



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 10, 2014

Paul Wins CPAC Poll, Says Privacy is the Issue for Republicans

The day after he won the Conservative Political Action Conference straw poll of potential GOP presidential candidates, with a 3-1 lead over his nearest rival, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul (shown) said a clear focus on the issue of privacy in the midst of America's growing surveillance state is necessary if the Republican Party is going to grow and win elections again.

"It's a message that can grow the party, and the party's got to grow bigger or we're not going to win again," Paul said on *Fox News Sunday*. At last week's CPAC conference, which was held outside of Washington, D.C., in National Harbor, Maryland, from Thursday through Saturday, Paul in his Friday speech took aim at the surveillance programs of the National Security Agency, insisting that such a massive daily collection of billions of phone call records and electronic communications from millions of Americans cannot possibly meet the search requirements of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution with its mandate that warrants issue only on probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation and "particularly describing the place to be searched and the persons or thing to be seized." Former Virginia attorney general and governor James Gilmore disagreed, arguing during a panel discussion that the counterterrorism officials need the information they are collecting so that when a suspected terrorist is discovered they can go back into the records to see with whom the suspect has been communicating.



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But Paul's position appears to be resonating with the public, especially young voters. President Barack Obama won 60 percent support among voters younger than 30 in the 2012 elections, according to a national exit poll, and those numbers have to improve for Republicans if the party is going to have a



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future, Paul said. While positions on taxation and spending have been long debated and the liberal and conservative positions solidified, an appeal by Republicans to young voters on civil liberties issues has the potential to break new ground, since most young voters value their privacy, are generally suspicious of government and have not formed permanent affiliations with either major party. There is the potential for Republicans to seize the high ground on these issues, since Democrats have been mostly silent about them since Obama has been in office.

“Young people across the country are fed up with a government that says, ‘Hey, the Fourth Amendment doesn’t apply to your records, doesn’t apply to your cellphone,’” Paul said on the Fox program. Paul, 51, is trying to build on the network of libertarian-leaning supporters that his father, former Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, amassed during his 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns. The younger Paul has taken positions on civil liberties, criminal justice, and foreign policy that differ from Republican orthodoxy, including his opposition to the NSA spy programs and to President Obama’s use of drone attacks to single out individuals for execution. Paul made clear during his speech at the conference that his primary loyalty is to the Constitution and the principles of liberty, not the political party.

“It may sound like I’m calling for the election of Republicans. I am not,” he said. “I’m calling for the election of lovers of liberty.”

It was the second year in a row that Paul won the CPAC straw poll, following two consecutive years in which his father Ron Paul walked away with the proverbial blue ribbon. In this year’s voting, Paul’s 33 percent of the vote left the rest of the Republican field swimming in his wake. Runner-up Ted Cruz, a freshman senator from Texas, noted for his efforts in the Democratic Senate to defund ObamaCare, was a distant second with eight percent. Ben Carson, a neurosurgeon who’s amassed a grassroots following, was third with nine percent. Gov. Chris Christie (R-N.J.), who addressed the crowd this year after not being invited in 2012, was fourth with eight percent support.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio experienced a steep fall from grace, seeing his 23 percent last year shrink to a mere six percent this time. Rubio’s decline was likely the result of his embrace of comprehensive immigration reform, a sore point with many of the conference attendees. Conservative columnist and right-wing firebrand Ann Coulter was among the clearest of the speakers at the conference in opposing the proposed “path to citizenship” for those who are here illegally, a path she described as suicidal for the GOP, given that most newcomers tend to vote Democratic. Those who suffer most from the competition in the job market are mostly low wage, unskilled workers who cross the border illegally, Coulter said, or those at or near the bottom of the economic ladder, including a disproportionate number of immigrants already here legally. At the upper end of the scale, a high corporate tax and excessive regulations have driven many native-born American business and professional people to move their enterprises offshore, Coulter said, while ObamaCare will accelerate that trend among medical professionals.

“You won’t be able to get an English-speaking doctor who went to an American medical school, unless you leave the country,” she predicted. Republicans have run poorly among Hispanic and black voters in recent elections.

A veteran Democratic pollster and now a Fox News commentator, Pat Caddell suggested Republican House members were not serious in calling for an investigation of the September 2012 attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya, in which four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens, were killed. Caddell said the 180 Republicans in the House who have called for an investigation could force the hands of Speaker John Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor to schedule hearings to



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determined what happened and why. If they continued to refuse, he said, the petitioners could tell them to do it “or you’re gone tomorrow.”

Carly Fiorino, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and unsuccessful candidate against California Sen. Barbara Boxer in 2012, lashed out at federal officials for diverting water needed by farmers in drought-stricken northern California to save the area’s smelt fish. The population of California had doubled in the past 40 years, said Fiorino, the co-chair of CPAC 2014 and chairman of the ACU Fund, the charitable arm of the American Conservative Union. Yet no new reservoirs or waterways for human consumption have been built in that time, she said. As a result, 70 percent of the rainwater falling on the land flows out to sea, she said.

Former Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed [blasted](#) Republicans who “caved” to the homosexual lobby and the mass media in opposing the religious freedom bill in Arizona that would allow private business owners to refuse, on religious grounds, to serve homosexual customers and clients for same-sex weddings. Gov. Jan Brewer, a Republican, vetoed the bill amidst a media frenzy on the issue and requests for a veto by former GOP presidential candidates Arizona Sen. John McCain, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, among others. Reed did not mention anyone by name when he spoke of “profiles in cowardice,” but he urged the conservative audience not follow leaders with spines he likened to *éclairs*.

The CPAC conference has been sponsored annually since 1973 by the American Conservative Union. During an interview with the cable channel C-Span, former ACU president David Keene was asked in a “tweet” from a viewer if the winner of the straw poll had ever become the Republican nominee for president. Keene laughed and said he was sure there had been an instance or two when that happened but he couldn’t think of one offhand. The poll is not scientific, he conceded.

Still, it may be significant that Paul and Cruz finished one-two among the conservative activists, even with the wide gulf in their vote totals. Both are considered likely to pursue the party’s presidential nomination in 2016 and they agree on many controversial issues, including opposition to the administration’s policy of targeting individuals for killing by drone attack. Cruz joined in Paul’s filibuster against confirmation of an Obama nominee until Attorney General Eric Holder conceded the president did not have the authority to launch a drone attack on an American citizen on American soil, even if the individual is suspected of ties to al-Qaeda or other terrorist organizations.

But Paul’s non-interventionist stance in foreign affairs and his willingness to reduce military spending, positions his father popularized during his two runs in the Republican presidential primaries, is at odds with Cruz’s advocacy of a wider commitment to guaranteeing security for the United States and its allies worldwide.

“U.S. leadership is critical in the world,” Cruz said on ABC’s *This Week*, “And I agree with [Paul] that we should be very reluctant to deploy military force abroad, but I think there is a vital role, just as Ronald Reagan did.”

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) speaking at CPAC: AP Images



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