



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 20, 2011

ABC News Distorts Ron Paul Event in N.H.

A distorted account of Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul's "town hall" meeting in New Hampshire Monday evening appeared on the ABC News political blog, "The Note." The report, written by Jason Volock, appeared under the headline, "Ron Paul Attacked for Views on Health Care." The lead sentence reads: "Ron Paul's views on health care came under fire tonight at a campaign stop in New Hampshire, where his position on eliminating Medicaid was met with open hostility from the audience."



The article does contain a few points of accuracy. The candidate was Ron Paul and the state was New Hampshire. It was a campaign stop and there was an audience, made up of about 150 people at the Executive Court in Manchester. And there was a question about the candidate's position on Medicaid. But the woman who asked the question in no way appeared to be "up in arms," as the reporter described her. Nor was her question hostile. "Skeptical" would have been a far more accurate description, though the word fails to convey the sense of dramatic confrontation for which Mr. Volock was so obviously striving.

Indeed, the [C-Span video](#) of the event, posted on the "Daily Paul" website, confirms what this writer observed from having sat through the entire meeting. Far from being "hostile" — which appears to be Volock's characterization of the audience in general — the crowd was, as one might expect at a campaign-organized event, very friendly toward the candidate, greeting his every answer with sustained applause. The topics covered in the question-and-answer session included, among others, Paul's well-known opposition to the Federal Reserve, the issuance of executive orders, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and U.S. policy toward North Korea. Volock's report was limited to coverage of one question about Medicaid, out of which he fashioned his description of a candidate "under fire" from a "hostile audience."

As the meeting proceeded in an orderly fashion, one woman in the audience took her turn at a microphone and calmly and politely posed the following problem and question to the candidate: "Thirty three percent of the children in the U.S. are on Medicaid and another 10 percent are uninsured. You have offered charity by doctors as a solution to this. Do you really think that 43 percent of America's children will be taken care of by charity?"

As the article stated, Paul began his response by saying the spending plan he has proposed would preserve Medicare and Medicaid, but said those programs would have to be phased out over time (he did not say how long a time) because of the nation's precarious fiscal condition. A retired obstetrician, the 76-year-old congressman recalled how medicine was practiced before the passage of the Medicare program in 1965 and spoke of his own experience as a \$3 an hour intern at a Catholic hospital in Texas, where, he said, no one was turned away because of an inability to pay for care.

"People weren't lying in the street without medical care," Paul said. When he began his own practice,



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he said, he charged patients \$5 per visit. Together with inflation and the proliferation of malpractice suits, the government role in medicine has driven up the cost of care, he said, as doctors and hospitals have charged more, knowing that the government is paying for it. The Texas Congressman said he wanted to reestablish the "doctor-patient relationship" by establishing medical savings accounts that would help people buy their own health insurance and pay for their own healthcare.

As the ABC story noted, another woman called out "What about the other 43 percent?" The article described Paul as "taken aback" by the question and said he "shot back, 'You mean when? Right now?'" As his subsequent comments made clear, Paul was seeking a clarification of whether the questioner was asking about the immediate future or about the point at which what Paul called a "free society" would be established. He repeated that he favors maintaining the programs in the short term. For the long run, he said, "Why not look at how the country looked before 1965? May be it wouldn't cost so much." Government programs have driven up costs in medicine, as they have in other areas, including housing and education, he said.

At one point the Volock article, as it was first posted on the blog, made it appear that Paul was becoming hostile to the questioner.

"Paul's voice then picked up as he stared at the woman and said, 'It sounds like you're cold-hearted, you don't care about people.'" That quotation from Paul was wrenched out of context, since he was clearly saying at the time that libertarians and conservatives have not done an adequate job of explaining their positions, leaving people with the impression that they are coldly indifferent toward the hardships of others. "It sounds like you're cold-hearted, you don't care about people and the government's not going to take care of it," he said. The distortion was emphatically protested on the "Daily Paul" website and the ABC story was later corrected to say that Paul "acknowledged that his own plans may seem 'cold-hearted,' but he is ultimately trying to save the country from financial ruin."

Far from reacting in a hostile manner to the questioner, the candidate expressed appreciation for the sincerity of her motives and her concern. "I'm sure you have sincere humanitarian instincts and your question reflects this," he said, adding that those concerns can best be met in the long run by reducing government spending and inflation and by encouraging more competition in the medical professions.

The only other exchange remotely resembling a conflict came when Paul, a 12-term member of Congress, expressed his own concern about recently enacted legislation that authorizes the President to hold terror suspects apprehended anywhere, including the United States, in military prisons indefinitely, without charge or trial. The dispute arose when a man protested that his Congressman had assured him American citizens were exempted.

"No, this is designed for American citizens; they are not exempt," Paul informed him. "They are included."

"Can a congressman lie to me?" the man asked, as laughter erupted through the hall.

"I've heard of that happening," Paul replied.



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