Liberal vs. Conservative: What’s the difference?

Overall Vision:

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| **LIBERALS** - believe in government action to achieve equal opportunity and equality for all.  It is the duty of the government to alleviate social ills and to protect civil liberties and individual and human rights.  Believe the role of the government should be to guarantee that no one is in need.  Liberal policies generally emphasize the need for the government to solve problems. | **CONSERVATIVES** - believe in personal responsibility, limited government, free markets, individual liberty, traditional American values and a strong national defense.  Believe the role of government should be to provide people the freedom necessary to pursue their own goals.   Conservative policies generally emphasize empowerment of the individual to solve problems. |

  Issue: Liberal Beliefs: Conservative Beliefs:

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| Economy | * A market system in which government regulates the economy is best. * Government must protect citizens from the greed of big business. * Government regulation in all areas of the economy is needed to level the playing field. | * The free market system, competitive capitalism, and private enterprise create the greatest opportunity and the highest standard of living for all. * Free markets produce more economic growth, more jobs and higher standards of living than those systems burdened by excessive government regulation. |
| Health Care | * Support free or low-cost government controlled health care. * There are millions of Americans who can't afford health care and are deprived of this basic right. * Every American has a right to affordable health care. * The government should provide equal health care benefits for all, regardless of their ability to pay. | * Support competitive, free market health care system. * All Americans have access to health care, the debate is about who should pay for it. * Free and low-cost government-run programs (socialized medicine) result in higher costs and everyone receiving the same poor-quality health care. * Health care should remain privatized. * The problem of uninsured individuals should be addressed and solved within the free market healthcare system--the government should not control healthcare. |
| Homeland Security    NOTE - there are many facets to Homeland Security.  This entry focuses on airport security. | * Airport security - Passenger profiling is wrong, period.  Selection of passengers for extra security screening should be random. Using other criteria (such as ethnicity) is discriminatory and offensive to Arabs and Muslims, who are generally innocent and law-abiding. * Terrorists don't fit a profile.  "...Arabs, Muslims and South Asians are no more likely than whites to be terrorists." (American Civil Liberties Union ACLU) * Asked on 60 Minutes if a 70-year-old white woman from Vero Beach should receive the same level of scrutiny as a Muslim from Jersey City, President Obama's Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta said, "Basically, I would hope so." | * Airport security - Choosing passengers randomly for extra security searches is not effective. * Rather, profiling and intelligence data should be used to single out passengers for extra screening. * Those who do not meet the criteria for suspicion should not be subjected to intense screening. * The terrorists currently posing a threat to the U.S. are primarily Islamic/Muslim men between the ages of 18 and 38.  Our resources should be focused on this group.  Profiling is good logical police work. * "If people are offended (by profiling), that's unfortunate, but I don't think we can afford to take the risk that terrorism brings to us. They've wasted masses of resources on far too many people doing things that really don't have a big payoff in terms of security." - Northwestern University Aviation Expert A. Gellman. |
| Immigration | * Support legal immigration. * Support blanket amnesty for those who enter the U.S. illegally (undocumented immigrants). * Also believe that undocumented immigrants have a right to: -- all educational and health benefits that citizens receive (financial aid, welfare, social security and medicaid), regardless of legal status.  -- the same rights as American citizens * It is unfair to arrest millions of undocumented immigrants. | * Support legal immigration.  Oppose amnesty for those who enter the U.S. illegally (illegal immigrants).  Those who break the law by entering the U.S. illegally do not have the same rights as those who obey the law and enter legally. * Promote road to citizenry. * The borders should be secured before addressing the problem of the illegal immigrants currently in the country. * The Federal Government should secure the borders and enforce current immigration law. |
| Private Property | * Government has the right to use eminent domain (seizure of private property by the government--with compensation to the owner) to accomplish a public end. | * Respect ownership and private property rights.  Eminent domain (seizure of private property by the government--with compensation to the owner) in most cases is wrong.  Eminent domain should not be used for private development. |
| Social Security | * The Social Security system should be protected at all costs.  Reduction in future benefits is not a reasonable option.  [Opinions vary on the extent of the current system's financial stability.] * Social Security provides a safety net for the nation's poor and needy. * Changing the system would cause a reduction in benefits and many people would suffer as a result. | * The Social Security system is in serious financial trouble.  Major changes to the current system are urgently needed. * In its current state, the Social Security system is not financially sustainable.  It will collapse if nothing is done to address the problems.  Many will suffer as a result. |
| Taxes | * Higher taxes (primarily for the wealthy) and a larger government are necessary to address inequity/injustice in society (government should help the poor and needy using tax dollars from the rich). * Support a large government to provide for the needs of the people and create equality.  Taxes enable the government to create jobs and provide welfare programs for those in need. * Government programs are a caring way to provide for the poor and needy in society. | * Lower taxes and a smaller government with limited power will improve the standard of living for all. * Support lower taxes and a smaller government. * Lower taxes create more incentive for people to work, save, invest, and engage in entrepreneurial endeavors.  Money is best spent by those who earn it, not the government. * Government programs encourage people to become dependent and lazy, rather than encouraging work and independence. |
| Welfare | * Support welfare, including long-term welfare. * Welfare is a safety net which provides for the needs of the poor. * Welfare is necessary to bring fairness to American economic life.  It is a device for protecting the poor. | * Oppose long-term welfare. * Opportunities should be provided to make it possible for those in need to become self-reliant. * It is far more compassionate and effective to encourage people to become self-reliant, rather than allowing them to remain dependent on the government for provisions. |

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