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About Jay Bailey



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Short Bio

Hi, my name is Jay Bailey. I'm currently working on completing my degree over the summer in Political Science at The Florida State University. I currently write for the FSView -- FSU's student newspaper, as an opinion columnist. I describe myself as a voluntaryist libertarian, but one who focuses on political action as the most effective means toward liberty in our lifetime. I am proud to contribute to what I consider to be the premiere collegiate libertarian publication in all the land. Keep the comments coming, and the lasagna flying.
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Principled Irrelevance: The Failure of the Libertarian Party

Blog entry submitted by Jay Bailey on June 06, 2010 (Last updated: Jun 6, 2010)

We libertarians are an odd breed. The individuals who describe themselves as libertarians range from hardened anarcho-capitalists to confused tea partiers; you know the kind: Bubba and Marge who don't like Mexicans or taxes. It ranges from voluntaryists to fusionists; from minarchists to neoliberalians, and everything in between. There are even libertarian socialists, mutualists, and the like...but they don't count. At least not for this post, they don't.

Libertarians are individualistic in nature. As such, it's difficult even classifying us as "libertarians," an encompassing term; but, given the nature and limits of language, it'll have to do. It's even more difficult, as you can imagine, to organize and mobilize a group of individualists — especially as diverse as libertarianism is.

Yet thanks to David Nolan and Murray Rothbard, we have a Libertarian Party, which is intended to be a pragmatic arm for an ideological movement. But what exactly does the LP achieve? And how does it actually operate? Who actually sees it as pragmatic? I'll answer the last question first: only libertarians. Yes, only libertarians could consider a platform that calls for the complete legalization of drugs pragmatic.

The LP operates essentially as a contrarian party. If and when it can actually muscle its candidates into a debate or forum, they come off as a kooky contrarian with, dare I say it, "strange ideas". It becomes more of an anti-party — a loose coalition of libertarian-minded individuals who wish to waste their energies and efforts for a losing cause.

This is not to say that libertarianism is a losing cause; the third party, for all the reasons we already know and none of which I am denying or justifying, is irrelevant, and only works to take votes away from either the closer party ideologically, or the unpopular party at the time.

Libertarian Party members realize their idea is failing. If it were working, then LP candidates would be receiving a higher % of vote totals than in the past. This is assuming that the goal of the LP would be to change minds and win elections. I could be wrong on this, since they seem to be interested in neither.

How do they counter such an argument? We've all heard it before (perhaps from our own mouths — I know I was guilty of this several years ago): I'd rather be right than in power. And if that's the way you feel, then I'm glad you're content in your situation of being "right". Meanwhile, you're not accomplishing anything.

Now, if someone using this line at argument were sitting on their couch, not



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attempting to achieve any sort of political ends, then I wouldn't bother arguing with them. This is different, though, because people in the Libertarian Party, at least ostensibly, are trying to change or do *something*. They have similar if not identical beliefs to other libertarians, but their efforts are being wasted. This is capital that could be going toward an effective cause.

Which brings me to my point: my support of Rand Paul. I recently have been taking some flack for supporting Dr. Paul from libertarians who claim he is not a libertarian. Typically, they're Libertarian Party members. In fact, the Libertarian Party is even considering running a [candidate against Dr. Paul](#) in Kentucky.

So, once again, I'm here to defend Rand Paul. First thing's first: despite some of the un-libertarian positions he has taken, which I will address below, Rand Paul is the closest thing to a libertarian that has been elected to Senate in who knows how long (the research to find out who would consume more time than I care to invest for a blog post no one will read). Given this, it's interesting how the Libertarian Party, which is supposed to be pragmatic, is taking the purist route on Dr. Paul. This may come from a lack of understanding of politics. Thanks to Rachel f'ing Maddow, this race will actually be fairly close, [polls suggest](#). If the LP gets 4% of the vote, and Dr. Paul loses by 3% or less, then it will be the Libertarian Party that gets Jack Conway elected. Now, I'm curious: how is that productive for liberty?

As far as his positions go: sure, there are a few issues on which he and I disagree. He's not taking very libertarian stances on the war in Afghanistan, has stated he has a forgivingly favorable view of Israeli national defense, and has taken an incredibly strong anti-illegal immigration stance, which includes building a border fence. He's also very pro-life.

All libertarians should acknowledge that there is infighting on abortion and immigration issues. Even when there is a Libertarian Party candidate for office, chances are 40-60% of LP members disagree with the candidate on one or both of these issues, depending on which side they take. As for his belief in a strong national defense, here's my take on this: First, his "strong national defense" has not nearly the same ramifications as what George W. Bush meant by it. That being said, he supports (as far as I can tell) the existence of GITMO, military tribunals for enemy combatants picked up on the field of battle, as well as the war in Afghanistan. He does oppose the occupation of Iraq, however.

Think about that for a second. A Republican in Kentucky opposing our efforts in Iraq. Think, further, about some of his other positions. Take the Civil Rights Act issue. Why on Earth he answered questions about it, I have no idea, as it was an incredibly stupid political move; but, this is quite the libertarian position to take. He has come out strongly against the Federal Reserve — something only his father has had the balls to do during a campaign. This man, like his father, I believe, is a follower of the Austrian School. Derive from that what you will about his other positions. In other words, I don't know many Austrian economists who are also big supporters of the war on terrorism, do you?

Rand Paul is running for the United States Senate in Kentucky. He is not running for a small southern Texas Congressional district. The politics are completely different. Ron Paul's election was improbable — I believe it was a special election, and no one expected him to win, really. Now imagine someone taking Ron Paul positions running for a Senate seat. These seats (although I don't believe they should be "run for" — re: the 17th amendment) receive national exposure. The races are nationally covered, especially when the races are pretty close or interesting: this race is both. And as we've seen, the national media tends to hone in on his "strange ideas". Now imagine he was running on the LP platform. Rachel f'ing Maddow would be doing cartwheels.

As much as I would like for it to be the case, Americans are simply not ready for a full-fledged libertarian to be elected to Senate.

So if the Libertarian Party and its members want to punish Rand for "not being libertarian enough," that is their right. It may be that this is merely a political ploy, meant to make Paul look relatively moderate (that is, less libertarian) to the average

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Kentuckian. If so, then they're risking losing Paul more votes than they gain him.

The main point I wish to get across is this: Ron Paul's 2008 election run has done more to advance liberty than the Libertarian Party, agorism, and the Cato Institute have done in their combined histories. Our ideas are great, they really are, and we need certain institutions to educate people. But without viable liberty candidates out there to infiltrate the two-party system, we cannot hope to push the country in any direction.

Instead, we will continue to agitate from behind a glass partition, and watch as the country continues on its path toward totalitarianism. Having Rand Paul and others like him in Senate, while they may not be perfectly libertarian, certainly would help steer the direction of the country toward liberty — much more so than the alternative.



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MAllenM 18 hours ago

"Libertarian Party members realize their idea is failing. If it were working, then LP candidates would be receiving a higher % of vote totals than in the past."

Maybe. But there are a lot of forces (e.g. ballot access barriers) inherent in the system working against third parties in general. Perhaps if they'd level the playing field for third parties, the LP might make some progress.

I'm not opposed to your advocacy of working within the two-party system as it stands. I'm encouraged by the handful or so of "liberty candidates" (e.g. Paul, Kokesh, Shiff) that have ran in the Republican primaries. (Nonetheless, some of the results are discouraging.)



Jay Bailey 14 hours ago [in reply to MAllenM](#)

It is undeniable that the two major parties have rigged the process to discourage and event prevent third party success. And I can agree that if this were changed, there is a chance that the LP could improve on its current outcomes. However, this argument goes both ways: these laws/rules exist, and they're not going away, which only adds to my point that third parties are irrelevant wastes of time.

Further, the concept known as Duverger's law dictates that, even if we had a perfectly open and fair election process, third parties would still be irrelevant in our system of government. Plurality and majority, single-winner voting systems can only allow for two major parties. Now if we had a parliamentary system, then third parties can be successful. But they cannot be here.



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