

Speech by Jack Painter
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I appreciate having a chance to be here today to tell you bit about the Tea Party movement.

A lot has been said and written about the Tea Party, and some of it is very critical.

Yet, pollsters Scott Rasmussen and Doug Schoen recently wrote in the Washington Examiner that over half of the electorate now say they favor the Tea Party movement, around 35 percent say they support the movement, and 20 to 25 percent self-identify as members of the movement.

They concluded:

“The Tea Party has become one of the most powerful and extraordinary movements in American political history. It is as popular as both the Democratic and Republican parties.”

It seems clear that the Tea Party is a significant political development with potentially broad ramifications.

So how did a corporate lawyer like me, who has no political ambitions, get involved in this movement?

I'd like to share two key events that affected my willingness to get involved.

The first occurred in the spring of 2009. There was a Tea Party rally scheduled on Fountain Square at noon on April 15, 2009.

I'd heard about the Tea Party, and I decided to go.

I was at the Chemed building at a client's office that day, and I decided to walk over to Fountain Square and check it out.

What I saw amazed me. There must have been 6,000-7,000 people there. The crowd was so big it covered Fountain Square, and people were standing shoulder to shoulder down Vine Street.

I was struck by the type of people there and the great signs. It was a diverse crowd of young and old, men and women from all walks of life. It was very peaceful and well behaved, and many people brought signs extolling the virtues of liberty. I thought to myself that these people are well educated, and they have a deep appreciation of the founding principles of our country.

I watched several speeches and then headed back to the office.

As I walked in front of the Westin Hotel, I noticed a well-known former Congressman standing on the sidewalk watching the crowd from a distance. This man was elected to Congress in the early 80s and had been part of the Reagan revolution.

I stopped and stood there for several minutes and watched him for clues as to what he was thinking.

I had the strong impression that he didn't know what to make of the rally. He seemed hesitant to cross the street and join in and was content just to watch from a distance.

It was if he was calculating whether it would be bad for him to be seen in that crowd.

I remember thinking how odd that was. Here was a group of people who were advocating exactly what he believed, and he was afraid to be associated with them.

It gave me the strong impression that our leaders didn't have the courage to step forward. They were paralyzed with fear and doubt. It was up to the people to take the lead and hope the leaders would follow.

The second event was a speech by the historian David McCullough that I attended in mid-September 2009. This was about two months after I founded the Indian Hill Tea Party.

McCullough talked about our founding fathers and George Washington in particular.

At the end of his speech he told a story about Washington that inspired me.

As you may recall, the battle of Trenton occurred Christmas night, December 26, 1776. Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware by boat in the dead of winter and defeated the British at Trenton, New Jersey. This proved to be a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

A few days later, on December 31, Washington called a large part of his troops out into formation to speak to them.

The way the system worked, all enlistments for the entire army were up on January 1, 1777. Every soldier was free to go home.

Keep in mind that these were volunteers from every walk of life ó farmers, shop keepers, blacksmiths.

Washington appeared before his men on horse and urged them to reenlist. He said that if they would sign up for six more months, he'd give them a bonus of \$10, which was almost a month's pay at the time.

As McCullough put it, "These were men who were desperate for pay of any kind. Their families were starving."

The drums rolled, and Washington asked people who were willing to stay on to step forward.

No one stepped forward.

Washington turned on his horse and started to ride away. Suddenly, he stopped, turned around and returned.

He then said the following three sentences to his men. We know this because someone wrote down his exact words.

"My brave fellows, you have done all I asked you to do, and more than could be reasonably expected, but your country is at stake, your wives, your houses, and all that you hold dear. You have worn yourselves out with fatigues and hardships, but we know not how to spare you. If you will consent to stay one month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty, and to your country, which you can probably never do under any other circumstance."

According to David McCullough, it was as if Washington was saying:

"You are fortunate. You have a chance to serve your country in a way that nobody else is going to be able to, and everybody else is going to be jealous of you, and you will count this the most important decision and most valuable service of your lives."

After Washington spoke, the drums rolled again, and men began stepping forward.

This story stuck with me, and it affected my willingness to step forward myself in the months to come.

Let me turn now to the Tea Party.

I'd like to start with a brief explanation of who we are and how we are organized.

We're a spontaneous, grassroots movement that grew out of alarm about the direction of our country.

Our members come from all walks of life and include Republicans, Independents, and Democrats.

We are not a political party. We're really a coalition of local community groups.

The Indian Hill Tea Party has over 375 members who live in Indian Hill and nearby communities.

We are affiliated with the Cincinnati Tea Party, which consists of 25 local Tea Party groups located in Southwest Ohio and has a mailing list of about 9,000 people.

The Cincinnati Tea Party is in turn part of the Ohio Liberty Council, which is a coalition of about 70 liberty-minded groups around the state, including Tea Party groups.

Both the Cincinnati Tea Party and the Ohio Liberty Council are highly decentralized. Their role is primarily to help the local groups share information and avoid duplication of effort.

At the national level, there are 4 or 5 groups that call themselves Tea Party groups, but they seem to exist more on paper than anything else. We really don't have any national leadership and don't see a need for that.

So what do we stand for and what are we trying to accomplish?

The starting point in answering that is the central idea behind our movement

- It's the core principle on which our country was founded – the idea that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.
- In other words, we are all equally human and therefore equally free.
- Each of us has the right to be left alone in our pursuit of happiness as long as we honor the equal right of others to be left alone.

In my view all the talk about deficits, earmarks, and the like is somewhat misplaced.

- Our deficits are unsustainable, and if something is unsustainable, that means it won't be sustained.
- The only question is how many people will get hurt between now and when we address those problems.

In the meantime, many of our leaders are willing to abandon the idea of equal freedom to achieve goals they think are more important.

- This has led to unprecedented efforts to use government to redistribute wealth, which sacrifices equal freedom to achieve equal results.
- It has also led to recent efforts to limit the basic rights of certain disfavored people or groups, including:
 - the free speech rights of corporations

- the freedom of association rights of religious-based groups
- and the private property and freedom of contract rights of individuals and businesses.

As a result, we're losing our right to be left alone, to be free from coercion and free to choose - the right of each of you to decide what is best for you and your family instead of having big, all-knowing government decide for you.

When I discuss this with people, I often ask them the following questions:

- Do you want a choice in whether to give others some of what you earn?
- Do you want the freedom to choose your own doctor? Your medical care? Whether to purchase health insurance?
- What about the freedom to choose what to charge your customers and what benefits to offer your employees?
- And do you want the freedom to choose what political speech you read and hear instead of having that speech filtered by the government?

Our founding fathers realized you have to establish boundaries on government to safeguard liberty.

- Without boundaries, government tends to grow more powerful over time.
- Eventually, it encroaches on liberty and makes some people servants of others.
- As Thomas Jefferson said, "A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have."

Our movement is a reaction to the fact that in many ways our federal government has escaped its boundaries.

- This has happened over many decades.
- It has accelerated in recent years.

Our response is to promote three principles that we believe are key to reestablishing boundaries for our government:

- Limited government
- Fiscal responsibility
- Free enterprise

Let me read a couple points from our statement of principles to give you an idea what these principles mean. If you want to learn more about these principles, I recommend you visit our Web site at www.indianhillteaparty.org.

Here are a few of the points under the heading "Limited Government":

- Role - The proper role of government is to protect equal rights, not to provide equal things through the redistribution of wealth.
- Powers ó The federal government has only the limited powers enumerated in the Constitution, and the checks and balances in the Constitution (such as separation of powers and federalism) are essential for limiting governmental power and preserving liberty.
- Rule of law - The law must apply equally to all (including our elected representatives), and judges are not entitled to favor certain people or groups over others based on compassion.

The key question is how to best promote these principles.

The Executive Committee of the Indian Hill Tea Party has considered that question and has reached some conclusions. I should say at the outset, that I am speaking for the Indian Hill Tea Party, not the Cincinnati Tea Party.

We have identified three options, and each involves influencing our elected leaders:

- First, we can be part of a third party movement.
- Second, we can work within one or both of the two major political parties.
- Third, we can stay out of party politics and limit our involvement to protest, lobbying and education.

We don't think being part of a third party movement will work. It will just split the vote and elect progressives and liberals.

We like the idea of protest, lobbying and education, but we think that doesn't really take full advantage of the energy of our movement.

That leaves the option of working within the two major parties.

We have developed a written strategy on how to engage with the two major political parties. While the principles behind the strategy are neutral and non-partisan, their application requires us to take sides.

I don't have time to get into the details here, but let me touch on the key points.

In the short-term

- We have to take the gavel away from the progressives and liberals who currently have it.
- We have to stop them before they destroy our country.
- This means we need to defeat all Democrats this November, even those we may like.

Let me illustrate this idea with an example. If Ronald Reagan were alive today and were running for Congress as a Democrat (not as a Republican, which he was, but as a Democrat), I would vote for his Republican opponent.

I say this even though I'm a Reaganite. The reason is that as a Democrat, Reagan would have to vote for Nancy Pelosi as Speaker, and our goal is to take the gavel away from her.

Our long-term goal is to reform both parties.

In other words, we need to defeat the political class.

This starts with the Republicans. We have to become the soul of the Republican Party.

I like the way Sue Hardenbergh, the co-leader of the Anderson Tea Party, describes our goal for the Republicans: Extreme Makeover, Republican Party Edition. Maybe someday they'll make it into a reality T.V. show!!

This effort to defeat the political class will also target the Democrats. It will likely take longer with them, but we have Independents and Democrats in our movement who are up to the task.

Anyway, that gives you an overview of what we stand for and what we're trying to accomplish.

Right now, the Cincinnati Tea Party is focused on November, and we call our effort "Project Vote".

The core of this effort is neighborhood organizing.

In the May primaries, we ran Tea Party people for Republican Precinct Executive positions in Hamilton, Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties.

A precinct executive is responsible for a precinct and sits on the Republican Party Central Committee for the County.

We had a fair amount of success. For example, in Hamilton County, there are 660 precincts, and about 375 of them have a precinct executive. Tea Party people or people favorable to the movement hold about 150 of those positions.

We also had good results in Butler, Clermont and Warren Counties. We now have Tea Party people in leadership positions in the Republican Party in those Counties, including the Chairman of Republican Party in Butler County and the Vice Chairman of the Party in Warren and Clermont County.

In Indian Hill, we elected all six precinct executives, and these people have formed precinct teams under them of 10 ó 20 people.

This is the building block of our grassroots effort.

In the run up to the November election we are focused on four things, and have a number of projects underway to accomplish each.

- Registering Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents
- Promoting Republican candidates
- Contacting like-minded voters at the precinct level by phone and by going door-to-door to urge them to vote.
- Planning Election Day activities to get out the vote.

Some of this is in coordination with the Republican Party, such as manning phone banks, but most of it is independent.

For example, the Ohio Liberty Council now has its own phone banks targeting four key Congressional races in Ohio.

Let me conclude with some words that inspire us in the Tea Party movement.

Forty-six years ago, Ronald Reagan spoke about the battle for freedom when he said:

“You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children’s children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.”

Those of us in the Tea Party movement take these words to heart.

We are at a critical moment in our nation’s history, and we believe our liberties and founding principles are at risk.

The solution won’t come from the political parties or from Washington. It will only come from ordinary citizens like you and me who get involved and make a difference.

We are trying to answer the call. We are trying to justify our brief moment here. We are trying to do all that can be done.