



Letter from the President, Peter Goettler

Cato has published nearly 400 books since 1980, but none was a biography until 2018: Tim Sandefur's outstanding *Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Man*. The book was timed to coincide with the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial. We couldn't resist the opportunity to showcase a great American who deserves to be better known, as well as the work of one of our most prolific adjunct scholars.

When writing the first draft of a Cato Institute *Statement of Principles* that was suggested by director David Humphreys and adopted by our board in October 2023, I included a quote from Douglass that I love. In a lecture to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in 1855, he said, "I would unite with anybody to do right, and with nobody to do wrong."

This quote was incorporated into the *Statement* because its spirit infuses almost all of our work at Cato. Mapping our principles to political philosophies and policy debates illuminates that Cato will have both broad areas of agreement and areas of serious disagreement with nearly everyone, regardless of where they fall on the political spectrum.

Whether it's Democrats or Republicans on Capitol Hill or in state houses around the country, staffers from both sides of the aisle joining our Congressional Fellowship Program, administrations of either political party, or the thousands of educators of Project Sphere (easily the most diverse part of our

community), we share common ground and objectives. And we work together to advance those objectives—whether it's through policy change, efforts to repair our civic culture, or the promotion of universal values such as freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, the Constitution, and the rule of law.

This was much on our minds as Election Day approached, bringing with it what George Will credibly called "the worst presidential choice in US history." And whichever candidate you preferred (or, perhaps, least disliked), it was easy to rue either potential outcome—if for different reasons. But this much was certain: Cato, our policy experts, and our outreach professionals stood ready to work pursuing policy change with either administration—if in vastly different areas.

So with the election of Donald Trump for a second term, we'll be embracing the areas in which we can work with the new administration to move policy in a more liberty-friendly direction. We hope these will include fiscal restraint, tax reform, deregulation—particularly in the areas of finance, energy, and the environment—and administrative law, health care, and foreign policy. As I'm writing this, Cato experts across our economic teams are hard at work putting the finishing touches on a comprehensive road map of reform

to guide the efforts of the Department of Government Efficiency.

But you can also count on us to be pushing back in areas such as trade, legal immigration, and more—where the administration will be trying to shift policy in directions we oppose. And, as ever, Cato will be a loud voice whenever the administration's decisions threaten to undermine the Constitution, exercise extralegal executive action, or compromise the rule of law—or when norms that safeguard the latter are broken. And this will be without regard for the policy objectives at hand. If the first Trump administration is any indication, such a voice will be crucial.

And in all this work, effort, and influence, we will be guided by the Cato principles enumerated in our *Statement*. For, as Douglass himself further challenged us in one of his most famous orations (1852's *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?*): "Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost."

Peter Goettler
President and CEO