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## **Austin intellectual proposes more liberty to cure society** | [myopenforum.com](http://myopenforum.com)

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The United States has eschewed the approach that made it great by surrendering individual liberties and looking to big government for security and prosperity, the vice president of a conservative think tank said Wednesday.

Michael Quinn Sullivan of the Texas Public Policy Foundation in Austin told two dozen people at a Midland County Young Republicans luncheon at the Petroleum Club that enhancing liberty in as many ways as possible was considered crucial by the Founding Fathers. But he said modern inattention to it has caused serious problems in education and other areas.

"Liberty is not freedom," Sullivan said. "Security and prosperity don't exist without liberty, and freedom without responsibility is anarchy."

Criticizing Texas public schools, he said they average spending \$10,000 a year per student while private schools only need \$6,800, mostly because public schools' teacher-non-teacher ratio has worsened from 5-1 in 1990 to 1-1 today.

He said public schools are able to mask their shortcomings with ever-increasing expenditures much like a rich person conceals a drug addiction longer than a poor one. "It's a highly inefficient system with skyrocketing costs," the Texas A&M University graduate said.

"Money hides inefficiencies and covers up a multitude of sins. Only 50 percent of high school students in the Rio Grande Valley are graduating."

He said parents of moderate income should not be forced to send their children to "the government school" but should be able to put them in private schools if they prefer.

Contending allegiance to ideas must take precedence over loyalty to political parties, Sullivan said a majority of Democrats on the U.S. Supreme Court were once pro-life and blocked abortion rights for women and any party will eventually espouse new purposes. "We have to have a system that empowers individuals and we must be in the business of exalting ideas over power," he said.

Sullivan said the Public Policy Foundation has greatly expanded its interests since it was founded in 1989 to seek tort reform and be involved in a handful of other issues. He noted that Midlanders Tim Dunn and Ernie Angelo are on its board of directors.

Great-great-grandson of Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Sullivan said Rush did not believe in classical democracy, calling it "mob-ocracy" and saying slavery "was the kind of thing a mob would do."

He said the Philadelphia physician bought numerous slaves for the purpose of freeing them. "Liberty is the principle that must guide all our thinking," Sullivan said.

With a dozen Midland Classical Academy students listening, he said the dependence on socialism and concomitant loss of liberties in Europe has made the economies of Germany and France moribund. "There is more freedom to start a business today in China than there is in France or Germany," said Sullivan.

In an animated fashion, he argued the success of a society and its economy depend on the simple but sometimes elusive concept of being able "to do what you're passionate about."

"You have to encourage competition and allow excellence," Sullivan said, adding the Chinese economy is expected to out-perform America's within seven years.