

Drug Law Nullification and 47%ers



Send him mail.

“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original weekly column appearing every Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

Welcome to the inaugural edition of “One Voluntarist’s Perspective,” a column I really, really hope to write every week. The idea is simple: I will give my perspective on two or three popular news stories relating to politics, economics, parenting, or schooling. This week we have an interesting one and a dull one. We’ll start with the dull one.

The 47%ers

Mitt Romney was caught on tape (who isn’t these day?) at a political fundraiser in the Spring talking about how 47% of Americans will vote for Obama no matter what because they’re on the dole. You can read all about it via [Google News](#). My perspective? He brings up an interesting point. What is the dole? Is it specifically welfare and food stamps? Or is it any sort of net tax consumption? I argue for the latter. If you are a net tax consumer, meaning you receive more in income from taxes (your income is paid by taxpayers) than you pay in taxes, you are essentially on the (public) dole. You don’t produce anything of value, at least as measured in the market, ie. satisfying voluntary consumers (who are paying with their own honestly-received money). You are the recipient of stolen goods, because as every voluntarist and libertarian knows, taxation is theft.

Now, I don’t know how accurate 47% of Americans is on what Romney defines as “the dole,” but I am fairly confident that our definitions of the dole are different. Since I consider anyone asking for and receiving money from the government as on the dole, this includes all government employees, all recipients of Social Security and Medicare, and all government contractors, in addition to welfare and food stamp recipients (this list is not all inclusive). Will these people be voting for Obama? I’m sure a whole lot of them will, but I’m sure just as many will be voting for Romney. What he said is really just right-wing rhetoric aimed at a right-wing crowd. Military contractors love business, and the business they get is precipitated by war. Who will they vote for? It’s become difficult to tell, actually, because Obama has been just as war-hungry as Bush. Will Romney top him? Or will he top himself in his second term? I certainly hope not to both questions.

(Other voluntaryist perspectives on this topic: Anthony Gregory, Sheldon Richman, Kevin Carson)

Drug Law Nullification in NH

Now to the interesting story. A big win for liberty and justice happened in New Hampshire thanks to that state recently passing a law that allowed defense attorneys to educate their juries on the concept of “jury nullification.” What is that? It’s when a jury exonerates the accused on the basis of bad law. In other words, the accused is guilty of breaking the law, but the jury is convinced that it’s a bad law that was broken (more here). This has major support among libertarians, but in most places it’s illegal for defense attorneys to bring it up at trial. Activists have even had their freedom of speech rights violated for passing out jury nullification literature in front of court houses.

What happened in New Hampshire? You can read more about it here, but essentially a man was on trial for cultivating marijuana. He was doing so for medical and religious reasons, and the jury decided that the laws he broke were bad laws, and that to convict him on the basis of bad law would itself constitute an act of injustice. I agree and applaud their decision. Recreational, medicinal, or religious drug use, especially of relatively harmless marijuana, cannot ethically be prohibited by law (and statist law to boot). The jury did the right thing, and I’m ecstatic that they’re even allowed to hear about and employ jury nullification. I hope this catches on elsewhere in whatever capacity (either defense attorneys are allowed to bring it up or that people learn of it on their own). Voluntaryists need all the help they can get in fighting injustice. This is a potent weapon.

(Other voluntaryist perspectives on this topic: Will Grigg, Jacob Hornberger)

Final Thoughts

This run for the president is sure to be a doozy. As always, we have a blue-colored statist against a purple-colored statis. Purple? Yes, he acts blue and speaks red. That makes him purple. You see what I did there? Even if he were pure red, it’d still be a battle between ideological compatriots arguing over the 5% of ideology they disagree on. Political discourse in this country is simply one-sided, the statist side. We voluntaryists and libertarians would do well to concern ourselves with more efficient strategies and avenues of impact. Jury nullification is one of those strategies. As is state nullification, peaceful parenting, unschooling, agorism, nonviolence, and of course, educating others on the principles of liberty.