



State Solutions. National Impact.

SUMMER 2021

Holding Government Accountable

This Network is restoring accountability and transparency to state governments while resisting bad policy coming out of Washington, DC.



Tracie

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OUR VISION

State Policy Network is pursuing a vision of an America where personal freedom, innovation, opportunity, and a more peaceful society help all Americans flourish. State Policy Network was founded to support the growth of a collaborative and entrepreneurial network of state think tanks, including 64 independent state think tank affiliates and more than 90 associate partners.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

State Policy Network's mission is to work side by side with these leaders to catalyze thriving, durable freedom movements in every state, anchored with high-performing, independent think tanks.

OUR STRATEGY

- Incubating think tanks and accelerating their development through strategic planning, training, and coaching;
- Connecting talented state leaders so they can learn, challenge, and grow together, with the aim of cultivating state solutions that collectively yield national impact; and,
- Defending the 50-state think tank network by disseminating best practices, critical resources when members are attacked, and fighting assaults on free speech and citizen privacy.

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For the full SPN staff list,
visit spn.org/staff.

Dear Friends,

Coming into 2021, we all knew that there would be significant challenges ahead. We anticipated vast political divides, cultural conflicts, and that ideas coming out of Washington, DC would grow the size and scope of government while not putting forth substantive solutions that would provide relief for Americans in their everyday lives.

However, like many of you, I also came into this year with hope. I knew we had an opportunity to push back against the federal government through our incredible Network leaders, who are working in the states to get this country on a path to prosperity.

Thanks to your generosity, my hope has not been misplaced. We still face incredible obstacles, but progress is being made. **The states are our best chance at pushing back against bad policies coming out of Washington and improving lives for all Americans, state-by-state.** Thankfully, because of your generosity, this Network is well-positioned to lead us on a better path forward.

Network leaders are working to mitigate the damage from the American Rescue Plan stimulus package. This Network has a plan that proposes that these funds are distributed in a way that avoids subsidizing any particular state and local political decisions while preserving the healthy interstate competition and dynamism that is so beneficial to our economy.

Like you, I know that this is a critical moment for America. America was never intended to be governed by one central body; it was intended to be a collection of states governed independently and working together.

In order for this collection of states to work, we must have faith in our elections. SPN polling shows that Americans understand this. In the last two election cycles, each party has been displeased with and questioned the authenticity of the results, so it is clear that **it needs to be easy to vote and hard to cheat** in order to maintain confidence in our elections.

At the same time, Americans are worried about access to affordable healthcare, their children getting back into a school that will help them to achieve success, and getting our economy back on track so they can make ends meet. In this edition of *SPN News*, along with the lead story on holding government accountable, you will read about how this Network is taking on all those issues and more—brainstorming solutions, helping to get them implemented in the states, and amplifying those successes so that these life-changing policies can spread.

Thank you for standing with us as, together, we embrace and implement state solutions for national impact. Thanks to you, there's a Network of leaders in all 50 states rejecting big government and putting America's promise back in the hands of communities and individuals. This is never an easy road and right now, it might seem harder than ever. What I know is that the pursuit is always worth it.

All my best,

Tracie Sharp





The Network Holds Dysfunctional Government Accountable

Thanks to your support, this Network is restoring accountability and transparency to state governments across the country.

Holding government to the highest level of transparency and accountability are essential conditions for government to function properly. Americans deserve to see what's happening within government, how it spends taxpayer money, and if it violates individual rights.

But government is not always open and transparent. It often strays from its constitutionally designed role to protect and secure our rights. When government oversteps, who ensures it is held accountable? Who is there to stand up for average Americans?

That's where this 50-state Network comes in. Thanks to your support, a free-market organization exists in every state, keeping a watchful eye on government and protecting the constitutional rights of hardworking Americans. As you'll see with the examples below in Illinois and New York, this Network is ready, prepared, and willing to stand up for the rights of American families when government is no longer serving their interests.

Illinois Policy Ousts the Longest-Serving House Speaker in US History

When you think of Illinois, a few things may come to mind. America's farmland, Abraham Lincoln, the beautiful city of Chicago...and if you're dialed in to state politics: corruption. Illinois consistently ranks as one of the most corrupt states in the country. It's a place known for political patronage, pay-to-play politics, and back door deal-making.

But a closer look at the intricacies of Illinois' political system reveals corruption is just a side effect of a bigger problem in the Lincoln State. For more than 50 years, politicians have been using taxpayer resources to strengthen their power. If you peel the curtain back even further, you'll find the man most responsible for that system: Mike Madigan.

Madigan is the longest-serving House Speaker in US History. Up until recently, he was considered the most powerful man in Illinois. At the onset of his speakership, he tweaked legislative

rules and assumed unilateral control of the legislative process. All legislation that made it to the floor had to go through him first. Madigan further strengthened his power by handing out patronage jobs and generous pension benefits to public officials in return for political support. He financed all of it through state debt.

This system of machine politics has had devastating implications on the state. Illinois had a perfect credit rating when Madigan took up the gavel in 1983. Today, it's the worst in the nation. The state now faces insurmountable debt, skyrocketing property taxes, and an outmigration crisis where one person leaves every ten minutes.

But few Illinois residents knew who Madigan was, let alone his contribution to the current mess the state finds itself in.

Enter the Illinois Policy Institute.

Illinois Policy Launches Campaign to Shed Light on Illinois' Broken Political System

Illinois Policy launched an aggressive marketing campaign in 2012 to educate residents on the Speaker's undemocratic policies. Through research, op-eds, media appearances, cartoons, and a feature documentary that earned millions of views, Illinois Policy shed a light on the corrupt policies of Mike Madigan. He became a household name, his approval rating dropped, and voters were hungry for reform.



Illinois Policy's op-ed in National Review.

With voters aware of how Springfield operated, rank-and-file members finally feared their constituents more than the Speaker. Those members turned against him, and he was denied the speakership earlier this year. January 13, 2021, was Mike Madigan's last day as Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives—a position he's held for 36 of the past 38 years.

Illinois' future is uncertain, but the driving force behind Illinois' fiscal mess is now out of office. Thanks to the Illinois Policy, there's a rare opportunity to reform politics as usual in the state. Illinois Policy's Austin Berg added: "The bill is coming due for decades of corrupt, short-sighted governance, and the man most responsible for running it up has left the building."

Thanks to your support, this Network ensures wins like these are not siloed to one state. Through SPN's resources, state organizations share best practices and strategies to learn from one another. What works in one state may work in another. Successes like these can replicate across the states, and even more leaders can be held accountable.

That's just what happened in New York.

Empire Center Sheds Light on New York's Nursing Home Catastrophe

At the onset of the pandemic, all eyes were on New York. To prepare for a coming wave of coronavirus patients, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order on March 25 that required the state's nursing homes to accept coronavirus-positive patients from hospitals, even if they had not fully recovered yet. Doing so would make room for the coming surge of new patients—a surge that never quite materialized.

As the weeks passed, nursing home deaths climbed. By late April, 3,448 residents of nursing homes or adult-care facilities had died. A few weeks later, that number grew to 5,300. The media, lawmakers, and the families of loved ones who died began to criticize the governor for his March 25 directive. A growing debate ensued over how big a role this policy played in exacerbating the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes.

In June 2020, the Empire Center for Public Policy uncovered soaring vacancy rates in nursing homes. Empire argued this suggested the state was not revealing the true death toll of nursing home residents. That number, according to Empire, had to be thousands higher than officially reported. Cuomo and his team pushed back.

Unlike most other states, New York only counted people who died in the nursing home itself, not the people who were transferred to and died in a hospital.

At a hearing in August, state lawmakers asked the state health commissioner, Howard Zucker, to release the data that shows



The Wall Street Journal is one of hundreds of media outlets that covered the Empire Center's campaign to expose New York's nursing home cover-up.

how manyhow many nursing home residents died, both in the physical homes or later in hospitals. Zucker said he needed more time to provide accurate data. But many knew, including Empire, the data was already there, the Department was just withholding it.

Empire Center filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to give New Yorkers the accurate picture of nursing home deaths that the government was not providing. The New York Department of Health (NYDOH) repeatedly extended the deadline on when they would hand over the data.

On September 18, 2020, Empire filed a lawsuit against the Department. On February 3, 2021, the judge ruled the NYDOH had violated the FOIL request and ordered the Department to release the nursing home data within five business days. The court also told the NYDOH to pay the Empire Center for all legal fees and court costs. The data confirmed what Empire had suspected for months: The document listed the dates and locations of nearly 16,000 deaths involving long-term care residents—6,000 more deaths than the New York government had claimed.

Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and US At-

torney's office in Brooklyn are now investigating Governor Cuomo's handling of nursing homes during the pandemic. In several articles, *The Wall Street Journal* credited Empire for exposing Cuomo—it was Empire's litigation arm that filed the specific public records request to hold Governor Cuomo's feet to the fire. They then took the extra, perilous step to pressure the NY attorney general to *compel* release of the real data.

An Opportunity to Reform “Business as Usual” in New York

The nursing home coverup might be the impetus for change New York government needs. Empire exposed the dysfunctional and unaccountable way Albany works, with its steep, unnecessary cost of this disfunction: the loss of thousands of lives. There is now an opportunity to change the way state government operates, and Empire is ready to seize on that opportunity, starting with transparency legislation.

“This win is an opportunity to change the culture of the way that New York government works, said Empire CEO Tim Hoefer. “I can’t overstate how big that is.”

Throughout Empire’s campaign, Hoefer leaned on the support from his peer group of CEOs across the Network. These Network leaders gave Hoefer valuable feedback on how to scale this win and maximize its impact in the Empire State. During these discussions, other state groups realized there were opportunities to launch similar campaigns in their states.

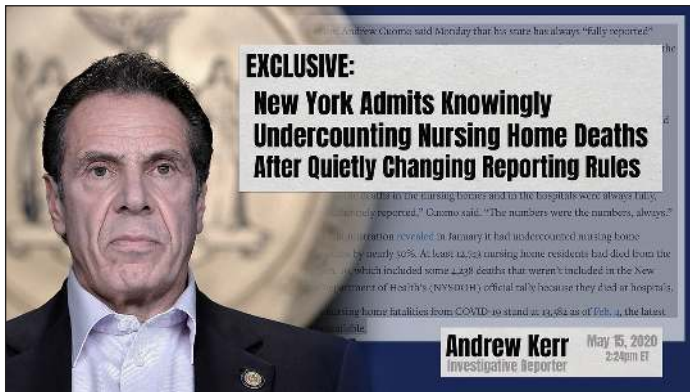
Several other states issued similar policies that required nursing homes to accept coronavirus-positive patients. In Michigan, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy filed a lawsuit against the



Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and US Attorney’s office in Brooklyn are now investigating Governor Cuomo’s handling of nursing homes during the pandemic.



These efforts are paying off. State organizations have advanced policies that restore balance of power in state government, ease tax burdens, and get people back to work.



An excerpt from *The Guardian's* coverage of New York's nursing home cover up.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) after the Department denied a Freedom of Information Act request for data on deaths related to COVID-19.

Empire's success in holding a powerful governor accountable now has the potential to spread across the states, leading to national impact.

A key reason why the Empire Center and Illinois Policy were so successful in challenging corruption in government leadership is their strategic focus on building capacities—or the tools and talent an organization can use to advance their mission. For example, Empire has spent years building up its litigation arm, the Government Justice Center. This litigation capacity gave their ideas traction—especially when New York ignored FOIL requests.

Thanks to your support, these efforts to build political capacity in each state are yielding returns. These forces are grow-

ing steadily more powerful and effective every day—they are the resistance. This is the kind of incubation SPN is sparking in states across the country.

This Network Holds Government Accountable to the Constitution and Protects the Rights of American Families

As we've seen with these stories in Illinois and New York, policy can deeply affect people's lives and livelihoods. Americans need organizations that stand up for the average person and hold government accountable when it exceeds its authority.

During crises like the pandemic, this Network's watchdog capabilities are needed more than ever. As during most crises, American freedoms have taken a back seat in the name of safety and security. Decisions made from Washington, DC, and by governors whose power has gone unchecked have crippled the economy, devastated small businesses, and left many without a way to provide for themselves and their families. Throughout the pandemic, this 50-state Network has kept a watchful eye on government and continues to push back on policies that hurt hardworking American families. These efforts are paying off. State organizations have advanced policies that restore balance of power in state government, ease tax burdens, and get people back to work.

Your generous investment ensures this meaningful work continues. Thanks to your support, this Network is the only state voice fighting against one-size-fits-all solutions from Washington, DC—and encouraging the people closest to the problems to solve them.

Building an Owned Audience to Amplify State and Local Solutions



Americans are eager for practical solutions that will move the needle to improve their communities and daily lives. This Network has those practical solutions but, when faced with an inhospitable media environment, it can be a challenge for Americans to hear about them.

State Policy Network is making incredible progress in creating partnerships that amplify our message for maximum impact. SPN's recent partnership with Real Clear Policy, for example, will put the Network's powerful stories in front of millions of readers. This initiative empowers citizens, policymakers, and communities to discover and develop practical solutions to today's problems by connecting them to the best research, analysis, and stories from all 50 states.

As the go-to site for information on elections, Real Clear Policy was the thirteenth most-visited news outlet last November—ahead of ABC, CBS, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and right behind NBC. The RealClearWire syndication service extends this reach by offering articles for re-publication to major local news conglomerates and metro-area publications. This is just one way SPN is helping to get solid stories in the news to inspire others.

Another way to amplify the Network's message is by going directly to readers, entirely cutting out the media middle-man.

Here's how one organization engaged directly with the people—and bypassed state and local media in the process.

Illinois Policy Institute Looks Beyond Traditional Media to Build an Owned Audience

Nearly 10 years ago, Network organizations were operating in a broken system, churning out content such as blog posts and white papers, and then finding themselves dependent on media and other channels for distribution.

Ready for change, John Tillman, chairman and CEO of the Illinois Policy Institute, brought marketing expert Ryan Green on board to gain active users (people who have opted-in to engaging with the organization—also known as an “owned audience” in marketing parlance) and, together, they changed the game.

Illinois Policy started with social media from 2012–2014, leveraging Twitter for earned media around the same time as lawmakers were starting to pay attention to the platform. Green spent hours on Twitter every day building an audience and capitalizing on events in the news to build Illinois Policy's Twitter following. The audience boomed. With a solid Twitter following, it was time to turn their attention to Facebook.

"Then," Green explained, "there was the big algorithm change and I saw other changes coming and thought 'This isn't sustainable.'" **It was time to think outside of social and traditional media.**

Outgrowing the Competition

Realizing that media would only do so much to amplify their work, Green dug into the numbers he would need to create change. "My aha moment was pulling the *Chicago Tribune's* media kit and seeing that their biggest email list was only 250,000 emails. **We decided to be bigger than the local papers and drive the narrative.**"

Green learned that the tipping point for social change is when an idea has support from 20 percent of the population. Armed with that knowledge, they set a goal of 25 percent in key legislative districts. "We just kept scaling it up from there," Green explained. "And then we started looking at the state and we reached 1.5 million people in our audience last year."

In 2017, in the midst of this incredible growth, SPN and multiple affiliates reached out to Green so that other organizations could learn how to replicate this success. Green founded his own marketing firm, Ironlight, in 2018, giving him the ability to continue his work at Illinois Policy while also consulting with nearly 30 other SPN Network organizations. This had another benefit as well. "We also needed a vehicle to be able to share audience in Illinois with different entities, so having a corporation that owned the data gave us some flexibility," he explained. Illinois Policy started testing audience mobilization and had some early wins such as legalizing food carts in Chicago and removing barriers that prevented ex-offenders from pursuing certain careers. Then, with a track record of success behind them, Illinois Policy worked with allies who were running extensive groundgames to deploy a social media campaign alongside other critical tactics to defeat the most expensive ballot initiative in the history of the Midwest in 2020: the "fair tax" proposal. The measure was backed by the governor and a \$60 million-dollar advertising and lobbying campaign. When this measure first went on the ballot, it had a 65 percent approval rating.

Green observed: "Illinois Policy, key donors, and other allies came back from a 30-point deficit in March to win by nearly 10 points in November. "There were these smaller things that we did to drive the narrative and change laws, but (Fair Tax) was the first time we really turned the machine on and used it in a major battle." **The machine worked.**

Solutions Journalism

Traditional news just tells people about the problems they're facing. Solutions journalism raises awareness about an issue, but then tells the reader about solutions and how to be part

of them. "That's how you build engagement and relationships over time," Green said.

Illinois Policy focuses on top-of-mind and low-friction issues like higher taxes to unite people and build an audience. "We'll identify these flash points because Illinois politicians will likely do something stupid and you just have to be ready to capital-



It's critical that state think tanks start building their owned audiences rather than relying on other outlets and platforms to share their messages.

ize on that. We have people that signed petitions (and) contacted their lawmakers."

Then, when it comes to mobilization, they know just where to look. "The key for us on the fair tax was actually a retired state worker who was a former police officer and we needed a plaintiff in our lawsuit," Green said. It only took about a month to find that perfect plaintiff in their own audience. "Those are examples of how, when you build such a massive audience and infrastructure, you're able to do things that you couldn't have done in the past."

A recent example that made even bigger news was the ouster of Mike Madigan, who had been the longest-serving Speaker in US history. "We did the documentary film about him in 2017, and that was when our active users started to ramp up," Green recalls. Forty percent of Illinoisans didn't know who he was but recognized the state as corrupt. "So, we introduced him as this figure that really controlled the state and everyone's like 'we have to do something about Madigan.'"

Once the problem was identified and introduced, it was time to turn to specifics and solutions. They talked to their audience about gerrymandering, property taxes, pensions, and how those issues are all tied back to the same man. The audience mobilized in historic ways. Most people don't know how a state elects the Speaker of the House but, suddenly, Illinois Policy's audience was protesting Madigan outside while

it happened. After that, it was simply letting people know they were getting the job done, as the first person ever voted against Madigan and again when he lost his supermajority. With such undeniable success, the audience was motivated to keep working and see it through. In 2020 and 2021, he was removed from office, removed as head of the Democratic Party, and resigned. As Green put it, “he got completely ousted.” That kind of win is incredibly motivating. “That sends a strong message to the audience,” Green said. “We were able to tell people ‘it seems like a long period of time, but he was in for four decades and, **in a four-year period, Illinoisans came together and ousted the most powerful politician in state history.**”

“The Most Important Thing We’re Doing”

It’s critical that state think tanks start building their own audiences rather than relying on other outlets and platforms to share their messages. “The left has done this for years and they have a sophisticated network that’s already operating this way,” Green said. These groups are nothing more than get-out-the-vote and voter registration machines, really. They all have audiences that they command and audiences that engage with them and we have nothing like that on ‘our side.’”



We need to ensure we are communicating consistently, regardless of election cycles. “You can’t persuade someone in the last 90 days leading up to an election.”

It’s also about serving as a catalyst for action, he explained, as these groups can look at who is and who is not a voter. “We looked at low-turnout voters and unregistered voters on our list and we did our best to convert them into active voters. If we’re going to compete and win, this is how we do it.” Green pointed to Donald Trump’s presidential win as proof that “there’s a population of people that are low-turnout or disen-

gaged voters that, if you speak to them, if you engage them, they’ll show up. We need to keep talking to and engaging with those folks.”

However, this is no quick fix. “Culture dictates political outcomes as politicians take cues from cultural influences on how to govern,” Green said. “Progressives control the cultural narrative through a steady drumbeat of political messaging delivered through media, academia, entertainment, sports, and brands that monopolize the attention of Americans. The result is the erosion of America’s first principles—limited government, free enterprise, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and personal responsibility. Conservatives must build direct lines of communication with Americans to counteract the progressive onslaught and compete in culture.”

This Network needs to ensure we are communicating consistently, regardless of election cycles. “You can’t persuade someone in the last 90 days leading up to an election. The media, all of these groups are messaging. Hollywood and entertainment is constantly messaging to voters. We can’t show up and expect to change their entire perspective in 90 days when these voters have been influenced 24/7 leading up to that. That’s why this is the most important thing we’re doing.”

The Illinois Policy Institute isn’t the only organization in the Network working on building an owned audience. SPN launched an owned audience initiative in 2019 with the stated goal of helping Network organizations build owned audiences in their states. Through owned audience trainings and grants, SPN is encouraging state think tanks to dedicate time and resources to this important marketing strategy. SPN also launched an owned audience cohort of Network organizations that meets regularly to share strategies, discuss success stories, and learn from one another. The Center of the American Experiment, Texas Public Policy Foundation, and John Locke Foundation—all members of the cohort—have already seen success in building these audiences within their states.

This is a long-term investment that will more than succeed. Green added: “**The work SPN is doing to build owned audience across the country will position us to win and pay dividends for years to come.** SPN and its partner organizations are uniquely positioned to build direct lines of communication and bypass gatekeepers such as Google, Apple, and Facebook. Continuing to borrow data from these providers is a direct threat to our cause. We must own our data and our relationships with Americans.”

Through cultivating and engaging with active users and building partnerships that share our messages in more traditional media outlets, this Network is finding ways to boost our stories, successes, and paths to victory. As more people hear about these ideas, more states will adopt Network-led reforms that will help countless Americans prosper and thrive.

ALABAMA

ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE • alabamapolicy.org

This legislative session, the **Alabama Policy Institute** promoted multiple bills that sought to undo some of the crisis areas in Alabama state code highlighted by the pandemic. Specifically, API sought to rebalance the power between the Legislature and the governor, who has unlimited authority to overrule state law. Bills to allow the Legislature to call itself into special session, as 36 other state legislatures are allowed to do, moved in the State House with API's support. Though the bills received pushback, they may garner enough support to pass. Another bill supported by API would limit the period in which the governor can declare an emergency, another important change. This bill has also moved in the State House. In addition, other coronavirus measures that API supported, such as liability protections for businesses, have already passed and been signed into law by the governor.



ALASKA

ALASKA POLICY FORUM • alaskapolicyforum.org

The **Alaska Policy Forum** is working on three health-related policies this year: telehealth licensing, Direct Primary Care, and certificate-of-need repeal. Each of these received reprieves from government regulation in response to the pandemic. Alaska Policy Forum believes that deregulation was not only allowed during the crisis but was seen as a logical step towards allowing people more immediate, and often less expensive, access to medical care, proving that these regulations are not necessary and can be done away with permanently, regardless of crisis. Alaska Policy Forum has been meeting at least weekly with State Policy Network experts such as Christie Herrera and with other think tanks within the Network, including the Foundation for Government Accountability and Americans For Prosperity. The exchange of ideas, sharing of testimonies and other written products, and examples of strategies that have proven successful gives Alaska Policy Forum optimism that they will see legislative victories in health-related policies this year.



ARIZONA

GOLDWATER INSTITUTE • goldwaterinstitute.org

The **Goldwater Institute** is proud to have worked alongside state allies to advance universal recognition, a reform which eases the pathway to licensure for skilled professionals and military families. This session, more than 20 states introduced a version of Goldwater's universal recognition reform, the Breaking Down Barriers to Work Act. By working hand-in-hand with colleagues across the country, the Goldwater team successfully advocated for this reform, highlighting its potential to transform state licensing regimes. In Arizona, universal recognition is already a resounding success. Since 2019, more than 3,000 individuals have received an Arizona license to work based on their out-of-state qualifications. In addition, the Institute's Home-Based Business Fairness Act continues to build momentum in the states. This innovative reform empowers entrepreneurial Americans by protecting their right to earn a living without having to ask their local government for permission first. In 2021, the Goldwater team worked with colleagues in multiple states, providing essential support to policymakers interested in adopting this pro-growth, no-cost reform.





ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

Arkansas legislators are moving to reduce the state income tax rate, a goal of the **Arkansas Policy Foundation** since its founding in 1995. One proposal would reduce the top rate from 5.9 percent to 5.8 percent, while another would lower it to 5.7 percent. The Arkansas governor has stated he would like a plan in place to reduce the rate to 4.9 percent before his term expires in early 2023. A decade ago, Arkansas had a 7.0 percent top rate, the second highest in the 12-state southeast region, according to the Federation of State Tax Administrators. The Foundation argues that Arkansas is at a competitive disadvantage with states in the region such as Florida and Tennessee that do not have a state income tax. A 4.9 percent rate would give Arkansas the third *lowest* rate in the region behind only Florida and Tennessee. The Foundation has engaged with businesses and entrepreneurs to advance the idea the top rate should be reduced in 2021.

CALIFORNIA



CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER • californiapolicycenter.org

With most California schools closed to in-person learning for more than a year, the **California Policy Center** is leveraging the grassroots network it built through its Parent Union project to send school districts a simple message: put kids' needs ahead of union demands. In April, the organization hosted a protest with parents, students, teachers, and community members outside the San Diego Education Association, one of the unions playing a key role in keeping schools shuttered. The protest drew media from throughout the region and featured one student's heartfelt message that school over Zoom "is not real school." CPC also continued educating teachers—particularly those angry with unions' refusal to allow members to return to class—that they don't have to pay union dues. Prominent California Assemblyman Kevin Kiley is using his platform to share CPC's message and help ensure California government employees truly have a choice in union membership.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (CALIFORNIA) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (California) has kept busy with two high-profile lawsuits against the teachers union, United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). First, the Freedom Foundation filed a lawsuit on behalf of longtime teacher Glenn Laird, who was a proud union member and one-time campus representative who was happy to take action and even join the picket lines regarding wages, workplace conditions, and other compensation. However, over the years Mr. Laird began to see a growing political shift in the union's priorities, and the final straw for him came during the 2020 coronavirus school reopening negotiations when UTLA demanded removing the police officers from campuses and defunding the police as part of its demands to return to in-classroom education. Mr. Laird asked to be removed from union membership and to have dues stopped being taken from his paycheck to fund a political agenda with which he disagreed. The union refused for months, until the Freedom Foundation got involved. Now Mr. Laird and the Freedom Foundation are suing for a refund of the dues deducted from the time he initially signaled his desire to leave the union. Second, Freedom Foundation filed a lawsuit on behalf of four sets of parents and their children who have suffered greatly at the loss of a year of education, socialization, and emotional stability at the hands of the Los Angeles school system, the teachers' union, and its leadership. The lawsuit is a first-of-its-kind personal injury lawsuit against the school system and teachers' union for the irreparable harm the year-long plus school closures have done to the children forced to attend "Zoom school."

PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • pacificresearch.org

Most of the proposals to combat homelessness put forward by the California governor and other state leaders focus on government programs and increased taxpayer spending. As is evident on the streets today, these status quo solutions just haven't addressed the problem. A new book, *No Way Home*, written by four **Pacific Research Institute** scholars, examines the causes of homelessness in California, focusing on unaffordable housing, poverty, mental illness, substance addiction, and legal reform. The authors evaluate the different strategies being used at the city, county, and state levels to prevent or reduce homelessness. There is also a legal perspective to the book, with a discussion about key legal cases and constraints that are hindering the ability of local governments to address homelessness. Based on their findings and research, the authors put forward several long-term policy reform proposals which would have the greatest potential to reduce homelessness.



COLORADO

INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE • i2i.org

Can police officers enter your home whenever they are engaged in "community caretaking"? In other words, can they enter without a search warrant or probable cause of a crime? This question is presently before the US Supreme Court in the case *Caniglia v. Strom*. The **Independence Institute** filed an amicus brief, defending the sanctity of the home. More than any other brief, Independence Institute detailed the original meaning of the US Constitution. Many debates over the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights focused on the need for robust and explicit protections for the home. Ultimately, the home became central to the Bill of Rights. The First through Fifth Amendments collectively create a zone of safety and protection in the home. Thus, the home has remained every American's castle throughout American history. The First Circuit's decision, however, permits home intrusions whenever the officer acts "within the realm of reason" while executing community caretaking responsibilities. Such a standard would allow many of the home intrusions the American founders vehemently opposed. Indeed, extending the community caretaking exception to the home would undermine the constitutional text, the American founders' intent, and centuries of tradition.



CONNECTICUT

YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • yankeeinstitute.org

Yankee Institute for Public Policy president Carol Platt Liebau wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* about the pay raises collected by public employees even as state revenues collapsed and many of their neighbors lost their jobs. Governors and state legislatures, Platt Liebau warned, have avoided hard choices and, instead, let union contracts drag their states further into the red. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Connecticut levying a personal income tax. Besides illustrating that premises behind instituting the tax haven't held up, Yankee showed that the state had fewer taxpayers in its top bracket than it did before the Great Recession, in part because of three rounds of income tax hikes.



DELAWARE



CAESAR RODNEY INSTITUTE • caesarrodney.org

As the federal government distributes COVID relief to the states, Delaware is looking at a potential \$2 billion cash surplus. As the **Caesar Rodney Institute's** John Toedtman wrote in a letter to the Delaware governor (also published in the *Delaware State News*) "This has never happened before and is unlikely ever to happen again." Toedtman encouraged the government to use this surplus to cut personal and corporate taxes in order to spur economic growth, which has been lagging in the state. Unfortunately, the federal relief came with strings attached, and that means that money cannot be used for tax cuts. However, Toedtman points out that Delaware could use their cash surplus to cover any short-term shortfall. CRI is both educating the public about how tax cuts launch sustained economic growth in the long run as well as providing the government with a way to do this that will not be in opposition to the rules of receiving federal relief.

FLORIDA



FOUNDATION FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY • thefga.org

In 2021, the **Foundation for Government Accountability** expanded into a new, crucial policy area: election integrity. FGA identified dozens of ways states can both restore trust in the election system and ensure ballot initiatives do not turn into democracy for sale to the highest bidder. As of mid-April, governors in Iowa, Georgia, Kentucky, and Arizona have signed election integrity bills containing FGA solutions. FGA is providing policy guidance to Iowa and Georgia lawmakers as they defend these reforms against the radical left's attacks. In Florida, and many other states, FGA has met with key policymakers to discuss their election integrity solutions. Thanks to the generous investment of FGA's donors, the organization continues to grow, adding several election experts to their legal, policy, and government affairs teams. FGA is conducting extensive polling to find the best way to present the most popular reforms, as well as collaborating with coalition partners on this important issue.



THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • jamesmadison.org

We are at the halfway point in the 2021 Florida legislative session and by all measures **The James Madison Institute** considers this to be a year packed with measures that advance liberty and freedom. Among the priorities that they are moving this legislative session: school choice expansion—expanding pod-friendly Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) so that more families have flexible education options; civics education—equipping educators with a new video library of testimonials from naturalized citizens who escaped communist oppression; occupational licensing reform—preempting onerous local licensing and zoning regulations hampering entrepreneurs; healthcare reform—further expanding the scope-of-practice for highly qualified nurses and pharmacists; liability protection—ensuring that businesses and healthcare providers are not subject to frivolous litigation; tech and innovation policy—updating money transmission rules to account for developments in fintech and cryptocurrency; academic diversity—engaging in higher education communities to ensure that a diversity of viewpoints are represented in faculty; and revenue-neutral sales tax parity—ensuring that small businesses and in-state retailers are treated fairly in the online marketplace while cutting the commercial lease tax to help small businesses.

GEORGIA

GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • georgiaopportunity.org

As **Georgia Center for Opportunity** continues their efforts to create vibrant communities where everyone can achieve their potential, they are seeing major progress through state legislative action and community opportunities. Of particular note was the passage of a special needs scholarship bill that expands education funding to more students in their state. Now more students, unable to access quality education through traditional services, will be able to use school options that meet their unique needs. This is a huge step forward and lays the groundwork for future changes that will ensure all students have access to better education options. Other legislative actions in areas of family formation and criminal justice made great strides such as passing bills expanding support and access to the foster community. New criminal justice reforms also passed with very little resistance in light of recent events around Georgia.



GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • georgiapolicy.org

Georgia became the first state in the nation to pass legislation protecting the innovative creation of learning pods, an essential education option for families struggling amidst the uncertainties of schooling during the pandemic. An SPN-led push backed by fact-based research from the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** emboldened lawmakers during the 2020 legislative session to prohibit state regulation of these voluntary microgroups of families. As the state Department of Education sought waivers on accountability tests and results, and at least one public school district stayed closed all year to in-person learning, legislators appeared in agreement that it was paramount to preserve families' options in ensuring their children's academic progress. To that end, they also passed legislation that expanded special needs scholarships and improved funding for Georgia's public charter schools. As congressional Democrats turn on the spigot and billions of "stimulus" dollars flow into the state, the Foundation is working with policymakers to ensure these federal funds are dedicated to fiscally responsible projects instead of being lavished on projects that entangle Georgia in long-term, unfunded obligations.



HAWAII

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • grassrootinstitute.org

As the Hawaii Legislature draws to a close, the **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** has been faring well regarding goals it had hoped to achieve. Measures it recommended that the Legislature is likely to approve include: reining in the governor's emergency powers, including his ability to suspend the state's sunshine laws; reforming the state's abusive civil asset forfeiture law; creating exemptions to the state's medical certificate-of-need (CON) laws; liberalizing the state's land-use and zoning laws to enable more housing; and removing business regulations, such as those on digital currency and the production of bottled water.





IDAHO

IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org

In 2021, **Idaho Freedom Foundation** has worked to promote their report on social justice ideology in the state's institutions of higher education. The social justice ideology seeks to divide society rather than fostering the pursuit of truth, the free exchange of ideas, and the aspiration of seeing people assimilate into American culture. Universities across the country are slowly building up an apparatus in which social justice ideology is displacing both professional and general education, and University of Idaho (UI) is no exception. Their report shows that ideas of social justice have crept into hiring, curriculum, and student life. Its culture dedicated to social justice is professional and bureaucratized, permeating deeply into academic and student life. It will continue on this path unless the political institutions of Idaho force change. IFF's report suggests budgetary and administrative ways of putting UI and America's other universities back on the right track.

ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org

The year began with the downfall of the nation's longest-serving public official. After 50 years in office—and a federal investigation—Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan was voted out of his leadership position and later stepped down from the General Assembly entirely. Meanwhile, **Illinois Policy Institute** experts beat the drum on the need for ethics reform on Chicago TV, radio and newspapers; vice president of marketing, Austin Berg, published a fantastic retrospective on Madigan's career in *National Review* titled, "America's Last Machine Boss Goes Down." The quarter continued with a legislative battle over economic growth opportunities and spending reforms. Illinois Policy Institute advanced a bipartisan bill that would add Illinois to the Nursing Licensure Compact, expanding opportunities for nurses both in Illinois and around the nation. The government affairs, policy, and communication teams worked together to showcase research on this bill in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, while getting the *Chicago Tribune* to editorialize in favor of it.

IOWA

TAX EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF IOWA • tefiowa.org

Tax Education Foundation of Iowa is placing a priority on educating Iowans about school choice. TEF Iowa has partnered with Iron Light agency to develop stories of Iowans who have been impacted by choice in education and those stories have been shared with legislators and Iowans across the state. TEF Iowa produced a *Fact or Fiction* document addressing both the truths and myths surrounding school choice. TEF Iowa's focus has also centered on improving civic education and calling for greater transparency in the curriculum to combat the radical indoctrination occurring in Iowa schools. Finally, TEF Iowa continues to promote pro-growth fiscal conservative tax and spending policies to ensure that taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned dollars while creating a stronger and more competitive economy.



KANSAS

KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org

Kansas Policy Institute worked with a broad group of elected officials and advocates from around the state to continue reforming property taxes through much-needed Truth in Taxation legislation. For too long, elected officials have been able to hold mill rates steady while letting valuations skyrocket. To push back against this, KPI created the Bee Honest campaign urging lawmakers to revisit the Truth and Transparency legislation this session. KPI is proud to say that Truth in Taxation is now the law in Kansas! Additionally, KPI tackled education reform in big ways this session through their “Giving Kids a Fighting Chance” campaign. Legislation passed the House encompassing a credit expansion, Education Savings Account (ESA), and a budget certification bill. Although it failed in the Senate, the fight continues to get something passed in the May session. Finally, KPI helped lawmakers reform the Kansas Emergency Management Act and provide Kansans due process rights. The legislation limits the governor’s powers by instituting critical checks and balances and ensuring the participation of elected representatives.



KENTUCKY

BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • bipps.org

When the **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions** (BIPPS) started in 2003, union bosses vowed Kentucky would not become a right-to-work state or offer private school choice during our lifetimes. Even like-minded people and organizations were skeptical it could happen. With the March 29 override of the Kentucky Governor’s veto of omnibus school choice legislation, Kentucky now has both (right-to-work passed in 2017). The Legislature this year overrode 27 of 29 bills vetoed by the governor, including House Bill 258, a Bluegrass Institute idea creating a new pension tier for new teachers. The unique hybrid approach offers a defined-benefit component for beneficiaries while protecting taxpayers with a defined-component element. The policy shifts risk from taxpayers to beneficiaries and keeps the teachers’ pension-deficit-liability hole—already \$15 billion deep—from sinking deeper. BIPPS also convinced legislators to use one-time federal dollars to more than double Kentucky’s rainy day fund to \$1.2 billion rather than create new—or expand existing—programs requiring ongoing state funding in future years.



PEGASUS INSTITUTE • pegasuskentucky.org

When **Pegasus Institute** first opened their doors in 2016, one of the most pressing issues in the state was the murder rate in Louisville, Kentucky. That year, the city had 116 homicides, many of them gang-related. Pegasus Institute began researching and writing about the violence almost immediately, and their first set of policy briefs were entirely based on these murders. Unfortunately, most of their recommendations fell on deaf ears. Four years later, Louisville would again set a murder record, with 173, but things were different in 2020; four years of research, writing, and advocacy began to produce fruit. In October, Louisville announced the beginning of Group Violence Intervention (GVI) and focused on a deterrence policing strategy they had supported since 2016. A partnership between Pegasus and Christopher 2X Game Changers, an anti-violence nonprofit, was providing resources and support for victims of violent crime while pushing for continued policy changes, and all eyes of government were on their efforts. In March of this year, Pegasus held a press event with Senator Rand Paul on the issue. They have had hearings before the Metro Council Public Safety Committee, and are working to get the issue before the Interim Joint Committee on the Judiciary in the State Capitol.





LOUISIANA

PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • pelicaninstitute.org

The **Pelican Institute for Public Policy** continues to try and solve one of the most urgent issues facing Louisiana—reforming the state’s complex and burdensome tax code to make it fairer and flatter for working families and job creators. During the upcoming legislative session, the Pelican team will work with lawmakers to pass a comprehensive tax reform package. If implemented fully, these common-sense, revenue-neutral reforms will level the playing field for everyone contributing tax dollars in Louisiana and reignite the potential of the state’s economy, leading to better-quality jobs. The Pelican team has already deployed several tax reform educational efforts for the state’s legislators and citizens this year. During the organization’s recent virtual “(BIG) Solutions (mini) Summit(s),” US Senator Thom Tillis served as keynote speaker and offered tax reform lessons to the lawmakers and citizens in attendance. The (mini) Summit also featured legislative and tax reform expert panels, as well as a special discussion with Speakers of the House from both Louisiana and Mississippi.

MAINE

MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE • mainepolicy.org

Maine Policy Institute’s top legislative priority in 2021 is reforming Maine’s emergency executive power law. After more than one year (and counting) of single-person rule in Augusta, Mainers are fired up and ready for reform. Earlier this year, Maine Policy Institute published a report that examines emergency power laws in all 50 states and grades them based on the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches. Maine Policy helped more than a dozen lawmakers draft and submit legislation to reform Maine’s state’s emergency power law this session and created an issue page using a OneClickPolitics form to enable Mainers to contact their elected officials on the issue. Though they were uncertain if all of their proposed reforms will be passed this session, they are confident the overwhelming citizen support they have helped to cultivate on the issue will result in reforms that require greater legislative oversight of the chief executive in emergency situations.

MARYLAND

MARYLAND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE • mdpolicy.org

In March, the **Maryland Public Policy Institute** released the results from a statewide poll on the issue of public pensions, which indicated that a large majority of voters are concerned about the state’s ability to fund pension benefits for public employees. The survey of more than 500 registered Maryland voters gauged public sentiment on the health of the state pension system and found that two-thirds of Marylanders are worried that the state will have to raise taxes to ensure adequate funding. More than 400,000 former and current state employees depend on the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System, yet the system suffers from a \$20.1 billion shortfall—or approximately \$15,000 per Maryland resident. Marylanders largely agree on one way to improve the fund’s finances: cut annual payments to the fund’s investment managers. Fully 63 percent of Marylanders agree that reducing the estimated \$500 million in annual fees paid to the fund’s investment management firms is the best way to close the shortfall. The Institute has published extensive findings on Maryland’s chronically unfunded pension systems and the need to shift to low-cost, passive, indexed investments. Learn more at mdpolicy.org.



MASSACHUSETTS

PIONEER INSTITUTE • pioneerinstitute.org

Pioneer Institute has led the public debate on a proposed graduated income tax amendment to the Massachusetts state constitution. Pioneer Institute seeks a sustainable tax system for Massachusetts that promotes job growth and economic recovery from the pandemic. They have produced a series of weekly reports on tax flight, the impact of high-earner taxes in other states, the impact of the tax on small business and retirees, and other effects of the proposed tax. Those reports, paired with hundreds of media appearances, op-eds including in *RealClearPolicy* and *The Boston Globe*, podcast episodes, virtual policy briefings, weekly email outreach, videos, and a social media campaign, Pioneer has educated Massachusetts residents and elected leaders about the detrimental impact of tax increases to the economy and the state budget.



PIONEER INSTITUTE
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mackinac.org

Increasing open government and transparency has long been a priority of the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy**, but the need for change has been especially critical this year. Michigan is one of only two states that exempts the governor from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements, and one of only eight that exempt the Legislature. The Mackinac Center, which submits hundreds of FOIA requests each year, is part of a coalition with groups across the political spectrum, including the ACLU and Michigan Press Association, working to change this. During Sunshine Week, Mackinac Center experts were quoted extensively in newspapers across the state, reaching a wide and diverse audience. Furthering government transparency can also be done through the courts. Over the past few months, the Mackinac Center has filed nine lawsuits related to transparency and one, against the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, has received national attention. In that case, the Mackinac Center is representing Charlie LeDuff, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, after the department refused to release data related to COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes.



MINNESOTA

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • americanexperiment.org

Center of the American Experiment launched a campaign to push back against Minnesota's version of the Green New Deal. The so-called Green Energy First legislation was moving in the State House and even had support from key Republicans in the Senate. American Experiment built a landing page at GreenEnergyFails.com that included key messaging and a call-to-action targeted to key senators in both parties. A coordinated media campaign included 40 billboards, Facebook ads, and a radio ad that fit nicely into American Experiment's "Think About It" radio series. The organization used the recent blackouts in Texas to drive home the point that Minnesota winters require reliable sources of energy. From the radio ad: "Think about it—Texas and California bought into wind and solar energy, but when they needed electricity the most, their residents were left out in the cold." The campaign also included a webinar featuring CAE's Energy Policy Fellow Isaac Orr and Dr. Brent Bennett of the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Life: Powered project to discuss how Texas' focus on promoting renewables, rather than reliability, came back to haunt them in the worst-possible way. The webinar was attended by 185 people and continues to receive traffic on CAE's Facebook page. The campaign delivered 2,274 targeted letters, and the Green Energy First bill remains safely stuck in committee.





FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • freedomfoundationofminnesota.com

What does a progressive billionaire do when he comes up short in his race for president? If you're Michael Bloomberg, you donate \$5.6 million to develop New York University School of Law's State Energy and Environmental Impact Center which then hires 17 attorneys and places them in 11 states' attorney general offices. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison applied for and received two of these full-time Bloomberg "special assistant attorneys general" whose job description says they are "advancing progressive clean energy, climate change and environmental legal positions." They are paid by NYU rather than the state of Minnesota, and much of their job description remains secret. Last June, those two Bloomberg attorneys filed a lawsuit against several oil companies hoping to replicate Minnesota's first-in-the-nation tobacco litigation. Since then, other Bloomberg-staffed attorneys general offices have joined in that lawsuit. The **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** has been demanding transparency from Minnesota's chief law enforcement officer to discover what exactly these privately funded staffers are doing while working in the state Capitol.

MISSISSIPPI

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI FOUNDATION • empowerms.org

This year, **Empower Mississippi Foundation** launched an ambassador program at the beginning of the legislative session to help elevate the voices of those who have been personally impacted by public policy. This included Karrece Stewart, a makeup artist, who had a dream of starting her own business doing what she loves—applying makeup and teaching others. But state law required those who want to enter this safe practice to spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in pursuit of a license—that didn't actually teach Stewart or anyone else about makeup. But she will soon be free to pursue her dreams after the Legislature lifted licensing requirements for makeup artists, eyebrow threaders, and those that apply eyelash extensions, making it easier to earn a living. As part of Empower's efforts to reform parole and habitual sentencing, the organization launched a series of stories on rehabilitation, as well as Mississippi's overly harsh laws that often do not fit the crime. The stories feature people like Jessica Flowers, who served time for drug offenses and is now working and living a productive life; Eddie Spencer, who became a pastor after serving 10 years for armed robbery and attempted murder; and James Vardaman, who is serving two life sentences for possessing seven boxes of Sudafed, simply because it was his third offense.

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mspolicy.org

Mississippi has taken major steps toward occupational freedom. In 2019, **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** filed suit on behalf of Dipa Bhattarai, a Nepalese immigrant who was pursuing the American dream by running a successful eyebrow threading business—until the state shut her down. Then in 2020, the Center threatened further suit against the state on behalf of eyelash extension artists. Existing law necessitated that both of their clients take hundreds of hours of classes that did not apply to their fields of work. Thanks to litigation efforts by the Center's legal division, the Mississippi Justice Institute, eyebrow threaders and eyelash extension artists are now exempt from existing burdensome laws and are free to work and practice their craft. Those efforts laid the groundwork for universal occupational licensing recognition through legislation that accomplished the same for military family members. This year, the Center built on that win and shepherded legislation that made Mississippi one of the first 10 states in the nation to secure licensing recognition.



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

MISSOURI

SHOW-ME INSTITUTE • showmeinstitute.org

Missouri's 2021 legislative session resulted in significant progress on several key initiatives, but the education reforms under consideration stand out for their promise. **Show-Me Institute** analysts have led the charge for expanding school choice and holding the education establishment accountable for more than a decade of failures. Yet progress has been painfully slow, as powerful entrenched interests have staved off any changes that would threaten their monopoly time and again. That might be about to change. Two promising bills are at various stages of the legislative process right now—HB 349 and SB 55. HB 349 would create, in limited form, tax-credit scholarships that parents could use to customize their children's education. SB 55 not only provides tax-credit scholarships but also expands charter schools and makes it easier to access MOCAP, Missouri's digital course access program. Neither bill is perfect or comprehensive, but each would represent a significant step in the right direction for Missouri. In addition to working with an SPN-managed coalition, Institute analysts have been using every tool available to help promote these important reforms, including blog posts, op-eds in major newspapers around the state, podcasts, regular radio appearances, and testimony before the Legislature.



NEBRASKA

PLATTE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH • platteinstitute.org

Despite widespread dissatisfaction with property taxes, 57 percent of voters say they are either unaware or unsure about public hearings where they can voice their concerns. Among the same group of voters, 77 percent say they would favor receiving a direct notification by mail with information about when these public meetings will be held. Notably, this overwhelming majority includes 79 percent of Republicans, 76 percent of Democrats, and 77 percent of independents. Among women and middle-aged voters, support reached 80 percent. By using this data in its government relations efforts, the **Platte Institute for Economic Research** is on the way to helping Nebraska legislators successfully adopt a new Truth in Taxation law. The proposal—which increases transparency by requiring direct notifications on property tax hearings for cities, counties, school districts, and community college boards—recently won first round approval in the Nebraska Legislature by a filibuster-proof vote of 36—1. While a share of state senators voted “present” and did not support the bill, overall backing for Truth in Taxation in Lincoln tracked closely with the support voters showed in their poll responses.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • jbartlett.org

The **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy** published a study of a legislative bill that would create Education Savings Accounts for New Hampshire families. This study found that the program would save taxpayers money while improving student outcomes. In the Senate debate over the bill, their study's findings were cited multiple times by supporters to debunk false claims by the opposition.



NEW JERSEY



GARDEN STATE INITIATIVE • gardenstateinitiative.org

The **Garden State Initiative** continues to advance ongoing efforts to ensure that New Jersey's lack of affordability and suffocating tax burden are front and center in 2021, a year in which the governorship and entire Legislature is up for election. This year, GSI launched their "Share Your Story" campaign, inviting their social media community to share their stories of how those factors have impacted their quality of life and decision whether or not to remain in New Jersey. The response was overwhelming. To date, GSI has received more than 200 heartfelt submissions from residents of their state, representing every demographic imaginable, telling their stories of fear of their financial ability to remain in New Jersey and that they will be forced to relocate in their golden years of retirement. The response to sharing these stories has increased awareness of these issues in a state that has experienced significant outmigration, particularly among retirees.

NEW MEXICO



RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION • riograndefoundation.org

Despite an increasingly "progressive" Legislature, the **Rio Grande Foundation** had some success in the 2021 session. Working with the Institute for Justice, the Foundation and a bipartisan group of legislators helped achieve long-overdue reforms on food freedom. Prior to these reforms, New Mexico had onerous prohibitions on selling homemade food. It was illegal even to sell homemade cookies to your neighbor. The state's largest city, Albuquerque, banned the sale of homemade foods completely—one of the only cities in the nation to do so. That will all change (at least for nonperishable foods) thanks to legislation enacted this session. A second success involved liquor license reform. Such licenses could often sell for \$300,000, making them prohibitive for new restaurants and bars. The Foundation had previously argued for reform and, thanks both to COVID and legislators seizing the opportunity, the Legislature enacted reforms that will reduce the cost of such licenses while also allowing for home delivery of alcohol.

NEW YORK



EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • empirecenter.org

After noticing soaring vacancy rates in nursing homes, the **Empire Center for Public Policy** filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request in 2020 to give New Yorkers a truer picture of nursing home deaths. Empire prevailed and the new data confirmed what had been suspected for months: The document listed the dates and locations of nearly 16,000 deaths involving long-term care residents—6,000 more deaths than the New York government had claimed. Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and US Attorney's office in Brooklyn are now investigating the New York governor's handling of nursing homes during the pandemic. Empire Center is pursuing transparency reforms to eliminate corruption and restore honesty and integrity to state government.

NORTH CAROLINA

JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • johnlocke.org

The **John Locke Foundation** has worked diligently to educate the public and inform legislators as to the necessity of appropriate checks on the governor's executive authority during emergencies. In April, the North Carolina Legislature filed a bill that would give voters the opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment which would provide those checks and balances. Similarly, the Foundation is working to end North Carolina's Emergency Management Act. Far from being political, the Foundation knows that this is simply good governance regardless of who sits in the governor's mansion. Ending this act would still allow for a rapid response in the case of an emergency, but ensures that no one individual has the unilateral power to deprive citizens of their liberty for an extended period of time. The organization looks forward to taking on these two issues that will restore appropriate checks and balances to North Carolina.



OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • buckeyeinstitute.org

In April 2019, then-Speaker of the Ohio House Larry Householder proposed a sweeping energy bill to bail out two nuclear power plants with taxpayer dollars. Dubbed the "Clean Air Program," the bill stood as one of the worst examples of crony capitalism in Ohio history. **The Buckeye Institute** immediately recognized that the taxpayer-funded subsidy would "cost Ohio families and businesses hundreds of millions of dollars per year, impede job creation, and perpetuate government-funded corporate welfare," and went to work sounding the alarm about the legislation and leading the charge against it publicly and behind the scenes. Despite powerful interests pushing it, Buckeye testified at the hearings that the bill was "bad public policy," which would make Ohio "poorer and weaker." As the bill wound its way through the legislative process, Buckeye refused to back down and continued to call upon the Legislature to kill this "ugly corporate bailout." The substantial corruption behind this crony corporate welfare ultimately materialized, predictably, with the arrest of Ohio's Speaker along with three others. Less than two years later, the bailout has been successfully repudiated and repealed, vindicating Buckeye's consistent opposition to "any government bailout for any company in any industry at any time for any reason."



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OHIO) • freedomfoundation.com

As elements of Ohio continue to reopen during the second quarter of 2021, **Freedom Foundation (Ohio)** is targeting AFSCME 8, the state's largest public employee union. The Freedom Foundation is preparing to engage more than 30,000 AFSCME 8 union members through a robust postal mail and email campaign and, after a year of lockdowns, is resuming in-person canvassing at public sector buildings. The Freedom Foundation is determined to arm Ohio's public employees with the truth about their First Amendment rights as recognized by the Supreme Court in *Janus v. AFSCME*. The outreach campaign will employ a variety of messaging, including outlining public employees' First Amendment rights not to be forced to have a union represent them against their wills; the ability to save thousands of dollars over the lifetime of their government careers; the right not to fund union activity with which they disagree; and the deceitful tactics AFSCME national union bosses adopt to prevent members from even learning about their rights.





OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • ocpathink.org

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs saw a multi-billion-dollar company, Paycom, attempt to silence the organization with legal action for posting independent conservative journalism with which they disagreed. Paycom is suing OCPA because of a news article OCPA wrote. Rich liberals using their wealth to silence any opposition has become more and more common, but OCPA is taking a stand and fighting back. OCPA is also working on the Oklahoma education system, work that is needed to ensure the next generation of Oklahomans can succeed. Currently, Oklahomans suffer from a lack of school choice and many children are struggling as a result. To this end, OCPA has been diligently promoting universal school choice at Oklahoma's Capitol and around the state. Finally, OCPA is working to increase healthcare transparency in Oklahoma. One of the most insidious and unseen issues plaguing Oklahoma today is surprise medical billing and overbilling. Advocating for more transparency in pricing for medical facilities will help consumers not to be bogged down with medical debt and finally start the process of fixing the healthcare system in this country.

OREGON



CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • cascadepolicy.org

Cascade Policy Institute strongly opposed Oregon Senate Bill 223, which would have forced private schools to register with the state. Under the proposed legislation, private schools would have had to comply with the state's public school requirements regarding teacher qualifications, school facilities, curricula, and instruction time to register with the Oregon Department of Education. The bill imposed stiff consequences for schools that opted out of or lost their registration, and it prohibited any public school district from being a member of a "voluntary organization" if that organization allowed non-registered private schools to be members. Cascade's Vice President of Research Dr. Eric Fruits submitted hard-hitting written and video testimony against the bill, explaining how it violated the rights of private schools, their students, and other academic and athletic organizations. More than 600 testimonies were submitted to the Senate Education Committee ahead of the March 17 hearing, all of which were in opposition. Due to this public response, the chair of the Senate Education Committee tabled SB 223 for the rest of the session. This is an example of the difference citizens can make by expressing their views and concerns within the legislative process.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OREGON) • freedomfoundation.com

Thanks to **Freedom Foundation (Oregon)**, the state's largest public employee union—SEIU 503—is facing charges of violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), and the union's fifth forgery lawsuit. So far, the Freedom Foundation has uncovered five cases of SEIU 503 forging signatures on membership forms in order to deduct union dues from taxpayer-funded paychecks against the employees' wishes. The fifth lawsuit, filed at the end of March, also includes violations of the RICO Act, the same act that eventually took down New York mobster, John Gotti. The lawsuit has received a plethora of media attention in outlets such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Epoch Times*, and RedState.com, as well as several radio stations, including "The Lars Larson Show."

PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • commonwealthfoundation.org

For over a year, Pennsylvania businesses, churches, families, and students have been strung along by the governor's botched pandemic response. By seizing unilateral power with an endless disaster declaration, he has invented new rules from month-to-month with little transparency, sending the business community, local communities, and education system into a tailspin. Starting last summer, **Commonwealth Foundation** has worked to unite lawmakers toward one goal: restoring checks and balances by ensuring no governor can indefinitely extend an emergency declaration. They emboldened lawmakers to craft state constitutional amendments that 1) limit the governor's emergency declarations to 21 days without legislative approval and 2) allow lawmakers to end an emergency declaration by majority vote. Lawmakers have now passed these amendments in two consecutive legislative sessions. Now, all Pennsylvanian voters will have their say on these amendments via the May 18 ballot.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (PENNSYLVANIA) • freedomfoundation.com

During the second quarter of 2021, **Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania)** is targeting the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), the state's largest educator union, as well as the state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The Freedom Foundation is preparing a robust postal mail and email campaign, including 20,000 mail pieces and 38,000 emails to the American Federation of Teachers members, and will target an overall 48,000 teachers in the PSEA. The outreach campaign will employ a variety of messaging, including outlining public employees' First Amendment rights not to be forced to have a union represent them against their wills; the ability to save thousands of dollars over the lifetime of their government careers; the right not to fund union activity with which they disagree; AFT president Randi Weingartner's recent anti-Semitic remarks against Jewish families who want schools to reopen; and the deceitful tactics teachers union bosses adopt to prevent them from even learning about their rights. When Freedom Foundation opened operations in Pennsylvania just before the COVID lockdowns, government unions scoffed. But their outreach has helped AFSCME and SEIU members leave in droves, costing the unions more than \$1 million in just one year.



RHODE ISLAND

RHODE ISLAND CENTER FOR FREEDOM & PROSPERITY • rifreedom.org

Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity is dedicated to ending unchecked emergency powers in the executive branch. CEO Mike Stenhouse joined former state supreme court justice and board member Robert Flanders in testifying before the Rhode Island Senate Oversight Committee hearing on executive orders issued during the pandemic. Flanders listed areas of concern such as executive overreach and potentially unconstitutional executive orders, saying "There is no pandemic exception to the Constitution." Stenhouse called out Senator Stephen Archambault for saying he was a "big fan" of one of these unconstitutional executive orders and decried the lack of oversight by the legislative branch. He called for reforms that would require General Assembly approval to extend emergency orders beyond their initial 30-day period.



SOUTH CAROLINA



PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • palmettopromise.org

With the help of **Palmetto Promise Institute**, a bipartisan bill to authorize mobile barber shops has now passed both the House and Senate and is on the verge of being signed into law. According to the proposed statute, South Carolina barbers can begin operating out of a mobile unit, bringing their services to people's homes and wherever else barbering is needed. Due to the effects of COVID-19 on the cosmetology industry, South Carolina's current prohibition of mobile barber shops is particularly hurtful to small businesses. It has lost income for many, including Geoff Richardson, a Charleston salon owner that Palmetto Promise caught up with last month. Richardson has two mobile units ready to go as soon as the statute is permanent law. "I bought an RV during the pandemic. It is just sitting in my driveway waiting to be activated," Richardson said. Palmetto Promise also spoke with Representative Pat Henegan (D-Marlboro), the lead sponsor of the legislation. She noted that the barbers she spoke with were particularly interested in being able to serve those who may not be able to get to a barber shop, such as the homeless, elderly, disabled, and institutionalized youth.

TENNESSEE



BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • beacontn.org

It was big news when Elon Musk fled Silicon Valley for Texas—and he's not the only one to do so. Companies and the innovators who head them are leaving states like California and New York in droves due to high taxes and a heavy-handed government. What if Tennessee stole these headlines and brought the world's brightest minds here by becoming the innovation capital of the United States? That's something **Beacon Center of Tennessee** is committed to making a reality. But, in order to do so, an environment must be created in which innovators, from homegrown small businesses to Musk himself, can thrive. One important thing Tennessee needs to do is to slash government red tape. A sure way to do that is to with laws that allow new startups to apply for an innovation fast-track to operate in a "sandbox" free from unnecessary and onerous regulations for a period of time, while still requiring them to protect consumers health and safety. Another step in the right direction would be to prevent the overregulation of new innovations by stopping local governments from unnecessarily regulating online marketplaces like Uber, Turo, Etsy, Handy, or other platforms that bring two or more people together to complete a transaction.

TEXAS

TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • texaspolicy.com

The **Texas Public Policy Foundation** held their 19th Policy Orientation where they hosted Governors Greg Abbott and Ron DeSantis, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Congressman Chip Roy, and a slew of Texas legislators and policy experts who laid the foundation for a truly (and perhaps surprisingly) conservative legislative session. TPPF hosted Secretary Mike Pompeo for a discussion on the border crisis and China policy. Texas Speaker of the House Dade Phelan proposed a healthcare package on which TPPF's own David Balat advised, ensuring conservative healthcare priorities. TPPF encouraged legislators to ensure that voter ID is included in proposed election reforms. Additionally, the proposed Texas budget falls *under* TPPF's Conservative Texas Budget—a major win for taxpayers. Finally, the TPPF is also focusing on child welfare. TPPF supported a bill (passed by the Legislature) that prioritizes preserving and strengthening struggling families over moving children into foster care. Further, it creates a definition of what “neglect” is; examples of neglect currently in Texas code could be having the greatest negative effect on minorities and impoverished families.



UTAH

LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • libertasutah.org

Libertas Institute has had an exciting second quarter. Two first-in-the-nation bills were signed into law—an all-inclusive regulatory sandbox and a proactive approach to privacy. Additionally, Libertas is growing! The Institute has recently added a number of outstanding new team members, including Executive Vice President Fergus Hodgson. Prior to Libertas, Fergus was the founding editor-in-chief of the *PanAm Post* and the founder of Econ Americas, a financial consultancy devoted to Latin America, among other impressive achievements. Libertas is incredibly pleased to welcome him to the team. Libertas is continuing to make ambitious plans to help increase the freedom of Utah's people and markets and to offer assistance to other SPN groups all over the country.



SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE • sutherlandinstitute.org

Sutherland Institute launched its Civics Initiative in April 2021 with an event featuring American Enterprise Institute's Rick Hess, Bill of Rights Institute President David Bobb, Utah's Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, and other state education leaders. Sutherland also released a new publication outlining the history of civics education in America and in the state. The Sutherland Civics Initiative is focused on awareness and grassroots efforts among parents and teachers leading to improved civics education for students starting in Utah and eventually shared across the nation. Sutherland commissioned an in-depth and first of its kind study in Utah, conducted by Heart+Mind Strategies. Results show many Utahns connect current civil unrest to a need for improved civics education. To inquire on this priority policy area, email Sutherland's education policy fellow, Christine Cooke Fairbanks, at Christine@sifreedom.org.





VERMONT

ETHAN ALLEN INSTITUTE • ethanallen.org

The **Ethan Allen Institute** is battling two major issues in Vermont that have national ramifications. Vermont's Secretary of State is bragging that the federal elections bill HR1 will essentially be replicated in Vermont if their Legislature passes all-mail voting this session (a bill that passed the Senate 27—3). Should the House follow suit, Vermont would have the least secure election system in the country—unless, of course HR 1 passes, and then Vermont's system will belong to everyone. Ethan Allen Institute is working hard to expose the massive vulnerabilities in Vermont's system, and hope others will use Vermont's mess as a cautionary tale regarding HR 1. The organization is also proud to work with a coalition of New England, Mid-Atlantic, and nationally based organizations to fight the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI), and its implications for a regional and national carbon tax on motor fuels.



VIRGINIA

THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • thomasjeffersoninst.org

With an accelerating leftward lurch in the Virginia General Assembly targeted at permanently strengthening the Left's allies in the union and environmental community, the **Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy** has pivoted its communications effort to focus on strategic issues campaigns as the state elections aim at November, when all three statewide offices will be filled as well as the House of Delegates. Focusing on the issues of new state regulations and taxes on job creators, a state-inspired "war on fossil fuels" doubling down on President Biden's proposals, and new state laws forcing employees into unions, the Institute is rolling out a series of storytelling narrative videos backed by an advertising budget, targeting audiences through direct mail packages; expanding its email reach, and building a social media presence engaging tens of thousands of Virginians each month.



WASHINGTON

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (WASHINGTON) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Washington) recently petitioned the US Supreme Court to hear two cases challenging government union abuses of public employees. The first case, *Belgau v. Inslee*, is on behalf of several Washington state employees who tried to leave their union and stop paying dues, only to have their requests denied. The second petition to the Supreme Court, in *Boardman v. Inslee*, is on behalf of three quasi-public employees in Washington state who provide home-based services to persons receiving public assistance. The case challenges the constitutionality of a 2016 ballot measure that allowed SEIU to identify and communicate with providers but shut down the ability of caregivers or groups like the Freedom Foundation to do the same. Both cases have been working their way through federal courts for a number of years.

WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER • washingtonpolicy.org

The Washington Legislature is again trying to implement an income tax on capital gains. **Washington Policy Center** has led the effort to keep Washington income tax free with statewide digital advertising, social media, a political cartoon series, and a petition that has amassed more than 14,000 signatures. If the proposal passes the Legislature, the battle in court and at the ballot box is only beginning and WPC research has laid a strong foundation to debate this unconstitutional and job killing tax. In addition, the Legislature has passed HB 1399, which will enact long-time WPC recommended reforms to the state's occupational licensing requirements and reduce occupational barriers for people with criminal convictions. Additionally, WPC's Center for Education Reform has led opposition to new critical race theory mandates on public employees, including K-12 teachers. WPC exposed the fundamental injustice of how this ideological thrust divides and judges people by skin color.



WEST VIRGINIA

CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • cardinalinstitute.com

The **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** celebrated the West Virginia Governor signing the Hope Scholarship program into law in West Virginia. The legislation is the nation's most inclusive Education Savings Account (ESA) program—accessible to more than 90 percent of the state's students. The program will go into effect July 1, 2022, and applications will open up on March 1, 2022. Families will be able to use the Hope Scholarship to create an education experience tailored to each individual child's needs. This is a paradigm shift in how West Virginia can live up to its promise to provide equitable education opportunities for all students. Cardinal Executive Director Garrett Ballengee noted, "Finally, with this program becoming law, West Virginia is a national leader in its approach to K-12 education by placing front-and-center what's most important: children. The Hope Scholarship will open up opportunities to generations of West Virginians who, prior to the Hope Scholarship becoming law, would not have been able to access an education best suited to his or her learning needs."



WISCONSIN

BADGER INSTITUTE • badgerinstitute.org

Two of the **Badger Institute's** policy priorities advanced in the Legislature this spring. A bill allowing dental therapists to practice in Wisconsin passed the Senate in April and now enjoys broad, bipartisan support in the Assembly. The measure would address the state's severe shortage of dental care providers without saddling taxpayers with new costs. The Badger Institute has provided research, reporting, educational events, and coalition leadership on this issue for the past two years. Legislation reforming the state's ineffective expungement law passed a key Assembly committee in April and is expected to receive a Senate committee hearing in May. Due to a unique and illogical timing requirement, judges have little information about the offender's likelihood of rehabilitation at the time when an expungement request is considered. The Institute first raised concerns about the state's expungement law in a report published in 2017.





WISCONSIN INSTITUTE FOR LAW & LIBERTY • will-law.org

The **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** (WILL) has been closely involved in efforts to ensure that Wisconsin's emergency powers are not abused during the current pandemic and offered reforms to safeguard liberty and the separation of powers. WILL sued Governor Tony Evers in Polk County Circuit Court in August 2020 over the use of multiple emergency declarations. WILL's case was eventually stayed, but WILL President and General Counsel, Rick Esenberg, participated in November's oral arguments in another Wisconsin Supreme Court case to address whether the multiple states of emergency constitute an unconstitutional delegation of the state Legislature's core power to legislate. The Wisconsin Supreme Court issued a 4—3 decision on March 31, that declared Governor Tony Evers' use of multiple, consecutive emergency declarations, to be unlawful. In addition, WILL published a study making the case to Wisconsin policymakers that Wisconsin's antiquated emergency powers statutes are in urgent need of reform.

1889 INSTITUTE • 1889institute.org

Attention on the **1889 Institute's** blog, with new content published twice weekly, is growing. The Institute was informed directly by the Oklahoma governor that its COVID-19 information page was helpful in formulating the state's policy and informing others. 1889 has published five studies since January, including an installment in its Corporate Welfare Directory, which got television media attention. Finally, important issues the Institute has put forth and emphasized such as healthcare price transparency and empowering teachers against unions and bureaucracy have been receiving attention and are making progress in the Oklahoma Legislature, though specific reforms have not yet been enacted.

1889 INSTITUTE

AMERICAN CONSUMER INSTITUTE • theamericanconsumer.org

As we move into the second quarter of 2021, the **American Consumer Institute** (ACI) continues to fulfill its mission of raising awareness on how policy affects consumers in a free market. As an educational organization, ACI has focused on publishing op-eds in widely read outlets such as the *Washington Examiner*, *Forbes*, *The Hill*, and *The Morning Consult*. Federally, ACI has continued its work in educating the wider public about the detrimental effects the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act will have on the labor market. Additionally, ACI has been engaged in outlining the effects of federal restrictions on the mailing of electronic cigarettes, encouraging lawmakers to keep the consumer welfare standard as the basis of US antitrust law, ensuring lawmakers do not weaponize antitrust law to settle political scores, encouraging Congress to create a regulatory environment that incentivizes private investment in 5G technology, and outlining the need for a federal data privacy standard. ACI has also produced op-eds dealing with drug pricing and steps the federal government could take to lower prices.



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI • goacta.org

In recent years, public debate has intensified on issues related to diversity and inclusion policies on college campuses, free and open debate in higher education, teacher preparation, and self-censorship. To dig deeper, the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** commissioned a survey in Illinois after the Illinois Department of Education issued the new "Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards." These new standards call upon teachers to work "to reform [political] institutions whenever and wherever necessary" and to "[promote] student advocacy." An early draft of the rule would even have required candidates for teaching licenses to "embrace and encourage progressive viewpoints and perspectives." The survey found that Illinois's education bureaucrats are significantly out of step with their constituents and illustrated that the citizens of Illinois want politics out of the classroom. Participants favor a robust education that will prepare students for career and citizenship. This information is invaluable as ACTA pushes back against these ideological objectives.





AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • [aei.org](https://www.aei.org)

This year, **American Enterprise Institute** launched the Conservative Education Reform Network (CERN), a nationwide membership organization of conservative leaders in education spanning a broad range of issue areas, positions, regions, and viewpoints. Rooted in the premise that conservatives could be leading much more effectively in education, the goal of CERN is to foster meaningful efforts to promote solutions for students and families in early childhood, K-12, and higher education. The Network hosts events, webinars, and working groups, and sponsors an array of content that offers policy proposals, strategic guidance, and analyses for those seeking ideas or a better understanding of key education policy questions. Since its inception, CERN has attracted more than 200 practitioners, scholars, elected officials, funders, and advocates from 40+ states across the country. You can find more information on the Network, including a public membership directory, on AEI's website at [aei.org/conservative-education-reform-network](https://www.aei.org/conservative-education-reform-network). If you are interested in learning more about CERN membership and how to become involved, please contact AEICoalitions@AEI.org.

AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL • [alec.org](https://www.alec.org)



Throughout the latest legislative season, the **American Legislative Exchange Council** (ALEC) has been hard at work educating lawmakers and the public on the economic benefits of reducing state income tax burdens that stymie economic growth and harm American workers. But, a provision in Congress' \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Act attempts to hinder the ability of states to cut taxes, constituting a broad overreach by the federal government. In response, ALEC organized a coalition letter that exposed this new policy as an attack on federalism, and 52 organizations across the nation have signed. ALEC also organized a bipartisan letter from state legislators, reasserting their authority over their states' tax codes. This legislative session also saw ALEC model policies passed by state legislatures across the country. New protections for free speech on campus rooted in the "Forming Open and Robust University Minds (FORUM) Act" ALEC model were codified in Montana. Expanded school choice in West Virginia was inspired by the "Education Savings Account Act" and the "Next Generation Charter Schools Act ALEC" model policies. The ALEC model "Liability Protection for Employers in a Declared Disaster or Public Emergency Act" will protect Arizona's organizations and employers from excessive litigation stemming from COVID-19.

AMERICA'S FUTURE • [americasfuture.org](https://www.americasfuture.org)



America's Future (AF) is excited to announce that Beverly Hallberg, founder and president of District Media Group, has been elected to join AF's board of directors. An expert media coach, lecturer, and public speaker with 20 years of experience, she trains members of Congress, CEOs, policy wonks, reporters, nonprofit and movement leaders, and politicians. Beverly is a guest columnist for *The Daily Signal*, the *Washington Examiner*, and *The Hill*, and is a frequent contributor on Fox News and CNN. "As a young professional in DC, AF was the place to learn and network. Many of the clients and friends I have today are because of the relationships built with other freedom-loving people at annual events and monthly roundtable discussions. I'm honored to be part of the AF board so I can give back to an organization that has had a big impact in my career," Beverly writes. Beverly joins existing members Jeff Berkowitz, Chaz Cirame, Peter Lipsett, Kathleen O'Hearn (Vice Chair), Richard Lorenc (Chairman), John Tillman (Secretary), and Brian Wilson (Treasurer) on the board of directors.

BEACON HILL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH • beaconhill.org

A new study by the **Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research** finds that recently passed legislation for Massachusetts calling for a net-zero emissions policy is flawed and unrealistic. The study estimates that a 100 percent reduction in emissions today would require gasoline to be priced above \$14.00 per gallon. The bill specifies emissions reduction targets, reevaluated in five-year increments, are unreasonable. Specifically, that by 2030, emissions in Massachusetts are to be 50 percent below 1990 emissions levels, by 2040, 75 percent below 1990 levels, and by 2050, at net-zero status. "Drawing from history, prohibition never works as planned," notes co-author David G. Tuerck, president of the Institute. "In this study, they conclude that this legislation is misconceived. The 'absolute zero' approach embodied in the legislation would be economically ruinous. It would increase costs to the average Massachusetts household to unacceptable levels."



CITIZENS AGAINST GOVERNMENT WASTE • cagw.org

Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) released its Critical Waste Issues report for the 117th Congress, which details 17 high-priority policy areas including healthcare, technology, telecommunications, defense spending, civil service, and regulatory reform. In April, CAGW released the 2021 Congressional Pig Book, an annual compilation of pork-barrel earmarks in the appropriations bills. The 2020 Congressional Pig Book exposed \$15.9 billion worth of earmarks in fiscal year (FY) 2020. Since 1991, CAGW has identified 111,417 earmarks costing \$375.7 billion. Read both reports at cagw.org.



CITIZENS' COUNCIL FOR HEALTH FREEDOM • cchfreedom.org

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), the law which eliminated patient consent requirements for data-sharing and authorized the computerization of all patient records, providing easy access and nationwide sharing of private data without patient consent. **Citizens' Council for Health Freedom** conducted a "Truth About HIPAA" campaign throughout April 2021. CCHF is working to shut down the related federal HIPAA "no-privacy" rule and restore patient consent requirements. CCHF encourages states to pass real medical privacy laws, which supersede HIPAA. CCHF's president explained LIVE on Facebook how the American public has been deceived, wrongly believing HIPAA to be a privacy rule when it's actually a permissive data-sharing rule. In fact, 2.2 million entities can have access without patient consent if those who hold the data (e.g., doctors, hospitals, health plans) choose to share it. This intrusion has led to corporate control of the exam room, healthcare rationing, and enormous profiteering from patient data.





COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • cei.org

This year, **Competitive Enterprise Institute** launched an American Resilience and Renewal project to draw attention to policies that help people overcome the greatest economic challenge of this century. The coronavirus pandemic wreaked havoc on our economy and healthcare system, yet this country has shown remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. What are the next steps? We must loosen, suspend, and repeal regulations and government controls that impede recovery. For example, CEI Senior Fellow Joel M. Zinberg has written about possible private sector uses for a vaccine passport to restore safety and confidence, with a limited but useful role for government. John Berlau and Matthew Adams have written about the need to help people gain access to capital and reject policies that limit viable loan options. And Ryan Young has called attention to the unnecessary costs a corporate tax hike would foist upon consumers, workers, and investors. Check out resilience.cei.org for CEI recommendations and, to aid this cause, visit cei.org/ways-to-support-cei. To see a list of CEI's upcoming events, visit cei.org/events.



EDCHOICE • edchoice.org

Since legislative sessions have been underway, more than 20 states have introduced legislation to create Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), the most popular and flexible form of school choice. West Virginia and Kentucky, states that previously had limited choice, have both enacted new ESA programs. **EdChoice** continues to work with SPN partners and other groups in their priority states to push for expanded school choice this session—and beyond!



FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE • firstliberty.org

In March, a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that the Bremerton School District in Washington state *can* ban Coach Joe Kennedy from taking a knee in brief, personal prayer after football games. **First Liberty Institute** plans to appeal the court's decision. After several years of litigation, the Supreme Court of the United States declined to review the case in January of 2019. However, Justice Alito, joined by Justices Thomas, Gorsuch, and Kavanaugh released a separate statement explaining that the Court needed more information in order to resolve the matter. The case then returned to the district court for further review where, in January 2020, a federal judge sided with the Bremerton (WA) School District against Coach Kennedy. Kennedy's attorneys then appealed to the Ninth Circuit, which heard oral argument in January.

FRASER INSTITUTE • fraserinstitute.org

Oklahoma tops the **Fraser Institute's** latest survey of energy sector competitiveness in US and Canadian jurisdictions. The survey of senior executives in the upstream oil and gas sector serves as the basis for Fraser's annual report on barriers to investment in oil and gas exploration and production facilities in the United States and Canada. Those barriers, as assessed by survey respondents, include high tax rates, costly regulatory obligations, uncertainty about environmental regulations, the interpretation and administration of regulations governing the upstream petroleum industry, and concerns over political stability and security of personnel and equipment. Investors pointed to uncertainty concerning environmental regulations, cost of regulatory compliance, and regulatory enforcement as major areas of concern in this latest survey. Nine of the top 10 jurisdictions are US states, with Kansas (2nd), Texas (3rd), Arkansas (4th), Utah (5th), North Dakota (6th), Wyoming (7th), Mississippi (9th), and New Mexico (10th) joining top-ranked Oklahoma. Twenty-one states and provinces are rated. Find out where your state ranks and sign up for the Institute's quarterly US newsletter at fraserinstitute.org.



FREE STATE FOUNDATION • freestatefoundation.org

While the **Free State Foundation** usually holds events at the National Press Club, FSF's Thirteenth Annual Policy Conference is being held via Zoom on different days this spring. As part of the conference, FSF President Randolph May moderated two Fireside Chats. The first of those was with FTC Commissioners Noah Phillips and Christine Wilson on March 19, and the second was with FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr on March 23. Earlier this year, FSF was pleased to host new FCC Commissioner Nathan Simington's Maiden Address on February 16. Videos of all FSF events are available on the FSF YouTube channel.



INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH • ifs.org

The **Institute for Free Speech** expanded their efforts to educate the public about an Orwellian proposal in Congress that would dramatically damage Americans' First Amendment rights. In many cases, H.R. 1, which passed the House with bipartisan opposition and is now before the Senate as S. 1, would ban nonprofits from speaking about government or public policy. Supporters of many nonprofits could see their names and membership publicly exposed, chilling support for causes and fueling politically motivated harassment. The proposal would impose crushing burdens on online speakers and commentary about judicial nominees. It would radically transform the bipartisan, six-member Federal Election Commission into a partisan, five-member agency run by the president's hand-picked speech czar. The measure would also force Americans to subsidize speech by politicians they oppose by providing millions in taxpayer dollars to candidates for Congress. IFS published a series of analyses examining the legislation's harms to free speech and association. A compilation of IFS resources can be found at ifs.org.





JESSE HELMS CENTER • jessehelmscenter.org

The **Jesse Helms Center** will host its 26th annual Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge program in June, July, and August for high school students. The Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge is a five-day residential program designed to teach high school students about the free enterprise system, America's founding principles, and principled leadership. Students are taught these principles using the experiential learning method. The sessions are confirmed at Houston Baptist University on June 21—25 and July 12—16. Additional in-person sessions are at Wingate University and Midlands Technical College. Also, a five-day virtual session is scheduled for August 2—6. For more information please visit www.felc-experience.org. Earlier this year, China policy expert Michael Pillsbury, delivered the first Admiral James W. Nance Foreign Policy Lecture of 2021. Dr. Pillsbury's lecture was recorded and is now available to view on the Center's website. For more information about upcoming Helms Center events and free enterprise resources please visit the Center's website.

MERCATUS CENTER AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY | mercatus.org



The **Mercatus Center at George Mason University** has continued to provide research to lawmakers and policy professionals across the country. Since January, Mercatus scholars provided 28 testimonies in 14 states. Policy actions informed by Mercatus scholars include efforts to end corporate welfare in Illinois, increase housing development in Montana, and expand access to telehealth services in Arizona. As of April 1, two bills have been signed into law and three are awaiting action by their governors. Mercatus scholars also published three US maps that detail state-level regulation, the current status of certificate-of-need (CON) laws, and state preparedness for drones and drone highways in every state. To contact a scholar, please contact the Mercatus outreach team at mercatusoutreach@mercatus.gmu.edu.

PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION | pacificlegal.org



Pacific Legal Foundation has been working with think tanks and state legislatures across the country to pass principled limitations on executive emergency powers. Governors and executive officials should have the ability to respond quickly to an imminent crisis, but the ultimate responsibility for determining public policy rests with state legislatures. Governors must not be allowed to impose restrictions on individuals and businesses indefinitely. In partnership with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), PLF developed model legislation to help state legislators restore the separation of powers in their state's government, even during times of crisis. With support from Pegasus Institute and PLF, the Kentucky Legislature passed comprehensive emergency powers reform legislation to limit emergency orders to 30 days without legislative approval and prohibit the governor from reissuing a substantially similar order. The Kentucky governor vetoed the bill, the Legislature overrode the veto, and the dispute is now in court. Kentucky is only one example; the majority of states across the country are considering similar reform, and at least 13 of those are using legislation similar to PLF's model bill.

PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH CENTER • perc.org

As the United States enters wildfire season, **Property and Environment Research Center** (PERC) is committed to fixing America's forests. In April, PERC released a new report "Fix America's Forests: Reforms to Restore National Forests and Tackle the Wildfire Crisis"—exploring how markets and partnerships will better promote forest ecosystem health and reduce fire risk. The report proposes eight policy recommendations on how the Forest Service can encourage collaboration rather than conflict, increase private and state partnerships, and open timber markets. By promoting landscapes with healthy forests and diverse forest types, forest managers can use these reforms to conduct restoration projects that reduce the risk of "megafires" and provide other conservation benefits. PERC is excited to work with policymakers and conservation groups—here in Montana and at a federal level—to advance these reforms. These ideas are the result of extensive research that brought together forest managers, restoration practitioners, and policy experts for collaborative idea exchange. Keep up to date on free-market environmentalism by subscribing to PERC Reports magazine for FREE at perc.org!



THE COLLEGE FIX • thecollegefix.com

The Student Free Press Association reached several milestones recently, marking its 10-year anniversary and solidifying itself as the best source for developing the next generation of unbiased, liberty-minded journalists. Its website, **The College Fix**, welcomed more than 16 million page views in 2020 as well. In 2021, the group launched several initiatives to continue to sound the alarm on campus-based culture wars and reach more people about that subject. They added profiles on a half-dozen emerging social media platforms and partnered with *The Center Square*, which covers news from the taxpayers' perspective, to allow their student-reported content to reach localized audiences across the nation to warn them how public institutions spend their tax dollars. In winter 2020, SFPA announced its new advisory board, consisting of some of the biggest names in journalism: Tim Carney, Mollie Hemingway, Heather MacDonald, Vic Matus, Derooy Murdock, Kim Strassel, and Salena Zito.

THE COLLEGE FIX

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION • heritage.org

The ideas of **The Heritage Foundation** experts influenced election reforms passed in Arizona, Iowa, and Georgia. Earlier this year, Heritage published a detailed report of election reforms specifically for state lawmakers to consider. These best practices were intended to strengthen election integrity in states, which have the primary responsibility for administering elections in America. Hans von Spakovsky, manager of Heritage's Election Law Reform Initiative and senior legal fellow, praised the passage of Georgia's voting reforms. "This bill is a big first step in the right direction to protect both access and security, which should be the key objectives of any state's election process," said von Spakovsky. "The state has made a good start on amending its election rules to reform the system and fix the many security vulnerabilities that currently exist—vulnerabilities that fueled the controversy over election results in Georgia in 2020."





THE POLICY CIRCLE • thepolicycircle.org

The Policy Circle is accelerating the success of female leaders by arming them with strong foundational knowledge, an ecosystem of support, and the guidance to identify and seize opportunities at the local, state, and national levels. In 2020, The Policy Circle completed a successful beta test of its new Civic Leadership Engagement Roadmap (CLER), a three-month experiential curriculum. This proprietary program launched nationally in January 2021 and will graduate approximately 100 leaders this year. CLER is unique in that it provides learning coupled with action (e.g., on-demand, virtual lectures on the US Constitution by Hillsdale College coupled with requirement to attend city council meeting); Group interaction and individual coaching (e.g. monthly cohort meetings on Policy Circle Brief and one-on-one meeting with a coach to set civic engagement goals); and building a specific, personalized roadmap that identifies a woman's area of focus, the influencers and policy-makers in that area, and plan of action to pursue leadership roles. Learn more about CLER at the [policycircle.org/CLER](https://thepolicycircle.org/CLER).

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“Annual Meeting is the best event of the year. Everybody’s here. It’s fun, interesting, challenging, and inspiring all at once.”

— Courtney Myers, Searle Freedom Trust

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to meet the visionary leaders of the freedom movement, connect with other like-minded philanthropists, and be inspired by individuals and organizations dedicated to promoting state policy solutions that improve communities nationwide.


The Network is stronger after every Annual Meeting. Our key supporters—people like you—leave the meeting engaged, connected, and inspired by our shared vision of improving lives through free markets and local leaders.


For more information, contact
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