

# Republican Perspective 1 April 2015

by Ed Manning

## Opposites Do Attract

*"I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice." Abraham Lincoln*

The conservative Koch brothers, Charles and David, are public enemy No. 1 to the liberal/progressive wing of the Democratic Party. The brothers are owners of Koch Industries that manufactures thousands of products, including Quilted Northern, Brawny and Stainmaster carpets. They employ nearly 60,000 Americans in 49 states with annual compensation and benefits totaling \$4.8 billion.

The Left's disdain is over the brothers funding of conservative and libertarian projects as well as their issues with overzealous environmentalists. The Koch's also contribute to Republican conservative political candidates. Such candidates no longer exist in today's modern Democratic Party as conservatives have been told to take a seat in the back of the bus. However, Koch says "We're not Republicans or Democrats or even libertarians; we're for people who we believe they are on balance helping the country to be better."

So it is an interesting alliance to see Charles Koch team with the liberal sugar daddy, George Soros and lesser known activist and former Administration Green Jobs czar, Van Jones to support criminal justice reform. His interest stems from a 1995 Texas case where an employee alleged that four other employees had covered up a chemical pollution infraction.

Prosecutors told Koch to fire the four employees so they could be charged and convicted. If doing so, Koch Industries would not suffer. Koch said no and litigated the case for six years and got 97 felony charges dropped but paid a hefty \$10 million settlement. Koch offered "If that can happen with us, with all our resources and what we did to defend our people, what happens to people in a company that doesn't defend them?"

Koch's general counsel, Mark Holden is leading the effort on criminal justice reform. Holden joined with Van Jones in his #Cut50 Bipartisan Summit to explore strategies to reduce American incarcerated population by 50% over the next ten years. The US has the largest prison population in the world.

Koch has unofficially teamed with George Soros on the prison reform effort. Both have donated to the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers with grants for training lawyers who represent the disadvantaged and those in need. "The use of the criminal

law to solve problems has just gone too far,” says Chris Stone, president of George Soros’ Open Society Foundations. “This is not about the libertarian right or the left. It’s about common sense.”

Holden has made the views of his boss known. He has stated that too many non-violent offenders have been sent to prison for too long. One in four adults in the US now have criminal records. Routine background checks by employers have made it extremely difficult for an individual with a criminal record to get a job. Thousands of ex-offenders have been denied voting rights even though they have paid their debt to society.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle seem to have shown a willingness to address reform. Republican Senator Ted Cruz and a 2016 Presidential hopeful, along with Utah Republican Mike Lee have joined with Democrats Corey Booker, Dick Durbin and Patrick Leahy to reintroduce the Smarter Sentencing Act. Should this become law it would give federal judges more discretion in sentencing non-violent drug offenses.

While criminal justice reform finds a right-left alliance, the Koch’s have no such expectations of finding common ground with the extreme environmentalists who control the Democratic Party agenda.