

The Faux Slavery Analogy to Voting

Editor's Pick. Written by Wendy McElroy.

I oppose electoral voting on both moral and strategic grounds.

In presenting the Voluntaryist case against electoral voting, however, I commonly encounter the slavery analogy as a counterargument in support of defensive voting. A classic formulation of it comes from Walter Block who argues, "Suppose we were slaves, and the master offered us a vote for either Overseer Baddy, who beat the crap out of us all the time, or Overseer Goody, who only beat us once in a while, and then more gently." Block concludes that voting for Goody would be an act of self-defense and not an endorsement; voting is morally justified.

One problem I have with the slavery analogy is that I disagree with how the issue is presented. But, before exploring that disagreement, I should state the bare-bone reason why I oppose electoral voting. I consider political office to be a position of unjust power over my life and the lives of innocent third parties. I cannot in good conscience assist anyone to assume that power, especially over others. Doing so would be akin to providing bullets to a person I knew would use his gun in a robbery. It is often argued that a libertarian politician would be an exception...but it is not the man, rather it is the position of power to which I object. Besides which, a libertarian politician would still take an oath to uphold the law of the land, which is massively unjust. Either he would be lying as he took the oath or he would be lying when he claimed to be a libertarian.

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