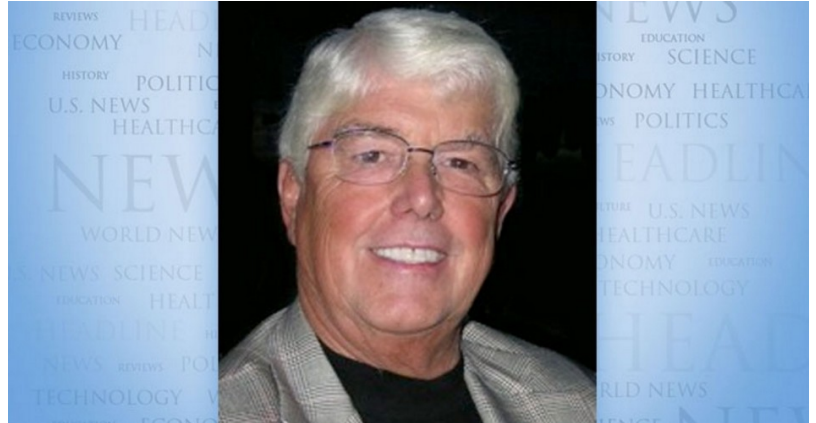




Written by [Wallis W. Wood](#) on August 5, 2012

Rand Paul Takes On the TSA

For the second year in a row, Kentucky's junior senator, Rand Paul, had the standing-room-only crowd at FreedomFest on its feet, applauding and cheering. (Although, there were a few gloomy dissidents I'll tell you about later.) And also for the second year in a row, I had the great pleasure of introducing the Republican senator and conducting a lively question-and-answer period with him.



Paul began with a story that got a huge laugh from the crowd. "As you may know," he said, "I have sort of a love/hate relationship with the TSA." He paused and then added, "Well, let's be honest. It's more of a hate/hate relationship."

Paul related several horror stories about passengers who were abused by the people charged with making sure our airports are safe and secure. He described what it is like going through airport security. He raised his hands above his head, then mimicked a guard saying, "No, hon, a little higher. Raise your arms a little bit higher."

While holding his arms high above his head, Rand turned to the crowd and asked, "Is this the posture of a free man?" The response was an enthusiastic burst of laughter, stomping and cheering.

The senator then related his own recent experience. It seems a scanner saw something it didn't like when he was trying to board a flight. He was instructed to sit in a cubicle and wait for a guard. He asked if he couldn't just go through the scanner again, but was told no. When he complained about being detained, he was told, "You're not being detained; you just can't leave."

He decided to alert the local media to what was happening. But when he reached into his carry-on bag to get his cellphone, a guard standing nearby said: "Now, you qualify for a full pat-down." So Rand told the reporter he was talking to, "Looks like I'll be here for a while."

Finally, an older and wiser Transportation Security Administration official prevailed. When he arrived, he suggested the senator go through the scanner again. In fact, he offered to take him to the head of the line. "No," the senator replied. "I'll wait in line like everyone else."

The second time through security the scanner was silent. "It looks like you have a 50 percent error rate," the senator remarked. "That doesn't sound very good to me."

A TSA employee standing by the machine told him, "Oh, that's because they're set to go off randomly."

A higher-up later denied this, but you could tell the senator was more than a little skeptical about the machines — and the agency that administers them.

Paul has introduced a bill in the Senate that would privatize the TSA.

"I'd rather have the airlines responsible for the safety and security of their passengers and their planes," he told the crowd. He said that while many Democrats in Congress have told him privately that they agree with him (and have even shared other TSA horror stories), he doesn't expect any action in the current Congress.



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"The TSA is a big union," he said. "And the Democrats won't do anything this year to hurt a union."

According to Paul, the TSA may be the second most-hated agency of the Federal government — next to the Internal Revenue Service. But it isn't the biggest problem we face. No, that dubious honor belongs to our debt.

"We are borrowing \$50,000 a second — over a trillion dollars a year," the senator said. "It is unsustainable. We must do something about it. And we aren't."

"Last week," he told us, "we tried to cut one penny from the price support for sugar. One penny. It would have saved \$7 million a year. That's not much when you're faced with a trillion-dollar deficit. We'd have to do it another 140,000 times to balance the budget."

Paul said the bill had a good chance to pass, but "then Harry Reid came along and twisted some arms and two Democrats changed their vote." The measure failed.

He told the crowd not to believe there is no bipartisan compromise in Congress.

"This simply isn't true," he insisted. "We have it every year — to *raise* spending." When you hear claims that Congress has agreed to cut spending, don't believe it, he said. "What they're cutting are increases that are already built into the system."

If we just held spending where it is, we could balance the budget in 10 years, Paul insisted. "If we were to cut just one percent a year — one penny out of every dollar — we could balance the budget in six or seven years."

As you might have guessed, Paul is totally opposed to raising taxes. He pointed out that the top 10 percent of taxpayers already pay 70 percent of all of the taxes collected in this country.

"The rich are paying *more* than their fair share," he said. "If you want to make it fair, you should cut their taxes." That sentiment was greeted with a hearty round of applause.

There was a lively question-and-answer period at the end of Paul's remarks. The most common question, by far, was why he endorsed Mitt Romney for president instead of his dad.

"First of all," he replied, "it's not 'instead.' I did endorse my father and still do. I've been campaigning for him since I was 11 years old. There is no one who has worked harder for him."

Paul said he believes "libertarians can accomplish more working within the Republican Party than outside." When he decided to run for the Senate, he did so as a Republican. "I said then that I would support the Party's nominee for president," he said.

Paul then addressed the libertarians in his audience.

"If you support the Libertarian Party, I'm not going to bust your chops," he said. "I've been there. I'm not saying that if you choose that approach you are wrong. But at least do me the courtesy of understanding that there's no one more supporting of my father than me."

The senator may not have won over everyone in the audience. But the vast majority gave him a rousing standing ovation when he concluded by saying: "We have to believe in ourselves. We have to believe in the free-enterprise system. We shouldn't apologize. Instead, we should tell the world that our system made us the strongest, the richest, and the most humanitarian country in the history of the world."

Until next time, keep some powder dry.

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