



## **Do Libertarians Need to Embrace a Socially Conservative Agenda to Achieve Their Goals?**

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Could libertarians and social conservatives – often viewed as clashing forces on the right – actually be natural allies?

“Values voters and libertarians share the view that a more intrusive, invasive, expensive and expansive federal government threatens self-governance and self-reliance and diminishes the worth of the individual,” said Kellyanne Conway, a Republican strategist and CEO of the Polling Company.

Libertarians are gaining strength in the Republican Party, with Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul looking likely to emerge as a top-tier candidate for the GOP presidential nomination in 2016. That’s bringing to the forefront questions about whether religious conservatives who oppose abortion and gay marriage can co-exist with libertarians, many of whom hold more liberal social views and oppose the government regulating anything.

Conway will take part in a panel Saturday at the social conservative Values Voter Summit in Washington to make that exact case: “Moral Decline Causes Big Government: Why Libertarians Should Join the Pro-Family/Pro-Life Movement.”

“Both groups reject unelected judges upending voter will,” Conway said. “Libertarians may be less religious than values voters, but they share a growing distaste for the assault on religious liberty in so many corners of our culture.”

As TheBlaze previously reported, libertarian groups, including the CATO Institute think tank, submitted legal briefs on behalf of Hobby Lobby in the company’s successful lawsuit against the Obamacare mandate for employers to cover certain contraceptive drugs for their employees.

Divisions between core conservatism and libertarianism can be traced back to the rift between William F. Buckley and Ayn Rand. But tensions seem to have cooled in recent years, chiefly because both camps found a common enemy with the increased growth of the federal government.

A representative for former Republican presidential candidate Gary Bauer’s American Values group, which is sponsoring the panel, believes that libertarians need to embrace social conservative policies to achieve their ends.

“At the core of the challenge is that many libertarians don’t believe they have a dog in the fight on issues like abortion, marriage and family values,” the representative said. “But libertarians have virtually zero chance of achieving their primary goal of reducing the size of government if negative societal trends continue because the breakdown of the family has contributed to the massive growth of big government.”

The other members of the panel are conservative commentator and author Maggie Gallagher, Doug Stafford, executive director of RANDPAC, and moderated by media consultant Kristi Hamrick.

“Our Founding Fathers gave us a system of limited government because they believed virtue and morality would restrain human passions. As Benjamin Franklin put it: ‘Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.’ Today we are seeing the confirmation of that wisdom,” the Values Voter Summit schedule says in describing the forum.

“As out-of-wedlock births increase, as marriage declines, as more children go to sleep at night in fatherless homes the demand for bigger government grows,” the description continues. “As Judeo-Christian values decline, the heavy-hand of government fills the vacuum. If Libertarians want to achieve the goal of reducing the size and scope of government, they should join with social conservatives and support the pro-family agenda.”

Conway cited the book by FreedomWorks head Matt Kibbe, “Don’t Hurt People and Don’t Take Their Stuff: A Libertarian Manifesto,” as a philosophy that could easily unite two factions.

“There is more overlap than obstinacy, between the two groups really, but of course there will be disagreements,” Conway said. “Many libertarians are pro-life because they believe ‘don’t hurt people’ extends to the womb. Libertarians abhor taxpayer-funding of abortion, and like, most of America, raise their eyebrows to stand against sex-selective, late-term and five month, 20 weeks or ‘fetal pain’ abortions.”

Sen. Rand Paul, like his father former Rep. Ron Paul – the 1988 Libertarian Party presidential nominee – is anti-abortion. The younger Paul has even sponsored sweeping pro-life legislation.

But Paul’s problem might not be with social conservatives, said Steven Gross, a University of Kentucky political science professor.

“He will not have a problem on social issues or abortion, he would not have gotten the nomination in Kentucky if he had not taken that position,” Gross told TheBlaze. “His bigger problem will be in foreign affairs, not domestic. On foreign affairs he takes a few non-traditional Republican positions.”

Gross believes Paul will have tough time securing the GOP presidential nomination in 2016, based on his less than hawkish view on military intervention. Still, he thinks Paul will be an interesting candidate.

“He is promoting outreach to African Americans and Latinos emphasizing the need to broaden the base of the Republican party,” Gross said.