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## There's No Political Freedom Without Economic Freedom

[Patrick Barron](#) February 21, 2015

Can we have political liberty without first having economic freedom? Is the form of government predetermined by the form of economic organization? At first blush the opposite would seem to be self-evident, i.e., that our form of government determines all else, including our economic structure. But Mises advises otherwise. In *Human Action* ([page 283 of the Mises Institute's scholars' edition](#)), Mises explains (my emphasis):

*Freedom, as people enjoyed it in the democratic countries of Western civilization in the years of the old liberalism's triumph, was not a product of constitutions, bills of rights, laws, and statutes. Those documents aimed only at safeguarding liberty and freedom, firmly established by the operation of the **market economy**, against encroachments on the part of officeholders.*

Likewise, in *The Law* by Frédéric Bastiat (page 49 of the Mises Institute edition), Frédéric Bastiat has this to say (my emphasis again):

***Political economy precedes politics:** the former has to discover whether human interests are harmonious or antagonistic, a fact which must be settled before the latter can determine the prerogatives of Government.*

## Economic Freedom Is the Foundation of All Freedom

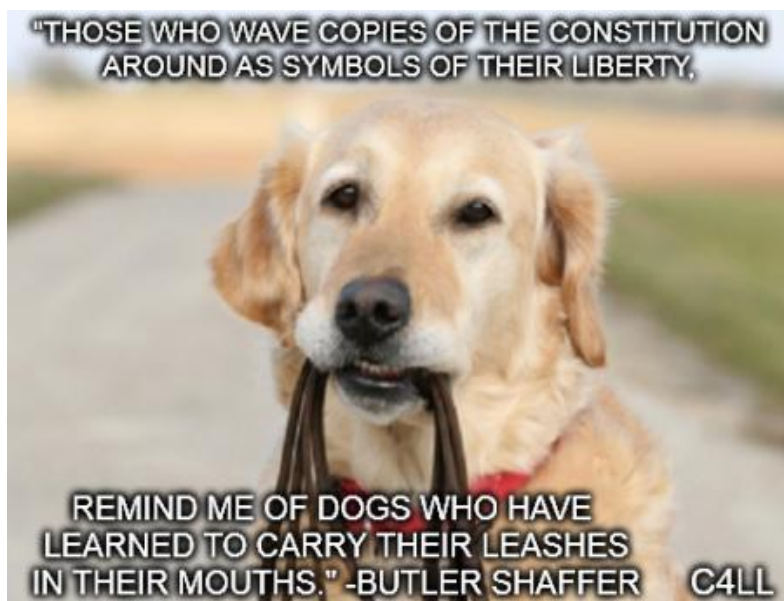
These insights counsel us that attempts to pass laws — or even constitutional amendments — to ensure our political liberty will be wasted as long as our *economic* freedom continues to be usurped by government. In other words, limited government will fade in the face of the modern regulatory state, and no laws can protect us from its deprivations.

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The root cause of economic interventions is the mistaken belief that government can improve our lives by making economic decisions for us. As I explained in an [earlier essay](#), by their very nature, economic interventions by government are coercive in nature. Voluntary cooperation in the marketplace, on the other hand, requires only access to an honest criminal justice system to enforce contracts and protect property rights.

Government mandates require government coercion for their enforcement, including, for example, the mandate that everyone contribute to the government's Social Security and Medicare programs. Although the public requires no government mandate to buy any of the wide ranging retirement savings and health insurance products available on the free market, government must force us to participate in its Social Security and Medicare schemes.

Absent the mandates, few would participate, because many understand that these programs are fatally flawed transfer taxes — Ponzi schemes of sorts — posing as retirement savings and healthcare plans. There are no real profit-producing assets from which to pay the plans' distributions, merely the promise by government that it will continue to force others to pay you in the future as it forces you to pay others in the present.

These programs must be maintained by the police power of the state, and what may appear to be widespread acceptance of the Social Security and Medicare mandates is really the vociferous support of those receiving benefits. Meanwhile, the taxpayers who understand the reality of the program continue to pay to stay out of jail.

### **Economic Regulation Requires Coercion**

The more government meddles in the economic sphere — which should require no regulation at all, since it is completely voluntary — the more police power is necessary to force us to comply. All government agencies possess huge enforcement mechanisms that not only can confiscate our property but take away our freedom. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is little more than a government-supported extortion racket, finding nebulous health and safety violations in the workplace that apparently do not concern the actual workers themselves, who haven't been chained to their machines for quite some time now.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shuts down businesses and threatens entire industries for violations of arbitrarily established environmental standards that are of little concern to the people affected. Smokestack emissions and the like are local environmental issues for which one would expect a wide variety of standards across the nation. Undoubtedly the people employed by the giant steel mills of Gary, Indiana tolerate smokestack emissions that Beverly Hills residents would find unacceptable. These arbitrary EPA standards are depriving Americans of the opportunity to work at higher paying jobs: their freedom to tolerate more pollution in order to enjoy a higher standard of living has been usurped by government.



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Speaking of jobs, just try practicing some profession that requires a government issued license, even if the parties using your service do not care whether you have one or not. Better yet, employ someone who is willing to work at a wage rate below the proscribed minimum or who is willing to work without healthcare or family leave benefits. The police power of the state will descend upon you, even though there is no dispute between you and your employee. Want to reclaim discarded furniture, refurbish it, and sell it out of your house? Better not try to do that without a business license and a store front in an area that is properly zoned. Do you want to hire "an able bodied *man*" to do some heavy lifting at your place of business? Uh, oh! The discrimination police will put you in your place, which may be a jail cell if you cannot pay their fine.

No truly limited government can perform these police functions, so expecting a limited government in a world where such regulations are common falls into the category of a cognitive dissonance. In laymen's terms, we are just kidding ourselves that we are a truly free people with a government that is subservient to our wishes and exists primarily to protect our life, liberty, and property. Keep this in mind the next time you hear that some new economic regulations have been proposed or implemented. Concomitant with these regulations comes an ever more powerful and coercive government.

**Note:** The views expressed on Mises.org are not necessarily those of the Mises Institute.

<http://mises.org/library/there%E2%80%99s-no-political-freedom-without-economic-freedom>



## **My Take**

By Tim Sovde

David van den Berg is executive director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks. Mr van den Berg recently had an op-ed piece in The Washington Post titled :

***“Yes, Alaska survives on oil. But Obama’s plan to protect the Arctic wilderness is the right move. Obama’s plan to extend wilderness protection in Alaska casts a dark cloud over the state’s future. But it’s necessary.***  
 By David van den Berg February 6 [The Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/02/06/yes-alaska-survives-on-oil-but-obamas-plan-to-protect-the-arctic-wilderness-is-the-right-move/) Thursday, February 12 2015 “

To read the entire article here is the web address. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/02/06/yes-alaska-survives-on-oil-but-obamas-plan-to-protect-the-arctic-wilderness-is-the-right-move/>

The first paragraph stated Mr van den Berg was the current Downtown Association of Fairbanks Alaska’s executive director. Which makes the article problematic and controversial with the first paragraph as the article could be construed as the official position of the Downtown Association on the most recent ANWR controversies. No where in the article did the author clarify that these were his positions only.

On Thursday Febuary 12<sup>th</sup> Donna Gilbert was on Problem Corner on Kfar incensed on this very point that the article would be taken as the position of the Downtown Association. Ms Gilbert brought up any number of interesting points so avail yourselves of the Kfar Audio Archives. Problem Corner is recorded and stored in the audio archives. <http://kfar660.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/pc021215-JeffGuestHosts.MP3>

Mr van den Berg was in communication with Senator Murkowski trying to clarify his position.

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***An intelligent person is never afraid to find errors in his/her understanding of things.  
 The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding.***

**Leonardo da Vinci.**

Dear Senator Murkowski:

The attached article appeared at the invitation of Zocalo Public Square where it was re-printed by the Washington Post 's PostEverything section under a different headline and subheading –neither of which I wrote nor endorse – where by one means or another it may have come to your attention.

I want you to know that I sought to relay the polarities of Alaskan opinion about President Obama's plan to preserve the Arctic Refuge coastal plain, not in a journalistic piece, but in a balanced essay drawn from my 25 years in and around Alaska's Arctic. After hearing concern about the slant of the article, I asked people I trust and respect to read it. I asked if they thought I expressed a personal opinion and almost all of them said, "yes, you want to lock it up."

I never intended to represent the Downtown Association of Fairbanks or its members, and I know that I don't represent them on this matter. I regret having tried to offer anything publicly to this debate. I should have known that an article such as mine could get confused in the important work of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks and be misconstrued as hostile to responsible resource development and Alaska's economy.

In the article, I wrote "oil is king" because it sustains Alaska's people and its economy. The coastal plain's legal status – not on the table, not off the table, and still an option to develop – is something Alaskans can live with for now better than President Obama's proposal.

I apologize for perhaps misspending your time, but it is important that I try to set the record straight, or at least take a little more space to explain. Thank you.

Sincerely, David van den Berg

The controversy of this point has certainly been a learning experience for Mr van den Berg.

Mr van den Berg goes on to establish his environmental credibility as a true believe with a biography of his activities in Alaska since 1989.

The article not of very much interest except for the Downtown Association controversy and the final paragraph. "I also believe President Obama's proposal to protect the coastal plain is a palliative to his move – also recently announced – to allow oil drilling off the East Coast from Georgia to Virginia. The hand that giveth also taketh away, and most Alaskans will count themselves among the taken as the president allocates America's wealth in land and water to balance America's need for oil and its desire for wilderness."

The point of interest was one would be in error if they approached the ANWR issue in isolation. How many Republican Senators are there in the East Coast states of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina? Six. The President is playing politics with the issue. ANWR is the bone to be thrown to the environmentalists. East coast drilling will be the quid pro quo to an agreement with a block of Republican Senators supporting the administration to stymie House initiatives.



## **Liberty is Knocking: Open Up!**

By TJ Martinell February 14, 2015

Last Saturday I joined dozens of other people at the Washington State Capitol in Olympia in protest of a recently-passed rule banning open carry of rifles and handguns in the viewing gallery.

Prior to the rally, the Washington State Patrol had warned that unlike the “I Will Not Comply Rally,” they would arrest those who attempted to violate this rule – which itself violates Section 24 of our State Constitution saying our right to bear arms shall not be impaired.

#### THE WOODSHED PAGE 4



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Undeterred by these threats, many protesters made it clear weeks before the rally they would defy this rule, even if it meant getting arrested. A bail fund was set up to pay for those who were willing to engage in civil disobedience of an illegal law and endure arrest.

Right before Saturday, however, we learned that the gallery doors, which are normally open on the weekends, had been locked in anticipation of our arrival.

While we were ultimately unable to get into the gallery, a list of grievances was read outside the building and then later posted on the gallery door.

As expected, many media outlets and commentators online mocked us for our inability to get inside the gallery. Yet they refuse to acknowledge that it was the state that backed down, not us. It would have been easy for WSP to allow armed protesters to enter and then try to arrest them all. There are, no doubt, thousands of Washingtonians who would have cheered them for doing it and ridiculed all arrested as lunatics and social misfits.

Instead, they locked the doors. They were unwilling to accept the political consequences for enforcing the rule (that there were two state representatives among the protesters might have also impacted their decision).

They also knew protesters were not bluffing when they swore they would violate it even if it resulted in their arrest. If America wants to bring about change, particularly with unconstitutional federal gun laws, we need more people with this devotion to liberty.

In our efforts to defy unconstitutional federal gun laws, we are pushing for states to [pass anti-commandeering legislation](#) that would deprive the feds of vital state resources. While such bills are designed to make enforcement extremely arduous, at the same time, these laws do not prevent the federal government from attempting to arrest people on their own. If this happens, there are some who believe unless a substantial number of people stand together in opposition so there is no risk of arrest, compliance with these federal laws is necessary. This argument infers that being arrested is not worth it, that people can do no good for the liberty movement in jail.

No one is earnest to end up in a jail cell, or to call on others to commit actions that will send them there. Intentionally violating laws in the foreknowledge that it will result in an arrest and possible conviction is not something to be taken lightly.

But the idea that people cannot make an impact on freedom behind bars is not true. We are witnessing this with the mass noncompliance of the federal drug laws in states that allow medical marijuana even when the feds continue to enforce their laws. Over 335 people have been charged with federal crimes related to medical marijuana in those states.

One might think the severity for violating drug laws pales compared to federal gun laws violations, but the truth is that many have been handed down onerous sentences.

One example is [Dale Schafer](#), a hemophiliac currently serving five years along with his wife Mollie Fry, a cancer patient. In Michigan, a kidney and pancreas transplant patient is serving a 10 year sentence for growing medical marijuana.



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It is worth noting that, according to a survey of court records by [Cal NORML](#), not a single pardon or clemency petition has been granted to a medical marijuana defendant by President Obama, who said in 2008 he wouldn't use the DOJ to circumvent state laws on marijuana.

These people are suffering not because they committed a crime, but because they defied unconstitutional violations of their rights by the feds.

Yet, they do not suffer in vain. Their stories help bring attention to the increasing unpopularity of the War on Drugs. As more and more similar stories are published, the more public opinion will sway towards the decriminalization of marijuana. They also serve as examples to others and embolden them to violate these laws, as well.

If some Americans are willing to suffer in prison over the growing and consumption of a plant, gun owners should have the courage to suffer in a likewise manner over their right to keep and bear arms.

When people quote Thomas Jefferson's famous remark that the Tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants, they tend to think of actual battlefields and revolution.

Often, however, the "blood of patriots" is metaphorical, and it is shed in a prison rather than the battlefield.



## **Communist Regime-financing Ex-Im Bank Fights for Survival**

Written by [Alex Newman](#) Friday, 20 February 2015

The U.S. taxpayer-backed Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im), widely criticized for [crony capitalism](#) as well as for financing communist and socialist regimes with American money, is fighting for its very survival amid scandals as a growing coalition of lawmakers in Congress works to finally shut it down. From funneling billions in "loans" to state-owned banks in Russia and Communist China, to offering the corrupt Brazilian state-owned oil giant Petrobras \$2 billion to "develop oil fields," to hiring politically connected "green energy" cronies, the bank's activities have come under increasing criticism on Capitol Hill. Now, with its charter set to expire this summer without congressional action, the Ex-Im Bank — originally created to subsidize U.S. exports to the mass-murdering regime ruling the Soviet Union — is sparring with the American people's elected representatives over its fate.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, key figures in the establishment wing of the GOP, often dubbed "RINOs" for being alleged "Republicans In Name Only," are pushing for re-authorizing the Ex-Im Bank's charter. Corporate welfare-loving Democrats, too, despite being in the minority in both chambers of Congress, are working to keep the controversial bank alive. Even the most extreme self-styled "progressives," such as Sen. Elizabeth Warren, whose specialty is attacking business and markets in the quest for ever bigger and more oppressive government, want to re-authorize Ex-Im. Meanwhile, Big Business lobbyists with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other special-interest outfits are right now twisting arms on Capitol Hill and plotting strategies to keep the taxpayer-backed Ex-Im cash flowing to their members.

Establishment Republicans anxious to please powerful special interests have proposed "reforming" the bank in an effort to make saving it more palatable to the public. Among them is Rep. Stephen Fincher (R-Tenn.), who introduced a bill with more than 50 GOP co-sponsors, so far, to "reform" the bank while re-authorizing its charter until 2019. Last week, a coalition of Big Government-loving Democrats led by ultra-leftist Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) tried to force the House Financial Services Committee to at least consider renewing Ex-Im's charter, but conservatives on the panel voted down their amendment. Even Obama, who [accurately described the bank as](#) "little more than a fund for corporate welfare" while on the campaign trail in 2008, is now working hard to browbeat Congress into re-authorizing the Ex-Im Bank.

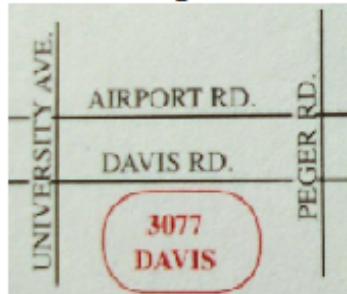
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“Bipartisan support for corporate welfare and a corporatism state provides compelling evidence that in the end, it is money and power — not ideology — that drives the DC insider establishment,” wrote Tom Borelli, a senior fellow with the pro-market group FreedomWorks. “Instead of drawing a clear policy distinction over corporatism and making the Democrats own the label of ‘the party of big business and special interests,’ Republican backers of the Ex-Im Bank are blurring the lines between the parties and tarnishing the GOP’s brand.” He said that unless conservative activists express strong opposition to re-authorizing the crony-capitalist bank, conservative members of the House of Representatives would likely be “overwhelmed” by Democrats and “ideologically bankrupt Republicans.”

Supporters of the Ex-Im Bank point out that its taxpayer-backed loan programs are contingent on the foreign entities involved purchasing U.S.-sourced goods and services. As such, the controversial bank likes to argue that it helps “support American jobs” and promote exports. Numerous other national governments also have similar institutions that subsidize some companies or government-owned “enterprises,” so the Ex-Im claims that it, too, must subsidize certain U.S. firms and foreign entities. Another argument often cited by the Ex-Im Bank and its supporters — primarily Big Business — is that rather than costing taxpayers money, it sometimes earns some revenue for the Treasury. Even this may be misleading, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office forecasting that U.S. taxpayers will bear some \$2 billion in Ex-Im losses over the next decade. Plus, there is always the prospect that enough bad loans from the bank could end up putting U.S. taxpayers on the hook for many more billions of dollars.

The federal bank also harms a wide array of Americans, experts say. “Ex-Im places the 99.96 percent of U.S. small businesses that it doesn’t subsidize at a competitive disadvantage because the subsidies artificially lower costs for privileged competitors,” explained Veronique de Rugy, a senior research fellow with the market-oriented Mercatus Center at George Mason University. “Sadly, the privileges Ex-Im extends to the few come at the expense of countless American firms and their workers. Unsubsidized firms may see reduced revenues — and their employees may see their hours cut, their salaries stagnate, or their jobs simply vanish because their employers cannot compete on the uneven playing field created by the federal government....It is time for Congress to start cleaning up its house and agree to end programs that need to go away. Enough with the pretense of reform.”

Critics have also rallied against the bank in recent years citing a wide array of other arguments. For one, and perhaps most importantly, there is no authority in the U.S. Constitution for the federal government to create a taxpayer-backed bank that picks winners and losers by loaning money to foreign governments, banks, and companies. Secondly, if participants in the free-market do not consider loans to be wise enough to put private funds behind them, critics of the Ex-Im Bank say the federal government has no business putting taxpayers’ money on the line instead. And while it may be true that some businesses and jobs benefit from Ex-Im schemes, many others suffer as a result. Countless examples have been cited by experts.

Even putting those problems aside, another major concern surrounding Ex-Im Bank is its long history of subsidizing ruthless communist regimes — a sordid pattern that continues to this day. In fact, the bank was originally established in 1934 specifically to finance exports to the *Soviet Union*. Why would a U.S. taxpayer-backed bank be needed to finance exports to Moscow’s regime? Because anyone with any sense in the private sector knew better than to trust the collection of gangsters, mass-murderers, megalomaniacs, and cut-throats in Moscow enslaving the Russian people while trying to mooch off of Americans to pay for it. Numerous other brutal regimes also received Ex-Im financing under a variety of pretexts.

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Despite the growing uproar, the Ex-Im Bank’s financing for brutal regimes that analyst say represent major national security concerns to the United States continues unabated. Between 1997 and 2013, for example, the bank provided almost \$2 billion in loans and long-term guarantees just to banks in Communist China and Russia, CNSNews.com reported, citing Ex-Im’s annual reports. Among the recipients: Bank of China, the Russian Agricultural Bank, China’s State Development Bank, Gazprombank, and many more. Of course, despite claims to be shifting toward what they call “state capitalism,” the banking “industries” in both Russia and Communist China remain entirely dominated and largely owned by the respective regimes.

“I don’t think Ex-Im subsidies to Chinese and Russian banks or State-Owned Enterprises constitute good uses of taxpayer resources,” Dan Ikenson, the director of the Cato Institute’s Herbert A. Stiefel Center for Trade Policy Studies, told CNSNews.com. “But, believe it or not, Ex-Im does partner with foreign export credit agencies to fund export sales and infrastructure projects even though the primary rationalization for having Ex-Im in the first place is to counteract the advantages provided to foreign businesses by those export credit agencies. It’s a complete sham.” In a report about Ex-Im’s victims, Ikenson also noted that the bank causes “substantial” “collateral damage” to many American companies.

More recently, the Ex-Im Bank offered \$2 billion to Petrobras, an oil conglomerate owned primarily by the [corruption-plagued, Marxist-Leninist-dominated Brazilian government](#), currently headed by former communist terrorist and close Castro ally Dilma Rousseff. A series of scandals in recent years surrounding the state-owned giant, which has [also counted billionaire Obama ally George Soros among its investors](#), revealed that Petrobras was being used by Rousseff’s extremist “Workers’ Party” to bribe politicians and help finance more socialist scheming in Brazil and Latin America. Aside from the national security concerns, U.S. lawmakers lambasted Ex-Im for funding Brazilian government oil exploration even while the Obama administration was working to shut down as much American energy production as possible and destroy Petrobras’ U.S. competitors.

A growing chorus of critics from across the political spectrum is calling on Congress to finally let the Ex-Im Bank’s charter expire as a first step to reining in cronyism, corruption, market distortions, and the financing of hostile foreign governments with U.S. taxpayer money. However, despite the mass opposition, unless the American people speak out loudly and clearly against Ex-Im and corporate welfare, analysts say the alliance of politicians in the pockets of Big Business and Big Government may yet succeed in re-authorizing the taxpayer-backed boondoggle.

Alex Newman is a correspondent for The New American, covering economics, education, politics, and more. Follow him on Twitter [@ALEXNEWMAN JOU](#). He can be reached at: [anewman@thenewamerican.com](mailto:anewman@thenewamerican.com)

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