**Political Ideology Definitions**

Questions often arise as to what is a *liberal*? What is a *conservative*? What does it mean to support the *Left*? Or the *Right*? What does a certain political party stand for? Although positions change over time and it's never good to make generalizations about what a certain group thinks, this section tries to clarifies some of the basic ideological definitions. Politicians have a wide range of opinions; thus, any particular leader doesn't necessary fit neatly into these categories.

The original definition of a liberal was someone who advocated change, new philosophies, and new ideas. A conservative was someone who avoided change, instead preferring to stick to the tried and true. In modern times, these definitions have expanded to include a wide set of political beliefs (which are defined below). To be Leftist or agree with the Left political point of view is synonymous with being liberal. To be Rightist or agree with the Right political point of view is synonymous with being conservative. The Left and Right terms were created because political ideology is viewed on a continuum; most people generally hold views somewhere in the middle. For example, if you agree more with liberal ideas, you're considered more Leftist in your thinking. The graphic below illustrates the continuum:

Liberal (Left) Conservative (Right)

*Generally speaking*, the Democratic party follows a more liberal platform; the Republican party follows a more conservative platform. The following table summarizes the current ideology of the parties (the

[links](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/links.htm)

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Liberal (i.e. Left)** | **Conservative (i.e. Right)** |
| *Representative Party* | *Democrats* | *Republicans* |
| [Abortion](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/abortion.htm) | Pro-choice | Pro-life |
| [Affirmative Action](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/affirmative_action.htm) | For (i.e. maintain race-based preferences) | Against (i.e. ban race-based preferences) |
| [ANWR Drilling](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/anwr_drilling.htm) | Prevent the Alaska drilling | Pursue this and other domestic oil sources |
| [Balanced Budget Amendment](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/balanced_budget_amentment.htm) | Opposed | In Favor of |
| Business | Increase regulation and worker protection | Ease regulation and keep government out of business |
| Crime | Protect the rights of the accused first and foremost | Provide maximum punishment and protect the rights of the victim first and foremost |
| [Death Penalty](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/death_penalty.htm) | Ban | Maintain |
| Defense Spending | Decrease or maintain | Increase |
| Embryonic Stem Cell Research | Use federal funding for the research | Don't use federal funding for the research |
| Government Size | Increase the government and use more socialistic policies | Reduce the government and use more capitalistic, free-market policies |
| [Gun Control](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/gun_control.htm) | Ban all gun ownership by civilians, especially handguns and assault rifles | Protect gun ownership |
| [Health Care](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/universal_health_care.htm) | Make 100 percent government controlled | De-regulate and introduce free market reform |
| Immigration | Grant [amnesty to illegal aliens](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/path_to_citizenship.htm); don't build a [fence along the Mexican border](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/border_fence.htm); allow illegal aliens to obtain driver's licenses; prevent the creation of a national ID card & database to track people in the country. | Prevent amnesty for illegal & driver's licenses for illegal aliens; construct a Mexican border fence; create a national ID card & database to track people in the country. Increase or maintain [*legal*](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/immigration.htm) [immigration](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/immigration.htm) only. |
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|  |  |  |
| [Mexican Border Fence](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/border_fence.htm) | Do not build the fence | Build the fence |
| [Minimum Wage](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/minimum_wage.htm) | Increase | Lower or eliminate altogether |
| [Missile Defense](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/missile_defense.htm) | Scrap this program | Pursue this program |
| Personal Responsibility | Government needs to protect people from themselves | People should be responsible and be held accountable for their own actions |
| [Physician- Assisted Suicide](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/assisted_suicide.htm) | Allow | Prevent |
| Religion | Maintain separation of church and state; prevent faith-based government initiatives | Introduce more religion in schools; allow faith-based government initiatives |
| [Same-Sex Marriage](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/same_sex_marriages.htm) | Legalize | Ban |
| [School Vouchers](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/school_vouchers.htm) | End the program | Expand the program |
| [Social Security](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/social_security_private_accounts.htm) | Increase age of beginning eligibility (e.g. 68 or 70); increase salary limits subject to tax | Privatize; i.e. allow citizens control over their own money and allow stock investments |
| Social Spending | Increase | Decrease or maintain |
| [Taxes](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/taxing_rich.htm) | Increase taxes, especially on the rich | Cut taxes, especially on businesses that invest and hire |
|  |  |  |
| [Unions](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/unions.htm) | Workers should be unionized wherever possible, even if it means mandatory joining of a union to work at a place | Unionization should be limited, and workers should never be forced to join |
| [World Peace](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/world_policeman.htm) | Negotiate first and only take military action if sanctioned by the U.N. and other world organizations | Work with world bodies and use negotiation, but take unilateral pre-emptive action if necessary to protect America |

Add up your circled “views” in each column: Liberal:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Conservative:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are you more “liberal” or “conservative?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is this a surprise? Why/why not?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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