

Libertarians Vs Social Conservatives

by [Stuart Shapiro](#)

David Boaz of the [Cato](#) Institute has an [op-ed](#) in today's *LA Times*. He begins with:

Social conservatives say they're trying to address the problems of family breakdown, crime and welfare costs, but there's a huge disconnect between the problems they identify and the policy solutions they propose. It's almost like the man who looked for his keys on the thoroughfare, even though he lost them in the alley, because the light was better.

After discussing how social conservatives focus on gay marriage and abortion as their way to deal with these problems, his ending is almost as good:

Reducing the incidence of unwed motherhood, divorce, fatherlessness, welfare and crime would be a good thing. So why the focus on issues that would do nothing to solve the "breakdown of the basic family structure" and the resulting "high cost of a dysfunctional society"? Well, solving the problems of divorce and unwed motherhood is hard. And lots of Republican and conservative voters have been divorced. A constitutional amendment to ban divorce wouldn't go over very well, even with the social conservatives. Far better to pick on a small group, a group not perceived to be part of the Republican constituency, and blame it for social breakdown and its associated costs.

That's why social conservatives point to a real problem and then offer phony solutions.

But you won't find your keys on the thoroughfare if you dropped them in the alley, and you won't reduce the costs of social breakdown by keeping gays unmarried and preventing them from adopting orphans.

He does leave out the fact that abortion and gay marriage are issues that rally the Republican base, but basically he is spot on. Say what you want about the Cato Institute, this is an example of intellectual consistency that is to be admired.