

IN FOCUS

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# LOOKING RIGHT:

## The GOP's 2016 Hopefuls



**A**s the GOP embraces the reactionary politics and anti-government zealotry of the Tea Party, it is steadily purging “moderates” and empowering extremists. Nothing shows this trend more clearly than the lineup of potential Republican presidential candidates.

In order to compete in early caucus and primary states such as Iowa and South Carolina, Republican presidential hopefuls must engage with a voter base that leans significantly farther to the right than the average American voter. Pro-corporate groups, often working outside of the public eye, have invested millions of dollars in creating a political infrastructure that has pushed the party to the extreme fringe, leading candidates to increasingly rely on a small class of mega-donors who seek to bankroll the campaigns of their personal favorites.

Candidates are already competing to see who is more skeptical of the science behind climate change, critical of any reform of America’s immigration system or financial industry, and vocal about the dangers of a Big Government that is purportedly crushing religious freedom and bent on seizing people’s guns. As the GOP moves farther to the right, its presidential candidates are moving with it.

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## **JEB BUSH: Staying True to W’s Legacy**

A favorite among “establishment” Republicans who see him as a “serious” figure who would be competitive in a general election, Jeb Bush is emerging as the favorite of the GOP’s donor class. His brother George W. Bush’s disastrous legacy as president won’t necessarily endanger Jeb Bush’s chances among GOP voters, as the former president holds an 84 percent approval rating among Republicans.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that “black voters were nearly 10 times more likely than nonblack voters to have their ballots rejected” while trying to vote in Florida that year, and that “African-Americans cast about 54 percent of the 180,000 spoiled ballots,” despite constituting just 11 percent of the voting population. The commission’s report called out Bush and other officials for

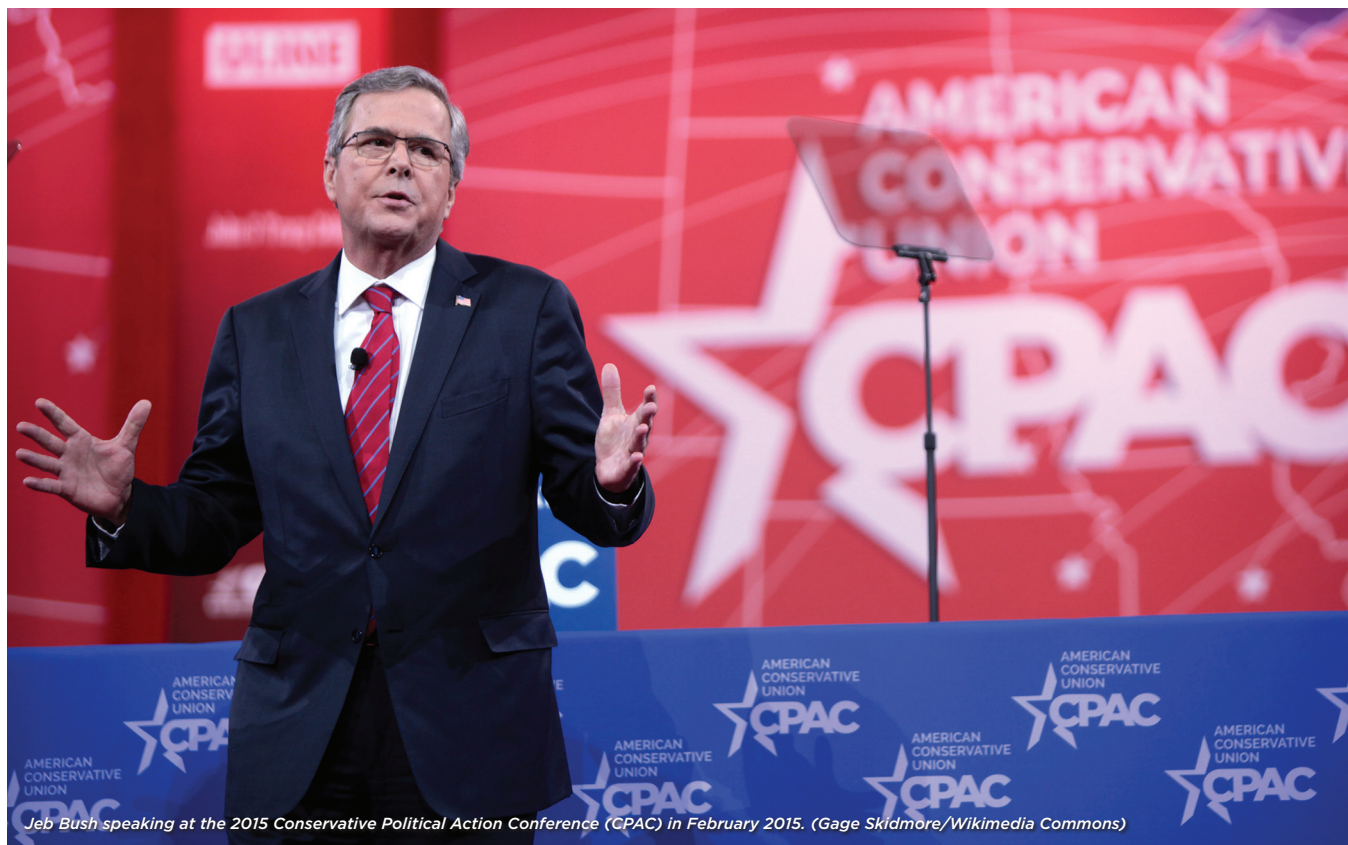
showing a “lack of leadership in protecting voting rights,” and recommended that the Department of Justice pursue charges against the governor for violating the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In 2004, elections officials working under Bush tried again to conduct a large-scale and faulty purge of the state’s voter rolls, but were rebuffed thanks to the efforts of voting rights advocates.

**Under Bush’s leadership, Florida purged thousands of people from its voter rolls in the run-up to the 2000 election, disproportionately removing African-American voters.**

Jeb Bush’s legacy is tied to his brother’s in more ways than their shared name (and advisers). Under Bush’s leadership, Florida purged thousands of people from its voter rolls in the run-up to the 2000 election, disproportionately removing African-American voters from its lists of registered voters.

Like his brother, Bush knows how to appeal to right-wing audiences. Warning that “we have a federal government that is willingly violating the religious freedom of its citizens,” Bush told students at a Pennsylvania Christian college this year that hostility to religious liberty is growing in America as a result of Obama’s



Jeb Bush speaking at the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in February 2015. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

leadership. Bush has also been making overtures to top Religious Right figures, including Ralph Reed and the Southern Baptist Convention's Russell Moore. Bush even tapped a leader of a notorious anti-LGBT, anti-choice group to lead his outreach to the Religious Right.

He is still fondly remembered by the Religious Right for his efforts to intervene in the Terri Schiavo case, attempting to defy court orders to remove Schiavo, who had spent years in a persistent vegetative state, from life support.

As governor, Bush also signed Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, a major legislative victory that the NRA used as a launching pad to promote similar bills in other states.

Bush remains a significant player in the movement to boost corporate involvement in education, and increase taxpayer support for private and religious schools. He even co-founded a Miami charter school, which eventually shut its doors amid budgetary, financial and building troubles. But in a party whose base looks askance at even the slightest veer away from orthodoxy, Bush's support for Common Core standards and some kinds of immigration reform may impede his efforts.

Glenn Beck, for example, claimed that Bush is among the "progressives in the Republican Party" who are working to undermine the conservative movement from within.

Bush will at least have one wing of the GOP behind him: donors. The former governor is seen as a favorite among the party's richest backers, a stature cemented by his work for the Wall Street firm Lehman Brothers until its collapse in the 2008 financial crisis and his subsequent job as an adviser for Barclays.

Bush's experience on Wall Street could, however, come back to haunt him, particularly his role in the "Project Verde" operation, in which Bush was sent to solicit Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim to bail out Lehman. The former governor's close ties to Wall Street have helped launch his recent fundraising bonanza.

For a candidate trying to break free from the shadow of his brother, who presided over the 2008 financial meltdown, undermined voting rights, led polarizing initiatives meant to throw a bone to the Religious Right and signed an unpopular education "reform" law, Jeb Bush seems to be mirroring the 43rd president's agenda rather than proposing new ideas for the country.



# BEN CARSON: From Gifted Neurosurgeon to Tea Party Conspiracy Theorist



Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon Ben Carson became an overnight conservative celebrity in 2013, when he delivered a National Prayer Breakfast speech criticizing President Obama — who was sitting beside

him while he spoke from the podium — for his handling of the deficit, the national debt, taxes and health care.

He has formed an exploratory committee and PAC, while a “Draft Ben Carson for President Committee” has been campaigning on his behalf and raising lots of money. Its leaders insist that Carson can defeat Democrats by capturing a significant share of the black vote.

As a black conservative, Carson quickly emerged as a favorite speaker among Tea Party activists who relish his assurance that criticism of President Obama is never motivated by racism, while criticism of Ben Carson most certainly is.

Carson has expanded on his views in speeches to conservative gatherings and on a timely book tour, revealing himself to be a politician adept at dishing out conservative talking points and playing into right-wing fears about government persecution.

For example, Carson has called the Affordable Care Act “the worst thing that has happened in this nation since slavery,” declaring it to be “slavery in a way,” and has said that the law is worse than the September 11, 2001, attacks, claiming that its passage was part of a larger Leninist push to impose communism on America.

Far-right activists eat up Carson’s claims that the U.S. military should not follow rules about war crimes and that supposedly anti-American AP U.S. History courses will inspire students to join ISIS.

Carson has inserted himself directly into popular Tea Party martyrdom narratives, claiming that he is the victim of liberal media bias and IRS targeting. Carson, a former Fox News contributor, also alleges that the Obama administration is trying to “shut down” the conservative network. Without Fox News, Carson said, Obama would have successfully introduced communism, and “we would already be Cuba.”

Carson has even claimed that he is losing his First Amendment right to free speech and that Hitlerian progressives are turning America into a society “very much like Nazi Germany.” “We live in a Gestapo age,” he has said, also arguing that Obama takes his cues from “Mein Kampf” and is effectively committing treason.

He is a favorite of the anti-gay right, and with good reason. Carson has linked gay rights advocates to supporters of pedophilia and bestiality, attacked LGBT-affirming churches as offensive to God, demanded that Congress

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oust judges who back gay rights, and accused gay people of seeking “extra rights” and creating a powerful “P.C. police who have tried in many cases to shut me up.”

Speaking at a National Organization for Marriage fundraiser, he insisted that gay marriage is a communist plot designed to bring down America and usher in a “New World Order.” However, Carson said he would no longer discuss gay rights issues after he received criticism for telling a CNN host that prison sex proves homosexuality is “absolutely” a choice.

Add Carson’s anti-gay rhetoric to his remarks that legal abortion is the same as “human sacrifice,” that the progressive income tax violates biblical principles and that America is facing a “war on God,” and you have a strong potential “standard-bearer” for the Religious Right.

Stoking fears of conservative persecution, political correctness, Big Government and gay rights is a necessary staple for Republican politicians, and Carson has mastered the art.

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## CHRIS CHRISTIE: The “Problem-Solver” Who Left New Jersey a Mess

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s ties to “establishment” party figures have enabled him to become a prolific fundraiser and frequent campaign surrogate, and his heated and bombastic rhetoric has animated many conservatives. However, the New Jersey governor has run a chaotic state government with frequent budget crises, credit downgrades and an atmosphere that led to the notorious, apparently politically motivated Fort Lee highway lane closures, just one of several scandals Christie is facing.

Christie, nonetheless, has one key ally: Fox News.

The conservative media empire that drives the agenda of the Republican Party routinely showers Christie with accolades, even defending the embattled governor in the midst of the lane closure scandal (a scandal the network initially tried to bury). Christie is also close to top conservative bankrollers David Koch, Kenneth Langone and Paul Singer.

Religious Right activists are less warm, and sometimes openly hostile, to Christie. He angered anti-gay activists when he said he didn’t consider homosexuality to be a sin, signed into law a bill banning the practice of ex-gay therapy on minors and decided against appealing a court ruling in favor of marriage

equality. His appointments of Muslim and gay judges have also sparked outrage and far-right accusations that he supports Sharia law and the gay agenda.

At the same time, Christie has cozied up to grassroots conservatives in an attempt to prove that he’s not a moderate. A quick look at his record, including his veto of a bill that



*Governor Chris Christie speaking at the 2014 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)*

**Under his leadership, New Jersey experienced multiple credit downgrades, regular budget shortfalls, a failed pension reform plan, fiscal mismanagement that benefited political donors, anemic job growth, a transit funding scandal and mishandling of Hurricane Sandy recovery money.**

would have legalized same-sex marriage and his strong opposition to abortion rights and Planned Parenthood funding, shows just some of his deeply conservative stances. He has even built a relationship with Ralph Reed, the former Christian Coalition leader who now heads the Faith and Freedom Coalition (and who, like Christie, has a legacy of shady political dealings), and has tried to win conservative support by relentlessly criticizing publications like The New York Times, blaming his failings on “liberal judicial activism” and pandering to anti-vaxxers.

In the wake of the Bridgegate scandal and the resulting four investigations into his administration, Christie embraced the tried-and-true conservative strategy of playing the victim.

Christie will likely campaign as a strong fiscal conservative, but his tenure as governor reveals a miserable legacy on financial and economic issues. Under his leadership, New Jersey experienced multiple credit downgrades, regular budget shortfalls, a failed pension reform plan, fiscal mismanagement that benefited political donors, anemic job growth, a transit funding scandal and mishandling of Hurricane Sandy recovery money.

Christie is essentially running on an image the media constructed for him, that of a problem-

solving, outspoken governor. In reality, however, the governor has very few accomplishments to substantiate the rhetoric surrounding him.

But Christie may prove to be an appealing candidate for conservative leaders hungry for a win after taking a beating from Obama. And just as when Romney captured the 2012 presidential nomination, the party’s far-right flank is likely to rally behind whoever ends up as the nominee, whether they like him or not, as long as he pledges to hold the line on social issues, appoint conservative ideologues to the judiciary and help elect extremist candidates to Congress.

Just as Romney’s previous support for reproductive rights, LGBT equality and Wall Street bailouts didn’t stop far-right activists from coalescing around his candidacy, Christie’s purported “center-right” reputation is unlikely to dampen Republican enthusiasm after eight years of being shut out of the White House.

Christie’s belligerent style and penchant for picking fights with Democrats may also win the support of Tea Party Republicans who believe their last two nominees lost because they were too apologetic, too moderate and too nice. Say what you will, but that certainly wouldn’t be the case with Christie.

## TED CRUZ: The Tea Party's Doomsday Prophet

No candidate flaunts his Tea Party bona fides more loudly than Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, whose 2012 campaign for an open Senate seat made him a celebrity among conservative activists nationwide. Cruz sprinkled his 2012 campaign with conspiracy theories about Sharia law and Agenda 21, and started his Senate career by suggesting — without any evidence — that defense secretary nominee Chuck Hagel received money from North Korea, Saudi Arabia or “extreme or radical groups.” That turned out to be just a preview of what was to come.

Cruz continued his self-aggrandizing conservative crusade by holding a faux filibuster demanding that the government block implementation of the Affordable Care Act, holding forth in a 21-hour speech that he compared to the Bataan death march. His anti-Obamacare campaign led him to orchestrate the 2013 government shutdown, in which he and other Republicans demanded that Congress keep the government closed until President Obama agreed to repeal the health care law.



Senator Cruz speaking at the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

**His anti-Obamacare campaign led him to orchestrate the 2013 government shutdown.**

Republican leaders eventually let the government reopen, conceding that virtually no changes to the health care law would be made as a result of the Cruz-inspired shutdown that had cost the economy billions of dollars. Cruz, however, said the debacle was worth it because he was able to use the manufactured crisis to build his fundraising list.

The Tea Party can count on Cruz to advertise its conspiracy theories on nearly any issue. During the debate over expanding background checks for those purchasing firearms, Cruz brazenly argued that gun reform laws would lead to higher crime rates and a national gun registry, even though he later admitted that the bill did not provide for such a registry. He also dismissed families who lost loved ones in the Newtown massacre as “political props.”

Cruz similarly used the debate over a constitutional amendment to overturn the 2010 Citizens United decision to warn that the government planned to stifle the speech of pastors and throw media personalities in jail. He insists that the Obama administration is targeting conservative groups and media outlets, which he says should lead to Attorney General Eric Holder’s impeachment.



At the start of this year, Cruz said that his “top priority” in the Senate would be pushing for the end of a program giving temporary deportation relief to undocumented immigrants who were brought into the country as children, a program he blames — again without any evidence — for this summer’s crisis of unaccompanied Central American children fleeing to the southern border of the U.S. His other legislative priority in Congress is “repealing” Common Core, which is not a federal statute.

Cruz has become notorious for his doomsday predictions. The senator, who is sponsoring a bill to curtail federal recognition of married same-sex couples, has claimed that marriage equality is a surreptitious push to outlaw the freedom of speech, imprison pastors, crush

liberty and eviscerate the Constitution.

He has warned that the implementation of Obamacare will “shut down” religiously affiliated “charities and hospitals.” He predicted that net neutrality will destroy “freedom online.” He criticized the constitutional amendment giving voters the power to directly elect their U.S. Senators, while calling for the repeal of the Voting Rights Act and the enactment of new legislation to make it more difficult to register to vote.

While many conservatives see him as the second coming of Ronald Reagan, Cruz sees himself as the reincarnation of a different right-wing figure: the late North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms.

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## CARLY FIORINA: Falling Upward to the White House

Carly Fiorina may have lost her post on the McCain-Palin campaign and her closely watched U.S. Senate race in California, but now the former Hewlett-Packard CEO is planning another foray into politics...this time, running for president. Fiorina told Fox News Sunday in March 2015 that there was a “higher than 90 percent” chance that she would throw her hat into the ring, noting that Hillary Clinton would “get a hitch in her swing” if she were to face a female opponent.

Fiorina insists that unlike Clinton — whom she claims “lacks a track record of accomplishment” — she knows “what leadership means” as a result of her experience in business.

However, her time at HP was not exactly a success story, as it ended with the company’s board firing her in a very public spat.

Arianna Packard, the granddaughter of HP cofounder David Packard, said Fiorina’s tenure was a “disaster” that “almost destroy[ed]”

the company: “The stock price dropped by 50%, only to rally 10% on the announcement of her firing. She fired 28,000 people before she herself was fired, departing with the \$21 million golden parachute that is financing her campaign.” (The golden parachute also included an additional \$19 million in stock and pension benefits, which is quite a severance

**Her legacy includes offshoring American jobs, overseeing huge layoffs and pushing through an ill-fated merger with Compaq, which one competitor called the “dumbest deal of the decade.”**

package for someone considered to be one of the country's worst CEOs). David Packard's grandson, Jason Burnett, added that Fiorina "did damage to a great company, and I don't want to see her do damage to a great country."

Her legacy includes offshoring American jobs, overseeing huge layoffs and pushing through an ill-fated merger with Compaq, which one competitor called the "dumbest deal of the decade." Fiorina also put business above American foreign policy interests, finding ways to work around U.S. sanctions so that HP could continue to trade with Iran.

While running for U.S. Senate, Fiorina was a

strong supporter of Proposition 8, which ended marriage equality in California, and mocked efforts to address human influences driving climate change as being "worried about the weather." Her campaign's main contribution to the race was a bizarre ad referring to insufficiently conservative Republicans as demonic sheep.



Carly Fiorina (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

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## LINDSEY GRAHAM: Frightening People All the Way to the Presidency

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., is attempting to establish himself as the race's expert on national security...mostly, it seems, by stoking fear among voters. While no one contests the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, Graham has played up wild fears in an effort to frame himself as the "security candidate," even naming his Super PAC "Security Through Strength."

Graham believes America is facing a "perfect storm" of terrorism and insists that the U.S. is in a "religious war": "We're in a religious war. These are not terrorists. They're radical Islamists who are trying to replace our way of life with their way of life. Their way of life is motivated by religious teachings that require me and you to be killed, or enslaved, or converted."

"This president needs to rise to the occasion before we all get killed back here at home" Graham said of ISIS, demanding that President Obama send in ground troops to fight the violent group. He has also said that he sees an "American city in flames" because "of the terrorists' ability to operate in Syria and Iraq."

In September of 2013, Graham predicted that the Syrian Civil War would lead to an all-out war between Iran and Israel in six months' time, which would then lead to a nuclear device coming into the U.S. "in the belly of a ship in the Charleston or New York harbor." (These statements were later cited by far-right conspiracy theorists who believed Obama nearly nuked Charleston as part of a false flag operation.)

Revealing his trademark paranoia after Obama's 2014 State of the Union address, Graham said that "the world is literally about to blow up," while Obama is "doing nothing."

"They are coming here," Graham said of ISIS during a Fox News interview. "And if we get attacked because he has no strategy to protect us, then he will have committed a blunder for the ages."

Despite his absolutely atrocious record on foreign policy predictions, Graham still insisted on "Meet the Press" this year that "the world is falling apart, and I've been more right than wrong when it comes to foreign policy."



Lindsey Graham, Official Portrait 2006 (US Senate)

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Graham also accused Obama of prioritizing efforts to combat Ebola over fighting ISIS, while simultaneously criticizing him for not doing enough to eradicate Ebola.

The South Carolina senator is one of the most vocal peddlers of myths about the 2012 Benghazi attack, even denouncing a Republican-led report, which joined all the other official panels that investigated the attacks in debunking right-wing accusations, calling it “full of crap” and “a bunch of garbage,” since it knocked down many of his own beliefs about the event. In 2013, he announced his plan to block all presidential

nominations in reaction to a CBS report about the attack, refusing to back down, even when the report was retracted by the news company. Unsurprisingly, Graham contributed to the discredited story, which he used to blast the “scumbags” in the Obama administration.

When a Florida pastor with a small church sparked violent incidents abroad after he very publicly burned copies of the Qu’ran, Graham said that he wished “we could find some way to hold people accountable” and went on to question free speech rights: “Free speech is a great idea, but we’re in a war. During World War II, you had limits on what you could say if it would inspire the enemy.”

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## **MIKE HUCKABEE: From the Pulpit to the White House, Seeking to Become America’s Pastor in Chief**

Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee may have lost his 2008 presidential bid, in which he ran as a folksy “Christian leader,” but the heavy media exposure he got from it helped him to become a national Religious Right hero with his very own Fox News show. He even has a new book out with the red-meat title “God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy.”

Huckabee has been especially active in the debate over marriage equality, hoping to convince the GOP to fight gay rights more aggressively. He told one conservative talk show host that he is “utterly exasperated” with his party and may become an independent

if Republicans don’t work harder to ban gay marriage. He insists that governors should defy court decisions striking down such bans, explaining that it is appropriate to ignore gay rights measures just as it would have been right to flout laws under Jim Crow or Nazi Germany. He once said he worried that marriage equality might sanction man-sheep marriage.

Beyond just the issue of marriage, Huckabee has criticized gay people for joining the Boy Scouts and appearing on television, while also likening homosexuality to alcoholism and gay marriage to Nazi Germany. He says that states



should simply ignore federal court rulings on gay rights and has vowed to restore “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” if elected president.

“I feel homosexuality is an aberrant, unnatural and sinful lifestyle, and we now know it can pose a dangerous public health risk,” Huckabee said in 1992 during an unsuccessful campaign for U.S. Senate. That year, he also suggested that the government quarantine people with HIV/AIDS: “If the federal government is truly serious about doing something with the AIDS virus, we need to take steps that would isolate the carriers of this plague.” During his 2008 presidential campaign, Huckabee defended his past remarks on homosexuality and HIV, saying, “I still believe this today.”

Not only does Huckabee believe that gay marriage will incite God’s wrath against America, the former governor has also said that abortion rights are “a curse for which we will answer.”

While other Republicans ran away from the extremist anti-abortion, anti-contraception “personhood” movement, Huckabee keynoted a fundraiser for the unsuccessful Mississippi personhood campaign, which was led by a Christian Nationalist secessionist, and endorsed another failed personhood amendment in North Dakota.

Huckabee described the health care reform law’s contraception coverage rules as a grave threat to freedom, and a liberal ploy to make women feel like they “can’t control their libido” and need help from “Uncle Sugar.” He even linked the contraception coverage mandate,

**“I feel homosexuality is an aberrant, unnatural and sinful lifestyle, and we now know it can pose a dangerous public health risk.”**



*Mike Huckabee at Thomas Road Baptist Church (Own work/Wikimedia Commons)*

along with the separation of church and state, to the Sandy Hook school shooting. Huckabee seems to conveniently forget that he enacted a sweeping contraception coverage mandate as governor of Arkansas, one that went even farther to impact religious-affiliated groups than the federal law.

Befitting his role as a Fox News personality, Huckabee has wondered if Obama is ushering in the End Times, predicted that laws to curb gun violence and gay rights will lead to Nazi-style tyranny, alleged that Christians are becoming second-class citizens to Muslims, and has repeatedly pushed the birther movement’s conspiracy theories.

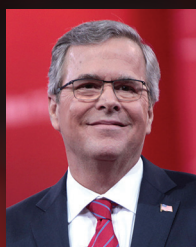
Huckabee has also used his newfound fame to make a bit of money pushing miracle cancer cures purportedly found in the Bible, discredited diabetes remedies and survival food supplies.

With this record of extremism, RNC Chairman Reince Priebus has held Huckabee up as “a model” for other Republican politicians to follow: “I always tell people: Listen to Governor Mike Huckabee.”

# 2016 REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

## Jeb Bush

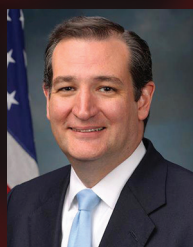
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- Following his brother's footsteps in sticking up for Wall Street ahead of working Americans
- Time as governor notorious for disastrous push for the privatization of public schools, civil rights violations and the Terri Schiavo incident

## Ted Cruz

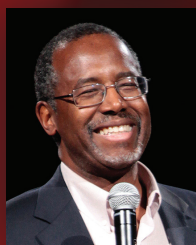
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- A far-right leader who is responsible for a pointless but extremely costly government shutdown
- A darling of the Tea Party and Religious Right movements alike since he embraces their conspiracies and extreme positions

## Ben Carson

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- Radical conspiracy theorist who claims to be a champion of "common sense" thinking
- Believes that gay marriage is a communist, New World Order plot to destroy freedom

## Carly Fiorina

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- Tenure as CEO of Hewlett-Packard has been described as a "disaster," used her post to promote the outsourcing of American jobs.
- Backed Proposition 8 and mocked climate science while running for U.S. Senate in California.

## Chris Christie

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- Wants to be seen as a decisive problem-solver even though his fiscal agenda as governor has fallen apart
- Dogged by corruption scandals, low approval ratings and investigations

## Lindsey Graham

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- Plans to use presidential candidate to push a radical foreign policy agenda that would make George W. Bush blush



## Mike Huckabee

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- Made a career out of spouting apocalyptic rhetoric, attacking the separation of church and state and peddling discredited health products
- Threatened to quit the GOP if the party didn't toughen its stance against gay rights

## Marco Rubio

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- After facing criticism from conservatives for backing immigration reform, he has been trying to placate the Tea Party base by supporting radical positions
- Attempting to give a respectable veneer to climate denialism, anti-choice push
- Used his platform as Senator to make wild predictions about imminent peril for all Americans

## Bobby Jindal

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- Using conspiracy theories about Muslims, education and gay rights to advance his presidential bid
- Budget policies wreaked havoc on state, responsible for fiscal crisis

## Rick Santorum

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- Reinventing himself with a new "blue collar" persona while staying true to his Religious Right, pro-Wall Street roots
- Believes that the U.S. government is engaging in severe anti-Christian oppression

## Rand Paul

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- Claims to be a principled libertarian, but has a record of glaring flip-flops and policy reversals
- Portrays himself as a moderate to a national audience and as a hardline right-wing Republican on conservative media

## Scott Walker

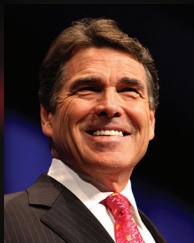
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- Claimed his crusade against workers' rights will increase jobs, but state is experiencing weak job growth
- Caters to billionaire donors to push an extreme right-wing agenda

## Rick Perry

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- Hoping to come across as an experienced leader but is still just a right-wing extremist with a record of bizarre, desperate statements
- Betting that voters will forget his previous presidential campaign



## BOBBY JINDAL: Champion of “The Stupid Party”

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, the self-styled policy wonk who once lamented that “dumbed-down conservatism” is turning the GOP into “the stupid party,” has quickly embraced the Republicans’ increasingly frantic talking points about the imminent end of liberty and freedom in America. Capturing the mood of Tea Party activists this year, Jindal touted his support for a “rebellion” and a “hostile takeover” of the government to stop the “radically, extremely liberal, ideological president.”

Jindal also jumped on the controversy surrounding Phil Robertson, star of the Louisiana-based A&E reality TV show “Duck Dynasty,” to position himself as a defender of conservative Christian values against a tyrannical government and secular media. Jindal, along with other conservative figures, turned Robertson into a cause célèbre when his show was temporarily put on hiatus after he made statements attacking gays and lesbians, and defending Jim Crow. Jindal alleged that A&E violated Robertson’s First Amendment rights when it put the star on leave, and has since cited the “Duck Dynasty” fracas to warn that the rights of same-sex marriage opponents are under “assault.” The Obama administration, gay rights advocates and the courts, Jindal told graduates of the conservative bastion Liberty University this year, are all waging a “war on religious liberty — on your freedom to exercise your religion, on your freedom to associate, on your freedom of expression.”

“The same liberal extremists that want to

come take our guns are the same forces that want to take away our religious liberty,” he told a National Rifle Association gathering the month before. He added: “Our freedom is under attack. Our opponents don’t believe in individual freedom...They believe the individual is subordinate to the state, subjects of the elite... We cannot let them change who America is.”

He also alleged that freedom is under attack across countries like the United Kingdom due

to Sharia law no-go zones, or areas governed by Islamic law that he believes are coming to America. When asked by a reporter where in the U.K. such no-go zones exist, Jindal was unable to name a single location. While Fox News retracted its claims about such zones after experts said that the charges were completely baseless, Jindal has turned the belief in no-go zones into a major campaign theme.

An opponent of abortion rights “with no exceptions,” Jindal signed legislation that would have shut down all of his state’s abortion clinics if not for a federal judge’s decision to halt its enforcement. He also signed laws limiting insurance options for women seeking abortion care and mandating that a woman undergo a medically unnecessary ultrasound before being allowed to have an abortion.

Jindal has led an aggressive push in his home state for the privatization of public education and the taxpayer funding of religious schools, even directing taxpayer dollars to schools espousing Creationism, which he said would

**An opponent of abortion rights “with no exceptions,” Jindal signed legislation that would have shut down all of his state’s abortion clinics.**

let kids “be exposed to the best facts.” Unsurprisingly, these policies have failed to improve education outcomes in the state.

Jindal was at one time a strong supporter of the Common Core education standards: He once called Common Core’s adoption a key part of his education policy and was featured in a U.S. Chamber of Commerce advertisement promoting the standards. But Jindal has since done an about-face to get behind the growing Tea Party and Religious Right hostility to Common Core. The Louisiana governor is now touting his opposition to Common Core in front of conservative audiences and implying that the standards entail a surreptitious socialist agenda. Jindal’s new line on Common Core plays right into conservative conspiracy theories about the standards, including claims that they represent a federal government takeover of the education system and will indoctrinate students into left-wing politics. Louisiana’s state board of education has ignored Jindal’s reversal and is implementing the Common Core standards anyway.

Jindal’s desire to appeal to right-wing conspiracy theorists has even led him to wade into the issue of President Obama’s citizenship, supporting a “birther bill” under



consideration in the state legislature in 2011. Jindal has repeatedly suggested that Obama neither understands American values nor loves America.

While Jindal works on burnishing his image for national audiences, he remains deeply unpopular among his own constituents. A majority of Louisiana voters, including Republicans, disapprove of the job Jindal has done as governor and say he shouldn’t run for president. Jindal is especially unpopular on pocketbook issues, as his economic agenda has led to a collapse in the state’s fiscal health. His policies have been so damaging that even Republican lawmakers in the state consider his policy program to be “insane.”

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## RAND PAUL: The GOP’s “Principled” Flip-Flopper

Following his upset victory in the 2010 Republican U.S. Senate primary in Kentucky, Rand Paul told the country that he had “a message from the Tea Party.”

That message has turned out to be a mix of anti-establishment libertarianism in the mold of his father, Rep. Ron Paul, and tired Republican ideas repackaged under the brand of the Tea Party.

Paul has received glowing media attention for his purported focus on promoting a brand of principled libertarianism and expanding the party’s base, which skews older and whiter, by building bridges to voters who typically receive little attention from Republican politicians.

His campaign against the scope of the federal government plays well in today’s GOP, which is trying to shy away from the unpopular legacy of George W. Bush, and blames “big government” under Obama for any and all societal ills.

But Paul is willing to buck his “principled libertarianism” when politically expedient — all while insisting that his positions have never changed. Paul, for example, claims that he has always supported the Civil Rights Act, even though, before he entered the national spotlight, he adamantly opposed key parts of the law.

Similarly, Paul told the Urban League in a 2014 speech that he supports the Voting Rights Act, although he had previously told the conservative outlet Newsmax that he opposed the law. He told a group of black pastors that he thinks the GOP should stop pushing restrictive voter ID laws, but then turned around and told Fox News' Sean Hannity that he doesn't actually oppose voter ID laws and only regrets the negative attention they have received.

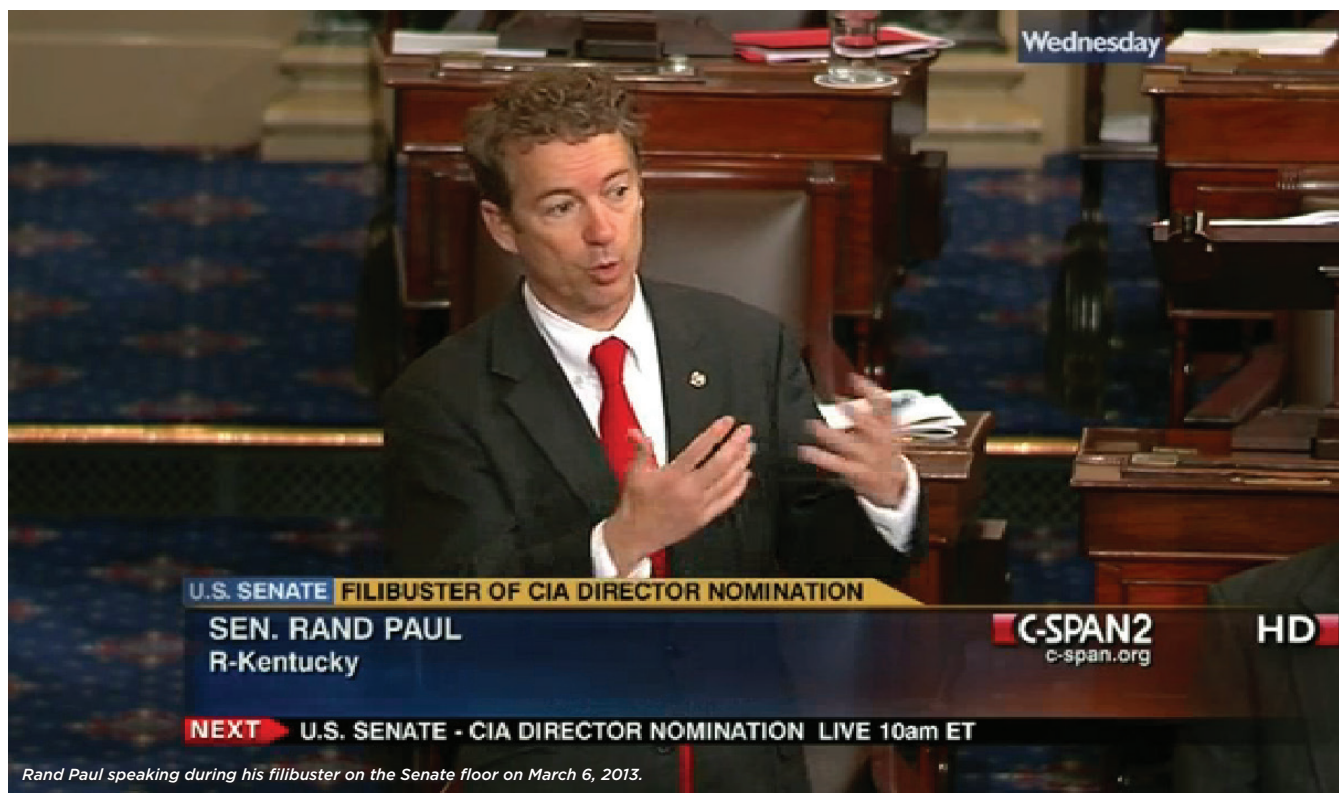
Paul insists that those who point to his past statements are part of a liberal media conspiracy to mischaracterize his record. But while conservatives may not mind his apparent shift on civil rights, he has also taken contradictory stances on issues that are more important to the GOP base.

Although he once proposed an end to all foreign aid, including dollars going to America's largest aid recipient, Israel, Paul now claims that he never once tried to end aid to the country. Paul's historical revisionism may be part of an effort to shore up support from Religious Right activists whose Christian

Zionist views have made U.S. support for the Israeli government a central cause of their movement. But it may be hard for him to escape his past statements and lengthy legislative record to the contrary.

One commentator for the conservative Heritage Foundation blasted Paul's "confusing" position on marriage equality, and it's no wonder why. The Kentucky senator has said that he is "in favor of the concept" of a federal marriage amendment banning same-sex unions, while at the same time insisting that he opposes a federal role in the matter. Paul has repeatedly expressed support for state bans on marriage equality — even going so far as to warn that same-sex marriage will pave the way for human-animal nuptials — while also making the case that the GOP can become "a bigger tent" without a "complete flip" on the marriage issue. Now he says that he opposes same-sex marriage simply because he and others are personally "offended" by it.

Paul has also been on all sides of the question of abortion rights. Although Paul is the chief sponsor of a federal personhood bill that would





**Rand Paul has one message for one audience and a different message for another.**

ban abortion in all cases and has warned that a failure to pass the bill will result in the collapse of civilization, he has also said that he does not favor changing the nation's abortion laws because the country is currently too divided on the issue. Paul insists that he opposes bans on birth control, despite the fact that his own personhood bill would give legal rights to zygotes and could ban common forms of contraception. In a 2013 CNN interview,

Paul said that there would be “thousands of exceptions” to his personhood bill, but a spokesman later assured anti-choice activists that the senator approved of just a single exception, allowing abortion in cases where the life of the pregnant woman is at risk.

If it sounds like Rand Paul has one message for one audience and a different message for another, it's because he does.

Paul's pattern of policy shifts belies his image as a principled, libertarian pioneer. In reality, he attempts to portray himself as a moderate to a national audience, while boasting of his far-right views in front of GOP audiences. While this maneuvering may play to conservative voters and his loyal base, it is only a matter of time before his reversals and denials catch up with him.

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## **RICK PERRY: God's Candidate for President, This Time...**

Texas Gov. Rick Perry quickly won support from conservative activists, especially the Religious Right, when he made a late entry into the 2012 presidential election, unofficially launching his campaign with a prayer rally packed with Religious Right extremists. Perry came into the race midway through his third term as governor, armed with a record of right-wing economic policies; close ties to the oil industry and opposition to regulations on polluters; antagonism to the federal government; and hostility to LGBT equality and abortion rights. Portraying himself as a candidate to the right of Mitt Romney but more electable than the rest of the GOP field, Perry gained traction

until his campaign self-destructed, thanks to a series of horrific debate performances and unforced errors.

**As governor, Perry championed Texas' law criminalizing consensual sex between adults of the same gender.**

Perry, who has floated the idea of secession from the United States and signed constitutionally dubious legislation defending the right of states to nullify federal laws, wants to repeal the amendments to the U.S. Constitution allowing for a progressive income tax and requiring that U.S. senators are elected directly by voters.

He believes states should be able to opt out of programs like Social

Security — which he called a “Ponzi scheme” — and Medicaid. His decision to refuse Medicaid expansion in Texas has cost the state tens



Governor Perry speaking at the 2014 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

of billions of dollars and left millions without insurance. A staunch critic of federal economic policies who once threatened the “almost treasonous” chairman of the Federal Reserve, his opposition to the 2009 federal economic stimulus package didn’t stop him from using stimulus dollars to balance Texas’ budget and stave off a massive shortfall. But it’s unclear how much power Perry thinks economic policy actually has: He once suggested that the 2008 economic crisis was an anti-government message from God.

Perry has played with the conspiracy theories surrounding President Obama’s birth, citing Donald Trump as his source of information on the legitimacy of the president’s citizenship and saying that the conspiracy theory surrounding the president’s birth certificate is “a good issue to keep alive.”

The Texas governor has also dabbled in other anti-Obama conspiracy theories, including alleging that the Obama administration orchestrated a humanitarian crisis on the southern border for political purposes. He made waves with his decision to send the National Guard to patrol the border against Central

American children, a plan he unveiled while campaigning in Iowa.

While he will likely ground his candidacy in issues relating to immigration and the economy, Perry is also a social issues warrior. As governor, Perry championed Texas’ law criminalizing consensual sex between adults of the same gender, which was struck down by the Supreme Court in the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* case. He made anti-gay animus a central part of his presidential campaign, running a desperate TV ad attacking gay military service

members. After his presidential campaign, Perry became an outspoken opponent of a policy change allowing gay youths to join the Boy Scouts, likening that fight to the fight to end slavery. Earlier this year, he defended his state party’s decision to endorse pseudoscientific ex-gay therapy by comparing homosexuality to alcoholism.

As governor of Texas, Perry enacted some of the most sweeping anti-abortion rights laws in the country, even going so far as to call an emergency session of the state legislature to pass a bill to force the closure of most of the state’s abortion clinics, though a federal judge has temporarily blocked portions of the new restrictions. Perry mocked one of the bill’s principal opponents, state Sen. Wendy Davis, saying “it is just unfortunate that she hasn’t learned from her own example” of being a teen mother.

Perry was recently indicted on charges that he abused his power as governor to defund an investigative unit that was looking into a project that he had championed. Despite his best effort to portray himself as the victim of a political witch hunt, a judge declined Perry’s attempt to have the indictments thrown out.

## MARCO RUBIO: The Tea Party's Prodigal Son Returns

The Republican Party has been increasingly willing to cave to far-right purists who want to drive out anyone who they deem to be ideologically impure. The career of Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., is a case in point.

After winning his U.S. Senate seat with Tea Party support in 2010, Rubio tried to follow through on his pledge to work toward a bipartisan bill on immigration reform, helping to lead the efforts of the so-called “Gang of Eight.” But many conservative activists turned against Rubio for daring to sponsor a bill that drew broad support from his colleagues in the Senate and the American people at large. In the end, under pressure from the party’s far-right flank, House Republicans blocked the “Gang of Eight” bill, failing to even put the reform legislation up for a vote.

As the attacks piled up, Rubio began sending mixed messages about his position on immigration reform, even while the Senate debated his bill. After voting for his legislation, Rubio worked hard to redeem himself in the eyes of the increasingly angry base, renouncing his support for the bill he helped to write and promising to oppose future comprehensive reform efforts.

This was all a bit of a turnaround for a politician whose willingness to work on immigration reform had led Time Magazine to dub him “The Republican Savior.”

Instead of leading his party, the Florida senator presented a textbook study in how to cave to the party’s most extreme fringe: Denounce past positions and then try to scramble as far to the right as possible.

After the “Gang of Eight” debacle, Rubio tried to score points with anti-immigrant activists by facing off with Dreamers who called him out for “flip-flopping” on his stance on comprehensive reform and using baseless right-wing talking points to denounce relief for young undocumented immigrants. The senator briefly threatened to use a budget

standoff to block President Obama’s executive actions on immigration, but eventually said that Congress should back down and fully fund the Department of Homeland Security.

Apparently fearing that his former stance on immigration has poisoned his image among conservative voters, Rubio has now embraced a whole host of right-wing causes in an attempt to win them back. Rubio pushed for a government shutdown over the Affordable Care Act, denounced a bipartisan budget deal that was derided by many Tea Party activists and criticized minimum wage laws.

The senator also boasted that he does not accept the consensus among climate scientists that human activities have an influence on climate change.

“I do not believe that human activity is causing these dramatic changes to our climate the way these scientists are portraying it,” Rubio said. “I don’t agree with the notion that some are putting out there, including scientists, that somehow, there are actions we can take today that would actually have an impact on what’s happening in our climate. Our climate is always changing. And what they have chosen to do is take a handful of decades of research and — and say that this is now evidence of a longer-term trend that’s directly and almost solely



Marco Rubio speaking at the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland on February 27, 2015. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

attributable to manmade activity.”

While speaking with Fox News pundit Bill O'Reilly, Rubio insisted — falsely — that “surface temperatures [on] the earth have stabilized.” He also failed to disclose, when asked during a press conference, which studies he has relied on for his claim that climate change is a myth, instead choosing to simply ignore the question and vowing to oppose efforts to “ban all carbon emissions in the United States,” something that no one is proposing.

In addition, Rubio has kowtowed to the Religious Right by mocking the separation of church and state, warning of the purported loss

**“I do not believe that human activity is causing these dramatic changes to our climate the way these scientists are portraying it.”**

of religious liberty under Obama, lambasting abortion rights, blocking a gay judicial nominee and denouncing the legalization of same-sex marriage in his home state.

He has also embraced the Religious Right's victimhood rhetoric, insisting that gay rights advocates preach “intolerance” and warning that American

society is marginalizing Christians.

The man who was once hailed as the leader who could help the GOP become a successful national party in a new electoral landscape seems to have given up on that ideal, settling instead for chasing approval from the party's extreme and demanding far-right base.

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## **RICK SANTORUM: A Religious Right Crusader Masquerading as a “Blue Collar” Conservative**

Since losing to Mitt Romney in the 2012 Republican presidential primary season, Rick Santorum has tried to position himself as the “anti-Romney.” The former Pennsylvania senator isn't just a conservative warrior on issues like immigration, legal abortion and gay rights; he is also trying to change the image of his party as an organization led by and only concerned about millionaires and billionaires.

In his 2014 book, “Blue Collar Conservatives,” Santorum chides his party for being too focused on cutting taxes for the rich, and showing little empathy for workers and the unemployed. His message of right-wing populism, while not exactly revolutionary, captures the mood of many Tea Party activists who see GOP elites as too close to Wall Street and Washington. But his critique of the GOP is mostly cosmetic: Santorum offers the same

tired Republican solutions for cutting taxes and domestic programs, deregulating Wall Street, promoting the fossil fuel industry and curtailing immigration.

Contrary to his rhetoric, Santorum pushes a policy agenda heavily favored by Wall Street: repealing regulations governing the financial services sector and other industries, attacking the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the National Labor Relations Board, rolling back the powers of the EPA and, of course, cutting taxes for the very rich. Santorum perfectly embodies the spirit of the Tea Party as he makes overtures to voters who are upset by Wall Street's behavior, while pushing policies that allow Wall Street to continue that behavior unfettered.

Santorum complements his message of economic populism with a crusading stance



on social issues, arguing that the GOP must become more conservative, and more aggressive, if it wants to win. Shying away from social issues, Santorum contends, would only undermine the GOP.

In a yearlong gig as a columnist for the online conspiracy theory clearinghouse WorldNetDaily that he started after dropping out of the presidential race, Santorum proved himself adept at speaking to his party's extreme base. He used the platform to play up right-wing fears about government and gays, stoking conservative opposition to such measures as an international disability rights treaty and the inclusion of gay youths in the Boy Scouts of America.

Santorum also stands to benefit from his deep roots in the first-in-the-nation caucus state of Iowa, where he built a coalition of Religious Right activists to edge out Romney in 2012. He received a late but critical endorsement from Bob Vander Plaats, a leading Iowa power broker who spearheaded Mike Huckabee's successful 2008 caucus campaign and heads an amalgam of Religious Right groups called The Family Leader. Santorum teamed up with Vander Plaats in 2010 for the successful

campaign to remove three Iowa Supreme Court judges who joined a unanimous decision in favor of marriage equality.

Santorum also won the support of a large coalition of Religious Right leaders from across the country in 2012, but only after Romney had already racked up early primary victories.

After coming up short in the presidential primary, Santorum got a job as the chief executive of a conservative Christian film company EchoLight Studios. He has used his new post to push the right-wing narrative that conservative Christians in America are facing widespread persecution as a result of gay rights, Obamacare, and the separation of church and state. The way Santorum tells it, marriage equality is a threat to the freedom of speech and religion, and Satan is using universities, mainline Protestant churches and the government to extinguish conservative values.

Naturally, he plans to center his upcoming presidential campaign on putting Bibles in public schools, criticizing the separation of church and state and gay rights, and warning of Nazi-style, anti-Christian oppression in America.

**The way Santorum tells it, marriage equality is a threat to the freedom of speech and religion, and Satan is using universities, mainline Protestant churches and the government to extinguish conservative values.**



*Santorum speaking at the Iowa State Fair in August 2011 (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)*

# SCOTT WALKER: The Koch Brothers' Favorite Extremist

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker became a right-wing hero in 2011 when he pushed a package of union-busting labor reform laws through the state legislature as protesters occupied the Capitol Building, and then survived a subsequent recall election.

Walker — who portrays himself as an “unintimidated” leader — has attempted to turn Wisconsin into a petri dish for conservative orthodoxy, spearheading efforts to curb the rights of workers, implement austerity economics, defund and privatize education, undermine campaign finance laws, restrict voting rights and crack down on legal abortions.

After the corporate tax cuts he championed caused his state’s budget deficit to balloon, Walker argued that Wisconsin needed to curtail the collective bargaining rights of public employees in order to close the deficit. His proposal targeted unions that typically supported Democrats, while GOP-aligned unions were conveniently left unaffected.

Tea Party groups rallied to Walker’s defense as protests rocked Madison, and right-wing groups poured in millions of dollars to defend Walker and promote his policies. Prosecutors alleged that several of these organizations were part of a “criminal scheme” involving illegal coordination with Walker’s office.

Walker’s recipe for economic prosperity in Wisconsin, which he wants to replicate

nationwide, hasn’t exactly been a success, as the state lags in job growth compared to its neighbors, and Walker badly missed his goal of creating 250,000 jobs by the end of his first term.

Walker coupled his offensive against workers with attacks on families who rely on public health insurance, costing the state hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Medicaid subsidies. He also drove through new laws curbing early voting and making it harder for the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin residents without drivers licenses to vote, a move that disproportionately affected people of color and young people.

But most recently, Walker has been receiving attention for his clear policy shifts as he prepares to run for president. He signed so-called “right-

to-work” legislation crippling private-sector unions, a bill he repeatedly said he wouldn’t touch as governor; reversed his position on whether undocumented immigrants should have a pathway to citizenship, saying that, despite past statements, he is now opposed to such a plan; he endorsed a federal ethanol mandate, popular among lowans, that he previously criticized for interfering in free markets and opposed as far back as 1999; and he pledged to sign into law a 20-week abortion ban, although he had vowed in a campaign ad to leave the “final decision” on terminating a pregnancy to “a woman and her doctor.”

**One Wisconsin Republican state senator criticized Walker’s policies as “way too extreme,” arguing that they serve “an out-of-state billionaire-funded and driven agenda.”**



After pivoting to the center to win a tight race for re-election, Walker now seems comfortable embracing his previous right-wing stances as he explores a campaign for the GOP presidential nomination. Despite his campaign claims that he doesn't have a position on marriage equality and will not "focus on" or "obsess with" abortion rights, Walker actually has a long record of Religious Right-aligned political activism.

Walker used his position as governor to fulfill a right-wing wish list, successfully repealing a law that allowed women to challenge discriminatory payment practices in state court; blocking the defense of a state law granting hospital visitation rights to same-sex partners; enacting targeted regulation of abortion providers (TRAP) laws aimed at closing clinics and limiting coverage; requiring women who seek an abortion to undergo an ultrasound; restricting birth control access; ending the state's relationship with Planned

Parenthood; and weakening comprehensive sex education in favor of abstinence-only lessons.

One Wisconsin Republican state senator criticized Walker's policies as "way too extreme," arguing that they serve "an out-of-state billionaire-funded and driven agenda." One of Walker's own fundraising officials emphasized the need for the governor to solicit money from the Koch brothers and billionaire GOP donor Sheldon Adelson, writing, "Corporations. Go heavy after them to give."

With such experience, it is no wonder that Walker cited his standoff with pro-labor demonstrators as a reason that he would be effective in fighting terrorists.





**Paul:** "I have heard of many tragic cases of walking, talking normal children who wound up with profound mental disorders after vaccines."



**Bush:** "I'm a skeptic. I'm not a scientist."



**Walker:** "I want a commander in chief who will do everything in their power to ensure that the threat from radical Islamic terrorists does not wash up on American soil.... If I can take on 100,000 protesters, I can do the same across the world."



**Cruz:** "I am a very, very proud wacko bird"



**Santorum:** "The reason Bibles are no longer in the public schools is because we let them take them out of the public schools. ... You say, 'Well we can't get them back in.' Yes, we can! Yes, we can!"

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