



### search nm

 

### stay connected

 

- [Home](#)
- [Blogger Index](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Bookclub](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [RSS](#)

## GOP Surrenders to Beck's Mob Rule

September 11th, 2009 at 11:59 am by [David Frum](#) | [194 Comments](#) |

[Share](#)

When Glenn Beck made his Fox debut, some shrewd conservatives responded with a wink. Maybe the show was paranoid and hysterical. Maybe Beck was none too scrupulous about facts and truth. But why be squeamish? The other side did as bad, or nearly. And see how usefully he mobilized the base!

Those shrewd conservatives assumed Beck was working for them. Big mistake. Beck is working for himself – and he chooses his targets according to his own scheme of priorities.

The newest target is Cass Sunstein, confirmed yesterday by the Senate as director of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs within the Office of Management and Budget.

For more about Sunstein, see Tim Mak's adjoining [report](#). Bottom line: For those who champion free competitive markets, Cass Sunstein is about the best possible choice to be hoped for from a Democratic administration.

I arrive at this opinion through first hand knowledge. I studied in one of Cass Sunstein's seminars at Harvard Law School, and witnessed for two hours per week the fair play of his mind. But it's not only my opinion. It's the opinion of: Chris DeMuth, past president of the American Enterprise Institute; of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page; and of the editors of Cato's *Regulation* magazine. And while Republican-appointed judges like Chief Justice John Roberts and Court of Appeals Judge Michael McConnell cannot properly express a view, I'd wager dollars-to-doughnuts they too support Sunstein: after all, he endorsed both of them.

Nor is it only American conservatives who admire Sunstein. British Conservative Party leader David Cameron has approvingly [quoted](#) Sunstein's latest book, [Nudge](#) (co-authored with University of Chicago economist Richard Thaler).

Indeed, Cameron has recommended Sunstein's work so forcefully that the left-leaning British newspaper *The Guardian* sardonically [calls](#) *Nudge*, Cameron's "favorite American import."

So how is it that this man so admired by economic conservatives worldwide, this market-oriented economist, this endorser of Republican Supreme Court nominees, and – by the way – this constitutional scholar who has [endorsed](#) the *Heller* case expanding Second Amendment gun rights - how could he of all the 10,000 political appointees of the Obama administration become a demon figure to Fox TV's new star?

The stated answer – watch [here](#) – is that Sunstein is a crazed animal rights fanatic who wants to grant monkeys the right to sue and allow people to execute their retarded children.

Now it might seem ambitious to try to defeat an administration nominee on the grounds that he is not cruel enough to animals. Here is what Sunstein himself has to say: Laws against animal cruelty have been on the books for years. (Oklahoma's date back to 1887). They command broad assent, from conservatives as well as liberals. Sunstein argues against trying to enact new laws, and in favor of enforcing existing laws. It's striking that Beck never actually quotes Sunstein. Beck instead relies instead on an argument from pure assertion: Sunstein opposes animal cruelty, the Princeton philosopher Peter Singer also opposes animal cruelty, therefore Sunstein must agree with everything Peter Singer has ever said or written.

This is beyond sloppy, beyond ignorant, proceeding straight toward the deceptive.

To anyone who knows anything – anything! – about what Cass Sunstein has actually written or actually said, it's a travesty and scandal. And ironically enough, if successful, it would have been a travesty and scandal in which conservatives would find themselves the main victims.

Had Cass Sunstein somehow been stopped, the next OIRA nominee would certainly have been less favorable to markets, enterprise, and competition. The next nominee would not have supported John Roberts and Michael McConnell, would not have chaired seminars with the American Enterprise Institute, might not have been endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, and very likely would not have shared with conservatives so many of the values that Beck purports to uphold but in fact betrays.

Glenn Beck is not the first to make a pleasant living for himself by reckless defamation. We have seen his kind before in American journalism and American politics, and the good news is that their careers never last long. But the bad news is that while their careers do last, such people do terrible damage.

Republican senators know the truth about Cass Sunstein – that's why only 33 Republican senators voted "no" on the cloture vote on his nomination, the vote that mattered. Yet unfortunately they also fear the wild disinformation broadcast by Fox News and credulously believed by millions of Fox viewers. So the final vote on the nomination of this best friend conservatives are likely ever to have inside the administration was 57-40, with only a handful of Republicans voting in favor.

The Senate's most left-wing member, Bernie Sanders, intelligently voted "nay." There's one person at least who did not allow himself to be hustled out of his principles by a television loudmouth.

With only two exceptions, however, all the Senate's Democrats present voted aye. That's perhaps the final irony of this strange episode: I wonder whether so many liberals would have voted in favor of Sunstein if Beck had not denounced him.

The ultimate happy ending of the story should not however close the page on this appalling episode of broadcast recklessness and political cowardice. We conservatives are submitting our movement to some of the most unscrupulous people in American life. This submission disgraces conservatism, discredits Republicans, and damages the country. It's beyond time for conservatives who know better to join us at NewMajority in emancipating ourselves from leadership by the most stupid, the most cynical, and the most truthless.

### Recent Posts by David Frum

- [Israel - Denounced for What](#)
- [It Is](#)
- [Immigration and Health Insurance](#)
- [College Republicans?](#)
- [The Speech 3](#)
- [The Obvious Question...](#)