

Defending taxpayers, health freedom, civil liberties

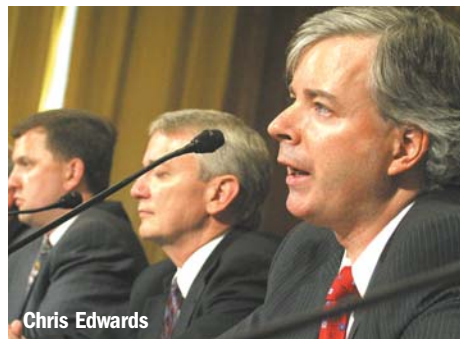
Sometimes Cato Is the Lone Voice for Liberty

Nature abhors a vacuum, but that isn't true in Washington. In a recent Cato Policy Analysis, "Budgeting in Neverland: Irrational Policymaking in the U.S. Congress and What Can Be Done about It," political scientist James L. Payne wrote about the ideological vacuum in which the federal government operates. In many instances, he found, only the side that supports bigger and bigger government gets a say. It's not surprising then that Cato scholars, through their media appearances and participation in public debates, often find themselves the only voices calling for limited government and free markets.

When David Boaz, Cato's executive vice president, testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations on July 11, 2005, he began his remarks by thanking the committee for inviting him "to provide a little diversity at this table." Those words sum up the often-lonely position of Cato scholars. The committee was considering funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Boaz was the only witness it heard who was not affiliated with public broadcasting. Predictably, the other witnesses, such as Patricia Harrison, president of the CPB, urged Congress to maintain and increase funding for their own activities. Boaz argued that, just as we are disturbed by state-run newspapers, we should be disturbed by state-supported television and radio and therefore urged the committee to end funding for public broadcasting.

Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies, stood alone against an IRS crackdown on taxpayers in order to close the "tax gap." The crackdown was predictably supported by two representatives of the IRS itself and one from the Department of the Treasury, at a February 16 hearing of the House Budget Committee. A few months later, on May 24, Edwards addressed a hearing of the Senate Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure. He argued that Congress should remove tax barriers to energy pro-

duction and efficiency but also said that Congress should not clutter the tax code with various incentives and credits, a form of micromanagement of the economic decisions of Americans.



Chris Edwards

“The most adamant voice against tribunals was that of Timothy Lynch, director of the project on criminal justice at the Cato Institute.”

—NEW YORK TIMES, November 30, 2001



Timothy Lynch

Timothy Lynch, director of Cato's Project on Criminal Justice, found himself in a similar minority position during his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on December 24, 2001. Although some of the other witnesses, such as Laurence Tribe of Harvard Law School, were critical of the Bush administration, Lynch was the only witness to argue that military tribunals are inappropriate in the war on terror. This issue's profile greatly increased in the following years, but the

debate in Congress, as seen in the recent passage in the Senate and House of a bill setting standards for detainee treatment, has focused solely on the question of how military tribunals should be regulated—not the more fundamental question of their constitutionality. The Project on Criminal Justice has been active, however, in providing one of the few voices that criticize military tribunals themselves as threats to liberty in this conflict. As Lynch argued in Cato's brief in the case of *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, using tribunals to prosecute suspected enemy combatants who are not members of any government's military could weaken the Sixth Amendment right to a trial by jury for civilians—including American citizens.

The free market and limited government tend to be unpopular in Washington, so even in discussions with other free-market-oriented organizations, Cato fills a void. Cato scholars have been some of the few vocal opponents of Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney's plan to require mandatory health insurance, which is based on an idea promulgated by scholars from the Heritage Foundation. At a September 21 event sponsored by the *National Journal*, Michael Tanner, Cato's director of health and welfare studies, participated in a panel discussion that followed a presentation from Governor Romney. While other panelists either praised the Massachusetts plan or criticized it for not spending more, Tanner said the plan is a surrender to the philosophy of socialized medicine. The Massachusetts subsidies, Tanner predicted, will inevitably grow beyond their initial purpose, as government programs tend to do. Tanner was apparently the only panelist uncomfortable with more dependence on government.

It is lonely at times to be a Cato scholar. But Cato's principles of individual rights would be much lonelier—indeed, absent—in many public debates if not for these instances when Cato stands alone.