

## ***Reader disputes view of Kochs***

By Ralph P. Reed  
April 7, 2012

While reading Dolph Simons Jr.'s Saturday Column supporting the Koch family (March 31) I couldn't help but think how much the Journal-World parrots Koch industry guidelines. You say the Kochs are a tremendous asset for our state. I contend they are not, by any means.

You decry the fact that the Kochs are maligned (especially in Kansas) and 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?"

Among other things, from what I've read, the Kochs do not support education at any level unless it's the "right" kind of education and in the "right" locations. You mention Koch support of cancer research at many locations, but not at KU Medical Center. Why do you list locations elsewhere but not here? If the Kochs are so good for Kansas, why aren't they using their billions to make KUMC's classification as a National Cancer Research Center much easier.

You don't mention the CATO Institute, where you mention Astroturf organizations (groups that appear to be grass-roots but are funded by large corporations). Granted the CATO Institute leans libertarian, but it also supports same-sex marriage (<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/moral-constitutional-case-right-gay-marriage>) and guest immigrant-worker programs (<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-needs-let-more-workers>). The CATO Institute opposes sweeping Patriot Act counterterrorism powers, the aggressive use of American military intervention, and the criminalization of drugs. The March 6, 2012, New York Times has an interesting article citing the many of these things; articles and op-eds are also available at [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org).

On March 1, the Journal-World reprinted an AP article outlining the Koch brothers' attempted takeover of the CATO Institute. The article reads as if the Kochs were the oppressed — "pity the billionaire" — when in fact they are not. The attempted takeover is a thinly veiled attempt to control the CATO Institute and its research; in essence they want to buy CATO.

As a note, Koch donations to CATO dwindled to zero this past year. If they did in fact support CATO as you say, wouldn't their donations increase rather than dwindle to nothing?

You say the Kochs support Citizens for a Sound Economy (CSE), Americans for Prosperity (AFP) and Freedom Works (FW). CSE was not just Koch-supported; it was Koch-founded and industry-supported (85 percent of their money) supporting deregulation. Some of their "citizens" are huge conglomerates, some "too big to fail:" Amoco, GE, GM, Citibank, and so on. They're citizens simply because of the "Citizens United" ruling; a ruling, by the way, which makes it rather useless for a true citizen (one person) to donate for a political cause. CSE is now FW because of an internal rift dissolving CSE and creating FW.

AFP is an Astroturf front group started David Koch and Richard Fink. As with any other Koch Astroturf organization, AFP opposes labor unions, health care reform, stimulus spending, cap-and-trade legislation (making industries pay for the air pollution they create) and international climate talks.

The AFP, CSE and FW are just some of the front groups funded by the Kochs. Jane Mayer indicated in the Aug. 30, 2010, New Yorker that it's difficult to know just how much the Kochs have their hand in politics because they're so slippery and leave no tracks; they dispersed their money, "creating slippery organizations with generic-sounding names." Sounds like a good, honest, trustworthy family, doesn't it?

You say Koch Industries follows a list of principles: integrity, confidence, value creation, principled entrepreneurship, customer focus, knowledge, change, humility, respect and fulfillment. The principles you mention are outlined in part of the Koch Market Based Management® philosophy, which you don't cite. I agree with most of them, however. You say confidence where they use compliance, "100 percent of employees fully complying 100 percent of the time." There is a distinct difference between the two. Confidence is the internal fortitude to do and fight for what is right; compliance presents a "yes, sir, thank you, sir, may I have another," attitude. The trademarked "Principled Entrepreneurship" is little more than a self-serving title to make what they do more palatable.

As a note, I see you use the principles as a nice dig against education. This indicates to me you don't support the public education system in Lawrence, nor do you support having the state fund schools the way they are constitutionally required to. I can only assume you support the ongoing attempts of Gov. Brownback and Speaker O'Neal to grind education (as many other things) under the heel of an autocratic, theocentric plutocracy.

— *Ralph Reed is a long-time Lawrence resident.*