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The rise of Ron Paul [1]

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A few weeks ago Rachel wrote a blog suggesting that presidential hopeful Fred Thompson might be just the small-government type the Republicans need. We were immediately inundated with comments saying 'What about Ron Paul?' Well...

He is certainly the subject of much conversation in libertarian circles, and has even hit the headlines a few times recently. He managed to raise more money in a single day than any previous presidential primary candidate. His website is getting more traffic than all his Republican opponents combined, and significantly more than any of the Democrats. He even won a New York State Republican straw poll. Granted, only 61 people voted, but Paul deserves to be taken seriously.

He's got some good policies too. He wants to abolish most of the federal government along with the taxes that sustain it, and return to limited constitutional government. He wants to protect and strengthen property rights, and extend personal freedom by rolling back the Bush administration's more invasive and illiberal legislation.

I'm not 100 percent convinced by his platform, however. A more pragmatic US approach to foreign policy would be welcome, but Paul's isolationism is a step too far. His opposition to multilateral trade liberalization and immigration also worry me, since both are vital to the promotion of free trade and international development. As for a return to the gold standard, it's just not feasible ? especially with a major economic downturn on the horizon.

The biggest problem with Ron Paul though is simply that he can't win. He will not win the Republican nomination, and if he stands as an independent he will only ensure a left-leaning presidency. It's a shame really ? policy differences aside, a libertarian president would be a wonderful thing.

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