



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 12, 2012

Veep Pick Paul Ryan Is No Conservative

No sooner had Mitt Romney's choice of Paul Ryan as his running mate become known than the world of punditry was abuzz with talk of "Ryanmania." Since mania is by definition an excessive or unreasonable enthusiasm, the label may be regarded as an understatement. For while the seven-term Republican congressman from Wisconsin and chairman of the House Budget Committee is not yet a household name across America, he does generate excitement within the "conservative movement," an excitement and enthusiasm that suggests the talking heads at Fox News and the dot.com warriors at *The Weekly Standard* have no more sense of conservative, constitutional government than the cheering chanting crowd of Republican partisans who greeted the vice presidential hopeful in Norfolk, Virginia, Saturday morning.



Like him or not, the one thing politically aware Americans are supposed to know about Paul Ryan is that he is a fiscal conservative, a bold budget hawk. He is, after all, the prime author of the House budget plan (titled "the Path to Prosperity") to repeal the Obama health insurance program ("ObamaCare"), turn the Medicaid program for low-income Americans over to the states and create a private insurance option for Medicare beneficiaries starting in 2023. The plan would also turn food stamps and other federal programs for the poor into block grants to the states, with limits on the growth of those programs. If Republican voters have any doubts about Ryan's commitment to budget austerity, they need only hear the Democrats' outcry that Ryan's "Path to Prosperity" will be a road to the poorhouse for elderly and low-income Americans.

But on the other side of the ledger, Ryan's voting record shows a robust support of big-spending programs to enlarge the role of the federal government, especially when they are promoted by a Republican in the White House. Ryan voted for all of the big-ticket, budget-busting items of the administration of President George W. Bush, including the No Child Left Behind Act and the prescription drug benefit known as Medicare Part D, often described as the largest expansion of the welfare state since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Ryan voted to create the new Department of Homeland Security, including the Transportation Security Administration that has harassed air travelers, while making aircraft safe from shoes, belt buckles and grandma's knitting needles. He voted for the PATRIOT Act, giving government enhanced powers for warrantless snooping into the lives of American citizens as well as foreign nationals. Ryan voted for the Troubled Assets Relief Program that bailed out the "too big to fail" financial institutions and inspired the Tea Party rebellion against big government and "crony capitalism." He backed the auto bailout that turned GM into "Government



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Motors.”

And while conservatives generally like to leave wars and military spending off the list of costly “big government” programs, Ryan’s record on that front is also troubling. Like Romney, Ryan has no foreign policy credentials and no record of military service to point to in the election campaign. And like Romney, Ryan swallowed whole the Bush-Cheney line on Iraq and supported the decision to invade and occupy that country in a needless war that cost more than 4,000 American and hundreds of thousands Iraqi lives and has added roughly a trillion dollars to our soaring national debt. Ryan’s budget calls for no reduction in military spending, despite the continued presence of U.S. troops in some 130 countries around the world, most of which have no bearing on our own national security.

Even more troubling is Ryan’s vote last December in favor of the [National Defense Authorization Act](#). The legislation included a provision authorizing the president to use the military to arrest suspected terrorists, including American citizens apprehended in the United States, and hold them indefinitely, without charges and without trial, in clear violation of due process rights guaranteed by the Constitution. This year Ryan voted against an [amendment](#) to remove that provision from the law.

Ryan did vote against reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, which grants loans and loan guarantees to foreign governments and businesses for the purchase of U.S. products. But his vote last year for the \$915 billion Omnibus Appropriations Bill for 2012 went to support further spending on housing, education, foreign aid, and other programs for which there is no constitutional role for the federal government. On *The New American* magazine’s [latest Freedom Index](#), matching congressional votes with the strictures of the Constitution, Ryan’s rating for the 112th Congress to date was an anemic 67 percent.

Paul Ryan is, in short, a typical Bush-era Republican, whose selection as a vice presidential candidate is being trumpeted as a triumph by many of the same Republicans who are doing their best to flush the administration of George W. Bush down the memory hole. Republican candidates almost never invoke the Bush name and the most recent Republican President will not be attending the party’s convention in Tampa, where Romney and Ryan are expected to be officially nominated. Chances are the name of the 43rd president will be mentioned in rare fleeting reference, if at all. Yet in his choice of running mate, Romney has chosen a loyal Bush Republican and reliable supporter of the programs and policies that made the Bush administration an anathema to genuine conservatives and an embarrassment to the nation.

Finally, the Ryan budget, while including a number of unspecified cuts in entitlement programs, would push overall spending higher than current levels. Despite its optimistic revenue projections, the Congressional Budget Office projects the Ryan plan will lead to a balanced budget by [2040](#). That suggests a rousing slogan for the Romney-Ryan ticket: “Slightly Less Socialism and a Balanced Budget in 28 Years.”

Photo of Rep. Paul Ryan: AP Images



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