

LIBERTY PLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

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May 2015

One Election Will Not Break America's Back!

By Robert Sarvis

Excerpted from *Collegiate Times*

Published on March 31, 2015

From Part III of a 4-part series of columns by Rob Sarvis in the Collegiate Times, news provider for Virginia Tech

Rob Sarvis was the Virginia Libertarian candidate for governor in 2013 and for U.S. Senate in 2014

... [W]e must look past the dumbed-down rhetoric of the major parties, and their strategic issue-framing designed to create the illusion of a serious policy debate.

If you look at the actual policies that get implemented under Republican and Democratic regimes, there isn't a whole lot of difference, and the direction of the state or country doesn't change much, no matter which side you elect.

When the Republicans gained control of Virginia's House, Senate and Governor's mansion, despite all their talk of fiscal restraint, spending increased in line with prior years and Democratic administrations. What resulted was the largest tax increase in Virginia history.

When Republicans finally held both houses of Congress and the presidency, spending kept right on increasing.

As for Democrats, no one expected McAuliffe to refrain from rampant cronyism, and he certainly hasn't surprised anyone.

At the federal level, many had high hopes for change under Obama.

However, we have launched more bombing campaigns in the Middle East, we still have mass domestic surveillance and other civil liberties violations, we passed a misguided financial-industry reform package (Dodd-Frank) that doubled down on implicit subsidies to "too-big-to-fail" banks, and we have a monstrosity of a healthcare law that might as well have been written by drug and insurance companies.

The only major difference between Democrats and Republicans is which party is currently demonizing the person in the White House.



Robert Sarvis

I am not saying there are no differences between the two parties. But even stark differences are not as important as you might think.

Take gay marriage, perhaps the clearest difference between Republicans and Democrats in 2013. The changes in the laws throughout the country are due entirely to a huge, organic, bottom-up change in social attitudes.

Direct democracy via initiatives and referenda — often bankrolled by libertarian donors — forced the issue in some places. In others, it was federal courts, following the lead of popular opinion.

Democratic candidates like Obama, Warner and McAuliffe only switched sides in 2012, only after polls showed it was beneficial to do so. The Fourth Circuit would have ruled the same way regardless of who won the 2013 election for Governor and Attorney General.

For the record, I supported gay marriage when I ran in 2011 for State Senate as a Republican! And the Libertarian Party has supported treating same-sex couples equally for forty years!

The point is this: get past the rhetoric and framing, and there isn't actually that much at stake when you vote for Republicans or Democrats.

When there's a reasonable third-party candidate who you
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Why I'm a libertarian, what it means and why you should be one too

By Dana Ettinger

From *The Johns Hopkins News-Letter*

Published on April 9, 2015

For the longest time in high school, I told anyone who would listen that my goal in life was to create my own political party. I put hours into this idea, researching topics and mascots and colors and logos.

I wanted a party that was fiscally conservative (lower taxes, less government regulation of business, fewer governmental departments) and socially liberal (pro-choice, feminist, pro-equality for all gender identities and sexualities and which supported a strict separation of church and state.)

I wanted non-interventionist foreign policy that was closer to the Monroe Doctrine than the Bush Doctrine and equal participation in international and transnational organizations rather than unilateral leadership. I was very excited about building it from the ground up — I was playing with European-style names like Centrist Party of America or Americans for the Center. Something that implied a third, middle route between the hawks and religious conservatives on the Right and the big government, big-spending liberals on the Left.

I have since found a better name for that ideal party: The Libertarian Party. It's real, it already exists and it's everything I want in a political party (except for being a major player).

First and foremost, it is important to note that libertarianism as a philosophy and the Libertarian Party are two different things. Libertarian philosophy is a spectrum just like any political philosophy, and there are those who fall closer to or further from the party's platform than I do.

My beliefs are in no way representative of everyone who calls themselves a libertarian, but they do fall on the spectrum. At minimum, the Libertarian Party and libertarians in general support maximized freedom in both personal and business matters.

Basically, libertarians want the government to keep its hands off of their businesses and its nose out of their personal lives. It's very much a "live and let live" philosophy, which is probably my favorite thing about it. There's no judgment about life choices, no proclamations about who chooses what morality for any other person — it is up to each individual to run his or her life as he or she sees fit. It is thus also the responsibility of each individual

to work to achieve the goals she or he wants to accomplish and accept the consequences of choices made in pursuit of those goals.

The closest libertarians get to a unified morality is the Non-Aggression Principle. This is a core belief of libertarianism that you have the right to do as you please so long as you don't infringe on anyone else's right to do the same. This becomes the framework through which one can determine criminality — the right to swing one's fist ends at the next person's nose.

Libertarians believe that it is not the responsibility of the government to legislate morality, but rather to protect natural rights. This is very important to me, as I believe in a strict separation between church and state. The United States is a nation of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Atheists, Agnostics, Rastafarians, Pastafarians and perhaps most recently, Indiana's First Church of Cannabis (look up Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act for more info).

Creating laws to govern all of those people who believe in such diverse teachings and philosophies based on only one of those belief systems, to me, seems oppressive and deliberately exclusive. Libertarians trust people to live without violating others' rights — without the need for a government-imposed moral code. People can be decent human beings, live in society and respect one another without adhering to the exact same proscriptions for living a good life.

With the 2016 presidential circus already beginning, my frustration with the lack of options in Congress and American politics in general is more prominent than usual. As a self-avowed political junkie, I have no doubt I will follow every twist and turn of the campaign trails.

I will bemoan the failings of the major candidates from the Republicans and the Democrats and proudly support the candidate for the Libertarian Party. I might even volunteer for the campaign, working to spread the message of the Libertarian Party and push it further into mainstream awareness.

My new goal is to work to make the Libertarian Party a national power player, one that can operate on the same level as the Republicans and Democrats and garner the respect it deserves.

If you're interested in learning more about libertarianism, consider attending a meeting of Hopkins Students for Liberty (hopkinssfl@gmail.com) or reading up on the Libertarian Party's official platform (www.lp.org/platform).

1 in 5 Millennials describe themselves as libertarian One fifth of under-30s describe themselves as libertarians, but most Americans reject the label

By Peter Moore
Excerpted from *YouGov*
Published on April 13, 2015

Last week self-described libertarian and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul launched his campaign to become the Republican nominee for the 2016 presidential elections. Paul has the solid support of the Republican Party's libertarian wing, but his support for stricter limits on counter-terrorism surveillance and relaxed penalties for drug crimes risks alienating the more socially conservative elements of the Republican Party.

YouGov's latest research shows that, overall, 15% of Americans say that they would describe themselves as a libertarian, while 53% would not. 32% aren't sure either way. Younger Americans, however, are much more likely to describe themselves as libertarian or to be unsure of whether or not they are libertarian. 20% of under-30s describe themselves as libertarian, while only 39% of the Millennial age group reject the label of libertarian.

There is little difference between partisans when it comes to identifying as libertarians. Republicans (13%) are essentially no more likely than Democrats (12%) to identify as libertarian, while 19% of independents describe themselves as libertarian. Overall, people with household incomes over \$80,000 a year (22%) and men (21%) are the most likely to say that they are libertarian.

Most Americans (51%) agree with the core idea of libertarianism that smaller governments are better governments, but that they are less convinced about other ideas common in libertarian circles. Americans tend to disagree (46%) rather than agree (34%) with the idea that poverty is generally more a result of individual failing than social problems. A large majority of Americans (68%) also agree with the idea that people occasionally need to be saved from themselves, something somewhat at odds with the libertarian idea that people should be free to do what they want, even if it damages them, as long as they are not hurting others.

New and renewing Liberty Pledgers

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If You Had To Tax Someone...

The below column, which appeared in The Valley Breeze by outgoing LP Rhode Island Chair Michael Rollins — shockingly — proposes a new tax.

“It’s a safe bet that most Libertarians would reject the proposed James Skeffington Tax, because the last thing we need is to enrich bloated government budgets,” said Joshua Katz, member of the Libertarian National Committee. “But Rollins is onto something: Going after government profiteers rather than taxpayers, as well as forcing transparency.”

**Excerpted from “A tax on crony capitalism?” in *The Valley Breeze*
Published on April 28, 2015**

As the soon-to-be former chairman of the Libertarian Party of Rhode Island, I have decided to propose what many other libertarians will view as being a total heresy on my part. Please do note that this is my own proposal, and is not a Libertarian Party proposal, and it has already been privately condemned by other LPRI officers with whom I have privately discussed it.

I propose an entirely new Rhode Island state tax. It is a new tax which I personally believe to be desperately needed.

In the spirit of Gov. Gina Raimondo’s recently proposed “Taylor Swift Tax,”* I have decided to name my new tax the “James Skeffington Tax.”* What I would like to propose is a new 300 percent (Yes, 300 percent!) tax upon all gross profits earned in part, or whole via any specially made crony capitalist insider deal with any state, municipal, or quasi-public agency.

I would define a “crony capitalist” deal as being any tax, land, or other financial deal which is not, or was not made equally available to all other individuals, or corporations, preferably via either a public auction, or competitive bidding. I would also broadly define a “quasi-public agency” as being any corporation, or organization which either directly, or indirectly gets a majority of its funding from government sources.

In other words, if you had to engage in any kind of negotiations, in order to get your government deal, it most

likely would qualify you for this proposed new James Skeffington tax on crony capitalism. Do note that my proposal has the extra advantage of being retroactively applicable to any residual income arising from crony capitalist special deals that were made years ago. It is a tax that can be passed a few years from now, and still apply. There is no time limit as to when this tax might ever be passed.

While my proposed new tax is only likely to ever recoup a small fraction of the hundreds of millions of dollars which crony capitalist insiders have already scammed from our hardworking Rhode Island taxpayers, it hopefully will help to discourage others from engaging in similar crony capitalist frauds going forward.

Michael J. Rollins
North Providence

** The recently-proposed “Taylor Swift Tax” is a tax on high-value second homes. James Skeffington is a Rhode Island attorney known for arranging insider deals between private organizations and government.*

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actually kinda dig, you are throwing your vote away if you vote for a bad candidate from a major party. They’re playing the same game, serving wealthy special interests and they treat individual voters like rubes, keeping us in line via the two-party mentality and enacting obstacles for those who challenge it.

Even if you prefer one major party to the other, it is simply wrong to think that your long-term interests are served by treating every election as a must-win. Sometimes, the best way to reform your preferred major party is to see it lose when it puts forward bad candidates espousing bad policies.

The parties pay close attention to the votes they’re losing. I did exceptionally well among young voters in 2013.

As a result, in 2014, Warner and Gillespie tripped over each other traveling to universities to reach out to young

voters. Of course, they mostly just pandered to you, instead of challenging you with an honest assessment of the state of higher education, but the point is they pay attention.

Many self-professed liberty-friendly Republicans failed to appreciate this and supported terribly illiberal candidates in 2013 and 2014 (in some cases while privately expressing their dislike of them).

I don’t begrudge anyone on their bad judgments, but the tunnel-visioned, win-at-all-costs mentality of the two-party system drove many of them, both activists and members of the conservative media, to slander my campaign by explicitly lying about my policy positions. It is shady business, this politics.

Step outside the two-party system, and those who ought to be your allies lose their minds. That’s how poisonous the two-party system is.

But the system is only as strong as the buy-in from the electorate, the voters: you!