



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 18, 2012

Sen. DeMint Not Ready to Endorse Romney

While the [notion](#) that Mitt Romney is "on the verge of sewing up the Republican nomination" is still just a neo-con fantasy (especially in light of [Ron Paul's surging poll numbers](#) and his respectable showing in Iowa and New Hampshire), pundits and *soi disant* opinion makers have suggested that the former Governor of Massachusetts choose a VP from among the "senior bench" of the Republican Party, especially one popular with the Tea Party bloc of Republican voters.



In 2008, South Carolina Republican Senator Jim DeMint (pictured), regarded as a "conservative hero of South Carolina," endorsed Mitt Romney. In 2012, however, the hero isn't ready to ride to the rescue. DeMint is a co-founder of the [Senate's Tea Party Caucus](#). The four original members included DeMint, Rand Paul of Kentucky, Mike Lee of Utah, and Jerry Moran of Kansas.

Although he reportedly recently told a radio show that he believes Romney will carry the Palmetto State, DeMint insisted in a statement made from South Carolina in advance of Saturday's primary, "I do not have a favorite in this race and I will not endorse a candidate."

"I've gotten to know each of the candidates over the past year and they are all far superior to [President] Obama," he continued.

DeMint, who [recently joined 25 other Republican Senators and introduced a bill](#) to stop the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from using U.S. taxpayer dollars to bail out eurozone nations such as Greece and Italy, instructed his fellow South Carolinians to choose the man they "believe will fight the hardest to stop the massive spending, bailouts, and debt that are bankrupting our country. We need a president with the courage to tell Americans that our government must do less, not more."

Although Romney probably reckoned he could count on DeMint's endorsement, there is every reason to believe that Tea Party favorite Ron Paul is just as likely to ultimately garner the Senator's influential support.

Regarding the real effect of a DeMint endorsement, South Carolina Democratic Party Chairman Dick Harpootlian observed, "I have to say that while I disagree with Jim on many things, I have to admire his consistency and his commitment to his philosophy. If DeMint endorsed Romney, he'd be the Republican nominee tomorrow."

In speaking of the pool of potential Presidents, DeMint told the often rambunctious audience at the



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[South Carolina Tea Party Convention held January 16 at Myrtle Beach](#), "I know that probably folks in this room feel strongly about them in a lot of different ways, and that's why I'm not getting involved."

Despite the [animated audience attending the Myrtle Beach event](#), there is a sense among political observers that the Tea Party is a movement on the decline. Just two years ago, however, the Tea Party wave carried several Tea Party-backed candidates onto the shores of the Potomac.

There is no question that the Tea Party wasn't without failure in the 2010 midterm elections (for instance, the defeats of Sharron Angle and Christine O'Donnell), but Sarah Palin became a household name and legitimate constitutionalists such as Rand Paul now sit in Congress, faithfully protecting the Constitution from enemies, foreign and domestic.

The voting trends developing in the presidential election campaign reveal the rapidity of the decline in Tea Party clout, however.

For example, in the Iowa caucuses, the three candidates most closely associated with the Tea Party — Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, and Newt Gingrich — finished very far down the tote board. Bachmann, in fact, bowed out of the race after failing to make a respectable showing in a very conservative state.

Let's not forget Herman Cain. Cain, the former CEO of Godfather's Pizza, was being wooed by Tea Partiers (who actually briefly shot the candidate to the top of the leader board) around the country and being touted by them as the favorite to replace President Obama in the White House.

As everyone knows, Cain dropped out of the race for the Oval Office amid allegations of sexual harassment and marital infidelity.

Regarding the sub-par showing of these Tea Party favorites, Judson Phillips, founder of the Tea Party Nation, took a very pragmatic approach: "God bless them, they're good people, but, for whatever reason, their campaigns did not take off," he mused.

It may be that the fading fortunes of the Tea Party may partially explain Senator DeMint's demur when it comes to a presidential endorsement.

That isn't to say that the Senator is going to keep completely out of the fray, though. DeMint is determined to strengthen the Senate's resistance to an expansive executive branch by aiding the cause of candidates to that body who are committed to constitutional principles of limited government and separate powers.

"We need not only to take a majority in the Senate," DeMint told the convention. "We need a conservative majority in the Senate."

The strategy to secure the Senate was explained in [a recent Reuters article](#):

The idea, he said, was to have enough conservative Republicans in the chamber to keep the occupant of the White House, "whoever it is," in check. Democrats hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate, but many of their seats are up for grabs in the November elections.

To that end, DeMint chairs the [Senate Conservatives Fund](#), an organization dedicated to raising money for those candidates who identify ideologically with DeMint. According to figures released by the group, \$3.5 million has been raised for the 2012 elections.

Moreover, information provided on the group's website crows that, "In the 2010 election cycle, SCF helped elected five conservative standouts: Pat Toomey (PA), Marco Rubio (FL), Rand Paul (KY), Mike Lee (UT), and Ron Johnson (WI)."



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To date, four senatorial candidates have been endorsed for 2012: Mark Neumann in Wisconsin, Don Stenberg in Nebraska, Ted Cruz in Texas, and Josh Mandel in Ohio.

A friend quoted in the Reuters piece explained DeMint's vision of his role in affecting elections:

"Ultimately, Jim wants to see 10 to 15 conservative senators who won't change their minds on core issues," said David Woodard, a politics professor at Clemson University, who has known DeMint for 20 years and co-authored *Why We Whisper* with the senator, a book published in 2007.

"That's the way he sees his role."

Regarding Romney's need to look to the Tea Party for a running mate, an [article from Huffington Post declares](#), "as his [Romney's] victories in Iowa and New Hampshire, and recent polling in Florida, make clear, Romney's ability to win over sizable percentages of moderates and conservatives alike demonstrates that he's already unifying the party to a much greater extent than McCain did in 2008...."

The Massachusetts moderate may be able to unify the Republican Party, but [recent poll results indicate](#) that Ron Paul unites voters from across the partisan spectrum in numbers sufficient to successfully challenge Barack Obama in November.

Photo of Sen. DeMint: AP Images



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