



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 6, 2012

Rick Santorum's Take on Libertarianism vs. Conservatism

Despite Rick Santorum's surprise surge in Iowa, a number of his critics contend that he is not the small government conservative he touts himself to be.

Judge Napolitano of Fox Business Networks Freedom Watch aired a video (see below) on his television program which revealed Rick Santorum making the following statement: One of the criticisms I make is to what I refer to as more of a Libertarianish right. They have this idea that people should be left alone, be able to do whatever they want to do, government should keep our taxes down and keep our regulations low, that we shouldn't get involved in the bedroom, we shouldn't get involved in cultural issues. That is not how traditional conservatives view the world. There is no such society that I am aware of, where we've had radical individualism and that it succeeds as a culture.



But what Santorum defines as Libertarian is the traditional definition of constitutional conservatism, at least in its original form, before it was usurped by William Buckley and friends and [redefined](#) by the neoconservative movement. Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul said, There is nothing wrong with describing Conservatism as protecting the Constitution, protecting all things that limit government. Government is the enemy of liberty. Government should be very restrained To be a conservative means to conserve the good parts of American and to conserve our Constitution.

After all, small and limited government is the very talking point which has enabled a number of Republican and conservative candidates to be elected to political positions. And yet most of them have disappointed when they arrived in office. Even Ronald Reagan, who has become virtually the emblem for the Republican Party and conservatives, expanded the federal government by approximately 90 percent.

David Boaz of the Cato Institute took issue with Santorum's words, asserting that there is in fact such a society that has radical individualism and has succeeded as a culture: the United States. Boaz said, It really is stunning that here is a candidate who has directly attacked the idea of the pursuit of happiness. It's in the Declaration of Independence. It's the fundamental idea of America.

Boaz contends that Santorum's statement proves that Santorum's intent, if he were to be elected President, is to regulate society, and control multiple facets of American life.

Likewise, it is not just Santorum's statement which undermines his assertion that he is a conservative.



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His record in the Senate is equally revealing.

Santorum voted in favor of the failed No Child Left Behind, introduced by President George W. Bush. Like all other education reform laws, NCLB not only failed to improve achievement overall, but failed to narrow achievement gaps, or improve preexisting trends in student achievement. A true conservative recognizes that education should be returned to the authority of the states, and that it is an unconstitutional usurpation of power by the federal government to attempt to regulate education.

Santorum also voted in favor of steel tariffs, which the World Trade Organization ruled were illegal and cleared the way for the European Union to impose \$2 billion in sanctions on imports from the United States. Steel tariffs virtually forced smaller companies to either declare bankruptcy or to allow themselves to be bought out by larger companies. The imposition of the tariffs resulted in the loss of countless manufacturing jobs in the United States.

Similarly, he supported subsidies for Pennsylvania's dairy farmers in 2005, which paid money to farmers when milk prices dropped. The power to grant such subsidies is found nowhere in the Constitution.

In addition to these, Santorum voted in favor of the prescription drug entitlement, even as conservatives criticized the plan as a massive expansion which would increase the federal budget deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars. Santorum now contends that he regrets that vote.

Santorum opposed cuts to food stamps in 2005, and fought hard to secure more federal money for Amtrak, though a true conservative would recognize that Amtrak is a major failure. It is government-owned and -controlled, union-operated and employs more than 20,000 workers. It runs trains which serve political purposes rather than meeting the needs of the marketplace, and has operated at a deficit for most of its existence. Santorum also voted in favor of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which critics contend is another example of bloated government bureaucracy.

Santorum has been accused of doublespeak because a number of the items he supported as a Pennsylvania Senator are now the same items he speaks out against as a Republican presidential candidate.

For example, while serving as Senator, Santorum was criticized for his favor toward earmarks. According to the conservative group Club for Growth, Santorum is a prominent earmarker who sought billions of dollars in wasteful federal disbursements.

On spending, Santorum has a mixed record and showed clear signs of varying his votes based on the election calendar, wrote the group in a review of Santorum's time in Congress. His record is plagued by the big-spending habits that Republicans adopted during the Bush years of 2001-2006.

Santorum now has asserted he supports an earmark ban because Congress has abused the process.

Perhaps the biggest indication that Santorum is no more than a neoconservative and not the true conservative he touts himself to be is his view on foreign policy. He asserts that the United States should be a powerful force of morality in the world and should be leading the fight toward freedom. He has criticized President Obama for what he views as a leniency toward nations that deserve aggression, and has been particularly critical of Obama's actions toward Iran. He alleges that by permitting Iran to build a nuclear weapon, Obama has risked turning the United States into a paper tiger, and overall claims that the President's attitude toward radical Islam is nothing but appeasement.

In other words, Santorum supports preemptive wars. But as noted by constitutional conservative Ron Paul, Another term for preventative war is aggressive war starting wars because someday somebody



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might do something to us. That is not part of the American tradition.

It is hard to refute the notion that Santorum is a social conservative, however, as he is strongly anti-abortion and stands firmly against gay rights; however, his notion that it is the federal governments role to impose a certain brand of morality is directly antithetical to constitutional principles.

The British publication *The Telegraph* went so far as to [write](#), "The truth is Rick Santorum is so left on the issues that matter he makes even Mitt Romney look like a red meat conservative. Be very afraid, Republican America. This is how bad things are."

Ironically, one person who came to Santorums defense is Jennifer Rubin of the *Washington Post*, who [claims](#) that he is just conservative enough without being characterized by bomb-throwing rhetoric and contempt for government. She cites as examples that unlike some of the other candidates, Santorum does not resent the Federal Reserve Chairman, nor does he advocate what Rubin dubs a goofy scheme to devolve Social Security to the states, and he did not urge Congress to refuse to raise the debt limit.

But for conservatives, those very items Rubin uses to defend Santorum are problematic.

Judge Napolitano contends that the only true conservatives in the presidential race are Ron Paul and former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson.

Boaz concurred, asserting, People who are looking for smaller government dont have many choices besides Ron Paul and Gary Johnson.



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