



## **The GOP Establishment Should Think Twice Before Trying to Undermine the Tea Party**

By: Daniel J. Mitchell – February 27, 2013

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Even though it changed the terms of the political debate, thus giving them a majority in the 2010 elections, many in the Republican establishment deeply resent the Tea Party. They don't like being monitored by taxpayer-friendly groups that will expose them when they side with special interests (as they have in recent months on Export-Import Bank subsidies and housing handouts).

And they really hate the idea of being held accountable at the polls when they side with the corrupt big-spenders in Washington. Just ask Senator Bennett and Congressman Inglis.

Pork...or principles?

Now the Washington establishment is fighting back. Karl Rove, best known for helping to steer the Bush Administration in favor of statist policies that led to the disastrous elections of 2006 and 2008, even has created a PAC to oppose the Tea Party.

But this seems like a very childish and self-destructive approach. According to some scholarly research, the Tea Party has made a big difference, both in terms of generating more votes for the GOP and in terms of pressuring Republicans to side more with taxpayers rather than the inside-the-beltway interest groups.

Here are some intriguing details from the new academic study.

We use data from a large number of sources to measure the influence of the Tax Day protests on the Tea Party. ...We show that these political protests and the movements they built affected policymaking and voting behavior as well. Incumbent representatives vote more conservatively following large protests in their district... Larger protests increase turnout in the 2010 elections, primarily favoring Republican candidates. We find evidence of sizable effects. In particular, our baseline estimate shows that every Tea Party protester corresponds to a 14 vote increase in the number of Republican votes. Our most conservative estimate lowers that number to 7. The Tea Party protests therefore seem to cause a shift to the right in terms of policymaking, both directly and through the selection of politicians in elections.

Seems like a GOP political consultant should be very pleased with this research (assuming, of course, that they're motivated by Republican and conservative victories rather than their own influence and contracts).

Want some more evidence that the Tea Party has made a difference? Well, check out these excerpts from a story in *The Atlantic* complaining about the lack of action in the Senate and ask yourself whether the addition of Senators like Rand Paul, Mike Lee, Marco Rubio, Ron Johnson, and Pat Toomey might be one of the reasons why Obama's agenda has been stalemated.

Here's an impressive fact about life in today's Washington: The last time a major new piece of policy legislation passed the U.S. Senate was July 15, 2010. That's when the Dodd-Frank financial-reform bill came through the Senate. And it was 951 days ago. If you're wondering whether President Obama's ambitious second-term agenda has a chance to make it through Congress, this little fact might be worth keeping in mind. ...the Senate...hasn't done anything the president could add to his list of policy accomplishments. For that — the kind of thing a president might talk about in his campaign speeches — it's been more than two and a half years.

It's now been more than 951 days, and let's be thankful with every passing second. A “do-nothing” Congress is a very good thing if the only other option is to pass monstrosities such as Obamacare and Keynesian spending schemes.

Keep in mind, by the way, that there are now more Tea Party-oriented Senators such as Tim Scott, Ted Cruz, and Jeff Flake.

To conclude, I'm not under any illusion that the Tea Party automatically means better politicians and/or better election results. But every advocate of tax reform and smaller government should be very happy that there are people in the country who are pressuring politicians to adhere to libertarian-ish principles rather than playing the corrupt Washington game.