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Posted at 2:43 PM ET, 02/25/2011

The case against Mike Huckabee

By Chris Cillizza



Should former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee run for president? Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Yesterday we made the case for why former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee should run for -- and can win -- the Republican presidential nomination in 2012.

Today we make the opposite case.

* A (non) organization man: Huckabee has spent the years in between his 2008 presidential run and today building his personal brand that now includes books, a radio show and a television show on Fox News Channel. What he hasn't done in that time is build any larger-scale campaign operation much beyond the spartan group he relied on in 2008. Huckabee allies insist that he can get by on his largely-volunteer organization composed of church-goers and home school advocates as he did last time around. But remember that while his non-formal organization worked in Iowa, it also ensured that he could not

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capitalize on the momentum his caucus win should have created for him. Huckabee flailed in New Hampshire, narrowly missed a win in South Carolina and was helpless to match the efforts of former Gov. **Mitt Romney** (Mass.) and Sen. **John McCain** (Ariz.) in Florida. While Huckabee allies tout 2008 as evidence that he doesn't need a traditional political organization, it's better understood as a missed opportunity largely because he didn't have a real organization in place. Huckabee's unwillingness to build that sort of operation heading into 2012 means that even if he could pull off another Iowa caucus win, he would likely fail to capitalize on it. Again.

* **Money matters:** A corollary to Huckabee's unwillingness or inability to put together a serious organization is his unwillingness or inability to put the pieces in place to raise the tens of millions he would need to compete seriously. In 2008, Huckabee raised \$16 million for his campaign, a sum that was dwarfed by the likes of Romney, McCain and former New York City Mayor **Rudy Giuliani**. While Huckabee's communications skills allowed him to excel in retail campaign states like Iowa and, to a lesser extent, South Carolina, he was non-competitive in larger states -- Florida, for one -- where millions were needed to reach voters on the airwaves. Huckabee allies insist he would have more financial backing this time around and note that his high name identification means he wouldn't need to raise or spend as much. True. But, if the race goes beyond the first three states of Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, Huckabee looks almost certain to watch as he is drastically outspent by rivals more committed to the cash collection process. Again.

* **The pardon problem:** [Huckabee's pardon commutation of the sentence of Maurice Clemmons](#), a man who murdered four police officers in Seattle, Washington in 2009, is a major problem. While Huckabee's explanation of why he did what he did -- Clemmons was serving a 108-year sentence for robbery and theft when Huckabee commuted his sentence to 47 years and made him eligible for parole -- makes sense, it doesn't fit neatly into a 30-second ad. And, while Clemmons is the most infamous person Huckabee ever **pardoned** commuted the sentence of, he is far from the only one. In ten years as governor, Huckabee either pardoned or commuted the sentences of more than 1,000 people --- more than three times as many as the state's three previous governors combined. That's an opposition researcher's dream.

* **Fiscal conservative?:** While Huckabee is, first and foremost, a social conservative, his supporters insist he can also win over fiscal conservatives if he runs in 2012. But, Huckabee's record has ranked many leaders in fiscal conservative circles; the [CATO Institute gave Huckabee an "F" in its 2006 fiscal policy report card](#) -- one of only two Republican governors to earn that "distinction". The influential Club for Growth, too, made clear its antipathy toward Huckabee in the last election when [it spent more than \\$500,000 attempting to stop his momentum in Iowa. Huckabee did raise taxes -- including the sales tax -- during his time as governor](#) and, while he rightly notes it was done with bipartisan support and led to a budget surplus in the state, that may not satisfy die-hard fiscal conservatives. Huckabee faced relatively little scrutiny on his tax record during the 2008 primary fight but it would almost certainly be prime fodder for his opponents this time around.

* **A "serious" hurdle:** Huckabee made his name during the last presidential race with his sunny demeanor and his comedic timing. But, a winning smile and a terrific personality alone won't get you elected president. While it's an indisputable fact that Huckabee has high favorable numbers among voters, real questions remain as to whether there is a difference between liking him and believing he can be president. (Former Alaska Gov. **Sarah Palin** may well face a similar problem if she runs in 2012 too.) Huckabee, then, must walk a tight rope -- stay true to the optimistic funny man that proved so winning in 2008 while also showing people that he is ready and able to be the leader of the free world. Huckabee is an able politician but that may be too difficult a challenge even for him.

By Chris Cillizza | February 25, 2011; 2:43 PM ET
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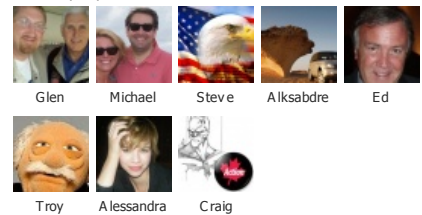
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45 Items

mcfield
 What's with all the Hate?
 If you don't like him, fine but don't just say garbage but make an actual case against him. I like what Chris did here, but his critique was based more on organization and money not character. I voted for Hillary and later Obama. I like moderates. Huckabee is more right wing but I find that he has a brain and can see the good policies or characters of people that he may not politically agree with. I remember that he was one of the only people who did not try to take advantage or make fun of Hillary crying in NH. He was funny on SNL. And I'm glad that he can pardon people (unlike W.). While he would not be my first choice I would feel Ok with him as president (and not have the sense of DREAD that I would if Palin won).
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Daan
 The case against Mike Huckabee Read more at
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labman57
 Huckabee is a societal snake oil salesman, hawking his sanctimonious sense of morality as a cure to all of our nation's problems.
 2 days ago, 12:44:09 - [Flag](#) - [Reply](#)

Samson151
 "Cilizza, why don't you and the rest of the lefty, idiot writers at the Post save yourselves a lot of time and trouble and simply declare "there is no qualified Republican candidate in the entire U. S. to be president."
 Of course there is, but you wouldn't vote for him or her.
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BigTrees
 He is a right-winger. Right-wingers are busy dismantling the United States and turning us into a third-world debtor nation with rationed health care, unaffordable education, almost a quarter of our population unemployed or homeless and approaching poverty. All this as violent lawlessness is rising amid disbanded police departments with an armed-to-the-teeth delusional right-wing mob embracing this new anarchy.
 Huckabee revels in this situation he and his party have built for us. And you need to build a case against him or his cohorts?
 The right-wingers broke my country and are throwing the pieces onto the trash heap of history, and they are proud of it. Who do I talk to to get my country

back?

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Samson151

I thought Gail Collins articulated the Huckabee dilemma pretty well in today's NY Times column - like John McCain, he sounds like he snuck off to some foreign surgery for a personality transplant in order to get the Tea Partiers to vote for him. It's even more radical than Mitt Romney now pretending he was never shift-eyed Wall Street corporate capitalist.

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analyst72

F.uckabee is nothing more than a right-wing evangelical charlatan, liar and a hypocrite.

2 days ago, 10:06:18 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)

techresmgt

There are those that claim the lame stream media is not 'controlled'? Oh, please. The democrats from Obama to the most lowly aide, do not know the difference between right and wrong; only right and left.

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BigTrees

Do you recall the W years?

That was when ever Democrat an unelected president could find in government was run out. Now nothing in our government works. Why? The professions were dumped and replaced with incompetent, unqualified ideologuse who spend more time surfing porn sites instead of trying to do their jobs.

Or did you miss that part of the 00s?

The 21st century U.S. political right is most corrupt conspiracy in our history and they are destroying our nation. Just ask Dick Arme y or Karl Rove.

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pd2710

Cillizza, why don't you and the rest of the lefty, idiot writers at the Post save yourselves a lot of time and trouble and simply declare "there is no qualified Republican candidate in the entire U. S. to be president."

All you people do is roll out daily Rep. candidate bashing stories anyway. By now most of us know to expect and ignore them

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BigTrees

I agree with that. There isn't one single right-wing candidate who has the best interest of the American people while BIG BUSINESS is stuffing his pockets and ballot boxes with billions in bailout money to buy the worst legislation imaginable.

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Channah

Huckabee is a right wing evangelical preacher who is out to convert the world. Do not trust him.

He spends so much time in Israel-how can they trust him? He is only there to convert them so that his prophecy of Jesus returning happens. He is demented in religious fanaticism.

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Dove 355

The case against Mike Huckabee -

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kencamarro

Huckabee's position on DOMA and anti gay rights removes him from candidate viability.

He simply does not have leadership depth or credentials.

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zafarz

He will run, but cannot win. He is not well educated and not well traveled. He made foolhardy statements in Israel which will come back to haunt him. See 'Mike Huckabee's Disastrous Foray in an Explosive Middle East' on sajeypress dot com

3 days ago, 23:26:14 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)

governmentcorruption

Huckabee is a putz! He don't work! What JOB do these Republican Conservatives do after politics? Can't do anything else, but to find a scam for fund raising and speak about whatever anti-American by whatever corporation will pay them them to CHIRP!

Huckabee, "The Troll" Newty, Pawlenty, Romney (Monarchy), Palin, What do GOP offer? CLOWNS, DEADBEATS that don't work, put scam people for a BUCK!

Huckabee knows he is a loser, but the campaign funds stay his after it's all over, until the next time!

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djhat3710

Sorry! He will not win!! I don't trust him, I think he is a phony.

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