



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on January 5, 2012

Rick Santorum, a Big-Government Conservative?

After capturing second place in the Iowa Republican caucuses, losing by a meager eight votes to former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum is positioned to be the latest subject under the media's microscope. When one becomes a frontrunner, the scrutiny quickly begins, and the question hovering over the former Pennsylvania Senator's head is: Is Rick Santorum really the authentic conservative he proclaims to be? Only hours after the Iowa caucuses closed, critics spelled out their cases as to why Santorum is not the "one true conservative running in 2012," which his campaign has been exuding since its original conception. Syndicated columnist David Harsanyi accused the presidential contender of being a "conservative technocrat," and a veritable bearer of "big-government conservatism."



"If the thought of big, intrusive liberal government offends you, he might just be your man," Harsanyi writes. "And if you favor a big, intrusive Republican government, he's unquestionably your candidate." In his article, which was published Wednesday, Harsanyi asserted that Santorum's book, *It Takes a Family*, is "crammed with an array of ideas for technocratic meddling," and that "the author acknowledges that some people will reject what he has to say as a kind of Big Government conservatism." Moreover, in detailing Santorum's unsettling political record, Mr. Harsanyi alleged:

Today, Santorum tells voters that Medicare is "crushing" the "entire health care system." In 2003, Santorum voted for the Medicare drug entitlement that costs taxpayers more than \$60 billion a year and almost \$16 trillion in unfunded liabilities. Santorum voted for the 2005 "bridge to nowhere" bill and was an earmark enthusiast his entire career.

These days, Santorum regularly joins a chorus of voices claiming that he would greatly reduce the role of federal government in local education. When he had a say, he supported No Child Left Behind and expanded the federal control of school systems. In his book, in fact, Santorum advocates dictating a certain curriculum to all schools. The right kind. It's not the authority of government that irks him, but rather the content of the material Washington is peddling today.

Son of GOP candidate Ron Paul, Sen. Rand Paul (Ky.) also warned that conservative voters should be careful in their quest for procuring the most "conservative" candidate. Santorum was "a big supporter of Medicare Part D, the expansion of Medicare, [and] a big supporter of No Child Left Behind," Paul said Monday on an Iowa talk radio program. "I've seen him asked directly about the Department of Education, he's for it." The Kentucky Senator added:



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We still believe in eliminating the Dept. of Education, that there is no function on the federal level for that. But Rick Santorum is a big supporter of the Department of Education; he in fact voted to double the size of the Department of Education with No Child Left Behind.

Opposing Obama's presidency and scrutinizing Washington's left-leaning bent, Harsanyi notes, are "not great acts of bravery." Unlike Republican candidate Ron Paul, Santorum was nearly always leaning on the side of the establishment, most notably for endorsing the liberal, then-Republican Arlen Specter over conservative-favorite Pat Toomey in the 2004 Republican Pennsylvania primaries.

Writing at National Review Online, Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, [added](#):

When Hillary Clinton was justly excoriated by conservatives for her book *It Takes A Village*, which advocated greater government involvement in our lives, Rick Santorum countered with his book, *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good*, which advocated greater government involvement in our lives. Among the many government programs he supported: national service, publicly financed trust funds for children, community-investment incentives, and economic-literacy programs in "every school in America" (italics in original).

Mr. Tanner called Santorum the "quintessential Washington insider," noting that the former Senator worked closely with Tom DeLay in establishing the "K Street Project," which fused a binding link between lobbyists and GOP leadership through earmarks and pork-barrel projects. Tanner also exposed Santorum for his dogmatic opposition to free trade, as he has supported higher tariffs on everything from steel to honey. "He still supports an industrial policy with the government tilting the playing field toward manufacturing industries and picking winners and losers," Tanner cited.

Also writing for National Review Online, columnist and bestselling author Jonah Goldberg [questioned](#) the GOP presidential contenders' big-government brand of conservatism.

For the last month or so we've heard a lot of posturing about the "conservative establishment." I've been pretty skeptical about the uses and abuses of the term. But now that Rick Santorum has replaced Newt Gingrich as the anti-Mitt frontrunner, the term seems even more stale. Santorum has many strengths (and weaknesses), but lets not insult our intelligence. He is no Washington outsider. The guy has been a fixture of the conservative and Republican establishment however you want to define the term for decades. A congressman, senator, radio show host, author, Fox News contributor, leader in the 1994 Contract with America movement, activist, lobbyist, earmarker, endorser of Arlen Specter: This is not some tea party unknown.

Erick Erickson of the conservative blog RedState, who labeled the former Senator a "pro-life statist," [chronicled](#) a grocery list of comparisons between Santorum and President George W. Bush, who was largely instrumental in forming the big-government conservatism such critics describe. Santorum "sees government as the means to conservative ends," writes Erickson. "But in using government to get conservative ends he has expanded government and set precedents for liberals to use government in the same ways for more liberal government."

"This is why I do not support Rick Santorum," Erickson pledged. "I do not want a co-conspirator to government largess premised on the rhetoric of compassionate or big government conservatism being rewarded."

As we write, an interesting opinion piece penned by Santorum's nephew, University of Pittsburgh student John Garver, has surfaced. Published by The Daily Caller, a Washington, D.C.-based news website, Garver's article was entitled: "[The trouble with my uncle, Rick Santorum.](#)" Among his reasons



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for disapproving of his uncle's political stance:

If you want another big-government politician who supports the status quo to run our country, you should vote for my uncle, Rick Santorum. America is based on a strong belief in individual liberty. My uncles interventionist policies, both domestic and foreign, stem from his irrational fear of freedom not working.

Garver goes on to write that it is because of his uncle's and other "status quo politicians['] inability] to recognize the importance of our individual liberties that I have been drawn to Ron Paul."

Photo: Republican presidential candidate, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, joined by wife Karen, left, addresses supporters at his Iowa caucus victory party Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012, in Johnston, Iowa: AP Images



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