



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 6, 2011

Is This the Ron Paul Moment?

Every issue seemed to be running his way during the debate. Paul was even asked by reporters: "Congressman Paul, a lot of folks consider you the founding father of the Tea Party movement. Now, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann has founded and heads up the Tea Party Caucus in the House. Has she eclipsed you?"



Congressman Paul replied: "Well, she's not here tonight, so she hasn't quite done that. We attend Tea Party meetings together, and of course, the Tea Party movement was started during the last campaign when there was a special day where they raised \$6 million dollars spontaneously."

{youtube width="480" height="390"}y9q4XRAAecE{/youtube}

Representative Paul was referring to a national fundraising effort on his behalf in December 2007 that netted his 2008 campaign \$6 million in Internet fundraising conducted independent of his campaign staff. But Paul's biggest victory May 5 may have had nothing to do with the debate itself. His Tea Party supporters blew up another of their Internet "money bombs" that [netted the Paul exploratory committee about \\$1 million in the day](#).

Fox News' Sean Hannity told viewers immediately after the debate: "You're going to hear from four of the five candidates on this show, except for Ron Paul. He decided to go to the Tea Party rally." Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum and former Godfather's Pizza chief executive Herman Cain also [attended](#) the debate.

Reports from the Greenville Tea Party meeting indicate why Paul skipped the Fox News interview for meetings with his Tea Party supporters. *The New American's* publisher John F. McManus reported an impressive turnout of about 250 state and local activists, including the Tea Party-aligned Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley. McManus told this reporter that the meeting earlier in the day had "a lot of good people, a lot of local organizations and statewide organizations. It's impressive to see. And again, you see a thing like this in mid-afternoon on a Thursday, pull out that many people. That's pretty good." He also told *The New American* that "my evaluation is that the people at the [Greenville] Tea Party are, if not 100 percent, 90 percent for Ron Paul."

The New American's McManus wasn't the only correspondent on the scene to take note that the Tea Party meeting was essentially "Ron Paul country." David Weigel of Slate.com [wrote](#): "'Osama bin Laden is dead,' said Stephen Sebastian, the CEO of Conservative Students for a Better Tomorrow. 'It's time to support the troops and bring them home, from all of the military bases.' That got such big applause that I took a harder look at the lunch crowd of around 100 people. Aha: Many of them had Ron Paul 2012 buttons. Paul is by far the best represented politician at the event, with a table for his Campaign for Liberty (copies of End the Fed on sale) and legions of grassroots supporters who are passing out information about hard money and nullification."



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The fundraising success and Tea Party leadership by Paul come at a time where [poll numbers from CNN](#) show Paul would run the strongest among GOP potential candidates against Obama in a head-to-head match. CNN reported: "Who does best against Obama? Paul. The congressman from Texas, who also ran as a libertarian candidate for president in 1988 and who is well liked by many in the tea party movement, trails the president by only seven points (52 to 45 percent) in a hypothetical general election showdown. Huckabee trails by eight points, with Romney down 11 points to Obama."

In 2007 and early 2008, Congressman Paul repeatedly warned voters that the economy was on the verge of collapse, and his warnings were virtually ignored. Nobody's ignoring him now, and he's a regular guest on financial [talk shows nationally](#).

Even on foreign policy, Paul's longtime quest to end U.S. foreign wars have taken on increased credibility in GOP primaries. He no longer has to square off against a Republican incumbent President who started the wars, and Democrat Obama has his own war in Libya. Moreover, the announcement that Osama bin Ladin — the putative reason for the U.S. war in Afghanistan — was killed by the U.S. military has negated a powerful reason for keeping American soldiers in harm's way. Rep. Paul told the Greenville, South Carolina, gathering: "[Bin Laden] wasn't caught in Afghanistan. Nation-building in Afghanistan and telling those people how to live and getting involved in running their country hardly had anything to do with finding the information where he was being held in a country that we give billions of dollars of foreign aid to, at the same time we are bombing that country.... Now that he has been killed, boy it is a wonderful time for this county now to reassess it."

Paul served as a lonely non-interventionist voice back in the 2008 presidential campaign. He wasn't alone on the stage May 5. Former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson told the audience he opposed to Iraq war "from the beginning" and supports immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan. He also claimed to be opposed to the Libyan bombing and waterboarding. But Johnson differed with Dr. Paul on the issue of abortion, an issue likely to minimize his electoral chances in the culturally conservative GOP primaries. Governor Johnson favors legalized abortion while Representative Paul has a perfect pro-life voting record over his 12 congressional terms.

This is not to say Representative Paul is the frontrunner for the GOP nomination at this point. There isn't any clear frontrunner. Missing from the debate are several prominent Republicans who are likely to become candidates, including former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, businessman Donald Trump, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Fox News Channel Host Mike Huckabee, none of whom have formally announced their candidacy for the presidency. But as Tom Jenson at Public Policy Polling [noted](#) of Paul on April 25, "don't laugh at Ron Paul."

Thumbnail photo of Ron Paul: AP Images

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