



## Ron Paul: Why a Top-tier Candidate Is Ignored by Republicans

It is hard not to be amazed by the blackout of media coverage of Ron Paul's presidential campaign. Had Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain, Rick Santorum, Jon Huntsman, or any second-tier candidate been performing remotely as well as Paul has, he would no longer be regarded as a "second-tier" candidate. To the credit of such left-leaning outlets as Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* and *The Huffington Post*, this phenomenon has not gone unnoticed by everyone.

Let's think about this.

*In spite of* the extent to which Paul has been ignored by the establishment media in both of its leftist and rightist varieties, he unfailingly elicits explosive applause in every GOP presidential primary debate in which he has participated. A [Fox News poll](#), of all places, shows that the overwhelming majority of its respondents hold that Ron Paul achieved a decisive victory over all of the other candidates in the most recent debate in Iowa. Of 7,991 "active" cities nationwide that participated in the poll, and 43,293 total votes, 27,459 people thought that Paul won the debate. Newt Gingrich came in second place — with 5,906 votes.

Statistically speaking, [Ron Paul practically tied with Michele Bachmann for first place in the Ames Straw Poll](#), a contest that is evidently so significant that "top-tier" contender Tim Pawlenty's third place showing compelled him to abandon his campaign. Bachmann beat Paul by a meager 152 votes.

A [CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll](#) released back in May showed that among possible Republican contenders (Perry may not have been a consideration as of yet), Paul stands the best chance of beating President Obama. This poll showed Obama leading Paul by only seven percentage points, while he led Romney by 11. Since then, however, things have changed.

A [Gallup poll](#) from August 23 shows that if the election were held today, Mitt Romney would beat Obama by two percentage points (48 percent-46 percent) and Rick Perry would tie with him (at 47 percent). It is true that this same poll has Obama beating Paul by (only) *two* points (47 percent-45 percent); but it has Obama beating "top-tier" candidate Bachmann by *four* points (48 percent-44 percent)! However, when it comes to that much cherished "independent" vote, Paul *leads* Obama by





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three points. The significance of this vis-à-vis my contention that Paul is a top-tier candidate himself and should be recognized as such becomes obvious once we grasp that Romney is the only other Republican candidate who leads Obama among independents by this much (but *only* this much). “Top-tier” candidate Perry leads Obama in this category by two points while “top-tier” candidate Bachmann *trails* Obama among independents by *six points*.

In a [Texas poll](#) among “882 highly active Republican voters,” these voters said that if the Texas primaries were held at the time that the poll was taken, they would vote for Congressman Paul before they would vote for any other Republican contender — including their own Governor, Rick Perry (who was second choice).

As I write this, [a Gallup Presidential Nomination preference poll](#) shows that Paul has leapt ahead of “top-tier” candidate Michele Bachmann and is now third place behind Perry and Romney. Twenty-nine percent of those polled prefer Perry; 17 percent are partial to Romney; and Paul picks up 13 percent of the vote against Bachmann’s 10 percent.

Polls fluctuate. In any event, they are no substitutes for actual votes. Still, the point here is not that Paul is likely to get his party’s nomination or that he would actually win the general election if he did; in these propositions it is not my purpose to either affirm or deny. Rather, the point is only to show that by the very standards by which establishment pundits and pollsters determine top-tier candidates, Paul should be considered a top-tier candidate.

But he is not.

The reason for this, I think, is pretty clear.

Even though he is the partisan for constitutional or “limited” government *par excellence*, Paul is despised and feared by the party of “limited government.” That is, he is anathema to the GOP establishment, for while he has proved prescient regarding the economic collapse of 2008, and while an ever increasing number of Americans generally and Republican-minded voters in particular have gravitated toward embracing many of his views over the last three years, Paul’s uncompromising repudiation of his party’s foreign policy vision has earned him quite a few enemies within it.

Let us be blunt: The stone cold truth is that for all of their talk of “conservative” principles and the like, Paul’s Republican opponents in Washington and the so-called “alternative” or “conservative” media are not now, nor have they ever been, genuinely conservative. Whether we are discussing Fox News contributors — a shocking number of which are refugees from George W. Bush’s administration — the writers at *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, or such talk radio personalities as Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Bill Bennett and all of the rest, such “conservative” commentators aren’t conservative at all; they are *neoconservative*.

In all fairness, it may be a lack of familiarity with the conservative intellectual tradition or even a reliable history of the conservative *movement* in America that accounts for why some of these folks wrongly, but sincerely, confuse their commitment to neoconservatism with conservatism proper. As for many of them, though, I suspect that they know exactly what they are doing when they deceptively identify themselves as “conservative.”

My intention here is not to criticize Paul’s detractors for being neoconservatives. The term “neoconservatism” is not, or at least should not, be interpreted as a slur. As I and others, including its apologists, have argued, neoconservatism is a distinct political-philosophical orientation, an expression of the Enlightenment liberal rationalism that continues to dominate our political imagination. But



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philosophically, neoconservatism is as far from classical conservatism as is socialism.

There is no more shame in a neoconservative arguing and defending his convictions than there is shame in anyone else doing the same. There is, however, shame in a neoconservative pretending that he is something other than he is.

And, like today's "progressives" who pretend they are not "socialists" because of the unpopularity of the idea of "socialism," our neoconservatives pretend they are "conservatives" because of the unpopularity of neoconservatism.

To sum this all up, Ron Paul has proven to be, at the very least, competitive with the best that this GOP primary race has to offer. However, as long as his party remains dominated by neoconservatives, he will face an uphill battle.

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