

What Does It Mean To Be Pro-Choice?

On March 7th, 2017, the U.S. Libertarian Party asked the public to vote, via donation, for the theme of the 2018 Libertarian National Convention. Among them is one that is causing quite a commotion in the party. “Pro Choice on Everything!”

Ever since its founding the LP has held a pro-choice stance on abortion. The abortion plank of the 1972 LP platform reads: “We further support the repeal of all laws restricting voluntary birth control or voluntary termination of pregnancies during the first hundred days.”

Today, it reads “Recognizing that abortion is a sensitive issue and that people can hold good-faith views on all sides, we believe that government should be kept out of the matter, leaving the question to each person for their conscientious consideration.”

A few points before the abortion plank, the LP platform firmly states “Individuals should be free to make choices for themselves and must accept responsibility for the consequences of the choices they make.”

The difference between pro-choice and pro-life is not abortion, but the role of government. Pro-choice libertarians base their argument on whether or not the government should prohibit a practice between individuals. Pro-life people base their argument on subjective morality and scientific theories.

Former chairman of the LP and businessman Mark Hinkle opines “whatever you do is tolerated and is not and should not be prohibited by law or government fiat. It doesn’t mean that everyone has to like your decision. It also doesn’t mean you’re exempt from the responsibility that goes along with whatever actions you take.”

Which is in line with both past languages of the abortion plank of the LP platform and the writings of many seminal libertarians.

Vice chairman of the LP of Kentucky and Ron Paul Revolution activist, Bryan Short, echoes Hinkle’s point, “the only absolute we advocate is freedom for the individual.”

Radical libertarians (e.g., voluntaryists) may or may not support abortion, but they do support choice. More importantly, the ones who oppose abortion directly advocate, not government intervention, but the free market.

A 2016 study by the Guttmacher Institute found the abortion rate to be much higher in South America when compared to the U.S., despite the former having harsher restrictions on abortion. By contrast, the abortion rate in western Europe is about the same as the U.S.,

all the while having more access to abortion.

When comparing pro-choice regions and those who that are considered pro-life, the abortion rate is higher with restrictions and lower with choice. Just as is common knowledge among libertarians with gun control and the drug war, prohibition actually increases abortion.

Pro-life people tend to be conservative, some are libertarian, who have a stated distrust of the government. They argue prohibitions or even slight restrictions on guns, alcohol, and a slew of other things they deem desired increase related violence. Alcohol prohibition, for example, fostered alcohol-related violence, even provided a fertile ground for organized crime.

Abortion control reaches the same logical conclusion. More abortion! Before the Supreme Court landmark case *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, illegal abortions were routine for generations. These unsafe circumstances not only terminated many pregnancies but sometimes even the mothers in the process.

Similar to how conservatives, rightfully, argue gun control only helps those who do not follow the law (e.g., criminals) while helping keep “law-abiding citizens” defenseless. Abortion, drugs, and a slew of other things they deem undesired suffers the same fate. In other words, in regards to the “abortion is murder” crowd, abortion bans help keep “unborn individuals” defenseless.

To combat this, libertarians, unlike conservatives, either abandoned or never joined the pro-abortion and anti-abortion industries and opted to seek free-market alternatives instead.

Biomedical research scientist and LP veteran Dr. Mary Ruwart has written extensively in regards to abortion. She is the author of the popular libertarian book *Healing Our World*.

Dr. Ruwart opines “The only way to stop the debate is to make abortion obsolete. Because a libertarian society would be wealthier than today’s, it is best equipped to develop the technology for fetal transfer to a willing woman. No physician will likely perform an abortion with this option available, so it will become obsolete. The right to life and a woman’s body will both be protected.”

However, the pro-abortion and anti-abortion industries siphon support and keeps people with good intentions trapped in a false dichotomy.

The good doctor, with a PhD in biophysics under her belt, says ““Pro Choice on Everything” is something that resonates with me personally, but I’d hesitate to support that as an LP slogan. It will alienate pro-life individuals both inside and outside the Party. Finding a

theme that unites us all, rather than divides us, would be preferable.”

Co-founder of the Libertarian Party Radical Caucus (anarchists in the party), Susan Hogarth, another woman with a background in biology, seems to agree with Dr. Ruwart, “It does seem to bother the pro-lifers, so I’d prefer something less contentious.” She cites the fact pro-choice views are common with libertarians.

It should be noted, a voluntaryist does not need to join the LP to make a difference. But this LP controversy opens up a new discussion about what it really means to be pro-choice. One does not have to be pro-abortion to be pro-choice – but one must be anti-government to be a pro-choice libertarian.

Two things are evident. First, libertarians seek free-market solutions to society’s problems, not the government and its schemes. Second, libertarians can peacefully co-exist with those who differ from them, unlike the average self-described conservative and liberal in the U.S.

Want to see an end to abortions and to prohibitions? Make the debate a thing of the past, through voluntary association.