

HUCKLEBERRY GOV'S COMPASSION PROBLEM

By Don Feder

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The problem with former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee isn't his funny name, which brings to mind a character in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon. (What kind of a name is Mitt, anyway?)

It's not the fact that he strums a guitar or that, other than governing Arkansas for a decade, his principal claim to fame is losing 110-lbs.

What scares me about Huckabee is that he's a practitioner of the gruesome art of political compassion. He could even be one of those compassionate conservatives we've heard so much about – except he's not a conservative.

Huckabee's stock is rising. Friday's Rasmussen Poll has him among the top tier candidates for the GOP nomination. With 12%, the former governor is behind Giuliani, Thompson and McCain (at 14%) but ahead of Deep-Pockets Mitt (with 11%).

Understandably, Huckabee wowed them at the recent Values Voter Washington Briefing, sponsored by Family Research Council. For those who voted at the conference (instead of voting online), Huckabee won with 51%.

Superficially, Huckabee looks like the ideal candidate for social conservatives – pro-life, anti-gay marriage and a Baptist minister to boot. A friend of mine who's an evangelical and a Beltway pundit says a lot of it comes down to tribal politics. The religious right, which is dominated by evangelicals, looks at Huckabee and sees one of its own. It is mistaken.

Abortion and marriage are make-or-break issues for me. But, uncompassionate conservative that I am, I also care about taxes and spending, secure borders, the economy, crime and the Constitution.

I'm not alone. Conservative icon Phyllis Schlafly says Huckabee "destroyed the conservative movement in Arkansas, and left the Republican Party in shambles," Schlafly charges, "Yet some of the same evangelicals who sold us on George W. Bush as a 'compassionate conservative' are now trying to sell us on Huckabee." Call the Better Business Bureau.

Richard Viguerie, as principled and tough-minded as anyone on the right, observes, "But while Gov. Huckabee stands strong on some issues like abortion that are important to social conservatives, a careful examination of his record as governor reveals that he is just another wishy-washy Republican who enthusiastically promotes big government" – which is why *Time Magazine* thought Huckabee was one of the nation's five best governors. *Time* doesn't hand out awards for cutting taxes and reducing spending.

During his years in Little Rock, Huckabee raised the state's sales tax by 37%, the gas tax by 16% and the cigarette tax by 103% (all fall particularly hard on the poor). State spending went up a staggering 65.3% -- three times the inflation rate. The state's workforce grew by 20% and Arkansas' general obligation debt increased \$1 billion.

Conservatives most familiar with his record are the most skeptical of Huckabee's claims to the conservative mantle. At its July convention, the Arkansas Republican Assembly, which represents the state party's right-wing, took a presidential preference straw poll. Thompson swept the field with 86%.

Betsy Hagan, Arkansas director of Schlafly's Eagle Forum, says that outside of a few key social issues, Huckabee governed as a liberal. "Just like Bill Clinton, he will charm you, but don't be surprised if he takes a completely different turn in office," Hagan cautions.

Huckabee is a sucker for social spending. In April 2006, he raised the state's minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.25 an hour, levying yet another tax on businesses and consumers -- one that destroys entry-level jobs.

Huckabee is particularly proud of his ArKids First program, which greatly expanded government-paid health insurance for children. Compassionate? Sure -- except it's one more small step on the road to socialized medicine -- which hasn't worked that well for the Brits and Canadians who've died waiting for operations, due to the inevitable shortage of medical services in a state-run system.

Huckabee calls the notorious No Child (Bureaucrat) Left Behind program the greatest education reform in his lifetime.

It all goes back to Huckabee's fatal flaw -- the Big C. The governor is one of those Republicans who's desperate to be loved. He craves the establishment's approval and gets an emotional high by doing good, invariably at someone else's expense.

Huckabee supports a mandatory cap on the release of greenhouse gases. "It goes to the moral issue," the governor intones. "We have a responsibility to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions" This, even though he's unsure that CO-2 emissions actually have anything to do with global warming. "But whether there is or there isn't (*a human factor in climate change*), it doesn't release us from the responsibility to be good stewards of the

environment.... It's a spiritual issue. The earth belongs to God. I have no right to destroy it.”

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Good stewards also have a responsibility to consider the consequences of junk science. In the 1960s, Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" (the era's "Inconvenient Truth") convinced governments to ban DDT as toxic to humans. In the Third World, mosquitoes multiplied. So did malaria and typhus. Since 1972, 100 million have died of these preventable diseases, mostly in Africa, due to political stewardship.

Does God want us to destroy the U.S. economy? Does He want us to sit in darkened homes, warmed only by thoughts of the imaginary benefits conferred on penguins and polar bears? Huckabee is an acolyte of the Church of Gore because it feels good – it makes him feel morally superior to all of those energy-profligate conservatives who – by not embracing this pious fraud – desecrate the Gospel of Eco-Doom.

Huckabee also backs the so-called DC voting rights bill, telling reporters that DC residents are "American citizens. They pay taxes and it just doesn't seem right that someone could be at least partially disenfranchised."

If residents of the District of Columbia were mostly Caucasians, instead of black, would the left care? Would Huckabee? Jesse Jackson and his gang have turned this into a civil rights, meaning a race, issue.

No representation in return for getting the national government in your backyard -- that's the bargain that was made at America's founding.

There are all kinds of goodies derived from residing in the District. One way or another, most residents make a living from

Uncle Sugar. For that, Washingtonians give up direct representation in Congress. If they simply cannot live without the bliss of voting for Congress-things, they can move a few miles into either Virginia or Maryland and vote in Congressional elections to their heart's content.

His regard for DC denizens is exceeded only by Huckabee's affection for aliens of the illegal persuasion.

When there was a bill before the Arkansas legislature to require proof of citizenship to vote and to cut off most government services to illegals, Huckabee did a passable impression of Linda Chavez, claiming the measure "inflames those who are racists and bigots and makes them think there's a real problem. But there's not."

Twelve million to fifteen million illegal aliens? More coming every day? Hospitals closed and schools severely overburdened? No problemo!

Huckabee now tries to rationalize that smear, generously allowing that he does not think everyone who's concerned about criminals and terrorists infiltrating our porous borders -- not all who resent subsidies for the horde who are here illegally -- are the moral equivalent of Nazis and nightriders.

What's behind this gratuitous insult to patriotic Americans? Can't you guess?

In a 2003 radio address, Huckabee told the citizens of Arkansas: "I looked into the eyes of immigrant Mexican children and was moved. These children often don't have enough to eat, don't have good clothes and don't have a dry place to sleep... And I was reminded we can give something back by offering a helping hand to those who follow the American dream along Interstate 30

and Interstate 40 into Arkansas.” Like Hillary, he’s doing it for the kids – and, in the process, throwing away the best issue the Republican Party will have next year.

Eventually, all compassionate politicians get around to slobbering over violent felons. Huckabee is no exception. Wayne Dumond served seven years of a life plus-20-year sentence for the kidnapping/rape of a 17-year-old cheerleader. Dumond claims that while he was awaiting trial, men broke into his home and castrated him. Sadly, he survived.

Shortly after he became governor, Dumond’s pardon application crossed Huckabee’s desk.

While denying the pardon, Huckabee helped with the parole board by sending the rapist a personal letter disclosing, “My desire is that you be released from prison. I feel that parole is the best way for your reintroduction to society to take place.” A 2002 article in the *Arkansas Times* reports Huckabee’s staff worked behind the scenes to secure the rapist’s release. Was Huckabee moved after looking into Dumond’s eyes and seeing another of society’s victims who was just following the American dream?

Ashley Stevens, who Dumond raped, told Huckabee “If you ever let him out, he’s going to do it again.” Huckabee was unmoved, even when Stevens thrust her face inches from his and told him “This is how close I was to Dumond’s face for an hour. I’ll never forget his face, and you’ll never forget mine.”

None of that dissuaded Mr. Compassion. Wouldn’t you know it, the year after the parole board reintroduced Dumond into society, he moved to Missouri where he sexually assaulted and murdered a 39-year-old woman.

To this day, Huckabee is in a state of denial (unfortunately for him, not one of the early primary states) regarding his role in this tragedy, insisting, “My only official action was to deny his clemency.” In terms of taking responsibility for their actions, Huckabee and Hillary have more in common than at first meets the eye.

What traits should we seek in a president? Compassion is way down on my list – well below guts, integrity, farsightedness, determination and patriotism.

Huckabee has bought into the left’s definition of compassion, a mushy mix of sentimentality and victimology. The avatar of this species of compassion is Jimmy Carter -- Nobel laureate, builder of homes for the poor, anti-American agitator who accuses Israel of racism, (like Huckabee, a Baptist given to homilies), and easily America’s worst president in the post-war era.

Political compassion comes at a price. Compassion for the recipients of social spending hurts taxpayers, including the struggling middle class and working poor. (It hurts recipients too, by addicting them to the dole.) Compassion for illegal immigrants hurts the victims of criminal aliens, not to mention the Americans who see their national unity slipping away (eroded by those who refuse to learn our language or identify with our country). Compassion for criminals is an affront to their victims – past and future.

Mike Huckabee, who’s big on Bible quotes, should contemplate the Talmudic adage: Kindness to the cruel is cruelty to the kind.

Huckabee will not be the Republican nominee in 2008, for which we should be exceedingly grateful. He lacks the organization and finances. (As of September 30, he had \$650,000

cash on hand, compared to \$16.6 million for Giuliani, \$9.2 million for Romney, and \$7.1 million for Thompson.) Money isn't everything. But, with the nomination process front-loaded and the need to run campaigns in a dozen states simultaneously, it is indispensable.

It's only in the past week that Huckabee, due to the Iowa and FRC conference straw-polls, moved into double digits in national polling – bumps he won't get again.

Huckabee won't be the nominee. But he could draw enough votes from an authentic conservative to throw the nomination to Giuliani, which, by fracturing the Republican base, would result in the election of the creature from the 9th circle of Hell, who seems to have a lock on her party's nomination – not my idea of compassion either.

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