

**Progressives In America**  
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*Steve McCullough*

There is a new political power in America. It's not the Democratic Party and it's not the Republican, Libertarian, Green, or other political party. In fact, it's not actually a political party at all, and it's not even new. It's called Progressivism, and it's getting more and more powerful in our government and in our lives. Many of our elected representatives who once called themselves "liberals", now refer to themselves as "progressives". This is in part due to the fact that "liberal" has, for many, become an unpopular label for those who favor an expansive and powerful centralized government. The political label of "liberal", prior to the early twentieth century, was used to describe those who favored a government whose sole purpose was to safeguard the individual rights of citizens as spelled out in the Constitution. Like the Founding Fathers, classic liberals were wary of a powerful centralized government. However, in the early twentieth century, the progressive movement in America co-opted the "liberal" label as a self-descriptive term for a new ideology.

The foundation for the progressive movement was the belief that the Constitution was an outdated document which had long outlived its relevancy for modern American politics and culture. The primary criticism of the Constitution by progressives was the restraints, checks and balances which it placed on the central government. Progressives believed, and continue to believe, that they are much wiser than those who constructed the Constitution. They wanted to implement a wide range of legislative programs to control the American economy and society. The progressives fundamental goal was the redistribution of wealth and the enactment of "social justice." Whereas the Founders believed to their core that all men were endowed with natural rights which came from God, progressives believe that government is the grantor of rights to its citizens. The Constitution, as written and implemented, was a major roadblock to their political agenda. The early progressives included presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and later, Franklin Roosevelt. Progressivism, as you see, was not limited to any particular political party.

Today, progressives have come "out of the closet". Many politicians and jurists now openly declare that they are modern-day progressives. A label once reviled has become fashionable once again. During a Democratic Party primary debate in 2007, Hillary Clinton was asked if she were a liberal. Recognizing that the "liberal" label had become an unflattering political description, Clinton responded, "I prefer the word progressive, which has a real American meaning, going back to the progressive era at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I consider myself a modern progressive". There is a Progressive Caucus in the House of Representatives which boasts a membership of close to six dozen legislators. The group was founded by socialist Bernie Sanders of Vermont and includes a roster of fringe-Left Democrats. Barack Obama has not openly declared himself to be a progressive yet he supports most, if not all, of the progressive causes, including socialized medicine, radical environmentalism, the redistribution of wealth, higher taxes, bank and Wall Street regulation, debt relief for poor countries, and a reduced military capability. His two Supreme Court nominees, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, are progressive justices who are more concerned with "social justice" than a strict

interpretation of law according to the Constitution. In a 2009 address to a joint session of congress, Obama referred to his audience as “my progressive friends and those on the Republican side of the aisle”. It’s obvious where Obama’s sympathies lie.

Although there are many progressives within both political parties today, the Democratic Party has been taken over by far-Left ideologues. John Kennedy would not recognize his party were he alive today. Progressives have gained political power in America and they want to, as Barack Obama once declared, “fundamentally transform America.” I don’t think most Americans want a fundamental transformation of the best form of government that has ever existed. We will find out in November.

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