



## *The Cato Institute and the Koch brothers ...*

By **Ronald Goldfarb** - 03/12/12 03:29 PM ET

... are in a fight for control of the 35-year-old libertarian think-tank. Internal battles over the composition of the organization's officials and board members have spilled over into public litigation in Kansas over control. I have found myself admiring of the intellectual level of Cato scholarship, even when opposed to its provocative conclusions, as is often the case. But having read the public exchange between Cato Chairman Robert A. Levy and Charles Koch, this non-libertarian casts his vote for the Levy position.

It is important for non-libertarians to weigh in on this debate, because the historic Jeffersonian principle is at its heart. The parties are arguing about board versus shareholder governance, and the property interest of donors to nonpartisan organizations. But more important is Levy's central point that "Cato cannot function as an independent voice for liberty (or anything else, I would add) if it is thought to be under the thumb of Charles Koch ..."

If the public thought that the Koch brothers, notoriously politically partisan, controlled Cato, the institution would lose its intellectual credibility, as Levy fears. First Amendment devotees may deplore any or all of Cato's policies, but not its right to advocate them, free from the influence of people or organizations that in fact or perception destroy its autonomy and independence.