

Roll Call



Norquist Group Joins Cato, Attacks Heritage on Immigration

By: David M. Drucker – April 8, 2013

Americans for Tax Reform on Monday joined the Cato Institute in launching a pre-emptive strike against The Heritage Foundation.

The conservative advocacy organization, which enforces the Taxpayer Protection Pledge against raising taxes and is led by Grover Norquist, supports a comprehensive immigration overhaul and is moving to neuter Heritage's influence as the legislative battle heats up on Capitol Hill. As I reported earlier Monday, Cato last week released a study aimed at discrediting the Heritage analysis that the libertarian think tank expects its conservative counterpart to unveil *after* the first congressional bill drops.

On Monday, ATR sent a copy of Cato's pre-emptive study and a memo to Republican congressional offices, warning them that the expected Heritage study, purportedly being conducted and written by Senior Research Fellow Robert Rector, "does not speak for the conservative movement; in fact, it does not even speak for the Heritage Foundation." (In my conversation with Heritage spokesman Mike Gonzalez on Sunday, there was no suggestion that Rector's study won't speak for the influential conservative think tank.)

Norquist over the years has wielded immense power over congressional Republicans on fiscal matters, as most GOP lawmakers have signed his pledge not to support any legislation that would raise taxes. Heritage has been equally influential, if not more so, and is blamed by the pro-immigration overhaul forces with helping to derail the 2007 effort at a comprehensive rewrite. Their claim: that Rector's 2007 study helped convince wobbly congressional Republican to abandon support for the comprehensive immigration overhaul being debated at that time.

The ATR memo attacking Heritage follows after the jump:

TO: House and Senate GOP Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Directors, Immigration staffers

FROM: Joshua Culling, Americans for Tax Reform

DATE: April 8, 2013

SUBJECT: Upcoming Heritage Foundation study on the costs of immigration reform

We expect Robert Rector will soon release an updated version of his 2007 Heritage Foundation report, "The Fiscal Cost of Low-Skill Immigrants to the U.S. Taxpayer". The initial study had a significant impact on the last big immigration reform push on Capitol Hill, with Rector's \$2.6 trillion cost estimate influencing many conservative Members of Congress to oppose reform. Unfortunately, Rector's study was severely flawed in its methodology, and thus in its findings. He appears poised to make the same errors in the paper's latest iteration.

Below is an analysis of Rector's methodological flaws by Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute. ATR agrees that Heritage should avoid the same errors present in the 2007 study, most notably the use of static, rather than dynamic scoring, and ignoring the escalating costs associated with immigration enforcement.

I would also like to bring to your attention another Heritage study from 2006, "The Real Problem with Immigration...and the Real Solution," by Tim Kaine and Kirk Johnson. In it, the authors extoll the economic virtues of immigration while emphasizing the need for a secure border. Among Kaine and Johnson's findings:

- Illegal immigrants "come to America primarily for better jobs and in the process add value to the U.S. economy".
- "The argument that immigrants harm the American economy should be dismissed out of hand".
- Immigrant labor has "a very minor effect" on native wages.
- "Most immigrant families have a positive fiscal impact on the U.S., adding \$88,000 more in tax revenue than they consume in services".
- "Social security payroll taxes paid by undocumented workers have led to a \$463 billion funding surplus" (as of 2006).

Robert Rector's work does not speak for the conservative movement; in fact, it does not even speak for the Heritage Foundation.

Heritage is a pillar of the conservative movement and has been a thought leader in the center-right policy community for decades. We urge them to consider the errors in Robert Rector's methodology, and that any reissued study reflects the quality of work Heritage has put forth in the past.