



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 28, 2012

Ex-Republican Charlie Crist to Speak at Democratic National Convention

Former Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, who defected from the Republican Party in 2010 to run for the U.S. Senate as an independent, is slotted to speak at the Democratic National Convention September 4-6 in Charlotte, North Carolina. After being defeated by Republican Marco Rubio for the Florida senate seat in 2010, Crist has steadily drifted away from the Republican Party, now seemingly evolving into a full-fledged Democrat.



While blasting his former party in an [op-ed](#) in Sunday's *Tampa Bay Times*, Crist snubbed GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney and pledged his support for President Obama. The former governor bemoaned an "element" of the Republican Party that caters to the "extreme right," while he touted Obama's economic leadership through difficult times. Crist's article read, in part:

As America prepares to pick our president for the next four years — and as Florida prepares once again to play a decisive role — I'm confident that President Barack Obama is the right leader for our state and the nation. I applaud and share his vision of a future built by a strong and confident middle class in an economy that gives us the opportunity to reap prosperity through hard work and personal responsibility. It is a vision of the future proven right by our history.

We often remind ourselves to learn the lessons of the past, lest we risk repeating its mistakes. Yet nearly as often, our short-term memory fails us. Many have already forgotten how deep and daunting our shared crisis was in the winter of 2009, as President Obama was inaugurated. It was no ordinary challenge, and the president served as the nation's calm through a historically turbulent storm.

Further, Crist offered a generic explanation of how the president has "relentlessly focused on saving jobs," by investing government resources "in the right places." The former Republican particularly applauded Obama's policies on education, claiming that the administration supported 400,000 teachers' jobs, helped make college more affordable, and is making student loan payments for young graduates more viable.

"He invested in our runways, railways and roads," the former Republican continued. "President Obama knows a reliable infrastructure that helps move people to work and helps businesses move goods to market is a foundation of growth."

Naturally, Democrats are attempting to capitalize on Crist's supposed political transformation, asserting that his political standing has shifted due to a Republican Party that has become far too "radical." "Gov. Crist can personally speak to this, and contrast the president's vision with Mitt Romney's, which caters to the most extreme elements of the Republican Party and undermines the middle class," a Democratic official [told](#) Fox News.

Meanwhile, Republicans and other critics have branded Crist's August 26 op-ed as a political precursor



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to a campaign run against Florida's present Republican Gov. Rick Scott in 2014. "He wants us to accuse him of being a liberal," a GOP public relations firm said August 26. "Calling him a liberal will only play into his hand."

The AP's Gary Fineout [says](#) all indicators lead to a presumption that Crist is gearing up for a 2014 campaign run:

There are Charlie Crist billboards on the highways touting his current employer Morgan & Morgan. There was the recent Morgan & Morgan television ad where the former governor touts the virtues of teachers. There was Crist's endorsement of Democrat Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate as well as his decision to criticize the non-U.S. citizen voter purge being pushed by current Gov. Rick Scott.

And now: A hearty endorsement of President Barack Obama by the man who once proudly called himself a "Ronald Reagan Republican" and who once tore into then-Gov. Lawton Chiles after Chiles ran a bruising campaign to knock off Jeb Bush. Crist will also speak at the upcoming Democratic National Convention.

Other critics say Crist's decision to speak at the Democratic National Convention, coinciding with his endorsement of Obama, is far from shocking. "No one in Florida is surprised," [asserted](#) Rep. Connie Mack (R-Fla.). "Charlie left the Republican Party a long time ago.... So, no one in Florida is shocked that that's where the former governor went."

Former Rep. Adam Putnam, now Florida's agriculture commissioner, had blunter words for the GOP defector: "You know, Charlie Crist, bless his heart he is just so desperate to be in the parade, he will wear anybody's costume."

Photo of Charlie Crist: AP Images



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