

Walden Declines to Join the Tea Party

Written by H. Bruce Miller
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Greg Walden got invited to the tea party, but he says he doesn't want to come.

A group of 35 Republican members of the House, led by ultra-right-wing Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Uranus), this week [formed a "Tea Party Caucus,"](#) which Bachmann described as "an informal group, dedicated to promote Americans' call for fiscal responsibility, adherence to the Constitution and limited government."

The office of Oregon's 2nd District representative told The Bulletin's Keith Chu that, while Walden is in sympathy with the Tea Partiers' general philosophy, he's decided not to join Bachmann's group because he thinks the movement needs to retain its independence.

Walden "isn't necessarily opposed to joining, but considering that the energy of the Tea Party groups comes from the local and grassroots levels, he's not sure they want Congress to step in and usurp what they're doing," Walden spokesman Andrew Whelan told The Bulletin.

Walden's a smart cookie, and declining to align himself with Bachmann was a politically shrewd move. Surely one of the biggest crackpots to hold a seat in Congress since Reconstruction, the Minnesota Republican [emits bizarre statements](#) on almost a daily basis, such as hinting that President Obama was responsible for the swine flu outbreak last fall, stating that [Terri Schiavo](#) was "healthy," claiming that carbon dioxide is not a "harmful gas" (tell that to those [deceased Drake Park geese](#)) and implying that the movie "The Lion King" could be used to promote homosexuality.

But isn't it about time to drop the pretense that the Tea Party movement is an "independent" entity that somehow just sprung up spontaneously and has no connection to the Republican Party? As the [Infoplease.com website](#) notes: "While the Tea Party movement claims to be a grassroots movement, FreedomWorks, a powerful conservative organization headed by former congressman Dick Armey, seems to play an important role behind the scenes and serves as clearinghouses for information on protests." (Its role isn't even really "behind the scenes"; [FreedomWorks actually calls itself "Tea Party HQ."](#))

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More tellingly, why weren't the Tea Partiers worried about "fiscal responsibility" when George W. Bush and a Republican Congress were turning the budget surplus inherited from Bill Clinton into a trillion-dollar deficit? Where was their dedication to "limited government" when Bush launched an unnecessary trillion-dollar war and [illegally wiretapped Americans](#), among other excesses?

Funny how those "grassroots" concerns didn't sprout up until we had a Democrat in the White House and a Democratic majority in Congress.