



Associated Press

Politico Asks: Exactly How Dumb Is Rick Perry?

Elspeth Reeve 11:14 AM ET 1,412 Views Comments (5)

"Is Rick Perry dumb?" This really is the headline of Jonathan Martin's Politico piece, in which he investigates the "whispers" that the Texas governor is "lightweight, incurious, instinctual." These whispers have followed him since he first got to the state legislature almost 30 years ago. Texans call him "Governor Goodhair." (His hair has multiple, but inactive, Twitter accounts.) One former Republican governor even called Perry "Bush only without the brains," Martin reports. Is the reputation based on Perry's actual brainpower or just his accent?

Martin tallies the evidence. On the one hand, he doesn't read much:

He is not an ideas man. Perry hasn't spent his political career marking up the latest Cato or Heritage white papers or reading policy-heavy books late into the night. Advisers and colleagues have informed much of his thinking over the years. ... "If he should know about John Locke, he'll know about John Locke," Miller said. "If it's not on his schedule, it's irrelevant to him."

On the other hand, Perry's extremely street smart:

He's a power politician and a very canny one. And what seems to animate him is competition.

Whether it is winning elections, beating out other states in attracting jobs or besting them for college football recruits, Perry is ferociously single-minded.

Copyright © 2011 by The Atlantic Monthly Group. All rights reserved.

"This is like judging [baseball star] David Ortiz as a failed athlete because he's never scored a touchdown," said Democratic Texas state Rep. Mike Villarreal, alluding to the Perry-is-dull charge. " ... Do not underestimate him."

And he knows how to hire the people who do read books:

Perry has such total trust in [longtime strategist Dave] Carney that he let the veteran political consultant bring in a group of academics to run experiments in his 2006 reelection about what does and doesn't work in modern campaigns. ...

Trained as an Air Force pilot right out of A&M, Perry was "taught to trust your information," Johnson said. ...

"Pilots execute flight plans," Miller said.

David Frum finds this last bit of praise curious. "Executing the flight plan' seems a terrible way to approach the presidency," Frum writes. "It's the president's job to *write the flight plan*." He thinks voters might wonder who these advisers are who would be "really running the country." *New York's* Noreen Malone says that putting aside the question of whether Perry's dumb, he might be a poet. She also notes that this whole question Politico raises is a bit "impolite."

Read more of Martin's examination of Perry's intellect here.

Want to add to this story? Let us know in comments or send an email to the author at ereeve@nationaljournal.com. You can share ideas for stories on the Open Wire.

[@elspethrb](#)

Elsbeth

Reeve

14

Like

9 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Sponsored Links

Elsewhere on the Web

Fantasy Football: The 50 Riskiest Players of 2011 (BleacherReport)

ExxonMobil's earnings: The real story you won't hear in Washington (ExxonMobil's Perspectives)

Critics pile on New York Times' shale stories (ExxonMobil's Perspectives)

Hottest Member of the GOP - Sarah Palin Photo Gallery (Zimbio)

10 Tax-Unfriendly States for Retirees 2011 (Kiplinger)

[what's this]