

## What is a Liberal?

**LIBERAL:** 1. Favorable to progress or reform. 2. free from prejudice or bigotry; tolerant of others. 3. favorable to or in accord with the policy of leaving the individual as unrestricted as possible in the opportunities for self expression or self-fulfillment. 4. advocating a representational form of government rather than aristocracies or monarchies. 5. not strict or rigorous.

**CONSERVATIVE:** 1. The disposition to preserve existing conditions or institutions. 2. opposition to innovation or change. 3. a political party characterized by a tendency to oppose change in prevailing institutions.

Liberalism is a broad class of political philosophies that consider individual liberty to be the most important political goal.

Liberalism emphasizes individual rights and equality of opportunity. Within liberalism there are various streams of thought which compete over the use of the term "liberal" and may propose very different policies, but they are generally united by their support for a number of principles, including freedom of thought and freedom of speech, limitations on the power of governments, the rule of law, an individual's right to private property, free markets, and a transparent system of government. All liberals, as well as some adherents of other political ideologies, support some variant of the form of government known as liberal democracy, with open and fair elections, where all citizens have equal rights by law.

Modern liberalism has its roots in the Age of Enlightenment and rejected many foundational assumptions that dominated most earlier theories of government, such as the Divine Right of Kings, hereditary status, established religion, and economic protectionism. Liberals argued that economic systems based on free markets are more efficient and generate more prosperity.

The first modern liberal state was the United States of America, founded on the principle that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to insure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Note: Look up underlined terms at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) for more information on these topics.