

# The Principled Conservative in 21st Century America

Smashwords Edition

Copyright © 2010 C. Scott Litch

[Read C. Scott Litch's blogs here.](#)

Introduction

I Military Might And Foreign Policy

II Societal Welfare At Home

III Political Economy

IV Tax Policy: Flatter Is Better

V Environmental Concerns

VI Health Care: A Mess Only A Social Engineer Could Love

VII Education: We Can Do Much Better

VIII What Does It Mean Culturally To Be An “American?”

IX Religion And Public Policy

X Human Sexuality And Public Policy

XI Concluding Thoughts

Principled. adj. based on or having (esp. praiseworthy) principles of behavior.

Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, 1998.

“These are my principles. If you don’t like them, I have others.”

Groucho Marx

Introduction

While this book addresses some serious issues, it’s not overly serious or else depression might set in. Now is not the time to panic, but the truth is that a strange, weird assortment of leftists, socialists, “progressives” (i.e. those too cowardly to call themselves liberals), and jihadists are doing their best to destroy America and ruin the world in the process. Some are doing so intentionally, others inadvertently. However, to stand on a street corner shouting about this would only draw stares and questions about your sanity. In politics and public policy, the best strategy is humor that highlights the folly of one’s opponents. This book attempts—in a mildly humorous vein—to illustrate that principled conservatism offers the right ideas that can revitalize America. This is especially so because opposition to such ideas does not hold up to close scrutiny. But a principled conservative understands human nature and how emotions, repeated (but wrong) mantras, and wishful thinking can cause well-meaning people to embrace bad ideas.

When looking at the nature of public policy issues confronting America in the 21st century, I am often perplexed why the vast majority of all Americans are not aligned with conservative political principles. Even though self-described conservatives consistently outnumber liberals two-to-one in opinion polls, this does not translate into consistent electoral success for conservative candidates. But I am used to political frustration, being a distinct, singular, and often overlooked minority: a Republican Jew.<sup>1</sup>

Sharing conservative political views does not of course mean reaching the same conclusion on every public policy issue. It does mean we should start from a set of fundamental principles that would help us reach a consensus in many areas of public policy and at least guide one's thinking in other areas. For those claiming to be independents or traditional liberals, the heart of the matter is that they really do not understand what it means to be a principled conservative.

This book seeks to remedy this shortcoming and reclaim the moral high ground on the basic principles that should guide public policy matters in 21st century America for those who consider themselves to be principled conservatives. Twenty-first century Americans should be proud to say "I am a principled conservative" and for all to understand precisely what this means, from political campaigns to social conversations. From tee-shirts to bumper stickers to Facebook pages, perhaps in the near future to be labeled "PC" would become a positive short-hand for "principled conservative" versus "politically correct." I understand the present reality that the brand name of conservatism took a beating of sorts in the first decade of the 21st century. This book does not attempt to dissect why or if such criticisms were always valid. I do submit, however, that part of the problem is a lack of clear communication and consistency of principles.

There is no denying that negative branding of conservatism is attributable in part to the predominant mainstream media liberal bias. Think about how conservatives are usually portrayed in the mainstream media: we always want to "turn the clock back" (presumably to oppress women and minorities); we favor big business over the working man; we seek military spending expansion to help defense contractors; we are intolerant of different cultures and civilizations; we are anti-science; we hate gays and lesbians; we are anti-intellectual; anti-feminist; etc. All these perceptions are gross distortions of reality and often downright wrong. Anyone who reads this book with an open mind, while not necessarily agreeing with every principle and conclusion, will better understand the actual principled conservative vision for 21st century America. It is also hoped that many will contrast it favorably to the prevailing and predominant liberal mind-set in the media.

The reader may have noticed in this brief introduction that the terms liberal and conservative have already been thrown around as though everyone knows their precise definition. While this book does not attempt to create a "new and improved" brand name for conservatism, I do assert that the historically astute reader will notice that the principled conservative in 21st century America is closer to the traditional 20th century liberal than today's self-proclaimed liberal or "progressive." This is not a new observation. Ronald Reagan summarized it concisely when he stated "I didn't leave the Democratic Party, it left me." Today's principled conservative—consistent with yesteryear's traditional liberal—is interested in preserving individual liberty and promoting freedom in all countries. In contrast, today's self-proclaimed liberal is often pretty darn close to socialist in domestic policy, and in the foreign policy arena is hopelessly addicted to the United Nations and making peace with tyrants at any cost to avoid military conflict. Liberals too, of course, have problems with a negative brand name. At present many have reverted to calling themselves "progressives," wrapping themselves in positive early 20th century initiatives like banning child labor (good) while ignoring progressivism's obsession with social engineering and big government (bad). I would point out that conservatives are proud enough to be called what we are. We are not running and hiding as are liberals from their justifiably unpopular philosophy. But there is of course a strong reason for this; conservative principles are in line with what a vast majority of Americans believe. In contrast, liberals/progressives constantly have to play a shell game to hide their true views and long-term intentions, knowing them to be widely unpopular. We hear them rail a lot about "special interests" that prevent their social engineering dreams from becoming a reality. Perhaps "utopians" would be a better term for them? However, this book attempts to lay out the principled conservative vision, not to sell socialism to the masses. We'll leave that task to President Obama.

This book does not aim to merely provide a list of conservative principles, but to clarify key principles and explain how they can be applied to contemporary public policy issues. The underlying conservative principles girding this discussion are certainly not brand new insights by the author. Rather, they build upon basic conservative political principles such as the following:

□ All individuals yearn for and deserve individual liberty, political freedom, and the right to retain the fruits of their labor for their family;

- Government primarily exists to protect individual liberty and prevent encroachment of such, not to solve every social problem under the sun or moon;
- A permanent class of politicians enriching themselves in public service is never a good idea;
- Free trade across national borders leads to prosperity; conversely, open borders and unrestricted immigration leads to societal disaster;
- Since entrepreneurs create the most jobs in America, businesses should have the freedom to start with minimal government interference;
- Generally consumers make better choices than government dictates; hence government should almost never have a role in determining or influencing individual consumer purchase decisions;
- On private matters such as family, sex, etc., the government should usually just leave us alone;
- The free enterprise system is the most productive supplier of human needs and economic justice;
- All individuals are entitled to equal rights, justice and opportunities, and they should assume their responsibilities as citizens in a free society;
- Fiscal responsibility and budgetary restraints must be exercised at all levels of government because citizens demand accountability and results, not just platitudes and good intentions;
- The federal government must preserve individual liberty by observing constitutional limitations;
- Peace is best preserved through a strong national defense; and,
- Government should protect freedom of worship of all faiths, and while not endorsing or establishing any official religion, should not be anti-religion.

Besides embracing classical liberal notions of liberty and freedom and the use of government to protect those freedoms, the principled conservative is also a practical realist—understanding of human nature and highly skeptical of utopian schemes to perfect humanity or of the government’s capability to solve social problems. While the above statements sound like good common sense, they stand in stark contrast to how many American liberals/progressives view the world in the 21st century.

This book builds upon these principles for a starting point in analyzing important issues America faces today and for the remainder of the 21st century. If the reader starts from a socialist, class-based Marxist/leftist perspective, she will find little to like in the above principles. But after we discard that thankfully extremely tiny minority of misguided fools, I ask the moderate, the independent, or the self-proclaimed “mainstream liberal” to consider how closely some of the above principles might be consistent with your own world view. Read the rest of this book with an open mind and consider the different public policy conclusions usually reached when starting from such principles. For those self-proclaimed conservatives, do not assume that you already know every conclusion that will be reached. In some areas, this book challenges what is often portrayed as the appropriate conservative position. I suspect there are some things in this book with which self-professed liberals/progressives will agree, and with which self-professed conservatives will disagree. I do so not to gain favor with my liberal friends and gain admission to their cocktail parties, but to be truer to the vision of a principled conservative. My aim is not to be deliberately provocative, but to analyze and synthesize what should be the standing ground of the principled conservative. I do not attempt to reach a moderate position simply to achieve political consensus. And it is acknowledged that on some policy issues, principled conservatives may arrive at different policy recommendations because the principles do not yield a precise answer to every policy question that exists. The hope is that they do offer guidance and direction on many critical issues. For example, if a core principle is that government spending (absent a world war!) generally helps only a small number of individuals and firms who receive government contracts without spurring growth in private sector employment, you are less likely to be enthusiastic about an economic stimulus package than someone who believes the government can create jobs by simply spending more money.

This book is also a very practical effort, which will not delve very heavily into political philosophy as compared to other recent efforts in this area.<sup>2</sup> This book is more of a primer. It is also understood that every principle

cannot be turned into immediate policy, given the normal course of political negotiations and compromises. For example, if the principled conservative believes that the government should not be in the business of subsidizing prices for sellers of consumer products, does that mean every price subsidy scheme ever devised by Congress gets repealed tomorrow or we go home crying? Of course not.

I firmly believe that America today at its heart is a centrist country, not easily definable in policy preferences as conservative or liberal. Some might even call it pragmatic—Americans like solutions and the “average person” doesn’t spend a lot of time having academic debates on political philosophy or the nature of man and the state. Political enthusiasm has always been about a compelling vision for the future. People generally do not take time away from work, family, recreation, etc., for bland or non-inspiring reasons. To succeed politically, conservatives must convince such folks that our ideas are an optimistic vision of the future that will result in better government, a strong economy, and a safe country. Conservative optimism may seem a contradiction to some, since conservatives typically view the world as it is (not as a possible utopia) and can easily come across as negative, cynical, and pessimistic. Perhaps that is the nature of being conservative, although conservatives who point to the relentless optimism and spirit of President Reagan would disagree. The reader may also note that while the principled conservative often stands at odds to what the current Democratic party believes in, it is also sometimes contrary to Republican party positions. The goal here is to stay consistent with these principles even though in some cases it means convincing your political friends that they are on the wrong path.

My purpose in writing this book is not to describe the history of the conservative movement in 20th century America, punch holes in every bit of liberal dogma, or give political advice for electoral “messaging.” Many others have written (or consulted) with far greater skill and insight on these matters than I profess to offer.

What I do offer is a fairly concise overview of a principled conservative vision for 21st century America that I believe will appeal to a wide range of individuals—especially those who give thoughtful attention to the big questions of our time (or at least wish to take a “time out” from the vast amounts of time we all spend following entertainment and/or sports, and the gossip surrounding those who participate). Such questions include:

- How can we obtain peace at home and abroad?
- How can we foster greater opportunities for success for our children?
- What does a fair society mean? Is it the same as “social justice?”
- What does it mean to be an American?
- Can a society of multiple religions and non-believers exist peacefully?

My hope is that many Americans of all political persuasions will find something compelling and agreeable for them in the world view of the principled conservative. It should be a uniting exercise and this is important because much is at stake in making America a more perfect union in the 21st century. As the world’s oldest and most successful self-governing democratic republic<sup>3</sup> it is in the interest of all Americans, and indeed all lovers of freedom around the world, to do everything in our power to ensure America’s success and continued existence into the next millennium.

While this introduction began on a very pessimistic note, now is not the time to abandon hope that things can be turned around. But it’s going to take a lot of persuasion and hard work and persistence. This book by no means has all the answers or even the most eloquent arguments. But, it does have a lot of things you can use to state your case and make sure you elect more principled conservatives to political office. Not the author per se, although I will consider hefty consulting and speaking engagements.

## Chapter 1

### Military might and foreign policy

Superior American military strength is always the best idea. It goes hand-in-hand with effective diplomacy to promote national security and peace. However, we must marginalize the United Nations.

Because we have an all-volunteer army, most Americans today have never served in the military. Hardly anyone particularly relishes the idea of being shot at, and few would profess to any special personal bravery.

However, it is difficult to imagine living in a prosperous American society in the 21st century without the protection of a strong military. Probably all but the most hard-line leftists would bemoan the importance of American military power. You would be hard-pressed to find a successful American politician to suggest that we don't need it. But if you press further there are some fundamental policy choices to be made under this state of affairs, choices that distinguish those who treat American military strength seriously versus those who merely give it lip service.

Conservatives are often stereotyped as militarist or war-mongering because we favor a strong military. This position is contrasted to touchy-feely liberals who love to ask "wouldn't we all be better off beating our swords into plowshares and living in peace and harmony?" Think about how much money we would save on military expenditures! But of course this dream of an earthly paradise has no basis in reality. We would not need a military if men and women were angels. That is not the case, however, because human perfection is contrary to human nature. Conservatives might be called cynical for simply accepting the fact that America must always be in a state of armed readiness for the protection of its citizens.

But this is not a cynical or pessimistic vision. American military might helps protect the freedom not only of Americans but many around the world. The principled conservative believes that the more people can live without fear of attack by hostile enemies, or a repressive totalitarian government, the more they will prosper and see the benefits of peace and prosperity over war. The principled conservative must always be the first to argue that without the safety and security of one's person and property, nothing else matters. It is a prerequisite to the pursuit of happiness, and must always be the highest priority of government. Such protection is basic to liberty and a clear measure of whether we would deem a government just or unjust:

"The first and chief design of every system of government is to maintain justice: to prevent the members of society from encroaching on one another's property, or seizing what is not their own. The design here is to give each one the secure and peaceable possession of his own property."<sup>4</sup>

The principled conservative understands that America would not exist in its current state without strong military protection. The most compelling case in the 20th century was prevailing in World War II over the militarist national socialism as practiced by Nazi Germany. In the aftermath of 9-11, fortunately there has not been a series of repeated successful terrorist attacks on American soil precisely because of our military might. Whether that can continue remains unseen, but to those who suggest dropping our guard, the principled conservative would politely inquire as to what planet they are living on? The only folks who should be pushing for a lackadaisical approach to national defense are jihadists (and other enemies of America) or Americans who have a societal suicide wish.<sup>5</sup>

However, we cannot simply leave things with the premise that American military might is important. Even very liberal politicians will say the same thing, even if their understanding of what this means and how to use it in practice are much different from the principled conservative approach.

Engagement in armed conflict should never be taken lightly, but neither should it be abhorred at all costs when the alternatives are worse (and options must include preemptive war).

Many recent political debates have focused on the appropriate uses of American military might. Is preemptive (or preventive) war acceptable? Can the U.S. invade a sovereign country to fight terrorism without an open invitation from the prevailing government and/or authorization from the United Nations? Conservatives tend to poke fun at liberals with the jab that liberals are for a necessary war—they just oppose whatever war is on the table for consideration at any given time. But this runs the risk of making conservatives seem eager for war. Even with advanced technology and sophisticated techniques to minimize collateral damage, war is brutal for both the combatants and civilians. It is never to be taken or pursued lightly. The principled conservative must acknowledge these costs. We are not opposed to diplomacy or to carefully weighing all options short of a military intervention. And if an intervention is warranted, planning must be prudently brilliant in order to both minimize the loss of American soldiers and civilian casualties. Indeed, the two basic Monday-morning quarterbacking policy arguments over the Bush Administration's decision to initiate war in Iraq are: 1) was military intervention necessary? and 2) was there a comprehensive plan in place to ensure success during and after the military conflict? The principled conservative position should be that a preemptive war is sometimes

regrettably necessary. Not often, not usually, but it should not be ruled out unilaterally. Thus, while reasonable principled conservatives could reach the opposite policy conclusion on whether the Iraq war was a necessary preemptive war, we would stand united in opposition to those who argue that preemptive or preventive war is never necessary. While President George W. Bush may not have been the greatest articulator of the doctrine, the principled conservative must point out that without the option of preemptive war in the 21st century, the benefits of American military might well be under-utilized or utilized too late—all to the detriment of freedom and safety.

Since war is never to be taken lightly but rather always considered with regret and sadness, it bears repeating that the principled conservative does not seek war. We do understand the terrible costs of war in both human misery and enormous government expenditures. It is not the way we wish things to be, but it is sometimes necessary. What the principled conservative can say is that by having the military option always available, as part of diplomacy, we may in fact avoid the escalation of conflicts and potentially nip problems in the bud before they develop into a full-scale war.

The contortions and reflexive gagging of some on the issue of preemptive war is perplexing because it's likely that 90+ percent of all Americans would agree with the sentiments Clemenza expressed in *The Godfather*:

“You know, you gotta stop them at the beginning. Like they should have stopped Hitler at Munich, they should never let him get away with that, they was just asking for trouble.”

Today, as we face the specter of countries that are harboring and supporting terrorists who intend to do great harm to Americans and citizens of other western democracies, it would appear to be societal suicide to sit around and wait for attacks before taking action. The principled conservative should point out that to dither and debate over whether preemptive wars are sometimes necessary is an exercise in mental masturbation that the nation can ill afford. The debate should simply be on the merits of whether a particular preemptive war option should be pursued.

#### American Weapons and Personnel Must Always be the Best

Another ongoing policy debate over the American military is how much we need to spend and what to spend it on to successfully defend American interests around the world. The political debate over resources needed to protect and fight has almost become a parody. Conservatives typically assert that liberals want to kill off every expensive new weapons program (especially missile defense) no matter the benefits, content to fight each new war with the technology of the previous war. Liberals typically pull up the Eisenhower “military-industrial complex” speech on YouTube® and warn of the dangers of throwing money away to satisfy defense contractors and the Pentagon budget.

But what to fight with is a fundamental question and one where the principled conservative should boldly proclaim a better vision of the future. Conservatives, despite the philosophy of preserving and conserving the best elements of a civilized society, eagerly embrace the benefits of science and technology where they can build a better and safer society. What better example than military weapons and defense technology?

Before we go down this road, it must be acknowledged that some will dredge up the charge of conservatives being enamored of a Star Wars-type universe of high technology warfare.<sup>6</sup> This is not the vision we seek. We seek a safer society where human life can be better protected with less risk to civilians and our fighting men and women. This goal can best be achieved via superior weapons technology, as opposed to the leftist notion of arms control, disarmament, and a “nuclear-free” world. The principled conservative should boldly point out that the concept of arms control and related themes is an utterly foolhardy endeavor; it is the foreign policy equivalent to domestic policy arguments to restrict guns. Given that criminals always seem to wind up getting guns from the black market, what rational person thinks that a totalitarian regime will disarm in the interests of world peace? So why do some argue that America should start destroying its nuclear stockpiles at the earliest opportunity and encourage other nations to do likewise? Yet these arguments are made and conservatives are portrayed again as uncaring, as if we would actually like countries to be nuked by any particularly destructive weapons, nuclear or otherwise.

The principled conservative is not in love with weapons or the need to have them. Indeed, the protection is pursued reluctantly but out of necessity. Since the protection is needed, the two overwhelming objectives should be to have far more than any other nation, and have technology that far outclasses any other nation on earth. It may not be a perfect state of affairs, but it is reality. Unless the free and democratic protect themselves, rights can be usurped. And to reiterate, we live on the planet earth, not an Eden or utopia.

Further, we must realize that America is in fact the world's policeman and the world is better off for this role. Once this is understood, the question about how to protect freedom and how to spend our defense budget is clearer. Although this is not to suggest it is always obvious as to what types of weapons systems are needed. We know there will always be military infighting and legitimate policy debates over the merits of competing weapons systems. We can never know in advance if the general who argues for a new and bold fighting innovation is a visionary, an utter fool or somewhere in between. But conservatives can posit some guiding principles.

First, new technology must always be embraced and fully exploited. Nowhere is this better illustrated than the area of missile defense. Perhaps the greatest threat is from a rogue totalitarian state or terrorist groups (obviously in many cases aided and abetted by rogue states). It is interesting that while some like to bash conservatives as being anti-science, it is often the same crowd who seem to constantly and pessimistically expect that science will never lead to an effective missile defense system. But just look how wrong they have been in light of the technical advances in missile defense even in the short time since President Reagan promoted the concept in the 1980's (naturally derisively dubbed "Star Wars" by many liberals). The principled conservative should point out that common sense dictates that the highest national defense priority should be against the greatest risk—missile attack. And yes, this includes developing weapons for use in outer space. If that is the best way to develop a missile defense, strike capability and/or destruction of enemy communications, we would be fools not to pursue it vigorously.

Air and naval superiority will continue to be critical, meaning that improvements in planes and ships should generally be pursued, including maintenance of existing fleets and squadrons. It is hard to imagine such forces becoming unnecessary in the foreseeable future. Sure, some should be built at a greater rate than others, but to cut promising models for current savings only to be caught short-handed in a future conflict would also be a foolhardy strategy.

The focus on technology should not overlook the human element and the noble calling of those who serve in the military. They are heroes and should always be respected as such. Right now, the volunteer armed forces meet national defense needs. Ironically, most Americans benefit as free riders from those who put their life on the line; the rest of us debate military strategy from a safe distance. Does that mean principled conservatives should call for a return to the draft? After all, mandatory military service, including remaining in the active reserves until age 45, has been cited as a major factor in the tremendous economic growth and innovation in Israel.<sup>7</sup> However, there are far too many downsides to that policy for America, especially for the principled conservative who abhors mandates and "forced volunteerism." But the principled conservative view is to make military service as attractive as possible, via existing scholarships and continued care given to the quality of military life, and letting the individual decide whether to serve. We must never again have any qualms about making military service as important and prestigious as possible. For example, consistent with the Supreme Court's thinking and Congressional legislation, no college campus that receives any federal aid should ever be allowed to deny the opportunity for military recruitment on campus. While conservatives cannot clean up the rampant collegiate faculty knee-jerk socialism in one swoop (that will probably require the retirements of many aging radical baby boomers), this is an important step. It is a simple principle that all young people deciding whether they wish to serve should have access to all the relevant information in making such a decision. And maybe learning more about how America's military protects freedom around the world, versus the America (and Israel)-bashing from so many leftist faculty, wouldn't be such a bad thing either!

The United Nations (U.N.) should play no role in American decision-making over the use of armed force<sup>8</sup>; further, America needs to put some competitive pressures on the U.N. and also distance herself from this misguided institution.

Quite simply, the principled conservative says the U.S. Constitution already settles the decision of whether and when America engages in a military conflict, not the U.N. We will not explore a detailed analysis of whether Presidents have properly followed the war powers provisions of the Constitution in numerous instances (they have not) or whether authorizations of military force (versus outright “war”) are acceptable under the Constitution. The bottom line is that under the Constitution it must always be based on actions of the President with oversight and approval by Congress, not a foreign government or organization—even one where America maintains a membership card. The principled conservative does recommend a refocus on Constitutional provisions and is inclined to disfavor undeclared wars, police actions and resolutions authorizing the use of force. Some have argued that the formal declaration of war is an obsolete or outmoded constitutional process that should be ignored. But we do so at great peril to the Constitution and the democratic process. The phrase “war” conjures up the seriousness of the enterprise and the necessity of gaining the acceptance of the American people via their elected representatives in Congress. We have seen the harmful consequences when military conflict is pursued and continued without the overwhelming support of the American people. Hence, the principled conservative wants an open and serious debate on such matters, throwing out the challenge that if the declaration of war is not relevant to modern times, then we should amend the Constitution to institute a better process. It should be embarrassing and unacceptable that every sustained and lengthy military intervention since World War II (Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Bosnia, Korea) has been pursued absent a formal declaration of war. The principled conservative says either follow the Constitution or fix it via amendment, but don’t ignore it:

“The principled constitutional interpreter must bite the bullet, swallow hard, and be willing to say that much of our nation’s actual practice with respect to the power to declare war in fact has been unconstitutional. So much the worse for our nation’s practice.<sup>9</sup>

It is apparent that one of the main lines of debate over wars in the 21st century will be the scope of American autonomy versus international bodies like the U.N. The principled conservative has an opportunity to clearly explain how our principles resolve this matter constitutionally, with common sense, with American uniqueness, and in the best interests of our country. If we do not make the case, no one else will. America is an exceptional country that will continue to operate as a world power and world’s policeman with the support and advice from like-minded countries, but never beholden to the U.N. Now some might argue that this pushes America into a role not contemplated by and indeed far beyond constitutional authority. And didn’t we just argue above about respecting the constitutional procedures for declaring war? But, the Constitution provides the power for the common defense and the facts of the 21st century are that the common defense of America requires America to be the world’s policeman. The two oceans and distances no longer protect America from foreign encroachment.

Speaking of the U.N., justifiably a favorite target of conservative wrath, bold changes in America’s relationship with the U.N. are in order. The principled conservative believes the U.N.’s problems are essentially not correctable in its current state.<sup>10</sup> The principled conservative would favor an association of western democracies, a competing organization to the U.N. where admission is limited to those countries that meet the basic criteria of a rule of law, elected government, individual freedom, and free trade. Once such an organization is established and operational, the U.S. and fellow association countries can determine the benefits of whether to continue their U.N. membership. One suspects that this type of organizational competition will motivate the U.N. to mend some of their more egregious habits, starting with their gratuitous bashing of America and Israel. The principled conservative should not hesitate to point out that the U.N. monster was brought to life by FDR at Yalta in exchange for Russian membership, leaving Eastern Europe to suffer under Soviet enslavement. Hardly a moralistic start! The principled conservative observes that the U.N. cannot effectively police the world and usually fails miserably in this task. Often even its relief efforts, while laudatory in theory, are diverted or wasted in practice. Yet some have almost a religious-like faith in the U.N. While conservatives are bashed for wanting to fight Star Wars in outer space, the U.N. has become the magical, earth-based United Federation of Planets from Star Trek. Anyone who denies we should move in this direction versus maintaining sovereign nations is derided as a backwards thinking Luddite by the U.N.’s fan club.

Should the principled conservative object to the peaceful nations of the world organizing themselves together for common interests? Of course not. The concept of an association of western democracies suggested above would be such an effort.<sup>11</sup> But would such an organization eventually evolve into world government or a



governing organization like the unelected European Union? No, this could only happen with the consent of the governed, a right the principled conservative always preserves at any cost. We must follow the U.S. Constitution and not surrender national sovereignty. If at some future point there is a compelling reason to grant governance powers of some degree to such an association of democracies, or even to formally remake it into a governmental body, here's a simple process to follow: put it to the American people via a Constitutional amendment. The objection of the difficulty of amending the Constitution is a vapid argument. If something as hypothesized above is such a wonderful idea, then why wouldn't two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states support an amendment? This is also a compelling way to demonstrate that the Constitution is a living, working, breathing document—not in the way that some liberals fantasize—but in a democratic matter. It can change with the times—but with the consent of the governed, not by ceding national sovereignty to any unelected organization.

To gain momentum and enthusiasm for such an association of western democracies (which should be a very prestigious group that every country should aspire to join), the principled conservative would certainly support the following membership criteria that best describes the essence of what it means to be a western democracy:

- Individual liberty;
- Political democracy—meaning elected, representative government;
- Rule of law;
- Liberal capitalism and free trade;
- Human rights;
- Cultural freedom but belief in European cultural heritage emanating from the renaissance and ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>12</sup>

Being the world's policeman does not make America an empire in any traditional or rational use of the word.<sup>13</sup>

Some will object to the association of western democracies concept and the world policeman role, arguing that America will be viewed as an arrogant and militarist empire, only willing to surround herself with “yes man” countries. This will allegedly hurt our ability to protect national interests.

This is a dangerously misguided viewpoint. It is the foreign policy version of the leftist domestic proclivity to hate the rich and successful. Since other countries will despise the U.S. for being powerful and rich, some suggest we shouldn't hurt their feelings but instead should apologize and try to be less rich and powerful. And apparently the only way to do so is to take our lumps at the U.N. and not impose our style of government or way of life on others. Simply keep paying those U.N. dues, and keep those foreign aid checks coming! The principled conservative believes we do not have to apologize because America is a force for good in the world, and most enslaved people around the globe would (and often do) die to obtain the type of freedom we often take for granted. Promoting a competitive alternative to the U.N. and downplaying the U.N. is not a particularly radical concept or difficult question. It's almost a no-brainer. And it can also get America out of the business of pressuring a democracy like Israel to cut a “peace deal” with a terrorist state that can hardly be expected to adhere to the terms of any legal agreement.

The more fundamental philosophical question is whether it is possible to be a benign, enlightened democratic republic while maintaining a powerful military and a world police role. The principled conservative, being a student of history, should examine this carefully because it is apparent few such nations have ever existed or existed for very long.

But America does not conquer other countries. Take our recent actions in Iraq as an example. The U.S. literally came, saw, overthrew a totalitarian government, helped the country transition to the post-Saddam era, learned the hard realities of why a counter-insurgency strategy is necessary, and then ramped down and pretty much left. Leaving behind the people of Iraq as the only Muslim-majority democracy in that region of the world. Was that cultural imperialism? The principled conservative would say it gave the Iraqi people an opportunity for freedom, while removing a tyrant who not only mistreated and mass murdered his own people but constantly

threatened (or in some cases like Kuwait actually harmed) the peace and security of other countries. Whether that war was justified or in the best interests of America to pursue is beyond the purview of this book, as is cataloguing the many factual contradictions of the leftist “blood for oil” conspiracy fanatics. The point is that after an overwhelming military victory, America did not act as an empire.

America does not interfere with peaceful democratic countries or wage wars with them. One never picks up the paper or reads an online news headline about America going to war with Canada, Australia, or Brazil. It’s just not going to happen. Democracies rarely if ever go to war against each other. No doubt part of the explanation is that when political leaders are accountable to the electorate this forms a powerful incentive not to do something rash and stupid. In contrast, countries which America has engaged in armed conflict in the past 50 years were not exactly bastions of democracy and freedom. Our message is clear—boundaries and sovereignty are only encroached when another country steps out of line. Contrary to how an empire would operate, we do not demand tribute; conversely, we give out foreign aid and lots of it. We do not pick the governors. The elections are up to the people of the countries, as they have been in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those governments are by no means perfect, but are so much better than their predecessors. Yes, America is a unique world power, but is not an empire. We are also willing to share world police duties with other western democracies. Such shared partnerships for peace and prosperity further demonstrate how America’s actions could not be further removed from that of traditional empire-building.

The principled conservative does acknowledge that we would like other countries to adopt our style of government and the basic tenets of our civilization. We need not be shy to say that, while we respect other cultures, we do think our way of life is better. The principled conservative truly believes in American values and will not apologize for promoting them around the world. At this point in history, it is indeed the role and responsibility of America to promote Western civilization.

This American role as policeman and leader of Western civilization and western democracies will guide many foreign policy decisions as to alliances. For example, what better friends to celebrate and support than the recently resurrected democratic republics of Eastern Europe, countries whose friendship and sympathy to American interests have been forged by their bitter enslavement by Communism for forty years? Conversely, to expect friendly and normal diplomatic relations with countries like Iran and North Korea, totalitarian terror states, gives them an aura of credibility and legitimacy they do not deserve. Can or should America in its interest support democratic revolutions in such countries? In the name of freedom, absolutely! The principled conservative find it ironic that so many liberals raised on the four freedoms of FDR consistently reject the concept that we should pull out all stops to make those things happen in non-free or slave societies. Perhaps part of this hesitation is that it would legitimize the thought that America is an exceptional country and that our way of government and freedom is right. To reiterate, the principled conservative vision is that you are damned right it’s the best way and it’s the only way if we hope to actually achieve world peace, as well as dignity and freedom for every human being on the planet.

Diplomacy has its place, but only if backed by military strength and strong principles; don’t expect successful negotiations with tyrants.

The principled conservative should not rashly criticize diplomacy, just the ill-conceived and/or naive use of it. And this will require several fundamental shifts in diplomacy, starting with the basic concept that America and other western democracies simply do not need to respect the opinions and sovereignty of totalitarian police states. Such states have forfeited their rights to such respect.

The “no respect to tyrants” doctrine<sup>14</sup> means America promises no respect for sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs. To the contrary, America should make clear that we support freedom-loving people everywhere, and in an unelected totalitarian police state (which as of this writing would clearly include North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Burma/Myanmar, Syria and many others) we make no apology for offering aid and support to their internal dissidents, explicit and implicit, overt and covert. We will not just give lip service to freedom. The principled conservative American vision should be that we are the international beacon of freedom. We also must separate the popular culture issues from the individual liberty issues. America is not “exporting”—at least through direct government action—our popular culture. Individuals around the world should be free to

determine whether they wish to purchase the entertainment coming out of Hollywood, but our government should not care whether they purchase that particular product (although we do encourage people around the world to purchase a lot of American products of some type). We certainly believe entertainment companies should be free through their corporate resources to market their products worldwide. But what the U.S. government should be solely in the business of exporting is a simple but brilliant concept in the history of humanity—the democratic republic that features a rule of law, free markets, religious freedom, and individual liberties. Are we making a value judgment that this is the best form of government? You bet your sweet ass we are! Is that a little conceited? No more so than asserting that Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player ever or that Tiger Woods was the greatest golfer (or womanizer). The performances speak for themselves. This is the best model of government and society and if America doesn't promote it, it is not going to happen through osmosis. And sometimes it is going to take armed force and some mess to overthrow the tyrants. There are also plenty of “carrot” approaches that the principled conservative would support. For example, why not a simple rule of only providing traditional U.S. foreign aid to countries that are members of an association of western democracies? It would not only save billions of dollars, but would be consistent with American values and not cause the taxpayer to feel the taste of bile when reading about billions given to countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia who are only our “friends” because they're not quite as bad as Iran. This does not mean we cannot pursue specific agreements with such countries that might involve infusion of American resources, but it should only be done so in our national interest, with great caution, and not with the sense that any such countries are “entitled” to foreign aid. And if we still want to spend some of what is saved, funnel it to democratic resistance leaders and organizations in totalitarian states!

This principled conservative vision, rather than being overly somber and pessimistic, acknowledges that through our actions we can achieve results (not merely good intentions) that actually make the world a better place. We care deeply about people living in terrorist totalitarian states. If we could do it tomorrow, we would free them all, because as discussed above the principled conservative is not afraid to make a value judgment about the best form of government and laws for a prosperous and free society. While we cannot realistically free them all in one swoop, we can pursue a foreign policy dedicated to their freedom. This point bears repeating: if America cannot promote these values (including the many benefits of membership in the association of western democracies), then nothing less than our civilization is doomed. Many Western European political leaders may not understand this, but we as Americans must be relentless in promoting the basic tenets of democratic republics and the celebration of the achievements of Western civilization. (And at this point, America-hating leftists may be asked to leave the room—perhaps to try living in one of their favorite totalitarian states for a few years.)

How does America relate to the “Muslim world” (or for that matter any culture that doesn't share our values)?

Will showing no respect to tyrants be labeled as saber-rattling that will make the Muslim world nervous and thus be bad for America? Does diplomacy in the traditional sense among fellow western democracies help us with the difficult decisions, understandings, and concessions that are needed to get along with the non-democratic Muslim world? The principled conservative can say that, with all due respect, we should not as a country turn the concept of right and wrong on its head. It really is not that complicated in terms of principles. We respect freedom of religious belief or non-belief. When others are harmed, however, that crosses the line.

So are we saying that a religion-based government or theocracy is a bad idea? In a word, yes. Is that anti-Muslim? It depends on how some interpret Islam. If a Muslim embraces living in a pluralistic society of freedom, including freedom of worship, that individual's rights will be protected. However, if a Muslim believes that the only legitimate form of government is an Islamic theocracy, well then, Houston, we've got a problem! The principled conservative points out that history and experience is on the side of individual liberty and freedom of worship, whereas Islamic Sharia law and a state based on such an official religion leads to religious intolerance, strife, war, terrorism, etc. It simply doesn't work, it is intolerably oppressive to freedom (especially that of women), and America should oppose such states with the same force and resolve that we oppose communism or any form of totalitarianism. We should call it what it is, Islamic totalitarianism or Islamofacism.<sup>13</sup> Does this mean America should immediately invade any such country to liberate the people? Of course not. While such action would rarely be beyond the military capability of the U.S., we must always be

prudent and cautious about using military force for the reasons discussed earlier. Eastern Europe was eventually liberated from Soviet communism, but it took 40 years and was achieved via military strength, economic strength, and diplomacy—fortunately not a direct armed confrontation. This is a policy judgment call on which principled conservatives may disagree in applying principles to specific cases (as noted earlier in discussing the Iraq war). But we all support the desire that all people should be free. The best way to achieve it may vary by country and region, and may require a host of strategies—even some seemingly contradictory. It will be trial and error. The principled conservative acknowledges there is no easy way about this, but asks America to hold firm to this vision.

But what of those who argue that certain true adherents really do want to live under the radical Islamic totalitarian terror state? If we would just leave them alone, would they leave us alone? Sadly, this is pretty deluded thinking given the history of terrorist attacks and nature of Islamic revolutionary thought. All the evidence, all the doctrinal writings, and all the harsh experience suggest they seem very much set on making the whole world Islamic versus an “I’ve got my space, you’ve got yours” attitude.<sup>14</sup> And just ask the state of Israel about the amount of tolerance for different religions even among the “moderate” Arab countries.

We must be unequivocal that this religion presents unique challenges because tens of millions of its adherents believe in a radical form. America and indeed the entire civilized world is not in a war with “terror” in a general or abstract sense, but in a war with radical Islam. We must acknowledge and declare it so. And by the way, this means that in pursuing the war we can accept principles of ethnic/racial and religious profiling of potential suspects. One hopes that by the mid-point of the 21st century, we will no longer be vigorously searching grandmothers of Scandinavian descent in airports.

Of course, America would be more popular without being the world’s policeman, but would we rather be unpopular and alive or popular and dead?

This response may sound glib, but it is a serious matter because avoiding or surrendering the world policeman role would likely mean winning really only a minor popularity contest while risking our very lives and the future of free people around the world. Radical Islamists will want us dead in either scenario, so why make it easier for them? Further, unless one enjoys marching in futile celebrity-organized protests against foreign atrocities without any hope of resolving them and the only promise being that of a sternly worded U.N. resolution, we must reject the inaction option. Rather, we should aggressively lobby other like-minded countries to contribute their fair share to a common world police force, so that it is viewed (rightly so) as a mission of western democracies for world peace, not an American-only enterprise. This can be factored into the association of western democracies organizational membership fee, so that liked-minded countries will be in the fight together with America rather than merely receiving a free benefit from the American security blanket. A robust force would also make it possible to respond quickly to crises around the world and not have the usual concerns about over-extension of American forces or fighting more than one war at a time. The principled conservative acknowledges that we are a global village and global economy, hence the need for a global police force. It could not be any worse, or less competent, than U.N. peacekeepers. Besides, who really likes those stupid baby blue U.N. helmets anyway, a color that only looks good on the Carolina Tar Heels or San Diego Chargers.

Would America be more popular if we treated terrorists differently after their capture? No experience to date has indicated this would be the case. Rather than worrying about world popularity, let us do what is fair and consistent with our values while also protecting the American people. Admittedly, the issue of proper adjudication for captured terrorists is a tricky issue because these terrorists are not soldiers of a foreign government fighting a traditional war who would be accorded P.O.W. status and not be subject to interrogation. They are committing individual crimes, but as part of a terrorist conspiracy that wages war on America. Since those captured are usually non-U.S. citizens, the principled conservative must conclude that to accord such non-citizens the right to a trial in U.S. civilian courts does not make sense and is certainly not required under the Constitution. While military tribunals may not be the perfect venue, they are far superior compared to bringing such terrorists onto American soil and treating them the same as the petty criminal who robs a local bank.

But it is fair to ask the principled conservative, since we do claim to be strong purveyors of American values, about how to deal with the issue of interrogation and potential torture of terrorists and terror suspects. The

principled conservative must oppose physical torture as being contrary to American values. While it is mighty tempting to allow a terrorist to be pummeled with a baseball bat to yield information about a pending plot that could result in the deaths of one's family members and friends, we must be content that the military tribunals can impose the ultimate penalty of death. America is simply not in the business of hooking up electrodes to testicles; that and other horrific business as regularly practiced in totalitarian police states should never be acceptable in a democratic republic. The principled conservative does not expect this stance to make America less hated in terrorist circles, but we support this because it is consistent with our principles. However, we do not have a problem with psychologically aggressive interrogation. If the CIA wishes to "break" terrorists by making them listen to the collected works of Shakespeare, or more low-brow entertainment such as the Porky's trilogy or gansta rap, we should not lose a minute's sleep.

Does all of this foreign involvement contradict the traditional conservative desire for smaller government?

After considering the discussion of a huge military and pro-active foreign relations including a very active association of western democracies, one might object that the principled conservative is promoting a direction that will result in a tremendous expenditure of government funds and huge bureaucracies needed for military might and diplomatic success. These strategies would appear contrary to conservatives who favor smaller government and less American entanglement in other countries' affairs.

But the principled conservative would truly be a rigid and unrealistic curmudgeon to suggest that all government everywhere is too large and must be shrunk. We don't think all government is necessarily bad. Nor do we think that highly skilled leaders and managers in the public sector are not to be recruited, justly compensated, and recognized for accomplishments. This is, after all, a principled conservative vision for the future, not a radical libertarian viewpoint. Our articulated vision is that the federal government should do fewer things, but the things it does should be done extremely well and should be extremely well-funded. On national security, it is quaint and nostalgic to rhapsodize about a well-regulated militia preventing domestic terrorism versus a strong federal government. We must acknowledge as principled conservatives that Alexander Hamilton was right and Thomas Jefferson was wrong. A strong central government, with a strong national defense, is necessary for the nation's survival.

This is not to accept that every branch of the military is fine the way it is or that the FBI, CIA, and the Department of Homeland Security should be organized in the same manner forever. To the contrary, the principled conservative must always promote rigorous re-assessment and re-organization of critical government agencies to ensure that performance is met and taxpayer dollars are most efficiently used. While we embrace the function of national security, there are a number of reforms that can be considered. For example, given the joint coordination needed in modern warfare, the artificial distinctions of Army, Navy, and Air Force are anachronistic. While this doesn't mean we favor the elimination of excellent specialized forces such as the Marines or Navy Seals, in principle we have no problem moving towards a unified armed forces structure with a unified command. The principled conservative should not conserve artificial service distinctions that are no longer efficient simply because that's the way we've always done things.

Still, a traditionalist conservative might press the point that this does indeed mean large standing armed forces with tremendous costs. Yes, it does and there is no getting around this. In a perfect world—which the realistic person acknowledges never exists—we would not need this, but there is no turning back at this point. We need the protection. Is this compatible with a democratic republic? We are indeed going to find out, as we must make it work because there is no other way. But if one thinks in terms of a global village and a global economy and the need for a global police force, this concept makes a lot more sense. As noted earlier, it may be possible to allocate the policing burden among western democracies, and thereby limit most U.S. Armed Forces to actual military conflicts (which hopefully will be fewer and further apart) versus peacekeeping missions and police work. Further, having the necessary defense does not imply that America should be looking for a fight or engage in foolish international undertakings. The principled conservative is certainly skeptical of over-extending our forces and having our military go beyond fighting and policing to actually running a country. We must let freedom-loving people around the world understand their personal responsibility and ownership in their own fight for freedom. America will assist, but they must truly own it.

## Chapter 2

### Societal welfare at home

Principled conservatives do care about societal welfare in our own country; we just approach the problems differently and the potential solutions more realistically.

While the reader may concede that conservatives really care about defending the country, what about the common charge that conservatives simply don't care about the social welfare of the poorest members of American society? This view must be vigorously rejected. The principled conservative cares about everyone in society, but we simply question whether government can solve some or all of the social problems that cause suffering and poverty. Indeed, we point out that government policies have often made things worse. That being said, let us be clear that the 21st century principled conservative is not suggesting that America eliminate a social safety net and rely completely on private charity for helping those in need. It is in fact a balance. The debate should be not over the need for a safety net, but what it should be composed of and how it should operate.

The principled conservative champions personal responsibility, and abhors government policies that penalize the successful, frugal, and industrious while rewarding the spendthrift or financially irresponsible. This is apparent in the typical liberal versus conservative view of the recent housing bubble burst and its causes. The principled conservative believes that any government plan to encourage excessive borrowing or borrowing beyond one's means to own a home is a bad idea. There is no constitutional or human right to own a home versus renting. To say this is not to be cruel or unkind to people, but to promote policies that reward hard work, thrift, and savings, as well as avoiding government involvement in individual consumer purchase decisions. Yet, spurred on by well-meaning liberals, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac did just the opposite. It would take an entirely separate book to catalogue their many abuses and bad policies. But at the heart of it is the leftist assumption that for a bank to assess a borrower's credit-worthiness is somehow unfair and discriminatory. Perhaps in a socialist utopia money flows from banks to consumers like water with no questions asked. In the real world, such policies will drive both the bank and (eventually) the government to bankruptcy. Yet, so often liberals want us to look only at their good intentions, not the disastrous results of following their policy prescriptions.

What the principled conservative must do is reframe the question. How can we best meet the ultimate goal of creating a fair society? How can the government best promote positive social goals and encourage the creation of individual wealth?

First of all, we can acknowledge the safety net programs that do require taxes and a government bureaucracy to support. These are acceptable because experience—i.e. reality—has shown that the nation is too large and too impersonal to totally rely on private charity to meet these needs. Included in this area would be the safety net programs such as unemployment insurance, paid for by private employer and government contributions. This recognizes that we would rather support the individual who is “between jobs” as opposed to propping up or rescuing a failing business. In fact, what better example of the appropriate conservative focus on the individual versus the organization? Conversely, the principled conservative does not believe there is any business in America that is too big to fail; this will be explored in more detail in the next chapter as we consider who is really in love with large corporations.

But some on the Right would question whether conservative principles have been sold out for political expediency, especially in accepting the long-standing programs of retirement income support (Social Security) and health insurance for the elderly (Medicare). If we accept the government subsidization of retirement income and health insurance for seniors, does it also follow that the government literally owes someone a living plus a decent health insurance policy?

Should adults in society be paid a check from the federal government for simply not earning sufficient income in a particular year? Let's assume that the government defines sufficient income as the federal poverty level. Putting aside tax policy issues discussed in Chapter 4, a principled conservative believes there should never be a government guarantee of income. The problem is that the cost is too high, it winds up removing incentives to

work and be a productive member of society, and it stifles self-improvement. So as a starting point we must advocate the principle that the government owes no one a living. However, we should recognize charitable exceptions for the sick, infirm, elderly, severely disabled, mentally incapacitated, etc.

It's not the nature of entitlement programs that are always the problem—it's often the reluctance to ever tinker or fix them when they're obviously going astray.

The principled conservative acknowledges that while guaranteed income schemes should be rejected, some entitlement programs are justified as part of the social safety net. But just as private sector markets change over time, entitlement programs should never be “stuck in time” in terms of their operations and criteria. Take health care for example: it is unrealistic for most Americans to self-insure or pay out-of-pocket for medical expenses. Health insurance is a necessity, and government should help those less fortunate obtain it. The principled conservative should promote policies that provide choices from a range of available plans, with subsidies for the lowest income families. But we must always be innovative and never afraid to fix what isn't working. For example, Medicaid is largely a failure in many states because it pays health care providers so far below market rates that many decline to participate. It therefore has a stigma attached that it is not as good as a private health insurance plan. Medicaid is a perfect example of a legislative plan that looks great on paper but is bad in practice. The principled conservative is not afraid to go back to the drawing board. We would support elimination of all the current low-income health insurance programs, and offer subsidies for whatever type of private health insurance plan a low-income individual, couple or family wishes to purchase. The recently passed health care reform law unfortunately makes a greater mess of an already messed up system. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Social Security and Medicare are of course two huge social welfare entitlement programs that are considered both politically untouchable and simultaneously long-term guarantors of tremendous federal budget deficits. But for the principled conservative to accept their need is not to embrace socialism. For the governed to consent to be taxed or assessed a fee to pay for a program for the general welfare is a far cry from supporting the government taking over private enterprise or micro-managing business. Conceptually, supporting programs like Social Security and Medicare is no different than pooling resources (via taxes) to support police and fire services. Further, Social Security and Medicare pose less of a problem than other entitlement programs because they are open to all; everyone benefits in some manner, as everyone benefits in some manner from having police and fire services in a community.

But simply suggest reforming or modernizing Social Security and Medicare and some liberal blowhard will call conservatives to the mat for not caring. Apparently some things are unmentionable, such as citing an actuarial analysis demonstrating that the programs are going bankrupt. So do we just accept these programs as unchangeable political realities and move on? Of course not. What sort of crazy notion is it that an entitlement program once established can never be modified or reformed? We must practice, not just preach, that the principled conservative is a good government innovator versus being stuck in the past. We want to conserve what works, and reform what does not. That is all very well and good the reader might say, but witness the crash and burn of President George W. Bush's social security privatization proposal. Let's not let one political failure lose sight of the big picture, or the fact that good policy ideas are rarely ever approved the first or even second go-around. Every American should have a robust pension plan that they personally own and are completely vested. How do we get there? By focusing on choice, we can let Americans decide their range of social security investment options, in stark contrast to those who continue to assert that Americans are too stupid make these decisions. There are many possible political compromises. Perhaps the first portion of a plan can be guaranteed income, with variable income choices above that threshold. Since we understand that low-income individuals and families have the hardest time building a retirement nest-egg, we are naturally more concerned with protecting their more limited assets than a higher-income family willing to take more risk in the stock market on their retirement savings. This brief analysis obviously does not cover every potential policy option, but simply points to the principle that a mixed public/private pension policy should be the long-term goal. And yes, we must be willing to raise the retirement age because the average lifespan in America continues to increase. To continue to insist on 65 as the age of retirement is truly to be stuck in the past. Why not 70? Do

all these proposed reforms mean the principled conservative has surrendered to the social welfare state? No, we seek to reform it for the better and make it more like the wealth-building state.

Medicare is politically popular because all seniors are eligible, from the richest to poorest. This prevents it from being a poor second cousin like Medicaid, which as noted above is a poor person's program with chronic underfunding in key aspects and shrouded in social stigma.<sup>17</sup> By under-funding Medicaid, lawmakers expect health care providers to work for far less than the going rate for providing the professional care. In recent years, Medicare has undergone a similar fate as physicians' associations flock to Capitol Hill to lobby or genuflect to prevent the Medicare funding formula from causing a further decline in their pay. The result is usually a temporary fix that just kicks the ball forward a few yards without a fundamental solution. The principled conservative believes this is a problem because—unlike some on the Left—we don't think doctors are overpaid and we understand that if the government controls doctors' pay and how they practice medicine, guess what happens? Few bright people will want to go into medicine, leaving a huge supply problem and the opportunity to have a non-physician guess at your diagnosis. Naturally, this was not addressed in the Democrats' monstrosity of a health care reform law. Instead, the government is throwing 16-20 million more Americans into Medicaid. Real genius policymaking! An initial conservative reaction might be good riddance to big government and the physicians suckling at the teat—you've made your bed, now lie in it. But one of the fundamental mistakes for a principled conservative to make is to walk away from a complex public policy problem because we cannot fathom how the government ever got so involved in the first place. The principled conservative must take the common sense/realistic/let's roll up our sleeves and deal with it approach. Few adults have their grandparents or elderly parents living with them anymore, nor can they afford to pay the associated medical bills. So, we take things as they are but favor reform approaches to bring competition, common sense, and innovation to Medicare. It is interesting that the same people who argue for a progressive income tax will whine and moan about any Medicare reform plan that involves the richest seniors paying more. But in principle, this is the right way to go. We've already moved in this direction as people with higher income levels already pay higher Medicare Part B premiums.<sup>16</sup> We have no problem further moving in this direction so long as it is tied to appropriate reforms in the tax code discussed in Chapter 4. The principled conservative would put it as follows: we have no problem with charging Donald Trump or Warren Buffet more for his Medicare, provided that we did not tax him at a high marginal rate plus two or three more times on his initial income earned. And as noted above with Social Security, raising the Medicare eligibility age above 65 must also be a top priority. Realistically, these two Medicare reforms—having higher income beneficiaries pay more and raising the age of eligibility—are going to have the largest impact on making the system financially solvent and able to meet future coverage demands.

There is a lot of blather from the Left about how Obamacare has extended the fiscal life of Medicare. One of the savings is from the supposed "overpayments" to Medicare Advantage plans. Of course, this will lead these very popular plans to either reduce coverage or raise premiums. And the savings are at best modest, compared to the significant potential savings noted above. But it is typical that liberal politicians don't want to cut entitlements to the beneficiaries, even those who can afford it, but have no problem cutting funding to those providing the actual services under the entitlement. As noted, historically in Medicaid the underpayment for providers is the main reason for low provider participation in the program. It simply shows that, unlike principled conservatives, doctrinaire Leftists don't understand or don't care how markets work. You will also hear a lot in the coming years about the ethical obligations of doctors to provide care at whatever the government decides to pay them. This indeed is the road to serfdom.

How do we really ensure affordable housing, and help the homeless?

Turning from old age pensions and health care to the basic necessity of housing, what is the appropriate role of the government? Perhaps there is no more vivid symbol of want in an affluent society than the homeless. While it might seem a problem that mushrooms when a Republican is in the White House and then falls off the front pages when a Democrat is in the White House (hmmm?), the media blowing hot and cold on the matter for political reasons does not diminish our human and humane concern. The principled conservative wants to help solve the problem, but not via subsidies for street living or continuing past misguided housing policies.



Let's start with the visible problem of homeless individuals roaming the streets with garbage bags and shopping carts. Step one is to recognize there should be no right to roam aimlessly and sleep out on the streets on either private property or government property. (Although if someone wants to let a bunch of homeless people sleep on their private property, assuming zoning or nuisance laws are not violated, that's another matter). It is clearly an infringement on others' rights when you have to step over the homeless man sleeping under a tree while you're playing Frisbee with your kids in a local park. So in principle, all homeless individuals who don't have a temporary place to stay should be transported to homeless shelters, regardless of whether or not the individual wants to go. Is this an unacceptable restriction on civil liberty? No because the principled conservative, as stated above, does not consider it a civil liberty to sleep and urinate outside on someone else's private property, or public property. It is entirely appropriate for the government to remove the homeless to a different location. But before we are accused of heartlessness, consider the reality that most of the chronically homeless suffer from mental illness. Therefore, they should be treated for such and institutionalized if necessary. Because we believe in a fair society, the principled conservative is committed to raise what is needed in public and private funds to provide this treatment. There will be plenty of volunteer opportunities in providing such treatment and ample employment opportunities for mental health professionals. What about the homeless person who is not mentally ill but simply addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc.? Again, we support treatment, but with the caveat that if the individual cannot stay clean and stay off the streets, involuntary institutionalization and treatment must always remain an option.

But what about affordable housing for others who are simply unfortunate individuals or families who fall through the cracks of housing not due to mental illness or drug or alcohol abuse? Here the principled conservative aims to reform our housing policies to let the private market work to provide low-income housing. The 50-plus years of failed public housing programs are a tragic but teachable history lesson, indicating that private housing will do a lot better job. Section 8 housing vouchers as currently operated are not the way to go.<sup>17</sup> Social engineers are obsessed with putting low-income housing in every community, which makes little sense from an economic standpoint. What incentive is there for a housing developer to build or refurbish less expensive housing if they know the federal government is going to subsidize the purchaser to be able to pay a higher price? Further, it is pure patronizing paternalistic hubris for the government to worry about where people decide to live, so long as the only discrimination concerns whether one is able to pay the asking price. It's not the end of the world that there will always be more affluent neighborhoods versus more modestly priced neighborhoods and even some poor ones. The principled conservative does not believe there is a right to live any place one wants regardless of the ability to pay the going rate, no more than every American has a right to own a certain type of car or television set or refrigerator. We do support a robust housing market including low-income housing which we believe is easier for the private sector to create if all communities are safe and have good elementary and secondary school options. While it might take years to wean off housing vouchers, the ultimate goal is lower taxes so that people will have more disposable income in order to purchase housing.

Why is the principled conservative so down on American public housing policies? Because rarely has there been such an example of long-term high government expenditures with terrible outcomes to show for it. The bad outcomes were not just the crime-ridden, drug-infested high-rise public housing projects that eventually had to be torn down. There are also the policies that foster dependence on government rather than self-reliance and wealth-building, such as the Community Reinvestment Act:

“Under its provisions, U.S. banks have committed nearly \$1 trillion for inner-city and low-income mortgages and real-estate development projects, most of it funneled through a nationwide network of left-wing community groups intent, in some cases, on teaching their low-income clients that the financial system is their enemy and, implicitly, that government, rather than their own striving, is the key to their well-being.”<sup>20</sup>

The bottom line is that there is plenty of mess to clean up in America's housing policies, another example of the principled conservative's desire to reform safety net programs and let the private markets work in cases where they will do a better job than government intervention.

We don't need another academic study indicating the poor are poor because they have less money than others.

Going beyond the homeless and housing problem to lower income individuals and families, the principled conservative would point out that our goal is to create societal conditions that give maximum opportunity for economic and social advancement. It is a leftist creed/myth that America is not a highly economically mobile society. The problem with poverty in America is different than third world countries or those living in totalitarian police states. With rare exception, poverty in America is not caused by any lack of legal protection for property and individual rights, by the government stifling business development, or by the government operating like the mafia (see the Gaza Strip experience under Yasser Arafat as a classic recent example of this phenomenon). Poverty in America is largely the result of social problems. Specifically, study after study has shown that it is single parenthood and dropping out of school that are the biggest indicators for poverty. The point is not to blame the victim, but to work from the premise that public policy should identify the root cause of problems even though such causes might be intractable or difficult to change through any governmental policy. This does not mean we give up, but we must be realistic, creative, and innovative. For the principled conservative, the underlying assumption is that we do the best for promoting social welfare by ensuring a fair society that creates the most opportunity for individual employment, advancement, and wealth. The measure of concern for the less fortunate should not solely be a commitment to social safety net programs, but also a commitment to such a society of freedom and opportunity. This is explored in greater detail in the next two chapters.

### Chapter 3

#### Political economy

When it comes to economics, real capitalism must prevail over socialism and state capitalism/corporate welfare or we're all in trouble.

The principled conservative has an economic prophet and we might as well shout his name from the mountaintops: Milton Friedman. Who would think that in the early 21st century all those boring economics classes many took in college would be startlingly relevant? But we currently find ourselves in a heavyweight bout between John Maynard Keynes' vision of democratic socialism (or state-controlled capitalism as it is often sold) versus Milton Friedman's vision of capitalism and freedom. Let the principled conservative be clear on this point—Keynes was wrong, Friedman was right. Friedman was also right about the proper role of government and society which makes capitalism and freedom so interlinked. He observed that:

“The great advances in civilization, whether in architecture or painting, in science and literature, in industry or agriculture, have never come from centralized government.”<sup>21</sup>

While it is not necessary to cite every utterance of Ronald Reagan to guide a 21st century principled conservative vision, the following Reagan quote concisely summarizes the basic Friedman economic principle: “you cannot tax and spend your way to prosperity.” To amplify further, it is not possible to fine-tune the economy through a yo-yo of spending and tax increases and cuts as Keynes recommended. The Keynesian says we should cut taxes and increase government spending in an economic downturn to stimulate the economy (through deficit spending of course) and raise taxes and cut government spending in an economic boom to reduce inflation. It sounds great in theory, but just never works in practice.<sup>22</sup> The principled conservative believes the best path for sustained economic prosperity is that taxes should always be low and government spending should always be constrained.

To be true to the principles of our favorite economist means the principled conservative must prevail against those opponents with a socialist vision they relentlessly pursue despite all evidence that it leads to disaster. We must repeat it again and again: capitalism leads to prosperity for all people while socialism never works and leads to misery. Capitalism recognizes human nature and that individuals work hardest for their families and their own business, and this creates riches for all. Socialism denies essential human nature and expects a utopia where we are all secure in the government running most aspects of our lives. True capitalism also promotes individual freedom, where the government's role is properly understood as protecting individual property rights, rights to associate, and fair competition (not picking winners and losers).

It is a gross distortion to suggest this advocates a return to “laissez faire” and no role for government regulation. Since capitalism means competition, as Milton Friedman said, a competition must have a fair referee. Whether or not the Securities and Exchange Commission has always effectively exercised this role in regulating publicly traded companies on the stock market is beyond the scope of this book. The principled conservative, however, is rightly skeptical of regulatory schemes that might cause greater harm than the problem they are attempting to address. For example, it is debatable whether the Sarbanes-Oxley regulatory scheme, approved by Congress in reaction to corporate financial scandals of the early 2000s, will accomplish its purported goals or merely add more administrative cost to public corporations and thereby discourage their creation in the first place.

An even more recent example is the financial reform law that President Obama and the Democratic Congress rammed through in 2010. Naturally, the liberal approach adds more government bureaucracy to regulate the markets, without really understanding exactly how or why existing regulatory bodies like the Securities and Exchange Commission failed to do their job in the first place. Or, for that matter, truly understanding the root causes of the economic problem. Further, we must also draw a clear distinction between the intentional criminal acts of some individuals (Bernie Madoff or Enron executives come to mind) —which certainly can and should be prosecuted under existing laws but are difficult to detect in advance even by competent government regulators (which may in itself be an oxymoron)—versus the task of developing reasonable regulations/playing rules for law-abiding individuals and corporations. Unfortunately, the policy bias seems to be towards the larger corporation versus the smaller business, as ultimately it is not the large multi-national corporation that will have trouble complying with the new regulations or gaining access to credit. It will be the small business considering going public, or trying to access credit to get started in the first place. But this should not be surprising. The Keynesian economic engineer generally favors large corporations because they can be co-opted by the government, acceding to excessive regulatory demands in exchange for the benefit of having the government help them to keep competitors out of the market. So, in a sense, they become a quasi-state supported enterprise.

But let us step back a minute and examine why there was a market in the first place for risky subprime mortgage-backed securities that led to the financial crisis. It was due to misguided government intrusion. The principled conservative understands that the housing collapse was a failure of liberal social engineering, rather than capitalism. As noted in Chapter 2, government policies decreed that home ownership was so important that the old-fashioned method of saving up enough to make a decent down-payment, or having a decent credit rating, must be tossed out the window. In sum, the government has spent years forcing banks to make bad loans to people with poor credit. Couple this with the Federal Reserve keeping interest rates artificially low to encourage excessive borrowing. What could possibly go wrong with that scheme?

This explanation does not excuse or deny that many banks and other financial institutions made poor investment decisions and/or packaged extremely complicated and risky financial instruments. The principled conservative simply says the best explanation is that we had the worst of big government in bed with large financial institutions to create a perfect storm. Our policy response should not be to reward either big government or large financial institutions for getting us in this whole mess in the first place. But rather than enacting reasonable and less intrusive reforms such as increasing reserve requirements for banks, liberals viewed the situation as a great opportunity for the government to assert greater control of the economy. In contrast, the principled conservative has one overriding consideration—making sure the referee is fair and reasonable.

But while we have attempted to stomp on socialism in this chapter, the clever Keynesian will argue that they are not socialists at all. That really depends on how socialism is defined. Perhaps state capitalism is a better term. True, the current Keynesian-Obamanite does not necessarily want the government to own and operate most corporations (the auto industry bail-out to the contrary). In practice, they pretty much look like traditional tax and spend liberals, with the caveat that politicians of this mindset like the taxing and spending part much better than the Keynesian-recommended tax cuts in bad times and government spending cuts in good times. This crowd will argue they are simply making capitalism work better and with less disruption for the average working person. It is a seductive argument, and all the more reason why the Milton Friedman-loving principled conservative must utterly reject the Keynesian notion that government spending can pump up consumer demand. Governments should spend on projects and programs that are meritorious and would not exist but for government. Government spending, however, can never spur the creation of private employment expansion on

any discernable level.<sup>23</sup> Remember, government pays a defense contractor for a jet fighter because that is necessary for the national defense, not because the government wants the contractor to create jobs. That may be a side effect, but the government does not have enough taxpayer money to contract with every business that creates a valuable product or service. This is done by consumers, and they do this best by not having large chunks of their income taxed away. Further, if given a choice most workers would prefer a good-paying job based on secure private economic growth rather than the vagaries of government contracts and funding.

Hence, we must reject economic stimulus spending proposals in principle, although some aspects of stimulus proposals might have merit based on the underlying projects. For example, an interstate highway system resurfacing project may be worthy of government funding whether or not the country is experiencing a recession or boom and regardless of the employment impact. Conversely, giving tax breaks, credits, or outright cash from the government for people to buy individuals products is the worse form of Keynesian economics. It is not only useless but ridiculous. If we really embraced Keynesian economics to the max, where do we draw the line and stop the stimuli spigot? Sure, who wouldn't mind receiving some government cash to purchase a large flat screen TV, a new Wii game, a new car, or a vacation house? But it would be terrible public policy and a waste of taxpayers' money to provide such a buying stimulus. The lesson the individual should hear from their representative government is that it creates the conditions for all these products, services, properties, etc. to be available. If you want them, then get the education you need and work hard to earn the money you need to buy them.

Exposing this fallacy of government stimulus spending is not a new revelation. Economists pointed out very early in the last century that while in theory the government could stimulate work by hiring one set of individuals to break windows and another set to repair them, in practice this would result in a wasteful diversion of resources and no new economic growth.

At the risk of being called heartless for our unwillingness to throw out (or up) government money at the first sign of an economic downturn, the principled conservative should be clear that there will always be economic ups and downs in a capitalist system. But there has been and there will always be recovery unless the government acts so stupidly as to prolong the economic downturn. And here we must go all the way back to the Great Depression to examine why so many have gotten it wrong since then. Some may remember their initial shock when their college economics professor pointed out that all of the New Deal's spending and regulatory schemes did not rescue capitalism or bring America out of the Great Depression. As pointed out in a more recent analysis,<sup>24</sup> unemployment in January 1938 was 17.4 percent and the Dow Jones Industrial Average at 121, almost exactly the levels under the disparaged Hoover Administration (17.4 percent unemployment and a 140 Dow Jones in September 1931) and only slightly ahead of the imagined depths of the depression in October 1933 (22.9 percent unemployment and a 93 Dow Jones). Yet whenever America has an economic downturn, there is always some damn fool (or presidential candidate) suggesting a massive federal government spending spree to rescue the economy. The principled conservative must always say it didn't work then and it won't work in the 21st century. It will, however, crowd out private investment, increase taxes, and increase the deficit—all of which will significantly hinder economic recovery. As this book is being written, the puzzled faces of Obama administration officials wondering why their economic stimulus has not stimulated would be funny if it were not so serious in terms of dramatically expanding the federal deficit without helping the very working people they are claiming to help.

Because of their failure to understand economics, the liberal/progressive crowd seemingly believes that if they hector businesses and stomp their feet and scream loud enough, jobs will be created and unemployment will go down. Yet, when enacting a regime of high taxes, burdensome regulations, and high government debt—which we'll conveniently call Obamanomics—that is very unlikely to happen. Or, put another way, you can't hate markets and treat them like dirt, and then expect them to perform to the max.

Is there really "pure capitalism" practiced anywhere?

The reason this question must be posed is that we already know the results of pure unadulterated socialism via the disastrous Soviet and Chinese Communist experiences of the 20th century. Other countries tried it too, but none had quite as much "success" as the Soviet Union and Red China in killing economic opportunity along

with tens of millions of their own citizens. The Nazis were of course socialists as well. But it is often asserted that democratic socialism is possible and that the dividing line between capitalistic or socialistic countries is a grey one. However, refer back to the contemplated membership criteria for the association of western democracies discussed in Chapter 1. If a country hits the mark on these criteria, it would be a far stretch to refer to it as a socialistic country. We are focusing on the economics of the marketplace, not whether safety net or social welfare programs exist. Where free trade is supported and where private ownership of business is protected, that is essentially a capitalistic country. Ah, but what about countries where the government is a major investor in or owner of an enterprise, like France with Airbus or the U.S. with General Motors? We would simply refer to these as examples of where capitalist countries have fallen off the wagon in a few circumstances, much like a drunk or drug addict. But these things stand out because they are the exception, not the rule. The principled conservative does acknowledge there are various degrees of capitalism practiced among capitalist countries. And that many such countries would be better off staying on the wagon and eliminating practices that distort the marketplace, as discussed in the next section.

The principled conservative is not in bed with big business. In fact, we oppose corporate welfare.

One of the greatest misconceptions constantly promoted by the mainstream media and assorted leftists is that conservatives are just advocates and apologists for big business. However, the compelling principled conservative vision is one of business competition rather than government protection or subsidy (via special tax treatment, direct dollars, or regulatory protection) for the largest corporations. It is also interesting that despite the stereotype of big business and Wall Street being enamored of Republicans, in fact far greater recent political giving from these sources has been to Democrats. But this is not surprising because larger corporations believe they can influence federal policy and receive favorable regulatory and tax treatment to their advantage (and to the disadvantage of their competitors). The principled conservative should not be shy about stating that this is just plain wrong because it's one of the worst market distortions. It has been called various names over the years: corporate welfare, state capitalism, crony capitalism, or way back to Adam Smith who called it mercantilism. But it is acknowledged that conservatives might get more credit for this position if they stuck with this principle and stated plainly that such arrangements should be opposed.

This position is not to be confused with nor is it contrary to the principled conservative position that any business, large or small, should not be subject to undue or excessive regulatory burdens. That is an altogether different matter than having unfair competitive advantages bestowed upon a business by the government. Further, while there are certainly efficiencies or economies of scale for large multi- or trans-national corporations, conservatives should on principle never forget to advocate for fair competition for small business. All large businesses once started out as small businesses, which is possible if governmental policy allows them to flourish without undue hindrance. However, we must accept the reality that when corporations become large they naturally desire to prevent smaller businesses from gaining market share at the larger company's expense. That is certainly a fair goal for the large corporation, but the government should have no stake in the final outcome or favor the existing large corporation over the up-and-coming small business. Or vice versa.

But the problem with many federal business regulations is that they are premised on large companies having thousands of employees. These large organizations are better prepared to deal with the burden of paperwork that is required for compliance. While such laws and regulations often exempt small employers, this is still rather arbitrary. Sure, the employer with perhaps 100, 50, or 25 employees is off the hook, but what about the employer who is just slightly larger? They are getting the shaft. The principled conservative should speak up against these inequities. And we should not hesitate to point out the many circumstances where the media gushes over a large corporation getting on board with a federal legislative or regulatory proposal, when upon closer examination it turns out that the large corporation merely wants to have regulatory costs imposed on a smaller competitor that it will be easier to defeat in the marketplace with a rigged game. So, for example, when a large corporation's CEO argues for retention of the estate tax, it should not surprise us that this policy allows his company to buy up small family-owned businesses who must sell in order to pay the estate tax. Or when a large corporation agrees to a federal regulation that could bankrupt many small businesses in the same field. No matter the purported rationale for subsidies, the principled conservative must be opposed to government policies that tilt the playing field to one business or type of business over another, or to prevent market entry of

competing businesses. The principled conservative must also oppose uses and interpretation of antitrust law in a manner to let a market loser attack their competitors.<sup>25</sup>

While wishing to create individual wealth and praising those who are financially successful, the principled conservative recognizes that many of the wealthiest members of society can often be found promoting policies that would prevent others from obtaining the same level of wealth. Whether this is out of a sense of guilt over their own well-deserved or ill-gotten wealth, the principled conservative does not advocate public policy to assuage others' guilt, phobias, childhood anxieties, or whatever else would drive them to attack the very system and policies that helped them and their families become rich and sometimes famous. Who knows why the Kennedy family in two generations swung from rampant capitalists to quasi-socialists. History is replete with children of the rich either leading aimless lives, or throwing their family wealth towards creating foundations seemingly dedicated to promoting socialism. It should come as no surprise that Warren Buffett and Bill Gates want billionaires to give half of their money away. Presumably, to support left-wing charities that can attack capitalism. How silly. Here is simple guidance: in crafting public policy to promote wealth creation, it is often best to ignore the policy advice of the very wealthiest in society.

The principled conservative should speak out boldly against all sorts of corporate welfare so it will be crystal-clear that we are not the cheerleading section for big business. Unfortunately, there are many corporate welfare programs currently operating in 21st century America:

- Generous subsidies and low interest loans for the sugar industry;
- Community Development Block Grants intended to bring business to poorer communities, but which often wind up in the hands of corporations in America's wealthiest communities;
- Various local government direct subsidies to attract Wal-Marts, that of course are not provided to smaller businesses;
- Subsidies from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation;
- Energy market distortions caused by the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA);
- Billions in targeted tax breaks such as exemptions from property taxes for a baseball stadium. This is not intended as bashing Major League Baseball. But they should play by the same rules as everyone else. <sup>26</sup>

And it's hard to know where to start with the ludicrous billions in federal farm subsidies, which often benefit huge farming conglomerates like Archer Daniels Midland rather than the family farmer.

In this discussion of corporate welfare, the astute observer of history would note that a traditional 20th century liberal would identify with the disdain for such practices versus what the 21st century liberal/progressive often accepts as gospel. One should always be cautious about huge initiatives that require a public-private investment, because these often mean the enrichment of one company at the expense of others and to the detriment of consumers. The principled conservative believes that the rise or fall of private enterprise should not be dependent on massive government subsidies or favorable (or negative) regulatory treatment.

We don't have a problem with lobbying and political contributions; but Congressional earmarks are just bad on principle.

"Special interests" is a pejorative term that should not be so. Actually, everything that matters is a special interest, whether those lobbying for a specific business, an entire industry, a non-profit association, or a "public interest" organization. They all represent real people and real interests. And they all have the freedom to associate and petition the government under the Constitution. There should be little cause for concern on this matter. The principled conservative leans towards a system of full disclosure and publicity of political contributions, as compared to the restrictions and convoluted rules that largely describe our current system. The same goes for individual political giving. Why should we care if a billionaire underwrites a candidate, so long as that information is quickly and publicly available? After all, the recipient of such funds will certainly be expected to defend herself in the court of public opinion as to whether the billionaire is simply pulling the strings and calling the shots. Let's look at it another way: if a candidate is persuasive enough to convince a

billionaire to support her campaign with a large donation, maybe this is a demonstration of her exceptional leadership qualities and powers of persuasion. Not bad characteristics for a political leader!

Yet, there is one aspect of lobbying for public policy initiatives which raises the ugly specter of influence peddling, from steering government contracts to a particular company or providing corporate welfare as discussed above. When we say that sometimes government regulation is needed and it must be very efficient, this is an area where there should be a wall of separation between the politics of fund raising and the government's management of grants and contracts. Pay-to-play is too often the norm (see Chicago and Illinois politics), but this is contrary to the principled conservative's notion of a fair society, especially fairness to taxpayers. To help facilitate this, we'll take the cue from John McCain but go even further. Let's consider a constitutional amendment to eliminate earmarks from the federal budget. Namely, Congress should only appropriate funds for agencies and their related programs that offer competitive grants and contracts. This further demonstrates that the principled conservative does not seek to conserve that which is bad, ill-functioning, or corrosive. This would certainly require a major change in the current system, particularly the way Congress works through legislative "log-rolling" (i.e. you support my piece of legislation and earmark if I support your legislation and earmark). We may even be accused of being naive. But, we cannot speak about a fair society while condoning corruption and the revolving door of influence peddling, whether for defense contractors or community activist groups. Earmark elimination won't solve all the problems, but it would solve a lot of them. Sure, agencies will still make contracts and grants to individual firms, but they will do so at their own discretion absent Congressional directive on the recipient and separate from any consideration of who gave what to political campaigns.

#### Corporate executive compensation

While the principled conservative opposes corporate welfare and a tilted playing field, we also defend the right of private enterprise to decide how much they wish to pay their employees, from CEO on down. What business is it of the government? The key is to have the board of directors do their jobs, not having government attempt to determine what is appropriate employee compensation. Admittedly this has become more complicated with recent government investment in, loans to, or outright ownership of certain corporations. And let's face it, the disputes are always over perceived excessive chief executive compensation, not how much the assistant accounting manager is making. But even in these circumstances, there is a risk that by adopting restrictive schemes and/or not paying for talent, other firms without the government help will recruit away the best talent and then out-compete the government-assisted firms. The best approach is still to hold the corporation's board of directors accountable, and make the market forces keep pay in line. Yet, the recent financial regulation law puts the government in the middle of determining when there is too great of a disparity between CEO pay and the "average" worker. God forbid we acknowledge that the CEO, and other senior managers, are actually far more valuable to a business enterprise than many of its workers. Word processing file clerks are a dime a dozen. Visionary brilliant CEOs are not.

Unions in America are increasingly incompatible with excellence, organizational unity, innovation and even prosperity, especially public sector unions.

Admittedly this heading sounds anti-union. It is. Few would deny the many improvements in working conditions as a result of union activities. But their history is not pristine, with past corruption and influence by both organized crime and Communists in many industrial unions. Today, even many historical fans of unions (including the author whose father was a lifetime union member) bemoan that unions seem to have lost focus and are more concerned with their own union bureaucracy and bashing businesses. Indeed, most unions have become merely a political arm of the Democratic Party. But unionized workforces today do not seem to be especially compatible with individual advancement, organizational excellence, or profits. Does anyone other than the diehard believer really think America would be better off if more of the workforce were unionized? Worse, many unions are seemingly oblivious to competitive forces, preferring that companies price themselves out of the market. General Motors would be out of business but for a massive government bailout. Besides dragging many private sector companies down, the public welfare, good government, and the interests of the taxpayer are especially ill-served by public sector unions. As of this writing they have succeeded in bankrupting the state of California, operating as ongoing conspiracy against the public interest and the taxpayer.

Just as companies must innovate to survive, unions should not be oblivious to competitive forces. The principled conservative openly acknowledges that we want to tip the legal balance back towards the employer rather than the union. However, we have a political deal to offer. Let's end corporate welfare and re-balance the labor laws impacting unions in the same legislative package. For example, the determination of overtime pay at present is based on laws from the 1930s, which are premised on the assumption that most workers are in a punch-the-clock type of rote processing job on a factory assembly line. Does that really describe the current high-tech, multi-tasking workforce? A one-two punch of legislation to simultaneously end corporate welfare and reform our labor laws to put unions back on the right track would make American society much better off, as the expected economic growth would be staggering. Ironically, there is a great need for union organizers in China and India. We wish them the best in such endeavors!

The principled conservative believes a capitalist system best helps those around the world who are poor.

This statement is completely consistent with appropriate U.S. foreign policy goals discussed in Chapter 1. Promotion of free societies with a rule of law, individual rights, property rights, and free trade and democratic elections are what should be promoted and is in the best interest of America and freedom everywhere. And remember that under the "no respect to tyrants" doctrine, to the socialist or anti-capitalist dictators of the world the principled conservative says you're completely wrong and who elected you leader of your country anyway? And to those who still think democratic socialism works, we note that the so-called socialist democracies of Western Europe have all in the past 30 years turned to more private enterprise and free market solutions with lower corporate taxes. Take a look around the world today at which types of societies hold people back and keep them mired in poverty. Then once more review the membership criteria for the association of western democracies discussed earlier. In theory and in practice, it is nearly impossible to think of a current country meeting such criteria for western democracies without giving individuals in their societies an excellent opportunity to succeed. It is also important to remember that in western democracies even the very poorest in society have living standards far above all but the most privileged elite in a totalitarian socialist regime.

#### Chapter 4

##### Tax policy—flatter is better

Taxes need to be low, easy to understand, and predictable; and government spending should be constrained.

The principled conservative would say we need to get beyond the relatively meaningless debate over whether the top marginal tax rate should be 38 or 35 percent. Based on the current state of affairs, we believe that fundamental change is needed, especially in regards to the income tax. The two basic principles of tax law should be fairness and the funding of critical government functions. The government should not use taxes as a funding source to attempt solving every social issue under the sun. Or for corporate subsidies and welfare as described in the previous chapter. Taxpayers should not be treated as an open check-book for the federal government.

For reasons of fairness and societal unity, nearly every adult citizen should contribute some amount in federal income taxes. We should all contribute not only because all benefit from key government activities, but also to create societal unity by showing we are all in this together. This policy does not mean that some limited exceptions are not warranted, or that certain current programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit<sup>27</sup> do not have merit. EITC is consistent with the above concept because it recognizes that the very poorest workers can barely make enough to offset the burden of payroll taxes. But when we have a situation where close to 50 percent of eligible taxpayers are not paying income taxes, that is fundamentally unfair as this percentage goes far beyond those most in need. The principled conservative believes a fair tax code is critical to a fair society, and that it is fundamentally unfair to reach the point where a minority of the population pays income taxes while a majority do not. America is not quite there yet, but is moving rapidly in that direction. As similar to the praise of Milton Friedman in the previous chapter, the principled conservative should acknowledge that Steve Forbes (and Barry Goldwater long before him) was correct in the area of taxes. The only income tax principle that is fair and sensible is a flat tax. A flat 15 percent tax would be good starting point—while policy may not get there in one swoop, the principle should be clear. Just as a flat stomach is the goal for a bikini wearer, a flat tax code should be the goal of a fair society. Certainly this flat tax principle puts the 21st century principled



conservative at odds with the entire concept of progressive income tax rates, which is as it should be. The flat rate has fairness, shared responsibility, simplicity, and economic growth on its side. Principled conservatives must be able to argue on this point, despite the challenge of those wedded to past failures.<sup>28</sup>

And yes, to all those tax lobbyists and corporate interests, this does mean that we support elimination of all sorts of deductions and tax breaks including the mortgage interest deduction. Didn't America learn from the financial melt-down of 2008 that promoting home ownership at any cost is a stupid policy? Clearly the mortgage deduction along with other government policies encourages borrowing beyond one's means. What about other deductions, especially charity? Again, no one said implementing policies would be easy. Some compromises will have to occur as always happens in politics. But the underlying principled conservative goal should be to move the U.S. closer to a flat income tax. We completely reject the various redistributionist (and yes, socialistic) impulses behind arguments for a progressive income tax. Fundamentally, we do not believe that a greater percentage of your income should be taxed away simply because you are successful. A flatter tax policy would demonstrate how success and fairness are respected, and how the government wants your family to prosper rather than creating barriers to success. It also would tend to eliminate individual tax dodges by those who can afford more sophisticated tax accountants. This in turn further acknowledges everyone's shared societal responsibility. For a principled conservative, the current tax code combines two pretty bad outcomes—it lets the rich person avoid paying a certain level of taxes via technically allowable (but bad public policy) deductions while alleviating any responsibility for persons of modest means to contribute their share.

What about service or use taxes? For a fair society, the principled conservative does not object to having users of services bear more of the burden. This is a different type of tax than the income tax. In principle, toll roads are fine, as are gas taxes that pay for highway maintenance, regulatory fees for businesses to support the regulatory "referee," fees for using a municipal fishing pier, or tokens for a bucket of golf balls at a municipal driving range. Does this mean everything is fair game for taxation? No, while the principled conservative supports user taxes, we are not keen on taxes on social behavior such as vice taxes (e.g., taxes on cigarettes or alcohol). It's not that we wish people to overindulge in drink or start smoking, but if the underlying activity or business is legal what business is it of government to tell us what is a bad versus a good vice? Sure, proponents will argue that such users should pay additional costs because these activities impose societal costs. But trying to ascertain generalized society-wide costs from the use of a specific product or participation in a specific activity is hugely problematic. Apple juice is good for your nutrition, but if a toddler sucks on apple juice in a sippy cup all day that child can develop cavities. Should an extra tax be imposed on apple juice? The principled conservative would say of course not. Such taxes would be a restriction on freedom, because the government decides which of your personal behaviors are socially unacceptable and therefore can tax you more for engaging in such behavior. This is an excellent principled conservative "teachable moment." As argued elsewhere in this book, in some areas government must be very large. But in terms of the government reaching into the personal behaviors of citizens, this is where the government should stay out. This doesn't mean that private organizations cannot spend money to encourage certain behaviors or discourage others (like the American Lung Association in urging Americans to quit smoking), but it's not a place for the government via the tax code to be messing around.

But what about tax policies that reward good behavior? To be consistent, we must ask that if the government should not be deciding what is bad personal social behavior (other than committing crimes), then conversely how can the government determine what is good behavior? For example, even though study after study demonstrates the importance of stable two-parent households for a child's well-being, does that mean a generous tax-subsidy for a stay-at-home parent should be considered? No, because the principled conservative would say this is a personal decision, and that tax policy should be neutral. Besides, if income taxes are low under a flatter tax system, then it would presumably be easier for one working parent to support the other parent to stay at home with children because less of the family income would be taxed away.

Consistent with arguments in the previous chapter concerning capitalism, the principled conservative promotes tax policies that create fair and reasonable rules in a desire for fairness for both individuals and corporations. Let's also delve a little further into the anti-corporate welfare stance of Chapter 3 by mentioning the practices of many state and local governments. There is no problem with state or local governments competing for business

by lowering overall tax rates on all individuals and businesses, and pointing out that a neighboring state or community features higher overall taxes and more onerous regulations on business. This is a fair point and in fact this type of competition among states and municipalities helps keep government honest and not overly intrusive into the marketplace. In other words, it helps constrain government to its proper role in promoting positive business conditions. However, the principled conservative is opposed to special tax breaks in the guise of recruiting business. This should be properly criticized as corporate welfare (and unfair to similarly situated businesses who do not benefit from the tax break) and it also promotes an unholy alliance of the state and businesses. We must not cede the role of looking out for the little guy to the self-proclaimed good hearted liberal. The principled conservative has a critical part to play here. State-sponsored incentives matched to a specific company amount to no more than state bribery. It encourages corruption and is contrary to the proper role of government, which should be to promote fair and free competition, not to favor one business or one industry over another. This further allows us to highlight the difference between state capitalism and fair competition capitalism, the latter of which should be the principled conservative's mantra. Let others defend these special subsidies, all at the taxpayers' expense, because they are simply not consistent with our principles. We should not hesitate to point out that if the flatter tax policies were implemented as discussed above, every business and every individual would have opportunity—based on their own talents and abilities—to be successful. Let us be clear that we are engaging in a full frontal assault on corporate welfare via improper use of the taxing authority at all levels of government.

On the opposite extreme—the government's propping up or bailing out of failing businesses—we must point out that specific businesses will and must fail from time to time in order to have business improvement and long-term consistent economic growth. What better recent example of this “crony capitalism” and “too big to fail” nonsense than the federal government deciding to bail-out some financial institutions (AIG) but not others (Lehman Brothers)?

How do we get smaller government commensurate with planned lower tax burdens?

While it is fairly easy to find an absolutely stupid federal program, it is much more difficult to pull together enough programs to make a dent in federal spending. This is especially true because so much is already tied up in entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare, as well as military spending. On top of this challenge, there is also the political reality that every federal program, even the dumbest, develops a constituency and political support. This is even more acute where it helps a distinct group of people or geographic region, such as the infamous billions in earmarks that Congress distributes each year. In Chapter 3 we already proposed the idea of a Constitutional amendment to ban earmarks.

The principled conservative is willing to take up the fight, put a lot on the table, and chip away at the federal bloat. There are plenty of possible options, many of which have been recommended for years by conservative think tanks.<sup>29</sup> This doesn't mean it will be politically easy, but at least proponents of these programs need to be put on notice as Desi did to Lucy that “you've got some 'splaining to do.” This is the distinct direction that principled conservatives must lead the country, and it should be brought up in every Congressional appropriations cycle and every session of Congress. If we want a fiscally accountable legislature, you have to hold their feet to the fire. Of course there will always be political logrolling to get bills through Congress (i.e. I'll support your program if you support mine), but why can't we try to tilt some of the log-rolling the other way (I'll support cutting the waste of time and money program that you despise if you support the one I want to cut).

In addition to the Social Security and Medicare reforms discussed in Chapter 2, the principled conservative could put a number of federal budget cutting issues on the table:

- Fellow member countries of the association of western democracies could contribute directly to America's world policing costs, or contribute their own forces so we can reduce ours;
- If Amtrak is only profitable in certain high density corridors, limit its operations to those areas only (it's what any sensible business would do);

- Eliminate all federal programs that give us PSAs and other media guidance on how to live our lives; there are enough private associations to do this work. The principled conservative does not think the federal government needs to expend resources to remind us to eat less and exercise more.
- Eliminate all price subsidies for any industry as part of our overall anti-corporate welfare platform.
- Think of all the IRS bureaucracy savings resulting from a simplified flatter tax.

Admittedly, this task is not as easy as Charles Grodin's accountant character in the movie *Dave* would lead one to believe. For starters, as noted the major entitlements must be reduced to have any serious impact. But sometimes even financially insignificant cuts can send a powerful message. For example, it is a matter of philosophy for the principled conservative that much of the federal government's efforts to improve social behavior are a waste of time. Hence, while reducing or eliminating these programs may not yield much in the way of overall deficit reduction, it will help re-define the appropriate and inappropriate roles of government. The fundamental liberal/progressive response is that if there is a problem, what can the government do to solve it? The fundamental principled conservative response is to ask whether the nature of the problem is such that the government should even attempt to solve it or could solve it even if it made herculean efforts? With the principled conservative approach, we will be talking much less about "structural deficits" and how much taxes need to be raised to fund the behemoth government, and much more time talking about limiting the government to doing a smaller range of tasks much more effectively.

## Chapter 5

### Environmental concerns

The environmental solutions we need are innovative and market-driven, not heavy-handed governmental interventions.

When the principled conservative speaks of government not attempting to pick winners and losers in business, what better example than in the pursuit of new energy technology? Does this mean conservatives don't care about the state of the environment? Of course not. Our vision would create a better environment for the future, but we rely on sound scientific evidence, not hysteria and politically motivated conclusions.<sup>30</sup> For example, it may be promising to switch to electric cars not to "stick it" to the oil companies, but because the electric car could eventually be more affordable, safe, easy to operate and recharge, and environmentally friendly (including battery disposal). In this area, we also use historical evidence that capitalist countries with private land ownership do a phenomenal job of protecting the environment compared to public land ownership in socialistic countries (there were great environmental degradations in the Soviet Union under Stalin and his successors and in China under Mao).<sup>31</sup>

It is a sad fact that environmentalism has become almost a religion of the Left. They view it as a path to greater government social engineering, and a convenient way to bash capitalism. In the 21st century, if one doesn't accept the doomsday scenario of global warming and the most dramatic, heavy-handed government intervention or restriction on freedoms and industry in order to "fix" this predicted disaster, then one is accused of being a skeptic, denier, heretic—the sin of environmental blasphemy. And of course it doesn't matter which way the weather goes to prove their theory. If it's too hot, blame it on global warming. If it's unseasonably cool and stormy, blame that on global warming as well. It's quite a theory in that any actual recording of current and future temperatures, whatever the outcome, can be spun to support your theory!

But the principled conservative can take the environmental heat (or cold) from the environmental extremists. To blame humans for harming or destroying the planet is an exercise in utter self-hatred and self-flagellation. Humans learn and change practices over time, based on new knowledge—otherwise it's taking a guilt complex to the extreme. We don't burn leaves any more, although our fathers did so when we were children because they didn't know of the harmful effects. Do we need to turn our fathers over to the EPA as environmental criminals to assuage our guilt?

We know from history that prosperous societies are better able to protect the environment. Public policy must consider all the options and act on the best possible science. Unfortunately in the 21st century, it is indeed a

challenge to find the wheat from the strafe in the area of global warming, where the information source is not rigorously controlled scientific experiments but rather computer modeling to make future predictions. And these models are based on past data that probably prior to 1976 was not measured with the precision we have today. Hence even making the statement that 1985 was colder than 1885 for example, assumes that temperature measurements for 1885 were as accurate as what existed in 1985. And we all agree that anecdotal evidence is not sufficient—citing evidence that citizens of 1885 complained of a cold winter is about as valid as someone today observing a cold night in Buffalo and claiming that global warming doesn't exist.

But let's not get carried away with skepticism. There is a lot of science demonstrating a general warming trend—albeit modest rather than the doomsday scenario. It is far beyond the scope of this book to dissect the world's climate history, the science behind global warming theories, what the average temperature will be like in 50 years, etc. We must simply say that if the only solution truly were to go back to living unclothed in the stone age—then surely we need another solution. Principled conservatives are optimists who believe science and technology will solve many societal issues, from efficient production of food (which did happen in the latter half of the 20th century) to environmental solutions. There is no doubt that the extent and causes of global warming are fully debatable, as are the types of changes in energy usage that will actually make a difference. And students of history may recall the environmental experts in the 1970's who warned us of the pending ice age. The principled conservative is not suspicious of science and technology; we are suspicious of those with political agendas who purport to explain to the rest of us morons what the science means and in doing so distort it beyond recognition (Al Gore, are you listening?). We also heed the time-tested advice of Yogi Berra that “predictions are always difficult—especially when they are about the future.”

Before offering guidance on contemporary environmental issues, let us reiterate categorically that the principled conservative does NOT view humans as despoiling the planet or that humans should be subordinate to animals, plants and trees. The fact is that overall humans have learned to better care for natural resources without damage, via more efficient methods of agricultural production, protecting animals, carrying out responsible logging, building energy-efficient “green” buildings, etc. Many animal species have been protected directly by human intervention, because in the animal kingdom often survival of the fittest means that both other animals and lands get wiped out and worn down. Thus, we view with disdain those organizations that care more about animals than people, or those that argue humans always despoil the planet. But this attitude is not the result of a religious belief that the earth and animals were put here by God to serve humans. It is based on the practical observation that our ancestors would all have starved and we would not be here today without killing animals and cutting down trees. It would be a silly guilt trip to call our ancestors all murderers. They were doing the best they could with the limited technology of the day, and didn't have the luxury to elevate animals to god-like status.

Of course humans have responsibilities towards animals, specifically that of caretaker and protector. This does not mean we are “playing God” or discriminating against other species. “We are morally entitled to make such choices precisely because our morality declares that humans are entitled to judge, to subdue, to have dominion over the Earth.”<sup>32</sup> We also stand firmly opposed to those who would oppose animal research to advance the understanding of diseases and health care treatments in humans. Does this mean a human life is worth more than an animal life? Absolutely! Let's do a simple test. Your child has a deadly form of cancer. Dissecting your family dog may yield some hope for a cure. Your family loves the dog, but you would put the dog down in a split second to help the human child. The principled conservative has little patience for the animal rights extremists, other than to suggest that they spend some time unarmed in the wilds with lions and tigers and see how human-friendly the animals are to them.

In the environmental area the principled conservative must always have the BS detector set in the “on” position. Some of the feel-good plans to “save the environment” are just plain silly and/or will have little impact on the environment. For example, sending everything via e-mail did not eliminate paper, it just changed who was doing the printing. Now we have the futile reminders on e-mails to think twice before printing out your e-mail. We say print it out without guilt! Besides, if you're using recycled paper in the office, what's the big deal? Speaking of recycling, let us understand that we have to measure all the costs of transporting said materials to the recycling centers, and the power needed to run such centers. Further, “organic” food requires far more land

to produce—and is therefore less green—than land-frugal, factory-farmed alternatives.”<sup>33</sup> The point is simply that all impacts must be measured and the net positive impact on the environment is not always as simple as it appears on the surface.

As noted, the principled conservative embraces technology and recognizes the amazing advances. We support entrepreneurs; we simply abhor allowing government to guarantee or subsidize one competitor over another or one industry over another. The principled conservative is not a purveyor of nostalgia, however. We do not seek to bring back the horse and buggy because our grandfathers liked horses or keep General Motors in business simply because our fathers liked the '57 Chevy. (That is why the government bailout and subsequent takeover of GM must rank for the principled conservative as one of the most despicable, stupid, misguided acts of government in the 21st century to date.) Even though we love books and lifelong learning, and suspect that the printed book will never go out of style, there are no technological guarantees in life. Perhaps future generations will prefer the advanced Kindle or similar devices over paper. At such point, all might celebrate over the decreased need for paper and cutting down forests, even while many printers will go out of business. The difference in attitude would be that the Leftist reading the paperless book will think about how the forest was saved, while the principled conservative will simply note that a superior technology to the printed book won out in the market-place. Further, the reality is that “we are saving the Earth with the technologies that the Softs [i.e. the touchy-feely environmentalists] most passionately oppose.”<sup>34</sup>

That is all fine and dandy some might say, but what about areas where technology might not provide the solution and the people and the government just stubbornly refuse to select the right environmentally conscious policy? Let us be perfectly clear. We prefer to burn up or drown in a (albeit far-fetched) global warming catastrophe due to bad decisions in a democracy, than to survive based on dictatorial decrees and a lack of democracy. What good it is to save the physical body if a society loses its soul and its freedoms? Besides, we can afford to be flippant because the principled conservative strongly suspects that in twenty years or so, Americans will be asking themselves how could so many scientific and media “experts” have been so off the mark about global warming. Plus we’ll all feel a little foolish for worrying so much about carbon footprints.

The fundamental energy question in the early part of the 21st century is alternative energy sources to oil. Should Americans all agree that reducing oil consumption and finding alternative energy sources is a compelling goal in response to a compelling problem? Yes, and it is compelling, even if global warming were proven to be utterly false, for the following reasons:

- a) It will have some positive environmental impact;
- b) It is in the national security interest to achieve energy independence or at least less dependence on oil, since so many sales come from countries that use their oil profits to support anti-U.S. activities;
- c) It’s not an unlimited resource so we should have alternative plans in place for a rainy day.

The 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is naturally being played to the hilt by the environmental zealots, as though we never knew before that oil exploration in the ocean floor could be a risky business. But to suggest this means all off-shore oil exploration should cease, for any period of time, is an ill-advised, panicky response to a vital fuel we need for a period of time in the transition to a more sustainable and easier to access or develop source of energy.

But while the principled conservative need not object to what has become an environmental mantra that America must develop a clean, alternative and safe renewable energy source, we do not believe that the government should pick winners and losers in this game of energy competition. For example, historically there was no massive government subsidy program to develop the car industry; Henry Ford came up with the Model-T and mass production idea by himself. Now some might argue that in this highly technical age of the 21st century the vision of a sole inventor/genius tinkering in his garage is nostalgic but outdated. That may be. It might only be a large company that finds the winning product; or a medium-sized one; or a small one. The point is, we don’t know and certainly the government doesn’t know. What the government can do is simply set the stage for such development. But setting the stage does not mean through subsidy policies (direct grants or tax breaks) to pick one technology over another. A principled conservative should oppose such arrangements. What

about a carrot approach such as a prize for a new vehicle, fuel, or energy source? Some will argue that, in the same vein the government invested massively in sending a man to the moon, a mammoth government-funded undertaking is needed because the project is beyond the scope of private enterprise to develop and implement. These are good points and we would not be opposed to open competition, or even an award program co-funded by government and private institutions (such as non-profit foundations). It might be an idea worth trying. But the criteria for funding such “requests for proposals” must be rigorous. As noted in regards to recycling, we always need an accurate analysis and accounting of costs when considering energy alternatives. For example, one cannot factor in the benefits of ethanol without measuring the costs of increased acreage to grow the crops used in its production, energy use to grow such crops, agricultural run-off into streams and rivers, and taking those acres of land off the market for other possible uses (namely, growing food for sale around the world that might actually prevent starvation).

Dare we hazard any predictions about the competition beyond letting the markets work? We would simply point out that cost, ease of production and distribution, and less negative side-effects usually produce the winner and consumers pick it because of these factors—especially price. More and more “green” building is being done because of anticipated energy savings, not because every single purchaser feels guilty about the environment (although no doubt some do). But what is the magic energy source of the 21st century? Unless we are Nostradamus, we cannot predict the future and cannot possibly know. Did anyone in 1900 accurately predict that by the end of the 20th century the most common travel mode for long distances would be the jet aircraft? Sure, there are many contenders for the energy prize. Possibly nuclear power, but without government subsidies (other than appropriate protection against frivolous nuisance lawsuits) it is not clear as to long-term profitability. Solar and wind power are clean, but can they ever produce the quantities and predictable flow of energy needed? There are many skeptics, but let investors and common sense and consumers decide. And be wary of the energy development that will only be great with a huge government heaping of corporate welfare. Again, at present we cannot possibly know the most prevalent energy source for America by the year 2100. Further, we do not even know if the vehicle of the future is the electric car. Besides battery disposal issues, if the underlying electricity to charge the car is not from a “clean” source, then the car is not as environmentally friendly as advertised. The principled conservative would simply say that government should set the tone and stage to spur innovation, not attempt to predict the outcome or be a central planner. The cost of the product must be reasonable and the consumer demand must be present, for that is how markets work. One has to be confident that a venture capitalist or corporation would be willing to jump all over an energy breakthrough that would bring immense profit. This is the difference between trusting the markets versus trusting central planning, or accepting corporate welfare to help one company gain in market share or one industry gain over another industry.

As for changes in individual energy consumption, let’s skip past the easier stuff like more efficient home lighting, insulation, etc. Consider mass transit to get people to and from jobs, schools, and entertainment. Mass transit is widely regarded by Americans as a great idea—for other people. Despite various incentives, Americans still do not seem to flock to mass transit. Do we keep trying, or just give up and focus on electric cars or similar personal vehicles because Americans are much more likely to choose the personal freedom of car travel versus taking the train or bus? And how can we make mass transit inroads anyway in a manner that doesn’t restrict freedom and try to change human nature? By the latter, we have to realistically understand that Americans who can afford it are not going to spend an extra 45 minutes getting where they are going by taking a city bus. It is just not going to happen. And we know that most mass transit systems were designed for the suburban-downtown commute, not suburb-to-suburb. And we know that heavily subsidized Amtrak trains are never profitable except in densely populated corridors that more closely resemble the short distances covered by railroad-happy Europe.

But here we encounter an interesting paradox. Whenever gas prices reach the \$3 or \$4 per gallon level, it is the committed Leftists who drone on about oil company conspiracies and insist that the government must act to prevent gas prices from rising. This is perplexing because even if their paranoid oil company conspiracies were true, wouldn’t this be a great thing for the environment? If prices rose and rose, Americans would make the consumer choice to switch to smaller, more fuel-efficient cars and (gasp) sometimes even take mass transit.

Hence, the principled conservative would remind Americans that there is no inherent constitutional right to operate a car, that gas prices will follow the market, and if that influences the decisions noted above—so be it. We don't particularly care how you get to work, so long as there are options. This does not mean that incentives for car pooling, for attractive mass transit pricing, should not be attempted. But let us not expect major changes in behavior. We cautiously suspect that efficient cars are the way to go and think it's much more likely in 25 or 50 years that Americans will be zipping around in many super smart cars, versus waiting at the bus or train stop. And what about the recalcitrant American who, despite smart cars and public transit options, insists on driving a SUV to work? Do we need to stage public demonstrations outside their house? Do we spit on them in the grocery store or pour oil on them (sort of like the fur-hating blood throwers?) Do we shun them from dinner parties? No, the principled conservative simply looks to economic incentives and not creating a better class of more socially conscious people (we'll leave that job to families and religion). Government on principle should not spend time on this. Public schools should focus on American cultural values, not creating little green jihadists. So let gas prices rise, tolls increase for usage at peak hours, bus lanes and small car lanes flourish—and people can make their own decisions.

Let us acknowledge there is one environmental thing the government does very well. The principled conservative recognizes that it can set aside public lands for absolutely no economic purpose other than enjoyment and protection of habitat—"conservation is the political heritage of conservatives."<sup>35</sup> So yes, we do in fact like parks. The principled conservative never said that commercial interests should dictate how every acre of land on the planet should be utilized. Our representative government can make such determinations because citizens demand there be a balance of competing interests. This not to suggest it is an exact science. However, time and experience have taught that open spaces such as parks not only enhance human enjoyment but also improve the overall community for both business operations and residential living.

## Chapter 6

### Health care: a mess that only a social engineer could love

As this book was written a massive health care reform overhaul law was pushed through Congress on completely partisan lines and is being "marketed" to a skeptical public by the Obama Administration. They insist that once you understand all the details you'll love it. The principled conservative predicts it is certainly destined to further transform, but unfortunately distort, the health care delivery system. To the principled conservative, government has already done just about everything possible to distort the market while politicians and advocacy groups have marched forward to proclaim that the "system" is broken. At the same time we recognize that purchasing health care, either via direct cash outlay or insurance or some combination thereof, is a very personal and basic human concern. It is appropriate for public policy to be directed at this issue as opposed to consumer choices that are relatively unimportant to policy makers (i.e. the type of television or computer you choose to purchase). But let us look at the history of greater government involvement in and funding for health care. The Medicare system enacted in 1965 is one of the main liberal arguments for government intervention in health. Proponents accurately assert that seniors have more security in health care than they did before. And even conservatives tend to like a program that is open to all and does not exclude or punish those having the bad judgment to earn more money in their working years than others. But the Medicare program costs a ton of money, far above original projections, is huge budget drain, and is going broke. It remains to be seen whether the promised universal coverage will actually reduce Medicare costs, since one of the ways of reducing costs is always to pay providers less—which of course reduces provider participation and access to doctors. So, naturally, Obamacare puts tens of million more Americans on Medicaid, a system that has failed for 40 plus years mainly because it pays providers far below market rates.

As is the case in Medicare and Medicaid and any government-financed health care reform, the only way to control government spending on health care is to heavily regulate and ration care. This also means having government involved in dictating how medicine is practiced. It is not the doctor or hospital that will approve payment for a procedure or test, but a government agency or authorized entity. But this intrusion has become common-place because of Medicare and private health insurance company practices. Doctors have, so to speak, been screwed for years as third party payers, Medicare, and others dictate how they practice medicine. Add to that the defensive medicine practiced because of the fear of lawsuits, one might ask what sane person would

want to be a physician in this day and age? Obviously, someone who cares about healing people and is prepared to fight whatever red tape (and there is a hell of a lot of it) thrown in their way. Physicians thought they had found a gold mine in the early days of Medicare with cost-based reimbursement (whatever you charged, you got reimbursed). But as the program's costs grew, the federal government asserted a more active and intrusive role in determining how physicians are paid via the Resource Based Relative Value System. The principled conservative would naturally assume that a payment scheme created by the federal government under subcontract to Harvard University would be a monstrosity. And it is. Every year physicians' groups rush up to Congress to beg them (they prefer to say, lobby) not to further reduce Medicare payments based on this complex formula.

The principled conservative likes choice but faces the reality that most Americans cannot hope to save enough money to pay for catastrophic hospital costs in case of an accident or major illness. In addition, over time patients with health insurance have been insulated from the true cost of health care. The third party payers (insurers) have provided a service that has possibly permanently damaged and certainly de-personalized the patient-doctor relationship. So where do we go from here? For starters, we fight against the federal government imposing a "one size fits all" insurance. Health needs differ dramatically by age, personal circumstances, and personal behaviors. The main reason that every citizen should have some type of health insurance is to insure against catastrophic costs resulting from lengthy hospitalization or medical treatment. But we are realistic and pragmatic. We are not saying turn back the clock to the days when folks paid their doctor out of pocket and negotiated directly. We are not calling for an end to all private and government-funded health insurance programs. We are saying fix the clock so that it tells time accurately. And that requires a willingness to innovate in products, individual choice, and autonomy. It also includes doing some major tinkering to the current government-funded health insurance programs (Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP-Children's Health Insurance Program).

The health care issue is complex so it's no surprise that opinion poll after opinion poll generally find a wide consensus for "health care reform," but widely divergent opinion on the actual new health care reform law. Probably a slight majority are deeply skeptical that it is the right type of reform. The principled conservative would offer the following overarching guidance: individuals must always be allowed to pay from their own resources for services and treatments (including drugs) that they desire and their physician recommends regardless of what is covered by their insurance plan or approved by any government agency or authorized entity analyzing "effective treatments." We must point out that health care systems in countries like Britain and Canada that promise universal care actually achieve universal rationing—with the wealthier coming to countries like the U.S. when they cannot get the care or timely surgery desired in their own country. Yes, we are rightfully scared about big brother. Did you know that England even has its own rationing institute called the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, or NICE? Oh the irony, those NICE people get to tell you that further treatment for grandmother just isn't something that society can afford, sorry. They routinely deny access to cutting edge cancer drugs. Naturally the academics love it because they sit around a table and get to decide what care can be afforded for "the people." Lovely! Canada is similarly sorry. They use the U.S. system as a safety net when their DMV-styled waiting time get too long, which is typical as new (and costly) technology is not available in the numbers and locations we expect in the U.S.<sup>36</sup>

Amazingly, in America, you will commonly hear health care "experts" bemoan market innovations like "concierge medicine" or physician-owned hospitals. God forbid that practitioners would target their services to consumers in an efficient manner that their patients like. Here, suddenly the committed social engineer becomes committed to the status quo philosophy that if waiting is good in health care, more waiting must be even better! Remember, the principled conservative supports innovation and technology. If consumers prefer concierge medicine with actual doctors making house calls again and physician-owned hospitals focusing on better customer service, let the market decide. Obviously, big health insurance companies and big government have distorted choices. But we must understand that to micro-manage and socially engineer health care via government is an exercise in utter folly. Yet the new health care reform law is based on the premise that a panel of experts can predict exactly how many specialists are needed in the future. There is a 15 member Workforce Commission charged with this task. These will certainly have to be very smart people, possibly philosopher-



kings. They will certainly attack with full gusto the current mantra of the social engineers that more primary care physicians are needed versus specialists. But it is not so simple and the primary care doctor mania represents a flawed assumption for several reasons. First, since when have patients simply followed a healthier lifestyle because their primary care doctor so advised? Banking on preventive measures and resulting savings in the “system” is extremely wishful thinking. Second, science is getting more complex (just consider genetics) so wouldn't we want more highly trained specialists who know all the nuances of their focused area? If you have the misfortune to contract a serious and complex disease, the first thing your primary care doctor (and you) will want to do is find the best specialist or assemble the best team of specialists.

Hence, the principled conservative want to promote choice in health plans and delivery of care, while giving consumers more control of how to spend their basic health care dollars. Insurance should be more focused on catastrophic loss, not paying for every last dollar of services. Why the obsession about prohibiting co-pays or cost-sharing? This helps people understand that the service costs money; unless you believe that the government owes everyone 100 percent free health care, then there is a proper measure of personal responsibility. And individuals cannot expect the “health care system” to fix all their problems if the individual doesn't take care of him or herself. A cost differential (including higher insurance premiums) may be a better incentive to start exercising rather than simply listening to counseling (or hectoring) by a doctor. The prevailing policy strategy appears to be perversely the opposite at present, as the health care reform law allows an insurance plan to vary their rates based only on age, geographic location, family composition, and tobacco use. What about other risk factors and personal choices: illegal drug use, excessive drinking, obesity, poor diet? So, for the greater good comrade, you are to get no reduction in your premiums for staying in shape. We are not asking for intrusiveness in private matters; we are simply saying that insurers have a right to assess risk and make pricing decisions based on that risk.

#### Hollywood hypocrisy over health care

Since many leftist celebrities like to extol the virtues of a socialized medical system, it is ironic that they would probably vigorously oppose federal government regulation of the movie industry in the following areas:

- How much an actor gets paid;
- The type of film and related camera and sound equipment that can be used to shoot the film;
- What is an acceptable margin of return on film revenues;
- Where the movie can be shown when completed;
- Who sits on the board of the movie studio;
- Taxation on the purchase of any innovative technical devices used in production and editing.

Under such constraints, who would ever expect any movie to get made? Yet in health care we have many of the above features in our current and newly “reformed” system. The amazing thing is not that the system is broken, but that high quality care is still delivered despite these government interventions.

But let us not just focus our barbs at the air-head Hollywood star. This attitude of “do to them as we would never have done to our industry” is also prevalent among the many lawyer-legislators that would balk at such restrictions on law firms. For example, efforts to limit contingency fees in order to discourage frivolous medical malpractice lawsuits and ambulance chasing is nearly always shot down in lawyer-dominated legislatures (with, of course, generous political support from the plaintiff's bar).

Today we find ourselves burdened by a system of onerous controls on doctors. On yet another issue, Ronald Reagan was presciently correct. Once physicians gave in to government intrusion via Medicare, they lost the freedom of practice in their profession. Since the federal government is paying for a huge portion of overall health care via Medicare and Medicaid, as Reagan predicted they tell doctors how to practice and how much they'll get paid. Between government insurance programs and the crunch of the private health insurance industry, is it any surprise that some physicians throw their hands up and say “ok, just pay me as an employee to work in a hospital or clinic so I can practice medicine.” But alas, such freedom is only that of the servant.

Someone will tell them how to practice and second guess their clinical decision-making. If “reform” means transforming doctors into tightly controlled bureaucrats, this is one area that perhaps a return to the concept of patient-centered services via house calls and personal attention may not be such a bad idea. It is also amusing and ironic that the proponents of reform rarely ever wish to take their own children or grandchildren to a government-funded public health clinic.

So the principled conservative has a simple principle here—stop stupid socialistic health care ideas. We must work to identify and publicize the many stupid policies in the new health care reform law, and work to repeal or reform it. We like competition in Medicare, so don’t give up on it. This means reversing the liberal assault on Medicare Advantage plans. We do not want to necessarily make health insurers rich. We definitely want to make doctors rich, as they deserve it. We are not adverse to an industry if it operates legally and ethically and profitably. While there always will be bad players within any industry, to issue a blanket condemnation of an industry such as pharmaceuticals is an exercise in utter stupidity, especially given the development of life-saving or life-extending drugs. These developments are far more important to the quality of health care, saving of lives, and extension of the average life span than a year’s worth of friendly “watch your weight” tips from your doctor.

Let’s get to the heart of what bugs the progressive socialist about the health insurance and drug industries. Is it wrong or unethical to turn a profit in health care? The principled conservative, who supports capitalism, says of course not. Naturally, there will be legitimate debate and differences of opinion as to whether a particular regulation creates a fair and reasonable playing field or otherwise. But we never question the profit motive. Even not-for-profit health care organizations have to be in the black or they will go out of business. Not-for-profit just means profit is not the primary purpose, but the organization’s purpose is not to lose money either. If so they would be called a “for loss” organization, and none of those exist very long for obvious reasons. Amazingly, to pay for the “reform” law, health insurers and medical device manufacturers will face hefty new annual taxes in the billions, industry-wide. Put your mind around this concept for a moment. In order to allegedly help you purchase health insurance and presumably have access to the latest medical technology (of which medical devices are critical) to improve your health care and hopefully improve your quality of life and extend it, the government is going to tax the shit out of those very products. Does that make any sense? To a social engineer perhaps, but not a principled conservative.

Interestingly, we cannot count on industry to necessarily stand up for capitalism and free markets if they think they can make money from government intervention/corporate welfare. Hence, the health insurers gambled that if the health care reform law makes everyone buy their product, that is worth the extra federal meddling in their business. Plus, it will probably lead to a consolidation in the industry, with only a few big insurers left and the potential smaller competitors crushed by the federal intervention in the market. Yet, if they really thought it through, they would realize what a long-term disaster it will be. And of course if the Founding Fathers knew that a federal cabinet secretary would be lecturing a private business about how they set their prices, they would not only roll over in their graves, they would come back as zombies and take their revenge!

The other charge often made is that this product (health care or health care insurance), is different, the market is different, the market doesn’t work, etc. The principled conservative would say that’s just plain wrong. The markets always work better than government planning, if you just give them a chance. And by work better, we mean in terms of timeliness, quality, and competitively priced services and products.

## Chapter 7

Education—we can do much better

The principled conservative has much to offer here and it can be stated in one word: choice. Must every child go through the same public school system? Of course not. It doesn’t even happen now. Our focus should be on quality, not conformity. If many other countries have year-round school and parents want it in their school district, why not? We never said America should not borrow ideas from other countries—just not the stupid ones (see previous chapter on health care). Let us shout it from the rooftops: this system is far more broken than the health care system. It is already largely socialized, and it is hard to think of an area more in need of competition.

We have clearly gone far afield from the vision of the Founding Fathers. Take Thomas Jefferson for instance:

“The notion that schools could be better run by “any other general authority of the government, than by parents within each ward [is] a belief against all experience. . . . Entrust the states with responsibility for education, and one might as well turn over to them “the management of all our farms, our mills, and our merchants’ stores”—a policy that, of course, later generations of collectivists would endorse.”<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately our children’s education has become politicized, with a clear dividing line: “. . . for conservatives, the purposes of schooling are primarily intellectual and moral but for liberals, they are social and political.”<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the principled conservative does not seek to create wards of the state, but self-reliant people. Further, while history should not be sugar-coated, there are genuine heroes throughout time whose achievements should be celebrated and whose character and decorum should be models to emulate.

Yet there is a powerful foe of any meaningful public education reform: teachers unions. We cannot mince words on such a critical matter as our children’s education—the principled conservative will find herself at odds with the teachers unions on just about every issue. These unions insist on no accountability, guaranteed employment, and little innovation. In elementary and secondary education, it leads to many absurdities. As one example, often it is lamented (usually by liberals) that we need more disadvantaged children (usually a code word for Black or Hispanic) to go into the professions, especially medicine. But what factor often encourages any child to pick such a career? Invariably, it is a parent, a teacher, and/or a role model in the community. Middle and upper middle class children have a built-in networking advantage because in their communities, including their own families, there are likely to be a number of male and female professionals. While recognizing there is an element of unfairness in this situation, the principled conservative would remind all that this unfairness stems from natural advantages and human prowess, not because of a government decreed unfairness. But we are not cold-hearted. What policies might actually help to counterbalance this phenomenon in order to provide the child of a low-income family access to such adult guidance and role models? How about a doctor who takes an early retirement and wants to give back to the community by teaching science in an elementary or secondary school? Do the teachers unions and school systems readily embrace re-training that individual on teaching skills when such an individual obviously has a breadth of real world experience and knowledge and presumably can easily grasp the content of the science curriculum? Of course not! They prefer the graduate of the education program who has done nothing but teach school his or her whole life. Not that all lifelong teachers are problematic, but why does every teacher in a school have to fit that same mold? Wouldn’t it be nice for a public school student to be able to ask her teacher: “So you used to be a doctor, what was that like?” We suspect this would do a great deal more good to inspire the child to stay in school, get good grades, and take science courses—the requisite things for future medical school admission—than a host of federal programs designed to turn kids onto science or becoming doctors. When public policy ignores what influences a child’s decisions about work and life, specifically those who can actually be mentors such as parent, teachers, and neighbors, we should not expect success. We cannot expect a public service announcement or brochure to foster real equal opportunity.

Another problem is the fact there is so much leftist indoctrination in the current public school system, from a distorted history of the U.S. to the current “go green” mantra. Do they ever mention that Rachel Carson’s non-scientific anti-DDT obsession caused millions in the third world to die of malaria in the absence of DDT to kill deadly insects on crops? Public schools also bends over backwards to find a Native American, a Black, or Hispanic author to read and celebrate, regardless of whether the work may in fact be far inferior than that produced by a white male of European descent. “Just because a work is written by a member of an historically oppressed group does not mean it is a great work.”<sup>39</sup>

The problems are myriad, so where is the principled conservative to start? Let us acknowledge that most parents and guardians feel frustrated about the lack of choice and accountability. To quote Elvis Presley: “we’re caught in a trap, I can’t get out.” We have a system that subsidizes and promotes lack of choice and accountability. Even President Obama held this view during his election campaign and stated as much before Wall Street investment types (although he seems to have conveniently forgotten this as the National Education Association (NEA) reminds any Democratic administration that the union must dictate education policy, certainly NOT the

parents/consumers). This NEA mantra actually makes the guidance for the principled conservative rather easy: review any recommendations from the NEA, and usually recommend the opposite.

### Elementary and Secondary Education

Some conservatives might suggest we simply start over with private schools and eliminate the Department of Education. The worth of this federal agency aside (a subject for many other books), the principle has to be one of choice, not merely replacing one flawed system with another. There are many fine public schools. Admittedly, these are usually in more affluent communities where children have better-educated parents. Conservatives do in fact care about children of low-income families and feel it is a tragedy that so many should be consigned to some terrible public schools. The principled conservative should rarely ever suggest blowing up anything (we'll leave that to the Taliban), but recommends proceeding wisely and cautiously. We often lament what children have to suffer through because of the educational policy experiments of misguided adults. There is a case for public education and the promotion of common citizenship. We must not indoctrinate political opinions; rather, we must teach American heritage and American cultural values (as described in Chapter 8). For a society not to pass down these important values would be committing cultural suicide. We must focus on the basics, while empowering and rewarding quality teachers. To facilitate quality teaching, we must embrace the following principles. While they might not be immediately achievable, they at least point us in the right direction.

□ Teachers must be allowed, without fear of lawsuits against the school system or them individually, to discipline students.

□ Teachers must be hired, promoted, and, yes, sometimes fired solely based on merit. On this issue in particular the teachers' unions are not just part of the problem, they ARE the problem. We believe teachers can and should be evaluated for the quality of their professional skills. Otherwise, teaching cannot really be claimed as a profession:

“Just as in law, medicine, business, and virtually every other profession, compensation must be keyed to performance and responsibility, not seniority. The concept that everyone should be paid the same regardless of results and, basically, on an hourly basis is the single greatest indication of the backwardness of the field.”

“...union leaders have made uniformity a top collective-bargaining priority, judging that differentiation is too risky for their members—and their own leadership positions.” 40

□ Teaching must be a serious, respected profession. To allow this there must be opportunity for mid-career changes and a wide range of career tracks. And the superstar teachers should be paid like superstars, regardless of their length of service. If others teaching don't like the pay differential, here's a simple solution—improve your own teaching skills, or find another job! No one has an inherent right to remain a teacher just because they started out in the system.

□ To facilitate competition for quality, there must be opportunities for charter schools and vouchers. It is interesting that the same folks who are proponents of a government run-health care “public option” to keep private insurers “honest” are the same ones who vehemently oppose any educational competition. But there must be options for parents and teachers because only competition will promote the excellence to which we strive.

□ Schools must be challenging and should always group students by ability. To do otherwise is to promote self-esteem over real learning. It is sad that in so many schools today “[k]ids are not taught how to defend a point or make an argument, skills that are absolutely essential in the development of critical thinking and logical reasoning.” 41

### Higher Education

While many American universities are highly regarded, the principled conservative bemoans the political correctness and leftward tilt of faculty. These leftist trends go back well into the 20th century. Sadly, while William F. Buckley Jr. is no longer with us, so many in academia (especially in the social sciences) still view it as their mission to teach college students to become socialist atheists. And from the parental viewpoint, the fact

that college prices rise consistently higher than inflation and seem oblivious to consumer needs is a source of chronic irritation. This should come as no surprise because colleges and universities have heavy government subsidies and the price consumers actually pay is not transparent because of student financial aid. Further, with the tenure system, there becomes much less incentive for faculty to actually spend much time teaching, especially teaching undergraduates. Let's see, a system with no incentives to economize and high fixed costs... what's the principled conservative not to love?

Where to start? First of all, there are some innovators who should be acknowledged and given a fair chance to compete. We speak of the on-line, innovative programs like the University of Phoenix. Accreditation agencies must not squash such innovation.

As mentioned above, the concept and reality of lifelong tenured faculty is so bad that the long-term goal should be to abolish it. Not overnight, but gradually and firmly. It has not fostered either academic freedom or academic excellence. But it has generated huge fixed costs. Perhaps nothing else would help make colleges more cost-conscious and cost-effective than ending this archaic system. Let colleges structure their departments, institutes, and courses based on consumer demand and societal needs. Let innovation reign, including distance learning. For example, if there is one great lecturer on astronomy in a state, why shouldn't all students at any college in that state be able to view her lecture? Set the market price accordingly. Presumably ALL students would be smarter as a result of this exposure. Why would that be such a bad thing, other than for the mediocre astronomy lecturer whose services are no longer needed?

The student financial aid system is a glorious mess. But, in principle, some student aid financed by the government makes sense for those families most in need as it can be considered part of the social safety net and the goal of a fair society. The principled conservative should favor grants for low income families, and tax breaks for middle income families. We are open to innovative ideas, such as the section 529 plans, as well as letting education savings accounts build up in banks without being taxed at any time during accumulation or payout.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the most significant principled conservative vision is merit-based admission, ending affirmative action or, as it is practiced, reverse discrimination. The principle should be that young Americans should never be admitted or denied admission to a college or university based on their ethnicity or family circumstances or geography.

We must also acknowledge that athletics have distorted colleges and universities, especially in the revenue-raising sports of football and basketball. When arguing in the previous paragraph for merit-based admissions, one has to ask what to do about all the athletes who would never get into the particular college or university but for excellence in sports? Is this a fair system? The principled conservative would say of course not, unless the institution is a sports academy. And what about Title IX, which presumes that women are just as interested in sports as men, despite centuries and centuries of historical evidence to the contrary? Sports should ideally be fairly irrelevant to college admissions, and sports offerings should be demand-driven rather than government-driven. Yes, it should be quite obvious that the principled conservative is not looking for a friendly hand-out from a college president consisting of Final Four or Bowl game tickets. Such changes can obviously not happen overnight, but this is the direction we should be moving.

## Chapter 8

What does it mean culturally to be an "American,"

Can a society of multiple ethnicities and religions exist peacefully as Americans? The answer is yes, provided that all subscribe to uniquely American values that do not replace but transcend national origin, race, religion, geography, etc. In this chapter, we argue that if we cannot agree and conform to these American values, our country's long-term survival will be in serious doubt. We do not mean for all to surrender to a meaningless, mindless, and vague "diversity is our strength" slogan. Rather, we are identifying and articulating clear values that all Americans must share if we are to be united as a country. Americans need not be predominately liberal, independent or conservative in their political thinking, but they should adhere to certain cultural values. It is acknowledged that when conservatives speak of values, they are often maligned and stereotyped as harkening

back to a whiter, more Christian America while railing against immigrants and other outsiders. But for the true principled conservative, nothing could be further from the truth.

America is based on the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. America is a land of immigrants, but not just any immigrants. We want the best from around the world and only ask that they assimilate to American values—although they probably are already more than halfway there given that they wanted to come to America in the first place. Many of these values are reflected in the association of western democracies membership criteria discussed in Chapter 1, but let us apply these to individual beliefs.

First and foremost is the belief in freedom. All those in America, from recent (legal) arrivals to those whose families have been here since the 18th century, should embrace their freedom to retain the fruits of their labors; to choose the occupation and job they desire; to choose the education desired; to travel where desired; to spend their leisure time as wished; and of course to worship any religion or worship no religion at all. All Americans should be skeptical of proposals that, for whatever purported benefit, would restrict these freedoms. Yes there are always exceptions, but they must be the exception, not the rule. The only freedoms always restricted to Americans are very singular and distinct: we don't allow for those advocating the violent overthrow of government and society. This admittedly excludes the committed radical Islamic Jihadist from American citizenship, but to paraphrase the late Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, cultural liberalism is not a suicide pact. By definition, it should be open-minded and inclusive, but not to the point of embracing unthinking "anything goes" nonsense. And by embracing this critically important caveat, we once again see how traditional liberalism of the 20th century is now pretty close to principled conservatism of the 21st century. This book does not attempt to chronicle liberalism's race to the far left; it merely argues that the principled conservative actually does embrace an open, free, and tolerant society. Note that the above restriction only minimally impacts free speech if pursued in the democratic context. If someone wants to argue for amending the U.S. Constitution to institute Sharia law for Muslims living in the U.S., fat chance with that: but we would not restrict such speech. We would only restrict those engaged in planning or advocating violent terrorist criminal acts to achieve such a goal. (As for how such idiots got in the country in the first place, see the discussion below on immigration policy.)

The principled conservative understands that although Judeo-Christian values were critical to America's founding and guide much of its law, our democratic republic is not based on any specific ethnic or religious group. Indeed, when saying the word "American" the listener should not think of any particular ethnic or physical characteristic, as compared to more homogeneous societies. Conversely, when one says "Japanese" or "Swede," the personal physical characteristic that comes to mind will indeed be a pretty accurate reflection of most people in those countries. Perhaps America could have decided to be the English Colony II and limit immigration to those Brits who wanted better weather, no official religion or king, and real football. But that was not the path chosen nor would it have led to a vibrant America.

But America did adopt the best of British and Western civilization, starting with the rule of law. This is a concept to which all Americans must be devoted. The rule of law means that disputes are settled peaceably through the legal system, not through force or violence. There is protection of individual safety, property, and contractual agreements under the law. A fair society must have a fair arbitrator and equal protection under the law.

All Americans must be devoted to work, and hard work at that. No one should expect a cushy existence. Of course there are exceptions for the mentally impaired or extreme physically disabled. They will require both government and private support, but for the able-bodied person there should not be an expectation of permanent dependence. It is certainly not a moral fault to receive welfare payments or unemployment insurance; it is a moral fault to expect this to be permanent versus temporary assistance.

All Americans should be devoted to upward mobility and support policies that give everyone a fair chance. Yet by aspiring to such, Americans should not be envious, jealous, or disdainful of wealthy, successful people; nor should they assume these individuals "owe" anything back to society. Conversely, we should not assume that just because someone is famous and/or has made a lot of money, that they are wiser than the rest of us in matters of public policy or personal behavior. We can acknowledge that some are just damn fools whose advice

should be ignored. At the same time, the principled conservative does not advocate an equalization or leveling-down. After all, people vary in talents and abilities, and in America no one is stuck or destined to remain forever in a certain economic group.<sup>18</sup> For those Leftists who insist that there is not fair and equal opportunity because of race, gender, or socio-economic status, the principled conservative must insist that such folks are not really true Americans but frustrated Marxists living in a capitalist society. While some may argue that “America love it or leave it” should not be resurrected as a political slogan, we simply say the following to any radical Leftists living in America: if you really think our society is so terrible and don’t profess to any of these American values, isn’t it hypocritical of you to continue living in the country and reaping all of its benefits? Could these possibly be the same folks driving SUVs to environmental rallies?

Americans should recognize that government cannot solve all social problems and that charitable agencies can accomplish a great deal of good far beyond the capability and purview of government to handle. While supporting the accumulation of wealth via individual initiative, Americans should support private charity and give as much as they can afford. For those who believe that government should provide all and there is no need for private charity—frankly, they are living in the wrong country as suggested above.

Americans should value family and recognize that any child not raised with moral and ethical guidance from parents is not going to be remedied later in life by taking an ethics course in school.

All Americans should evaluate each other as individuals based on the content of their character, not the color of their skin—nor indeed any other immutable characteristic. Thus, stereotypes or expectations based on group status are to be avoided. This does work both ways (see discussion below of affirmative action), as group burdens as well as group benefits should be regarded as anti-American.

Pursuit of happiness begins with a peaceful and safe existence.

All Americans should value and have the opportunity to live in peaceful and safe neighborhoods. The fact that many do not is a concern for all of society and its citizens. Indeed this is a fundamental role for government. The principled conservative accepts that there will be neighborhoods of varying socio-economic groups. Some will have bigger homes and greener lawns than others. Such is life, and it is something to strive for since Americans value upward mobility. Some neighborhoods may feature modest-sized homes with smaller yards. Some may feature townhouses or rental apartments. Others may find themselves living in a shotgun shack (or trailer home). We simply value one thing—however Americans live, they should all be safe. No American should feel comfortable with the current reality of “bad neighborhoods” (meaning unsafe due to various criminal activities). If there is one thing that government should protect, it is the safety of people and their possessions. Of course these problems would be less prevalent with stronger families and communities, but this is not something that can change overnight. Similar to the earlier discussion of the need for a world police, the local police are there because people are not angels. Unfortunately, some are criminals and predators. The principled conservative believes that a fair society must be a safe society. Children caught in crossfire of gang warfare is never acceptable! While there is undoubtedly unanimity of opinion on this point, the proposed policies and remedies will likely diverge widely. The principled conservative understands that police should be supported and given the resources for neighborhood safety. But we also have high expectations for individuals and families. The police can protect a neighborhood, but the residents and parents have responsibility for supervision of children. Hence, while the rights of parents to raise their children as they see fit is important, it is not an unlimited right. If the parent (s) is not up to the task to make sure their child does not commit crimes, join a gang, deal drugs, or pursue other criminal activity, it is fair for society to pursue alternatives such as foster parents, adoption, and reform school. And unfortunately, there are some malevolent individuals who will have to be incarcerated their entire lives in order to protect society.

A cultural American must also be devoted to preserving this republic. No country has survived for centuries as both free and powerful, but that is the goal for the 21st century and beyond. This is something worth preserving. There may be great differences of opinion on how best to achieve this, but the fundamental goal must bind all Americans. We are all in this great experiment together. And we must repeat—if anyone living here at present thinks America is horrible and has not made the world a better place, there is a cave in Afghanistan where the Taliban will be happy to welcome you.

Immigration policies must be cleaned up.

Few would not acknowledge that serious mistakes have been made in our immigration policies since 1965. LBJ thought that flooding America with Mexican immigrants would make both countries stronger. Like many of his policies, they turned out to be utterly and completely wrong. American must fashion immigration policies to recruit the best and brightest from around the world, with a preference either for countries that share our values (the association of western democracies) or for those fleeing persecution in totalitarian terror states. The expectation should not be that individuals legally immigrate to gain access to government benefits. Naturally the principled conservative is disgusted that America has let the illegal immigration problem get so out of hand; it is a slap in the face to the rule of law and to those who immigrate legally (and often very patiently). Some argue that American values should not result in deportations. The principled conservative respectfully says...that is a load of crap. We also support amending the Constitution to clarify that simply being born on U.S. soil as a child of illegal immigrants does not make the child a U.S. citizen. This would go a long way to removing illegal immigration incentives. Secondly, we would dangle before the Mexican government the opportunity for membership in the association of western democracies, in order to encourage societal reforms that would make that country's citizens less interesting in fleeing.

Some have suggested that we allow unlimited immigration but simply deny any eligibility for government benefits for a period of time. This is to be rejected as contrary to a fair society. One should not be penalized because of the timing of their legal arrival in the U.S. As argued in this chapter, our public policy should support the "we are all in this together" concept versus separating Americans by any type of status. Further, open, unlimited immigration would be an economic, environmental, and cultural disaster.

It is recognized that America cannot "drain" all the best and the brightest from every country around the world. Otherwise poorer countries would have no incentive to perform economically, become developed, implement the rule of law and all those other good things that would help such countries to eventually become prosperous members of the association of western democracies. Some may have family and other ties to their home countries, or may not like the fast pace of life in America (or our easy access to the NFL or MLB on cable TV). Admittedly, it is not for everyone. But we do not apologize for American values or for the assertion that it would be better for the world if more countries were like America. This really should not be a political divide. To acknowledge that America has made mistakes and that we haven't solved every problem is not contrary to stating without hesitation or apology that America has made the world a better place. If a liberal/progressive is hesitant to say this, then they should not be surprised if we question their patriotism. If every country was devoted to American principles, we would likely have a much better chance at that elusive concept of world peace.

We can all get along—in a merit-based equal opportunity society.

The principled conservative should not equivocate but be 100% crystal clear that affirmative action as currently practiced is reverse discrimination in favor of under-represented minorities, or women, or whatever other oppressed group is identified. The practice is un-American and should be ended, not mended. We even have a simple guiding statement from Chief Justice Roberts:

"[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race."<sup>43</sup>

The principled conservative must not fear being called a racist, just because those with small minds and leftist agendas will not hesitate to do so. The principled conservative must say it is wrong to make decisions on anything—jobs, government contracts, school admissions, etc. based on anything other than merit. Yes, some laws have been on the books for years (e.g. government contracting preferences) but that doesn't make them any more acceptable in principle or even consistent with the Constitution if correctly interpreted. Divisive affirmative action policies treat people under a "victimized group" identity versus treating them as individuals. Essentially, if you are in the correct group, you receive special consideration that you did not individually earn. As discussed above, this is not consistent with what it means culturally to be an American.

The affirmative action/diversity cheering section is not content just to desperately cling to preferential admission practices for colleges, even though several states have passed referenda to ban such practices. They



are now heavily into the “shake down” strategy of pressuring private businesses to contract with “diverse” vendors. That’s right, it’s time to start getting out the ethnic profile of all your vendor’s employees, plus their sexual preferences and disability status. Nothing could be more divisive or corrosive to the social fabric than the diversity industry’s initiatives such as this. The principled conservative must reject and fight such policies at every opportunity, and sadly there are plenty of opportunities to fight. As just one small example, hidden in the Dodd/Frank/Obama financial reform law is that each new regulatory agency must have an Office of Minority and Women Inclusion “that shall be responsible for all matters of the agency relating to diversity in management, employment, and business activities.” In other words, it matters less whether new regulatory agencies are actually effective—but it is decreed that they MUST have the correct number of women and minorities.

Please keep in mind, however, that the above arguments by no means deny past wrongs. But it is hard to think of a more classic case to illustrate why two wrongs do not make a right. Worse, such policies diminish the real achievements of the individual. Sadly, it is a pervasive cancer throughout many institutions, both in the private and public sectors. Can a woman say she really made the grade as a city firefighter or Air Force fighter pilot if the standards, including physical capacity, have been lessened for women? But this is exactly what happens in the name of feminism and diversity. Can a Hispanic woman say she really deserved that Harvard law school education when her GPA and LSAT scores were significantly lower than many others who were rejected? Of course not.<sup>44</sup> It bears repeating that this is diametrically opposed to the concept of a cultural America which seeks to bind us together as ONE republic, not as a bunch of competing ethnic groups looking for a “fair share” for our people. Those who persist as such should be put on notice that they are in fact destroying America and will not like where we wind up if these policies are pursued to their logical conclusion. This has no bearing on pride or celebration of one’s ethnic heritage and religious beliefs. But affirmative action as practiced is contrary to the basic principles of fair, equal opportunity as well as a social and economically mobile society. Further, let the principled conservative point out that in promoting the real education reforms discussed in Chapter 7, we are committed to improving the prospects of the less fortunate so that equal opportunity is real, not merely symbolic.

Some presumed conservatives, and many self-proclaimed liberals, have shunned this debate for the very real fear noted above of being called a racist or insensitive or both. But the principled conservative cannot simply sidestep this issue because it is so crucial to our basic values. We cannot throw in the towel on this one and sleep with a good conscience. If the above arguments don’t convince, perhaps we can also point out the cost savings that would result from no longer tracking ethnicity or race on census or other governmental or private organizational forms. Dare we not track this data? Yes, because it would be consistent with a basic principle: America as a nation should not care one iota how many women, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, etc. are in a certain profession, job, etc. For the good of a fair and just society, we simply don’t care. After all, we are all just Americans.

This is not merely a pedantic exercise, but it has real implications for America’s future. As Samuel P. Huntington described in his classic *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, the culture of America as discussed in this chapter is under a very real threat:

“Historically American identity has been defined culturally by the heritage of Western civilization and politically by the principles of the American Creed on which Americans overwhelmingly agree: liberty, democracy, individualism, equality before the law, constitutionalism, private property. In the late twentieth century both components of American identity have come under concentrated and sustained onslaught from a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists...they wish to create a country not belonging to any civilization and lacking a cultural core. History shows that no country so constituted can long endure as a coherent society.” (emphasis added) 45

The premise of this chapter bears repeating again and again: anyone—regardless of national origin, race, religion, etc.—can be a cultural American and live and prosper in American society. But if one rejects such values, even those whose families may have been in America for two centuries, essentially that person can no longer truly claim to be an American. And yes, this means there is absolutely no place for the radical Islamic

adherent in America (sadly there are plenty of suicidal countries in Western Europe ready to welcome such individuals).

Changes in the Voting Rights Act and the Congressional redistricting process would help foster such common values.

As argued above, racial grievances should have no place in 21st century America, and race-based identity politics is a path to societal collapse. To identify oneself as a hyphen-American, versus just an American, is a problem. The principled conservative not only wishes to remove such questions from the census, we want the nation to reject the color-obsessed bean counters. Celebrating one's heritage, culture and family history is nice, but it should simply not be the basis of political representation or public policy.

Hence, one of the biggest political principles should be that voting districts logically and reasonably follow geography, not populations. To fix the current problems of Congressional districts requires fundamental changes in the law, specifically modifications to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We do not seek to turn the clock back, but to turn the clock forward. Creating safe seats for Black and Hispanic candidates by gerrymandering/jerry-rigging Congressional districts has so many bad side effects; it is no more justifiable than creating safe seats for incumbents. The racial spoils system we currently have in place assumes that only a person of a certain race can effectively represent those of the same ethnicity. This must be news to the 60+ % of the population characterized as "Caucasian" who appear to be existing peaceably under the presidency of half-black, half-white Barack Obama, while the country's largest ethnic minority (Hispanic or Latino) seems not to have committed mass suicide despite not yet having a president of any distinct Hispanic heritage. Simply take a look at the map of U.S. Congressional districts, which is a result of the unholy alliance of the Voting Rights Act and political gerrymandering. There are radically different shapes and combinations of disparate communities all to achieve the results of putting more Blacks and Hispanics into Congress or protecting incumbents. If a Congressperson were to represent a contiguous geographic area, then that duly elected representative will have to take account of all views in the area. It is amusing that those who decry the lack of bipartisanship in Congress fail to recognize that our Congressional districting process practically ensures there will be a Congress of very far left and very far right members. And then we are shocked that they don't reach much common ground! To the contrary, these policies have:

"... contributed to the racial polarization of the parties, keeping Republican House members from representing many black or Hispanic voters and keeping such voters from being able to vote for many viable Republican candidates for House seats. It has also made it harder for minority candidates to develop the multi-racial followings necessary to win statewide office."<sup>46</sup>

So rather than preserve the current system, the principled conservative is in favor of starting over with Congressional districts and focusing on logical and reasonable geographic electoral districts. Sure, there will always be politics, but Congress can approve certain parameters for states in drawing up districts. While little credence can be placed in expert political philosopher-kings to make such decisions, in this area we would be willing to embrace technology and let a dispassionate, objective computer program spit out the results.

## Chapter 9

### Religion and public policy

Religion and government should not be enemies. But let's not be naive about Radical Islam.

Religion is clearly an area where conservatives get some of the worst press from the mainstream media. Mention the words "moral majority" or "religious right" and any good liberal gets more scared than if a hoard of bomb belt-strapped Al Qaeda fighters showed up on their front lawn. It is all rather silly yet the fact is there is a great religious divide in 21st century America. For adherents, religion is a core part of their lives. The reality is that America was founded by Christians, and Judeo-Christian morals play a major part in our laws and sense of morality. Further, many have come to America over the years fleeing religious persecution in other countries. Yet agnostics or atheists, whose numbers appear to be growing, often scorn the religious as hopelessly misguided fools stuck in the past who don't understand we must get beyond the whole God thing. Some go even further and blame religion for everything bad that's ever happened in the world. How can an

American society comprised of such diametrically opposed viewpoints ever hope to agree on a core set of principles and values about anything, as suggested in the previous chapter?

The principled conservative understands that America is based on the principle of freedom to worship or not to worship whatever one wishes. This is the guiding principle. The only exception or caveat is when one's religious or non-religious practice endangers others, and here we will use the compelling example of radical Islam. For those adherents who support, encourage, and or justify suicide bombings, we rightly acknowledge there is no place for you as an American citizen; you may want to consider France or Belgium. This book cannot possibly devote the time, space, or expertise to explore the deeper question of whether radical Islam is a perversion of Islam or an accurate reflection of what the Koran recommends. For the purposes of the principled conservative, it does not matter because actions speak louder than words. If any religion (or non-religious article of political faith like Communism) features adherents who do not accept the values of a free society even while living in its midst and benefiting from its freedoms—then they pose a danger to society and cannot be permitted to live and proselytize in the free republic. Indeed, as witnessed by the 2009 outrageous murder spree by the Army jihad shrink at Ft. Hood, Texas, it is not clear the killer saw any irony in wiling away his spare time in strip clubs (which of course America presumably has in abundance compared to any totalitarian/terrorist Islamic state).

To reiterate, the principle of a properly designed free republic is the right to freely worship the religion of choice or no religion at all. The only caveat would be when the worship endangers other non-believers or attempts the overthrow of government or society. As noted, Radical Islam falls into this exception and the principled conservative would argue for consistency sake that the same restrictions would apply to any religion seeking to overthrow the U.S. government and/or oppress all other religions. It just happens that Radical Islam is the only major religion on the stage at the moment that falls into this category. The typical liberal/progressive harbors the delusion that there are only one or two such Muslims in the world, and the rest are very nice, moderate people. Sadly, the reality is the reverse. While it's hard make an exact estimate of the number of radical Islamic extremists worldwide, their numbers are at least in the tens of millions. While some may raise a cautionary note about the difficulty and danger of having the government investigate whether the tenets of a religious faith cross the line, in the present situation the proponents of radical Islam have made it rather easy. They say it and write it repeatedly, advocating against democratic government and for the rejection of freedom of religion, except for Islam. If this is what is being preached in any mosque, the principled conservative would argue that in our society such religious practice can be restricted because freedom of speech and freedom of worship does not mean freedom to overthrow the government or restrict others' religious freedom.

Putting aside the special justified treatment of Radical Islam, public policy should be neither endorsing nor hostile to religion, but neutral. This is a simple principle that has been misinterpreted by the courts over the past fifty years. Under the First Amendment, clearly America cannot have an official, established religion. So to say America is a Christian nation is incorrect. The American, as described in the previous chapter, can be an adherent to any religion or none. Tolerance is what makes the person a cultural American. That being said, religious believers are free to proclaim freely why their religion is superior to all others. The key in America is that we do this peaceably, without violence or threats of violence. One should be perfectly free to say that Judaism is far superior to Christianity or Islam—you may be wrong, and those who disagree can debate you to their heart's content, but you have a right to preach as you wish. However, if you walk over to the Mosque or the Methodist church down the block, break windows and spray paint insulting graffiti, you have no right to do so and have broken the law.

So much of the Supreme Court's constitutional law interpretations concerning religious freedom and separation of church and state has focused on ridiculous minutiae over whether nativity scenes can be displayed on public property. How that establishes a religion or compels anyone to practice one is quite perplexing. It is similar to those who have mental contortions over "In God we Trust" on coins. Should we melt them all down and start over? Again, for a country that was founded by many seeking religious freedom, it would be strange to support policies that remove religion from any mention in the public realm, as if it were a virus to be avoided. Must a Christmas tree now be declared merely a holiday shrubbery? Much of the current legal morass started with atheists who were concerned that school prayer would pressure their children to consider the existence of God.

Religious minorities in America, that is non-Christian religions, understandably are sensitive to any implication that the government is favoring Christianity over all other religions.

How to resolve this? The principled conservative supports the principles of official neutrality and tolerance, with protection of vigorous free speech and debate. So having religious displays open to any religion as desired in a town or city should be acceptable under the law. If a village has 99 Christians and 1 Muslim family, can they allow a nativity scene on the Village Green? The principled conservative says yes, so long as that Muslim family or indeed any other family has the right to put up their own display if so inclined. Add to this scenario one atheist family. They also, if desired, can be permitted a display (perhaps a Richard Dawkins book with a sign saying “there is no God.”) So long as it is not obscene language the principled conservative would view this as the free expression of ideas. But let us not turn such debate of religious ideas into a hate crime. If the atheist decides to sit among the display of godlessness to talk up the benefits of atheism, he or she must be prepared to accept that some may hurl insults back (e.g. “you’re a moron.”) Unless there is violence or the threat of violence, this is simply what free speech is all about. It’s no different if the Christian display proprietor encounters a visitor fresh from Karl Marx University who asks why does Christianity cause all the wars and misery of humanity? We never said that free speech had to be accurate or even in the ballpark. Much like other issues discussed throughout this book, the principled conservative wants to dissect and debate every debatable issue. And in the area of religion, how could there NOT be debate? The existence of God can never be proven, so what could be possibly be more debatable? It is doubtful anyone who ever asks the following question at a (obviously seriously intellectual) cocktail party as to “what is the meaning of our existence?” would ever get the response that “that question is so well-settled and beyond dispute that I think you’re an idiot for even raising it!”

The principled conservative does sadly recognize the decline in knowledge and civility concerning religious discussions. The many failings of public schools were explored in an earlier chapter, and certainly their incompetence in connecting religion’s role in history is both negligent and intentional. Discussions about religion and their history should not be taboo, because this encourages thinking, reading, and scholarship. Would it be such a bad thing if more Americans read the Torah, the Bible, or the Koran? Of course not. We would say even to the atheist or agnostic that you would be well served to read closely and understand what you are rejecting. And to the believer, it wouldn’t hurt to have a better understanding of what you believe. The principled conservative would ask how can a human being claim to be in pursuit of excellence in life (by this meaning family, work, relationships, etc.) and not personally explore the basic question of why are we here and what do I believe? And of course we mean a serious pursuit, not just a French shrug and shake of a cigarette while commenting on the absurdity of existence.<sup>47</sup>

To summarize, the principled conservative accepts and understands basic human nature and the scientifically unfathomable nature of our existence. We understand the reality that no one knows for sure or will likely ever know while living on Planet Earth as to whether there is a God or if any of the currently practiced religions is “correct.” Fortunately in a free and civil society we don’t need the answer. We accept this uncertainty of faith. The principle conservative just demands a government that safeguards religious freedom.

What about abortion?

It is not surprising why abortion has remained one of the most contentious political issues since the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, because it challenges so many assumptions and principles for those of all political persuasions. Science absolutely shows that a fetus is a human life, and viable outside of the womb at even earlier points in a pregnancy thanks to advances in science and technology. Abortion is an abhorrent, horrible procedure as any doctor or nurse who has ever performed can attest. And while Planned Parenthood would disagree, probably a solid majority of Americans would agree that abortion is absolutely the worst possible form of “birth control.”

Yet, the principled conservative supports individual freedom and privacy as well as lack of government influence and control over one’s personal decisions, even when those decisions may be misguided or wrong (so long as the law is not violated). And there is hardly a much more private matter than a pregnancy. The principled conservative would then say abortion is to be banned or limited only if it breaks the law, which of course begs the question of what the law should be. Is it possible to straddle a middle ground between the

position of abortion on demand versus those declaring it to be murder in every circumstance? The principled conservative should say yes, as abortion falls into the dicey area of both religious beliefs and sexuality. Both are areas that government should protect and stay out of the business of regulating or prosecuting unless others are harmed either potentially or actually. The principled conservative must deal with society as it is and acknowledges there is no wide-spread consensus for treating abortion like homicide—a requirement for converting a religious belief into the secular criminal law. But while not illegal, abortion should never have been declared a fundamental right. Religious believers should have every right to convince others of their belief that the practice is immoral. And would it really be harmful to any woman to fully understand the procedure and what it looks like? This means a full disclosure of information, not a sanitized neat “I am woman hear me roar” pro-choice version. There should be more education and awareness. And the principled conservative should support limitations on funding, as well as appropriate regulations concerning consent and parental notification that can be as broad as any state decides. We will not detour here to delve into the legal issues of the current confused state of Supreme Court and lower court jurisprudence in the wake of *Roe v. Wade*; we are only suggesting the general direction that should be taken. The strategies to get there are a separate discussion. This indeed may be one of the few times the principled conservative will quote President Clinton, who opined that abortion should be safe, legal and rare. He said it, but we’re not sure he meant it. We mean it. And we think that when the full range of information and choices and education are available, few will choose abortion—other than in cases of rape or incest. And further, government should promote adoptions to the hilt. Finally, procedures such as partial birth abortions should be rightly condemned and banned.<sup>48</sup> Put simply, if this procedure is not morally wrong and evil, it’s not clear what else would qualify.

## Chapter 10

### Human sexuality and public policy

Apologies are owed to the reader by the author for taking this long to reach the chapter about sex. But the principled conservative must address sex, because there must be guiding principles as to how and when public policy should have anything to do or say about what goes on in peoples’ bedrooms or other private places where private parts meet. Private is the operative word here, no pun intended. The principle is that sex is a private matter and if no one is harmed and consensual adults are involved, there is no role for government and no public policy issues over which to grapple (or grope).

However, we do believe that stable families, via marriage and the raising of healthy and happy children, are fundamental to the future of our society. That does not mean the principled conservative views what goes in a marriage as a subject for government interference, or that marriages are stuck in time in terms of their functionality. In looking for self-improvement and pragmatism, surely the best time-tested values of marriage should carry forward, while some of the negatives can be jettisoned. For example, expectations of married women being subordinate and having all the child-rearing responsibilities and limited employment opportunities are a relic of the past. But, we also reject those who ignore human nature and some of the fundamental differences between the sexes. Women generally are better nurturers of families and relationships, while men are generally physical task-oriented and suited to heavy lifting (taking out the trash and snow shoveling come to mind). Of course any parent sees this when observing that girls tend to play more with dolls and boys with trucks. No amount of exposure to radical feminist ideology is going to change human nature. All roles in a marriage need not to be equally assumed in order to be fair to both spouses; the key is reaching mutual agreement.

We do have a sense that marriage and relationships in general are under assault in a society that seems to focus on sex and physical attraction above all else. Admittedly, this is a cultural change not emanating from any law or government decision. Whether one wants to blame it on the sexual revolution, Hugh Hefner, or rock and roll, the point is that we live in this type of society. But didn’t we just admit this is not an area of government involvement? Yes, but that does not mean that, as a society, we cannot promote expectations, proffer judgments, and bring back shame. And not just for adulterers. We also reject the hedonistic lifestyle as bad for America because who can ever be a stable partner, parent, etc. while pursuing a “if it feels good do it” lifestyle? Certainly not the many Hollywood celebrities who are great at physical attraction (and checking into and out of rehab) but often terrible at sustaining an adult relationship. But the promotion of this morality must come from

the people, not the government. For example, the debate over providing condoms to teens because “they’re going to have sex anyway,” versus promoting teen abstinence, should be outside of any government role. We have no problem with a religious group running an advertisement promoting abstinence. Nor do we have a problem with a condom company running an ad promoting their product. Again, this is what legitimate public debate under the First Amendment is all about.

Ah, but the astute reader will recall that didn’t we earlier proclaim that stable two-parent families are shown again and again in studies to be essential to child welfare and opportunity for success in life. So, shouldn’t the government spend billions in messaging to encourage you to get in a stable relationship and raise good kids? Sounds enticing, but here the principle of freedom and the appropriate role of government comes into play. Let’s put it this way: families are so important that they are the last place we want the government coming up with “five year plans and new deals” (to quote Creedence Clearwater Revival). The principled conservative simply wants government to stay out of being a family counselor, and let families and yes, religions, nurture socially acceptable practices for sexuality and relationships. This also does not mean that government should suppress the free speech of the hedonists. Let them state their case. Nor does it mean we cannot appreciate physical beauty. Humans have celebrated the female figure from ancient Greece to the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. We are not aesthetic hermits. It is natural for people to want to be attractive, dress attractively, and be attracted to others who do so. We rightly condemn radical Islamists who would cover women from head to toe. Here we seek common cause with Victoria’s Secret! But this is a far cry from condoning wide-spread promiscuity and fractured relationships.

But now that we have delved into the area of sexuality, it is acknowledged that the committed leftist almost immediately attacks conservatives as being “anti-gay.” As described below, this is not only inaccurate but almost irrelevant to the principled conservative, who believes that ethics and morality comes from family and very close friends—not the government and not from an ethics class in college or business school. People should have the freedom to believe and do what they will in regards to sex. Remember that the principled conservative accepts human nature as it is—and sex is a basic human need like eating and going to the bathroom. It would be strange to have any policy argument in favor of starvation or against indoor plumbing. It is accepted as a given that eating to sustain health and having a nice warm toilet are both acceptable things. The principled conservative would say that in general, public policy should be the same in regards to sex between consenting adults. If you ever hear a political debate over whether U.S. citizens are having too much or not enough sex, the principled conservative should fling a shoe at the TV or computer screen. If the Census Bureau ever wants to ask the question “are you getting enough sex?” the principled conservative’s response should be that this is a private matter and it’s none of the government’s damn business.

But the simple “sex is a private matter” principle does hit a dilemma when sexuality becomes a lifestyle and a political movement. For example, there does not appear to be any coalition to promote the civil rights of middle-aged heterosexual men who fantasize about NFL cheerleaders and like to dine at Hooters. However, there are many organizations that promote “civil rights” for gays and lesbians. Some organizations also actively promote the gay/lesbian lifestyle, as if society were in a recruiting battle for one team or the other, to paraphrase Seinfeld. Think about this for a minute. If sex is a private matter, why should anyone from child to senior citizen be receiving brochures about these matters? It is recognized that conservatives are often criticized for intolerance, insensitivity, and hypocrisy in this area, but the principled conservative would remind all concerned that consistency and fairness are the goal. Yes we recognize that some will be offended by a gay pride parade in San Francisco with half-naked men on a float, but what about young girls flashing their breasts for beads during Mardi Gras in New Orleans? The principled conservative recognizes that if one is fair game, why not the other? However, before we jump on the parade float, let’s acknowledge some difficult questions. The principled conservative is both protective of individual privacy but also rightly concerned about the tone and tenor of American culture. We are concerned about the over-emphasis on sex and the impact of the sexual revolution that unfortunately seems to place the physical act on a higher plane than an actual mature emotional relationship. And what we would consider private matters are often openly displayed in public. Back to the simulated man-on-man sex acts on a float or college girls gone wild in New Orleans. Do we simply allow this so long as it doesn’t cross the legal (ill-defined) line of obscenity, or recommend government restrictions? This

is a tough call. But think about this—if one can get fined for public nudity and indecent exposure by urinating in public, what harm would it do to allow localities to issue misdemeanor fines for a range of behaviors considered by a reasonable person to be indecent? That is probably the best we can do here, but it does mean that communities who strongly believe in sex and sexuality as a private matter can fine those who go outside the line. And reasonable restrictions on time, place, and manner of overt sexual displays are acceptable. Just as zoning laws can prevent strip clubs from operating next to elementary schools, the same can be said for leather bound gay-pride displays or the college coeds at Mardi Gras. You can limit the location. And while the government does not say this, friends, family, etc. can certainly teach the lesson to keep it inside. We don't want to see heterosexuals, gays or lesbians slobbering over each other in public, any more than we want to see bowel movements in public. These are private matters and it's time society pushed them back inside where they belong.

But what of those with a religious conviction or belief against gays and lesbians and/or the gay or lesbian sex act? This is certainly a cause for tension because here the belief in sex as a private matter comes into conflict with religious beliefs which every American should be free to hold (so long as those beliefs are not advocating the forcible overthrow of the government, murder, terrorism, etc.). So how is the principled conservative to resolve the matter? Is a person's sexuality the same immutable characteristic as race, gender or hair color, that cannot change (well, absent surgery or hair coloring)? We would rightly call anyone a bigot who dislikes or hates a person solely because of such a characteristic. It also does not resolve the matter to say that while I might personally find the lifestyle and behavior offensive, some of my best friends are gay or lesbian. That is condescending and probably would not be something you would be comfortable repeating in front of your gay or lesbian friend(s).

Let's put aside the rather easy issue of the rampantly promiscuous person, be it straight or gay. We can be intolerant of the chronically unfaithful, whether a womanizer or "manizer," because (absent perhaps some actual clinical condition) it is clearly a choice not predetermined by genetics. If someone disapproves of me or dislikes certain lifestyle choices that I choose, then I cannot fairly call them discriminatory. My neighbor may not like that I drive too fast through the neighborhood, that I date many attractive but much younger women, that I drink beer and pass out in my back yard, etc. These are all personal choices which others can rightly criticize. Obviously my choices might be in violation of the law in some cases, whereas in others it will never get beyond my neighbor looking out the window at me and yelling. As noted, in promoting positive behaviors like monogamy, marriage, not having children out of wedlock, etc. it is perfectly fine to bring back the traditional societal attitude of shame or stigma: "Many people confuse stigma and prejudice, but the two are very different...Stigma...means blaming a single person for his or her immoral, dishonorable, or improper conduct."<sup>49</sup>

Back to more difficult question of whether being gay or lesbian is a choice or an inherent trait. If sexual preference is not really a choice, but immutable, genetic or unchangeable and part of one's nature or essence, so long as that characteristic is not harmful to others, how can my neighbor possibly criticize it without being narrow-minded or bigoted? For my neighbor to say that the bald guy down the street is bad for the neighborhood would be strange and rightly condemned. So how does the principled conservative view being gay—a choice or genetic? Unlike the choice of whether there is a God, this is a decision that we really do need an answer to in the present and is also one that might even be answered scientifically in our lifetimes. Because the principled conservative errs on the side of human freedom and less government interference in private lives, at present and until shown otherwise the principled conservative should conclude this is genetic versus simply a lifestyle choice. While there is no definitive science at this point to say so with 100 percent certainly, let's say it's a pretty good hunch. Consider human experience throughout history. Long before there were gay-straight alliance support groups in high schools, there have been gays and lesbians in all types of societies and at all socio-economic levels. When something happens that consistently over time, it is difficult to conceive it was a result of a concerted recruiting campaign to join the other team. The genetic or "hard-wired in the brain" explanation also better explains why one man fantasizes about the physical charms of, say, Catherine Zeta-Jones, while another man fantasizes about Nathan Lane. And this results in a position of non-interference in private decisions. One also has to ask in the greater societal context, are two gay people in a monogamous

relationship a worse threat to society than sexually promiscuous heterosexuals? The principled conservative would say of course not. Further, in a free and tolerant America, these principled conservative views are in stark contrast to those societies which would clearly condemn gays and discriminate immensely—the totalitarian/terrorist Islamic states and their adherents in free societies. The best place for a gay or lesbian to live is in a democratic republic such as America protected by the rule of law and conservative principles of privacy that the government will not interfere in decisions between consensual adults.<sup>50</sup>

The politically astute person may well comment that we just alienated a whole bunch of politically conservative Christians who usually vote Republican and would view a Gay Pride parade in San Francisco as yet another example of America going to hell in a hand basket a la Sodom and Gomorrah. But the principled conservative would respond in two ways. First, we take humans as they are and recognize human imperfection. As long as they don't hurt others, a person's sexual behavior should be put in perspective that there are plenty of sinners in society who commit far greater sins than this—child abuse, murder, and rape come to mind. Second and more importantly, to condemn someone for being gay, which we accept to be a genetic characteristic, is not acceptable.

Does this mean that the denial of marriage is discrimination against gays and lesbians that should be remedied by legislative or judicial change—or constitutional amendment to either allow or not allow it in order to remove all doubt? This issue of course has become the litmus test of gay rights advocacy groups as to whether you are with us or against us. Is this really THE civil rights issues for gays and lesbians in a similar manner to voting rights for blacks? Before answering this question, let us understand the parameters being used. We are not analyzing what the Founding Fathers would do (it is unlikely they would view this as guaranteed under the Constitution), or whether or not marriage is as fundamental a right as voting or owning property. Principles are to help guide our decisions, not to answer every nuance of public policy. The principle is privacy and individual freedom and choice. When looked at in this perspective, on principle who really gives a flying flip if someone wants to marry someone of the same sex? It has absolutely no impact on heterosexual marriage. It is a decision between two consenting adults. So, from a starting point, the principled conservative should be skeptical about arguments against gay and lesbian marriage. Then the question can turn as to whether this should be determined through the legislative process or determined by the judiciary as an ever-expanding right via a flexible, living Constitution. Given that so many marriages end in divorce and the miniscule impact that being married has on one's job prospects or other chances for success in life, the principled conservative should also start from the premise of “show me why this cannot simply be decided in the legislative process since this is bestowing an additional privilege.” It does not seem to be interfering with a fundamental right. Remember, this is a book about principles, not about reaching the correct or right outcome on every public policy debate. This is a contentious matter where two principled conservatives might reach a different policy conclusion. But at least they would be starting their analysis from the proper point. And given that we also want to promote more lasting marriages and family as being good for society, it would be very compelling if proponents can demonstrate that more people will be married and adopt children as a result of such laws. Since over the past 25 years roughly half of all marriages end in divorce,<sup>51</sup> society would seem to have no better place to go than up.

Can the principled conservative be “pro family” without being anti-gay? Yes, because family is a different issue altogether and the decision to have a family and raise children is clearly a choice. And this is one that can be encouraged by all sorts of public and private activities because we can conclude that a family is a healthy thing that is good for society. Adoption should be promoted. Stable two-parent families (regardless of gender) are critical. It is difficult for any single parent, no matter how committed, to raise a child. As noted, studies consistently show that children of single parents face much greater obstacles to success. And remember the arguments against promiscuity? The principled conservative claims that monogamy is good, it is a choice, and it's good for reasons beyond fighting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. We can also promote social shame or stigma, as mentioned above. But all of this does not mean the government is telling you how to live your life. We are not asking the government to issue public service announcements reminding you that it's important to start a family plus mow your lawn regularly. It is up to religions, charities, associations, and other social organizations to do good work in the area, and preach the gospel of stable families and lasting marriages. Government policies, especially tax law, can be supportive, but expecting government to have much of a role in



social ethics and family patterns is foolish. Government policies should not penalize marriage, but clearly assumptions about government policies promoting good behavior have proven wrong time and time again. For example, the committed social engineer will usually say the cliché that if we just handed out more condoms and had more sex education in school, there would be fewer teenage pregnancies and unwed mothers. We have done so for years, and it does not make a difference.<sup>52</sup> Naturally, it's because such choices are based on character and the home environment. Yes, if only positive social behavior could be accomplished by a poster or television commercials saying "here, do this, it's good for you." The principled conservative is guided by realism and pragmatism versus pursuing the same bad public policy again and again and expecting a different result.

## Chapter 11

### Concluding thoughts

The principled conservative in a nutshell is a vigorous advocate for free markets, entrepreneurship, capitalism, a sound economy, and individual liberty and freedom of action. We aim at creating the conditions for everyone to have an opportunity for success, personal freedom, and personal safety and security, while protecting the most vulnerable in society

The principled conservative wants society to ultimately protect life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness of all the world's citizens, not just Americans. It doesn't mean every country will adopt the same policies, but it does mean their policies will be determined by elected representatives of the citizens in a democratic manner.

The principled conservative vision of 21st century America is a fair society more protective of individual rights and equal opportunity, with a more effective but leaner government. America should remain a beacon of freedom around the world and promote the U.S. Constitution and the democratic republic as worthy models for all people to consider. We need a new national spirit of renewal—not from the government down but from the grass roots up—to result in responsible and accountable government with the goals of helping individuals succeed and be free. While not being anti-government, we are committed to ending government involvement in many areas where it has no business. As Barry Goldwater asked many years ago:

"Who will proclaim in a campaign speech:

"I have little interest in streamlining government or in making it more efficient, for I mean to reduce its size. I do not undertake to promote welfare, for I propose to extend freedom. My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution or have failed in their purpose, or that impose on the people an unwarranted financial burden. I will not attempt to discover whether legislation is 'needed' before I have first determined whether it is constitutionally permissible. And if I should later be attacked for neglecting my constituents' 'interests', I shall reply that I was informed that their main interest is liberty and that in that cause I am doing the very best I can."<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps it is poetic justice that the man derided by LBJ and the liberal media as a dangerous man turns out to have a lot more common sense and guidance for 21st century America. As I hope this book has contributed in some small part.

1 India is not given credit here because they were under British colonial rule until 1947.

2 Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 5.

3 While many liberals would like to hide their head in the sand and deny that we are presently at war with Radical Islam, the adherents of global jihad have declared war long ago.

4 Of course, if by some slim chance we are attacked by other intelligent but belligerent forms of life in the universe, they would think us pretty stupid if we had unilaterally disarmed in the interest of "world peace."

5 Dan Senor, Saul Singer, *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* (New York: Twelve, 2009).

6 Those who wish it to do so should try amending the U.S. Constitution.

7 Paulsen MS, "The War Power," 33 *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 1, Winter 2010 (pp. 120-121).

8 For a litany of the U.N. mess, see Jed Babbin, *Inside the Asylum: Why the United Nations and Old Europe are Worse than you Think* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004).

9 Babbin in *Inside the Asylum*, 86-88, proposes a “Alliance of the Free” with similar goals; I prefer a voluntary “association” with criteria for member admission and specific goals to be determined by member states versus starting with a grandiose charter (which sounds a little too much like the U.N.).

10 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 311, 307.

11 For further explanation of the benefits of America’s role of world policeman but not as an empire, see Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath: How American Acts as the World’s Government in the 21st Century*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

12 Or, if preferred, the Rodney Dangerfield doctrine.

13 Per Norman Podhoretz, *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

14 See Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006).

15 Ironically, Medicaid’s overspending tendencies are largely in the area of long-term care for elderly, whose costs should arguably not even be a part of this program; it would have been far cheaper to simply subsidize the purchase

of long term care insurance policies.

16 See the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Web site at: [https:// questions.medicare.gov/cgi-bin/medicare.cfg/php/enduser/std\\_adp.php?p\\_faqid=2099](https://questions.medicare.gov/cgi-bin/medicare.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=2099) 17 See Howard Husock, *America’s Trillion-dollar Housing Mistake: The Failure of American Housing Policy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

18 Husock, 11.

19 Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 40th anniversary edition 2002), 3.

20 For a concise summary of why application of Keynesian economics never works in the real world, see John Steele Gordon, *Hamilton’s Blessing: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt* (New York: Walker and

Company, 1997), 129-136.

21 Absent a major world war, but it is doubtful anyone is arguing for that.

22 Amity Shales, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2007), 352, 105, and 147.

23 See Robert A. Levy, *Shakedown: How Corporations, Government, and Trial Lawyers Abuse the Judicial Process* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2004).

24 These examples are all from Timothy P. Carney, *The Big Ripoff: How Big Business and Big Government Steal Your Money* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2006), 57-73.

25 As Wikipedia summarizes: “The United States federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC or EIC) is a refundable tax credit designed to encourage low-income workers and offset the burden of U.S. payroll taxes. For tax year 2009, a claimant with one qualifying child can receive a maximum credit of \$3,043. A claimant with two qualifying children can receive a maximum credit of \$5,028.” “Today, the EITC is one of the largest anti-poverty tools in the United States (despite the fact that most income measures, including the poverty rate, do not account for the credit), and enjoys broad bipartisan support.”

26 As Gordon notes in Hamilton's Blessing, p. 143: "...the failed experiment of high marginal [tax] rates continued to be supported by the unlikely combination of liberals and the rich, just as the failed experiment of prohibition was long supported by the preachers and bootleggers."

27 For example see: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Budget/bg1622.cfm>

28 This is unfortunately what has happened in global warming science. See Lawrence Solomon, *The Deniers: The world-renowned scientists who stood up against global warming hysteria, political persecution, and fraud\** (\*and those who are too fearful to do so), Richard Vigilante Books (2008).

29 See Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages*, St. Martin's Press (1998).

30 Peter Huber, *Hard Green: Saving the Environment from the Environmentalists/A Conservative Manifesto* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 171.

31 Huber, 106.

32 Huber, 102.

33 Huber, 92.

34 Sally C. Pipes, *Miracle Cure: How to Solve America's Health Care Crisis and Why Canada's Isn't the Answer* (Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Research Institute and the Fraser Institute, 2004), 160.

35 Allan Pell Crawford, *Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2008), 131.

36 Maureen Stout, *The Feel-Good Curriculum: The Dumbing Down of America's Kids in the Name of Self-Esteem* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 2000), 226.

37 Stout, 190.

38 Chris Whittle, *Crash Course: Imagining a Better Future for Public Education* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005), 124-125.

39 Maureen Stout, 158.

40 It is strange that we often bemoan the lack of savings while not questioning the basic premise that interest earned on savings accounts, which has already been counted once as income, should be taxed each year as it accumulates.

41 I refuse to use the term "class" in this context because it has such bad and misguided Marxist connotations.

42 *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

43 A UCLA study indicates the effect is even more damaging, as minorities admitted to law schools above their ability level drop out in higher rates than their non-minority counterparts. Yet when learning together in schools with those of equal ability, minorities and non-minorities do equally well.

44 (New York: Touchstone edition 1997), 305-306.

45 Ramesh Ponnuru, "The Longest Emergency: Congress debates (sort of) the Voting Rights Act of 1965," *National Review* July 17, 2006, pp. 22-23.

46 And to all the French just gratuitously insulted, those who embrace American values are welcome to legally immigrate to America and enjoy our society. We even have two Disney theme parks!

47 Wesley J. Smith, *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 63-4. And for those who might jump to the conclusion that this is a politically conservative author, note that Mr. Smith's book is dedicated to Ralph Nader, with whom he has written four books.

48 James Q. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture has Weakened Families* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2002), 216, 217.

49 See Bruce Bower, *While Europe Slept* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006), where the author views the creeping and sweeping anti-gay intolerance of Muslim communities in Western Europe as a far greater threat than any verbal “moral approbation” from the so-called religious right in America.

50 Wilson, 161.

51 Mona Charen, *Do-Gooders: How Liberals Hurt Those They Claim to Help (and the Rest of Us)* (New York: Sentinel, 2004), 134.

52 Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (New York: MJF Books, 1990, originally published 1960), 15.