



## For Ron Paul, winning isn't everything

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Republican presidential candidate, Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas speaks at the University of Missouri, Thursday, March 15, 2012, in Columbia, Mo.

By the standards of the standard goal of a presidential run – actually winning the presidency – Paul's run is thus shaping up to be a failure. But victory was never the longtime Texas congressman's only goal: As Paul's team will openly admit, his presidential run has doubled as an effort to advance the Libertarian movement. And on that measure, there are reasons to already view it as a success.

Start with the vote totals. Despite his lack of wins, Paul has consistently won more votes in the 2012 cycle than he did in his presidential run four years ago. In Ohio, he went from 49,027 votes in 2008 to 111,238 votes in 2012; in Michigan, he went from 54,434 votes four years ago to 115,712 votes in this cycle. He more than quadrupled his vote total South Carolina, tripled it in New Hampshire and doubled it in Georgia.

Throughout the campaign, Paul has attracted the sort of crowds that also-ran candidates rarely see, including the 4,600 people that turned out to see him in Champaign, Illinois, on Wednesday. Meanwhile, his passionate supporters have continued to pour money into his campaign, even as Paul's odds of winning the nomination have gotten ever longer.

“It does seem like this is a real step forward within the Republican Party,” said John Samples, who directs the Center for Representative Government at the Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank. Noting that Paul's supporters tend to be younger and previously disengaged from the GOP, he added: “He's reaching a new constituency, and he's doing it in the context of a party that has concerns about the future.”

The degree to which Paul has been able to move the GOP in his direction in the short term is up for debate. The other candidates and the Republican Party more broadly have largely not embraced Paul's effort to reduce the U.S. military footprint, decriminalize drugs or dramatically reduce the size of government; indeed, the candidate who seems to be most directly connected

with the GOP base, Rick Santorum, is described by Samples as “the most consciously anti-Libertarian voice in the Republican Party.”

Jesse Benton, Paul’s campaign chairman, said he does see evidence that Paul’s ideas are making a difference.

“There is a big debate right now inside the Republican Party on getting out of Afghanistan,” said Benton. “Look at the monetary issue. You’ve got candidates across the country campaigning on sound money, the gold standard, auditing the Federal Reserve. You’ve got internet freedom – Republicans came together and they opposed SOPA.” Benton also pointed to GOP efforts to cut spending, though he said such efforts have not gone nearly far enough.

“The campaign really is for 2016,” Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel, who has given a total \$2.6 million to the pro-Paul super PAC Endorse Liberty, told Slate. “I think we’re just trying to build a libertarian base for the next cycle.”

Benton stresses that the Paul campaign is not giving up on winning the nomination, though he concedes that Paul is not going to get the 1,144 delegates necessary to secure it before the GOP convention in August. He argues that if no candidate secures the nomination before August, Paul will ultimately triumph at the convention.