

Rights and Regulations

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There have always been two views of America; the first is the lone explorer heading off into the wilderness, and the second is villagers helping neighbors raise their roofs. Living in a society always means surrendering some individual freedom for the good of the whole. No, you can't go out and shoot someone, but they aren't allowed to shoot you either.

In an economic sense, Republicans believe that government is a necessary evil that should have very limited authority and everything else is up to the individual. Democrats believe that government, which is ideally all of us working together, should play a greater role in structuring society.

So, for a very real example such as healthcare, the true conservative believes that healthcare is up to the individual, and if someone can't afford to pay the bills or have insurance in our capitalist system, then they should suffer and die. That's harsh, but very Darwinian. Liberals believe that government should help subsidize the cost of healthcare for those unable to afford it. We believe that a society that can't provide decent healthcare to all its citizens is a society that is failing badly.

Unregulated free-market capitalism results in tremendous inequities of wealth. It is a great system for sociopaths who only care about themselves. Regulations are necessary to prevent the destruction of our planet in the endless pursuit of profit. When you hear someone complaining about too much regulation, maybe they're right, but I'd like to know which regulations they consider too much. No regulation springs into existence other than as a response to an existing abuse.

Many essays have been written on the rights of individuals in a society, and I'm unlikely to tread on any ground that hasn't already been trampled to death. However, to a very real extent, the difference between Democrats and Republicans is how we view the rights of individuals against the needs of a society. Once we agree that we need someone to tell us what side of the road to drive on, the rest is just determining the balance of rights and responsibilities.