



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 12, 2011

## Second Day of CPAC Outdoes the First

The second day of the 2011 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), held at the Marriot Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., proved to be eventful as it boasted an array of prominent speakers and educational/inspirational symposiums.

The day began with a panel on the current state of mind of Americas voters. Led by Republican pollster John McClaughlin and Democratic pollster Pat Caddell, the discussion revealed some surprising figures.

First, the American people continue to place the economy and security threats at the top of their list of priorities. On the issue of public security, Obamas ratings are relatively weak, particularly as Americans perceive Iran to be one of the largest growing threats plaguing the United States.



In a poll of 1,000 voters conducted by McClaughlin & Associates, Americans ranked the following as the top five threats facing the nation:

1. Terrorism 14 percent
2. President Barack Obama 7 percent
3. The economy 6 percent
4. American policies 6 percent
5. Iran 4 percent

According to the pollsters, this present time is the most insecure Americans have felt since the days of the Cold War. As far as Obamas dealings with Iran and the threat of terrorism, 76 percent of Americans feel that the President's treatment of Iran will not prevent Irans nuclear proliferation. Likewise, 51 percent of the people believe that Obamas outreach to the Muslim world has a negative impact on Americas safety, as opposed to 23 percent of voters who view it favorably.

Caddell and McClaughlin are key proponents of securing America from threats of terrorism and have led a campaign called Secure America Now to see that it happens.

Surprise guest Gary Johnson, former Governor of New Mexico, gave an early morning address. A notable speaker on the nationwide Nullify Now! tour and well-known for his extreme Libertarian philosophies, Johnson has been a widely popular figure at this years conference.

Touting himself as an entrepreneur, the former Governor discussed his various business aspirations and his transition to politics. He explained that he was welcomed by the Republican Party when he first became involved but was warned that his inexperience would likely prevent him from winning elections. However, his treat government like a business approach to politics won him a gubernatorial seat in a Democratic state.



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He related that his cost/benefit analysis of politics prompted him to veto 750 bills a declaration that provoked applause.

A key proponent of school choice, Johnson stated, The only way to reform education in this country is to bring competition to public education.

Gary Johnson is also known for his stance on legalizing drugs in the nation, believing that Americans should focus instead on the problem of drunk driving. The police dont have the resources, the courts are packed, and the prisons are full, he declared, contending that the war on drugs is a waste of law enforcement. Ninety percent of the drug problem is prohibition-related, not use-related, he stressed. As a result, he proposed legalizing marijuana: Control it, regulate it, tax it. He added that it should not be legal to smoke marijuana and drive, or for children to purchase or use pot.

He also told CPAC attendees that he supports repealing healthcare, as well as the repeal of the Republican passage of the prescription drug benefit which ran up record deficits. Theres a shared responsibility in this and it goes back a long way, he indicated.

Additionally, according to Johnson, spending cuts are absolutely mandatory, but taxes should not be raised. In fact, he declared, We should eliminate the federal income tax.

He concluded, The Republican Party is the only party capable of fixing whats wrong in this country, and received a standing ovation.

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney drew a large crowd as he assailed the current administration for its failure to construct a foreign policy that is beneficial to the United States, citing the Presidents failure to address the growing threat of Iran and his signing of the one-sided START treaty.

Focusing on the current economic crisis and swollen unemployment figures, Romney declared, The liberals in Congress should be ashamed of what they have done to the American people.

Romney also targeted the President for his inconsistent rhetoric. He quipped, The President went from Change you can believe in to Can you believe this change? He added, however, Its not going to take new rhetoric to put Americans back to work its going to take a new president.

As a potential presidential contender in 2012, Romney failed to outline his agenda for the United States but contended that a good leader would restore faith in American exceptionalism and refuse to apologize for it.

He concluded, I believe in America.

Tea Party favorite Mike Lee of Utah spoke on the danger of overreaching federal governments, a danger he contends is symptomatic of government. National governments by nature have a tendency to increase their power, he noted, assuring his audience that he will work to remind his colleagues that their powers are indeed limited.

Lee also addressed his and Jon Kyls Senate Resolution 5, a balanced budget amendment proposal that would require that the federal government not spend more than 18 percent of the GDP, not spend more than it takes in, and not raise taxes or the debt ceiling, without the two-thirds approval of Congress. Encouraging the audience to contact their Senators to urge them to vote in favor of the resolution, Lee closed with, Help end this modern-day form of tyranny!

Immediately following Senator Lees address, Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Representative



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Thaddeus McCotter (R-Mich.) made similar assertions regarding the necessity of a balanced budget amendment, touting it as the only way to control spending.

Potential presidential hopeful Herman Cain, radio talk show host and businessman, attracted a large crowd as well, and proved to be a highly charismatic speaker. He was introduced by Niger Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality, another popular figure at this years CPAC.

According to Cain, The American Dream is under attack but the good news is we are fighting back.

He had no qualms about criticizing the current administration, or targeting those who assert that it is racist to criticize the Obama administration. You are not racists; you are patriots for standing up for what you believe in, he declared. He told the crowd that he still believes America to be the greatest country in the world, but that it faces danger as others are trying to knock it off its pedestal. The liberal agenda is to destroy America, or make it mediocre like every other country in the world. Its not in Americas DNA to be mediocre, he maintained.

Cain noted that America faces the attack of the 'ations': taxation, regulation, and legislation. His advice? Stay informed, stay involved, stay inspired. The crowd responded well to his address with a number of standing ovations and wild cheers.

Ron Pauls CPAC address was perhaps the highlight of the day, as the Marriott Ballroom was brimming with his passionate supporters who cheered and chanted for him to run for President.

Paul challenged the federal government on a number of issues, including the implementation of unconstitutional systems such as the individual mandate and the Federal Reserve, as well as its out-of-control spending and failed foreign policies.

Pauls speech drew a total of nine standing ovations from the crowd, with the occasional boos from neo-conservatives who oppose his military and non-interventionist policies.

A number of other notable guests appeared on the second day as well, including Representative Ted Poe (R-Texas), Representative Tom Price (R-Ga.), Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), and Texas Governor Rick Perry.

In addition to the presence of key Republican leaders, CPACs second day was jam-packed with noteworthy forums, ranging from issues on the Mexican-American border to the pro-life movement and the overwhelmed entitlement programs.

At 10:00 a.m., the National Taxpayers Union and Americans for Tax Reform hosted a forum on the federal income tax code. The panel debated between the implementation of either a FAIR, Flat, or VAT tax, or the elimination of the federal income tax altogether. While all of the forums speakers contended that the federal government should do away with the progressive income tax, the death tax, etc., they disputed on the tax that should be adopted.

Representative Steve King (R-Iowa) appeared on the panel as a proponent of the FAIR tax, relating that he had been inspired by one too many tax audits and assertions made by the IRS that he still owed money despite his following of the federal tax code to the letter. He declared, The only way to abolish the IRS and still fund the federal government by way of taxes is through a FAIR tax on retail items. ... Stop punishing productivity and let Americans pay voluntarily when they pursue personal consumption.

By contrast, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform asserted that the United States should implement a flat tax, or constant tax rate system, and eventually use it to transition to a FAIR tax, noting that he did not trust the federal government not to turn a FAIR tax into a Value Added Tax (VAT).



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Following the federal tax forum, the Americans for Tax Reform sponsored a symposium on cuts to defense spending. There, the sponsors discussed a letter addressed to Senator Mitch McConnell and House Speaker John Boehner that read:

We write to urge you to institute principled spending reform that rejects the notion that spending cuts can be avoided in certain parts of the federal budget. Department of Defense spending, in particular, has been provided protected status that has isolated it from serious scrutiny and allowed the Pentagon to waste billions in taxpayer money. A new Congress, with a clear mandate to cut spending and the size of government, should signal its fiscal resolve by proposing cuts for all federal spending.

A number of today's seminars focused on the power and influence of the Tea Party movement. At noon, the Tea Party Express and Americans for Tax Reform addressed a key tenet of the Tea Party movement: Its the spending, stupid!

The sponsors used the forum not only to celebrate the influence of the Tea Party movement, particularly in the recent midterm elections, but also to emphasize its focus on fiscal conservatism.

Amy Kremer of the Tea Party Express told the audience, Families are balancing their budgets while Washington is swiping our credit cards over and over again.

Likewise, FreedomWorks sponsored a convention on the cultural impact of the Tea Party entitled, *Is Atlas Shrugging?* referencing Ayn Rand's timeless classic of conservative literature, *Atlas Shrugged*.

In the afternoon, the Clare Booth Luce Policy Institute, the Heartland Institute, and the Home School Legal Defense Association hosted a fascinating symposium on growing the conservative movement by way of school choice and homeschooling entitled, *Are We Superman?* referencing the widely-popular documentary *Waiting for Superman*, which focused on the plight of parents who wait in great anticipation to learn if their children have been accepted into charter schools.

The speakers at the event maintained that not only is homeschooling and school choice a more affordable alternative to public schools, it also provides for a better opportunity to grow the conservative movement. According to Mike Farris, founder of Home School Legal Defense Association, public education is a failing system and homeschooling and school choice will help to break the monopoly of public schools.

The second day of the CPAC agenda likely made it very difficult for attendees to decide where to go, as the list of worthwhile activities seemed endless. As CPAC approaches its final day, one must wonder whether the close of the 2011 event will be as memorable as the first two days.

*Photo: Rep. Ron Paul at CPAC: AP Images*



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