

The most basic principle to being a free American is the notion that we as individuals are responsible for our own lives and decisions. We do not have the right to rob our neighbors to make up for our mistakes, neither does our neighbor have any right to tell us how to live, so long as we aren't infringing on their rights.

Freedom to make bad decisions is inherent in the freedom to make good ones.

If we are only free to make good decisions, we are not really free.

Socialist ideologies blur this line between self reliance and government control because the mistakes of the individual are spread to everyone else. Thus the government becomes very interested in your decisions and way of life, with the justification that you could make a mistake others will have to pay for.

The end result is, of course, that everyone loses privacy and control over their own lives.

Whether they realize it or not, they are no longer truly free.

This week in Congress brought some examples from both sides of the aisle on these issues of freedom and personal responsibility. We talked about

online gambling quite a bit with the markup of some legislation dealing with the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act.

Now, I am not someone who enjoys throwing money away, but I am someone who understands issues of freedom and self-ownership.

As such, I strongly support the right of free people to do with their hard-earned money as they please.

Gambling is ultimately a matter of personal choice, and some people find it entertaining.

As long as I am not forced to underwrite their losses, it is none of my business what gamblers do with their time and money.

There are those that feel online gambling is morally wrong and financially irresponsible, which I do not argue with, but they also feel that because of this, the government should step in and prevent or punish people for taking part in these activities. This attitude is anathema to the ideas of liberty.

However, most of the same anti-gambling crowd sang an entirely different tune when we discussed giving away free birth control in schools. All of a sudden, they did not want others making decisions about their lifestyles and families, while the other side felt the need to interfere.

It is interesting that the same group that feels parents have the absolute right and ability to control how and when their kids get birth control, are powerless to monitor their internet activity and must enlist government regulatory

assistance to protect against gambling or predators.

Which is it?

Are parents the ones to parent, or not?

Both sides switch their positions based on the subject at hand, but the philosophy of liberty is elegantly simple and consistent.

I can assure you of this – once the government gains a foothold into regulating the internet, even for benevolent reasons, the wonders of the free internet will soon be a thing of the past. Parents, with modern day technology, are quite capable of monitoring their children's internet activity.

The internet must remain a government-free zone to maintain its integrity and usefulness to modern society, and that is something for which I will continue to fight.