

Tea Party movement

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The **Tea Party movement** (TPM) is an American populist^{[1][2][3]} political movement that is generally recognized as conservative and libertarian,^[4] and has sponsored protests and supported political candidates since 2009.^{[5][6][7]} It endorses reduced government spending,^{[8][9]} opposition to taxation in varying degrees,^[9] reduction of the national debt and federal budget deficit,^[8] and adherence to an originalist interpretation of the United States Constitution.^[10]

The name "Tea Party" is a reference to the Boston Tea Party, a protest by colonists who objected to a British tax on tea in 1773 and demonstrated by dumping British tea taken from docked ships into the harbor.^[11] Some commentators have referred to the *Tea* in "Tea Party" as the backronym "Taxed Enough Already".^{[12][13]}

The Tea Party movement has caucuses in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States.^[14] The Tea Party movement has no central leadership, but is composed of a loose affiliation of national and local groups that determine their own platforms and agendas. The Tea Party movement has been cited as an example of grassroots political activity, although it has also been cited as an example of astroturfing.^[15]

The Tea Party's most noted national figures include Republican politicians such as Ron Paul, Sarah Palin, Dick Armey, Eric Cantor, and Michele Bachmann, with Paul described by some as the "intellectual godfather" of the movement.^{[16][17]} The Tea Party movement is not, as of 2011, a national political party; polls show that most Tea Partiers consider themselves to be Republicans^{[18][19]}, and the movement's supporters have tended to endorse Republican candidates.^[20] Commentators including Gallup editor-in-chief Frank Newport have suggested that the movement is not a new political group, but simply a rebranding of traditional Republican candidates and policies.^{[18][21][22]} An October 2010 *Washington Post* canvass of local Tea Party organizers found 87% saying "dissatisfaction with mainstream Republican Party leaders" was "an important factor in the support the group has received so far".^[23]



Tea Party protesters fill the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall at the Taxpayer March on Washington on September 12, 2009.

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Background and history

See also: Tax revolt, List of Tea Party protests, 2009, and List of Tea Party protests, 2010

The theme of the Boston Tea Party, an iconic event in American history, has long been used by anti-tax protesters.^{[24][25][26]} It was part of Tax Day protests held throughout the 1990s and earlier.^{[27][28][29][30]} More recently, the anniversary of the original Boston Tea Party was commemorated on December 16, 2007, by Republican Congressman Ron Paul supporters who held a fund raising event for the 2008 presidential primaries advocating an end to fiat money and the Federal Reserve System, disengaging from foreign entanglements in Iraq and Afghanistan, and upholding States' rights.^{[31][32][33]}

Fox News commentator Juan Williams says that the TPM emerged from the ashes of Paul's 2008 presidential primary campaign.^[34]

Others have argued that the Koch brothers supported the movement.^{[35] [36]}

Early local protest events

On January 24, 2009, Trevor Leach, chairman of the Young Americans for Liberty in New York State organized a "Tea Party" to protest obesity taxes proposed by New York Governor David Paterson and call for fiscal responsibility on the part of the government. Several of the protesters wore Native American headdresses similar to the band of 18th century colonists

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who dumped tea in Boston Harbor to express outrage about British taxes.^[37]

Some of the protests were partially in response to several Federal laws: the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008,^[38] the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009,^{[39][40]} and a series of healthcare reform bills.^[41]

New York Times journalist Kate Zernike reported that leaders within the Tea Party credit Seattle blogger and conservative activist Keli Carender with organizing the first Tea Party in February 2009, although the term "Tea Party" was not used.^[42] Other articles, written by Chris Good of *The Atlantic*^[43]



A Tea Party protester holds a sign saying "Remember: Dissent is Patriotic" at a Nashville Tea Party on February 27, 2009.

and NPR's Martin Kaste,^[44] credit Carender as "one of the first" Tea Party organizers and state that she "organized some of the earliest Tea Party-style protests".

Carender first organized what she called a "Porkulus Protest" in Seattle on Presidents Day, February 16, the day before President Barack Obama signed the stimulus bill into law.^[45] Carender said she did it without support from outside groups or city officials. "I just got fed up and

planned it." Carender said 120 people participated. "Which is amazing for the bluest of blue cities I live in, and on only four days notice! This was due to me spending the entire four days calling and emailing every person, think tank, policy center, university professors (that were sympathetic), etc. in town, and not stopping until the day came."^{[42][46]}

Contacted by Carender, Steve Beren promoted the event on his blog four days before the protest^[47] and agreed to be a speaker at the rally.^[48] Carender also contacted conservative author and Fox News contributor Michelle Malkin, and asked her to publicize the rally on her blog, which Malkin did the day before the event.^[49] The following day, the Colorado branch of Americans for Prosperity held a protest at the Colorado Capitol, also promoted by Malkin.^[50] Carender held a second protest on February 27, 2009, reporting "We more than doubled our attendance at this one."^[42]

According to pollster Scott Rasmussen, the bailouts of banks by the Bush and Obama administrations triggered the Tea Party's rise. The interviewer added that the movement's anger centers on two issues, quoting Rasmussen as saying, "They think federal spending, deficits and taxes are too high, and they think no one in Washington is listening to them, and that latter point is really, really important."^[51]

First national protests

On February 19, 2009,^[52] in a broadcast from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, CNBC Business News editor Rick Santelli criticized

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the government plan to refinance mortgages, which had just been announced the day before. He said that those plans were "promoting bad behavior"^[53] by "subsidizing losers' mortgages". He suggested holding a tea party for traders to gather and dump the derivatives in the Chicago River on July 1.^[54]^[55]^[56] A number of the floor traders around him cheered on his proposal, to the amusement of the hosts in the studio. Santelli's "rant" became a viral video after being featured on the Drudge Report.^[57]

Overnight, websites such as ChicagoTeaParty.com (registered in August 2008 by Chicagoan Zack Christenson, radio producer for conservative talk show host Milt Rosenberg,) were live within 12 hours.^[58] About 10 hours after Santelli's remarks, reTeaParty.com was bought to coordinate Tea Parties scheduled for Independence Day and, as of March 4, was reported to be receiving 11,000 visitors a day.^[58]

According to *The New Yorker* writer Ben McGrath^[52] and *New York Times* reporter Kate Zernike,^[42] this is where the movement was first inspired to coalesce under the collective banner of "Tea Party". By the next day, guests on Fox News had already begun to mention this new "Tea Party".^[59]

As reported by The Huffington Post, a Facebook page was developed on February 20 calling for Tea Party protests across the country.^[60] Soon, the "Nationwide Chicago Tea Party" protest was coordinated across over 40 different cities for February 27, 2009, thus establishing the first national modern Tea Party protest.^[61]^[62] The movement has been supported nationally by at least 12 prominent individuals and their associated organizations.^[63]

Fox news called many of the protests in 2009 "FNC Tax Day Tea Parties" which it promoted on air and sent speakers to.^[64]^[65] This was to include then-host Glenn Beck, though Fox came to discourage him from attending later events.^[66]

Symbols

Beginning in 2009, the Gadsden flag has become a favorite among the Tea Party movement nationwide,^[67]^[68]^[69] for Tea Party protesters who feel patriotism for their country and are upset at the government.^[70] It was also seen being displayed by members of Congress at Tea Party rallies.^[71] Some lawmakers have dubbed it a political symbol due to the Tea Party connection,^[69] and the political nature of Tea Party supporters.^[72]

The Second Revolution flag gained national attention on January 19, 2010.^[73] It is a version of the Betsy Ross American flag, with a Roman numeral *II* in the center of the circle of 13 stars, symbolizing the second revolution in America.^[74] The Second Revolution flag has been called synonymous with Tea Party causes and events.^[75]

Composition

Worker's self management

Voluntary association

Voluntary society

Schools

Agorism • Anarchism

Autarchism • Christian

Consequentialist

Deontological

Free market • Geolibertarianism

Left-wing • Marxist • Minarchism •

Mutualism

Paleolibertarianism • Panarchism

Propertarianism • Right-wing

Socialist • Voluntaryism

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Frédéric Bastiat • David Bergland •

Walter Block • Murray Bookchin •

Harry Browne • Richard Cantillon •

Kevin Carson • Gary Chartier •

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Roderick T. Long • Tibor R. Machan •

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Jeffrey Miron • Gustave de Molinari •

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Murray Rothbard • Mary Ruwart •

Joseph Schumpeter • Hans Sennholz •

Herbert Spencer • Lysander Spooner •

John Stossel • William Graham Sumner •

Linda and Morris Tannehill •

See also: List of Tea Party politicians

Membership and demographics

Several polls have been conducted on the demographics of the movement. Though the various polls sometimes turn up slightly different results, they tend to show that Tea Party supporters are mainly white and slightly more likely to be male, married, older than 45, more conservative than the general population, and likely to be more wealthy and have more education.^{[76][77][78][79][80]}

A Gallup poll conducted in March 2010 found that -- other than gender, income and politics -- self-described Tea Party members were demographically similar to the population as a whole.^[81]

When surveying supporters or participants of the Tea Party movement, polls have shown that they are to a very great extent more likely to be registered Republican, have a favorable opinion of the Republican Party and an unfavorable opinion of the Democratic Party.^{[80][82][83]} The Bloomberg National Poll of adults 18 and over showed that 40% of Tea Party supporters are 55 or older, compared with 32% of all poll respondents; 79% are white, 61% are men and 44% identify as "born-again Christians",^[84] compared with 75%,^[85] 48.5%,^[86] and 34%^[87] for the general population, respectively.

Canvass and polls

An October 2010 *Washington Post* canvass of local Tea Party organizers found 99% said "concern about the economy" was an "important factor".^[23] Polls have also examined Tea Party supporters' views on race and racial politics. The University of Washington poll of registered voters in Washington State found that 74% of Tea Party supporters agreed with the statement "[w]hile equal opportunity for blacks and minorities to succeed is important, it's not really the government's job to guarantee it", while a CBS/*New York Times* poll found that 25% think that the administration favors blacks over whites, compared with just 11% of the general public, and that they are more likely to believe Obama was born outside the United States.^{[82][88][89]} A seven state study conducted from the University of Washington found that Tea Party movement supporters within those states were "more likely to be racially resentful" than the population as a whole, even when controlling for partisanship and ideology.^{[90][91]} Of white poll respondents who strongly approve of the Tea Party, only 35% believe that blacks are hard-working, compared to 55% of those strongly opposed to the Tea Party, and 40% of all respondents.^{[92][93]} However, analysis done by ABC News' Polling Unit found that views on race "are not significant predictors of support for the Tea Party movement" because they are typical of whites who are very conservative.^{[94][95]}

Views of supporters

Various polls have also probed Tea Party supporters for their views on a variety of political and controversial issues. A University of Washington poll of 1,695 registered voters in the state of Washington reported that 73% of Tea Party supporters disapprove of Obama's policy of engaging with Muslim countries, 88% approve of the controversial

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Gadsden flag



Second Revolution flag

immigration law recently enacted in Arizona, 82% do not believe that gay and lesbian couples should have the legal right to marry, and that about 52% believed that "lesbians and gays have too much political power".^{[88][89]}

More than half (52%) of Tea Party supporters told pollsters for CBS/*New York Times* that they think their own "income taxes this year are fair".^[82] Additionally, a Bloomberg News poll found that Tea Partiers are not against increased government action in all cases. "The ideas that find nearly universal agreement among Tea Party supporters are rather vague," says J. Ann Selzer, the pollster who created the survey. "You would think any idea that involves more government action would be anathema, and that is just not the case."

In advance of a new edition of their book *American Grace*, David E. Campbell of Notre Dame and Robert D. Putnam of Harvard published in a *The New York Times* opinion the results of their research into political attitudes, finding that Tea Party supporters had been largely "highly partisan Republicans" (and not "nonpartisan political neophytes"). Additionally, according to Campbell and Putnam, their rank and file is more concerned about "putting God in government" than it is with trying to shrink government.^[96]

The 2010 midterm elections demonstrated considerable skepticism within the Tea Party movement with respect to the dangers and the reality of global warming. A *New York Times*/CBS News Poll during the election revealed that only a small percentage of Tea Party supporters considered global warming a serious problem, much less than the portion of the general public that does. The Tea Party is strongly opposed to government-imposed limits on carbon dioxide emissions as part of emissions trading legislation to encourage use of fuels that emit less carbon dioxide.^[97] An example is the movement's support of California Proposition 23, which would suspend AB32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006.^[98] The proposition failed to pass, with less than 40% voting in favor.^[99]

Many of the movement's members also favor stricter measures against illegal immigration.^[100]

Leadership and groups

An October 2010 *Washington Post* canvass of 647 local Tea Party organizers asked "which national figure best represents your groups?" and got the following responses: no one 34%, Sarah Palin 14%, Glenn Beck 7%, Jim DeMint 6%, Ron Paul 6%, Michele Bachmann 4%.^[23]

The success of candidates popular within the Tea Party movement has boosted Sarah Palin's visibility.^[101] Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) conclude that "She is the symbolic leader of the movement, and more than anyone else has helped to shape it."^[102]

The movement has been supported nationally by prominent individuals and organizations,^{[103][104]} including:

501(c)(4) Non-Profit Organizations:

- Tea Party Patriots, an organization with more than 1,000 affiliated groups across the nation^[105] that proclaims itself to be the "Official Home of the Tea Party Movement."^[106]
- Americans for Prosperity, an organization founded by David H. Koch in 2003, and led by Tim Phillips. The group has over 1 million members in 500 local affiliates, and led protests against health care reform in 2009.^[103]
- FreedomWorks, an organization led Dick Arme. Like Americans for Prosperity, the group has over 1 million members in 500 local affiliates. It makes local and national candidate endorsements.^[103]
- Tea Party Express, a national bus tour run by Our Country Deserves Better PAC, itself a conservative political action committee created by Sacramento-based Republican consulting firm Russo, Marsh, and Associates.^{[107][108][109][110]}

For-Profit Businesses:

- Tea Party Nation, which sponsored the National Tea Party Convention that was criticized for its \$549 ticket price.^{[111][112][113][114]} and because Sarah Palin was apparently paid \$100,000 USD for her appearance (which she put towards SarahPAC^[115]).^[116]

Informal Organizations and Coalitions:

- The National Tea Party Federation, formed on April 8, 2010, by several leaders in the Tea Party movement to help spread its message and to respond to critics with a quick, unified response.^[117]
- The Nationwide Tea Party Coalition (<http://www.nationwidechicagoteaparty.com/>) , a loose national coalition of several dozen local tea party groups.

Prominent Individuals:

- In July 2010, Representative Michele Bachmann, a Minnesota Republican, formed the House congressional Tea Party Caucus. This congressional caucus, which Bachmann chairs, is devoted to the Tea Party's stated principles of "fiscal responsibility, adherence to the Constitution, and limited government".^[118] As of March 31,2011, the caucus consisted of 62 Republican representatives.^[119] Jason Chaffetz and Melissa Clouthier have accused them of trying to hijack or co-opt the grassroots Tea Party Movement.^[120]

Agenda

Contract from America

Main article: Contract from America

The Contract from America was the idea of Houston-based lawyer Ryan Hecker. He stated that he developed the concept of creating a grassroots call for reform prior to the April 15, 2009, Tax Day Tea Party rallies. To get his idea off the ground, he launched a website, ContractFromAmerica.com, which encouraged people to offer possible planks for the contract.

1. Identify constitutionality of every new law
2. Reject emissions trading
3. Demand a balanced federal budget
4. Simplify the tax system
5. Audit federal government agencies for waste and constitutionality
6. Limit annual growth in federal spending
7. Repeal the healthcare legislation passed on March 23, 2010
8. Pass an 'All-of-the-Above' Energy Policy
9. Reduce Earmarks
10. Reduce Taxes

The Tea Party Patriots have asked both Democrats and Republicans to sign on to the Contract. No Democrats signed on, and the contract met resistance from some Republicans who since created "Commitment to America". Candidates in the 2010 elections who signed the Contract from America included Utah's Mike Lee, Nevada's Sharron Angle, Sen. Coburn (R-OK), and Sen. DeMint (R-SC).^[121]

Foreign policy

In an August 2010 article for *Foreign Policy* magazine, Ron Paul outlined foreign policy views the Tea Party movement should emphasize: "[W]e cannot stand against big government at home while supporting it abroad. We cannot talk about fiscal responsibility while spending trillions on occupying and bullying the rest of the world ... I see tremendous opportunities for movements like the Tea Party to prosper by capitalizing on the Democrats' broken promises to overturn the George W. Bush administration's civil liberties abuses and end the disastrous wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan. A return to the traditional U.S. foreign policy of active private engagement but government noninterventionism is the only alternative that can restore our moral and fiscal health."^[122]

Walter Russell Mead analyzes the foreign policy views of the Tea Party movement in a 2011 essay published in *Foreign Affairs*. Mead says that Jacksonian populists, such as the Tea Party, combine a belief in *American exceptionalism* and its role in the world with skepticism of American's "ability to create a liberal world order". When necessary, they favor total war and unconditional surrender over "limited wars for limited goals". Mead identifies two main trends, one somewhat personified by Ron Paul and the other by Sarah Palin. "Paulites" have a Jeffersonian, "neo-isolationist" approach that seeks to avoid foreign military involvement. "Palinites", while seeking to avoid being drawn into unnecessary conflicts, favor a more aggressive response to maintaining America's primacy in international relations. Mead says that both groups share a distaste for "liberal internationalism".^[123]

Fundraising and support

Sarah Palin headlined four "Liberty at the Ballot Box" bus tours, to raise money for candidates and the Tea Party Express. One of the tours visited 30 towns and covered 3,000 miles.^[124] Following the formation of the Tea Party Caucus, Michele Bachmann raised \$10 million for a political action committee, MichelePAC, and sent funds to the campaigns of Sharron Angle, Christine O'Donnell, Rand Paul, and Marco Rubio.^[125] In September 2010, the Tea Party Patriots announced it had received a \$1,000,000 USD donation from an anonymous donor.^[126]

Koch Industry influence

Main article: Political activities of the Koch family

In an August 30, 2010, article in *The New Yorker*, Jane Mayer said that the billionaire brothers David H. Koch and Charles G. Koch and Koch Industries are providing financial and organizational support to the Tea Party movement through Americans for Prosperity, which David founded.^{[127][128]} The AFP's "Hot Air Tour" was organized to fight against taxes on carbon use and the activation of a cap and trade program.^[129] In 1984, David Koch also founded Citizens for a Sound Economy,^[130] part of which became FreedomWorks in a 2004 split, another group that organized and supports the movement.^[131] Koch Industries issued a press release stating that the Kochs have "no ties to and have never given money to FreedomWorks".^[132] Former ambassador Christopher Meyer writes in the *Daily Mail* that the Tea Party movement is a mix of "grassroots populism, professional conservative politics, and big money", the last supplied in part by Charles and David Koch.^[133] Jane Mayer says that the Koch brothers' political involvement with the Tea Party has been so secretive that she labels it "covert".^[134]

Impact on the 2010 election cycle

In 2010 Tea Party-endorsed candidates upset established Republicans in several primaries, such as Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Nevada, New York, South Carolina and Utah, giving a new momentum to the conservative cause in the 2010 elections. In the 2010 midterm elections, *The New York Times* has identified 138 candidates for Congress with significant Tea Party support, and reported that all of them were running as Republicans — of whom 129 are running for the House and 9 for the Senate.^[135] The *Wall Street Journal*-NBC News poll in mid October showed 35% of likely voters were Tea-party supporters, and they favored the Republicans by 84% to 10%.^[136]

However the effectiveness of the Tea Party to endorse candidates has come into question as only 32% of the candidates that were backed by the Tea Party won the election^[137]

For a list of Tea Party politicians, see List of Tea Party politicians

- On January 19, 2010, Republican Scott Brown was elected as the U.S. senator from Massachusetts in the

- special election held after Ted Kennedy's death. The election was notable in that Massachusetts is normally a solidly pro-Democratic state. Brown received Tea Party support.^[138]
- Dean Murray, a Long Island businessman, won a special election for a New York State Assembly seat. He is believed to be the first Tea Party activist to be elected into office.^[139]
 - John Frullo won the nomination for the Texas District 84 seat vacated by the retiring Carl Isett, also a Republican. Frullo defeated businessman Mark Griffin, a former Texas Tech University regent.^[140] He was elected as a representative.^[141]
 - In Texas, April 13, 2010, Charles Perry won the GOP primary against 86-year-old incumbent and fellow Republican Delwin Jones in District 83 and is unopposed in the November 2 general election.^{[142][143]}
 - In Utah attorney Mike Lee defeated establishment Republican U.S. Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) in the GOP senate primary on May 8, 2010. Lee's win is seen as a victory for the Tea Party Movement, whose supporters were against Bennett's return.^{[144][145][146]}
 - Rand Paul, endorsed by Tea Party groups, won the Super Tuesday GOP Senate primary in Kentucky. Paul, the son of Republican Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, comfortably beat Republican establishment favorite Trey Grayson with 60% of the vote, and subsequently won in the November general election.^[147] He was quoted saying, "The Tea Party Movement is about saving our country from a mountain of debt."^[148]
 - In the Republican primary in South Dakota for the at-large Congressional seat, Kristi Noem, a Tea Party-approved candidate, defeated incumbent Secretary of State Chris Nelson and state representative Blake Curd.^{[149][150]}
 - In the South Carolina first Congressional District GOP Primary, Tea Party favorite Tim Scott, defeated two establishment Republicans with long family histories in Republican politics: Paul Thurmond, son of the former South Carolina U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond.^[151] and Carroll Campbell, son of former South Carolina Governor Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. Scott has spent one term in the South Carolina House, where the businessman became the first African American GOP representative in more than 100 years.^{[152][153]}
^{[154][155][156]}
 - Nikki Haley, a 38-year-old Indian-American state representative, beat out three prominent Republican rivals in the South Carolina primary race for governor, capturing 49% of the vote. She defeated the second-place finisher, U.S. Representative Gresham Barrett, in a run-off election on June 22.^{[157][158]}
 - In Maine, Paul LePage won the GOP primary for governor.^[159]
 - In California, Chuck DeVore, who had Tea Party backing, lost the GOP senate primary to Carly Fiorina, who had backing from Sarah Palin.^[160] But she lost on November 2, 2010, to Boxer.^[161]
 - In New Jersey, Anna C. Little defeated Republican "establishment" candidate Diane Gooch in the Republican congressional primary for the 6th Congressional District on June 8, 2010. Little will face Democratic Congressman Frank Pallone in November.^[162] Pallone defeated Little by over 16,000 votes, 55% to 43%.
 - In Nevada, Sharron Angle won the U.S. Senate Republican primary race, defeating the GOP favorite, Sue Lowden, the one-time front runner.^[163] Angle was defeated by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.^[164]
 - In Arizona Jesse Kelly beat state Sen. Jonathan Paton, the National Republican Congressional Committee's preferred candidate, in the August primary for the party's nomination in congressional district 8.^[165] He lost the general election to incumbent Gabrielle Giffords.
 - In Alaska, attorney Joe Miller defeated current U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, in the GOP primary race on August 24, 2010. Murkowski had been appointed to the seat by her father, Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski, who had held the Senate seat for 30 years prior to becoming governor.^[166] Murkowski remained in the election as a write-in candidate, eventually beating Miller in the general election.^[167]
 - In Delaware, Tea Party-backed candidate Christine O'Donnell defeated veteran Representative Mike Castle in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate.^{[168][169]} Her victory was a surprising upset and was seen as a sign of Tea Party movement strength.^{[170][171]} O'Donnell lost the election.^[164]
 - In New York, Tea Party-backed candidate Carl Paladino defeated former Representative Rick Lazio in the Republican primary for governor;^{[172][173]} in the November election he was defeated by Democrat candidate Andrew Cuomo.

- In Louisiana, in the last congressional primary of 2010, Tea Party-endorsed Republican Jeff Landry of New Iberia defeated the establishment choice, former Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives Hunt Downer by a 65–35 percent margin.^[174] Landry won the 2010 general election.^[175]
- In Florida, tea party favorite Marco Rubio defeated Independent and sitting governor Charlie Crist for the U.S. Senate seat.^[176]
- In Colorado, tea party favorite Ken Buck won the GOP Senate primary, defeating Republican establishment candidate Lt. Governor Jane Norton.^{[177][178]} In the November general election, Buck was defeated by Senator Michael Bennet.^[179]

Allegations of Democratic candidates planting "fake" Tea Party candidates have surfaced in Florida,^{[180][181]} Michigan,^{[181][182]} New Jersey,^{[181][183]} and Pennsylvania.^{[181][184]}

Impact on the 2012 election cycle

In February 2011, the Tea Party Patriots organized and hosted the American Policy Summit in Phoenix, Arizona. The 1,600 attendees were polled regarding their preference for a 2012 presidential candidate. Herman Cain, the first of the 2012 candidates to form a presidential exploratory committee, won the poll with 22%. Runners up were Tim Pawlenty (16%), Ron Paul (15%) and Sarah Palin (10%). Ron Paul won the Summit's online poll.^[185]

In September 2011, CNN and Tea Party Express co-hosted a Republican primary debate among presidential candidates which featured questions from various Tea Party groups.^[186]

Public opinion

A *USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted in March 2010, found that 28% of those surveyed considered themselves supporters of the Tea Party movement, 26% were opponents, and 46% were neither.^[187] These figures remained stable through January 2011, but public opinion of the movement changed by August 2011. In the *USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted in January 2011, approximately 70% of adults, including approximately 9 out of 10 Republicans, feel Republican leaders in Congress should give consideration to Tea Party movement ideas.^[188] In August 2011, 42% of registered voters, but only 12% of Republicans, said Tea Party endorsement would be a "negative" and that they would be "less likely" to vote for such a candidate.^[189]

A CBS News/*New York Times* poll in September 2010, showed 19% of respondents supported the movement, 63% did not, and 16% said they did not know. In the same poll, 29% had an unfavorable view of the Tea Party, compared to 23% with a favorable view.^[190] The Center for American Progress, a progressive group, used this poll to assert that the Tea Party movement holds views that differ from those the general public. The Tea Party differed on views related to *Roe v. Wade*, income taxes, and Obama.^[191] The same poll retaken in August 2011 found that 20% of respondents had a "favorable" view of the Tea Party and 40% had an "unfavorable" view.^[192] A CNN/ORC poll taken September 23–25, 2011, found that the favorable/unfavorable ratio was 28% versus 53%.^[193]

An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll later in September 2010 found 27% considered themselves Tea Party supporters. In that poll, 42% said the Tea Party has been good for the U.S. political system; 18% called it a bad thing. Those with an unfavorable view of the Tea Party outnumbered those with a favorable view 36–30%. In comparison, the Democratic Party was viewed unfavorably by a 42–37% margin, and the Republican Party by 43–31%.^[194]



Ron Paul, the "intellectual godfather" of the Tea Party

A poll conducted by Quinnipiac University in March 2010 found that only 13% of national adults identified themselves as part of the Tea Party movement but that the Tea Party had a positive opinion by a 28–23% margin with 49% who did not know enough about the group to form an opinion.^[195] A similar poll conducted by the *Winston Group* in April 2010 found that 17% of American registered voters consider themselves part of the Tea Party movement.^[83]

After debt-ceiling crisis

See also: United States debt-ceiling crisis

After the debt-ceiling crisis, polls became more unfavorable to the Tea Party.^{[196][197]} According to a Gallup poll, 28% of adults disapproved of the Tea Party compared to 25% approving, and noted that "[t]he national Tea Party movement appears to have lost some ground in popular support after the blistering debate over raising the nation's debt ceiling in which Tea Party Republicans...fought any compromise on taxes and spending".^[196] Similarly, a Pew poll found that 29% of respondents thought Congressional tea party supporters had a negative effect compared to 22% thinking it was a positive effect. It noted that "[t]he new poll also finds that those who followed the debt ceiling debate very closely have more negative views about the impact of the Tea Party than those who followed the issue less closely."^[197] A CNN/ORC poll put disapproval at 51% with a 31% approval.^[198]

Reception

Obama administration

Polls found that just 7% of Tea Party supporters approve of how Obama is doing his job compared to 50% (as of April 2010) of the general public,^[82] and that roughly 77% of supporters had voted for Obama's Republican opponent, John McCain in 2008.^{[79][80]}

On April 19, 2009, Senior White House Adviser David Axelrod, when asked about the Tea Party protests on CBS News, said, "I think any time that you have severe economic conditions, there is always an element of disaffection that can mutate into something that's unhealthy." He also noted, "The thing that bewilders me is this President just cut taxes for ninety-five percent of the American people. So I think the tea bags should be directed elsewhere, because he certainly understands the burden that people face."^[199]



Barack Obama signs the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act at the White House, March 23, 2010.

On April 29, 2009, Obama commented on the Tea Party protests publicly during a townhall meeting in Arnold, Missouri, saying: "[W]hen you see, you know ... those of you who are watching certain news channels on which I'm not very popular — and you see folks waving tea bags around ... let me just remind them that I am happy to have a serious conversation about how we are going to cut our health care costs down over the long term, how we're going to stabilize Social Security. Claire (McCaskill) and I are working diligently to do basically a thorough audit of federal spending. But let's not play games and pretend that the reason is because of the recovery act, because that's just a fraction of the overall problem that we've got. We are going to have to tighten our belts, but we're going to have to do it in an intelligent way. And we've got to make sure that the people who are helped are working American families, and we're not suddenly saying that the way to do this is to eliminate programs that help ordinary people and give more tax cuts to the wealthy. We tried that formula for eight years. It did not work. And I don't intend to go back to it."^{[200][201]}

On April 15, 2010, Obama touted his administration's tax cuts, noting the passage of 25 different tax cuts over the past year, including tax cuts for 95% of working Americans. He then remarked, "So I've been a little amused over the last couple of days where people have been having these rallies about taxes. You would think they would be saying thank you. That's what you'd think."^{[202][203]}

On September 20, 2010, at a townhall discussion sponsored by CNBC, Obama said healthy skepticism about government and spending was good, but it was not enough to just say "Get control of spending", and he challenged the Tea Party movement to get specific about how they would cut government debt and spending: "And so the challenge, I think, for the Tea Party movement is to identify specifically what would you do. It's not enough just to say, get control of spending. I think it's important for you to say, I'm willing to cut veterans' benefits, or I'm willing to cut Medicare or Social Security benefits, or I'm willing to see these taxes go up. What you can't do — which is what I've been hearing a lot from the other side — is say we're going to control government spending, we're going to propose \$4 trillion of additional tax cuts, and that magically somehow things are going to work."^[204]^[205]

Commentaries on the movement

According to *The Atlantic*, the three main groups that provide guidance and organization for the protests, FreedomWorks, dontGO, and Americans for Prosperity, state that the demonstrations are an organic movement.^[206] Law professor and commentator Glenn Reynolds, best known as author of the Instapundit political blog, argued in the *New York Post* that: "These aren't the usual semiprofessional protesters who attend antiwar and pro-union marches. These are people with real jobs; most have never attended a protest march before. They represent a kind of energy that our politics hasn't seen lately, and an influx of new activists."^[207] Conservative political strategist Tim Phillips, now head of Americans for Prosperity, has remarked that the Republican Party is "too disorganized and unsure of itself to pull this off".^[208]

"Tea Party supporters", says Patrik Jonsson of the *Christian Science Monitor*, "have been called neo-Klansmen and knuckle-dragging hillbillies". Jonsson adds, "demonizing tea party activists tends to energize the Democrats' left-of-center base". He notes that "polls suggest that tea party activists are not only more mainstream than many critics suggest, but that a majority of them are women (primarily mothers), not angry white men".^[209] Jonsson quotes Juan Williams saying that Tea Party's opposition to health reform was based on self-interest rather than racism.^[209]

Matthew Continetti of *The Weekly Standard* has said: "There is no single Tea Party. The name is an umbrella that encompasses many different groups. Under this umbrella, you'll find everyone from the woolly fringe to Ron Paul supporters, from Americans for Prosperity to religious conservatives, independents, and citizens who never have been active in politics before. The umbrella is gigantic."^[210]



Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich speaks at the New York City Tea Party, April 15, 2009.

Mark Mardell of BBC News, who has "spoken to many supporters of the Tea Party and been to lots of rallies" has said that when he talks to Tea Party supporters for more than a few minutes, "fury tends to dissolve into concern, worry about the economic direction of the country, worry about the size of the government and the level of taxation".^[211] While "many" supporters of what Mardell calls the "hydra-headed" Tea Party combine their fiscal and constitutional concerns with social issues associated with their Christian beliefs, the unifying focus is on fiscal conservatism and the constitution.^[211]

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich's political activist group American Solutions supports the protests, saying on its website that they are "our chance to communicate our anger and opposition to the irresponsible policies of politicians in Washington who have failed to solve problems". Gingrich spoke at the New York City protest on April 15.^[212]

Dan Gerstein, a former Democratic political advisor, argued in *Forbes* that the protests could have tapped into real feelings of disillusionment by American moderates, but the protesters put forth too many incoherent messages.^[213] Democratic Party Chairman Tim Kaine told CNN that Tea Party candidates will not appeal to independent and moderate voters, and that their growing importance within the Republican Party will help Democrats.^[214]

Ned Ryun, president of American Majority, an organization that offers training for many Tea Party activists, believes this movement is not about political parties, stating, "It's very much anti-establishment at both parties ... They don't care about party labels." He has also said that "I think we're getting to the point where you can truly say we're entering a post-party era. They aren't going to be necessarily wed to a certain party — they want to see leadership that reflects their values first ... They don't care what party you're in; they just want to know if you reflect their values — limited government, fixing the economy."^[215]

According to Arthur C. Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, America is locked in a culture war between the country as being an "exceptional nation organized around the principles of free enterprise — limited government, a reliance on entrepreneurship and rewards determined by market forces" or as a country determined by "European-style statism". Brooks states that while some have tried to criticize the tea party, they are part of an ideological movement to preserve the former and oppose the latter.^[216]

In an April 2009 *New York Times* opinion column, contributor Paul Krugman wrote that "the tea parties don't represent a spontaneous outpouring of public sentiment. They're AstroTurf (fake grassroots) events, manufactured by the usual suspects. In particular, a key role is being played by FreedomWorks, an organization run by Richard Armey."^[217] The same month, then Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-California) stated "It's not really a grassroots movement. It's astroturf by some of the wealthiest people in America to keep the focus on tax cuts for the rich instead of for the great middle class"^{[218][219]}

In a September 2010 piece for *Rolling Stone*, journalist Matt Taibbi wrote: "I've concluded that the whole miserable narrative boils down to one stark fact: They're full of shit. ... [T]he Tea Party is a movement that purports to be furious about government spending — only the reality is that the vast majority of its members are former Bush supporters who yawned through two terms of record deficits ... The average Tea Partier is sincerely against government spending — with the exception of the money spent on them. In fact, their lack of embarrassment when it comes to collecting government largesse is key to understanding what this movement is all about ..."^[220] Taibbi concluded, "This, then, is the future of the Republican Party: Angry white voters hovering over their cash-stuffed mattresses with their kerosene lanterns, peering through the blinds at the oncoming hordes of suburban soccer moms they've mistaken for death-panel bureaucrats bent on exterminating anyone who isn't an illegal alien or a Kenyan anti-colonialist."^[220]

Observers have compared the Tea Party movement to others in U.S. history, finding commonalities with previous populist^[221] or nativist movements and third parties such as the Know Nothing party, the John Birch Society,^{[221][222]} and the campaigns of Huey Long, Barry Goldwater,^[222] George Wallace,^[223] and Ross Perot.^[224] Two historians, Steve Fraser and Joshua B. Freeman, have written in Salon.com that the Tea Party movement and anti-immigration movements share a "fear of displacement".^[223] Historian Jill Lepore has described the movement as a form of "historical fundamentalism", turning the founding into sacred history and rejecting critical academic study of it.^[225] U.S. Senator Chris Dodd compared the movement to the Know Nothings, saying it seeks to roll "the clock back to a point in time which they've sort of idealized in their own minds as being a better time in America".^[226] Other commentators, like Jacob Heilbrunn and Michael Lind, predict that it will share the short life span of third parties in U.S. history that have faded after altering the political order.^{[227][228][229]}

In March 2011 Ronald Schiller, a National Public Radio fundraising executive was secretly recorded during a lunch meeting with two men posing as potential donors. On the recording, Schiller said that he would speak personally, and not for NPR; then he contrasted the fiscally conservative Republican party of old that didn't get involved in people's personal and family lives with "the current Republican Party, in particular the Tea Party, that is fanatically involved in people's personal lives and very fundamental Christian — I wouldn't even call it Christian. It's this weird evangelical kind of move." Schiller said some highly-placed Republicans believed the Republican Party had been hijacked by this radical group, and characterized them as "Islamophobic" and "seriously racist, racist people".^{[230][231][232][233][234]}

Media coverage

US News and World Report reported that the nature of the coverage of the protests has become part of the story.^[235] On CNN's *Situation Room*, journalist Howard Kurtz commented that "much of the media seems to have chosen sides". He says that Fox News portrayed the protests "as a big story, CNN as a modest story, and MSNBC as a great story to make fun of. And for most major newspapers, it's a nonstory."^[235] There are reports that the movement has been actively promoted by the Fox News Channel, indicating a possible media bias.^{[236][237]}

According to *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, a progressive media watchdog, there is a disparity between large coverage of the Tea Party movement and minimal coverage of larger movements. In 2009, the major Tea Party protests were quoted twice as often as the National Equality March despite a much lower turnout.^[238] In 2010, a Tea Party protest was covered 59 times more than the US Social Forum (177 Tea Party mentions versus 3 for Social Forum) despite an attendance that was 25 times smaller in size (600 Tea Party attendees versus at least 15,000 for Social Forum).^[239]

In April 2010, responding to a question from the media watchdog group Media Matters posed the previous week, Rupert Murdoch, the chief executive of News Corporation, which owns Fox News, said, "I don't think we should be supporting the Tea Party or any other party." That same week Fox News canceled an appearance by Sean Hannity at a Cincinnati Tea Party rally.^[240]



Tea Party protesters walk towards the United States Capitol during the Taxpayer March on Washington, September 12, 2009.

Following the September 12 Taxpayer March on Washington, Fox News said it was the only cable news outlet to cover the emerging protests and took out full-page ads in *The Washington Post*, the *New York Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* with a prominent headline reading, "How did ABC, CBS, NBC, MSNBC, and CNN miss this story?"^[241] CNN news anchor Rick Sanchez disputed Fox's assertion, pointing to various coverage of the event.^{[242][243][244]} CNN, NBC, CBS, MSNBC, and CBS Radio News provided various forms of live coverage of the rally in Washington throughout the day on Saturday, including the lead story on CBS Evening News.^{[242][244][245][246]}

James Rainey of the *Los Angeles Times* said MSNBC's attacks on the tea parties paled compared to Fox's support, but that MSNBC personalities Keith Olbermann, Rachel Maddow and Chris Matthews were hardly subtle in disparaging the movement.^[247] Howard Kurtz has said that, "These [FOX] hosts said little or nothing about the huge deficits run up by President Bush, but Barack Obama's budget and tax plans have driven them to tea. On the other hand, CNN and MSNBC may have dropped the ball by all but ignoring the protests."^[248]

Tea Party's views of media coverage

In October 2010, a survey conducted by *The Washington Post* found that the majority of local Tea Party organizers consider the media coverage of their groups to be fair. Seventy-six percent of the local organizers said media coverage has been fair while twenty-three percent have said coverage was unfair. This was based on responses from all 647 local Tea Party organizers the *Post* was able to contact and verify, from a list of more than 1,400 possible groups identified.^[249]

Racial issues

Black conservatives have expressed mixed feelings about the Tea Party's inclusiveness and concerns about racism. Brandon Brice, a primary black speaker at a tax-day Tea Party rally, said he was worried about the movement, noting that, "It's strayed away from the message of wasteful spending and Washington not listening to its constituents, and it's become more of this rally of hate." Lenny McAllister, a Republican commentator, author and Tea Party supporter, said he has seen racism within the movement and has confronted it by approaching people with racially derogatory signs of President Obama and asking them to take the signs down. Like Brice, McAllister thinks leaders of the Tea Party movement must not ignore the issue. McAllister told *The Washington Post*, "The people are speaking up and becoming

more educated on the issues, but you have fringe elements that are defining this good thing with their negative, hateful behavior." He said the movement is more diverse than news clips show, commenting that "There is this perception that these are all old, white racists and that's not the case."^[250] Jean Howard-Hill, leader of the National Republican African American Caucus, wrote that, "Any movement which cannot openly denounce racism, calling it out as wrong troubles me. To attack President Obama on his policy is one thing, but to do so on his race or some hysterical pretext of socialism is yet another."^[250] During an interview on NPR with Michel Martin, McAllister and columnist Cynthia Tucker discussed racism and the Tea Parties; Tucker wrote about the interview, concluding that McAllister's take on racism was that he'd seen enough racist signs at other Tea Party gatherings to know that racism is associated with the movement.^[251]

Black Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain said that racist accusations about the Tea Party Movement are "ridiculous".^[252] "I have been speaking to Tea Parties, Americans for Prosperity, since 2009, before it was cool," Cain said, and then, referring to his victories in recent Tea Party Straw polls, "... If the Tea Party organization is racist, why does the black guy keep winning all these straw polls?" Cain went on to say that while he doesn't feel President Obama used race to get elected, "a lot of his supporters use race selectively to try to cover up some of his failures, to try to cover up some of his failed policies." Cain said Obama's surrogates "try to play the race card, because there's supposed to be something wrong with criticizing him", and concluded, "Some people have tried to use [race] to try to give the president a pass on failed policies, bad decisions and the fact that this economy is not doing what it's supposed to do."^[252]

Another prominent African-American conservative, Ward Connerly, decried accusations of Tea Party racism and defended the movement in a *National Review* column: "Race is the engine that drives the political Left. In the courtrooms, on college campuses, and, most especially, in our politics, race is a central theme. Where it does not naturally rise to the surface, there are those who will manufacture and amplify it," Connerly said. "I am convinced beyond any doubt that all of this is part of the strategic plan being implemented by the Left in its current campaign to remake America."^[253]



Tea Party protesters during the Taxpayer March on Washington, September 12, 2009.

About 61 percent of Tea Party opponents say racism has a lot to do with the movement, a view held by just 7 percent of Tea Party supporters.^[254] Some Tea Partiers blame the media for casting them as racists.^[90] Allen West, one of 32 African-Americans who ran for Congress in 2010 as Republicans, says the notion of racism in the Tea Party movement has been made up by the news media.^[255] *The Washington Post* reported that an analysis of the signs displayed at a September 2010 Tea Party rally found that "the vast majority of activists expressed narrow concerns about the government's economic and spending policies and steered clear of the racially charged anti-Obama messages that have helped define some media coverage of such events".^[256] Roughly a quarter of the signs "reflected direct anger with Obama", 5 percent "mentioned the president's race or religion, and slightly more than 1 percent questioned his American citizenship".^[256] The researcher, Emily Elkins, did not conclude that

"the racially charged messages" were "unimportant", but she did conclude that "media coverage of tea party rallies over the past year have focused so heavily on the more controversial signs that it has contributed to the perception that such content dominates the tea party movement more than it actually does".^[256] A report published in the fall 2010 by the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights and backed by the NAACP has found what it says are efforts by white nationalist groups and militias to link themselves to the Tea Party movement.^{[257][258]} White nationalists have attempted to recruit new members at Tea Party events. Steve Smith, Pennsylvania Party Chairman of the white nationalist American Third Position Party, has called Tea Party events "fertile ground for our activists".^{[259][260]}

Specific racial slurs

While at a Tea Party event on February 27, 2009, a photo was taken of TeaParty.org founder and president Dale

Robertson with a sign that said "Congress = Slaveowner, Taxpayer = Nigger".^[261] It has been reported that he was ejected from the event because of the offensive nature of the sign, and Houston Tea Party Society leaders ousted him from the society shortly after. It was also reported that Robertson intended to sell the domain TeaParty.org; however, as of May 2011 he is named the "President & Founder" on the TeaParty.org "Founder" section.^{[262][263][264][265][266][267]}

Reports of slurs at health care reform protests

On March 20, 2010, during a rally at the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. before the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Bill was voted on, several black lawmakers said that demonstrators shouted "nigger" at them.^{[268][269]} Congressman Emanuel Cleaver was spat upon, although it is unclear if this was deliberate, and said he heard the slurs. Congressman Barney Frank, who is gay, was called a "faggot".^{[268][270]} Representative André Carson said that while walking with John Lewis and his chief of staff from the Cannon building, amid chants of "kill the bill", he heard the "n-word at least 15 times". Carson said he heard it coming from different places in the crowd, and one man "just rattled it off several times".^{[271][272]} Carson quoted Lewis as saying, "You know, this reminds me of a different time."^[271] Heath Shuler, a Democratic U.S. representative from North Carolina commented on the tenor of the protests, saying: "It was the most horrible display of protesting I have ever seen in my life." He also confirmed hearing the slur against Frank.^{[273][274]}

While attending the health care rally in Washington, D.C., on March 21, 2010, Springboro, Ohio Tea Party founder Sonny Thomas posted a racial slur on the Springboro Tea Party Twitter webpage he managed. Directed specifically at the Hispanic community, it stated "Illegals everywhere today! So many spics makes me feel like a speck. Grrr. Wheres my gun!?" On April 14, 2010, according to CNN anchor Rick Sanchez, when CNN contacted Thomas to ask for an explanation, Thomas initially said he was making a reference to a Bee Gee's song. Thomas posted the following on the Springboro Tea Party website, "I take full responsibility for the action and it was not my intention to be insensitive. While it is never appropriate to make such a facetious comment, I hope that we can put this issue behind us for the greater good."^{[275][276]} The posting triggered cancellations by several local and statewide political candidates and leaders scheduled to speak at a Springboro Tea Party rally on April 17. An Ohio Republican state Sen. Shannon Jones boycotted the rally and stated, "I don't think it says anything about the movement per se". A Dayton Tea Party official, Rob Scott, claimed that the posts were "classless" and did not represent the national Tea Party movement as a whole.^{[277][278]}

Response

According to *The Washington Post* three weeks after the incidents, video and audio proof of racial slurs against Lewis and Carson had yet to emerge, and conservative commentator and blogger Andrew Breitbart insisted the charges were made up. "If so, they're good actors," Andrew Alexander, ombudsman for the Post, said, explaining that reporters described Carson as "trembling", "agitated", "angry" and "emotional" as he recounted what had just happened. Carson implored the reporters to step back outside to witness and document the taunts, but Capitol police prevented them. Andrew Breitbart offered to make a \$100,000 donation to the United Negro College Fund for any audio/video footage of the N-word being hurled at Congressman John Lewis or if Lewis could pass a lie-detector test.^{[268][279]} "It didn't happen," said Breitbart, who wasn't there.^[271] Breitbart asserted that the racial slurs were only alleged as a way for the left, abetted by the "progressive" media, to "marginalize" Tea Party supporters.^{[280][281][282]} To support his assertions, Breitbart had posted a mislabeled 48-second video of the Congressional Black Caucus members on the day in question, but later analysis revealed that the video was not of Lewis and Carson walking to the Capitol, when the slurs were reportedly heard, but instead showed the lawmakers leaving the Capitol — at least one hour after the reported incident. When asked about using the video from the wrong moment on his website, Breitbart stood by his claim that the lawmakers were lying. "I'm not saying the video was conclusive proof," he said.^{[271][283]}

In response to Breitbart's allegations, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka said he had witnessed the events in question, stating, "I watched them spit at people, I watched them call John Lewis the n-word. I witnessed it."^[284] Fox News' Bill O'Reilly discussed the issue on four of his shows, beginning on March 22. O'Reilly stated, "Just because it's not on tape

doesn't mean it's fabricated."^[271]

Economist and prominent black conservative Thomas Sowell told *The Washington Post*, "This is a serious charge — and one deserving of some serious evidence ... But, despite all the media recording devices on the scene, not to mention recording devices among the crowd gathered there, nobody can come up with a single recorded sound to back up that incendiary charge. Worse yet, some people have claimed that even doubting the charge suggests that you are a racist."^[253]

The National Tea Party Federation sent a letter to the Congressional Black Caucus denouncing racism and requesting that the CBC supply any evidence of the alleged events at the protest on March 20, 2010.^[285]

House Republican leaders criticized the use of slurs against the Democratic congressmen by the protesters, but said they were isolated incidents that should not overshadow the healthcare debate. House Minority Leader John Boehner called the incidents "reprehensible", and House Minority Whip Eric Cantor said, "Nobody condones that at all. There were 30,000 people here in Washington yesterday. And, yes, there were some very awful things said." As demonstrators gathered the following day outside the Capitol to rally against the bill again, one held a sign saying, "All tea partiers: If you hear a racial slur, step away, point, boo and take a picture of the rat bastard."^[286]

Mark Williams anti-Islam comments

Tea Party Express leader Mark Williams referred to Allah as a "Monkey God". Williams' comments elicited strong rebukes from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York state senators and Muslim leaders. In a subsequent blog posting, Williams wrote, "I owe an apology to millions of Hindus who worship Lord Hanuman, an actual Monkey God. Hanuman is worshiped as a symbol of perseverance, strength, and devotion ... Those are hardly the traits of whatever the Hell (literally) it is that terrorists worship." When questioned by *The Washington Post* about his comments about Islam, Williams has claimed the controversy has "been fantastic for the movement".^{[287][288]}

Williams came under further criticism in mid-July when he posted a fictional letter named "Colored People" on his blog. Williams claimed the letter was a "satirical" response to a resolution passed by the NAACP calling on Tea Party leaders to "repudiate the racist element and activities' from within the movement".^[289] In response, the National Tea Party Federation "demanded that the Tea Party Express — a separate group — oust Williams from its ranks. When it did not, the Federation expelled both Williams and his conservative outfit."^[290]

Other controversies

On March 22, 2010, a Lynchburg, Virginia, Tea Party activist, attempting to post the home address of Representative Tom Perriello on his blog, incorrectly posted the address of Perriello's brother, who also lives in Virginia, and encouraged readers to "drop by" to express their anger against Representative Perriello's vote in favor of the healthcare bill. The following day, a severed gas line was discovered in Perriello's brother's yard that connected to a propane grill on the home's screened-in porch. Local police and FBI investigators determined that it was intentionally cut as a deliberate act of vandalism. Perriello's brother also received a threatening letter. The website issued a response saying the Tea Party member's action of posting the address "was not requested, sanctioned or endorsed" by the group.^{[291][292][293][294]}

In early July 2010, the North Iowa Tea Party (NITP) posted a billboard comparing Obama to Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Lenin and received sharp criticism, including some from other Tea Party activists. NITP co-founder Bob Johnson acknowledged the anti-socialist message may have gotten lost amid the fascist and communist images. Following a request from the NITP, the billboard was removed on July 14.^{[295][296][297]}

Use of term "teabagger"

The term "teabagger" emerged after a protester displayed a placard using the words "tea bag" as a verb.^{[298][299]} The label has prompted additional puns by commentators, the protesters themselves, and comedians based on the sexual meaning of the term. It is routinely used as a derogatory term to refer to conservative protesters.^[300]

The term has also entered into the political debate; supposed or actual supporters of the tea-party movement have been referred to as "tea-baggers" by politicians such as Senators John F. Kerry^[301] and Chuck Schumer^[302] as well as by President Obama.^[303]

See also

- Coffee Party USA

Notes

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