

Donna Brazile Delivers Stirring Speech at NV/RPAC Breakfast

New Recipe Needed to Bring Country Together

By Liz Milner, Contributing Writer

The metaphors of America as a melting pot of cultures and Washington, D.C. as the capital of political gridlock were given new life at the 2011 NV/RPAC Legislative Breakfast by renowned political strategist and pundit Donna Brazile, who presented a talk entitled, *Stirring the Pot of American Politics*.

Using the tale of her Beltway traffic tribulations on that October 11 morning, Brazile delivered some home truths about national politics to an audience that consisted of NVAR members and a group of Northern Virginia's most influential lawmakers.

Gridlock has long been used as a metaphor for our dysfunctional political process. Now, however, Brazile says, "if the metaphor was about being stuck in traffic, now it's like being stuck in traffic in the middle of a three-foot deep molasses spill in slow motion. It's bad when our representatives won't get anything done, and it's a thousand times worse when our elected officials won't even talk to each other."

Brazile attributed this intensification of gridlock to a new style of politics that now dominates Washington. It is characterized by an unwillingness to compromise or even listen to political opponents.

"How," asks Brazile, "do you get the truth out anymore? I read legislation because I feel it's my obligation on TV to tell the facts. . . . Then you get on TV, and somebody says something outlandish, and you spend the next two hours trying to disprove a lie. It's one thing to debate ideas, to have different values and different opinions and still like somebody. On the other hand, when you start lying and demonizing people you can't have a civil conversation but you get a lot more cable time."



Best-selling author and political pundit Donna Brazile entertained NVAR members and Northern Virginia legislators with her spicy election rhetoric at the 2011 convention day breakfast.

Will there be a lot of negative, inappropriate, misleading, demonizing ads in the next election? "Absolutely," says Brazile, who is a regular on-air contributor to CNN, NPR and ABC's *This Week*. "It's part of the political culture and unless the American people try to change it, this is the culture we'll be dealing with in 2012."

While the last time things moved quickly in Washington D.C. was, "during the War of 1812 when they were running away from British Troops," Brazile noted, now things are "moving slower than the continental plate. It looks like our great North American continent will collide with Asia before Congress finally gets down to actually solving our problems."

Brazile, who has served as a political strategist on every

presidential campaign from 1976 to 2000 and who, as campaign manager for Al Gore, became the first African-American woman to manage a presidential campaign in American history, gave her perspectives on the next presidential election.

Supporters of Obama, she commented, can draw great comfort from the fact that the present crop of Republican presidential hopefuls are either uninspiring (Mitt Romney) or un-electable (Michele Bachmann). She quoted George Will that, "there's no such thing as an Establishment Republican Party;" but she added that the Republican Party is looking for someone who can bring together their energetic social conservative base and their more corporate center. If this happens, Obama's supporters will truly have something to worry about.

Indeed, she continued, there already is much to worry about. Our country faces some serious challenges. "We can expect another wave of foreclosures next year," she said. "Some of our fellow citizens are unable to get the credit they need to buy a first home. There's a lot of frustration and weariness out there. If we put aside the cultural differences, the Tea Party and the Occupy Wall Street Movement are pretty much angry at the same things. They're frustrated

NOTABLE GUESTS:

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Congressman Gerry Connolly

Congressman Jim Moran

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

Sen. George Barker

Sen. Dave Marsden

Sen. Dick Saslaw

Sen. Mary Margaret Whipple

Sen. Chap Petersen

VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Del. Bob Brink

Del. David Bulova

Del. Barbara Comstock

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn

Del. Tag Greason

Del. Charniele Herring

Del. Patrick Hope

Del. Mark Keam

Del. Tom Rust

Del. Kaye Kory

Del. Ken Plum

Del. Jim LeMunyon

Del. Jim Scott

Del. Scott Surovell

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with the way things have been going in the country, they believe that their political leaders haven't acted responsibly; they're upset with the bailouts."

The housing sector, according to Brazile, is the key to recovery. "We need more help," she says. "We have millions of our fellow citizens who are living with mortgages they can no longer afford, and they need help restructuring their finances. I know the government has come up with all sorts of initiatives, and many people have taken advantage of them. But most people have not because they don't know about them, and the banks are often not cooperating.

"It's not a chicken and egg situation — it's a situation where more pressure needs to be brought to bear on those players who can actually get things done. We need to apply pressure to our governmental institutions and the banks to help these homeowners stay in their homes."

Brazile believes that the antidote to the present gridlock and malaise can be found in the lessons she learned in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as she

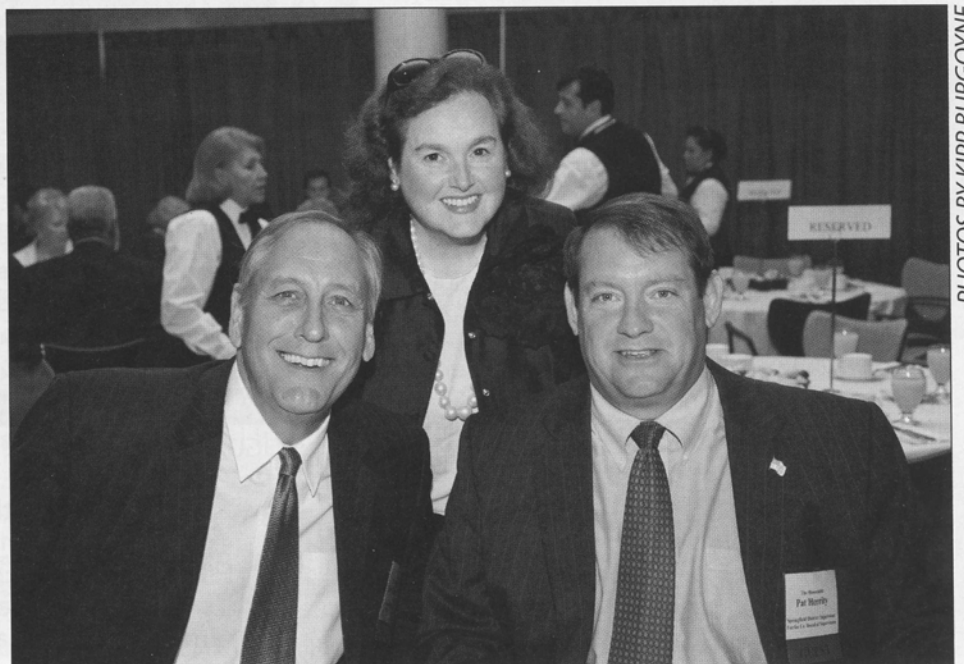
struggled to bring relief to her home town of New Orleans. "I learned that the most important thing is that when you're in a crisis you come together, that you sit down with people — even people that you once disagreed with, people you once opposed — because you need them to get things done. Nowadays that's no longer the rule.

"We have a whole new rule book in Washington, D.C. and the new rules are: fight all the time, campaign 24-7, don't give the other side a break, don't listen to each other. I think that's wrong.

"The American people are tired of it," she said. "The country is hurting. All our democratic institutions are suffering. The American people have lost trust in their leaders; they've lost trust in the institutions they once thought were on their side. We're in for a roller-coaster ride. The only way out of this is if we stir a different pot; make a new recipe and find ways to bring in ingredients that will bring us together, that will help us solve America's problems in the 21st Century so that we can be competitive with China and India and the country that was named after my family — Brazil!" ✱



Realtor® Bob Adamson of McEneaney Associates, among the 100-plus audience members, had the opportunity to ask Brazile her opinion about presidential campaign funds.



Conversation flowed along with the coffee, as elected officials mingled with members before Brazile's presentation. Pictured (left to right): Senator Dave Marsden (D-VA 37), Realtor® Suzanne Granoski of Keller Williams in Alexandria and Fairfax Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield).

PHOTOS BY KIPP BURGOYNE