



## **#IAMUnitedLiberty: Jason Pye's path to liberty and fight to shake up the status quo**

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Looking back at it all, I suppose it makes sense that I would be attracted to the liberty movement. I've always been skeptical about the status quo, always questioning what I've been told about by politicians from both sides of the aisle.

I was raised in sort of odd circumstances. My father passed away when I was 12 years old, leaving my mother to raise me on her own. The experiences of my childhood instilled in me a very real sense of independence, personal responsibility, and individualism.

We weren't a very politically active family, though my mother was and remains a conservative Republican. She was more outspoken about politics than my father. Though we lived in Metro Atlanta, an area known for its conservative politics, her coworkers, were mostly Democrats.

She'd pick me up from school and I would spend afternoons talking with them. They called me "Senator Pye" because I was so incredibly opinionated, a trait that has stuck with me.

My mother quipped at me one day that I should listen to Neal Boortz, an even more opinionated, libertarian-leaning talk radio host out of Atlanta who frequently used his platform to knock Democrats and Republicans alike. I became an addict to his show by the time I was a senior in high school.

Boortz introduced me to Ayn Rand, whom I began reading by the time I was 19 or 20, and the Cato Institute. Over time, I started reading other great libertarian minds, including Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek.

I took a year off after high school to work and playing drums in a punk rock band. Though I always had an interest in politics, I didn't get seriously involved until I was 23. I decided that I didn't want to keep my political opinions to myself, so I started a blog covering local and state politics. Not long after, I was getting so many tips that the local paper was using my blog as a source of information.

Erick Erickson, whom some of you may know as the editor-in-chief of RedState.com, gave me the chance to contribute at Peach Pundit, the most widely read political blog in Georgia, where I still occasionally contribute.

Using that forum, I was able to help influence legislation from time to time. For example, my focus on cutting wasteful spending out of the state budget, particularly state funding of various halls of fame, led to an investigation by an Atlanta-based news station. Eventually, appropriators slashed or entirely eliminated funding for what should've been private endeavors.

I spent several years working in the Libertarian Party of Georgia, involved in various legislative issues and helping candidates, and a brief time in the Republican Liberty Caucus. The liberty movement, at the time, wasn't what it is today. Ron Paul hadn't launched his 2008 presidential campaign. Rand Paul, Justin Amash and other liberty-minded politicians weren't yet on the radar.

In February 2009, the Tea Party movement rose to prominence. I attended the first Atlanta Tea Party rally at the state capital and appeared on Fox News' *Your World with Neil Cavuto* to talk about the first round of rallies across the country.

I've been running United Liberty since June 2009, where we spend much of our time and efforts in this space writing commentary about current news, elections, policy, and the liberty movement. I've been blessed to continue writing and speaking about politics and the libertarian philosophy — interviewing numerous elected officials and personalities along the way and participating in panels that provide me with the opportunity to talk about liberty.

I've continued to work with liberty-minded candidates and gotten involved in my local Republican Party and, last summer, a group of local conservative and libertarian friends and I started a group that focuses on issues in our Metro Atlanta county. Our goal is to shake up the political status quo and protect taxpayers against power-hungry politicians.

To me, the liberty movement is a broad coalition of individuals and organizations, ranging from libertarians to constitutionalists to fiscal conservatives to populist Tea Partiers. We may have disagreements on certain issues, but we unite around the free market and the fundamental civil liberties protected by the Bill of Rights.

Today, the liberty movement is stronger than it has ever been. The task before us, however, isn't to focus on the past or personalities, but to get involved in our campuses and communities through activism. Students have more resources available at this point than they had when I was in high school and college, thanks to the growth of organizations like Young Americans for Liberty and Generation Opportunity.

Outreach to the Millennial generation is the biggest challenge we face. They are our future, and it's up to the liberty movement to educate them about the dangers of overregulation and the rapid destruction of their civil liberties as well as to teach them about how free markets and limited government are the only path to economic and personal liberty.