



An Honest Look at Mitt Romney

From the time the GOP presidential primary contest got under way, Mitt Romney has been heralded in the media as the frontrunner. Since its crushing losses in '06 and '08 and the ensuing rise of both Barack H. Obama as well as the Tea Party movement, the Republican Party has claimed to have learned the error of its ways. It alone is the party of "limited" or "constitutional government," the party of liberty. Yet during its reign of power under the tenor of George W. Bush, it not only abjectly failed to reduce the size and scope of the federal government; it significantly expanded Washington D.C.'s control over our lives. Now, the GOP promises us, it will "return to its roots."



From the time the GOP presidential primary contest got under way, the media has treated Mitt Romney's nomination as virtually inevitable. How, though, does the idea of an allegedly repentant Republican Party renewing its commitment to individual liberty square with the idea of Mitt Romney as this party's presidential nominee?

To put this question another way, is Romney a credible standard bearer of the party of "limited government?"

To answer this question, we need to look not so much as what Romney says *now*, during a Republican primary race. We need, rather, to look at what he has said and *done* throughout his career.

Abortion

The first thing of which to take note is that in spite of his assurances that he is opposed to abortion, for most of his political career he has been a proponent of women's "right to choose." Mind you, it isn't just that Romney refused to ally himself with the opponents of abortion; he actively sought to counter their efforts.

In 1994, while he was running for the Senate in Massachusetts, Romney was photographed at a *Planned Parenthood* fundraiser. That same (election) year, he insisted that "we should sustain and support" *Roe v. Wade*, as well as "the right of a woman to make that choice" to pursue an abortion or not. Whatever Romney's or anyone else's "personal beliefs" regarding the wrongness of abortion, he adamantly rejected the possibility that it would be appropriate to interject them "into a political campaign."

When Romney's opponent in the Senate race, Ted Kennedy, accused him essentially of flip flopping on the abortion issue — Romney was "multiple choice," according to Kennedy — he replied that among his most cherished beliefs is the belief that he must not "impose my beliefs on other people." Upon losing "a dear, close family relative" who had "passed away from an illegal abortion," Romney said that he, his



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mother, and his family “have been committed to the belief that we can believe as we want, but we will not force our beliefs on others on that matter [i.e. abortion].” So that there would be no doubts regarding the strength of his conviction on this issue, Romney unequivocally asserted: “And you will not see me wavering on that, or being multiple-choice, thank you very much.”

As of 1994, then, Romney confessed to having been a lifelong advocate of “abortion rights” for women. By 2002 — when he ran for the governorship of Massachusetts — things had not changed in this respect. Romney pledged to “preserve and protect a woman’s right to choose” and his platform reiterated his stance on this topic: “The choice to have an abortion is a deeply personal one. Women should be free to choose based on their own beliefs, not [those of] the government’s.”

As Romney relays the story now, all of this changed for him in 2004 when he had an encounter with Harvard University stem cell researcher, Douglas Melton. When Melton explained to Romney that destroying two week-old embryos via therapeutic cloning was unobjectionable, the governor supposedly had an epiphany. Turning to his chief of staff, Beth Myers, Romney told her that “we have cheapened the sanctity of life by virtue of the *Roe v. Wade* mentality.”

Melton, however, takes exception to Romney’s account of their meeting. There was, he insists, no talk of killing embryos at all. That *a year later*, in 2005, Romney underscored that he was “absolutely committed to” his “promise to maintain the status quo with regards to laws relating to abortion and choice” suggests that perhaps there is more than a grain of truth in what Melton says.

So up until he decided to run for the presidency in 2008, Mitt Romney was essentially “pro-choice.”

Unfortunately, many Republicans and self-declared conservatives will miss the main significance of this. From the perspective of a champion of “limited government,” the primary problem isn’t that Romney was effectively “pro-choice.” The problem is that he favored usurping the right of individual states to negotiate this most controversial of issues for themselves. Romney defended an obscene power grab on the part of the federal government, a concentration of government authority over an even greater part of our lives.

Yet this was far from the only time that Romney betrayed his sympathy for Big Government.

Education

Romney, like most Republicans, supports “school choice” and charter schools. And, like most Republicans, he wants to preserve the Department of Education. There is no inconsistency here. The rhetoric of “choice” is politically appealing, but when it comes to this issue of education, Republicans are no more interested in depriving the federal government of the role in education that it has assumed over the decades than are Democrats. Romney, furthermore, is actually *a fan* of the Department of Education. In the GOP primary race of 2008, Romney remarked that he had come to “see that the Department of Education can actually make a difference.”

Oh, and he is a proponent of “No Child Left Behind,” a law that has served to *strengthen* the federal government’s grip over state schools.

The Second Amendment

It turns out that Romney hasn’t been all that much friendlier to those committed to protecting the Second Amendment than he has been to the unborn and the champions of states’ rights.

While campaigning for the governorship of Massachusetts in 2002, Romney both acknowledged his state’s strict gun laws *and* expressed his belief in them. He was unequivocal: “We do have tough gun



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laws in Massachusetts; I support them. I won't chip away at them. I believe they protect us and provide for our safety."

And lest one object that Romney was just governing a specific state in accordance with the prevailing sensibilities of the majority of its residents, we would be well served to recall that during his Senate campaign, he endorsed "the Brady Bill" — a *federal* piece of legislation requiring all would-be purchasers of firearms to wait five days before they can follow through with their purchases. He commented that his decision to do so was "not going to make me the hero of the NRA [National Rifle Association]." But that was fine with Romney, for as he proudly noted, "I don't line up with the NRA."

In 2008, on the eve of the declaration of his candidacy for president, Romney acquired a membership with none other than the NRA.

Other Domestic Issues

Government Subsidies and Industry

Romney supported the government's bailout of the automobile industry. Not only, though, does he call for the federal government to subsidize *this* industry, he also believes that it ought to continue subsidizing the agricultural industry. Romney wasn't always this sympathetic to the latter, though. While he was running for the Senate in 1994, he demanded what he referred to as "the virtual elimination" of the Department of Agriculture. However, in 2007, when he was pushed on this point, one of his Iowa spokespersons assured farmers that "Governor Romney believes that investing in agriculture is [the] key to our economy and families."

Romney has also made known his fondness for the federal government's indispensable role in "investing" in technology. For Romney, it isn't enough that, to his own admission, "we as a country already invest an enormous amount...in defense technology, space technology," and "health"; we need as well "to invest in some of the emerging technologies that are important at a basic science level such as fuel cell technology, power generation, materials science, [and] automotive technology." The federal government must also combat the "moral pollution" that engulfs America's children on a daily basis. To this end, Romney wants to coerce home computer manufacturers to install a device that will permit parents to block objectionable content. According to Romney, "We have to recognize that where we invest as a nation, *both* from a *government* standpoint but also from a private standpoint, those are the areas we've been most successful" (emphasis mine).

Global Warming

Romney doesn't just believe in "global warming;" he thinks as well that human beings contribute significantly to it. In and of itself, this belief is neither here nor there, but as we know all too well, believers in "global warming" — especially when they are politicians, like Romney, with dreams of amassing vast quantities of power — invariably jump all too easily from this belief in an impending apocalypse to the conclusion that "*we* must do something to thwart it."

And this, of course, means that we need bigger and bigger government.

When he was governor of Massachusetts, Romney authored a 72-point "Climate Protection Plan" and supported the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative — both measures designed to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

Though he has thus far said little about it, you can bet the bank that as president, Romney would be ever so eager to combat "global warming" at the federal level.



Health Care

There is very little that hasn't already been said concerning "Romneycare." Still, it bears repeating: Romney's socialized health care scheme for the citizens of Massachusetts was instrumental in the formation of the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act"— i.e. "Obamacare."

Regrettably, for Romney, his attempt to establish a morally relevant difference between his health care plan and that of Obama's has failed abysmally. Certainly, there is indeed a difference between policies enacted at a state level and those enacted at the national level. But much of "Romneycare" is funded by *the federal government*. That is, the citizens of the 49 states —American taxpayers living outside of Massachusetts — have been made to part with their resources so as to finance "Romneycare." This much Romney never mentions.

Furthermore, in the hard cover edition of his book, *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*, Romney said that he would like to do for *all* of America's citizens vis-à-vis healthcare what he did for the citizens of Massachusetts. Since "Obamacare" became woefully unpopular, the paperback version of his book has been released. Only this version is slightly different from its predecessor inasmuch as it omits this line.

Foreign Policy

Romney is no different from any other Republican (save Ron Paul, and to a lesser extent, Gary Johnson) inasmuch as he enthusiastically embraces a robust, activist military, a military that is engaged in exporting "Democracy" throughout the Middle East and (potentially) beyond. He supported invading Iraq as well as "the surge" of 2008. Romney doesn't deny that we continue to face real challenges in Iraq, but he attributes these problems, not to the fact that we are there, but to our government's "mismanagement" of the situation.

That is, like all proponents of Big Government, it is never the government *itself* that accounts for the disasters that occur when government seeks to intervene in this or that; it is always specific government *office holders* that are responsible. It isn't that government *cannot* get the job done correctly; it is that government just *has not* been able to do so *thus far*.

Conclusion

There is much more that can be said about Romney. But I think that what has been said should suffice to convince readers that Romney is as devoted a lover of Big Government as anyone.



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