

Keeping the Right Away from the Left

My 16-year-old recently texted me one of those where-do-you-fall-on-the-political-spectrum quizzes. She was curious to see how my results compared to those of a friend of hers who speaks fondly of socialism.

His results were predictably leftist, though not as authoritarian as one might fear. So, I suppose there's hope.

I've been encouraged lately by some of what I've read from folks who, while not as young as my daughters, are certainly a good deal younger than I am. Nonetheless, some points of contention emerged, notably inspiration gleaned from Republicans like Senator Marco Rubio (FL).

He grabbed headlines last month with his promotion of "[common-good capitalism](#)." One "modest and prudent" shift Uncle Sam could apparently make is expanding the child tax credit.

Modest? Perhaps. Prudent? Not really. Going the wrong direction in the tax debate? Most certainly.

The best system of taxation is one that is minimal, simple and has the sole purpose of funding only the constitutional functions of government. It is currently none of these.

A low 5 percent, maybe 10 percent, levy on incomes [would likely suffice](#) in accomplishing this. Clearing out the thicket of loopholes in our convoluted code would save taxpayers billions of dollars and many hours spent annually in compliance. It would also free up tax specialists to pursue more productive endeavors.

This assumes that we are unable to repeal the [16th amendment](#), and redirect taxation to where it should be

applied: [to consumption](#). After all, why do we disincentivize that which powers our prosperity: work, saving, and investment?

Either method would carry the added benefit of a massively shrunken Internal Revenue Service.

Moreover, for those concerned with debt and deficits, driving the tax rate down is one of two ways to rein in what are nothing more than accounting measures. Investors will keep loaning to Uncle Sam as long as they're confident he can service the debt. A rock-bottom tax rate might introduce doubt into that calculus.

The other way is to take a machete to the real problem: spending.

In this area, President Trump has more or less fit the typical Republican mold: propose cuts to domestic spending while increasing the Pentagon's budget.

While five percent [department cuts](#), [tightening](#) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility requirements, and [attempting to rescind](#) unspent funds are admirable efforts, the biggest problem is that entitlements need reform. Alas, candidate Trump swore off addressing the issue in any way other than the clichéd "[getting rid of waste, fraud and abuse](#)."

Absent comprehensive reform, proposing narrow measures like [cutting the payroll tax](#) will only compound the problem.

Conservatives choose strategies of expanded entitlements at their peril. At best they end up playing on the left's turf. At worst, they implicitly agree that Americans are mere subjects to be controlled and manipulated from thousands of miles away.

The previous statement should not be construed as [an](#)

[endorsement](#) of proposals by a few senate Republicans to [relocate large chunks](#) of [federal departments](#) out into flyover country.

It's sad enough that the supposed small-government GOP barely gives lip service anymore to abolishing cabinet agencies. Not only are there calls to add to the bloat, but some are trying to convince Americans that the administrative state fosters prosperity.

Government (spending) does no such thing. The vast majority of the time, it only skews incentives, creates a deadweight loss to society via bureaucrats' salaries, and props up the lifestyles of power-hungry politicians, particularly those who "retire" to lobbying.

The right either wants to be part of this parasitic machine, or it wants to deprive it of the bloodline of the American people.

The classic riposte to my daughter's friend's leanings is "wait until he sees his first paycheck." But it's never too early to teach our children about unintended consequences, our system of federalism, and how government ought to work.

Republicans need to draw a clear line of distinction between themselves and Democrats. If they don't stand unequivocally for free market and conservative principles, young folks may very well succumb to the seduction of the deceptively mythical "free lunch" the left is offering.

—

[Image Credit: Flickr-Gage Skidmore, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)]