



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 18, 2011

Rick Perry: Tax and Spend Cronyism as Big as Texas

While his appeal to many Tea Partiers is unquestioned (particularly by Perry himself), more than a few discordant notes have sounded in the Tea Party chorus of praise. Some in the anti-tax band of the Tea Party spectrum have begun questioning Perrys anti-tax bona fides in light of his record as Governor of the Lone Star State.

The areas of concern may seem minor in the grander scheme of things, but in the with-us-or-agin climate of Tea Party politics, molehills become mountains, and some of Perrys problems are going to be hard for the candidate to climb over.



The situation is described in the following [story](#) about Perry from Yahoo News:

After all, they say, there are reasons to think he's a spendthrift. He once campaigned for Democrat Al Gore, reviled by the Tea Party for being Bill Clinton's vice president and for his campaigning on climate change, and he even spoke kindly about Hillary Clinton's healthcare reform efforts.

Then there is the issue that he was once a Democrat.

This from one a local Tea Party leader: "They're vetting, they want to know if he is for real," Dallas Tea Party leader Katrina Pierson, said. She added that she has personally addressed concerns bubbling up from several outposts of the Tea Party, including California, Iowa, and New Hampshire.

Given the electoral success of Tea Party voters and their affiliates in the 2010 mid-term election, there is reason for them to hope that the coffers of political currency earned in those elections can be spent replacing President Obama with a more like-minded Republican in 2012.

There is little doubt that Governor Perry is fluent in the language of the Tea Party. He says the right things and to the right people, but there is a percolating fear among many influential members of the disparate Tea Party groups that Perrys record will betray his rhetoric.

Some of Perrys public statements are meant not only to be controversial, but to quell the fears of those conservative movers and shakers who could potentially make or break Perrys showing in early primary elections.

One of the most reported and renounced (by pundits) of Perrys [comments](#) is the one made in April 2009 when he told a fired up crowd of Tea Party faithful that he could envision a time when Texas could secede from the union.

"There's a lot of different scenarios," Perry said. "We've got a great union. There's absolutely no reason to dissolve it. But if Washington continues to thumb their nose at the American people, you know, who knows what might come out of that. But Texas is a very unique place, and we're a pretty independent



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lot to boot.”

Another example of Perrys proficiency in the parlance of the Tea Party is the hard line he took against compromise in the recent debt-ceiling debate. He went on record saying that he doubted the country would default on its financial obligations with or without an increase.

Then there was the statement made in May by Perry to popular evangelist James Robison that spending by the federal government was making slaves of the citizens of America. “I think we are going through these difficult times for a purpose to bring us back to those biblical principles of you don’t spend all the money,” he said.

The songs Perry is singing certainly get Tea Party toes tapping. Problem is, despite the appeal of recent performances, the Texas Governor has hit more than few sour notes during his time in elected office. Particularly painful to the ears of the large bloc of fiscal conservatives that Perry hopes to count on in the primaries are the inconsistencies between Perry’s words and his deeds regarding federal spending and state sovereignty.

It is problematic to those on the Right in money matters that federal dollars accounted for nearly 37 percent of Texas’ spending one of the highest rates in the nation according to data published by RBC Capital Markets.

Perrys personal spending habits have drawn unwanted scrutiny, as well. It is reported that he spent as much as \$10,000 per month of taxpayer money to pay for a luxury rental home while the Texas Governors mansion was being renovated.

Legislatively, Perrys personal initiatives have flopped and have been financially burdensome. First there was the Trans Texas Corridor, a \$150-billion boondoggle that drew the ire of ranchers who complained that the plan paved too much of their land. Then there was an executive order signed by Perry in 2007 (eventually overturned by the state legislature) that would have forced young girls enrolled in Texas public schools to be vaccinated against cervical cancer.

Additionally, there is substantial evidence that Governor Rick Perry is fond of perpetuating the capitalist welfare system by doling out taxpayer money to corporate cronies.

Witness the Texas Emerging Technology Fund. This fund was initiated by Perry in 2005 to serve as a source of seed money for start-up technology companies doing business in Texas.

In the six years since its inception, the fund has committed nearly \$200 million of taxpayer money to fund 133 companies. Perry told a group of CEOs in May that the fund’s “strategic investments are what’s helping us keep groundbreaking innovations in the state.” Unlike other programs sponsored or supported by the Governor, Perrys finger is in every pie as he, along with the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the Texas House, maintains final authority over the disbursement of the funds resources.

So pervasive was Perrys influence on the fund that the *Dallas Morning News* [reported](#) that nearly \$16 million from the Texas Emerging Technology Fund went to firms in which major contributors to Perrys campaign served as either investors or officers, and \$27 million from the Fund has gone to companies founded or advised by six advisory board members. This excessive and self-serving entanglement has not escaped the attention of observers in Texas, especially among fiscal conservatives already riled at Perrys fast and loose manner when it comes to spending taxpayer money.

The facts and the figures align to pose a significant threat to Perrys position on the Right. The *Los Angeles Times* published an excellent and informative [article](#) citing chapter and verse of the Texas



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Governors you scratch my back and Ill scratch yours doctrine.

To date, Rick Perry has received a total of \$37 million over the last decade from just 150 individuals and couples, who are likely to form the backbone of his new effort to win the Republican presidential nomination. The tally represented more than a third of the \$102 million he had raised as governor through December, according to data compiled by the watchdog group Texans for Public Justice.

Nearly half of those mega-donors received hefty business contracts, tax breaks or appointments under Perry, according to a *Los Angeles Times* analysis.

State Representative David Simpson called the incestuous relationship “fundamentally immoral and arrogant. The fund, he continued, opened the door to the appearance of impropriety, if not actual impropriety.”

And there was this statement from Michael Quinn Sullivan, president of Texans for Fiscal Responsibility. “The problem with these kinds of funds is that even when they’re used with the best of intentions, it looks bad. You’re taking from the average taxpayer and giving to someone who has a connection with government officials.”

Equally as problematic as his fondness for cronyism, corporate welfare, and spending other peoples money on government programs is Rick Perrys political pedigree. He began his career in public service as a Democrat. Granted, the Lone Star State was a Democratic stronghold and Perry may very well have been motivated by the same political pragmatism that serves as his polestar today, but there are some in the GOP who will question the loyalty of a man who cannot just pick a side.

There is evidence, however, that Perry was more than a Republican in Democratic clothing. While a member of the Democratic Party, he served as the Texas chairman for Al Gore’s unsuccessful 1988 presidential bid. Then, after converting to the Republican Party, Perry penned a letter in 1993 praising Hillary Clinton for her incipient efforts to socialize the healthcare industry while serving as First Lady. Perry called her attempt most commendable.

As sketched above, the big picture of Perrys political past and present is likely a reliable indication of the future of our Republic were this newly minted media darling to be elected President. Fortunately for constitutionalists, the heat of scrutiny will only increase as the internecine battle for the GOP nomination heads into the primaries.

Photo of Rick Perry: AP Images



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