



Why Libertarians Should Support Social Conservatives

by **Tony Perkins** ([more by this author](#))

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The conservative movement exists to promote a strong and secure America, a vibrant economy that enables ordinary people to prosper, and a respect for the dignity and equality of every person.

Each of these is related to the other. We cannot have a robust defense unless our economy is humming and providing the financial and technological resources our military needs. But our military cannot thrive when there looms a shortfall of potential recruits, nor will we create the jobs we need without the human capital sustained economic growth requires.

So, instead of attacking the Family Research Council (FRC) in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, as he did earlier this month, the Cato Institute's David Boaz should be joining us in our drive to support the traditional family. Boaz says he views divorce, out-of-wedlock childbirth, welfare, and even abortion, as serious moral problems in our society. We agree, which is why we at the FRC are doing something about them.

Ironically, Boaz fails to grasp the connection between a healthy family, personal liberty, and a sound economy: When the family fails, the economy suffers and social pathologies ensue. This invites government intervention, which contracts liberty—the very thing Boaz says he wants to fight.

Since 1973, our country has seen 53 million abortions, 65 million sexually transmitted diseases, and an out-of-wedlock birthrate of 41%. Recall that the great liberal scholar Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned of social chaos when the out-of-wedlock birthrate among black families was 25%. Now seven of 10 black children are born without a father's guiding and restraining hand in the home.

All of this social chaos costs us billions. The federal government's programs are no substitute for a mom and a dad in the home. The hard data demonstrates that all

children living in intact homes do better in school—and this costs taxpayers nothing extra.

The Cato Institute rightly believes that government should protect our rights—and stay out of the way.

What right is more important than the right to life? If we cannot be secure in our persons, will we remain long secure in our property?

FRC's Dr. Patrick Fagan has massively documented the findings of social science. These conclusions are unambiguous—the intact family headed by a married mother and father produces the best results for children. The family that remains together—and that worships regularly—can point the path to society's renewal.

We share Boaz's vision of a smaller government, a government that is limited and constitutional. We too want a government that lives within its means.

Consider this fact: The fiscal costs of social breakdown are massive. Fewer people mean a weaker economy: It has been estimated that since 1970, abortion has cost the nation a minimum of \$35 trillion. And government pays hugely for pathologies that derive from broken families and broken lives.

Abortion flows directly from broken families: Young people taught abstinence by involved parents means sexual probity until marriage in far more cases than not. Young people looking for the affection they don't receive at home are more likely to be sexually intimate. And young women in crisis often turn to abortion as a recourse when they feel they have no other options.

Children don't need just two affectionate adults, as in two same-sex partners. They need a mom and a dad, who each provides a kind of nurturing unique to their genders. It is important to note, also, the inherent contradiction in Boaz's assertion that homosexual marriage is somehow a viable alternative to traditional marriage: He claims that when government allows same-sex marriage, more children will be adopted.

Perhaps. But if families were stronger, the need for adoption would be less great, and the fact that he refers to homosexual adoption, not procreation, makes a significant part of the case for marriage itself—only a male and female can create a life.

Does the Cato Institute really believe that the voters in more than 30 states who have upheld marriage, who have rejected liberal attempts to overturn it, should be ignored? Where's the liberty in that kind of *libertarianism*?

Same-sex unions can never be equated with true marriages, nor can the pathologies Boaz rightly decries ever be addressed effectively until we again strengthen the one institution without which society will continue to crumble: the traditional, heterosexual, married family.

Mr. Perkins is president of the [Family Research Council](#).

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