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The Arena

Will the Koch brothers take Cato?

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Driving the Conversation:

Arena Ref: [David Mark](#)

[David Boaz](#) Executive VP, Cato Institute :

Charles Koch has filed a lawsuit asking a court to give him (with his brother's support) majority ownership of the Cato Institute under Cato's long-dormant shareholder arrangement. That would give him control over the Board of Directors, which has heretofore run the Institute for 35 years with no input from the shareholders. Already the Koch forces have managed to put seven people on the board, all but one of them financially involved with Koch Industries.

This is no way to run an independent think tank. We at the Cato Institute believe this effort is a direct threat to the independence, nonpartisanship, and libertarianism of the Cato Institute. Koch control - or control by any individual or company - would destroy 35 years of hard work by our board, officers, staff, and donors to build the Cato Institute's reputation.

Our lawyers believe that Charles Koch is wrong on the law and on his interpretation of our shareholder agreement, and that we will succeed in the Kansas court. However, the bigger issue here is that a think tank controlled - indeed, actually owned - by a single corporate CEO would not be regarded as an independent and trustworthy source of ideas and analysis. In today's Washington Post, [Ezra Klein acknowledges](#) that he doesn't agree with Cato scholars on a lot.

"And yet, it's among a handful of think tanks whose work I regularly read and trust....Cato is an organization that can have more than a marginal impact on elections. It can have a significant impact on policy and governance. That's a level of influence that even the Kochs can't buy."

That's the issue, and that's why Cato's officers, staff, donors, and all non-Koch-appointed board members are determined to preserve the Institute's independence.

