



Issues Motivate Tea Party Members

(NAPSA)—By February 2009, Ken Campbell had had enough. The Lincoln, California horse rancher caught the now famous economic “rant” by CNBC correspondent Rick Santelli, who said on national TV, “We’re thinking of having a Chicago tea party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up at Lake Michigan, I’m gonna start organizing.” Santelli didn’t start organizing a local tea party but Campbell did.

Campbell, who spent more than 20 years in local Republican Party politics, “kind of dropped out” of the GOP as the Great Recession began to take hold, explaining, “I was fed up. I was not gonna help these Republicans wasting my tax money.” With that, Campbell engaged with other frustrated Californians at the 2009 Tax Day Tea Party rally at the state capitol in Sacramento. Since then, his involvement has grown across northern California.

Campbell’s story is not much different from that of millions of other people who have joined Tea Party Patriots, a national grassroots organization of more than 3,400 chapters across the country. It’s the local nature of the group that Campbell says makes Tea Party Patriots so important. “You see a lot of people with a lot of different ideas and we all want to save the country,” said Campbell.

Cindy Wilkerson of Laurel, Mississippi, shares Campbell’s appreciation for the grassroots emphasis of Tea Party Patriots, and saw it in full force during the group’s 2010 Tax Day rally in the nation’s capital. “I was just amazed and in awe that in such a short time, they’d been able to go from just a word-of-mouth organization to put on a massive rally in Washington, D.C.,” said Wilkerson, who was among the estimated 1.3 million people attending the event that day.

Many Tea Party Patriots members are concerned about fiscal issues such as government spending, rising taxes and a growing national debt, which now exceeds \$17 trillion. But for Wilkerson, there was another concern. “It was more than just taxes for me. It was really health care,” said Wilkerson, a former health care professional who holds a degree in social work from Mississippi College.



The Tea Party Patriots is a national grassroots organization of more than 3,400 chapters across the country.

“I knew that ObamaCare was coming and I knew what it was going to do,” said Wilkerson. “I saw a lot of issues in hospice care, the rationing of health care, and it was deeply concerning to me.” Wilkerson also sees Tea Party Patriots as an active government watchdog. “Absolutely, I think they keep politicians honest,” said Wilkerson. “I think we really scare them.”

Holding officials accountable is just as important to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Tea Party Patriots member Lenny Scaletta. “We’re not afraid to stand in front of them and ask them serious questions,” said Scaletta. A local organizer for the group, Scaletta’s approach to engaging citizens includes planning lunch and supper events designed to begin a conversation among local residents, and fostering teamwork among them. “I just encourage people to get busy, to get out there and do things.”

Scaletta, a Vietnam-era Navy veteran, started his local chapter two years ago because “I wanted to get the word out that I was part of Tea Party Patriots and I agreed with what they were saying.” Motivated by issues like fighting terrorism, health care and the need to stop illegal immigration, Scaletta said, “I just want to get out and try to teach people and to get them involved.” According to Scaletta, it’s working in west central Iowa. “Even with Democrats, we agree on a lot of things,” said Scaletta.