



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

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Ultra-liberal Group Pushing for “Do-Not-Junk-Mail” List

The Center for a New American Dream, an ultra-liberal “social justice” organization, claims to have helped 10,000 people sign a petition calling on Congress to establish a “Do-Not-Junk-Mail” list, modeled on the popular Do-Not-Call registry implemented this year.

While a Center for a New American Dream spokesperson called unsolicited advertising mail “an invasion of our privacy,” the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), the largest trade association for businesses interested in direct, database and interactive global marketing, replies that unsolicited advertising mail isn’t necessarily unwanted, since these advertisements often offer customers discounts and convenience they don’t generally find in stores.

In addition to the obvious regulatory burden such a list would put on marketers who would have to scrub their mailing lists against the Do-Not-Junk-Mail list, such a registry would also result in other dangers.

In order to enforce such a list the USPS would have to sort through advertising mail and distinguish between the catalog a customer wants and the unsolicited advertising sent in violation of the list. Since approximately 75% of the USPS’ expenses can be attributed to labor costs (not actual delivery of mail), the reduction in advertising mail would do little to cut the USPS’ costs, but would slash its revenues by millions.

Given the loss of revenue that would result from the millions of advertising pieces marketers would no longer be able to send, the USPS would have one place to turn to make up for the loss – postage rates. Since the USPS has a tried and true track record of raising postage rates to fund ventures such as corporate sponsorships and below-market prices in competitive products, it’s a cinch the USPS won’t hesitate to bring a rate case before the Postal Rate Commission to make up for the lost revenue and additional expense a Do-Not-Junk-Mail list would create. While the Center for a New American Dream claims in a press release that under its plan the advertising industry would fund the list, rather than taxpayers, this new regulatory expense would force advertisers to pass the additional expense on to their customers.

Between higher prices and the inevitable postage rate increase, the creation of such a list would rest very heavily on the backs of taxpayers.

The Center for a New American Dream, as well as the Direct Marketing Association, both offer fairly simple vehicles by which customers can remove their names from mailing lists for unsolicited advertising. The fact that such mechanisms already exist and are offered by the very senders of “junk mail” brings into question the need to codify such a list, maintained and enforced by government bureaucrats.

A few minutes on the Center for a New American Dream’s website (newdream.org) reveals a “social justice” group seeking to “influence the American culture and economic system in ways that will help people live in balance with their deepest values and in harmony with the Earth.”

The website “attempt[s] nothing less than a shift of American culture away from its current emphasis on consumption towards a more fulfilling, just and sustainable way of life.”

The Center for a New American Dream partners with another website called ActForChange.org, “an online journal of progressive news and opinion published by Working Assets.” That site is chock full of action items attacking President Bush from every direction, and urging a filibuster of the President’s judicial nominees.

Could it be that the group’s interest in creating a Do-Not-Junk-Mail registry results not so much from a desire to save us all a little annoyance, but as an attempt to limit the ability to advertise, one of the key components of the capitalist system to which they’re so opposed?

Regardless of their motivations, it appears these groups do have a sense of irony. What’s the first thing a web surfer sees on ActForChange.org?? A pop-up ad.