

THE DAILY CALLER

If Ted Cruz Wants To Be President, He Must Embrace Liberty, Not Just Talk About It

ALEXANDER MCCOBIN

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With the clock ticking towards the 2016 presidential election, many pundits have oddly declared Ted Cruz as the Republican frontrunner of late. Michael Tracey made the case in *The American Conservative* this week, arguing that the Texas senator “is admired by salt-of-the-earth Tea Party types, but also by powerful factions of the Republican vanguard.”

While that point may be true, Tracey misses one important group that Cruz can certainly not count on for support if current trends continue: libertarians. Cruz’s disrespect for liberty and rule of law that he ironically says he values will alienate the pro-freedom faction that the senator has tried to cozy up to.

Contrary to the wishful thinking of Republicans like Sen. Cruz, libertarians are not conservatives. Although both tend to use the rhetoric of limited government, conservatives seem to have trouble adhering to such principles in practice. Most conservatives (and certainly most Republicans) oddly love big government when it comes to a bloated military, unnecessary interventions abroad, dictating private choices, a drug war that has failed for decades, and the militarization of state and local police that has emerged as the result of the abovementioned policies.

Libertarians, on the other hand, are skeptical of government power in all of these arenas. Just as the government should exercise restraint in taxation and spending, so too should it be reluctant to intervene with policies that affect people the most directly — bombs that kill civilians as collateral damage and arrests that turn first-time offenders into criminals for non-violent personal choices.

Sen. Cruz, like many conservative Republicans, has trouble applying these principles consistently despite constantly paying homage to liberty and the Constitution. Cruz has spoken to many big-tent Tea Party groups like Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks, talking up the Constitution to corner libertarian support as well as the conservative base he’s all too comfortable with. Many prominent media outlets like the *Houston Chronicle* have dubbed him “libertarian-leaning” because of this strategy, but the senator still has trouble applying the rule of law he espouses in his speeches to the policies he supports.

When it comes to executive power, for example, Sen. Cruz is quick to condemn President Obama for having “trampled on the Constitution,” but doesn’t mind doing the same. Last month, Cruz introduced the Expatriate Terrorists Act, which would have eroded due process by giving the president unprecedented power to revoke Americans’ citizenship if they are suspected hostiles, by a mere preponderance of evidence. As Matt Purple points out in Rare, there’s already a crime enumerated in the constitution for aiding an enemy: “it’s treason, and treason has a much higher evidentiary standard than just a ‘preponderance of the evidence.’”

It’s not just war where the senator supports an overbearing federal government. Cruz has called on the federal government to enforce drug prohibition in the states, despite the fact that 23 states have legalized it either for medical or recreational use. This is a rather odd position for Cruz to take considering he is the former Solicitor General of Texas — a government that has never been fond of federal overreach. In fact, at the 2012 Value Voters Summit, Cruz bragged about how his former office defended the constitutionality of the Texas Ten Commandments Monument before the Supreme Court. The message could not be clearer: states’ rights trump individual rights when they can be used to defend socially conservative priorities.

Sadly, Sen. Cruz’s list of alienating policies for libertarians only continues. He has not learned the Iraq War’s lesson, urging President Obama to take further military actions against ISIS. He has decried the Supreme Court’s striking down of the Defense of Marriage Act, believing that straight couples and gay couples should be treated differently in the eyes of federal law. Finally, despite being a Canadian immigrant himself, he has opposed all amnesty efforts — even one proposed by his own party.

Last month, Sen. Cruz made a widely-noted gaffe at the In Defense of Christians Summit, lecturing a roomful of Middle Eastern Christians, “If you will not stand with Israel and the Jews, then I will not stand with you.”

Senator Cruz, if you will not stand for liberty, libertarians will not stand with you. We appreciate your intellectual dedication to the principles of a free society, but actions speak louder than words. Instead of defending the freedoms of solely your conservative base, you must defend the freedom of all people — black or white, gay or straight, foreigner or American — to be a truly uniting presidential contender.

Alexander McCobin is co-founder and president of Students For Liberty. Under his leadership, Students For Liberty has grown into the largest libertarian student organization in the world, which includes over 400 leaders that support over 1300 student groups representing over 50,000 students. Previously, Alexander worked at the Cato Institute and ran another nonprofit organization that introduced high school debate programs to underserved youth in the greater Philadelphia area. Alexander also serves on the Board of Advisors of The Atlas Society and is an honorary board member of the Our America Initiative. Alexander received his B.A. in philosophy

and economics at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008 and received his M.A. in philosophy at Georgetown University in 2014.