

Mike Berman's

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SPECIAL EDITION

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THE TEA PARTY

What is the Tea Party? Is it a movement? Is it a short-term political phenomena of the 2010 election? Is it the early rumblings of what will become a viable 3rd party? Is it the beginning of the reformation of the Republican Party?

The answers to all of those questions lie down the road. What is clear is that, whatever the Tea Party is or may turn out to be, it is having a substantial impact on the 2010 mid-term election.

In The Beginning

The beginning is a bit amorphous.

Congressman Ron Paul's 2008 Presidential campaign used the "tea party" protest as a fundraising device.

In early 2009, commencing about the time that Barack Obama was inaugurated, a part-time trader and member of Ticker Forum (a site for financial market commentary) posted a suggestion on the Forum that folks "Mail a tea bag to Congress and to Senate." On the same date, the moderator of the Forum invited readers "to a commemorative tea party," with the idea of everyone sending tea bags on February 1st.

On February 11, a talk radio host and Fox Business Network personality appeared on "Fox and Friends," waving tea bags and saying "It's time for a Tea Party."

There are many claims of who organized the first Tea Party, and at the same time there was another organizing activity called Porkulus Protests. This came from Rush Limbaugh, who coined the term on a broadcast about the Stimulus bill and pork barrel spending.

Often described as the “first” national Tea Party protest was the one called for by CNBC editor Rick Santelli, who, on a broadcast, suggested putting together a Chicago Tea Party. This is claimed by many to be the triggering event of the real growth of the Tea Party because the next day the new “Tea Party” was being discussed on Fox News.

A Facebook page popped up on February 20th. The first Tea Party convention occurred in February in Nashville. On tax day, April 15, 2009, there were hundreds of tea parties across the country. (History courtesy of Wikipedia)

Since then The Tea Party has taken on a life of its own, and without all the trappings of traditional political organizations....it is having a impact.

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Who Are the Tea Party's Supporters?

18% of Americans consider themselves Tea Party supporters. Who are they?

58% are men; 35% are ages 45-64; and another 31% are age 65+; 93% are white; education ranges from 35% with H.S. or less formal education to 28% being college graduates; 59% report making between \$30,000 and \$100,000; 53% are Republicans and 41% are Independents; 64% are Protestant and 18% are Catholic. [CBS 10/10]

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What Is The Point of View of Tea Party Supporters?

94% of Tea Party supporters think the country is on the wrong track.
80% would prefer an outsider as their Representative in Congress.
74% think that the Tea Party will give them more say in government
74% of Tea Party Supporters think media coverage of the Tea Party has been too harsh.

Among Tea Partiers

82% think that Obama has expanded the role of government too much.

72% oppose the new healthcare bill

64% think the auto companies should have been allowed to fail.

63% think the country would be better off if the banks had been allowed to fail.

58% do not think the government should take care of people who cannot take care of themselves.

30% think the views of the Tea Party “reflect the views of most of America.”

[CBS 10/10]

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Where is the Tea Party’s National Office Located?

There is no physical office. It is organized through a weekly conference call.

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Who Are The Tea Party’s Leaders?

There is no single national leader or even group of national leaders. The Tea Party is a network of people and groups who are tied together through the wonders of modern communication.

There is an organization called the Tea Party Patriots, which appears to be the largest of the Tea Party groups. It seems to have taken on responsibility for “coordination” of the Party’s activities. It actually has a handful of paid staff, but no offices. They work from their homes and laptops.

There is no hierarchy. All Tea Party groups, wherever located or however organized, are essentially equal within the Tea Party.

If any group is interested in pursuing a particular goal or position, they are free to “lead” the effort. If other groups want to join in well and good. If no other group is interested, the ideas usually fade away.

The various State and local organizations seem to connect with each other by registering on the Party’s website, teapartypatriots.org. In Minnesota there are 43 groups registered. In the District of Columbia, 12 groups are registered.

The interesting question is whether the Tea Party will develop a more obvious leadership class after the 2010 election. Perhaps these new leaders will not be leaders in the traditional sense. Their responsibility will not be to give orders. Rather their job may be to become national spokespeople for the Party.

Some commentators suggest that Member of Congress, Michelle Bachman (R-Mn), may become one of those leaders.

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Its Candidates

There are 129 Tea Party candidates running for the House and 9 running for the Senate.

67 of the House candidates are running in Solid Democratic districts, while 29 are running in districts that lean Democratic. 19 are running in districts that are rated as Toss Ups, while 7 are running in Solid Republican leaning districts, and 7 in Solid Republican districts.

Of the 9 Senate candidates, 1 is running in a State that is leaning Democratic, 4 in Toss Up States, 3 in States leaning Republican, and 1 solid Republican State. [NYTimes 10/15/10]

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The 2010 Election

35% of likely 2010 voters are Tea Party supporters. [NBC/WSJ 10/10]

18% say they would be more likely to support a Congressional candidate who associates with the Tea Party, while 28% they would be less likely. 51% say it would make no difference. [ABC/WP 10/10]

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How Do Americans Feel About The Tea Party?

47% say they oppose the Tea Party movement, while 40% support it. [ABC/WP 10/10]

Here is what the NBC/WSJ survey found about positive and negative feelings of Americans toward the Tea Party. During the past year the number of people who don't have an opinion has dropped from 31% to 12%. From January to October,

positive feelings have remained relatively stable. Those who report negative feelings has grown from 21% to 38%

	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
October 2010	30	38	20	12
September 2010	30	36	21	13
June 2010	34	31	21	14
January 2010	28	21	20	31

	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Mod</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Positive	10	25	57	9	15	56
Negative	59	36	13	60	49	13

[NBC/WSJ]

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No surprise, the view of the Tea Party by the general population is quite different than the view of so-called DC Elites.

26% of the general population says that the Tea Party is a fad that will soon enough go away. 67% of DC Elites say it is a fad that will go away.

15% of the general population says that the Tea Party has been the most negative of the "3" political parties. 33% of DC Elites hold that view. (34% of the general population see the Democrats as most negative, while 23% say that about the Republicans. 30% and 26% of DC Elites have those views.)

Will Tea Party candidates elected in November be able to change Washington?

	<u>Gen Pop</u>	<u>DC Elites</u>	
Yes	17	11	
No	42	77	[POLITICO]

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