



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on April 22, 2012

Bailout Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch Will Face Primary

"Hatch received 59.2 percent of delegate vote to Liljenquist's 40.8 percent," on the second ballot, the Utah-based *Deseret News* reported April 21. "Candidates need 60 percent of the vote to win the party nomination outright. Eight other candidates did not advance after the first ballot."

Hatch spun the primary fight as a victory. "Just a few months ago, nobody was going to give me a chance," he [told](#) reporters after the convention.



But the primary will indeed be a rebuke to Hatch for his [vote](#) in favor of the \$700 billion TARP financial bailout in 2008. Hatch was not up for reelection in 2010, but his U.S. Senate colleague from Utah, Republican Bob Bennett, was [voted out of office](#) for his support of TARP. Bennett placed third in a five-way convention contest that year, and failed to even make the ballot for the primary.

In comparison with Bennett's experience, the near-60 percent vote was a victory for Hatch, who has irked party conservatives in recent years with an ever-more-liberal [voting record](#). Hatch voted for the massive No Child Left Behind entitlement program in 2001 and Medicare Part D in 2003 as well as the TARP bailout bill in 2008.

It's hard to predict how Hatch will fare in a primary against the underfunded Liljenquist, though Liljenquist was [endorsed](#) by most of Hatch's other primary opponents after the first ballot. Liljenquist has been [deferential](#) to Hatch in the two primary debates thus far, except for a disagreement with Hatch over the detention of U.S. Citizens without trial under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011. "Our rights are protected," Hatch [argued](#) of the NDAA, while Liljenquist said otherwise.

Liljenquist has stressed that Hatch's advantages of incumbency and seniority are not always assets. "Seniority does not matter unless you're actually able to change the course of the country and actually get bills passed," Liljenquist [told](#) the press after the convention. And Liljenquist may have a point for this election year in particular. While Liljenquist's campaign is underfunded and [struggling to raise \\$20,000](#) in a post-convention money bomb against Hatch's millions, Hatch has superpacs and other grass-roots organizations to deal with.

One of the strongest independent efforts against Hatch is the Freedom Works organization, which has spent \$700,000 attacking Hatch as an advocate of big government, with a [television ad](#) complaining: "Utahns thought we sent a conservative to Washington. But Orrin Hatch has risked your children's



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future by voting to raise our nation's debt limit 16 times. Orrin Hatch gave away your family's money to bailouts for Wall Street bankers."

The independent efforts may blunt some of Hatch's fundraising advantages and equalize the ground in Utah, as well as in races in states across the nation in the 2012 election cycle. This is the first cycle where so-called "superpacs" are able to accept unlimited donations to advocate for political causes; it's a direct result of the [Citizens United](#) Supreme Court case.

The Freedom Works advertisements have definitely gotten under Hatch's skin. "Give me a break," Hatch [told](#) National Public Radio after the group started running advertisements as part of its "Retire Hatch" campaign. "These people are not conservatives. They're not Republicans. They're radical libertarians. And I'm doggone offended by it. I despise these people, and I'm not the type of guy you'd come in and dump on without getting punched in the mouth."

Of course, Freedom Works is hardly a libertarian organization. It is run by former Congressman Richard Armey, a Republican Majority Leader in the U.S. House in the 1990s. And it was founded by establishment Republicans such as Vin Weber, Jack Kemp, and Bill Bennett, with funding from the Koch Family. That's hardly libertarian.

But Hatch has clearly been stung by his liberal voting record, and has seen the political blood in the water from Bennett's loss in 2010. So has FreedomWorks. "The bottom line is Hatch doesn't represent the state of Utah," [said](#) Russ Walker, vice president of political and grassroots campaigns for FreedomWorks PAC, to the Daily Caller when the organization rolled out the ["Retire Hatch"](#) campaign back in June 2011. "The state of Utah is far more fiscally conservative than Orrin Hatch is. It's an opportunity to pick up a seat, it's an opportunity to find somebody who is better."

The Republican Party establishment has been under assault since the rise of the Tea Party movement. There's a battle brewing between the neoconservative establishment and several other factions, including the the Ron Paul and Tea Party factions of the GOP. These insurgent factions of the GOP have some overlap, and almost never fight each other in their battles against the establishment. The Utah Senate race may be one to watch to gage a new supremacy of anti-establishment sentiment in the GOP, or a return to the same bailout politicians of old.

Photo of Sen. Orrin Hatch: AP Images



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