

Will Rand Paul Run?

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rEVOLution 2.0 -- Will Rand Paul run for President in 2012?

by George Dance (libertarian)
 Sunday, March 13, 2011

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rEVOLution 2.0 is a look at the campaign for the 2012 election of President of the United States (POTUS), in the context of the 21st century struggle for a free society (the rEVOLution[®]). The last installment took a look at the rEVOLution's 2008 candidate, and obvious first choice for a standard

bearer in 2012, Ron Paul. This installment looks at Paul's son, Rand, the newly installed junior Senator from Kentucky.

It seems a bit odd to talk about a Presidential run for someone who has served little more than a month

in elective office, of any kind. In fact, though, a Rand Paul presidential run was being mooted even before he'd won even a primary election. Last May, online magazine Salon was speculating that a Rand Paul run for POTUS «starts to make sense, for two basic reasons: 1) The political atmosphere has never been more favorable for Ron Paul's brand of libertarianism; and 2) Ron Paul himself will be 77 years old in 2012.» (1)

(1) Steve Kornacki, «Will Rand Paul run for president in 2012?», Salon, May 17, 2010. Web, Mar. 13, 2011. http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war_room/2010/05/17/rand_paul_president_2012

There is no denying the truth of 1); we pointed to several examples in our last article. (2) Ron Paul himself sees that; back in June, he was pointing to signs of it like «the big libertarian influence in the Tea Party movement,» the mainstreaming of his campaign against the Federal Reserve Board, and polls showing him leading President Obama among independents by double digits. (3)

Nor is there any point in denying 2); Ron Paul's age is a matter of fact. But it's harder to argue what that means. Paul looks in tremendous shape; his health does not like a factor. However, that wasn't what Salon meant. Rather, the suggestion was that «the old man may not feel like spending another two years of his life running around the country, but with a son in the Senate, he'd have someone to pass the torch to.» (1)

Is Ron Paul running or not? His answer given on his one-day swing through Iowa had a familiar ring: «The truth is, my answer has been, I am 50/50 on the issue of running or not running. I really don't know.» (4) So to take Paul at his word, there's a good chance he has reasons for not wanting to run, and

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good reason to think he may want to «pass on the torch» instead.

Despite all that Ron Paul has said and done to keep the rEVOLution from degenerating into a mere personality cult: If he decides to not run, it is questionable whether the rEVOLution's allegiance can be transferred to another candidate. If anything, the evidence looks negative neither Paul's endorsed candidate, Chuck Baldwin, nor anyone else, benefited when Paul ended his 2008 campaign though the barrier in that case could have been Baldwin's third-party status. In any case, it seems reasonable to go with the candidate that Ron Paul's supporters are most likely to back, and Rand Paul does seem to fit that bill.

In addition, Rand Paul has shown that he has been able to broaden the base of support beyond his father's 2008 core supporters. The latter were no doubt crucial to the fundraising success that allowed him to win the Senate race. Equally undoubtedly, though, if Paul had had to rely on the 13,000-odd Kentuckians who voted for his father in 2008, he would not have won even he nomination.

Rand Paul demonstrated his ability to expand the base through the amazing variety of endorsements he picked up, from Jim DeMint to James Dobson, from Steve Forbes to Sarah Palin. As Liberty Maven's Mrc Gallagher commented when Palin appeared with both Pauls on Fox's «Freedom Watch» last June: «How fitting it was to see Rand Paul sitting between Ron Paul and Sarah Palin on the show. I'm not sure if this seating arrangement was purpose-driven, but it certainly seemed like it could have been deliberate. Rand Paul represents the 'coming together' of these factions into a more effective liberty-driven whole.» (5)

In some respects it looks as though Rand Paul is already running against President Obama. He recorded his own response to the President's State of the Union message in January, stressing the looming debt crisis (6).

He returned to that theme this week, when he emerged as the spokesmen for a group of rogue Senators who vow to block «any» legislation until that crisis is addressed. (7) Unlike his father, Rand does not hesitate to go on the attack; and he's sounding increasingly like a presidential candidate as he excoriates Obama's lack of «leadership» on the issue:

«We do need bold leadership, and I think the president has abdicated in that role, and I think even some of us as Republicans aren't doing what we ought to do. We need to lead boldly. We need to believe in the things we used to believe in, like that education should be state and local, that we can cut things, that we can balance the budget, and that America is a great nation, that the American dream is worth believing in. And I think if we can do that I think the sky's the limit.» (8)

Like his father, Rand Paul is scheduling speaking trips of his own to Iowa and New Hampshire, «raising reporters' eyebrows because of both states' status in the presidential nominating cycle» in the words of Washington insider blog The Hill. The blog adds: «The trips to Iowa and New Hampshire do nothing to tamp down speculation that the younger Paul will make a run if his father opts against another campaign, and he's been on a media blitz to promote it.» (9)

Rand Paul has many reasons to encourage such speculation and the attention it brings him. For one thing, he has a new book to promote. (10) For another, it attracts attention to his issues. But it cannot be denied that he is at least putting himself in fallback position for his own run.

As a final consideration, one can note that Rand Paul would be running as a Senator, while Ron Paul (for all his rock star status among his supporters) is still just one of 400-odd Congressmen. As the Cato Institute's David Boaz puts it: «Ron Paul may make some noise, and may run, but House members don't get nominated for president,» (GD2) Indeed, one has to go back to James Garfield in 1881 to find the

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last, and in fact the only, instance of a Congressman being elected POTUS..

On the other hand, Senators do win. Admittedly, Rand Paul is only a first-term junior Senator, but that doesn't seem to matter: to find a first-term junior Senator who won the Presidency, one has to go back only as far as Barack Obama.

(2) George Dance, «The case for a Ron Paul Presidential campaign in 2012,» Nolan Chart, Mar. 6, 2011. <http://www.nolanchart.com/article8429.html>

(3) George Dance, «Ron Paul: Gary Johnson is best alternative for 2012,» Nolan Chart, Jun. 28, 2010. <http://www.nolanchart.com/article7824.html>

(4)

(5) George Dance, «Liberty Hits Primetime (I): Freedom Watch,» Nolan Chart, June 15, 2010. <http://www.nolanchart.com/author383.html>

(6) «Sen. Rand Paul on President Obama's State of the Union Address,» The Political Animal, Jan. 26, 2011. <http://gdspoliticalanimal.blogspot.com/2011/01/sen-rand-paul-on-president-obamas-state.html>

(7) «Rand Paul among group vowing to block non-debt, deficit legislation,» The Political Animal, Mar. 13, 2011. Web, Mar. 13, 2011. <http://gdspoliticalanimal.blogspot.com/2011/01/sen-rand-paul-on-president-obamas-state.html>

(8) «Sen. Paul: President Obama Has «Abdicated» In His Role,» Real Clear Politics Video, RealClearPolitics.com, Mar. 10, 2011. Web, Mar. 13, 2011. http://realclearpolitics.com/video/2011/03/10/sen_paul_president_obama_has_abdicated_in_his_role.html

(9) «Rand Paul for President 2012 speculation,» The Political Animal, Mar. 4, 2011. Web, Mar. 13, 2011. <http://gdspoliticalanimal.blogspot.com/2011/03/rand-paul-for-president-2012.html>

(10) «Rand Paul's Book The Tea Party Goes to Washington Available Now,» The Political Animal, Feb. 18, 2011. Web, Mar. 13, 2011. <http://gdspoliticalanimal.blogspot.com/search/label/Rand%20Paul>

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It may seem odd to be discussing a Presidential run by someone who has not served even two months in elective office of any kind. In fact, though, a Rand Paul presidential run was being mooted before he had won so much as a primary. Last May, online magazine *Salon* was speculating that a Rand Paul run for POTUS «starts to make sense, for two basic reasons: 1) The political atmosphere has never been more favorable for Ron Paul's brand of libertarianism; and 2) Ron Paul himself will be 77 years old in 2012.» (1)

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Nor is there any point in denying 2) -- Ron Paul's age is a matter of fact. But it's harder to argue what that means. Paul appears to be in tremendous shape; his health does not look like a factor. However, that wasn't what *Salon* meant. Rather, the suggestion was that «the old man may not feel like spending another two years of his life running around the country, but with a son in the Senate, he'd have someone to pass the torch to.» (1)

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Despite all Ron Paul has said and done to keep the rEVOLution from becoming a personality cult, it is questionable whether the rEVOLution's allegiance to him is transferrable. The evidence looks negative: neither Paul's endorsed candidate, Chuck Baldwin, nor anyone else benefitted when Paul ended his 2008 campaign (though the barrier in that case could have been Baldwin's third-party status). In any case, Rand Paul does look like the candidate whom Ron Paul's supporters would be most likely to back.

In addition, Rand Paul has been able to broaden his support base well beyond his father's 2008 cadre. The latter were no doubt crucial to the fundraising success that allowed him to win the Senate race. Just as certainly, though, had he been able to attract only the 13,000-odd Kentuckians who voted for the elder Paul in 2008, he would not have won even his party's nomination.

Rand Paul demonstrated his ability to expand the base through the amazing variety of endorsements he picked up, from Jim DeMint to James Dobson, from Steve Forbes to Sarah Palin. As Liberty Maven's Marc Gallagher commented when Palin appeared with both Pauls on Fox's *Freedom Watch* last June:

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Salon acknowledged in May that Rand Paul had «pulled off a remarkable feat in Kentucky: uniting his father's libertarian army with Rush Limbaugh's Dittoheads in a coalition that the party establishment has been powerless to stop. If he could even begin to replicate that Kentucky formula on the national stage, Rand Paul would be far more formidable than Ron Paul ever was or ever could be.» (1)

Sometimes it looks as if Rand Paul is already running against Obama. He recorded his own response to the President's State of the Union message in January, stressing the looming debt crisis (6). He returned to that theme this week, as the spokesmen for a group of rogue Senators who vow to block the passage of «any» legislation until that crisis is addressed. (7) Unlike his father, Rand does not hesitate to attack; and he sounds increasingly like a candidate as he excoriates Obama's lack of 'leadership':

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The younger Paul has many reasons to encourage such speculation and the attention it brings him. For one thing, he has a new book to promote. (10) For another, it attracts attention to his issues. But it cannot be denied that he is at least putting himself in position for his own Presidential run.

As a final consideration, one can note that Rand Paul would be running as a Senator, while Ron Paul (for all his rock star status among his supporters) is still just one of 400-odd Congressmen. As the Cato Institute's David Boaz puts it: «Ron Paul may make some noise, and may run, but House members don't get nominated for President.» (3) Indeed, one has to go back to James Garfield in 1880 to find the last, and in fact the only, instance of a Congressman being elected POTUS..

On the other hand, Senators can and do win. True, Rand Paul is only a first-term junior Senator. But that does not look like much of an obstacle. To find an instance of a first-term junior Senator winning

the Presidency, one has to go back only as far as Barack Obama.

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Photo: Rand Paul, at a town hall meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, Nov. 7, 2009. **Photo by Gage Skidmore**. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 3.0 Unported CC BY-SA-30) License. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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