



## Letter from the President, Peter Goettler

Since I last wrote, we have all lost a champion of liberty and a true leader of libertarianism. And those of us on staff at Cato have lost a colleague and a dear friend. David Boaz passed away in early June after a yearlong battle with cancer.

David's passing is felt deeply within the Institute, among those who advance classical liberal values worldwide, and by so many across the breadth of the political and philosophical spectrum who appreciated his principled and sharp insights—whether they agreed with his point of view or not. David's influence in mainstreaming libertarian ideas and policy solutions is evident in tributes published throughout the media, from the *New York Times* to the *Washington Post*. David also did much to create and perpetuate Cato's most defining attribute—its adherence to principle. And this itself is a reflection of the dedication to libertarian principles that he exhibited in his own life.

As one final example of his dedication to Cato and liberty, David died with his boots on: continuing to work and come to the office until he was unable to do so only two weeks before he passed away. We were blessed during this time with continuing opportunities for conversation and debate, as well as the chance to seek his counsel as needed. David even delivered a powerful speech on Cato's history and importance at the last all-staff meeting he attended in May.

But David's final public speech was a presentation he delivered to the Students for Liberty's international LibertyCon conference in February. And while I'm tempted to use this letter to highlight the contributions David made to policy during his 40 years at Cato, his speech to the Students for Liberty that day reflected so

much of his best: optimism and perspective for all we continue to achieve, balanced with a healthy concern for today's threats to liberty; a willingness to call out those threats regardless of from where they're emanating; and a lifetime of success in bringing young people to the ideas of liberty and the philosophy of libertarianism.

He reminded us that while we often feel like we're on the road to serfdom, in David's own lifetime citizens of the United States lived with military conscription, 90 percent marginal income tax rates, sodomy and obscenity laws, Jim Crow laws, wage and price controls, and entry into transportation and communications markets that was controlled by the government. He lived to see all these things end. Meanwhile, the Iron Curtain collapsed, and the spread of property rights and market institutions to China, India, and parts of Latin America and Africa helped lift a billion people out of extreme poverty.

But David was never a Pollyanna; he was realistic about the current challenges to liberty as the surveillance state, federal spending, and government regulation all rise dramatically. And no one was more diligent in pushing back on the rise of illiberalism we are witnessing on both the left and the right.

Ever the honest intellectual, David never played on a political team so didn't carry the biases, double standards, and hypocrisy that so often entails. He readily took the left to task throughout his career at Cato but gave fair time to the threats arising from the right as well. Indeed, at his last Students for Liberty presentation, David admonished the audience: "When you see self-proclaimed 'freedom advocates' talking about blood and soil, or helping a would-be autocrat overturn an election, or talking about LGBT equality as

'degeneracy,' or saying we shouldn't care about government racism against black people, or defending the Confederacy and the cause of the South, or joining right-wing culture wars in supporting politicians who want to use the state to fight their enemies, or posting Holocaust jokes and death threats on Twitter, recognize that for what it is. Speak up. Fight back. Tell people, "That's not America, and it's certainly not libertarianism."

David's last public appearance also drives home the incredible role he played in bringing the ideas of liberty to students and young people. At conferences where young libertarians gathered, David was treated like a rock star. His presentations always earned enthusiastic ovations. And his book *Libertarianism: A Primer*, which was updated in 2015 as *The Libertarian Mind*, is often cited—along with classics such as *The Road to Serfdom*, *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Wealth of Nations*, and *Capitalism and Freedom*—by young people explaining how they arrived at libertarianism.

I shared David's Students for Liberty speech with one of Cato's key partners. He watched it and told me, "We have lost a good soldier." Indeed. David's devoted efforts and eloquent and persuasive voice will be missed. But as when a flag bearer falls on the battlefield, those of us who remain must take it up, redouble our efforts, continue our mission, and ensure that freedom wins. David's legacy demands no less.



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President and CEO