

## *Protesters: Save Cato from the Koch Brothers*

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SOURCE: Campus Progress / Emily Crockett

***Liberals and libertarians alike oppose the billionaires' takeover.***

A handful of activists protested to “Save the Cato Institute” outside the Washington, DC lobbying headquarters of Koch Industries this week.

The billionaire Koch brothers—David and Charles Koch—have filed a lawsuit attempting to gain control over the nonpartisan, libertarian-leaning think tank, a move which Cato’s president Ed Crane has called a “hostile takeover.”

“The Koch brothers are a threat to democracy and opportunity in this country,” said protester Elodie Huttner. “They have a clear pattern of trying to buy elections.”

The organizers of the protest might seem strange bedfellows to Cato—Common Cause and United Republic, both nonpartisan but liberal-leaning nonprofits devoted to fighting the influence of money in politics.

“We may disagree or agree with certain things that Cato says,” said United Republic communications coordinator and former ThinkProgress blogger Zaid Jilani. “But we agree that Cato is an independent voice for great analysis in Washington, DC, and we don’t think that they should be taken over by the Kochs and turned into another blindly pro-Republican, pro-corporate shill-tank.”

While the newly formed United Republic is staffed by several former employees of the Center for American Progress, our parent organization, including former Campus Progress director David Halperin, the organization has a mission to investigate influence-peddling by special interests on both sides of the aisle, from Democratic groups that support for-profit colleges to the Republican-sympathizing Heritage Foundation.

“One of the huge problems in Washington, DC is that a lot of our ‘think-tanks’ have been turned into ‘do-tanks,’” Jilani said. “They don’t engage in independent research and analysis to inform the public; they engage in political activity on behalf of a certain candidate or political party. But Cato has been remarkably good at staying above the fray.”

Whether the good feelings were shared by Cato is unclear.

Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at Cato, [told Roll Call](#): “Thanks, but no thanks. We don’t have any complaints with money in politics; the more money in politics, the better.”

Jilani said several friends at Cato privately supported the rally, though none ultimately showed up on Tuesday.

While the motives of the protesters and Cato likely diverge, their goal is the same—keeping Cato independent. Most agree that if the Koch brothers take over, that won’t be an option.

*Emily Crockett is a staff writer with Campus Progress. Follow her on Twitter @emilycrockett.*