

# Under Penalty of Catapult

## *Final Thoughts on Koch vs. Cato*

Written by Skip Oliva  
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Eighteen days ago, Charles and David Koch filed their now-infamous lawsuit against the Cato Institute, Cato president Ed Crane, and the estate of former Cato chairman Bill Niskanen. I got caught up in the story for a couple weeks, but as I've dug deeper, I now realize there's not much here. This is not some fight for the soul of the libertarian movement. It's not a valiant struggle by Cato scholars to preserve their independence. It's not a principled stand against the Kochs and their money.

When you cut through all the bullshit—90% of which is coming from the Cato side—what you're left with is two old men who simply refuse to compromise. Charles Koch signed an agreement that he believes Ed Crane refuses to honor. Ed Crane feels he has earned the right to dictate Cato's future after 35 years at the helm. Complicating matters was a series of poorly drafted legal documents, from the two shareholder agreements to Niskanen's will. There's no great ideological battle going on here. And I'm not going to spend another moment pretending otherwise.

Except to say this. If the Kochs prevail and Cato collapses, it won't be the end of the world. It won't even be the end of libertarianism. The pro-Cato argument is fueled by this narcissistic belief that libertarianism needs a unified, "credible" spokesman in the nation's capitol. I didn't think that was true when I lived in Washington, and now that I've liberated myself from that hell-hole, I still don't think it's true. All the energy and resources devoted to an "independent" Cato Institute would be better spent—in my opinion—on actually working to advance liberty at the grassroots level.

There are thousands of cases where average Americans have had their livelihoods destroyed by government action. They don't need an independent Cato. They need the intellectual and financial resources to resist. They need libertarians who are willing to fight with them in the trenches. They don't need an infinite series of policy papers, Capitol hill briefings or panel discussions.

And with that, I wash my hands of this case. If anyone wants to buy the [kochvscato.com](http://kochvscato.com) domain from me, send me an email.