

Grassroots Lobbying Does Not Work: A Review of Chris Cantwell's "Anarcho-Lobbyist" Series (Season One)

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Statists have always told libertarians that if we don't like the law, we should work to change it. Unfortunately, what this means is that if individuals want to secure their liberty, they must do so by begging for it from those tyrants who imagine themselves to be our rulers. Worse, some opportunists use this dynamic in order to put themselves on this week's [news cycle](#), in order to further their own self-aggrandizement. As the Austrian economists put it, [human action is purposeful behavior](#), yet, what behavior can be said to be purposeful if the actors are doing the same things over and over again, all the while expecting different results?

Grassroots political movements used to be all the rage in years past. During the 2008 banker bailouts, Americans witnessed the rise of the Tea Partiers, which the Ron Paul supporters originally began, but was then hijacked by disgruntled conservative fascists not long after. Following the 2011 Arab Spring, [freegans](#) and Greenbackers organized [street demonstrations](#) on Wall Street in New York City, yet, these too were quickly co-opted by disenchanted progressive communists.



Both the Tea Partiers and Occupiers of Wall Street ultimately issued demands for the government to act on their behalf in some way. Whether by [petitioning](#) or [writing "their" congresscritters](#), the Tea Partiers and Occupiers attempted to redress their grievances by way of government, that is, through [the political means of making money](#). If our enemy really is [the State](#), then why do these political activists seek to curry favor with despots?

I suspect it is because they aspired to become the newest "special interests" by seeking reform, not abolition, of the State. Notice, for instance, the antipathy expressed by the Tea Partiers against cannabis, or the Occupiers against firearms. Worse yet, the response by most American patriots and libertarians to this [controlled opposition](#) is to support grassroots lobbying organizations, whether it be ones like [Gun Owners of America](#) (GOA) or the [National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws](#) (NORML), in order to shrink the power of government.

A related underlying presumption here seems to be that if a man is opposed to the nationally organized

grassroots lobbyists who want privileges bestowed upon them by the federal government, then he should refocus himself towards more “local” government, such as the municipality, county, or even provincial... *ahem*... “state” government he happens to be subject to the jurisdiction thereof. Some of the Free Staters in New Hampshire have “watch-dogged” the governments in Keene, Cheshire County, and Concord, and upon discovering the activities of the politicians, they started begging their local rulers to please be nicer to the body politic, as the [New Hampshire Liberty Alliance](#) (NHLA) has done.

Let me draw a rather significant distinction here regarding watch-dogging and grassroots lobbying. Merely attending public meetings and bearing witness to the daily routine of the State (as [Shane Radliff has done](#) recently with both [the legislative](#) and [judicial branches of the McLean County government](#) in Illinois), if done with the sincere intention of directly experiencing only what the State actually *does*, rather than believing through blind faith the incoherent civics nonsense spewed by the government propagandists known as “[public school teachers](#),” fails to compromise one’s integrity in the cause for liberty. Grassroots lobbyists, I think, aspire to eventually infiltrate the State in order to turn it against itself; if such an absurd idea were to be taken seriously at all, it should first be experimented with, as Stefan Molyneux suggested, by [infiltrating the Mafia with the explicit goal of turning it into the United Way](#).

Six months ago, in January of 2015, [Christopher Cantwell](#) began a new video series uniquely entitled, “[Anarcho-Lobbyist](#),” which is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the various flavors of hyphenated anarchism. In each episode, Cantwell usually approaches a desk, sits down, and then proceeds to tell a New Hampshire legislative committee exactly what he thought about whatever bill was being considered by them, including whether he supported it or not. Obviously, as you might be able to guess, I enjoyed his antics for its [comedic value](#), to say nothing of the fairly cogent arguments underpinning his coy use of language.

Once I began evaluating his influence upon legislators, I noticed that I had also been subtly making unfounded assumptions regarding his motivations. Leaving absolutely nothing to chance, I decided to remove all supposition by calling in to the April 27th live stream of Cantwell’s [rebranded](#) podcast, [Radical Agenda](#), which is about “common sense extremism,” as he describes it. During this [third episode](#), I specifically asked him as to what his intentions were behind his pilgrimages to Concord [any mistakes in transcription are solely the fault of this humble blogger]:

Kyle Rearden: *I was curious about your Anarcho-Lobbyist series. When you started it, and the subsequent videos that have rounded it out, were you attempting to influence legislators, or were you more just trying to kinda empirically demonstrate that grassroots lobbying does not work?*

Chris Cantwell: *Well, I suppose there’s a couple of angles here, right? I take a certain amount of pleasure in going there and ranting before the legislature, some people seem to take an interest in it, I get to comment on policy, and whatnot. I do believe that some of these people have taken a great deal of interest in what I’ve said. I have yet to see if it actually tends to influence policy. I’d like it to influence policy, whenever I go in there and I say, “Hey, I shouldn’t have to have a permit to carry a gun.” I really do, I sincerely hope, that these guys say, “Hey, he’s right, and we’ll repeal that,” and I hope that that happens, but if it turns out that these bills are getting defeated and that sort of thing, then we can see that it does not work. So, I’m going in there and doing it, and waiting to see what happens, more or less.*

Think for a moment about the implications about what he just admitted. Cantwell, more or less, wants to have his cake and eat it too, quite possibly. On the one hand, he wants to “influence policy,” which *is* reformism (that is, “working within the system in order to change it from within”), yet on the other hand, he appears comfortable in, say, taking one for the team, by demonstrating on video that grassroots lobbying these politicians does not work *if* the goal is to secure individual liberty. Although I can certainly appreciate his wait-and-see attitude, I find this to be an expression of [wishful thinking](#), in that he seems to me to be presuming that if he is (marginally) successful in influencing legislators to shrink the power of government, then grassroots lobbying would not only become a technique worth doing, but also one worth being emulated by other libertarians outside of New Hampshire.

Earlier this month on June 5th, I called again, this time onto the [fourteenth broadcast of Radical Agenda](#), in specific preparation for this article:

Kyle Rearden: *Howdy Chris!, I wanted to first ask you if you had intended to make any more of those Anarcho-Lobbyist videos?*

Chris Cantwell: *I certainly do intend to, and as a matter of fact, I've got some good news on that front. That series was sort of dependant on...for awhile, I had a couple of problems with my vehicle. I knew I could fix them myself, but during the wintertime here, it was just too cold out for me to work on my car, so I back-burnered it, and I was uninspected and stuff, so to go to the capitol city of New Hampshire with my uninspected vehicle was sort of something prohibited and I was reliant on other people for that. I just today managed to get all the problems with my vehicle fixed, and I got my vehicle inspected, so I'll keep an eye on the House calendar, and when interesting things come up, I will be going up there, whether people want to come with me, or not.*

Kyle Rearden: *Well, part of the reason I wanted to ask you about that, Chris, was because I'm a blogger, and I had an article idea about writing a review of your Anarcho-Lobbyist series, but I did not want to write an article about something that is still going to have more episodes upcoming, so if you're going to have more episodes, I guess I could hold off on that, for the time being.*

Chris Cantwell: *Well, if you feel you have commentary on something that is already out there, you are certainly welcome to write any commentary you see fit, but I do intend to go back up to Concord. There's a certain period of time, and I don't entirely understand it myself, like, when I was doing them every week, there was a certain period of time when there was more of these things going on. When all the bills are first getting introduced, and the most interesting stuff is on the front burner, and that period has now passed, so some of the stuff that's going on is not necessarily as interesting. Some of the stuff I testified on is now being voted on in the House and Senate, and I don't really just wanna sit on the House floor and listen to these idiots argue with each other. There's not going to be as much of it, certainly, but there's still committee hearings and that sort of thing. I will be going up there, and you will see more Anarcho-Lobbyist, and when it comes back around next year, or more accurately, when that period comes this year, I might say more accurately (oh, well, I was doing them **this** year, or was it **last** year?)...anyway, when it comes around again, then I'll certainly have them out rapid fire, but it's gonna be a little slower. I'll be there in any case until that time.*

Kyle Rearden: So, maybe, Chris, should I call it, “Season One” of Anarcho-Lobbyist versus “Season Two” in a sense, kinda like a television series, then?

Chris Cantwell: That wouldn't be a terribly inaccurate way to put it [*inaudible*] “holiday special,” that kind of thing? We definitely had the most rapid fire period of it, it was during this period of time when all the most interesting bills are being testified on, so that would be sorta like season one and season two will be another set of rapid fire issues where we'll be going in there and talking about a lot of important things very quickly. I'm gonna be keeping an eye on the House and Senate calendars. If there are things that are worth going up there and talking about, now I'm at a point where I don't have to rely on anybody else. I can just go shoot up there and go whenever I want. We'll be back.

Notice that he announced here his intentions to make more installments of the Anarcho-Lobbyist series in the near future. Not only that, but he also acknowledged that the ones he's made up until now could be thought of as a collection unto themselves, hence my referencing of them as “Season One.” In other words, the parameters of my review of his series are limited to this already released collection.

Briefly put, correlation does not imply causation. Just because there is no way to prove, from the available data sets, that Cantwell's lobbying *caused* the legislators to vote on the bills the way he wanted them to (because had their decisions been more in line with what he wanted, it still could just as easily have been due to coincidence), what my review can determine is whether Cantwell's lobbying is *correlated* to legislative decision-making.

Season One of the Anarcho-Lobbyist series was uploaded between January 30th to April 8th, encompassing 23 videos about 22 legislative bills, simply because HB 407 was the featured bill for both the February 11th and March 26th videos. A table of contents for Season One is as follows [dates follow a yy/mm/dd format]:

- 150130: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Bitcoin Regulators](#)
- 150131: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. E-Verify](#)
- 150131: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Vehicle Inspections](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Campaign Finance Reform](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Stricter Voter Registration](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Voter Registration Sharing](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Absentee Ballots](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist on Ballot Access](#)
- 150205: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Open Primaries](#)
- 150211: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Minimum Wage](#)
- 150211: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Police Militarization](#)
- 150213: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for Constitutional Convention](#)
- 150213: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. State Lobbyists](#)
- 150213: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Poker Regulators](#)

- 150218: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Drug Prohibition](#)
- 150219: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for Bitcoin in Payment of Taxes](#)
- 150221: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Civil Asset Forfeiture](#)
- 150223: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for Repealing Texting While Driving Ban](#)
- 150224: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for Jury Nullification](#)
- 150325: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for Constitutional Carry](#)
- 150326: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Police Militarization, Round 2](#)
- 150327: [Anarcho-Lobbyist for an Article V Convention](#)
- 150408: [Anarcho-Lobbyist vs. Casino Corporatism](#)

As you can no doubt tell, the political subject matter varied quite a bit, making it at least halfway decent for the variability of the overall data set. Listed here, in chronological order, are the corresponding bills to each of the videos (HB 407 is listed only once):

- [HB 356](#): Bitcoin Regulators
- [HB 267](#): E-Verify
- [HB 387](#): Vehicle Inspections
- [HB 649](#): Campaign Finance
- [HB 627](#): Stricter Voter Registration
- [HB 620](#): Voter Registration Sharing
- [HB 659](#): Absentee Ballot
- [HB 665](#): Ballot Access
- [HB 652](#): Open Primary
- [HB 370](#): Minimum Wage
- [HB 407](#): [Police Militarization](#)
- [HCR 1](#): Constitutional Convention
- [HB 300](#): State Lobbyists
- [HB 445](#): Poker Regulators
- [HB 618](#): [Drug Prohibition](#)
- [HB 552](#): Bitcoin in Payment of Taxes
- [HB 475](#): [Civil Asset Forfeiture](#)
- [HB 426](#): Repeal “Texting While Driving” Ban
- [HB 470](#): [Jury Nullification](#)
- [SB 116](#): [Constitutional Carry](#)
- [HB 148](#): Article V Convention
- [SB 113](#): Casino Corporatism

In terms of my research design, measuring Cantwell’s effectiveness at influencing legislators can be easily determined by matching his support or opposition to a bill relative to whether the bill in question survived the legislative process at all, and if it did, discovering its current status. Put another way, Cantwell’s

advocacy in his videos can be measured against what the legislative committees eventually decided to do about the bills before them.

The results were quite revealing, to say the least. From the overall sample size of 22 bills, Cantwell's lobbying can be summarized thusly:

- For ($n = 14$)
 - HB 356: Retained in committee [**lose**]
 - HB 387: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 665: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 652: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 407: Ought to pass [**win**]
 - HB 300: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 445: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 618: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 552: Retained in committee [**lose**]
 - HB 475: Retained in committee [**lose**]
 - HB 426: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - HB 470: Inexpedient to legislate [**lose**]
 - SB 116: Ought to pass [**win**]
 - HB 148: Enrolled [**win**]

- Against ($n = 8$)
 - HB 267: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - HB 649: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - HB 627: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - HB 620: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - HB 659: Retained in committee [**win**]
 - HB 370: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - HCR 1: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]
 - SB 113: Inexpedient to legislate [**win**]

Assuming that "inexpedient to legislate" and "retained in committee" mean that the bills died in committee, then initial analysis reveals that only 3 of the 22 bills survived being in committee; in other words, 19 bills died in committee. Cantwell advocated for the passage of 14 bills, and opposed 8 other bills. All 8 of those bills died in committee, yet 11 bills Cantwell favored died as well, which means that those 3 bills that survived the committees were all supported by Cantwell; even then, only 1 has been scheduled for a floor debate.

In terms of success ratios, this means that Cantwell was batting 1:1 (100%) against those bills he opposed, yet only 3:14 (21%) in favor of those bills he supported. Averaging them out amongst the entire 22 bill sample, what this means is that Chris Cantwell's success ratio, overall, for the entirety of Season One, was 1:2 (50%). What this means is that a correlation between Cantwell's grassroots lobbying and the

fate of a bill is not observable, because the probability is literally that of a [coin toss](#), that is, random chance. In other words, **there is no observable effect grassroots lobbying had on New Hampshire's legislative process at all** within these measured samples.

[Hitchens' razor](#) says that the burden of proof lies only with the claim maker; skeptics are not required to provide evidence disproving the claims in question in order to be correct. Yet, in the interests of furthering everyone's remedial political education, I have found it both illustrative and necessary to go above and beyond the call of duty, as it were, and explore whatever proof is available, especially including that which debunks reformism. In this critique of grassroots lobbying, my only interest lies in discovering the truth of such lobbying's effectiveness in shrinking or abolishing whatever elements of government that are realistically possible.

Not only has causation not been proved by reformists, but in fact, the Anarcho-Lobbyist's first season appears to suggest that even correlation is irrelevant. This likely means that legislative advocacy organizations, such as the NHLA, are at best, irrelevant to mainstream political decision-making. In light of this revelation, I wouldn't be surprised if such a result were eventually proved to also be accurate here in Texas, simply because the legislature here in Austin is less accessible than the one in Concord, in part due to the fact that Texan legislators don't allow open carry at their capitol building, unlike in Concord where Cantwell demonstratively proved open carry as being tolerable to the New Hampshire legislators inside their own capitol building without undue incident from the government police.

My working hypothesis, as implied by the title of this article, is that grassroots lobbying does not work, simply because legislators seek to always increase the power of government. The only real problem with this hypothesis, even if objectively true, is that it assumes a causation that cannot be measured from the already presented data set. All that this data can show, at most, is whether or not a correlation existed between Cantwell's lobbying and legislative committee actions. As already demonstrated, there is not any observable correlation between these two variables, since Cantwell's overall success ratio is literally that of a coin toss.

In light of this truth, Cantwell might as well have stayed home and the probability would have remained exactly the same; however, this does beg the question as to the value of the work he put into Season One of the Anarcho-Lobbyist series. Although Cantwell incurred [opportunity costs](#), what he was able to accomplish was bringing *transparency* to the very act of grassroots lobbying itself through both his articles and videos, thereby surpassing the NHLA by leaps and bounds in this regard. Without Cantwell's efforts at transparency, I wouldn't have been able to review his attempts at lobbying, and judge its efficacy accordingly; for that alone, I thank him quite profusely.

Truth be told, using the scientific method does entail the repeatability of experiments, so should anyone else, especially those who believe in reformism, be interested in mimicking Cantwell's Anarcho-Lobbyist series, preferably with a larger sample size and a more consistent bibliography than he kept, I'd certainly encourage them to do so. My hope is that how I collected and analyzed the data here provides a good example in how to gather such evidence for a data set, and especially the importance of follow-up once the legislature has had enough time to make its decisions, especially regarding committee actions.

Long-term strategic and methodological considerations need better efficacy than that of random chance if anyone is serious about securing their liberties. Once the wheat has been separated from the chaff, and the latter thrown into the dustbin of failed political action, then perhaps Americans will be more willing to examine the wheat that is left and see what it has to offer. Whether such wheat has a reliable historical track record, or is just experimental, such a class of tactics should be given serious consideration, rather than just dismissively ignored in favor of the chaff that promises nothing but repeated failures. If indeed Ludwig von Mises was correct that human action is purposeful behavior, then the best way, as I see it, of

honoring his legacy is to debunk reformism and its failed techniques for the counterproductive distraction that it is.

At this juncture, given what I've just shown about grassroots lobbying, it is probably accurate to say that anyone who recommends libertarians to speak in front of any legislative body, with the intention of trying to persuade the legislators to please be nicer to the population-at-large, is someone who is very naïve about the nature of the situation we are all suffering under, which is, namely, statism. Consider [William Wolf's unsuccessful attempt](#), back in February of 2014, at requesting the Gallatin County Commissioners to form a three-member panel in order to investigate government corruption in Montana. Although one could argue that this was an isolated case, consider also the advocacy by some to use any opportunity to speak in front of a legislative body as their own [personal bully pulpit](#).

Rather than beleaguer the sopping wet pathetic failure that reformism is any further, I would like to briefly suggest a few alternatives to grassroots lobbying. Escaping the State through such legal remedies as [cancelling your voter registration](#) (or quite possibly, expatriation), is far more effective than begging the rulers for [scraps from the King's table](#). Sam Konkin's agorist philosophy and counter-economic methods promise a way for people to [civily disobey](#) the rulers while side-stepping the alleged necessity for [legal defense fund scams](#) (for the most part). Arguably, if [libertarian vigilantes](#) were able to retain both their guns and privacy, then they would possess the means to win all their other freedoms back, not unlike the [Polish resistance](#) of last century.

Lobbying, whether grassroots or otherwise, is *not* "fighting." Much like [protesting](#), it's a form of begging, albeit, more dignified begging. I don't know about the rest of you all, but as for me, I'd rather exercise my own [natural liberty](#) without asking permission, rather than wasting a single moment of my valuable time in the physical presence of those delusional predators by groveling before them like a sniveling coward.

Postscript: *I'd like to acknowledge and thank [Shane Radliff](#) for his help in tracking down the remainder of the legislative bills so I could discover what their current status was, for without that knowledge, this article would not have been possible in fairly judging the efficacy of the Anarcho-Lobbyist series thus far.*