

## Hot Topic: Who really wants Sarah Palin to run for president in 2012? Democrats or Republicans?

### Will liberals or conservatives stand to gain more?

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- By BEN BOYCHUK and JOEL MATHIS, RedBlueAmerica, for Scripps Howard News Service

Who wants to see Sarah Palin run for president, Democrats or Republicans? Palin has kicked off a tour for her new book, "America by Heart," amid speculation that she's preparing a 2012 presidential run.

While Palin is very popular with the Republican base, there are signs GOP establishment leaders would rather she stay out of the race. The libertarian Cato Institute's David Boaz even suggested this week that liberal Democrats who want to see President Barack Obama face a weaker challenger in the next election are touting Palin's prominence.

Should Democrats hope for a Palin ascendancy? Should Republicans? Joel Mathis and Ben Boychuk, RedBlueAmerica columnists, consider the matter.

#### **JOEL MATHIS, view from the left**

There are undoubtedly a few liberals who would like to see Sarah Palin win the GOP nomination because they think she'd be easy for Obama to beat in 2012. I'm not one of those people, for two reasons.

First, there is a possibility she could win. Second, I'd like to see the Republican Party put forth a credible, non-demagogic leader who is capable of leading the entire country. Palin isn't it.

The reason many liberals talk so much about Palin is because she's clearly connected to the heart of the GOP, and seemingly has a realistic chance at the nomination. Writer Jim Geraghty confirmed this with questioning of the 700 participants in a cruise hosted by the conservative National Review magazine: "I found about two-thirds wildly enthusiastic about Sarah Palin; you could hear the gasps when (pollster) Scott Rasmussen predicted she would not be the 2012 Republican nominee."

#### **Annoyed**

A smart conservative friend is annoyed by the attention paid Palin.

"I'd wager she raises more money for Democrats than she does for Republicans," he says. That may be true. But one could say the same thing about Hillary Rodham Clinton's profile among Republicans for the last 20 years; she nearly became president, and it wasn't because conservatives were secretly advancing her cause through reverse psychology. Likewise, Palin is a real political phenomenon.

Liberals didn't put Palin on the 2008 ticket. We didn't give her a lucrative Fox News contract. We're not the ones making her books into best sellers. We're not in the party giving her an 80 percent approval rating. And we're not the ones scouting office space in Iowa for her.

There's something going on there. Republicans are the only ones who can stop it from happening.

### **BEN BOYCHUK, view from the right**

Lots and lots of conservatives love Sarah Palin. For some, it's her "Mama Grizzly" demeanor and her plainspoken populism. Others respect her ability to pick winning candidates and her fundraising prowess -- she pulled in more than \$10 million for Republican candidates and committees this past election.

And quite a number of us just like the fact that Palin drives liberals nuts.

So it's hardly surprising Palin scores high approval ratings among Republican voters, especially in the wake of the "shellacking" the GOP delivered to Democrats on Nov. 2. The 2012 presidential-election season will begin in earnest in January, and, naturally, many discerning and curious eyes are on the erstwhile governor of Alaska and 2008 vice-presidential nominee.

This much is certain: Palin is riding high, with a reality-TV series, another best-selling book, a lucrative Fox News contract, more than 2.6 million fans on Facebook and seemingly unlimited news coverage and millions of column inches devoted to what she may or may not do next week, next month and next year.

### **But ...**

What's conventional wisdom now is discarded wisdom 12 months from now.

Remember how in 2007 everyone "knew" Hillary Clinton was going to be the Democratic nominee and likely next president of the United States? Many Republicans, having witnessed the giddy ascent and disastrous implosion of the Obama cult, are unlikely to throw in with a candidate whose manifest charisma is undermined by her limited executive experience.

Palin may have stepped down as Alaska's governor for what her most devoted supporters would consider good reasons. And, yes, she has a real record of accomplishment. But given the choice between a savvy former half-term governor and a smart one- or two-term governor -- say, Indiana's Mitch Daniels or Minnesota's Tim Pawlenty -- GOP voters are more likely to go with the candidate with a deeper resume.

It's easy to admire Palin for the way she skewers the "lamestream media" and rallies the GOP faithful. But come the next election, she will need to prove her mettle in a different way. Just watch: These discussions will look naive in retrospect.

*(RedBlueAmerica columnists Ben Boychuk and Joel Mathis blog regularly at [www.somewhatreasonable.com](http://www.somewhatreasonable.com) and [joelmathis.blogspot.com](http://joelmathis.blogspot.com).)*