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Peter Thiel at Students for Liberty: We must put our hope in libertarians

I'm constantly on the lookout for other young libertarians. I search in part for social purposes (birds of a feather...), in part to reaffirm my sanity (see image on next page), and in part because I agree with [Peter Thiel](#) that, simply put, we young libertarians are the ones who can save the country.

It was easy to find young libertarians this past week. First – on Thursday, Feb. 16 – I went to a panel discussion sponsored by the self-described “classical liberal” [America's Future Foundation](#) (AFF) and titled “[What is the role of the federal government in marriage?](#)” [Matthew Bechstein](#) of [GOProud](#) and [Jason Kuznicki](#) of [Cato Institute](#) presented on the side that most of the audience supported.

Second, I spent the weekend at the [Students for Liberty fifth annual conference](#) with over 1,000** libertarian students from across the country. The conference offered educational sessions on topics such as “[What is Austrian Economics?](#)” ([Chris Coyne](#), [Foundation for Economic Education](#)) and “[What Kind of Libertarian are You?](#)” ([Nigel Ashford](#), [Institute for Humane Studies](#)).

Clearly, young libertarians exist. If you can get 700 of them to travel to the lion's den of libertarianism ([Washington](#), DC), then there has to be at least a decent size.

But it's difficult to know just how many young voters are libertarians (self-described or accidental). [David Kirby](#) and [David Boaz](#) [estimate](#) that “14% of American voters can be classified as libertarian.” By all outward appearances, youth libertarianism is bigger. Consider flawed-libertarian-vessel Ron Paul's success among young voters in polls and actual elections: This [mid-January Gallup poll](#) shows Paul to be the favorite Republican candidate of all young voters (31% to Romney's 26%, Gingrich's 10%, and Santorum's 7%), and Paul has [scored a number of youth wins](#) among those few enthusiastic young voters who turn out for Republican primaries: 48% of the youth vote in Iowa; 47% in New Hampshire; first place in South Carolina; second in Florida, etc.

Suggestive evidence of youth libertarianism can also be found in the explosion of groups like SFL, AFF, Young Americans for Liberty, Cato Institute summer internships, Koch Foundation's student programs, and the student programs of the Institute for Human Studies. Finally, the initial returns from a survey done by my RK Research organization suggests that college students think the Republican party is far better with economic issues than they are with social issues – a form that fits libertarianism. ([page 2](#))

Whatever their number, these young libertarians are the potential saviors of the country. [Peter Thiel](#) – co-founder of PayPal and Facebook angel investor – made this

argument as the SFL conference keynote speaker. According to Thiel, the United States is in a bad position: Innovation drives the U.S. industry and our innovation (with a few exceptions, namely the computer/internet world) has stagnated. Witness the airplane – the planes we now fly go the same speed as they did in 1990. We use coal for large amounts of energy, just as we did in the nineteenth century. The number of new drugs we produce has slowed. Life expectancy is no longer rising at the rate it once did. Etc.

Unreasonable explanations for this include: 1) We've reached the end of history; it's impossible for us to improve on the technology of the plane, and 2) We're not as smart as we used to be.

Peter's alternative explanation – developed in his essay "[The End of the Future](#)" – is far more feasible: the modern regulatory system has choked invention.

And the only people in the place to fix this aren't the statist on the right or on the left, but the libertarians. As Peter said, "It's an exciting time to be a libertarian."

Armed with new enthusiasm, I spent the rest of the weekend at SFL learning more about how the state is choking development, and I met the people who are going to fix this course in the near future.

If you have statistics on young libertarians, please email them to me.

If you missed your young libertarian fix this weekend, tune in on Thursday to [The Stossel Show](#) that was shot at the SFL conference.

** I said 700 previously.

