

# **“THE TEA PARTY EXPRESS”**

## **Project Proposal - DRAFT**

**OVERVIEW:** The Our Country Deserves Better Committee is planning a cross-country tour during the final two weeks of September (lasting approximately two-weeks and taking place between September 14 – September 30). The tour will be called “The Tea Party Express” and will feature a proper luxury coach wrapped in a “tea party” themed graphical design. “The Tea Party Express” will cross the nation, stopping in cities to conduct “tea parties.” The locations of these “tea party” rally stops will be determined based on these criteria:

- The city or state is represented by a member of Congress or Senate who has been a flagrant supporter of the big-spending programs that have been pushed through, and/or bailouts, and/or tax increases.
- The member of Congress or Senate faces a re-election campaign in the 2010 elections.
- The member of Congress or Senate is somehow politically vulnerable – either having won their seat in the 2008 elections in a district that would normally be represented by a conservative or where the Senator/Congressman is shown to be vulnerable based on recent polling.

Examples of the types of individuals who we will target include: Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut and also likely Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania (by targeting him we can also show that we are not simply targeting Democrats, but also those Republicans who have been guilty of being fiscally irresponsible).

**PARTICIPANTS:** “The Tea Party Express” will be led by the leadership of the Our Country Deserves Better Committee (**Mark Williams** and **Deborah Johns**), musical performers (**Lloyd Marcus** who has tentatively confirmed his participation and also **Rivoli Revue** of “A Bailout Song” who have expressed an interest in working with us but who have yet to get back to me about their availability or their willingness to participate in the tour), key staff (**Joe Wierzbicki**, **Kelly Eustis**, and if available, **Sal Russo**), **Gary Pon** of Free Republic (what’s a national tour without him!) and potentially one other individual to serve as a speaker (an example would be Lew Uhler of the National Tax Limitation Committee) and hopefully two additional staffers. We might also choose to invite a blogger to come along with us to blog on the tour (one who is respected by leading conservative bloggers).

At each “tea party” stop we will also invite to speak the following types of individuals: local tea party leaders, fiscally conservative political candidates, local officials or dignitaries, local talk radio hosts, etc...

It is also possible that we might invite Pajamas TV, national tea party or conservative leaders such as Michael Patrick Leahy of Top Conservatives on Twitter, or other such individuals to come with us. This will be a very sensitive matter that we will need to discuss in the coming days. We have to be very very careful about discussing amongst ourselves anyone we include “outside of the family” because quite frankly, we are not only **NOT** part of the political establishment or conservative establishment, but we are also sadly not currently a part of the “tea party” establishment (i.e. Michelle Malkin, Eric Odom of Don’t Go Movement, Smart Girl Politics, Top Conservatives on Twitter, Freedom Works, Newt Gingrich of American Solutions, etc...)

We can probably pull off a phenomenally successful tour without these big-ego establishment types, provided that we do a good job in getting the word out to local tea party leaders and grass roots conservatives who operate in their local communities independently as is – the April 15<sup>th</sup> tea parties may have been promoted by Fox News, Pajamas TV, Michelle Malkin, FreedomWorks, American Solutions, etc... however almost all of the tea parties were organized and led by individual activists in local communities.

**ROUTE OF TOUR:** The tour route will be determined based on our identification of liberal/big-spending members of Congress who won in 2008 in districts where they normally would not have been competitive. Kelly Eustis is currently preparing this data per Sal Russo's request, and we will be evaluating the data with him and making a tentative route within the next 4-5 days. Our goal is to end up in Washington, D.C. with what will hopefully be a major "national tea party" in D.C.

I don't know where the best opportunities will exist until we have the preliminary data from Kelly but it is also worth considering making a return run to Michigan. Former Republican Michigan Governor, John Engler, has recently stated that he believes the Republican Party will do quite well in Michigan given the fact that the economic depression in the state has only deepened, and Democrats dominate the state and federal offices in The Great Lake State. I'm just throwing this out for consideration at this time, but again we will have a better sense when we see where in the country the best opportunities are. I'm sensing that this will probably be a tour that starts in California (maybe even the Ellen Tauscher seat?) and then heads through Nevada, traverses the South (where Democrats picked up seats they normally would not have won had Obama not been so popular and Bush been so unpopular) and then swing up the Atlantic Coast towards Connecticut, Pennsylvania and D.C.

**POLITICAL COMPONENT:** Besides inviting candidates who will be challenging the big-government Congressman/Senators that we will be targeting, we will also be producing and broadcasting television, radio and print advertising that will highlight the need to vote the offending incumbent big-government liberal out of office. This will help us to have both a tool for fundraising (to raise money for the ad campaigns) and also garner additional media (it will make our effort more substantive when we are starting the 2010 elections with a warning shot across the bow against these targeted incumbents).

We've already discussed doing a "casting call" among our Nevada supporters and donors to appear in at least one of our TV ads targeting Harry Reid – to buttress our "authenticity" in running ads in the state. It will be harder for Reid and his supporters to attack us if Nevadans are the ones on-camera delivering the message. As you can imagine, each time we consider enhancing the effectiveness of this tour and associated components with such ideas we increase the workload, cost and logistical challenges immensely. So please realize this proposal will probably evolve over time.

**FUNDRAISING:** To do this "right" (having an awesome looking tour bus, getting the word out, having slick/persuasive/compelling advertising, paying for permits/insurance, hotels, food, etc...) will require a major fundraising effort between now and "The Tea Party Express" tour commencement. We will appeal for money for the direct purpose of supporting this tour, but we will also make a heavy push (and likely raise most of our money) by pushing the "Defeat Harry Reid" or "Defeat Chris Dodd" or "Defeat Arlen Specter" political components to this effort.

We will start by fundraising to our own in-house email lists, then begin our first direct mail fundraising to our in-house donor lists (which Deborah Johns and I have been waiting to start doing for quite some time), and then renting email lists from entities such as Newsmax, Human Events, GOPUSA, Townhall, WorldNetDaily, etc... I will also attempt to replicate the deal we had with Intermarkets, Inc. to run an advertising campaign on the Drudge Report where we will split proceeds raised with Intermarkets.

Once again – I suspect that most of the fundraising pitches we do will not be to support the tour so much, but rather to get people to contribute to our independent expenditure campaigns to defeat Harry Reid, Chris Dodd, Arlen Specter, etc...

We also should plan on printing t-shirts and bumper-stickers to sell both before and during the tour to raise additional proceeds.

**VIRAL MARKETING & ONLINE GRASSROOTS SUPPORT:** Part of the way we will be able to pull this effort off (in both generating awareness of the tour, attracting crowds, obtaining support from local tea party activists and fundraising) will be through viral marketing of our advertising (via posting of our ads on YouTube, etc...) and communicating with tea party activists and supporters. I have already begun a project to build databases and email lists for conservatives on YouTube (to notify them when we start posting our campaign ads or promotional video announcing the tour) and also harvesting email addresses of every soul I can find who posts a blog, message or comment that was favorable/supportive of the tea parties that have been taking place up until now.

This is an extremely labor-intensive effort, but one I think will be critical to helping us get the kind of momentum we will need to generate “buzz” about our efforts.

Additionally, our fundraising email blasts to Newsmax, Human Events, GOPUSA, Townhall, WorldNetDaily, etc... will also plug the tour. If we are successful in raising money or breaking even from each email it will enable us to continue renting the lists more and more and getting more and more individuals to become aware and hopefully sign up with us to support the effort.

We will also utilize our nascent, but growing, social networking groups at Facebook (almost 2,600 supporters currently), MySpace (over 1,060 supporters currently), YouTube (almost 700 subscribers currently), and Twitter (approximately 300 followers currently).

The trick here is that once enough people are “buzzing” about this effort (the tour and campaign advertising, etc...) then we should hopefully start to get some mentions and possibly even promotion from conservative/pro-tea party bloggers, talk radio hosts, Fox News commentators, etc...

**WHAT'S NEXT:** First step forward is for each of you to provide feedback to this proposal and give your opinion, suggestions and insights. We'll be working on the potential tour route and “Defeat Harry Reid” campaign (which is the first campaign we will be launching a fundraising drive for and producing advertising for) and building the lists of conservative YouTubers and email lists of pro-tea party individuals and organizers.