



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on May 27, 2010

Rebels Against Party Leaders

Those who believe that the Tea Party movement will simply be a convenient flack for the Republican establishment have received rude awakenings in the last few weeks.

Rand Paul, son of Congressman Ron Paul, overcame the clout of Senate Republican Floor Leader Mitch McConnell to win the Republican Senate nomination in Kentucky. Senator Bob Bennett, a long term Republican senator from Utah who was not tainted with scandal and who had “clout” in Washington, lost the nomination for a new term to a relative unknown. Once-popular governors like Charlie Crist of Florida have seen their lead in Republican primary polls nosedive when faced by candidates with more consistent philosophies for limited government. Even when a principled stand may cost Republicans a House seat, like in Doug Hoffman’s run as a conservative in an upstate New York special election, the Republican Party leadership has not been able to persuade its party members that any Republican is better than any Democrat.



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The latest example of this popular rejection of those too much in love with government power is the victory by Raul Labrador in Idaho over Vaughn Ward, a Marine Corps veteran and Senate aide who was pushed hard by the National Republican Congressional Committee as one of its ten “Young Guns.” Ward had even more impressive support to conservative voters: Sarah Palin endorsed Ward. Palin is not just a very popular conservative, but she hailed from Idaho. She hailed, in fact, from the very congressional district in which the primary took place. Republican voters, who doubtless are proud of their native daughter and who admire her political courage, still would not blindly followed a politician they like. Now, more than in any election in memory, voters seem to be voting their consciences — with no guidance needed or wanted, not even by conservative politicians they admire.

What has happened in the Republican Party may be happening in the Democrat Party as well. The White House and the DNC pushed Arlen Specter very hard to win the Democrat primary in Pennsylvania. Their support stank of secret political deals, and Stesak, the Democrat who beat Specter, may have more to say about that later. In Pennsylvania 12, the special election that Republicans viewed with so much promise, a Democrat who supported the Second Amendment, supported the Right to Life, and opposed socialized medicine seemed just as popular to voters as the Republican candidate who held



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similar positions.

The distrust of party leaders, of Washington insiders, and of established institutions of political activity is just what the Tea Party represents to millions of Americans. Party labels, clout in the capitol, praise from well-liked figures — all these ordinary advantages in ordinary election seasons are fading fast. A new voice, that of people yearning to breath free, is rising instead.

Photo: Minnesota Gov. Timothy Pawlenty speaks at a luncheon during the Republican National Committee summer meeting in San Diego on July 30, 2009: AP Images



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