



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 15, 2008

McCain: Maverick?

What a difference a few weeks can make! In the blink of an eye, politically speaking, Sen. John McCain has gone from pariah to darling among much of the indispensable conservative base of the Republican Party. Early in the GOP primaries, McCain was an object of scorn, competing with Rudi Giuliani as favorite target of the Republican right.

Right up to the Republican convention in St. Paul in September, some of the most visible and vocal conservative leaders were still tepid at best toward McCain, or were still vowing to sit out the election in protest. McCain's long record of crossing the aisle to cosponsor big-government, liberal-left legislation with Democrats like Teddy Kennedy, Hillary Clinton, Joe Lieberman, and Russ Feingold had understandably alienated him from most of the party faithful. His antagonism toward the religious right had not helped either. His reference during his 2000 presidential run to the Rev. Jerry Falwell and other social conservatives as "agents of intolerance" played well with the liberal media, RINOs (Republicans In Name Only), and the homosexual set at the Log Cabin Club, but cost him dearly among mainstream voters, as he later admitted.



Conservative pundits and commentators kept the airwaves and the blogosphere roiling with anti-McCain invective. "McCain will kill conservatism as a dominant force in the Republican Party," Rush Limbaugh declared on his radio show on January 11 of this year, during one of his many rants against the Arizona senator.

"If he's our candidate, then Hillary is going to be our girl, because she's more conservative than he is," threatened Ann Coulter on Fox's *Hannity and Colmes*. "I think she would be stronger on the war on terrorism," Coulter opined. "John McCain is not only bad for Republicanism, which he definitely is — he is bad for the country," she said.

Sean Hannity, an early booster of Rudi Giuliani, repeatedly blistered McCain on his radio and TV programs as beyond the pale. "There is clearly an effort [by the media] underway, I think, to convince us, the voters, to go for either, say John McCain or Mike Huckabee," Hannity declared in January. "If you ask me who are the two more liberal candidates in the Republican primary, I would say, it's John



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McCain and Mike Huckabee."

"McCain is not only not conservative enough; he also has built a reputation as a maverick by stabbing his party in the back — not in furtherance of conservative principles but by betraying them," wrote David Limbaugh, Rush's younger brother and a columnist for Newsmax.com and Townhall.com.

"McCain delights in sticking it to his colleagues while winning accolades from the mainstream liberal media," said David Limbaugh.

Similar condemnations were standard fare in most conservative circles. Perhaps McCain's most damaging critic was Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family ministries. Through his huge daily radio audience, the Family Research Council (his policy think tank and citizen activist arm), and his programs in numerous churches, Dobson exercises enormous influence, not only among his main base of Evangelical Christians, but also among conservative Catholics and Mormons.

Unlike the aforementioned McCain detractors, who are famous for partisan wrangling, nasty personal attacks, and high-decibel bloviation, Dobson is widely respected not only for holding to strong moral and political stands, but doing so in a low-key, high-minded, civil manner. Dobson felt so strongly about McCain's unsuitability that he took the unprecedented step of announcing his opposition in the Republican primaries. "Speaking as a private individual, I would not vote for John McCain under any circumstances," he said in 2007.

With exit polls from the early voting states showing McCain consistently losing among those who identified themselves as conservatives, the "maverick" and his advisers decided it was high time to start a serious wooing campaign. After having stiffed the annual Conservative Political Action Convention (CPAC) in previous years, McCain begged his way into the February 2008 gathering in Washington, D.C. A chastened McCain claimed that he had heard the conservative opposition loud and clear and would be changing his ways. On immigration, for instance, he pledged to secure our borders first, before any efforts aimed at securing a "pathway to citizenship," his way of describing amnesty for illegal aliens. Even so, he was coldly received, and subjected to boos and catcalls.

Likewise, his appearance at the closed meeting of the Council for National Policy (CNP) meeting in March failed to ignite this inner sanctum of high-level conservative GOP donors and activist movers and shakers. In fact, says former Senator Rick Santorum, who attended the CNP confab in New Orleans, McCain's performance was "cold water and no fire."

Even after McCain scored wins in Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont on March 4 and hit the magic number of 1,191 delegates to nail down the nomination, many of his conservative critics continued to blast him and insist they could not support him in the general election. One by one, however, they have come over to Team McCain. And not just tepidly, mind you. Many of his erstwhile implacable foes now ardently embrace him as a "genuine conservative."

How to explain the neck-snapping 180-degree turnabout? Well, a big part of it, no doubt, can be explained in two simple words: "Obama" and "Palin."

Fear & Loathing, Hope & Love

"I think that Obama and Hillary are the great uniters of the right," said former Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich, a Republican, back in March. "If you look at their views and you are right-leaning, enough said. Fear works just as well as love in politics. Fear and loathing? Absolutely." Ehrlich is no rock-ribbed conservative himself; during his four terms in Congress — before moving up to the governor's mansion — he regularly hovered just below the 50th percentile on this magazine's "Conservative Index" (now the



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"Freedom Index"). Prior to signing on as McCain's Maryland campaign chairman, he had served as Atlantic states coordinator for Giuliani's primary campaign.

Nevertheless, the Obama-Hillary "fear and loathing" strategy worked in convincing some conservatives to once again hold their noses and opt for McCain as the lesser of two evils. McCain operatives like Charles R. "Charlie" Black, Jr. began systematically targeting the GOP shepherds in order to corral the sheep. "You have to go get the conservative leaders who have a following, one at a time. [McCain] has been doing this for several months, and he has some very prominent conservatives on board now," Black told Newsmax.com reporter Kenneth Timmerman back in March.

Black heads up Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healey, one of the most powerful of Washington, D.C.'s notorious K Street lobbying firms, which boasts such clients as Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress. Black directed a coterie of persuaders: Senator Lindsay Graham, former Senators Phil Gramm and Bob Dole, former Rep. Jack Kemp, former drug czar William Bennett, tax activist Grover Norquist, and Dr. Richard D. Land, President Bush's key supporter in the hierarchy of the Southern Baptist Convention. Their job was to win influential conservatives to the McCain camp, and they did the job well.

However, fear and loathing couldn't quite get the job done; what was desperately needed was something to really motivate conservatives to be loyal foot soldiers in the campaign. McCain's "come to Jesus" epiphany and his sudden and unconvincing use of references to God and "the Savior" smacked too much of hypocrisy for one accustomed to preying rather than praying. Besides, even after ardently courting pro-life Christians, getting the endorsement of televangelist John Hagee, and performing on cue at Pastor Rick Warren's televised church "debate" with Obama, McCain's consultants and advisers were revealing their candidate's real intentions by constantly polling conservative leaders to see if they would stay on board McCain's "Straight Talk Express" if he picked a pro-abortion VP running mate like former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, Senator Joe Lieberman, or former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney.

Finally, just before the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, the McCain strategists settled on a plan not only to bring the conservative, pro-life, pro-family constituency on board, but also to energize and excite them. CNP leaders were flown to a secret meeting in St. Paul to meet a little-known Alaskan governor that few of them had even heard of — Sarah Palin. In Palin, an attractive, feisty, telegenic chief executive with solid Christian and pro-life bona fides, the dissatisfied and distrustful conservatives finally found a soul mate with whom they could connect — and one in whom they truly could believe.

Dobson, who had emphatically slammed the door on a McCain ticket, suddenly had a change of heart and mind. He called Palin "an outstanding choice that should be extremely reassuring to the conservative base" of the GOP. Among other things, McCain's Palin pick "gives us confidence he will keep his pledges to voters regarding the kinds of justices he would nominate to the Supreme Court," said Dobson. Dr. Mathew Staver, dean of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University School of Law, agreed completely. "It's an absolutely brilliant choice," Staver said. "This will absolutely energize McCain's campaign and energize conservatives."

The Palin choice was brilliant indeed, and undoubtedly succeeded in energizing the GOP conservative base far beyond the wildest expectations of the McCain strategists. They desperately needed a major boost. Barack Obama had just delivered a messianic performance at the Democratic convention in Denver that had riveted the eyes of much of the nation to their television screens and left the 84,000 faithful at Mile High Stadium swooning in ecstasy. There was no way McCain could match Obama's



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oratorical brilliance or inspire his own party's base the way Obama had stirred his.

However, what McCain lacked in freshness, fervor, ideological purity, and celebrity aura, Sarah Palin, the ultimate surprise candidate, delivered — and then some! The moose-hunting, gun-slinging, straight-shooting, Alaskan hockey mom/beauty queen wowed the lovelorn conventioners as well as many of the nearly 40 million viewers who tuned in to her acceptance speech. She definitely was no Washington, D.C., insider; she was cut from totally different cloth than anything else out there. Her national debut presented a VP candidate who was the pluperfect combination of feminine grit, grace, guts, and glamour. The ignored and abused GOP conservative base was instantly love-struck.

McCain rallies that previously had struggled to turn out a few hundred supporters suddenly had thousands, many of whom sported signs reading Palin-McCain rather than McCain-Palin. But the fact remains that it is McCain who is at the top of the ticket, and it is he, not Palin, who will be deciding policy and calling the shots. Conservatives who are head over heels for Palin need to ask themselves what McCain's decision to tap her really means in *substance*. Does it really mean, as many are saying, that McCain and the party leadership have finally seen the light? Unfortunately, no; it simply means they've felt the heat — and have done the minimum necessary to keep from getting burned. While a McCain pick of Lieberman, Ridge, or Romney could be taken as a trustworthy indicator that McCain would continue pursuing the same liberal policies that had already alienated him from the party's base, the Palin pick is *not* an indication that he will reverse his past record. Instead, it more likely indicates that he has made a pragmatic decision to please the worker bees and voters he needs to get elected. And, as we will show, there are plenty of indicators that he intends to revert to form.

Bipartisan "Maverick" Record

In 1982, when the seat representing Arizona's First Congressional District became open, McCain entered the Republican primary, which he won, and he was elected to the seat in the general election. He served in the House of Representatives for four years, and using this magazine's "Conservative Index" (now the "Freedom Index") as a yardstick, received mediocre scores over the years, usually landing in the 50th to 70th percentiles. For a state with a constituency as naturally conservative as Arizona's, McCain's voting record was undistinguished, at best.

In 1986, when Senator Barry Goldwater announced his intention to retire from the Senate, Rep. McCain decided to throw his hat into the ring to win the conservative icon's seat. From the moment he announced his candidacy, McCain was deemed by a research firm to be a four-to-one favorite to win the seat, his popularity bolstered considerably by his status as a Vietnam War veteran and former POW.

Elected to the Senate, McCain joined that body's freshman class when it convened in 1987. He has held that seat ever since. His "Conservative Index"/"Freedom Index" scores over the years have continued to be unimpressive, with his cumulative score for the latest (110th) Congress dropping to an anemic 36 percent. In contrast, McCain's Arizona colleague, Jon Kyl, who answers to the same constituency, received a score of 70 percent.

John McCain's Senate career is perhaps best exemplified by several pieces of legislation he cosponsored that cemented his reputation as a maverick who bucked his own party. These include:

- **McCain-Lieberman (Climate Change):** These were not one, but three pieces of legislation, introduced by McCain and Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman (formerly a Democrat, now Independent), along with other cosponsors, between 2003 and 2007. These bills, which would have amounted to piecemeal implementation of the economy-killing United Nations Kyoto Protocol treaty,



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were based on a so-called "cap-and-trade" system whereby a government body sets a cap on the amount of greenhouse gasses that a facility can emit. However, entities that do not use all of their allowances can sell (or trade) their unused emissions credits to another company. This process is sometimes referred to as "carbon trading."

Fortunately, all of these bills were defeated. However, while sound science is steadily debunking the wild scenarios used to justify these legislative power grabs, the major left-wing media continue the onslaught of global-warming alarmist propaganda. And thanks to McCain, the left's strategic ally on this issue, more Republican politicians have joined the Gore-Clinton-Obama-Boxer climate-change bandwagon, and we are much closer to seeing destructive legislation enacted that will further harm our nation's energy picture and further cripple our competitiveness, while also greatly assisting the assault on our national sovereignty by the growing UN global regulatory regime.

• **McCain Feingold (Election Finance):** The McCain-Feingold bill "to reform the financing of Federal elections" was introduced in the Senate on January 21, 1997. In addition to John McCain and Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), its cosponsors included such ultra-liberal senators as John Kerry, Barbara Boxer, and Dianne Feinstein.

"If you were a politician and wanted to enact a law forbidding private citizens to criticize you, what would you call it?" asked commentator David Frum in the November 17, 1997 *Weekly Standard*. His answer — "Campaign finance reform" — is entirely accurate. And that is precisely the perilous course on which McCain-Feingold has placed us.

The First Amendment prohibits Congress from making laws abridging the freedom of speech or of the press. The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, which gave the Federal Election Commission unprecedented new powers to regulate political speech before elections, clearly violates this protection.

• **McCain-Kennedy (Immigration):** In May 2005, John McCain joined Democrat Senator Ted Kennedy in introducing the so-called Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act — legislation that, like President Bush's proposal of a year earlier, would grant amnesty to illegal aliens. Title VI of the legislation also facilitates the "anchor baby" phenomenon, whereby illegal immigrants who are parents of babies born in the United States would automatically qualify for green cards in the name of "family unity."

Over the past five decades, Senator Kennedy has been the single most important member of the U.S. Congress pushing revolutionary immigration legislation, beginning with his 1964 immigration law that started our downward slide. That McCain would team up with Kennedy to further erode our immigration policies and border security speaks volumes. So does the fact that the McCain-Kennedy amnesty bill's lineup of avid supporters in the Senate included Democrat Majority Leader Harry Reid, John Kerry, and Barack Obama.

Realizing that his immigration policies had produced a near fatal sting for him, McCain flip-flopped and started claiming he is for "securing the borders first." However, since supposedly seeing the light on this matter, McCain has been caught backsliding repeatedly, as, for instance, when he (like Obama) pandered to the radical Hispanic lobby with his July 2008 speech to the annual convention of La Raza in San Diego. Or his employment (for Hispanic outreach) of Juan Hernandez, the Mexican national and notorious open-borders advocate who was former Mexican president Vicente Fox's "Presidential Office for Mexicans Abroad." Or his continued support (the same as Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama) for greatly expanding the issuance of H1B visas, one of the most fraud-ridden visa programs, which has



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allowed millions of aliens to displace American white-collar, professional workers.

Unfortunately, these bills we've just mentioned are emblematic of McCain's larger legislative oeuvre. As the *Washington Times* reported on September 15, 2008, "since 2005, Mr. McCain has led as chief sponsor of 82 bills, on which he had 120 Democratic co-sponsors out of 220 total, for an average of 55 percent. He worked with Democrats on 50 of his bills, and of those, 37 times Democrats outnumber Republicans as co-sponsors."

Yet, incredibly, many "conservatives" have now adopted the position that McCain's "working across the aisle" is a great virtue, rather than a vice. This, they claim, is one of his great advantages over Barack Obama! But they will search in vain for examples of his bipartisanship that *reduced* the size, scope, and cost of government. His latest adventure in this area has been to endorse (along with Obama) the bipartisan (and unconstitutional) multi-billion dollar Kennedy-Hatch plan for national service.

More McCain Record

The closer one looks at John McCain's record, the more obvious it becomes that his selection of Governor Palin by no means indicates any likelihood of reversing an entire career of moving leftward. Here are some additional key markers:

- **NAFTA and Beyond:** When it comes to international trade agreements, McCain has been a solid supporter of NAFTA and other proposals often touted by the neoconservative wing of the Republican party as "free trade," but which are, in effect, *managed trade* governed by sovereignty-threatening regional and global entities that spew out never-ending rules and regulations.

McCain supports extending the NAFTA concept to all of the Americas. As a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, he contributed his viewpoint in a November/December 2007 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the council's journal, in which he proposed using the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) to "move the process of completing a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) forward." McCain also expressed support in *Foreign Affairs* for "creating a transatlantic common market tying our economies more closely together" with the European Union, and even establishing "a worldwide League of Democracies" because the American military is serving with international forces, and "these troops are not all part of a common structure."

- **The Iraq War:** The statements at McCain's campaign website confirm the candidate's position as a steadfast supporter of the U.S. invasion and military occupation of Iraq. They also verify that, in McCain's view, the U.S. presence may (and should) continue indefinitely (at least for the next 50-100 years, as he famously declared in February 2008). They read, in part: "John McCain believes it is strategically and morally essential for the United States to support the Government of Iraq to become capable of governing itself and safeguarding its people. He strongly disagrees with those who advocate withdrawing American troops before that has occurred."

Ironically, McCain cites one reason for staying the present course: "Iraq must not become a failed state, a haven for terrorists, or a pawn of Iran." Contrary to what this statement implies, the successive governments that have ruled Iraq with American support since the U.S.-led invasion have been virtually subsidiaries of the Iranian regime. The political base of the Iraqi head of state is the Dawa Party, which is sponsored by Iran. In fact, the party was based in Iran during the rule of Saddam Hussein. Consider that back in 2005, about two weeks after President Bush asserted, "We're helping Iraqis build a free nation that is an ally in the war on terror," then-Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari (in Iraq's Transitional Government from 2005 to 2006) made a pilgrimage to Iran, where he laid a wreath at a



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shrine to the late anti-American despot, Ayatollah Khomeini,

Al-Jaafari's successor, Nouri al-Maliki, spent part of his exile during Saddam Hussein's rule living in Iran. On August 8, 2007, al-Maliki met in Tehran with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other top Iranian officials. After the meetings, al-Maliki told the press that Iraq and Iran "have a joint understanding that they are keen to solve the problems and sufferings of the Iraqi people. And they are both convinced that their cooperation may lead to helping Iraq and restoring stability."

• **Judicial Appointments:** The McCain website describes McCain's view as a "Strict Constructionist Philosophy," a philosophy welcomed by constitutionalists tired of judicial activism. The campaign states: "John McCain believes that one of the greatest threats to our liberty and the Constitutional framework that safeguards our freedoms are willful judges who usurp the role of the people and their representatives and legislate from the bench. As President, John McCain will nominate judges who understand that their role is to faithfully apply the law as written, not impose their opinions through judicial fiat."

But veterans of the political scene know that presidents have not always delivered on their campaign rhetoric. In fact, some of the most "liberal" Supreme Court Justices have been nominated by Republican presidents. When asked during his televised interview with Pastor Rick Warren at the Saddleback Church which currently sitting Supreme Court justices he would not have nominated, Senator McCain named Justices Ginsburg, Breyer, Souter, and Stevens — liberal-left activists all. Unfortunately for the viewers, Pastor Warren neglected to point out that *McCain voted to confirm* Ginsburg, Breyer, and Souter. (Stevens became a Supreme Court justice prior to McCain becoming a senator.)

• **Sanctity of Life:** The McCain campaign website asserts that "*Roe v. Wade* is a flawed decision that must be overturned, and as president he will nominate judges who understand that courts should not be in the business of legislating from the bench." It must be recalled, however, that in 1999, McCain told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that "certainly in the short term, or even in the long term, I would not support repeal of *Roe vs. Wade*, which would then force women in America to [undergo] illegal and dangerous operations."

When it comes to stem-cell research, McCain's campaign claims the candidate is opposed to the embryonic variety, with such statements as: "John McCain opposes the intentional creation of human embryos for research purposes. However, John McCain parted company with virtually all pro-life people when on April 11, 2007 he voted "Yea" on S. 5, a bill introduced by Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) to overturn the 2001 ban on federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research.

• **Protecting Second Amendment Rights:** "John McCain believes that the right of law abiding citizens to keep and bear arms is a fundamental, individual Constitutional right that we have a sacred duty to protect," states his website. His positions seem to confirm that statement, as he has opposed gun manufacturer liability for crimes committed with guns, restrictions on so-called "assault rifles," bans on the importation of high capacity magazines, "waiting periods" for law abiding citizens' purchase of firearms, and the confiscation of firearms from private citizens during times of crisis or emergency, and has supported lifting the District of Columbia's gun ban but because of legislation McCain voted for or advocated such as a bill that would make running a gun show so risky that no one would dare put one on. Gun Owners of America gave McCain a rating of "F" in 2006.

• **United Nations, Internationalism:** John McCain is an internationalist who supports expanding UN powers. In addition to the already-mentioned support for a global climate regimen, he has urged Senate



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approval of the UN's Law of the Sea Treaty, though he has also said he would consider objections to it. And he has expressed support for U.S. participation in the International Criminal Court, which would subject American citizens to a foreign judiciary, stating in 2005: "I want us in the ICC, but I'm not satisfied that there are enough safeguards." Of course, without the United States coming on board, no safeguards would be needed.

He also supports regional trade arrangements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which undermines U.S. sovereignty by transferring the regulation trade policies to a supranational regulatory authority — an embryonic regional government. He voted for the agreement creating NAFTA in 1993, and in 2005, he voted to extend the NAFTA concept via a new Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

As mentioned previously, Senator McCain is a long-standing member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the organization of one-world elitists that the *Washington Post's* Richard Harwood has called America's "ruling establishment," and *The New Yorker's* Richard Rovere (a CFR member) has referred to as the "Presidium ... that guides our destiny as a nation." McCain's CFR policy advisers include Henry Kissinger, Warren Rudman, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Chuck Larson, Ken Duberstein, and Lynn Forester de Rothschild.

Lady de Rothschild, wife of the fabulously wealthy banking scion Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, was formerly a backer of Hillary Clinton (whose husband, Bill, is a CFR member). McCain and the Rothschilds are also members of that very elite and secretive globalist club, the Bilderbergers. The husband-wife de Rothschild team are major stock owners of the very influential journal *The Economist*, which has run a complimentary cover story on McCain ("Bring Back the Real McCain") and then used that issue's cover picture as a McCain promotional for *The Economist's* ubiquitous Internet pop-up ads. *The Economist* likes McCain but wants him to stop being "so polite to the religious right" and to cut the "talk about religion and abortion."

Certainly one of the most telling things about Senator McCain was his endorsement by the CFR-stacked *New York Times* in the Republican primaries. As the media flagship of the liberal left and the CFR ruling elites, that should send a strong signal that despite his more recent conservative rhetoric they are counting on John McCain to continue on the same leftward course he has charted in the past.

For information about Senator McCain's record on the POW issue, see ["POWs: Forgetting Those Left Behind."](#)

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