

Who Can Beat Obama?

✘ According to the latest Rasmussen poll only 16 percent of likely voters think the country is heading in the right direction. A staggering 77 percent think we're heading the wrong way. This, of course, is very bad news for president Obama. But he can still win re-election. Not because of anything he's accomplished. If he wins, he'll have the Republicans to thank.

Even with Herman Cain leading in the latest polls, Mitt Romney is still seen as the candidate with the best chance of beating Obama. But conservatives don't trust Romney. Here's what George Will says about him:

"Romney, supposedly the Republican most electable next November, is a recidivist reviser of his principles who is not only becoming less electable; he might damage GOP chances of capturing the Senate. Republican successes down the ticket will depend on the energies of the Tea Party and other conservatives, who will be deflated by a nominee whose blurry profile in caution communicates only calculated trimming."

Romney, as I've said in this space before, not only is not a principled conservative, he's not principled at all, not when it comes to politics, anyway. James Carville calls him a "serial windsock." When a conservative like George Will and a liberal like James Carville agree, that's news. When they agree that Mitt Romney stands for nothing but his own success, that's potentially bad news for the Republican Party.

The fix is easy, say the conservatives. Don't nominate Romney. Pick a real conservative. It sounds good but this is where problems come in for the Republicans: Which conservative can win the independent vote, which would be needed to beat Obama? I can't think of any.

Rush Limbaugh says he wants the most conservative candidate to

win the nomination – because the most conservative candidate can beat Obama. Rush is a smart guy, but does he really think that Bachmann can win the independents and beat Obama? Or that Santorum can? Or Perry? Cain is popular at the moment but I fear he'd come up the loser in a debate with Obama. Newt Gingrich is the only conservative in the race who not only would beat Obama in a debate, but has the gravitas to be president. But if the polls are right, he can't win his own party's nomination let alone the general election.

Reasonable people differ on such things but I think this is a weak Republican field. I remain on Team Buckley: I want the most viable conservative candidate to win the nomination; the one who could actually beat Obama. I'm not at all sure who that is.

But I am sure of this: Reports of Barack Obama's political demise – like those of Mark Twain's death – are greatly exaggerated.