



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on December 15, 2009

Follow the Constitution, Arney Urges GOP

Former House Majority Leader Dick Arney, one of the architects of the Republican victory in 1994, has urged his fellow Republicans to pay closer attention to the Constitution. In an interview with CBS News, Arney said that Republicans did not need to worry as much as ideology as they did to be dutiful. Congressman Arney noted that every member of Congress takes an oath to uphold the Constitution. Duty, Arney reiterated, is different from ideology or philosophy of government. He did not leave out free spending by Republican controlled congresses from his scolding.



Arney urged a fresh start with a central focus on individual responsibility. The former House leader urged that Republicans take a practical approach. In Arney's, it's unrealistic to suggest that entitlement programs vanish, simply because these programs were enacted under dubious constitutional authority. But, he continued, the direction of future policies on programs like Medicare should be toward voluntary participation rather than state compulsion. While the guiding star should always be the liberty that the Founding Fathers intended to leave us, it's vital to at least begin to fight for as much individual choice as possible within government programs. He said: "if we can't restore America to the full dimensions of liberty, let's at least clear up the transgressions of the institutions that are there."

The approach Arney outlined is perhaps reflected in the positions of FreedomWorks, the conservative advocacy group Arney heads. For example, FreedomWorks [calls for](#) scrapping our current tax code and replacing it with a flat tax. By way of contrast, Congressman Ron Paul, who ran for President in 2008 on the Republican ticket as the "champion of the Constitution," calls for scrapping the federal income tax and replacing it with nothing.

Regarding healthcare, the FreedomWorks website [says](#): "We want Americans to be able to use the free market to choose the care that suits their individual needs." It adds: "We believe that government should not gain more control over healthcare" — as opposed to taking the position that the federal government's already-significant role in healthcare should be phased out over time.

Arney has been a strong critic of President Obama's healthcare proposals — which would expand government's involvement in healthcare — as well as the "cap and trade" legislation supported by Obama. He also warned about the dangers of compulsory unionization, which is something that President Obama has been supporting. Congressman Arney noted that when the American people understand that the Obama administration is moving away from everything that created the American Dream, in pursuit of a purely academic idea of what America ought to be, then the president's current slide in public approval will increase.

Dick Arney, unlike so many other powerful politicians in Washington, is not a lawyer or a lifelong elected official. He attended college in North Dakota, far away from the powerbrokers in Washington,



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and later he taught economics at North Texas University. Arme y, a conservative congressman during his years in the House (1985-2003), acquired a reputation for supporting the closure of unnecessary military bases, a position many congressmen generally considered conservative do not take.

In his CBS interview, Congressman Arme y was asked about the Tea Party movement and whether FreedomWorks helped father that movement. He was asked if he agreed with Paul Krugman of the *New York Times*, who called Tea Parties "astroturf events." Congressman Arme y said that this movement was genuinely spontaneous and that this movement would have occurred with or without any help from FreedomWorks. Arme y said that this movement could lead to the genuine rehabilitation of the Republican Party, and that when Republicans adopt its attitude of freedom, then Republicans would win.

Photo of Dick Arme y: AP Images



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