

Anti-big government GOP terrified of "privatization"

by **Chris Bowers**

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For a party that denounces "big government" and "socialism" at every turn, Republicans are oddly terrified of the alternative: privatization.

Case in point: Republican Senatorial candidate and former Club for Growth chair Pat Toomey. Although Toomey favors moving Social Security out of the public sector and into the stock market--aka, privatization—he will never, ever use the word *privatization*. Further, he will adamantly deny that he favors privatization. Consider how Toomey **reacted** to a question at the National Press Club yesterday when asked about Social Security privatization:

Q: Do you continue to favor privatizing Social Security?

A: I've never said I favor privatizing Social Security. It's a very misleading — it's an intentionally misleading term.

Privatization is **exactly** what Toomey supports. He wants to take Social Security money out of the public sector of the government and put it in the private sector of the stock market. That is why it is called "privatization." The DSCC **catalogued** 36 instances where Toomey supported exactly that policy.

What Toomey, and most other Republicans, oppose is not actual privatization, but the word "privatization." Republicans used to use the word when discussing their plans for Social Security but in the fall of 2002, they made the linguistic slide away from the term en masse. They did this once it became known how poorly variants on the word "private" poll in regards to Social Security. Talking Points Memo **documented** some Republicans making this shift:

Rep. Chris Chocola (R) of Indiana *before* word came down from party headquarters (Nov. 1, 2000) ...

Bush's plan of individual investment of 2 percent of the money is a start. Eventually, I'd like to see the entire system privatized. It's not a 'risky scheme.'

Rep. Chris Chocola (R) of Indiana *after* word came down from party headquarters (Sept. 3rd, 2002) ...

I do not support the privatization of Social Security.

Bob Novak before the word came down from party headquarters (Capitol Gang, Sept. 14th, 2002 where we find Mark Shields at mid-*Outrage of the Week*) ...

Mark Shields: In an Orwellian abuse of the language, conservatives, including even the respected Cato Institute, insist that they're now for Social Security choice, not for dreaded 'privatization'. Yes, and war is peace.

Robert D. Novak.

NOVAK: I'm still for privatization.

Bob Novak *after* the word came down from party headquarters (Crossfire, Oct. 28th, 2002) ...

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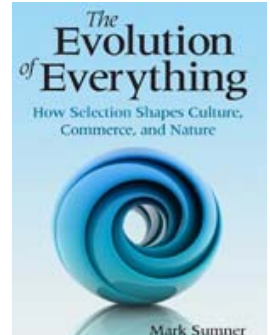
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[Democratic consultant] Steve McMahon: I thought they were accusing the Republicans of wanting to privatize Social Security which, after all, is what Republicans wanted.

NOVAK: That's a Democratic term.

Conservatives favor turning Social Security over to the private sector. However, they will vehemently deny wanting to privatize Social Security because it polls poorly.

With the possible exceptions of Muslims, the LGBT community, and immigrants, there may not be anything Republicans fear more than the use of the word, "privatization." As such, Democrats need to keep hammering away at Republicans with the term. Maybe if enough Democrats do so, all of them will come to oppose privatization, too.

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