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Niskanen Center, New Libertarian Think Tank, Launches with Focus on Congressional Action

Group to focus on immigration, entitlement and military procurement reforms;
Will press policymakers to replace EPA regulations and protect civil liberties

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Niskanen Center, a newly established Washington-based think tank, announced this week its plans to build momentum and deliver results for libertarian policies in Congress and across the federal government. The group’s initial focus will be on expanding legal immigration; replacing command-and-control greenhouse gas regulation with market-friendly emission controls; strengthening civil liberties protections; reducing defense spending and improving Pentagon planning procedures; and reforming entitlement policy.

“Our mission is simple: to produce concrete results – libertarian-friendly legislation and regulation. Success requires us to build the foundations necessary for libertarian policies to become viable in Congress and throughout government,” said Jerry Taylor, president of the Niskanen Center. “Niskanen’s approach accepts the political terrain and embraces relative policy improvements. Above all, we seek meaningful reforms, whether sweeping in scope or cumulative.”

The Niskanen Center’s audience is the Washington insiders – policy-oriented legislators, presidential appointees, career civil servants in planning, evaluation and budget offices, congressional committee staff, engaged academics, and interest group analysts – who together decide the pace and direction of policy change.

The Niskanen Center’s focus on policy change complements the work of existing libertarian organizations, most of which are engaged in other activities such as analyzing or criticizing public policy, changing public opinion, blocking counterproductive regulation and legislation, and electing friendly politicians.

Taylor added that there are two important guidelines for the Center’s work:

1. Embracing relative policy improvements – The Niskanen Center believes that while major changes in legislative or administrative policy are possible, they are rare. More typical are marginal policy changes that, cumulatively, often have major impact and help



set the stage for more sweeping reforms down the road. The Niskanen Center will aggressively forward second, third, or fourth best reforms (as allowed by the political terrain) if they represent improvement over current policy while keeping an eye out for windows of opportunity for more sweeping change.

2. Willingness to compromise – The Niskanen Center further believes that sustainable policy change is rarely possible without broad coalitions across partisan and ideological lines. Assembling such coalitions will require the Center to tailor its reform proposals so as to be compatible with the preferences of those who often do not share our beliefs. Hence, the exact nature of our reform proposals will likely mutate and evolve in the course of the deal making necessary to construct winning political coalitions.

The Center is named after Will (Bill) Niskanen, former chairman of the Cato Institute. Before his time at Cato, Niskanen was a defense policy analyst at RAND, director of program analysis at the Institute for Defense Analyses, assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget, professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley, chief economist at the Ford Motor Company, professor of economics at UCLA, and a member (and later, acting chairman) of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Ronald Reagan.

“Bill Niskanen was a personification of the qualities we embrace at the Niskanen Center. He was an exemplary scholar who never let ideology or partisanship color his interpretation of facts and data. He was an idealist but, at the same time, a political realist with a burning desire to improve the state of affairs to whatever extent he could,” added Taylor.

For more about the Niskanen Center’s theory of policy change and the Center’s approach, **[read our conspectus](#)** and visit **www.niskanencenter.org**

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