

By Columnist Doug Patton

Because he is now the only person standing between the American people and four more disastrous years of you-know-who, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney is unquestionably my pick for President of the United States. However, like millions of other American conservatives, my first, second or third choices during the Republican presidential primary season were, in fact, someone else — and the last couple of weeks have reminded me why that was the case. Like so many other stalwart champions of the RINO cause — John McCain, Bob Dole, Gerald Ford and the entire Bush family — Mitt Romney is exhibiting an uncanny ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. His lackluster little speech in the aftermath of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding Obamacare was disappointing to say the least. Instead of blasting the ruling in passionate tones as a gross violation of our liberties, he gave us political platitudes and wonkish numbers. This was followed by a top Romney advisor, Eric Fehrstrom, contradicting Chief Justice John Roberts and the entire Republican Party that Obamacare is, in fact, a massive tax increase. Fehrstrom, you will recall, is the same hack who compared his candidate to an Etch-a-Sketch that could simply be shaken up and reset after the primaries were over.

Apparently, former Gov. Etch-a-Sketch stuck his finger into the political wind the next day and felt another round of conservative blowback, because he immediately reversed his campaign's official position to reflect the truth: Obamacare is a tax, not a "penalty." Of course, Fehrstrom has not yet been fired, so one wonders what his next inane statement might be on behalf of his boss.

The reason for the Romney campaign's heartburn over the Obamacare ruling is exactly what former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum warned us about during the primaries: Romneycare, the health care plan Romney implemented in Massachusetts, became the blueprint for Obama's sweeping federal legislation. How does the author of Romneycare credibly attack Obamacare? Santorum asked.

Obama also is using class warfare to beat his opponent to death in the court of public opinion over the issue of Romney's business record when he ran Bain Capital, a record that should be his greatest strength in a weak economy.

Whatever is a presidential campaign to do?

As an old former campaign hack myself, I have a couple of modest proposals for bold, straight-forward commercials that will take Mitt Romney off the defensive and put his campaign

on offense where it belongs. These could be done by the Romney organization itself or they can come from one of the Super PACs.

Mayor Corey Booker of Newark, New Jersey, and Governor Duvall Patrick of Massachusetts, both black Democrats, have defended Bain Capital and, by extension, Mitt Romney's leadership there. So has former President Bill Clinton. The words of these three men should be run over and over again until the American people see how hollow Obama's anti-free enterprise rhetoric really is.

Then, to attack Obamacare, picture two people who were residents of Massachusetts when Romneycare passed — one who loved it and chose to stay there after it was passed, the other who did not like it at all and chose to move to another state. A narrator, perhaps Romney himself, says, "The majority of residents in Massachusetts liked what we did there. Some did not and chose to move to another state." Then he asks, "Where will you go to escape Obamacare?"

The current Romney strategy seems to be grounded in a belief that if they simply do nothing the economy will cause Barack Obama to self-destruct. This is as foolhardy as Bob Dole thinking in 1996 that Bill Clinton was finished after the drubbing Republicans gave his party at the polls in 1994, or John Kerry believing the Iraq war would undo George W. Bush. You just can't beat something with nothing, and the Romney campaign is not immune to the laws of political reality.

Doug Patton describes himself as a recovering political speechwriter who agrees with himself much more often than not. Now working as a freelance writer, his weekly columns of sage political analysis are published the world over by legions of discerning bloggers, courageous webmasters and open-minded newspaper editors. Astute supporters and inane detractors alike are encouraged to e-mail him with their pithy comments at dougpatton@cox.net.