



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 30, 2011

How Much Is Rick Perry Like George W. Bush?

Along those lines, Politico [asked](#), “Is Rick Perry Dumb?”

There is something about Rick Perry and the manner in which he attempts to exude populism while embracing one after the other of the neo-con, Republican establishment articles of faith that make Politico’s question not nearly as daft as it may at first sound.

The article in Politico opens with a very quick survey of Governor Perry’s past problems with being regarded as a deep thinker:



Doubts about Perry’s intellect have hounded him since he was first elected as a state legislator nearly three decades ago. In Austin, he’s been derided as a right-place, right-time pol who looks the part but isn’t so deep — “Gov. Goodhair.”

“He’s like Bush only without the brains,” cracked one former Republican governor who knows Perry, repeating a joke that has made the rounds.??

As was the case with another Texas Governor who struggled to tamp down rumors of his intellectual inferiority, Rick Perry’s people reject the idea that their man isn’t smart enough for the job. They, as did the Bush supporters before them, chalk all the chatter up to “political bias and sour grapes.”

As for now, Perry pokes fun at himself and at the indictment of idiocy handed down by pundits, but the time may well come that those seeds of doubt, fertilized by his own questionable record as Governor, may blossom into full-blown trees of skepticism on the part of the national electorate.

While there is no escaping his record and the assumptions made based on it, there is room to wonder if Perry really is as ignorant as the punchlines paint him to be.

A couple of things pointed out in the Politico piece suggest that while Perry may not be a scholar of political science, he is an able politician. First, Perry has never lost an election — an impressive feat considering he was first elected to the Texas House of Representatives almost 30 years ago (as a Democrat). While serving in the House, Perry [voted](#) for a \$5.7 billion tax increase and he [campaigned](#) for Al Gore in 1988.

The second notable fact about Perry’s political acumen is that he is the longest-serving Governor in Texas history, having been first elected to that office in 2002 (he began serving as Governor in late 2000 after then-Governor George W. Bush resigned to focus on his presidential campaign).

However, observers know that being politically savvy and a successful campaigner does not qualify one to be President. There are heady matters to be analyzed and decided in the Oval Office and rousing stump speeches and a firm handshake just won’t suffice.

Politico summed up Rick Perry’s study habits this way:

He is not an ideas man. Perry hasn’t spent his political career marking up the latest Cato or



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Heritage white papers or reading policy-heavy books late into the night. Advisers and colleagues have informed much of his thinking over the years.?? Could any description be more familiar sounding than that? Rick Perry, in both attitude and aptitude, appears to be the George W. Bush for 2012.

But his allies are not deterred. They insist that it's not that Perry can't understand the principles of freedom and the men who elucidated them, it's just that he doesn't want to.

Said Texas lobbyist and Perry pal Bill Miller: "If he [Perry] should know about John Locke, he'll know about John Locke," Miller said. "If it's not on his schedule, it's irrelevant to him."

However, constitutionalists point out that the United States is founded upon several Lockean principles of liberty. As this reporter once wrote regarding the relationship between John Locke and the founding documents of this nation:

Long ago scholars identified the arches and loops of John Locke's fingerprints on the writings of James Madison. Evidence of this influence is often noted in Madison's espousal of Lockean liberalism in the arguments set forth in the *Federalist*, particularly *Federalist*, No. 51. That Madison benefited from Locke's analysis of the machine of government and its relationship to the virtue of a people is indisputable.

Perhaps the Governor would be wise to pick up a used copy of Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* and bone up a little before swearing to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Policy-wise, Rick Perry is finding himself to be a short dog in tall cotton. One example is provided by Politico:?? And that showed during an interview last week with Laura Ingraham, in which he responded to a question about whether a rising China is good for the United States with platitudes that prompted the conservative talk show host to complain that he was only offering "broad generalities."

Reportedly, Perry is "currently reading Henry Kissinger's recent China book — *On China*." So Perry, the darling of Tea Party nation, is turning to a tome authored by the Nestor of globalism Henry Kissinger as his foreign policy primer. Add to the revelation of Perry's reading list the fact that a spokesman for the Perry 2012 campaign called his boss "an avid reader" and one has what may be an example of what Shakespeare meant when he wrote: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks."

Criticism from the cynics in the national mainstream media is one thing, but the opinion of longtime Lone Star State journalists likely reveals much about the Rick Perry that exists below the hair spray and the drawl.

"In terms of sheer brains and understanding policy at a deep level, he'd rank pretty low," said David McNeely, a political columnist that has covered Austin since the days after the Kennedy assassination. "But as far as power politics and control, he's the most powerful Texas governor in history," McNeely continued.?? Another politico who remembers Perry from his days in the Texas state legislature remarked, "He [Perry] was not known as a particularly bright guy. But he was really charming and clearly a political talent.?"

Where, then, did a young Rick Perry turn to to fill the gap in his policy proficiency? A very familiar face. Combined with strategy advice from Karl Rove, his first top political advisor, and then Dave Carney, his current guru, Perry has been well-served over the years — as he's acknowledged.?? "If Karl Rove hadn't been my consultant, I would not have been agriculture commissioner today," Perry told the *Dallas*



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Morning News in 1994, adding: “My brain is like a chicken pot pie. His is like a refrigerator that is all very organized — pickles here, salad there.”

To extend the gastronomical metaphor, it seems that from soup to nuts, Rick Perry is a political and intellectual clone of George W. Bush, and given his dedication to prolonging the “War on Terror” begun by the latter, there is little doubt that the United States under President Perry would be involved in foreign entanglements for at least four more years.?

Photo of Rick Perry: AP Images



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