

# California Republican Party struggling to be viable

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

California's top Republican operatives are busy raising millions of dollars to pump into the state's most competitive races.

But this election, many of the checks aren't being made out to the California Republican Party.

A new crop of independent committees and fundraising efforts created to support Republican candidates are allowing major donors to bypass the state party.

As California delegates gather in Tampa for the Republican National Convention this week, they leave behind a party organization in a major state of flux.

Historically, state political parties have been expected to raise and spend money to support candidates statewide. They lead voter registration and outreach efforts, work to boost turnout and map out messages that strengthen the party's brand.

But the California Republican organization has fallen on hard times, particularly since losing every race for statewide office in 2010. GOP registration has dropped to 30 percent of California voters, and the party's bench of potential statewide candidates isn't deep.

Those leading the new efforts say claims of mismanagement from the top, including the leadership of state Chairman Tom Del Beccaro, have discouraged donors.

The party recently downsized its Sacramento office, eliminating some of its staff, as it reported ending June with

just \$169,000 in the bank for state races and about \$156,000 in unpaid bills still on the books.

That doesn't necessarily mean Republicans are on the ropes this November. Top GOP politicians and strategists are moving to work around what they see as the state party's failings, spearheading efforts of their own to recruit candidates and reach out to voters.

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