

Cato Institute, Rasmussen poll results said politically biased

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The Cato Institute and Rasmussen polls are often cited by conservatives that support certain social and political ideas, so are these organizations non-biased and their results to be trusted? Some critics don't think so.

[The Cato Institute](#) gives this definition of itself: "The Cato Institute is the foremost upholder of the idea of liberty in the nation that is the foremost upholder of the idea of liberty." - George F. Will

Despite its pronouncements about being non partisan, critics declare the Cato Institute is as non-partisan as Fox News, a media outlet owned by J. Rupert Murdoch and is said by those critics to have an established political agenda, that is conservative and slanted towards the beliefs of its funding sources. These same critics, like Sourcewatch, maintain funding sources provide the direction for the Institute's results.

And who are these funding sources? Tobacco companies are strong advocates of the Cato Institute, especially R.J. Reynolds. [Sourcewatch](#) quotes Reynolds executive declarations that Cato Institute can be relied upon as a friend of the tobacco industry. The Cato Institute is also favored by Koch Industries, backed by Ed and David Koch, brothers in oil and gas and among the wealthiest in America that favor conservative, Republican candidates while espousing certain libertarian causes such as gay marriage.. The Cato Institute is on record as against Social Security, climate change fundamentals, welfare, and other socially progressive programs with many of its members directly involved in companies that foster opposition to or abolition of environmental regulation, according to experts. Charles Koch is one of the founders of the Institute established in 1977.

Koch's intense dislike and campaigns against Barack Obama have been examined by a number of newspaper critics. [Andrew Ferguson](#) points out, "The brothers provide a unified field theory to explain the otherwise inexplicable: Where did all these Tea Partyers come from — denouncing President Obama, lacerating policies that were designed for their benefit? With the Kochs "uncovered," the answer was clear. The Tea Partyers were being used. They weren't heartless, just dumb."

The Rasmussen poll, like the Cato Institute, is seen by some analysts also as a conservative, largely Republican group whose poll questions are set up to solicit, and obtain, conservative opinions. This is true even though Cato Institute promotes itself as libertarian. There is some controversy about its leanings, but as [Nate Silver](#) of the New York Times observes, "What it does mean, though, is that when you're evaluating the polls in a particular race, you need to take an especially long look at who's



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Cato Institute opposes many of the tenets of the Democratic Party and especially Obama and is an organization backed by, among others, the wealthy oil and gas barons, David and Ed Koch

conducting them. If you tell me that the latest poll has the Republican up by two points in Colorado, that's going to mean one thing if it's Research 2000 telling me that and quite another if it's Rasmussen.”

Rasmussen polls were [cited 94 times by Fox News](#) prior to the 2010 midterm elections and overstated potential Republican votes, according to Nate Silver of the New York Times as reported by Media Matters. Media Matters goes on to say that this should raise suspicion about motivation with respect to Rasmussen polls.

Rasmussen and the Cato Institute frequently present polls negative to Obama. For example, the Cato Institute declared Obama's administration's direction and [over-expansion of regulation](#) and his budget plans unacceptable. Critics, as noted above, question the results of their reports based on their demonstrations of political bias, noting that the Cato Institute has been in favor of the conservative orientation toward deregulation in the environmental, business and oil and gas industries. They want to remove many of the EPA regulations as advanced by Obama that control carbon emissions, as an example, according to those experts reviewing Cato Institute reports and see them as biased.

Virginia Miori, Ph.D., assistant professor of decision and system sciences at [Saint Joseph's University](#) in Philadelphia and an expert on predictive analytics, maintains this type of finding is commensurate with other findings that reflect problems caused by bias.

“Surveys and polls are known for problems with bias even in the best cases,” she says.

What determines a poll's accuracy has to do with the methodology used and the size of the sampling.

“Simply stated, the polling agencies (like those reviewed by Silver of the New York Times) did not question the right combination of individuals,” says Miori. “In addition, a particular polling agency will be very likely to ask

questions biased toward the results they are seeking.”

The following is a list of forums for May 2011 of the Cato Institute giving at a glimpse the organization's present interests through a brief listing of upcoming forums listed on the organizational website and scheduled for May 2011: May 2, 2011

Rehabilitating Lochner: Defending Individual Rights against Progressive Reform

Cato Book Forum, 4:00 pm May 4, 2011

Climate Coup: Global Warming's Invasion of Our Government and Our Lives

Cato Book Forum, 4:00 pm May 5, 2011

The Arab Awakening and Its Implications

Cato Policy Forum, 4:00 pm

May 9, 2011

The Moral Implications of Deficits, Debt, and the Budget Battles Ahead

Cato Policy Forum, 4:00 pm

Both Rasmussen and the Cato Institute declare their political orientation to be either libertarian or impartial.