





# A Message from the President and Board Chairman

#### **Dear Friends,**

In 2024, there was a pivotal shift in American politics—and we don't just mean in Washington. Voters across the country rejected the direction the country was headed in both federal and state elections. This sentiment crossed traditional party lines: California voters defeated progressive ballot measures while Michigan flipped its state House, dismantling the Democratic trifecta established in 2022. Meanwhile, we have an administration that has signaled an interest in reducing federal agency influence and devolving more authority to the states.

There is palpable energy around the return to the values that have made this country prosperous, and now is our time to seize this moment for the good of the American people.

Our 2024 Annual Report highlights the lives changed and policy reforms made possible by your partnership. Organizations are building and deploying a Durable Freedom Infrastructure in their states to withstand election cycles and the toughest opposition—including a historic ballot measure victory in one of the bluest states in the country, Washington State. Our Network partners are building political machines, litigation centers, investigative journalism outlets, leadership academies, and other key capacities to partner with think tanks in order to create an entire ecosystem dedicated to advancing and protecting freedom for the long term.

Achievements that once seemed impossible are now happening in rapid succession. Seventeen states have secured universal education freedom, including two new states, Louisiana and Alabama, in 2024. Dozens of states passed fiscal reforms providing economic relief despite government-induced inflation. And our Network successfully pushed back against harmful energy mandates and championed alternatives, like recycled nuclear rods, to shore up our energy future.

With the introduction of DOGE and other efforts to examine the role of the administrative state, federalism is making its comeback. In its third year, our Center for Practical Federalism is gaining traction with elected officials seeking to cut federal strings, including first-of-its-kind legislation increasing transparency around federal funds. Our work is shining light in the depths of government bureaucracy and showing lawmakers how they can exercise their authority to fight back.

Because of the generosity of thousands of donors across the country, our Network achieved its best fundraising year yet, with combined revenue exceeding \$224 million. This vote of confidence in our Network is because supporters see the value of state and local action, which we feel in our everyday lives. It is a reminder that while all eyes are on DC, there is a lot we can do closer to home to give people greater opportunity to flourish.

We thank you for your partnership and are excited for the opportunities ahead.



Tracie Sharp
President and CEO

Tracie Sharp



Lawson Bader Board Chairman

#### **OUR VISION**

State Policy Network's vision is an America where all people flourish because collaborative, entrepreneurial leaders have secured lasting social change, personal freedom, and opportunity at the state and local level.

# OUR MISSION

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



#### **WHO WE ARE**

State Policy Network is a coalition of 64 state think tanks representing all 50 states, over 66 state allied organizations in key capacities (like litigation, journalism, and advocacy), and more than 100 national partners, all dedicated to the principles of liberty and federalism. SPN exists to make these organizations better, faster, and stronger than if each worked alone. The power of the Network is in scaling critical state and local solutions so they spread from state to state, leading to national impact.

#### WHAT WE DO

We work together with citizens, businesses, community leaders, and policymakers to solve some of our country's greatest challenges. By solving problems closer to home, state leaders can be relevant and responsive to the needs of their communities, regardless of the political landscape. SPN empowers the Network to be influential voices for freedom in the states and achieve meaningful policy wins that enable all Americans to live freer, more prosperous lives.





2024 By the Numbers

64

state-based think tanks 110+

national nonprofit partners

66+

state partners in key capacities like litigation, advocacy, and investigative journalism 34

states have some form of Durable Freedom Infrastructure \$224M

in total revenue across the state think tank Network

\$6.8M

in targeted investments in the 50-state Network

92M+

lives improved from state policy victories

244

SPN-sponsored trainings and events that bring the Network together

1,801

unique attendees participating in SPNsponsored events 1,571

people registered for SPN's 32nd Annual Meeting from all 50 states 8

organizations in SPN's Organization Accelerator program

309

leaders enrolled in SPN peer networks or policy working groups 115,000

Network and SPN media mentions

\$25.2M

raised in 2024 to advance SPN's mission

### SPN State Affiliates





# A MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM IN THE STATES: DURABLE FREEDOM INFRASTRUCTURE

The Founders designed our nation's government to serve the people. Their intention was that true power should rest with the states and in the hands of citizens, not an entrenched political class. Over the years, the federal government has grown in size and scope. While some progress has been made to return decision-making power back to the states, the pace of policy change wasn't enough to secure effective solutions beyond election cycles. Achieving long-term policy victories requires

more than a single state think tank or legislative win to bring about real change—it demands a movement led by strong, principled leaders fighting on all fronts.

Every state has its own unique history, political dynamics, and economic realities that influence policy decisions. So, how are victories for freedom achieved and replicated, especially when it doesn't seem politically possible?

#### THE DFI BUILDING BLOCKS

# 34 states have some form of Durable Freedom Infrastructure in place today.

By tailoring their capacities to state-specific challenges, our Network effectively advances and defends policies that benefit the people in their states.

- **State Think Tank**—Policy change rooted in sound research, communications, and educational outreach to promote individual liberty and economic opportunity.
- Litigation Capacity—Defends constitutional rights and challenges the opposition through strategic legal action in state and federal court systems.





7 States with think tanks that have partner advocacy organizations.

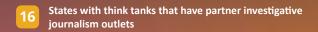
States with think tanks that have partner litigation centers or litigation capacity.

Durable Freedom Infrastructure is a battle-tested model that deploys key capacities to push policy reforms across the finish line, defends against legal challenges, and ensures hard-fought wins last. This strategic, long-term approach to implementing sound, free-market principles has transformed how policies take root.

State Policy Network and our affiliates have had more victories for individual liberty and economic opportunity in the last four years than in the last 40 years combined—proof that this model isn't just working; it's reshaping the public policy landscape at breakneck speed.

- **Leadership Academies**—Identifies and trains new leaders who go on to key roles in government to champion pro-freedom ideas.
- Politics and Advocacy—Engages and influences policymakers to drive bold, decisive action and advance policies that defend freedom, fuel economic growth, and put power back in the hands of citizens. This can include a host of methods including government affairs, PACs, or ballot initiatives.
- **Investigative Journalism**—Exposes government waste, corruption, and overreach through in-depth reporting and compelling, fact-based storytelling.
- **Voter Insights**—Leverages key messaging and strategic communications to demonstrate to lawmakers the policies that voters view favorably or unfavorably.







12 States with think tanks that have leadership academies

SPOTLIGHT

### **DURABLE FREEDOM INFRASTRUCTURE: WASHINGTON STATE**

Dann Mead Smith, former president of Washington Policy Center, co-founded Project 42 with Steve Gordon, the executive director of Concerned Taxpayers of Washington State, to build a Durable Freedom Infrastructure in one of the bluest states in America. Since then, Project 42 has helped launch and partners with several organizations, including Washington Policy Center, League of Our Own, Citizen Action Defense Fund and Let's Go Washington, the state's new ballot initiative machine, to advance critical reforms.





**Project 42 Founders** Dann Mead Smith (left) and Steve Gordon (right) speak at the State Policy Network's 2nd Annual Roe Retreat in Charlston, SC.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

et's Go Washington: Historic Ballot Measures in a Blue State

**YES ON I-2111** 



NO STATE INCOME TAX Keep Washington Prosperous

YES ON 1-2113



#### REASONABLE POLICE PURSUIT

Restoring the ability for police to arrest dangerous criminals

YES ON I-2081



#### PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

• Parents Have The Right To Know

YES ON 1-2066



#### STOP THE GAS BAN

Protect Energy Choice





PASSED BY THE VOTERS









"We can replicate success faster, and with the backing of Durable Freedom Infrastructure, we can start to turn the tide in one of the bluest states in America."

> - Dann Mead Smith, Project 42



Future 42 Snohomish **Data & Targeting** Future 42 Whatcom Future 42 Local Electeds Working Group

Other Projects

Future 42 Clark County

# CAPACITIES

**Initiative Machine** 

Let's Go Washington

THINK TANK

**RECRUITMENT & TRAINING** 

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

**LITIGATION** 

**DATA & TARGETING** 

**BALLOT INITIATIVES** 

**INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM** 

**GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION** 

PROJECT.

# **OUTCOMES**

Let's Go Washington qualified seven ballot initiatives in one year, resulting in the largest signatures collected in the state's history.

58 League of Our Own candidates have already been elected to state and local offices.

**Washington Policy Center research** has spurred litigation via Project 42's Citizen Action Defense Fund to improve transparency on multi-billion collective bargaining

negotiations.





#### SPOTLIGHT

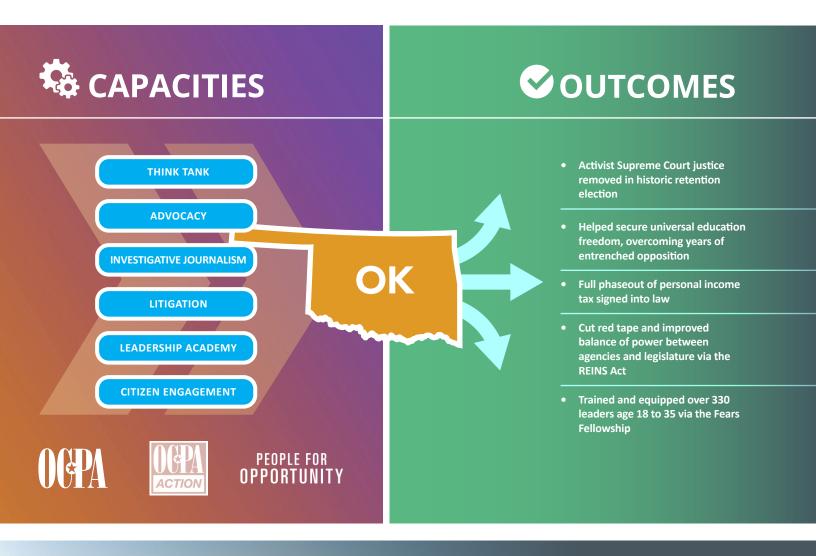
#### **Supreme Court Justice Accountability**

In a historic 2024 retention election, Oklahoma voters removed the most activist state Supreme

Court justice—the first such removal since the state adopted judicial retention votes in 1967. The election followed a high-profile campaign led by the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA), OCPA Action, and People for Opportunity, which exposed the justices for overstepping their constitutional roles and making ideologically driven decisions. OCPA created an original Judicial Scorecard to inform voters about the justices' records and shine light on their decisions around critical issues. The victory signals a shift toward greater accountability and scrutiny of the judiciary in Oklahoma.



Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs founder Dr. David Brown knew SPN founder Thomas Roe and President Ronald Reagan and supported their vision to create a freedom movement in every state. He also knew that given the opposition in the state and their stronghold on the culture, it would take more than traditional think-tank work to preserve free-market policies. Since 2010, OCPA has built a robust infrastructure that has led to significant victories for freedom.









It doesn't take much digging to see how federalism is desperately needed in today's government. Whether it's the growth of the administrative state, or the executive overreach of each administration, the impact of the federal government in American's everyday lives is larger than ever.

But in two short years, the Center for Practical Federalism has not only demonstrated the importance of federalism but has also sharpened its focus and strategy to return more power to the states in the years to come.

#### **Shining a Light on Guidance**

Every year, federal agencies issue thousands of communications called "guidance." This information is meant to help individuals, companies, and state and local governments comply with federal law. But because guidance is only supposed to clarify the law, it isn't subjected to the transparency and legal review requirements that govern federal rulemaking. This lack of review has created a dangerous loophole. Too often, agencies go beyond legislative clarification and use guidance to create new rules that have no statutory authorization. This is against the law.

CPF traveled across the country to inform state lawmakers about this unconstitutional practice, empowering them to challenge federal guidance that bypasses elected officials and undermines democracy.



Those efforts proved successful in April 2024, when Tennessee legislators passed first-of-its-kind legislation requiring the Tennessee Department of Education to disclose all federal guidance it receives to state lawmakers. CPF's Steve Johnson testified in support of the bill and wrote an op-ed in *The Hill* highlighting why the new Tennessee law is a groundbreaking win for transparency. In a piece for Governing, CPF's Tony Woodlief commended Tennessee's new policy and encouraged other states to follow suit.

#### How Do States Rank on Federalism?

**Early** in 2024, CPF launched their first-of-its-kind, 50-state federalism scorecard.

The scorecard achieves three main objectives. First, it assesses how much control each state maintains over both its internal bureaucracies and its interactions with federal agencies.

Second, it highlights each state's vulnerabilities—including red states where many underestimate federal influence. And third, it provides practical policy recommendations that legislators can use to protect their state's autonomy.

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With the scorecard data in hand, SPN and CPF engaged with state groups and legislative allies to identify opportunities for reform across the country. For example, in Nebraska, the Platte Institute invited CPF to train legislators during their "Study in Federalism" event in October where Tony Woodlief, Senior Fellow of Center for Practical Federalism and SPN's Senior Executive Vice President, was the keynote speaker.

#### Stopping Misguided Agency Rules: CPF Encourages Department of Labor to Halt Workforce Regulation

The Center for Practical Federalism team was involved in the effort to halt a Department of

Labor rule on the registered apprenticeship program. In March 2024, the team coordinated a public comment on behalf of a coalition of 29 state and local officials from 16 states in response to the proposed rule that would impose one-size-fits all mandates on states that administer apprenticeship programs.

This proposed regulation would have effectively nationalized apprenticeship programs at a time when states are becoming more creative in using these programs to train more skilled workers. At the end of November, the Department of Labor withdrew the proposed

"This proposed regulation would have effectively nationalized apprenticeship programs..."

apprenticeship rule. We know that this type of action taken by federalism heroes is an important component in reigning

in these federal agencies, especially since only 2,200 comments were submitted to the record, a low amount for public comments.

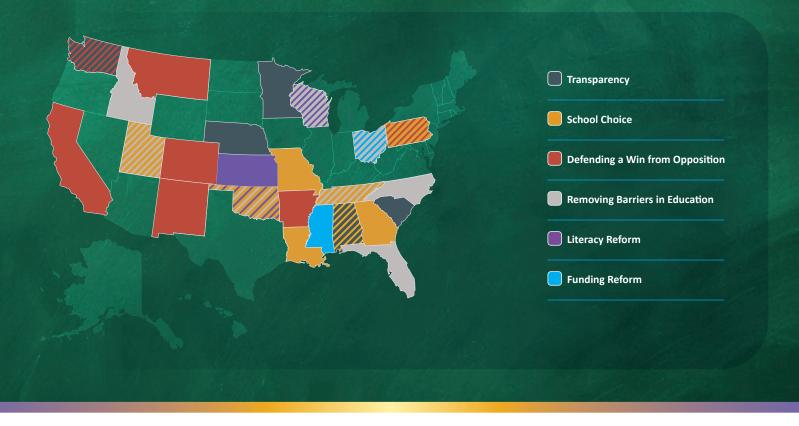
The Wall Street Journal's Kimberley
Strassel featured the report in her
weekly newsletter, and the CPF team will
continue to share this important tool
with policymakers and the media in 2025.

#### THE EDUCATION RENAISSANCE

Over the last 5 years, there has been unprecedented demand for a change to the education status quo. This wave of reform has been fueled by parents who, since the pandemic,

have awakened to the need for greater accountability, access, and affordability of diverse education options that meet the needs of each student. Education freedom is made possible by many state and national organizations, and SPN works to bring them together and accelerate winning strategies throughout the country.

#### 2024 Education Wins



#### **GEORGIA**

Thanks to the coordinated campaign of the Georgia Center for Opportunity (GCO) and the Georgia Public Policy Foundation (GPPF), Georgia students will have access to "Promise Scholarships" in 2025. The scholarships are part of an Education Savings Account program that allows students in low-performing schools to apply for funds that can be used for education-related items including books, uniforms, and private school tuition. While Promise Scholarships are reserved for students in the bottom 25% of schools, GCO and the GPPF are working with lawmakers to expand the program so *all* students in the state can soon be eligible. SPN helped both organizations get this reform over the finish line with with strategy and messaging support, as well as targeted investments.

#### **ALABAMA**

Through research, legislative testimony, and outreach to lawmakers, the Alabama Policy Institute (API) spearheaded the passage of universal school choice in Alabama. This legislation, called the CHOOSE Act, allows for up to \$7,000 in state funding per-student in the form of a tax-credit Education Savings Account. Alabama was the 10<sup>th</sup> state to enact universal education freedom. SPN was able to provide critical support for a regional communication coordinator at API to promote school choice and its benefits.







#### MISSISSIPPI

In 2024, Mississippi policymakers passed a law that replaces the state's current state education funding formula with a new system that focuses on the needs of individual students. The new law installs a weighted student funding formula that awards each student \$6,695. Some students get additional funding based on their unique needs. And most importantly, with this new system, education funding follows the student. The reform could not have passed without the work of Empower Mississippi and the Mississippi Center for Public Policy. SPN provided seed funding for this research and ongoing issue campaign support, in addition to years of work with our Network sending leaders to receive education funding certification.





#### LOUISIANA

In 2024, thanks in large part to the outreach and advocacy work of the Pelican Institute for Public Policy, Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry signed legislation that creates the state's first Education Savings Account program. The "Giving All True Opportunity to Rise" (GATOR) Scholarship Program is open to all K-12 students in the state, regardless of income. And in addition to using the funds for tuition, families can use their GATOR scholarships to hire private tutors, enroll their child in an online/virtual educational program, or purchase other instructional materials. SPN partnered with the Pelican Institute and provided targeted investments and coaching to support their campaign. The reform was also supported by national partners including EdChoice, yes. every kid, Americans for Prosperity, American Federation for Children, among other local partners and schools.

**OKLAHOMA** 

With the help of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs,
Oklahoma passed a bill to improve reading scores for students
in the Sooner State. SB362, also called the Strong Readers
Act, requires teachers to be trained in the science of reading
and proven instructional methods, including
phonics. SPN was able to provide targeted
investments to fuel this win for students.

# REMOVING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURS

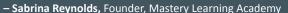
SPN's Velinda Jonson Family Education Fellow Kerry McDonald leads our efforts to build coalitions of school founders and innovators who can work with policymakers to decrease

barriers to opening new schools, so that there is a robust supply of education providers once bills are passed, or even before the law catches up.

In Utah, McDonald, in partnership with the Libertas Institute, identified early on how regulations hamper the creation of new and innovative education models, like microschools, that could serve students participating in the state's universal ESA program. Working closely with Libertas, they worked together to pass policy recommendations to eliminate zoning restrictions that limited where microschools and non-

"SB 13 [the zoning reform bill] has literally saved my microschool. I don't think people know how impactful you and the Libertas Institute are to our state and local communities."

traditional schools could operate.



Thanks to McDonald's foresight, we hope to see momentum for this type of reform advance nationwide. This victory had an immediate and tangible impact on Utah's education entrepreneurs. Sabrina Reynolds, founder of Mastery Learning Academy, a microschool in Taylorsville, was nearly forced to close last year over zoning issues, but were saved by this innovative legislation.







Launched in 2020, Ed-Prize recognizes and accelerates cutting-edge, forward-thinking projects that offer creative solutions to current and future challenges in K-12 education. Our partners, Stand Together Trust and the Walton Family Foundation, generously supported the 2024 Ed-Prize.

2024

#### **Ed-Prize Winners**



Left to Right: Jenny Clark, Love Your School, Jon England, Libertas Institute, and Marvin Pierre, Eight Million Stories

# pathways-prize

■ The Pathways to Prosperity Prize supports ideas and organizations that expand the power of free enterprise to lift individuals out of poverty and give them the personal freedom to be entrepreneurial in all walks of life. We are grateful to our partners from the John Templeton Foundation, Beth and Ravenel Curry Foundation, and Rising Tide Foundation for making this possible.

Pathways to Prosperity Prize Winners



From Left to Right: Aaron Frumin, uncommon Construction, Adrian Montague, Doxa Development, Josue Sanchez, CarePortal

Libertas Institute: The microschool movement is expanding across the country with the growth of school choice.

Nonetheless, many parents are still working to navigate the burdensome red tape around microschools. To combat this, Libertas is developing the nation's first state-based trade organization specifically designed to support these education entrepreneurs.

Love Your School: In 2022, Arizona expanded its Education Savings Account (ESA) program to become universal. Love Your School's Parent Concierge Service (PCS) aims to empower parents to utilize ESAs to improve their child's education. PCS will connect Love Your School's staff with families to help them navigate the ever-increasing complexity of choosing the best education path for their child.

**Eight Million Stories:** Located in Houston, Texas, Eight Million Stories' mission is to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline by providing a comprehensive suite of educational services, social and emotional support, and mentorship opportunities.

**CarePortal** connects those in the community to families in crisis, meeting needs in real-time.

**Doxa Development** aims to break cycles of poverty by developing budding entrepreneurs and nurturing interdependent relational environments.

unCommon Construction allows high-school-aged youth to learn soft and technical skills and engage in meaningful networking and mentorship opportunities by completing real construction projects.



# STATE POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

#### TAX REFORM

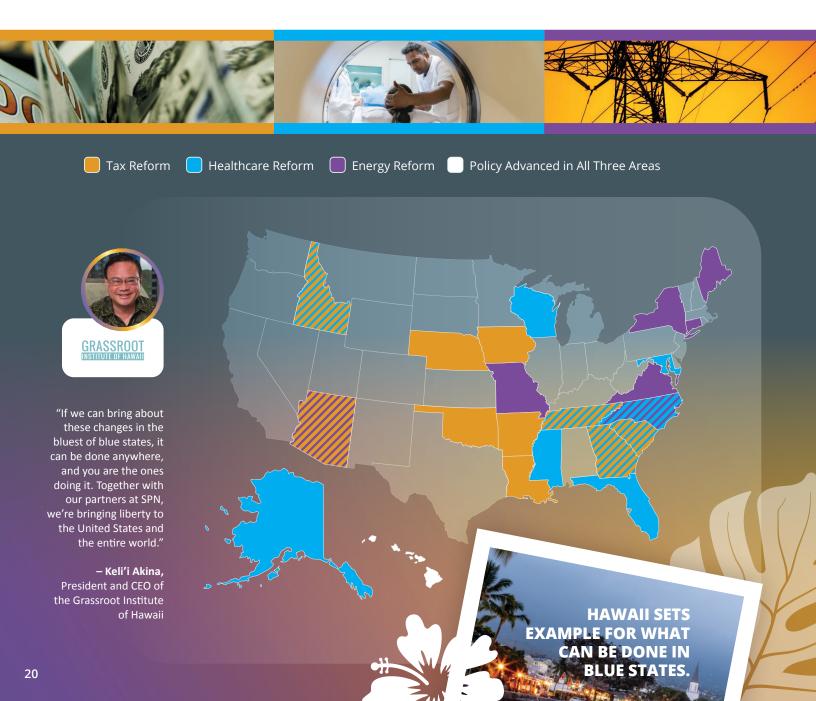
Tax reform has gained momentum across the country over the last 4 years as over 25 states have passed some form of tax reduction. Powered by SPN partners pushing for fiscally-conservative state budgets and responsible tax policies, tax reform is making important progress nationwide. SPN brings together our Economic Policy Working Group of experts to share and accelerate sound fiscal reforms.

#### **IOWA PASSES FLAT TAX**

On the whole, states with flat income taxes (or no income tax) are more productive, have higher job growth, and attract new residents. Additionally, flat state income taxes protect



taxpayers from perennial tax hikes and irresponsible spending. In 2024, lowa passed legislation that moved the state from a progressive tax system to a flat tax system. The law also lowered lowa's tax rate from a top income tax rate of 5.7% to a flat 3.8% starting in 2025. This reform will save taxpayers more than \$1 billion over the next six years and gives lowa the sixth lowest income tax rate in the country.





# HAWAII PASSES BIGGEST TAX CUT IN STATE HISTORY



In 2024, Hawaii signed a tax law that will lower the average state income tax burden by almost 70% over the next 6 years. By increasing the standard deductions families can take on their taxes and widening the income tax brackets, HB2404 will save Hawaiians roughly \$5 billion by 2031. Through research papers, media appearances and placements, personal outreach to lawmakers, and even editorial cartoons, the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii made the case for tax relief and helped get HB2404 over the finish line.

#### HEALTHCARE

Every American is affected by healthcare policy, and many face skyrocketing costs with dwindling access to primary care providers and specialists. Our 50-state Network is fighting back against bureaucratic red tape that unnecessarily burdens both patients and healthcare providers alike. The solutions brought by this Network have improved access to, and the affordability of, essential healthcare for millions of Americans.

#### **TENNESSEE REMOVES BARRIERS IN HEALTHCARE**

Reforming healthcare in Tennessee has long been a priority for the Beacon Center of Tennessee. With their research and advocacy expertise, they have worked tirelessly to pass healthcare reform in their state, including a comprehensive report calling for reform. Thanks in large part to that work, Governor Bill Lee signed multiple bills in 2024 to make it easier for Tennessee families to access quality, affordable healthcare. The reforms include improving Tennesseans' access to telemedicine and removing burdensome regulations that have prevented the expansion of access to services like neonatal ICUs, MRI machines, and long-term care hospitals. These reforms have also enabled pharmacists to prescribe more types of medicine to patients. SPN provided strategy and messaging guidance to Beacon, helping accelerate this reform.

# MARYLAND AND NORTH CAROLINA GIVE PATIENTS ACCESS TO NEW TREATMENTS

In a victory for patients with rare diseases, both Maryland and North Carolina have passed Right to Try for Individualized Treatments laws. The Goldwater Institute championed the law, which gives patients the right to work with their doctor to try innovative treatments before they are approved for

general use by the FDA. Oftentimes the approval process for these treatments can take years to decades, which is simply time that these patients do not have. By removing barriers to access, Right to Try gives patients access to potentially lifesaving treatments without needing permission to do so from the government.

#### ENERGY

Rising energy costs put a major burden on everyday Americans. Additionally, Progressive governors and lawmakers have attempted to pass sweeping energy mandates that further increase costs while putting more strain on an already overloaded energy grid. SPN and its 50-state Network are working diligently to stop harmful policies in their tracks while offering reliable and cost-effective solutions.

#### **AMENDING THE ATOMIC ENERGY ACT**

Nuclear waste is an untapped renewable energy source, as the nation's stockpile of uranium fuel rods contains enough energy to power the electric grid for the next one hundred years. The Caesar Rodney Institute worked with lawmakers to pass bipartisan legislation that will permit the use of groundbreaking technology capable of recycling spent rods. Their amendment to the Atomic Energy Act is one giant leap toward a reliable clean-energy future.

### NORTH CAROLINA TRANSITIONS TO RELIABLE ENERGY

In 2017, Governor Roy Cooper initiated a Clean Energy Plan that would cut electricity-based greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by 2030. His plan would have ballooned prices for ratepayers and transitioned to unreliable energy sources like solar and wind. To combat this, the John Locke Foundation produced a first-of-its-kind examination of North Carolina's two potential energy futures—would North Carolinians have affordable, reliable energy or would they be subjected to a future of rolling blackouts and rising electricity prices? The impact of their research has translated into tangible victories as Duke Energy abandoned its initial plan to shoehorn in unreliable energy. North Carolina is now poised to retire coal power facilities at a sensible rate, secure grid reliability, and maintain energy affordability.



# STRENGTHENING AND CONNECTING STATE LEADERS

In order to truly serve the American people and bring greater freedom and opportunity, we need the best and brightest talent leading the way. SPN invests deeply in talent because it is critical to the success of an organization—and an entire movement in a state. Our leadership development programs are aimed towards strengthening and sharpening leaders to deliver transformative results. The real power is in the connectivity of this Network—for leaders to put their heads together to strategize, share best practices, and provide the support necessary to press forward.

#### SPN WRAP-AROUND SERVICES

#### Organization Accelerator:

SPN's Organization Accelerator program is a two-year, intensive partnership between SPN and affiliate organizations that is designed to strengthen existing capabilities and/or build new infrastructure that will enable them to secure more transformative policy victories. SPN partners with our affiliates to review their long-term objectives and advise them on specific infrastructure that they need to take the organization where they want it to go. We then advise them on fundraising, communications, leadership, board governance, and other practical aspects that are necessary to strengthen their capabilities.

#### Strategy Development:

SPN's strategy workshops help organizations focus their priorities and leverage the best opportunities. Many policy victories begin at the strategic development table—as we bring in key stakeholders to help formalize a plan for the organization's long-term success.

#### Peer Networks:

One of the most important roles
SPN plays is the "connector" of organizations working to improve lives in the states. SPN provides peer-to-peer learning opportunities for different specialties including fundraising, operations, communications, government affairs, policy, and senior level management.



- Garrett Ballengee, Cardinal Institute

for West Virginia Policy

#### Personalized Coaching:

SPN experts provide 1:1 leadership coaching to Network partners to help them work through challenges, think outside the box, and build their leadership skills so they can go on to building thriving organizations in the states.

#### Conferences and Retreats:

Through critical gatherings, like SPN's Annual Meeting and our annual Executive Leaders' Summit, SPN encourages our leaders to raise the bar and go further, faster, together.



# By the Numbers

244

SPN trainings and events to bring the Network together

1,801

Network leaders participated in SPN programming 309

leaders enrolled in SPN
Peer Groups or Policy
Working Groups

32

leaders received 1:1 coaching from SPN affiliated coaches

8

organizations participated in SPN's Organization Accelerator "The time I get to spend with my CEO peers is literally the most valuable aspect of being in the Network. Doing free-market policy work can sometimes feel like you're on an island as the only voice against government doing more. On top of that, as a leader there are issues you can't even talk about with anyone else on your team. The other leaders in the Network are the best resource for collaboration, new ideas, and even practical, day-to-day issues."

**– Chris Ingstad,** President, Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation









#### AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT



# INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT

CJ Szafir joined the Institute for Reforming Government in 2020 and since then has establish the organization as a leading force engaging lawmakers and communities to advance better policy to change the landscape in Wisconsin.

#### 2020

- CJ Szafir leaves the Wisconsin
  Institute for Law and Liberty to become
  CEO of the Institute for Reforming
  Government. With a strong
  board and leadership,
  they are ready to
  build a team and
  develop their
  strategic plan. CJ
  reaches out to SPN
  about membership
  and joining the startup
  program.
- SPN hosts a strategy development workshop with IRG staff and other allies to develop IRG's vision, mission, and strategic plan. SPN offers development training and coaching to help them reach their fundraising goals.
- The Board approves IRG's strategic framework with the goal of building out advocacy and community engagement as their biggest assets. CJ joins SPN's government affairs peer network to build this capacity and share his experiences with others in the Network.

#### 2021

- IRG hires former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Dan Kelly to work on increasing accountability and oversight of state agencies. This sets the stage for their long term work empowering the legislature to act when the executive branch oversteps its authority—a key strategy given the makeup of Wisconsin politics.
- IRG advances a reading bill to address the state's literacy crisis, which makes headway but doesn't cross the finish line because of the governor's veto. IRG quickly becomes the goto resource on literacy reform and continues to build the coalition.

#### 2022

- SPN provides State Voices polling specifically tied to Wisconsin to support their community engagement efforts. IRG brings on a full-time community engagement expert to conduct a major project that includes listening tours to better understand the policies of concern for everyday Wisconsinites.
- IRG launches education issue campaigns with support from SPN's education program. They focus on teacher apprenticeships to help build a pipeline of better teachers as well as community-run charter schools.
- CJ joins other CEOs for SPN's Executive Leaders Summit to
  - share ideas on community engagement, among other topics, and build a network peers. He receives coaching from Justin Owen, CEO of the Beacon Center of Tennessee.
  - IRG expands its infrastructure to create IRG Action, a c4 entity that enables them to more directly work with lawmakers on policy reform.





#### 2023

- IRG launches the Center for Investigative Oversight (CIO), building upon Justice Kelly's work to increase oversight of state government. As part of the Center, IRG releases a major report exposing the University of Wisconsin for race-based hiring through its Target of Opportunity (TOP) Program As a result, lawmakers had the pressure needed to put a stop to the program as part of larger DEI negotiations with the university.
- After visiting 25 cities, convening 42 listening sessions, and driving 5,367 miles, IRG releases their landmark study, "What Wisconsin Wants." The lessons from the study help them focus on key reforms that reflect the needs of the people like education (in particular, literacy and a teacher pipeline), mental health, childcare issues, and tax reform.

With policy solutions from their listening tours, IRG works with Democrats and Republicans to pass comprehensive literacy reform that prioritizes proven methods of reading, like phonics,

- and early intervention. The Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, the most influential Republican politician in the state, called it the "biggest accomplishment of the session."
- IRG is nominated for a Bob
  Williams Award for Outstanding Policy
  Achievement for their groundbreaking
  research exposing misuse of COVID-19
  education funds.
- IRG wins SPN's Communications
  Excellence Award for their work building
  the Center for Investigative Oversight.
  CIO also works closely with Steve
  Johnson from SPN's Center for Practical
  Federalism to take what has
  worked in Wisconsin to
  other states.

#### 2024

- IRG works closely with policymakers on the implementation of the literacy law. The Wisconsin Committee on Finance approves the four highest-quality curriculum options because of their support. This comes after the governor issued a partial veto, known as Act 100, that struck language allocating money for school boards and charter school compliance in the literacy program, meaning that the funds for this program can go anywhere in the education literacy bucket.
- In a major breakthrough, the legislature passes IRG's reform that would enable high-quality teacher apprenticeships in Wisconsin, setting the stage for future reforms.





Ducey join us in Phoenix, Arizona as the opening keynote speaker of our 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting. In his tenure, Gov. Ducey was a beacon of free-market innovation, pioneering reforms in K-12 education, healthcare, and taxes while also reducing government overhang and shrinking the state's budget. In his keynote, Gov. Ducey was joined by SPN senior executive vice president Tony Woodlief to talk about the impact of his governorship as well as

lessons he's learned along the way.

"I want to thank State Policy Network," said Ducey. "When you look at the individual organizations, like Arizona's Goldwater Institute, so many good things happen when they partner with other groups."

at this Annual Meeting as SPN President and CEO Tracie Sharp discussed the game-winning strategy that employs

strategic capacities to secure policy in even the bluest

of states. Matthew Brouillette, President and CEO of Commonwealth Partners Chamber of Entrepreneurs, and Dave Trabert, CEO of Kansas Policy Institute, joined Tracie on the main stage to talk about how their organizations have grown stronger thanks to this multi-tiered infrastructure.

"Why are we doing this?" asked Matt. "Why do we fight like this, why do we have a passion for it? We're fighting for people who don't have a voice and need us to win these battles. We need to speak up for those who can't speak up for themselves."





#### **Celebrating Success**

In addition to the rigorous strategy discussions that take place, Annual Meeting is also a time to celebrate the success of our partners. The Bob Williams Awards, Communications Excellence Awards, Philanthropy Impact Award, and Thomas A. Roe Award all provide opportunities to recognize the amazing work that each of our Network partners is doing in their home state.

#### Thomas A. Roe Award

Named after SPN's founder, the Thomas A. Roe Award pays tribute to those in the state public policy movement whose achievements have greatly advanced free-market philosophy, and recognizes leadership, innovation, and accomplishment in public policy. The recipient of the 2024 award was Lawson Bader, CEO of DonorsTrust and chairman of SPN's Board of Directors.

"SPN's strength IS our ideas, values, principles, people and the durable institutions we have built and inherited," said Lawson during his acceptance speech. "We are in a moment when we all need to give of our time, talent, and our dollars to protect, defend and promote the general welfare that IS this great nation—but, more importantly, to protect, defend and promote the founding principles of this great Republic. We are, after all, the United *States* of America."



# **Bob Williams Awards for Outstanding Policy Achievement**

Most Influential Research: John Locke Foundation—Energy Crossroads: Exploring North Carolina's Two Energy Futures

**Best Issue Campaign: Georgia Public Policy Foundation**—Highlighting the Negative Effects of CON laws



Best Home State Win: Pelican Institute for Public
Policy—Bringing Universal School Choice to Louisiana



**Biggest Win for Freedom: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**—Enacting Housing Reforms and the Largest Tax
Cut in State History



**Best State-Based Litigation: Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty**—Stopping the Biden Administration's
Race-Based Business Development Program





# Communications Excellence Awards

**Bold Brand Boost Award:** Center of the American Experiment—Day at the Fair



Powerful Storytelling Award: Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty—Standing up for Wisconsin Small Businesses



**Expanding Your Audience Award:** Grassroot Institute of Hawaii—Changing Hawaii's Political Culture by Popularizing Liberty







#### **Philanthropy Impact Award**

Presented for the first time in Phoenix, the Philanthropy Impact Award recognized a development professional in the Network who has made an indispensable contribution to their organization's fundraising success and inspired cherished partnerships with key philanthropists. The recipient in 2024 was Jim Walker, Vice President for Advancement at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

"At Mackinac, we say that we don't want a gift if it isn't good for the donor to give it," said Walker in his acceptance speech. "Let's not think of our work as getting money from donors, but giving donors reasons to be even more generous, which will increase their hope and happiness. That is the gift we owe to them."













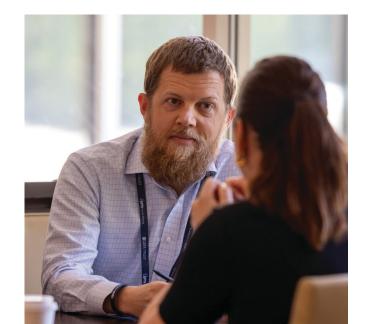














#### CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF THOMAS R. ROE:

# THE INAUGURAL ROE RETREAT



At the urging of President Ronald Reagan,
South Carolina entrepreneur and businessman
Tom Roe brought together a national coalition of
think tanks so free-market principles could spread
around the country for national impact. More
than three decades later, State Policy Network
has grown into a formidable force with over 100
national partners and 64 independent statebased affiliates advocating for personal freedom,
economic opportunity, and free enterprise. To
celebrate the incredible Network both Tom, and

his devoted wife Shirley, established, supporters gathered from across the country in Asheville, North Carolina, for the inaugural Roe Retreat to engage in strategic conversations about the critical issues shaping our nation's future. Attendees connected with Network leaders, policy experts, and fellow philanthropists to deepen their understanding of effective state-based solutions and leave inspired to take bold action.

SPOTLIGHT

#### The Future of Philanthropy

One of the key discussions held during the retreat focused on the future of philanthropy. Lawson Bader, SPN board chairman and CEO of DonorsTrust, Carrie Tynan, SPN board member and CEO of the Adolph Coors Foundation, and Garrett Garcia, president of the Garcia Family Foundation and CFO of Pinehill Capital Partners, led an insightful discussion in which they explored the evolving landscape of charitable giving, emphasizing the importance of strategic investments in state and local initiatives to drive lasting change.

As a third-generation American and philanthropist, Garrett Garcia shared that values and strategic planning are essential to ensuring donor intent and shared values are honored and protected, especially with family foundations like Garrett's. The key is to ensure that future generations align with the mission of the organization and are committed to carrying forward the philanthropic vision. "My family and I are direct beneficiaries of the American Dream and want to preserve that for others. We like to think about our family foundation as a way to perpetuate values and pass them on to the next generation."

"At the Roe Retreat, I was inspired when I heard about Durable Freedom Infrastructure. While I have concerns about what happens at the federal level of government, at the state level, that's something within our control. We can have a defensible position to push back, execute legislation, and drive initiatives that support our civil liberties. I've been growing my support of SPN and what it's doing to help build Durable Freedom Infrastructure in the states, especially for those of us in blue states like California. We're not a lost cause. We can come back."

 Dale Okuno, SPN Supporter and Board Member of the California Policy Center

#### SPOTLIGHT

# **Building Durable Freedom Infrastructure** in the States

Network CEOs Joe Lehman (Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Michigan), Matt Brouillette (Commonwealth Partners, Pennsylvania), and John Hood (SPN Board Member and cofounder of the John Locke Foundation, North Carolina) shared

the history of Durable Freedom Infrastructure, and how their organizations, together with committed donors, delivered critical solutions that improved and expanded education freedom, energy independence, and economic opportunity. Despite the range of each state's political environment, every organization leveraged different components of Durable Freedom Infrastructure to drive real results. Each Network leader also noted the support that SPN, in partnership with generous donors, gave to their organizations through targeted investments, strategic guidance, and coalition building.









# The Network in the News

Even with an eventful year for national political news, 2024 provided many opportunities to drive home our message of the importance of federalism in solving some of the nation's greatest challenges. This became especially evident in times of crisis, like the devastation of Hurricane Helene and the subsequent policy response. Our Network has been at the forefront of these critical discussions, underscoring how state and local decision-making leads to more responsive, effective governance—ensuring that policies are tailored to the unique needs of communities rather than dictated by a one-size-fits-all federal approach.







THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

NATIONAL REVIEW











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### SPN Leadership

#### BOARD

Lawson Bader (Chairman), DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund
George Coates, Commonwealth Foundation
John Hood (Vice Chairman), John William Pope Foundation
Nicole Hoplin, Hoplin-Jackson Charitable Advisors
Adam Meyerson, Stand Together
Tracie J. Sharp (President), State Policy Network
Stanford D. Swim (Treasurer), Bill of Rights Institute
Carrie Tynan (Secretary), Adolph Coors Foundation
Bridgett G. Wagner, The Heritage Foundation

#### **LEADERSHIP TEAM**



**Tracie Sharp** *President and CEO* 



**Tony Woodlief**Senior Executive Vice
President and Senior
Fellow, Center for Practical
Federalism



**Rebecca Painter** *Senior Vice President* 



Emily McCalister
Executive Vice
President



**Todd Davidson** Vice President of Programs



Brooke Medina
Vice President
of Communications

### SPN Financials

■ State Policy Network is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by the generosity of our dedicated supporters. We do not receive any government funds for our activities and services. SPN is funded by individuals, foundations, corporate entities, membership fees, and events.

# SPN 2024 Assets and Liabilities

#### **ASSETS**

Cash and Equivalents: \$4,824,444

Investments: \$15,131,917

Accounts Receivable: \$2,872,829

Prepaid Expenses: \$405,281

Fixed Assets, Net: \$1,342,380

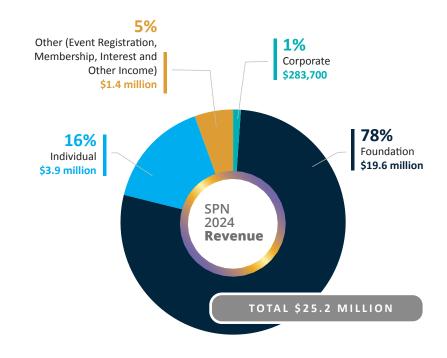
Total Assets: \$24,576,851

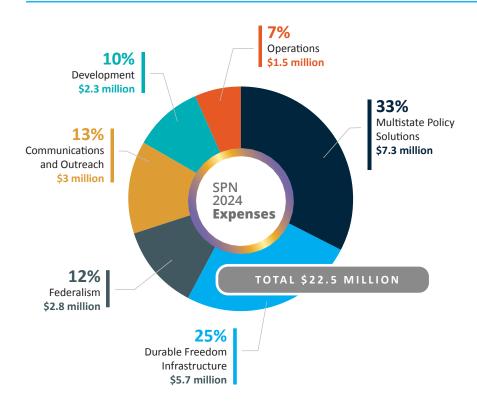
#### LIABILITIES

Liabilities: \$1,781,419

Net Assets: \$22,795,432

Total Liabilities and Net Assets: \$24,576,851





### Ways to Give



#### By Mail

Checks should be made out to State Policy Network and sent to: Attn: Tracie Sharp State Policy Network 1500 Wilson Blvd, Suite 600 Arlington, VA 22209



#### Online

Visit spn.org/donate to make a contribution via credit card on our secure donation page. If you would like to arrange a recurring donation by mail, please contact Zack Urevig <a href="mailto:zurevig@spn.org">zurevig@spn.org</a>.



#### **Wire Transfer or Appreciated Stock**

If you wish to donate via Wire Transfer or Appreciated Stock, please contact Zack Urevig <a href="mailto:zurevig@spn.org">zurevig@spn.org</a> to let us know that you would like to make a gift.



#### Leave a Legacy

If you are interested in more information on how you can include State Policy Network in your will—or would like to explore other legacy giving options and **become charter member of the Thomas Roe Legacy Society**—please visit spn.org/legacy or contact Christina Pajak at 612-239-2801 or legacy@spn.org.



Thanks to the generosity of the Roe Family, we have a special matching gift opportunity. If you share with State Policy Network that you plan to make a legacy gift to SPN, the Roe Foundation will contribute an additional \$5,000 to SPN (up to \$250,000).



# **Stay Connected**

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