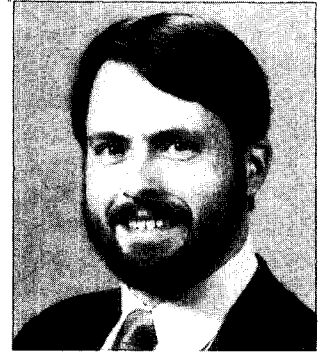


An Agenda for Limited Government



After an election that confirmed the Washington status quo, the nation's capital has been filled with professions of warmth and promises to cooperate. One is entitled to be skeptical of the politicians' protestations of goodwill toward each other. But assuming they are sincere, I'd like to modestly suggest a new nonpartisan theme: The era of big government is over.

A majority of those who voted last November told pollsters that they wanted the federal government to do less. Which means that our elected leaders, in contrast, have a lot to do.

- Cut taxes across the board. People say that they want general rate reductions, not targeted cuts that allow the government to engage in social engineering. Obviously, the usual demagogues would oppose any measure which offered any benefit to anyone who was not poor. But these class warriors must be confronted, and the way to do so is to make the moral case for tax reduction. Yes, lowering rates would stimulate economic growth, but that is merely a side-benefit. The more fundamental point is that people are paying far too much in taxes.

This argument needs to be repeated again and again. It is not right, morally right, to deprive people of over 40 percent of their incomes. They are entitled to keep more of

their earnings. The best and fairest cut would be across the board. How to respond to the charge that the rich would get more back? People would save more *only if they are paying more in the first place*. Anyway, it is time that public officials laud people who become successful rather than demonize the successful. Washington needs to hold a serious public debate on today's outrageous levels of taxation.

- Really cut spending. Americans who live outside of Washington may believe that every year Congress and the President seriously debate the budget. Voters read about programs being cut, spending being reduced, and safety nets being slashed. Yet, in reality, the politicians are usually arguing about whether government should grow by 3.5 percent or 4.5 percent during the coming year. Outlays increase even as legislators proclaim that they are making cuts, since reductions are measured against a mythical "baseline budget" that is always rising. And individual programs virtually never disappear.

So in this new era of good feelings, let's actually eliminate programs, making it difficult for them to grow back. And when politicians talk about making cuts, let them really make cuts.

Of course, some legislators are skittish about a budget confrontation out of fear of another government shutdown. But federal appropriations are traditionally divided among 13 bills that, when approved on time, allow Congress to make tough decisions without creating a public relations fiasco. If both

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parties are genuinely committed to balancing the budget, then surely they can agree to kill such nonessential programs as foreign aid (which, runs the old saw, takes money from poor people in rich countries and gives it to rich people in poor countries), the National Endowment for the Arts (which pays people to slather their bodies in chocolate and stuff vegetables into various body orifices), business subsidy programs (if anyone in America doesn't need welfare, it is big business), and so on.

- Slaughter sacred cows. There has always been an element of truth to left-wing attacks on proposals to “balance the budget on the backs of the poor.” Politicians from both parties are more likely to cut traditional welfare than subsidies for groups with greater political clout. Thus, the budget overflows with transfers to the well-to-do. The Coast Guard inspects yachts for free. The National Park System is frequented almost entirely by middle- and upper-class Americans. Whether the National Endowment for the Arts funds opera or pornography, it benefits primarily the rich. A plethora of grant, loan, insurance, and guarantee programs enhance corporate profits.

- Unplug the third rail of American politics. By the year 2013, at the latest, Social Security will be running in the red. With its faux trust fund filled with Treasury IOUs (the money has been borrowed to fund today's deficit), the system will be ready for Chapter 11.

All of the proposals so far advanced by bipartisan panels—changing the cost-of-living adjustment, fiddling with benefit formulas and retirement ages, hiking taxes (of course!), and allowing the government to invest tax revenues in the stock market—are inadequate to “save” Social Security. Leaders committed to really leading would press for full privatization, as quickly as possible. Only when people have control over their own retirement futures will both the federal budget and individual liberty be safe.

- Defund partisan lobbies. If there is anything that people pledged to bipartisanship should be able to agree on, it is that the government should not underwrite political

organizations. Over the years some conservative groups have collected grants, many for foreign junkets in the name of promoting democracy abroad. But Uncle Sam has been especially generous to labor unions, pro-abortion groups, left-wing organizers, and liberal senior citizen activists. Such groups have a perfect right to be politically involved, but they are not entitled to collect taxpayer dollars. Although such funds are theoretically provided for independent social services, money is fungible and federal grants strengthen such organizations immeasurably.

Congress should also cut cash collected with the de facto assistance of government. The Supreme Court has ruled that labor unions may not use mandatory dues for political purposes, but neither the administration nor Congress has enforced the Beck decision. It is, however, the law of the land. Enforcement is also a matter of basic morality. Organized labor has no right to loot members for campaign contributions, especially those used on behalf of candidates that many workers oppose.

- Move from welfare reform to welfare repeal. Officials are talking about revisiting the changes approved only last year, but the basic problem is government assistance programs themselves. Only private charity can meet each recipient's particular needs and speak to the whole person. Unfortunately, however, the always aggressive and imperialistic public sector continues to squeeze out private efforts.

Thus, we need not only to promote charity, but to shrink welfare. Many different kinds of private programs already exist. Their number would explode if government no longer sopped up private funds, assuaged people's natural desire to help those in need, and relieved beneficiaries of responsibility for their own actions.

- Educate voters. For years, big government congressional majorities held hearings to make the case for ever new and ever more expensive federal programs. In this new co-operative age, Congress should use the process for the opposite purpose. It is time, for instance, to confront attacks on supposed “cuts” in education funding. Congress should

hold hearings on the limited impact of spending on quality; the factors that make schools successful; why private and parochial schools do so much better than public ones; and how centralization of education has reduced parental involvement and student achievement.

Similar efforts could be undertaken on the environment, crime, and the like. One hearing is not enough; it should be an ongoing process to publicize arguments, credential scholars,

and highlight relevant research. In short, it is an important part of the war of ideas, which continues, despite the widespread belief that classical liberalism has triumphed.

Bipartisanship has a nice ring to it, but those of us living outside of the Beltway will benefit only if elected officials work together to shrink government and protect liberty. It's time that they showed us they really believe the era of big government is over. □

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Dying for a Pizza

by Ralph R. Reiland

It started as more than 50 people were being killed in Los Angeles by rioters who didn't agree with the verdict in the Rodney King case. That same night, while the rest of us were watching the mayhem on television, Carl Truss of Schenley Farms in Pittsburgh's Hill District called Pizza Hut for a pie.

The store said it was too dangerous that night to deliver to Truss's neighborhood, a predominantly African-American area. Now, after investigating the case for over four years, Charles Morrison, Director of the Human Relations Commission of Pittsburgh, says it's a case of illegal redlining: "We've determined there is probable cause to believe that it is more likely than not that a discriminatory act occurred here. We found that they did deliver to areas that had greater incidence of crime yet were not perceived to be 'black areas.'"

Morrison is referring to the Oakland section of the city—home to the University of Pittsburgh, Chatham College, Carlow College, and Carnegie-Mellon University—where Pizza Hut takes its risks to deliver to a large student market. That's a judgment call by a store manager, but most Pittsburghers, I'd guess, would see Oakland as safer than the Hill District on the night of the Rodney King riots.

"We don't want any business to be exposed to putting their drivers in harm's way," says Morrison, "but there has to be a basis for

denying service. You can't just say, 'We hear it's bad there.'"

With the way the Human Relations Commission operates, the burden of proof is on the store, a case of being guilty until proven innocent. The Commission is saying that pizza managers, on top of juggling teenage workers and other workplace headaches, must also be proficient in crime statistics by street and neighborhood in order to stay out of court. "There could be a loss history," explains Morrison, "such as, 'When we go to ABC street, we get robbed.'"

The year after Truss didn't get his pizza, Jay Weiss, a 34-year-old man who worked for Chubby's Pizza in Pittsburgh's North Side, was killed by two teenagers while delivering a pizza. As the driver was dying, the boys sat on a curb and ate the pizza.

A few minutes after Morrison was interviewed on the Jim Quinn radio talk show in Pittsburgh, "Dan," a former Pizza Hut driver, called the show to explain how it looked from the inside. "We had drivers robbed every day," he said. "In East Liberty, we had the same driver robbed three times in one day. They usually robbed us with a gun—they know we're not allowed to carry a gun, or more than \$20. They'd rob us just for the pizza. If we'd drive to Schenley Farms, they hid in the bushes across Herron Avenue to rob us. Drivers would quit after a couple days."

Morrison explained to Quinn's listeners that the Human Relations Commission in this case was going after "a large company, not a

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