

POLITICO

BIRTHDAY OF THE DAY: Ilya Shapiro, senior fellow in constitutional studies at Cato Institute and EIC of the Cato Supreme Court Review

Daniel Lippman

June 27, 2018

How/where are you celebrating your birthday and with whom? “Like most people on their birthdays, I’ll be testifying before the Federal Election Commission. They’re having a hearing on internet-ad disclosures and I’ll be focusing on First Amendment issues (you can read my written statement here). The rest of the day I’ll be commenting on Supreme Court opinions or watching the World Cup—likely both at the same time.”

How did you get your start in politics? “I grew up in Canada (after emigrating from the Soviet Union) but always preferred ‘life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness’ to ‘peace, order, and good government.’ For example, in junior high during the 1988 election, I pasted pictures of Reagan and Bush in my notebooks. In high school, I did well in Ontario Model Parliament and got picked up to work the 1995 provincial election for the Tories—what became known as the ‘Common Sense Revolution.’ I was a few weeks shy of my 18th birthday but learned how to pour beer properly at a rally in downtown Toronto. I’ve found it’s a skill that translates well to non-political environments too.”

What’s an interesting book/article you’re reading now or finished? And why? “I just started Jonah Goldberg’s ‘Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy.’ It’s a really smart book for our times and, as one would expect from Jonah, quite readable.”

What is a trend going on in the U.S. or abroad that doesn’t get enough attention? “Thanks to capitalism and globalization, the number of people in extreme poverty around the world fell by about 137,000 since yesterday—and every day in the last 25 years. Relatedly, we seem to have solved hunger, with no famines outside of warzones and Africa developing an obesity problem.”

How is the Trump presidency going? “Well, you have the good (judges, deregulation, leaving the Paris Agreement and Iran Deal, moving the embassy to Jerusalem), the bad (trade, immigration), and the ugly (Twitter, tone). All in all, better than expected, and certainly better than a Hillary Clinton presidency would’ve been, but those are exceedingly low bars. We live in interesting times, full of both opportunities and pitfalls on the policy front.”

What's a fun fact that people in Washington might not know about you? “I had my first publication at age 13, with a letter to the editor in the January 28, 1991 issue of Time magazine. I argued that after winning the Cold War, we should work to bring Russia into our orbit instead of just taking victory laps.”