

Mission, Innovation, and Impact
Remarks at The Heartland Institute's 25th Anniversary Benefit

By Joseph L. Bast
President, The Heartland Institute

Thank you so much for that warm welcome. It's an honor to be here today, with so many friends who helped make this occasion possible. Thank you, Dave Padden, for being a great boss, mentor, benefactor, and friend for 25 years. And thank you, Terry Savage, for being such a good friend and supporter of The Heartland Institute all these years.

I would like to recognize and thank the members of Heartland's board of directors who are here tonight:

Bob Buford
Paul Fisher
Jim Fitzgerald
Jim Johnston

Jeff Madden
Art Margulis
Dave Padden, and
Herb Walberg

Humble Beginnings

It's hard to believe that we opened our doors as a one-man shop in 1984, in donated office space with an annual budget of \$26,000. Scott Hodge, president of the Tax Foundation, is in the audience today. It was his vision that led to the creation of The Heartland Institute. I was just a lucky guy who was in the right place at the right time, and got to be the executive director.

Dave Padden recruited the founding directors and first donors, Mark Ferdinand helped us incorporate the institute and provided donated office space for several years, and Pat Peterson did 90% of the fundraising during our first decade.

Today, Heartland has more than 2,000 donors, 134 academic advisors, a full-time staff of 35, and an annual budget of \$7 million. That's not bad for a kid from a small town in Wisconsin!

Impact

We communicate directly with more elected officials, more often, than any other free-market think tank in the United States. We've come to learn that while many politicians are motivated by the will to power and to get reelected, there are some in every state who are there to restore constitutionally limited government.

By treating elected officials as customers and finding and working with those who are potential allies, we helped defeat hundreds of proposals to increase income taxes, sales and excise taxes, and property taxes at the federal, state, and local levels. We have helped defeat taxpayer subsidies for sports stadiums, convention centers, municipal broadband ventures, and businesses threatening to relocate all across the country, saving taxpayers billions of dollars. We helped pass legislation creating school vouchers, tax credits, and charter school programs that now enroll nearly 2 million students every year. We helped defeat ClintonCare in 1994 and we are helping to defeat ObamaCare right now.

On the issue of global warming, we are the reason only 36% of the public today – according to a Pew Research Center poll released last week – believe global warming is due to human activity. According to a National Science Foundation survey conducted in 2006, 25% of Americans did not know the Earth revolves around the Sun. So we've only got about 11 percentage points more to go before the only people who still believe in global warming are either imbeciles or teach in American universities.

We changed public opinion on global warming by distributing more than a million books and a million videos presenting the real science and economics of climate change, running nearly \$2 million in advertisements, hosting three international conferences on climate change featuring scientists from 26 countries, and generating thousands of articles and letters that appeared in the mainstream media and millions of online hits.

We're going to win this debate, and save the American people hundreds of billions of dollars and millions of jobs by defeating cap-and-trade legislation.

Innovation

Heartland has a well-deserved reputation for innovation.

In 1993 we created PolicyFax, a fax-on-demand service that allowed elected officials to order research and commentary over the phone and have it delivered instantly to their fax machines, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When the Internet came along, we converted PolicyFax into PolicyBot, which today makes it easy to find and view more than 25,000 documents. Nearly 8,000 documents are requested and viewed every day.

In 1997 we invented the public policy newspaper – easy-to-read, 20-page tabloid-sized publications that present free-market ideas as news and not just research or commentary.

We now publish five single-topic newspapers on issues ranging from budgets and health care to the environment and telecommunications reform. 85% of state legislators say they read at least

one of our newspapers and half of them say a Heartland publication has influenced their opinion or led to a change in public policy.

In 2006, we decided to take advantage of our high level of brand recognition among elected officials by using the tools and techniques of the telemarketing industry. Last month, Heartland staff had 2,157 personal, one-on-one, contacts with elected officials. We have new tools and tactics in hand that should enable us to dramatically increase the number of contacts in 2010.

The Obama Administration

The Heartland Institute's work is important regardless of who is in the White House or governor's mansion. We're an equal opportunity critic of politicians. But our work is even more important now.

The current administration has nationalized entire industries and wants to nationalize more, it is massively increasing the debt and debasing our currency, and it dismisses those of us who disagree with its agenda as people who "cling to guns or religion."

More recently, the President said his opponents "just kinda sometimes do what they're told." What?! We're not the coalition of people who do what they're told. We're the coalition of people who don't want to be told what to do! Or as Grover Norquist likes to say, we're the "leave us alone coalition."

The administration is singling out for criticism, intimidation, and retribution any individuals and groups that dare to speak out against its policies. These tactics are over the top. They pose a danger to the rights of every person in this room today.

The United States is not Venezuela or Russia. We don't tolerate politicians who threaten our rights and institutions. We don't want czars. We want public servants.

We have the right to criticize this administration. We will not be silenced. And we will not stop speaking out until this administration stops its war on the freedom of the American people.

Good News

There is some good news. The election of Barack Obama was a moment of clarity, a chance to see what liberal Democrats would do if they ever got political power again. Until the election of President Obama, it was as if a thick fog had descended over the political playing field. We thought we were playing between the 40 yards lines, but when the fog lifted, we found we were

on our own 5 yard line, with our backs to our own end zone.

If John McCain had won the election last November, we'd probably have cap-and-trade and nationalized health care by now. There would not have been a Tea Party movement, and no million-man Taxpayers March on Washington, D.C. Sometimes you gotta lose before you can win.

There's more good news. President Obama's job approval rating has been falling at the rate of 1 point a week for the past 10 weeks, and now stands at 53%. At this rate, he will have a 0% approval rating on November 2, 2010. Peggy Noonan says it's "the biggest such drop Gallup has ever measured for an elected president during the same period of his term."

A Fox News poll released last week showed support for the president's policies falling below 50% for the first time. Yesterday, a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found a majority of people feel the country is "on the wrong track," for the first time since President Obama was elected.

Next week, voters in five states will get to register their opposition to the Obama agenda. There are governors' races in New Jersey and Virginia, a Congressional race in New York where a Conservative Party candidate (backed by the American Conservative Union, by the way) is leading both the Democrat and Republican candidates, and taxpayer bills of rights will be voted on in Maine and Washington.

At this point, it appears voters will speak out for individual freedom and limited government with a clear voice. People are finally waking up to the scope of the threat facing their liberties. They know that no politician will ride to their rescue, which is why independent voters now outnumber Republicans or Democrats. By sometime next year, before November second, they will outnumber Republicans and Democrats *combined!*

Then things will start to get interesting!

Thanks for Your Support

Many of you here tonight have contributed generously to The Heartland Institute and to the other think tanks and advocacy groups that are represented in the room. Your financial support helped us wake up the American people. At the end of the day, we will win because we're right, but also because of your support. Because being right doesn't count if you can't be heard.

The freedom movement is very small compared to statist think tanks and advocacy groups. And Heartland is just a very small part of that small movement. As some of you may have heard,

George Soros just announced he's giving \$50 million to start up a new liberal think tank.

But thankfully, we are blessed with opponents who are often stupid and incompetent. So we don't need to match the other side's spending dollar for dollar. But we do need to spend a dollar for every hundred dollars they spend, or at least one for every one *thousand* dollars they spend.

And that's where you come in. If you aren't a donor, please become one. If you haven't renewed your support yet this year, please do so. And if you have given already, please consider giving again and introducing us to friends and relatives who might wish to support our efforts.

It's been an honor to assemble a team of talent people to serve the cause of individual liberty for the past 25 years, to have met so many of the people in this room tonight who have become friends and partners in this great campaign.

Thank you once again for being here on this very special evening, and God bless you all.

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