Answering Socialism: The Conservative Problem
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October 14, 2026

For the last several years, many on the right have been concerned about the rise of a fascination with socialism in our country. Their fears have been justified as we have seen the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) – the central cog in the move to the far left – win victory after victory in both primaries and general elections. Socialism in any form has not worked in any country. Yet its adherents continue to try to steer our country in that direction.

The response from the political right has been appalling. "Don't vote for them – they are Socialists!" has been the most the Right can do. The problem is that such a strategy does nothing. Those who are solid Republicans are going to vote for the GOP anyway. Those who are in the middle stay home – because political name calling rarely works. The crucial Independent voters – who identify with issues and not with parties – will indeed run away from Conservatives because they see a GOP that is quick to point out problems but provide no workable solutions.

Conservatives have two problems when it comes to dealing with the DSA and their advocates. First, Conservatives do not understand the simple reason for the allure of Socialism: it provides answers to the pain points of modern civilization. The second is closely related: Conservatives have huge problems being bold enough and succinct enough to get our own answers to those problems across to a population that needs to elect Conservatives in order to institute their policies.

Answers

For example, here in Wilmington, NC the DSA put locally built benches along city bus routes. These benches were not approved by the state, county, or city. They were often marked with graffiti or signs that pointed to the liberal left. They probably would not have withstood any type of storm or heavy weather. But they provided an answer to a problem: a place to sit while waiting for the bus. The benches were eventually removed by administrative action of the county. Members of the far right – and the local GOP – proclaimed victory over the DSA and the illegal benches. But there is really no victory to be had because a concrete solution to a problem – having a place to sit while waiting for the bus – went away.

In fact, if we are to be honest, this local solution to a local problem is actually a very Conservative idea. The state was not doing anything about giving tired people a place to rest. The city and the bus line certainly seemed content to let people stand or sit on the ground while waiting for transportation. But a group of local citizens did respond. Were they politically motivated? Perhaps. But – and this is central to the whole fascination with socialism – they provided an answer.

Those answers to problems big and small – no matter how badly thought out – are at the heart of the growing fascination with socialism. As President Eisenhower once put it – the liberal left will always point out the problems – but it must be the conservative right that institutes answers. So far, the Left has been allowed to do both.

Systemic Issues With More Bad Answers

We have big problems to solve. Among them:

- Healthcare: America has some of the best healthcare in the world. But access to it – and the associated and confusing costs of it – are hugely problematic.

- Cost of Living: Our gas is too expensive – even though we do not rely on foreign oil. Energy prices drive up the cost of almost all of our goods. In a country with our vast amount of resources, the cost of living is huge in voters' minds as they go to the polls.

- Higher Education: Graduates are often burdened with a student loan bill that takes decades to repay. We seem to keep sending our kids to college – and not care about the tremendous debt they will incur.

None of these are simple problems. In fact, these and other issues we face are all systemic failures that are the result of decades of being ignored or complicated by government programs that garner votes but actually solve nothing. Many are interrelated with other problems – problems themselves that are difficult to unwind. Yet above all we must realize none of these challenges are just political talking points. They are real problems with real pain points causing real burdens that demand answers that will drive people's votes at the polls.

In response, the far left came up with answers.

They passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – often just called the ACA or simply Obamacare. No matter what name it goes by the reality is that it is a government takeover of a huge slice of our domestic gross product. Its goal was to reduce costs and protect the under- or non-insured. In fact, it did the opposite by driving up costs and increasing administrative burdens on patients and providers. While more people are insured, they actually have less access to care because of exorbitant deductibles. To counteract the high cost of living, many Democrat-controlled states have instituted minimum wage laws which only result in business closing or investing in automation to avoid the ever-increasing cost of human labor. To handle student loans, President Joe Biden proposed a massive debt forgiveness program, essentially requiring those who went into the trades, those in the military, and those who managed their own debts to pay off the loans of others.

None of these are good answers.

But people flock to them – because they are indeed answers. They are bad answers. They are answers that require expanding government to gargantuan and invasive proportions. They are dangerous answers with outcomes their well-intentioned, but underinformed advocates do not foresee. But they are indeed answers. History shows nations flock to those who have solutions to the challenges they face in their everyday lives – no matter how bad those solutions may be.

This is why merely screaming "Socialist!" does precisely nothing to persuade anyone into coming into the Conservative tent. Labels are meaningless to a generation of voters facing real world problems. Answers get their attention – and the shiny answers are coming from the liberal left.

Conservatives Have Good Answers

There are conservative answers to the challenges that we face. Many of those answers rest in letting the wisdom of a free market solve them with minimal government intervention. For example, to solve the high cost of health care Conservatives want to encourage competition at every level of the process. We want to remove government programs that mandate services but only increase costs – knowing the market will come up with solutions for those who need specialized care. We understand the need for tort reform to handle ridiculous lawsuits that drive up costs that doctors have to pass on to their patients. A free-market answer to health care also insists on transparent pricing across the board.

The high cost of living can be reduced by throwing away burdensome and expensive regulations. Because minimum wage laws artificially increase the cost of labor which in turn is passed on to consumers, Conservatives want the market to determine what businesses pay their employees. Republicans need to double down on expanding our oil drilling and refining capacities to provide more supply which in turn reduces cost in all areas of our society.

Debts as the result of going off to college will be severely reduced if lending agencies were allowed to loan education funds based on the importance of the field of study as determined by the free market. Students going into needed fields in society would be able to find favorable rates. Those going into useless but politically attractive fields would find higher interest rates. Additionally, all of these debts would be gone almost overnight if we stopped shipping our children off to college and instead enrolled them in the trades or the military – where instead of stacking up debt they rake in wages and experience.

All concrete and good answers to real problems.

Conservatives Just Cannot Get The Messaging Across

Why do Conservatives not put these answers forward?

In large part because these complex problems require complex answers which will simply not play in the hyper-short attention span of today's voting population. Our high cost of living, for example, is a multi-layered and multi-faceted issue requiring attention on multiple fronts with answers not easily summed up in a character-limited X post. Explaining exactly why a free-market based health care system will actually rein in the cost of health insurance while at the same time providing better non-government oversight will not fit in the space of a 2-minute Facebook reel. While organizations like PragerU are doing great work to get the conservative message out in "doable" clips, it still takes them 2 – 5 minutes of a video to get to the point. For today's scrolling audience, 2 – 5 minutes might as well be the 3 hour and 17-minute 1965 version of Dr. Zhivago. The voting population simply will not take the time to find out why our policies are much better than anything from the liberal left.

Another challenge is that workable free-market solutions often run directly against policies coming from the Executive Branch. One clear example is the contribution of broad and shifting tariffs imposed earlier this year to the higher cost of living. Tariffs can be effective foreign-policy tools; other countries

correctly fear exclusion from the American market and frequently adjust their own policies in response. But sustained and unpredictable tariffs reduce supply and raise the prices households pay. Conservatives have historically opposed the routine use of tariffs for precisely this reason. Many now hesitate to say so, because criticism can appear to align them with the left or can invite primary challenges from a president whose influence over Republican nominations remains decisive. To be heard, however, conservatives will have to be willing to question policies that create the pain points voters feel—regardless of who instituted them.

Finally, many conservatives themselves lack a clear, consistent grasp of the free-market answers their party has traditionally advocated. Additionally, those on the Right have often become very comfortable with government programs – and do not want to jeopardize votes by ending them. Furthermore, the reality of razor-thin margins in both Houses of Congress have resulted in many conservative ideas either not making a vote on the floor or being watered down to pass muster. Republicans nevertheless – if they are to be heard in this or any election – need to be bold enough to always run on the prospects of less government and more free market in order to answer the pain points of today's voter.

Conservatives MUST find a way to break through this message barrier. It should start the day after a Republican is elected – and continue all through the next campaign. We need to use tools – including Super Intelligence - that will effectively get our message across – and do it in a way that will capture the attention and understanding of constituents. We need to be in our communities and our workplaces – carefully but consistently explaining these common-sense, free-market based conservative solutions.

If we continue to lose this messaging challenge – we will continue to lose the vote.

Trust Over Labels

In short, Conservatives need to gain the trust of Americans rather than continue to throw around labels of the opposing party. We must demonstrate that the answers we bring to the table are far more constructive, far more thought-out, and much more aligned with our American values than most anything that comes from the left. We must always acknowledge the role that the liberal wing plays in bringing problems to light. We must also be up front that our solutions to problems might cause short term pain with long-term benefits. Yet we must also state – confidently, unequivocally, passionately and intelligently – that the answers we bring are far better than anything the left might devise. We simply will not gain the trust of Americans otherwise.

In other words, Republicans need to run as Republicans – and put forward Republican answers that will work. Americans are not stupid. They want the best for their families and their communities. They want both immediate answers to what is threatening them, and generational answers to ensure the prosperity of their children. Conservatives can answer today's pain points – and those answers can win elections. We need to focus on those answers – and focus on how we can get them to the people who are looking for a reason to vote for us because they know the answers of the far left simply will not work.

Or we can continue to focus on labels, provide no real answers, and just scream "Socialist!" – and lose.