



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 15, 2013

CPAC Crowd Takes a “Stand With Rand”

If one does not speak a targeted individual's name, is it still a personal attack? Consider: Rand Paul, speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference just outside Washington, D. C., Thursday, said the party has to change its thinking and its brand. And, [reported](#) *The American Spectator*, he got in an implied shot at an old warrior who had labeled him among the “wacko birds” of today's politics.



“The GOP of old has grown stale and moss-covered,” said the junior senator from Kentucky. “I don't think we need to name any names, do we?”

Zing! Take that, John McCain! A “wacko bird” strikes back!

Paul, who captured national headlines and TV coverage last week with a 13-hour filibuster against confirmation of John Brennan as CIA director, has been adamant in opposing President Obama's policy of using drone strikes in foreign lands to kill, without due process, terrorist suspects, including in at least two cases, American citizens. He wanted assurance that such strikes against U.S. citizens won't happen within the United States itself.

Attorney General Eric Holder, who has consistently defended the drone attacks, conceded in a letter to Paul last week that the president has no legal authority to kill by drone on U.S. soil, an American citizen who is not engaged in combat against the United States. Paul declared that a victory, though it carried no assurance that Americans not engaged in combat will not be “droned” to death in other lands or killed by other means here at home. Brennan was later confirmed by the full Senate.

Paul jokingly complained that he had been given only 10 minutes to speak at the conference and came prepared with 13 hours of material.

“Don't drone me, bro!” a young man yelled from the crowd. The drones will likely remain a hot issue, not only the use of armed drones for targeted killings, but also the use of unarmed drones for government surveillance.

Whatever “the GOP of old” might think, Sen. Paul's points resonated with the CPAC crowd. His call for eliminating the federal Department of Education, something Republicans began promising in party platforms in 1980, drew wild cheers, but he also drew applause when calling for an end to the jailing of non-violent drug offenders, a policy long favored by the old GOP veterans of the Nixon and Reagan eras.

“Our party is encumbered by an inconsistent approach to freedom,” Paul said. “The new GOP will need to embrace liberty in both the economic and the personal sphere.”

A [report](#) on Salon.com noted that the enthusiastic reception for Paul and his non-interventionist stance in foreign policy contrasted with the heckling aimed at previous CPAC speakers who pitched the line of America on the march, spreading what President George W. Bush called “the freedom agenda” or a “global democratic revolution.” Two years ago, for example, former Vice President Dick Cheney drew barbs from the supporters of the Pauls — Sen. Rand and his father, the former Texas congressman and presidential candidate. By contrast, Salon noted, Sen. Paul Thursday drew “only love from the crowd.”



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Paul's speech was also different in style and tone from that of another Tea Party favorite, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, who was on stage immediately before Paul. Both men appear to be considering White House bids in 2016 and Rubio, up from sunny Florida, spoke in more optimistic terms, not making a contrast between old and new conservatives and/or libertarians, but praising the party in general.

"The Republican Party has to change," Paul said. It especially needs to appeal to young people by expanding its conception of limited government beyond taxes and regulation to things like drug policy, technology, and civil liberties, he explained, because the "Facebook generation" is the "core of the 'leave me alone' coalition."

Reflecting the temper as well as the jargon of a younger generation of conservatives and libertarians who do not rely on the established old-line media for their news and views, the Kentucky senator said members of "the Facebook generation" are looking for leaders who "won't feed them a line of crap." Drawing on the popularity of the "Stand with Rand" slogan used to support his filibuster against Brennan, Paul said, "I will ask anyone who values liberty to stand with me."

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul at CPAC: AP Images



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