

Kirsty, The web site sent me your question to answer. You've asked "**Is there tension at the heart of liberalism between liberty and democracy? If yes, why?**" Your question is a tough one because everybody's 'definition' of labels such as "liberal" and "democracy" isn't quite the same because of viewpoints founded in life experiences. That said, rather than give you a definitive 'answer' I'll provide my 'view' or opinion based upon my life experiences.

Google the phrase "define **liberal**" and you'll find that that the label is most often defined as a "**willingness to discard traditional values**". Now, there's nothing wrong with that in and of itself but, applying this to politics, it's a belief that government should 'act' to protect (which ultimately translates to - to them - to 'promote') divergent views that are not held widely by the common body politic (regular folks). Now, were government to understand its role and responsibility which is to protect its Citizen's Rights (regardless of what they 'believe' or how they wanted to live their lives) it would simply use the power of government to insure folks with views that diverged from "traditional values" (an example might be traditional Mormons believing in having multiple wives or perhaps gays) were left alone and not harassed by others with other views. The problem arises when government goes beyond protecting the Right to be left alone with using the power of government to 'promote' something which quickly crosses the line of personal "**liberty**".

Let's look at it another (simplistic) way. Liberals pressure the government to implement policies in the area of energy efficiency. Nothing wrong with that, on its surface but the government (having no lawful authority to act in this regard) promotes (through incentives, etc.) energy efficient bulbs to save energy and then they take the next step (which they ALWAYS do) and actually ban incandescent bulbs. Now they've crossed the line into interfering with the "**liberty**" of regular folks. They took the liberal position to limit my ability to make my own choices. Now these goofy bulbs save electricity but give off little more 'light' than candles not to mention the trickle down effect of this "liberal" agenda is GE and others have shut down their manufacturing of this product in the United States, causing

the loss of countless good paying jobs/homes which, in turn, cuts out a great deal of tax revenue from folks no longer employed and spending into the economy and the result is greater cost to government in unemployment benefits and healthcare providing a soft landing for all the folks effected by the closure of an industry and thus more taxes on those of us left working. So, the liberal idea of saving energy is great but the effects of interfering with liberty (choice) is immense and adverse without even going into the fact that if you drop one of these on the floor you need to call a Hazmat team in to clean up the mercury from your kitchen floor or the fact that there's a neat loophole in the government's Law saying that while companies (GE) can't 'make' a 100 watt incandescent bulb in the US, they certainly can have their Indian subsidiary make them and offer them for sale at Home Depot.

This country (a former Republic - not "democracy") was founded on the premise of being left alone. Our forefathers did not want to be micro-managed from afar. They wanted the Right to "choose" their own path and lifestyle which was pretty "liberal" at the time. Unfortunately today, applied 'liberalism' inherently 'dictates' to others a divergent view and lifestyle that they must accept yet they might not choose on their own which can be summed up by Daniel Webster He said: Good intentions (in this case liberalism) will always be pleaded for any assumption of power. The Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions. There are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters, but they mean to be masters.

*For the record most of my adult life I was a republican leaning individual. These days, however, I don't trust any of the established parties as far as I can spit because both the democrats and the republicans have demonstrated again and again and again their willingness to dictate to all of us what choices we have and how we'll live. So, "**tension**"? Yes. When the state can start dictating what I have to 'accept', how I'll raise my kid, what products I'll be limited to buy or FORCED to buy and what Rights they'll allow me to enjoy then YES, "**liberalism**" causes "**tension**" with "**liberty**" and in a very real sense, "**democracy**" (if that word can be interpreted as 'freedom') dies.*