



## Events

# Modern Conservatism and Free Markets

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**  
**10:00 AM**

What is the future of traditional economic conservatism? Is being pro-free market a tenable position for the modern conservative? What does today's "small government" perspective look like when support for big government has become the default position of both sides?

The American Action Forum will host a discussion focused on three current policy examples as evidence of a shift in right-of-center ideology, though there are no doubt many more. These examples include broad imposition of tariffs, pharmaceutical price controls, and empowering agency heads to target specific companies. Notably, these all represent points of similarity if not outright agreement with related actions of the Biden Administration.

The current administration views trade policy dramatically differently from a traditional economic conservative. It issues sweeping tariffs to shield domestic industry from competition - and argues that imposing such tariffs is an end unto itself. The presumed virtue of pharmaceutical price fixing is yet another rare point of agreement with the previous administration, and one that would normally be considered anathema to the right. Finally, the enthusiasm with which this administration's agency heads use media and their regulatory powers to target specific companies for political offenses doesn't inspire confidence that impartial good governance - a cornerstone of traditional conservative thought - is a priority for the modern right.

**Fireside chat:** Senator Pat Toomey and AAF President Douglas Holtz-Eakin

### **Panel:**

Dr. Ben Harris, VP & Director of Economic Studies, Brookings Institution

Dr. Veronique De Rugy, George Gibbs Chair in Political Economy & Senior Research Fellow

at GMU's Mercatus Center

James Pethokoukis, Senior Fellow DeWitt Wallace Chair Editor, American Enterprise  
Institute

[Live stream](#)