

More On Ron Raul

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If Ron Paul's libertarian handlers and support base could escape their ideology, Ron Paul could be much better positioned to win the Republican nomination.

Here are some suggestions.

Ron Paul should be making the point that Social Security and Medicare are threatened by multi-trillion dollar wars that are funded by debt, by bailouts of a deregulated banking system, and by money creation to keep the banks afloat. Libertarians support deregulation, but their position has always been that deregulated industries must not be bailed out with public subsidies, much less subsidies that are so extensive that they threaten government solvency and the value of the currency.

Instead of hitting hard on the serious threat to Social Security and Medicare posed by Obama and Republican candidates for the nomination, all of whom serve Wall Street, the military/security complex, and the Israel Lobby, Ron Paul has been positioned both by his supporters and his opponents as the danger to Social Security and Medicare. This is an amazing strategic mistake by the Ron Paul campaign.

The mistake is somewhat understandable. Ron Paul's supporters are mainly among the young. The importance to them of Social Security and Medicare will not register for many years, but for the vast majority of the population Social Security and Medicare are essential for survival. A candidate who is positioned as the destroyer of what scant economic protection the American elderly have is not positioned to win an election for president.

Many libertarians regard Social Security and Medicare as welfare handouts and as Ponzi schemes, when in fact these programs are a form of private property. People pay for these programs all their working lives, just as they pay premiums for private medical policies and make their deposits into private pension plans. Libertarians are great defenders of private property, so why don't they defend the elderly's private property rights in Social Security and Medicare benefits? Social Security and Medicare are contracts that government made with citizens. These contracts are as valid and enforceable as any other contracts. If Social Security and Medicare are in dire trouble, why is the government wasting trillions of dollars in behalf of private armaments industries, a neocon ideology, and Israel's territorial ambitions? Why isn't this question the most important issue in the campaign?

Instead, in a decade that has seen two massive stock market crashes and an amazing amount of financial fraud, libertarians prattle on about privatizing Social Security and about how much larger the retirement pensions would be. They speak about delaying the Social Security retirement age to 70 without any thought to what a person does who is retired by his employer at 65. People who suggest making Social Security and Medicare off limits until

people reach 70 need to have a look at the cost of private medical plans for older people. A group plan with Blue Cross Blue Shield Florida for a 64-year old woman has a \$18,000 premium, large deductibles per medical issue, and a 20% co-pay. Even a person with private insurance faces potentially ruinous health care expenses.

Libertarians will not wait to think before they inform me that private savings are funded but Social Security and Medicare are not. They are incorrect on both accounts.

Social Security and Medicare are funded with a payroll tax. It is true that the government has stolen the funds, spent them, and left non-marketable IOU's in their place. But in our deregulated casino financial system with street registration of "securities," the same thing happens to private holdings. Where is the money that individuals had in MF Global? What happened to people's savings invested with Madoff? What happened to Enron's investors? Can AIG make good on its promises to pay the benefits that people have purchased? Can banks whose balance sheets are loaded with subprime derivatives make good on their depositors' accounts? US government debt is a component of many private pension plans. How secure are the values of Treasury bonds?

The notion that free unregulated markets are totally trustworthy is the enormous mistake that former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan made, for which American and European peoples continue to pay. Libertarians endorse this fantastic mistake to the hilt.

This is not meant to be an attack on libertarians. Rather, it is an explanation of some of their mistakes. There is much to admire about libertarians. They believe in civil liberty, that is, in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution. They understand that government cannot substitute for the market. I know a lot about libertarians. I was associated with them for years, serving for several years as Distinguished Scholar at the Cato Institute until I was run off for independent thinking.

Libertarians are sectarian, and their tolerance does not extend beyond their ideology. The biggest mistake that libertarians make is the way they view government and private sectors. Government is the root of all evil, and the private sector is the source of all good. Libertarians have never figured out that people are the same whether in the government or in the private sector. They will abuse their power regardless of where they perch. That is why government needs to be tied down by the Constitution and the private sector by regulation. Yes, regulation can go too far. Certainly, deregulation has gone too far.

The ongoing financial crisis from deregulation and ongoing jobs crisis from offshoring constitute empirical evidence that the belief is false that an unfettered private sector is the source of all good.

Some readers misunderstood the point of my previous column, "America's Last Chance." I am endorsing the U.S. Constitution and making the point that Ron Paul is the only candidate for president in either party who is committed to resurrecting the Constitution. Without the Constitution we cease to be American citizens and become subjects of a tyrannical police state. My complaint is that the only candidate who could bring back the Constitution cannot be elected because of the inflexibility and sectarianism of his base. Possibly there are more worthy third party candidates, but they have no prospect of visibility. Ron Paul is visible, and the opportunity is going to waste.

I hope readers will spare me their comments about how important their various single issues

are. There are many important things. The question is: what is the over-riding important thing?

Civil Liberty, essentially the accountability of government to law that serves to protect the innocent, is the historic achievement of the English over many centuries from its beginnings with the foundation for common law established by Alfred the Great in the 9th century through Magna Carta in the 13th century to the Glorious Revolution in the 17th century. If this human achievement is lost, it is unlikely to be resurrected. If the Constitution that Bush and Obama have murdered stays in its grave one more presidential term, no one will be able to re-establish the Constitution's authority.

And please, no prattle from libertarians about "natural rights." The only rights we have are rights achieved by centuries of human struggle that we have the wits and strength to retain.

And no prattle from left-wingers who denounce the Constitution for not protecting slaves and native Indians. The Constitution did not establish universal justice. The Constitution protected the people covered by it. Over time rights were extended. During the past decade the Constitution lost its power. Today rights depend on the subjective opinion of the executive branch. This is tyranny. We should be unified in our opposition to tyranny.

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