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## Health Care Arena

An ongoing discussion on the health care debate

Nov. 02, 2009

### Driving the Conversation:

Arena Ref: [Fred Barbash](#)

## NY 23 and the GOP: "First principles" or road to "internecine ruin?" (WSJ)

Noon live chat on Afghanistan with CFR's [Max Boot](#). See his piece this morning, "[Give McChrystal a Fighting Chance](#)"

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### Roger Pilon

Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

In important respects, the NY 23 congressional race is a microcosm of the Goldwater/Rockefeller battle of 1964 -- a battle for the soul of the Republican Party. For years during the 1950s and '60s, "Rockefeller Republicans" were not simply "Democrat Lite" but often to the left of Democrats, giving rise back then to the New York Conservative Party, which nominated Doug Hoffmann for the NY 23 seat at stake tomorrow. And the policies those Republicans put in place, starting with taxes, were directly responsible for the relentless decline of the Empire State. As reported in a recent [Empire Center study](#), "New York's share of the nation's population declined sharply in the second half of the 20th century, from 19 percent of all Americans in 1950 to less than 7 percent in 2000."

Goldwater won that intra-party battle, of course, then lost an election all but foreordained by the Kennedy assassination. And with Goldwater's victory for the soul of the Republican Party, the parties were at last distinguished by their principles, even if a remnant of Rockefeller Republicans, like the two Bushes, remained to muddy the waters.

The NY 23 situation captures this perfectly. Nominated not in a primary but by a few party officials, Dede Scozzafava's indifference to Republican Party principles was no better illustrated than by her decision, when it became clear how badly she was losing, not simply to remove herself from the race but to endorse the Democratic nominee -- in an apparent [back-room deal](#) with state and national Democrats. We'll doubtless know in time just what promises were made for that endorsement. But it reeks already of the lust for power over principle: Do whatever it takes to stay in the political game.

It's impossible to predict the outcome of this election, of course. Some of Scozzafava's

loyalists will probably follow her, while others will be moved by a sense of betrayal to go the other way. The larger question, however, is whether we are going to have two significantly different parties in this nation -- or simply two parties vying for power, with barely a dime's worth of difference between them. The Obama administration's lust for power, making Bush look like a piker, has brought the Goldwater/Reagan revolution back to life. But the [Wall Street Journal's](#) sober editorial this morning got it exactly right: Whether this revival returns the GOP to first principles or leads to internecine ruin "will depend on how GOP leaders and conservative activists respond." Both could do worse than look to Ronald Reagan for guidance.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>
<a href="#">Open Mic Weekend Plus, more on Friday's question: A year after his election, what has most surprised you about Barack Obama? In Health Care Arena, all about the ad wars</a>	Oct. 30, 2009
<a href="#">Does the administration appear to have its act together on the flu? If not, how hazardous is it to Obama's political health?</a>	Oct. 29, 2009
<a href="#">POLITICO's new Health Care Arena House bill deconstructed Oct. 31, 2009</a>	Oct. 29, 2009
<a href="#">What's your question?</a>	Oct. 28, 2009
<a href="#">Reid's Option: Does it help or hurt the chances for healthcare passage by Christmas?</a>	Oct. 27, 2009
<a href="#">What are the national implications of the "mini mid-terms" in Virginia and NJ?</a>	Oct. 26, 2009
<a href="#">Open Mic</a>	Oct. 24, 2009