



## NGOs

### The Heritage Foundation

By Madeline Boyd

#### Introduction

Welcome to the Heritage Foundation! The Heritage Foundation is a conservative **think tank** where Americans who support **free enterprise**, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense can feel at home. As conservatives, members of the Heritage Foundation believe that the preservation of the ideals articulated by the Founding Fathers is an essential political undertaking. The fundamental principles of Heritage are to uphold liberty and faith, to defend self-government and patriotism, and to promote character, responsibility, and family. Heritage is delighted that you will be helping to unite conservatives in the fight against the welfare state, while defending American freedom and opportunity.

You will not be fighting alone. Heritage's support runs deep, and its membership of more than 250,000 makes it the largest think tank in the country. All of its members care deeply about promoting a conservative agenda. Though closely aligned with the Republican Party, Heritage is a non-profit organization and is run by an independent board of trustees. It relies upon the private financial support of the general public—individuals, corporations and other foundations—and does not accept government contributions or perform contract work. That said, Heritage is viewed as one of the most influential lobbyist groups in Washington. Every day, Heritage experts distribute fact-sheets to members of Congress and write op-ed pieces that are reprinted in newspapers across the country.

Heritage analysts perform timely, accurate research on key policy issues, and Heritage staff report these findings to important audiences, such as members of Congress, key congressional staff members, policy-makers in the executive branch, the news media, and the academic community. Each year, Heritage publishes more than 200 influential studies, and holds conferences, meetings, and lectures across the country.

#### Heritage and Public Policy

Heritage has been making a profound difference in American policy since its establishment in 1973. In its early years, Heritage helped to deflate former President Jimmy Carter's welfare expansion and to defeat a proposed tax hike. It also led American supporters of the **Nicaraguan Contra freedom fighters**. In 1992, when Heritage criticized over-regulation in former President George H.W. Bush's tax policies, then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton quoted the Heritage Foun-

**think tank** - An organization engaged in research and advocacy in specific areas of public policy; frequently attempting to influence members of Congress and the executive branch

**free enterprise** - business governed by the laws of supply and demand, not restrained by government interference, regulation or subsidy

**Nicaraguan Contra freedom fighters** - Groups of counter-socialist revolutionaries that rebelled in Nicaragua in the 1980's

dation's analysis in his denunciation of the Bush tax system, demonstrating Heritage's ability to appeal to both parties. Later, Heritage developed a free-market health care plan that became the leading alternative to President Clinton's proposal for a government-run health care system. Heritage also founded the "Index of Economic Freedom," a widely-quoted, annual measurement of free-market policies in more than 100 countries.

After nearly three decades, the Heritage Foundation remains a leader in promoting the conservative message. Heritage recently expanded its Center for Data Analysis, an office that compiles accurate economic analyses and forecasts. The Center for Data Analysis has exposed the prejudice of the **Congressional Budget Office** which Heritage claims is biased against sensible free-market economics. Heritage recently opened its Center for Media and Public Policy, which advises conservatives on how to compete in liberal media markets. Additionally, Heritage is leading the way on key issues like taxation and education.

The Heritage philosophy is straightforward. When the Heritage Foundation examines an issue, it looks for ways to reduce the federal government's burdensome bureaucracy. It seeks to root out obsolete, **redundant**, and dysfunctional programs. According to Heritage, federal programs must be run efficiently to promote accountability. Most importantly, the federal government should let state and local governments do what they do best, such as administer state welfare programs and run public schools. The federal government can help local governments through aid, but it cannot effectively administrate at the community level, and so those programs should be left to state and local governments. As part of the Heritage Foundation, you are charged with upholding the founding principles of the county by challenging and encouraging lawmakers to adhere to the tenets of government—principles upon which their re-election depends.

**Congressional Budget Office**—A federal agency which provides economic data and reports to Congress

**redundant** – unnecessarily repeated or in excess

## Hot Topics

### *Credit Crisis*

The current credit crisis has shown that there is a dire need to bring reform to the American financial system, while not stifling or micromanaging consumers or lending institutions. The Heritage Foundation supports an overhaul of regulatory institutions, but prefers a standards-based to a rules-based system. A structure like this would allow financial institutions to continue to innovate, so long as this innovation does not pose future harm to America's economy. A clear **TARP** exit strategy is also necessary to ensure that the government is not overly involved in the financial sector.

**TARP**—The Troubled Asset Relief Program, a program that allows the US government purchases assets from failing financial institutions.

Besides preventing future economic crashes, Congress must also stimulate the current economy by lowering taxes. Rather than taxing and spending the public's money in hopes of economic benefit, the Heritage Foundation supports keeping the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts in place, as well as decreasing the corporate tax rate.

### *Organized Crime*

The Heritage Foundation believes other threats, such as terrorism or other forms of domestic crime, pose a greater danger to the United States than the current, weak state of organized crime. However, the Heritage Foundation still believes in individual responsibility, and therefore defers the issue of organized crime to state and local authorities rather than the federal government. Heritage believes that over-involvement of the federal government as well as over-criminalization of various social and economic actions may threaten citizens' rights and may break citizens' trust in the justice system.

### *US-Cuba Relations*

Cuba's recent transition of power has brought the opportunity for hope back into the arena of US-Cuba relations. Unlike some hard-line Republicans, who believe strict **sanctions** are the only way to bring about a democratic Cuba, Heritage believes that we should open lines of communication—provided that Cuba is willing to cooperate. While President Raul Castro's human rights record is a cause for concern, his admiration of China's gradual acceptance of capitalism could present an opportunity for mutual understanding and cooperation that should not be wasted.

**sanctions**—  
*economic penalties, such as trade restrictions, assessed against a particular country by other countries or the international community*

### *Energy Innovation*

The United States should, when considering energy policy, prioritize using private sector research and development, expanding domestic energy supplies—including repealing unnecessarily strict environmental regulation when necessary—and keeping global energy markets free and open.

Previous government programs to subsidize technologies such as ethanol, solar, and wind for a few years until they could compete on the free market have not lived up to their promise, and all three technologies continue to require heavy subsidies. The oil windfall profits tax has also proven to be unsuccessful, only encouraging further importation of oil—something that hurts domestic industry and harms our national security.

### *Food Safety Regulation*

An objective, science-based approach to food safety regulation is the best policy. Market forces and private sector competition should be the main forces weeding out unsafe producers. Strict regulation that

only allows certain producers to compete in the marketplace would do little to keep our food supply healthy, serving only to stifle competition, raise prices, and decrease quality. Furthermore, excessive regulation or tariffs on imported food would damage our trade relations, quite possibly inciting similar tariff policies in return.

### *Healthcare Reform*

Policy makers should take decisive steps to move today's bureaucracy driven, heavily regulated, third-party payment system to a new patient-centered system of consumer choice and real free-market competition. Congress should repeal the unfair and inefficient tax break for employer-provided health insurance. Congress should also give the states authority in deciding how to run their own health care systems, rather than creating a federal one-size-fits-all plan. Finally, Congress should reform existing healthcare spending and make efficiency the priority.

### *US-Pakistan Relations*

Recent cooperation between Pakistan and U.S. military operations has been very successful in the fight against Taliban forces—one example being the recent assassination of a Taliban leader using a U.S. **unmanned aerial vehicle** aided by Pakistani intelligence. Heritage would like to see this alliance continue. However, in order to win the long-term struggle against terrorism, this alliance must be accompanied by economic development and political reform to raise the living standards of Pakistanis.

**unmanned aerial vehicle**—*An aircraft that contains no on-board crew and is instead guided remotely from the ground. UAVs are commonly used by the US in military and anti-terror operations.*

### *Food Prices*

Heritage strongly opposes excessive ethanol mandates and government **subsidies**. While doing little to raise energy efficiency, they greatly increase food prices. Because of these subsidies, farmers plant corn instead of other vegetables, driving vegetable prices up. Furthermore, ethanol subsidies cause corn to be bought up by energy companies rather than by farmers who need corn to use as feed for their cattle. This in turn causes beef prices to go up, ultimately hurting average Americans. Heritage strongly believes that American consumers get the best prices with the minimum amount of regulation and subsidization.

**subsidies**—*financial assistance paid by the government to producers in a particular industry*

### *Conclusion*

A few years ago, Heritage conducted a survey of thousands of its members on many questions concerning government policy and the role of Heritage. When asked how Heritage could most effectively promote conservative ideas, more than half of respondents resounded on one point, namely that Heritage needs to present “a detailed blueprint for the conservative agenda” to Congress and the president. They also said that Heritage must **disseminate** its message through radio and television in-

**Disseminate** – *spread*

interviews and through newspaper editorials. The members suggested that Heritage should ensure that its **allies** receive media exposure and form coalitions with other conservative groups. In short, they said that Heritage needs to do exactly what you are going to do at HMCE 2010: lobby. Lobby hard for a clear conservative agenda to the people who make major political decisions.

**allies**—*supporters*

It is up to you how effective you will be as a member of the Heritage Foundation's lobbying staff. Decision-makers in the House and Senate love information. Intelligent arguments and well-researched presentations can easily sway a member who is on the fence. The best lobbyist is not the one who speaks with the loudest voice or knows the most people; rather, it is the person who provides the best and most insightful information to support his or her position. Heritage implores you to carefully read and research your assigned topics. If you come to the conference armed with new information to support Heritage's cause, you will find yourself in a position to help both the organization and society at large.

Now is a challenging time for conservatives; the liberal shift of both the executive and judicial branches has put Heritage's vision of a better America in peril. But all is not lost. As a Heritage lobbyist, you can help unite conservatives in Congress behind a common agenda. With your help, Heritage can bring together conservatives from across the country, and help this nation's leaders return to the fundamental, conservative principles on which this great nation was built.

## **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.heritage.org/>>.

Your first and most valuable resource will be Heritage'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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