

Wichita Business Journal

Koch brothers sue over control of Cato Institute

Wichita Business Journal by Nick Jungman, Managing Editor

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[Charles Koch](#) and [David Koch](#) have filed suit over shares in the [Cato Institute](#) , a prominent libertarian think tank founded in part by [Charles Koch](#).

In the suit, filed Thursday in Johnson County District Court in Olathe, the Kochs seek to require the widow of [William Niskanen](#), one the institute's original shareholders, to sell Niskanen's shares back to the institute.

[Charles Koch](#), [David Koch](#), Niskanen and Cato President [Edward H. Crane III](#) were the sole shareholders of the institute, a nonprofit corporation, at the time of Niskanen's death in October, each with one-quarter share, according to lawsuit documents.

The Koch brothers are the sole plaintiffs in the suit, which names Crane and Niskanen's widow, [Kathryn Washburn](#), as defendants.

The lawsuit says each of the shareholders signed an agreement stipulating that he could not transfer his shares without first offering them for sale back to the institute.

Since Niskanen died, no offer to sell the shares back to Cato has been made, the lawsuit says, and the shares are apparently in control of Washburn, who is named in Niskanen's will as the personal representative of his estate.

Cato is a well-known source of libertarian perspectives on public policy issues and is based in Washington, D.C. However, it is incorporated in Kansas and maintains an office in Overland Park.

[Cato's website](#) says Niskanen was a past-chairman of Cato, a member of President [Gerald Ford's](#) Council of Economic Advisers, a director of economics for the [Ford Motor Co.](#) and a professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley and at Los Angeles.

Another blog post on the lawsuit, as well as a link to lawsuit documents, [can be found on The Washington Post's website](#).

Charles and [David Koch](#) are owners of Wichita-based [Koch Industries Inc.](#)