

SPN Bob Williams Awards for Outstanding Policy Achievement

2025 Nomination Scoring Guide

This scoring guide is meant to serve as an internal tool for our finalist selection committee, with recommendations for what to pay attention to when rating nominations. We are also publishing this rubric to assist with writing nominations. Please direct any questions about the scoring guide, or the finalist selection process, to Taylor Anderson (tanderson@spn.org)

Universal Notes:

- Did this project demonstrate “outsized impact” or “Return on Investment” relative to the project cost and size of the organization?
- Did this project tier up to the Network’s goals of Earning Lasting Wins, Building Influence, and driving the national conversation on federalism?
- Was this project innovative?
- Was this project replicable for other Network groups?
- Did this project make future wins for other groups more achievable?

Best Issue Campaign:

- Did the project demonstrate strategic thinking and serve to advance the other efforts of the organization and the Network? Did it demonstrate strong organizational alignment?
- Did the project demonstrate exemplary or innovative outreach tactics, and did those tactics achieve the desired results?
- Did the project identify the right target audience for achieving its goals, and was that target audience adequately reached?

Biggest Home State Win:

- Was the victory significant for advancing future reforms, defending against government excesses, or otherwise driving forward the Network’s and nominee’s visions?
- Was the nominating organization primarily responsible for the win, or was their role crucial to its eventual success?
- Did the organization demonstrate strong internal alignment and utilize multiple capacities to achieve this win?
- Keep in Mind: Biggest Home State Win should recognize wins that are relatively isolated to a single state - even if the win is replicable for others. Wins that you feel qualify for the Biggest Win for Freedom can be moved into that category, or vice versa, as appropriate.

Biggest Win for Freedom:

- Was the victory significant for advancing future reforms, defending against government excesses, or otherwise driving forward the Network’s and nominee’s visions?
- Was the nominating organization primarily responsible for the win, or was their role crucial to its eventual success?
- Did the organization demonstrate strong internal alignment and utilize multiple capacities to achieve this win?
- Keep in Mind: Biggest Win for Freedom should recognize wins that span multiple states, or that have such a seismic effect on their state that they are guaranteed to affect policymaking in other

states or at the federal level. Wins that you feel qualify for the Biggest Home State Win can be moved into that category, or vice versa, as appropriate.

Most Influential Research:

- Was the research innovative, new, or otherwise likely to change any existing narratives?
- Was the research timely and relevant?
- Did the research influence discussion in a measurable way?

Best State Based Litigation: *As you score these nominations, feel free to direct any and all questions to Taylor Anderson. If necessary, there are some legal experts in the Network who could weigh in on the merits & impacts of a submission if you're uncertain about something.*

Questions to keep in mind:

- Was the case on an issue of state or local importance (i.e., was it non-federal)?
- Was the nominating organization primarily responsible for the outcome of the case?
- Did the case make future wins for the Network more likely?

Other things to keep in mind:

- Consider the value of hard-to-message cases when appraising nominations. For instance, a case related to *Chevron* deference would be highly technical and hard to message to the public, but would have a massive impact on the American institutions of separation of powers and checks-and-balances.
- Litigation does not have to result in a “legal victory” to be considered for the award. For example, when the Institute for Justice lost the *Kelo* case they created national awareness of the problems with eminent domain laws, which led to changes to many state eminent domain laws across the country.
- Applicants are allowed to be clients of a litigator, or to have contracted out with a litigator. They do not have to have a litigator on staff, but they do need to be primarily responsible for the outcomes of the case and to have played a major role in the win.
- National litigators and large shops are more than welcome to apply, so long as their case is state or locally focused. They will be appraised by the same standard as state think tanks and their affiliated litigation shops.
- Any sort of legal effort will qualify for the award in the inaugural year, as we work to refine our criteria for the type of litigative work we’re looking to reward. This means work types could range wildly, so the main thing to keep in mind is not disqualifying some types of work, but the role the nominee played in the eventual case outcome.