

Heritage Foundation + The War Industry: What a Pair

Conservative think tank considers Lockheed fixture for its next president.

By [Prof. Paul Gottfried](#)

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According to recent [reports](#), the Heritage Foundation, clearly the most established and many would say politically influential conservative think tank in Washington, is considering David Trulio, Lockheed Martin vice president and longtime lobbyist for the defense industry, to be its next president. While Heritage's connection to Washington's sprawling national security industry is already well-established, naming Trulio as its president might be seen as gilding the lily.

If anything, reading this report made me more aware of the degree to which the "conservative policy community" in Washington depends on the whims and interests of particular donors.

And this relationship is apparently no longer something to be concealed or embarrassed by. One can now be open about being in the pocket of the defense industry. Trulio's potential elevation to Heritage president at what we can assume will be an astronomical salary, will no doubt grease the already well-oiled pipeline of funds from major contractors to this "conservative" foundation, which already operates with an [annual disclosed budget](#) of almost \$100 million.

A 2009 Heritage Foundation report, "[Maintaining the Superiority of America's Defense Industrial Base](#)," called for further government investment in aircraft weaponry for "ensuring a superior fighting force" and "sustaining international stability." In 2011, senior national security fellow James Carafano wrote "[Five Steps to Defend America's Industrial Defense Base](#)," which complained about a "fifty billion dollar under-procurement by the Pentagon" for buying new weaponry. In 2016, [Heritage made the case](#) for several years of reinvestment to get the military back on "sound footing," with an increase in fiscal year 2016 described as "an encouraging start."

These special pleas pose a question: which came first, Heritage's heavy dependence on funds from defense giants, or the foundation's belief that unless we steadily increase our military arsenal we'll be endangering "international stability"? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in the middle: someone who is predisposed to go in a certain direction may be more inclined to do so if he is being rewarded in return. Incidentally, the 2009 position paper seems to be directing the government to throw more taxpayer dollars to Boeing than to its competitor Lockheed. But it seems both defense giants have landed a joint contract this year to produce a new submersible for the Navy, so it may no longer be necessary to pick

sides on that one at least. No doubt both corporations will continue to look after Heritage, which will predictably call for further increases, whether they be in aerospace or shipbuilding.

Although one needn't reduce everything to dollars and cents, if we're looking at the issues Heritage and other likeminded foundations are likely to push today, it's far more probable they'll be emphasizing the national security state rather than, say, opposition to gay marriage or the defense of traditional gender roles. There's lots more money to be made advocating for the former rather than the latter. In May 2013, Heritage [sponsored a formal debate](#) between "two conservatives" and "two liberals" on the issue of defense spending, with Heritage and *National Review* presenting the "conservative" side. I wondered as I listened to part of this verbal battle why is was considered "conservative" to call for burdening American taxpayers with massive increases in the purchase of Pentagon weaponry and planes that [take 17 years to get off the ground](#).

Like American higher education, Conservatism Inc. is very big business. Whatever else it's about rates a very far second to keeping the money flowing. "Conservative" positions are often simply causes for which foundations and media enterprises that have the word "conservative" attached to them are paid to represent. It is the label carried by an institution or publication, not necessarily the position it takes, that makes what *NR* or Heritage advocates "conservative."

In any event, Mr. Trulio won't have to travel far if he takes the Heritage helm. He and his corporation are already ensconced only a few miles away from Heritage's Massachusetts Avenue headquarters, if the information provided by Lockheed Martin is correct. It says: "Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that employs approximately 98,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services." A company like that can certainly afford to underwrite a think tank—if the price is right.

Paul Gottfried is Raffensperger Professor of Humanities Emeritus at Elizabethtown College, where he taught for twenty-five years. He is a Guggenheim recipient and a Yale PhD. He writes for many websites and scholarly journals and is the author of thirteen books, most recently Fascism: Career of a Concept and Revisions and Dissents. His books have been translated into multiple languages and seem to enjoy special success in Eastern Europe.

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