

House Call interview with Robert Uithoven, candidate for Republican Party Chairman in Nevada

Chuck: Welcome to another House Call interview. My special guest today is Robert Uithoven. Robert is President of j3 Strategies, a public and government affairs firm that also manages campaigns in Nevada. He was Chief of Staff to Jim Gibbons in Congress, and managed Gibbons successful 2006 campaign for Governor. Robert is married with three sons and lives in Reno. Robert, welcome.

Robert: Thank you so much, Chuck. I appreciate it.

Chuck: Okay. Let's start by noting that this interview is being conducted on Wednesday, September 25th, three days before the election for Nevada Republican Party Chairman, a race you entered four days ago. Tell us, why did you jump into that race?

Robert: Well, I had been looking at the race, and quite honestly, you know, I've always had an idea that I'd like to be Chairman of our Nevada Republican Party. It's something I've discussed with a number of consultants over the years through various campaigns. Following my ten years working for Jim Gibbons, I thought about it. Sue Lowden, when she was Chairman of the Party, I remember flying back from the 2008 convention in Minnesota, and we were kind of thinking about how I could run for Chairman after her Chairmanship would be up. You know, so it's something that's always been on the back of my mind. I entered, you know, and I'd been looking at this, I knew that Chairman McDonald was unopposed; he was going unopposed. Yeah, based on the current state of the party, I believe that we needed some new leadership in there. I have no problem with Michael McDonald at all. I've known him for a long time. I wouldn't say we're close friends, but we're certainly, I would consider him a friend. And, but, I just look at the results, and I like him, believe that our party has to do better, and we're starting to lose our competitive edge. And, it's starts in Presidential politics, and eventually it trickles down and affects our statewide and state legislative races, and so forth. And, I don't want to see us become New Mexico. I wanted the, I knew that I couldn't do this job well, should I be elected, without the support of the Governor. I think that may have been an issue with the current Chairman, for whatever reason. And, it's not for me to get in there and try to figure

out why the support wasn't there. But, I didn't want to go in there not having the tools that believe are needed to be successful. And, first and foremost that's raising money. And, you've been around the Nevada Republican Party for a long time. You know, we had a party that was once led by Governor Kenny Guinn, who was involved in the party, and helped raise money for the party. You know, I believe you, people like you and Dan Burdish, and many others know the history of how much better a party can be funded and that money utilized for registration, get out the vote, and all the things a party has to do to operate well, when you have the backing of the Governor. Kenny Guinn, you know, obviously, was viewed as a moderate in a lot of circles. I know that Governor Sandoval is viewed the same way. Regardless of that, you've got to have that Chief Executive, when he's with your party, help you raise those dollars. And, I wasn't going to get in until I had the assurance that I had that support and it took me some time to get it, and once I knew that I had the support of the Governor, I jumped in. I'm playing significant catch up right now, Chuck, working through these call lists, I know, that Chairman McDonald had been out collecting proxies, and votes, and support for a long time, as he should have been to his credit, prior to me getting into this race. And, I jumped in once I believed I would have the tools to be successful should I win. And, so it is late. I could have decided to sit this one out and sit on the sidelines, but I'm one of those who constantly frets about the condition of the party and believed that we're losing our competitive edge. And, you know, some people can choose to sit outside the ring, and some can get in, and I'm in it.

Chuck: Well, I can honestly say, that you and I had talked about you running for party Chairman at least five years ago, I remember, when I was still living up in Carson City. So, I know this wasn't a lark. I know this has been something that you've thought about for a long time. That said, the condition of the party has been well known, by everyone in Nevada, for a long, long time. Why did it take until just this past Saturday, four days ago, before you decided to jump in at this time, at the last minute?

Robert: Again, I really believed that I could not do a good job should I be elected, if I didn't have the backing of the Governor. And...

Chuck: But couldn't you have gotten that three months ago, two months ago, six months ago?

Robert: I don't know, quite honestly, Chuck. I started seeking a public endorsement a matter of weeks ago. It took some time to get it, and once I got it, I called Michael McDonald and told him that I would be getting into the race. We had talked probably about a week prior to that, and I let him know that I was interested in it, but I was making some calls to see if it was even viable. And, once I was able to secure the support of the Governor, I got in. This wasn't an issue where consultants urged me to do it, or, are pulling my strings, I know that based on a number of my calls with Central Committee Members, a lot of people are concerned of who's putting me up to this? Nobody is putting me up to this. I care about the party. I don't question that Michael McDonald cares deeply about the party. I know how hard he has worked; I know the effort that he's put forward. I know that he's traveled the state and I have no qualms with that. But I also don't want to be a Chairman of this party who doesn't have the strong backing of a Governor who can raise the kind of money that is needed to keep our party competitive.

Chuck: With that in mind, Michael McDonald has been Chairman for the last 18 months. Governor Sandoval has been Governor for 3 years now, and prior to Mike McDonald there was Amy Tarkanian. And yet, the Governor didn't do anything to help the party when Amy Tarkanian was Chairman either. Why hasn't the Governor been supportive of the party the way, as you pointed out so rightly, Governor Guinn, even though there were ideological differences between Governor Guinn and a lot of the party members, he went out there and made sure that he raised money to make sure that the party had money to operate and a strong Republican party. Why hasn't Governor Sandoval done that over a series of Chairmen? You know, it's obviously not just Mike McDonald.

Robert: I can't answer that, Chuck; I think only the Governor can answer that. What I can say is that he has expressed an interest in helping the party now, and he has expressed support for my candidacy, and I frankly wouldn't want this job if I didn't have his support. You could probably find a number of clippings in the press, interviews that I have done, certainly right after he was elected, where I was saying the same thing, expressing my hope that the Governor would really step up and help get our party back into a competitive, back, you know, get our party

competitive again with the Democrats. Because I know that he has the capability of raising a lot of money. I've run a campaign as you cited at the start of the interview of Governor Gibbons. When you are running for Governor you can raise a lot of money, and there's people who can write big checks, and they can write much bigger checks than the checks they are legally allowed to give a candidate for Governor. And what your hope is, is that when you receive those contributions from the donors, and they say, what more can I do for you, you want a Governor there to say, if you can contribute more, go give money to that state party, to our state party, the Nevada Republican party, because they are going to put that money to good use. What we've seen as you know, and you've pointed out very well, is that shadow parties and 527 C4's and C6's, have all been popping up everywhere to try to go around the state party. I am a state party guy. I don't want those things to occur. I'd like to see a well-functioning, capable state party, energetic state party, do the work that a lot of these shadow groups have been doing. And, frankly, I believe everyone in the state party, county party, activists want to see, and I think donors, even, want to see it. Donors don't want to write a check to a lot of these different groups because there is so little accountability. You know, when you give money to the state party, and you've run party organizations, there's transparency. You have to file senior reports with the Secretary of State, you have to file FDC reports on the federal money. And so donors can look and see who's giving, who's giving how much, and then how much, how those dollars are being spent. I like the idea of having that transparency. I like the idea of having a healthy Nevada Republican Party, and I hope to bring that should I be successful on Saturday.

Chuck: Okay. You and I have known each other since I think around 2005, I first met you in Washington D.C. when you were still with then Congressman Jim Gibbons, and I've always considered you to be a pretty solid conservative, certainly a solid fiscal conservative. Indeed, back in 2009, I remember you did an interview in which you laid blame for the Republican losses in 2006 and 2008, at the feet of moderates in the Republican party, and you said that we actually had to have, you know, somewhat of a, I don't want to use the word bloodletting, but there was going to have to be some serious changes made because the party had drifted too far to the middle. Now that you're running for Chairman, all of what is considered to be the moderate establishment in

Nevada, Governor Sandoval, Senator Roberson, Assemblyman Pat Hickey, they're now all supporting your candidacy, which I think probably scares a lot of conservatives worried about, you know, has Robert Uithoven now gone over to the dark side, has he sold out the way Senator Roberson did last year. And, I'm curious about that. I've always known you to be a conservative, but when you see all of these moderates backing your candidacy, it causes one to pause. So, how would you address that?

Robert: I appreciate that question very much, and it's probably the question I'd most like to address. I am, and always have been, and will remain a strong conservative. And, I believe it is the conservative values, and the conservative energy which drives our party, and will move it forward and keep it healthy. I think a lot of the frustration with 2006, and certainly with 2008, centered around our party, and this is a historic type thing, we're a party where we nominate the guy whose turn it is. You know, we saw it with Bob Dole and his candidacy, you know, and we saw in 2008 with John McCain. And, certainly, speaking of John McCain, you know, just because, a lot of people viewed it, well, it's his turn and he's kind of earned his way into being our nominee, we saw what a disastrous Presidential cycle that was for us. And it affected everyone on down the ticket. Look, I'm, people can label me, I'm not interested in labeling others, I'm honored to have the support of those who are supporting me and I do have conservatives supporting me, as well, from our state legislature. I, I've, I'm culling through the list. I want Michele Fiore in the Assembly fighting for my rights. I told her that on the phone. I also want Pat Hickey in the Assembly because he has an R by his name. And if we can get those numbers better and hopefully, someday, get the majority, I want Republicans to have gavels in their hands running the committee. And I believe that we'd have a better chance of construction defect, and project labor agreement reform, and PERS pension reforms, tax reforms, with Republicans at the helm. I don't always agree with a number of people who are endorsing me, and quite honestly, I doubt that they've always agreed with things that I've said in the paper or people I've worked for. But the fact is if they have an R by their name I view it as my job, should I be elected, to help them if they win their primary. If you have an R by your name and you win your primary I want the state party to be there for you, to help you get into office. And, you know, I've always believed in that adage of Reagan, a hero of yours, a hero of mine. That

if you agree with them 80% of the time they are still a friend. And that applies with a number of my supporters and, you know, I'm proud of my conservative bonafide, I mean, I worked for 10 years for Jim Gibbons, as I pointed out to you, and Jim Gibbons was Tea Party before there was Tea Party. Think what our tax rates would be in the State of Nevada, think of it, you know, we're about, we're gearing up for this big margins tax fight, think where we would be in the state without the Gibbons tax restraint amendment in our Constitution. I was proud to stand with the Governor, former Governor Gibbons, through that, through the Education First Initiative, which, I think, is a very significant conservative public policy issue, and when he was dealing with an all Democrat-controlled assembly and senate, he broke the record for the most vetoes, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud to have worked for Sue Lowden who shut down the Tax Committee in the State Senate when she was a senator. You and I know Sue well, I consider her a friend to this day, and a true conservative. And I've been proud to work with her, Stavros Anthony and a number of others. There are people I've worked with who I might not have agreed with on every issue, but I would much rather have that Republican getting into office, than the Democrat. And, I trust my ability as a conservative advocate to get into their office when they're in session in Carson City or whether they are back on Capitol Hill, and getting more of a fair hearing from my elected official if they have an R by their name when I'm advocating for conservative policies.

Chuck You have rightly said that a prime objective of the Republican party is, of course, to get more Republicans elected, and that was a reason for running for Chairman is to get more Republicans elected. Your detractors will point out that not only did you win as campaign manager for Jim Gibbons' gubernatorial race in 2006, but then you came back two years later and lost two races, incumbent Senator Bob Beers, and incumbent Joe Heck. Even though they were incumbents and they had a lot of money, and let's assume that if you are elected Chairman you are going to have more money than what Michael McDonald has. Then they also point out that in 2010 you did manage Sue Lowden's campaign which failed to win in the primary. So the detractors are saying, well, if the objective is to win elections, Robert's track record is, at best, mixed. Why is he going to be a better Chairman in fulfilling that objective than what Mike McDonald is, who has also won races himself, you know in the past?

Robert: I think we suffered a major problem at the top of the ticket in 2008. Joe Heck had a decision to make as an incumbent State Senator at the time, I think he's better off today, I think we're all better off having him in Congress, frankly, but he faced a difficult decision when we saw the polling and how strongly Obama was doing in the State of Nevada. There was a decision to be made that he can pull away from that and pull away from the ticket and maybe try to embrace the Obama voters so that we can have split ticket. I remember this very, very well, as if it were yesterday. Joe Heck gave probably the most impassioned conservative speech I've ever seen given in the State of Nevada when he showed up at a Sarah Palin rally in Henderson, Nevada. It's one of the best speeches, one of the most energizing speeches I've ever heard given in the State of Nevada. He could have not shown up there. He could have distanced himself from the ticket. What would the criticism have been then? He and the campaign decided that he was going to put his best foot forward. He was going to be a soldier for the top of the ticket all the way down. I remember a lot of angst. This didn't just happen in Nevada; it happened everywhere. We took on significant losses in '06 and '08. And, I really believe that a lot of that was driven by the top of the ticket. I'm not making any excuses. Those were very tough losses. It was very difficult to get over those. Joe Heck is an outstanding, veteran, public servant, and I think he was a great candidate for that cycle. We got to the point we were just hoping all these people who were going to be showing up to support Obama and give John McCain a huge defeat in this state would just show up, vote top of the ticket, and leave. They didn't. They showed up; they voted Obama. They voted Democratic all the way down, and that hurt us. It also hurt Joe Heck that he had, you know, third party candidates, I believe those Libertarian votes would have gone to him, I believe the IEP votes would have gone to Joe Heck, had they, he would have won easily. Michael Roberson, two years later in winning the seat back from Joyce Woodhouse, he was able to, before filing, to go to the IEP and go the Libertarian likely candidates, talk them into staying out this one, let it just be a Republican versus Democratic race, and we saw a different outcome. Bob Beers, one of my heroes in the State, I remember that campaign very well too. The Democrats played very ugly in that race. They had money, again, this gets into the financial disadvantage that we face as Republicans. Bob Beers, yes Bob Beers did have money. But our state party didn't have the kind of money, and the Senate Republican Caucus didn't have the kind of money to

counter the attacks that were launched against Bob Beers. They were on TV in State Senate races. It was almost unheard of to be on television. And, it was very difficult for us to match that. And the most important thing I can say about that race, an unfortunate loss. But, they, the Democrats played ugly. They slandered Bob Beers, and he took them to court and he won. Now, I wish he could have won that election because, I think, that if the slander stuff that the Nevada Democratic party did against him to eke out that victory, if that had not occurred I believe Bob Beers would have been re-elected to the Nevada State Senate. They broke the rules. He sued them; he won. I'm proud that he sued them; I'm proud that he won. It didn't change the outcome of the election; I wish it would have. Sue Lowden, hey look, Sue Lowden had a very difficult campaign, and you know this well, you were very close to the campaign. She was being attacked from the.... You know, patriot majority was set up. It sounds like a Tea Party organization. It was set up with that name to kind of fool people that they were this right leaning group. It was run by a bunch of Harry Reid former staffers. They raised a bunch of money. They spent significant amount of money trying to affect the outcome of the Republican primary. Sue Lowden was being attacked from groups like Club for Growth out of Washington, saying that she wasn't conservative enough, or Tea Party Express, she wasn't conservative enough. Patriot Majority jumping on an unfortunate thing that she said at a Town Hall meeting that blew up, and took on a life of its own. It certainly wasn't her health care policy. I remember sitting with Sue Lowden drafting a health care policy that was a very reasonable counter to Obama Care. And, with the amount of money that was spent against her from the right and left, it allowed Sharron Angle to sneak through and win that primary. That was a very tough loss. I'm proud of the wins that I've had in campaigns, and the losses hurt. And I don't like losing. And I don't like seeing our candidates, whether I work for them or not, Chuck, this isn't about whether I make money as a consultant on these races. The losses hurt; I don't like seeing our Republicans lose. I don't like the Democrats having so much more funding where they can go on TV and slander our senate candidates or our legislative candidates. Or, you know, I don't like the idea of, hey, you need to distance yourself from the top of the ticket and start appealing to Obama voters if you want to win. Joe Heck made a decision to show up that night. It was a great speech. I don't know, I'm not going to say that that speech was the reason why he lost, but that coupled with the

Libertarian being in there, and the IEP candidate being there, and they have every right to file and run for office. This isn't an anti-third party thing, it's not an anti-Democracy statement I'm making, but, had he been able to get those IEP and Libertarian candidates out before filing, and make it just an R versus D race, he would have won that race significantly. Unfortunately, he was not able to do it. Roberson was two years later, and I had worked with him on that campaign. And it proved successful; he was able to eke out a victory against Woodhouse. So, you know, I would love to sit here and talk about the wins, the Jim Gibbons wins, the initiative issues, the Washoe County John Brennan who came out of nowhere and took on a City Council woman up here and we had to run a really grass roots campaign, got John Brennan elected. He became Chairman of the Washoe County Commission which helped appoint Greg Brower to fill Raggio's term, or Stavros Anthony, a win that I'm very, very proud of when there was not a single Republican in local government in Clark County. All seven County Commissioners, five City Council, Mayor, everyone was a Democrat in that race, and Stavros, I'm not taking the credit, Stavros deserves the credit for the win, but I was proud to be a part of that win and, so, you win some and you lose some. I know the resources are critically important. And, I would not want this job, I've said it and I'll keep saying it over and over again, I cannot be successful at the job, should I get elected, unless I can raise some money. You have to get those registration numbers back to where things were when, you know, in the mid- and late-90s. Where we were dead even or even up in registration in some occurrences. When we had even registration, good candidates were the favorite, good Republican candidates were the automatic favorite because those Independent voters were a little more conservative throughout the state, and we can rely on them. And, we're just falling further and further behind. And I don't want to see Nevada become New Mexico where, you know, Bush-Gore, millions of dollars spent in New Mexico; Bush-Kerry millions of dollars spent fighting it out in New Mexico. I don't think Mitt Romney spent \$1 in New Mexico this last time around because they are a lost cause. I don't want Nevada to become a lost cause. If it becomes a lost cause at the top of the ticket in Presidential campaigns, it will ultimately affect our ability to elect Republican Governors, Senators, Congressman, State Legislators, all the way down. It's too important.

Chuck: You have a very close relationship with the Las Vegas fans, I think you're there government affairs lobbyist if I'm not mistaken, still...

Robert: Right.

Chuck: ...as well as Senate Minority Leader, Mike Roberson, and Monte Miller, who is a leader of the Keystone Corporation, a business group that gets very involved in political races, all of whom have supported this, a, rather large tax on the mining industry. Knowing that the Republican Party platform specifically opposes such tax hikes, would you as party Chairman publically and vocally oppose efforts to raise taxes on our mining industry?

Robert: I will publically do it right now, I would oppose it. I went to dinner with Senator Roberson, and told him that if I were a Senator in his caucus, I would be voting against it. I told him that, and I'll tell you that. I don't believe that we need higher taxes in this state on anybody. Monte Miller, he brought that issue before the Keystone Group and the Keystone organization, of which I'm a Board member, voted down supporting his proposal. So, and Governor Sandoval, who is a supporter of mine, issued a veto threat on Senator Roberson's proposal. I remember the legal counsel of Governor Sandoval, at the time, sending a letter over to Senator Roberson and his gang of six, saying that they didn't believe it was even legal, setting up a possible legal challenge if the bill had even passed, between Brenda Erdoes, the LCB lawyer, and the Governor's lawyer. So the Governor was adamantly opposed to that issue. Chuck, the Republican Party Central Committee, Republican Party votes, and Republican Party at large, has my word, that I will not back tax increases on anybody, on any industry in the State of Nevada, and most certainly, never any kind of corporate or personal income tax.

Chuck: In 2009, the Nevada legislature voted for some \$620 million worth of tax hikes that were sold to the citizens of Nevada as "temporary." Your former boss, Jim Gibbons, vetoed those tax hikes, and then the legislature overrode his veto. Since that time, Governor Sandoval has, not once but twice, extended those tax hikes that were supposed to sunset, and a number of Republicans in the legislature have gone along with that, and voted to extend those tax hikes. Again, if you were elected as party Chairman, would you be vocally and publically

opposed to extending those sunsets again in the 2015 legislative session.

Robert: I've made it clear that I oppose those tax increases. I would have loved to have seen, I supported the Governor Gibbons at the time, and when he vetoed those tax increases I really got cross-ways with Senator Raggio when they were first being developed by coming out and opposing it, those tax increases. You know, I want to get the history of this right, but you'll recall, when those taxes were first created, when they were drafted, before they were debated, before they were voted on, I pointed out a conflict of interest that took place in developing these, that tax bill. And they ended up having to come up with what has been called the, what was the resolution, the conflict, the abs....what is the, immacula....

Chuck: I remember what you're talking about, I can't remember the phrase.

Robert: Right, the rules of our Nevada legislature say if you have a conflict you cannot vote on it. That conflict that I brought forward that I was able to demonstrate, would have not allowed those taxes to even get to the Governor's desk, they would not have had the votes. The absolution resolution, Chuck, that's what it was.

Chuck: That's it. There you go, remember it well.

Robert: And I was proud to be into that fight. I was proud to have put up that challenge. And the challenge was such a threat to the people who wanted to raise those taxes at the time, they had to change the rules of the legislature and create the absolution resolution to absolve people of any worries of any conflict, and allow them to go forward and vote for those tax increases. And I'm not going to get into policy battles should I be elected Chairman between the Governor and the legislature. I'll certainly, if asked, express my personal opinion on tax issues, regulatory issues, reform issues, PERS pension reform issues, I think people know where I stand on those. I'll continue to let people know where I stand on those things. But, again, I'd much rather have Governor Sandoval there today than a Governor Rory Reid. And I would much rather have Michael Roberson be our Majority Leader than, say, Mo Denis, or anyone else who might be working their way through the ranks with the Democrats. I just believe that we have a

better chance to get some conservative reforms through with Republicans legislators than we would with Democratic legislators. It doesn't mean that I'm going to agree with him all the time, and they certainly know that. I worked for Gibbons for ten years, and I didn't agree with every position that he always took. But, my job was to advocate for Governor, then Congressman Jim Gibbons, and I was proud to have done that. I really don't view my job as getting in there and trying to assign labels to anybody. I want to raise money, and I believe that I can with the backing that I have in this race. So that I can help narrow the registration numbers, and give us a fighting chance. When our candidates put on the shoe leather and they go out and on a weekday evening or a weekend afternoon, and you know this because you've been a candidate, you know this because you've been a campaign consultant, you know this because you've run campaign classes for campaign consultants. It's very demoralizing. It's a hard thing to do to leave your door at night, to leave your wife and your kids, to go out and bang on doors. It's even harder when you go out there and you see that you're outnumbered, not just by your opponent, fine, I expect to see my opponent out there walking a precinct and I'm hitting the other side, one side of the street and I'm hitting the other. But when you see the unions out there too, and the Democratic party out there too and you don't have the backing of your own state party, there's no money there to send walkers out into your precinct in these swing states, it's a difficult thing to put our candidates in that position. I don't want our candidates to be in that position. I want our republicans to feel like they have a fighting chance. And I feel like we're losing that fighting chance. I don't blame Michael McDonald for that, not the slightest. I believe he's tried; I believe his heart is in the right place. But, for one reason or another, it, the money is just not there, not the kind of money that's needed to fund a registration program, a get-out-the-vote program. And that's why I'm running. If I didn't think I could do it, Chuck, I wouldn't be in this race.

Chuck: One more question on taxes, then we'll get into some party policy issues. As you know, Robert, the taxpayer protection pledge has been around since 1986. In that, candidates, any candidate from any party, signs this document which tells the constituents of their district that they promise to oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes. I know Governor Gibbons, when he was a Congressman had signed that pledge. Is that, do you support the taxpayer protection

pledge? Do you believe that Republican candidates in Nevada should sign the taxpayer protection pledge? And would you support, as has been done in some other states, adding a plank to the Nevada Republican Party platform that calls on the candidates to sign the taxpayer protection pledge?

Robert: I remember very well Governor Gibbons signing that taxpayer protection pledge when he was running for Governor because you were the witness to it, and you signed it as a witness to it. I believe, first and foremost, that candidates, Republican candidates, ought to shoot straight with the constituents, with the voters their seeking support from. And if they say they say they are open to tax increases let the chips fall where they may. Let the voters decide whether or not that they would support that Republican on that kind of a promise, if they want to sign the pledge, great. I think that the pledge itself really doesn't give any wiggle room for those candidates to try to wiggle their way out of, or try to finesse, well maybe I will support this tax increase and I can get around the pledge by saying this or that. I think that's up to the individual candidates. And if they are in a primary, let the chips fall where they may. I, you know, I'm not a candidate for an office where I will be setting policy on, you know, determining people's taxes or not. I've told you in this interview, and I've said it over and over again, I don't support tax increases on anybody. I will not, as Chairman, should I be elected. But as for candidates, if a candidate wins a primary and they have not signed the pledge, I would still like to have the party back them and help them get into office. As far as the making it a platform issue that we oppose tax increases, of course, I support a platform position of the Nevada Republican Party that we should live within our means, and we shouldn't tax people more, we shouldn't take more out of the private economy to fund a bigger government. I think there's a lot of work that still needs to be done in reforms that will save money, conservative reforms that will save public money, save taxpayer money. Ultimately, a healthy government, one that is able to acquire the revenues needed to provide essential services, a healthy government can only occur with a healthy private sector. And you don't get the private sector more healthy by taxing it more. You can't, I believe, you need the private economy and individual families to have security in their life first before the government has ultimate security in its life when it comes to a lot of program that may not be, as we would view, essential services. You

know, there's a laundry list of those. I know NPRI puts a booklet out on these every legislative session. It gets passed around the halls. I think our government needs to provide essential services, and anything beyond that, you better make a very strong case to every taxpayer that those dollars are being spent wisely, and if not, they shouldn't be taken from the taxpayer in the first place. I'm not adverse at all to Grover Norquist and what he's done. I always enjoyed, you know, the few meetings that I was in the room with when I worked for Congressman Gibbons at the time. Or the different...he spends a lot of time out here in Nevada as you know. And, I'm not adverse to what he's done. And I think his pledge provides very little wiggle room for people who make a promise to their voters and yet try to do something different when they get in office. I'm for elected officials, our Republican elected officials, I'm for them keeping their promises that they make to the voters.

Chuck: I remember one of my favorite Jim Gibbons lines from way back when, you just reminded of, is that if you can find the service in the yellow pages the government probably shouldn't be doing it. It was always one of my favorites.

Robert: Right, right. And Gibbons was, like I said, you know, he wasn't around when kind of the, I guess he was just finishing up his first term, you know, when the Tea Party really came to be. But Jim Gibbons was Tea Party before it was Tea Party. He was Tea Party before Tea Party was cool. You know, he had a very strong Libertarian streak in him too. A lot of people wanted him to be more conservative on social issues, and he was much more Libertarian on those issues. I remember one of my favorite Gibbons lines was a government strong enough to tell you, you, let me get this line right...

Chuck: [inaudible]

Robert: A government strong enough to tell you that you can't do something is a government strong enough to tell you that you must do something. So, he was very concerned about how much government would affect you in your own personal life, and that gets into some of the social issues. But, as far as a fiscal conservative, I'm very proud to have really cut my teeth through a lot of those Gibbons years. He was an outstanding Congressman, unfortunately things didn't work out for him

as Governor. But I'm proud of the positions that he took as Governor. You know, it's interesting, you think so many people badmouth Gibbons, and I'm always rushing to his defense even to this day. The two candidates for Governor against him, you know, current Governor Sandoval, and even the Democratic nominee, Rory Reid, essentially ran to Gibbons right. You know, you think about those campaigns, in 2010, that says a lot, that says a lot about the, a lot of people who ended up not supporting Gibbons, he lost the trust and support of some people on a lot of personal issues that came to be in his life, but the policy issues and where he stood, and where he stood his ground, were emulated by the people who, a lot of people who've come to be since him, and really, you know, the people who are running for that position nearing the end of his term as Governor.

Chuck: We're now still six months out from the opening of filing for office for the 2014 cycle, and already we've seen Governor Sandoval has endorsed a Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor, we already know that the Republican senate caucus is endorsing candidates, in fact, has told a sitting Assemblyman that they would not endorse him, that they were looking for a different candidate, and the Assembly caucus has already voted to endorse all of their incumbents. Now, with all these other Republican groups, organizations, and individuals endorsing prior to the primary, endorsing even prior to filing, where do you stand, Robert, on maybe changing the Republican party's policy on pre-primary endorsements?

Robert: Boy that's a tough one, because I don't like being told what to do, you know, I think, a lot of voters view that, they view their vote as a very personal thing and their own decision making and how they decide who they're going to support in an election is a very personal thing. You know, I get the idea of pre-primary endorsements, either from the party or a caucus, but just because I may be the favorite to a caucus director, doesn't always mean that the person getting the endorsement may be the very best candidate. You know, I think it could be argued either way. I'm just one of those, this is probably a lot of the Gibbons in me too, I think you let the voters decide, you trust the voters on these things. I am not adverse to primaries, I never have been. I think they are good for the, if you are an incumbent getting challenged in a primary, you should win. Incumbency is a tough thing. I'm facing that right now in my run against Michael McDonald. I know how hard it is

to take out an incumbent. If I'm not successful I'd like to think that maybe Chairman McDonald would be even stronger going into another term as our party chairman. I'm not adverse to primaries either way. I think it's a double-edged sword, Chuck. It's really a tough one that I struggle with internally a lot because part of me doesn't like being told that, hey, we like this guy and so you must too. It's not that there shouldn't be endorsements. Look, I have endorsements, Michael McDonald has endorsements in this race. He always liked to have endorsements. Candidates that I've worked for over the years, you always like to get those endorsements. But when you almost feel like you're being told that you need to support this candidate over another candidate, I think that can turn some voters off.

Chuck: Isn't that what the Senate caucus and the Assembly caucus and Governor Sandoval are already doing? And if they're doing it, why shouldn't the party which, I mean, you and I both know, the folks who belong to the Central Committee are the folks who are in the trenches day in and day out, probably know the candidates better than the general election. We're not saying not to have a primary, and that the voters shouldn't have their say. But if others are endorsing, isn't it a responsibility of the party leader, on the Central Committee, to maybe also take a look at these candidates and judge which one they think has a better chance of winning in November?

Robert: I'm not adverse at all to endorsements; let me put that out there. I'm not adverse, at all, to endorsements, even pre-primary endorsements. I think people go out and they seek those endorsements and good luck getting them. I think there's a very fine line, though, than when an endorsement becomes, you know, almost like a bullying type thing. Where you hold it against somebody if they're, I'm sorry, I appreciate that you've endorsed this candidate, but this is my candidate and I'm sticking with this candidate. I don't think people like being bullied, and I think there is a fine line there. I certainly don't believe that any of the people who've endorsed me are bullying anybody. I've never heard that Governor Sandoval is making calls to people bullying them on this. I'm proud to have his endorsement, and I don't believe that Senator Heller has to, or Assemblyman Hickey, Assemblyman Roberson, John Hambrick, or Wes Duncan. You know, any of these elected officials who I'm proud to have as supporters, I certainly wouldn't want them on the phone with Central Committee members

saying you have to back Uithoven, or you're not going to get this. I would not condone that. I'm proud to have endorsements, I'm sure Michael McDonald is proud to have his endorsements too. And, God Bless Him for going out there and working hard get them. Same with me, I'm working hard to get endorsements. Ultimately, it comes down to votes. If I thought people who were endorsing me were out bullying somebody, I would do my best to shut that down. I'm not in this to bully anybody, I'm just in this to say I believe the party can do better with more resources. Why we don't have them now, it's not for me to explain that away, we just don't have them. All you really have to look at is results. You know, this isn't a, this is a tough business, as you well know. And we're not judged just based on our effort. You have to have results. And, I've had wins, and I've had losses, and the losses hurt. But I feel like I've learned from them, I want to get in there with the support of the Governor because I know the Governor is in a re-election cycle; he can raise a lot of money. And, I fully anticipate being able to access those donors, get this party funded again, and start chipping away at the games of the Democrats. I don't want to become New Mexico.

Chuck: Okay. I don't want to keep you too long. I want to see if we can wrap this up in the next ten minutes. Let's go through a lightening round if you can. I just want to throw a number of different, mostly strategies and tactics out, and just get your opinion on those without going too terribly long but feel free to, you know, if you want to expound, don't let me hold you back. But, in 2012, there was a lot of criticism, Robert, about the presidential caucus system in Nevada, that Nevada is a caucus state rather than a presidential primary state. And there's been talk that maybe Nevada should change that, and become a primary state. Do you have an opinion one way or the other on which you think is better? Should we change from a caucus state to a primary state?

Robert: You know, I haven't really spent a lot of time thinking about that. I do, I do like the idea of a caucus from one standpoint in that it shows organization, and organization matters. We all know how important grass roots organization is to any campaign. Funding or no funding, obviously grass roots becomes significantly more important if you don't have the funding to do a lot of other things, like a massive air war, as we call it in a campaign. So, you know there's benefits to a caucus. But then again, there's a lot of people who lead very busy

lives, two jobs, registered Republican voters who, you know, I have three kids, and trying to balance out the music lessons, and their sports activities, and their school activities, I may not be able to participate in a way that's as effective in a caucus as I would be in being able to go down and simply vote in a primary and make sure that my voice is heard. That's a tough one, I'm kind of split on it. I don't think we lose out either way. I like the fact that we're early. I do, the positive side of a caucus is a demonstration of organization. But, I also don't want to disenfranchise some Republican who believes that's a massive time consuming matter to get involved in a caucus and, therefore, they are going to sit it out. I want their participation as well. Look, on election day in November, they can show up at their local high school or library, or by mail and vote, and they can get back on with their busy lives running their business and running their families, and I think if I had to pick a decision right now, I like the idea of a primary a little bit better. There are strengths in both. I understand both sides of the argument. Having, you know, you're the father of children too, and you know how busy your life can get, and I think some people, one of the concerns I've heard, is that people just don't feel like they have the time to commit to a full-on organization in process that's more caucus driven.

Chuck: You mentioned earlier the fact that Nevada Republicans are about 100,000 voters less than the Democrats in voter registration. What would you do differently from what's being done now to change that dynamic, and how close do you think Republicans can get between now and the general election next year?

Robert: Raise money. I believe I can tap into the donors who've been sitting on the sidelines and get the money needed to fund a registration campaign to narrow the gap. I believe Michael McDonald would do that right now if he could; I just don't think the resources are there. I believe I can get those resources to start turning the trend. I don't know how much closer I can get, but I certainly would not seek a re-election to this position, should I be elected, if I can't show discernible gains in our registration and in our fundraising. I think that is one of the most essential roles of a party Chairman. Harry Reid didn't do this overnight. Bob Miller was termed out in '98. There was a big power struggle within the Democratic party between Bob Miller, Dick Bryan and Harry Reid. Miller was termed out in '98. Dick Bryan retired in

2000. It became Harry Reid's party. It took him a number of cycles to get his machine up and going. It would take a number of cycles, I won't be Chairman anymore no matter what, you know, possibly by the time this thing gets turning around. I would love to be able to see this thing get turned around in two or three cycles. But it might take a little bit longer than that. It took Senator Reid a few cycles to build up the registration advantage that they have over on the Democratic side. I think it will take a few cycles for us to narrow that gap if not completely eliminate it. I want to get Nevada red again. It won't happen overnight, but I believe we can start that trend. If I'm not successful at it, I won't run again. If I lose support of the Governor, I won't run again.

Chuck: To the area of communications, especially in the area of media relations and dealing with the press and reporters, what are your ideas on changing and improving the Republican Party's messaging out there?

Robert: It's hugely important, and you know this very well. I think a Communications Director who is very good at their job helps the entire operation of the party. I think a good communication apparatus helps you to raise money. It gets your message into the newspaper, it gets your message on TV. You know, when the Democrats are out there pushing Obama Care, pushing for tax increases, fumbling on foreign policy, we need to have an effective communications policy so that voters who don't live their lives like we do, fully immersed in politics, but they get up in the morning, they drink their coffee, and they read the newspaper, I want them to see what the Republican party believes in. I get so frustrated when I see that calls are not returned by, you know, we placed the call into the spokesperson for the Republican Senator so-and-so, and they were not returned. We placed a call into the Nevada Republican party for their position on this, and they weren't returned. I want to do far better than returning the phone calls. I want to be proactive. I want a communications apparatus within the party where we're not just responding to media requests, we're helping drive the media. We are helping establish a debate in not only the conventional media, your evening news, and your daily newspaper, but certainly into the social media as well, which has been tremendously effective, put to use much better by the Democrats than we have, we're a little bit behind, we've got a little catching up to do. I'm not the

talented guy; I'm not the social media expert. I would love to be able to bring one into the party who could help drive that. Communications is huge, not just for the sake of communications alone. I think it brings more people to the party. It allows people to see where we stand as a party and where our candidates stand. Communications is an essential part of any party operation. Without it, you are not a complete well-organized party.

Chuck: I've always maintained that voter registration isn't enough, and maybe isn't even the most important thing; to get out the vote is crucial. Last January, we had a Republican candidate running for City Council who only needed 3,000 votes in a City Council district that had 18,000 registered Republicans, a district that Mitt Romney carried solidly, and she lost. So, it's not that we didn't have enough Republicans registered; it's that we didn't get enough Republicans out to the polls. What are your thoughts on that? What would you do differently? How would you improve the party's get out to vote operation.

Robert: Once again, Chuck, a lot of it is funding. And, we did, we had an outstanding City Council candidate down there. Look, Mitt Romney would be President today if Republicans had turned out to vote. We lost that election. I don't think Barack Obama won that election. He won 2008, but he did not win 2012. We lost that election because so many Republicans stayed home. I think a big part of that is funding. I think us trying to match what the Democratic party has been able to do with the support of very well-funded union organizations, it's a hard lift for us. But you need the funding. It's not adverse to the grass roots organization. You know, people labeling me as establishment is pretty frustrating thing because I, it's not that I'm anti-grass roots when I say you need the money, I know you need both. The money is never going to replace the need for grass roots. But grass roots is never going to replace the need for money. I think you need both. I would point out, that the investments, and I will make this case if I'm elected Chairman, to a lot of donors who have been giving to the Democrats but not giving to the Republicans, look at your ROI, look at your return on investment to the Democrats. They raised millions of dollars compared to not that much money that we were able to raise in our party. Look at how much money they spent compared to us. A lot of pundits in the state love to point out how much more successful the Democrats are at raising money than we are. I think, when you look at our return on

investment compared to their return on investment, look, we have a Republican, we re-elected a Republican Senator, we have a Republican Governor, we didn't lose any seats on the Senate, I would have liked for us to have one, we came 300 votes short of capturing the State Senate. We lost one seat in the Assembly, which, you know, it didn't break us below that two-thirds threshold, but no one really believed we were going to capture the majority. So, if you are outspent 10 to 1, but we held on to a Senate seat, and we re-elected Joe Heck and Mark Amodei got elected and re-elected, I would argue that Republicans are much better at dealing with the donor's money than the Democrats are. And, therefore that's why you should invest, you the donor who has been sitting on the sideline, investing in all these other, you know, maybe candidates or causes but not the Nevada Republican Party, we could take your money and we'll put it to much greater use than the Nevada Democratic Party has. We need that money to compete, not only with the Nevada Democratic Party, but to compete with the organized labor apparatus as well.

Chuck: One last question and then I'll let you go. Tell me about building and strengthening the county parties. I know the State party is underfunded, the county parties are, quite often, especially in rural areas, even in worse shape than the state party level. As far as not only it's the funding, but as far as training activists in the rural counties, what would you do to strengthen, I guess you could say, the farm team of the Republican party activists?

Robert: Right. I've had a lot of conversations, as you can imagine, with county chairs, and a lot of people involved in, first and foremost, their own county structure, and then the state party structure. One of the ideas I've kind of thought of is I've been talking to a lot of county chairs and vice chairs, and hearing their need for money, and it's not new to me. I've done the Lincoln Day circuit across the state countless times and I know that their entire operating budget for the year comes off of one or two events, the Lincoln Day dinner and then maybe one other event that they have. I would like to see perhaps some kind of grant program where the state party with successful fundraising taking place at the state party could provide almost grant assistance, state funding, Nevada Republican Party funding, to help assist some of our counties. When we have a candidate like Dr. Robin Titus, you know in Yerington, and they need the county structure there needs a little support to help her

win an election, I would like them to be able to come make the case to the state party and say, hey we could use a little money, here's what we did at our Lincoln Day Dinner, here's what we did at some of our other events. Would the Governor, this is one where I would ask for the Governor to be involved in, could he sign a fundraising letter, not just, I'm going to be asking for fundraising letters on behalf of the state party, but I would like to see that occur at the county level as well. One of the things that I'm very proud of is in my work with Las Vegas Sands that was mentioned earlier in the interview, I am Reno based, I am Washoe County based. The Las Vegas Sands decided to hire somebody up here in Reno to be their lobbyist. I was, for years and years, Las Vegas Sands was a major contributor in not only the Nevada Republican Party, but the Clark County Republican party. And I've been able to help convince them that they need to be funding the Washoe County party up here too. It's a swing county, it's a big county, a swing county in a swing state. I think I can be successful in helping get those dollars down to the county level as well. As far as grass roots training, organization, things like that, all I would need to do is come here to the county, come make their case to us at the state party, and tell us, these are the people we'd like to see training our candidates, and know that that money is being spent effectively, efficiently and so forth, and I'd have no problem with that. But that's a very long way of saying, I think there could be some kind of, I would sit down with the finance committee, and say, how do we develop some kind of grant system to have the state party help our county parties, especially those where maybe turnout is dipping, maybe registration is dipping, maybe we have a candidate who is in a much more difficult race than perhaps they should have been. You know, I think of a county like Churchill years ago with Marcia DeBraga there, where you can have a conservative Democrat actually put a tough race against a Republican, how do we get the Republican the support they need in a county where you wouldn't typically think of it as a swing county, but a race may develop there, a campaign may develop there, where the county party closest to the candidates can help most effectively. If those state dollars can be spent more effectively and efficiently at that more local level, I'm more than happy with the support, I know I'd have to get support, I can't do this on my own. But I'd be more than happy to help get those dollars where they can be spent more effectively. It's kind of what we believe in in the grand scheme of things anyway, of not having this top down approach. If the county

party can help a candidate from that county better than the state party can, or they know how those dollars can be spent more effectively to get that candidate elected, then by all means, I'll be more than happy to be a champion for that cause.

Chuck: My apologies, but your answer reminded me of one more question I wanted to ask. During the legislative session, if you were Chairman, would you have full-time staffed office in Carson City during the legislative session?

Robert: You know, throughout the Gibbons campaign for Governor, one of the things I always went to Gibbons about, and you know, I hoped to become his Chief of Staff, it didn't work out, it's a longish story I don't have time for right now, but you know, I wanted, and I spoke with Gibbons about this constantly, and he agreed to do this throughout the campaign. I said I want the state Republican Party headquarters during session right across the street from the Capitol building. And I want to have a message machine in there, as we talked about a communications machine in there. I want to have people who are in constant communication with every one of our Republican legislators, not just the leaders, not just the core group, I want a state party that is in constant communications with every single elected Republican legislator, in the building, and with the Governor, to be advocates for our elected officials in Carson City. Absolutely, Chuck. It's one of the, you know, I'll be asking for money for a lot of things, registration, Geo TV, once we get there, I'll want to have money said aside to have office space in Carson City walking distance from the legislature and the Capitol building where we can have a place for our activists to work out of, and help move a conservative agenda through Carson City legislative sessions.

Chuck: Alright. We'll end with a prediction that I consider extremely important since you're in Reno and I'm in Las Vegas. On October 26th, who's going to win, UNLV or UNR?

Robert: Oh, man. You know I grew up having season tickets to UNR games, and I played baseball at UNLV, I am a UNLV fan. I think UNLV has a chance this year, I think, University of Nevada Reno, I know they like to call themselves Nevada, I don't subscribe to that, UNR I don't think

has the team that they've had in the past. I think UNLV is going to give them a good game, I think they win by a field goal.

Chuck: UNLV wins by a field goal? Or UNR?

Robert: UNLV wins by a field goal.

Chuck: Oh, it sounds like we might have to have a bet offline. Robert Uithoven, thank you so much for today's interview, and best of luck to you on Saturday.

(Note: This transcription by a third-party, iDictate.com, is unedited. Access the actual audio file to verify any items. Submit any requests for changes/corrections to chuck@chuckmuth.com.)