



General welfare – then and now

The word “welfare” conjures up images of the indigent waiting on long lines to receive meager handouts. That image is no longer valid in the United States. Since the advent of food stamps and government assistance programs, living at the poverty level has turned into an acceptable way of life. We no longer see the long bread lines we saw during the Great Depression, and consequently we have become indifferent to the plight of the poor – and worse, so have the poor. Things like welfare and unemployment insurance are no longer a safety net meant to temporarily help those who are down on their luck. Welfare has become a way of life that enables fathers to leave their families and young girls to actually plan having babies out of wedlock.



What “general welfare” once meant

Back when our Founders wrote the preamble of our Constitution, they used the term “welfare” in a completely different context. They wrote:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility; provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America. (sic. Emphasis added.)

The term is also used in Article 1, Section 8 of our Constitution that gives Congress very specific powers to spend money in specific ways for the general good (or general welfare) of the entire nation. When our Founders wrote these words, they meant that monies could ONLY be spent on the specific things listed for the general population. In other words, Congress’ power to spend money was limited and could NOT be used for “specific welfare” – or only to benefit specific groups and not the population as a whole. But the concept of general welfare vs. specific welfare can be extended beyond the enumerated powers listed in the Constitution. It is a concept that insures that all citizens are equal in these United States. There are many arguments for equality: the equality of men and women, the equality of black and white, the equality of lifestyle choices etc., etc. For the purpose of this article, I will be referring to the equality that infers the absence of an elitist hierarchy or oligarchy that rules over the majority of citizens. I will also consider it to mean that government cannot show favoritism by providing more services for one group of people than it does for another, or tax one segment of the population more than another. Equality and/or the general welfare in all instances is an important concept for a nation that has been founded on the principle that all men (and women) are created equal – even when it has failed to live up to so high an ideal.

General welfare v. specific welfare

Today we see specific welfare being granted to specific people in many areas in the form of tax exemptions and such. In common terms it can be called a “double standard.” Perhaps the area that is most awash in double standards relates to the 2nd Amendment. There exists a preferred citizen oligarchy that is allowed to purchase and carry firearms without restriction while others are not. For instance, celebrities like Rosie O’Donnell, Paul McCartney, Jim

Carey, Alec Baldwin, Gloria Estefan and others – have joined Tony Bennett in his quest to infringe upon our 2nd Amendment right to bear arms. It is astounding that a great majority of them probably have body guards who carry firearms. Perhaps someone should tell them that the subject is off limits until they disarm themselves and their bodyguards. Of course the list of hypocritical elitists who would infringe upon our right to carry is not limited to celebrities. It extends to our elected officials – most notably the President of these United States, his family, and the rest of his cronies who enjoy the protection afforded by our Secret Service. Before anyone thinks of arguing that their lives need to be protected, which I agree, please consider that all lives matter. Also consider that anyone asking us to give up our right to carry should first give up theirs. Anything less is not only hypocritical; it is arrogant and elitists in nature. It nothing less than a “do what I say not what I do” mentality where what’s good for the goose is not good for the gander. This philosophy creates a hierarchy of human beings that deserve to protect themselves more than the rest of us, indirectly implying that their lives are worth more than ours.



The US Constitution. Photo: National Archives of the United States

We are seeing the same specific welfare being applied in the religious sect as well. In 1962 prayer was taken out of the public school system. In the new millennium, prayer has been allowed back into the classrooms – but only Islamic prayers. High School World History textbooks published by Prentice Hall/Pearson devote an entire chapter to the Five Pillars of Islam where students are taught to memorize and recite Islamic prayers. Of course the 10 Commandments are forbidden, as is the Lord’s Prayer or any equivalent Jewish prayer. While technically this is not a good example of general welfare, it is a good example of a double standard that prefers one group of people over another. It is also unconstitutional because it infringes upon our right to worship as we see fit, as well as violating the very spirit of equality that our government was founded upon.

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Education does not escape the double standards heralded as politically correct today. Men like Bill Gates who promote and financially support Common Core, make sure that their own children attend schools that have not implemented this educational travesty. So Mr. Gates believes he can tell us what to do with our kids but not with his. Double standard or hypocrisy? Whatever the proper term is, it is more than objectionable; it is abhorrent and it further undermines the entire philosophy that all men and women are created equal.

One cannot conclude even a limited discussion about specific welfare or double standards without mentioning the many exemptions allowed in Obamacare. Not only is it hypocritical that legislators that have bound us with this extraordinarily deceptive law have managed to have themselves and their staffs exempted, it is also unconstitutional since the Supreme Court declared it to be a tax and taxes must be equally imposed. The same applies to SEC laws and insider trading laws that we would be prosecuted for indulging in but not those in Congress that get a free pass for doing what is unlawful for us to do. Is it any wonder that they are able to amass such huge fortunes while they pretend to serve their constituents?

General welfare and bad law

Ironically, a legislature that justifies all the unconstitutional laws it passes by placing them in the general welfare category, is itself the chief violator of the general welfare clause. Worse, they have not only violated the true meaning intended by our Founders, they have violated the very concept of equality by placing themselves above the very laws they bind us with. If Congress is not forced to live under the same laws they have imposed upon us, they have created a separate elitist class for themselves of citizens that are above the law. If you really want to see who your

representative represents, look up who donates to their campaigns. It's public information and can easily be found.

Whether you call these abuses "general welfare" or a "double standard" is immaterial. Whatever it is, it has created a hierarchy of elitists who will continue to increase our chains of bondage unless we stand up and throw all the bums out of Congress and stop financing the like-minded celebrities who contribute to their campaigns. Yes, I have said it before and I will say it again. It bears repeating because it needs to be repeated ad infinitum until the land of the free manages to remove the shackles of oligarchs so it can once again pursue the American Dream where all men (and women) are created equal and obey the biblical directive that admonishes us not be a respecter of person – meaning not to prefer one class of people over another.

So how do we accomplish equality? First, stop voting for career politicians – no matter how "nice" they may seem and start electing those who are really committed to America, its principles, and its people. Second, stop patronizing the arts that provide lucrative means for celebrities that finance elitist politicians. And maybe, just maybe, this time we can get it right and provide for the "general welfare" as our Founders had intended.

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