



Written by [Laurence M. Vance](#) on September 16, 2019

## Why Republicans Are Powerless Against Socialism

If we are to believe the Republicans, they are all that is holding back the forces of socialism from taking over the United States and replacing a free and capitalist society with an authoritarian and socialist society.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

After suffering the humiliating loss of the House of Representatives in the 2018 midterm election, and having to deal increasingly with the fallout from the govern-by-Twitter pronouncements of Democratic bogeyman, Donald Trump, Republicans needed a bogeyman of their own to feign horror over in order to help them convince moderate and independent voters (and on-the-fence Republicans) that they should be afraid of the policies pushed by Democrats and vote Republican in the 2020 election. That bogeyman is socialism. As Republicans gear up for the 2020 campaign, they are pressing their case that a vote for Democrats is a vote for the policies of socialism.



Republicans don't have an easy road ahead of them. A Gallup poll taken last year found that 37 percent of Americans feel positive about socialism, including 16 percent of those who lean Republican. Young people are especially likely to view socialism positively, with about half of Americans under 30 (51 percent) responding that they had a positive view of socialism. That accords with other polls that reveal that an increasing number of Americans support progressive ideas such as government-mandated paid maternity leave, tuition-free college, government funding for child care, increasing the minimum wage, and Medicare for All. Popular political figures such as Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), as well as an increasing number of progressives, embrace the label "democratic socialist." Even so, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has told reporters that the path to Republican success in the 2020 election is "running to be the firewall that saves the country from socialism."

Back in April, Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah) received approval from the U.S. House of Representatives for the creation of the Anti-Socialism Caucus. According to a press release that was posted on the congressman's official website, "The purpose of the caucus is to inform lawmakers and the public on the dangers of socialism and to serve as a bulwark to stop the advancement of socialist policies and legislation." According to Representative Stewart,

Socialism is a folly. Not only is it doomed to fail wherever it rears its head, it leaves a wake of destruction in lives and freedoms lost.



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So much time has passed from the fall of the Iron Curtain that many have internalized — or never experienced — socialism’s ultimate price. If we fail to recall those dangerous times, the primitive appeal of socialism will advance and infect our institutions.

Our adversaries have one thing in common: they want to destroy freedom, democracy and the rule of law, for the life-affirming principles which define our liberal democracy represent an existential threat to their existence.

The Anti-Socialism Caucus will play a part in how we will defeat socialism once again.

“This caucus will defend individual liberty & free markets and highlight the dark history of socialism,” tweeted Stewart upon receiving approval from the House for the formation of the caucus.

At the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) held earlier this year outside Washington, D.C., White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), former White House deputy assistant Sebastian Gorka, head of the Republican National Committee Ronna McDaniel, and Vice President Mike Pence all played the socialism card.

According to the Associated Press and *Business Insider*, Kudlow implored conference attendees to “join us to keep America great and join us to put socialism on trial and then convict it.” Meadows, chair of the House Freedom Caucus, warned Republicans that Democrats are “embracing socialism.” Gorka asked and answered a question: “What is America’s biggest problem? Not socialism in Russia, but in America!” McDaniel told the conference that the GOP would look to “go out and educate” voters about socialism. Pence said in his speech that the choice in the next election is “between freedom and socialism, between personal responsibility and government dependence.” “The moment America becomes a socialist country is the moment America ceases to be America,” said Pence to the friendly crowd.

A Trump campaign official who spoke on the condition of anonymity said the campaign was exploring ways to use the “socialism” message to drive a wedge between Democratic voters and independents. It was a surprise that Trump did not mention socialism in his speech to the crowd of conservative activists. But of course, he has mentioned it numerous other times. Just before the 2018 election in which Democrats regained control of the House, he predicted,

If Democrats win control of Congress this November, we will come dangerously closer to socialism in America. Government-run health care is just the beginning. Democrats are also pushing massive government control of education, private-sector businesses, and other major sectors of the U.S. economy.

In his State of the Union Address in February, the president again warned of the dangers of socialism:

Here, in the United States, we are alarmed by new calls to adopt socialism in our country. America was founded on liberty and independence — not government coercion, domination, and control. We are born free, and we will stay free. Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country.

## **Socialism in Theory**

The term “socialism” is increasingly bandied about by pundits and presidential candidates, resulting in much confusion. What is socialism? Although Republicans are increasingly trying to demonize Democrats with the label, they rarely stop to define the term in its specific historical sense or in its more general modern sense. Akin to that is their insistence that they believe in free markets and that



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the United States is a capitalist country that must be saved from socialism.

In its essence, socialism is the government ownership and control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. That is why socialist parties, once in power, seek to nationalize major industries. Under socialism, government central planning, not markets, determines what should be produced, by whom, and in what quantities — at least in theory.

The Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises, in his 1944 book *Bureaucracy*, contrasted capitalism and socialism:

The main issue in present-day political struggles is whether society should be organized on the basis of private ownership of the means of production (capitalism, the market system) or on the basis of public control of the means of production (socialism, communism, planned economy). Capitalism means free enterprise, sovereignty of the consumers in economic matters, and sovereignty of the voters in political matters. Socialism means full government control of every sphere of the individual's life and the unrestricted supremacy of the government in its capacity as central board of production management.

More recently, economist Walter Williams succinctly explained the difference between the capitalist and socialist systems: “The key features of a free-market system are private property rights and private ownership of the means of production. By contrast, socialist systems feature severely limited private property rights and government ownership or control of the means of production.”

But as Mises's disciple and Nobel laureate economist Friedrich Hayek made clear in the preface to the 1976 edition of his classic work *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), the meaning of socialism evolved in the second half of the twentieth century from meaning “unambiguously the nationalization of the means of production and the central economic planning which this made possible and necessary” to mean “chiefly the extensive redistribution of incomes through taxation and the institutions of the welfare state.” Modern-day socialists and their fellow travelers aren't calling for the nationalization of industry or the abolition of private property. They want a mixture of government ownership, government control by regulation, and government redistributive programs to ensure social justice and economic equality.

### **Socialism in Practice**

In spite of Republican rhetoric, and contrary to what most Americans think, the United States, like every democratic country, has — in the words of economist Thomas DiLorenzo — “islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism.”

*Socialized education.* Public education is one of the most blatant forms of socialism in the United States. Every state government has a provision in its constitution for the operation of K-12 schools, colleges, and universities in the state. K-12 schools are funded by local property taxes as well as the federal and state governments. Public universities are funded directly by state governments and indirectly by federal Pell grants, other federal educational grants, and federal student loans. Teachers are employed by local school boards (in the case of K-12 schools) or state governments (in the case of colleges and universities). Textbooks are selected, and curricula are designed, by government entities.

Every state, as well as the federal government, has a department of education. The states have mandatory-attendance laws and standardized-testing requirements. Government agencies mandate teacher-education requirements and certify teachers. The federal government has math and science initiatives, special-education mandates, bilingual-education mandates, research grants for colleges and universities, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Higher Education Act, the Education for



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All Handicapped Children Act, Common Core, Title IX anti-discrimination mandates, the No Child Left Behind Act, and school breakfast and lunch programs. The accrediting agencies of colleges and universities are government agencies.

*Socialized medicine.* Americans who criticize the socialized medicine that exists in Canada and European countries forget that we have several forms of socialized medicine in the United States. Medicare is government-funded health care for Americans 65 years old and older and for those who are permanently disabled, or have end-stage renal disease or ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). It covers more than 55 million Americans, most of whom become eligible for Medicare when they reach age 65, regardless of their income or health status. Medicaid is government-funded health care for poor Americans of any age and people with certain disabilities. It is the primary source of health-insurance coverage for low-income populations and nursing-home long-term care, and covers about 70 million Americans. Medicaid is jointly financed by the federal and state governments, but designed and administered by state governments within federal guidelines. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a partnership between federal and state governments that provides federally funded health insurance to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid.

Government insurance exchanges help millions of Americans purchase health insurance subsidized by the federal government. The federal government has a National Institutes of Health (NIH), federal laboratories, a Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives, vaccination programs, and nutrition guidelines.

*Social Security.* This is the largest socialist program in the United States. There are actually two parts to Social Security (OASDI). The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program provides monthly benefits to retired workers, families of retired workers, and survivors of deceased workers. The Disability Insurance (DI) program provides monthly benefits to disabled workers and families of disabled workers. More than 60 million Americans receive some sort of Social Security benefit. The government pays the benefits, determines the benefits, sets the retirement age, decides on cost-of-living adjustments, and makes the rules for eligibility.

Despite the name of the program, many Americans think that they are entitled to receive Social Security benefits because they earned them by contributing to the system over the course of their working life. But there is no contractual right to receive Social Security benefits. Congress can reduce benefits at any time, increase Social Security taxes at any time without increasing benefits, and raise or eliminate the wage base upon which Social Security taxes are figured at any time without increasing benefits. The federal government can even pay Social Security benefits in perpetuity regardless of the amount of Social Security taxes that are collected.

*Socialized charity.* There are in the United States about 80 means-tested welfare programs that offer benefits on the basis of the beneficiary's income or assets. U.S. welfare programs provide cash, food, housing subsidies, utility subsidies, and social services to poor, disabled, and lower-income Americans.

The most egregious of the means-tested welfare programs is the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. It pays cash directly to welfare recipients to spend as they please. States receive block grants from the federal government to design and operate TANF programs. In an average month, approximately 3.5 million Americans receive TANF benefits. The majority of poor families with children receive some form of cash assistance from the government.

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program gives cash assistance to people who are disabled,



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aged, or both and who have low income and few assets. More than 5 million low-income households in the United States receive federal rental assistance through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Most recipients of federal housing assistance pay 30 percent of their adjusted income toward rent, with the government paying the rest up to a certain amount.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP [formerly known and still referred to as food stamps]) is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but operated by the states. Recipients of food-stamp benefits receive a deposit on an EBT card each month that can be used only for prepackaged food items. About 13 percent of the population are on food stamps.

Other means-tested welfare programs include the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Head Start; Healthy Start; the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); the School Breakfast Program (SBP); the Special Milk Program (SMP); the Elderly Nutrition Program; the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and subsidized low-income phone service. Some welfare programs aren't means-tested at all, such as Unemployment Compensation, which is overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered by the states. It provides benefits to those who become unemployed who meet certain eligibility requirements.

*Socialized services.* Governments at all levels in the United States provide services that could be provided by the free market. The most infamous example is the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). And to make matters worse, by law, only the Post Office is allowed to deliver regular mail. The federal government's National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) costs taxpayers more than a billion dollars a year in subsidies. The federal government's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) provides security at airports and forbids airlines to provide their own security.

Government "public works" projects are not only socialism on a grand scale, they are also the epitome of the term "boondoggle." In many states, counties, and cities in the United States, it is the government that collects the garbage; operates mass transit; supplies electricity, water, and natural gas; operates fire departments; owns the airports; operates health clinics; provides ambulance services; operates hospitals; inspects restaurants; operates the liquor stores; and picks up stray and dead animals. Other things that are done by private businesses are also done by government-run enterprises.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "In 2017, U.S. government spending for national, state and local budgets was 38 percent of GDP." Almost two-thirds of the federal budget goes for transfer payments and subsidies.

## **The Republicans**

Will the Republicans save us from socialism? To think so is to dream the impossible dream. Republicans are powerless against the onslaught of socialism, and for two reasons. One, they support the same socialist policies as the Democrats. And two, they did nothing to roll back socialism when they had the chance.

Republicans support the three biggest socialist programs in the United States: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Just read what it says in the Republican Party platform:

As the party of America's future, we accept the responsibility to preserve and modernize a system of retirement security forged in an old industrial era beyond the memory of most Americans. Current retirees and those close to retirement can be assured of their benefits. Of the many





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reforms being proposed, all options should be considered to preserve Social Security.

We intend to save Medicare by modernizing it, empowering its participants, and putting it on a secure financial footing. We will preserve the promise of Medicaid as well by making that program, designed for 1965 medicine, a vehicle for good health in an entirely new era.

Even worse, Republicans sometimes create new socialist programs of their own accord. In 1997, the Republican-controlled Congress created the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP, now just called CHIP), a partnership between federal and state governments that provides federally funded health insurance to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid. The program has been reauthorized with Republican support ever since then.

After many years of Democratic control of both houses of Congress, Republicans captured the Senate during the presidency of the Republican Ronald Reagan and held on to control of it for six years. They did absolutely nothing to stop the onslaught of socialism. In fact, they raised the Social Security and Medicare tax rates to bolster those socialist programs. If only we had control of the House, said the Republicans. During the last six years of the presidency of the Democrat Bill Clinton, Republicans had a majority in both houses of Congress. They did absolutely nothing to stop the onslaught of socialism. In fact, they increased the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) every year to redistribute even more of the incomes of American taxpayers. If only we had a Republican president, said the Republicans. When the Republicans finally got their Republican president in George W. Bush they had a perfect opportunity to abolish the federal government's socialist programs and restore the United States to a free and capitalist society. The Republicans controlled both houses of Congress for more than four years during the Bush presidency. They had not had absolute control of the government since the first two years of Republican Dwight Eisenhower's presidency. Again, they did absolutely nothing to stop the onslaught of socialism. In fact, they expanded Medicare, created the TSA, and tremendously increased the budget of the Department of Education. The Republicans had another chance to roll back socialism when they controlled both houses of Congress during the first two years of Trump's presidency. But again, they did absolutely nothing to stop the onslaught of socialism. In fact, they could not even come together to repeal Obamacare, even though they had railed against it since the day the Democrats passed it in 2010.

The conclusion is inescapable: Republicans are powerless against socialism because — as shown by their words and deeds — they are socialists themselves.

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*Laurence M. Vance is a columnist and policy advisor for the [Future of Freedom Foundation](#), an associated scholar of the [Ludwig von Mises Institute](#), and a columnist, blogger, and book reviewer at [LewRockwell.com](#). He is the author of [Gun Control and the Second Amendment](#), [The War on Drugs Is a War on Freedom](#), and [War, Empire and the Military: Essays on the Follies of War and U.S. Foreign Policy](#). His newest books are [Free Trade or Protectionism?](#) and [The Free Society](#). Visit his website: [www.vancepublications.com](http://www.vancepublications.com). Send him [e-mail](#).*



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