



Chick Heileson vs. Mike Simpson

Even his parents never called him Marvin. To all but his mother and a few other close relatives, he is “Chick.” (His parents called him “Chuck,” after his middle name Charles.) Chick Heileson is one of a growing number of Constitution-oriented citizens who have not only decided to run for Congress, but are also being taken seriously by political pundits. Heileson is running against the liberal Republican Mike Simpson of Idaho’s Second Congressional District. Simpson is serving his fifth term and is facing a serious challenge from within his own party.



“The biggest thing that everyone is very upset about is that he voted for the first bailout under Bush,” Heileson told *The New American*. Simpson voted for the initial Bush TARP bailout package, a serious repudiation of free-market principles that has undercut Simpson’s reelection chances. Simpson, who earned a meager 50 percent on *The New American*’s “Freedom Index” earlier this year, also voted to triple spending on national service, for \$1.8 billion in federal aid to (i.e., control over) local police through the COPS program, and for the supplemental “emergency” appropriations bill that allocated an additional \$96.7 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The liberal *Boise Weekly* noted back in October 22, 2008 that Simpson “is generally liked across the district and even by his opponent, Boise Democrat Debbie Holmes. Holmes often agrees with Simpson’s point of view, despite her contention that ‘he is part of the problem’ in Washington, D.C.” But that was last year, before news of Simpson’s vote for the TARP bailout made its way through the district.

Although Idaho is one of the most Republican states in the nation, last fall Democrats were able to unseat Bill Sali, Idaho’s other congressional Republican who had strong political and financial backing from the Bush administration. Sali had garnered several hundred thousand dollars in donations from Washington’s political establishment, to no avail.

The political lesson being slowly learned in congressional districts across the country is that the Washington GOP establishment has been backing liberal Republicans who are mere echoes of the Democrats, and conservative voters are sniffing out the phonies and sending them down to defeat. The principle was perhaps best summarized by Massachusetts Republican State Senator Robert Hedlund, who told a local magazine in 2003, “When voters are given a choice between a socialist and someone who comes off as a cheap imitation, they will choose the real thing every time.” In political parlance, the Republican National Committee has found conservative votes “non-transferable” to its cheap imitations through two consecutive congressional election cycles.

As a result, Democrats may soon smell political blood in the water with Simpson after his TARP bailout vote. “It was one of the toughest votes I have ever cast,” Simpson explained to the press after following the Bush administration’s lead. Simpson said after voting for a bill that he hadn’t read (and was rushed through with virtually no debate), “I voted yes on the bill because I sincerely believe the greater risk for



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taxpayers is in not acting.” He added: “No one is happy about this legislation, but I am convinced that action is a necessary evil in order to keep small businesses afloat, keep retirees from losing their life savings and help end the growing credit crisis we now face.”

But Simpson’s willingness to engage in socialist bailouts is apparently determined by the party proposing them in Washington. He was okay with the Republican bailout, but has balked at Obama’s bailouts, saying in February of this year regarding the economic stimulus package: “While I support a number of programs and ideas that are reflected in the package we voted on today, I can not support the astronomical amount of money that is being thrown at this problem with very little thought and no debate.”

“There’s no such word as conservative anymore,” is how Heileson responds to self-described “conservative” Simpson’s explanation of his TARP vote. As a result, Heileson has been raking in political donations from within the district. “I’ve raised more in my first quarter than anyone who has ever run against him, and almost as much as he himself has raised.” Simpson raised \$53,805 in the third quarter, while Heileson’s FEC filing noted third quarter donations of \$40,705.

More importantly, Heileson is getting almost all of his donations from inside his Idaho district. “I think he raised \$67,000 total in his last go around inside the state of Idaho and I’ve raised \$50,000,” Heileson said of his three-month-old candidacy. According to the Federal Election Commission, more than three-quarters of Simpson’s donations have come from out-of-state political action committees. Thus, it’s not surprising that the liberal *Boise Weekly* has noted Simpson is spending most of his campaign time in Washington, D.C., with “28 party invites on file. He appears to have fortnightly fundraisers at the ‘refined and elegant’ Capitol Hill Club, a Republican gentleman’s club two blocks from Capitol Hill.”

Meanwhile, Heileson told *The New American* he has more “cottage” and “town hall” meeting invitations than he can attend in the district. “About 160 people want to hold them,” he says, which would keep him busy until the May 25 primary. “You kind of get scared when things are going so well,” the Vietnam veteran says. “All I’ve been speaking to is the choir. Even the press has been good to me.” But he notes that he still has some work to do to win more name recognition.

Heileson entered the race after serving as a John Birch Society coordinator in the district for 15 years. The John Birch Society is a non-partisan educational organization focusing upon the Constitution and the principles of limited government. “Working for the Birch Society for the last 15 years has been quite an advantage,” he told *The New American*. As a coordinator, he met thousands of Simpson’s constituents and forged many friendships. He also became comfortable with public speaking, and has an affable, personal manner. “The constitutionalist movement is what inspired me to do it,” Heileson says of his candidacy. While not directly inspired to run as a result of Ron Paul’s 2008 presidential race, Heileson stresses that “what he’s done is inspiring.”

Photo: Chick Heileson

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