



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on March 12, 2013

Rising Rand: The Significance of Rand Paul's Filibuster

Rand Paul's nearly 13-hour filibuster on the Senate floor last week was a stroke of political genius that still has not yet been fully appreciated.

Those who compose the base of the GOP lost much of their morale during George W. Bush's second term. When the Democrats took back the Congress in 2006 and Barack Obama won the presidency two years later, it all but vanished.

Spirits began to stir once more during the midterm elections of 2010, it is true, but since then, they've again been reduced to dust and ashes. Anyone who doubts this need only consider that some four million self-identified Republicans refused to vote for Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan back in November.



Yet now, thanks to Rand Paul, and he alone, millions of Republicans from around the country have gotten their second wind. They have been rejuvenated in a way, and to an extent, that the party hasn't seen in years.

But even this understates the magnitude of what's happened courtesy of Rand's Senate stand, for it isn't just that he reinvigorated the traditional base of his party.

Rand Paul's move last week was a potential game-changer inasmuch as he garnered the respect and admiration, yes, but, also, the enthusiastic support of legions of just those voters who the GOP ceded to their competition long ago: independents, the young, and even some Democrats.

Even his critic John McCain acknowledged the influence that Rand Paul exerts over young voters when he castigated his colleague for exciting "impressionable libertarian kids in their dorm rooms" — you know, exactly those "kids" who would rather die than vote for most Republicans, but particularly the McCains of the party.

Many of us on the Right have been arguing for quite some time that Republicans have what some have called a "messaging" problem. As far as popular opinion is concerned, image has always counted for more than substance in politics. For no people is this truer than our image-obsessed generation.

In other words, even if "the facts" are on a politician's or party's side, this by itself means nothing electorally speaking. What does matter electorally, though, is that if those facts aren't articulated passionately and in a way that provokes the popular imagination, those who possess them can go down to defeat.

Rand Paul proved last week that he is well aware of all of this.

The substance of his filibuster concerns the issue of drone strikes against American citizens on



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American soil — an issue with which Americans from across the political spectrum are concerned. However, it is the style with which Senator Paul packaged the substance of his speech that awakened Americans to this topic.

And it is the style that called forth their sympathies for Paul's position while endearing him to them personally.

Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is vintage Americana. The film captured the heart of a nation. But it did so in more than one way. Countless millions of Americans from across generations love this film — including those who have not seen it. It is one of those stories that all remotely decent persons are supposed to love. Yet Americans love this story because, like an air-brushed photo, it helps them to see just how good they can be — both individually and as a country.

Paul evoked all of those wonderful emotions that are wrapped up in the popular consciousness with this Capra classic. He styled himself the quintessential idealistic non-political, or trans-political, politician, concerned with nothing more or less than defending the American Way against the power lust of "the people's" elected representatives.

As a result, his political fortunes, as well as those of his party, are looking much brighter now than they looked before Mr. Paul went to Washington.



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