



Carleson Center for Public Policy

by Human Events (more by this author)

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Susan Carleson recalls meeting her late husband in 1978, when they were both stranded one day when the Washington Metro broke down.

“We began to chat and discovered we both adored Ronald Reagan,” she recalled to HUMAN EVENTS.

Six years after that chance meeting she married Robert B. Carleson, the long-time Reagan aide who has often been called the “Father of Welfare Reform.”

In honor of her husband, who died in 2006, and to help reignite Reagan’s governing philosophy, Susan Carleson founded the Beltway’s newest policy group, the Carleson Center for Public Policy (CCPP).

The center’s website says clearly what its guiding principle will be: “What would Reagan do?”

To actualize that standard, Susan Carleson reached out to former members of the Reagan Administration to help spread Ronald Reagan’s message of limited government.

The center’s policy board is like a reconstitution of the Reagan Administration: Edwin Meese III, Kenneth W. Clarkson, Morton C. Blackwell, [Linda Chavez](#), John F. Cogan, T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr., William A. Niskanen, John McClaughry, Richard Bender Abell, John A. Svahn, Stephen J. Entin, Lewis K. Uhler and Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, as well as Peter Hannaford from Reagan’s California days.

Incorporated in January, the center’s signature issue is returning welfare programs to the states. Its website quotes Reagan saying, “The more government we can keep at the local levels, in local hands, the better off we are and the more freedom we will have.”

“Bob was Reagan’s trusted welfare adviser,” says Susan, “and he was the impetus behind

the idea of getting the federal government out of the welfare business by giving block grants to the states.”

Robert Carleson started working for Reagan in 1968 and helped craft the California governor’s welfare reform policy.

After working in the Reagan White House, he influenced the 1994 Contract with America’s position on welfare and as well as the landmark reform legislation signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton.

Susan Carleson, chairman and chief executive officer of the center, will remain the head of the American Civil Rights Union (ACRU), which her husband founded in 1998 as a conservative alternative to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

She brought some veteran Washington figures to help staff the new venture. Peter Ferrera is CCPP’s policy director and brought on former Sen. Jesse Helms staffer John Mashburn as the center’s executive director.

The first order of business for the center will be reversing the damage done by President Obama and a Democratic Congress.

The economic stimulus package that passed in 2009 undermined the 1996 welfare reform by “rewarding states to increase their welfare rolls and adding a variety of new or expanded welfare benefits,” says the center’s website.

Just as the 1996 Welfare Reform bill replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with finite block grants to the states, CCPP hopes to use the same strategy by advocating block grants for states to implement the federal Food Stamp and Medicaid programs.

Organized as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt educational foundation, The Carleson Center for Public Policy can be reached at: theccpp.org

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