



Can Daniels Win Over Libertarian Wonks?

November 23rd, 2010 at 7:33 pm [Noah Kristula-Green](#) | [4 Comments](#) |

In my look at Mitch Daniels chances yesterday, user [ProfNickD](#) suggested that my contention that Daniels was the favored candidate of the conservative policy wonk community was misplaced:

Wonks love him? Really? You mean the Cato Institute? The Independence Institute? The Ludwig von Mises Institute? The Reason Foundation?

Some wonks like Daniels — DC/NYC Republican statists and establishmentarians, for sure, those who advocate free markets, not so much.

I have a sense of where this free market rejection of Daniels comes from. Cato released a [paper in September](#) which graded each state governor on their fiscal records. Daniels' grade was a mere "B", with the report noting that "Governor Daniels is a fiscal conservative, but he seems to focus more on balancing the state budget than shrinking the size of government." The report went on to cite that Daniels went on to sign a cigarette tax and a temporary increase in the income tax (which was rejected). The report also cites that while he did lower property taxes, he off-set it by raising the sales tax. The report ominously warns this "may lead to larger government down the road by increasing state power at the expense of competition between local jurisdictions."

Daniels is thus clearly not a minarchist. Yet while Cato does seem to view taxes on cigarettes as a mark against the cause of liberty, on the whole, a fair number of libertarian organizations seem willing to give Daniels credit where credit is due on his record. Heartland institute has [praised Daniels' governance](#) and The Reason Foundation also [praised](#) Daniels' privatization of the toll road.

It's true that Daniels is not the darling of the libertarian right. They have criticized him for having the audacity to support [full-day kindergarten](#), and when he first announced his accursed tax on cigarettes in 2006, he [recieved a "D" grade](#) in Cato's governor's grading.

However, fast forward to 2009, when Daniels proposed an education tax credit, and received [praise](#). Cato policy analyst Adam B. Schaeffer wrote: "Sounds like Governor Mitch Daniels deserves kudos for keeping the bill in his budget and pushing for the program...Big Ed ain't what he used to be."

So perhaps even free market advocates can concede that while it is a shame that Daniels thinks that cigarettes create negative externalities which should be taxed, that at least he does his part to fight for school choice and balanced budgets, even if Indiana is merely an efficient state and not a Galt's Gulch.

If Daniels fails to become president, it won't be because of a cigarette tax, it will be [because 80% of Americans don't know who he is](#).

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- **buddyglass** // [Nov 23, 2010 at 8:51 pm](#)

Of the republican hopefuls, who else would a libertarian support? Ron Paul? There's Gary Johnson and Chris Christie, but they're even less likely to get nominated than Paul, and most likely they won't even run.

Huckabee's a FairTax guy, which might appeal to some libertarians, but he's also big about nanny state measures to improve public health. Also he's a creationist, which won't sit well with a lot of folks.

Romney? Mass. health care. End of story.

Palin? Give me a break.

Gingrich? Dude said the state should step in and prohibit the ground zero mosque.

- **Posting From Fake America** // [Nov 23, 2010 at 9:12 pm](#)

“Daniels’ grade was a mere “B”, with the report noting that “Governor Daniels is a fiscal conservative, but he seems to focus more on balancing the state budget than shrinking the size of government.””

Oh, the AUDACITY!

- **ltoro1** // [Nov 23, 2010 at 11:50 pm](#)

I see someone beat me to it. Only a B. That's not bad. Especially when you consider that balanced budgets are typically consistent with limited government.

- **ltoro1** // [Nov 23, 2010 at 11:53 pm](#)

On aside, I have been totally surprised that anyone gets worked up about cigarette taxes. Maybe it's because I don't smoke, but even if I did I would prefer them to income taxes or gas taxes.

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