



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 11, 2012

Challenging the Congressional GOP Establishment

The Republican Party establishment is under assault in a much more fundamental way in 2012 than it was in the Tea Party revolution of 2010. There's a battle brewing between the big-government establishment, sometimes called neoconservatives, and both the Ron Paul and Tea Party factions of the party.



Nowhere has this insurgency into the Republican Party been more apparent than in Utah, where a strong Tea Party movement ousted establishment GOP Senator Bob Bennett in a 2010 primary. Tea Party activists resented Bennett's increasingly liberal voting record in general and his vote for the 2008 TARP bailout of big banks with taxpayer dollars in particular. The three-term Bennett faced a Utah GOP convention in 2010 that placed him third in a five-way primary, preventing him from even making the ballot in the primary election.

In 2012, Tea Party organizations are trying to replicate their 2010 Utah success. Six-term U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch had long enjoyed an undeserved conservative reputation, but has voted for big government whenever it was proposed by fellow Republicans. Hatch voted for the massive No Child Left Behind entitlement program in 2001, Medicare Part D and — most importantly — the TARP bailout bill in 2008. One Tea Party-allied organization, Freedom Works, started a "Retire Hatch" campaign last year to remove the 78-year-old in 2012, Hatch's first election since the TARP vote. Freedom Works PAC 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 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 Freedom Works advertisements and presence at the Utah convention have clearly gotten under Hatch's skin. He complained to National Public Radio about the Freedom Works campaign: "Give me a break. 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 former Republican Majority Leader who served as Newt Gingrich's lieutenant 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 Freedom Works has nevertheless helped the constitutionalist insurgency against neoconservative, big-government GOP



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incumbents in recent years.

The Freedom Works media campaign revealing Hatch's record of backing bank bailouts may have made the difference at the April 21 Utah GOP convention, as Hatch has been forced into his first primary since his first Senate race in 1976. Hatch fared better than Bennett at the Utah GOP convention, winning 59 percent of the vote (60 percent was needed to avoid a primary), but he will face former state Senator Dan Liljenquist in the primary. Liljenquist is a mixed bag for traditional constitutionalists, as his platform is a mixture of establishment GOP claptrap about "cut, cap and balance" along with some genuine constitutionalism such as favoring the abolition of the U.S. Department of Education and supporting repeal of the detention provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Liljenquist will have an uphill financial struggle in the race in order to prevail in the primary June 26. He has struggled to raise tens of thousands of campaign dollars against the incumbent Hatch, who has millions in the bank. But SuperPacs such as Freedom Works PAC — and others like it — may erase much of the funding advantages of incumbency. This is the first full election cycle where independent political organizations can accept donations of unlimited size, a result of the 2010 Supreme Court decision *Citizens United v. FEC*.

The 2012 election year promises to be the most unpredictable yet, as "SuperPacs" put larger amounts of independent money into congressional races. And these independent funds may fuel the already strong anti-establishment insurgency across the nation. The insurgency inside the GOP got a shot in the arm in 2010 with the election of Tea Party candidates such as Kentucky Senator Rand Paul and Utah Senator Mike Lee. Bigger surprises may be in store for 2012.

Congressman Ron Paul's presidential candidacy has also created a powerful new faction struggling against the establishment in nearly every state of the union. And this may be the principal reason why Ron Paul has continued his presidential campaign after the delegate math made his nomination for President appear impractical. Rep. Paul has continued to campaign across the states and draw enthusiastic young crowds by the thousands. Many of these new activists are being drawn into the political process on the congressional level, as many of the insurgent candidates are inspired by Ron Paul's message of constitutional principles and limited government.

Following are several cases where establishment GOP congressional candidates are facing serious challenges from constitutionalist challengers.

Sheriff Richard Mack vs. Texas Rep. Lamar Smith

Former Arizona County Sheriff Richard Mack is well known nationally to defenders of the U.S. Constitution for his lawsuit against the federal government, *U.S. v. Mack*, where he challenged provisions of federal gun control under the Brady law. The Supreme Court ultimately agreed with the former Graham County, Arizona, Sheriff and invalidated provisions of the Brady law for unconstitutionally making state and local law-enforcement officials enforce a federal law.

Mack has since moved to Texas and announced his candidacy for Congress against 13-term incumbent Republican Lamar Smith in District 21. Smith voted for the 2008 TARP bailout, the 2003 Medicare Part D entitlement, and 2001's No Child Left Behind. In short, Smith has voted for big government whenever it was pushed by his party establishment. Mack is the first serious opposition Smith has faced in a decade, and his first serious primary challenge since first winning the seat in 1996.

Of his oath of office to protect the U.S. Constitution, Mack promises, "I will keep that oath. Our problems in this country are a result of failing to follow our Constitution. As your Congressman, I will



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uphold the Constitution, support State sovereignty and put Texas first.” As an Arizona Sheriff, Mack joined the Oath Keepers organization, where military and police professionals pledged not to follow any order to disarm law-abiding U.S. citizens. Oath Keepers was created in the wake of publication of the 29 Palms Survey first published by The New American magazine in 1994. The survey asked combat personnel the Twentynine Palms, California, U.S. Marine Corps Center (among other questions) if they would “fire upon U.S. citizens who refuse or resist confiscation of firearms banned by the United States government.”

Mack’s platform should fit well with both the Tea Party and Ron Paul movements, as he favors major spending cuts, supports civil liberties in a libertarian-leaning fashion, and has a 20-year law-enforcement background.

Mack’s libertarian outlook can be seen in his position on a federal marriage amendment, stating that it’s not the constitutional role of the federal government: “I don’t believe government has any business being involved in what marriage is and what marriage isn’t,” he wrote on his campaign website.

Smith holds a strong edge in fundraising, with more than \$1 million on hand, nearly half of which has come from Political Action Committee contributions. Mack has raised only \$25,000 as of the end of the first quarter of 2012, but his national exposure in the wake of the Brady law court battle should help with fundraising nationally.

Karen Kwiatkowski vs. Virginia Rep. Bob Goodlatte

Former Air Force Lt. Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski is waging a serious challenge against 10-term incumbent Republican Bob Goodlatte in Virginia’s District Six. Kwiatkowski has an impressive educational, military, and constitutionalist record. She is a 20-year Air Force veteran who was working in the Pentagon on the day of the September 11 attacks. She earned a master’s degree from Harvard University and doctorate from Catholic University in global politics. While in the Pentagon, she was against neoconservative military adventurism, and she retired from the Air Force in 2003 and became a regular contributor to the popular libertarian website [LewRockwell.com](#).

Goodlatte is a typical establishment Republican bailout politician, voting for TARP in 2008, the Medicare Prescription Drug bill in 2003, and No Child Left Behind in 2001. These, together with Obama-Care (which all Republicans opposed), constitute all of the major entitlements that were passed during his congressional tenure. In short, Goodlatte has consistently backed big government entitlements and bailouts when they have been proposed by Republican Party leaders.

That record of support for big government is something Kwiatkowski, a mother of four, has pounced upon: “Career politician Bob Goodlatte has voted a dozen times to increase the debt ceiling, doubled the size of the Department of Education, voted for increases in foreign aid and domestic spending, and he voted for the largest increase in entitlement programs since Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ). We, and our children and grandchildren, cannot afford to continue down this path.”

Kwiatkowski, on the other hand, has pledged to vote against all debt limit increases and to stand with both the Ron Paul movement and the Tea Party movement in seeking less spending and lower taxes. “I will work to repeal the 16th Amendment establishing a federal income tax, and I stand with the Fair Tax advocates in abolishing the IRS and reforming the tax code.”

A cattle rancher at her Shenandoah Valley farm, Kwiatkowski has pledged to “oppose federal subsidies of any kind. The subsidization of mass agriculture, coupled with trade barriers to exports and imports that interfere with the freedom of both farmers and consumers to choose what they will purchase has



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warped agricultural production, and hurt our global competitiveness.” She has also called for the repeal of the same “No Child Left Behind” federal education mandate that Goodlatte voted to pass, in addition to the complete abolition of the U.S. Department of Education.

In the money race, Kwiatkowski faces an uphill run, raising just \$75,000 thus far in the campaign against Goodlatte’s more than \$800,000 (more than half of which come from PAC contributions). She has received a number of endorsements from major Ron Paul campaign figures and his libertarian allies, such as Lew Rockwell, Peter Schiff, Tom Woods, and James Bovard. So she may receive some independent support from the half-dozen well-funded SuperPacs that previously backed Ron Paul’s presidential campaign.

Marvin “Chick” Heilesen vs. Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson

Marvin “Chick” Heilesen is making his second attempt to unseat seven-term incumbent Republican Mike Simpson in Idaho’s second district. Simpson backed all major Republican-backed entitlement spending during his congressional tenure: 2001’s No Child Left Behind Law, the 2003 Medicare prescription drug law, and the TARP bailout in 2008.

That final vote won Simpson a four-way primary battle in 2010, which he won with 58 percent of the vote. Second in the 2010 field was Heilesen, with nearly a quarter of the primary vote. This year, Heilesen will be Simpson’s only challenger.

Vietnam veteran Heilesen served in the district as an organizer for the conservative John Birch Society for 15 years and has been endorsed by several local Tea Party organizations. “I’m going there to vote against all the things my opponent’s for, against bailouts and higher taxes,” Heilesen told *The New American*, stressing Simpson’s record of voting for the TARP bill and breaking his pledge not to vote for tax increases. Heilesen stresses his strict adherence to the U.S. Constitution and reluctance to get into unnecessary and unwinnable counter-insurgency wars without definitions of victory.

Heilesen’s campaign will be decided about the time readers of *The New American* receive this issue, during his May 15 primary.

“It looks fairly good,” Heilesen says of his electoral math. Of the 42 percent of primary voters who opposed Simpson in 2010, Heilesen said “we’re considering all those votes anti-Simpson.” He adds that the primary math is that Idaho’s new open primary system is expected to draw in 16-32 percent of independent and Democratic crossover voters, which he hopes to win with his non-interventionist foreign policy and defense of domestic civil liberties.

Heilesen also told *The New American* he plans on working toward a constitutionalist coalition if sent to Congress. “Voting against things is not the whole solution. You’ve got to go across the aisle and build coalitions. You’ve got to convince the others. I don’t think it would be a hard thing at all convincing people, because in a crisis period, people negotiate better. Even if you can’t convince them on the Constitution argument, the common sense argument is persuasive.”

Minnesota U.S. Senate Race: Kurt Bills vs. Dan Severson, Pete Hegseth

Experienced constitutionalists are also waging an insurgency against party establishment figures in primaries against Democratic incumbents, as in the case of the Minnesota Senate race. In Minnesota, one-term State Representative Kurt Bills faces two establishment opponents in the primary to face freshman incumbent Democrat Senator Amy Klobuchar.

Bills is also a high-school economics teacher who has severely criticized the Federal Reserve Bank for



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its inflationary practices. Bills argues that “printing money causes the most regressive form of taxation ... the inflation tax. Stealing the purchasing power of working class people by printing money keeps interest rates low and encourages people to go further into debt rather than save. This is one of the most morally corrupt policies I have witnessed in my study and teaching of economics.”

Bills faces two party establishment favorites in the primary, State Representative and House Minority Whip Dan “Doc” Severson and Vets for Freedom founder Pete Hegseth. Severson is a 22-year Navy veteran serving his fourth term as a state representative. Severson has a record of supporting the Republican state establishment and differs from purist libertarians by opposing state decriminalization of marijuana.

Iraq War veteran and Council on Foreign Relations member Pete Hegseth is primarily known for founding an organization called Vets for Freedom, which has sought to continue the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hegseth is also a contributor to the neoconservative *National Review* magazine, where he has reiterated his dogged defense of continuing the U.S. combat presence in the Iraq War and insisted that President Obama not issue a public withdrawal date for Afghanistan.

By way of contrast, Bills is reluctant to sacrifice the lives of U.S. soldiers on the mere say-so of the executive branch of government or for vague foreign policy goals. “I do not agree with spreading our military so thin around the world that it compromises our men and women and their effectiveness. Furthermore, Congress must declare war according to our constitution. I will work for keeping the US military out of nation building and ill-defined missions.”

In the fundraising contest, Bills and the rest of the Republican field are underdogs. The incumbent Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar has \$5.2 million in her campaign war chest already. Even within the GOP primary, Bills has an upward sprint financially. Bills raised a little more than \$45,000 as of March 31, while Severson has raised \$142,000, and Hegseth is topping the pack with \$159,000 raised. But Bills will likely find new donors after receiving a March 29 personal endorsement from Representative and presidential candidate Ron Paul.

* * *

While none of the above constitutionalist candidates are favorites to win, each has a chance to win. They are examples of a wave of hundreds of candidates for federal and state office who are running on constitutionalist platforms. Many of them are running for the first time and were not part of the election process in 2008, or even in the Tea Party froth of the 2010 elections. Most Constitution candidates will lose their primaries and final elections, as most challengers and political novices do, but the difference this year is that more of them are bound to win.

Ron Paul’s presidential campaign — always a longshot — by itself would not have created a fundamental challenge in the size of the federal government without a commensurate change in the make-up and nature of Congress. His campaign may meet a deeper success during the congressional elections than he sought during the presidential primaries by inspiring a wave of candidates dedicated to smaller government and less foreign interventionism.

The result will be a Congress in January of 2013 that will still contain a majority of vote-buying socialists and crony-capitalists, but one that will include a larger Constitution-oriented caucus of Congressmen in the House and Senate.



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