

The Bill of Natural Rights

The following rights are presented in the order of precedence. Conflicts that result between the various rights, if any, must always be resolved to favor the right that has precedence.

Clean air: Every person has a right to unpolluted air.

Fresh, pure water: Every person has a right to the access of unpolluted water for cooking and drinking supplied by publicly funded and regulated facilities that operate not for profit. Any further use/diversion of water must be limited and regulated to ensure this basic right.

Uncontaminated, balanced food: Every person has the right to basic required foods (grains, fruit and vegetables) that are free from any contaminating or unnatural substances induced from production processes (such as pesticides, chemical fertilizers, etc.) at affordable prices or by the provision of the required land to grow one's own. This includes the right to the required uncontaminated water required for growing such foods which must likewise be provided not for profit.

Clothing / Shelter: Every person has the right to minimal protection from health-threatening climate conditions at affordable prices or by the provision of materials/property and the means to build/make their own.

Health-conducive environment: Every person has the right to an environment that provides sufficient space and facilities for adequate and satisfactory exercise to promote health and well-being. Also each person must be provided a personal environment that is restful, stress-free and free of unnatural and unnecessary dangers.

Communion: Every person has the right to commune freely and easily not only with other human beings but with the natural environment of his/her surroundings. Facilities must be provided for human communal activities for all, as well as access to significant features of the surrounding natural environment (especially rivers and shorelines). This means the communities and environmental surroundings must be planned around this right.

The term 'unpolluted' in the preceding means: free of contaminants that are not naturally occurring. The term 'affordable' is understood in relation to one's ability to pay.

These rights are considered more fundamental than the political rights provided traditionally by liberal constitutions (e.g. of free speech and the right to a fair trial), although they are not likely to conflict with such rights. However, their precedence must be maintained. This would mean, for example, that the "pursuit of happiness" could not be interpreted to include activities which conflict with the natural rights listed above, even those of a single person. I.e. political and other personal rights must be limited by natural rights.

The general tenant of these rights is that they are prerequisites for the fulfillment of human potential. To deny them is to deny one's humanity.

Commentary:

The rights presented above represent ideals that are meant to guide us to a reasonable and just polity while introducing the precedence of natural rights. These are presented as rights with the clear intention of making them politically non-negotiable. No policy dispute should ever be allowed to negotiate away or dilute these rights in any respect and to any degree for the sake of attaining other political or economic goals.

Obviously, we are a very long way from realizing these principles and perhaps getting further away from them with each passing day. For example, all manner of sporting activities involving internal combustion engines are viewed today as the “right” of people to pursue their “freedom” and “happiness”. Obviously, however, these “rights” are creating a commercial reality that is jeopardizing the right to clean air and water, as well as a healthy environment in the broader sense and the dramatic elimination of the right to communion with nature. There should be no justification for this. E.g. we should not be discussing the “appropriate” or “tolerable” level of air pollution. Any level is an infringement on our natural rights. There is no argument that can justify anyone having to tolerate even the slightest level of air pollution in their environment against their will for the mere sake of someone else’s pleasure or convenience – no matter what the majority rules. And there are certainly plenty of people who, given the chance, would invoke these basic rights. Only a dire necessity (say, perhaps, civil defense and essential civil services) should ever be allowed to over-ride these principles, and then only to the extent absolutely necessary.

Also the “right” to basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, will certainly be suspected of infringing on what is perceived to be our “right” to a free market. However, **any** political system that fails to provide **all** of its subjects with basic needs must surely be viewed as a **failed** system. The formulation of these rights does not dictate the particularities of the political implementation of those rights. It does, however, define the non-negotiable goal of any just political system.

The environment and economic system we have created for ourselves in the last 200 years has all but eliminated the possibility of establishing the rights envisioned here. The advent of all sorts of privately owned devices (for transportation, sport, etc.), as well as similar commercial devices (airplanes, etc.) and manufacturing systems that create superfluous products in an inefficient manner have contributed significantly to a global level of pollution and destruction of wilderness that is clearly measurable, even visibly noticeable. This is also known to have increased significantly the number of deaths attributed to, among other things, pulmonary diseases, industrial poisoning and technological accidents. And yet, we do not have the political will to make the appropriate “sacrifices” to reverse this situation. We apparently do not see, for example, the deterioration of our most fundamental biological requirement (air) as a sacrifice! We do not consider the hundreds of thousands of people who die each year in automobile or work related accidents as enough of a sacrifice?! This is a ludicrous statement to make. Think about it. The sheer weight of the “facts on the ground” has come to imply an imperative that determines the limits of our political will against obvious, even life-threatening health hazards. This is a good indication of how necessary it is to open up this debate and take it seriously – **dead** seriously.

Proposals for how to achieve the goal of attaining these rights, both politically and economically are presented in the set of political writings associated with this document. I am not going to just complain about our situation. I do have solutions – at least, in theory. They address both short-term and long-term considerations. In particular, the following:

Framework for a Sustainable Economy: A proposal for a structural basis of a sustainable economy.

Minimal Footprint Ecotecture: A proposal for land use that would create an environment for the maximization of human cultural needs and pursuits while minimizing the impact on the natural environment. You **can** have your cake and eat it to.

Waging Peace: A proposed organizational basis for the total, personal and voluntary commitment to the realization of the principles stated in the Bill of Natural Rights.

Some Small Steps to a Political Future: Suggestions for concrete political initiatives as first steps toward the implementation of these political goals.

Self-contradictory Volitions: A politically oriented essay on the psychology of defeatist politics and an appeal to a vision that humans could be a lot happier than they are right now, if they only would learn to understand how they are defeating their own purpose.

None of these proposals appeal to a “communist” society, to anarchy, or to a rejection of all modern technology, although I’m sure that some readers will inevitably try to interpret them that way. They will, however, challenge certain well-entrenched and fanatically defended concepts. I do not shy away from suggesting that our concept of “freedom” needs to be re-evaluated. Freedom cannot mean the right of one person to deny the rights of another. Even the debate over “free speech” cannot be sacred. That does not mean these ideals should be abandoned – only that their meaning be re-examined in view of our obvious problems. Also our phobia of planning must be taken into consideration and debated – with the possible result of redefining the notion of “property”. Perhaps none of this debate will (or even could) ever lead us beyond the hardened lines we have drawn, but to deliberately avoid the debate is, I believe, a grave mistake.

Our political fore-fathers had the courage and the vision to break out into a new political order. To say that this is an impossibility today and that it is fundamentally wrong to question the basics concepts of our political system, would imply that what the founders of our nation did was equally wrong. That argument, therefore, contradicts itself.