



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on February 28, 2011

Sen. Rand Paul Educates David Letterman on the Economy

Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) has far exceeded the expectations and hopes of conservatives across the United States. With his bold advocacy for the principles of limited, constitutional government, he has taken the country by storm. One of the most popular figures on the Tea Party circuit, Paul is emerging in the public eye as the de facto leader of the movement to reclaim America and return the federal government to its constitutional roots.



Contributing to the fame and appeal of Senator Paul is his ability to articulate his philosophies on the nature and role of government in an engaging manner which resonates with the average American voter. It is this ability which propelled him to victory in the Republican primary last May, in which he soundly defeated Trey Grayson, the hand-picked choice of the GOP establishment, and later in the general election, where he defeated Democrat Attorney General Jack Conway.

The Kentucky Senator has indeed emerged as the voice and conscience of a movement and an entire new generation of Tea Party activists and other constitutionalists. His February 24 appearance on CBS's *Late Show* with veteran talk show host David Letterman was intended to be merely a promotion of his new book, [The Tea Party Goes to Washington](#) an explanation of what he has outlined as the constitutional conservative agenda of the Tea Party movement: a commitment to the foundational economic principles of a free market, hard currency, and a return to the gold standard, as well as reducing inflation, balancing the budget, and resisting the seductive tide of Keynesian stimulus deficit spending, while adhering to the ideas championed by his father, Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), and outlined in the theories of Adam Smith, F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and Murray Rothbard.

Letterman has previously hosted right-of-center talk show guests, including Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly, relentlessly criticizing them (including lampooning the former for his battles with chronic pain). In addition, he has been an unbalanced critic of former President George W. Bush and a supporter of radical peacenik protester Cindy Sheehan, President Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton, while making [inappropriate sexual jokes](#) about Bristol Palin, daughter of former GOP Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

Because Letterman's conspicuous liberalism differs so markedly from Senator Paul's philosophies on the nature and role of government, what started as a discussion on Paul's book quickly turned into a policy debate. Rather than turning his [appearance](#) on the *Late Show* into an opportunity for self-



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promotion, Senator Paul instead made the highlight of his prime-time television appearance a discussion of his commitment to the economic and constitutional principles of the Tea Party movement the broader cause of working for limited, constitutional government, as indicated in his unexpected move of debating his host and educating him on the fundamentals of economics.

While their discussion was civil, it became apparent that Letterman had intended to turn the interview into an opportunity to lambaste Tea Partiers. He asked Paul, You want to shrink that strata of American workers and give tax breaks to people who well could afford to pay higher taxes. So are we hurting the middle class?

To which Sen. Paul (an ophthalmologist by profession) confidently responded with empirically-validated facts and statistics, while Letterman (a comedian, by background), responded emotionally and came across as ignorant. The best Letterman could do was reply to Paul by [retorting](#), that doesnt sound right, and I think hes wrong about some of these things, I just cant tell you why, while claiming that Wisconsin public schoolteachers should be making \$178,000 a year, an example of demagoguery at work.

Lettermans logic, commonplace among those of his political persuasion, resembles former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosis statement concerning Obama's health care bill that the measure must be passed in order for Congress to know what it says.

Campaign for Liberty [scholar](#) Dr. [Thomas Woods](#) commented on Lettermans feeble attempt to play economist:

Rand correctly noted that the top 1% of income tax earners pay one-third of all the income taxes, with the top 50% paying 96%. So the "rich" are already paying plenty. Letterman's response? There must be something wrong with those numbers, he said to applause from the audience. So the audience is in effect saying, "We also refuse to believe those numbers!" But those numbers are correct.

Rand explains, again correctly, that spending more money on education has not improved educational outcomes. Letterman's response? Well, education is important, so we've got to try something how about spending more money? But by the time of George W. Bush's term, per-pupil spending, adjusted for inflation, had already doubled since LBJ....

Letterman wonders why we can't just loot the "rich" some more. Well, if we'd like to make still more firms leave the U.S., that'd be a good start. Want to strangle the growth on which everyone's welfare depends? By all means pursue this strategy.

Rand points out, correctly, that the compensation package for Wisconsin teachers is extremely attractive, amounting to over \$80K annually. Letterman, to general applause, says that figure should be doubled. Isn't education important? This is the level of reasoning people appear comfortable with. On Big Rock Candy Mountain there's a giant pile of cash overlooked by the governor and the rest of us. Don't worry that the pension systems are going to bankrupt the states that's nothing a doubling of teacher salaries won't solve.

Lettermans futile attempts to challenge Sen. Paul are a clear example of his inability to think beyond the standard talking points of [his Democratic Party](#) cohorts the mistaken beliefs that Republicans are anti-middle class, anti-education stooges for the rich, rather than the reality: that Republicans are largely a middle class party, with appeal to the widest swaths of American society. Unable to debate on an equal footing with Sen. Paul, Letterman was capable only of attacking him on his decision to wear blue jeans on his show. He also hypocritically accused Tea Partiers of being tools of the rich, while



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Letterman himself has a net worth of over \$400 million, according to most estimates. However, one cannot expect more from a man who claimed that the federal government should randomly throw money at education, even if the same policies are failing, purely because if we were going to throw money at something, it should be education.

Sen. Paul's appearance on the [Tonight Show](#) with David Letterman was therefore not only an opportunity for him to demonstrate his economic prowess and effective, common-sense ideas for restoring the federal government to its constitutionally-limited roots, but was also a prime opportunity for him to advance the cause of liberty and spread the word on the virtues of the Founding Fathers' vision for a prosperous, decentralized government. His performance also boosted Tea Party publicity and appeal by conveying what constitutionalists have long been aware of: that the [Tea Party](#) embodies values which are at the heart of what it means to be an American, principles which resonate with the vast majority of Americans. Truths from which the likes of David Letterman are far detached.

Photo of Rand Paul: AP Images



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