



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 8, 2014

Republican “Cowardice” Ripped at CPAC Conference

Hot-button social issues were stressed by Republican leaders and conservative activists at [Friday’s session of the annual CPAC conference](#), despite concerns of some that such issues will drive away “moderate” voters who might otherwise be attracted to the GOP on economic, national defense, or civil liberties and privacy issues. In marked contrast to the Republican Party of a generation or more ago, Republicans were less vocal about national defense and tax cuts than they were about the laws of God and the protections of the Bill of Rights.



“If this nation forgets our God, then God will have every right to forget us,” Mike Huckabee, former Republican governor of Arkansas and the pastor of a Baptist church told the cheering crowd. “It’s time for government to scale back, not for people of faith to scale back,” said Huckabee, a contender for the party’s presidential nomination in 2008 and a possible entrant in the 2016 primaries.

Former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, whose stand in opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage and other issues of crucial importance to social conservatives earned him runner-up status behind Mitt Romney in the battle for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination, vigorously denounced any effort to play down those issues in order to court the moderate vote. “We’re told we have to put aside what we believe is in the best interests of the country so a Republican candidate can win,” Santorum said. That kind of victory would be “a devastating loss for America,” he said.

The conservative gospel of low taxes and fewer regulations was not neglected, with Texas Gov. Rick Perry comparing red state and blue state governors and noting that states with Republican chief executives, including his own, have increased jobs and average incomes by reducing taxes and regulations.

But evidence that this is not “your father’s GOP” was abundant when Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky (shown above) aimed most of his rhetorical fire at government violations of civil liberties, an issue that used to belong to liberal Democrats when Republicans in the Cold War were promoting loyalty oaths and investigations of persons suspected of communist ties or sympathies. “There’s a great battle going on. It’s for the heart and soul of America,” said Paul, as he brought cheering conservatives to their feet when he recalled his filibuster in the Senate last year to force the administration to admit the president has no power to use drones to kill American citizens on American soil. (During one of the panel discussions at the conference, former assistant Attorney General Bruce Fein noted that the Obama administration had used drones overseas to kill four Americans and that the White House is currently considering killing a fifth American.)

In his remarks, Paul also focused on the National Security Agency collection of phone call records, e-mails, and other electronic messages, noting that such dragnet collections under a single warrant violates the Fourth Amendment requirement that warrants may be issued on probable cause and must identify the particular places to be searched and persons or items to be seized. Quoting John Adams,



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Paul said unlimited searches by agents of the British crown in colonial times led to widespread opposition, led by James Otis, that was the spark for America's war for independence.

Paul also took President Obama to task for signing the National Defense Authorization Act, which includes a provision authorizing the indefinite detention without trial of persons suspected of association with al-Qaeda or other terrorist organizations. He did not mention that most Republicans in Congress voted for the bill, but he did make clear that he was not promoting Republican candidates for the sake of the party label.

"You may think I'm talking about electing Republicans. I'm not," Paul said. "I'm talking about electing lovers of liberty."

Former Christian Coalition executive director Ralph Reed was even more blunt as he turned the focus back on to the issues dear to the "religious right." Reed knocked GOP leaders who "caved" under pressure when the liberal media and the homosexual lobby demanded Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer veto a bill that would have allowed vendors, as a matter of religious conscience, to refuse to take on homosexual customers or clients. The bill's backers said the legislation was necessary to prevent businesses from being sued for refusing to bake cakes or take pictures at same-sex weddings, for example. Brewer did veto the bill after it became a target of national controversy and frequent ridicule. Many in the state feared enactment of the bill would hurt convention and tourist business and could result in the state losing the National Football League's Super Bowl, scheduled to be played in Phoenix next year. The state's two U.S. senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake, were among the Republicans in national office who called for the veto, along with former Massachusetts governor and 2012 presidential nominee Mitt Romney and former U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. Reed mentioned no names, but he pulled no punches, either.

"I have a message for these profiles in cowardice who often display the backbone of a chocolate éclair and cave the minute they're criticized," Reed said. "We're not going to follow lukewarm so-called leaders any more whose god is their ambition, whose idol is power."

That and other shots across the opening of the Republican "big tent" signaled a battle over individual rights and the accommodations to the demands of "diversity" that will likely continue right up to the party's convention and its choice of a presidential nominee in 2016.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images



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