



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on June 20, 2016

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“Moderate” Murkowski

Senator Lisa Ann Murkowski of Alaska is portrayed by the liberal press as a “moderate Republican,” in contrast to the “conservative” label typically associated with most members of her party. The daughter of former senator and governor of Alaska, Frank Murkowski, Lisa Murkowski served in the state legislature, representing the 14th district in the Alaska House of Representatives from 1999 to 2002. She has served in the U.S. Senate since December 20, 2002, when she was appointed her father to fill his Senate seat when he resigned to become governor. She was elected to her first full Senate term in 2004.



During her time in the Senate, Murkowski has garnered a dismal cumulative “Freedom Index” score of 48 percent, the third-lowest for any current Republican in the Senate (only Senators Susan Collins of Maine and Mark Kirk of Illinois have lower scores, at 40 and 34 percent, respectively). The New American’s “Freedom Index” is a congressional scorecard, published biannually, that measures the constitutional fidelity of individual members of Congress based upon their votes on key issues.

During her 2010 reelection campaign, Murkowski lost the Republican primary to Tea Party-backed candidate Joe Miller. Undeterred and staunchly opposed to the Tea Party, having called the Tea Party Express both a “racist” and an “extremist” group, Murkowski continued her reelection bid as a write-in candidate and defeated both Miller and her Democratic opponent, Scott McAdams. A month prior to the election, the liberal *Anchorage Daily News*, Alaska’s largest newspaper, endorsed Murkowski, touting her “moderate” credentials, support for healthcare reform, and her ability to “join hands with — or even lead — moderates in both parties.”

During the close 2014 U.S. Senate election in Alaska, in which incumbent Democratic Senator Mark Begich lost to Republican challenger Dan Sullivan, Begich’s campaign radio ads boasted of his almost identical voting record with Senator Murkowski. “Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich vote as much as 80 percent of the time together — that’s healthy for Alaska. I have a great dislike for partisan politics,” the ad touted. Despite Murkowski’s attempts to dispute the claim, PolitiFact rated it as “mostly true”:

The Begich campaign calculated the 80 percent figure using every roll call vote in 2014 in which both Murkowski and Begich participated, through July 2.

Murkowski and Begich voted 183 times, according to the campaign’s data, which we confirmed. They voted together 148 times, and they disagreed 35 times. Based on these numbers, the senators voted together 80.8 percent of the time for the first six months of 2014. The 35 votes on which Begich and Murkowski disagreed in 2014 were primarily procedural.

However, since both senators have served together since 2009, these numbers only reflect a portion of



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Murkowski's voting record. Otherwise, her cumulative "Freedom Index" score would likely be much lower, closer to Begich's, which is a mere 13 percent. However, rather than evaluating her full tenure and complete voting record in the Senate, the following pages will focus on her past votes that set her apart from more conservative Republicans and ultimately disqualify her from being a constitutionalist.

Abortion

Unlike the majority in her party, who take a pro-life position, Senator Murkowski is a strong proponent of abortion. Murkowski is a member of the Wish List, which, according to its website, touts itself as "America's largest fundraising network for pro-choice Republican women candidates." Murkowski is also member of other pro-abortion Republican political action committees, such as Republican Majority for Choice and Republicans for Choice.

Following revelations from undercover video recordings that Planned Parenthood exchanges the body parts of aborted babies for monetary compensation, Murkowski distanced herself from the controversy while still defending the organization. "I have long supported Planned Parenthood because I believe it offers important family planning, cancer screenings and other health services to thousands of men and women in Alaska and across the country," Murkowski said a statement posted on her Facebook page on August 3, 2015. A close observation of her voting record confirms her pro-abortion position and support for Planned Parenthood.

On April 14, 2011, Murkowski voted against a resolution that would have prohibited federal funding for Planned Parenthood. On December 2, 2015, Murkowski, along with pro-abortion Republican Senators Collins and Kirk, introduced an amendment (S. Amdt. 2885) to another amendment (S. Amdt. 2874) attached to the reconciliation on the budget for fiscal year 2016 (H.R. 3762). This amendment sponsored by Collins and Murkowski would have struck the section of the bill defunding Planned Parenthood for 2016. Although the amendment failed, Murkowski's "yea" vote affirms her continued support of Planned Parenthood despite accusations of illicit behavior.

Murkowski's abortionist stance is no recent phenomenon. Over 10 years ago, in 2005, she voted in favor of an amendment introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) to repeal the rule prohibiting U.S. foreign aid from going to organizations that provide or promote abortions. This vote demonstrated not only Murkowski's commitment to abortion, but also her approval of unconstitutional foreign aid as a delivery vehicle to expand and help facilitate its practice overseas.

Known as the "Mexico City" policy, this rule was imposed by President Ronald Reagan, rescinded by President Bill Clinton, reinstated by President George W. Bush, and then overturned by President Barack Obama via an executive order shortly after his inauguration on January 23, 2009. Following Obama's executive action overturning the "Mexico City" policy, Senator Mel Martinez (R-Fla.) introduced an amendment to the Children's Health Insurance bill in order to reinstate it. When Republicans voted for Martinez's amendment, Murkowski broke with her party and voted with the Democrats to defeat it, and the "Mexico City" policy remains overturned. Democrats and Planned Parenthood can always count on Murkowski to join their ranks to vote in favor of abortion and oppose any pro-life measures. As destructive as these votes may be to human life, unfortunately it is not the only issue in which Murkowski collaborates with progressives or the president.



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Amnesty and Border Security

In addition to her firm stance for abortion, Senator Murkowski is also a strong proponent of “immigration reform,” leftist newspeak for amnesty. In 2006, she voted against an amendment, introduced by Senator Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), attached to the then-Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 (S. 2611). Isakson’s amendment would have required the Department of Homeland Security to certify that the U.S. borders are secure and that additional detention facilities for illegal immigrants are operational prior to the implementation of any guest-worker and pathway-to-citizenship programs.

Again, in 2013, when Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) introduced a similar amendment to the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (S. 744), more commonly known as the “Gang of Eight” bill, Senator Murkowski voted for a motion by then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) to table (or kill) the amendment. According to Paul, his amendment would “not allow the processing of this new category called registered provisional immigrants until Congress votes that the border is secure.” Like Isakson’s amendment in 2006, Paul’s amendment would have also required Congress to certify every year for five years that the border is secure, or at least to make specific progress toward border security as defined in detail by the amendment.

Murkowski’s votes with the Democrats and other so-called moderate Republicans to prevent securing the borders before any comprehensive measures are in place only guarantees the perpetuation and likely exacerbation of the country’s current immigration woes, either making it more difficult to deport the additional influx of illegal immigrants who have entered as a result of an unsecure border, or resulting in a increased number of illegal aliens who may qualify for a future legalization program. In Murkowski’s case, she supports the latter.

Shortly after her votes against Isakson’s amendment in 2006 and for Harry Reid’s motion to kill Paul’s amendment in 2013, Murkowski proceeded to vote for S. 2611 and S. 744. The 2006 bill, S. 2611, would have effectively granted amnesty to the then-estimated 12 million illegal immigrants residing in the United States and created a guest-worker program for up to 200,000 immigrants per year. The 2013 “Gang of Eight” bill, S. 744, would have both granted immediate amnesty for the majority of illegal aliens in the United States and created new visa programs for a broad spectrum of low-skilled and high-skilled workers. Furthermore, as we previously reported in the “Freedom Index,” S. 744 would have also raised “the average legal immigration rate to several million per year.”

In 2009, Murkowski voted to reauthorize the unconstitutional State Children’s Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP as it is commonly known. This SCHIP reauthorization bill would also apply to the estimated “400,000 to 600,000 children of legal immigrants whose sponsors had agreed to cover the children’s healthcare needs for at least five years after arriving to the United States,” according to the “Freedom Index.” The purpose of SCHIP is to provide health insurance to children of families whose incomes disqualify them from receiving Medicaid but are still unable to afford private insurance. Not only does this vote reveal Murkowski’s continued advocacy for illegal immigrants, it highlights her support for the welfare state and entitlement programs.

A month after President Obama issued a unilateral executive action granting “deferred action,” or amnesty, for an estimated four to five million illegal immigrants currently residing in the United States, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) raised a constitutional point of order against the omnibus bill’s DHS (Department of Homeland Security) funding, which the president announced he would use to implement



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his unconstitutional executive amnesty decree. Of the point of order, Heritage Action's chief executive officer Michael A. Needham explained the importance of the vote as follows:

If Senators are opposed to President Obama's executive action on immigration, they should vote in favor of Sen. Cruz's constitutional point of order. A vote against the point of order is a vote in favor of unchecked presidential power and granting work permits and Social Security numbers to people who are in the country illegally.

Of the 54 Republicans in the Senate, 22 voted for Cruz's point of order while 20 crossed over and joined the Democrats to defeat the measure. Unsurprisingly, Murkowski was one of the 20 Republicans who voted in the negative. She released a statement applauding her previous vote for the 2013 "bipartisan immigration reform" bill and further added, "I stand ready to do so again in the next Congress." Although she voted against the point of order, she concluded her statement saying:

However, what I cannot support is immigration changes in the form of a Presidential fiat — an action publicly called unlawful by President Obama twenty two separate times. What's changed, aside from him being on the other side of an election?

Despite her stated opposition to "immigration changes in the form of a Presidential fiat," Murkowski was also one of 11 Senate Republicans who refused to sign on to an amicus brief filed with the Supreme Court on April 14, 2016 challenging President Obama's executive amnesty. Her inaction toward stopping President Obama's unconstitutional executive amnesty is in itself action in favor of the president's position.

ObamaTrade

Another major area of agreement between Senator Murkowski and President Obama is her support of the president's trade agenda, particularly the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Promoted as a "free trade" agreement, the TPP would economically integrate 12 Pacific Rim nations (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam) and establish a governing or executive TPP Commission, which could override Congress and the national legislatures and/or parliaments of the member states. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) has described the text of the 5,554-page TPP, which he has read, as a "living agreement" that can change even after it has been passed by Congress. Sessions has also compared the TPP Commission to the EU, referring to it as a "nascent European Union."

Despite these warnings from Senator Sessions, Murkowski twice voted to empower President Obama with Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). TPA, or "fast track," will allow Congress to limit debate and prohibit attaching amendments to the TPP when it comes up for a vote, and it lowers the threshold necessary for passing the TPP to a simple majority (50 percent plus one) of voting senators.

On October 5, 2015, shortly after U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman announced that the 12 Pacific Rim nations have successfully concluded TPP negotiations, Murkowski went on Facebook to post her optimistic approval of the agreement. "I am a free trader and I remain hopeful that the TPP will benefit Alaska, by opening new markets for our state's exports and supporting thousands of jobs," Murkowski said. She further added, "Still, we must look carefully at the details of the negotiations, and I look forward to vetting the agreement when it comes to Congress." Although Murkowski has remained virtually silent about the TPP since her last statement as she faces yet another tough election, win or



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lose, she is likely to vote for the agreement if it is brought up during a lame-duck session.

Pre-emptive War

In addition to abortion, amnesty, and trade, Senator Murkowski has garnered quite the “moderate” pedigree when it comes to pre-emptive war and military intervention abroad. Picking up where her father left off, among whose final votes was for authorization of the use of force in Iraq, on October 17, 2003, Lisa Murkowski voted in favor of supplemental spending for Iraq and Afghanistan (S. 1689). This bill appropriated \$86.5 billion in fiscal 2004 supplemental spending for military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the case of the war in Iraq, the U.S. military was sent into Iraq to enforce UN resolutions, rather than to protect American lives or property.

On May 27, 2010, Murkowski voted for another supplemental appropriations bill (H.R. 4899) that would provide an additional \$58.8 billion in “emergency” funding for the remainder of fiscal 2010. Included in the supplemental appropriations bill was \$37.1 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$5.1 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and \$2.9 billion in foreign aid for earthquake relief in Haiti.

The following year, when the Obama administration and NATO carried out a military intervention in Libya in order to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and to topple the regime of Moammar Gadhafi, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) motioned to send a small-business bill (S. 493) to the Foreign Relations Committee with instructions to insert his amendment. Senator Paul’s amendment would have expressed the sense of the Senate that “the President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.” Murkowski voted to kill Paul’s motion.

Although much more could be said about Senator Murkowski’s record, it is evident from the above selection of issues that her votes leave much to be desired in terms of conservative principles and upholding the Constitution. While she may not be a progressive liberal Democrat, she nevertheless remains to the left of most in her party and contributes very little to the preservation of the government established by the Founding Fathers. Constitutionalists will find little in her record to garner their support, but whenever President Obama or Harry Reid are in need of a crossover vote, they can trust Murkowski.

Photo of Sen. Lisa Ann Murkowski : AP Images



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