



## Cato Publishes New eBook on The Libertarian Vote

Matt Welch | Oct. 25, 2012 11:28 am

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Today, the Cato Institute is announcing the release of a new eBook called [\*The Libertarian Vote: Swing Voters, Tea Parties, and the Fiscally Conservative, Socially Liberal Center\*](#), co-authored by Cato's David Boaz, FreedomWorks' David Kirby, and Reason Polling Director Emily Ekins. It's a compilation of the authors' research, polls, and op-eds on a portion of the electorate they estimate at around 15 percent. From the introduction:

So how do libertarians vote? Libertarians are increasingly a swing vote, and they are a larger share of the electorate than "soccer moms" and other micro-targeted groups.


Our data show that libertarians have generally voted Republican—66 percent for Ronald Reagan in 1980, 74 percent for George H. W. Bush in 1988, and 72 percent for George W. Bush in 2000. But they are not diehard Republicans. John Anderson and Libertarian Party candidate Ed Clark got 17 percent of the libertarian vote in 1980, and Ross Perot took 33 percent of the libertarians in 1992.

The libertarian vote for Republicans fell off in 2004 and 2006 in response to the Bush administration's big-government agenda, and then grew again in 2008 and 2010 in light of the Obama-Pelosi-Reid Democrats.

How's the libertarian vote shaping up for Nov. 6? Check out this graphic from the [Reason-Rupe Poll](#) last month:

**If the 2012 presidential election were held TODAY and the candidates were....for whom would you vote?  
Among Likely Libertarian Voters**

	2-Way	3-Way	Difference
Barack Obama	20	13	-7
Mitt Romney	77	70	-7
Gary Johnson		14	+14



So even while [Reason magazine types](#) are currently polling at 68 percent Gary Johnson vs. 32 percent nobody, libertarians writ large [as of six weeks ago](#) were thinking 70 percent Mitt Romney, 14 percent Johnson, and 13 percent Barack Obama.

Meanwhile, conservative direct mail king Richard Viguerie is laying down the gauntlet: "[Will Libertarians And Constitutionalists Re-Elect Obama?](#)" From that:

Conservatives have more reason now to be optimistic than they have had in the past 50 years. The rise of the Tea Party, the election of small government constitutional conservative office holders, such as Senators Rand Paul and Mike Lee, and presumably Ted Cruz, mean our agenda will have a new generation of effective and attractive advocates on the national stage, and most importantly, in Congress where they can actually legislate on that agenda.

The bad news is that many libertarians pride themselves on being destroyers, and when they lose a primary or otherwise don't get their way, rather than cinching-up their belts and selling themselves and their ideas harder, they try to "teach" Republicans a lesson by causing them to lose.

This is a bad way to sell your ideas in the best of times, it is dangerous to the future of the country this election. Four more years of President Obama will take generations to undo – if the economic damage and institutionalization of a culture of dependency can be undone at all.

And over at the group law-prof weblog [The Volokh Conspiracy](#), you can read explanations for why libertarian legal scholars will probably prefer Romney to Johnson by [David Bernstein](#) and [Jonathan H. Adler](#).

*Matt Welch is editor in chief of Reason magazine and co-author with Nick Gillespie of [The Declaration of Independents: How Libertarian Politics Can Fix What's Wrong With America](#), now out in paperback with a new foreword.*