



## “Real Conservatives” and the Next Republican President

There are four Republican candidates left standing in the GOP’s presidential primary contest: Mitt Romney, Ron Paul, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum. But to listen to most of talk radio and Fox News — i.e. the so-called “conservative” media — you would think that Ron Paul had withdrawn from the race, if he was ever in it at all.



This sort of coverage from self-avowed “conservatives” is the function of the worst of vices on their part. Paul not only remains a contestant in this struggle for his party’s prize, he remains a most viable contestant. That they would suggest otherwise, then, reflects upon their dishonesty as well as their recklessness. Finally, in neglecting Paul, the GOP’s apologists in the media convict themselves of both injustice and a lack of charity. Given that Paul’s integrity, both as a man as well as a public servant, is second to none, both justice and charity demand that he receive vastly more respect than his detractors in “the conservative media” are willing to give him.

That those Americans who yearn for a restoration of the constitutional Republic for which our progenitors fought and died should be reluctant to vote for Ron Paul because of his age, say, or even his style, is understandable. Yet these are *the only* considerations that should prevent the lover of liberty from casting his ballot for the only candidate in this race who shares his love.

Although the person of good will can’t but be frustrated with “conservative media” coverage of the GOP race, he is equally powerless from getting a chuckle out of it. After all, it is comical enough to hear, of all people, Romney, Santorum, and Gingrich arguing over who is most conservative. But when such self-appointed arbiters of “conservative” orthodoxy as Bill Bennett and Rush Limbaugh treat this political theatre with utmost seriousness, and when, at the same time, they mock and ridicule the one person whose commitment to the ideal of “limited,” constitutional government even *they* don’t question, the whole ordeal becomes downright laughable.

Let us not forget — let us never forget — that the very same self-avowed “conservatives” who deride Ron Paul while styling themselves defenders of “limited government” also enthusiastically supported George W. Bush. In fact, to this day, they still speak of Bush as if he were a conservative.

Yet, as most of us now know, Bush was no conservative. He was a *neoconservative*.

To put it another way, he was a believer in Big Government. Moreover, he was as much a believer in Big Government as any of his Democratic predecessors and perhaps even as much of a believer as his Democratic *successor*.

In this Age of Obama, and at this specific moment when Republicans are anxious to wrestle the presidency from this man who pledged to “fundamentally transform” America, few Republicans care to revisit Bush’s record. But revisit it they must if they care to avoid taking but another disastrous turn for their party and their country.

Bush promoted what he called “Compassionate Conservatism.” This is nothing more or less than an aggressive agenda that requires for its implementation a gigantic, far reaching federal government.

Bush’s declaration of a “war” on “terror” — a war that is in principle interminable — was in and of itself



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on January 30, 2012

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sufficient to guarantee that the federal government should assume a *permanent* position of central importance in the lives of every American. But even domestically, he labored inexhaustibly to insure federal supremacy.

Bush, who claims to be “pro-life,” was the first President in our history to authorize federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. In spite of the fact that hardly anyone cares to remember this, it was a huge victory for the champions of “choice.” With this single decision, our 43rd President both legitimized the act of abortion — the federal government would now encourage the destruction of innocent, unborn human lives by subsidizing it — as well as eroded further the sovereignty of the individual states by coercing their residents to support this objectionable practice.

In a sane world, this would be enough to definitively establish that Bush was no kind of a real conservative or lover of liberty. Those who remain unconvinced, however, will seek more proof. Fortunately, there is an ample supply of it:

- 1). Bush advanced the passage into law of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act — the most ambitious, and radical, change in Medicare to have ever been undertaken. Part of this change included what is called Medicare Part D, a new, and very controversial, prescription drug benefit. This victory of Bush’s entailed saddling an already insolvent health care program with an ever greater burden while strengthening the federal government’s authority over the innumerable transactions transpiring daily between millions of American consumers, their doctors, and their insurance providers.
- 2). Bush successfully urged passage of his now infamous “No Child Left Behind” Act, a law that renders state school districts ever more beholden to the federal government while feeding the bloat of the Department of Education.
- 3). Bush promoted what has been called “the Home Ownership Society.” What this means is that he brought the weight of the federal government to bear upon private lending institutions so that they would throw traditional lending criteria to the wind and make “sub-prime” mortgage loans to under-qualified applicants. It was this agenda that led to the explosion of the housing bubble and the onset of the economic meltdown of 2008.

We can easily add to this list of liberty-eroding measures that Bush appropriated during his two terms as President. The aforementioned details, however, are more than enough for all with eyes to see to recognize that George W. Bush was anything but an ally of the cause of limited, constitutional government for which conservatives are supposed to be fighting. Bush was no friend of liberty, for under his presidency, the federal government grew exponentially.

The thing is, the very same folks who now call for the need for “a real conservative” presidential candidate — while dismissing, ridiculing, and abusing Ron Paul — not only tirelessly defended Bush while he was in office; they continue to speak of him as if he were a great conservative President.

This is the case whether we are discussing the Republican Party’s pundits in the so-called “conservative media” or Republican politicians — including Gingrich, Romney, and Santorum. This is crucial to bear in mind as Republicans prepare to select their presidential nominee, for Bush did incalculable damage to the GOP brand — a fact to which Bush’s own approval numbers upon leaving office as well as the devastating congressional losses that Republicans suffered in 2006 and 2008 readily attest. To make matters worse, the political climate now is even more hostile vis-à-vis Big Government than it was in ‘08.



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All of this is crucial to bear in mind simply and solely because any vote for Romney, Gingrich, or Santorum is a vote for a third Bush term — not exactly a winning proposition.



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