

# Has Media Cronyism Dismantled Conservatism?



Yesterday, Fox News' popular early-evening show *The Five* led with a *huge* news story – one that could change the very face of the 2016 presidential election.

No, I'm not talking about that inconsequential drivel about Hillary Clinton having intel from our nation's most secretive, classified government programs on her personal, insecure email server. Who cares about that, after all? I'm talking about something important: Sarah Palin's endorsement of presidential candidate Donald Trump.

It was such a big announcement that co-host Eric Bolling could barely contain his composure as he offered a wide-eyed analysis of its importance to the GOP Primary – specifically the upcoming Iowa Caucus. He called the former Alaska governor's support "big" and marveled at Trump's skilled manipulation of the media.

"Wow," Bolling gasped after digesting some additional good news for Trump: Iowa Governor Terry Brandstad's urging of his state's Republicans *not* to support key rival Ted Cruz.

It was certainly a big day for Mr. Bolling, who is a personal friend of Trump's, and perhaps his most loyal and enthusiastic cheerleader in the national media. For months, he has willingly sacrificed his dignity to rationalize and defend even the most outrageously offensive, dishonest comments that

have come out of the Trump campaign.

Bolling attempted to explain his affection as he closed out Tuesday's segment. "Everyone gives me a lot of grief on Twitter, and even in the building," he said. "for being...for saying some of the things I say about what's going on with the Trump campaign. But I've been saying it for six months...or eight months...and it continues to roll this way. Look...you don't like me... I'm sorry, I'm just calling it the way I see it."

You know, if one didn't understand the context of that homily, they might confuse it for *principle* – the case of a man standing up for what he believes in, in the face of heavy scrutiny, and sacrificing himself for a strongly-held value.

But that's not what's happening, of course – not if you believe *anything* Mr. Bolling had said on national television, prior to his friend entering the race. Up until then (for years in fact), he presented himself as a conservative purist. He was someone who readily used terms like "RINO" and "squishy conservative" to describe each and every Republican who he didn't believe committed them self to defending the Constitution (he carries a copy on him), preserving personal liberty, and embracing small government fundamentals. If you didn't pass Bolling's litmus test (and the criteria was awfully strict), Bolling didn't want you on a ballot.

All of that changed the day his friend Donald threw his hat in the ring – a fiscally liberal, pro-entitlement candidate who is at best Constitutionally disinterested. Since then, FNC viewers have witnessed a love that only rivals that of the one between President Obama and Chris Matthews' leg.

Bolling's not alone, of course. The second half of 2015 saw an exodus of ideology from influential conservative-media mainstays. Familiar right-wing voices abandoned their long-held, presumably principled beliefs to throw-in with the candidate who FNC host Greg Gutfeld aptly describes as a

“Rockefeller Republican” for his *big-government*, authoritarian positions.

These players (including Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Mark Levin, and Laura Ingraham) defected from their own conscientious rhetoric to not only make stunning allowances for Mr. Trump, but outright campaign for him at times. Some now seem to be having second thoughts, but their reservations have come much too late, and others seem ready to take their places.

Even Tea Party icon Sarah Palin, who has long campaigned and spoken out against nearly everything Donald Trump stands for, is now squarely in his corner. Even beyond political ideology, this should mystify people. Trump, after all, scoffed at the notion that Palin’s former presidential running-mate was a war hero. He also mocked a man’s birth-defect disability (something you’d think would resonate on a personal level with Palin).



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly’s new novel.

Whether these *born-again* opinion-makers’ motivations are to impress a friend, glom onto a fan-base, or retaliate against

“the establishment,” the results cannot be ignored: our next president’s sensibilities likely won’t be grounded in conservatism.

What that means for a country with a \$20 trillion national debt, an expanding welfare state, soaring healthcare costs, and dangerously low labor-force participation is scary to imagine.

Maybe that’s okay with a lot of Republicans. Maybe, as many journalists have theorized lately, conservatism’s appeal has been grossly overstated within the party; the poll numbers certainly reflect that. Maybe sacrificing one’s ideological beliefs isn’t all that heavy of a burden to carry these days.

I mean, if it’s so easily done by the movement’s loudest, most influential voices, why would we expect those who listen to them to agonize over such conflict?

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## The Poor, Disrespected Arlen Specter

☒ A couple years ago, my family and I took a road trip to Eastern Kansas for a wedding. As we trekked along I-70, we began to see a number of proud, colorful billboards touting the upcoming turn-off to the city of Russell, Kansas. In large lettering, the billboards read, “Boyhood Home of Senator Bob Dole”. Below it, in a strikingly smaller font were the words, “and Senator Arlen Specter”. It made me laugh because the perception it left was that while the town laid claim to having two long-term U.S. senators once live there, they were really only proud of one of them. The other was a mere footnote who was barely worth the mention.

It seems to me that the billboards outside Russell are indicative of the lack of respect Specter seems to believe he's unjustly endured over the past couple of years. In his new book, entitled "Life Among the Cannibals", the former senator complains that President Obama left him high and dry after he cast the 60th and decisive vote in the U.S. Senate to pass the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare). As some might recall, Specter left the Republican party in 2009 and became a Democrat. Months later, he changed his original position from being opposed to Obamacare to a being strong supporter of it.

As a condition of his party switch and advocacy for the president's agenda, Obama pledged his support in helping Specter's re-election bid for a sixth term in office. That support never came. Once Specter's usefulness had come to an end, Obama backed out of campaigning for him. Specter ended up not even making it past the Democratic primary, losing to fellow Democrat, Joe Sestak.

Months before the election, many of us remember the verbal lambasting Specter took over his support of Obamacare from an angry room of Pennsylvania constituents at a town hall meeting. The scene was played repeatedly all over the national news. One of the things that struck me most about the incident was the dumbfounded expression that Specter had plastered across his face while fielding questions, as if he was offended and confused over why the people were upset with him. He looked absolutely appalled that he was being treated in such a manner.

Poor Arlen Specter. He was the Rodney Dangerfield of the U.S. Senate during the last two years of his political career. And if the excerpts released from his book are of any indication, it seems that he still doesn't claim any responsibility for earning that disrespect.

It's hard to look at the Specter debacle without identifying

the core problems with our leaders in Washington D.C. We vote our representatives into power to represent us, and I do think a lot of them start out truly wanting to do the right thing for their constituents. But when someone stays in power for as long as Specter did, they somewhere along the way start advocating only for themselves. The decisions they make are no longer about their constituency, but rather their own self-interests, their political career, and the massaging of their own ego.

What made Specter a little different than most is that he outright admitted it. When he joined the Democratic party and was asked at a press conference the reason behind his decision, he stated the absolute truth. He essentially explained that after the impressive Democratic sweep in the 2008 elections, he felt that his best chance of winning another term in office was to jump on board the Democratic bandwagon. In other words, it wasn't about principles, ideology, or policy... It was about him. He acted as a *pilot fish*, swimming beneath the proud, fearless shark and collecting any scraps that fell from its razor-sharp teeth in order to survive.

It's the same reason he did an about-face and latched onto Obamacare. It was merely the completion of a deal. When someone reverses their decision overnight on monumental changes to a sector that comprises 1/5 of our national economy, they can no longer make the case that they understand who they're working for.

Specter became his own greatest fan. And like many fans, he found it nearly impossible to see the flaws in his idol.

My strong suspicion is that Arlen Specter's memoir will be turning up in the bargain bin at your local Walmart soon after its release at the end of the month. Sure, there's some significance in his tenure as a public servant, including his work on the Warren Commission following the assassination of

John F. Kennedy. But when people look at Specter today, they see someone without character and without principles. They see a man who shamelessly touted the extension of his own career as the primary argument for his re-election. Most importantly, they see a man that they cannot respect because he stopped respecting them.

If Specter understood any of that, he'd figure out why town-hall attendees excoriated him, Democratic primary voters rejected him, and the Obama administration discarded him.