



Opinion Blogs

Simmons a Yankee Doodle Dandy choice

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The Connecticut-based Yankee Institute for Public Policy has picked a great front man in naming former Republican congressman [Rob Simmons](#) of Stonington as its new chairman. Simmons is enthusiastic in his pursuit of public policies that encourage free markets and reduce needlessly burdensome regulation. He wants government to get out of the way of entrepreneurs. Simmons is gifted in making his case in a positive fashion, avoiding the meanness that often accompanies attacks from the right on social programs and government workers. He should help the organization raise money, a key need for the conservative advocacy group, organized as a nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation under IRS regulations.

To maintain that nonpartisan status, Yankee does not endorse candidates, but it pushes a fiscally conservative agenda and works with such major conservative think tanks as the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute. Simmons' record as a moderate state legislator and later congressman is certainly to the left of those libertarian-leaning organizations. As a congressman he was never above taking federal largesse if it benefitted his district, including seeking hundreds of millions of dollars to complete Route 11, a project that certainly some fiscal hawks would consider a needless waste of tax dollars if it is ever built.

For Simmons, whose last run for office was an unsuccessful Republican primary race against Linda McMahon (who went on to lose the Senate race to Democrat Richard Blumenthal), the leadership position with Yankee will give him a platform to keep his name in the news should he ever consider running again.

Things could get interesting as Yankee Institute prepares to [launch a lawsuit](#) against the administration of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy. The group will contend that Malloy did

not have the authority to issue two executive orders giving child-care and home-care attendants who work for programs funded by the state, the ability to organize. Such a labor decision is the purview of the legislature, Yankee's lawyers will argue, and indeed lawmakers last year failed to adopt a bill to help such workers organize unions. Critics say the higher pay and benefits that would result from unionization will mean much higher costs for taxpayers, while supporters say these important workers are underpaid.

This will not be a frivolous lawsuit. At best it is a gray area as to whether Malloy exceeded his executive authority. Expect to be hearing more from Rob Simmons soon.