



Is the T.E.A. Party a Viable Third Party in American Politics?

There has long been a saying in America: "Rarely do we realize a historical event until it has long been over." This saying is actually very accurate, and every so often, we may need reminding that history is being made right in front of our eyes. This year, history will be made, as we are now witnessing the growth of a political party that has caused a lot of controversy over the last year and a half. But whether you are for or against them, one should acknowledge that the T.E.A. Party movement is making history and, now gaining momentum, defying all the odds.

The party's name alone has historical roots, as it is the name that captures one of the key historical events in our history, an event where patriotic Americans, upset with the British imposed tax on tea and Britain's monopoly of the tea trade, threw 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbour on December 16, 1773. The members of today's T.E.A. Party share a common perspective with those patriots in 1773 at The Boston Tea Party—a desire to stand against taxation without representation, a desire to discard many of the practices that have been established by all political parties over the years, a desire to discard the corrupt ways that have come to characterize practices within the federal government, and a desire to eliminate the government's intrusiveness and size.

So far in our history, there has not been a third political party that has taken hold and become a true, formidable opponent to the Democrats and Republicans. The T.E.A. Party may well hold that chance, if these ordinary Americans from all walks of life stand by their principles, refrain from rhetoric and unnecessary attacks, and organize around viable candidates who share their views on limited government. What more and more people are realizing is that the idea of a third party, a viable third party, means that Americans will receive a lot more choices than those provided by the two main parties. In addition, a viable third party in the American political system will force compromise and bipartisanship.

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Many conservatives have become increasingly excited by the T.E.A. Party movement, in hopes that they can take a leaf out of the liberal's book by using the movement to stage demonstrations to protest extortionate tax rates and out of control spending by the federal government.

The T.E.A. Party has been fairly successful since its humble beginnings as the idea of a lone conservative blogger. Since this initial idea, it has snowballed brought thousands of Americans together, many of whom had never been involved in the political process before. Their rallies have received fair turn outs in the tens of thousands in some instances each time they have made public protests or talks. They have received a lot of media coverage over their controversial nature and approach to politics, and again this year on April 15th there is said to be over a hundred thousand people turning out nationwide to hundreds of T.E.A. Parties in communities throughout this great country. Unfortunately, the movement has been condemned and ridiculed by both the liberal media and liberal politicians in Washington, D.C. Rather than recognize the tremendous feat accomplished by this grass roots movement, liberals have denigrated and belittled the participants at each chance.

All great causes and movements begin with a single idea, a single shared commitment. The T.E.A. Party phenomenon is well known as a grass roots movement with more and more citizens starting to identify themselves with this cause. Citizens who have been lifelong members of their own parties and many who have never taken an interest in politics until now have begun to realize that they too have political say. With only a small notification over the Internet simply announcing a rally, thousands flock to these events with each participant desperate to be heard and disseminate their opinions to a wider audience. The T.E.A. Party may not be everybody's party, but they are definitely making history, and they feel they are very much the people's speakers in this time when it seems so many of our political leaders have lost touch with the people they represent.

It remains to be seen whether the T.E.A. Party will ever be a viable third party in the American political system. There are many obstacles to its long-term survival. As is the case

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with so many political movements, participants eventually tire and become complacent. The passion for the cause that united them slowly dies. And while there will continue to be events coming from this Administration that will keep the fires alive in devout T.E.A. Party members, there are considerable resources from both major parties against the survival of this grass roots movement that threatens to weaken the numbers in their parties' membership. But to be sure, the T.E.A. Party represents more than disenfranchised citizens railing against the ills of a growing federal government that further indebts this generation and future generations while ignoring the wants of the people. The T.E.A. Party represents all that makes the American political system so great—the freedom to gather in peaceful assembly with likeminded individuals yearning to be heard and to make a difference in our political futures for the love of their country.

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