

Tea Party, liberals to play nice at Harvard

By Hillary Chabot | Thursday, September 22,

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Photo by Stuart Cahill

Tea Party firebrands and flaming lefties will be facing off in the hallowed halls of Harvard Law School this weekend — but anyone expecting a political conflagration might be disappointed.

Because in this sorry age of bitter partisan rhetoric, a Kumbaya moment may be brewing in Cambridge, where an unlikely — and uneasy — left-right alliance has been formed for a two-day conference to explore the prospects for a U.S. constitutional convention.

“I’m not going to be voting for Sarah Palin,” admitted Harvard Law professor Lawrence Lessig, a self-described liberal who is co-chairing the event with a top Tea Party chief. “But a bunch of us across a range of political persuasions are convinced there are problems with the way our government functions.”

Fellow co-chairman Mark Meckler, a founder of the Tea Party Patriots, said, “I would bet you on policy we probably can’t agree on anything, but what we can agree on is that the country has gotten away from the people. There is a ruling elite that none of us feel represented by anymore.”

The roughly 400 people expected to attend will look for common ground in promoting a constitutional convention, where the states could mull amendments to overhaul the fundamental rules of government in the United States.

Speakers representing a broad swath of American political thought are coming from the Green Party, the Cato Institute, Progressive Democrats of America and the American Freedom Agenda, among others.

Agenda items will include term limits, expanding state rights and limiting private money in politics.

Attendees aren’t likely to agree on many of those issues, said keynote speaker Glenn Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor and founder of the influential conservative libertarian blog Instapundit. But, he said, “There is a widespread sense that things aren’t right and we should talk about fundamental changes instead of incremental changes — sort of like a reboot.”

Harvard Law Tea Party founder Christopher Mills said he’ll stifle his differences with some of the speakers to hear what they have to say. Living in notoriously PC-obsessed Cambridge, or “Moscow on the Charles,” as he calls it, Mills said he knows what it’s like to feel unwelcome.

“People usually aren’t rude, but some people have been condescending. They ask us how long have we been Tea Partiers, as if it was some disease,” said Mills, 24, of South Carolina.

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