



## William Niskanen, RIP

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October 27, 2011

I was very saddened to hear that William Niskanen, famed economist and Chairman of the Cato Institute, [passed away](#) yesterday at the age of 78. Bill was a giant in the limited-government movement and his contributions will live on for generations to come. His pioneering work in public choice economics, his turn as Chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, and his more recent role as a respected scholar at Cato all contributed mightily to shifts in economic thought and public perceptions of government. George Scoville wrote a nice piece at United Liberty documenting his [lasting influence](#).

Unfortunately, I can't claim to have known Bill terribly well myself. Back when I graduated from the University of Michigan, I moved to Washington and began an internship at the Cato Institute during his tenure as Chairman. I can only recall running into him once (at a large organization like Cato interns don't often have occasion to work with the top brass) when we shared an elevator ride to the top floor. In my mind, he seemed about 6'5" and looked every bit the part of the brainy economist ([a sentiment apparently shared by Cato's Randal O'Toole](#), as Bill was apparently less than 6' tall) and I was too intimidated to say more than an awkward "Hello."

The "his legacy will live on" stuff one hears after someone's death is often lionizing pabulum, but not with Bill Niskanen. His work truly serves as the foundation upon which many of NTU's efforts are built. As but one specific example, [our recent support of Representative Justin Amash's "Business Cycle Balanced Budget Amendment"](#) is directly informed by Bill's work in identifying a better structure for fiscal limits.

He will truly be missed, and the thoughts and prayers of NTU are with the Niskanen family and our friends at the Cato Institute for their loss.