



Who Owns the Cato Institute? Billionaire Koch Brothers Seek Majority Control Via Lawsuit

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Billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch could gain control of the libertarian Cato Institute if they win a lawsuit filed on Wednesday.

According to the [suit](#) (PDF), the Kochs currently own 50 percent of the shares in the institute under a shareholder agreement, and co-founder Ed Crane owns 25 percent. At issue is ownership of the remaining 25 percent once held by one-time chairman William Niskanen, who died in October. The [Associated Press](#), the [Los Angeles Times](#), [Politico](#) and the Washington Post blog [ThinkTanked](#) have stories.

The Kochs say Niskanen's 25 percent should be offered for sale to the institute, rather than passed on to his surviving wife. The Kochs contend they are entitled to buy the Niskanen shares, in proportion to their shares in the corporation, if the Cato Institute declines to purchase them.

Crane apparently opposes the Kochs. In a statement, he said the suit represents an effort to "transform an independent, nonpartisan research organization into a political entity that might better support [the Koch] partisan agenda."