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Are Libertarians Drifting Away From Obama and the Democrats?

[Matt Welch](#) | August 17, 2009, 2:12pm

That's the suggestion from David Boaz, executive vice president of the Cato Institute, in [this op-ed](#). Excerpt:



Research that David Kirby and I have done shows that libertarian-leaning voters have typically given up to 70 percent of their votes to Republicans. But in 2004 and 2006, that number fell off sharply. Republican congressional candidates barely held a majority of libertarian votes in 2006, and of course the Republicans took a pounding in that election. [...]

Some of those independents voted Democratic in 2006 and 2008, figuring that the Democrats would be more tolerant and could hardly be more profligate. And what are they now seeing?

President Obama is exceeding all their fears on fiscal and economic issues. After promising a "net spending cut" during the campaign and denouncing "the most fiscally irresponsible administration in history," he has sent federal spending and the deficit soaring into the stratosphere.

Meanwhile, he's not delivering what some of his voters hoped for on social issues. [...]

Independents who turned against the Republicans are likely to become equally disillusioned with Obama, and there's already some evidence of that in the polls. Support for "smaller government with fewer services" has risen in the ABC News/Washington Post poll, and independents prefer it by 61 to 35 percent, a margin three times as large as a year ago. The number of people who see Obama as an "old-style tax and spend Democrat" has risen by 11 percentage points.

Whole thing [here](#). Related reading: Virginia Postrel, Brink Lindsey, Richard Epstein, Bruce Bartlett, Jonathan Rauch, and Deirdre McCloskey assess whether there is "Any Hope for this Man," back in our [November 2008 issue](#).