

# Rekers, Jindal and the Impressive Hypocrisy of the Far Right

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Years ago Phil Ochs, the great folk singer, defined a liberal as somebody who is "[ten degrees to the left of center during good times; and ten degrees to the right of center when it effects them personally.](#)" If Phil Ochs were alive today he might look at the far right in America and describe them as 40 degrees to the right of center when things are going well and 40 degrees to the left of center when it effects them personally.

Even by those standards, it is quite a time for the conservative movement. For example, the decision by Minister George Rekers, a fundamentalist minister and co-founder of the [Family Research Council](#), to hire a young man who he found on the website [rentboy.com](#) to accompany him on a ten day jaunt to Europe does not even qualify as the most hypocritical thing done by a far right leader in recent weeks. Rekers is particularly outspoken in his anti-gay views and has previously dressed up his bigotry in the jargon of pseudo science claiming that through therapy and other interventions gay people can become straight. Nonetheless, there is nothing altogether new about far right homophobes being linked to gay liaisons of one kind or another. Rekers has impressive credentials as a hypocrite and bigot, but also loses some points for lack of originality.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal's reaction to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, however, demonstrated a level of hypocrisy, and for that matter chutzpah that exceeds anything Rekers has done. Jindal, of course, rose to national prominence with his spirited attack on President Obama's policies following Obama's 2009 State of the Union speech. During that address, Jindal reminded Americans of the need for small government and urged us to remember that government, particularly the federal government, cannot solve our problems.

Since the oil spill, however, Jindal seems to have forgotten about his disdain for Washington and has [asked the federal government for more assistance to clean up and mitigate the impact of the oil spill.](#) Jindal has also asked for the federal government to fund the Louisiana National Guard to help with the oil spill related problems. Defenders of Jindal and his small government way of thinking undoubtedly think that this oil spill is sufficiently big and unexpected that there is a legitimate reason for Jindal to ask for help from Washington.

This view, however, captures exactly why the anti-government advocates are wrong. An important role of the federal government, of course, is to help out when problems are too big for state or local governments, but we also know that these events occur with some frequency. Oil spill, natural disasters, economic downturns and terrorist attacks are just some of the major events which require the intervention of the federal government. Building a political philosophy around the belief that they will not occur is absurd. While we may not know exactly when these events will occur, it is somewhat disingenuous to act completely shocked when they happen. A major part of the responsibility of government is to be prepared for these bad scenarios. If

disasters, foreign attacks and market collapses did not occur, then Jindal would be right about their being no need for government, but this is not the case.

Jindal's hypocrisy is founded on an implicit belief that nothing could have been done to prevent the oil spill or other major events of this kind. While it may be true that we cannot prevent earthquakes and hurricanes, through investing in infrastructure, other precautions and the ability to respond to disasters of this kind, we can reduce their impacts. The oil spill is, of course, a little different. It demonstrates the need for stronger environmental, safety and other regulations which may prevent future spills or similar disasters. This is similar to the financial crises which, like the oil spill, required some kind of immediate intervention by the federal government, but also reinforced the need for better regulation and, with apologies to Jindal, a more engaged federal government. By asking for assistance now, Jindal has become the elite equivalent of the thousands of [tea partiers who want more government support for the things they think are important](#).

The problem with Jindal's critique of government is that under the guise of lecturing about personal responsibility it abandons any real notion of what responsibility is. It is easy to talk about the evils of taxes and the danger posed by a big government if you know that you can ask that government for help when things are really bad and your state is desperate for help. That is precisely what Jindal has done. Jindal and Rekers are not alone, but exemplify an almost willful blindness to the real world consequences of ideological extremism that has become something of the sine qua non of the far right.