

CONNECTICUT POST

\$2.00

www.ctpost.com

Sunday, December 6, 2009

TEA PARTY GROUPS PROLIFERATE

Organizations surface to form grassroots opposition movement

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FAIRFIELD — The groups are numerous. The New Canaan Glenn Beck We Surround Them. Danbury 9/12ers. 9.12ers of Southern Connecticut. Connecticut Campaign for Liberty. Right Principles. Tea Party Patriots.

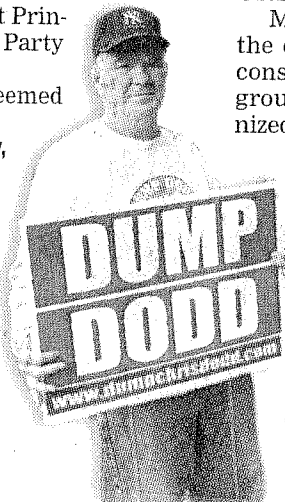
They seemed

to spring up overnight, vociferous in their opposition to legislation, such as health care reform, politicians, such as Sen. Chris Dodd, and attempts they claim will turn the United States into a socialist country following President Barack Obama's election.

Membership to some of the organizations could be considered small, but these groups have a loosely organized affiliation, staying true to their Libertarian roots and desire for a true grassroots movement. Many can be found on Meetup.com, a Web site network of local groups. There, they post notices of meetings, tea party protests or candidate events. On the Tea Party Patriots Web site is a listing for tea

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Art McNally, here in October when Vice President Joe Biden visited Fairfield, is part of state's "tea party" movement.



FILE PHOTO

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party groups in Connecticut — there are 13 separate groups listed, including the Stratford Tea Party Patriots, the Tea Party Patriots of Trumbull, and the CT 4th District.

The Tea Party Patriots of Trumbull lists 10 "featured members" on its site and says it was set up "primarily to disseminate important information to the public concerning upcoming health care reform. We are opposed to government interference in any part of the economy, and that includes the practice of medicine."

The movement gathered steam this past summer with the Tea Party Express, a bus filled with conservative speakers and entertainers, including author and pundit Ann Coulter, that traveled the country for 15 days, stopping in more than 30 cities. It made two stops in Connecticut, in Bridgeport and Hartford. The bus made its final stop in Washington, wrapping things up with a march. In Bridgeport, about a 100 people stood in the rain on Baldwin Plaza to take part in the local rally.

And just who are these people? They are, said Fairfield resident Bob MacGuffie, your neighbors, your family and your friends.

MacGuffie is the founder of Right Principles, just one of many conservative grassroots movements springing up around the state and the country that some attribute to a move to conservatism, but he doesn't consider himself a conservative.

"I've been a registered Libertarian since the early seventies," said MacGuffie, 58, a partner in a Stratford insurance agency.

Now a fixture at local ap-

pearances by politicians like Sen. Chris Dodd and U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, Right Principles started about this time last year and registered as a PAC in January.

"I guess we feel that we're a sleeper cell that's become active after 35 years," MacGuffie said. He founded the group with three friends that he's known since they were kids in Flushing, Queens. Two are still in Long Island and one is in New Jersey, according to MacGuffie. "We're all involved locally in our areas."

Though never very active in politics before, "I followed the scene forever," MacGuffie said, and was also was a vocal opponent of the left.

Now, since organizing Right Principles, he found himself involved in a national controversy over a memo he wrote listing the "best practices" to use at town hall meetings with elected officials. The memo cites their action at a Himes meeting in May. "Himes clearly left the hall staggered, as the meeting, billed as a progress report for his economic solutions, clearly did not go as he planned," MacGuffie wrote.

Limited government and fiscal responsibility are two of the things Right Principles was founded on, and MacGuffie estimates there are about 10,000 similar activists statewide in groups like his and others like the Tea Party Patriots and the Glenn Beck 9-12ers.

Tanya Bachand is the Connecticut coordinator for the Tea Party Patriots. Like MacGuffie, she began to get involved last year. For her, it was the federal bank bail out. The Wallingford resident, who owns a business in Norwalk, said that involvement increased "with every dime

Tea parties percolate throughout state

More information

Here are some Web sites to visit if you wish to learn more:

www.rightprinciples.com

www.CommitteesofSafety.org

www.teapartypatriots.org

www.meetup.com

the government voted to spend that it doesn't have."

"Tea parties" are held on a regular basis in area communities, including Stratford and Trumbull, with supporters standing on busy street corners holding signs. "I think it's very productive," MacGuffie said, "if you do it week after week." People will realize, he said, that "folks are standing up opposing a socialist agenda."

MacGuffie said his group probably has about 1,200 on its mailing list. "We all found ourselves pretty much in the same boat," MacGuffie said. "We're opposed to the socialist agenda being put forth. We think that experiment has been run, and it failed. We're adamantly opposed to it."

To that end, he said, they are looking for candidates to back and raise money to see them get elected. Earlier this month, Right Principles hosted a "meet the candidates" event at Vazzy's Restaurant in Bridgeport that featured four Republican and one Independent Senate candidates and three candidates for the 4th Congressional District seat. But MacGuffie is not for sending the same person back to Washington or Hartford year after year. Instead, he said, he thinks there should be more "citizen legislators" who serve in office for two or three terms, which he said was the founding fathers' intent.

"It wasn't until the late 1800s that the committees got powerful," MacGuffie said. "Before that, it was yeoman's work, a citizen's duty and there was plenty of turnover." After political party committees took hold, he said, career politicians were born. "By the 20th century, politics could be a big time career and we see it every year," he said, "and there's too much money coming from outside the district."

For example, Dodd, MacGuffie said, raises most of his campaign funds from the financial sector that he oversees as chairman of the banking committee. A proponent of the "Dump Dodd" movement, MacGuffie said it's time to give someone else a chance.

His group's methods are working, he said. "We're talking to candidates, and they're listening to us, and we're listening to what people are saying. We're trying to get some recognition for the average people," MacGuffie said. While many of the candidates may by default be Republicans, MacGuffie said they are not looking to be simply become a part of the Republican Party, but rather a champion of candidates who support their beliefs.

MacGuffie's Web site states average people, like him, believe in a limited federal government, private enterprise ownership, a strong military, American traditions and the country's founding on Judeo-Christian values and are opposed to the "leftist agenda" and liberal legislative bills and executive orders creating wasteful government programs that "implode the budget, raise taxes and self-perpetuate failure."

"The president keeps talking about doing something

for jobs," MacGuffie said, but all he's done, he said, is "put a tourniquet on it" and all Washington is talking about is doing the very things that will strangle small businesses. "The bureaucrats aren't accountable to the bottom line and they're too arrogant to realize the programs they're putting forth are scaring small businesses." Nancy Pelosi, Harry and Obama all show a "disdain" for the small businessman, MacGuffie said.

He said he wants the public to know that Right Principles is "tying to give voice and leadership to the folks trying to stand up and take back the country for the principles on which it was founded."

Weston resident Walter Reddy, a self-employed artisan designer, founded Committees of Safety. A visit to that group's Web site reveals a mission statement that says the people need to take control of the power of the purse—establishing in each state and alternative currency — and the power of the sword — revitalizing state militias.

"Committees of Safety intends, by means of a peaceful mass grass roots political activism, so restore the power of the purse and the power of the sword to the American people through their state governments," according to the mission statement.

When the country was first formed, Reddy explained, there were Committees of Safety, appointed by the states' legislatures to carry on their work while the legislature was in recess.

"We've got thousands of members throughout the country," Reddy said, and an arm of the organization in all 50 states. Reddy is quick to differentiate between the state militias they advocate for and private militias. "What we're doing is trying to get back to the founding principles and our founding government," he said.

Reddy also belongs to Ron Paul's Campaign for Liberty and 9.12ers of Southern Connecticut. While the groups may all focus on a different aspect, what they all have in common, he said, is a feeling of being fed up with "false representation" by elected leaders.

"It's kind of spontaneous," he said. "It's not organized from one central place."

Today, Reddy said, "a lot of people feel disenfranchised. They feel like we have false representation. They're representing special interests." Those showing up at town hall meetings or attending tea party protests "want to be self-governed or have their representatives really representing the people."

MacGuffie hasn't stopped to think what will become of his group should their goals be accomplished. "I don't even think about when it might trail off," he said. "The fight is so fierce right now. We're working in three states and we're going to try and get some good candidates nominated. We're trying to find some good people to run."

A "third rail" has been touched, MacGuffie said and "this isn't going away."