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June 24, 2009

[Don't Write Off Barbour- A Possible Answer To Matthew Miller's Question](#)

Earlier today in the comments section, Matthew Miller [stated](#) the following:

I can't, for the life of me, figure out why Barbour appeals to people. He's not much of a fiscal conservative (if we take the word of fiscal watchdog groups like CATO), he doesn't seem like a "man the battlements for Christian Civilization" type...what am I missing? As best as I can tell, Pawlenty is more conservative than Barbour on basically every score (except, again, for that silly ethanol). Or does the indiscipherable Southern drawl give him defacto credibility with the base?

For the record, I am not a supporter of Haley Barbour, at least at this point. I am not necessarily disagreeing with Matthew, nor am I explicitly defending Governor Barbour from critics whose opinions I hold in high regard (specifically the CATO Institute). It should be pointed out that Mr. Barbour has not exactly been able to govern under normal circumstances. I have not dug deep into the problems or explanations of the grade he garnered...

But it seems that some context needs to be provided and that some in conservative circles need to be reminded of the way Governor Barbour handled leadership in the face of great catastrophe.

Governor Barbour managed his state through the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States, and did so in magnificent fashion. Hurricane Katrina and the way Barbour handled it and its aftermath have not been recognized by those on the right to the level of someone like Guiliani, for example, is because it was viewed as a black eye for the Bush Administration. There were no faces or blame to put on a specific enemy, and it engulfed more than one state, meaning that failures in Louisiana effected the success in dealing with the problems in the other affected states. That is not to compare Barbour to Guiliani because the situations were completely different. However, it is not unfair to say that he handled the crisis in spectacular fashion.

While this is not to excuse what appears to be shortcomings in regards to his fiscal ratings, I think it is possible that the results of those reports may be heavily skewed because he had to manage the state budget during the mentioned crises.

And I really don't understand the comparisons to Governor Pawlenty, at the moment. That's not to say that Pawlenty hasn't had his share of hardships to deal with, because he has (the bridge collapse). However, he never had to deal with a disaster anywhere near the level caused by Katrina nor the level of back and forth politicizing that followed, and that's why some people (although it remains to be seen just how many) could conceivably be drawn to a Barbour candidacy.

Now, I am not that well informed regarding Tim Pawlenty either, other than what has been written here, and at this point, I really don't have a favorite candidate. I could be persuaded to support either man, in fact. What troubles me about Pawlenty is that his [positions regarding tobacco](#) are downright Huckabee-esque. Hell, I even believe that had Huck not been so far to the left on that issue, he wouldn't have had

near the trouble that he did in his home region in 2008, and would've won my home state of TN by a lot more than a couple of points (not to start another Huck war, just my honest opinion on why he didn't win here by a large margin). That's not a dealbreaker, but it's an important issue to a lot of people in these parts (**author's note:** Ironically, Barbour has this same problem).

In the end, I may support Haley Barbour, and then again, I may not. There is, however, a void in the "handled themselves in the face of human tragedy with grace" still out there with the absence of Rudy Guiliani and John McCain, and maybe Haley Barbour could be the man to fill that void. A lot stranger things have happened...

by Tommy Oliver @ 9:57 pm. Filed under [Haley Barbour](#), [Tim Pawlenty](#)
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19 Responses to "Don't Write Off Barbour- A Possible Answer To Matthew Miller's Question"

1. *Jonathan* Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 10:10 pm](#)

I like Haley Barbour. As someone who has lived through several hurricanes, let me tell you; they are a huge burden upon government resources and it takes a really good manager to deal with them effectively. In that way, Barbour kind of reminds me of Jeb when he had to deal with the 4 hurricanes in 6 weeks in 2004.

I don't see Barbour as being the nominee, but he could be a good running mate to Romney, Palin, Pawlenty or even Daniels.

2. *Stephen* Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 10:16 pm](#)

say what you want about his drawl but one can't say that he is not fiscally conservative. Even though Mississippi (where I was born and still live) is much poorer than most other states, it has

not had nearly the budget problems that other states have had—hence Californai and its 24 (or is it now 25) billion dollar budget gap. A special session has not been called yet here, and he tried like Mark Sanford to refuse much of the stimulus money. The House here, controlled by Democrats, wanted to spend the stimulus money as part of this year's budget. Well, the Senate, controlled by the Republicans and led by Lt. Governor Phil Bryant (former State Auditor who it is well-known will run for governor here when Barbour's term is up and would likely win) does not want to do that with one-time money. So, Barbour, even with his Southern drawl as it is, is a conservative all around and without the hands-on masquerade to make him into something that he is not (like McCain did to Palin) and the political skills he has, he can make a good run in the primary and maybe even a run at the White House if he has the right ideas and Obama is as unpopular as I think he will be in 2012.

3. *JayPe* Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 10:20 pm](#)

When you look at the options for 2012, most of them are outsiders (Governors). Washington is not flavor of the month, and that is not going to improve.

Barbour's resume is that of the ultimate insider, including a lobbyist. He's a Governor but won't be able to do the 'change' motif: "Washington is broken, restore credibility". See Obama (2008) and Bush (2000) for more information.

He's a logical choice for a senior post (SecState), but the number of negative ads you can construct with Barbour should be enough to put anyone off.

4. *blue* Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 10:24 pm](#)

Speaking of filling a voids, no sanford, no ensign, no ron paul running = big void for the 2012 version of the 2008 huck run...i'm thinking, this guy could come out of nowhere with a long shot bid:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=2154119n&tag=related;photovideo>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LymRr0CEIwk>

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he has a niche to make a name for himself on the big stage, winning is clearly another matter though.

5. *Tommy Oliver* Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 10:32 pm](#)

JayPe,

I'm not saying that there aren't some red flags with Barbour, but disasters bring out the best in leadership, and Barbour proved he has what it takes.

I know a lot of supporters of other candidates like to downplay any potential conflict with their choices chance to win in 2012. However, all candidates should be looked at and examined, both in their strengths and weaknesses. Barbour has a lot of strengths and has proven that he can handle a

crisis on a level that none of the other potential candidates have had to deal with.

I'm just saying that it's not smart to write off a candidate like this at this point.

6. *JayPe* Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 10:38 pm](#)

"I'm just saying that it's not smart to write off a candidate like this at this point"

That's true. Its funny how many people are written off (Huckabee & Palin included). You never know which candidates will gain traction (Huckabee, Ron Paul) and which won't (Brownback, Hunter).

A lot of chatter amongst the 'invisible primary' watchers is that Barbour is positioning himself to be king-maker (e.g. The Fix is strongly in this camp). He'll need to run strongly to overcome that perception (just as Gingrich would)

7. *Thomas Alan* Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 10:51 pm](#)

We could do a lot worse than Barbour to be sure. He's a good man, very competent, and obviously a level head in a disaster.

But there are better candidates who are more electable. And I don't think we'll be selecting our next president based on who has the best crisis management experience.

8. *gregY* Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 10:56 pm](#)

As for Barbour not being fiscally conservative enough, you gotta remember context: we're talking about Mississippi here... Cutting taxes and shrinking government is not going to turn around states like Mississippi—case in point: pre-1960, NC wasn't too far from MS. The research triangle was not the result of unfettered free market but of a visionary governor (yes in the other party) who was willing to create the environment for a business-tech. explosion.

Just sayin', states like Ark. (Huckabee) that have the worst roads in America might actually need to raise funding to fix the roads. States like Miss. might actually need to spend a little dough to get economic dvmt., or whatever the case might be.

Don't let dogmatic political ideology get in the way of common sense.

9. *wateredseeds* Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 10:57 pm](#)

You know you mentioned the worst natural disaster to face our country.....how come no one uses that as good reason to support Huckabee? Huckabee helped a lot of people when they needed it. I'm very proud of both barbour and huckabee for the way they handled the crisis.

10. *Tommy Oliver* Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 11:05 pm](#)

wateredseeds,
From Wikipedia and the national weather report:

Eastern Arkansas received light rain from the passage of Katrina. Gusty winds downed some trees and power lines, though damage was minimal.

From the official state website, provided by wikipedia:

Arkansas avoided damage from Katrina, as the storm passed to the east.

In short, Mike Huckabee had nothing to do with Katrina

11. [Tommy Oliver](#) Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 11:07 pm](#)

that's not to say Huckabee didn't help a lot of people during the hurricane, but his state didn't have to deal with the financial burden caused by massive damage to its infrastructure.

12. [Bob Hovic](#) Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 11:13 pm](#)

the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States,

Johnstown Flood

Galveston Hurricane of 1900

San Francisco Earthquake and Fire

Peshtigo Fire

Those are just the ones that come readily to mind. All killed far more people than Katrina (6-8x in Galveston).

13. [Tommy Oliver](#) Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 11:18 pm](#)

Bob Hovic,

Hurricane Katrina was among the five deadliest natural disasters. Not only that, it was **far**the costliest, making it #1 (in most circles). Downplaying it's significance in both areas is of no real benefit to anyone.

14. [Tommy Oliver](#) Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 11:19 pm](#)

that is supposed to read "by far the most costliest natural disaster"

15. [Bob Hovic](#) Says:

[June 24th, 2009 at 11:39 pm](#)

I will concede your statement that it is the costliest (though cost comparisons over 100+ years are difficult).

And certainly it killed a great number of people, which I have no intent to downplay.

But it remains that the Galveston hurricane killed around 10,000 and Katrina less than 2,000.

16. [Tommy Oliver](#) Says:
[June 24th, 2009 at 11:45 pm](#)

Bob,

Why are we arguing this? What's the point in downplaying the significance of either event?

However,

On sheer numbers, Galveston trumps Katrina, but the infrastructural damage, the failure to act on both side of the aisle, the corruption that followed... etc.

Not to mention the fact that even with all the criticism, it's a hell of a lot easier to evacuate people in 2005 than it was in 1900. There were no ways of alerting people, meaning that a storm of smaller caliber would have a much greater impact on the number of lives lost, and while having much less effect on the damage it caused in other areas.

17. [Bob Hovic](#) Says:
[June 25th, 2009 at 12:11 am](#)

Tommy: Sorry. You hit on a pet peeve — an overweighting of the historical importance of recent events/things/people. Somebody a couple days ago called Jimmy Carter the worst president ever — that got me going, too.

But I'm guilty of threadjacking. To return to the point, I don't think Barbour has a chance because of his lobbying history, but I'm not writing off anybody yet. Except Jeb Bush.

18. [MWS](#) Says:
[June 25th, 2009 at 9:27 am](#)

Jonathan,

“I don't see Barbour as being the nominee, but he could be a good running mate to Romney, Palin, Pawlenty or even Daniels.”

Yeah, he might pair up well with a northerner, esp. Daniels, Pawlenty, Romney, or Thune. Of all those four, Romney could probably use a southerner the most.

19. [roundhead22](#) Says:
[June 25th, 2009 at 12:16 pm](#)

The throwaway line about the absence of McCain and Giuliani reveals the most unexamined assumption of the 2012 handicapping: that the delegate mathematics of 2008 have somehow disappeared.

Not true. In 2008, there was a “pre-primary” primary between McCain and Guiliani which McCain won. The winner of that pre-primary had a good shot in New Hampshire, and if successful, an overwhelming advantage in aa huge number of blue/purple, nomination-deciding states (i.e. CA, NY, NJ, PA OH, etc.). And that was why McCain clobbered Romney.

Those numbers are still there. If Guiliani runs and wins in NY in 2010, he can go right back to New Hampshire and fight Romney in a winner-take-all primary. Because, if Romney loses to

Guiliani in New Hampshire (he will lose in Iowa to at least one and maybe more than one of the social conservatives in 2012), Romney will be finished and Guiliani will have the same overwhelming advantages McCain enjoyed in 2008.

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