

Nader-Paul politics

BY [SHAWN GUDE](#) | FEBRUARY 04, 2011 **7:10 AM**

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One side is chock full of freedom-hating statist; the other, callous aggrandizers of Big Business.

Or so the potshots go.

In truth, despite real (and, admittedly, some intractable) differences, libertarians and those on the left agree on much.

Both bristle at the curtailing of civil liberties. Both are outspoken critics of the corporate welfare, including the current farm-subsidy program. And both oppose the draconian war on drugs. That's why they should set aside their disparate animating principles, dispense with the pejoratives, and come together on these (and others) issues of agreement.

It's unsurprising our epoch demands such alliances: The two major national parties have cohered around a political vision inimical to anti-corporatists and anti-militarists. No matter which party is in the White House, America's hubristic foreign policy will likely persist, as will business-government cronyism and civil-liberties violations. Indeed, their continuation, however fetid, will only be tempered by incremental or peripheral policy changes — not a full-scale, Tectonic shift.

As The Washington Examiner's Tim Carney pointed out [in a recent column](#), those who deviate from the political status quo are scorned, while corporatists are lionized for their "centrism": "The pattern is this: Moderate Republicans tack to the middle by supporting handouts to Big Business, while moderate Democrats tack to the middle by opposing those big-government programs that Big Business dislikes. Then in the end, 'moderates' from both parties reap their reward on K Street, where their ideological 'flexibility' is an asset."

This disconcerting reality has united people such as Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, and Ralph Nader — totemic figures on opposing ends of right-left spectrum. The two have even [appeared together](#) on cable news, decrying the current state of American politics and crowing about the possibility of an intra-ideological alliance. And, Nader's sanctimonious demeanor aside, it would undoubtedly have a salubrious effect on our ailing political system.

Circumspection is often easier than rethinking inveterate alliances. For the last several decades, libertarians have planted themselves in the Republican tent. This alliance would cause them to at least partially sever that tie.

But I'm convinced a coalition between the Nader left and the Paul right would be a symbiotic one.

The two ideological groups compose a relatively small portion of the electorate. Scholars at the Cato Institute [have estimated](#) that 14 percent of American voters are libertarians. The electorate likely has even fewer left-liberals (Nader [received just under 3 million votes in 2000](#), his most successful run for president). Unifying on specific issues would allow leftists and libertarians to increase their political clout without discarding their preferred policies.

Complete philosophical congruency is unnecessary when forming issue-based accords. (Nader, for example, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF67r8HXE2I> has called Paul's deep antipathy toward regulation "zany.") Libertarians will always place more weight on individual freedom; left-liberals will always favor steps to ensure greater political and economic equality. The two camps will always clash on questions of the role of government.

And that's fine.

Anything other than a détente on such core ideological questions would precipitate an impasse. And rhetoric and visceral distaste for one another would have to be set aside.

So, fellow leftists — drop the libertarian bashing. And libertarians — repress your own anti-leftist bomb throwing.

An alliance between us that was unencumbered by petty squabbling would do wonders for our nation's politics.