

# OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

Dear OCPA Member:

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

America is divided between two ways of thinking about government, perhaps more now than at any time in our history. One reason for this division is generational. Conservative, free market thinkers have not done an adequate job of finding ways to communicate our ideas to the young. That leaves this important part of our population exposed as targets for anti-capitalists to teach governing ideas and philosophies that simply don't work in the real world -- ideas which will lead us away from freedom.

Recently, I was talking with some young college age students and realized my references to Ronald Reagan's public policy successes while president didn't connect. I was at first puzzled and found myself backtracking a bit to explain further when I realized that these students weren't even born when Reagan was president. Nor did they know about the "malaise" our nation suffered through in the 1970's due, in part, to the failed big government policies of the previous Carter administration. My examples were, therefore, without much impact. It got me to thinking. . .

Just how do we reach out to the next generation and explain free market principles? In examining this important demographic, here's some initial thoughts: 1) We should start understanding what motivates youth and find ways to link their interests to free market ideas. 2) We should demonstrate in creative ways how the ideas of Bastiat, Hayek, von Mises and Freidman are still relevant today. 3) We should use the same technologies the youth use, to reach them. 4) We should network with them to work on noble, yet tangible goals. 5) We should keep messages compelling. 6) We should persist.

New initiatives need to be implemented or expanded through organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Achievement and OCPA to reach these important citizens. Private businesses need to be especially concerned that we strive to build an appreciation for free enterprise to counter the anti-capitalistic philosophy introduced in many of our colleges and universities. There needs to be an insistence by the business community that public schools start teaching the important role of free enterprise in the success of America. Positive contributions to Oklahoma by business, need to be advanced in the media; likewise, examples of government bureaucratic, nonsensical red-tape which hampers entrepreneurship needs to be exposed. (I know one 18-year-old who has been thwarted by such red-tape for six months in an attempt to open a portable snow cone stand! While Oklahoma City's building permit office admits city regulations need to be revised for his type of business, no change has occurred. Meanwhile, he's missed the summer snow cone season as well as money he hoped to earn for college.)

These young adults, "Millennials" as they are often called, are confident, hopeful, civic-minded, achievement-oriented, and team-players. Proponents of free enterprise cannot afford to surrender this important segment of our society to others who are working against us with flawed governing philosophies -- or simply through our own neglect. If America remains free it will depend, in great part, on getting today's youth heavily invested in the right ideas, before they are disillusioned with the wrong ones.

Until next time. . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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