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African-American Catholic elected to head GOP

by NCR Staff



Michael Steele

Former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele won a sixth ballot victory today to become the first African-American chairman of the Republican National Committee (RNC).

A prominent Catholic lay person, Steele serves on the Administrative Board of the Maryland Catholic Conference -- the church's lobbying arm in the state capitol of Annapolis -- and is a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Landover Hills, MD, where he attends mass regularly with his wife Andrea and their two sons Michael and Drew.

Steele, a native of Washington, DC, spent three years as a seminarian in the Order of St. Augustine, but ultimately chose a career in law instead. He earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center in 1991.

In 2005, President George W. Bush chose Steele to be part of the U.S. delegation to the investiture of Pope Benedict XVI.

He is currently a Partner in the international law firm of Dewey & LeBoeuf in Washington, DC. From 1991-1997, Steele was a corporate securities attorney at the international law firm of Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton in Washington, DC, specializing in sophisticated financial transactions on behalf of Wall Street underwriters. He also was a corporate finance counsel for the Mills Corporation and founded his own company, The Steele Group, a business and legal consulting firm.

"Catholics look forward to collaborating with Chairman Steele on behalf of the common good," said James Salt, Director of Organizing and Communications for Catholics United, who has worked with Lt. Gov. Steele in abolishing the death penalty in Maryland.

"We are hopeful that Steele's Catholic values will continue to shape his leadership as we tackle a number of pressing concerns, such as reducing the number of abortions, passing immigration and health care reform, reducing poverty, safeguarding workers' rights, and ending war."

A self-described "Lincoln Republican," Steele, 50, became the first African-American elected to statewide office in Maryland in 2003. He ran unsuccessfully for the US Senate from that state in 2006, losing to Democrat Ben Cardin.

Steele's victory at the RNC winter meeting makes him the nation's most prominent African-American Republican leader as well as the leading non-Congressional voice of the Party in the media. The RNC is made up of representatives from each state and plays a crucial role in fundraising and developing national strategies for Republican candidates.

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