



Ron Paul's Opposition in Tea Party Movement

Has the Tea Party Movement (TPM) been hijacked? Originally very much a grassroots uprising against high taxes, out-of-control federal spending, and incumbents not affiliated with any political party, it drew in disaffected Republicans, many of whom had supported Ron Paul for the Republican nomination, many former Republicans who may not have supported Dr. Paul but never considered George W. Bush the genuine article, some Constitution Party members, a few Libertarians, and other Independents. Many credit Ron Paul and his supporters for having started the TPM back in late 2007.



Last week, however, TPM organizers held a convention in Nashville, Tennessee, at a ritzy hotel (the Opryland), and charged an admission fee of \$549 a head, to hear — not Dr. Paul or someone following in his footsteps such as Peter Schiff or his son Dr. Rand Paul (both involved in runs for Senate seats in their respective states) or Debra Medina, a former Paul campaign volunteer now making a credible run for Governor of Texas, but former vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin!

If that doesn't raise a few eyebrows, let us consider that Dr. Paul [faces three GOP opposition candidates](#) in his own district in Texas, more than ever before. All three have ties to the TPM. Dr. Paul, moreover, has expressed a certain amount of discomfort with the antagonistic tone of some of the Tea Party rallies.

Tim Graney, one of Dr. Paul's challengers, said, "The Tea Parties have awakened a lot of everyday people here and across America. And Ron Paul is worried about getting swept up in the anti-incumbent wave as if he is some exception."

Gerald Wall, another opponent, stated, "The Republican Party has left its principles. And these Tea Parties are full of people who want to take back our party."

John Gay, the third opponent, was more openly critical of Paul, saying, "The word I keep hearing is 'ineffective.' This district is not really being represented as it could be."

Ron Paul's critics in his own district have expressed impatience with his national ambitions, his refusal to vote for federal aid to the district following Hurricane Ike, and his opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — a sore spot with many Republicans.

Ron Paul's main campaign spokesman, Jesse Benton, has scoffed at allegations of ineffectiveness, stating that the vote against aid to the district was an expression of Dr. Paul's consistent fiscal conservatism. Dr. Paul, like others in Congress, has the advantages of incumbency, including \$1.9 million in the bank — an amount none of his challengers in either major party have approached. (Three Democrats are also vying for Ron Paul's job.)

Dr. Paul takes the challenge seriously, though, having written in a letter to supporters that his opponents had "turned their attack dogs loose on me" ... He went on to warn them that the anti-



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incumbent mood in the country could take him down as well. "While I think this development is a good thing," he told supporters, "I am going to have to work hard to ensure I am not caught up in the same wave and swept out of office before our job is done."

While Dr. Paul's prospects for retaining his seat in the House are good, he and supporters appear to face a separate challenge for control over the TPM. However loudly she stated, "*America is ready for another revolution*," the substance of Palin's speech in Nashville was very much that of the GOP mainstream. She supported the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, and engaged in sabre-rattling against Iran. On the other hand, she never mentioned the Federal Reserve or sound money — mainstays of the Ron Paul movement.

This suggests that the neoconservatives — "neocons" — who controlled the GOP during the Bush II years — have indeed hijacked the TPM and are drawing on its energy in their efforts to win back Congress this fall and, eventually, the White House in 2012. At the very least, with the Nashville convention that took on an appearance of mainstream GOP instead of grassroots populism, we may be seeing the beginnings of a power struggle within the TPM between supporters of Ron Paul and supporters of Sarah Palin.

For what it is worth, Palin has endorsed Dr. Paul's son in his run for the soon-to-be-vacant Senate seat in Kentucky.



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