



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

I'm Free Because I Voted, Right?

by Jacob G. Hornberger

In the wake of his reelection, President Bush has announced that he remains committed to bringing democracy to the Middle East, which includes the indefinite military occupation of Iraq. In the president's mind — indeed, in the minds of most public officials in America — democracy is freedom. So, given that I voted in the recent election, that makes me free, right?

Let's see.

Government officials have the power to take away my income by simply raising the percentage of tax take to whatever extent they wish. So they have the power to destroy me by the unlimited power to tax me. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will put me in jail if I ingest substances that harm my health. Okay, not just any harmful substances — such as alcohol and tobacco — but certainly harmful substances that our public official don't approve of. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials force me to subject my children to a government-approved education. Or they force me to pay for the government-approved schooling of other people's children. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials confiscate my wealth simply by debasing the currency by printing lots of it to finance out-of-control government expenditures. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials regulate my economic activities with other people. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will punish me for traveling to non-approved countries. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will punish me if I hire an undocumented worker or even permit him to spend the night in my home. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will punish me for buying, selling, or trading with unapproved people overseas. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will punish me for engaging in an occupation or business without official permission in the form of a government license or permit. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials force me to be good, caring, and compassionate by confiscating my money in order to give it to other people. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will take my home away from me if I don't make tax payments to them. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials will deny me right to counsel, due process of law, and habeas corpus by simply labeling me an "enemy combatant" before executing me. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials start wars on the declaration of only one person, our ruler. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials can seize me against my will and force me to work for them and even send me thousands of miles away to die for them. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

Government officials can prohibit me from owning assault weapons and other means of self-defense. Just like in North Korea. But I'm free because I voted, right?

The great German thinker Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once wrote, "None are so hopelessly enslaved as those who falsely believe they are free." I wonder what he meant by that. I'm free because I voted, right?

Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

This article was originally published in November 2004.