FreedomWorks Supporters:
2012 Campaign Activity, 2016 Preferences, and the Future of the Republican Party

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Introduction

Since our first survey of FreedomWorks subscribers in December 2011, a lot has happened: the 2012 Republican nomination contests, the 2012 presidential and Congressional elections, continuing debates over the budget, Obamacare, and immigration, and the creation of a Republican Party Growth and Opportunity Project (GOP).

In all of these, the Tea Party has played an important role. Tea Party-backed candidates won Republican nominations in contested primaries in Arizona, Indiana, Texas and Missouri, and two of the four won elections. Even though Romney was not a Tea Party favorite (see the first report), the movement pushed him and other Republican Congressional/Senatorial candidates (e.g., Orin Hatch) to engage the Tea Party agenda even when they had not done so before.

In this report, we will focus on the role of FreedomWorks subscribers in the 2012 nomination and general election campaigns. We’ll also discuss their role in—and view of—the Republican Party as we move forward to 2014 and 2016.

This is the first of multiple reports on the March-June 2013 survey, which re-interviewed 2,613 FreedomWorks subscribers who also filled out the December 2011 survey.

Key findings:

Rallying around Romney (pp. 3-4)

- Between the 2011 and 2013 surveys, Romney’s evaluations went up significantly from 2:1 positive to 4:1 positive surveys.
- By the end of the nomination process Romney and Santorum had become the two top nomination choices but neither received over a quarter of the sample’s support.

Romney-Ryan General Election Activity and the Primaries (pp. 4-8)

- Respondents were much more active in their support of Romney-Ryan in the 2012 general election than they had been for McCain-Palin in 2008.
- At least three-quarters of every primary candidate’s supporters were active for Romney-Ryan, with the exception of Ron Paul supporters of whom barely half were active.
- Paul’s 2008 supporters were also less active for McCain-Palin than any other 2008 candidate supporters.
- Working for Paul’s nomination made respondents less likely to be active for Romney-Ryan. On the other hand, doing campaign activities for any other primary candidate made respondents more likely to be active for Romney-Ryan.
Negative Attitudes Towards Republican Party and Congressional Leaders (pp. 8-12)

- More respondents rated the Republican Party “below average” than rated it “above average”
- More than a quarter of respondents rejected the Republican label, supplying a different party for their identification
- More than three times as many respondents rated Speaker Boehner below average as rated him above average
- Eighty-seven percent of people in this sample identify more with the Tea Party than with the Republican Party (up from 81% in 2011)
- Although respondents themselves became slightly more conservative in their ideology, they saw the Republican Party as becoming more moderate, increasing the ideological distance between the two

Causes of Romney-Ryan Loss (pp. 13-14)

- Fifty-six percent of respondents thought Romney’s moderation was “very important” to his loss, more than 10 times the number who though his problem was his being “too conservative” (5%)
- Only a third thought that lack of out reach to Hispanics was a major cause for his defeat
- Barely half of the sample thought that either being too conservative, being associated with the Tea Party, overconfidence in campaign or lack of outreach to minorities was an “important factor” in his loss

Gap between Growth and Opportunity Project and FreedomWorks (pp. 14-17)

- The sample remains clearly pro-life and supportive of limiting immigration
- There’s little support for gay marriage (5%) among respondents, but the majority support for legally recognized domestic partnership
- There’s little support for compromise on important issues: Three-quarters favor nominating Republican candidates clearly trailing in polls but with whom they agree rather than nominating someone they disagree with on some important issues but is running even or ahead.

2016 Republican Nomination Candidates (pp. 17-20)

- Rand Paul is the clear favorite (37%) for the 2016 Republican nomination, followed by Ted Cruz (30%); no one else is within 20 points of Paul.
- We utilized a statistical technique used to identify the degree to which the respondents evaluation of candidates and groups allows us to identify separate dimensions to which each group or candidate is linked. We found two dimensions (Tea Party and Establishment Republican) explained how candidates were evaluated. Most candidates are linked to only one dimension.
  o Paul, Lee, Cruz are clearly Tea Party; Christie is clearly Establishment Republican; Rubio, Ryan, Santorum fall in between.
The 2012 Election

Rallying around Romney

The 2012 Republican nomination contest was more politically polarizing and long-lasting than any Republican primary process we have seen over the past three decades. Five different candidates led in the national polls over a five-month period between mid-September 2011 and mid-February 2012. As late as the last week in March, Rick Santorum was still winning primaries.

After such a long and contentious primary process, there were concerns that supporters of the unsuccessful candidates, and particularly the many Tea Party activists who did not support Romney, might disengage during the general election campaign.

This was a legitimate concern in 2012. In the December 2011 poll, almost twice as many FreedomWorks subscribers rated Romney as someone they could not support for the nomination (24%). Only 13 percent rated him as their top choice, and barely half gave him positive evaluations (a lower percentage than viewed Bachmann, Cain, Perry, or Gingrich positively). However, once he got the nomination, there was a clear rally effect. As other candidates showed weaknesses during the nomination contests and Romney became the nominee, Tea Party attitudes towards him softened significantly.

Even after losing the election to Obama, Romney’s favorability ratings in March-June 2013 far surpassed those from late 2011. In the earlier period, Romney’s positive ratings (i.e., “slightly above average,” “well above average” and “outstanding”) outnumbered his negative ratings by barely 2:1 (50 percent above average vs. 23 percent below average); by spring 2013, his positive ratings were almost four times greater than his negative ratings (59 percent above average versus 15 percent below average).

Similarly, almost twice as many respondents selected him as having been their choice for the nomination in the spring of 2013 as had done so at the start of the nomination campaign. But much of this gain can be attributed to attrition: as other candidates dropped out (Cain, Bachmann, Gingrich), those who remained increased in popularity at their expense. In fact Santorum, who stayed almost until the end, had almost exactly the same levels of support as Romney in both waves of the survey, showing a similar gain. Even Ron Paul, the only other candidate still around at the end of the campaign, showed an increase in support. Nonetheless, nearly three-quarters of our sample in spring 2013 selected someone besides Romney as their preferred candidate for the 2012 Republican Presidential nomination.

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1 Respondents rated parties, institutions, and individuals on a scale from “poor” to “excellent” with the middle category being “average.” Negative ratings include “poor,” “well below average” and “slightly below average;” while positive ratings were “slightly above average,” “well above average” and “outstanding.”
Because of the clear lack of enthusiasm for Romney during most of the nomination campaign among Tea Party Republicans, there was concern that this group would generate little enthusiasm for the November election. However, this did not turn out to be the case. Eighty percent of FreedomWorks subscribers said that they were “much more interested” in the 2012 general election than in past presidential elections, versus less than 2% who were “less interested” than in past presidential elections.

This interest and enthusiasm of the FreedomWorks sample was not only evident in attitudinal responses. It was also reflected in its voting behavior. Just under than 99% of respondents turned out to vote, with 94% voting for Romney (versus only 1% for Obama and the rest for third party candidates). Romney’s vote was 3% higher than McCain’s among the FreedomWorks sample, and support for Republican House candidates mirrored that for the presidency with 95% voting Republican compared with only 1% for the Democratic candidate.

**General Election Activity**

In addition to an increase in Republican presidential vote relative to 2008, respondents were also much more active in their support of Romney-Ryan in the 2012 general election than they had been for McCain-Palin in 2008. As Figure 2 shows, less than a quarter (23%) of respondents in 2012 reported having done no activities for the Romney-Ryan campaign whereas more than a third (36%) did not participate in the McCain-Palin 2008 campaign. Equally striking is the increase in percentage of respondents doing a lot for the Republican ticket. In 2012, 40% did two or more activities for the presidential ticket, compared with only 25% in 2008; and 17% did three or more activities, almost double the percentage (9%) from 2008.
Given Romney’s low level of support at the beginning of the primary season, such high levels of activity in support of his general election campaign are particularly striking. But with Obama as the alternative in the general election, even many of those who did not favor Romney and rated him below average initially provided active support.

In fact, of those who rated Romney as below average in December 2011, almost two-thirds (63%) were active in some way for the Romney-Ryan ticket, and a quarter did two or more activities for it. While this is, as expected, significantly below what those who rated him above average did, it clearly shows that initial negativity towards Romney did not preclude engagement in the fall campaign.

Even those respondents, who worked actively against him in the primary season in support of one of his opponents, were still active for the ticket after he was nominated. Of those respondents who were active for one of his opponents (while doing nothing for Romney), almost two-thirds became active for Romney-Ryan.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, those who did a lot for one of his opponents (and nothing for Romney) were significantly more active for Romney-Ryan than those who were only marginally active for one of his opponents.

Figure 3 shows this relationship. For those respondents who did nothing for either Romney or any of his opponents, the level of general election activity for Romney-Ryan was quite low. Only a third did anything at all, and only 8% did two activities or more for the ticket. On the other hand, for those doing nothing for Romney in the nomination period, but four or more activities for non-Romney candidates, almost half (44%) did two or more activities for the Republican ticket in the general election, and almost three-quarters (72%) did at least some activity for the ticket.
Republicans received much criticism for the open nomination process, which allowed the polarizing contest to go on for several months, brutally mobilized supporters of all nomination candidates who contributed significantly to Romney-Ryan general election activity.

It was also the case that the level of Tea Party identification had a significant and positive effect on activity for the Republican ticket, just as it had been in 2010 Congressional races. More than 80% of those who identified as “Strong Tea Party supporters” were active—about 10% more than was the case with those identifying as “not so strong” Tea Party supporters. The small number of those who did not identify with the Tea Party (less than 2%) showed very low levels of involvement. This Tea Party effect holds even when we take 2008 and 2010 activity, ideology and partisanship into account. What this means is that Tea Party identification not only was related to Romney-Ryan activity in 2012, but it played a major role in increasing Presidential campaign activity between 2008 and 2012.

But the Tea Party support shown for Romney in the general election should not be taken as an indication that our FreedomWorks sample had shifted towards stronger Republican loyalty over the 15 months between surveys, nor that they thought of Romney as the perfect candidate, as we shall see below.
Primary Activities by Nomination Preference

We have seen that even those who did not support Romney for the nomination nevertheless were active for him in the general election. Somewhat surprisingly the more active a FreedomWorks subscriber was for Romney’s opponents in the primaries combined, the more active they were for the Romney-Ryan ticket in the general election.

Activity was for the Romney-Ryan ticket was widespread across supporters of his nomination opponents. In Figure 4, we show the percentage of each nomination candidate’s supporters who did at least one activity for Romney-Ryan. As expected, those who supported Romney in the primary (at 86%) showed the highest level of involvement, about the same as Santorum’s proponents. Even more impressive is the close clustering of the other candidates. With a single exception, at least three-quarters of every other candidate’s supporters were active for Romney-Ryan in the general election. In fact the range of percent active is only 11% from Romney to Perry.

However, there is clear outlier—Ron Paul. Only slightly over half of his supporters did anything at all for the Romney-Ryan ticket. In other words the difference in activity between the second least active candidate (i.e., Perry) supporters and the least active (Paul) is twice as great as the difference between supporters of Romney and those of Perry.

Even more interesting is that uniquely among the five challengers, the level of activity for Paul was negatively related to the level of activity for Romney-Ryan. In the case of every other primary candidate, the more people worked for their preferred primary candidate, they more they then worked for Romney-Ryan. This relationship is strong and statistically significant in every case. But for Paul supporters, this relationship was the inverse; the more they worked for Paul, the less they worked for Romney-Ryan.
These results are remarkably similar to findings in the first report on the 2008 election. In 2008, as here, among FreedomWorks subscribers, nomination supporters of John McCain were only slightly more active in the general election campaign than were supporters of his primary opponents, with a single exception—Ron Paul. While the percentage active for the McCain-Palin ticket varied only between 63% and 71% for all seven nomination candidates besides Paul, only 40% of Paul supporters were at all active for McCain-Palin.

The question of why Ron Paul supporters are so reluctant to support the party’s nominee is an important and interesting one and one to which we will return in later reports.

**Negativity towards the Republican Party**

A surprising finding in the initial report was the rather high level of negativity towards the Republican Party among FreedomWorks subscribers. In December 2011, more respondents rated the party “below average” than rated it “above average.” Similarly, identification with the Republican Party was surprisingly low. While only 5% identified as Democrats or Independents, another group of more than 20% failed to identify with the Republican Party, instead supplying another party. We interpreted this as a negative reaction towards the “establishment” Republican Party, since these same respondents were very positive towards the Tea Party. But that was a year prior to the 2012 election in which the Tea Party was very active and influential within the Republican Party. The high level of support for the Republican ticket among our sample in 2012 might have been expected to translate into a more positive rating.

This time around, 15 months after the first survey and shortly after a major presidential election, opinions on the Republican had actually became more negative. As Figure 5 shows, combining all the positive responses (“slightly above average,” “well above average” and “outstanding,” only a quarter of 2013 respondents gave the party a positive rating, while almost twice as many (48%) now gave it a negative rating (“poor,” “well below average” or “slightly below average”).

In fact, more than one-in-five respondents who had rated the party above average in 2011 now rated it below average and only 10% of those who had been negative in 2011 had become positive. Of those who were neutral in 2011, more than 40% were now negative compared with only 20% who had become more positive.

Even on the question of party identification, we find a push away from the Republican Party and pull towards the Tea Party. The percentage of the sample identifying as “strong Republicans” dropped by 6% from 30% to 24%, and there was a very slight increase in the percentage selecting “other” as their party identification.
But while evaluations of the Republican Party declined, evaluations of the Tea Party actually improved. Although in neither survey did more than 2% rate the Tea Party movement below average, in 2013 the percentage rating it “excellent” increased to 41% from 34% in 2011. This difference is most clearly seen in the increase in percentage of sample who when asked if they were “more Tea Party” or “more Republican,” the percentage seeing itself as “more Tea Party” increased from 81% in 2011 to 87% in 2013.

Evaluation of John Boehner

But it was not just evaluations of the Republican Party that suffered over the 2012-2013 period, as we can see in Figure 6. The evaluations of John Boehner, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, plummeted. Back in 2011, Boehner was not particularly unpopular. Half again as many FreedomWorks supporters rated him positively as rated him negatively as Figure 6 shows. However, by 2013, his acceptance of new taxes to avoid the “fiscal cliff,” his refusal to abide by the “Hastert rule,” requiring that a majority of Republicans support a bill before the Speaker brings it to the floor, and his perceived “over-chuminess” with Obama all tarred him. In our recently completed survey, more than three times as many rated him negatively as rated him positively. In fact, only about one-in-six respondents rated him above average while almost 60% rated him negatively. Boehner, who was rated significantly more favorably than the Republican Party in our 2011 survey, was rated much less favorably than his party in 2013.

2 In fact by 2013 the gap in favorability between the ratings of the Republican Party and the Tea Party are actually greater than the gaping favorability between the Democratic and Republican parties.
The increased negativity towards Boehner was at the extremes. While only 5% rated Boehner as “poor,” in comparison with other political figures and groups in 2011, by 2013 more than 20% did so. In fact more respondents rated him “poor” than rated him “outstanding,” or “above average,” or “slightly above average” combined (only 17%).

But while Boehner’s evaluations were dropping, those of Tea Party leaders remained high. For example, Glenn Beck evaluations, which were already extremely high in 2011, actually improved in 2013. And even Ron Paul, far from a favorite of the sample in 2011, showed a large increase in favorability, as Figure 6 shows. In fact Boehner was rated above average by only about half as many respondents who rated Chris Christie above average (31% vs. 17%).

**Figure 6: Change in Evaluations of John Boehner and Ron Paul, 2011-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boehner Rated Above Average</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boehner Rated Below Average</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Rated Above Average</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Rated Below Average</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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**Ideology of the Parties, Respondents**

To what can we attribute the decline in positive opinions of the Republican Party over the period between our two waves of surveys? One factor to consider is ideology. How did respondents see the parties aligning with respect to their own positions? Did our respondents perceive a shift in the Republican Party’s positioning and if so, how did that shift comport with their own change over that same period?

In both December 2011 and again in spring 2013, we asked respondents to place the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and the Tea Party as well as themselves on a seven point scale ranging from “Very Conservative” to “Very Liberal.” This allows us to see how respondents shifted, if at all, as well as how their perceptions of where the parties were located changed. It also allows us to examine how ideologically close our sample felt to both major parties as well as to the Tea Party.
We can compare where respondents placed themselves and the parties in the 2011 survey and where they placed themselves and the parties in 2013. Of course we are reporting only on subjective judgment, not objective issue positions for the parties. Nonetheless, such subjective judgments are significant in understanding the change in evaluations of the Republican Party.

Figure 7 below shows that there is a lot of consistency over the period of the survey waves, from December 2011 to March/June 2013. The top figure shows the 2011 placements and the bottom figure the 2013 placements. In both years, the Democrats anchor the extreme left, the Tea Party is on the right, but not quite as far on the right as the FreedomWorks sample as a whole and the Republican Party is placed close to the center. There are however some important differences in the two years. Both self-placement and placement of the Tea Party shifted slightly to the right, both occupying a more conservative position. The percentage of “very conservative” respondents increased from 53% of the sample in 2011 to 59% in 2013.

On the other hand, there is a more substantial shift in the placement of the Republican Party, but this time in the opposite direction. In 2011, respondents saw the Republicans as conservative rather than liberal by a better than 2:1 majority (53%:24%), but in 2013, the percentages were far more even as 42% saw the party as to the right of center, and 32% to the left of center. That almost a third saw the party as left of center and less than half saw it as conservative is quite stunning.

The result of these contrary moves resulted in FreedomWorks subscribers feeling less ideologically compatible with the Republican Party. Whereas in 2011, almost two-thirds of our sample saw themselves close to the Republican Party (two or fewer units on the 7-point scale), only 56% were that close in 2013.

Not surprisingly those who felt close to the Republican Party ideologically were also more positive towards it, while those ideologically distant were less positive. Of those close to the Republican Party, 40% rated the party above average, but only 7% of those more ideologically distant rated the party positively. So the increase in ideological incompatibility is at least partly responsible for the decline in positive feeling toward the party.

Such skepticism towards the “establishment” Republican Party presents serious questions about relationship between the “establishment” Republicans and the FreedomWorks Tea Party supporters since the election and into the future.

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3 It is important to keep in mind that placement of parties is sometimes selective. Those more favorable to a party place that party closer to themselves than those less favorable. There is a high variance in the placement of the Republican Party, with those liking the party placing it close to themselves, reflecting this selectivity. In addition because the placement of the Republican Party and the Tea Party are asked in consecutive questions on the same screen, this might cause respondents to focus on the Republican Party without the Tea Party.
Figure 7: Mean Placement of Tea Party, Republican Party, Democratic Party, and Respondent in 2011 and 2013 by FreedomWorks Sample
Causes of the Romney-Ryan Loss

Because the 2012 presidential election was such a disappointment to Republicans and conservatives, party leaders began a search for causes and to consider future directions of the party might take. The Republican National Committee Chair, Reince Priebus initiated the Growth and Opportunity Project with a mandate to develop plans “to grow the Party and improve Republican campaigns.”

The report’s first set of recommendations released in March 2013 emphasized a range of proposals for improving campaign organization and messaging, but it also heavily emphasized the need to expand the party base by reaching out to minorities (especially Hispanics), youth and women, and it suggested moderation of party positions on immigration and social issues.

Specifically, in its report it states “we must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform. If we do not, our Party’s appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only,” and “when it comes to social issues, the Party must in fact and deed be inclusive and welcoming. If we are not, we will limit our ability to attract young people and others, including many women, who agree with us on some but not all issues.”

The FreedomWorks sample, on the other hand has a very different take on the causes for loss in the election as shown in Figure 8. Almost twice as many thought that Romney’s not being conservative enough was a “major cause for his defeat” as thought the lack of outreach to Hispanics was a major cause of his defeat, and only 5% thought that his being too conservative was an important cause. Finally less than one-in-six (16%) thought Romney’s association with the Tea Party was a major cause of his defeat. In fact if we combining those who select either minority outreach or Romney’s conservatism, or his association with the Tea Party or his campaign’s overconfidence, still gives us a smaller percentage than those selecting “Romney not being conservative enough” alone.

Given these views the likelihood of Republican establishment leaders in winning over Tea Party supporters to their agenda of expanding the Republican base to include more Hispanics, youth and women, seems problematic at best.
**Issue Positions**

The GOP loss also had little impact on our respondents’ issue positions on issues highlighted by the Growth and Opportunity report. Even in 2011, FreedomWorks subscribers were not as united on immigration or abortion as they were on a issues like Obamacare, gun control, abolishing the Department of Education, and environmental regulation. Whereas 95% took the conservative position on each of these, just over two-thirds did so on abortion and on immigration.

There was virtually no change in the year and a half between surveys. If we look at the two issues together (Figure 9), we find a clear majority (55%) in support of both initiatives, although a strong minority was in favor of at least one of these. However, slightly less than one in eight respondents were both opposed to the anti-abortion amendment and opposed to further restricting legal immigration.

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4 The percentage in favor of restricting immigration had increased by around 3% (from 70% to 73%) and that favoring a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion except when mother’s life is endangered had decreased by about 2% (from 72% to 70%).
The issue of gay rights that was specifically addressed by the GOP report was asked only in 2013. Although there is little support for legally recognizing gay marriage (4%), a clear majority (54%) favor allowing “a legal domestic partnership similar to but not called marriage.” Combining these two alternatives include 58% of the FreedomWorks sample. So while there is little support for legally recognizing gay marriage, only a minority of the respondents believe that there should be “no legal recognition [given to gay] partnerships.”

While the outreach proposals of the GOP report suggests strategically compromising on some issues in order to reach out to demographic groups under-represented in the Republican Party, that is not the strategy favored by the FreedomWorks sample. In fact support for such compromise has declined significantly since 2011.

When asked if when “we feel strongly about political issues we should not be willing to compromise with our political opponents,” the percentage strongly agreeing increased from less than a third (32%) to almost half (46%), and those disagreeing to any degree dropped by half from 16% to 9%, as shown in Figure 10.
We also asked respondents a question about their willingness to support a nomination candidate with a better chance of winning but with whom they disagreed on some important issues versus one running well behind the probable Democratic nominee, but whom they agreed with on important political issues. By a majority of 3:1 they selected the candidate running “well behind” but with whom “they agreed with on important issues”? Slightly over 70% both reject compromise on issues they “feel strongly about” and are unwilling to support the more electable less ideologically compatible candidate.

What kind of candidate our respondents preferred for the nomination is also strongly related to their view of the party. Those who prefer the ideologically compatible candidate running well behind, evaluate the Republican Party far more negatively than those selecting the more electable, but less ideologically compatible candidate. Only a third of the latter group rates the Republican Party below average, while an absolute majority of the former group does so (51%). This link of resistance to compromise on issues and negativity towards the Republican Party shows a clear split which has developed since the election between the more pragmatic “establishment” Republicans and the more ideological Tea Party group within the party.

So what we find is little agreement with the Growth and Opportunity Project conclusions on either causes for the Romney-Ryan loss or on willingness to strategically compromise on issues. And on the issues identified as problematic (immigration and abortion access) there was virtually no shift in a moderating direction between the beginning of the nomination contests and the post-election period. Finally, although there is support for domestic partnership there is very little for legalization of gay marriage.
These results suggest a significant gap between the more establishment Republicans, represented by Chairman Priebus who support the Growth and Opportunity Project and our Tea Party sample. This is reinforced by the lack of strong link in our sample between Tea Party evaluation and Republican evaluation. In fact, only one-in-four respondents have the same opinion on the Republican Party and the Tea Party (either both above average or both below average), and statistical measures reveal only a small correlation between the two. These findings suggest difficulty in cooptation of Tea Party supporters in pursuit of Republican political success. Rather we see a clear gap between the FreedomWorks supporters’ strong identification with Tea Party and Tea Party principles and their opposition to the Democratic Party, which does not necessarily result in support for the Republican Party, or at least not in support of the “establishment” Republican Party.

2016

We now turn to evaluations of prospective 2016 Republican candidates. We asked respondents to rank the following candidates in terms of their preference for the 2016 Republican nomination: Chris Christie, Paul Ryan, Scott Walker, Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum.

As Figure 11 shows, there are two clear preferences among the candidates offered. Rand Paul and Ted Cruz together garner two-third of the support. In fact no one else is within 15 points of Cruz or 20 points of Paul. But not only do these two lead in the percentage of first choice selections, they also lead in the percentage of second choice preferences, with Paul receiving an additional 25% second choices and Cruz an additional 24%. As a result, almost two-thirds of our sample picked Rand Paul as either their first or second choice for the nomination, and more than half picked Ted Cruz. No one else attracted even a third who placed them either first or second.

Among the others, Marco Rubio led Paul Ryan among first choice voters, 13% to 10%, but Ryan surpassed Rubio in second preferences, receiving 18% of second choice support versus 14% for Rubio. The level of support for the other candidates is quite low. Neither Santorum, Christie, Walker, or Bush were selected by even 5% of the sample as first choices, and only Walker received even 10% for first and second choices combined. Besides Paul and Cruz, Rubio and Ryan are the only candidates for whom 25% ranked them first or second.
Given our findings above about the lack of relationship between Tea Party and Republican Party evaluations, we considered the possibility that we could better understand the ratings of Republican figures, including these 2016 nomination contenders by thinking about them being evaluated on both a “Tea Party Republicans” dimension and on an Establishment Republican dimension. Utilizing a statistical technique which measures the similarity in how political figures and groups are rated, we can judge how they cluster. In Figure 10, the vertical dimension represents Establishment Republicanism and the horizontal dimension represents “Tea Partyism.” The closer a political figure or group is to the top, the more they represent “Establishment Republicans” and the further they are to the right the greater their Tea Party representation.

Figure 11: Percentage Selecting Each Candidate as First and Second Choice Preferences for 2016 Republican Nomination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Ryan</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Walker</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rick Santorum</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Christie</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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As Figure 12 below shows, there are three clear groupings. The official leadership of the House and Senate (McConnell, Boehner and Cantor) all group close to one another in the top left portion of the figure (high on Republican, low on Tea Party), and are all close to Chris Christie and the Republican Party. But note that they are all quite far away from the Tea Party (i.e., they are to the far left in the figure). What is particularly impressive is that Christie is both the most “Establishment Republican” of all 2016 Republican nomination prospects, and also the least Tea Party. This clearly suggests that Christie is seen by FreedomWorks respondents as being uniquely close to the establishment, and having little in common with the Tea Party. This view of Christie suggests that he will have great difficulty in making inroads into the Tea Party support, likely to be crucial in the 2016 nomination contest.

At the opposite extreme, if we look to the bottom right of the figure, we find Rand Paul, Mike Lee, and Ted Cruz who are all very close to one another and to the Tea Party, but very far away from the Republican Party. These three will, if they run for the nomination, clearly vie for the support of Tea Party supporters, but may well have difficulties with the Republican establishment supporters.

In the middle of the figure are Santorum, Ryan, Rubio, and Romney. Ryan, Rubio, and Santorum are all equally far to the right on the graph, indicating that they show equally strong links to the Tea Party and to the strongest Tea Party candidates. Ryan’s greater proximity to the Republican Establishment, without giving up Tea Party identification, might give him a bit of an advantage, while Santorum’s distance from the Establishment Republican pole might suggest greater difficulty.

The numbers in parentheses are the net favorability ratings, which is simply the percentage rating a figure above average minus the percentage rating him below average. So if everyone rated a candidate above average and no one below average, his score would be 100 (100-0); whereas if everyone rated a candidate below average and no one above average, his score would be -100 (0-100). If the same percentage rated a candidate above average as below, his score would be 0.
But it is important to note that even in this sample of FreedomWorks Tea Party supporters, it is not the case that simply being close to the Tea Party and further away from the Republican establishment (i.e., closer to the bottom right corner of the graph) translates into nomination support. Santorum is a case in point. He is both closer to the Tea Party and further from the Republicans than either Rubio or Ryan, yet he trails each by almost 4:1 in nomination preference.

Overall, this figure gives some idea of the possible dynamics of the 2016 nomination contest and how candidates might end up vying with one another for the same constituency, while also trying to draw from different constituencies.

Conclusion

The 2013 survey reported here reinforces findings of the 2011 survey. Both show Tea Party/FreedomWorks supporters as being active for Republican candidates, but at the same time being quite negative about the party itself and particularly its establishment wing. Respondents rallied around Romney—even those who had been negative towards him in our pre-primary survey, with the exception of Ron Paul supporters. In spite of concerns that Tea Party supporters would be less engaged in 2012, they were even more active for Romney-Ryan than they had been in 2008 for McCain-Palin.
Although they did more activities for Romney-Ryan in 2012, negativity towards the Republican Party and Republican elites grew, compared with 2011. In the 2013 wave, more FreedomWorks subscribers actually rated the party below average than above average. Speaker Boehner fared even worse with more than three times as many respondents rating him below average as above average. On the other hand, respondents continued to view the Tea Party and Tea Party connected Republicans very favorably.

Ideologically, the sample became slightly more conservative over the period between surveys (while seeing the Republican Party as moderating slightly), and was also less supportive of compromise on important issues than it had been before. FreedomWorks supporters also showed a reluctance (by a 3:1 margin) to support a more electable, less ideologically consistent candidate over a more electable candidate less ideologically in agreement with respondents.

The reluctance to move the party to the center or consider electability over ideology is reinforced in the majority of respondents who felt that Romney’s moderation and not his conservatism was the reason for his loss. In fact, more thought that his moderation was a major cause of his defeat than thought that either his conservatism, his links to the Tea Party, overconfidence in his campaign, or a lack of outreach to Hispanics.

Respondents tended to see most possible 2016 nominees as being either Tea Party (Rand Paul, Mike Lee and Ted Cruz) or establishment Republicans (Chris Christie) with Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum falling in between. This division is reflected in preferences for the 2016 nomination where Rand Paul is the clear favorite, with Ted Cruz a strong second. No one else came close to the support these two garnered.