

## Rand Paul raises funds and talks about support from pro-TARP senators

Wednesday night, Kentucky U.S. Senate candidate Rand Paul spent two hours of a D.C. fundraising trip at the Phoenix Park Hotel, meeting with supporters at a low-dollar, low-key fundraiser. The buy-in to meet Paul, his father Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.), and Sen. Jim Bunning (R-Ky.), was only \$25, and that drew in 40-odd young libertarians and veterans of the Ron Paul presidential campaign. Some clutched copies of Reason and the Cato Institute magazine Regulation as they chatted with the candidate. It was the kind of crowd in which long-haired interns would stop the taciturn Bunning and say "Sir, I want to shake the hand of the most principled conservative in the Senate."

In the run-up to his D.C. trip, Paul had [generated headlines](#) by scheduling meetings with senators who supported the Troubled Asset Relief Package -- in the primary, he declined support from anyone who did so. Bunning, who met with Paul before the event, said the candidate had yet to meet with the offending senators, and generally shrugged off the story.

"Rand met with the steering committee today," said Bunning, "the ones who are supposed to be conservatives. I don't follow what the NRSC does, or what Senator McConnell does. I just follow what I do. I don't know what they're going to do."

In short remarks at the fundraiser, Bunning explained why he backed Paul in the primary over party favorite Trey Grayson -- he was worried, said the senator, about Grayson's past support for Bill Clinton. And while he was "proud" of Paul, he warned him to be more careful about talking to the press.

"I wanted to get him before or the day after he got elected," said Bunning, "because I knew all the papers would immediately turn on him. And they did I would have told him, as soon as you win the nomination, they're your enemy, and the more you recognize that the better off you are, because then you can be a little more careful about how you approach some of our *wonderful* papers like the Herald-Ledger and the Courier-Journal."

In his own remarks, Paul took his own shot at the media.

"You'll see that they want to paint me -- the Courier, the Herald, even some of these national newspapers up here -- as being 'extreme,'" Paul said. "One of the answers I learned from my dad, because they tried to do this to him, is flip it around and ask, what's extreme? It's extreme to have a \$2 trillion deficit."

Paul also criticized Republicans who voted for TARP, and thanked Bunning for opposing it. That led the Post's Felicia Sonmez and me to ask why Paul had decided to accept support from the senators who supported it.

"I think the Republican Party, as you've seen, after the new administration came in, has been fairly unified in saying no more bailouts," said Paul. "And even some who voted for it will quietly say I don't think it was a good vote, and I might not have done it again. Some still say we don't know what would have happened, it would have been calamity if they didn't do it. I don't think they're bad people -- I disagree on the vote but we disagree on a lot of things."

Paul emphasized that by accepting the support of pro-TARP senators, like Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), he had not changed his stance on the issue.

"I think it does show that I will work together with other Republicans I don't necessarily agree with," he said. "I think them endorsing me and giving me money shows that they are endorsing my candidacy; it's not me endorsing their candidacy. It shows the party does want to retain this seat in Kentucky."

By David Weigel | June 24, 2010; 9:03 AM ET

---