



DeMint Dismisses Cato, ATR Criticism

By: Luca Gattoni-Celli – April 9, 2013

Jim DeMint spoke for half an hour today at the Heritage Foundation, introducing himself as the powerful conservative think tank's new president and laying out his vision for its future. He said "competitive federalism" is an important element of Heritage's research and messaging strategy as various states and the federal government confront fiscal and economic challenges. The differing fortunes of the states were also offered as an illustration of DeMint's belief that the inevitable failures of progressive policies must be contrasted with sound conservative principle. The takeaway message was characteristically steadfast: "We're not changing what we've done, we're just building on it."

He then took questions from the audience (mostly interns and journalists). The first solicited his response to criticism from the Cato Institute and Americans for Tax Reform, traditional allies, regarding Heritage's forthcoming immigration report. Complaining about a report they haven't seen yet? "That sounds like Washington," he quipped, before giving a twofold response. First, DeMint asserted that the immigration bill is being written "behind closed doors" by special interests, "big labor and big business," adding, "What we believe at Heritage is it should be an open and transparent process." Ergo, the skepticism.

Moreover, DeMint seeks a credible promise that system will be fixed before some form of amnesty is granted, lest the policy failure of the late 1980s repeat. Expressing doubt about the current compromise, DeMint promised his organization's cost analysis would be uniquely comprehensive, but did not go into specifics. "We'll talk about that when the report comes out."