

[The Washington Post](#)

Five myths about Ron Paul

By Nick Gillespie, Friday, December 9, 1:18 PM

Ron Paul is the Rodney Dangerfield of Republican presidential candidates. The 12-term Texas congressman ran for president on the Libertarian Party ticket back in 1988 and was widely seen as a sideshow in 2008, despite finishing third in the GOP field behind John McCain and Mike Huckabee. Why, despite a small but devoted set of supporters, does this 76-year-old obstetrician turned politician routinely get no respect from the media and GOP operatives? Let's take a look at what "Dr. No" — a nickname grounded in his medical career and his penchant for voting against any bill increasing the size of government — really stands for.

1. Ron Paul is not a "top-tier" candidate.

At some point in [the race for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination](#), the mainstream media became more obsessed than usual with designating certain GOP hopefuls as "top-tier candidates," which translates into "people we want to talk about because we find them interesting or funny or scary." Or more plainly: "anybody but Ron Paul."

Five Myths

A feature from The Post's Outlook section that dismantles myths, clarifies common misconceptions and makes you think again about what you thought you already knew.

Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney has been accorded top-tier status from the start, but otherwise it's been a rogues' gallery. As their numbers soared, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and pizza magnate Herman Cain enjoyed stints in the top tier, and former House speaker [Newt Gingrich is now ensconced](#) in that blessed circle.

Back in August, Rep. Michele Bachmann (Minn.) was designated "top tier" after [winning Iowa's Ames Straw Poll](#). Paul was not, despite losing to her by only about 150 votes. And when Paul [won the presidential straw poll](#) of about 2,000 attendees at the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit in Washington in October, the contest's organizer pronounced him "[an outlier in this poll](#)."

Yet Paul is doing increasingly well in national and state-level polls. He's running in [second place in Iowa](#) ahead of the Jan. 3 caucuses and third in the New Hampshire primary — the first two contests for the GOP nomination. And now that [Cain has dropped out](#), Paul's stock is likely to keep climbing. The congressman is no less a top-tier candidate than anyone else in the race.

2. Ron Paul is a doctrinaire libertarian.

Yes, he once ran for president on the Libertarian Party ticket and was accurately [described by New York Times columnist Gail Collins](#) last month as against “gun control, the death penalty, the C.I.A., the Civil Rights Act, prosecuting flag-burners, hate crime legislation, foreign aid, the military draft under any circumstances, campaign finance reform, the war on drugs, the war on terror and the war on porn.” But Paul parts company with many libertarians on many issues.

These include immigration, where he favors ending birthright citizenship and reducing the number of newcomers until the welfare state is dismantled. Paul says abortion law should be settled at the state level, but in Congress in 2005, 2007 and 2009 and this year he introduced the [Sanctity of Life Act](#), which would define life as beginning at conception.

In theory he supports free-trade agreements, but in reality he votes against them, dismissing them as “managed trade.” He’s known for [adding earmarks](#) to spending bills he votes against, thus bringing home pork while maintaining his “Dr. No” credentials. As a result, [says David Boaz of the libertarian Cato Institute](#), Paul is “an imperfect messenger” for libertarians’ small-government gospel.

3. Ron Paul’s call to “end the Fed” is crazy.

Paul’s 2009 “[End the Fed](#)” manifesto pretty much gives away the plot in the title. But the book sold well and drew respectful notices not just from folk singer Arlo Guthrie and actor Vince Vaughn, but also from the likes of media magnate and former GOP presidential candidate Steve Forbes. “History,” [Forbes wrote in a review of Paul’s book](#), “will judge that Paul had it right when it came to the Fed and its often misbegotten monetary policies.” David Stockman, the former Republican congressman and Reagan budget director, has said that “[our monetary system is out of control](#)” and that Paul is the “one guy who understands it.”