

AMSPECBLOG

## Are We Doomed Politically?

By Doug Bandow on 7.14.09 @ 8:38PM

We're doomed. At least, that is what the polls suggest. My Cato Institute colleague Gene Healy points to polls which show that today's young people, Generation Y, are generally statist:

The CAP report shows that Gen Y is substantially more likely to support universal health care, labor unions, and education spending than older voters. And other surveys support CAP's "Progressive Generation" thesis.

In 2008, the nonpartisan National Election Study asked Americans whether "the free market" or "a strong government" would better handle "today's complex economic problems." By a margin of 78 to 22 percent, Millennials opted for "strong government."

Kids today are a credulous bunch. The 2007 Pew Political Values survey revealed "a generation gap in cynicism." Where 62 percent of Americans overall view the federal government as wasteful and inefficient, just 42 percent of young people agree.

No wonder, then, that GenNext responds to President Obama's call for "public service," roughly translated as "a federal paycheck."

Here, they differ dramatically from their skeptical "Generation X" predecessors. A 1999 survey asked Gen X college seniors to name their ideal employers; they "filled the entire list with for-profit businesses like Microsoft and Cisco." What a difference a generation makes. In the same poll today, Gen Y prefers the State Department, Teach for America, and the Peace Corps. That's a problem for a country built on the entrepreneurial spirit.

Demography might not be destiny, since minds can change. And an Obama administration which racks up trillions of dollars in debt to be paid by Generation Y might reduce people's enthusiasm for endless government spending.

Still, the numbers are sobering. If the limited government/individual liberty crowd is going to prevail, we have a lot of educating and convincing to do.

**Doug Bandow** is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is the author of *Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics (Crossway)*.

