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## Heritage Tacks Left on Immigration

By [David Weigel](#)

Actually, the news that Stephen Moore is [joining the Heritage Foundation](#) as chief economist can be interpreted in all sorts of ways. Moore's trip on the center-right/right carousel has spun him from Heritage to the Cato Institute to the Club for Growth to the *Wall Street Journal*, and now to Heritage again, as the think tanker with the most familiarity with Fox News' green room. The immigration issue only warrants a graf in Rob Bluey's in-house news-break:

Last year in a *Wall Street Journal* column, Moore [took issue](#) with Heritage Foundation President Jim DeMint's characterization of the late Milton Friedman's view of immigration. Moore said he discussed the issue with DeMint recently.

Discussed? Discussed? What did they say? Moore, a disciple of the optimistic economist Julian Simon, explained in that Friedman column that conservatives were getting immigration all wrong, and that economists could 'splain it to them.

In 1984, when I was working at the Heritage Foundation, I surveyed the top 75 economists in the country on their views on the economics of immigration. There are few issues that economists agree on so universally: The views of the Keynesians and free marketers ran equally about 9 to 1 in favor of immigration.

Friedman responded to the survey by saying that "legal and illegal immigration has a very positive impact on the U.S. economy." He believed that one of the most powerful forces of freedom was that people could "move across borders and vote with their feet." He wholly rejected the idea that immigrants are undesirable because they compete with Americans for jobs and lower wages. The free enterprise system, he argued, "created the high wages in the first place."

Moore has been on this beat for the better part of two decades. In his Cato days, [he attacked](#) "immigration myths" such as "immigrants depress wages" and "immigrants impose a financial burden on taxpayers." At that time, there was no major immigration bill moving through Congress (then run entirely by Republicans). Right now, all the House needs to do is bring up and pass a new bill in order for a conference committee to come up with a comprehensive

reform. Unless the "discussion" between DeMint and Moore was about why Moore should give himself an electric shock if ever he felt like discussing immigration, this hire marks a big departure from the Heritage of Jason Richwine.

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