



Tea Party Groups Seek Vengeance For Fired Staffer

By [Alex Rogers](#)

Dec. 16, 2013

The [Tea Party](#) wants to avenge Paul Teller.

Teller was fired last week from his post as executive director of the Republican Study Committee, a congressional group that steers the right-wing agenda, after allegedly leaking private conversations over the course of years to outside political groups.

“This is personal,” says Brent Bozell, a conservative commentator and chairman of For America. “They are making it personal by attacking people by personally besmirching their integrity. I’m just not going to stand for it. Paul Teller is a good man.”

“What it’s telling the conservative movement is ‘we don’t want to do business with you,’” adds Bozell. “It’s political suicide.”

“This is clearly a line in the sand that the establishment in Washington DC is drawing with the conservatives,” says Jenny Beth Martin, President of the Tea Party Patriots. “With a tax and spend budget, and you combine that with the comments that Speaker [of the House John] Boehner said [last] week and the statements Sen. McConnell has said in recent weeks, it adds up to a pattern of lashing out at the conservative voter base that Republicans actually need to get elected.”

Last week Bozell and Martin signed a letter with more than 50 figures in the conservative movement, including [Ronald Reagan](#) Attorney General Ed Meese, Heritage Action’s Mike Needham, RedState’s Erick Erickson, FreedomWorks’ Matt Kibbe, Tea Party Express’ Amy Kremer, and David Bossie of Citizens United, praising Teller as “one of the true heroes of the conservative movement.” Bozell and Martin deny that Teller has ever leaked any confidential information to them.

Conservatives are furious in particular with Boehner, despite the fact that it was Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.), the RSC Chairman, who fired Teller. Last week Boehner told the press that outside groups had “lost all credibility” for opposing the budget deal created by Rep. [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wisc.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) before it was announced. FreedomWorks, Heritage Action, and the CATO Institute were among those groups. Unfavorable views of the Tea Party

have nearly doubled to 49% since 2010, according to a [Pew Research poll](#) published Oct. 16, at the end of the government shutdown.

A lawmaker in the RSC leadership, who asked not to be identified, told TIME that the Teller firing was an “isolated incident” and that further staff changes were unlikely. According to the lawmaker, the RSC fired Teller after he leaked details of a December 5 meeting where Ryan outlined aspects of the forthcoming budget deal.

“Paul Teller was in that meeting and taking notes and then all of a sudden we’ve got these off the Hill groups that are talking about how they’re going to oppose the deal because it covers this and that and the other,” says the lawmaker. “He [Ryan] didn’t even have an agreement. There was nothing in writing. Then all of a sudden these groups said they are going to oppose it. That is not fair to Paul [Ryan], and that is not fair to Steve Scalise.”

The lawmaker stressed that it was not a first time offense. In 2011, during the debt-ceiling showdown, Teller [reportedly](#) was caught sending emails to outside groups in an attempt to tank a Boehner proposal. Members chanted “Fire him, fire him!” when they found out, according to [Politico](#).

But firing Teller has provoked scorn and outrage within conservative communities, forcing some Republicans to try and make public amends.

“John just kind of got his Irish up,” Ryan told [Meet the Press](#) Sunday. “I was frustrated too, but I think these are very important elements of our conservative family.”

“I would prefer to keep those conversations within the family,” he added. “I think these taxpayer groups are indispensable to keeping taxpayer interest accounted for, keeping people accountable.”