

Go Libertarian!

Political ideology has been a left/right concept since the Declaration of Independence. First it was Anti-Federalists and Federalists which finally turned into Republicans and Democrats. One may question themselves and think “I like the economic factor of conservatives, but the freedom of liberals. How can I vote on both?” The answer to that is to vote Libertarian.

A Brief History

Officially created in 1971, Libertarianism has been ranked the third largest political party. During the height of the Renaissance era, thriving new ideas came from such important men as Erasmus, Francis Bacon, Niccolò Machiavelli and Galileo Galilei. Their ideas were known as Classic Liberalism. During the Middle Ages, this term sparked the ideas that Thomas Hobbes quickly proclaimed as to the earliest of libertarianism. Influenced by the Civil War, Hobbes created his starting motto that where every person has a right and a need to do anything to preserve their own liberty and safety. ¹ John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine began to develop their ideas into resembling a modern libertarian philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Libertarians and their followers are not uniform groups, but have teamed up to form think tanks, political parties, and other groups. For example, Austrian School economist Murray Rothbard co-founded the John Randolph Club, the Center for Libertarian Studies, and the Cato Institute to support an independent libertarian movement, and joined David Nolan in founding the United States Libertarian Party in 1971. In the 1972 presidential election, John Hospers and Tonni Nathan quartered one

electoral vote with almost 400,000 votes. Tonni Nathan still stands as the only woman to receive an electoral vote.³

Today, the party claims more than 200,000 registered voters and more than 600 people in public office.⁴ In 1978 Dick Randolph became the first Libertarian elected to state office with his election to the Alaska House of Representatives. In the 1980 presidential contest, the party gained ballot access in every state and earned more than one percent of the popular vote. Ed Clark and David H. Koch spent several million dollars to be the most successful libertarian campaign to date. In more recent news, Michael Badnarik's campaign scored ballot status in 48 states and earned 397,367 votes. Despite less name recognition and a much smaller campaign checkbook, Badnarik polled nearly as well as independent candidate Ralph Nader.

Basic Principles

The Libertarian party is in favor of many economical changes as republicans are, but love to keep out of the way of personal affairs like democrats advocate. The adoption of laissez-faire is a major principle in the Libertarian belief. It will result in the complete separation of state and economics. This includes enormous reduction in taxation, privatization of Social Security, and welfare. This also includes the elimination of business regulation, abolition of labor regulations such as the minimum wage and the cessation of government interference in foreign trade¹ are also basic principles. Plus, they state that the government's responsibilities should be limited to the protection of individual rights from the initiation of force and fraud.⁴

On the social spectrum, Libertarians are Pro-life, believe in strong civil liberties such as freedom of speech, privacy protections, freedom of association and sexual

freedom. On the other hand, they also support the idea of unrestricted right to the means of self defense, which includes gun rights and the right to carry mace or pepper spray. There is also the abolition of laws against victimless crimes (prostitution, driving without a seatbelt, use of controlled substances, etc.). They favor an ethic of self-responsibility and strongly oppose welfare because they believe forcing someone to provide aid to others is ethically wrong.

Right Theorists & Consequentialists

There are many types of libertarians such as Paleolibertarianism, Objectivism Neolibertarianism, Classical Liberalism, Civil Libertarianism, Anarcho-Capitalism, etc. The two major types of libertarians are consequentialists and rights theorists. Consequentialist libertarians oppose moral force, but believe in allowing a very large span of political and economic liberty. This type of libertarianism is linked with Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek. Libertarians do not oppose force used in response to aggressions such as violence, fraud or trespassing. Rights theorists believe that it is morally important that all human interaction, including government interaction with private individuals, should be voluntary and consensual.² This form of libertarianism is associated with Objectivists and individualist anarchists.

Misconceptions

Some people think that libertarians fall under libertinism or hedonism which is neither the case. Also, others think that libertarians have the idea that "people can do anything they want to, and nobody else can say anything." Both of these statements are completely false. Libertarians search for social justice and a decrease of government influence in our lives.

Rightists often argue that government is needed to maintain social order and morality. They may argue that excessive personal freedoms encourage dangerous and irresponsible behavior. Some of the most commonly debated issues here are sexual norms and the drug war. Doug Case from the article *Libertarian Arguments Debate* stated You do not turn children into responsible adults by giving them absolute freedom. You foster good character by limiting freedom, and by channeling energies into the most productive avenues.⁵

The Leftists believe that the libertarian movement encompasses economic practices that result in privileges for the wealthy side of America. This is because liberals are big on welfare. They do not understand that libertarians are not demanding a stop to the welfare, but to give people a choice on whether or not they want their money going towards a program like welfare.

Rules of law

To summarize the basics and contradict the misconceptions, libertarianism proposes a society of liberty under law, in which individuals are free to pursue their own lives so long as they respect the equal rights of others. The rule of law means that individuals are governed by generally applicable and spontaneously developed legal rules, not by arbitrary commands; and that those rules should protect the freedom of individuals to pursue happiness in their own ways, not aim at any particular result or outcome.²

Reaction

My personal hypothesis for the reason that the libertarian movement has not flourished like it should is pretty simple. It all comes to down to the fact that many people have no idea that the Libertarian movement is out there. A lot of people in their early

twenties (the supposed future of America) focus solely on the rights of people such as rights on gay marriage, abortion, and the war in Iraq. Because of Bush, more people are leaning towards the left and will most likely vote in the upcoming election to make the 'change' that they need in our country. Ultimately, if these people can vote to get these personal laws changed, they will vote to whatever ballot has those conclusions even without paying attention to the economic standpoints of that ballot. People these days are not primarily concerned about welfare or taxes, especially if they still live at home with Mom and Dad. Now on the other hand, the highest percentages of voters are senior citizens which usually count for a lot of our republican votes. They love the idea of a traditional government and especially the social security, as the rest of the American voters fall in-between or do not vote at all. Could it be because nobody cares to vote strongly one way or another? If they knew about the common middle ground, I am sure more people would vote Libertarian.

Conclusion

Starting my college years here at CMU has made me see a lot of controversy between the republican and democrat students whether it is about affirmative action or even abortion. I have tried to categorize myself as a republican, but the ideas that concern personal matters that the government controls has always been a bother to me even though none of them concern me. By hearing about the libertarian movement, I decided to research this party and it has made me very aware of what libertarians believe. I am proud to have been able to find my political place in the world.

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Research Paper

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Date: April 12th 2007