



Will Tea Party Rebels Upset the GOP Congressional Apple Cart?

Plutarch records that upon hearing one of his early public orations, Julius Caesar remarked about his erstwhile protégé and eventual assassin Brutus: "I know not what this young man intends, but whatever he intends he intends vehemently."



The current GOP congressional leadership may understand some of what Caesar was feeling. In the midterm elections several Republicans lost their seats and swarms of newly minted representatives and senators are chomping at the bit to get on with the business of reducing the size of government. At least that is the bill of goods these self-described revolutionaries sold to the American electorate.

Whether these freshman legislators deliver on their promises is yet to be seen. History is not on the side of those who desperately depend on these lawmakers to follow through on their campaign commitments.

A popular gambit for recently elected representatives and senators, for example, is the denouncement of earmarks and the fiercely worded call to arms to rid Washington of this brand of wasteful spending. That's all fine and good. But, how many of the self-described "revolutionaries" will dedicate themselves to tirelessly striving to abolish, absolutely abolish, every agency, department, program, and "entitlement" that is not specifically authorized according to the enumerated powers granted Congress in the Constitution? It is easy to join in the fray and make a show of grand gestures swatting at the gnat of "earmarks" while simultaneously swallowing whole the multi-humped camel that is the perpetuation of an unconstitutional bureaucracy.

Regardless of the sincerity of these Tea Party touted congressmen, they will face opposition from many in their own party, the entrenched leadership that will not go gentle into that good night. Years of "same ol', same ol'" sedentary comfort have lulled many Republicans into a sort of stupor, despite once having been good foot soldiers themselves who came to power after the victory in the Reagan and Gingrich revolutions. The smell of victory is often soporific.

Major media outlets are gleefully predicting that an internecine struggle will stymie the zeal of the rookies and prevent the corps of crusaders from replacing the status quo with a new slate of rules. From [ABC News](#):

The new Congress hasn't been seated yet but signs of a rift are already beginning to emerge between Republican leaders and Tea Party groups who were a driving force propelling many unknown candidates to victory last month.



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 23, 2010

From the tax cuts extension bill to the food safety legislation to Republican selections for key House committee leadership posts, Tea Party leaders have expressed outrage at what they perceive is a continuation of the same old Washington-style politics.

And this from *The Atlantic* online blog [AtlanticWire](#):

Many wondered not whether the Tea Party would become a headache for Republicans, but when. The answer might be: right now. John Boehner hasn't even claimed his speakerly throne yet, and already there are 'signs of a rift' between top Republicans and the Tea Party that helped them win a majority of the House....

This same blog effectively chronicles many similar stories published in other popular outlets:

Boehner on Shaky Ground, The Daily Beast's [Benjy Sarlin](#) reports. "Boehner owes no small part of his imminent promotion to the speaker's office to the Tea Party, whose support he courted early and often en route to a landslide takeover of the House. But he may lose that support before he's even begun to wield his new power. ... Expectations will be sky high for the new majority to slash the budget, and Republicans' relatively modest proposals in their Pledge to America may not be enough to cut it with the activist base, many of whom were critical of its limited scope."

The Movement Is Too Hard to Control, [The Agonist](#) writes. The Republicans' southern strategy "divided the nation into three groups: economic royalists, socially conservative Christians, and the rest of us. Power within the GOP rested firmly in the economic royalty camp, with the occasional intruder like Pat Robertson allowed a seat at the table ... The Tea Party is a curious admixture of both camps." In addition, "effectively, the Tea Party is a movement without a leader and many people vying for that leadership. But it may be too late: success happened so quickly for the chaotic movement that even early adopters like Dick Armey have had trouble herding the kittens."

We Need the Tea Party, The [New Hampshire Union Leader](#) writes. "The truth is that without the constant vigilance currently provided by what can loosely be called the Tea Party movement, Republicans would be just as happy as Democrats to squander taxpayer money. They are only acting frugal now because they know they're being closely watched, so keep watching."

The Tea Party Killed the DREAM Act, Newsweek's [Mickey Kaus](#) notes. The midterms were a big win for the Tea Party, and "nothing like fresh heads on pikes to, er, reinforce a persuasive (to my mind) policy argument." Pressure from the Tea Partiers probably helped keep Republicans in the "no" camp, he figures.

Could They Challenge Democrats in Primaries, Too? [Digby](#) wonders at Hullabaloo. Tea Partiers "predict primary challenges for Democrats from the right. This isn't the first time I've heard this, by the way. Now I don't know if it's just wishful thinking, but in the age of Citizen's United, it seems to me that shennanigans are possible with this sort of thing."

Changing the Little Things "Earlier today," Slate's [Dave Weigel](#) reports, "some Hill staffers attended the first of four staggered meetings on how to write a new clause into legislation that explains why, exactly, the legislation is constitutional. This was a big Tea Party demand that Republicans ran on, and they're not welching."

Finally, a widely read [opinion piece](#) co-authored by the founders of the Tea Party Patriots Jenny Beth



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Martin and Mark Meckler and published online by *Politico* strikes a similar chord:

House Republican leaders are making bold statements about what the public can expect during their tenure in the majority. In addition to the “backroom deal” tax compromise, last week, through their appointments to chairmanships of the Energy and Commerce and the Appropriations committees, they sent a clear message that despite an electoral victory driven by the tea party movement and fueled by public disgust with incumbents, Washington is back to business as usual. ??The large incoming freshman class is filled with tea party representatives. Yet the GOP’s old paradigm leaders are daring this new class to stand for the principles on which it was elected.

One would expect such dire divinations from the press and pundits whose livelihoods and relevance depend on the constant stirring of controversy. There is more to the forecast of a storm brewing on the horizon, however. Former Senate majority leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), now a D.C. lobbyist, was quoted in the [Washington Post](#) as positing that an overly zealous band of fired-up firebrands could cause a real problem for the powers that be. Said Lott: “We don’t need a lot of Jim DeMint disciples. As soon as they get here, we need to co-opt them.”

It is up to the voters that elected these “revolutionaries” to monitor their every speech and vote in order to hold them accountable for the vows they made while campaigning under the banner of the Constitution.

Photo: Florida Republican Senate candidate Marco Rubio, and his wife Jeanette smile as national TV stations call the race in his favor, while watching results in Coral Gables, Fla., Nov. 2, 2010.: AP Images



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