



Rand Paul, the Tea Party, and the Media

Political analysts have been examining one of the most interesting trends in the media ? how the mainstream media have been responding to America?s most quickly growing political movement, the Tea Party.

While the mainstream media (networks such as NBC, CBS, MSNBC, and ABC, and publications such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, and the *New York Times*) are known for their belief that liberal opinion constitutes political orthodoxy, the Tea Party has robustly challenged these suppositions, especially with Senator Rand Pauls (picture, left) emergence as the de facto head and most prominent media spokesman for the burgeoning political movement and its agenda of limited, constitutional government, free markets, individual liberty, and fiscal restraint.



The liberal media eschew and even mock concepts such as the unconstitutionality of Social Security, as well as the notion that there are conservatives opposed to an interventionist foreign policy, and the idea that many of the reforms of the civil rights era are unconstitutional incursions into the realm of property rights and states rights. Because of this liberal media bias, individuals such as Senator Paul have at times been forced by circumstances to use their media appearances as an opportunity to educate journalists and the public on the principles of constitutionalism and libertarianism which the public does not even generally hear on conservative channels such as Fox, which features mainstream conservatives such as Sean Hannity and Bill OReilly.

Senator Rand Paul has taken the media by storm, gracefully and wisely responding to liberal attacks and uninformed objections against his constitutionalist ideology. Upon the release of his book, [The Tea Party Goes to Washington](#), Paul?s media opportunities have increased immensely, opening up more opportunities to advocate for the all-too-neglected principles of true fiscal conservatism and constitutionalism.

Such an example occurred when Senator Paul promoted his book on *Late Show With David Letterman*. Letterman, a liberal, expressed a pro-labor union sentiment and failed to demonstrate even a basic understanding of economic principles in his argument, as the best response he could provide to Paul?s calm and cogent statements was to retort, that doesnt sound right, and I think hes wrong about some of these things, I just cant tell you why, while claiming that Wisconsin public schoolteachers should be making \$178,000 a year, an example of demagoguery at work. Letterman also declared that the federal government should randomly throw money at education, even if the same policies are failing, purely because if were going to throw money at something, it should be education.

Another example of how Senator Paul weathered the storm of media criticism with “grace under fire” is



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seen in his handling of his 2010 Kentucky Republican primary campaign. This first test in his career as a Senator and media figurehead for the Tea Party movement involved challenges to Paul from the conservative media, which endorsed his opponent, establishment Republican Tray Grayson, former Kentucky Secretary of State. In addition to attacks from the usual liberal pundits such as Keith Olbermann and Chris Matthews (whose [documentary](#) *The Rise of the New Right* smeared Rand Paul and the Tea Party movement), he also faced opposition from pundits associated with the right, such as former Bush speechwriter [David Frum](#), who accused him of [extremism](#), and who joined forces with the Republican Party establishment in supporting Paul's opponent in the Senate primaries, Trey Grayson.

In his book, Paul recounts a tense meeting with [Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell](#) in a Louisville, Kentucky airport hangar with Secret Service surrounding them. McConnell was campaigning for Paul's opponent Grayson, and Paul said he tried to keep conversation light: "As our meeting continued," Paul related, "Senator McConnell reiterated that he didn't want to get involved in the primary. I thought to myself, 'Not get involved I wonder what it would mean if he did get involved.'"

Senator Paul also discusses his relationship with [Sarah Palin](#), and in turn, the brutal and abrasive treatment of her by media figures such as Joy Behar. He writes that Palins endorsement gave us a boost that energized supporters, brought in new ones and, of course, annoyed my opponent [Trey Grayson] and his Republican bosses to no end. ... In talking to Palin, one of the primary things I wanted to do was allay any fears about social issues, telling her, My opponents call me a libertarian but I want to assure you that I am pro-life. Palin responded, Oh, we all have a little libertarian in us.

The treatment of Sarah Palin by the media is another example of how the Tea Party is scorned, vilified, and its members are subjected to personal attacks, much like the ones Senator Paul has faced, including accusations of racism, an ugly smear which has been thrown at those who are committed to constitutionalism. After his appearance on the *Rachel Maddow Show*, he answered her accusations of racism [as follows](#):

My experience with the Tea Party is that it's actually quite diverse, more so than the Republican Party. Almost every Tea Party I've been to has featured African-American speakers. At an event in Louisville there were ten speakers, and two were black. A black minister from the west of Louisville, who is a supporter of mine, approached me after the Rachel Maddow controversy in which the MSNBC host tried to paint me as somehow being against the civil rights movement due to my support of property rights.... The minister wanted to let me know that he believed the civil rights issue of our era was education. He was concerned about the high numbers of minority kids dropping out of school and that the education establishment seemed more worried about pandering to the unions than actually fixing our schools.

Pauls experiences with Maddow and Letterman indicate that the media elite simply have no tolerance or patience for such bulwarks of liberty as the Founding Fathers, Ayn Rand, Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative*, and the classics of the Austrian School of Economics, including Murray Rothbards *Conceived in Liberty*, Ludwig von Mises voluminous writings, and [Henry Hazlitts](#) *Economics in One Lesson*, a favorite of former President Ronald Reagan.

While *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* has enjoyed broad media coverage, Pauls own observations on the hostility of the mainstream media toward the Tea Party movement serve as a reminder of the [biased treatment](#) conservatives can expect: There has been a concerted effort since the tea party began to rise, since my victory, to paint us as something we are not. Until we buy advertising, the message is controlled by the other side.



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This is a reality, as the Tea Party and its leaders, such as Sarah Palin, Sen. Paul and his father, Rep. Ron Paul, remain favorite media targets of conservative hosts (one need look no further than the [vilification](#) of Glenn Beck in the pages of the neoconservative *Weekly Standard*). Despite the wide reception of *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* in the media, those who advocate anything that deviates from the anti-Constitution, anti-free market message of CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News will continue to be marginalized a truth that will be realized (eventually) by true adherents to the constitutionalist message. Keeping the conversation light with big-government scions such as Mitch McConnell (who [walked out](#) of the Senate during Pauls maiden speech in which he criticized the Great Compromiser Henry Clay of Kentucky) cannot be a long-term strategy.



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