

# VISION FOR LIBERTY

SECURING OUR DREAM FOR  
THE NEXT GENERATION

CATO  
INSTITUTE



# CATO'S VISION FOR LIBERTY

There has never been a time that did not demand action in defense of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace—and there likely never will be. But the dangerous direction of public policy, the growth of government power, and the spread of toxic partisanship have made our mission to defend individual liberty and a free society more urgent than ever.

Cato's Vision for Liberty includes increasing our impact with new hires in policy, marketing, and outreach; investing in technology and infrastructure; and enhancing our student programs. With these strategic investments, we will accelerate our plans to bend the arc of ideas toward liberty, unleashing freedom to build a better and more prosperous future for the next generation.

# THE THREAT

Government in the United States is steadily gaining ground as politicians centralize power, rack up trillion-dollar deficits, and deploy reckless monetary policies.

We have reached a crossroads in history where both major political parties question whether a free and open economy is morally acceptable and generates prosperity for all.

The progress we have achieved over the past century hangs in the balance. More and more of American life is dictated in Washington, and questions that used to be left to the states or to the people are now increasingly settled, winner-take-all, by whether the Red or Blue team seizes political power.

When the government decides whether you have to pay off your loans, what children learn in schools, and which businesses can open their doors, fellow citizens are pitted against one another in a partisan death spiral.

**As these rival tribes clash and vie for control, Cato's voice must rise even higher above the fray to rescue liberty and restore it.**



# THE OPPORTUNITY

Times of crisis also present an opening for transformational change—the Institute has an extraordinary opportunity to captivate the exhausted middle majority.

Cato must invest more in introducing new audiences to our ideas and persuading them that advancing civil society is the sensible alternative to government control.

Preaching to the choir will not change the world—real change requires reaching new audiences, building new networks, and blanketing debates with our principles, research, and solutions.

**Our message—the dignity of the individual, the power of dynamic markets, and the consequences of expanded government power—must be at the center of every major conversation in debates over public policy and America’s future.**



# IDEAS, INFLUENCE, IMPACT

Cato's Vision for Liberty will accelerate our efforts to broaden our reach, deepen our network, and bring new audiences to our mission. We will build upon our **reputation for independence and integrity** and bolster our proven strategies for ideas, influence, and impact.



## IDEAS THAT DRIVE CHANGE

Ideas matter. For good or for ill, they can change the course of history.

Cato's role is to ensure that the best ideas rise to the top of our national policy debates.

To that end, we are investing in more resources in key policy areas including taxes, budgets, entitlements, health care, and free speech.

We will expand our Government Affairs and State Relations teams to increase Cato's influence at the federal and state levels, and we will launch more targeted, strategic policy initiatives building on our past success.



## FUTURE GENERATIONS

We must reach more young people with the ideas of liberty and develop the talent pipeline for the next generation of libertarian leaders.

Our competitive internship program, Sphere Education Initiatives, for grades 5–12 educators, and student seminars will engage over one million students every year.

We will expand Sphere, dedicate more resources for our websites [Libertarianism.org](http://Libertarianism.org) and [HumanProgress.org](http://HumanProgress.org), and build innovative student programs leveraging our best-in-class digital tools to reach thousands more young people.



## BRINGING LIBERTY TO LIFE

Cato reaches millions of people annually—including thousands of policymakers—with only a modest outreach and communications staff; but we can do much more to ensure that our ideas, reform proposals, and content reach our target audiences of policymakers, thought leaders, and the general public.

We will increase our marketing and communications staff and invest in new digital technologies to broaden our content portfolio—bolstered by the creation of a Content Lab that will serve as a central resource to create compelling infographics, data visualizations, and multimedia content for all our research areas.

# THE VISION FOR IDEAS THAT DRIVE CHANGE

Accountability is a watchword at Cato.

- **Prioritizing issues** in our policy areas and focusing our work on the most important goals.
- **Maintaining a strategy** and theory of change for how our work, effort, and activity will move the world and policy in our direction.
- **Executing effectively** on those strategies, including robust external engagement with policymakers, the media, and the academy.

The core of the Cato Institute is ideas—and unlike other institutions in Washington, our ideas don't depend on which party is in power or which views are politically fashionable at the time. We believe that the principles of liberty affect every dimension of public policy.

To truly bend the arc of ideas toward liberty, Cato has developed objectives to measure success and, where applicable, goals for tangible change. Research will remain foundational to Cato's influence and mission, but publishing research alone is not enough. We must take the fight to the Hill, the states, the courts, and the bureaucracy. On Capitol Hill, in critical federal agencies, and in state capitals, we will deepen our relationships to exert more influence on policy direction.

**Investments in this area will support plans to:**

- **Add policy staff** in critical areas, including entitlements, taxation and budgets, and state-based economic issues.
- **Expand our Government Affairs and State Relations teams** to increase our influence at both the federal and state levels.
- **Sustain and grow** our Defending the Free Economy initiative to advocate a dynamic, vibrant economy unimpeded by government intervention.
- **Scale policy initiatives** including Cato's Project on Criminal Justice, Project on the First Amendment, and Health Policy Studies Initiative: Making Health Savings Accounts Work for Everyone, with near-, mid-, and longer-term plans.
- **Expand our scholarship support team** to amplify our scholars' work while also building a pipeline of the next generation of free-market thought leaders.

“When I read Cato's take on a policy question, I can trust that it is informed by more than partisan convenience. The same can't be said for other think tanks in town.”

—EZRA KLEIN, JOURNALIST

## CATO'S IMPACT ON IDEAS THAT DRIVE CHANGE

Cato tackles long-term threats to liberty and free enterprise and works vigorously to influence tangible policy change and inject libertarian ideas into mainstream policy debates. This approach pays off. We have:

- Enforced constitutional limits on government and protected individual liberty.
- Reduced the burden of taxation.
- Brought criminal justice reform to the forefront of the public policy debate.
- Led the charge for free-market health care reforms.
- Paved the way for the growth of charter schools, vouchers, and scholarship tax credits.
- Championed realism and restraint in foreign policy. Once a lonely voice in the hawkish Beltway, our position now has mainstream respectability and major influence in national foreign policy debates.
- Been one of the most prominent and powerful voices protecting free speech and civil liberties for all people.



# THE VISION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Cato's vision for a freer, more prosperous future demands that we empower young leaders and educate them in libertarian principles and policy.

Our student programs are designed to mentor, motivate, and inspire the brightest future leaders for liberty. As these young people fill the ranks of academia, journalism, government, and the private sector, investments in their future will pay valuable dividends in the ongoing challenge of building a free and prosperous society.

## Investments in this area will support plans to:

- **Scale Sphere**, adding more dedicated staff to create and distribute Sphere lesson plans and present Sphere on the Road programs in schools across the country. After reaching an initial goal of a network of 8,000 educators, our new goal is to grow our network to over 25,000 educators by the end of 2029.
- **Build up our suite of classroom resources** for educators, including lesson plans and other content designed to model civil debate, and introduce students to the ideas of liberty at an age when they are formulating their opinions.
- **Develop a “Cato Courses” suite** of engaging online classes built on our cutting-edge digital templates.
- **Increase student attendance** across our intern, student briefing, and Liberty Seminars programs by up to 2,000 students annually.
- **Grow the recently relaunched Cato University** with a focus on students.
- **Create a talent pipeline** of future libertarian leaders by providing focused training to our research associates so that they can enter a variety of professions—including meaningful representation in liberty organizations.
- **Bolster our websites for young people**—Libertarianism.org and HumanProgress.org.

“You know that when Cato is involved in these policy matters that there’s one voice—even if you don’t agree with it, you know that it’s a sane voice, and you know that it doesn’t have an ulterior motive. It’s the digging for facts without prejudice that’s really crucial.”

—P. J. O’ROURKE

# CATO’S REACH

- **17 Research Areas**, including Constitution and Law; Economics; Politics and Society; and International Affairs
- **12.2M+ Visits** to Cato’s websites
- **200+ Research Studies** published annually
- **600+ Op-Eds** published annually
- **2,000+ Media Appearances** annually
- **600+ Meetings** with Policymakers annually
- **30+ Testimonies** annually
- **1.7M+ Podcast** downloads annually
- **1.8M+ Social Media Followers** across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter
- **100+ Interns** work with Cato annually
- **12,000 Teachers** participated in Sphere since its launch
- **1.5M+ Students** reached across the country through Project Sphere

## THE VISION FOR BRINGING LIBERTY TO LIFE

As the ways people consume information continue to change, Cato must—and will—remain on the cutting edge in the digital arena.

**W**e will deliver our content to larger audiences by optimizing our work across multiple distribution channels—web, email, social media—to reach the right individuals at the right time with the right messages.

We will provide new, innovative resources for Cato staff to present our ideas and products to varied target audiences—including students, Capitol Hill staff, and all those who visited our website 12.2 million times in 2024. We regularly test our multimedia strategies and are now poised to scale those that prove successful and persuasive.

### Investments in this area will support plans to:

- **Expand recruitment for the Cato Content Lab** and build a dedicated creative team to produce compelling infographics, data visualizations, and multimedia assets for all Cato research areas and initiatives, including Sphere.
- **Overhaul our marketing strategy**, grow our marketing and communications staff, and develop new digital technologies to ensure all Cato projects, initiatives, and content achieve maximum exposure and reach.
- **Transform Cato's Hayek Auditorium** into a state-of-the-art production studio through technical upgrades that will allow us to create exceptional programming and content for both virtual and in-person audiences.
- **Increase and sharpen production of video content**, a vital tool for communicating complicated policy proposals.



“The Cato Institute is the foremost upholder of the idea of liberty in the nation that is the foremost upholder of the idea of liberty.”

—GEORGE F. WILL

# CATO'S VISION FOR LIBERTY CAMPAIGN

Cato's Vision for Liberty Campaign will accelerate our ability to increase our impact through new hires in policy, marketing, and outreach; investment in technology and infrastructure; and scaling our student programs.

**By 2027, we aspire to raise \$300 million in cumulative support to bolster our strategic plans and build a broader community of people dedicated to preserving the ideas of liberty.**

For more than 40 years, the Cato Institute has been a trusted and principled voice for liberty. But the threats that we and future generations now face demand that we make our message much louder.

**We invite you to partner with us in defending and preserving this critical legacy.**



To learn more about how you can support Cato's Vision for Liberty Campaign—through an increased annual gift, an extraordinary campaign contribution, or a legacy commitment—please contact Harrison Moar at [harrison.moar@cato.org](mailto:harrison.moar@cato.org).

Donate now at [Cato.org/VisionforLiberty](https://Cato.org/VisionforLiberty), or scan the QR code below.



# CATO INSTITUTE'S MISSION

The mission of the Cato Institute is to keep the principles, ideas, and moral case for liberty alive for future generations, while moving public policy in the direction of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace.

# ABOUT THE CATO INSTITUTE

The Cato Institute was founded in 1977 to create a presence for and promote libertarian ideas in policy debates. From rigorous independent research and engagement with key policymakers to regular media appearances in major outlets and testimony on Capitol Hill, Cato has successfully injected the libertarian perspective into mainstream policy debates across the country.

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