



Happy 100th birthday Milton Friedman

6:55 AM, July 31, 2012 | Abby W. Schachter

Milton Friedman, the Nobel-prize winning economist and champion of freedom, was born this day 100 years ago. His life is a testament to the need for immigrants to this country because immigrants make us better (his parents were immigrants). He has had an outsized influence on two political movements -- Libertarianism and Conservatism -- as exemplified by these tributes from the [Cato Institute](#) and the [Heritage Foundation](#) .

[Friedman was just about the founder of the school reform movement, and would be pleased at the progress made in that area, but not satisfied.](#)

"Today there are 39 voucher and tax-credit programs in 21 states and the District of Columbia offering more than 200,000 children educational freedom. In the past two years alone, more advancement has been made in school choice than in the previous 20. Yet most American parents still are not free to choose their child's school. Limited by the financial resources of their parents, children living within arbitrarily drawn boundaries are assigned to government-run institutions. The competitive, diverse and innovative system of high-quality educational options Friedman advocated is not yet a reality," [write Patrick Byrne and Robert Enlow of the Friedman Foundation for Education Choice.](#)

Friedmans' critics are marking the birthday by distorting his legacy and attempting to separate him from today's inheritors of that legacy. [As Nicholas Wapshott incorrectly notes](#) , "Today, Friedman has been left out in the cold. His belief in an ordered, managed economy through interest rates runs counter to prevailing conservative orthodoxies. It was his certainty -- and the wit with which he delivered his message -- that helped popularize his views around the globe. But the fact that he did not adopt absolutist positions on the size of the state and the evils of government has made his true views irrelevant among those he used to lead."

Of course, monetary policy is where Friedman is known and there is much discussion today whether current Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke's "quantitative easing" would be earning plaudits or punishment from Friedman, were he alive. Bernanke can rest easy though the Congress and Ron Paul ought to be keeping

him up at night. Auditing the Federal Reserve is likely to happen in one form or another and soon.

Those who lived under Communism know the true value of Friedman's work and writings. Just listen to the late, great Vaclav Havel: "For us, who lived in the communist world, Milton Friedman was the greatest champion of freedom, of limited and unobtrusive government and of free markets."

And did you know that we don't have the draft anymore because of Friedman?

"Milton's greatest pride lay in serving President Nixon at the height of the Vietnam War on the Commission on an All-Volunteer Force;" [writes John Blundell in the Telegraph](#) , "he convinced his 14 fellow commissioners to vote 15 to zero to scupper the draft and go for a professional, all-volunteer military. "Mercenaries," thundered witness General Westmoreland. "Better than slaves," countered Milton.

It is worth considering that term today, "slaves" because though we aren't in shackles, the movement by nanny politicians like Mayor Bloomberg to control the free choice of citizens is to us the most terrible rejection of Friedman and real threat to freedom.

As Friedman noted: "Many people want the government to protect the consumer. A much more urgent problem is to protect the consumer from the government."