

Who does the republican party represent? essay sample

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Since the Barry Goldwater conservative invasion of the 1960's, and the Reagan Revolution of the 1980's, the Republican Party espouses a basically conservative philosophy. Concentrations of liberalism and sometimes outright socialism can be found amongst Republicans in the northeast, led by the likes of Governor Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, who refused to sign a bill banning partial birth abortion. On the other side of the extreme, constitutional libertarianism can be found in Congressman Ron Paul, who votes against nearly every spending bill that comes out of Congress, and filed a lawsuit against President Clinton for violations of the War Powers Act.

As we consider the various constituencies of the Republican Party, we should keep in mind that a political party is a fluid entity, and often cannot be neatly categorized. Many voters will fall into more than one voting constituency described. It is fairly common, for instance, for a voter to exist somewhere in between the Christian Right and the "Yellow Dog" groups. That is, they highly value the Republican Party as their political home, yet they share many of the ideas of the Christian Right. It is useful to consider the following constituencies as voting "tendencies" rather than neat boxes in which to place voters.

The first group we will consider is often derisively labelled by conservatives as the "RINO's" (Republicans In Name Only), who, in their minds, hold what is the last vestige of progressive thought in the Republican Party.

LIBERALS

Liberals are characterised by the above mentioned Governor Whitman and former Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum, who collaborated with Senator <https://assignbuster.com/who-does-the-republican-party-represent-essay-sample/>

Kennedy on an enormous new health care bureaucracy, and those such as Congressman Chris Shays, who refused to vote for impeachment articles against President Clinton.

Quite simply, these Republicans do not fit the conservative bend of the modern Republican Party. They go against the grain, disagreeing with the official party platform, which calls for an end to abortion and other strongly conservative notions. Liberal Republicans, whether officeholders or grassroots, typically favour a host of issues that are generally associated with the Democratic Party. They generally vote for increased environmental control by government. They would rather spend “surplus” money to “shore up” programs such as Medicare or Social Security rather than cutting taxes or getting rid of the IRS, they are almost always in favour of abortion rights, they are sometimes supported by unions, and they are often in favour of government dole-outs to organisations like the National Endowment for the Arts.

In short, they are in favour of an activist federal government that promotes equality and social justice.

What, then, makes them Republican? Most of these types would fit much better, ideologically speaking, into the Democratic Party. However, many of these liberal Republicans that hold particular seats in Congress are the only type of Republicans that can hold that seat. Congresswoman Kay Granger (14-Texas), is a liberal Republican (for the state of Texas), yet she is likely the only Republican that can hold that seat as it is presently drawn.

There is also this political reality: The Republican Party enjoys a strong fund raising advantage across the country that many potential candidates are attracted to. Many party switchers over the last five years have switched to the Republican Party because of the ability to win under the Republican ticket with Republican money. Perhaps they were queasy with the idea of attaching themselves to a party that favoured Bill Clinton. Perhaps they felt that, even in the Northeast, a Republican would be more likely to awaken his or her voting base than a Democrat. Or perhaps they were simply uncomfortable with extreme leftism, the likes of which is manifested in feminism and the other rank and file of the Democratic Party.

As far as the grassroots goes, liberal Republican activists are not prevalent — except in a few pockets of northeastern states like New Jersey.

They remain fairly rare in southern states such as Texas and Georgia.

The Republican Party sports a conservative platform. For the time being, the rank and file has remained conservative on a nationwide level.

BUSINESS AND CORPORATE INTERESTS

A common and very serious complaint from the conservative grassroots is that the leadership pays little attention to the wants of the conservative base, which forms the vast majority of the activist branch of the Republican Party.

So why is the leadership of the Republican Party so deaf to the social and political policies of the right wing at the party's base? One of the main reasons for this is: soft money and PAC contributions.

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Fortunately for the leadership of the Republican Party, they have a ready-made constituency with almost unlimited funds, that does not care if the Republican Party is for or against abortion or gun control. Corporate America gives money to both major parties (but more often than not, Republicans) because of what they can receive in return. And what they receive in return is substantial. The Republican Party is perfectly willing to give donors what they pay for.

According to Common Cause, of the 249 Members of President George Bush's Team, 100 contributed \$25 million to his campaigns, and received in return federal favours worth \$100 billion. In the mid-1980's, according to journalist Phillip Stern, AT&T's PAC's contributed \$1.4 million in donations, and promptly received \$12 billion in tax exemptions. It should be stressed here that the Republican Party is by no means the lone transgressor of favours-for-contributions. It is well known, of course, that Bill Clinton was also willing to do favours for donors,

Regardless of the motives, whether pure or corrupt, Corporate America represents a consistent flow of cash into the coffers of the RNC through enormous soft money donations or PAC contributions to individual candidates. These donations occur whether the Republican Party pays attention to its conservative base or not. The only qualification is that they have the power to ensure a permissive environment for commerce. It is important to note, however, that while Corporate America may have millions to give, it does not command votes on election day.

YELLOW DOGS

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These members of the Republican Party are Republican because they are Republican; that is, they identify more with the party than with a core ideology. That is not to say that they are without principle, but they are different from the other great constituency in the Party, the Christian Right, who view political parties as simply a means to an end. Yellow Dogs are sometimes religious people, yet their faith does not shape their politics with the same all-encompassing fervour of the Christian Right. Yellow Dogs wish, first and foremost, to elect Republicans to office, and the ideological purity of those candidates are not as important as the fact that they are not Democrats.

The Yellow Dogs, along with the Christian Right, form the majority of activists and officeholders in the Republican Party. There is a constant tug of war between the two. The Yellow Dogs can best be represented by the career and presidential candidacy of Senator Bob Dole. Dole was a party man; he gained the nomination through the sheer force of organization of the dozens of Republican officeholders that endorsed him. The front-loaded primary system is designed to favour candidates with a strong organization (i. e. a Yellow Dog such as Bob Dole.)

Obviously uncomfortable with the Christian Right and its strict adherence to conservative doctrine, Dole based his general election campaign on a 15% tax cut, when a good portion of the Republican Party wanted a complete end to the current tax system. He refused to speak about such widely popular reforms as a ban on partial birth abortion, and disdained the strongly

conservative platform ratified at the 1996 convention, saying that he had not bothered to read it and did not feel bound by it.

President Bush is in many ways the ideal Yellow Dog candidate. He appears to live as a principled, religious man, without all the “ difficulty” that a religious Christian Rightist would bring to a ticket. Bush would rather have won in 2000 than have lost while maintaining the letter of the Republican Platform. Getting elected was his first priority.

Yellow Dog Republicans are quite patriotic, and believe strongly in such ideals as “ the good of the American people.” They combine a sentimental love of country with a personal moral code that made them abhor Bill Clinton’s sexual escapades in the White House. Yellow Dogs believe in a strong military, value military service, and find unconscionable Bill Clinton’s “ gutting” of the armed forces budget. They remember Ronald Reagan with fondness.

Ideologically speaking, Yellow Dogs hold many of the same values as the Christian Right does. They are overwhelmingly pro-life, pro-Second Amendment, and anti-taxation. Perhaps the main difference between Yellow Dogs and the Christian Right is how much they value the Republican Party, and how issues motivated they are. Yellow Dogs are one of the great pillars that hold up the Republican Party. We shall now move to a group that is comparatively small, yet is gaining many converts from frustrated Republicans.

LIBERTARIAN

This subconstituency could be termed the “ forgotten” voters. It is difficult to measure their strength, because as a whole these voters do not engage in the political process. Many in this subconstituency have left the Republican Party entirely, vowing never to return until, in their minds, the Republican Party ceases to be “ Democrat Light.” Their extreme dislike for “ statism” is almost, but not quite, matched by their loathing of liberal Republicans.

Many pure libertarians moved to the Libertarian Party banner, though some continue within the Republican Party within the banner of the Republican Liberty Caucus. The essence of libertarian thought is that government should retreat entirely from private life, intervening only to stop one citizen from infringing on the freedom of another. To the pure libertarian, this means the complete legalization of all drugs, complete abortion rights, the end of a standing army, the dismantling of Social Security and other welfare programs, outlawing the draft, legalization of prostitution, the end of all laws banning discrimination, and the end of federal education.

Libertarians and their close cousins, Constitutionlists, generally leave the Christian Right far behind in their ironclad ideological litmus testing of candidates. This in part is what places them along the fringes of the political process. Libertarians in particular are so disgusted with the Republican Party that only a major shift could bring them back.

CHRISTIAN RIGHT

This group is by far the most publicly exposed and the most demonized of the Republican Party's constituencies. Disliked and treated with suspicion by other groups

in the Party, the Christian Right has nonetheless emerged as the largest constituency in the Party, along with the Yellow Dogs. They did this by starting at the precinct level a decade ago and then bursting on the scene in 1994. Now evangelical Christians dominate state Republican caucuses in several influential states.

CR's view the Republican Party as a means to an end. In this case, the end is to outlaw abortion except when the life of the mother is at stake; encourage vouchers for private schools; protect the rights of home schoolers; oppose special rights for homosexuals; bring about the end of the IRS; and cure the amoral climate in government.

Decades ago, when Christians voted at all they voted Democratic, particularly if they came from the South. With the New Left's takeover of the Democratic Party in the early 1970's these conservative voters, bit by bit, began to enter the Republican Party along with many non-Christian Right mainstream conservatives that fit nicely into the Yellow Dog end of the party.

In 1995, the Christian Right seemed to have the Republican Party in its palm, and was on its way to becoming the party's largest voting group. Then, in 1996, the Republicans gave into Clinton on the budget shut-down and nominated Bob Dole, who was clearly uncomfortable with the new power of

the Christian Right. Christian voters, to the astonishment of Republican leaders, refused to vote for a candidate who did not seem to share their values and stayed at home in large numbers. Dole lost; and Republicans lost seats in the House.

By 1998 In their minds, the Christian Right had given the Republican Party four years, and had seen little to no return on their grassroots investment. Abortion had gone uncurbed, the tax burden was higher than ever, school choice was still not a reality, Clinton was still in office despite brazenly committing perjury and obstruction of justice, and most of all, Republicans seemed to have no direction and no plan to counter Clinton. Week after week went by in 1998, as the Republicans said and did nothing to counter the vicious assault against Ken Starr, or to defend the rule of law as Clinton and his allies leaked damaging information about Republican officeholders.

The result was a catastrophic defeat for the Republican Party in 1998. Many Christian Rightists again stayed home, as did many conservative leaning Yellow Dogs. Democrats picked up 5 seats — unheard of in an off-year election.

Voters with a strong Christian Right tendency were rather suspicious of George W. Bush's vague rhetoric. They are much more interested in a checklist of his stands on issues. They want to know specifically, what he will do to curb abortion, whether he will support homosexual rights, what his tax policy will be, and how he views foreign policy. Christian Right voters are highly suspicious at this point, believing they have been “rolled” over the last few elections by the Republican Party.

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So as you can see the Republican Party gains votes from, and represents a wide spectrum of the American public. However there are still voters I'm sure that would fit into any one of these groups but still not vote republican. This could happen for a number of reasons. They may have a personal dislike for the leader of the party or may disagree with only one policy. There are many reasons that could effect the voting of the public.