

RNC Research BRIEFING

Crist Reality Check

Charlie Crist Claims He Isn't A Flip Flopper; History Begg To Differ

This Weekend, Republican-Turned-Independent-Turned-Democrat Charlie Crist Claimed He Wasn't A Flip Flopper, Asserting "I Haven't Changed On Hardly Anything." KINSEY: "But you know the line of attack against you is going to be that exhibit a here has been that you have been historically a flip-flopper. You were a republican, independent, now you're a democrat. CRIST: That's not true. if I might. if I might, I haven't changed on hardly anything." (Bay News 9's ["Political Connections,"](#) 11/9/13)

- **Crist: "I'll Tell You The Guy Who's Got A Core In This Race, And It's Me."** CRIST: "This flip-flop thing is a joke. I'll tell you the guy who's got a core in this race, and it's me. My core is I believe in Florida, and I will protect her." (Bay News 9's ["Political Connections,"](#) 11/9/13)

IN THE SPACE OF THREE YEARS, CRIST BELONGED TO THREE DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES

In February Of 2010, Crist's Campaign Issued A Press Release Headlined, "Crist: I'm A True Blue Reagan Conservative." "But it wasn't that long ago that Crist was bragging about his conservative and GOP credentials. On February 9, his campaign issued a press release headlined, 'Crist: I'm a True Blue Reagan Conservative.' The campaign was touting an interview Crist had done with Newsmax.com, a conservative site, in which he had proclaimed himself a conservative GOPer, repeatedly citing Ronald Reagan and noting, 'I'm an anti-tax, pro-life, pro-gun Republican.'" (David Corn, "Crist: 'I'm A True Blue Reagan Conservative,'" [Mother Jones](#), 5/12/10)

- **Crist, In An Interview With Newsmax: "I'm An Anti-Tax, Pro-Life, Pro-Gun Republican..."** "'Rubio claims he is the true conservative in the race, and some Republicans say you're not conservative enough,' Newsmax.TV's Ashley Martella said, and asked: 'How do you respond?' 'I think it's kind of funny, to be honest with you,' Crist answered. 'I'm an anti-tax, pro-life, pro-gun Republican, and I think it's very clear that during my entire career I've never voted for a new tax. I've always thought it was important to put people first, to make sure they have the opportunity to make their own decisions about their lives without the government intruding. If that's not conservative, I don't know what is ...'" (Jim Meyers, "Crist: I'm A True Blue Reagan Conservative," [Newsmax](#), 2/9/10)

Just Months After Proclaiming Himself A Reagan Republican, Crist Announced In April Of 2010 That He Would Run For Senate As An Independent. "Gov. Charlie Crist announced Thursday that he

will run independently for the United States Senate, giving Florida a race that will once again make the state a gawk-worthy stage of American politics, where the country's desires, fears and conflicts play out. Mr. Crist told supporters in his home town of St. Petersburg that his decision to leave the Republican party is "the right thing for America" and 'the right thing for Florida.'" (Damien Cave, "Florida's Senate Spectacle," [The New York Times](#), 4/29/10)

In December Of 2012, Crist Switched Parties Again, Registering As A Democrat. "Charlie Crist, who was elected as the governor of Florida as a Republican and then ran unsuccessfully for the Senate as an independent, has announced that he is switching to the Democratic Party. The announcement, made Friday night via Twitter, prompted speculation that Mr. Crist would seek to regain his old job in 2014 from Florida's current governor, Rick Scott, a Republican." (Changing Affiliation Again, Former Governor Of Florida Becomes A Democrat," [The Associated Press](#), 12/8/12)

- **"Mr. Crist Sent Out A Message That Said, 'Proud And Honored To Join The Democratic Party In The Home Of President @BarackObama!'"** ("Changing Affiliation Again, Former Governor Of Florida Becomes A Democrat," [The Associated Press](#), 12/8/12)

BEFORE SUPPORTING OBAMACARE, CRIST OPPOSED THE LAW AND CALLED FOR ITS REPEAL

In August Of 2013, Crist Voiced Support For ObamaCare, Saying "Americans Deserve Health Coverage And I'm Glad The President Pushed It Forward." QUESTION: "What is it about the healthcare law that you feel that we should be supporting at this time? Especially given the fact that on October 1, we will be able to look at the policies and the exchanges." CRIST: "I think the most important part that should be supported, among other things, is the fact that preexisting conditions won't keep you from getting coverage going forward, under ObamaCare, which even the President now calls it. And the 26 year olds can stay on their parents' policies, I think that has really helped a lot of people throughout the country. And there are many, many more but Americans deserve health coverage and I'm glad the President pushed it forward." ([Bayoubuzz.com](#), Jefferson-Jackson Dinner, 8/17/13)

When Running For Senate As A Republican, Crist's Website Claimed That He "Strongly Opposes The Health Care Legislation Being Debated In Congress." "Charlie Crist strongly opposes the health care legislation being debated in Congress. A government run health care system is not the answer to our nation's health care needs but instead it is the typical answer of liberals and Democrats in Congress. The American people need a health care system that provides choice and access to quality health care at affordable costs. These health care opportunities are not found in the legislation championed by President Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid." ([Charlie Crist For U.S. Senate Website](#), Accessed 11/7/13)

- **"As Senators Prepare To Cast Their Votes On The So-Called Health Reform Bill, I Hope Those In Support Will Realize That This Is Not Reform,' Said Crist. 'While Most Agreed That Healthcare Reform Should Lower Costs And Increase Quality Care To Americans, The Bill Being Supported By Senate Democrats Does Just The Opposite.'" (Governor Charlie Crist, "Statement Of Governor Charlie Crist On Healthcare Reform Bill Vote," [Press Release](#), 12/23/09)**

Crist's Website In Early 2010 Described The Health Care Reform Legislation Being Debated As "The Typical Answer Of Liberals And Democrats In Congress." "Charlie Crist strongly opposes the health care legislation being debated in Congress. A government run health care system is not the answer to our nation's health care needs but instead it is the typical answer of liberals and Democrats in Congress. ([Charlie Crist For U.S. Senate Website](#), Accessed 11/10/13)

In July 2010, Crist Insisted In A “Fact Check” On His Campaign Website That He Would Have Opposed ObamaCare Had He Been In The Senate. “The Obama health care bill was too big, too expensive, and expanded the role of government far too much. Had I been in the United States Senate at the time, I would have voted against the bill because of unacceptable provisions like the cuts to the Medicare Advantage program.” ([Charlie Crist For U.S. Senate Website](#), Accessed 11/7/13)

In August 2010, Crist Told A Local Station “I Would Have Voted For” ObamaCare. “Crist told a local TV station Friday that he would have voted in favor of President Obama’s healthcare proposal were he in the Senate. That was a reversal of his previous position against the healthcare law. ‘I would have voted for it,’ Crist said in the interview. ‘But I think it can be done better, I really do.’” (“Crist Says He ‘Misspoke’ On Healthcare,” [The Hill](#), 8/27/10)

- **But Crist Recanted His Comment Just Hours Later, Saying “If I Misspoke, I Want To Be Abundantly Clear: The Health Care Bill Was Too Big, Too Expensive, And Expanded The Role Of Government Far Too Much.”** “Crist, who outlined his opposition to Obama’s health care plan on his own campaign website in July, quickly issued a statement, saying the interview he gave was not a flip but a slip. ‘Apparently, based on an interview this afternoon, there may be some confusion regarding my position on health care. If I misspoke, I want to be abundantly clear: the health care bill was too big, too expensive, and expanded the role of government far too much. Had I been in the United States Senate at the time, I would have voted against the bill because of unacceptable provisions like the cuts to the Medicare Advantage program,’ Crist said.” (David Catanese, “A Flip Or A Slip For Crist,” [Politico](#), 8/27/10)

Crist Also Flip-Flopped On Whether ObamaCare Should Be Repealed

In March 2010, Crist Said He Would Pursue A Repeal Of ObamaCare If Elected. “But back in March – when he was still campaigning as a Republican – Crist signaled he would pursue repeal as a senator. ‘What people really want when it comes to health care, in my view, is they want greater access and less cost. We just need to get it right and do it right,’ Crist told the Associated Press.” (David Catanese, “A Flip Or A Slip For Crist,” [Politico](#), 8/27/10)

- **Crist: ObamaCare Is “Comprised Of Secret Backroom, Sweetheart Deals” And “The Passage Of Such A Bill Is A Direct Affront To The American People.”** “On March 21, entrenched in a Republican primary battle with Rubio, Crist said he hoped to repeal it. ‘The bill is comprised of secret backroom, sweetheart deals ... and the passage of such a bill is a direct affront to the American people,’ he said in a campaign statement the day the legislation passed the U.S. House.” (John Frank, “Crist Flips His Position Again On Health Care Bill,” [St. Petersburg Times](#), 8/28/10)

In July 2010, Crist Told *The Wall Street Journal* That He Did Not Support A Repeal Of ObamaCare. QUESTION: “How do you feel about the health care overhaul?” CRIST: “I think it needs to be improved. I’m concerned about so much government control for it. But there are the same time there are good aspects to it.” QUESTION: “Should it be repealed?” CRIST: “I think it should be modified. It can be made better.” QUESTION: “When the bill passed, you called for its repeal.” CRIST: “Well, I wanted it to be changed..... People get caught up in, ‘I’m going to say it’s going to be repealed’ like they’re hammering their fist on the desk and be impressed with themselves. That’s part of the purity test.” (Peter Wallsten, “Q&A With Charlie Crist,” [Wall Street Journal](#), 7/20/10)

- **Crist Said Those Calling For A Repeal Were Falling For The Primary “Purity Test.”** CRIST: “Well, I wanted it to be changed..... People get caught up in, ‘I’m going to say it’s going to be repealed’ like they’re hammering their fist on the desk and be impressed with themselves. That’s

part of the purity test.” QUESTION: “Is that an example of something you had to do in the primary campaign as a Republican?” CRIST: “Perhaps. And I just don’t have to do that anymore. I’m liberated to a greater degree, and I’m very happy about it.” (Peter Wallsten, “Q&A With Charlie Crist,” [Wall Street Journal](#), 7/20/10)

CRIST SUPPORTED OBAMA’S WASTEFUL STIMULUS, THEN HE OPPOSED IT, NOW HE SUPPORTS IT AGAIN

In February Of 2009, Crist Touted Obama’s Stimulus Package. “Crist took to the stage here to help Obama stump for his stimulus package — making him a rare Republican willing to come forward and publicly back the \$838 billion measure.” (Jonathan Martin and Carol E. Lee, “Crist Joins Obama To Sell Stimulus,” [Politico](#), 2/11/09)

“Crist Did His Part, Urging Passage Of The Stimulus And, As Is His Signature, Touting The Merit Of Doing So Without Regard To Party.” (Jonathan Martin and Carol E. Lee, “Crist Joins Obama To Sell Stimulus,” [Politico](#), 2/11/09)

- **Crist: “This Issue Of Helping Our Country Is About Helping Our Country. This Is Not About Partisan Politics.”** CRIST: “And let me finish by saying, Mr. President, we need to do it in a bipartisan way. This issue of helping our country is about helping our country. This is not about partisan politics. This is about rising above that, helping America and reigniting our economy.” (Governor Charlie Crist, Remarks, Fort Myers, FL, 2/10/09)

By November Of 2009, Crist Said He Never Endorsed Obama’s Stimulus Package. WOLF BLITZER: “Let me interrupt for a second, Governor. For a second, do you have any regrets about endorsing the economic stimulus package?” CRIST: “Well, I didn’t endorse it. I -- you know, I didn’t even have a vote on the darned thing. But I understood that it was going to pass and I wanted to be able to utilize it for the benefit of my fellow Floridians.” (CNN’s “The Situation Room,” 11/4/09)

- **Politifact Rated Crist’s Claim “Pants On Fire,” Saying “There Are Mountains Of Evidence That He Not Only Supported The Stimulus, He Sang Its Praises.”** “Facing a primary challenge from the conservative wing of the Republican Party, Crist appears to be trying to rewrite history. But there are mountains of evidence that he not only supported the stimulus, he sang its praises. The meter is ablaze: Pants On Fire. (“Charlie Crist Says He Didn’t Endorse Stimulus Bill,” [Politifact](#), 11/5/09)

But At The 2012 Democratic National Convention, Crist Continued To Praise Obama’s Stimulus Package. “Crist recalled the economic calamity that hit the state in 2008 and praised the president for pushing through stimulus funding in response.” (Stephanie Condon, “Charlie Crist Hails Obama’s stimulus, Calls GOP Too Extreme,” [CBS News](#), 9/7/12)

CRIST SUPPORTED MERIT PAY FOR TEACHERS – RIGHT UP UNTIL HE VETOED IT

Crist Supported A Bill To Institute Merit Pay For Public School Teachers As It Was Being Debated In The State Legislature, Saying It Would “Build On Education Reforms That Have Earned Florida Great Improvements In Academic Rankings.” “Gov. Charlie Crist signaled today he might veto the controversial bill to overhaul the way pay raises are decided for public school teachers in Florida. The Senate approved the bill last week, and the House is expected to pass it Thursday. Crist showed support for the bill as recently as Monday, when he issued a statement praising the House for holding a marathon eight-hour committee on a bill. Crist said then that the bill (HB 7189, SB 6) helps ‘build on education reforms that have earned Florida great improvements in academic rankings.’” (Michael Bender, “Crist Vacillating On Teacher Merit Pay,” [The Palm Beach Post](#), 4/7/10)

- **Crist Sent His Education Policy Chief To A Florida House Hearing On The Bill To Express**

Crist's Support. “We know Republicans have said Crist supported and would sign the bill -- Republican Party of Florida Chairman and state Sen. John Thrasher went as far as to say Crist promised he would sign the bill -- but did Crist ask a staffer to attend a committee hearing to indicate the governor's support? State records show -- and video evidence confirms -- that a Crist staffer did attend a House committee hearing in support of the education bill. On March 25, 2010, at a hearing of the House PreK-12 Policy Committee, Crist education policy chief Terry Golden said she supported the teacher pay bill on behalf of the Office of the Governor.” (“Florida Republican Says Charlie Crist Wasn't Always Against GOP Led Teacher Tenure Bill,” [Politifact](#), 4/15/10)

Despite Having Expressed Support For The Bill Just Weeks Before, Crist Vetoed The Merit Pay Bill On April 15, 2010. “Gov. Charlie Crist on Thursday vetoed a controversial, first-in-the-nation proposal to base teacher pay and job security on student test scores, in a dramatic conclusion to an issue that drew howls of protest from educators and parents across the state. (Josh Hafenbrack, “ Gov. Crist Vetoes Controversial Teacher Merit-Pay Proposal,” [Sun Sentinel](#), 4/15/10)

- **The Bill Had Been Vociferously Opposed By Florida Teachers Unions.** “Florida Gov. Charlie Crist (R) on Thursday vetoed a bill that would have radically altered teacher tenure and compensation systems throughout the state. Teachers’ unions and school boards mounted a vigorous campaign to stop the bill, alarmed at how it would have removed tenure possibilities for new teachers and based evaluations largely on student academic gains. With the Crist veto, they won the day. But many education reformers see the veto as just a temporary setback in a march toward breaking down the status quo and ultimately improving the teaching profession.” (Stacy Teicher Khadaroo, “ Crist Veto A Victory For Teachers Against Merit-Based Pay,” [The Christian Science Monitor](#), 4/15/10)