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Feb 1 2010, 4:07 pm by [Marc Ambinder](#)

The Sevugan v. Conant Budget Super-clash

WARNING * WARNING * WARNING * For INSIDERS only. If you're not an insider, your eyes will glaze over.

On the right: Alex "Iron Jaw" Conant, senior adviser to Gov. Tim Pawlenty, a potential 2012 aspirant.

On the left: Hari "Boom Boom" Seguvan, the DNC spokesperson in charge of keeping tabs on potential 2012 presidential candidates.

After noticing that the Democratic National Committee e-mailed reporters [an article from The Hill](#) about how "Democrats go after Pawlenty's credibility to bash the budget," Conant e-mailed Sevugan and blind copied reporters:

Hari - Thanks for inviting a comparison of Governor Pawlenty and President Obama's spending records after reading the Governor's oped in POLITICO today. However, the CATO study you are citing is out-dated; in fact, a new study released by the group in 2008 ranked Governor Pawlenty as one of the most fiscally responsible governors in the country. (Pawlenty received a "B", near the top of the list. By comparison, your boss, Gov. Kaine, received a "D".) Wrote the CATO institute in its report: "Pawlenty's veto record is impressive, including rejecting a gasoline tax increase, a hike in the top personal income tax rate, and various bloated spending bills." (Vetoing bloated spending bills - something President Obama should consider!) On the same day President Obama is proposing record deficits and higher taxes, I'm surprised you would attack a governor who cut spending for the first time in his state's history, and balanced his state's budget every year without raising taxes. In his State of the Union address, President Obama said that "Washington may think that saying anything about the other side, no matter how false, no matter how malicious, is just part of the game. But it's precisely such politics that has stopped either party from helping the American people." After reading your quote about Governor Pawlenty today, I can't help but wonder if you take exception to the President's call for a more civil tone?

Two hours later, Sevugan responded in the same fashion:

Dear Alex - Good to hear from you.

As you seem interested in defending Governor Pawlenty's record with analysis from the right, I'm sure you would give great credence to the thoughts of former Reagan and Bush Administration advisor Bruce Bartlett who thought the Governor's op-ed in *Politico* was "grossly ill-informed" and that his budget ideas are "transparently phony." It's not

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Pollster.com	Right Direction / Wrong Track	34.9% / 59.1%
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Standard & Poor's	Standard & Poor's S&P 500	1,073.87 (up 239 points since 1/20/09)
National Federation of Independent Businesses	Small Business Optimism Index	88.0 (down 0.3% from November)
ABC News/Washington Post	Consumer Comfort Index	48 points below zero
U.S. Department of Labor	Initial Weekly Jobless Claims	470,000 (down 115,000 since 1/20/09)
Bankrate.com	Interest on 30-Year Fixed Mortgage	5.13%
RealtyTrac	Newly foreclosed properties in December	349,519
U.S. Department of Labor	Unemployment	10.0%
U.S. Department of Labor	Consumer Price Index	+0.1 in December
Mortgage Bankers Association	Quarterly Delinquency	9.64%

surprising that this is the take away from Governor Pawlenty's op-ed, because as Bartlett points out "[the Governor] rants about the deficit without proposing any spending cuts and insisting on still more tax cuts." Of course, that would make Governor Pawlenty like every other Republican -- which judging by Governor Pawlenty's abandoning of even the pretense of mainstream appeal for the adoption of a hard-right wing ideology -- is exactly what he's going for. So... you know... congratulations on that? Anyhow, thank you for drawing more attention to Governor Pawlenty's hypocrisy on spending. Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't also thank you for the opportunity to put a spotlight on a former Reagan adviser's thoughts on the Governor as "not ready for prime time." I've included Bartlett's post in full below in case you want to share it with others on your list. Given that [only 37 % of Minnesotans](#) now say that they would vote for their own Governor if he ran for President, we also included some local press coverage of the Governor's op-ed in case you didn't know how it was playing back home. Please feel free to pass that on to your list too.

All the best - Hari

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