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Thursday, November 19, 2009

### Get Your Intellectual Ammunition [John Hood]

The nation's leading think tanks are continuing to produce critical information for challenging the growth of Big Government and promoting the advancement of liberty in America and throughout the world. Check out these recent releases.

- Writing for the [Cato Institute](#), researchers from Cal State-Northridge and New York Presbyterian Hospital have a new [study](#) showing how and why America leads the world in medical innovation:

In general, Americans tend to receive more new treatments and pay more for them — a fact that is usually regarded as a fault of the American system. That interpretation, if not entirely wrong, is at least incomplete. Rapid [adoption](#) and extensive use of new treatments and technologies create an incentive to develop those techniques in the first place. When the United States subsidizes medical innovation, the whole world benefits. That is a virtue of the American system that is not reflected in comparative life expectancy and mortality statistics.

- The Heritage Foundation's indispensable Robert Rector and two of his colleagues have just produced their [latest summary](#) of federal welfare spending. Years ago, Rector exploded the myth that only [cash](#) assistance to families with children was "welfare," showing that Washington and the states spent hundreds of billions of dollars more on means-tested health benefits, day care, housing, and many other in-kind and cash programs strewn across dozens of agencies. For the 2008 fiscal year, the total welfare bill was \$714 billion. Three-quarters came from the federal budget, the rest from the states.

- Last month, Leon Aron of the [American Enterprise Institute](#) published a fascinating [exploration](#) of Russia's massive economic and social problems as seen through the eyes of Russians residing in the country's 460 company towns, or "monotowns." Aron's conclusion:

Intoxicated by the oil-fed economic boom, Putin's Russia has dispensed with such democratic shock absorbers as uncensored media, responsible and viable

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political opposition in the national legislature, and genuine local self-governance. With rigid recentralization putting the political center of gravity in the Kremlin and with the road signs and traffic lights of societal feedback largely obscured and darkened, the danger of a major accident in the next six to eight months is a distinct possibility. And monotowns are perhaps the deepest and most proximate potholes.

- Conservatives have opened up another front against Obamacare — the dubious constitutionality of federal encroachment on state budgeting and on the freedom of state residents to make their own health-care arrangements. Michael Ciamarra explains the argument well in a new piece for the [Alabama Policy Institute](#).
- If you were entertained or outraged by the disclosure this week that the federal government's official site for reporting stimulus data has claimed tens of thousands of jobs created or saved in congressional districts that don't actually exist, you have a network of conservative think tanks and watchdog groups to thank. As the Franklin Center reports [here](#), the first stories on the Recovery.gov screwup came from [New Mexico Watchdog](#). Similar groups in other states soon followed up. The Montana Policy Institute then confronted the federal panel that oversees Recovery.gov and got a revealing response. Read the whole thing.

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