

PENSITO REVIEW

Tea Party Professor Who Defeated Cantor Flubs Interview on First Day

David Brat also runs a foundation that promotes the fantastical economic theories of Ayn Rand

Jon Ponder
June 11, 2014

Note to Prof. Dave Brat, the newly nominated tea party candidate for the Virginia district currently held by Majority Leader Eric Cantor: College professors get to choose topics for discussion in class, but candidates — just like elected officials — must be able to answer whatever questions the media throws their way.

Brat made a poor showing today in one of his first national interviews:

In his interview with MSNBC's Chuck Todd Brat punted when Todd asked him both about the minimum wage and Syria.

“Let me ask you a few other issue questions. Where are you on the minimum wage? Do you believe in it and would you raise it?” Todd asked.

“Minimum wage, no, I'm a free market guy,” Brat responded. “Our labor markets right now are already distorted from too many regulations. I think Cato estimates there's \$2 trillion of regulatory problems and then throw Obamacare on top of that, the work hours is 30 hours a week. You can only hire 50 people. There's just distortion after distortion after distortion and we wonder why our labor markets are broken.”

Todd then pressed Brat on the question.

“Um, I don't have a well-crafted response on that one,” Brat finally conceded. “All I know is if you take the long-run graph over 200 years of the wage rate, it cannot differ from your nation's productivity. Right? So you can't make up wage rates.”

The exchange was pretty similar when Brat was asked about arming Syrian rebels.

“On a foreign policy issue, arming the Syrian rebels. Would you be in favor of that?” Todd asked.

“Hey, Chuck, I thought we were just going to chat today about the celebratory aspects,” Brat said. “I'd love to go through all of this but my mind is — I love all the policy questions but I just wanted to talk about the victory ahead and I wanted to thank

everybody that worked so hard on my campaign. I'm happy to take policy issues at any time, I just wanted to call out a thanks to everybody today."

And then there is this:

Brat is also the director of the school's BB&T Moral Foundations of Capitalism Program, a bank-branded program intended to give "free-market principles" — and Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism in particular — a leg up in the classroom.

The program was started by the Branch Banking and Trust Company (BB&T), a North Carolina-based financial services company which currently boasts \$184.7 billion in assets...

[Former BB&T CEO John] Allison, who currently serves as president and CEO of the conservative Cato Institute, has had a long public history as [an Ayn] Rand disciple. In Allison's telling, the college programs were funded because BB&T had become concerned that "free-market principles" were being dismissed by "most intellectuals," and because "we wanted Rand's ideas to be heard in the academic community." So BB&T began giving out money. By 2012, the bank had sponsored 68 programs at universities in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern states.

The Cato Foundation was called the Charles Koch Foundation when it was founded in 1974.