



LOBBYISTS

Center for American Progress

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Introduction

The Center for American Progress (CAP) began in 2003 as a left-wing counterweight to more established right-leaning think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. CAP's work primarily involves policy research, government lobbying, position papers, and media advocacy in the hopes of swaying public opinion. Lobbying and advocacy efforts, however, are conducted through the Center for American Progress' Action Fund, a sister organization that is removed from the policy research focus of CAP's main organization. Unlike other think tanks, CAP has a very well established senior fellows network, which conducts much of their research output. Some of these fellows include Gene Sperling (Director of the National Economic Council under Presidents Clinton and Obama), Senator Tom Daschle (former Senate Minority Leader), and the late Elizabeth Edwards. CAP was also featured prominently on the Al Franken Show, which aired on the no longer existing Air America Radio Network. Hosts Christy Harvey and Al Franken (now a US Senator from Minnesota) frequently criticized former President Bush's policies with the help of CAP research.

Outreach Methods

CAP produces a daily newsletter emailed to all registered members. *The Progress Report* gives the think tank's report and analysis of the day's major political news, and includes both domestic and international policy decisions. While the organization does have a **progressive** tilt, the newsletter merely interprets actual news through a progressive lens, thereby providing both factual analysis and opinion. *The Progress Report* has four sections: an in-depth piece on the major topic of the day (such as an economic proposal, government scandal, or foreign policy initiative); "Under the Radar," which includes less well-publicized new stories, including links to op-eds and articles from other media outlets; "Think Fast," which solely features links to articles from other media outlets; and "Daily Grill," perhaps the most well read of the four sections. This portion seeks to point out the hypocrisy and flip-flopping of right-wing candidates by comparing their past and more recent statements.

progressive—favoring or implementing social reform or new, liberal ideas.

Additionally, CAP has other media outreach methods. Since 2006,



CAP has been working to expand its social media presence, particularly with YouTube videos intended to “go viral.” This video system, which seeks to promote their policy work in a multi-media fashion, is presently known as SEEPROGRESS. CAP has three well-read and regularly updated blogs as well. “Climate Progress” focuses on environmental issues, “Think Progress” seeks to popularize and expand the progressive movement throughout the country (as hopefully an eventual rival of the now well-established Tea Party), and “Campus Progress” is a blog dedicated to youth issues hoping to expand voter and civic participation rates amongst 18-35 year olds. Through this blog, CAP hopes to give voice to and empower the next generation of progressive leaders.

Issues

Domestic Issues

Bioethics and Science

CAP prides itself on not limiting its domestic policy research to issues that tend to dominate the mainstream media. Therefore, CAP has funded and conducted numerous studies concerning the role of science in society as well as the obligations the scientific community has to engage in humane, ethical research practices. The organization has applauded President Obama on increasing funding to scientific organizations, despite constant pressure to cut the federal deficit.

Civil Rights, Liberties, and Justice

Much like the ACLU, CAP focuses on modern civil rights issues, including affirmative action, gay rights, transgender rights, housing and labor, and parity between genders. Additionally, CAP has worked to reform racial barriers that are still extant in our judicial system (such as unequal punishments for similar crimes and crack cocaine sentencing) and has argued vehemently against legislation like the **USA Patriot Act**, which CAP believes unnecessarily encroaches on the American people’s civil liberties.

Education

CAP sees education as one of the foremost public policy issues of our time. Therefore, they have conducted extensive research on a variety of education-related policies, including standardized test efficacy, school choice, charter schools, teacher evaluation, the use of technology in classrooms, private school vouchers, and professional development. Additionally, the CAP Action Fund has engaged in government lobbying regarding this issue in particular, especially as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, now referred to as the No Child Left

USA Patriot Act—a federal law passed in 2001 that dramatically reduced restrictions on law enforcement agencies’ ability to search personal records and communications, eased restrictions on foreign intelligence gathering within the US, and broadened the discretion of law enforcement in detaining and deporting immigrants suspected of terrorism-related acts; the act also expanded the definition of terrorism to include domestic terrorism.

Behind Act) is soon to expire and with the president recently announcing his Blueprint for Education Reform and Race to the Top initiatives.

Health Care

Although in support overall of President Obama's healthcare reform bill (CAP in fact did much of the research that convinced senators to include certain controversial provisions, including the individual mandate), CAP has argued for more liberal reforms in the American healthcare industry. CAP's research has shown that the undue influence of healthcare and pharmaceutical companies severely limit healthcare reform efforts, and that therefore our system should fundamentally change to more resemble a European, government-run, **single-payer model**.

single-payer model—a health care model in which medical care is funded from a single insurance pool operated and administered by the government.

Other Issues

Other domestic issues of serious importance to CAP are: immigration (including access to education for the children of illegal immigrants, drivers' licenses for illegal immigrants, amnesty, paths to citizenship, and fundamentally reforming our existing immigration laws), open government (clearer laws about accepting lobbyist money, more relationships between elected officials and constituents, and fewer classified communications), poverty (addressing the growing homeless veteran population and working to shrink the ever widening gap between income levels), and women's rights (preserving a woman's right to choose against state encroachments, continuing the equal pay for equal work fight).

Economic Issues

Credit and Debt

Like other liberal think tanks, CAP blames much of the economic downturn of the last few years on large banks, **hedge funds**, and credit card companies. Therefore, when dealing with the federal debt, CAP has argued that the companies responsible for the crisis should bear a larger financial burden than middle class Americans, particularly credit cards companies. Additionally, CAP does not believe that the ballooning federal debt is as major an issue (in the short term) as Republican politicians would like us to believe, and that the budget cuts currently being proposed (and those that have already been enacted) are not only morally untenable given their impact on people's lives but also economically misguided.

hedge fund—a private, actively managed investment fund that utilizes sophisticated strategies in international and/or domestic markets designed to generate returns higher than traditional stock and bond investments

Economic Outlook

Unless President Obama and his economic team dramatically change course, CAP views the country's economic outlook as bleak.

This is in large part due to the contractionary economic policies that have been pursued (budget cuts being the primary strategy). CAP argues that if the government would continue to spend money, particularly on infrastructure projects, health and education, and scientific, communication, and technological research, the country would have to endure a shorter recession and would end with a much more vibrant, balanced economy.

Other Issues

Other economic issues of serious importance to CAP are: the federal budget (and how to make it more equitable), the global economy, housing (how the nation can increase accessible housing for the disabled, poor, and minorities in urban communities), labor and work (creating jobs for the 21st century, green jobs, remaining committed to **collective bargaining rights**, the continued existence of unions, making manufacturing a larger portion of the economy again), markets and regulation (increasing regulation of the American economy, particularly the credit card, finance, banking, and loan industries), postsecondary education (making college more affordable through government subsidies, providing increased federal funding for public state colleges, shifting spending from for-profit colleges to community colleges), retirement (ensuring that Social Security remains solvent for future generations, advocating for issues particular to older Americans, especially housing, voter disenfranchisement, access to healthcare, respecting the dignity of human life), tax reform (fundamentally reforming the American tax structure to make it more progressive, placing a larger burden on the upper income tax bracket, increasing the corporate and capital gains taxes, closing corporate loopholes, making postsecondary education tax deductible), and technology and innovation (reigniting American ingenuity, funding science and computer science curriculums in schools, space exploration, ensuring that America remains the world's leader in innovation, technology, science, and communications)

Media and Progressive Values

Gay and Transgender Issues

CAP supports full and immediate marriage benefits for gay families and has argued as such before Congress. Other issues pertaining to gay families, including hospital visitation and adoption, are lobbied for at the state level. Regarding transgender individuals, CAP has lobbied insurance companies to begin to cover gender realignment surgery. Additionally, they have urged the authors of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to no longer classify transsexual individuals as having a mental disorder. During **Don't Ask Don't Tell** repeal debates, CAP was one of the few organizations to question how trans-

collective bargaining rights—rights pertaining to the process of negotiations between employers and the representatives of a unit of employees (e.g. labor unions) aimed at reaching agreements that regulate working conditions.

Don't Ask Don't Tell—the policy that prohibited military personnel from discriminating against closeted homosexual or bisexual service members while barring openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons from military service; the policy was repealed by Congress in 2010.

gender service men and women fit into the equation.

Progressive Movement

CAP has worked with Think Progress and Campus Progress to foment a liberal movement in the United States to rival the Tea Party. CAP has worked with media leaders, including Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, as well as “The Coffee Party” on this very long-term, yet very vital movement. CAP hopes to empower a new generation of progressive leaders and move the country in a more general left-wing direction.

Other Issues

Other values issues important to CAP include race and ethnicity (maintaining a national spotlight on civil rights abuses, the death penalty, housing availability, school integration, the teaching of race in schools, affirmative action, college affordability, immigration, obesity, gun violence, sexual abuse and other issues that predominantly effect minorities) and religion and values. In regards to the latter issue, CAP believes that people of all faiths, including Islam, must be respected, and the group hopes to help America move away from a political polemic dominated by “**the Christian right.**”

Christian right—*the term used to describe right-wing Christian political groups that are characterized by their strong support of socially conservative policies.*

Conclusion

The Center for American Progress is a resounding liberal voice in a crowded lobbying community centered in Washington, DC. In an era that seems to be moving in a subtly right wing, reactionary direction, CAP remains committed to progressive ideals. The unique thing about CAP is that it works with nearly all political and policy issues and does not specialize with advocacy agenda like Greenpeace and AIPAC. Its issue base is even broader than its equivalent right ring think tank, the Heritage Foundation. Therefore, as lobbyists, this gives you considerable freedom regarding the issues you want to work on. It is likely that if someone somewhere is concerned about it, CAP has written a policy memo (or two) about it. One must keep in mind, however, that their research comes through a progressive lens, and that this tilt must be taken into account when evaluating the efficacy of their findings. One must always keep a discerning eye when working with slanted or partisan political organizations, think tanks, and research institutes.

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