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A Rand Paul/Mike Lee Ticket for 2016?

Bernie Quigley, [writing at the Pundit's Blog for The Hill](#) on Wednesday, considered the fiscal cliff bill that became the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (ATRA) as a “touchstone ... a benchmark ... to mark the progress of history.” He considers the law as a



sea change and two to watch at the quiet turning of the tides today are Rand Paul and Mike Lee, Senators from Kentucky and Utah, who voted against the fateful “fiscal cliff” agenda last night.

The century might start this year with them.

He added that these two junior senators, supported by Tea Party conservatives and remaining loyal to and consistent with its beliefs and principles, “have brought the Tea Party’s passionate rants to responsible and effectively engaged government ... both of them should have their eyes on the Oval Office in 2016.”

It’s possible that Paul, the son of retiring House member Ron Paul (R-Texas), has had his eye on that prize long before he voted against ATRA. Just a few days after the November election, Paul [was asked](#) by ABC’s Jonathan Karl about his presidential ambitions for 2016 and Paul responded:

Am I interested in thinking about that? Yes.

I’m not going to deny that I think we have to go in a different direction because we’re just not winning.

Scarcely a week later Paul [was interviewed](#) by CNN anchor Brooke Baldwin where he clarified and expanded on his thinking about 2016:

I want to be part of the national debate. I think my party, the Republican Party, is shrinking. We’re in danger of becoming a dinosaur.

We’re not competitive in huge areas of the country. Some of the biggest states: California, New York, Illinois ... we’re not competing there anymore. In fact, we don’t even advertise there.

So we need a new type of Republican. I think that involves some of the ideas of Libertarian-leaning Republicans: people who believe in a less aggressive foreign policy, people who believe that we’re not going to deport 12 million Hispanic folks.

Paul, who left a thriving practice in ophthalmology in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to run for the Senate in 2010, [immediately made his presence felt](#) by forming, with the help of Senators Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah), the Senate Tea Party Caucus. He then offered a bill to cut \$500 billion from federal spending in the first year, primarily by emasculating the Department of Education and the Department of Homeland Security and eliminating altogether the Department of Housing and Urban Development. His bill would shut down another seven government agencies, cut defense spending by 6.5 percent and



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terminate all foreign aid.

As bills came to the Senate floor to expand the reach and power of the federal government, Paul could be counted on to vote “no.” He voted against the most egregious provisions of the [USA Patriot Act](#), including roving wiretaps, searches of business records and conducting surveillance of “lone wolves” (individual American citizens not necessarily linked to so-called terrorist groups). In August 2011 he voted against raising the debt ceiling while endorsing a bill to audit the Federal Reserve that his father offered in the House.

His efforts to defund the Department of Education are part of his philosophy that educating children ought to be left to their parents and local communities. He opposed subsidizing energy companies, saying that it only encourages them to increase their lobbying efforts in Washington. Regarding the Supreme Court’s [decision to uphold ObamaCare](#), Paul said that “just because a couple of people on the Supreme Court declare something to be ‘constitutional’ does not make it so. The whole thing is unconstitutional.”

Rand has a kindred soul in [Senator Mike Lee](#) (R-Utah) as one of the two other senators who voted, along with Paul, against the [National Defense Authorization Act of 2012](#) (NDAA). He expressed serious concerns specifically over Section 1021, the part of the law that gives the military the power to detain indefinitely any person — including an American citizen — who commits a “belligerent act” against the United States and hold him “without trial until the end of hostilities.”

Lee joined with Paul and the other senator from South Carolina, Lindsey Graham, in proposing a plan to salvage Social Security from its impending bankruptcy by raising the retirement age to 70 and reducing benefits to higher-income beneficiaries.

Lee’s voting record has been as consistent as Paul’s as well, with the Club for Growth giving Lee a 100 percent score (along with Paul and just two others). Lee has also received a 100 percent rating from the American Conservative Union and a 99 percent rating from the Heritage Foundation. The Freedom Index published by the John Birch Society, rating how closely they hew to the Constitution in their voting records, gives Rand a 95 rating out of 100, while giving Lee at 90 rating.

If the establishment Republican Party’s ratings have reached a low point following the loss of its presidential candidate Mitt Romney in the November presidential election and its failure to get footing in its battle to reduce government spending during the recent fiscal cliff debate, then perhaps it isn’t too early for the party to begin to look for potential candidates who stand for what that party used to stand for: limited government as outlined by the Constitution. These are two names to watch as the 113th Congress opens.

Photos of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah)

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