

# Study Shows Republicans Favor Economic Inequality

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A study of the voting records of members of Congress, recently published in the prestigious online scientific journal *PLOS One*, shows that “Republicans tended to support legislation increasing economic inequality regardless of their social status,” whereas the tendency of congressional Democrats was in the opposite direction but weaker, because “High status Democrats tended to exhibit less support for legislation that reduces economic inequality than did their lower status” peers. The study “analyzed 13 pieces of legislation, chosen by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS; [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)), that were sponsored by members of Congress between 2010 and 2012.” The IPS is a progressive think tank that was founded by anti-Vietnam-War academics Markus Raskin and Richard Barnet in 1963, and which has championed anti-war and civil-rights issues and consistently opposed economic inequality. It frequently attacks both Democrats and Republicans for what IPS considers to be insufficient focus on reducing inequality. It is not a Democratic think tank in the sense that (for example) the Heritage Foundation is a Republican one, because historically IPS has been hostile toward both Parties — it has been “to the left” of both.

IPS rated bills on the impact that they would have in reducing economic inequality. No Republican think tank has rated bills on the impact on increasing economic inequality; so, there was no think tank “on the right” side that could counterbalance IPS “on the left.” Consistent with what turned out to be the findings in this study, people “on the right” don’t care much about economic inequality or else they support it; but, in either case they aren’t studying proposed legislation as to its tendency to increase or decrease it.

This scientific study, [“Noblesse Oblige? Social Status and Economic Inequality Maintenance among Politicians,”](#) was published 21 January 2014, and authored by two of the world’s leading researchers of political attitudes, Michael W. Kraus and Bennett Callaghan, both of whom are psychology professors at the University of Illinois.

The authors wrote that “having lower status in one’s local community predicts lower levels of life-satisfaction better than national income levels [32-33]. Thus, we tested the prediction that relative status differences, even among elite members of society, would predict support for economic inequality.” Their study “involved the use of publically available data for 430 members of the US House of Representatives. The data include 190 Democrats and 240 Republicans. The majority of the sample was male (n = 357) and white (n = 359). Members of Congress had served an average of 11.85 years in office (SD = 9.60).”

“The social status of members of the House of Representatives was assessed using three variables: average wealth, race, and gender. For average wealth, estimated average wealth of 423 members of the House of Representatives was collected from the Center for Responsive Politics.”

They “analyzed 13 pieces of legislation, chosen by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS; [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)), that were sponsored by members of Congress [only Representatives; no Senators] between 2010 and 2012. ... Legislation (summarized in Table 1) was chosen by the IPS to appear in the 2012 Inequality Report Card,” and those were the 13 bills that were analyzed here.

They found: “As expected, political party affiliation had a large effect on sponsoring behavior ... supporting reduction of economic inequality significantly more than Republicans. ... All subsequent analyses assess social status predictors of legislative behavior while accounting for party affiliation.”

Their “Discussion” said: “It is interesting to speculate about the reasons why status did not influence support for economic inequality among Republicans. One perspective suggests that people who identify as liberal [by which they intended to mean progressive] and conservative tend to operate using distinct moral foundations.” On the hypothesis that Republicans, as conservatives, place higher value upon loyalty: “It is perhaps because of this loyalty that low status members of the Republican Party tended to support economic inequality as much as their high status counterparts.” (By contrast: low-status Democrats might not be so loyal, and therefore might break away more often to side with the Progressive Caucus in the House, which doesn’t even have any Republicans in it but which is highly critical of most bills from members of both Parties, but especially of Republican bills — only of a few Democratic bills.) Also: “It is noteworthy that consistent relationships between support for economic inequality and social status emerged across three distinct measures of social status – average wealth, race, and gender. Importantly, influences of wealth, race, and gender have demonstrated some converging effects in prior research.”

My own comments on this study are: The picture that emerges from it fits very well with the Republican Party being the rich white Christian male Party, and the Democratic Party being instead a collection of lower-status groups, such as females, the non-wealthy, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Jews, etc. — all of the historical rejects from traditional high society in American culture — in other words: the lower-status groups. Whereas the Republican Party is solidly pro-aristocracy at the expense of the public, the Democratic Party is split between the two — mainly pro-public, but with a significant pro-aristocracy contingent (such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton). Whereas there exists a Republican ideology (solidly conservative), there is no Democratic ideology (it’s not solidly progressive), and this also is the reason why the Democratic Party can select Presidential candidates like Obama and the Clintons, who are tools of the aristocracy who simply mouth platitudes about “the need for more equality” just so as to win elections in order to compromise them away with Republicans to achieve “change” that’s no basic change at all, and that’s not even necessarily change in a progressive direction (for example, estate taxes have still been going down, which is a primary goal of the aristocracy, but which has been ferociously opposed by more than 95% of Democrats in both the House and the Senate).

*Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They’re Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST’S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).*

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