

Rolling Stone reporter explores “really effective” reform efforts of the House Freedom Caucus

Dan Popkey/Raul Labrador’s Office

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a lengthy radio interview, Rolling Stone’s Tim Dickinson says Rep. Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, and his conservative colleagues have enjoyed extraordinary success, including extracting \$2 trillion in federal spending cuts.

Dickinson describes Labrador and other members of the House Freedom Caucus as smart, principled, committed conservatives who put constituents ahead of party in fighting for major change in Congress. Labrador helped found the Freedom Caucus in January.

Dickinson, national affairs correspondent for Rolling Stone, appeared on NPR’s “Fresh Air” last week to discuss his article, “Meet the Right-Wing Rebels Who Overthrew John Boehner.” In the 36-minute interview Dickinson elaborates on his story, [published online](#) and in the Oct. 22 print edition of Rolling Stone.

Highlights of the [radio interview](#) follow. To view a transcript, [click here](#).

“And if you get inside their heads a little bit, they see that America is going off a cliff eventually, that our spending is out of control, that we have no budget discipline in Washington, that something dramatic needs to change. And so they’re willing to bring short-term pain now in part, as they see it, to prevent an even greater catastrophe down the line, if we keep spending the way that we are.... And to be honest, I mean, we talk about how obstructionist they’ve been, but they’ve also been really effective. I mean, under a Democratic president, conservatives have extracted \$2 trillion in avoided spending over the next 10 years, which is really quite extraordinary. I mean, this is - this is \$2 trillion of spending - government spending that’s not going to happen because of the kind of obstructionism that we’ve been talking about.”

“...so we think about the tea party crazies, and even some of their colleagues call them that. And these guys are not like that....These are very smart guys who are very principled....These guys are committed. And so there’s – you know, you meet them, and they’re some of the nicest people I’ve met in Washington, frankly. And they’re easy to talk to because they are very at ease with their principles and with what they’re doing. They are just committed conservatives.”

“These are Republican fighters...these guys are really voting their constituents....And they see themselves as being sent to Washington not to get along and not to climb the ranks, but to sort of throw themselves on the gears of government and bring things to a halt and start to bring change by any means necessary.”

“Rep. Raul Labrador from Idaho is sort of the informal spokesperson for the House Freedom Caucus. And I spoke with him at length in his office earlier this summer. And he said he didn’t, you know, care to be labeled an obstructionist because he wasn’t there to vote his party. He was there to vote his constituents and spoke openly about how he thought Nancy Pelosi was a smarter leader than John Boehner or Kevin McCarthy.”

“I think you need to understand, too, that it's not just these 40 guys. There's a larger orbit of folks who are sympathetic to them or at least responsive to the same forces that they are. And so when these House conservatives, these 40 naysayers, these obstructionists, make a move, it's very difficult for about another hundred or so House Republicans to disobey that, to get out of step with that because these folks have the mantle of true conservatism. These folks have the mantle of being most responsive to the voters.”