

## Presidential Hopefuls: Herman Cain

**Embattled candidate has interesting ideas. How much longer will he be able to talk about them?**

by CHARLOTTE HAYS

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*Republican presidential candidate former CEO of Godfather's Pizza Herman Cain is introduced prior to a debate at Constitution Hall Nov. 22 in Washington.*

– Win McNamee/Getty Images

WASHINGTON — As his campaign is engulfed by new accusations of sexual misbehavior, [Herman Cain](#), at least for the time being, continues his gaffe-riddled candidacy. Cain has managed to be confusing on many issues, from his private life to his stance on abortion.

The rumors of sexual misconduct swirling around Cain, who is reportedly reassessing his candidacy in the light of fresh allegations, have many asking questions about whether a candidate's private life should be open to public scrutiny.

Some have argued that being put under a microscope can keep good people out of politics. But writing in [Commentary](#), Jonathan Tobin says that such intrusions are justified.

“As brutal as this is for their families, I, for one, would rather live in a country where the press doesn't protect politicians from the consequences of their behavior than one in which the JFK precedent is repeated,” Tobin argues.

For some commentators and activists, the conflicting reports of Cain's private life are of a piece with the candidate's approach to handling political positions.

When Cain made an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate in 2004, Georgia pro-life leaders were impressed by his commitment to their cause.

"We were excited," recalled Dan Becker, president of Georgia Right to Life, "because it was the first time an important political candidate in the state had taken a no-exceptions [for rape or incest] stand on the issue of abortion and defended it."

Nobody questioned what Cain proudly calls his "100% pro-life" stance until the GOP presidential candidate granted a now-infamous interview to CNN host Piers Morgan in October. Asked about his belief that there should be no exceptions for rape and incest, the Atlanta businessman and associate pastor in a Baptist church appeared to be giving a "pro-choice" answer.

"So what I'm saying is it ultimately gets down to a choice that that family or that mother has to make," Cain said. "Not me as president; not some politician; not a bureaucrat. It gets down to that family. And whatever they decide, they decide. I shouldn't have to tell them what decision to make for such a sensitive issue."

The interview immediately raised questions. Was Cain one of those "personally opposed" candidates who nevertheless don't want to make abortion illegal? In damage-control mode, Cain's campaign put out a statement the next day restating the candidate's position that he is "100% pro-life. End of story."

"My answer was focused on the role of the president," Cain said in the statement. "The president has no constitutional authority to order any such action by anyone. That was the point I was trying to convey."

The statement went on to say that as president Cain would appoint judges who "know that the Constitution contains no right to take the life of unborn children," veto legislation that contains funding for Planned Parenthood, and "do everything that a president can do, consistent with the Constitution, to advance the culture of life."

During an interview on CBN News (the Christian network known for broadcasting *The 700 Club*) shortly after the Morgan interview, Cain came out in favor of a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

After initially hesitating, Cain in late November signed the Susan B. Anthony List's pro-life pledge.

"This decision is consistent with the Herman Cain we have come to know," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA List, in a statement. "He understands the wound abortion is to America and especially to the most vulnerable among us — people that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger labeled 'human weeds.' We commend Mr. Cain for

adding his name to the list of candidates who have signed the pledge, and should he be elected to the White House, we look forward to him leading the fight to protect women and unborn children.”

### **Defunding Planned Parenthood**

Cain has traced his original reluctance to the pledge’s requirement that candidates, if elected, “advance” a Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act to protect unborn children who are capable of feeling pain from abortion. Cain has said that he would gladly sign it into law but that it is up to Congress to pass such legislation.

Privately, several pro-life leaders told the Register that, while they might find Cain’s remarks on CNN “troubling,” as one put it, they do not doubt Cain’s commitment to the pro-life cause and ascribe the confusion created by the Morgan interview to a novice national candidate’s mishandling of a situation.

Noting that Cain was “pro-life when it wasn’t cool,” Becker believes that Cain is firmly pro-life. In making the case that he is against abortion, Cain also received support from a group of prominent, pro-life black pastors who issued a statement a few days after the Morgan interview. The statement noted that “Cain’s pro-life stance, coupled with his history of support both financially and otherwise, clearly represent that Mr. Cain is a bona fide pro-life candidate.”

Signers of the statement, which is not a political endorsement, included Alveda King, niece of Rev. Martin Luther King and an activist with Priests for Life.

“I don’t know who’s on his staff or who’s advising him,” said Pastor Walter Hoye II of the Issues 4 Life Foundation in Union City, Calif., “and his comments [on CNN] were very confusing, but I do know that Herman Cain is a preacher; and over the years, he’s been a strong supporter of what we do in the black pro-life community. We don’t have any reservations about his pro-life stand.”

Cain has used particularly strong language to describe his opposition to taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood — he has called the organization’s actions “planned genocide” and gone so far as to accuse it of targeting African-American babies.

Speaking at an event at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., Cain said, “Here’s why I support defunding Planned Parenthood, because you don’t hear a lot of people talking about this: When Margaret Sanger — check my history — started Planned Parenthood, the objective was to put these centers in primarily black communities so they could help kill black babies before they came into the world.”

Day Gardner, president of the National Black Pro-Life Union in Washington, D.C., another signer of the pastors’ statement, praised Cain’s remarks about what she called its “genocidal impact in the black community,” adding that Cain has been active in the pro-

life community for many years. “I’m very comfortable that he’s completely pro-life,” Gardner said.

## **Marriage**

As with the abortion issue, Cain has managed to sow confusion about where he stands on same-sex “marriage.” Appearing on NBC’s *Meet the Press* in October, Cain said he “wouldn’t seek a constitutional ban for same-sex ‘marriage,’ but I am pro-traditional marriage.”

In response to a question, Cain said the matter was best left to the states.

Less than a week later, Cain admitted on CBN that he “used to” believe that the issue could be decided at the state level but had changed his mind: “I think marriage should be protected at the federal level.”

He said he had been influenced by a move to “basically take the teeth out of” the Defense of Marriage Act, the 1996 law that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. The Obama administration has announced that it will not defend legal challenges to DOMA.

Also, Cain has said he opposes embryonic stem-cell research. An email to the Cain campaign to expand on this issue received no reply.

## **Self-Made Man**

As a man who didn’t start out rich but became wealthy through his success in the corporate world, Herman Cain personifies a different point of view from that of President Obama, who consistently has urged young people fresh out of college to bypass large corporations in favor of working for nonprofit organizations.

A 1967 graduate of the all-black Morehouse College, Cain started his career as a systems analyst for The Coca-Cola Co. in Atlanta and rose to become CEO of Godfather’s Pizza, president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association, a trade association, and deputy chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. Cain has also been a radio-show host.

His beginnings were humble. He is the son of a domestic worker and a father who worked as a barber, chauffeur and janitor — often doing all three jobs at the same time, a habit of industriousness that allowed the senior Cain to own his own house.

With such a life story, it is not surprising that Cain’s campaign website describes him as “a self-made man who has never been fazed by what is expedient or easy, but has spent his life pursuing his American dream by first considering what is right.”

An unabashed fan of the free market, Cain has called for reducing “the burden of cumbersome federal regulations” that he says hamper economic growth, stated that many social programs designed to provide a safety net are detrimental because they lead to dependency, and backed repeal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — commonly known as Obamacare — and its replacement with “patient-centered, free-market reforms.”

Of course, Cain is best known for his 9-9-9 plan, which he mentions at the drop of a hat and calls “a vision for economic growth.” The plan would abolish the current tax code and replace it with an entirely new system with three components: a 9% business tax, a 9% federal income tax, and a 9% sales tax, or a tax on consumption.

Some critics have said that the new consumption tax is an invitation to Congress to raise the level far above the 9% in the Cain plan. Ironically, this would make a plan to reduce taxation a vehicle for higher taxation, they argue.

“My problem with the 9-9-9 plan,” said Tad DeHaven, a budget and policy analyst for the libertarian Cato Institute, “is that it creates another large stream of revenue for the federal government. For somebody who has said he wants to reduce government, this is a problem.”

Added economist Veronique de Rugy of the Mercatus Center, “Cain is very good on regulations and how new regulations have been stifling business. But my problem with the 9-9-9 plan is that I would be extremely reluctant to give the federal government three bases for taxes. I can’t bring myself to like this plan because it is complicated and gives lawmakers [another way to raise taxes].”

The Mercatus Center is a research and education organization based at George Mason University in northern Virginia that is considered a prime source for market-oriented ideas.

## **Social Security**

De Rugy’s take on Cain’s proposal to adopt the Chilean model to replace Social Security was more mixed. The Chilean system removed government from the retirement fund business in 1981, replacing it with personal retirement funds. The workers determine the percentage of their contributions and the level of risk. The fund is property, unlike Social Security, and becomes part of the worker’s estate.

“It’s a good plan,” de Rugy said, “as long as we can keep the government from stepping in and guaranteeing private accounts. If we don’t find a way to make sure that these plans are not backed by the government, then we will end up in the same place we are now.”

One of the often-quoted critics of the Cain plan is Edward Kleinbard, a University of Southern California law professor whose field of expertise is taxation, including capital

taxation and the political economy of taxation. He wrote a paper arguing the Cain plan is “a terrific example of fiscal hocus-pocus” that will raise more revenue by “skewing downwards the distribution of tax burdens when compared to current law.”

“It is a plan that would be devastating for most Americans,” Kleinbard told the Register, “because their tax bills would go up dramatically.”

“It would redefine the entire social contract that binds us as Americans,” said Kleinbard, who added that the Cain plan “vastly reduces the tax burden of the very wealthy.”

The Cain plan would end the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low and moderate income people that can be larger than the tax burden, leading to a refund that exceeds the contribution. Kleinbard is critical of this and of the consumption tax.

“It would be very tough if you were in a supermarket to say, ‘I am a poor person in a family of four and so I should pay less [of the consumption tax] than an affluent person,’” Kleinbard said.

But others maintain that the Cain plan would be good for poor and middle-income people because it is a pro-growth plan.

Speaking at a panel on the Cain proposals in October at the American Enterprise Institute, economist Stephen Moore, who writes op-eds for *The Wall Street Journal*, said, “There is nothing, nothing, nothing more regressive than our current system. People who suffer the most from our current system are people who don’t have a job.”

Though not without some criticisms, Moore said that he finds the Cain plan “attractive.”

“I do believe,” he said, “that if we institute Rick Perry’s plan, New Gingrich’s plan or Herman Cain’s 9-9-9 plan we could create a million jobs in a month.”

Barney Keller, spokesman for the pro-free-market Club for Growth, also found much to like in the Cain plan. “We think 9-9-9 broadens the base and flatten the rates, and that is exactly what the country needs.”

Will it skew the tax burden towards the less affluent?

Said Keller, “It’s funny how fewer [such] complaints are [made] when wealth and the economy are growing.”

*Register correspondent Charlotte Hays writes from Washington.*

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