



Book urges political parties to back gay rights

by Derrick Johnson II

2012-06-20

The Republican Party will have to get back to basic human rights if it wants to stay relevant.

That is the case that David Lampo makes in his new book, *A Fundamental Freedom: Why Republicans, Conservatives, and Libertarians Should Support Gay Rights*.

Lampo was born in Mt. Kisco, N.Y., and attended Penn State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science. After graduating, Lampo worked for various libertarian and anti-tax organizations before joining the Cato Institute in 1982.

Windy City Times: What motivated your book?

David Lampo: I was motivated by the fact that few elected Republican officials and candidates were willing to speak out against the religious right and for social tolerance.

WCT: What is exactly is the book about?

David Lampo: It's a primer on gay rights for Republicans, conservatives and even libertarians because the party has long had this image as an anti-gay party dominated by the religious right.

This has been the case for the last couple of decades because, in the '70s, the evangelicals moved from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party and since then they have become the party's base. You can't say that you support the religious right and also support limited government and individual rights, because there's a fundamental conflict between policies that the religious right advocate regarding social issues and the principles of individual liberties and limited government. I think the party is at a crossroads: It has to choose its values between individual rights and limited government and supporting the agenda of the religious right.

WCT: Why do you think Republicans, conservatives and libertarians should support gay rights?

David Lampo: Three basic reasons: It's consistent with Republican principles; most rank-and-file Republicans already do; and it's politically the smart thing to do since independents, who Republicans need to win elections, are strongly pro-gay rights.

WCT: You said that the next generation of voters will increase the gap between religious extremists and the Average Americans. How so?

David Lampo: Every new generation of Americans is more supportive of gay rights than the previous generation. The percentage of religious extremists will continue to shrink as the population ages and dies off, because older Americans are disproportionately anti-gay.

WCT: You also said that the next generation voters are in support of gay rights. What about the portion of that generation raised under religious extremism?

David Lampo: The religious right has already lost the culture war. They bring up their sons and daughters to believe in the bigotry that they believe in and that's a distinct minority. ... Younger people already support gay rights and that's not going to change as they get older.

WCT: Why do you think that religious conservatives and extremist still have influence with the Republican Party?

David Lampo: They are the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. They are a minority but they are a very determined and aggressive minority. We haven't had anything like that on the other side.

WCT: What are your thoughts on religious extremists and the role they play in American politics?

David Lampo: Their role regarding gay rights is uniformly negative. While agree with them on most other issues, such as taxes, spending, reforming entitlements, etc., when it comes to personal liberties, they desert their stated beliefs in limited government because they try to tell people how to live their personal lives—not just on gay rights but control over reproductive rights, personal drug use, etc.

WCT: What direction do you believe the United States is headed regarding religion?

David Lampo: Even in the United states we're becoming more secular. ... The majority of people at least believe in evolution. Polls show that even a majority of Catholics also support same-sex marriage and other gay rights issues, despite what the Catholic hierarchy tells them. Most people in America consider themselves Christian and believe in God, but they don't hold the fanatical beliefs of the religious right.

WCT: If the Republicans and conservatives were to officially change their stance on LGBT issues such as marriage how long do you think it would take?

David Lampo: Most Republicans already support some form of legal recognition, but younger Republicans [millennials] support marriage rights at a higher level. Every year support gets stronger, so I'd say maybe five to 10 years until a majority support same-sex marriage. Until then, civil unions will be the fallback position for those who can't bring themselves to support marriage equality.

WCT: What do you think the Republican Party has to gain from supporting LGBT issues, besides votes from moderates?

David Lampo: More votes. Independents usually decide who wins most elections, and independent voters are overwhelmingly pro-gay rights, with a strong majority supporting even same-sex marriage. Most voters are focused right now on economic issues for obvious reasons, but when the economy returns to normal, voters will return to looking at other issues like gay rights with greater scrutiny.

WCT: What steps would need to be taken by the Republican Party in order for them to gain more support from LGBT voters and their allies?

David Lampo: By following my advice and accepting the fact that gays and lesbians should have the same legal rights as everyone else.

WCT: Do you think that changing its stance on LGBT issues will help the Republican Party with LGBT voters who are members of ethnic and racial minorities as well?

David Lampo: It can only help, but when you introduce racial issues into the mix, that will certainly complicate and slow down the process.