

**Progressive Citizen:  
Citizenship in the Modern Progressive/Liberal State**

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What do America's governing elites ask of America's citizens? How do they envision the roles and duties and actions of the citizen in light of the roles and duties and actions of the republic? What is their ultimate view of the citizen and of the republic? And who are the governing elites?

Currently, the ascendant group of governing elites is (largely) the progressive/liberal men and women elected in the national elections of 2008 and 2012, and most notably the historic two-term presidential victories of Barack Obama. By contrast, some 200-plus years ago the governing elites were, of course, the American Founders. Though this paper will focus on the current governing elites, it is helpful to first consider some words of contrast with the Founders:

The Founders spoke eloquently and wisely of a virtuous citizenry—self-governing citizens whose ability to successfully self-govern themselves would be crucial to a successfully self-governing republic. George Washington expressed this conviction often, believing that virtue and morality were both synonymous and crucial to the American republic, and understanding that religion was the root for both.<sup>1</sup> In his Farewell Address, Washington stated that “religion and morality” were “indispensable supports” to “political prosperity.”<sup>2</sup>

Influencing Washington and the Founders was a French philosopher named Charles Montesquieu, whose work is (sadly) foreign to the current generation. His work included the

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<sup>1</sup> Among others, see: Michael and Jana Novak, *Washington's God* (NY: Basic, 2006); and Gary L. Gregg and Matthew Spalding, *Patriot Sage: George Washington and the American Political Tradition* (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> George Washington, “Farewell Address,” September 19, 1796.

seminal *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). In that work, Montesquieu considered various forms of government. He concluded that the best form of government is a self-governing one, and yet it is also the most difficult to maintain because it demands a virtuous populace. As noted by John Howard, the longtime senior fellow at the Howard Center for Family, Religion, & Society, Montesquieu stressed that each citizen in a self-governing state must voluntarily abide by certain essential standards of conduct: lawfulness, truthfulness, honesty, fairness, respect for the rights and well-being of others, obligation to one's spouse and children, to name a few. "Each new generation must be trained to be responsible citizens ... to be virtuous and conscientious," writes Howard.<sup>3</sup>

American citizens today might not think a lot about the importance of virtue and self-control in the operation of their nation, but they actually *sing* about it fairly often, even if the words do not sink in. Consider this line from one of the nation's sacred political hymns, *America, the Beautiful*:

America, America,  
God mend thine ev'ry flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law.

The Founders saw that as fundamental: *Confirm thy soul in self-control*. Our liberty is enshrined in our laws, but that liberty should not be license for opportunities for the flesh (see Galatians 5:14). Our liberties, protected and permitted as they are, should not be exploited to do anything and everything we want, including things harmful to oneself, to one's family, to one's neighbors, to one's culture, to one's country. That misunderstanding and abuse of freedom is

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<sup>3</sup> John Howard, "Some Reflections on Choosing a College," *St. Croix Review* (June 2011).

what Pope Benedict XVI calls a “confused ideology of freedom,” one that can engender “the self-destruction of freedom” for others.<sup>4</sup>

In truth, a genuine freedom requires responsibility. As the song says—and as Washington and Montesquieu and others intimated—we must successfully govern ourselves in order to successfully govern our nation.

In more modern times, conservative thinkers like Russell Kirk echoed similar sentiments when he spoke of the need for “inner order” by citizens before their republic could maintain “outer order.”<sup>5</sup> America needed an ordered liberty. Thomas Merton, the brilliant Catholic writer, called this “trained liberty,” which Merton believed required the assistance of divine grace. A society that failed to understand this, and pursue this, would be (in Merton’s words) a “disordered society.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Father Benedict Groeschel argues that American citizens should pursue a “virtue-driven life.”<sup>7</sup>

Among the Founders, even the much-maligned Thomas Jefferson, constantly assailed for his alleged lack of religion, understood the importance of virtue. He could not avoid a reference to one of the cardinal virtues—prudence—in the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson also implicitly understood, as did his countrymen, the very limited purposes of the government they were establishing. In the Declaration, Jefferson underscored the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; it is “to secure these rights,” wrote Jefferson, “that governments are instituted among men.” Yet, Jefferson went further. In his 1801 inaugural address, President Jefferson stated: “A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Merton, *Life and Holiness* (NY: Doubleday/Image, 1962), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Father Benedict J. Groeschel, *The Virtue Driven Life* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2006).

improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government.”<sup>8</sup>

The Founders did not want their government doing too much or being expected to do too much. A virtuous citizenry would not expect that of the government, nor desire it. James Madison, the father of the Constitution, sought a middle ground between an overly centralized government and an overly decentralized government that gave too much power to the states. And he, too, emphasized the need for a virtuous citizenry. At the Virginia constitutional ratification convention, Madison declared, “If there be ... [no virtue among us], we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government, can render us secure.”<sup>9</sup>

Neither American government nor any form of government could ever achieve the utopian task of rendering all of its citizens secure. Only citizens’ own virtue could provide security; that virtue came from within citizens and, more specifically, from their faith in God.

Alexander Hamilton also grasped this, likewise believing that while the citizenry must strive to be virtuous, citizens also needed to realize that a perfectly virtuous republic is impossible. Hamilton wrote in *Federalist* 65:

If mankind were to resolve to agree in no institution of government, until every part of it had been adjusted to the most exact standard of perfection, society would soon become a general scene of anarchy, and the world a desert. Where is the standard of perfection to be found? Who will undertake to unite the discordant opinions of the whole community

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “First Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1801.

<sup>9</sup> Clarke D. Forsythe, *Politics for the Greatest Good: The Case for Prudence in the Public Square* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 68-70.

in the same judgment of it; and to prevail upon one conceited projector to renounce his infallible criterion for the fallible criterion of his more conceited neighbor?<sup>10</sup>

America will never be, and can never be, *perfect*. Neither can any form of government or programs or plans or policies that a government offers its citizens.

How does this vision of the Founders square with the vision of progressives/liberals today, particularly given the plans and programs of President Obama and his administration? And what sort of citizen—*progressive man*, if you will—is being shaped and molded by those plans and programs?

It is the plans and programs of the current group of governing progressives/liberals that tell us more about their vision for the citizen than anything else. We could ask progressives/liberals for sweeping statements about their philosophy of the citizen. That, however, would not tell us nearly as much about the shaping and molding of the citizen that is underway through their policies. We need to go there to uncover their core principles.

### *The Progressive/Liberal Program*

What drives liberals today? Or, should we ask, what drives “progressives” today? Liberals, after all, are now embracing the term “progressive.” No doubt, the retreat from the liberal label dates to the 1980s when Ronald Reagan sent liberalism reeling. By the 1988 presidential campaign, Vice President George H. W. Bush was hurling the term at Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis as almost an invective. For his part, Dukakis seemed ashamed to even describe himself as a liberal. *The New Republic*, the liberal flagship, famously begged Dukakis to stand up, be proud, and call himself a liberal.

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<sup>10</sup> See the discussion in Forsythe, *Politics for Greatest Good*, 58-60.

Then came Bill Clinton, who won the presidency in 1992 by running as a “New Democrat,” meaning a *moderate* Democrat—or, better, not a liberal. For his running mate, he picked Senator Al Gore, a fellow member of the moderate Democratic Leadership Council. Their goal was, in effect, to get elected by further fleeing the liberal label.

Since 2008, with the emergence of Barack Obama and, really, Obama-ism, “progressivism” is ascendant, even as one doubts that many to most of those calling themselves “progressive” even know what the term fully means.

The jettisoning of the “liberal” label for the less maligned tag of “progressive” is surely tactical as much as philosophical. It is fascinating that Hillary Clinton, for instance, recently proclaimed herself a “progressive.” Several years ago I researched an entire book on Mrs. Clinton, and never once found her describing herself as a progressive.<sup>11</sup>

Now, that said, the truth is that “progressive” is a better name, more accurately describing the movement and its extremely broad, precariously unpredictable direction.

Here is the essence of contemporary progressivism, which is a problem for America: One of the only things we really know about progressives, and that they know about themselves and their ideology, is that they favor constant “change,” “reform,” an ever-shifting, ongoing “evolution,” or, yes, *progression*. And therein is an inherent, significant difficulty: Progressivism offers no clear, definable end. The goalpost is always moving, forever pushed further away. Ends are never ends; they always “progress,” with culture and society—and they do so with the underlying assumption that the changes are always (or largely) good.

For the rest of us, this ambiguity is troubling, bordering on maddening, as we cannot, by the very nature of progressivism, get an answer from progressives as to where, exactly, they

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Kengor, *God and Hillary Clinton* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

intend to stop. It is completely unlike conservatism, where the goalpost was erected circa 1776; conservatives believe the American Founders fundamentally and essentially got it right, and that the American project is to ensure that the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are maintained. Under conservatism, citizens should know their duties, their rights, their history, their Constitution, and their institutions. Under progressivism, these things are often said to be antiquated, repressive, and unfair, and need to be changed or reinvented. Under progressivism, these things are and must always be in a state of progression, ever evolving into something better and something more just.

So, what do we call it? Progressivism or liberalism? Is it one and the same? Well, most of those embracing “it” seem to mean largely the same thing.

With that said, what are the current dominant principles of progressivism and/or liberalism? What makes progressives/liberals tick?

Identifying those “principles”—such as they exist and can be identified—is no easy task, and everyone who makes an attempt will have a slightly different list. My list as a conservative no doubt is biased by my conservative perspective, and will justifiably elicit criticism from the other side. My list would not be the list of each and every liberal/progressive.

Acknowledging those limitations (and some overlap), here are—in my humble, conservative view—nine telling bellwethers of modern progressivism/liberalism, observed largely through the prism of the current governing Obama administration’s policies and vision. I believe these nine are indicative of contemporary American progressivism/liberalism:

- the progressive income tax
- wealth redistribution and government centralization
- Keynesian prime-the-pump government “stimulus”

- same-sex marriage
- Obama-care and “universal healthcare”
- changing America through the courts
- the HHS (Health and Human Services) mandate
- expanding the abortion frontier
- a new government class

There are more that could be added; nonetheless, these nine strike me as salient manifestations of the modern progressive/liberal agenda. I will lay them out in this paper. But more than that, I believe that this progressive/liberal vision, or program, is creating a type of new *progressive citizen*, a modern progressive man. I will conclude this paper by considering that citizen and what that citizen looks like.

### *The Progressive/Liberal Nine*

Of these “progressive/liberal nine” that I have identified, some are policy positions, some are executive actions, some are programs, and some are something else entirely. Together, however, they are telling manifestations of the current dominant progressive/liberal agenda. I believe they are bellwethers of progressive/liberal thinking and the progressive/liberal view of the nation and its citizens.

*The progressive income tax.* The progressive income tax is a hallmark of the progressive/liberal program. The modern progressive income tax was established by progressives in 1913, and only after a very intense debate among America’s legislators. It required a constitutional amendment. The tax was a tiny percentage rate applied to the truly super-rich. But within just three decades, under President Franklin Roosevelt, it had skyrocketed to a 94%



upper-income rate. It would eventually be reduced to 70% under John F. Kennedy and then 28% under Ronald Reagan, before slowly but surely progressing back upward to a high of 39.6% under Bill Clinton. It was reduced to 36% by George W. Bush, which is where it remains today. The Obama administration is currently pushing hard to move it back up to 39.6%.

A telling moment for the tax's current status came in December 2010, after Republicans' overwhelming victory over Democrats in the mid-term election. It was a stinging defeat for President Obama and his agenda. Obama, thus, forcibly compromised with Republicans in extending the Bush tax cuts. Clearly motivated entirely by politics and not by ideology, Obama, in his press conference announcing the compromise, chastised his disappointed left-wing base for not understanding political realities. He denounced Republican tax-cutters as "hostage takers." The president bemoaned his moral dilemma, forced to "negotiate" with Republicans, who kneel before what Obama described as "their Holy Grail:" "tax cuts for the wealthy." "These tax cuts for the wealthy," said a visibly bitter Obama, echoing his common class-warfare rhetoric, "this is, seems to be, their central economic doctrine."

Well, in truth, it was not Republicans' "central economic doctrine." Nor was it their Holy Grail. To the contrary, if there is one central economic doctrine that constitutes a kind of Holy Grail to progressives/liberals, it is progressive tax rates. Progressive incomes taxes are integral to their class-based worldview, their political rhetoric, and their very view of a just nation. The progressive citizen and state is guided by the progressive income tax. Progressives believe that the tax plays a vital leveling role. And thus, a good progressive citizen in a just progressive society happily abides by the moralizing influence of the progressive tax code.

*Wealth redistribution and government centralization.* Implicit to their embrace of progressive tax rates is the desire by progressives/liberals to redistribute wealth on a vast national

scale. This is the leveling/moralizing goal of the progressive income tax; the tax is the means to the end. To the progressive/liberal, these ends fully and unquestioningly justify the means.

Wealth must be transferred from those with more to those with less.

Instructive was a February 2011 exchange on MSNBC between liberal stalwart Lawrence O'Donnell and former Democratic National Committee head Howard Dean. The two were angry at Fox's Bill O'Reilly for challenging President Obama on whether he believed in the redistribution of wealth. Here is their exchange:

O'Donnell: Governor [Dean], this is one of those things you can see he's [Obama] afraid of discussing—what an increase in the top tax rate actually does....

Dean: That [interview] was an unusual thing. The president doesn't often get mouse-trapped, especially by the likes of Bill O'Reilly.... [But] that's what governments do—is redistribute. The argument is not whether they should redistribute or not, the question is *how much* we should redistribute....

The purpose of government is to make sure that capitalism works for everybody.... It's government's job to redistribute.

Dean's definition of the "purpose" and "job" of government is a modern progressive/liberal definition. Howard Dean cannot factually argue that his definition has currency beyond that. He certainly did not render a definition grounded in sources one would traditionally expect in America: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, specific writings of Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, even John Locke. No such person, or thing was cited by Dean. For instance, the Declaration, written by Jefferson, edited by Ben Franklin, John Adams, and the entirety of the first Congress, approved by 56 of America's Founders, stated that "governments are instituted" for the purpose of securing the "unalienable

rights” of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Wealth redistribution is nowhere to be found in the document.

What Howard Dean offered was an expansive modern “progressive” definition of government. That is fine, but his terms need to be identified as just that.

Taking this a step further, note that both Dean and O’Donnell desire a federal income-tax system based on graduated or progressive rates. They believe such a system reflects and enables government’s “job” and “purpose.” They want a progressive federal income tax for the chief intention of wealth redistribution. In the modern progressive/liberal state, citizens willfully participate in this mass form of wealth collectivization and redistribution for the (alleged) common good of the citizenry.

*Keynesian “stimulus” policies.* Just days into his presidency, Barack Obama declared that “only government,” and specifically the federal government, could save America from its economic crisis. “[A]t this particular moment,” said the newly inaugurated president, “the federal government is the only entity left with the resources to jolt our economy back into life. It is only government that can break the vicious cycle where lost jobs lead to people spending less money which leads to even more layoffs.”

Obama said this on February 9, 2009. Mere hours earlier, Senate Democrats had paved the way for the unprecedented \$800-billion “stimulus” package that President Obama desired as a cure for the fledgling economy. Washington’s central planners had seized the reins to rescue the nation from (supposedly) another Great Depression.

This “only government” sentiment was expressed in Obama’s very first presidential press conference. It was a lifetime removed from the previous Democratic president, Bill Clinton, a fiscal moderate who famously declared that “the era of big government is over,” or from

Republican President Ronald Reagan, who, likewise facing a terrible economy, said, “In this present crisis, government is not the solution ... government is the problem.”

Under progressives/liberals, the era of big government is not over for America’s citizens; quite the contrary, big government is the goal. An instructive contrast is the differentiation in how President Obama, a progressive/liberal, and President Reagan, a conservative, responded to economic crises. Note the crucial difference in the expected role of the citizen/individual in each president’s approach:

President Obama claimed that the economy he inherited was the worst since the Great Depression. Actually, it was the worst economy since the Reagan recession of 1982-83. Further, the 2009 market crash under Obama was not the worst since 1929 but since 1987—also on Ronald Reagan’s watch. What did Reagan do—or, more importantly, *did not* do—in response to these “crises?”

In both cases, Reagan did the exact opposite of Obama’s massive government spending infusions. (In fact, it is worth noting that Bill Clinton did not invoke Obama’s method when he faced recessions at the very start and end of his presidency.) As for the Reagan recession, the president waited extremely patiently—to the point where he drove his advisers nearly crazy—for his huge 1981 tax cuts to take effect.<sup>12</sup> Reagan did not seek a huge government infusion because he believed that government spending had long been out-of-control, particularly since FDR’s New Deal and LBJ’s Great Society, which created systemic deficits. Reagan felt that high spending, high regulation, and high taxes had sapped the American economy of its vitality, and particularly its ability to rebound from recession. The economy needed to be freed in order to

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<sup>12</sup> See my lengthy discussion in Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 73-83.

perform. Reagan wanted a huge infusion from the private sector, from the individual, from the citizen. Reagan's belief in, effectively, private-sector stimulus is the polar opposite of Obama's faith in public-sector stimulus.

Either way, it is this sort of Keynesian prime-the-pump "stimulus" spending that has become another hallmark of modern progressive/liberalism. Here, the progressive/liberal citizen stimulates economic growth (in theory) by forcibly turning over a large portion of his earnings to governing elites who (in theory) will more intelligently and justly allocate those resources for the benefit of greater collective economic growth.

*Same-sex marriage.* A new staple in the progressive/liberal agenda is same-sex marriage. In his landmark announcement coming out in support of gay marriage, which he delivered on ABC News, President Obama cited his faith as key to his position. Speaking for himself and the first lady, Obama told ABC's Robin Roberts: "You know, when we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule ... treat others the way you would want to be treated. And ... that's what motivates me as president."<sup>13</sup>

President Obama had invoked the Golden Rule in support of gay marriage. And his entire party immediately fell in line, immediately considering the unprecedented step of placing gay marriage in the Democratic Party platform. That was a huge change, another form of "progress" in the progressive mind, one that an enlightened citizenry en masse is expected to embrace.

Consider liberals' *progression* on this issue, which speaks to the very essence of how progressive political thought unpredictably and unevenly evolves: A half century ago, the concept of "gay marriage" would have been unthinkable to any Democrat. Anyone who might

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<sup>13</sup> "President Obama Affirms His Support for Same Sex Marriage," ABC Web site, ABCNews.com, May 9, 2012.

have voiced public support for such a thing back then, Democrat or Republican or radical, would have been hauled off to an asylum as a public menace. Just 20 years ago, the previous Democratic president, Bill Clinton, supported the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage as strictly between a man and a woman.

While support for gay marriage has increased since then, what the progressive movement needed was a front man to light the fuse and take the lead. They got it in spades from President Obama. Just like that, the entire public debate swiftly changed, with gay-marriage advocates on the offensive and opponents on the defensive. Those opposing the unwavering norm for marriage since the dawn of humanity, following the billions before them—what G. K. Chesterton called the “Democracy of the Dead”—were suddenly framed as extremists who must explain themselves. And CEOs of companies who voiced a mere opinion to the contrary—i.e., Chick-fil-A—were picketed, protested, banned, and attacked by the nation’s mayors for manufacturing everything from “hate thoughts” to “hate chicken.”

This political shift was the embodiment of progressivism: No one can initially see where progressives will end up, but we can see in retrospect how their positions unfold. In this latest manifestation—call it *President Obama’s progress*—progressives insist that everyone acquiesce on gay marriage. President Obama did not begin the push, but, in mere months, he advanced the progressive project by leaps and bounds, a stunning surge that would not have happened without him.

As for the citizens of the progressive state, they are expected to come around to this evolved form of heightened understanding of the sacred institution of matrimony. Those citizens who disagree are not only deemed un-enlightened but intolerant and impediments to the just society.

*Obama-care and “universal healthcare.”* Support for President Obama’s revolution in American healthcare has become a litmus test for progressivism/liberalism. If you’re against it, you’re against the modern progressive/liberal view of fairness.

There is dispute over precisely how much government control is engendered in Obama-care. That exact level constitutes the trillion-dollar question. The American healthcare industry is the world’s most advanced, and it comprises one-sixth of the U.S. economy.

Progressives have been trying to implement “universal healthcare” since literally 1912, when those words appeared in that year’s Progressive Party platform. Under Barack Obama, they appear to have finally pulled it off.

If the progressive income tax is liberals’ Holy Grail, then nationalized healthcare will be—to borrow from the language of Britain’s NHS (National Health Service)—their “crown jewel.” It will also join Social Security as the “third rail” in American politics, a veritable political untouchable. Once Obama-care is fully implemented, with countless millions of citizens dependent upon it for their daily care, it is difficult to imagine ever undoing it. Attempting to undo this massive restructuring by Washington will be like trying to unscramble eggs.

Among Barack Obama’s many initiatives, none so literally impact the lives of American citizens as this one. At a minimum, Obama-care will affect the currently uninsured; at a maximum, it will affect every taxpayer, will dramatically affect the overall economy, and could affect literal life-death decisions for every citizen approaching the end of life.

*Changing America through the courts.* In the summer of 2012, Americans anxiously awaited the Supreme Court’s epic decision on Obama-care. At the core of the decision was a simple question: Is the “individual mandate” in Obama-care constitutional? And thus, is Obama-care constitutional? In a stunning turnabout, the court’s chief justice, a conservative named John

Roberts, voted with the court's liberals, thereby upholding the constitutionality of Obama-care as a "tax"—precisely what the Obama team had argued that it was not.

No matter for the court's progressives/liberals. They would have found a way to uphold Obama-care regardless. They liked the legislation, or, really, they like what it aims to do, and so, they were going to find a way to rule in favor of the legislation.

In that sense, the ruling on Obama-care was not unlike *Roe v. Wade*, which manufactured a right to abortion in the United States. That "right" had to be read into the Constitution, and at the expense and complete exclusion of sections guaranteeing a right to life, such as the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which states, "nor shall any State deprive any person of life." To the contrary, abortion was inserted into the "right to privacy," three words which themselves do not exist in the Constitution. The "right to privacy" was manufactured by a majority of U.S. Supreme Court justices in the 1965 case of *Griswold v. Connecticut*, in which the court spoke of "penumbras" and emanations from other rights, such as the right against unreasonable search and seizure. These penumbras or "glows" from other rights were regarded by the court majority as creating this new right to privacy, which, in turn, created a constitutional right to an abortion.

As *Roe* showed so painfully, progressives/liberals use the court system to legalize and advance their agenda, irrespective of whether that agenda conflicts with the U.S. Constitution. When Obama-care came before the court, it was a guarantee that the court's liberals would find a way to make it "constitutional." Next up for the court will be the Obama-HHS mandate requiring every American, including all religious believers and institutions, to fund contraception and abortion drugs. Here, too, President Obama and his allies are pushing another mandate that will have to be reviewed by courts because of its blatant challenge to the Constitution—in this case, the First Amendment's freedom of religion and conscience.



It will not matter to liberals on the court. The facts of the Constitution are always secondary to the goals of the progressive/liberal program.

Barack Obama got two picks for the high court in his first term. He will get more in the second. These and a huge number of additional federal appointments will be the most significant handmaidens in advancing President Obama's "fundamental transformation" of America. This massive shift in the philosophical/ideological direction of the court will have a corollary massive influence on the American citizenry. Not a citizen in this nation will be unaffected, as the courts decide on everything from regulations of commerce to same-sex marriage to life issues.

*The HHS mandate.* That brings us to the HHS mandate. The Obama administration's mandate to every American citizen, including religious believers, to provide contraceptives, sterilization, and abortifacients—that is, birth-control drugs that induce abortion—is unprecedented. It came via executive fiat. Under the expansive umbrella of Obama-care, it was simply ordained by the chief executive, and thus, it was done. That alone is a potent indicator of the huge powers enshrined in Obama-care and now granted to the executive branch.

It is also a potent indicator of religious intolerance. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, defines contraceptives, sterilization, and abortifacients as "intrinsically evil." Nonetheless, the Church and its members are now being told they must provide them. By fiat, the Obama administration has issued that decree. It clearly flies in the face of the First Amendment's freedom of religion and conscience.

Here, specifically, is how the Obama mandate unfolded:

In August 2011, the Obama administration's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidelines for implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obama-care." The guidelines mandated that by summer 2012 all health-

insurance plans in America—yes, *all* of them—must cover any and all FDA-approved contraception, sterilization procedures, and pharmaceuticals, even those that produce or result in abortion. It was decreed that every employer and employee must pay for these things, even if they violate the dictates of their conscience. The employers include all Catholic institutions, from colleges to hospitals to nursing homes to social service agencies to charities ... to whatever else. “All” meant “all.”

When Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi infamously said that Americans would learn the details of Obama-care after Congress passed the legislation, this was a perfect illustration. The Devil is truly in the details.

In response to this, Catholics sent letters to Kathleen Sebelius, HHS secretary. They did so to no avail. As stated by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, head of the American bishops, the Obama administration basically told American Catholics that they had one year “to figure out how to violate our consciences.” Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik expressed his frustrations more bluntly, writing: “The Obama administration answered you and me. The response was very simple: ‘To hell with you.’”<sup>14</sup> Zubik added:

This is government by fiat that attacks the rights of everyone .... At no other time in memory or history has there been such a governmental intrusion on freedom.... It undermines the whole concept and hope for healthcare reform by inextricably linking it to the zealotry of pro-abortion bureaucrats. The mandate would require the Catholic Church as an employer to violate its fundamental beliefs concerning human life and human dignity.... It is really hard to believe that it happened.

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<sup>14</sup> Bishop David Zubik, “To Hell With You,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 30, 2012.

In response, on May 21, 2012, forty-three Catholic dioceses, archdioceses, organizations, universities, schools, and groups filed 12 federal lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the Obama administration's HHS mandate. Even Notre Dame University, burned by honoring Barack Obama with an honorary degree in May 2009, participated in the lawsuit.

The HHS mandate is a sign of the striking stridency of the modern progressive/liberal project and its impact on citizens. To wit: on these particular "women's issues"—forced taxpayer funding of contraception and abortion drugs—no citizen (male or female) has a legitimate right to conscientious exemption, or even to appeal to their cherished freedom of religion. The mandate constitutes a reconstitution of our nation's founding understanding of religious liberty; it is a narrowing of religious liberty. This federal mandate by progressives/liberals lacks the Founders' sense of virtue, and certainly the theological virtue of charity. No charity is to be granted to citizens who hope to conscientiously object to this favored policy of modern progressives/liberals.

*Expanding the abortion frontier.* Related to the HHS mandate is the larger progressive/liberal notion of "women's rights," where progressives/liberals are rapidly expanding and redefining a whole host of new "rights" and even "entitlements," from legal abortion to taxpayer-funding of Planned Parenthood and contraception.

With the election and reelection of Barack Obama, the battle to end legal abortion in America is effectively over. *Roe v. Wade* will not be overturned, and is essentially now a permanent part of American life. Barack Obama got two Supreme Court picks in his first term and will get more in his second. Had Republican John McCain won the presidency in 2008, this permanency might have been stopped. Now, it will not.

But the situation is actually much more extreme than that. President Obama, his administration, and progressives/liberals are poised to expand “abortion rights” to vast new frontiers. In the not-so-distant past, abortion advocates did not demand that all citizens forcibly pay for their abortions—and for Planned Parenthood, for contraception, and the dissection and destruction of embryos for purposes of research. They were not demanding that taxpayer-funded contraception become a new “entitlement,” a push publicly embodied by the activism of Georgetown student Sandra Fluke.

Worse still, those begging to differ with this relentless agenda have been accused of everything from religious intolerance to spearheading a “war on women.”

Nonetheless, such is how progressivism works, or, really, evolves, *progresses*. Consider, for instance, liberals’ *progression* on abortion/life issues:

Take the example of Planned Parenthood. It was launched in the 1920s, initially as the American Birth Control League. At first, Margaret Sanger and her allies wanted birth control. Sanger was a racial eugenicist who had some horrible views toward the poor (“human weeds,” she called them), toward the mentally slow (“imbeciles” and “morons”), and, among others, toward black Americans. Progressives today dare not raise the grim specter of Sanger’s “Negro Project” or infamous 1926 speech to a KKK rally in Silverlake, New Jersey.

But what about abortion? Planned Parenthood’s progressives were not there yet; they had to evolve to that. In fact, initially, abortion was not on their radar. It will shock pro-lifers and pro-choicers alike to hear this, but Margaret Sanger initially denounced abortion. “It [abortion] is an alternative that I cannot too strongly condemn,” wrote Sanger in the January 27, 1932, edition of *The Nation*. “The practice of it merely for limitation of offspring is dangerous and vicious....

[S]ome ill-informed persons have the notion that when we speak of birth control we include abortion as a method. We certainly do not.”<sup>15</sup>

Sanger adamantly repudiated abortion. Nonetheless, Sanger and her disciples were progressives, and, thus, what began as birth control and eugenics—aimed at halting life at conception—needed only a few decades to progress to a new level; that level included the eradication of undesired life after conception. Today, Sanger’s organization is America’s largest abortion provider. Sanger’s progressive progeny picked up her torch and burned down the barn. As with much of what progressives do, where they started was not where they ultimately ended up. Planned Parenthood’s progressives became radical “abortion rights” advocates.

And now, having fully secured legalized abortion, this, too, no longer seems enough. Currently, progressives/liberals are arguing that abortion should be funded by taxpayers, as should Sanger’s abortion-leading Planned Parenthood, as should contraception. These initiatives are evolving into odd new American “entitlements” for citizens. Such is the new progressive citizen.

*A new government class.* The vision and policies and programs of progressives/liberals are rapidly generating a new government class. The current such class—the one that re-elected Barack Obama—is comprised of federal workers, of employees in public-sector unions, and of those collecting food stamps, welfare, and unemployment benefits (among others). Some may refer to them as Mitt Romney’s “47 percent” (if not higher), or Rush Limbaugh’s “Santa Claus” class, or by some other designation. Either way, these citizens constitute a large and growing segment of the American population—and American voters—who are becoming not merely dependent upon government but also dependent upon liberal Democrats. The more dependent

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<sup>15</sup> Margaret Sanger, “The Pope’s Position on Birth Control,” *The Nation*, January 27, 1932, 103.

this group becomes, and the more it expands, the more it redounds to the political benefit and enshrinement of liberal-Democrat politicians. We can argue whether or not this is intentional by Democrats, or a deliberate tactic of the progressive/liberal agenda, but there is no denying that it is a political reality.

All of these segments of the citizenry—or, perhaps, *constituencies*—have steadily expanded over the last 100 years of progressivism/liberalism, and have recently resurged under Barack Obama. Under Obama, there are a record 47 million Americans on food stamps, up from 32 million at the start of his presidency. The welfare rolls have exploded. Unemployment has not only increased but remains stuck and stagnant, with the actual unemployed around 15%. (There are even 636,000 homeless Americans—double the number from the Reagan years, and totally unreported by the mainstream media that favors Barack Obama.<sup>16</sup>) The huge number of federal workers continues to rise, as does the percentage of employees in public-sector unions beholden to Democrats: SEIU (Service Employees International Union), AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees), and teachers unionized through the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Writing on this phenomenon, Dr. Marvin Folkertsma observes:

America's mammoth federal government constitutes an interest group itself, which means it does all the things other public and private groups do to protect itself.... [A]bout half of the population receives some form of aid from the federal government, according to the Heritage Foundation's 2012 Index of Dependence on Government, and these recipients constitute perhaps the most behemoth group of them all.... [C]lose to one-half of the entire population does not pay federal

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<sup>16</sup> See: Paul Kengor, "Obama's Homeless," *American Spectator*, October 26, 2012.

income taxes, a figure that climbed from 12 percent in 1969 to 34.1 percent at the beginning of the Bush administration, to its current figure as President Obama starts his second term.<sup>17</sup>

That current figure is bad news for the literal solvency of the republic, but good news for those cynically hoping to expand the boundaries (and collective dependency net) of progressivism/liberalism. (It is also good news for progressives/liberals who champion wealth redistribution.)

The first flame of this rising government class came with President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s, picking up from the spark lit by Woodrow Wilson's progressive presidency two decades earlier. The next significant expansion came via President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society in the 1960s. Incremental additions to the burgeoning government class happened thereafter, with an agency or new department started here and there. To cite just one example, President Jimmy Carter, for instance, started the Department of Education. With President Obama, another extension of this class is underway, with the centralization of healthcare under Obama-care just one of the more obvious manifestations.

These changes are creating an entire bloc of citizens who look to the federal government for a paycheck and their livelihood. Via the policy actions and preferences of progressives/liberals, the Democratic Party first became the party of the New Deal, then of the Great Society, then of the welfare state, and now of a still further expanding government class.

### *Conclusion*

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<sup>17</sup> Marvin J. Folkertsma, "The Decline and Fall of America," The Center for Vision & Values, November 16, 2012.

The American Founders surely did not envision a new government class. They argued over checks and balances, separation of powers, and the size and scope of the federal government, with some (like Alexander Hamilton) favoring a government stronger and more centralized than the decentralized form advocated by the likes of Thomas Jefferson. Others, like James Madison, sought a “middle ground” somewhere between the two. All of the Founders, however, spoke of a virtuous citizenry, one capable of self-governing itself before successfully self-governing the republic. A permanent and seemingly ever-expanding government class was surely not what they desired for the citizenry. This contemporary by-product of progressivism/liberalism would make the Founders shudder, and perhaps even go back to the Constitutional drawing board.

The “inner order” of this new government class is not about confirming one’s soul in self-control, but about ordering one’s life around Washington, whether through temporary benefits during unfortunate periods of unemployment, cynically milking the system for ongoing welfare benefits, or relying upon the federal government for full-time work—and punishing any politician who vows to scale back government in order to save the republic from insolvency. Any politician who threatens to dissolve the Department of Education, or de-fund PBS, or enact wage or hiring freezes is attacked as a pariah and mortal threat to the United States of America and its citizenry. He is cast as a rogue villain who must be defeated. His attempts to preserve the republic’s fiscal sanity are viewed as pernicious, as anathema to the interests of the government class.

Consider other results flowing from the core principles and policies of progressivism/liberalism:



The modern progressive citizen places faith in the progressive income tax, a system that (it is assumed) will justly and equitably redistribute wealth—certainly more fairly than a free enterprise system. As DNC (Democratic National Committee) head Howard Dean puts it, “It’s government’s job to redistribute.” The progressive citizen believes that a good government constantly transfers wealth from one group of citizens to another group of citizens. Citizens who favor this system are deemed compassionate, whereas those who object are framed as lacking compassion.

The modern progressive citizen also favors Keynesian-style, prime-the-pump government “stimulus” to (attempt) to spur economic growth. This, too, according to the progressive citizen, is a good thing for government to do. Today’s progressive citizen disagrees with more recent fiscally moderate Democrats like Bill Clinton, who declared that “the era of big government is over.” Quite the contrary, for the progressive citizen, big government and growing government is never over—it is the objective; in fact, it is one of the only things that progressives truly know about themselves and their ideology. They know that they are always progressing in the direction of increased government, particularly increased government centralized in Washington. If there is a major ill plaguing the citizenry—such as a portion of Americans lacking (for whatever reason) healthcare—then the problem must be solved not at the local level or by non-profits but by dramatic federal action. For progressives, the healthcare problem must be collectively tackled by managers and “experts” in Washington.

The modern progressive citizen also believes in same-sex marriage. Progressives have evolved to that understanding, breaking from centuries and millennia of previous tradition and understanding. Something once unimaginable by religious progressives like William Jennings

Bryan is suddenly a central tenet of the progressive creed: A truly progressive citizen supports same-sex marriage—period.

Likewise, progressive citizens have *advanced* to where abortion is judged not only a new civil right, but a just society must demand that every taxpaying citizen fund abortion through Planned Parenthood, through abortion-inducing drugs forcibly covered under “Obama-care,” or through other means. Under the new progressive state, even religious believers and institutions and denominations who object to this progressive plan and vision, and invoke their sacred traditions or constitutional freedom of religion and conscience, must acquiesce to the edicts of the state. Mandates are enacted at the federal level by mammoth federal departments, forcing those consciously objecting to violate their conscience—or take their chances in a court system increasingly dominated by progressive judges. Shocking policy novelties like taxpayer-funded contraception are suddenly deemed a new “entitlement” in the progressive state. Those citizens who object are portrayed by the progressive political class as advocating no less than a “war on women.”

Such is the make-up of the new progressive man, the ever-evolving progressive citizen. He is not what the Founders could have envisioned. Indeed, by the very definition of progressivism, no one at the time of the founding, or even in the progressive movement 100 years ago, could have envisioned this current progressive citizen. The progressive citizen is, like its ideology, always in a state of flux. The only thing we know about the progressive citizen, like the progressive ideology, is that it undergoes a constant process of change, of *progression*. Thus, we know only that *today's* progressive citizen will not and cannot look like the progressive citizen of 100 years ago or 100 years henceforth. And if non-progressives demand some contours

as to what the progressive citizen of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century might look like, they will not get any; no one knows, including progressives themselves.

And if you find this ideology a little maddening, you are not alone. Nonetheless, it is now the governing ideology of you and your Founders' country, where the only real "virtue" is ever-changing *change*.