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The



# LOWDOWN

EDITED BY JIM HIGHTOWER AND PHILLIP FRAZER

“Buckets of crazy.”

—A REPUBLICAN STAFFER in the House, candidly describing tea party lawmakers pushing a ridiculously destructive debt ceiling bill.

*In just one year, the tea party went from hating billionaires to fronting for them*

## It's time to name the tea party politicians (and their sponsors)—and call them out

**AS HE KEEPS DEMONSTRATING**, President Obama is not exactly Mount Rushmore material. But—good God!—the petulant pettiness and corporate servility of Congress' tea party Republicans makes Obama's timidity seem like a chapter from *Profiles In Courage*.

**A**merica has BIG needs right now—a jobs crisis, housing crisis, infrastructure crisis, energy crisis, climate crisis, middle-class crisis, democracy crisis. But they can't even be addressed because tea party ravers in the House, joined there by a gaggle of old school right-wingers, keep throwing hissy fits over far-out ideological gimcrackery.

Our problem in Washington really comes down to this: We have too many 5-watt bulbs in 100-watt sockets. Take, for example, the astonishing clamoring by tea party congress critters to pass a light bulb bill. Yes, light bulbs! In July, these addle-brained lawmakers actually spent time, energy, and their credibility on stopping the horrible scourge of energy efficient bulbs from spreading across the country.

This non-issue was literally drummed up by the billionaire Koch brothers (who, by the way, are in the dirty energy business and profit if you have to use more of it to light your home). During the past couple of years, various Koch front groups have been shrieking that nanny-state Democrats have banned Thomas Edison's old, glowing 100-watt incandescent globes. As of next January 1, they wailed, sales of Edison's marvel will be outlawed, replaced by the cold glare emitted by spiral, fluorescent bulbs.

Only, none of that is true. There is no ban, just a new standard for all bulbs to consume less energy. And it was not set by Democrats, but by a Republican-sponsored law signed in 2007 by George W. Bush. Furthermore, the light bulb industry backed the new efficiency stan-

dard. “Everyone supported it,” says a top executive of bulb-maker Philips. So did Edison's descendents, who issued a simple statement that old Tom himself could've written: “Technology changes. Embrace it.”

Plus, the new law shows that government rule-making can work beautifully, producing a major surge in industry innovation. In only four years, Philips, GE, and Sylvania have already developed incandescent bulbs that meet the government's higher efficiency standard and save money for consumers.

Nonetheless, such dim bulbs as Michele Bachmann, along with the tea party caucus, joined the Kochs' silly circus. They merrily rolled the bizarre anti-efficiency light bulb bill right through the House. Luckily the Senate won't pass this folderol, so it won't become law, but that won't stop congressional tea partiers from continuing their goofy rant against big government “telling us what kind of light bulbs we can buy.”

### Name the names

Meanwhile, America's corporate media have surrendered any semblance of journalistic responsibility in covering the tea party congress. On the one hand, they treat the slightest sneeze from these lawmakers as a powerful storm. For example, on July 27 the Koch-backed astroturf group, the Tea Party Express, held a “Hold the Line” media event on the Capitol grounds. It was promoted as a mass rally to demand that Congress slash trillions of dollars from the federal deficit through spending cuts alone, with no tax hikes on billionaires and corporations.

News cameras were there to record and report every bon mot tossed out by such tea party favorites as Sens. Jim DeMint and Rand Paul. They did not report, however, that fewer than 50 of the

expected masses showed up (see a great photo of DeMint at the “rally” speaking, essentially, to no one but the cameras: [www.flickr.com/photos/58372028@N00/5981973020](http://www.flickr.com/photos/58372028@N00/5981973020)).



The next day, the progressive American Dream Movement drew a crowd ten times larger to another Capitol Hill rally, demanding that Congress protect seniors from the budget slashers and, instead, eliminate special tax giveaways to corporations and the rich. No cameras came to cover the message of these citizens.

On the other hand, the media establishment is failing even to give the public an answer to journalism's most basic question: Who? Name by name, who are these tea partiers casting votes to harm workaday people, further enrich the rich, and extend greater corporate power over us? We can't have an informed electorate if it's not informed.

Many tea party activists themselves could benefit from this information. The rank and file assume that the crop of outsiders they sent to Congress are now inside representing their interests. But most would be stunned to know that their "representative" has voted to kill Medicare, gut Social Security, protect Wall Street speculators, and turn our natural resources over to polluting profiteers. A big chunk of the tea party nation did vote in 2010 for smaller government—but not *this*.

The media, however, only generalize that tea party Republicans are doing this or that, failing to deliver such useful specifics as: "Hey, the goober you sent to Congress just stabbed you in the back." On July 28, for example, the *New York Times* ran an important article about the wholesale assault on environmental protections by "freshman Republicans," not even mentioning that these are tea partiers. The members were attaching some 70 pro-polluter amendments to an appropriations bill—including unleashing coal giants to blow up Appalachia's mountains, allowing uranium mining at the Grand Canyon, exempting offshore oil drillers from any accountability for their equipment failures, blocking all agencies from doing research on climate change, letting industrial corporations escape from even reporting their carbon pollution, and stopping the EPA from so much as studying pollution by factory farms.

But, no names of the members sponsoring this stuff were reported. In America's democratic system, it's not enough to say "Congress" did this, or even "tea party" legislators did it. Name the names, so they have to be accountable for what they're doing. At a minimum the news outlets could put the names on their websites.

This is important for all voters, but especially for those who thought that electing this tea party bunch would help end a business-as-usual Congress controlled by corporate money and lobbyists. After all, the tea party insurgency was not sparked by a hatred of government, but by raw fury at Republicans and Democrats alike for coddling the Wall Street banksters who crashed their casino emporiums into our economy. Arrogant and avaricious bankers were handed multibillion dollar bailouts in 2008-2009, while workaday Americans were being handed pink slips and eviction notices.

This daylight robbery definitely put the "ugh" in ugly, and it brought the public's general anger about collusion between corporate and political elites into sharp focus. That political moment held bright promise for progressive populism, but it quickly dissipated. Progressive funders, organizations, and media (enthralled by the new Obama presidency and concentrating on Washington) did little outreach to the bubbling rebellion in the countryside, leaving the field to right-wing exploiters.

### Arme y gets an army

As a result, the tea party uprising was soon hijacked and transformed into anti-populism. The key player was Dick Arme y. A former GOP majority leader in the House, he was a well connected corporate lobbyist for tobacco giants, drug corporations, and others when he noticed reports in early 2009 of some mad-as-hellers brandishing tea bags at a few scattered protests. Arme y also was head of a Koch-financed political shop called FreedomWorks. "Eureka!" this career Washington insider must have shouted as he scurried from his opulent office to get in front of this fledgling movement of unattached outsiders.

The tea bag crowd loathed insiders, but Arme y has a good line of B.S.—and he came with a rich goodie bag, including: ample Koch money, an experienced PR machine, savvy Republican political

## WHO IS THE TEA PARTY CONGRESS?

Seems like this would be an easy question to answer, but it turns out that we could find no group, including the tea party's own organizations, that has made a complete list, or at least they've not made one public. So, the *Lowdown's* ace fact diggers dug out the names themselves, presented below in three categories for everyone's political edification.



### I. Endorsed and elected as tea partiers in 2010

Note that there is no such thing as the Tea Party. The movement has no formal political entity for holding primaries or conventions, nor does the tea party name appear on general election ballots. Instead, "official" tea party candidates are those who're endorsed by FreedomWorks or the Tea Party Express—both of which are creatures of Dick Arme y and his billionaire backers. Last year was the first congressional election with candidates endorsed as "tea partiers" and at least 26 of them won, all elected as Republicans. There may be more, but these are the ones we could find—if you know of others, please send their names (along with any backup material attesting to their tea partiness) to [lowdown@pipeline.com](mailto:lowdown@pipeline.com).

NAME	CITY/STATE	NAME	CITY/STATE
<b>Mo Brooks</b>	Huntsville, AL	<b>Steven Palazzo</b>	Biloxi, MS
<b>Rick Crawford</b>	Jonesboro, AR	<b>Vicky Hartzler</b>	Archie, MO
<b>Tim Griffin</b>	Little Rock, AK	<b>Jon Runyan</b>	Mount Laurel, NJ
<b>Paul Gosar</b>	Flagstaff, AZ	<b>Ann Marie Buerkle</b>	Syracuse, NY
<b>Tom Graves</b>	Ranger, GA	<b>Nan Hayworth</b>	Mount Kisco, NY
<b>Raul Labrado</b>	Eagle, ID	<b>Renee Ellmers</b>	Dunn, NC
<b>Bobby Schilling</b>	Colona, IL	<b>Steve Stivers</b>	Columbus, OH
<b>Adam Kinzinger</b>	Manteno, IL	<b>Joe Wilson</b>	West Columbia, SC
<b>Todd Young</b>	Bloomington, IN	<b>Tim Scott</b>	Charleston, SC
<b>Marlin Stutzman</b>	Howe, IN	<b>Kristi Noem</b>	Castlewood, SD
<b>Mike Pompeo</b>	Wichita, KS	<b>Jaime Herrera Beutler</b>	Camas, WA
<b>Jeff Landry</b>	New Iberia, LA	<b>Sean Duffy</b>	Ashland, WI
<b>Dan Benishek</b>	Iron County, MI	<b>Reid Ribble</b>	Appleton, WI
<b>Tim Walberg</b>	Tipton, MI	<b>Paul Ryan</b>	Janesville, WI
<b>Steven Palazzo</b>	Biloxi, MS		

operatives... and a simple, ready-made agenda for diverting the angry crowds' attention from Wall Street to the bugaboo of Big Government.

With no real competition, Arme y established himself as the de facto commanding general of the disjointed tea party army. He created the Tea Party Express and the Tea Party Patriots as astroturf fronts for orchestrating some 600 "tax day" protests on April 15, 2009, creating the image of mass opposition to Obama's health care reforms.

Next came the raucous summer shout-fests choreographed by Arme y's team at several town hall meetings, which unsuspecting congressional Democrats had scheduled in their home districts. A FreedomWorks memo schooled local troops (mostly GOP activists) on how to disrupt these usually genial gatherings: "Spread out in the hall and try to be in the front half. The objective is to put the Rep on the defensive.... Watch for an opportunity to yell out.... Have someone else follow-up with a shout-out.... The goal is to rattle him."

Then, in August, a defining "Tea Party Manifesto" emerged, asserting that the diffused rebellion had coalesced into a national movement with hard-core right-wing principles. It proclaimed adamant opposition to "government... high taxes... state government employees... [and] a government-defined health insurance plan." Who wrote the manifesto? Not grassroots folks, but Dick Arme y and his top staffer at FreedomWorks. The purpose of the movement, declared the document, is "a hostile takeover" of the Republican Party.

Thus, the rebellion against corporate control of government became a CEO's wet dream: a grassroots constituency unwittingly harnessed to a laissez-faire agenda for establishing a corporate plutocracy over the people.

## II Members of the tea party caucus

Formed early this year by Rep. Michele Bachmann, who chairs it, the caucus is open to all lawmakers who want to wear the tea party label (interestingly, about two dozen of the tea party-endorsed candidates who won last year have chosen not to join Bachmann's group). There are 61 members in the House caucus, plus four members of a Senate caucus. All are Republicans.

### ALABAMA

Robert Aderholt

### ARIZONA

Trent Franks

### CALIFORNIA

Wally Herger  
Tom McClintock  
Gary Miller  
Ed Royce

### COLORADO

Mike Coffman  
Doug Lamborn

### GEORGIA

Paul Broun  
Phil Gingrey  
Tom Price  
Lynn Westmoreland

### FLORIDA

Sandy Adams  
Gus Bilirakis  
Ander Crenshaw  
Rich Nugent  
Dennis Ross  
Cliff Stearns  
Allen West

### ILLINOIS

Joe Walsh

### INDIANA

Mike Pence

### IOWA

Steve King

### KANSAS

Tim Huelskamp  
Lynn Jenkins  
Sen. Jerry Moran

### KENTUCKY

Sen. Rand Paul

### LOUISIANA

Rodney Alexander  
Bill Cassidy  
John Fleming  
Jeff Landry  
Steve Scalise

### MARYLAND

Roscoe Bartlett

### MICHIGAN

Tim Walberg

### MINNESOTA

Michele Bachmann  
Chip Cravaack

### MISSOURI

Todd Akin  
Vicky Hartzler  
Blaine Luetkemeyer

### MONTANA

Denny Rehberg

### NEBRASKA

Adrian Smith

### NEW MEXICO

Steve Pearce

### NORTH CAROLINA

Howard Coble

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Sen. Jim DeMint  
Jeff Duncan  
Mick Mulvaney  
Tim Scott  
Joe Wilson

### TENNESSEE

Diane Black  
Stephen Fincher  
Phil Roe

### TEXAS

Joe Barton  
Michael C. Burgess  
John Carter

John Culberson  
Blake Farenthold  
Louie Gohmert  
Kenny Marchant  
Randy Neugebauer  
Ted Poe  
Pete Sessions  
Lamar Smith

### UTAH

Rob Bishop  
Sen. Mike Lee

### WEST VIRGINIA

David McKinley

## Tea Party "allies"

These are GOP lawmakers who were not tea party endorsees and are not in the caucus, but they provide the margin of votes and the hard-right leadership in Congress to push the extremist laissez-faire agenda forward. It includes many of the committee chairs and other leaders in the House. There is no definitive list of these players (much of this action is behind closed doors), but Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia and Jim Jordan of Ohio (chair of the GOP's powerful "study committee") have been the most aggressive House allies, helping the tea partiers shove the GOP's congressional center to the far-right fringe. In addition, all eight Republicans running for president are allies, with the likes of Bachmann, Perry, and Santorum often scuttling beyond the fringe in a frenetic but unabashed effort to appeal to the kookiest of right-wing factions.

## Going inside

On the opening day of Congress last January, beaming members of the new Republican majority entered the House chamber. But also entering triumphantly for the swearing-in ceremonies was David Koch, the multibillionaire laissez-faire extremist who bankrolled much of the tea party Republicans' victory last fall. What symbolism! The members were taking office, but Koch and his corporate peers were taking power.

The fresh-faced outsiders quickly morphed into cynical insiders. While they've taken noisy public stands against deficit spending, they've quietly functioned as plodding mules for hauling the corporate wish list through the House. Some examples:

- **In an astonishing case** of tone deaf overreach, Rep. Paul Ryan, a tea party endorsee last year and now the House budget chairman, proposed to privatize Medicare and slash its health care payouts to seniors by two-thirds. This would be a windfall for insurance corporations, and it's a top priority of kill-the-government Koch-heads. Ironically, most tea party candidates for

Congress in 2010 had bashed "Obamacare" by falsely claiming that it would require "massive cuts" in this very popular, efficient, and effective Medicare program—all but two tea partiers voted with Ryan to destroy it. As one observer said, "it's a measure of just how far off the deep end Republicans have gone." That was no lefty talking, but David Stockman, Ronald Reagan's budget director.

- **A few days after voting against** granny's health care, the GOP (including all tea partiers) did vote to help one of the neediest among us: Big Oil. With gasoline at \$4 a gallon and oil profits soaring, Democrats suggested that the annual \$4 billion taxpayer subsidy for the oil giants should be eliminated. "No," said all 241 Republicans—with not a single dissent from tea party lawmakers, who otherwise decry "entitlement" programs.
- **Just like the old Congress**, money talks in this 'new' one, and the tea party crew is eagerly snagging checks from corporate lobbyists. Steve Stivers of Ohio, for one, landed a coveted seat on the financial services subcommittee, and—*shazam!*—nearly



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## SCHOLASTIC PROPAGANDA

"THE VAST MAJORITY of our programs are not controversial," says the CEO of the world's largest publisher of children's educational material, "but once in a while there is a slip-up in editorial judgment."

I'll say! Like taking big bucks from Big Coal to produce a curriculum packet for fourth-grade teachers that was a shameless propaganda piece for—guess who—Big Coal. That "slip-up" by Scholastic Inc. precipitated an avalanche of anger from parents, children's advocacy groups, and environmentalists. The \$2 billion-a-year corporation was buried in bad publicity raising questions about the integrity of its classroom materials.

This was not Scholastic's first trip down the slippery slope of corporate-financed "education." It has also taken cash to produce books and lesson plans that served the interests of Brita, Disney, Microsoft, Nestlé, and Shell. Publishing the biased content of these funders matters, for Scholastic is able to get its materials into 90 percent of US classrooms—which, of course, is why corporate giants want to buy-in. Indeed, Scholastic brags that it reaches young minds with curriculum-connected programs that can influence behavior and affect "brand awareness and consumer loyalty."

Now, however, the outcry has forced Scholastic to terminate some of its industry puff pieces and announce a partial retreat on accepting corporate funds, while also setting up a quasi-independent review board to vet all materials produced in "partnerships" with industry.

To be worthy of its name, Scholastic needs to sever all corporate connections, which is why We the People must stay on their case. To keep up and speak up, go to [www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org).

\$100,000 in campaign cash fell into his lap in just his first eight weeks—85 percent of it from financiers his committee oversees. Steve is now carrying two bills that those interests really, really want passed. One would kill a Wall Street reform requiring banks to disclose the difference in pay between CEOs and average employees. The other exempts billionaire private equity hucksters from regulation. Sheltering greedheaded banksters—is that what the tea party rebellion was about?

■ **How about sheltering children** from dangerous toys? Just a few years ago, marketers like Mattel had to pull made-in-China toys, cribs, etc... off the shelves because they contained lead, toxic paint, and other dangers. Responding to public outrage, a bipartisan congressional majority voted in 2008 to beef up the staffing and authority of the then-dormant Consumer Product Safety Commission, giving it a firm mandate to protect our children. In one excellent reform, CPSC set up an easily accessible database so parents themselves can report product hazards or read injury reports. Great—it's effective, consumer-driven, and inexpensive! Kill it, squawked industry lobbyists this year, calling it a government intrusion into the marketplace. The tea party's Mike Pompeo of Kansas sponsored an amendment to cut all funding for CPSC's database. Not for nothing is Pompeo called the "Congressman from Koch." His Wichita business was financed by a Koch Industries subsidiary, he was a trustee for a Koch think tank in Kansas, the Koch PAC was his campaign's top donor (by far) last year, David Koch's own front group (Americans For Prosperity) organized and mobilized tea party support for Pompeo, and a Koch lobbyist is now Pompeo's chief of staff in Washington. Mike's amendment passed 234 to 187, enjoying full tea party support.

### Reading the tea leaves

Armey's "hostile takeover" of the GOP is effectively complete. Such old right-wing reliables as Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah have jerked themselves even harder to the right this year: "I was tea party before it was cool," he recently asserted, clearly worried that

he might face a primary challenger from the tea wing. Speaker John Boehner, long the proper corporatist, has been twisted into some very uncomfortable policy positions by this caucus, which has been dubbed "Boehner's Migraine." And the Republican presidential primary is not merely tilted to the right, it has fallen off the cliff into extreme, religious-like, right-wing fanaticism.

Is this because that's what Americans want? Has the American electorate really gone nuts, demanding the policies that tea party Republicans are insisting on? No.

Rank and file tea partiers themselves are beginning to say, "This is not what we meant." As one supporter in Texas put it: "It can't just be kill everything. It's certainly not kill my investments." In fact, a CBS poll in July found two-thirds of the movement's supporters favoring compromise on the debt ceiling conflagration, 53 percent saying some tax increases were needed, and most saying that the most important need is not spending cuts, but jobs.

Meanwhile, the Bachmann-Perry-DeMint-Cantor style of goofy and strident tea partyism is poisoning the movement's own tea. In April 2010, when Armey began his Koch coup, only 18 percent of the public had an unfavorable view of the activists. That has now more than doubled. In an August 16 *New York Times* piece, independent analysts David Campbell and Robert Putnam report that the tea party ranks lower in popularity than all of the 23 other groups in the survey—including Republicans, Democrats, and atheists!

The one group that gets similarly high negatives is the Christian right. That's significant, because the tea party that Armey has organized turns out now to be made up largely of longtime Republican partisans and the usual fundamentalist Christian political groups that want God running government—a position that repels most Americans.

For progressives and true populists, our need is not to wring our hands about their movement, but to work more urgently than ever to expand our own. Koch-flavored tea is failing, but that doesn't mean we gain—*unless we* take to the countryside, offering a genuine, anti-plutocratic, outsider alternative to the co-opted tea party, hopeless Republicans, and cowed Democrats.

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TEA PARTY POLITICIANS  
(AND THEIR SPONSORS)—  
AND CALL THEM OUT**

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