



## 'Americans hate Rand Paul's libertarianism - they just don't know it yet' thinks Williamson

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Kevin Williamson's confidence that ["Americans hate Rand Paul's libertarianism, They just don't know it yet,"](#) comforts and amuses me, after a week of becoming more concerned that Senator Rand Paul might actually be the smartest of the potential GOP challengers. Rand's fire breathing speech against excess spying to thunderous applause to liberals at Berkeley, last week, while too many Democrats timidly stand by on the side-lines on these issues, has had some of us worried that he might have the potential jump out of the fringe category to surprise us the way President Obama did.

Williamson picks up on that sentiment noting that Rand Paul's supporters believe America is ready for a "libertarian moment," but then immediately dashes these hopes saying that "American's hate libertarinism."

The problem for libertarian politicians is that Americans hate libertarianism. They like Social Security and minimum-wage hikes, they are still somewhat wary of free trade and they resent that the world is full of conniving and frequently swarthy foreigners who are scheming to provide us with goods and services in exchange for little green pieces of paper. Four times as many Americans support pulling out of NAFTA or renegotiating it as support staying in. Paul, on the other hand, wants to make the whole world a free-trade zone: He scores 100 percent on the libertarian Cato Institute's free-trade index. Libertarian ideas might appeal to voters on principle—in a poll last fall, 22 percent of Americans said they identify as or “lean” libertarian. But in the voting booth Americans don't have principles; they have interests.

Nearly every election cycle, a poll comes out suggesting that many Americans, and a big chunk of swing voters, think of themselves as “fiscally conservative but socially liberal,” and therefore possibly open to libertarian candidates who want to police the deficit but not your sex life. These voters are the political equivalent of people who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” It's basically an empty formulation to avoid picking a side or a fight; it's shallow, but it sounds good. The problem, at least for Rand Paul, is that “fiscally conservative but socially liberal” is not a long way of saying “libertarian.” Paul's libertarianism is intended to offer a little something for everybody, on the left and right—spending cuts for the Republican base, legal relief for potheads, a presidential pat on the head for gay people. But if he gets serious about substantive reform along these lines, his libertarianism is instead going to offer something to outrage everybody.

Yes, that's what we need, a list of how Paul will outrage everyone! I'm ready, let's practice possums and Kossacks, "Seriously Paul, WTH!" What are you thinking!?! I can feel polls

coming already. "Springtime, for HoundDog, and Daily Kos..., Springtime for HoundDog, and Paul!"

Just warming up, practice makes perfect.

Williamson deconstructs "so-called fiscal conservatism" noting that Americans want to cut foreign aid and generally believe it makes up about a third of the federal budget, when in fact it makes up less than one percent. Cutting it entirely would yield trivial savings.

When it comes to balancing the budget, Paul is more likely to cut off aid to your mom. That's where the money is. We spend almost all of the federal budget on a handful of programs: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and defense. So any plausible, politically sustainable campaign to impose some sanity on America's national finances is going to mean reforming—i.e., cutting—all of those. How unpopular is that? Solid majorities of Americans oppose cutting Social Security and Medicare benefits and raising taxes to pay for them, even though a larger majority also believes that the cost of those programs will create economic problems.

After reading Williamson's analysis, I'm much less worried about Rand Paul surprising us with an unexpected "sustained" surge to the mainstream. I believe he will have a three or four month surge due to his superior intelligence, debating skills, decisiveness on controversial policies - such as privacy and decriminalization of marijuana that will appeal to younger voters, including some of our Democrats - but that this surge will collapse once voters see the fuller ugly picture of the Rand libertarianism's lack of compassion, and a much needed capability of using government as a necessary agent for protecting and achieving our common good, and collective needs in a complicated modern world.

Also, Paul's foreign policy positions are so naive as to leave him highly vulnerable. We should plan our opposition research and image management accordingly. Also, let's not forget his serious problems with plagiarism.

**12:22 PM PT**: We really need to thank Lawrence Lewis for peppering us up with the electoral spirit when he boils down my overly long and dense post to the core essence we all need to be carrying around in our heads to mention anytime Rand Paul's name comes up. Our stock response when someone says they might vote for Rand because of marijuana, or privacy, or Rand, says, anything stupid,.

"Yes, seriously? WTH, What is that Jackass thinking, BTW folks, don't forget this is the same guy who is a "climate change denier, an opponent of reproductive choice, a homophobe, and has a curious habit of associating with white supremacists. His brand of libertarianism would make the Koch brothers very happy. Any ostensible liberal or progressive who in any way supports him is an idiot."

What an amazing talent for conciseness. This is exactly what I was trying to say in the above post with only about 2% of the words. How does he do it. I'm having my people working out a deal with Lawrence Lewis' people to have him edit down and distill all my future posts, so it will save all of us a lot of eye strain, time, and electrons. Thanks Lawrence. If you could just take over responding to the other comments here as well it will be better for all of us. I'm going to have breakfast and going back to bed. I think we have this election covered now.