



**Episode 1,507: Dave Smith on Libertarian Strategy, the Toughest Libertarian Views to Defend, and More**

**Guest: Dave Smith**

**WOODS:** All right, this is it. This is the last episode of Dave Smith Week. We're going to make the absolute most of it. I jotted down a bunch of things during the week that I wanted to ask, but some of them I snuck into the various episodes, so I don't have as many that I want to ask. But I've got a bunch from the supporting listeners group – SupportingListeners.com, by the way. You should all be in there, because that's where the cool stuff behind the scenes of the show happens.

I want to start, though, with one for me. You are, I think, a very, very good spokesman for libertarianism, and you're able to defend it in a way that's interesting, accurate, and funny. But even you must feel like maybe there's one or two issues where you understand the libertarian position, but you can kind of get why somebody else who doesn't see the big picture might not find it that convincing or that you yourself have trouble arguing for. Is there any such issue?

**SMITH:** Well, I guess there would be two that I would say are the issues that I struggle with the most. And I'll tell you one of them is the immigration issue. Immigration to me is a really tough, tough issue for libertarians to deal with. And I'm sympathetic to both sides of the issue. I completely understand where there are these consistent anarchocapitalists who go, no, no, listen – and this is what my original take on immigration was, was like, look, there's no such thing as immigration. There's no such thing as government lines. These are all made-up social constructs. It's just a person crossing an imaginary line. Immigration should be moving. Whether you're moving from New York to New Jersey or moving from Mexico to California, it shouldn't make any difference. And we don't support the state violating the nonaggression principle, and that's that.

And I still in my heart of hearts kind of feel that way. However, I understand a lot of the arguments that Lew Rockwell and Hans-Hermann Hoppe and people like that, who I have tremendous respect for, have made. And they raised some really good points. And of course, Murray Rothbard later in his career wrote about a lot of this stuff. And I'll be honest. If I'm just being completely honest, I've never quite been able to get there from a libertarian perspective. So if I'm just following private property and the nonaggression principle, it's always been like, well, why do we get to make this exception for this one area, because if you're willing to do that, we could make exceptions all over the place? And then that basically compromises our principles, and I'm not willing to do that.

That being said, I see, if we were to just have open immigration tomorrow, as being an absolute disaster. And I know people will call you like racist for even suggesting this, but the idea that we could just have people from third-world countries pouring into our country right now, when we have no culture that really defends freedom or free markets or capitalists, and they can vote — I mean, there's a lot of illegal immigrants who do vote, and then the next generation is going to vote right away, and they vote like 80% for Democrats. I mean, I just look at the handwriting on the wall, and I go, this is going to be a disaster. This is going to be terrible for the prospects of liberty. So while I can't quite get there from a libertarian perspective, I also see it as something that's probably going to be a disaster. And I don't know. You know, it's like, what would you rather do: compromise 1% of your principles and save the other 99%, or lose it all? So I have a lot of trouble with that issue. So that's probably the biggest one.

The other one I have a lot of trouble with is the tech censorship. I really hate the idea that the tech companies and Google and all these guys can just kick off people like Daniel McAdams or Scott Horton at their own whims, while they let these crazy leftists say whatever they want to. And I understand the libertarian argument that like they're private companies, and they can do whatever they want to, but I really, really hate it. I'm not advocating the state do anything thing about it, but it really bothers me. And I understand why, if some right-wing populist goes, "No, you know what? That should be illegal," that's a little bit more attractive than some libertarian saying, "Well, they're a private company, and they can do what they want."

**WOODS:** All right, let me turn now to some questions — those were really good answers you just gave, by the way — some questions that the supporters want to get answers to. And this is one I know you've covered a lot on *Part of the Problem*, but not everybody listening has heard those episodes. The question is:

"How has fatherhood changed Dave's perspective on libertarian questions? Which are important? Which are less so? Also, how has it changed his perspective on questions that aren't libertarian questions, per se, but may be of concern to libertarians?" You interpret that however you like, Dave.

**SMITH:** Well, Tom, as you'll learn when you finally have some children —

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah.

**SMITH:** — having kids changes everything. When you when you finally get onto your 18th child, you'll understand too. But no, as you know, Tom, I mean, there's nothing like having a kid in — like, it's traveling formative in every aspect of your life. I mean, every second of your day is different when you have a kid. And as somebody who, I have a lot of young people, a lot of young guys who listen to my podcast, and so I almost feel like it would be wrong for me to not let them know how amazing it is to be a father and to be married and settled down and all of these things.

And I mean, it's a running joke on my show that I'm like a conservative, but there is something that's really drastically changed in me, where I lived a very degenerate lifestyle for many years, and now I live a much more traditional lifestyle. And just giving one guy's opinion: the traditional one is way better. There's way more joy. There's way more meaning, more happiness, and I just — I don't know, it's just way better you. I understand the merits of

traditionalism much more. And, I mean, every second of my day, I'm taking care of the baby or thinking about her. And so, it's hard to say – look, to me, the biggest changes in the non-libertarian stuff is your life is all of a sudden completely directed. It's filled with this central purpose.

And you kind of walk around, particularly in today's culture, but I was a kid who, I wasn't raised with religion. I didn't really believe in God. I do now, but I didn't really believe in God as a kid. We didn't have a culture of like chivalry and tradition, or loyalty to country, or any of these things that most people throughout human history have. And so you kind of just live this life with the modern belief system that life is about being happy. And so you're like, okay, well, what do I want to do? I want to finish my homework so I can play video games, or I want to go hang out with my friends, or I want to go have a few drinks, or I want to go do standup comedy. This was always my life, just kind of, that was kind of the loose purpose, I guess, was to try to have fun and be happy. And it's really actually very empty. There's nothing noble about that. There's no purpose in that.

And once you have a kid, it's like all of a sudden, all of that changes, and you know exactly what your purpose is. And that's it. And my purpose is to protect and provide for my daughter and help her to be a good, independent person. Like, that's my purpose in life. So every inch of your life is different. And it's great. It's really amazing to live for somebody else. And my wife, Lauren, she really brought that out of me, and she's really just made me a better person. And it's amazing. I'm happier than I've ever been. I mean, last night at 3:45am when the baby woke up crying, I wasn't particularly happy at that exact moment, but overall, I am happier than I've ever been.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah, I know exactly what you mean about that situation.

**SMITH:** Well, you had like the domino effect, where one baby wakes up and wakes up two other babies and wakes up –

**WOODS:** Well, thankfully, we spread them out and we got a sizable house once it became necessary. I asked Marc Clair – I don't know if you know him; he's the host of the *Lions of Liberty*.

**SMITH:** Of course. Yeah, I've been on many times. I love Marc Clair.

**WOODS:** Okay, good, good, good. I had him on just the other day, and we were talking to him about living in Los Angeles, and you're around a lot of people who are not only unsympathetic, they really just don't even understand you at all. And I'm sure that's also true in New York, and maybe it's true in the comedy world. So how have you navigated that? And I wonder if *Legion of Skanks* is part of your answer?

**SMITH:** Well, yeah, I mean, it is, but I kind of made a little place for myself in the comedy scene, number one, before my politics were so out there, and before this era – like politics have always been somewhat contentious, but it hasn't been like it has been the last few years. I mean, like the last couple years of Obama and really the first couple years of Trump, it's like this full-fledged culture war is going on and people are fighting. So I established myself before that era, and I was funny, and I was generally considered funny in the comedy scene. So I kind of got a pass from a lot of people, and they knew that I knew stuff about

politics that a lot of them don't, so I just was able to almost get grandfathered in, in a way. Whereas if I was coming up that way now, I think it would be a much tougher road. Still, probably from *Legion of Skanks* stuff and other stuff and my politics, I'm never going to get some network show or something like that, but honestly, I don't really particularly care about that. I like what I'm doing better. So obviously there's a lot of that stuff, but I just kind of – my thing, I decided a long time ago that I'm just going to be me and let the chips fall where they may. And that's what I do.

**WOODS:** Yeah, well, that's how you should live. Somebody did actually ask about this, so this is not just me being self-promoting. But somebody did ask about this. They want to know about your impressions of the Contra Cruise. You came on the second time we had it. Scott Horton was another guest. You and Scott are also scheduled to join us on the 2020 cruise. [ContraCruise.com](http://ContraCruise.com) is the website. Can you just take a minute to just share with people your impressions of that?

**SMITH:** Oh, I mean, look, the Contra Cruise is incredible. That was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. It was so much fun. I met so many great people who are like lifelong friends, who I met on that cruise. And it was just so much fun. Just hanging out with a bunch of really, really smart people who kind of think like you think, great conversations, a lot of great fun, a cocktail or two. It was just incredible, and I'm really, really excited to go back on it next year.

**WOODS:** I'm really looking forward to it, as well, and the combination of you plus Scott Horton, you just can't beat that. You cannot possibly beat that. So definitely looking forward to that. Somebody's asking about something that I guess is going to come up for you in the pretty near future now that you've had a child. Do you think about like the philosophy of parenting? Are you just thinking you're going to wing it? Like for example, you know a lot of libertarians and Stefan Molyneux talk a lot about so-called peaceful parenting. Is this anything that you've had time to look into or think about?

**SMITH:** Yeah, I'm a big believer in peaceful parenting. And I'm sure there are like some – I don't know if I agree on every last detail with Stefan Molyneux, but I absolutely don't believe in hitting children and yelling at children. I'm a big, big believer in that, so I'm on board completely.

And I do think that there's something interesting for a libertarian to think about, that I think it's in general the way we regard children and society is somewhat crazy. I mean, it's like the only group of people, the only group that it's just acceptable that you hit them. If I were to say my wife isn't acting the way I'd like her to act, so I give her a slap, everyone would be rightfully horrified. But if you say the same thing about your kid, that's somewhat accepted, and that just seems crazy to me. I actually think, from my perspective, it would be far worse to hit your kid than to hit your wife. I mean, my wife has recourse. I mean, first of all, she's Italian. She might win that fight. But then on top of that, she can leave me. She can call the cops, whereas the kid has none of that.

And I'm very conscious of my philosophy on parenting. I really believe that it's your responsibility to help your child develop at every single turn, that you should always be putting them first. I believe that me and my wife chose to bring my daughter, Layla, into this world. She didn't choose to come into this world. So now we have a responsibility to put her first and her needs first at every turn. So yeah, very much so.

**WOODS:** All right, very good. Very good. Now, I'm obviously not in favor of hitting children, but I never really read anything about peaceful parenting. I never said to myself, I'm going to follow this particular philosophy; I just more or less did it. But yet, there are definitely ways where I fell short of that, and so as I continue into the future, I'm much, much more consciously following that strategy, as opposed to just kind of winging it and occasionally doing the wrong thing. I'm much more conscious of it.

But anyway, this is about you, not me, so let's go on to this one. And this is actually from somebody you would know from the Contra Cruise, but I'm going to keep everybody anonymous, so that you all understand what is in the supporting listeners group stays in the supporting listeners group. And this person says:

“Is backing libertarian political candidates even worth it? In his opinion, with the lock that the left has on the media and the sheer difficulty of getting money and exposure to third-party political candidates, it seems like the political process is fairly dead to us as far as getting leaders who will actually enact change. If this is true, what do we do? Has he seen the libertarian philosophy affecting the way people think who don't identify as libertarians? Meaning, do we have a chance of influencing the mainstream politicians to become more antiwar and more freedom-minded? Is he hopeful in this regard? And if so, what are his best ways to focus our resources?”

**SMITH:** Well, I think that politics can have a big influence on people, and I think it's just you have to have the right candidate, you have to have the right messenger. And like we mentioned in the previous episode, look at what was happening when Ron Paul was on those debate stages, compared to when he's not. And Ron Paul is still around and still doing really great work. I mean, Ron Paul, does the *Liberty Report* with Daniel McAdams. It's phenomenal. It's one of the best shows out there on the internet. I mean, five days a week, he is attacking the warfare state, attacking the empire, attacking the Fed, breaking everything down in a completely logical, coherent, consistent way. But he's not on those debate stages. And I think we feel that loss in the liberty movement.

And this is part of why I was doing that debate the other day. I think if you look at something like the Libertarian Party on the national platform, they have a tremendous opportunity. A tremendous opportunity. I mean, you're going to be looking at two just terrible candidates. You're going to have Donald Trump, who's going to have an approval rating somewhere in the 40s, who's going to be going through these ridiculous impeachment proceedings, who's going to be - you know, like, he's Donald Trump. He has very high negatives. And then you're going to have like Elizabeth Warren or - it looks more and more like it's not going to be Joe Biden. You're going to have somebody who was like a fake Native American, who's got the charisma of a bathmat running again.

And then you've got a party that has the word “libertarian” in it, that has ballot access in 50 states, that might get a lot of media attention. They certainly did last time. If they were to run a really good candidate there, I think that's a golden opportunity. The issue is that it's got to be a really good candidate. So yeah, I still think there's a lot that we can do.

I think that people who - I mean, people like yourself who have been in the libertarian world longer than I have, probably have a better understanding of this. And then people like Walter Block or someone who's been there a lot longer than you, he probably has an even better understanding. But it's easy for guys like me to go, *Oh, man, the liberty movement doesn't*

*have the juice that it had in 2012, 2013. This sucks.* But if you compare it to where Murray Rothbard was, with like seven people in his apartment, we're doing pretty good. "Libertarian" is kind of like a mainstream term, thanks to Ron Paul and Tom Woods and people like you guys.

And there's a lot of us out there. And to me, it's pretty obvious. Okay, so our goal is that we just need to get more and more people who see it this way. We need to convince and convert more and more people. We need to double our numbers, and then double them again, and then double them again, and double them again. And I think that to discount politics as like, *Well, that can't be part of it*, I think would be silly.

**WOODS:** I think you'll recall from the Contra Cruise that Scott Horton took me aside at one point during the cruise – and I think you found out about this later – and he said to me, "You have to run for the LP nomination for president." And he said a lot of complimentary things that I won't repeat, but he said, "You can make the case, and you're a good speaker," and like he was – but he was way over the top in his compliments. And he was saying that, I've got to do it. I've got to do it, because I'm the best chance we have. I thought, oh, boy, are we in trouble. And I just told him there's just no way I can do it. So I want to ask you, Dave. You are very well spoken, and you're very hardcore. Would you absolutely 100% rule out ever doing that?

**SMITH:** Well – oh, man, I was really getting ready to put you back on the spot, and then you turned it around on me. Okay, here's why you're the guy to do it, and I'm not the guy to do it. All right, you have to have – listen, I do believe – putting modesty aside, because I've heard a lot of people, particularly after I had that debate at the Soho Forum the other day. There's a lot of people who have said this to me. And I get why they would want me. Like I could handle being on a debate stage. I've done a lot of cable news shows before. I'm good at that. I get why people would want me. The problem from my perspective is that, just being like, *Oh, here's this comedian who's like read some books and thinks he knows better than everyone*, is not going to be a great way to present our ideology. It makes it very easy for it to be discarded.

Whereas if you had someone who you go, *Well, this guy is a graduate of Harvard and Columbia, is a New York Times bestseller, has written all of these amazing books, a very popular author, a senior fellow at the Ludwig von Mises Institute* – and that guy can give a great speech and really knows what he's talking about – now we've got ourselves a chance. So I'm going to agree with Scott Horton and say you are the guy who needs to do this, and that probably some *Legion of Skanks* tapes would surface that wouldn't make our movement look great.

**WOODS:** Yeah, but you know what? Look, anybody doing anything is going to have something surface at some point, right? And I love that passive word, "surface," as if they just spontaneously come to the surface, as if it's not people pulling them from down where you've tried to put them, right?

**SMITH:** Wait, were we being recorded that whole time?

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**SMITH:** I was just talking with my friends.

**WOODS:** Right, I don't know how this could happen.

**SMITH:** Well, I guess I'll just say it was locker room talk.

**WOODS:** Yeah, apparently you can get away with that. Somebody wants to know – let me ask you, this: you've been on Fox News, Fox Business, and then you had a gig for a little while on CNN. Once that came to an end, were you welcomed back at Fox? Are you in kind of a limbo, or what's going on?

**SMITH:** No, I was welcomed back at Fox, primarily just because Kennedy is there and she is just – you know, Kennedy is the best, and I love her, and she's always been really great to me. She was the first one who ever put me on television, and she's just always happy to have me on. And I'm actually going tonight to go record an episode of *The Greg Gutfeld Show*. So it was pretty easy to come back to that. That happens a lot in the cable news world, where if somebody gets a contract with one company, they disappear from that other channel for a while. But no, it was pretty easy to come back.

And I thought it was a really great experience at CNN. It was good money, and it was good exposure – better money than exposure, because the ratings on the show weren't great. But I really enjoyed a lot of those moments that I had, and it was fun to get into the mainstream media world, because Fox News is kind of its own thing. It was fun to be on that show with S.E. and to challenge some of those guys. And if I'm being completely honest, I miss it a little bit.

**WOODS:** What was the first TV appearance you ever had?

**SMITH:** It was Kennedy. Kennedy was the first one – I don't know how exactly she found out about me. I believe it was this comic Sam Morril, who's a really, really funny guy, a great person, comedian here in New York City. And he I think knew her or knew the booker of the show, and he told her, he was like, *Oh, if you're a libertarian, there's this comedian, this guy, Dave Smith, who you've got to have on*. He was always like a big a big fan of mine, and I'm a big fan of his as well. And so I think he introduced us.

And then they reached out to me, and they were like, *Hey, you want to do this?* And I was like, *Absolutely, I would love to*. It was exciting. I'd never been on television before. And I was, at this point already like a soldier in the liberty movement. I was really into all of these ideas. And Fox Business was the station Kennedy was on, and this is the station that had Judge Napolitano's show on and had Stossel's show on, so I was like, oh, this is amazing. Like, this is where the libertarians do cable news. So I was really excited to go do it. And it was a great experience. And Kennedy, her whole staff, they're great, and I met Andrew Heaton there and a lot of other really great people. So, it was a great experience. Still love doing that show.

**WOODS:** All right, well, as we're coming to the end of Dave Smith Week, let me ask you to look ahead into 2020, but not the election. Meh. No. Into the life of Dave Smith in 2020. Do you have anything on your bucket list you want to cross off in 2020? Anything you want to

accomplish in 2020, any ambitions, anything new you want to try on the show, anything like that?

**SMITH:** Well, my main ambitions professionally are, I want to put out the comedy special that's better than *Libertas*. That's my goal. That means a lot to me. And it's got to be better. And I don't mean like numbers or making money or anything like that; just in my opinion, I have to be like, *I think that was a better comedy special*. I don't want my follow-up to be weaker than my debut. And I just want to keep growing the audience at *Part of the Problem*, keep doing cool things that I love to do, and keep telling the truth as I see it.

**WOODS:** Well, actually, that leads me to one more question. What do you think you're doing to grow the audience? You kind of hinted at that earlier, but are these just things that you're naturally doing anyway, like going on television? Or are you actively saying, today, I'm going to make this video so that I can grow – I haven't seen you make videos lately, but you know what I mean?

**SMITH:** No, what I try to do is I try to go on as many other shows as I can and make them as good and interesting and funny as possible. That's always kind of been my method: get on as many shows as you can, for as much self-promotion, grow my social media as much as possible. But really, what I try to do is just make the show as good as I can. I think that's the best way to organically grow and actually grow in a way where you're keeping the people that you bring on board. So I try to do a like a show on the topic of the day that a lot of people are talking about, but I kind of believe you don't want these kind of cheap gimmicks to get a bunch of people over for one video. I want to get people over who are buying in and are going to be with me for the long run. So it's not a very complicated formula. Try to get on as many big podcasts, as many big shows as I can, and try to make sure the show is as good as I can make it.

**WOODS:** Well, I was actually selfishly asking you because I was thinking: how can I grow my audience? Let's see what old Dave is up to. So *Part of the Problem* is the podcast. GaSDigitalNetwork.com is the site. You can join the site, you get extra benefits, but you can also be a cheapskate if you want to do that and just listen to *Part of the Problem* on your various devices without doing that. But I actually have a subscription at GaS Digital Network, because I think there was one thing you did that I wanted to see right on time as soon as it came out, and then I never canceled it, because I thought I liked what they do at GaS Digital Network, and so I just want to send the money. So that's basically what I've continued to do [laughing].

**SMITH:** Well, thank you very much. I also am a supporting listener of your show, of course.

**WOODS:** I appreciate that. I appreciate that support. So TomWoods.com/1507, as with all the other show notes pages for this week, will have links to Dave Smith and the stuff that he does, so you can just head over there, TomWoods.com/1507. Well, we've come to the end of Dave Smith Week, Dave, and we are all deeply grateful and wish to thank you for your service.

**SMITH:** Oh, it was an honor. I really enjoyed it. Thank you so much, Tom.