#)

Video: [Debate](#)

Video: [Is California Back? Neel Lives a Week Homeless in Fresno](#)

Video: [Vergara mini-documentary](#)

Ad: [Ax](#)

Ad: [Betrayal](#)

Ad: [Vergara](#)

Op-ed: Teacher Quality Is a Civil Rights Issue
([Sacramento Bee](#), 7/14/14)

Op-ed: Brother, Can You Spare a Job?
([Wall Street Journal](#), 7/31/14)

Op-ed: Republicans Are the Party of Civil Rights
([Flash Report](#), 10/27/14)

News Articles

Kashkari Talks Educational Inequality at South L.A. Church
(Seema Mehta, [Los Angeles Times](#), 6/15/14)

Neel Kashkari Could Be California's Goldwater
(George Will, [Washington Post](#), 7/23/14)

Neel Kashkari: The California GOP's Pro-Gay Gubernatorial Candidate
(Karen Ocamb, [Frontiers](#), 7/24/14)

Neel Kashkari is Running the Best Campaign that Money Can't Buy (Josh Richman, [San Jose Mercury News](#), 7/27/14)

Kashkari's Gubernatorial Campaign Heads in Unconventional Directions (Seema Mehta, [Los Angeles Times](#), 8/8/14)

California Governor's Debate — No Losers
(Deb Saunders, [San Francisco Chronicle](#), 9/7/14)

Rebranding Republicans in California
([The Economist](#), 9/13/14)

Neel Kashkari Relentlessly Upbeat about Chances in Governor's Race (John Wildermuth, [San Francisco Chronicle](#), 10/6/14)

Can This Man Save California's GOP?
(Andrew Romano, [Yahoo!](#), 10/20/14)

Kashkari Aims to Rebrand GOP
(Juliet Williams, [AP](#), 10/25/14)

Hopeful Seen as Future of GOP
(Josh Richman, [San Jose Mercury News](#), 10/28/14)