



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 11, 2011

American Constitution Party Suffers from Major Party Status in Colorado

As recounted last year in *The New American*, the American Constitution Party (ACP) has achieved major party status in Colorado, due in large part to the campaign for Governor of Tom Tancredo (left), former Republican Congressman from the state. Ironically, now that the ACP has gained this level of official acceptance, the red tape associated with maintaining this existence is discouraging it from getting comfortable in the new role as a legitimate alternative and besides, it's expensive to buy into this high-stakes game.



Compliance with bureaucratic regulations isn't easy. As [described](#) by the Columbus, Indiana, *Republic*: With only 4,134 members, the ACP has had to create a 21-member central committee, elect an executive committee and set up party committees in each of Colorado's 64 counties. In exchange, the party gets a place at or near the top of the ballot in the next gubernatorial election in 2014.

"We keep asking Secretary of State Scott Gessler what's the benefit of being a major party. We get a higher position on the ballot, but if that's the only thing, it's not worth it," said Amanda Campbell, the ACP's treasurer and an executive board member.

Being a major party brings major responsibilities, like filing detailed campaign finance reports, hiring lawyers to interpret complicated state and federal reporting requirements, and holding primaries and caucuses.

Money, not surprisingly, is always tight for a third party. In the case of the ACP, the Colorado Secretary of State's website records that the ACP had just \$817 in the bank as of April 15. Campbell said the party no longer collects dues because as all members are afforded the right to vote, including those who don't pay, she believes it would be unfair to give voting rights only to dues-paying members.

"To do a mailing would cost \$2,000, money we don't have because we don't have member dues anymore," Campbell said.

The history of the party is essential to understanding the appeal of its tenets. The party now known as the American Constitution Party began in 1992 as the U.S. Taxpayers Party. The name was changed in 1999 to the Constitution Party. In Colorado, the party was subsequently rebranded the American Constitution Party.

The party's basic platform is laid out briefly on its [website](#).

We, the members of the American Constitution Party, gratefully acknowledge the blessings of the Lord God as the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe and of our nation. We hereby appeal to Him for aid, comfort, guidance and the protection of His Divine Providence as we work to restore and preserve this nation as a government of, by, and for the people. Our republic is a



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nation governed by a constitution rooted in Biblical law and administered by representatives elected by the people to preserve, protect, and defend it against attacks by all its enemies, whether from without or within. We affirm the principles of inherent, un-a-lien-able*, individual rights upon which these United States of America were founded. The sole legitimate function of government is to secure these rights through the preservation of domestic tranquility, the maintenance of a strong national defense, and the promotion of equal justice for all.

While the foregoing articles of faith understandably attract the devotion of constitutionalists and those interested in restoring our republic to its roots, the practical, pragmatic requirements of competing in electoral contests are vexing this group of patriots.

The Colorado ACPs woes paradoxically began as a result of its banner carriers success. When Tom Tancredo abandoned the GOP and declared his intent to run for Governor under the ACP flag, he set the party on a course that led to prominence and problems.

Tancredo eventually lost to Democrat John Hickenlooper, but according to state law, the ACP was granted major party status after Tancredo's second-place finish.

Republican Dan Maes was backed by the Tea Party, but received only 11 percent of the vote. State law requires a partys candidate to cross the 10 percent threshold in order to maintain major party status.

Contrary to the assumption of many observers, Tom Tancredo's well-publicized candidacy did not produce a financial windfall for his party. In fact, Campbell claims that only several hundred dollars was collected by the party while over \$650,000 was deposited directly into the Tancredo campaigns coffers, bypassing the party altogether.

And now, to add insult to injury, Tancredo has left the American Constitution Party and rejoined the GOP. In this case, it is difficult to determine which partner brung Tancredo to the big dance and to which he should be loyal.

In a statement void of any vestige of loyalty, Tancredo told the press, "This is a challenge they [the ACP] chose to undertake. They should see this as an opportunity.

If Tancredo cant be relied on to come to the defense of his former mates, it is no wonder that Democratic Governor Hickenlooper's promises to consider ACP members for appointments to state boards and commissions have not been fulfilled.

"There are no current vacancies on the Colorado Commission on Aging, which is the only state board or commission that requires membership from major political parties," said Hickenlooper spokesman Eric Brown. "Anyone can apply to participate on one of the more than 300 state boards and commissions."

According to the article cited above:

The ACP may be stuck for another four years. Gessler said there is no statutory authority for a party to give up major party status and that the Legislature would have to change the law to allow anyone to withdraw. Campbell said the party won't ask for any change because that would cost taxpayers.

The moral of the story: If you lie down with dogs, you'll wake up with fees.



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