



HOW TO ARGUE LIKE A LIBERTARIAN

A Field Guide to the 8 Debates You Will Have at Every Holiday Dinner

Taxes. Guns. Free speech. Healthcare. Immigration. Drug policy. These are the debates that come up every single time — at the dinner table, in the comment section, at work, and on every news channel running every hour of the day.

Most conservatives and libertarians know what they believe. Fewer know how to say it in a way that actually lands. This guide gives you the tools: what they will say, what you should say back, the facts that back you up, and the closing line that makes your point impossible to dismiss.

A few ground rules before you start. You are not trying to 'win' in the sense of humiliating your opponent. You are trying to plant seeds. Change minds by being the calmest, most informed, most consistent person in the room — not the loudest.

Truth does not need to perform. It just needs to show up.

8 GOLDEN RULES OF LIBERTARIAN ARGUMENT

Master these before any debate begins

01

Define your terms first.

Make your opponent define 'fair share,' 'common sense,' 'hate speech,' and 'need' before the debate begins. Most progressive arguments collapse when their key terms are pinned down.

02

Ask 'compared to what?'

Every government program should be compared not to an ideal, but to the actual alternative. The question is never 'is the free market perfect?' — it is 'is it better than a government bureaucracy?' The answer is almost always yes.

03

Follow the incentives.

Government bureaucrats are incentivized to expand their budgets and power. Politicians are incentivized to win elections. Ask: who benefits from this policy, and are they the same people writing it?

04

Use their logic against them.

If government can ban guns because people misuse them, it can ban cars, alcohol, and social media. Apply the principle consistently and watch the argument unravel.

05

Acknowledge real concerns.

Dismissing genuine concerns about healthcare, poverty, or gun violence makes you look heartless and shuts down the conversation. Acknowledge the problem — then argue about the solution.

06

Distinguish the principle from the policy.

You can agree that clean air matters while disagreeing that the EPA as constituted is the right way to achieve it. Separate the goal (which is often shared) from the proposed government mechanism (which is where the real debate is).

07

Stay calm. Facts do not need to shout.

The side that gets emotional first usually loses. When your opponent raises their voice, lower yours. Calm confidence signals that you know you are right and do not need to perform outrage to make your point.

08

End with a question.

The best libertarian arguments end with a question your opponent cannot answer without contradicting themselves. 'If government can do that, what can it not do?' is always a good one.

DEBATE 01

TAXATION

Is taxation theft — or the price of civilization?

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p>"Taxes are how we pay for roads, schools, and the military. Without taxes, society collapses."</p>	<p>Taxation is the compulsory taking of money under threat of imprisonment. Call it what it is. The question is never whether government needs revenue — it is how much, for what, and whether citizens have genuine consent.</p>
<p>"The rich need to pay their fair share."</p>	<p>The top 1% of earners already pay more in federal income tax than the bottom 90% combined. 'Fair share' is a slogan, not a math equation. Ask anyone who uses it to define the exact percentage that would qualify and watch them go silent.</p>
<p>"You benefit from government services every day whether you admit it or not."</p>	<p>The fact that I use a road does not obligate me to fund a Department of Education, foreign aid, or a \$40 billion subsidy program. Consent matters. You can acknowledge some government services are legitimate without agreeing that government may fund anything it wants at any level it chooses.</p>

KEY TALKING POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every dollar government spends was first taken from a private citizen who earned it.• The Founders considered taxation without genuine representation the justification for revolution.• Government does not create wealth — it redistributes it, always taking a cut in the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The federal government collected \$4.9 trillion in 2023. Ask: What would YOU do with your share?• A flat tax or consumption tax is far more 'fair' than a progressive system that punishes productivity.• Every new government program requires enforcement — and enforcement ultimately means a gun.
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WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:

"I am not against paying for legitimate government. I am against being forced to fund every program a bureaucrat dreams up, forever, with no meaningful limit. That is not civilization — that is coercion dressed in a suit."

DEBATE 02

GUN RIGHTS

The Second Amendment is not about hunting

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p>"No one needs an AR-15. Military-style weapons have no place in civilian hands."</p>	<p>The Bill of Rights has never been about need. The government does not get to decide what tools a free person requires for self-defense. By the same logic, 'no one needs' a sports car, alcohol, or a 3,000 square foot house. Rights are not rationed by bureaucratic permission.</p>
<p>"We just want common-sense gun control. Background checks. Red flag laws. Is that so extreme?"</p>	<p>Background checks already exist at licensed dealers. Red flag laws allow the government to confiscate your firearms based on an accusation — before any conviction, any trial, and often without you even present to defend yourself. That is not common sense. That is a due process catastrophe.</p>
<p>"The Founders never imagined weapons this powerful when they wrote the Second Amendment."</p>	<p>The Founders absolutely understood technological change — they had just witnessed muskets, cannons, and warships revolutionize warfare. More importantly, the principle behind the Second Amendment is timeless: a free people must be able to resist tyranny. The weapon changes. The principle does not.</p>
KEY TALKING POINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Supreme Court confirmed in Heller (2008) and Bruen (2022) that the Second Amendment is an individual right.• The cities with the strictest gun laws — Chicago, Baltimore, Washington D.C. — have among the highest gun violence rates.• An armed citizenry is the final check on government tyranny. The Founders said this explicitly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are approximately 400 million privately owned firearms in the U.S. Criminals do not follow gun laws — law-abiding citizens do.• Defensive gun uses are estimated at 500,000 to 3 million per year in the United States.• Every genocide in the 20th century was preceded by civilian disarmament. This is not coincidence.
WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:	
<p><i>"The Second Amendment is not a hunting license. It is the amendment that protects all the others. When you understand what it is actually for, 'common sense' gun control looks very different."</i></p>	

DEBATE 03

FREE SPEECH

Who decides what is 'harmful' — and why that question should terrify you

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p>"Hate speech is not protected speech. Words cause real harm."</p>	<p>The Supreme Court has ruled repeatedly that there is no 'hate speech' exception to the First Amendment. The entire point of free speech protection is to protect speech that someone finds offensive — popular speech needs no protection. Once you grant government the power to define 'harmful' speech, you have given it the power to silence anyone.</p>
<p>"Private companies can moderate content however they want. The First Amendment only applies to government."</p>	<p>When government coordinates with private platforms to suppress speech — as the Twitter Files and Missouri v. Biden revealed — it is government censorship laundered through a corporate intermediary. The First Amendment does not have a loophole for outsourcing.</p>
<p>"Misinformation is dangerous. Someone has to be responsible for stopping it."</p>	<p>Every piece of speech that was ever labeled 'misinformation' by the government was later debated, reconsidered, or proven wrong by the government itself. The lab leak theory. Masks. School closures. The 'safe and effective' claims. Who was the misinformation spreader? The answer should make you deeply skeptical of any government 'truth' authority.</p>
KEY TALKING POINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The government has labeled true information 'misinformation' repeatedly. They do not get the benefit of the doubt.• Moms for Liberty was labeled an 'extremist group' by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Who decides who is extreme?• The answer to bad speech is more speech — not enforced silence, which simply drives ideas underground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969): Speech is only unprotected if it incites imminent lawless action. Not feelings. Not offense. Action.• Social media censorship accelerated dramatically after government 'disinformation' task forces were established.• Every authoritarian government in history has justified censorship as protection from 'dangerous' ideas.
WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:	
<p><i>"Give government the power to decide what speech is too dangerous to allow, and you have given it the power to silence its critics forever. That power has never been used wisely. It never will be."</i></p>	

DEBATE 04

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

What \$34 trillion in debt actually means for your children

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p>"We can't cut spending — people depend on these programs."</p>	<p>Creating dependency is not compassion — it is a political strategy. Every program that makes citizens dependent on government creates a permanent voting constituency for bigger government. True compassion means building systems that make people self-sufficient, not permanently reliant on a check from Washington.</p>
<p>"Defense spending is the real problem. Cut the military budget."</p>	<p>Defense is one of the few explicitly constitutional functions of the federal government. Entitlement spending — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid — makes up over 60% of the federal budget and is the actual driver of the debt. You cannot balance the budget by cutting defense alone. The math does not work.</p>
<p>"The national debt doesn't matter — we owe it to ourselves."</p>	<p>We owe \$34 trillion — a significant portion to foreign nations including China. Interest payments alone now exceed \$1 trillion per year, more than the entire defense budget. Every dollar paid in interest is a dollar not spent on anything Americans actually need. This is not abstract — it is generational theft.</p>

KEY TALKING POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The federal government spent \$6.75 trillion in fiscal year 2023 and collected \$4.44 trillion. The gap is your children's problem.• Social Security and Medicare are the largest drivers of long-term debt — not foreign aid or defense.• The Congressional Budget Office projects debt at 166% of GDP by 2054 under current law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interest on the national debt is now the single fastest-growing budget item.• Every dollar of government spending was either taxed from someone, borrowed from the future, or inflated away from your savings.• No government in history has ever spent its way to long-term prosperity.
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WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:

"We are borrowing money from our grandchildren to fund programs that were never constitutionally authorized, run by agencies that have never been audited, to solve problems that have only gotten worse. At what point does that become unconscionable?"

DEBATE 05

THE REGULATORY STATE

When government 'protection' becomes government control

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p>"Without regulations, corporations would poison our air, water, and food."</p>	<p>Regulations consistently benefit large corporations — who can afford compliance teams — while crushing small businesses and new competitors. The biggest companies love regulations because regulations are a moat that keeps competitors out. This is called regulatory capture, and it is not a conspiracy theory. It is economics.</p>
<p>"The free market only works in theory. In reality it creates monopolies and exploitation."</p>	<p>Most monopolies in American history were created or sustained by government — not the free market. Standard Oil, AT&T, and today's tech giants all benefit from government-granted advantages, liability shields, and regulatory barriers to entry. Competition — not regulation — is what keeps markets honest.</p>
<p>"Someone has to set the rules. Would you rather have no rules at all?"</p>	<p>The choice is not between total regulation and total chaos. The question is: who sets the rules, how many there are, and whether they serve the public or the bureaucracy. The Federal Register — the list of federal regulations — exceeds 90,000 pages. That is not protection. That is control.</p>
KEY TALKING POINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Small Business Administration estimated federal regulations cost the U.S. economy \$1.9 trillion annually.• Occupational licensing laws — requiring government permission to braid hair or teach yoga — trap millions in poverty.• Dodd-Frank regulations drove thousands of community banks out of business, consolidating banking into fewer, larger institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since <i>Loper Bright v. Raimondo</i> (2024), courts no longer automatically defer to agency interpretations of law.• The FDA's lengthy approval process has delayed lifesaving drugs by years, costing lives in the name of 'safety.'• Every regulation is ultimately enforced at gunpoint. Is the rule important enough to warrant that?
WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:	
<p><i>"Regulations are written by people with agendas, enforced by bureaucrats with job security, and paid for by everyone except the corporations that lobbied for them. That is not protection. That is the illusion of protection."</i></p>	

DRUG POLICY

The War on Drugs failed. It is time to admit it.

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p><i>"Legalizing drugs sends the wrong message and will increase addiction."</i></p>	<p>The War on Drugs began in 1971. After 50 years and over \$1 trillion spent, drug use is higher than ever, cartels are more powerful than ever, and we have imprisoned more of our own citizens — disproportionately minority and low-income — than any nation on earth. By any measure, it has failed. Insisting on the same policy and expecting different results is not governance. It is stubbornness.</p>
<p><i>"Drugs destroy families and communities. Government has a responsibility to stop that."</i></p>	<p>Government does not have the constitutional authority — or the practical ability — to save people from their own choices. What it can do is imprison them, which destroys families and communities far more completely than most drug use does. Portugal decriminalized all drugs in 2001. Drug deaths, HIV infections, and addiction rates all fell dramatically.</p>
<p><i>"Some drugs are so dangerous they simply cannot be allowed."</i></p>	<p>Alcohol and tobacco are extraordinarily dangerous and kill hundreds of thousands per year. They are legal. The consistency argument for prohibition falls apart the moment you apply it evenly. The libertarian position is not that drugs are good — it is that consenting adults own their own bodies.</p>

KEY TALKING POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S. has 5% of the world's population and 25% of the world's prison population — largely due to drug policy. • Fentanyl deaths have skyrocketed precisely because prohibition drives users to unregulated, unpredictable black market supply. • The 10th Amendment gives states the authority to set their own drug policy. Federal override is constitutionally questionable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug prohibition creates cartels the same way alcohol prohibition created the Mafia. The lesson was not learned. • Legalization with regulation gives users access to safe, known-dosage products — reducing overdose deaths. • Your body is your property. A government that controls what you put into it controls you completely.
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WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:

"The War on Drugs is the longest-running, most expensive, most racially disparate, most constitutionally dubious domestic policy in American history — and it has not worked by a single measurable standard. At some point, liberty and results both demand a different approach."

HEALTHCARE

Why government-run healthcare costs more and delivers less

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<i>"Healthcare is a human right. No one should go bankrupt because they got sick."</i>	A right is something that exists independently of other people's labor and resources. Healthcare requires doctors, nurses, facilities, equipment, and medications — all produced by human effort. You cannot have a right to someone else's labor. What you can have is access to a competitive market that drives down costs and improves quality — which is exactly what we have systematically destroyed through regulation.
<i>"Every other developed country has universal healthcare. Why can't we?"</i>	Every country with 'universal' healthcare either rations care, has long wait times, supplements with private insurance, or all three. Canada has 12-month waits for specialist appointments. The UK's NHS is in permanent crisis. These systems work only in comparison to what the U.S. has — which is not a free market but a heavily regulated, government-distorted market.
<i>"The free market has failed at healthcare — that is why costs keep rising."</i>	Healthcare costs began rising dramatically after the federal government dramatically intervened in the 1960s with Medicare and Medicaid, and again after the ACA in 2010. Before heavy government involvement, healthcare was affordable for most Americans. The market has not failed — the market has been replaced by a government-corporate cartel that serves neither patients nor providers.

KEY TALKING POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price transparency, not single-payer, is the most powerful tool to reduce healthcare costs. • Direct Primary Care (DPC) practices that opt out of insurance offer excellent care at dramatically lower cost. • Health Savings Accounts and high-deductible plans put consumers back in charge — and dramatically reduce unnecessary spending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Need laws — government permission required to open a new hospital — reduce competition and drive up prices. • The FDA and AMA have suppressed competition in both pharmaceuticals and medical practice for over a century. • Medical errors are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. — inside the current system, not outside it.
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WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:

"If you want to lower healthcare costs, the answer is more competition, more transparency, and less government control — not less competition, less transparency, and more government control. History and economics point the same direction."

DEBATE 08

IMMIGRATION

Rule of law, national sovereignty, and the limits of open borders

WHAT THEY SAY	YOUR REBUTTAL
<p><i>"Immigrants built this country. Anti-immigration is anti-American."</i></p>	<p>Legal immigrants built this country — and they are among the most patriotic Americans because they chose to be here and followed the rules to get here. Conflating legal and illegal immigration is deliberate manipulation. No libertarian or conservative opposes legal immigration. The debate is about sovereignty, rule of law, and whether national borders mean anything at all.</p>
<p><i>"Undocumented immigrants just want a better life. Show some compassion."</i></p>	<p>Compassion for individuals does not require abandoning the rule of law or pretending that unlimited, uncontrolled immigration has no economic, cultural, or security consequences. A nation that cannot control its borders cannot control its destiny. And real compassion for immigrants means fixing the broken legal system — not rewarding illegal entry and making the line longer for those doing it right.</p>
<p><i>"A border wall is expensive and ineffective. It will not solve anything."</i></p>	<p>Border security requires multiple tools — physical barriers, technology, personnel, and legal reform. Whether a wall works better than other tools is an empirical debate. Whether sovereign nations have the right and the duty to control their borders is not a debate at all.</p>

KEY TALKING POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The United States admits over 1 million legal permanent residents per year — more than any other nation.• Uncontrolled immigration suppresses wages for the lowest-paid American workers — who are disproportionately minority.• A libertarian can support open immigration and secure borders simultaneously — the two are not mutually exclusive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rule of law means the rules apply to everyone. Selectively enforcing immigration law destroys equal justice.• Fentanyl, which kills 70,000+ Americans per year, enters almost entirely through the southern border.• Every other nation on earth enforces its immigration laws. Enforcing yours is not extremism.
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WIN THE ROOM — CLOSING LINE:

"I believe in immigration. I believe in immigrants. I believe in the rule of law. You cannot have all three without a border that means something. Pick the two you want and live with the consequences of abandoning the third."



ONE LAST THING.

You are not going to change everyone's mind. That is okay.

The goal of a good argument is not a knockout punch. It is a question planted in someone's mind that they cannot stop thinking about. It is the friend who goes home and looks something up. It is the family member who, six months later, says 'you know, I've been thinking about what you said.'

Stay calm. Know your facts. Acknowledge genuine concerns. Ask the questions they cannot answer. Then let the truth do the work.

And share this guide with everyone who is tired of losing arguments they know they should be winning.

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