



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 9, 2011

Senator Rand Paul Is the Real Deal

A careful review of Kentucky Senator Rand Paul's "maiden speech" to the Senate last week reveals what Tea Partiers and other strict constitutionalists hoped they would find: a man of character.

Instead of taking advantage of his first opportunity to address the Senate as a freshman and using his presentation as a coy attempt to ingratiate himself with establishment Republicans, Paul instead figuratively thrust his rhetorical sharp pencil right up their collective (pun intended) noses and drew a line on the floor of the Senate. On one side of the line are those continuing to treat their roles as chefs in the galley of the *Titanic*, delivering delicious meals to those fortunate enough to be aboard with a First Class ticket. On the other side are a very few who are noisily warning of the iceberg about to pierce the *right side* of the ship. Paul is one of those, and he isn't going to compromise.



In his speech, Paul recalled the life of Senator Henry Clay from Kentucky who became known as "The Great Compromiser":

I will sit at Henry Clay's desk. There is likely no legislator from Kentucky more famous than Henry Clay. He served as both the Speaker of the House and Leader of the Senate. He ran for President four times....

Henry Clay's life story is, at best, a mixed message. Henry Clay's great compromise was over slavery. One could argue that he rose above sectional strife to carve out compromise after compromise trying to ward off civil war.

Or one could argue that his compromises were morally wrong and may even have encouraged war.

Rand then recounted the lives of people in Clay's time who refused to compromise on the issue, and suffered greatly for it, including

William Lloyd Garrison ... [who] was beaten and imprisoned for his principled stand ... [and] Frederick Douglass ... [who] was beaten ... and thrown from trains....

Today we have no issues that approach moral equivalency with the issue of slavery. Yet we do face a fiscal nightmare and potentially a debt crisis....

Any compromise should be about where we cut federal spending, not where we raise taxes. The problem we face is not a revenue problem. It is a spending problem.



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Will the Tea Party compromise? The answer is of course there must be dialogue and compromise but compromise must occur on where we cut spending and by how much.

As long as I sit at Henry Clay's desk, I will remember his lifelong desire to forge agreement, but I will also keep close to my heart [those] who refused to forsake the life of any human simply to find agreement.

The message of defiance that Rand delivered was pointed at the establishment Republicans who are only too eager to engage in "dialogue" with the big tax-and-spenders, especially at the senior Senator from Kentucky, Mitch McConnell, who just happens to be a fan of Henry Clay. As Alexander Bolton [wrote](#) in *The Hill*,

[Rand] has pushed a proposal to cut \$500 billion in federal spending over the course of a single year. That has applied pressure to GOP leaders, including Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, to take a similarly hard approach or risk looking timid to Tea Partiers.

This is part of Paul's character. During his campaign, he made it clear to his supporters that if he were elected, he would take "aggressive stances" once in Washington. As noted by Scott Jennings, a member of the Kentucky Republican Party's executive committee, "One of the underlying key reasons he was able to build such momentum in the Republican primary is he presented the view and vision [that he] would lead from the front."

Rand hasn't wasted any time since assuming his role as junior Senator from Kentucky. On January 24 he launched the [Tea Party Caucus](#) in the Senate, modeled after a similar caucus sponsored by House Representative Michelle Bachmann (R-Minn.). As noted by [Daniel Sayani](#) in *The New American*, the Senate caucus started out with only three members, Senator Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah), and Paul. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) just joined. Although its size is unimpressive at present, Sayani points out that these members "have political clout and significance, particularly in the domain of the public eye and the media."

Taking the lead has its benefits as well as its costs. One of the benefits is determining, early on, who is on their side of the line and who isn't. Florida Senator Marco Rubio, an early favorite of the Tea Party, has backed away from Rand's caucus and remains strangely quiet about supporting his spending cuts. Also missing in action, at the moment, are Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), and Senator John Hoeven (R-N.D.), each of whom ran with Tea Partier support.

There are detractors, of course, including Matt Berman of [Faster Times](#), who said that Rand's maiden speech "gives us a pretty anticipated window into what we can expect from Sen. Paul over the next six years. However, it also shows us the frustration that we are likely to see as the rules and practices [i.e., business as usual] of the U.S. Senate collide with Rand Paul's ideology." Berman is much more comfortable with masters of compromise with no understanding of the Constitution, such as Senator Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.), who hold Freedom Index ratings of just 8 and 3 respectively. They "come into the Senate with plans for making our country better through compromise, negotiation, and steady, incremental reform."

A Republican [strategist](#) summed up Rand Paul nicely:

I think Paul truly wants to be a representative of the Tea Party in Congress and not just use it to get elected. He views the Tea Party philosophy as a way to govern. Too often people are more worried about senatorial courtesy than speaking up about the important issues.



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Sayani added, "In such an environment, it is reassuring to know that we have a few leaders of integrity like Senator Paul, who seem bent on changing the way Washington does business."

The junior Senator from Kentucky looks like the real deal.

Photo of Rand Paul: AP Images



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