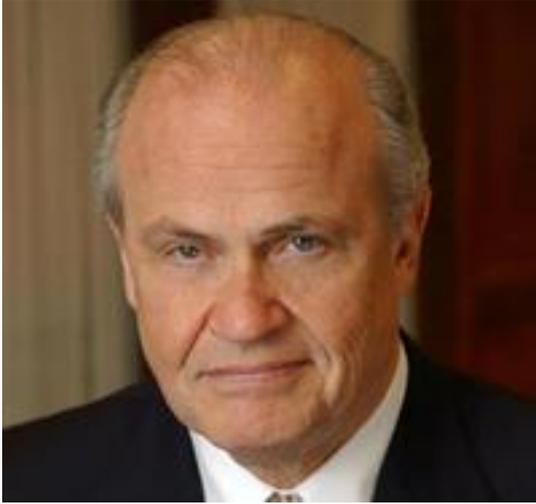


[Is Fred dead?](#) [1]

Written by [Tom Clougherty](#) [2] | Saturday 15 December 2007



Not long ago Fred Thompson, the former Tennessee senator and *Law & Order* star, was the great hope of many US Republicans, who excitedly compared him to Ronald Reagan and willed him to run for president. But since announcing his candidacy, Thompson's campaign has been lacklustre at best.

Yet the criticism most often levelled at Thompson ? that he is just a TV personality ? is unfair.

If anything, his policy platform and his commitment to small government principles are stronger than his competitors', while it is his media skills that have proved surprisingly disappointing.

His [tax plan](#) [3] illustrates this perfectly. Having announced the policy on Fox News, he didn't make a single public appearance for three days and his plan sank without trace, which is a great shame, since it is extremely promising and would undoubtedly appeal to Republican voters if only they knew about it. Thompson would permanently extend the Bush tax cuts (which have done much to keep the US economy afloat) and reduce corporation tax from 35 to 27 percent ? a vital move for America's global competitiveness. The death tax would be abolished, as would the Alternative Minimum Tax, which was meant to hit the rich but now catches countless middle-income Americans in its net.

Best of all, Thompson proposes a new, alternative income tax code, which people could choose to opt into. Instead of the complexities of the existing system, people could choose a simple \$15,000 personal allowance, paying 10 percent on their next \$35,000, and 25 percent on everything over \$50,000.

Eventually, I suspect most people would opt for this simpler tax code, and the US would have shifted to a simpler, flatter tax system without ever fighting major political battles over the removal of popular complexities. It's a clever policy, and one that could work this side of the Atlantic too.

It goes to show: Fred Thompson has plenty of potential. He just needs to raise his game before it's too late.

Kimberly Strassel, in the Wall Street Journal, and Quin Hillyer, in the American Spectator, have good pieces on Thompson [here](#)[4] and [here](#)[5].

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