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Where are all the 'small government' voters?



January 20, 12:52 PM Libertarian News Examiner Garry Reed

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Yet another poll, this time from the Washington Post-ABC News, tells us that Americans are becoming ever more libertarian.

Question number 40 in the telephone poll of "a random national sample of 1,083 adults" read like this:

"Generally speaking, would you say you favor (smaller government with fewer services), or (larger government with more services)?"

The result was that "smaller government/fewer services" won 58 percent to 38 percent.

This is the 19th time this question has been asked since July 1992, and the "smaller government/fewer services" side has always won, sometimes by as much as 60 to 63 percent.

Over at the Cato Institute Executive VP David Boaz complains that the question, as stated, is incomplete, because it doesn't remind people that "larger government" translates into higher taxes while "smaller government" means lower taxes.

Boaz then points his readers to a Rasmussen Report from last December that factored in the tax question and came up with this result:

"Sixty-six percent (66%) of U.S. voters prefer a smaller government with fewer services and lower taxes over a more active government with more services and higher taxes."

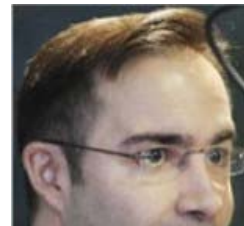
That's frosting on the libertarian cake. People prefer smaller government, fewer services, and lower taxes.

So where are all those people hiding? They're certainly not bringing those sentiments with them into the voting booth. The Libertarian Party has been running small government-fewer services-lower taxes candidates since 1971 and they've barely made a dent in the ballot results.

Some will say the problem is that the message just isn't getting out to the voters.

But it certainly got out to the voters in Massachusetts. In fact, the message that there was a Libertarian in the election to put a body into the empty Ted Kennedy Senate seat got out all over the country.

Every news story about the contest made at least the obligatory mention of Joe Kennedy as a "third candidate" and quickly appended



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If 58% of voters believe in "smaller government" why didn't Joe Kennedy win in Massachusetts? (AP photo)

two tags: "no relation to the famous Kennedys" and "independent running as a Libertarian."

So what happened at the polls? Given the choice of voting for a big government Democrat or a big government Republican or a small government-fewer services-lower taxes candidate, Bay State voters simply switched brands and elected yet another big government candidate.

Perhaps the polls that indicate Americans are becoming ever more libertarian should ask this question:

Why don't "more libertarian" Americans vote for Libertarians?

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spinnickerca says:

They SAY they are the party of principle, but then they nominate Bob Barr, making them seem just like any other political party with a scheme to 'win'.

I like the principles.

January 23, 11:59 PM

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MamaLiberty says:

If you "vote" to give other people ANY power over your life and property - yes, even "libertarians" - just how can you complain about what they do? History shows clearly that it isn't possible to "limit" that power.

Either YOU own your life (and are responsible for it), or someone else does - and they will ultimately do whatever they please with it.

January 21, 11:18 AM

PECB says:

Because the voting process is rigged an most of the time does not reflect the actual results.

There's quite a history behind efforts to create a non-tamperable voting system (both paper and electronic) -- or at least very, very, very, very difficult to tamper with system. Surprisingly it's not that hard to do, but whenever someone makes a serious effort at selling, implementing, or otherwise make it happen, they usually wind up dead, or otherwise marginalized.

January 21, 9:52 AM

Kent McManigal- tinyurl.com/abqliberty says:

Why? Because they have been brainwashed into believing "we have a two-party system". That makes any alternative seem like a hopeless waste of time. Kinda like voting.

January 20, 7:21 PM

Bill says:

As it was noted Small Government means different things to different people. To Social and Religious Conservatives, small government does not include keeping the Government jackboot out of your personal affairs. In contrast to Fiscal Liberals, small government has no barring in Economic affairs.

January 20, 6:05 PM

Bob says:

I'm in Massachusetts. I've been a member of the Libertarian Party since 1980, and I ALWAYS vote Libertarian (even when it means voting for Bob Barr). But yesterday I voted for Republican Scott Brown (may God have mercy on my soul), because electing Brown seemed to be the only way to stop the health care reform juggernaut.

I vote Libertarian to boost the party and send a message that I want small government. Joe Kennedy was not running as a Libertarian - he was an independent on the ballot - so voting for him wouldn't help the Party. As for sending a message: having Massachusetts elect Brown has done that in spades - more than a larger vote for Kennedy would have. Sure, a libertarian victory would've been even better, but that wasn't going to happen.

If Brown hadn't had a shot of winning, or if the Democrats weren't running wild, I would've voted for Kennedy. I normally hate it when people say "this race is too important to vote Libertarian", but this time I thought it was true.

January 20, 2:01 PM

DC says:

I don't vote for them often because they are always so far behind in the polls it seems like a waste of a vote. I would prefer to vote libertarian, but I would rather cast my ballot for someone with a chance of winning than on a small party just to make a statement.

January 20, 1:37 PM



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