



NGOs

Center for American Progress

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Introduction

Welcome to the Center for American Progress! Founded in 2003 by John Podesta—Bill Clinton’s Chief of Staff and one of America’s “smartest political operatives”—the Center for American Progress (CAP) is one of America’s foremost progressive organizations. Both prominent right-wing and left-wing leaders have attested to the organization’s significant influence on American policy.

The Center for American Progress follows in the footsteps of some of America’s greatest leaders, such as Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The organization’s innovative use of media, combined with its thoughtful policy proposals, make it a force to be reckoned with in the world of Washington politics.

CAP believes in a strong America: an America where everyone has the opportunity to better themselves through hard work, an America with an open and effective government, and an America that other nations can look to as a beacon of fairness and equality.

CAP’s main goals this year are equalizing economic opportunity, restoring America’s position as a respected global leader, promoting clean, efficient energy, and delivering universal healthcare. CAP supports a healthy, efficient economy but also advocates for an economy whose gains are fairly distributed. With 180 staffers (including 11 full-time bloggers) and a \$27 million annual budget, the Center is well-equipped to pursue its goals.

History

The Center for American Progress was founded in response to the Bush-era conservative media saturation. Through outlets such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, and, somewhat infamously, **Fox News**, the right wing was able to efficiently disseminate its major talking points, giving conservatives the lead in the war of ideas. Consequently, in 2003, John Podesta announced the creation of the Center for American Progress, a “think tank on steroids.” Its aim was to counter the conservative monopoly on political media, and to reassert liberal ideas into mainstream politics. Although CAP is only six years old, it has quickly risen in influence and is currently one of the most powerful lobbying groups on the Hill.

Chief of Staff—*The top-ranking aide to an elected official*

Fox News—*A major American cable news channel. Though ostensibly focused on reporting the news in an unbiased fashion, many observers accuse Fox News of promoting a conservative political agenda.*

Center for American Progress In Action

CAP uses a variety of media initiatives to promote its views and policies. These include its blog, *Think Progress*, as well as a daily email newsletter entitled *The Progress Report*. Another major initiative is *Campus Progress*, which serves as both a way for college students to make their voices heard and a venue for empowering the next generation of progressive leaders. Other initiatives include *Enough*, a program to stop humanitarian crises in Africa, and *Faith and Public Policy*, a venue for debating the role of religion in politics and the public sphere.

Hot Topics

Healthcare

According to CAP, a universal health care plan is essential for health of Americans, as well as for the economic health of our nation. The current system is expensive, inefficient, and in need of imminent reform. Under CAP's plan, everyone would have the option of using Medicaid, employer-sponsored insurance, or the plan of federal employees to provide for their health care. Premiums would be capped at a percentage of one's income. The plan would emphasize preventative care and personal responsibility for health. The system's information technology would be updated. Finally, the plan would be funded by an efficient **value-added tax** that is not distortive and can easily raise a significant amount of revenue.

Energy Innovation

Unlike conservatives, CAP believes the dangers presented by global warming are too severe to be ignored, and so CAP advocates for immediate action. Acting now instead of waiting for future disaster will save Americans money. Investing in clean energy will create "green collar" American jobs and stimulate our economy.

CAP also supports a cap-and-trade carbon market, which is a program that trades economic incentives for effective pollution reduction. In a cap-and-trade program, the government establishes a cap, or limit, on the amount of pollutants companies can produce, and any company who pollutes above its limit must buy **carbon allowances** from either the government or a company who has produced less pollution than mandated by the cap. This would not only help our nation transition to a low-carbon energy system, but would also allow the government to raise revenue for alternative energy programs by auctioning off these carbon allowances. Another way to spur the American economy would be through clean retrofitting of homes, which would aid the currently suffering construction and manufacturing sectors, raise real estate values, and increase energy efficiency. However, while CAP supports many types of emerging clean technologies, it opposes nuclear power,

value-added tax—A tax on goods and services that taxes each step of production based on the amount of value it adds to a product

carbon allowances—credits which permit the holder to emit a specific amount of pollution. They can be sold by low-polluting companies to high-polluting companies.

believing it to be more dangerous than it is worth.

US-Pakistan Relations

Despite the dangers present in the region, recent US initiatives in Pakistan have been relatively successful. CAP argues, however, the US strategy in Pakistan has lacked a broad-based approach. Rather than centering our relationship with Pakistan around a single focal point, such as Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf—as was done recently—or military action against terrorism, US policy should be comprehensive. CAP believes that the United States and Pakistan need comprehensive, **bilateral** cooperation in all realms—military intelligence, economic and energy policy, and even social and educational development.

bilateral—*involving two different sides or parties*

Credit Crisis

CAP believes that in order to avoid the “**liquidity** trap”—economic stagnation caused when the public is too uncertain about the future to borrow money—we need government stimulus to convince people that the economy is back on track. The government should also examine declining family wealth—especially in terms of declining home values—and its effect on the retirements of seniors. The recent economic downturn has made it abundantly clear that stricter regulation of financial markets is needed. Finally, in order to get out of this crisis, people will need real income—not just loans—to increase their confidence in the future and initiate a return to their old spending habits. Consequently, CAP argues that the country needs for a well-designed economic stimulus that is able to create permanent, high-paying jobs.

liquidity—*the ability of an asset, such as cash or property, to be bought or sold without a significant change in its value*

Food Safety Regulation

Maintaining cheap food prices and protecting food industry profits are no excuse for risking the health and safety of Americans. Genetically cloned and engineered meats should be cleared by the FDA before making it to grocery store shelves, and FDA report data should be made available to Americans to help with their shopping decisions. Other forms of food, including imported food, should likewise be subject to FDA clearance before being available for consumption.

Food Prices

Sharply rising food prices not only pose a severe domestic problem, but they also threaten international security. Instability has already increased in strategically important parts of the globe, such as Pakistan, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Haiti. Domestic coffers are being emptied as more and more people sign up for food stamp and other assistance programs. Congress should increase the funding for these programs and purchase more from local producers to reform the large agribusiness monopoly. Furthermore, Congress should contribute more to the World

Bank to promote stability abroad.

Cuba

The Center for American Progress believes that President Obama and the **Organization of American States'** decisions to restore relations with Cuba—provided the island nation embraces democratic principles—was long overdue. Although Cuba declined the offer for the time being, the administration's statement that US policies are no longer the primary obstacle to US-Cuba relations is a welcome change of pace, and signals a message of cooperation to the entire Latin-American region. Cuba should reform, but, provided it does, there is no need to cling to restrictions that are relics of the Cold War.

Organization of American States—an international organization made up of thirty-five of the countries in North, Central, and South America

Organized Crime

The Center for American Progress supports **integrated** military, diplomatic, and economic power to fight international crime and to protect America's national security. CAP is especially concerned about the role of organized crime in human trafficking, which brings thousands of migrants into slavery, forced labor, and servitude around the globe. As far as domestic organized crime—especially in relation to Mexico—it favors prevention rather than enforcement. Accordingly, CAP supports increased funding for drug-demand reduction programs and addiction treatment programs in the United States in order to cut the revenue gained by Mexican drug cartels.

i n t e g r a t e d — Incorporating as equals different parts or groups

Finally, the Center for American Progress supports wider cooperation between the US and Mexico. For example, CAP favors sharing US drug enforcement information and intelligence with Mexico in order to assist it in the apprehension of criminals and their assets. CAP also supports annual, bi-national review panels between the leaders of Mexico and the US in order to evaluate the progress made in the fight against organized crime. This method can be applied in other cases with other international partners against organized crime as well.

Conclusion

You have been tasked with the mission of promoting the Center for American Progress' agenda. To do so, you must have a sharp mind and a sharp tongue. Persuading the other delegates to support your way of thinking will require a nuanced explanation of your party's views, as well as thorough research on the issues at hand. Thus, we encourage you to prepare well and to actively research the relevant issues and CAP's stance on them. Doing so will maximize your own credibility and force congressmen to listen.

These are good times for the Center of American Progress. CAP's influence in political circles has already been on the rise, and

with President Obama now in the White House, CAP is poised to become one of the most influential lobbyist groups in Washington. John Podesta and at least ten other CAP experts have advised or currently advise President Obama. However, while these are excellent times for the Center for American Progress, we cannot squander the opportunities given us.

Our time for action is now.

Guide to Further Research

In addition to this briefing, there are two main ways you can prepare yourself to lobby for the Heritage Foundation at the conference.

<http://www.americanprogress.org/>.

Your first and most valuable resource will be CAP's website. Here you can find information on its history, mission, and goals, as well as specific positions on a myriad of issues, including ones that will be debated at HMCE 2010.

The second primary way that you can prepare for the conference is by reviewing the issue briefings of the committees at HMCE. Look over the briefings and the questions that each committee will be considering. In doing so, you should be able to gain an understanding of how your organization can interact with each committee in order to further your goals and initiatives.

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