



## *Struggle for individual liberty never ends*

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For supporters of limited government who are closely following the 2012 presidential race, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is the "Cult of Obama" is dead.

A recent Reuters story explores the Obama campaign's marketing difficulties, and the headline says it all: "Obama's Slogan: Looking to Replace 'Hope and Change.' "

The article then delicately explained that "a new tagline will have to reflect a new reality."

The bloom is off the rose. Not long ago, Shepard Fairey, the aging graffiti artist who refashioned an AP photo into the iconic "HOPE" poster, told a reporter he wasn't going to vote for Obama: "Obama was the delivery device in theory. Now, I realize that he maybe is not the correct delivery device."

Amber Lee Ettinger, the bikini-clad Obama Girl whose video "I Got a Crush on Obama" racked up over 16 million views on YouTube, has fallen out of love. She isn't sure now who she'll vote for come November 2012: "I want what this country wants. I want this country to be better. I want everyone to have jobs and for gas prices to go down." (Who doesn't?)

When Obama has lost the guy who made the HOPE poster -- and Obama Girl -- we've hit a tipping point. We've definitely passed "peak hope."

The bad news, of course, is the Republican field. It might tax even H.L. Mencken's cynicism to imagine an American public credulous enough to view Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, or Newt Gingrich as paladins who can "renew America."

At the GOP debate in Phoenix two weeks ago, Santorum explained why he voted for No Child Left Behind: "Sometimes you take one for the team, for the leader. ..."

As the crowd began to boo, he continued: "You know, politics is a team sport, folks ... and sometimes you've got to rally together!"

Inspiring.

With Obama in the White House, Republicans are finally worried about the massive concentration of power in the executive. They've got plenty to worry about.

Among other things, with the waiver authority embedded in the Bush-era No Child Left Behind Act, the Obama Education Department has begun implementing federal curriculum standards in an area where the Constitution gives the federal government no authority whatsoever.

And, via the Clean Air Act, the administration has begun implementing comprehensive climate-change regulation, massively restructuring domestic energy use despite Congress's refusal to pass "cap and trade."

Most of the recent controversy over birth-control coverage under Obamacare has focused on whether Catholic hospitals will be required to provide contraception to their employees.

But even the concessions offered by the administration assume a staggering degree of presidential power. In the course of explaining the administration's compromise, an Obama official told the Washington Post that "insurance companies will be required to reach out to directly offer contraceptive care free of charge" without raising premiums -- per the president's decision.

That is a disturbing amount of authority to put in one man's hands -- whatever his party. And whether or not Obama is defeated come November, the problem of power will remain.

Elections matter, but the contest for individual liberty is a long game. As Friedrich Hayek put it in 1949:

"We need intellectual leaders who are willing to work for an ideal, however small may be the prospects of its early realization. They must be men who are willing to stick to principles and to fight for their full realization, however remote. The practical compromises they must leave to the politicians."

Politics may be a "team sport," but the battle for limited, constitutional government is not.

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