

Department & Division News

The Heritage Foundation: A Think-Tank on a Mission to Destroy the Public Postal Service

(This article first appeared in the Sept-Oct 2017 issue of the American Postal Worker magazine)

On paper, the Heritage Foundation looks like an ordinary “think tank,” a group of experts who research public policy ideas and write reports and articles.

The organization describes itself as a research and educational non-profit, promoting conservative public policy on Capitol Hill. It calls its editorials, “the voice of the American taxpayer.” However, digging beneath the surface, one can easily see the Heritage Foundation is anything but some run-of-the-mill Washington, D.C. policy analysis foundation. It is, in fact, completely dedicated to increasing the wealth and power of its ultra-rich funders, at the expense of working people.

The Heritage Foundation is packed with corporate cash and uses that money to heavily influence politicians as they consider legislation discussed and passed in Congress. Starting in the 1980s with the Reagan administration, and continuing today with the Trump administration, it provides blueprints for budgets that do nothing but gut workers' rights, wages, benefits and pensions.

Big bankers, real estate developers, hedge-fund owners and CEOs from businesses like Morgan Stanley, Amway and Forbes serve on its Board of Trustees. They receive funding from organizations affiliated with David and Charles Koch, billionaire co-owners of Koch Industries. The think tank's funders support the organization's platform of “free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.”



Courtesy of Mike Konopacki

The Heritage Foundation, with its donors and partners, not only attacks workers but also supports policies against the environment, communities of color and women. Besides regularly promoting Right-to-Work legislation, it promotes a laundry list of regressive ideas, including:

- Sick leave policies should be eliminated;
- Economic inequality doesn't exist;
- Programs that benefit working families, such as Medicaid, are "wasteful;"
- Social Security and the minimum wage should be eradicated, calling the latter "a toll" on the work- force.

The Heritage Foundation has a long history of pushing policies that encourage its version of "traditional American values," which include calling for the privatization of public services.

Against the Public Postal Service

For some, the Heritage Foundation's ideas provide a roadmap for a future that is very different from working people's goal of a government that protects and supports average American families.

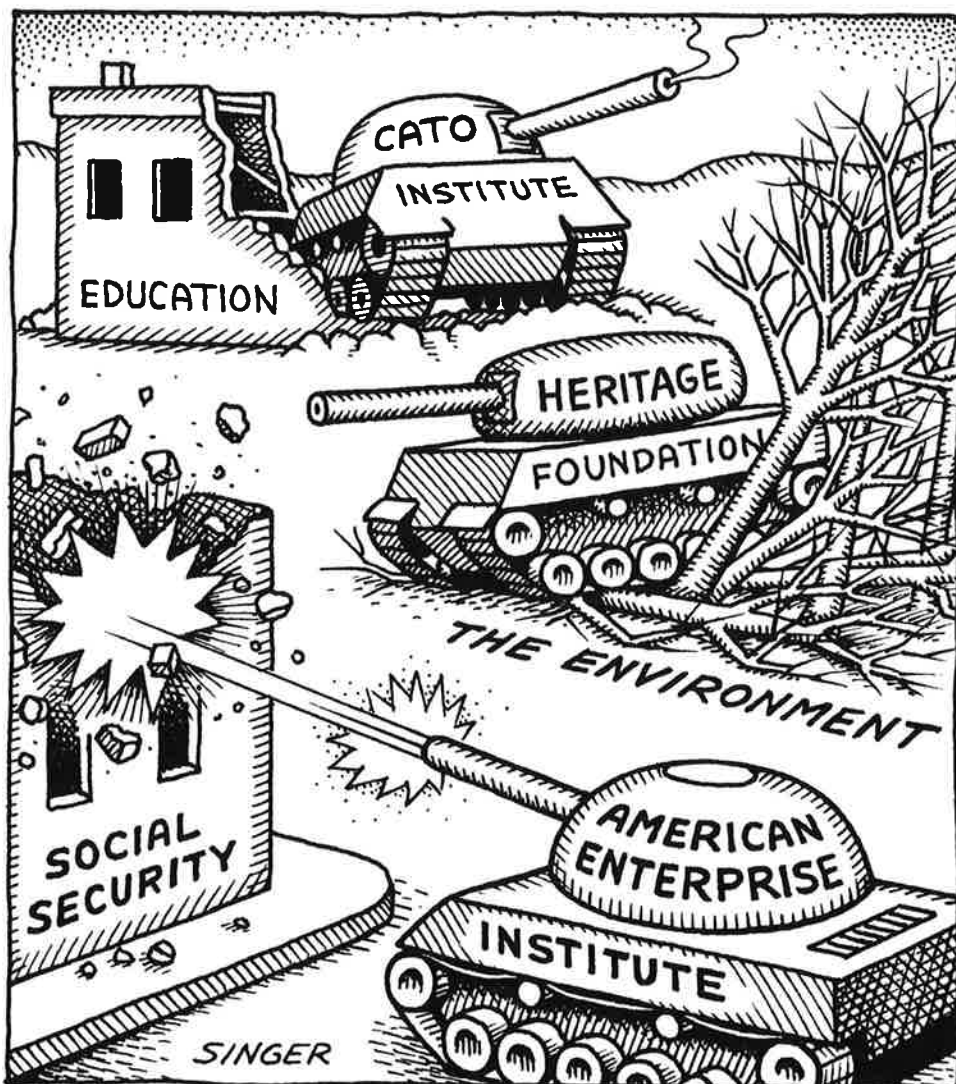
The Foundation's publications influenced members of Congress to draft an even more harmful 2018 federal budget than expected – hurting workers and their families and providing tax-cuts for the already incredibly wealthy.

As reported in the July-August 2017 issue of the *American Postal Worker*, the blueprint for the White House budget (a starting point for Congress) was the Heritage Foundation's *Blueprint for Balance: A Federal Budget for 2017*. That booklet also called for:

- "Lifting Congressionally imposed restrictions on the closure of USPS processing centers and post offices."
- "Lifting restrictions on delivery times and schedules, and permitting delivery on a five-day per- week basis

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THE THINK TANKS



Courtesy of Andy Singer

or even less.”

- “Eliminating service-level mandates.”
- “Eliminating restrictions on competition in the postal business, including the prohibition on private delivery of letter mail.”

The think tank’s blueprint also supports the current pre-funding mandate imposed on the Postal Service, saying the agency should “ensure 100 percent prepayment over a defined and limited period of time.”

All these goals fall in line with the Heritage Foundation’s “ultimate goal... to make the Postal Service a privately run organization... free of restrictions and mandates placed on it by Congress.”

Spouting Lies

In recent years, the Heritage Foundation published articles such as, *Can the Postal Service Have a Future?* and *You’ve Got (No) Mail: Is the End Near for the Postal Service?* These publications were slanted hit-jobs filled with blatant lies and misconceptions about the Postal Service’s operations, claiming that the USPS is obsolete and that its finances are so far in the red, it can never recover.

On one donor solicitation, it asks, *Is the Postal Service Doomed?*, then proceeds to spout lies written by James Gattuso, someone who is not just a Heritage staffer, but also former vice president of the conservative Citizens for a Sound Economy.

Postal workers can see through this nonsense, but unfortunately, the deception can sway unsuspecting members of the public. Some elected officials also use these false reports as fuel for their mission to reverse working peoples’ legislative gains, such as safety regulations and overtime laws.

Anti-Worker Roots

The Heritage Foundation was created in 1973 by people who thought Republican President Nixon’s agenda was too liberal. One of the founders was union-busting Joseph Coors, of the Coors Brewing Company empire. He launched the Foundation with \$200,000 of company money.

The Heritage Foundation gained traction when it published *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* in 1980. Nearly two-thirds of its 2,000 recommendations were adopted by President Reagan, including tax breaks for the wealthy, increased military spending and union-busting tactics.



The Heritage Foundation's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Its donors are among the top one percent of America's wealthy families and corporations – and are hell-bent on keeping it that way. They include many who would love to see a privatized Postal Service, including the United Parcel Service (UPS), which donates hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Foundation.

Under the Trump administration, many of the new legislative staff in the White House's West Wing, as well as the many arms of the Executive Branch, have ties to or are even former employees of the Heritage Foundation.

Learn More and Speak Out

So if you hear someone mention the Heritage Foundation, be sure to set the record straight. Speak out and let them know the Foundation's corporate donors do not care about working people, they only care about themselves.

The Heritage Foundation's Board of Trustees wants to kill our public Postal Service – and all other services that belong to the American people.

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