

# 2016 PRESIDENTIAL WHITE PAPER SERIES

PAPER #4

## FORMER GOVERNOR MIKE HUCKABEE

MAY 5, 2015

### INTRODUCTION

Mike Huckabee was the Governor of Arkansas from 1996 to 2007. Previously, he was elected as the state's Lieutenant Governor in a 1993 special election, serving until 1996, when he replaced the Democrat Governor who resigned after being convicted of fraud. After his service as Governor of Arkansas, Huckabee was a candidate for the Republican nomination for president in 2008, eventually losing to Senator John McCain.

Since Huckabee has never served in Congress, he does not have a rating by the Club for Growth. However, the Cato Institute, a free market think tank, produces a biennial scorecard on the nation's governors based on their tax and spending policies and actions. Huckabee's grades from Cato during his service as governor were:<sup>1</sup>

- 1998 – B
- 2000 – C
- 2002 – C
- 2004 – D
- 2006 – F

According to Cato's 2006 report card, "The main reason for the drop [in Huckabee's grade] was his insistence on raising taxes at almost every turn throughout his final term."<sup>2</sup> Cato gave Huckabee a "D" for his overall grade as governor.

The Club for Growth issued its first presidential white paper on Governor Huckabee in January 2007. What follows is updated reporting on his economic record, includ-

ing material from his work as an author and political commentator after his service as governor.

### TAXES

*The Club for Growth is committed to lower taxes – especially lower tax rates – across the board. Lower taxes on work, savings, and investments lead to greater levels of these activities, thus encouraging greater economic growth.*

Mike Huckabee has become a vocal advocate for the pro-growth Fair Tax – which is a flat national sales tax. In 2010 he wrote:

For 8 years, I've advocated that we need to implement the Fair Tax, which replaces all of our current forms of taxation on our productivity. And with the Fair Tax comes the repeal of the 16th amendment and abolishing the IRS.<sup>3</sup>

More recently Huckabee gave a scathing assessment of the IRS, calling it, "a criminal enterprise, it systematically violates our constitutional rights, and it has to go."<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with his Fair Tax proposal, Huckabee has supported the elimination of taxes on "income, investment, savings, capital gains, or inheritance."<sup>5</sup> He has also called for cutting corporate taxes,<sup>6</sup> and argues that the Fair Tax would save businesses money by eliminating the massive expenses that are spent on tax code compliance.<sup>7</sup>Huckabee



PHOTO CREDIT: GAGE SKIDMORE

has had harsh words for the anti-growth Obamacare medical device tax, saying, "it may be the dumbest tax ever enacted."<sup>8</sup> He says Obamacare was also designed so that its taxes and penalties "would all come after the [2012] elections" to protect Democrats.<sup>9</sup> During his presidential campaign Huckabee proposed a health insurance tax credit for low-income households, and making health insurance costs tax deductible.<sup>10</sup> He said Republicans "need to get over" any opposition to subsidizing people with extraordinary medical expenses.<sup>11</sup>

On Governor Huckabee's Facebook page he has posted his opposition to a host of taxes, including a gun and bullet sales tax,<sup>12</sup> a soda tax,<sup>13</sup> a car mileage tax,<sup>14</sup> and raising energy taxes under the guise of "fighting climate change".<sup>15</sup>

8 [Mike Huckabee Facebook page](#), 3/23/2013

9 [Mike Huckabee Facebook page](#), 9/28/2012

10 Dallas Morning News, 01/22/2008

11 [The Hill](#), 12/22/2013

12 Mike Huckabee Facebook post, 10/17/2012

13 Mike Huckabee Facebook post, 11/14/2014

14 Mike Huckabee Facebook post, 5/5/2011

15 Mike Huckabee Facebook post, 6/22/2013

1 Cato.org

2 [Cato Institute Fiscal Policy Report Card](#), 10/24/2006

3 [Mike Huckabee Facebook page](#), 10/14/2014

4 God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy, 2015, p. 125

5 [Arkansas Online](#), 9/26/2010

6 A Simple Government, 2011, pp. 67-68

7 [Arkansas Online](#), 9/26/2010

In 2008 Huckabee supported the Bush tax cuts,<sup>16</sup> and he supported extending them in 2010.<sup>17</sup> However, Huckabee also joined Democrats in using class warfare to criticize the Republican Party for tilting its tax policies “toward the people at the top end of the economic scale,”<sup>18</sup> even though objective evidence demonstrates that the Bush tax cuts actually shifted the tax burden to higher income taxpayers.<sup>19</sup>

In 2012 Huckabee urged compromise when Democrats wanted the Bush tax cuts to expire for high-income earners.<sup>20</sup> Huckabee supported “closing loopholes,” while holding tax rates steady,<sup>21</sup> and then criticized the final “fiscal cliff” deal, saying, “the deal spends more, cuts virtually nothing, and extends billions in tax breaks that benefit big companies.”<sup>22</sup>

Concerning his time as Governor of Arkansas, Huckabee wrote in his biography that he “pushed through the Arkansas Legislature the first major, broad-based tax cuts in state history” and “led efforts to establish a Property Taxpayers’ Bill of Rights” early on as governor.<sup>23</sup> Huckabee did fight for an \$80 million tax cut package in 1997 that was passed by the Arkansas Legislature,<sup>24</sup> and cut the state capital gains tax in 1999.<sup>25</sup> The Property Taxpayers’ Bill of Rights, which was also passed in 1999, limited the increase in property taxes

to 10% a year for individuals and 5% per taxing unit.<sup>26</sup> However, Huckabee’s record over the rest of his ten-year tenure tells a starkly different story:

- He signed a sales tax hike in 1996 to fund the Games and Fishing Commission and the Department of Parks and Tourism.<sup>27</sup>
- He supported an internet sales tax in 2001.<sup>28</sup>
- He publicly opposed the repeal of a sales tax on groceries and medicine in 2002.<sup>29</sup>
- He signed bills raising taxes on gasoline (1999), cigarettes (2003),<sup>30</sup> and a \$5.25 per day bed-tax on private nursing home patients in 2001.<sup>31</sup>
- He proposed another increase in the sales tax in 2002 to fund education improvements.<sup>32</sup>
- He opposed a congressional measure to ban internet taxes in 2003.<sup>33</sup>
- He allowed a temporary three percent income tax surcharge to take effect in 2004 to cover a budget shortfall.<sup>34</sup>
- In 2004 he allowed a \$377 million sales tax increase to become law. It was the largest tax increase in state history.<sup>35</sup>
- In 2005 he opposed further tax cuts at a gathering of Iowa conservatives.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of his ten-year tenure, Governor Huckabee was responsible for a 37% higher sales tax in Arkansas, 16% higher motor fuel taxes, and 103% higher cigarette taxes, according to Americans for Tax Reform.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, Huckabee’s substantial tax hikes far surpassed his modest tax cuts, with the average tax burden increasing by a whopping 47% over his tenure.<sup>38</sup> According to the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, “The total net tax increase under Huckabee’s tenure was an estimated \$505.1 million... adjusted for inflation.”<sup>39</sup>

While campaigning for president in 2008, Huckabee, in response to the Club for Growth’s analysis of his record on tax increases, claimed that he had cut taxes 94 times.<sup>40</sup> However, several Arkansas papers documented the fallacy of the claim. The *Arkansas Morning News* called it “another bloated pronouncement encompassing every penny-ante tax break the Legislature passed during his time.”<sup>41</sup> The *Arkansas Times* wrote. “Huckabee fixed a standard for what is a tax cut: every little exemption, credit, deduction or tax break of any kind.”<sup>42</sup> The “94 tax cuts” included such minor tweaks as exempting residential lawn care from the sales tax, reducing taxes on bets made at Southland Greyhound Park, and exempting Arkansas Symphony Orchestra purchases from the sales tax.<sup>43</sup>

Huckabee has also argued that he did not *sign* all of the tax increases, and while true, this fact does not absolve him of responsibility. In the case of a 1996 constitutional amendment to raise the sales tax for the state’s conservation agencies, Huckabee campaigned vigorously for the tax hike,

16 CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer Transcript, 2/3/2008

17 The Willis Report Transcript, 07/09/2010

18 Washington Examiner, 09/13/2006

19 [Congressional Budget Office](#), 12/2006

20 Fox News – America’s Newsroom, 11/9/2012

21 YouTube Video of Fox News Broadcast, 11/9/2012

22 Mike Huckabee Facebook post, 1/8/2013

23 Arkansas Times, 9/22/2005

24 Cato Policy Analysis No. 315, 9/3/1998

25 The Commercial Appeal, 2/29/1999

26 Associated Press, 3/16/1999

27 Cato Policy Analysis No. 315, 9/03/1998

28 *Americans for Tax Reform*, 1/7/2007

29 *Arkansas News Bureau*, 8/30/2002

30 *Americans for Tax Reform*, 1/7/2007

31 *Arkansas News Bureau* 3/1/2001

32 *Arkansas News Bureau*, 12/5/2002

33 *Arkansas News Bureau*, 11/21/2003

34 [Arkansas News](#), 1/8/2005

35 [KAIT TV](#), 2/6/2004

36 Associated Press, 9/17/2005

37 *Americans for Tax Reform*, 1/7/2007

38 [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#), 10/9/2007

39 [Newsweek](#), 11/20/2007

40 [Meet the Press](#), 1/28/2007

41 *Arkansas Morning News*, 11/4/2007

42 [Arkansas Times](#), 1/30/2007

43 [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#), 10/9/2007

even taking a fishing trip down the Arkansas River to promote it.<sup>44</sup> The amendment passed by just 8,284 votes out of 802,148 votes cast.<sup>45</sup> Referring back to the tax increase won through his campaigning, Huckabee wrote, “To this day, it remains one of the things I’m most proud of in my ten and a half years as governor.”<sup>46</sup>

Huckabee repeatedly claimed that 80% of Arkansas voters approved the gas and diesel fuel tax increases that he backed.<sup>47</sup> That’s not the whole story. The Arkansas Legislature passed two bills in March of 1999 to pay for transportation projects, a gas and fuel tax hike, not subject to voter approval, and a bond issue that was contingent on voter approval.<sup>48</sup> Huckabee was a “strong advocate” for both,<sup>49</sup> and he signed the gas and diesel fuel tax increases into law on April 1, 1999; the tax hikes began taking effect that day.<sup>50</sup> Voters finally approved the bond issue on June 15, 1999,<sup>51</sup> but the bond referendum did not include the gas and fuel tax increases.<sup>52</sup> As the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* made clear, “the tax increases [signed by Huckabee] will stay whether vot-

ers approve the bond issue or not.”<sup>53</sup>

Finally, Governor Huckabee argued that the historically high sales tax hike in 2004 was mandated by the state Supreme Court and that he refused to sign the final product.<sup>54</sup> The Arkansas Supreme Court mandated that Arkansas spend more money on education and distribute that money equitably, but the court did not mandate a tax increase.<sup>55</sup> Reducing state spending in other areas in order to increase education funding would have been an acceptable remedy. Instead, taxes were raised to historical levels.<sup>56</sup>

While Huckabee allowed the massive tax hike to become law without his signature,<sup>57</sup> his opposition was not to the tax hikes; rather, he opposed it because the Legislature refused to adopt his school consolidation plan,<sup>58</sup> telling the *Associated Press* through his spokesperson that “He doesn’t want to obstruct the wishes of the Legislature but still believes we should have obtained a more-significant level of reform for this size tax increase.”<sup>59</sup> While Huckabee did not sign this tax hike, as he did many others, his refusal to fight for lower spending and his ambivalence in the face of the largest tax hike in Arkansas history<sup>60</sup> are certainly reasons for concern.

The record shows that Governor Huckabee has made strong pro-growth statements about tax reform, tax cuts, and abolishing the IRS since leaving office in Arkansas. His time as Governor also began with a substantial tax cut. However, Huckabee’s record of enormous tax increases while in office and his vigorous defense of that

record continue to provide strong evidence that he is in fact a tax hiker at heart. Quite simply, there has not been a Republican candidate for president this century with a worse record on taxes than Mike Huckabee. It remains difficult to take seriously any assurances from Huckabee that he would not raise taxes as president.

## SPENDING

*The Club for Growth is committed to reducing government spending. Less spending enhances economic growth by enabling lower taxes and diminishing the government’s economically inefficient allocation of resources.*

Since leaving office, Mike Huckabee has been a critic of some of Washington’s worst spending fiascos.<sup>61</sup> In 2008, he criticized the federal Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), the infamous \$700 billion Wall Street bailout. According to the *Des Moines Register*, more than a month after TARP was signed into law Huckabee said Republicans who supported it were “betraying the party’s tradition of supporting personal responsibility.”<sup>62</sup>

He called President Obama’s 2009 so-called stimulus, “the opening round of the Democrats’ campaign for big government.”<sup>63</sup> He later referred to it as “the mistake that keeps on costing.”<sup>64</sup> And, he said, “I was beyond disappointed”<sup>65</sup> at the 2009 bailout of automakers, which he characterized in 2010 as “another expansion of government.”<sup>66</sup>

Conversely, at a 2007 Republican presidential debate, he was the only candidate to oppose President Bush’s veto of the vastly expanded and expensive SCHIP

44 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 11/7/1996

45 Arkansas Secretary of State, Election Results, 1996, [http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/elections\\_results/1996/ballot\\_results.html](http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/elections_results/1996/ballot_results.html)

46 Dear Chandler, Dear Scarlett: A Grandfather’s Thoughts..., 2012, p. 141

47 “Meet The Press,” 1/28/2007, “This Week,” 2/11/2007, & Fox News Presidential Debate, 5/15/2007, [http://www.clubforgrowth.org/2007/11/huckabee\\_fibs\\_on\\_gas\\_tax\\_hike.php](http://www.clubforgrowth.org/2007/11/huckabee_fibs_on_gas_tax_hike.php)

48 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 4/25/1999

49 [Politifact](http://www.politifact.com), 1/3/2008

50 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 4/2/1999

51 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 6/29/1999

52 Arkansas Secretary of State, Highway Election Results for 1999 Highway Bond Issue, 1999, [http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/election\\_results.html](http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/election_results.html)

53 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 4/25/99

54 [Townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com), Hugh Hewitt, 11/1/2007

55 Associated Press, 2/2/2004

56 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 2/7/2004

57 [KAIT TV](http://www.kait.com), 2/6/2004

58 Associated Press, 2/2/2004

59 Associated Press, 2/6/2004

60 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 2/7/2004

61 [The Iowa Republican](http://www.theiowarepublican.com), 1/10/2010

62 Des Moines Register, 11/21/2008

63 [Politico](http://www.politico.com), 2/10/2009

64 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 50

65 God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy, 2015, p. 152

66 [The Iowa Republican](http://www.theiowarepublican.com), 1/10/2010



program.<sup>67</sup> The \$60 billion measure, that Bush vetoed but Huckabee supported, would have increased spending by \$35 billion.<sup>68</sup> And, in 2013 Huckabee supported the Ryan-Murray deal that broke the sequester caps, saying, “I thought it was a step forward, a baby step nonetheless, but a step forward to actually see people trying to govern.”<sup>69</sup>

Huckabee has been a consistent advocate for market-distorting subsidies. In Iowa, he indicated support for continued ethanol subsidies,<sup>70</sup> and he’s backed farm subsidies<sup>71</sup> fully funded crop insurance, and other incentives for farmers like deferred loans.<sup>72</sup> Recently he said the wind energy production tax credit “should be debated”.<sup>73</sup>

Beyond his rhetoric on spending, Huckabee has a record of 10+ years as Governor of Arkansas. Under his watch, general fund spending increased by 52% and total spending increased by a whopping 101%, according to data from the National Association of State Budget Officers.<sup>74</sup> This far outstrips population and inflation growth of 36%. The number of state government workers rose 20% during his tenure, and the state’s general obligation debt shot up by almost \$1 billion, according to Americans for Tax Reform.<sup>75</sup> The massive increase in government spending is due in part to the number of new programs, and the expansion of existing programs,

initiated by Governor Huckabee, including ARKids First, a multimillion-dollar government program to provide health coverage for thousands of Arkansas’ children.<sup>76</sup>

These large increases in government borrowing and spending significantly impede economic growth, and raise significant doubts about how Huckabee would act as president. In Arkansas, state law required that the governor balance the annual budget, but no such requirement exists for the President of the United States.

## ENTITLEMENT REFORM

*America’s major entitlement programs are already insolvent. The Club for Growth supports entitlement reforms that enable personal ownership of retirement and healthcare programs, benefit from market returns, and diminish dependency on government.*

As a 2008 presidential candidate, during the debate over health care reform, Mike Huckabee said, on his campaign website, “We don’t need universal health care mandated by federal edict or funded through ever-higher taxes.” He argued for policies to “encourage the private sector to seek innovative ways to bring down costs and improve the free market for health care services,” and he said this could be done by,

reforming medical liability; adopting electronic record keeping; making health insurance more portable from one job to another; expanding health savings accounts to everyone, not just those with high deductibles; and making health insurance tax deductible for individuals and families as it now is for businesses. Low income families would get tax credits instead of deductions.<sup>77</sup>

Despite his clear opposition to Obamacare,

before and after its passage, Huckabee was an unabashed critic of the 2013 effort to defund Obamacare.<sup>78</sup>

On Social Security, Huckabee has written that the retirement age “has to be raised,” with tax incentives and increasing benefits used to encourage people “to keep working... letting them keep more of what they earn.”<sup>79</sup> He also suggested raising the age of eligibility for Medicare and switching to vouchers to allow recipients “to buy private insurance in the marketplace.”<sup>80</sup> However, he seems to have recently flip-flopped, saying, “...he would not sign Paul Ryan’s Medicare reform into law if he were president,”<sup>81</sup> even though he seemed to endorse the Ryan plan in 2012.<sup>82</sup>

In 2005, as Governor of Arkansas, Huckabee defended President Bush’s proposal for personal Social Security accounts. Unfortunately, however, Huckabee qualified his support, saying, “I don’t think anyone pretends it solves the long-term issue of solvency. It’s trying to address methods to improve the system and broaden the base of how it is funded.”<sup>83</sup> More disturbing is Huckabee’s support for the 2003 Republican-initiated Medicare prescription drug plan, a huge unfunded liability shouldered by taxpayers across America.<sup>84</sup>

## REGULATION

*Excessive government regulation stymies individual and business innovation necessary for strong economic expansion. The Club for Growth supports less and more sensible government regulation as a critical step toward increasing freedom and growth in the marketplace.*

<sup>67</sup> [CNBC/Wall Street Journal Debate](#), 10/9/2007

<sup>68</sup> [NY Times](#), 10/3/2007

<sup>69</sup> [Fox Business Network](#), 12/17/2013

<sup>70</sup> [Washington Times](#), 3/8/2015

<sup>71</sup> Do the Right Thing, 2008, p. 209

<sup>72</sup> Southern Governors’ Association resolution, 9/9/2001

<sup>73</sup> [KCRG TV](#), 3/7/2015

<sup>74</sup> National Association of State Budget Offices, [State Expenditure Reports, 1996-2007](#)

<sup>75</sup> Americans for Tax Reform, 1/7/2007

<sup>76</sup> Arkansas News Bureau, 4/13/2006

<sup>77</sup> [MikeHuckabee.com Issues](#), from web. archive.org, 8/11/2007

<sup>78</sup> [Politico](#), 10/15/2013

<sup>79</sup> A Simple Government, 2011, pp. 53-54

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> [Weekly Standard](#), 4/17/2015

<sup>82</sup> [Mike Huckabee Facebook post](#), 8/22/2012

<sup>83</sup> Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 2/4/2005

<sup>84</sup> Humanevents.com, 2/28/2006

During and after his time in office, Governor Huckabee has spoken about individual responsibility and has criticized government mandates that rob people of “control over their destinies”.<sup>85</sup> He wrote, “government has a role in the economy, but it’s not to pick winners and losers.”<sup>86</sup> Huckabee has taken several positions consistent with that viewpoint:

- In 2014 Huckabee criticized efforts aimed at “...raising the minimum wage, making it even more expensive to hire unskilled workers”<sup>87</sup>
- He has opposed mandatory labeling of so-called GMO foods (genetically modified)<sup>88</sup>
- He wrote, “I don’t want the government to become ‘sugar sheriffs’ and tell us what to eat or tax us for eating what they don’t think we should eat.”<sup>89</sup>
- He supports the Keystone Pipeline and has been supportive of fracking and drilling<sup>90</sup>
- He opposes the Dodd-Frank banking regulations<sup>91</sup>
- He has called for the repeal of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act<sup>92</sup>

However, Huckabee’s record as governor paints a vastly different picture from positions he has subsequently adopted. During and after his service as governor, Huckabee frequently supported and initiated measures that increase government’s interference in markets, thereby impeding

economic growth. Governor Huckabee:

- Raised the minimum wage in April 2006 from \$5.15 to \$6.25 an hour and encouraged Congress to take the same initiative on a national level, a proposal that President Bush and most congressional GOP members opposed<sup>93</sup>
- Sought to use revenue from his tax hike proposal for economic development projects in 2002<sup>94</sup>
- Threatened to investigate price-gouging after 9/11 if gasoline prices went up too high<sup>95</sup>
- Ordered regulatory agencies in Arkansas to investigate price-gouging in the nursing home industry<sup>96</sup>
- Signed a bill into law that would prevent companies from raising their prices a mere 10% ahead of a natural disaster; services like roof repair and tree removal were targeted<sup>97</sup>
- Supports a federal ban on smoking in the workplace<sup>98</sup>
- Frequently has endorsed a federally mandated arts and music curriculum in schools across America<sup>99</sup>

Cap and trade is another example of an issue that Huckabee has appeared to be on both sides of. In 2009 he said that he has “strong opposition to the idea of heavy-handed government mandates of cap and trade...” which he rightly said lead to “tremendous energy taxes.”<sup>100</sup> However, in remarks at a 2007 conference in New Hampshire, Huckabee seemed to endorse

action by the federal government on cap and trade. He prefaced his comments with, “The one thing that all of us have a responsibility to do is to recognize that climate change is here and it’s real... and recognize that it’s all our fault, and it’s all our responsibility to fix it.” Huckabee then offered these proposals,

We need to support the fuel economy standards to an average of 35 miles per gallon by the year 2020, an effort which the Senate passed, but the House didn’t consider. And I hope they will. I also support cap and trade of carbon emissions, and I was disappointed that the Senate rejected a carbon counting system to measure the sources of emissions, because that would have been the first and most important step toward implementing true cap and trade.<sup>101</sup>

Huckabee did go on in the speech to praise the voluntary cap and trade efforts of Walmart.<sup>102</sup>

On the issue of CEO pay, Huckabee stopped just short of endorsing government intervention in setting CEO pay, but he denounced corporate salaries and argued that “the line between capitalism and greed has to be very clearly delineated.”<sup>103</sup> The comment raises questions about how Huckabee believes the issue should be addressed by the federal government, and how a line might be drawn between an appropriate expression of capitalism and, in Huckabee’s words, “sheer unadulterated greed.”<sup>104</sup>

85 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 28; Washington Times, 3/1/2005

86 God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy, 2015, p. 152

87 [Mike Huckabee Facebook post](#), 1/14/2014

88 [Environment and Energy](#), 3/10/2015

89 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 81

90 [Mike Huckabee Facebook post](#), 2/24/2015; [Mike Huckabee Facebook post](#), 6/17/2014

91 [Fox News](#), 5/17/2014

92 [Politico](#), 9/24/2008

93 US Newswire, 8/3/2006

94 Associated Press, 11/22/2002

95 *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 9/12/2001

96 *Associated Press*, 6/15/2001

97 *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 3/7/1997

98 [MSNBC](#), Lance Armstrong Presidential Cancer Forum, 8/27/2007

99 [Sioux City Journal](#), 11/8/2007

100 [HuckPac video](#), 6/19/2009

101 [YouTube video](#) of speech at Global Warming and Energy Solutions Conference, 10/13/2007

102 Ibid.

103 New Hampshire Public Television, “[More than Money: Myron Kandel and the Presidential Candidates](#),” 10/17/2007

104 [MSNBC](#), “Hardball,” 8/8/2007

## FREE TRADE

*Free trade is a vital policy necessary for maximizing economic growth. In recent decades, America's commitment to expanding trade has resulted in lower costs for consumers, job growth, and higher levels of productivity and innovation.*

Huckabee's record on trade has undergone something of a shift. At one time he emphasized free trade and executed free trade policies, but that focus has been usurped in recent years by his language of *fair* trade and what he believes to be the negative consequences of free trade.<sup>105</sup> For example, he recently expressed doubts about a Trans Pacific Partnership agreement: "If it's not fair trade, it's not free trade."<sup>106</sup> And, in one of his books, Huckabee wrote, "We are losing jobs because of an unlevel, unfair trading arena that must be fixed."<sup>107</sup>

In 2006 Huckabee signed an agreement between Arkansas and a South Korea trade group, calling for increased commerce between the state and South Korea.<sup>108</sup> However, as a candidate for president he did not articulate a full-fledged trade policy, adopted protectionist rhetoric, and suggested his opposition to the trade agreement between the United States and South Korea<sup>109</sup> (The largest free trade agreement since NAFTA; it eliminates over 90% of tariffs with South Korea).<sup>110</sup> Huckabee has also said that, in response to the issue of Chinese currency manipulation, "We have the right to slap countervailing duties on [Chinese goods], but we haven't done so."<sup>111</sup>

105 [MikeHuckabee.com Issues](#), from web.archive.org, 12/2/2007; [Newton Daily News](#), 2007; [GOP Debate](#), 10/9/2007

106 [Politico](#), 3/7/2015

107 Do the Right Thing, 2008, p. 127

108 Associated Press, 6/23/2006

109 American Spectator Newsmakers Breakfast, 4/23/2007

110 [New York Times](#), 3/31/2007

111 Do the Right Thing, 2008, p. 133

His positions left a former part owner of *Arkansas Business* magazine to conclude that Huckabee is "hostile to free trade".<sup>112</sup>

## SCHOOL CHOICE

*The Club for Growth supports broad school choice, including charter schools and voucher programs that create a competitive education market including public, private, religious, and non-religious schools. More competition in education will lead to higher quality and lower costs.*

Governor Huckabee's record on school choice is mixed. He fought hard to protect the rights of parents to homeschool their children and was a vocal proponent of charter schools.<sup>113</sup> In 1997 he supported a proposal that would expand charter school eligibility to include public and private universities, governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations.<sup>114</sup> He also signed legislation in 1999 that allowed for as many as 12 charter schools to be established in Arkansas, an important achievement given the state's onerous laws governing charter schools.<sup>115</sup>

Unfortunately, Governor Huckabee has sent mixed signals on the most important element of genuine school choice—voucher programs, that allow poor students in failing public schools to attend private schools and inject much needed competition into a decrepit public education system. In 2005 he opposed vouchers because of a concern about government control of parochial schools.<sup>116</sup> However, he apparently switched his view by 2011 when he wrote that vouchers and scholarships which move "more children into private schools... are good things."<sup>117</sup>

112 [Wall Street Journal op ed](#), 10/26/2007

113 Arkansas Times, 9/22/2005

114 Associated Press, 2/12/1997

115 Time, 7/10/2000

116 Arkansas Times, 9/22/2005

117 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 94

Despite some claims to the contrary, Huckabee has been a proponent of federal intervention in public schools. He called *No Child Left Behind* "the greatest education reform effort by the federal government in my lifetime,"<sup>118</sup> even though the program stripped schools of local control and increased federal spending on education by 48% over three years.<sup>119</sup> He also said "I fully endorse the new federal program Race to the Top," which was part of the 2009 Obama stimulus and employed a carrot-and-stick approach to increasing federal power in education policies.<sup>120</sup> Huckabee has also made frequent appeals for adding music and arts education as an "essential program" in public education.<sup>121</sup> According to the *Sioux City Journal*, "Huckabee said he would make arts and music education tested curriculum and provide federal funds to do so."<sup>122</sup> And finally, while he has more recently taken to criticizing *Common Core*, Huckabee says it was conceived "from an effort that conservative Republican governors like Jeb Bush... and I all supported."<sup>123</sup>

## TORT REFORM

*The American economy suffers from excessive litigation which increases the cost of doing business and slows economic growth. The Club for Growth supports major reforms to our tort system to restore a more just and less costly balance in tort litigation.*

Governor Huckabee has supported tort reform in both his rhetoric and his record. In 2011 he wrote of the need for "liability reform so that personal injury lawyers can't treat the health-care system as a

118 *Washington Times*, 3/1/2005

119 Heritage.org, 11/9/2006

120 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 100

121 [Center for American Progress](#), 9/10/2008

122 [Sioux City Journal](#), 11/8/2007

123 God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy, 2015, p. 177

grab bag.”<sup>124</sup> In his 2003 State of the State speech, Governor Huckabee called for “action immediately to limit the abuse of malpractice litigation”<sup>125</sup> and followed up a year later, signing the Civil Justice Reform Act which set a \$1 million limit on punitive damages in civil cases in Arkansas. He rightly hailed the measure as an important step towards achieving “affordable health care and help[ing] the state attract and keep businesses.”<sup>126</sup>

## POLITICAL FREE SPEECH

*Maximizing prosperity requires sound government policies. When government strays from these policies, citizens must be free to exercise their constitutional rights to petition and criticize those policies and the politicians responsible for them.*

There are two sides to Mike Huckabee’s take on campaign financing. There’s the presidential candidate who launched a Super PAC in April 2015,<sup>127</sup> and the political commentator who seemed less interested in free speech when he said, in 2012, “one of the worst things that ever happened in American politics is the rise of the independent expenditure groups”.<sup>128</sup>

Governor Huckabee has been a frequent critic of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform, but not because of its blatant violations of the First Amendment. Instead, he said,

We’re just about to create a ruling class – people of great wealth who can run for office, and then the rest of us who will not be able to adequately compete because we don’t have personal wealth or we are not surrounded by wealth in order to run.<sup>129</sup>

While he called for less restrictions and more disclosure regarding campaign contributions,<sup>130</sup> and okayed unlimited soft money, provided full disclosure,<sup>131</sup> Governor Huckabee is also on record favoring limits on individual, PAC, corporate, and political party contributions to state candidates.<sup>132</sup> Yet, more recently, on fundraising limits, he concluded that, “maybe the best way is to prohibit nothing and disclose everything”, leaving open the option of unlimited money for campaigns.<sup>133</sup>

It’s unclear whether Huckabee might go further than McCain-Feingold in any attempts to regulate campaign finance. He also has not seemed to express any qualms about McCain-Feingold’s abridgement of free speech rights.

## POLITICAL ACTIVITY & ENDORSEMENTS

*Robust political activity is essential to producing a federal government that is more respectful of free markets and produces more pro-economic growth policies. The Club for Growth’s PAC has been active in some of the more central battles within the Republican Party nominating process in recent years, supporting pro-growth candidates over pro-government ones.*

Governor Huckabee has been very active on the political front. Over the last four election cycles, through his Huck PAC, he has made over a hundred endorsements for, and donated over \$350,000 to, congressional candidates.

An analysis of his endorsements shows he has little regard for candidates’ records on economic issues. Further, he is quick to defend the establishment choice when strong economic conservatives run for

office. Among many such examples is Huckabee’s strong support for Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst against Ted Cruz in the 2012 U.S. Senate primary in Texas.<sup>134</sup>

## SUMMATION

Governor Huckabee’s record on pro-growth, free-market policies is exceptionally weak. He has pro-growth positions on tort reform, mixed positions on trade, school choice, political speech, and entitlement reform, and profoundly anti-growth positions on taxes, spending, and government regulation.

In the eight years since the Club’s first Huckabee white paper, he has made highly commendable remarks about abolishing the IRS, repealing Obamacare, and getting government out of the business of picking winners and losers. But, what Huckabee has not said may speak louder. He has yet to take responsibility for the exorbitant rise in taxes and government spending that he championed as Governor. As the record shows, instead of aggressively pushing the Arkansas legislature to hold the line on taxes, Governor Huckabee was frequently endorsing or tacitly approving the many tax increases that eventually left him with the moniker of “Tax-Hike Mike.”<sup>135</sup>

Governor Huckabee has often tried to dismiss the Club for Growth’s White Paper as part of a personal conflict. That’s what politicians tend to do when they do not have facts to rebut criticisms or defend their record. Without question, over the last eight years, Huckabee has remained, if not grown, as a popular and likable public figure. But he is a public figure with a record that should not be forgotten and cannot be ignored. It remains a record of tax hikes, spending increases, and regulatory expansion. And that record leaves the Club for Growth convinced that Mike Huckabee is not a champion of free markets, limited government or economic conservatism.

124 A Simple Government, 2011, p. 83

125 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 1/15/2003

126 Associated Press, 4/20/2004

127 [The Hill](#), 4/2/2015

128 [Think Progress](#), 1/3/2012

129 New Hampshire Public Television, “[More](#)

[than Money: Myron Kandel and the Presidential Candidates](#),” 10/17/2007

130 The Hill, 11/29/2006

131 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/10/2000

132 Votesmart.org, 2002

133 Do the Right Thing, 2008, pp. 97-98

134 OpenSecrets.Org

135 [Pensito Review](#), 11/28/2007