

## 'People are ready to listen' to Paul's long-time stances

When Ron Paul first told his family in 1974 that he planned to run for Congress, his wife, Carol, called the move "dangerous."

" 'You could end up getting elected,' " Paul recalls her saying. "I assured her that it wouldn't happen. I told her I just needed to get some things off my chest."

As it turns out, he was right. Paul, an obstetrician, ended up losing the race for Texas' 22nd U.S. House district to an incumbent. But he kept talking – predicting economic crisis if the nation continued its profligate spending and preaching against the country's history of aggression overseas. And he kept campaigning.

Now, after 12 terms in Congress and two unsuccessful bids for the White House, Paul once again is treading uncharted territory.

This time, he's making a full-throttle run for the Republican presidential nomination, determined to be considered a top-tier candidate.

During his 2008 bid, Paul himself seemed surprised at what supporters dubbed the "Ron Paul Revolution." He attracted legions of grass-roots followers and turned heads with his online fundraising prowess, but struggled at the polls, finishing fifth in both the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary.

"It still amazes me," Paul said of the determined base of supporters he amassed during his last White House bid. "Those people are all back this time, and now they're bringing their friends, their neighbors."

Paul is also stepping up his ground game in Iowa, airing television and radio ads that highlight his credentials as a fiscal conservative. He's visited the leadoff caucus state roughly once a week since announcing his candidacy. Tuesday evening, he announced a two-day, five-city Iowa swing next week with his son Rand, a U.S. senator from Kentucky.

His campaign team made the top bid (\$31,000) to garner the most prominent tent spot at the Aug. 13 Ames straw poll, where some political insiders are predicting a top three finish.

"In 2008, he lit a prairie fire among young people, and vastly stepped up the interest in real economics and the cause of freedom," libertarian political commentator Lew Rockwell observed. "Today, thanks to those two efforts and his many years of actual public service ... his name ID is way up."

Paul's Iowa supporters are doing everything they can to capitalize on their candidate's rising star. A recent "Ready, Ames, Fire" 24-hour online fundraiser netted \$550,000, and the campaign has arranged to bus scores of supporters from across the state to next week's straw poll.

“People are starting to realize that he actually has a chance, and they’re starting to get amped up,” said Laura Bosworth, a Paul supporter and recent college grad living in Ames. “It’s finally come to a point, with the economy and the wars, that people are ready to listen.”

## **Ideas viewed as fringe now gain attention**

Paul, who’s 75 and was first elected to Congress in 1976, announced last month that he won’t seek re-election to the House, allowing him to run full-out for the presidency.

His platform today echoes the policies he’s promoted for nearly 40 years: Shrink the federal government, pull U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and eliminate the Federal Reserve, an agency he says was the main cause of the nation’s current financial crisis.

He advocates an unfettered free market and a return to the gold standard, a system where paper money is backed by units of precious metals.

Paul’s dogged attempts to spur debate on national fiscal issues until recently branded him as somewhat of a “Chicken Little.” But the 2008 economic crisis – and a sentiment that the country is becoming entrenched in overseas conflicts – has generated more power for Paul in the House and more attention on the campaign trail.

Case in point: GOP legislators backed his play to audit the Fed in 2009, an idea he first floated in 1983.

“That used to be a fringe idea,” said Michael Tanner, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank based in Washington, D.C. “Now you see a fair amount (of legislators) demanding some sort of accountability on the part of the Fed, and there’s a great deal of suspicion of Fed policy.”

Other Republican presidential candidates, including Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann and Georgia businessman Herman Cain, have joined him in questioning the nation’s entanglements in foreign affairs, a phenomenon that Rand Paul credits to his father.

In 2008, pundits “attempted to ridicule him over foreign policy,” Rand Paul said. “Now you have a Republican presidential field in which half or more of the candidates are mimicking his lines about overseas military bases, and about having a constitutional approach to declaring war in Libya.”

## **A font of ideas, but persistently libertarian**

Ron Paul himself remains cautious about the depth of his following. After more than three decades in the public eye, he’s still awkward at the art of mixing statesmanship with salesmanship. He knows there’s more support, but just how much?

He shrugs his shoulders, and laughs. That’s really a better question for his advisers, he says.

His role? He’s the idea man. Paul expects audience members to keep up when he peppers his stump speeches with references to the works of Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard, students of Austrian economics whose works guide his fiscal policies.

When reporters on Iowa's campaign trail question his ability to appeal to mainstream voters, a look of impatience crosses his face. Before answering, Paul shifts the weight of his wiry frame, rocking side to side on the black athletic shoes he wears with his blue suits.

He sighs. He raises his bushy white eyebrows. His voice goes up an octave.

"The status quo is what got us into this mess," he says, with a note of exasperation. "People are sick of the status quo. It's just going to dig us deeper into debt, get us involved in more foreign wars. Who wants that?"

With the unemployment rate above 9 percent, he believes he'll earn more supporters in 2012 "because people vote from their bellies."

His consistent record on curbing government spending – he has never voted to raise the debt ceiling – appeals to purist fiscal conservatives.

But he gets in trouble with some social conservatives because of his adherence to libertarian views of limiting government intervention in individual liberty and deferring to states' rights over federal authority.

For example, he believes abortion to be immoral, and he opposes government funding for facilities that perform abortion. But he doesn't think the government should have the power to stop all abortions.

Likewise, he personally defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman. But he thinks the issue is best addressed by the states, not the federal government.

## **To him, it's all about liberty, free markets**

To Paul, politics is a lot simpler than the press or Washington playmakers like to make it.

Since reading Friedrich von Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom" as a medical student, he has devoted his life to advocating for individual liberty through the free market. That book promoted some of the same lessons Paul learned as a boy at his family's dairy in Pennsylvania. Starting at the age of 3 or 4, he rose at dawn to rinse milk bottles, Rand Paul said.

"He learned to work hard and waste nothing," said the younger Paul. "His parents could never conceive of spending money they didn't have, and he can't either. We live in an era where now people will put \$20,000 on their credit card. He wouldn't do that as an individual, and he doesn't think we should do it as a country, either."

Today, Paul's still waking early, still working hard.

He typically visits two to three cities each day in Iowa, and makes time to shake every supporter's hand after each event.

On the weekends, he refuels his mind – and spirit – with 12-mile bike rides near his Lake Jackson, Texas, home. Alone on the road, he refines his policy positions. The exercise keeps him from getting "too ornery" with members of the media who have pooh-poohed his chances

of making real headway in a national election, he said.

Few national commentators give him much chance of winning the GOP nomination. But Iowa will serve as a testing ground for whether the surge of interest in limited government can translate into votes.

“Any candidate with a small, but well-organized and intensely motivated group of supporters makes a bigger splash in the smallest of ponds,” said Dennis Goldford, a politics professor at Drake University. “The caucuses are a small pond, and the straw poll is an even smaller pond.”

That means Paul is once again in danger of making waves.

“I think we’re winning the battle,” he said, following a June campaign speech in Des Moines. “We’re winning the battle of changing people’s attitudes.”

## Ron Paul

DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 20, 1935.

EDUCATION: Bachelor’s degree, 1957, Gettysburg College. Medical degree, 1961, Duke University.

ELECTIVE OFFICE: U.S. House, 1976-77, 1979-85, 1997-present.

OTHER POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS: In 1988, he ran for president as the nominee of the Libertarian Party.

OTHER CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: A physician. In 1984, he did not seek re-election to his House seat and returned to his medical practice.

HIS BOOKS: Recent ones include “Liberty Defined: 50 Essential Issues that Affect Our Freedom,” Grand Central Publishing, 2011; “End the Fed,” Grand Central Publishing, 2009.

FAMILY: Wife, Carol; five children, including son Rand, elected in 2010 as a Republican U.S. senator from Kentucky.

## What they say

“There is something to the argument that sometimes he has been so pure that it has been at the expense of accomplishing 99 percent. He wants 100 or nothing. And, so, sometimes that limits his effectiveness as a legislator, while maximizing his effectiveness as an educator.” — Michael Tanner, senior fellow, Cato Institute

“He is perceived very differently back home than he is on the national stage. On the national stage, he’s an eccentric, perennial candidate for president. In his district, he’s been Dr. No since the 1970s.” — Dave Wasserman, House editor, Cook Political Report, explaining that Paul’s constituents are used to his libertarian positions

“Ron Paul himself has said he’s not the greatest messenger, but it is the greatest message.” —

Jack Hunter, conservative commentator and columnist, official Ron Paul 2012 campaign blogger

“Ron Paul has the experience. Hats off to him. The guy is old enough and rich enough he could retire and live an easy life, and yet he chooses to serve. If I can help him win, I’ll do that.”  
— Rod Schmidt, Ron Paul supporter, Garden Grove