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the corner

Monday, February 08, 2010

The Crist to Rubio Switch [Cesar Conda]

Last May, I [wrote](#) about why I thought Florida governor Charlie Crist was an acceptable fiscal conservative (the Cato Institute had given him an "A" on its Fiscal Policy Report Card) and why I believed he gave Republicans the best chance to retain Florida's U.S. Senate seat. Even though I was chided by fellow conservatives for saying something favorable about the governor, who had embraced [Obama's](#) nearly \$1 trillion stimulus package (which by the way has failed to reduce unemployment), I believed that a more important goal was to stop the Democrats from strengthening their filibuster-proof Senate majority. I subsequently donated to Crist's Senate campaign and even met with him once to discuss tax- and budget-policy ideas.

But since then, I've changed my mind and made the switch to Marco Rubio. For one thing, Governor Crist's fiscal-responsibility score has fallen. According to Cato's Chris Edwards in an October e-mail to the *St. Petersburg Times*: "But as the report's author, I am concerned that the governor has fallen off the fiscal responsibility horse since the report was written in mid-2008. In particular, Crist approved a huge \$2.2 billion tax increase for the fiscal 2010 budget, even though he had promised that \$12 billion in federal 'stimulus' [money](#) showered on Florida over three years would obviate the need for tax increases." But more important, I had a chance to meet with Rubio right before Christmas. He struck me as someone who was genuinely interested in nitty-gritty of public policy; a true policy wonk who had championed 100 reform ideas when he was the Speaker of the Florida house. Furthermore, I came away thinking that Marco Rubio is someone conservatives could trust to go to Washington and take on President Obama and congressional liberals as they move to massively expand government.

[Charlie Crist](#), if elected, would make a fine U.S. senator, and would probably be a reliable Republican vote on most issues. But I think Marco Rubio is more likely to be a leader when it comes to putting forward innovative conservative policy reforms and alternatives to America's problems.

I've rounded up a group of friends, including Rep. [Paul Ryan](#), Mary Matalin, former Rep. Vin Weber, Liz Cheney, former Sen. Bob Kasten, and former Rep. J. C. Watts, among others, to host an evening reception in my offices (901 7th Street, N.W., Washington) for Rubio after his speech before CPAC on Thursday, February 18. I'd invite all Corner readers to come over to meet Marco, who I believe will be Florida's next U.S. Senator.

— Cesar Conda was assistant for domestic policy to Vice President Dick Cheney and senior economic policy adviser to the 2008 Mitt Romney for President Campaign.

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