



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 13, 2011

Article Indicts Ron Paul for His Opposition to the “War on Drugs”

Lamentably, the American people have become accustomed to slouching along the gently sloping path toward tyranny. Likewise, we now trust the soothing susurrations of demagogues, led as if hypnotized to follow the suggestion that this or that federal policy is in our “best interest” and that all our personal habits and choices must be vetted by the nannies on the Potomac.

In no area of public life is this sad state of the incremental surrender of liberty more noticeable than in the realm of the use (and abuse) of substances known to be harmful to the body and mind.

No one would argue that there are many drugs (including alcohol) that destroy the mind, the body, and likely the soul of those who ruin their lives by abusing these devastating liquids, powders, rocks, and pills.

That said, agreeing that one would be wise not to partake of (or in the case of alcohol, overindulge in) any of these substances is not the same as agreeing that the federal government should prohibit their use and spend billions of taxpayer dollars on a war on drugs that has produced no measurable advances against the ravages caused by the designated enemy.

Of the few prominent politicians who oppose the war on drugs and the reams of statutes enacted to prosecute it and punish those caught in the crossfire, only one has demonstrated the courage necessary to publicly proclaim his position – Ron Paul, Congressman from Texas.

Earlier this week, an [article](#) was published by *My San Antonio* online with a provocative headline meant to recriminate Dr. Paul for his belief that the war on drugs is unconstitutional and contrary to the timeless principles of liberty upon which it was formed.

The headline read: Ron Paul Favors Legalizing Heroin. Despite the authors obvious attempt to indict Paul as some sort of immoral proponent of drug addiction or the drug trade that supplies it, it is certain that the obstetrician-turned-lawmaker would plead guilty to the charges leveled against him.

Speaking of the Republican debate held last week in South Carolina, the author of the piece quotes Representative Paul and summarizes his stance on the legalization of drugs.

Paul was the only candidate at the debate to make news, calling for the repeal of laws against prostitution, cocaine and heroin. The freedom to use drugs, he argued, is equivalent to the freedom of people to practice their religion and say their prayers. Liberty must be defended across the board. It is amazing that we want freedom to pick our future in a spiritual way, he said, but not when it comes to our personal habits.





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The authors use of quotations marks reflects more than just his desire to accurately record Dr. Pauls comments. The conspicuous use of the punctuation displays the authors intent to denigrate the libertarian congressmans philosophy regarding drugs and their prohibition.

As if the nuance that separates advocacy of legalization from advocacy for abuse evades the authors analysis of Congressman Pauls position, he continues his attack on Pauls remarks and the genuine libertarian nature thereof.

This argument is strangely framed: If you tolerate Zoroastrianism, you must be able to buy heroin at the quickie mart. But it is an authentic application of libertarianism, which reduces the whole of political philosophy to a single slogan: Do what you will pray or inject or turn a trick as long as no one else gets hurt.

Even by this permissive standard, drug legalization fails. The de facto decriminalization of drugs in some neighborhoods say, in Washington, D.C. has encouraged widespread addiction. Children, freed from the care of their addicted parents, have the liberty to play in parks decorated by used needles. Addicts are liberated into lives of prostitution and homelessness.

In an effort to offer evidence of Ron Pauls detachment from the devastation that accompanies the tragedy of drug addiction, the author relates the answer given by Congressman Paul to the criticism that the legalization of drugs would result in a catastrophic increase in the number of people addicted to those substances.

But Paul had an answer to this criticism. How many people here would use heroin if it were legal? I bet nobody would, he said to applause and laughter. Paul was claiming that good people like the Republicans in the room would not abuse their freedom, unlike those others who don't deserve our sympathy.

The problem, of course, is that even people in the room may have had sons or daughters who struggled with addiction. Or maybe even have personal experience with the freedom that comes from alcohol and drug abuse. One imagines they did not laugh or cheer.

Dr. Pauls response to this very common criticism of his stance on this volatile issue is again more substantial than the author admits. In fairness, perhaps the author of the article didnt read the very logical and liberty-based defense of his position given by Dr. Paul in his newest book, [Liberty Defined: 50 Essential Issues That Affect Our Freedom](#). In this illuminating and unmatched apology of liberty, Paul analogizes the failure of the war on drugs to eradicate the drug trade or the plague of addiction to the outcome of the prohibition of alcohol in the early 20th Century:

Alcohol prohibition was destined to wreak havoc on the American people. It bred lawlessness and underworld criminal syndicates, which made huge profits. Prohibiting any desired substance inevitably leads to a black market, as history has shown countless times, and never achieves its goal of eliminating the use.

Furthermore:

Those who abuse alcohol and suffer disease or addiction, not the government or taxpayers, are responsible for their own actions.

And there's the rub! Those who are horrified by the suggestion that drugs should be legalized, whether tacitly or passively, advocate the substitution of the governments will for a persons own freedom of choice. The most fundamental tenet of the principle of liberty is that one is responsible for his own



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choices, as well as for accepting the consequences of those actions. The prohibition of dangerous substances, alcohol in the 1920s-1930s and drugs today, is founded upon the philosophical base that common men and women are likely to make poor choices and they would benefit from having the eye of a paternalistic government looking over their shoulder to keep them from hurting themselves.

This policy, no matter how noble the underlying intent of those who endorse it, robs people of the liberty given to them by God and trains them to always look to government for the nod of approval or the rod of discipline for every act.

Finally, the author of the *My San Antonio* article removes all doubt about his comprehension of the proper role of government, Dr. Pauls opinion of the seriousness of addiction, and the relationship between those two issues.

Libertarians often cover their views with a powdered wig of 18th- and 19th-century philosophy. They cite Locke, Smith and Mill as advocates of a peaceable kingdom a utopia of cooperation and spontaneous order. But the reality of libertarianism was on display in South Carolina. Paul concluded his answer by doing a jeering rendition of an addict's voice: Oh yeah, I need the government to take care of me. I don't want to use heroin, so I need these laws.

It is easy to set ones sights on the libertarian philosophers of history and condemn those who are no longer able to defend themselves. This tactic is no more than a red herring thrown down to divert the attention of Americans in pursuit of the truth away from the sound logic of Ron Pauls uncommon position.

In fact, Locke, Smith, and Mill have no place in this discussion. They were merely the very capable and enlightened messengers of a timeless truth: liberty is essential to the living of a good life and is a right given by man not in limited quantities by a generous government, but it is a natural right with which man was endowed by his Creator. The government is not the source of liberty and cannot, in a republic, be the rightful arbiter of what is or is not an appropriate exercise of it.

Photo: Texas Congressman Ron Paul speaks to a gathering of Tea Party supporters at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville, S.C. on May 5: AP Images



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