



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on August 12, 2011

## **GOP Presidential Candidate Rick Santorum**

Born in 1958, he early became known as feisty and opinionated. In high school, he earned the nickname “Rooster,” in part because of hair that refused to stay combed, and in part because “he was dogged and determined like a rooster and never backed down,” according to an online June 2006 write-up by *U.S. News & World Report*.



Santorum got his first taste of politics as a junior at Penn State University, where he volunteered for Republican Senator John Heinz’s campaign in order to fulfill a requirement for a political science course.

After completing his B.A. in political science at Penn State, Santorum went on to earn an M.B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1981 and a J.D. from the Dickinson School of Law five years later. He became a member of the Pennsylvania Bar and attracted some attention in the legal community for his defense of the World Wrestling Federation, arguing that, because pro wrestling was entertainment, not sport, the organization should be exempt from federal anti-doping laws.

Rick Santorum married Karen Garver, and the two have seven children.

In 1990, at the fairly precocious age of 32, Santorum was elected to the first of two terms as a U.S. Representative from Pennsylvania’s 18th District, defeating a heavily favored seven-term Democratic incumbent. In the House, Santorum was one of seven Representatives (the so-called “Gang of Seven”) who helped bring to light in 1992 the House banking scandal, in which it was disclosed that the informal bank run for the benefit of House members allowed Representatives to run up overdrafts without charging any penalties. The long list of mostly Democratic Congressmen involved in writing rubber checks disgusted the voting public and was a major factor in the political sea change that led to the stunning Republican takeover of the House in 1994.

In 1994, he was elected to the first of two terms in the Senate. Santorum served in the Senate until 2006, when he was ousted by Democrat Bob Casey, Jr.

During his two terms in the Senate, Santorum served as Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, and on three committees — Agriculture; Finance; and Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Rick Santorum has never minced words with his political opponents. In a blistering rebuttal to a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* op-ed piece calling Santorum “Pennsylvania’s own nonresident peddler of nontruths,” accusing him of characterizing all Muslim countries as fascist, and alleging that he had branded as “traitors” those who opposed the Iraq War, the Senate firebrand set the record straight with the blunt rhetoric that has become his political stock in trade:

The editorial writers seem to believe that criticism of any Muslim is a criticism of Islam itself, a gross and dangerous oversimplification.... For my part, I have taken great care to distinguish between the Islamic fascists who are trying to destroy us (and dominate and oppress their fellow



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on August 12, 2011

---

Muslims) and the hundreds of millions of Muslims who wish to be free to follow the guidance of their own good judgment.

... I have never claimed that someone who believes we must pull our troops out of Iraq is a “traitor who does not really love freedom.” I disagree with the advocates of “cut and run,” but I think they are wrong, not traitorous.... I am engaged in an honest debate, while the editorial writers are conducting a smear campaign based on distortions of my words.

A strong supporter of the Iraq War — which was initiated without a constitutionally mandated declaration of war against a country that had never attacked the United States — Santorum was also publicly at odds with those who, like Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, favored diplomatic engagement with regimes like Syria and Iran.

As a Senator, Santorum was also outspoken on issues related to morality and family values. He earned liberal brickbats for daring to criticize homosexuality in polite company. In a 2003 interview with an incredulous *USA Today* reporter, Santorum defended anti-sodomy laws:

Every society in the history of man has upheld the institution of marriage as a bond between a man and a woman.... In every society, the definition of marriage has not ever to my knowledge included homosexuality.

Interestingly, Santorum stopped short of criticizing homosexuality as a lifestyle, claiming he had “nothing, absolutely nothing” against anyone with a homosexual orientation, and that his beef was not with homosexuality per se but with homosexual acts.

Santorum has also been a vocal opponent of amnesty for, or any kind of government assistance to, illegal aliens, and has advocated strengthening barriers along our southern border. He also favors making English the official national language of the United States.

Rick Santorum has become one of the most outspoken proponents of so-called “compassionate conservatism,” which, in a November 2005 editorial for Townhall.com, he described as follows:

There are four cornerstones to Compassionate Conservatism. First, Compassionate Conservatism is founded on the family because the family is the foundation of a healthy civil society.... Second, Compassionate Conservatism believes in the transformative power of faith and the integral role of charities, houses of worship, and other civil institutions. If government is to be effective, these institutions must be respected and nurtured rather than overpowered or effectively controlled by government.... Third, Compassionate Conservatism is founded on an inviolable belief in humanity’s inherent dignity. Respecting the sanctity of each life means that abortion, which ends life at its beginning, and euthanasia, which ends life before it reaches its natural end, undermine human dignity.... Fourth, Compassionate Conservatism targets the poor and hurting for help, whether they are across the street or across an ocean. To this end, Senate Republicans have developed a domestic anti-poverty agenda, which respects the critical roles of work, investment and neighborhoods in empowering families in need.

In practice, compassionate conservatism is less about respecting constitutional limits on federal government power than about harnessing that power to achieve ends desirable to family values-oriented conservatism. On the subject of foreign aid, for example — a constitutionally illegitimate government program if ever there was one — Santorum had this to say, in the same Townhall.com manifesto: “We need to embrace the challenge to dedicate a larger percentage of our GDP to foreign aid, while encouraging more international trade with developing countries.”



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on August 12, 2011

---

Santorum also implied that, far from repudiating Big Government, “compassionate conservatism” looked merely toward redirecting its energies:

We are going to have to look at everything from pork, to entitlements, and be decisive about changing the role of government in our lives. That effort includes not only cutting old, tired programs, but also advancing new initiatives like the CARE Act, a bold package of expanded charitable-giving incentives that supports faith-based and community organizations.

Rick Santorum announced his candidacy for the presidency on June 6, 2011. Measured by a “conservative” yardstick, Santorum’s voting record in the Senate frequently belied any conservative rhetoric. In the second half of 2005 alone, for example, Santorum voted for \$31.8 billion in foreign aid appropriations, for \$7.7 billion for the EPA, and for \$100.7 billion for the Agriculture Department and the FDA, including \$40.7 billion for the Food Stamp program and \$25.7 billion for farm subsidies. During this period, Senator Santorum also voted to raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.25.

— *Photo: AP Images*



## Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,  
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



**Subscribe**

### What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.