

## ***Koch Industries and Koch brothers are assets to state***

By [Dolph C. Simons, Jr.](#)  
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What is it, or why is it, that the name Koch, particularly here in Lawrence and Kansas, seems to trigger such angry, passionate and negative responses from a certain segment of the community, particularly among some at Kansas University?

Charles and David Koch operate Koch Industries, the second-largest privately owned company in the United States. They have two brothers, Fred and Bill, and, in the 1980s and '90s, the four brothers were engaged in a long, bitter and costly legal fight to determine who would take control of the company that had been founded and nurtured by their father, Fred Koch. Eventually, Charles and David assumed control of the giant firm. Fred now lives elsewhere and concentrates on art collecting and philanthropy; Bill also lives elsewhere and focuses on other businesses, sailing and being a collector.

Since Charles and David assumed leadership of the Wichita-based company, Koch has enjoyed phenomenal growth throughout the United States and in at least 60 other countries. Today, the company employs approximately 67,000 people.

In Kansas, Koch has close to 3,000 employees, pays millions in taxes and supports a wide variety of charities.

The answer to the question at the beginning of this column is that the Kochs are conservatives, some would say "ultra conservatives." They support organizations such as the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, Americans for Prosperity and Freedom Works. Their critics have been quick to try to fault them for supposedly funneling money to the tea party movement. Some say the brothers have given more than \$100 million to these conservative organizations.

Charles and David Koch have been the lightning rods for liberal, anti-conservative forces in this country, and it is that likely liberal-leaning faculty members and administrators at KU, as well as at many other universities, have been critical of the Kochs in order to keep peace with their staffs.

The sad, phony or hard-to-understand part of this situation is that the two Koch brothers attribute the success of their family-owned business to the guiding principles espoused by their market-based management philosophy.

These principles are: integrity, confidence, value creation, principled entrepreneurship, customer focus, knowledge, change, humility, respect and fulfillment. They are pretty good principles to live by and to use when owning and operating a business — also pretty good principles for teachers and school administrators to keep in mind.

Some say it is wrong for a company such as Koch to spend so much money supporting conservative causes, but why should they be criticized or silenced when so many other groups such as organized labor, ultra-liberal environmentalists, teachers unions, the American Medical Association, the Chamber of Commerce, Obama forces, George Soros and others are spending millions upon millions supporting their own causes, usually diametrically counter to the conservative efforts of the Kochs?

It's likely that in a company as large as Koch Industries, there have been causes in which there have been violations of some kind, even fines, but Koch runs a clean operation and offers good jobs.

In fact, one of their ranch operations, Beaverhead in Montana, has received numerous environmental awards. Yes, the company owns and operates giant refineries, but they operate safely and with a goal of 100 percent compliance with emission and environmental standards.

In Kansas, some of the Koch companies include Flint Hills Resources LLC, Koch Pipeline Company, Invista B.V., Georgia-Pacific Gypsum LLC, Koch Supply and Trading LP, Koch Glitsch LP, Koch Nitrogen Co. LLC, Koch Carbon LLC and the Matador Cattle Company.

Koch financial contributions to Kansas programs are generous, covering many interests throughout the state and benefiting thousands of individuals.

Since 2000, David Koch and the David Koch Charitable Foundation have pledged or contributed more than \$750 million to further cancer research, enhance medical centers, support educational institutions, sustain arts and cultural institutions and conduct public safety studies. These contributions have gone to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Johns Hopkins University, the Lincoln Center in New York, the Smithsonian and numerous other medical and educational programs.

Charles and David Koch have championed limited government, economic freedom and personal liberty and they have challenged excessive government spending. Their financial

giving efforts — political and charitable, both personal and through their company and foundations — all have been lawful.

This being the case, it would seem KU officials, as well as other state officials, should be trying to work with Koch Industries, Charles and David Koch and their foundations on ways to benefit the university and the state. They should be trying to embrace the Kochs rather than acting as if they were pariahs.

The Kochs are a tremendous asset for the state!