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Seattle, WA 98155

June 2nd, 1998

Dear C-SPAN,

I am a libertarian. Consequently, I am philosophically equidistant from all three of your call-in line options: "liberal," "moderate," and "conservative." (I didn't like "Republican/Democrat/other" much better. Being an "other" is kind of a bummer...)

Many people are already confused about libertarians. I would not be helping the situation if I were to call in as a liberal or a conservative and then espouse my libertarian views. And, while libertarianism is a very rational, common sense, principled and consistent philosophy, I have never heard anyone call it "moderate."

C-SPAN has been very fair about covering Libertarian Party events and conferences and speeches by libertarians at the Cato Institute and elsewhere. I don't mean to imply that C-SPAN is unfair to libertarians (or anyone else.) It is the most unbiased network by far. But your phone line options leave a little to be desired. That's all.

Here's my case:

S.W.)

Pollsters have concluded that there are at least 50 million libertarians in the United States. The Gallup organization took a survey in January 1996 which found that 20% of the population was libertarian, 35% conservative, 13% liberal, 20% populist (whatever that means.) Judging by these results, you should drop the liberal line! (But I'm not advocating that.)

A January 1994 survey by Gallup reported that 22% of the population was libertarian.

A March 1993 Gallup poll showed 19% were libertarians.

I don't have the latest poll results, but the number of libertarians has remained at about 20% of the population for quite a while. The Libertarian Party has almost tripled in size in just the

past five years. I would bet that the number of philosophical libertarians in the general population has probably grown, as well.

It would not be fair to expect liberals to choose from phone lines labelled "conservative," "libertarian" and "moderate." Nor would it be fair to conservatives to have "liberal," "libertarian" and "moderate" lines.

What is the rationale for discriminating against libertarians?

It is true that a libertarian can have liberal or conservative leanings, but a conservative or a liberal can also have authoritarian or libertarian leanings.

Technically, "moderate" falls in the mushy middle of the four political philosophies (liberal, conservative, libertarian and authoritarian) which are the cornerstones of the political "universe" which includes all of the many political party affiliations.

Nobody is precisely in "the middle," but 50 million people fall into the libertarian category. The vast majority of so-called "moderates" have leanings, but the term "moderate" serves to obfuscate callers' philosophical leanings rather than identify them. "Moderate" means something different to everyone, but "libertarian," like "conservative" and "liberal," has a relatively clear meaning.

MY SOLUTION:

Change the "moderate" line to a "libertarian" line -- at least as an experiment -- and let viewers choose for themselves which of the three -- liberal, conservative and libertarian -- best describes their leanings.

The ideal solution would require five phone lines. (Although, you could get by on four, since an "authoritarian" phone line would obviously be silly -- nobody would use it! But, then, authoritarians have never really been known for their honesty or adherence to principle, have they?)

Naturally, I have a libertarian bias, but I think that I have made a reasonably objective argument supporting the notion that

changing your "moderate" line to "libertarian" would be an improvement. My motives are somewhat self-serving -- I want people to understand that libertarianism is every bit as unique a philosophy as conservatism and liberalism and that it deserves equal status -- but being self-serving does not mean that what I have proposed is not fairer or better. I hope that you will give my suggestion serious consideration. Thank you.

Sincerely,

