



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 13, 2010

Tea Party Favorites Taking Government Handouts

As the November 2010 elections approach, it is the sacred duty of every Constitutionalist to be aware of the differences among the various parties and factions promoting themselves as friends of the Constitution, advocates of small government, and proponents of lower taxes.

For example, the Tea Party movement that is burgeoning nationwide has already had a significant impact on several elections. There is an inertia about this group that seems to be gaining momentum and credibility as Election Day grows nearer.



That is to say, not everyone wearing a tri-cornered hat is Paul Revere and not everyone seeking the Tea Party endorsement or campaigning under that banner is a constitutionalist. The Bible provides a key to discerning between those who pretend to be that which they are not: By their fruits, ye shall know them.

One of the fruits in the Tea Party orchard that is frequently picked and polished by candidates for public office is that of “small government.” The idea is that our national government has exceeded its constitutional mandate and has taxed and spent its way into economic morbid obesity. The size of the government, so the saying goes, must be reduced and the quickest way to shed the unwanted weight is to eliminate wasteful spending. Cuts in so-called entitlement programs, as well as other aspects of the federal dole must be abolished if America is to get back down to her fighting weight.

Sadly, some of the loudest voices in the chorus calling for the government slim down are singing a different tune when the microphones are off. Many of the chief mouthpieces of the “conservative” stratum have drawn negative attention to the farm subsidy program overseen by the Department of Agriculture. The [Wall Street Journal editorial page](#), [National Review](#), the [Cato Institute](#), the [Heritage Foundation](#), the [American Enterprise Institute](#), all chronicled the unconstitutional and fiscally unsound nature of this controversial legacy of largesse.

Given this nearly universal denouncement by right wing media, one would imagine that Tea Party candidates would flatly refuse to receive any handout under such a denigrated government program, especially one so unquestionably without clear Constitutional provenance. One would be mistaken, however.

Last month, for example, the [Washington Post reported](#) that Stephen Fincher, a Tea Party Senate candidate from Tennessee, was getting flack over his acceptance of farm subsidy payments. In Indiana, Senate candidate [Marlin Stutzman](#) was experiencing a similar swell of outrage for the same reason. Even Representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN), a Tea Party darling, receives farm subsidies ([over \\$250,000 between 1995 and 2006](#)) and for that she [has been accused](#) of preaching small government on Sunday and taking big government handouts on Monday, so to speak.

The fact that these farm subsidies are a form of welfare as much as any other government assistance



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and equally as odious to the principle of enumerated and limited powers, somehow eludes the “conservatives” in the Republican Party. In March, with the ObamaCare deliberations in full swing, nine Republican senators [sent President Obama a letter](#) chastising him for having the gall to propose cuts to the farm subsidy program. The senators who signed the letter were Saxby Chambliss (Ga.), senior Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee, Pat Roberts (Kan.), Thad Cochran (Miss.), John Thune (S.D.), James Risch (Idaho), Lindsey Graham (S.C.), Mike Crapo (Idaho), Kay Bailey Hutchison (Texas) and David Vitter (La). Here’s a quote from the letter:

As Congress directs its attention to the fiscal year 2011 budget, we write to voice our opposition to cuts in the farm safety net.

While we agree that fiscal restraint is necessary and spending in the Federal budget should be reduced...

We look forward to working with you on reining in government spending.

With primary elections occurring all over the country as we speak and with the mid-term election just around the corner, it is difficult to comprehend how such an impressive roster of “right-wing” lawmakers would ride so quickly to the defense of a program so roundly derided by most of their conservative colleagues. Even for politicians, so accustomed to talking out of both sides of their mouth, the acceptance of government subsidies and the letter criticizing proposed cuts in them, are appalling manifestations of hypocrisy.

Of course, the letter cited above calls the farm subsidies a “safety net.” The numbers tell a different story. It isn’t the hard-working, family farmer who works a 9-to-5 job during the day and gets behind the plow at night just to make mortgage payments that is benefitting from these handouts. According to figures provided by the [Environmental Working Group](#), most of the subsidies defended by the nine senators go to the largest, wealthiest corporate farm owners in the country. In fact, between 1995-2009, the top 10 percent of the largest farms in America collected 74 percent of all farm subsidies. Compare that to data from the USDA itself that reveals that 62 percent of farmers nationwide received no payments whatsoever. So much for the “safety net” charade.

In the months preceding the elections (primary and general), it is imperative that every friend of the Constitution compare the small government words of “conservative” or “Tea Party” candidates with the “big government” deeds they might be committing when the cameras are off.



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