

Heritage on Marijuana Policy: FAIL

Posted on September 22, 2010 by Clark Ruper

The conservative Heritage Foundation has published a [policy study opposing the decriminalization of marijuana](#). I am not going to spend time discussing why this position is so incredibly wrong. This work has already been done for me by the Cato Institute in studies such as [Drug Decriminalization in Portugal](#), [Thinking about Drug Legalization](#), and [Mexico's Failed Drug War](#). For an concise argument see Harvard Professor Jeffrey Miron's article [Marijuana Legalization in California](#). In short, the war on drugs is probably the most egregiously wrong, wasteful, and harmful policy of the United States over the past 40 years. By any standard – ethical, practical, historical, etc. – the drug war is a complete failure.



Free People - Free Choices

The fact that Heritage supports state control of certain substances comes as no surprise. What is interesting to me is what this says about the state of modern conservatism. Faced with mounting evidence that the war on drugs is a colossal failure ([check here for a long list of evidence](#)) and a shift in public sentiment (see the popularity of medical marijuana laws across the country), conservative leaders and scholars refuse to admit to failure on this front. With the state of California on the brink of fiscal collapse and the federal government burying the country with debt, conservatives still advocate wasting billions of dollars on a drug war that only encourages crime and enriches black market drug dealers. As a ideology, conservatism is reactionary, looking backwards and unable to reconcile its positions with reality.

Which leads me back to a common theme on this site: libertarians are not conservatives. Furthermore, as a political philosophy, libertarianism is far superior to conservatism. The drug war issue illustrates that fact more clearly than any other. It is contradictory for conservatives to oppose government management of an individual's health via Obamacare, but support government control of health through the drug war. You are either for the nanny state or against it, you can't have it both ways and be consistent in your beliefs.

The superiority of libertarianism to conservatism was well argued by Sara Scarlett and Liya Palagashvilli during this summer's [Libertarianism v Conservatism Debate](#), and since I love posting this video, here you go:

The take away here is that the [libertarian movement needs to be distinct from the conservative movement](#). For 50 years libertarians and conservatives have been grouped under the banner of [fusionism](#) (I was once a self-identified

fusionist myself). This alliance had its benefits in the economic sphere (not as many as we would like) but those benefits have come at the cost of social issues. While libertarians have been out in front on drug issues for decades by calling for legalization, we have not invested nearly enough time and energy into the issue. Now with soaring deficits, the public is paying attention and reconsidering their position.

Now is the time that libertarians, particularly young students, need to stand out and embrace the social issues that have ignored for far too long. These issues are where our greatest potential growth lies. We can only do that by creating our own libertarian institutions and messaging liberty as a principle distinct from both conservatism and progressivism – as a consistent ideal that embraces freedom for all people at all times.

For more information on how you can get involved in the fight to end the drug war, visit our friends at [Students for Sensible Drug Policy](#) and [Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#). Representatives and speakers from both organizations will be at the [SFL Regional Conferences this fall](#).

Like

Clark Ruper and 223 others like this.

ShareThis

This entry was posted in News and tagged Drug Policy, Heritage Foundation, marijuana. Bookmark the permalink.

Comments (3)

Login

Sort by: **Date** Rating Last Activity

Chad Reese · 20 hours ago

+5

Right on, Clark. I know many libertarians feel it is almost a political necessity to side with the neo-conservative movement in order to make headway, but we can't continue to do so at the expense of our own ideology (or pragmatic public policy for that matter).

I cringe everytime I hear a broadcast journalist note that they are about to interview some "conservative" scholar from Cato or a politician talks about libertarian positions as "ultra-right wing".

Honestly, we have only ourselves to blame at this point, but young libertarians should actively work to distance themselves from the statist policies of the right just as much as they actively campaign against those of the left.

Reply



Clark Ruper · 19 hours ago

0

Thanks Chad. Agreed.

Reply

[Libertarians are not conservatives.](#) « [Bill4DogCatcher.com](#)

[...] READ FULL ARTICLE: <http://studentsforliberty.org/news/heritage-on-marijuana-policy-fail/> [...]

Post a new comment

Enter text right here!

Comment as a Guest, or login:

Name

Displayed next to your comments.

Email

Not displayed publicly.

Website (optional)

If you have a website, link to it here.

Subscribe to

Submit Comment

Comments by