



Written by [John Stossel](#) on February 8, 2023

Mike Pompeo Versus Libertarians

Former CIA Director and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will probably run for president.

People call him a “staunch conservative.”

In our extended interview, I give him a hard time about that.

“Conservative” once meant promoting limited government. But lately Republicans push new regulations and drive up America’s debt by spending *more*.

Pompeo surprised me by agreeing that, under Donald Trump, Republicans spent too much. He surprised me again by saying that entitlements must be cut and that we *don’t* need to spend more on our military. That was refreshing.

Then we talked about the border.

“Immigrants made America,” I point out.

“I’m an immigrant,” Pompeo responds. “My ancestors came through a legal process. This is the difference.”

But today, I point out, the “legal process” for an ambitious person who wants to work is nearly impossible. “You *might* get in after waiting 12 years!”

“Whatever the rules ... you got to enforce it,” Pompeo responds.

“Shouldn’t we change the rules?” I ask.

“I actually think it’s time to take a break,” says Pompeo. Today, people apply for asylum and then stay until their request is accepted or denied. When Pompeo was secretary of state, he says he told Mexican officials, “You’re not going to have these people traveling in caravans through your country. We’re sending them back to you.”

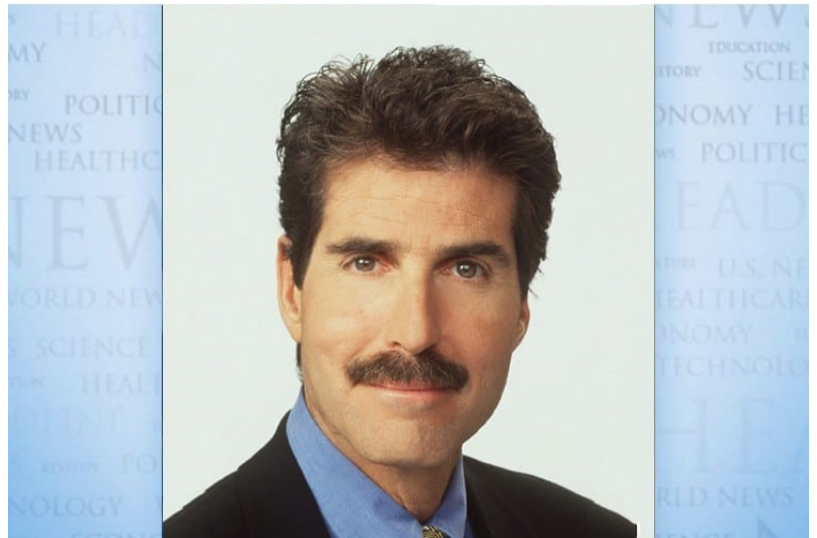
President Joe Biden reversed that policy. “You can now see 4 million illegal immigrants in just 24 months,” says Pompeo. “This will fundamentally change the nature of our country ... drugs came across our borders. There’s not much difference between a cartel leader and a jihad leader.”

“Why not legalize drugs?” I ask. “Then cartel leaders wouldn’t exist!”

“It’s a terrible idea,” Pompeo responds. “You see the decimation that we have from our drug culture today.”

“That’s because it’s illegal!” I push back.

“It’s not,” responds Pompeo. “There’s too much product available. Family institutions are beginning to fail in ways that are fundamentally dangerous to the United States.”



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His answer makes no sense. Families fray, and drugs are shipped *despite* our drug war. The war creates a black market that *causes* crime. There are no alcohol “cartels,” only because we *ended* Prohibition.

But I won’t convince Pompeo. Or you, probably.

I ask Pompeo why America needs 54,000 troops in Japan and 36,000 in Germany. “We won those wars! Now those countries should defend themselves.”

Xi Jinping is the “singular greatest threat in the history of our nation,” says Pompeo. If we bring all the troops home, that will “put the American people at enormous risk.”

Pompeo calls Edward Snowden “a traitor” who should be executed. Snowden stole documents from the National Security Agency that showed how our government illegally spied on Americans.

I call Snowden a hero for risking his freedom and career to reveal the truth.

Pompeo says secrets Snowden revealed endangered Americans. But our spies often exaggerate their importance. For instance, the NSA claimed its mass surveillance stopped 54 terrorist attacks. Then the number dropped to seven. Then government reviews concluded that mass surveillance did not stop a single attack.

“You can’t just steal American secrets,” says Pompeo. “If you find something illegal, there is a process to correct it.”

But people who used that process had their homes raided — their careers ended. I understand why Snowden sneaked out of the country.

Another area where Pompeo and I disagree is Trump’s tariffs.

“Tariffs mainly punish the American consumer,” I point out. Tariffs make goods more expensive.

“Tariffs are a very blunt instrument,” acknowledges Pompeo, but they “solve a very real challenge. How is it you prevent an adversarial nation from screwing you in their trade relationships?”

The Chinese do cheat. They steal intellectual property. But tariffs haven’t stopped that. The Chinese also foolishly subsidize some industries. But so do we!

Free trade benefits everyone. That’s one reason I’m a libertarian.

Pompeo does want to cut government. Why isn’t he a libertarian?

“I grew up libertarian,” he says. “The idea of less government power being better for the American people is something that is very near and dear to my heart.”

Every Tuesday at [JohnStossel.com](https://www.johnstossel.com), Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom. He is the author of Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media.

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