

POLITICAL HAY

In Defense of Boring Men

By [David Boze](#) on 4.28.11 @ 6:08AM

The fact that young women frequently fall for bad boys is something that every good guy knows. It's also something our society immortalizes in popular culture: Juliet fell for Romeo; Joanie fell for Chachi; Diane fell for Sam; Buffy fell for Angel; and Bella for Edward. In the movies and on television, it generally works out okay. In real life, it's generally drugs, disease, despair, divorce and parental heartbreak, which is why, knowing what challenges lie ahead and the value of a solid partner, parents ask, "Why couldn't you just fall for the nice guy?"

Right now, polls show many conservative voters, at least temporarily, falling for the bad boy in the form of billionaire celebrity Donald Trump. A main reason cited for this is the "bland" or "boring" slate of potential GOP candidates. They're not dynamic, dangerous or sexy enough to attract their eye. But conservatives have long prided themselves as belonging to the party of reason and dismissed the Democrats as the party of emotion, so expect these feelings to subside.

To aid that eventuality, a defense needs to be made in favor of boring men. When at a car lot, it's usually the exciting car that catches your eye, but the reality is, for what you need to accomplish, it's the reliable, "boring" choice that better fits budgets and better gas mileage. Just as you might initially be attracted to the luxury sports car at the car lot, it's easy to get distracted by a flashy, brash, entertaining candidate. But unless that candidate is suited for the job you actually need him for (defeating Obama, and reining in spending), it'd be a good idea to avoid buyer's remorse and kick the tires of the other candidates.

Mitch Daniels, the plainspoken, bald, short governor of Indiana is not the kind of man generally described as exciting. His claim to television fame is his long-form campaign commercial series, "Mitch TV." It was no *Apprentice*, but then again, it wasn't supposed to be.

Daniels erased a \$200 million dollar deficit and turned it into a surplus, reformed state government, and reduced the total number of state employees to their lowest number since Michael Jackson's "Thriller" was top of the charts. Daniels is currently taking on the teachers' unions with education reform. On federal issues he warns the U.S. faces a new "Red Menace" as devastating as the former Soviet Army, only this time the menace is the red ink of debt. He defended Paul Ryan's budget plan as "the first serious proposal" of either party to tackle the looming debt tsunami, and derided those who criticized it without offering a substantive alternative as "unserious" men.

Daniels's one "bad boy" characteristic is that he rides a Harley, but just as you'd never confuse Richie Cunningham for "The Fonz" even if Richie were wearing a leather jacket, you won't mistake Daniels on a Harley as a "bad boy" either. He can make a Harley look like a scooter. But when he is talking about policy, he is an unmistakably serious man.

Former Governor of Minnesota, Tim Pawlenty possesses qualities similar to Daniels. If he were a kid, he'd be the kind of young man grandmas would urge their teen granddaughters to date. He would also probably be earning money mowing that Grandma's lawn. Pawlenty was one of the few governors to receive an "A" grade from the Cato institute for his efforts on behalf of the fiscal policy of his state. His approach to the numerous new taxes proposed by the Democrat legislature in his state was to veto them, and then veto them again. He is plain vanilla but likeable, earnest, and with a solid track record on the issue of the day (spending). Only Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana scored higher on Cato's fiscal report card, but there's no sign he's getting into the race.

In 2008 the American electorate was swept off its feet by the dazzling rhetoric of an exciting candidate who promised everything. Will they be looking to be swept off their feet again? I suspect when the time comes, the electorate will be in a more serious mood, seeking a leader who will speak clearly and honestly to them about the great issues of our time, spending and the size and scope of government.

The Republican presidential field is not yet in stone. Perhaps there will be some surprises, but let's not start believing we need them just because MSNBC pundits say we do. We have good candidates now.

Candidates who satisfy our desire to be entertained will have their time in the sun, but most Americans are not thinking about the presidential race right now. They're thinking about rising gas prices, looming debt, inflation fears, and foreign wars. The presidential race seems far away, so they're looking for distraction. Right now when nothing seems to be at stake, during the adolescent phase of the presidential race, flirtation with the "bad boy" candidate seems like harmless fun.

Times are too serious for that to last, and when Americans really start considering the presidential race, they will think about America at a crossroads between big government and a path toward greater economic liberty. They will consider whether they want more choices over their health care, or do they want to be cared for by the state. They will have to decide if they want to cripple future generations with debt and fewer opportunities, or reform the social safety net in a way that expands freedom. Ultimately, they will have to ask themselves whether they want another four years of President Obama's vision for America.

When they answer "no," they will need an acceptable alternative. That's when we will be grateful to have a "boring" candidate at the helm with the vision, experience, and credibility necessary to begin the hard work of getting the nation back on course.

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