



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on October 10, 2011

The Tea Party Movement, Republicans, and Ron Paul

Within the last few years, a phenomenon emerged to become among the most formidable forces in contemporary American politics. It goes by the name of “the Tea Party movement.” Supposedly, the Tea Party movement is not affiliated with either of our two national political parties. Rather, it is composed of millions of ordinary Americans who, jealous as they are of the liberties bequeathed to them by their progenitors, find intolerable the gargantuan proportions to which the federal government has grown.



This, at any rate, is the conventional account of the genesis and character of the Tea Party movement. I once endorsed it. Sadly, I no longer can.

It is my considered judgment — a judgment, mind you, from which I derive not the slightest satisfaction — that the Tea Party movement, like the so-called “conservative media” of Fox News and talk radio, has become, if it hasn’t always been, an organ of the GOP.

Those who would convict me of treating the Tea Party movement unfairly on this score shouldn’t be so hasty.

Contrary to the assertions of their leftist critics, that the glaring profligacy of George W. Bush and his Republican-dominated Congress failed to give rise to the Tea Party most certainly is *not* the function of a lack of sincerity on its members’ part. Still less can this be attributable to some perceived racial animus that the latter have toward the current occupant of the White House. As far as broadening the scope of the federal government is concerned, it is true that Barack H. Obama exploited the trends initiated by his predecessors, both Democrat and Republican alike; yet, understandably enough, both the rapidity and the aggressiveness with which he sought to strengthen this Colossus provoked the backlash that is the Tea Party movement.

The Republicans spared no occasion, and no expense, to feed Leviathan — and yet the Tea Party never came. But it is a mistake to think that *this* is what warrants concerns regarding Tea Partiers’ declaration of neutrality vis-à-vis political parties. The suspicion that the Tea Party movement is essentially an arm of the Republican Party is not rooted in what it may or may not have done *in the past*; the suspicion is fueled by what self-identified Tea Partiers are doing *right now*.

It hasn’t been uncommon to hear Republicans, whether politicians or “conservative” media personalities, wax repentant over having “lost their way” during the years that the vast apparatus of power was at their disposal. In reality, though, the only thing for which the Republicans are sorrowful is that they lost the dominant position that they once held. This, at least, is by far the most reasonable conclusion that we can draw, for genuine repentance demands that the penitent come to terms with his specific sins. This Republicans have singularly failed to do.

And yet, Tea Partiers continue to give them a pass.



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Anyone who doubts this need only consider the GOP's presidential primary contest.

If Tea Partiers *really* are concerned about affecting a dramatic reduction in the size and scope of the federal government; if they *really* want to deprive the government of much of its sustenance — i.e. “spending”; and if they *really* want to restore the constitutional republic to which our Founders gave birth and, thus, the liberty that this entails, then it should be obvious to all with eyes to see behind which of the candidates they should be throwing their unqualified support.

That candidate, of course, is Congressman Ron Paul.

In fact, truth be told, if it is the substance of a candidate's ideas and his or her determination to realize them to which they ascribe importance, there isn't a single other contestant in this race at whom Tea Partiers should glance twice.

My sympathies lie with Dr. Paul, of course, but it would be a grave mistake for his detractors to dismiss my verdict *simply* as a function of those sympathies. There are some very good *reasons* — i.e. considerations that, whether they ultimately embrace them or not, reasonable people must concede are legitimate — for the judgment that, by the professed standards of the Tea Partiers, Dr. Paul is their candidate *par excellence*.

As of this juncture, it seems that there exists a chasm of considerable depth between, on the one hand, Tea Partiers' *rhetoric* of “limited government,” “lower taxes,” and “less spending” and, on the other, their resolute failure to *specify* so much as a single program from the Bush era that they wish to revoke. In this respect alone they are indistinguishable from the Republicans who they support.

This brings us to our second premise: to judge from the presidential primaries, one could be forgiven for thinking that Republicans haven't changed their spots *at all*. True, thanks to the tireless labors of Dr. Paul, some Republicans, like Newt Gingrich and Rick Perry, now recognize the need to make the occasional derogatory reference to the Federal Reserve; but outside of that, none of the candidates sound any differently now than the GOP presidential candidates of 2008.

Ron Paul, however, is an entirely different matter.

The doubling of the national debt; No Child Left Behind; Faith-Based Initiatives; the Home Ownership Society with the sub-prime mortgages that it required (and the economic collapse to which it critically contributed); endless war in Iraq and Afghanistan and, in principle, the entire Islamic world; a prescription drug benefit that is unprecedented in its scope and cost; federal funding of *embryonic* stem cell research; the ominously named “Patriot Act”; bailouts; and TARP; these are just some of the measures that Bush 43 and his fellow Republicans appropriated to consolidate the federal government's power and authority over our lives to an extent that hasn't been seen since Lyndon Banes Johnson's Great Society.

Yet, besides Ron Paul, no other candidate has even hinted at regret over *any* of this.

Some candidates certainly *sound* better than others, but unless Tea Partiers are being dishonest about their desires to “shrink” government, they must be naïvely trusting to accept at face value these Republicans' words *in light of* their records. Just a few words about each should suffice to substantiate this point.

Take, first, the two “frontrunners,” [Rick Perry](#) and [Mitt Romney](#). The former was a lifelong Democrat and supporter of Al Gore up until the end of the Reagan decade, while the latter was the governor of the most heavily Democratic state in the Union and long-time ally of Ted Kennedy.



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Now, that a person's intellectual horizons should expand is something at once possible and desirable. It is certainly anything but a strike against Perry and Romney that they should have changed their minds throughout through out their lives. But it is neither the quantity nor the quality of the changes in perspective that renders both men suspect; it is, rather, *the timing* of their political conversions that calls into question their sincerity: both "frontrunners" seem to have changed their views at just those moments when it was to the advantage of their political careers to do so.

More specifically, Perry not only attempted to *compel* underage girls to receive a vaccination (whether it would have adversely or beneficially impacted them physically, is neither here nor there), he attempted to do so by way of circumventing the legislative branch, through an executive order. Furthermore, by granting in-state tuition to illegal aliens, he extended to them what in effect amounts to a de facto amnesty. To add insult to injury, as recently as a few weeks ago during the last GOP primary debate, he stood by his decision, and all but accused his critics of being heartless "racists." If ever we needed proof that Bush's "Compassionate Conservatism" is back, and back with a vengeance, this is it.

As for Romney, he is credited by no less a figure than Obama himself as being the inspiration for the dreadful Obamacare. Before there was Obamacare, there was Romneycare in Massachusetts.

That's right, along with Perry (and, for that matter, *Obama*), Romney too has a penchant for deploying the power with which he has been entrusted in the service of coercing those over whom he presides into pursuing ends that he has chosen for them. In the hardback edition of his book, *No Excuses*, Romney even expressed his enthusiasm over the prospect of implementing a national version of his state plan (When, however, the paperback edition was released, he omitted this detail).

The second (and third, fourth, and fifth?) tier candidates aren't significantly better.

[Newt Gingrich](#) and [Rick Santorum](#) are long-time establishment Republicans. If the Republican establishment that Americans overwhelmingly rejected in 2006 and 2008 could be said to have a face, it would be a composite of the faces of Gingrich and Santorum. From these two we heard not a peep during the last decade about excessive government spending, the dangers of the Federal Reserve, the impending housing bubble burst and consequent economic collapse, or any other threats to liberty and prosperity that Republican rule posed to the country.

[Michele Bachmann](#) is much more impressive than her contenders, but she *did* vote for \$192 billion dollars in "anti-recession" stimulus, while [Herman Cain](#) ecstatically endorsed Mitt Romney in 2008, indicated not the slightest awareness as late as 2006 of the looming economic crisis, and, even now, urges, never the elimination or drastic reduction of any agency or even program, but their *reform*. As for Jon Huntsman...well, he is [Jon Huntsman](#), *Obama's* former ambassador to China. This is about all that we need to know about him.

There is something else that we must never forget: every one of the forgoing candidates supports Bush's "Freedom Agenda," an agenda that demands for its actualization an ever expansive military and, thus, *increases* in government spending.

This brings us back around to our original point. That Tea Partiers would be in the least bit conflicted as to which of the Republican candidates they should endorse would alone suffice to confirm my suspicion that they are the same old Republicans repackaged under a new label. That they would think to chime right in there with Rick Santorum and other establishment backers in mocking, ridiculing, and booing Ron Paul all but assigns this suspicion an axiomatic status.



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Ron Paul is the only single Republican presidential candidate who has a lifetime of unwavering service to precisely those ideals for which Tea Partiers claim to stand. He should be the *sole* Tea Party candidate. That he isn't only shows that the Tea Party is an organ of the GOP.



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