

Programme OPERA – ENTRETIENS

Entretien – santé n°40

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Interviewer: I wanted to start with the beginning of your career. Did you directly join the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), or... ?

Responder: Actually, after school I was in the service for a while, in the Air Force. Then I was unemployed briefly and then I took an internship with the American Exchange Council. That essentially was my first Washington job. I worked for them for a few months, actually two months, and a job opened up there and I took it.

How long did you work there ?

I believed I worked there about five years.

Until 199.. ?

1991, it would have been.

Why did you leave it ?

I changed for George Public Policy Foundation in Atlanta. There were a number of reasons. Essentially it was a chance to have a broader portfolio. I was the director of research for the George Public Policy Foundation, so I have to watch a wider range of issue for them and I thought it was a chance to advance my career.

When did you specialize in health care policies ?

Well probably for the beginning: my job in ALEC, I was legislative director for health and welfare studies. So I was working on health care for them. In George Policy Foundation I have a much broader portfolio but I still worked on health care when I was there. I did a monograph for Georgia that was also expanded into Alabama and South Carolina and that was a monograph still about health care system and reforms. It should be done there. And then, when I came back to Cato in 1993, I was director of health and welfare studies.

When you worked in the American Legislative Exchange Council, what were your sources of inspiration to frame or to shape your research ?

We primarily worked on state legislative issue, it didn't deal with federal health care legislation. We focused on what states could do. ALEC is a very unique structure : on each issue they had a team that are put together of state legislators and expert form the private sector, both think tanks and corporations and those teams work to develop model legislation that the states would then adopt. My role was to facilitate that, provide research for that, more [sour?...3'58] that the type of policy work that I do here.

Were you already interested in new conservative ideas about health care?

I was a guy with a free market advocate at that point and ALEC was a free market focused legislative group. So I was working into ideas to reform health care from a market-oriented perspective.

Who were the main references in this field?

We are going back to a long way to try to remember! At that point, there was the Heritage Foundation that had Edmund Haislmaier and some people... John Goodman of course was still there and is still today an expert. I would say that we worked a lot with them. The early stop at that point had a lot to do with... It was the beginning of the talk of Medical Saving Accounts and we discussed but it was just in their entraney. The work I was doing then if still exist ... (il cherche des livres dans sa bibliothèque). This is the type of work that we produced as a model legislation: *Prospection changes...*

So at this time, you worked closely with Heritage Foundation?

Well I knew them, they were probably the biggest think tank on the right of the spectrum at this time - we are talking the late eighties - so back and forth with them; we also looked at their building, so it may be convenient. Be honest, I could not remember exactly who I was reading 20 years ago, 25 years ago.

Do you remember if it was a time with much stimulation?

Actually, no; no that early. Much of the work at that point had to do... there were not a lot broad health care discussion at the time. If I look at the titles of legislation we worked on, a lot had to do with pharmaceutical issues. State legislators worked on at the time, there were a lot to deal with [...7,26?] reforms, there were tax credits to help small businesses, buy health insurance. Craig Scendlen is another one who is still around now and at that point he worked for Blue Cross Blue Shield but he was still an expert on mandate and state benefice in effort to repeal them. It was more small changes than large systemic changes at that time.

In you opinion, why did you become so interested in this field?

It was a sort of natural outgrowth of... My original interest in the area that I originally wanted to work was welfare public policy, that where my initial policy interest were. And health care

was very closely tied to that. [It looked in the public health costs for a big part of Medicaid was tied in it and so extracted to and overlapped in that: 9'03].

In 1993, you were hired by Cato...

Yes, Cato broad me back specifically because of it was the Hillary care. That was the Clinton health care initiative and Cato had no one to specialize on health care at that time. They broad me back specifically to do health care, and they gave me health and welfare so I do welfare and social security but the reason I was here was to do health care.

What was your mission?

To stop Hillary care.

How did you try to do it?

I did a great deal of writing, I traveled and spoke. I know that from 1993 to 1994 190 000 miles of travel, dozens and dozens of speeches around the country, [couple of papers, 10'14], that sort of things.

Did you hire other fellows to help you?

I have always had a research assistant who work for me. At that point Cato was much smaller and I was the only one along with my research assistant doing health care at that time.

When did it change in Cato?

It is gradual. We got gradually bigger. The real change came in probably 2004 and 2005. At that point, social security was the big issue in this country and I was running a social security effort. So I was not able to spent much time at all in health care anymore and we needed to have a full time health care person; so at that time we hired Michael Cannon to be director of health care studies and initially he reported directly to me. I was director of welfare studies, he was director of health care studies. He was a full time on health care and I was occasionally working on it. And then a couple of years ago, I was promoted to senior fellow and he became independent, he didn't have to report to me directly any more.

Did you come back to health care?

Social security was over, health care was again there and I decided to work on it again and again.

And now, how many people work on health care policies here?

Four. Cannon, my self, and each one has a research assistant. There are other people who occasionally work on health care. Dog Benda who is a fellow who occasionally write about it; other people may periodically get involved in these issues. Tax and fiscal policy people deal with Medicaid and Medicare issues so they occasionally do something on it. Now there is a question on the constitutionality of the new bill, so legal persons... So a lot of people

occasionally touch on it but in term of real emphasis, taking part every day, there are four persons.

These occasional persons, do they work in Cato or are they private consultants?

It's a little more sophisticated in Cato. They're fellows, mostly. Sometimes fellows have an office here and sometimes they don't.? (13'42) It's a little bake. But they are paid by Cato.

When you started to work here, did you have a precise idea about what you wanted to develop? Which kind of ideas?

Not anywhere near as developed as they would become. I mean I knew I opposed to Hillary care. I had written when I was in Georgia (il cherche dans sa bibliothèque) a monograph on what things should do and it talked a little bit on national issues (I don't know if it still exists...). A couple of books on health care reform. A monograph as you call them because they are not very published books. But they had lead me to a general policy favor of deregulating the health care industry, of things we are calling Medical Saving Accounts; I had written about those in a book. I had a sort of general philosophy but it had not entered in a lot of detailed proposals. When I came to Cato, the first thing we did was to published the book called *Patient power* by John Goodman and Gerald L. Musgrave. They were not working for Cato at all. John Goodman has his own think tank, CPPA, Center for Public Policy Analysis, ... was an independent consultant, he has an econometric consulting firm in some place. They got together and wrote *Patient Power*, which really became the first, almost the Bible of free market health care movement for many years. We brought out this book, which was 800 pages; we did a bridge of a 200 pages book and 50 pages..16'30]. Until very recently, that was the explanation of the role of the free market health care movement.

When was it published?

1993.

Why isn't it the Bible anymore?

In someway it's still is but it's just overtaken by advance. The stop you find is still the basic discussion on what's going on. It sets the whole tone for what is now called the consumer-directed health care movement: the idea that you need to have consumers who control the money and make value decisions, that sort of things. It was the purpose about and it is still the [...?17'25] of the free market movement. But it was what was happening in national health care system 20 years ago. It even doesn't exist in the same way anymore. The reference is the same way but it's something I recommend [....?].

During the Clinton's attempt of reform, did you help people at the Congress, or...?

Yeah, that was a very interesting time. We certainly worked a lot with [....? 18'11]. We don't work directly on legislation or anything because of the tax rules for think tanks; but we can provide information for them. What is particularly interesting about that time historically was the three main free market think tanks at that time, AEI, Heritage Foundation and Cato

Institute developed very different approaches to health care reforms and were very antagonist to each other, to each other proposals. There was a huge fight between the three of us. So much so that the Republicans in Congress became quite upset; they said that they were having trouble in formulating their position to oppose Hillary care because there was no consensus on the right. There was actually a bill based on Heritage model, something [... bill]. And we published the all papers trashing. People didn't know what they could sign on to that. Eventually, they called Grace-Mary Arnott, now it's Grace-Mary Turner, she got married. Grace-Mary who was a very well known Washington insider, she had held a number of positions in different think tanks, not Cato but Heritage and others, she had been a staffer on the Hill, she knew [...], she knew [...], she always very close connection, very tided in. They asked her to convene peace talk between the three think tanks. And for six month, we negotiated. Famously in Washington people talk the story over Grace-Mary who cooked baked cookies and brought milk and cookies at our office. Bob Moffit from the Heritage Foundation, Bob Helms from the AEI and me, with Grace-Mary and a couple of other people moderating. We negotiated a joint statement for the three think tanks. Every word was negotiated, it really was like the Paris peace talk! But eventually, we came out with a joint statement and this group became noticed as the Consensus group, which still exist today. [But a dozen of think tanks involved. But at that time that was very important to find a unified agreement, what we are against, what we are for, the opposition instead of ideas...]

What were the main issues among you?

They are still existing today! The largest was that the Heritage Foundation supported a individual mandate to people to buy insurance and we were strongly opposed to that. Heritage also supported something like a managed competition model, something like the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program which the government would set the broad progenitors [22'49] and we favored much more deregulated market.

They worked with Alan Enthoven?

They didn't work with him but it was based on some degree along the same line as Enthoven.

It was not so far from Clinton's reform...

That what we argued! They argued that it was very different but we thought it was remarkably similar!

When did you find the consensus?

Eventually, we managed to find a freezing thing that didn't say that we are opposed to a individual mandate but didn't say we supported one. It was a way of coming out that we are able to find a language that everybody could read what he wanted to do.

When did the meetings end?

I could say exactly. I would say, somewhere in the summer of that year, 1993 (*il se trompe: 1994*); a few month before Hillary crashed and burned. Probably 1994, it's 94. Hillary care started in October 93, so it's probably in spring 94.

The three of you, Heritage, AEI and you, did you have particular contacts in the Congress, did you have special relationship with staffer or politicians?

Heritage always worked closer with Congress than we did, or AEI. Heritage always was very more legislative involved than us. In fact, at that time, we didn't even have a legislative staff. We brought in much later. Cato wasn't even tasked with talking with Congress and we didn't do it very much. Heritage always fights itself in being in being in the same room where bills were drafted.

Before Clinton's election, during the presidential campaign, did you have contact with the Bush's team?

That was before I came to Cato and I was daunted, I was very much daunted. Heritage probably did but we didn't. It's not the sort of thing that Cato would do even if we liked George Bush, what we didn't.

Do you know who were his main advisers or experts in health care?

He didn't have any. Seriously, at this time Republicans wasn't particularly involved in health care issue. One quote I remember at the time was Bob Dole: "Health care will never be a Republican issue; the most we can hope for is to get off the table very fast". The one guy who was, I believe, significant was Newt Gingrich and Cheap something, I can't remember his last name. He was very actively involved in think tanks community and coming up with ideas. But they were very little [...] among Republican Party on health care.

That's a interesting point for me. In 1992 or 93, the Republican Party didn't have a very specific point on health care, or it was more proposition of incremental policy.

Right, incremental policy; they didn't want to spend much money on things they didn't have much policy. And probably, George Bush White House didn't have much policy [...?]. They were not big thinkers. One part of it was that health care was not something which was on the Republican screen as an issue. They thought it was a losing issue. Democrat and they discovered they wanna talk about health care. Even through the Hillary care debate, - with very few exception - It was hard to find a Republican to talk about health care. They learned that they opposed to Hillary care and they all learned to say the word "Medical Saving Account". Most of them didn't necessarily know what it meant but they knew "oh what are you for? - I am for Medical Saving Account". That lead to something of a disaster when as the compromised position, they feeled back Heepaw, which was the Kennedy-Kassenborn bill. The next step was the big health care reform, which was pretty bad in many ways I think. But it included the first Medical Saving Account legislation, and, since it was in there, the Republican "Oh! How can be bad this piece of legislation! Medical saving accounts!" Even the two pieces of legislation have a part in Medical Saving Account.

You mean in the BBA? In 1997?

Yes, it should have been in 1997.

In 1995, Newt Gingrich make a proposition of reform ...

Not really, he talked about making Medicare more efficient and there was something about that. It didn't deal with the health care system in general. There was a commission, the "Gramm Commission" because Gramm was the head of it. About Medicare, how to deal with Medicare and its cost. But it was not a broad health care reform but a Medicare reform.

Do you think that over time, the involvement of Republicans increased?

I think no, and I think it went away. I think that the Republicans had defeated Hillary care and they Medical saving Account enacted, and then, they dropped. Still not a Republican issue: "we don't want to talk about health care issue". They just stopped talking about it. And I don't recalled Republican candidates at all. Bob Dole, he never talked about it, except Kennedy-Kassenborn or thing like that, he put SCHIP for kid. But there was not much a push for Republican ideas about health care.

But in 2003, for the MMA...

At that point, you got the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. I mean, and again, health care was. Going on how health care was. The Republicans, there were two sorts of democrats initiatives, brought . One time the Bill of Right Proposal actually backed by several Republicans, including John McCain, who was a big proponent on the side, and on the .. side, a senator called Charlie Norwood, also a doctor. Like in the Hillary care debate, don't know what they are talking about. HMOs were the enemy. And Hillary care was a ... to HMOs because people don't like HMOs. Demonize HMO's industry and then restric HMOs, a lot of Republicans got on board as been health care reform. That eventually died out. The Patient Bill was never enacted a sort of troubled away, geted out. But the other Democrats were pushing for the Medicare Prescription Drug Prescription. And Republicans, George W. Bush decided to preempt the Democratic push, by making it his own Medicare Prescription Drug Prescription, that turned to be a disaster.

It was also a kind of enactment of the idea of Medical Saving Account...?

That right. Medical Saving Account, the original one was in the Kennedy-Kassenbaum bill act. There was a limit Republican health care reform a part of the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, and particularly, it was a way the Bush administration could get enough conservative support to get the Drug Benefit through. It passed but with 3 votes, and that the price they paid to get a number of support the bill who'd not have done so if the Medical Saving Account would have been in there.

Did you help for something for this bill?

We opposed the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit!

But for the part about Medical Saving Account?

We said it was not worth the price. We support Medical Saving Account without to extend Medical Saving Account, so we opposed the bill.

You are one of the persons who developed the idea of medical Saving Account...

Medical Saving Account is a part of Medicare. And a brief Medicare plus or something like that. It was in the legislation and it never happened. A lot of reasons. Very hard to an interesting idea but which was never developed.

And, in the paper you did with the two other think tanks in 1994, was this idea of Medical Saving Account in it?

Right. It was in it. It was renamed Health Saving Account for some reasons when the Prescription Drug Benefit... yeah, that was something we agreed on.

Do you think this paper was very used by the Republican Party?

Oh, yes. When we came out with the consensus, they opposed Hillary care. If you opposed something, you have to be for something. It was something all the think tanks agreed on.

It was the beginning of the new program of the Republican Party, do you think?

That right. It gave something. It was the first time they were FOR something. Not only against the government. I think it was the first positive program on health care. Even if I said they didn't really understand what they were talking about, they idea of universal tax credit or universal standard deduction, something along those lines. So it expanded from that initial concepts. So back, the very first was by Stormy Davis, he was head of the American Medical Association he wrote a paper paid attention on there, some academics thought about it. And then, the publication of *The Patient Power* changed a lot. If I could say, the health care debate was loosing ground . No one can and loosing ground. But still, just one thing you have to understand, Patient power was the same thing with health reform.

Did the book by Edmund Haislmaier and , A National Health Care for American, have a impact at this time?

That the proposals of 1993-94 that we had problems with... Yeah, that had an influence in the sense that it and the book by Robert Helm. It was part of the original problem I guess.

In the two next decades, have you continued to work with Heritage and AEI?

Not really; Health care seemed largely go away as an issue. The Consensus Gourp met periodically but it had a lot of unurgency, nobody seemed on the republican side talk about it. We published some articles here and there but it really wasn't a big issue for Republicans... It episodically seemed to come back with specific pieces of legislation, we would be for, against. And generally, we were against something, like the Medicare Drug Prescription Benefit, those like that... came along, health care reform, social security reform... much priorities

Do you think the Republican party was ready for the last health care reform?

Not at all! I think it took them somewhat by surprise.

Like in the beginning of the 90s...?

Yeah... But there were more ready research to draw. In fact, in the last couples of years of the Bush administration, some proposals actually were pretty good, that they developed , reduction, to change, the idea of changing the tax code, academic or think tanks world had developed. It was something talked about in Patient Power, it was focus on smaller Saving Account ; it also stemmed from the same basic concept: it had taken on owner by that time; it had become; the standardized position on the right was the idea of moving away from employer-based welfare system to one with individual purnoble insurance and then yet to change tax code in order to do that. That had become the consensus position on the right. And the Bush administration made some effort able to do that but it was in the last couple of years and nobody cared about what the Bush administration thought at that point. John McCain – I actually wrote a paper on the difference between John McCain and Obama – who senior was Eken. He had a very well purdout proposal on this regard. In this the plan was actually very good. He never would able to explain that, he actually wouldn't understood it but it was well developed, put together a very good plan.

Could you give me the name of the mains reports or books of that time?

There were more general articles and things like that. (il cherche dans sa bibliothèque) A very important book – when was it published? 1999; Grace-Mary Arnott was the editor, and articles by me, by Helms, by Moffit, Jim Stearly – They later develop a piece by a of Stanford... Here is the book I mentioned earlier, when I was in Georgia. I have to back and figure out exactly what was... but there were a lot of obscure academic discussion going on around and general ideas developed.

So you think that for the last election, Republican party was more ready...

For the John McCain proposal. But Congress was still... they had pol..... about health care. Still it was not a Republican issue. As Republican, you didn't run for Congress by saying: "I have a reform for health care". As Democrat, you did. Democrats always run for . Republicans defensively. Because I am opposed to what the Democrats, but it is hard to say what I am for and come out with Medical saving account or .. But really thoughtful not in health care, very few Republicans had.

Did you help for something in the McCain's campaign program?

No. Because McCain campaign... I know ... and we talked a little bit. Previous to that, we had publish our book, Micheal Cannon and I, A Healthy Competition, and that was part of the debate. So we had put some information out there. I would say I studied the two proposals and talked on the proposals. But we didn't really... Again, firstly it is not what Cato intend to do, we try pretty arms from them. And John McCain thought the same way about Cato. So we would never be in the same room.

During the process of the last reform, I read that there was a big change among the Republican in the summer 2009: they decided not to vote the bill in any case

Just before that, you had John McCain, and just before you had Romney I Massachusetts, and Romney, with Heritage – Romney worked very closely to Heritage to develop and that was

Heritage laboratory – they were to push the proposal they had since 1999 in place in Massachusetts through Romney. So you..... So that was that proposal, that was very different from the McCain proposal ; so essentially, in 2008 election, you had two Republican , they were much Republican foundations even if you had among Republicans sort of clueless when it came to the issue. And for Romney, he was originally, wanted to steal the Democratic issues and health care, talk about . I am Republican and I can take away traditional Democratic issues. And that gonna be the way he say “no” he starts to be attacked on the right. But that the originally put through health care reform so strong.

Now, Heritage says that Obama’s program is very different...

There are wrong! They are not telling, there is very little difference. It’s different because it was in a state and with Obama it’s national... OK, yeah, that’s sure... but that’s because you a state. No I think that Obama’s model and Massachusetts model are remarkably similar. The differences are in the detail and of course details are very important but conceptually it’s very very close to Obama care and to Hillary care in 1993.

In your opinion, why Heritage says that, that it’s very different?

Why? Because you can’t be Republican and be for Obama care. I mean, make a distinction for themselves.

But, normally, they are not Republican; they are..

Yeah. Heritage is more Republican than we are. But it also, you are in the opposition and you have to, you know they don’t want to favor Obama care and they try to make a distinction. But it’s a problem for them, I think it’s hurting them. And I would say, it also hurts the effort against Obama care. We are going back to 1993 the major think tanks, AEI is not very involved in Health care anymore, Bob Helms wrong but he’s not very active and don’t want much to take involved in it, and Cato and Heritage have VERY different views about health care reforms. It prevented a consensus conforming on how to oppose Obama care. And this time there were no Grace-Mary – Grace Mary is still around but there were no Grace-Mary’s peace talk to put everybody together. And that did, I think, hurt the effort against it. I think eventually, a position on the right was much closer to us than to Heritage and we came to the conclusion “ok we don’t support an individual mandate anymore” but that was for a long time and Edmund Hailmeier still support an individual mandate even if Republican and Heritage don’t. Their position became much more mody? But I think the consensus on the right was “individual mandate is wrong, we don’t like the health insurance reform” but they didn’t ever..., I think the time was spent educating their own side and it was not spend repealing the other side.

How do you explain this change about individual mandate?

How Heritage change his position...

Do you think it’s more because of strategy or more...?

You have to ask them how they changed their position. But they did. I think they say: “There’re two decades of research and we came to the conclusion...”. But they were

supporting an individual mandate three years ago! I don't know..... You have to ask them! Burning Bush, I don't know! But they were clearly in favor of an individual mandate. They say, and it's go back to 93, the original disagreement that we had with them back then, it's still the disagreement we have with them today and I would say, a lot comes from Stuart Butler. He has a sort of continental conservatism, as opposed to... He's a libertarian and conservative. But he has sort of attitudestate (55'26) you can make the state rule in conservative ways. They're more reticent for the involvement of the state than we do.

Do you work with other think tanks now, or other...

We work with... Cato maintains very independent, we them. The Consensus Group document the extraordinary situation when we signed the joint statement. We almost never signed joint letter or participate to join press conference. We try to maintain our independence, partly because we don't want to be identify with position that these groups have that we don't agree with, and partly because and we don't want to be drawn?..... to that. So we don't work with them and you see in a hurry to a joint conference or..... We talk to the more of time, we speak..... there are a lot of interactions with them, particularly in CPA, I think, at the national level. We work much more now with state think tanks; in fact, we have hosted four now what we called summit. We bring in experts from the states think tanks working with them for a couple of days and try to educate them on the issues. We work very closer with those than what we did before. It's a very recent innovation for about three years.

Why did you choose to do that?

Frankly, in part because Heritage had make a big effort with state think tanks. They were very active in the resource stuffs and things like this they were reading the Heritage point of view to take the wrong position. We thought we needed to confront that. And a part because we tried to build a mass movement against Obama's care and educate the people who had the wrong networks.

So, you started in 2007?

No, more in 2008 after the election. But it..... in 2009

And do you sometimes still work with American Legislative Exchange Council?

Yeah, they try to organize meeting ... we talk regularly, send emails as well. the health care person there, we are pretty well in a contact.

Because they also organize a summit I think...

They do but it not especially on health care. Health care may or may not be part of that. Manage to have their own task for the legislation. They are very actively involved in drafting the health freedom bill and say the individual mandate doesn't apply, they are very active in that sort of thing. ALEC, I would say, is pretty much apart of they debate.

Do you also have contact with the Center of Newt Gingrich, the Center for Helath Transformation?

Rarely. First of all, there is no center, in the Center, there is Newt Gingrich! And few staffers who are travel and put it them on TV! There is not a broad academic thing supporting or stuff like that; so. And again, Newt was never gone along with us that way.....?. But we are much close in the army and a much more contact with. I read the whole book by Newt Gingrich, so it's not migreeten..... one chapter...

Do you think he's still influential in health care policies?

He's influential in what you'd say... He's like a microphone. He's an influential voice in Republican politics. But there is no real innovative ideas; he's taking ideas that other people..... and get on TV to talk about them. So he's influential in the sense that he spread ideas and not in the sense that he develops ideas.

Even if Republican are not very involved in health care issue, who are the Republicans the most interested in this field?

Tom Coburn, he's one of the best. I don't know if I always agree with everywhere he's going on this but he's knowledgeable. Paul Ryan, who knows almost everything, a good policy guy, a guy who knows what he is talking about on issues, always listening at him, Curren Price who's doctor in Georgia and who's pretty salient on these things, DeMin, I don't know how much he knows but he get good staff when he comes to health care, people who are working there. They would be people I would go to first. I am sure there are names who don't spring to my mind but those folks knows where they are talking about on issues. The leadership not so much.

I would also have a question about the research centers, because I think there are more and more think tanks. I was wondering if you have an idea to explain this change.

Yeah. I think there a few reasons. One is that they proved effective. Heritage Foundation, basically in the Reagan administration proved able to influence policy and to made a difference in terms of policy in Congress, back. I think for people it opened their eyes. Before that, there were Brookings and AEI, really academic, they didn't have a lot to do with influence politics at least in the short term. Sort of 20 000..... Heritage changed that. When people thought that they were changing things they began to give them money. A lot of think tanks were able to raise money and that makes a big difference I think; think tanks would come up and they can find donors now, they can get involved and think tanks are successful to develop more nacheese; they might do things in which they really have a specialty. Compared to the Nobel Prize?? Institute for example. It does do every issue but environment is ... environmental issue. So you see

The other thing is with the; there are two part of this. One is traditional political structure, that is political parties, are loosing influence. They don't have the top down ideas generation anymore; I think for many years, political parties are loosing influence they don't have the influence they wanted. So you seem alternative part of that, and I think that's the think tanks. And the other is that you have for the sem community news, the Internet, the ability to get information out. That in 93, then you had CNN that was much harder, start in the eighties if you were a think tank you wrote a book you can meet the press you know that's it get out. Now you have Internet, people can emails, it's easy to talk radio if you don't have, push it.

The ability to offer this has become easier over years and I think that lead people “oh, we can do it!”

About this decline of political parties: How would you describe the relations between political parties and think tanks today?

I don't know about the political parties per se. I mean, Heritage is probably the think tank on the right which is the most politically involved in political debate. The equivalent on the left would be the American Progress, they are involved in the Democratic party process, where Heritage was in the Bush administration and Congress. There are think tanks who are involved in a more partisan way, even if they..... they are much more conceived in that way. I think there are other like AEI which have an ideological in the sense that they conservatism and in the Bush administration they tended to have more influence because some of the neo-cons move back and forth but by their nature they tend to be a little more standard office, they are more an academic institution. People don't like pictures, they like books. by the type of work they do. And then, Cato is more removed because we just like everybody and everybody would just like soss/us??, we defend everybody, which make very hard for politicians to get in with us . We have this natural antipathy to politicians. We are much more ideological, we don't want to compromise than most. Somewhat is the nature of us. AEI's structural nature, for different reasons, is not to get involved in partywise. You wouldn't see to talk to new Congress. Heritage goes. Brookings would show up; Brookings wouldn't do so much either, more academic. But you would see Center for American Progress, sure with the Democrats. So, it's two different types.

Heritage changed its mind about the individual mandate and came to a position closer to yours. Do you consider it's a kind of victory?

I wouldn't say it's a victory but the center of gravity in the debate shifted in a way that we think it's positive.

How do you explain this change?

I would like to say because..... ; some of them were political, simply, opposition to Obama forced people in that direction. But I think it also seem more apparent people didn't like Obama care, with the natural outgrowth of the rest of these things. They thought that you couldn't be a little pregnant a little bit governmental control of the health care sytem and with Obama care, people thought “you coul, with Obama care, you could be more pregnant”. And that was natural growth and that scared people. People tought “maybe we need something with little involvement”. I think it goes back to the first place, that shifted the debate. I don't think it's clearly shifted but the center of gravity was here, between Heritage and us, and it's moving a little bit. Romney step a l....., but everyone else. And I think it gonna be a huge disadvantage for Romney in 2012. I think it gonna be left or right tend to his opposition to Obama is credible. “My plan is working perfectly; if Obama had done what we did”, not gonna work!

I think I am done with my question and maybe I took a lot of your time...

No, not at all! If you have more specific questions, we can talk in a call and I will be happy to answer to you.