

Empowering People vs. Plutocrats

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The July/August issue of The Atlantic has an article about Evan McMullin, the Presidential candidate who ran because he saw Trump as an autocrat. To counter this he wants to empower an independent party in 2018. He saw Trump as a threat because in his career in the CIA he worked in many countries ruled by autocrats and saw a pattern that is now being repeated here: putting family in government rather than experts, enriching themselves whenever able, asking for loyalty to person rather than country, belittling the free press and making it the enemy. McMullin sees an independent party as a potential third party that even small, like the little boy in the picture, has eno



ugh weight to shift the balance of power. We wish him well.

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But he must find a way out of his conservative roots if he wants to do this. Those roots include, according to the Atlantic, positions against abortion and reducing entitlements. When those roots show potential supporters evaporate.

We have a few suggestions:

—Health care.

Conservatives are partly right that entitlement programs create a dependent population. In contrast we need a society that is independent and able to strive for what they want—and succeed. You do that not by entitlements but by empowering the individual. Many in our society already are in that position. Many are not, and the most common denominator is poverty. So shift Medicaid to a government supported Health Savings Account with the individual in charge. A study from Wisconsin shows that people using their own money from an HSA spend about a third of what others do with no adverse effect on health. That is largely true because they are *empowered* to make their own decisions, an element that has been shown crucial in creating healthy people. (see *Salutogenesis*, by Aaron Antonovsky.) HSAs have an added benefit in that they bypass the argument of abortion. This argument arises because the state is the payer if the procedure is done through Medicaid, and there is ample argument that taxpayers who feel abortion is the same as murder should have a voice in how their tax money is spent. If that payment is made by the individual it shifts that argument away from the government.

—Regulation.

Conservatives are partly right in this issue as well. Regulations do restrain free enterprise; that is what they are meant to do and why they are necessary. They began over a century ago because of abusive corporate power that adversely affected our populace, and; as long as the emphasis in corporations is on profits rather than on customer satisfaction the need will continue. But they have become oppressive.

The reason for this is our fundamental freedom to respond. Regulations are generally perceived as a threat since they constrain our options. In a free and legally based system such as ours we maintain an option to respond and, when the regulation is seen as oppressive, that option is generally ‘gaming the system’—actions, often novel, that optimize our gain from the regulation. This, in turn, is often seen by the regulator as something else to be regulated. The cycle continues until the regulations are measured in feet rather than pages—at which point they are oppressive.

A better option is to let the marketplace deal with the issue, by creating a Consumer’s Report type of web page where the issues are noted and discussed; thus empowering people with the information needed to make wise decisions.