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## Huckabee's Endorsements

By Katrina Trinko

During the Texas Senate primary, Mike Huckabee was one of David Dewhurst's most prominent backers. "Plenty of candidates say they're conservative, but the only proven conservative in this race is David Dewhurst," Huckabee said in a May ad.

Earlier, in an [ad](#) released a mere hour and a half after the announcement that Sarah Palin was endorsing another candidate, Ted Cruz, Huckabee remarked, "David's conservative leadership helped Texas pass more pro-life legislation than any state in America." In an ad released after Huckabee endorsed Dewhurst back in January, Huckabee criticized the "Washington insiders [who] have come to Texas falsely attacking David Dewhurst."

Huckabee is not only the conservative backing Dewhurst. Add to that list Michael Reagan, Oklahoma senator Jim Inhofe, and Rick Perry. Still, in the category of conservative endorsements, Ted Cruz is the clear winner: His heavyweight backers include Sean Hannity, NATIONAL REVIEW, and Senators Jim DeMint, Rand Paul, and Pat Toomey.

The Club for Growth, which has had a contentious relationship with Huckabee for years, has endorsed Cruz and spent millions advocating his candidacy. The Club sees Huckabee's overall record of endorsements as oriented toward promoting moderates rather than conservatives in Republican primaries. Huckabee, it says, has picked the moderate in the GOP primary not only in Texas but also in the Senate race in Wisconsin and in a House race in North Carolina.

"It's not surprising that Mike Huckabee has supported liberal, big-government Republicans like Tommy Thompson, David Dewhurst, and Richard Hudson," says Club spokesman Barney Keller. "Mike Huckabee is a big-spending, big-taxing liberal, and birds of a feather stick together."

There is no love lost, of course, between Huckabee and the Club. "The problem is when very strong conservatives who have actually effectively governed and innovated are called 'moderates' by divisive and strident groups like Club for Growth," retorts Huckabee in an e-mail. "How anyone with serious political perspective or depth could call Tommy Thompson or David Dewhurst a 'moderate' is silly on its face."

"Huckabee still blames the Club for sabotaging his presidential race in 2008," argues a conservative activist. (Sample line from a Club ad against Huckabee: "There was once a governor from Hope, Arkansas, who raised taxes like there was no tomorrow.") But it is not only the Club for Growth that has questioned Huckabee's conservative credentials. "He's a social conservative, but he never struck me as a fiscal conservative," e-mails Chris Edwards, director of tax-policy studies at the Cato

Institute. Huckabee, he notes, received an F from the [Cato Institute](#) in 2006 for his work as governor of Arkansas, for reasons such as “his insistence on raising taxes at almost every turn throughout his final term.”

But Huckabee maintains that he’s no supporter of moderates. He writes:

Tommy Thompson wasn’t just sitting around contemplating [welfare reform](#), school choice, and job stimulating free-market capitalism from some highly paid think tank, he was gutting it out in the crucible of the political environment of a blue state and had actual results to show for it. David Dewhurst not only was successful in the private sector as one who actually lived and practiced old-fashioned entrepreneurship and capitalism, but then had the courage to put that experience to work in the real arena of politics and more importantly GOVERNING [capitalization in the original]. The critics sit in the expensive sky boxes and watch politics from the distance, believing that because they enjoy the most expensive perches from which to watch they actually understand the game. I value those who come off the field with their own blood smeared across their face and mud in their hair from having competed and won.

His criterion for choosing someone to endorse, Huckabee elaborates, is that the candidate must have “stood tall in the protection of the dignity of every human life and the sacred traditions of marriage and family.” In fiscal matters, he says, he backs candidates who support a “principled conservatism where governments don’t bail out recklessly run businesses, where taxes are restructured so as to stimulate innovation and risk rather than just reduce rates and run up massive deficits and boast of ‘not raising taxes’” while evading responsibility and raising “catastrophic debts.”

In the case of Thompson, too, Huckabee is joined by other conservatives, including former Florida governor Jeb Bush and Indiana governor Mitch Daniels. It’s the same story with Huckabee’s endorsement of Richard Hudson, who in the GOP primary in North Carolina’s eighth congressional district was backed also by Rick Santorum and Paul Ryan.

In two other heated primaries this cycle, in Utah and Indiana, Huckabee didn’t endorse at all. In the upcoming Missouri GOP Aenate primary, he has endorsed Congressman Todd Akin, as has Michele Bachmann. But in Missouri, as elsewhere, the conservative endorsements are not all going to just one candidate: Former state treasurer Sarah Steelman won Palin’s endorsement, while businessman John Brunner is backed by Senators Ron Johnson and Tom Coburn.

And for his part, the Fox News and syndicated radio host sounds fed up with the rush to anoint as conservative heroes candidates with little in the way of political experience. “I take umbrage,” Huckabee writes, “when successful and effective conservatives like Tommy Thompson or David Dewhurst are falsely labeled ‘moderate’ because they didn’t have the luxury of

simply screaming code words and slogans, but had to make things work in the dynamics of the field where politics has to become actual government.”