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GOP v. GOP on LGBT

Post by **PETER MONTGOMERY**

The libertarian CATO Institute hosted a presentation Wednesday by David Lampo, author of *A Fundamental Freedom: Why Republicans, Conservatives, and Libertarians Should Support Gay Rights*, which Lampo calls a “fact-based primer” for “center-right” voters. Lampo argues that gay rights are compatible with GOP principles such as individual liberty, limited government, and equality under law—and he cites a raft of polling data indicating that rank-and-file Republicans are more supportive of gay rights, including marriage and other forms of relationship recognition, than many party leaders are. It’s time, he says, for socially tolerant Republicans to come out of the closet.

Lampo was not shy about slamming religious right leaders and Republican officials who pander to them, or about calling out the hypocrisy of people like Newt Gingrich—who, as Lampo noted, has had two mistresses (that we know about) and three wives—talking about the sanctity of marriage. He quoted his hero, the late Barry Goldwater, promising to fight the religious right “every step of the way if they try to dictate their moral convictions to all Americans in the name of ‘conservatism.’” When asked about Mitt Romney, Lampo said he would give the presidential candidate a grade of D

for having abandoned earlier pro-gay positions and embraced a federal constitutional amendment against marriage equality.

Listening to Lampo talk about the rise of a live-and-let-live approach to gay rights among Republicans, it occurred to me that even the National Organization for Marriage recognizes the appeal of a libertarian message. NOM's number-one [poll-tested message](#), repeated over and over again by its spokespeople, is this: "Gays and Lesbians have a right to live as they choose, they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us." Of course, the religious right allies who help NOM pass anti-gay constitutional amendments don't really *believe* gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose—to serve in the military, for example, or to raise children, or to be protected against discrimination on the job. Many religious right leaders vehemently opposed the Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which overturned state laws that made gay people de facto criminals. And many are actively urging politicians in Africa and elsewhere to make or keep homosexuality a criminal offense. Given the continuing influence that the religious right has in the GOP, as reflected in the anti-gay rhetoric and positions that characterized the Republican primaries, it may be a good long while before we hear a Republican presidential candidate talking like Lampo's conservative hero.