



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 11, 2011

CPAC's First Day Highlight's Ron Paul's Popularity

The first day of the 2011 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) set the stage for what could be a raucous weekend of exciting events in Washington, D.C. Though the attendees of this year's conference are of a broad spectrum, it appears that the majority are youthful and energetic, and an abundance of them are fans of Congressman Ron Paul. And this year, they came to be heard.



The day began with a brief welcome from [controversial](#) CPAC Chair David Keene, who was implicated two years ago in the American Conservative Union's efforts to have FedEx pay for a \$2 million campaign against an effort in the U.S. House of Representatives to impose new regulations from the NLRB onto the carrier that would have removed the competitive advantage it maintains over UPS.

Following the welcome address, a number of reputable speakers gave lectures and hosted symposiums, including Raul Labrador, Idaho's newly elected Representative, who told the audience that it was his Republican message that coasted him to victory, and encouraged audience members to stick to that message.

"We weren't elected because the American people love Republicans," said Labrador. "We were elected because the American people love Republican principles."

Describing his life story — including his mother's decision to give birth to him even as others attempted to convince her to either abort him or place him for adoption, and her transition from Democrat to Republican under President Ronald Reagan — Labrador's message was positive and patriotic.

Labrador also took the opportunity to criticize President Obama for using false rhetoric to mislead the American people. "Obama says things that sound nice and inspire hope in many, [but] his actions betray his message," he pointed out.

Also appearing at day one of the three-day conference was Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who took a number of jabs at the mainstream media for its sudden change of heart regarding the late President Ronald Reagan, as it has been comparing President Obama to Ronald Reagan in recent weeks.

"Olbermann is out and Reagan is in," joked McConnell.

McConnell outlined the GOP Senate agenda, which includes the repeal of ObamaCare and the replacement of the healthcare law with "common sense reforms to keep the government out of the doctor's office."



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McConnell added that the Republican Party needs to return to its principles of limited government, free enterprise, strong defense, the celebration of American exceptionalism, and strict constitutionalism.

Attendees crowded the ballroom to hear former House Speaker Newt Gingrich tout his achievements during the Clinton administration, which Gingrich contends included a balanced budget for four consecutive years, welfare reform, and tax cuts.

Equally angered by the media's attempts to compare Obama to Reagan, Gingrich declared, "Barack Obama is no Ronald Reagan."

According to Gingrich, Obama should follow in former President Bill Clinton's footsteps and move to the center. For Gingrich, that should include the following:

1. Signing the repeal of ObamaCare;
2. Signing tort reform for doctors;
3. Permanently repealing the death tax;
4. Passing a new Hyde Amendment which eliminates all taxpayer-funded abortions;
5. Securing the border; and
6. Replacing the Environmental Protection Agency.

Gingrich also emphasized the importance of allowing the free market to function so that Americans can get back to work. "America only works when Americans are working," he declared.

Planners of this year's CPAC likely did not believe that *New York Times* bestselling author and economist Thomas Woods, author of [Nullification: How to Resist Federal Tyranny in the 21st Century](#), would attract as large a crowd as he did, but the room in which he spoke was brimming with intent listeners.

Highly comedic and politically incorrect, Woods jokingly warned his audience, "If you want an opinion that neatly fits into the range from Mitch McConnell to Hillary Clinton, get out now."

Unafraid to pack a punch, Woods boldly declared that most of what Americans learn about the federal government is false, particularly any assertions that it is government interference that keeps society intact: "It is false to claim that the government ensures healthy work conditions, or good education, or safe food, or blah, blah, blah. The government convinces the public that it is needed, but in reality, it governs through a series of fiefdoms."

Woods proclaimed that the federal government should abolish most, if not all, of its departments and agencies, including the Department of Education and the Environment Protection Agency.

Woods was also unapologetically supportive of Ron Paul and not-so-subtly encouraged his audience to choose Paul in this year's CPAC presidential straw poll. He also took a few jabs at Donald Rumsfeld, particularly mocking CPAC for choosing Rumsfeld for its "Defender of the Constitution" award.

Appearing as a surprise guest was billionaire entrepreneur Donald Trump, who discussed his potential presidential aspirations. Though he has not come to a final decision on whether he will in fact seek a presidential bid, Trump outlined his presidential agenda, which includes a return to free-market principles.

Trump assured members of the audience that he would not add any new taxes, and would seek to restore American exceptionalism.

A fierce advocate of capitalism and the free market, Trump bemoaned the Obama administration's



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failure to see China for the threat that he perceives it to be, and criticized China for its manipulation of its currency.

Despite Trump's conservative talking points, however, each of his assertions was followed by an audience cheer of "Ron Paul for President." Eventually, Trump addressed his listeners, boldly declaring that while he is a fan of Paul, "Ron Paul has no chance of winning the presidency," an assertion met by loud boos.

In the end, however, Trump's patriotism won the hearts of the audience.

Ron Paul's son, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), also spoke at Thursday's forum, highlighting the difference between the Tea Party favorites in Congress and the establishment Republicans.

Rand Paul pointed to the dangers of blindly following Republicans who claim to espouse conservative ideals. He asserted that, for example, the GOP proposal to return spending to 2008 levels is not bold enough. He also declared that the federal government must cut unconstitutional programs and abolish the Department of Education.

Rand criticized the current and previous administrations for misinterpreting the Commerce Clause in the Constitution. He joked, "If my shoes were made in Tennessee, they would try to control my walking in Wisconsin," using the Commerce Clause.

Above all, Paul emphasized the importance of strong leaders and the necessity for CPAC's attendees to "keep the pressure on the Republicans."

He concluded, "America is not inherently exceptional; it's exceptional because we chose liberty and constitutional protections. "

A number of other prominent conservatives and Republicans appeared at Thursday's events, including Tea Party favorite Representative Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.), former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, Representative Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), and Representative Steve King (R-Iowa).

Likewise, an array of discussion panels took place throughout the day, regarding a spectrum of issues ranging from Second Amendment rights to the restoration of traditional family values.

Perhaps the most memorable event of the day was the awarding of the Defender of the Constitution Award, which was bestowed upon Donald Rumsfeld. Vice President Dick Cheney appeared as a surprise guest to present the award to George W. Bush's Defense Secretary.

Conservatives in the audience could not disguise their disdain for this year's recipient, booing and jeering him and asserting that the award should absolutely have been given to Congressman Ron Paul.

In fact, throughout a number of Thursday's symposiums, Ron Paul supporters could be heard chanting his name, or touting his strict defense of constitutional principles. Thus far, they have appeared to be the most outspoken attendees at the conference, and their energy and passion is contagious.

On Saturday evening, the winner of the CPAC presidential straw poll will be announced. Last year, Congressman Ron Paul won the majority of the vote. If the climate at this year's CPAC is indicative of the results, it appears history may repeat itself this weekend.

Photo: Ron Paul at CPAC: AP Images



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