



Alex Nowrasteh's Personal Attacks On Senator Jeff Sessions Hurting CATO Institute

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We've always considered our libertarian friends at the CATO Institute to be among our most effective allies in the fight for economic liberty and the free market. And when we do disagree, as we sometimes have on matters of immigration and social policy, or perhaps more correctly if governments should even have social policies, the debate has always been from principled positions well-grounded in the classics of Western thought on liberty.

Which makes what we are about to say all the more painful; CATO, or at least its immigration policy analyst Alex Nowrasteh, seems to have abandoned that intellectually rigorous tradition for one of childish ad hominem attacks on anyone who disagrees with the Obama administration's open borders policies.

And writing under the imprimatur of the CATO Institute, Nowrasteh has reserved an especially acid reservoir of personal antipathy for Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama, one of the most principled advocates of ordered liberty now holding a seat in the United States Senate.

Stranger still, on many matters of economic liberty Senator Sessions would be among the top allies of CATO, so why the personal attacks?

"Nativist," "restrictionist," "anti-immigrant," "confused," and "poisonous" are just a few of the epithets Nowrasteh has directed at or implied about Senator Sessions. Although they don't quite get down in the gutter with Mark Zuckerberg's personal open borders ally, Facebook board member Marc Andreessen, who called Sessions an "odious hack" and "clinically insane" in a series of negative Tweets, they are definitely trending in that direction.

Just as worrying for CATO's reputation as Nowrasteh's ad hominem attacks is the diminishing rigor of Nowrasteh's debate in which Twitter exchanges like the following seem to have replaced the give and take of rigorous argument:

Ellis Island turned away ~2% of applicants. Sessions wants to turn away almost all who want to come.

And:

Calling the employment of an unlawful immigrant "job theft" is same as calling smoking weed "sobriety theft." Poor propaganda.

Or posting articles such as "[Guest Worker Visas Can Halt Illegal Immigration](#)," arguing that "More lower skilled guest workers means fewer unauthorized immigrants. Fewer guest workers mean more unauthorized immigrants," a truism akin to arguing that opening bank vaults will result in fewer bank robberies.

Or this article "[Rebuttal of Senator Sessions' Anti-Immigration Talking Points](#)" again making the argument that the way to stop illegal immigration is to simply open the borders:

Claim: No immigration reform proposals will halt unauthorized immigration.

Fact: Guest worker visas are the most effective way of halting unauthorized immigration because it provides a lawful pathway for low-skilled immigrants to enter instead of overstaying a visa, running across a desert, or being smuggled in. Providing a lawful immigration pathway will funnel peaceful migrant workers into the legal system leaving immigration enforcement to deal with a much smaller pool of unlawful immigrants. Italian immigrants in 1910 did not crash boats in to the Jersey Shore to avoid Border Patrol. They entered legally through Ellis Island *because* there was a legal way to enter. Let's reopen that pathway – at least partly.

None of this "analysis" from CATO's "immigration analyst" Alex Nowrasteh actually analyzes anything.

It's almost as if Nowrasteh received a grant from some member of the cheap labor wing of the US Chamber of Commerce or billionaire Mark Zuckerberg's lobbying operation FWD.us to go after Senator Sessions on a personal level.

Instead of engaging in rigorous "analysis" of the legal, social and economic impact of legal and illegal immigration Nowrasteh has devolved into something akin to the Twitter trolls he so regularly excoriates on that social media site.

We urge our friends at CATO to take a good look at Nowrasteh's name calling and ad hominem attacks against Senator Sessions and ask themselves if such conduct advances the cause of liberty, or reduces their organization from a respected think tank to a social media caricature.