



Koch Vs. Cato, Or Libertarians Vs. Power-Hungry Billionaire

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It is often tempting to paint all those with whom disagree with a broad brush. However, a battle for control of the Cato Institute shows that profound differences do exist on the right. (The left usually wears its disagreements in public, so it is more unusual to see these things on the right). The Koch brothers are [trying](#) to take over Cato, which leans libertarian, to turn it into more of an arm of the Republican Party.

The rift has its roots, Cato officials said, in a long-simmering feud over efforts by Mr. Koch and his brother David Koch to install their own people on the institute's 16-member board and to establish a more direct pipeline between Cato and the family's Republican political outlets, including groups that Democrats complain have mounted a multimillion-dollar assault on President Obama. Tensions reached a new level with a lawsuit filed last week by the Kochs against Cato over its governing structure.

"We can't be perceived as a mouthpiece of special interests," Robert A. Levy, chairman of Cato's board, said in an interview. "The Cato Institute as we know it would be destroyed."

I don't often agree with the scholars at Cato but they produce provocative and thoughtful work (truth in advertising: I have published articles in their Regulation magazine). If the Koch brothers get their way, the work may still be provocative but it is unlikely to remain thoughtful.

(personal advertising note, I am now tweeting [@shapiro_stuart](#). Blog posts by me here will be mentioned there).