

More Views (2024)

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Though I seem to have expressed various positions in vain, I encourage you to read the “Views” document I wrote last year: see

<https://www.daveandtanner.net/views23.pdf>

I still believe what I wrote then.

I would like to think that people would not knowingly vote for liars, but disinformation abounds and may have contributed significantly to the results of this year’s election. Let me repeat my belief that it should be legally required to be easily able to find out who is paying for material not conveyed by direct speech. That would not end disinformation, but it might put some brakes on its distribution.

For-profit corporations should not be allowed to make political contributions. Though 501(c)(4) entities can make political contributions and statements, it should be possible to identify their donors and to tell the amounts of their donations. Corporations in general should not enjoy the rights of real people — only real people should have those rights.

In general, though I have specific views and beliefs, I think it best to be tolerant of other views and beliefs. Years ago, Tanner and I took my parents to visit my (step-) brother and sister-in-law, who were then living in Singapore. I was very favorably impressed with Singapore’s treatment of religion. You could believe what you wanted, but if you harmed someone whose belief differed from yours, you were dealt with severely. I think that is good policy.

When I was a child, “gay” was an innocent word, and I liked having a short last name, “Gay”. Though I am not pleased with how the word “gay” is sometimes used these days, again I think tolerance is the way to go. (If you use a stall and can close the door while you do your business, what difference does it make if the bathroom is labeled “Men” or “Women”?)

Though I have religious beliefs, I also believe that the separation of church and state is a really good idea. In particular, public money should not go to parochial schools.

Maybe I am a socialist or something else you think bad, but I am also a mathematician who wants to be better off, whence making everyone better off guarantees that I am made better off.

Things can be done well or poorly by both government and the private sector. I care mainly that things be done well, whoever does them. Either way, a system of bonuses for

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outstanding contributions might be good.

While the profit motive sometimes works well, huge disparities in earned income are a bad idea. I would highly tax any payments more than, say, ten times the payment of the lowest-paid employee. Senior managers would still earn a lot more than the lowest folks on the totem pole, but their ratio of earnings would be restrained. In general, while it should be good to earn more money, huge disparities in income are bad for society. (In my imaginary world, rich folks could still have yachts, but they might be a bit shorter.)

All income should be taxed alike; we could have a much simpler tax system. It should not be necessary to hire an accountant to do your taxes.

Corporations should be forbidden from buying their own stock (except perhaps at the price it was directly sold to an employee).

Medical records should be readily available to medical providers, in a format that they can easily understand. It should not be necessary for a patient to provide information that could be in the records.

Many problems arise or are exacerbated because there are simply too many people in the world. The conventional ways populations are reduced — war, famine, disease — are highly undesirable. The only humane way I can see to reduce the population gradually is to enforce world-wide the policy that China once had of one child per family. To that end, in my ideal world, both men and women would be made infertile after fathering or bearing one child having a suitably long life expectancy, e.g., 10 or 20 years. (Should a child die because of accident or illness, a couple would be allowed to have another child.) Such a policy might be relaxed somewhat once the population shrank to a target level, e.g., a billion people. Alas, though this is the only humane approach I can imagine, I see no chance of enforcing it any time soon. (I know many people from big families who like their families, and I like the charm of a big family, but limiting family size is the only fair approach I see, affecting all groups equally.)

Again, if you find some of my views wrong, please feel free to tell me why. My E-mail address is dmg@acm.org.

Some more explanation of the pictures in the 2024 Christmas letter...

The three ladies are nieces, Abby, Jamie, and Jordon. The kids are most of theirs (8 of 10).

I probably met Mike (M.J.D.) Powell when I was a graduate student. I visited Mike at the (now defunct) Atomic Research Establishment Harwell in England for a few weeks right after the blizzard of '78; I got there on one of the first international flights after Boston's Logan Airport reopened. (We had been housebound for a week; 6 feet of snow had fallen where I lived.) Mike became a professor at Cambridge University, and Mehi was one of his students. Mehi is Syrian, but for many years he has lived in Muscat, Oman, where he teaches at the local university. Thrice Tanner and I visited Muscat so I could attend meetings that Mehi organized.

Many of the AMPL team (I work on a modeling language called AMPL) were at the INFORMS meeting in Seattle. We had dinner together. From left to right: Dave, Bob Fourer (lives in Evanston, IL), Marcos Dominguez Velad (Spain), Meg Robert (Ontario, Canada), Christian Valente (Greece), Felipe Brandão (Portugal), Gleb Belov (Australia; he is from Russia). I stayed to work with Marcos and Gleb.