



“Mount Vernon Statement” — A Warning

The “Mount Vernon Statement” to be announced today at the start of the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, D.C. is a “broad statement of principle aimed at giving a coherent framework” to the Tea Party and other activist movements on the right.



It also sounds eerily familiar.

The statement is available at www.themountvernonstatement.com, which declares:

The federal government today ignores the limits of the Constitution, which is increasingly dismissed as obsolete and irrelevant. Some insist that America must change, cast off the old and put on the new. But where would this lead — forward or backward, up or down? Isn't this idea of change an empty promise or even a dangerous deception?

The change we urgently need, a change consistent with the American ideal, is not movement away from but toward our founding principles.

It is designed to “update” and “restate” the Sharon Statement of 1960, the founding statement of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) which heralded the start of the conservative movement. (The statement's name stemmed from it being first announced from the home of William F. Buckley, Jr. in Sharon, Connecticut.) It is designed to reach out to three main branches of conservatism, “reminding economic conservatives that morality is essential to limited government, social conservatives that unlimited government is a threat to moral self-government, and national security conservatives that energetic but responsible government is the key to America's safety and leadership in the world,” according to Edwin Meese, former Attorney General under President Reagan and one of the drafters of the document.

The Sharon Statement included conservative affirmations such as “the individual's use of his God-given free will, [from] whence [he] derives his right to be free from the restrictions of arbitrary force”, “the purpose of government is to protect those freedoms,” and that “the Constitution of the United States is the best arrangement yet devised for empowering government to fulfill its proper role, while restraining it from the concentration and abuse of power.”

The Mount Vernon [Statement](#), according to Alfred S. Regnery, publisher of *American Spectator* magazine, “is a philosophical foundation, based on the concept of ‘constitutional conservatism.’ It's written so that most conservatives can say, ‘Yeah, this is just what I think.’ ”



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It's also written to "recommit ourselves to our conservative principles," [according to](#) Jim Bopp, a member of the Republican National Committee.

This is particularly important now, since we are facing the most concerted and comprehensive attack on the nature of our society and government in an effort to transform it based on a socialist model.

It honors the central place of individual liberty in American politics [and] encourages free enterprise, the individual entrepreneur, and economic reforms grounded in market solutions.

And it's written "to unite Republicans and 'tea party' independents around the cause of defending the Constitution from liberal overreaching," said Solomon Yue, another RNC member. Yue added that the statement "lays a foundation for embracing the full spectrum of conservatism by defending founding principles in their entirety in order to keep this republic."

Evidence of the statement's effort to reach disparate viewpoints, especially in foreign policy, military adventures, and nation-building, shows up when it says it "supports America's national interest in advancing freedom and opposing tyranny in the world and prudently considers what we can and should do to that end."

The Mount Vernon Statement is the creature of the Conservative Action Project which was formed immediately after Barack Obama's victory. The CAP is an offshoot of the Council for National Policy [founded](#) in 1981 as "the conservative version of the Council on Foreign Relations," according to Marc J. Ambinder of ABC News.

Individuals drafting the statement include respectable Republicans and neo-conservatives such as Edwin Feulner of the Heritage Foundation, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, Brent Bozell of the Media Research Center, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, and David Keene, head of the American Conservative Union (which is sponsoring the conference in Washington).

According to the [American Spectator](#), the statement's goal is to "unite the right — economic, social, and national security conservatives — under a set of shared principles. Unlike the [Contract for America](#), the Mount Vernon Statement is not a detailed legislative agenda. Instead, it is a set of philosophical principles that can serve as the foundation for policy formulation later." Former Congressman David McIntosh, one of the drafters, said "The objective was to unify various people who were conservatives who care about different aspects of conservatism. It unites all of those principles under kind of a stronghold of constitutional government. We're hoping this will be picked up by the Tea Party activists as a framework."

The similar attempt with the 1994 Contract with America to push back against encroaching government failed miserably. In her review of "[Newt Gingrich, The Establishment's Conservative](#)" in *The New American* magazine, Rebecca Terrell reminds her readers that it "turned out to be a public relations smokescreen to cover various unconstitutional measures that Congress planned to pass under Gingrich's leadership [as Majority Leader of the House of Representatives]. Federal spending in all the areas addressed by the 1994 Contract rose in subsequent years. Edward H. Crane, president of the Cato Institute, observed that "the combined budgets of the 95 major programs that the Contract with America promised to eliminate have increased by 13%."

It's encouraging to note that not everyone is buying into the statement. Richard Viguerie, a longtime conservative activist, said:



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[The statement] is embarrassing. If the people in the leadership of the conservative movement are going to put out pabulum like this, the tea party people are going to make them seem irrelevant. And the tea party people are going to march to the forefront. This is almost as if the movement's leaders were taken over by [establishment conservatives] like Tom DeLay and John Boehner.

It is helpful to remember that DeLay, along with Gingrich and Grover Norquist, started the "[K Street Project](#)", an effort to "pressure Washington lobbying firms to hire Republicans into top positions, and to reward loyal GOP lobbyists with access to influential officials." Boehner is the House Minority Leader.

[Michelle Malkin](#) noted that "many groups are coming out with 'statements' of conservative principles and legislative agendas. All well and good, but if the signers of all these new documents [wind up supporting] political candidates who brazenly [continue to] undermine the grand principles they put forth, *what's the point?* "

Referring to a photo of a billboard depicting the U.S. Constitution next to a headline reading "Miss Me Yet?" Malkin noted:

Anyway, isn't the document featured here the only statement of guiding principles we need?

Photo of Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich at the 2007 Conservative Political Action Conference: AP Images



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