



Did the Tea Party Cost Republicans the Senate, and Should It Matter?

The U.S. Senate losses by Tea Party favorites Sharron Angle and Christine O'Donnell have led some pundits to conclude that the Tea Party is responsible for the U.S. Senate remaining in Democratic hands.

CBS News analyst Brian Montopoli [posited](#) after the election:

It's impossible to know exactly how things would have played out had the Tea Party movement not existed. But it certainly appears that the nomination of both O'Donnell and Angle cost the Republican Party. Had those two seats gone to the GOP, Republicans might now be in a position to celebrate a takeover of both houses of Congress instead of just one.

Of course, Montopoli fails to account for the losses by establishment Republicans in the final election who had defeated Tea Party candidates in primaries in many other states. Many others, such as libertarian-leaning [Peter Schiff](#) would likely have had greater appeal in the liberal and Democratic-leaning Connecticut U.S. Senate race over the establishment picked, self-funded GOP nominee Linda McMahon, who lost to Democrat Richard Blumenthal. Moreover, the margin in House races could have been wider had it not been for establishment GOP candidates such as New Mexico's Tom Mullins winning the primary against Tea Party candidate [Adam Kokesh](#), and then going on to lose handily to incumbent Democrat [Ben Lujan](#) in the general elections.

The more important point is perhaps that the original Tea Party movement, [started by Ron Paul supporters back in 2006 and 2007](#), was not created to bring electoral victory to Republican clones of the big-spending Democrats. To the contrary, the original Tea Party opposed big-spending Republicans when they were still in power in Congress and the White House. The election, as well as the incipient Tea Party movement, could be seen as a move to oppose the Democratic agenda, not an endorsement of the Republican Party agenda. Indeed, [most voters including Tea Party supporters still have a negative view of the Republican Party](#).

Photo of Sharron Angle: AP Images



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