



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 30, 2009

## Rep. Parker Griffith Changes From Democrat to Republican

Alabama Representative Parker Griffith announced on Tuesday that he is changing his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican.

Griffith, a member of the [Democratic Blue Dog Coalition](#), previously asked to be called just a Blue Dog, and now prefers to be called Republican, after changing party affiliations last week. He says he [made the change](#) because he can no longer align himself “with a party that continues to pursue legislation that is bad for our country, hurts our economy and drives us further into debt.”



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Griffith continued,

Unfortunately there are those in the Democratic Leadership that continue to push an agenda focused on massive new spending, tax increases, bailouts and a health care bill that is bad for our healthcare system [Griffith is an oncologist]. I have always considered myself to be an independent voice and I have tried to be that voice in Congress — but after watching this agenda firsthand I now believe that the differences in the two parties could not be more clear and that for me to be true to my core beliefs and values I must align myself with the Republican party and speak out clearly on these issues.

I want to make it perfectly clear that [the health care] bill is bad for our doctors, our patients and will have unintended consequences far beyond what we know today. As a doctor and as a Republican, I plan to once again oppose this measure and hope that we can defeat this bill that is a major threat to our nation.

Regarding Nancy Pelosi, Griffith said, “I would not vote for her [again]. Someone that divisive and polarizing cannot bring us together.”

Other Republicans welcomed the new arrival. Virginia Representative Eric Cantor, the Number 2 Republican in the House, hailed Griffith’s move as evidence that the Democrats have become “completely disconnected from seniors, young workers and families in America.”

Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions [said](#), “I believe [Griffith’s] voting record and public statements on many important issues demonstrate an approach to government and spending that is incompatible with the national Democratic Party. As a Republican, he will be affirmed in his concerns about reckless spending and governmental overreach, rather than being ostracized for them.”

Alabama Representative Mike Rogers called the switch “a great development. He just could not stomach what the Democrats are doing any longer.”

Griffith made the decision to switch after a meeting with other Republicans in the Alabama delegation,



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including Representative Robert Aderholt, and both Senators Sessions and Shelby. Senator Shelby is a former Democrat who switched parties while in office.

Members of the Democratic Party were not happy. Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chairman Chris Van Hollen issued this statement:

House Democratic Members and the [DCCC] took Parker Griffith at his word and, as a result, invested a great deal in working with Alabamians to bring Mr. Griffith to Congress. We were committed to helping Mr. Griffith deliver for his constituents and successfully helped Mr. Griffith fend off personal attacks against him from the far right.... His constituents will hold him accountable to keep his commitments.

[Other Republicans](#) weren't so ebullient. Huntsville, Alabama, political activist Hugh McInnish "mocked Griffith's self-proclaimed conservatism, questioning just how "our frightened longtime liberal Democrat congressman [could move away from his] Marxist oriented party [after] his years' long voting record."

Les Phillip is running against Griffith in the upcoming Republican primary. In a [mailer](#) to voters in his district, Phillip reminded them that Griffith sent personal checks of support to DCC Chairman Howard Dean and to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

And *The Atlantic* [commented](#): "Parker Griffith ran as a centrist Democrat two years ago [and] was personally recruited by now White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel." Parker won his district by only 2 percentage points while Presidential candidate John McCain won it by more than 25 points.

According to Griffith, he [voted against](#) various bailout measures, cap and trade environmental legislation, and the universal health care bill. And he was one of only 11 House Democrats to vote against the stimulus package.

However, Griffith's voting record as shown in "[The Freedom Index](#)" is rated at only 40 percent. According to *The New American*, this index "rates Congressmen based on their adherence to constitutional principles of limited government, fiscal responsibility, national sovereignty, and traditional foreign policy of avoiding foreign entanglements."

By way of comparison, Alabama Senators Shelby and Sessions are rated at 70 percent and 89 percent, respectively.

More than a disagreement with the Democratic Party may be involved here. The *Christian Science Monitor* [notes](#) that "electoral dynamics are shifting" and that many congressmen are "encountering backlash from the public against a Democrat-controlled progressive agenda." Griffith's decision to switch parties "indicates a pragmatic approach to [the] elections next year."

Professor Merle Black at Emory University said, "This has to be a calculation that it's going to be easier for a congressman [to be a] Republican than a Democrat. The Democrats have gone too far, gone way too liberal, [wanting to take over] one-sixth of the whole economy."

Signs of that backlash appeared last summer when Griffith got an earful of criticism from his constituents. He was even booed at a town hall forum. "If I'm agreeing with you," he said, "don't fight me. I'm on your team." The point was not missed by Griffith. "I should be nervous," he said afterwards.

Democratic pollster John Anzalone [said](#) Griffith would have faced a difficult re-election as a Democrat and "undoubtedly was worried about his prospects in a conservative district... You never can really figure out the motivation [to switch parties]. Usually it's political opportunism."



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A [blogger](#) at *The Atlantic* article put the matter succinctly: “Griffith needs a retirement party. That district isn’t going to elect someone who isn’t a Conservative and his voting record and friends reflect his ideology. So what if he didn’t vote for Obamacare, he was initially for it, but found out that [his] district would tar and feather him for such a thing.”

*Photo: Rep. Parker Griffith*



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