



"It is the duty of the patriot to protect his country from its government."

-Thomas Paine

Study praises Tea Party freshman Labrador for fiscal restraint

By Eric D. Dixon
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The 2010 elections brought a wave of new blood to Congress, freshmen legislators from across the nation promising to rein in federal spending and regulatory reach as part of the Tea Party movement. [A study released this week](#), however, suggests that rhetoric has not translated to reality for many of these newcomers. One exception to this trend, according to its findings, is Idaho's first-term Rep. Raul Labrador.

Released on Wednesday by the Club for Growth, a national organization that tracks economic issues and legislator performance, the study used the organization's [Congressional Scorecard](#) to rate how each legislator voted on a range of fiscal issues, such as energy subsidies, appropriations, the debt limit and Obamacare. Of the 87 freshman Tea Party congressmen tracked, the study claims that more than half voted in favor of fiscal responsibility only 70 percent of the time or less. Of these, 13 voted to restrain government's reach in only 50 percent or less of the economic issues counted by the study.

Only 19 of the 87 legislators included in the study rated 90 percent or better in the Club's vote ranking, including 1st District Rep. Labrador, who was one of only three to rate a perfect score of 100 percent—voting in each case in a way deemed fiscally responsible by the Club's Congressional Scorecard. The other two legislators receiving perfect scores were Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan and Rep. Tim Huelskamp of Kansas. These three were also among the nine total legislators to earn a perfect score from the full 2011 Congressional Scorecard.

"I am honored to earn this distinction from Club for Growth, but there is still so much left to be done," Labrador said in a statement after the full Congressional Scorecard's release. "I am as committed as ever to cutting federal spending, limiting the size and scope of government, lowering taxes and restoring liberty in efforts to steer this country back on the path to prosperity."

Tad DeHaven, a budget analyst for the Washington, D.C.–based policy think tank the Cato Institute, [noted Thursday](#) that more recent votes continue to demonstrate that for many of these Tea Party freshmen, a commitment to smaller government may still be on the decline.

“The study comes on the heels of three telling votes taken last week in the House that *should have been* slam-dunks for members who possess the slightest regard for limited government and free markets,” DeHaven wrote. “Only 49 percent voted to defund the [Economic Development Administration]. Only 56 percent voted to defund a new corporate welfare program requested by the Obama administration. And only a dismal 44 percent voted against reauthorizing ‘Boeing’s bank.’ That’s pathetic.”

Although potential legislators may be sincere when they make campaign promises to reduce government, economic theory, [says one author](#), suggests that the public sector contains a powerful set of perverse incentives that promote compromise.

“Although legislators are expected to pursue the ‘public interest,’ they make decisions on how to use other people’s resources, not their own,” wrote author Jane S. Shaw for “The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics.” “Furthermore, these resources must be provided by taxpayers and by those hurt by regulations whether they want to provide them or not. Politicians may intend to spend taxpayer money wisely. Efficient decisions, however, will neither save their own money nor give them any proportion of the wealth they save for citizens. There is no direct reward for fighting powerful interest groups in order to confer benefits on a public that is not even aware of the benefits or of who conferred them. Thus, the incentives for good management in the public interest are weak.”