



State Solutions. National Impact.

FALL 2020



Leading in Crisis

The Network quickly pivoted in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic to offer solutions when Americans needed them most. Now, they are paving the way for a brighter path forward.



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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Dear Friends,

There is no doubt 2020 is asking hard questions of us all. Over the last several months, we have come face to face with threats to our lives, liberties, and happiness in unimaginable ways. We are each experiencing this national moment in our own way, with emotions ranging from anger and grief to confusion and fear for the future of our nation.

America has undergone enormous moments of upheaval before—several recessions, riots, natural disasters, 9/11 attacks, and decades of subsequent war. We have endured by not allowing this grief to turn into cynicism.

Instead, we must be bold in our efforts to pave a brighter path forward. We must keep fighting back against harmful policies made today that could linger on for decades. We must also acknowledge that **despite the headlines, there are good things happening in the country to help others, thanks to you.** Because of your partnership, this Network is proof of that every day.

This Network quickly advanced solutions that saved lives in the early days of the pandemic, enacting healthcare reforms in over 24 states. They fought to protect American civil liberties and push back against government overreach. They helped revitalize state economies and enact economic reforms in at least 14 states within the first two months of the crisis. Now, they are pushing to get these solutions in place permanently and prevent looming budget disasters.

This Network of 64 state think tanks was ready to help Americans in their greatest time of need, armed with over 100 solutions to ensure Americans had access to healthcare, children continued their education, and families had opportunities to financially recover. But you and I both know our work is far from done.

Today, more than ever, our nation needs the kind of leadership and solutions this Network is uniquely positioned to provide.

This spring, we hosted Congressman Gary Palmer for a talk with the Network (Palmer founded our Alabama affiliate, the Alabama Policy Institute, before taking office). He said: *"History is being made. Are we going to be a part of it or miss it? All I would say to people in the movement—don't miss this. **This will demand more of us than we've done before, but don't miss it.**"*

Your partnership means that together, we can make sure freedom and opportunity are not lost as we chart a better path forward for Americans in the hard days ahead.

Tracie Sharp





Leading in Crisis

Thanks to your investment in state solutions, State Policy Network and our partners in every state were ready to rise to the challenge and have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of people in their communities.

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic have been profound and personal. Depending on who you are or where you live, it has affected you in different ways. Perhaps you know someone who has tragically died, or you or a loved one have lost a source of income. Maybe you have been distanced from loved ones, your kids are home from school, or your day-to-day freedoms have been stripped away. There's no question that the events of the last few months have taken a toll on all of us.

Very quickly, people looked to their state leaders for solutions. A March poll in *The Wall Street Journal* told us that trust in state and local governments superseded federal bureaucrats in Washington, DC. And who did state policymakers look to for solutions? The leaders in the State Policy Network, thanks to the generosity of philanthropists like you.

Because of the investment of our supporters over the last 28 years, this Network entered the crisis in a position of strength, ready to fight for a better way forward.

**Note: The data represented in this story are as of June 2020 and are subject to change. Visit spn.org for the latest news.*



100+

Number of solutions state think tanks have proposed to ensure Americans have access to healthcare, students are educated, and families and workers can financially recover.



58

Number of state think tanks across the country that have published recommendations for leaders in their states.

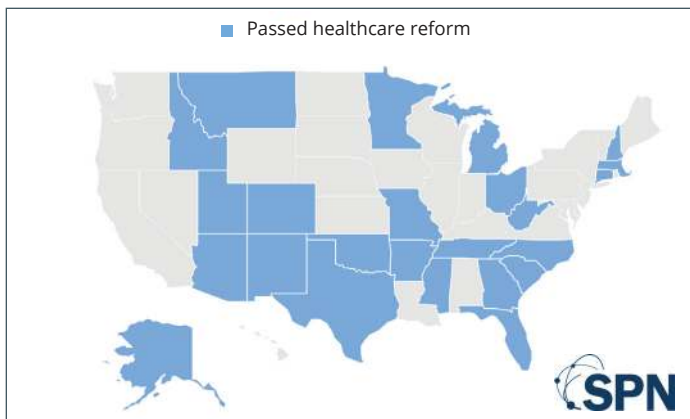


32

Number of state think tanks that created comprehensive guides to help their states recover.

Pivoting to Address the Pandemic

One of the biggest values SPN offers the freedom movement is our ability to bring people together to strengthen their efforts and accelerate solutions. In difficult times, it's the power



States that passed healthcare reform based on state think tank recommendations.

of connectedness that can help organizations collaborate, innovate, and feel empowered by the fact that we are all in this together.

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, SPN pivoted our 2020 plans and organized over 67 coronavirus-related virtual gatherings, bringing together an average of 192 Network leaders each week. The trainings covered a wide range of topics, including fundraising in crisis, effective messaging, budgeting and operations, and running virtual events. These trainings dove right into the immediate challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Along with trainings, SPN hosted targeted crisis strategy sessions to help state think tanks adjust their plans and prioritize the most important opportunities. We also hosted our well-established peer groups of state think tank staff in specialized roles so they could continue coming together to discuss mutual challenges and opportunities. And through our digital channels, we published dozens of public-facing and member-only resources to support the Network.

"Myself and other staffers have been logging into all of SPN's webinars and the many wonderful lifelines you guys keep throwing us," said John Tsarpalas, president of the Nevada Policy Research Institute.

Leading Nationwide Healthcare Reform

For years, SPN has brought together experts across the country to accelerate policy reform from state to state. Our longest-running cohort of experts, the Healthcare Working Group, was ready with market-based solutions to healthcare once the coronavirus pandemic took hold.

Within days, they created a list of recommendations that states could immediately use to expand healthcare access—solutions such as allowing doctors to work across state lines,



At least 40 states have taken executive action to expand healthcare access since the pandemic took hold.

cutting red tape that limits the supply of hospital beds, and allowing people to use telemedicine for non-emergency care.

In a few short weeks, 24 states passed healthcare solutions based on recommendations from state think tanks in the Network. Even liberal governors, like Governor Gretchen Whitmer, took up reforms put forth by the Network (the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, in particular). Forty states took executive action to expand healthcare access. Now, all 50 states have enacted some form of market-based healthcare reform.

Traditionally, these types of reforms take years to pass. With the pandemic, and the quick, solution-focused response from the Network, these reforms took days. Now, the priority is ensuring these solutions remain in place after the pandemic since market-based healthcare reforms can improve healthcare quality and access more effectively than a nationalized healthcare system.

Getting People Back to Work and Revitalizing State Economies

The pandemic and mandated shutdowns meant that millions of Americans were out of work overnight and businesses closed their doors. The economic effects are still being felt today, and state leaders are still struggling to revitalize their economies and create job opportunities.

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, at least 14 states passed economic reforms based on recommendations from state think tanks. Early on, governors looked to state think tanks for immediate solutions. For example, Tennessee's governor reached out to the Beacon Center for a list of recommendations. Of the 27 items Beacon proposed, 12 have been adopted. In particular, Beacon's recommendations led Tennessee to remove the labels of "essential" and "nonessential" on businesses and instead allow businesses to open as long as they followed CDC guidelines.

In Ohio, the governor took The Buckeye Institute's recommendations to implement a hiring freeze and spending cuts for government services not connected to the virus. The Idaho Freedom Foundation suggested that \$200 million in CARES Act funds be directed to property tax relief, which the governor adopted in June.

Other Network affiliates, like the Commonwealth Foundation, served as important resources for businesses. Commonwealth worked directly with business owners in their communities to help them reopen safely. Their support enabled hundreds of people to get their jobs back and made it possible for many others to receive answers from government agencies that were otherwise unresponsive.

In one case, the Pennsylvania Governor's order to shut down construction meant that an elderly couple waiting on a new home in a retirement community didn't have anywhere to live. In another case, the order shut down a payroll business that paid healthcare workers.



In Pennsylvania, the governor halted construction of new homes in a retirement community, leaving senior citizens, the most vulnerable to the virus, unable to move into their new home during the pandemic.

"This is why it's such a problem that a handful of bureaucrats dreamed up this scheme and shut down parts of the economy without a good strategy and without transparency," said said Charles Mitchell, CEO of Commonwealth Foundation in an interview on SPN's "America at Its Best" show. "And it's been deeply destructive."

Now, as states look for solutions to growing budget issues, the Network has put forth comprehensive budget plans tailored to each state's unique environment. These plans are getting the attention of top state and federal lawmakers. As states face tough decisions on how to balance their budgets, they are expected to take up more of the Network's economic and budget solutions in upcoming legislative sessions.

Upholding American Civil Liberties

As policymakers impose reforms to address the pandemic,



Jackie Taylor and Linda Jo Hisel of Linn County reached out to Kansas Justice Institute because they felt an order made by local county officials was in direct violation of their Fourth Amendment rights.

Americans are experiencing significant violations of their civil liberties that could have long-term consequences for our freedoms.

For years, this Network has understood that battles against government overreach often take place in the courts. Network groups have ramped up their litigation capabilities and are taking on more cases to protect Americans from abuses of power during the pandemic.

Several of these litigation efforts are challenging governors who imposed sweeping shutdowns during the pandemic. For example, the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty filed an amicus brief on the extension of the governor's "safer at home" order, which resulted in the order getting struck down by the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Other state think tanks have taken up court cases on behalf of business owners and patrons who are facing infringements on their freedoms. Thanks to the Kansas Justice Institute, residents in Linn County defeated a government order requiring businesses to gather personally identifying information from anyone who enters—and hand it over on demand. The new order allows for businesses to request a warrant before certain records are disclosed.

"We are grateful to the two Linn County business owners, Jackie and Linda Jo, who were willing to take a stand and reached out to us for help," said Ellen Hathaway, communications director at the Kansas Policy Institute. "While safety precautions are necessary during a pandemic, we must keep our liberties intact. It's important to push back when the government oversteps, as they did in Linn County."

When it comes to our personal information and the government's pandemic response, Network leaders have been at the forefront of ensuring Americans' data privacy is respected. In particular, the Libertas Institute passed comprehensive drone reform in Utah several years ago, and this proactive solution has protected Americans from abuses of data collection during

the pandemic. Libertas also passed the nation's first digital privacy law in 2019—a victory for which Libertas earned SPN's Bob Williams Award for Outstanding Policy Achievement. Now, they are working to ensure that any pandemic-related surveillance or data collection is subject to oversight and accountability.

Bringing State Voices to Federal Policy

Today, even governors like Andrew Cuomo are reminding us that “the states created the federal government, not the other way around.” Thanks to your support, SPN's federal outreach program has been a critical resource to the federal government, connecting decision makers in DC with Network leaders who have on-the-ground intel and state-based solutions. Network experts have been in contact with top officials from the administration almost daily since the crisis began, and their advice on key issues like the economy, healthcare, and education has led to federal policies that devolve power to the states.

For example, Network leaders joined forces to ensure the best use of the CARES Act money issued to the states. The John Locke Foundation in North Carolina and the Platte Institute in Nebraska spearheaded a coalition of 29 state think tanks and sent a letter to Congress, with the help of SPN's federal outreach program, asking for flexibility in how state and local governments could spend these federal relief funds. With more latitude, states could use the money in the most efficient way to fill budget gaps. The letter caught the

attention of federal lawmakers, and bipartisan legislation was introduced to give state and local governments this much-needed flexibility.

“It required a dynamic Network of state-based leaders to drive the policy because not every state is the same. Nebraska has different budget priorities than New York does. And this flexibility is critically important as we move forward and navigate through this landscape,” said Jim Vokal, CEO of the Platte Institute.

The Fight Continues

Thanks to you, this Network was ready and able to provide solutions to the coronavirus pandemic, and we continue to be a critical resource to policymakers in the hard days ahead. While you may not hear it in the news, trust that there are good things going on across the country to help people, thanks to your partnership and the efforts of this Network.

SPN Board Member Adam Meyerson Put it Best:

“America at its best emerges right now. We see Americans taking charge as concerned citizens, such as neighbors helping neighbors, especially when expected government help is too slow to alleviate suffering. There are so many people in communities working together to find creative solutions. In crises of the past, Americans have risen to the challenge.”

Beyond the data points: Understanding the human impact of the pandemic and government's response

It was 2:30 on an April afternoon in Richmond, Illinois, and Katie Anderson was turning on the television to listen to the governor's latest announcement. For Katie, there was more at stake than a simple update. She was tuning in to find out if she could keep her business running one more day.

Anderson is a fourth-generation candymaker and manager of Anderson's Candy Shop in Richmond, Illinois. The shop has survived the Great Depression, World War II, the Great Recession, and many other moments of uncertainty during its 100 years of existence. But that day, as Katie turned on the television, she wondered whether the shop had finally encountered the crisis that would close its doors permanently: the coronavirus pandemic.

Although it can be tempting to fixate on the numbers, the impact of the pandemic and the government's response has been deeply personal, taking a toll on real people across the country. With both lives and livelihoods at stake, the nation has been divided when it comes to balancing the economy and controlling the virus. Most people are not certain about the best course for the country, and they struggle to know who they can trust.

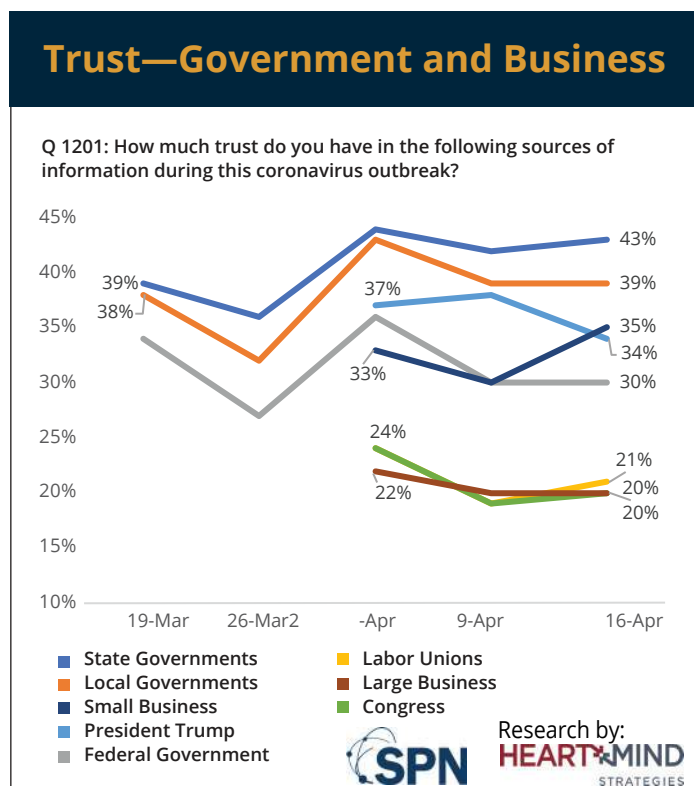
Thanks to you, SPN quickly stepped in to learn more about how the public's attitudes were changing as the crisis unfolded. Partnering with a leading market research firm, SPN is conducting an ongoing messaging project to track Americans' reactions and concerns in the wake of the pandemic.

Through your support, SPN is sharing the findings with state think tanks so they can follow changes in American attitudes and develop compassionate, compelling messages that will help policymakers and the public see the benefits of their policy ideas. Armed with these insights, state think tanks have pivoted their communications strategies to highlight the human impact of the pandemic and help state leaders craft policies that will meet local needs and restore hope for workers, families, and communities.

Understanding Americans' Attitudes Toward the Pandemic

SPN's weekly polling has provided the Network with a resource for understanding concerns and values related to the pandemic. Here are a few key findings shaping the Network's response:

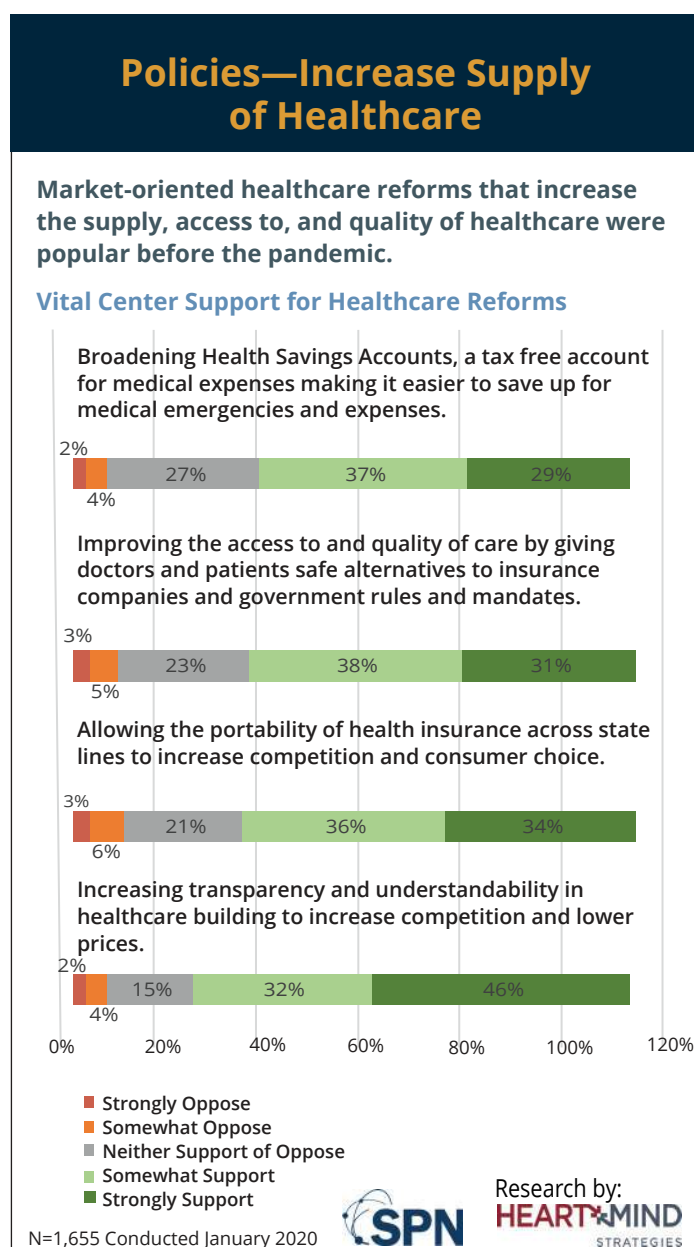
1. People trust their states most to solve problems in the crisis. While overall trust in institutions is modest, many Americans have indicated greater trust in state, city, and local governments when it comes to crisis response and reopening decisions. Local government is not immune to poor decision-making, but when decisions are made closer to home, there is a better chance those decisions will truly meet people's



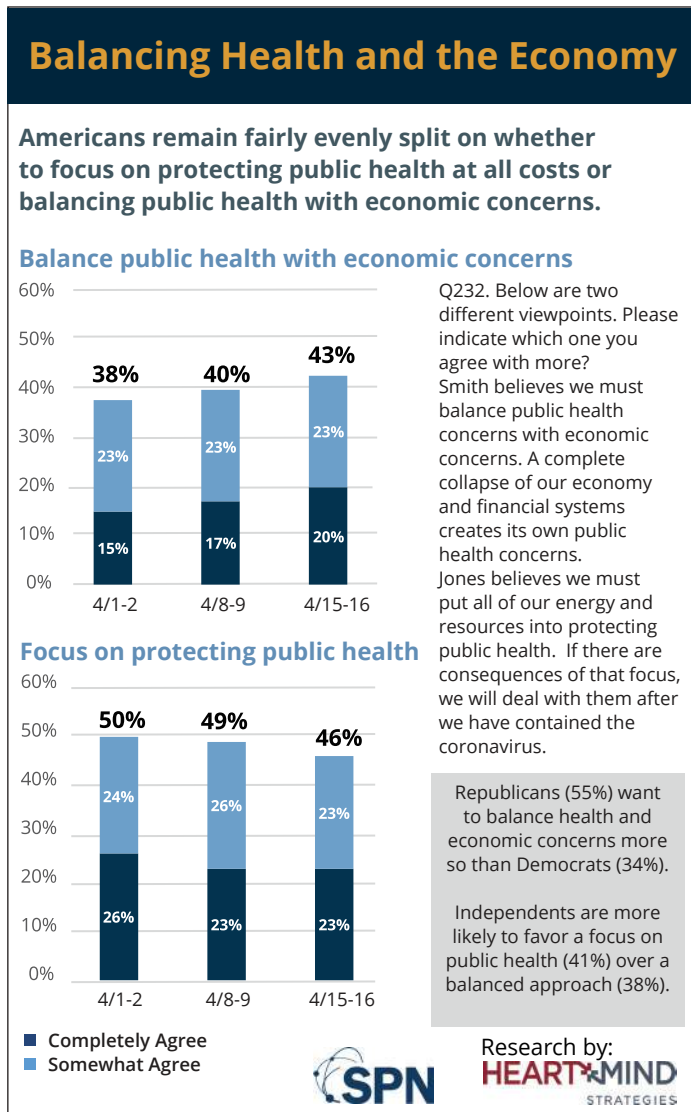
needs and be held accountable. As members of their communities, state think tanks have a unique and critical opportunity to bring their ideas to the table and work alongside state and local leaders to develop policy solutions.

2. Americans are hungry for more of the Network's health-care solutions. SPN's polling shows that, even before the pandemic, there was growing support for market-oriented reforms that improve the quality of healthcare and increase healthcare supply and access. Now that Americans have seen the benefit of our healthcare recommendations throughout the pandemic, states have a window of opportunity to take up more of the Network's solutions.

3. Americans are divided when it comes to reopening. The country is evenly divided over the question of reopening or remaining closed, and it is split along party lines with Republi-



cans more likely to want to reopen and Democrats more likely to want to keep government-mandated shutdowns. Republicans (55%) want to balance health and economic concerns more so than Democrats (34%) who want to focus on health at all costs. Those in urban areas are more likely to want to remain closed than in less populated areas. People see the pandemic as something that's driving us apart rather than bringing us together.



For the Network, this divide represents a unique opportunity to build trust with and work alongside policymakers and communities on solutions that will empower states to bring people together and find the best reopening path for their citizens.

Using the Power of Storytelling to Encourage States to Move Forward

As state think tanks are listening to Americans' concerns, they are sharing powerful stories of how people are struggling with the changes and uncertainties induced by the pandemic

and mandated shutdowns. By telling these stories, state think tanks have helped policymakers and the public understand the consequences of economic lockdowns and have opened conversations about solutions for revitalizing state economies.

Illinois: Supporting Small Businesses

Let's revisit Richmond, Illinois, and Katie Anderson. Illinois' mandated economic shutdown threatened Katie's business in a way that it had never before been tested.

"This is different from the Great Recession and looks like it could be worse for us in many ways," Katie said. "During the recession, we had several months to adjust to the downturn. This has been so sudden, it is threatening our business in a much different way."



Katie Anderson in her candy shop.

Katie's saving grace was the Illinois Policy Institute. Recognizing the toll of the shutdowns on local businesses and people, the Institute began telling stories of business owners and their struggles to stay open. The Institute highlighted Katie's story through their online communities, and through this act of support, Katie generated enough sales to keep her business alive.

Louisiana: Capturing the Struggles of Small Business Owners

The Pelican Institute traveled across Louisiana to learn how shutdowns were impacting the people of their state. In town after town, they encountered the same challenge: Business owners had been forced to close, lay off employees, and face the prospect that their dreams and livelihoods might not survive.

To share these personal stories far and wide, Pelican launched a new video series, Faces of the Shutdown. They shared the story of gym owners Jarett and Kallie Landry who had to lay off all 12 of their employees. They featured Karlos Knott, owner of Bayou Tech Brewing, who had to cut 15 of his employees. And Pelican called attention to the consequences related to unemployment benefits by telling the story of Jose Villeda, owner of



Jose Villeda, owner of JLV Construction

JLV Construction, who lost employees because they chose to receive unemployment benefits rather than continue to work for him.

North Carolina: Highlighting Challenges for Local Restaurants

John Locke Foundation shared the impact on a particularly beloved industry and community gathering space: the local restaurant scene. When North Carolina's shutdown order went into effect, restaurant owners faced a series of difficult choices: How would they be able to pay their employees? How would they continue serving their communities through food and hospitality? How would they survive themselves in an industry where living paycheck-to-paycheck is so often the norm?

The Foundation featured social media posts from several North Carolina restaurants to amplify the voices of these restaurant owners and paint the true picture of the heartbreaking decisions they faced.

Heirloom Brewshop: "Decisions like this are excruciating for independently-owned small businesses to make—balancing social and medical with fiduciary responsibility for a team that depends on us to continue living."

Second Empire: "We miss everyone, especially our amazing staff. As you know, these are difficult and trying times. Since the governor made the decision to close all restaurants and bars, we made the heartfelt decision to lay off our staff. We all look forward to the day when we can open our doors to you again."

Linus & Pepper's Sandwich Shop: "One of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my life is commit to the decisions that we had to make today. Decisions we had to make within a swift few hours so that we could get folks to the front of the assistance line as quickly as possible. Like almost all of our friends in the industry, we were forced to shutter our doors and inform our work family that we wouldn't be able to employ them for the foreseeable future. That's a very hard thing

to swallow when each one of those people's livelihood literally depends on day-to-day operations. Living paycheck to paycheck is not always a choice but, unfortunately, is 100% a reality."

Tra'Li Irish Pub: The Foundation also called attention to the heartbreaking story of a restaurant that was not able to survive. After the governor's shutdown order, Tra'Li Irish Pub in Morrisville offered takeout to try and get by. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough. A pub is not designed for takeout—it's a gathering place for the community. On May 7, 2020, Tra'Li closed their doors for good after issuing this statement: "Having carefully considered the situation after the COVID-19 shutdown order, we have taken a difficult yet unavoidable decision to permanently close the doors of Tra'Li Irish Pub at Grace Park, Morrisville."

Texas: Businesses Pivot to Help Community

Through its new video series, Recovery Texas, Texas Public Policy Foundation shared inspiring stories of how businesses have stepped up to help fellow Texans through the crisis.

TPPF profiled Austin's Couch Potatoes, a local furniture company, that quickly pivoted its operations to meet the demand for face masks. In a serendipitous turn of events, Austin's Couch Potatoes discovered that the material they had used for several furniture pieces was the same material used for medical-grade



Staff of Austin's Couch Potatoes

surgical masks. They had two large rolls of it in the factory and immediately got to work designing and producing masks for frontline workers in central Texas.

Thanks to the company's quick thinking and action, masks made it into the hands of hundreds of frontline workers—from pediatricians to nurses to school employees handing out lunches to kids.

"This is what small business does," said Brian Morgan of Austin's Couch Potatoes. "We're nimble. We can help the community. We can change design at the flip of a dime. We can use the resources that we've been given because we've had to start from nothing. We've had to learn different processes, and we can utilize all those experiences to help our community."

ALABAMA

ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE • alabamapolicy.org

The **Alabama Policy Institute** has invested its resources in promoting the RESTORE Alabama Plan (Responsible and Efficient Solutions to Open and Revive the Economy). The RESTORE Alabama Plan asks Governor Ivey to call a special session of the Alabama Legislature to address six key issues that cannot wait until the 2021 regular session: 1) tort reform against frivolous coronavirus-related lawsuits; 2) the shift of some emergency responsibilities from the governor to the Legislature; 3) the use of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds for expanded broadband access; 4) the continued suspension of certificate-of-need and occupational licensing regulations for healthcare providers; 5) the renewal of the Alabama Jobs Act; and 6) increased school choice for students stuck in failing schools. In an API-commissioned poll, more than 70 percent of Alabamians support the governor calling a special session to address the effects of the coronavirus. Each issue of the RESTORE Alabama Plan was polled as well, and all six issues received the support of two-thirds of respondents or more.



ALASKA

ALASKA POLICY FORUM • alaskapolicyforum.org

Alaska Policy Forum worked with a local polling company to design and administer an opinion survey to discover Alaskan's thoughts on the coronavirus, the economy, low oil prices, and much more. APF learned 42 percent of Alaskans have faced financial hardship due to the coronavirus. Twenty-three percent have considered moving out of state, and 10 percent of businesses expect to close or have already closed permanently. Fifty-eight percent of Alaskans want the health mandates removed, yet 55 percent are still concerned that someone in their households might catch COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, 69 percent think the economy is not doing well. Sixty-seven percent believe budget cuts must be made to address the state's deficit. Nearly all Alaskans—87 percent—think that state legislators need to get back to work on non-virus-related policy. APF shared these results with policymakers, candidates, and community leaders.



ARIZONA

GOLDWATER INSTITUTE • goldwaterinstitute.org

The **Goldwater Institute** has influenced Arizona Governor Doug Ducey's executive orders to address the coronavirus crisis. These orders include suspending all continuing education requirements for occupational licensing boards in the state for a period of six months if those requirements could not be satisfied by remote or online means. They also allow occupational licensing boards to waive application licensing fees, waive a scope-of-practice limitation on Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) in the Medicare program, allow pharmacists to do emergency refills and make hand sanitizer, expand the use of telemedicine in the state's Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, enable facilities to expand patient capacity, and add liability protections for healthcare workers coming into the state to assist with the healthcare crisis. The Institute has also worked with SPN allies nationwide to break down barriers to work. Eleven state legislatures have passed bills based on the Goldwater Institute's universal recognition for occupational licensure law, which makes it easier for skilled professionals to obtain an occupational license when they relocate to another state.





ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

In 2015, the **Arkansas Policy Foundation** launched an Efficiency Project with cooperation from Governor Asa Hutchinson's administration. The project identified 184 cost-saving initiatives underway at Arkansas state departments. Five years later, savings from ongoing efficiency initiatives in Arkansas state government exceed \$60 million, according to public records. A recent report produced for state policymakers shows Governor Hutchinson's administration saved an estimated \$26.7 million from his overhaul of executive branch agencies, including "reducing personnel by 310 positions through attrition." Thanks to APF, Arkansas residents are seeing less wasteful spending by their state government.



CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER • californiapolicycenter.org

California Policy Center is putting the pieces into place to turn the COVID-19 fiscal crisis into an unprecedented opportunity for California. With evaporating sales tax revenue, California will be forced to reform the massively underfunded public employee pension system. Reform is possible through Chapter 9 bankruptcy. In bankruptcy, federal judges have showed a willingness to reopen collective bargaining agreements. The mere threat of declaring municipal bankruptcy is sometimes enough to get public-sector union negotiators back to the bargaining table. With guidance from a CPC-led coalition of experts in finance, law, and actuarial analysis, local government officials just might be able to transform their relationships with the powerful unions that run California.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (CALIFORNIA) • freedomfoundation.com

In June, **Freedom Foundation (California)**'s legal team filed yet another lawsuit against Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1000 for forging the signature of a public employee in order to pilfer dues money out of taxpayer-funded paychecks. The latest California forgery lawsuit brings the total California forgery cases to four (a fifth that settled), and the total number of Freedom Foundation forgery lawsuits to more than a dozen up and down the West Coast. The Freedom Foundation is also weighing legal action against government overreach in the name of the pandemic. In addition, Freedom Foundation sent tens of thousands of emails and mail to government employees, including those on furlough. The outreach resulted in notably high rates of union opt outs, including a one-day high of 59 opt outs from SEIU 1000 on June 22, 2020, and a seven-day high of 257 opt outs from the same SEIU 1000 between June 18-25, 2020.



PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • pacificresearch.org

Pacific Research Institute Senior Fellow in Healthcare Studies, Dr. Henry Miller, has been in high demand for his expertise on scientific and medical issues, including regulatory reform and vaccination. Dr. Miller is the former founding director of the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Biotechnology and has conducted vital research on genetic engineering and emerging viral diseases. As PRI's "Single-Payer Poll Watch" has documented, support for single-payer healthcare has been rising since the start of the pandemic. PRI President and CEO Sally C. Pipes has been educating the American people through numerous op-eds and online speeches that socialized medicine would make America less able to respond quickly to future pandemics. In addition, PRI held a webinar that analyzed how entrepreneurship may prove the key to California's economic recovery. Another webinar featured PRI's Lance Izumi and an expert panel providing practical information for parents to help educate their kids at home.

COLORADO

INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE • i2i.org

On June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court denied certiorari petitions in all 11 Second Amendment cases. This bodes ill for the future of the United States. Justice Thomas wrote a dissent and cited the **Independence Institute's** Dave Kopel's research on the right to arms litigation. Both Kopel and a fellow Institute expert, Rob Natelson, have made contributions to the subject of English legal history. While many people do not call think tanks asking for serious research into seventeenth century English law, one of the purposes of a think tank is to dig into topics that might not seem immediately relevant. The kind of originalist research Natelson and Kopel conduct does show up on the big stage. Natelson's scholarship has been cited in six Supreme Court cases, and Justice Thomas's dissent is the first Supreme Court to cite Kopel's scholarship.



CONNECTICUT

YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • yankeeinstitute.org

The **Yankee Institute for Public Policy** was the first organization in Connecticut to offer concrete policy proposals in response to the coronavirus. Four of Yankee's proposals quickly became executive orders. First, the governor implemented a hold-harmless unemployment tax provision for small businesses forced to lay off employees during the pandemic. Normally, when businesses let go of employees, they have to pay more in state unemployment taxes. But during this crisis, businesses were forced to close and lay off employees. The temporary hold on this tax increase eased the financial burden on business owners and prevented businesses from closing permanently. Second, the governor waived occupational licensing requirements and filing fees for an extended range of services. An occupational license is essentially a permission slip from the government to work. Easing these regulations helped Connecticut citizens get back to work more quickly. Removing annual licensing renewals helped businesses trying to reopen or continue operating during this difficult time. Third, at Yankee's recommendation, the governor convened a task force, including members representing diverse sectors of the economy, to prepare for Connecticut's reopening. Finally, the governor temporarily eliminated the 10-cent plastic bag tax.



DELAWARE

CAESAR RODNEY INSTITUTE • caesarrodney.org

To ensure Delaware's healthcare system was prepared to take on the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, the **Caesar Rodney Institute** sent a letter to Governor Carney, asking him to suspend certificate-of-need (CON) laws. These laws require healthcare providers to get permission from a regulatory body and prove the community needs the planned services. This anti-competitive barrier reduces the supply of healthcare resources and diminishes the quality of care provided at hospitals. Additionally, in order to stay connected and engaged with CRI members and supporters during these uncertain times, CRI launched "CRI Virtual Policy Discussions," a series of weekly discussions on policy issues related to the coronavirus pandemic.





FLORIDA

FOUNDATION FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY • thefga.org

Congress nearly tripled average unemployment benefits through its response to the pandemic and resulting economic challenges. This created a situation where some workers are paid more not to work. The **Foundation for Government Accountability** has been raising awareness on how extended and boosted unemployment benefits will hinder America's economic recovery unless people are encouraged to return to work. FGA released a study that highlighted how unemployment now pays better than work for 68 percent of Americans. In another study, FGA shared stories of small businesses across the country whose employees are asking to be laid off to receive the unemployment bonus instead of asking to return to work.

JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • jamesmadison.org

As Florida addresses the fallout from the coronavirus, the **James Madison Institute** noted effective policy has never been more important to Florida and the country. JMI launched a video series, "Policy Gone Viral," to discuss how Florida is handling the coronavirus and economic recovery. JMI has released 21 episodes with state elected officials, agency heads, policy experts, and more. The JMI team noted one of their favorite parts about working at the organization is being on the road and engaging with donors, hosting intimate events, and connecting with campus representatives across the state. To see and hear from members during this unprecedented time, JMI launched a virtual Zoom meeting series called "My Town, Our State." JMI looks forward to when they can engage in person with their members and donors, but until then, they will continue to use the technology of the day to connect with people around the state.

GEORGIA

GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • georgiaopportunity.org

As unemployment numbers continue to rise, there is a need to move people into work quickly. To facilitate this, the **Georgia Center for Opportunity** restructured its "Hiring Well, Doing Good" platform to connect people looking for work with local businesses that are hiring. Hiring Well, Doing Good is a platform that helps communities leverage nonprofit services and businesses to get people into long-term gainful employment. It is the power of civil society in action. GCO has also been busy advancing education opportunity in Georgia. The organization spent a large part of the special legislative session working with legislators on a special needs school choice bill. In June, GCO hosted former Governor Jeb Bush for an in-depth discussion on the future of education and how to address issues like injustice and opportunity through education. These discussions and stories from communities highlight the value of alternative education in low-income areas. GCO plans to see movement on education in the next legislative session.

GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • georgiapolicy.org

After a lengthy pandemic-related intermission and state shutdown, the Georgia General Assembly ended its 2020 session, and state government braced for budget cuts. Governor Brian Kemp, having initially ordered state agencies to cut budgets by 14 percent, settled for a 10 percent cut, about \$1 billion less than he initially sought. Throughout these budget discussions, the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** and its experts proposed common-sense approaches for legislators, whose session began with a plan to keep a tax cut promise and ended with squabble over how to cut spending. Also, the Foundation hosted the 2020 Georgia Legislative Policy Forum virtually in July. The annual event featured a series of eight weekly sessions, all focused on post-COVID-19 solutions that support market-based, personal-responsibility approaches and propel Georgia toward its goal to be best in the nation for small business. The opening keynote featured US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

HAWAII

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • grassrootinstitute.org

Despite the uncertainty of the last few months, the **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** has grown its influence with policymakers and the public. For example, with the help of a focused grant and working with top social media experts, the Institute was able to more than double their email list. More people in Hawaii were able to read about Grassroot's new online budget tool, which shows ways Hawaii can balance its budget. One key Democratic senator found the tool so fascinating that he reached out to the Institute for a consultation. The Institute also helped marshal thousands of Hawaii residents to voice their views on a proposed bill that would have given the state health director the power to declare and micromanage all future health emergencies. After Grassroot's efforts, the bill failed at the State Capitol in early July.



IDAHO

IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org

Property taxes in Idaho grow at an unsustainable rate that outstrips inflation and Idahoans' income growth. To provide much-needed relief to Idahoans, the **Idaho Freedom Foundation** launched a property tax reform campaign in 2019. In May 2020, Idaho Freedom Foundation's report, "Direct Relief Funds to all Idahoans: Devote Federal Relief Funds to Pay Down Property Taxes," showed government officials how to use federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds for property tax relief. Idaho Governor Brad Little adopted this policy in June 2020. Little's decision gave Idaho cities and counties access to CARES Act money to pay for public safety services, provided they pass property tax relief to residents. Governor Little estimates IFF's policy could provide up to \$200 million in property tax relief to Idahoans, or an approximate 10-20 percent reduction on Idahoans' 2020 property tax bills.



ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org

Illinois Policy Institute is continuing to show the economic impact of Governor J.B. Pritzker's shutdown order by telling the stories of small business owners and addressing the core financial problems that existed long before the pandemic. The governor's shutdown left 1.5 million Illinoisans without employment. IPI released an analysis showing that prolonged lockdown hit minorities the hardest. While Illinois saw more than 60,000 people return to work in May, Black and Hispanic workers are experiencing the weakest jobs rebound in the state. After the governor issued an emergency rule to criminalize business owners who defy his stay-at-home order, IPI quickly activated its online community to make sure Illinoisans' voices were heard. In less than 48 hours, leading up to the key hearing where lawmakers were set to vote on the governor's order, IPI's community sent 20,062 unique emails demanding their representatives oppose the rule. The governor's administration repealed the order five days after its filing.





IOWA

TAX EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF IOWA • tefiowa.org

The Iowa Legislature passed occupational licensing reform, which implements universal recognition for new residents of Iowa with out-of-state licenses, waives the initial licensing fee for applicants earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and establishes a standard for a fairer review process if a license is denied based on past criminal convictions. For several years, the **Tax Education Foundation of Iowa (TEF Iowa)** has been encouraging policymakers to take this step, explaining how it would expand economic opportunity for workers and make Iowa a place where more people want to live and do business. In addition, TEF Iowa produced a study on the coronavirus' impact on state and local tax revenues, employment, and economic growth. As the Legislature resumed session in early June, policymakers used TEF's report to help understand the estimated loss in revenue. The Legislature passed a conservative \$7.78 billion budget, which held the line on spending.

KANSAS

KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org

Kansas Policy Institute published its COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan with policy suggestions on how and when Kansans can get back to work, how students should be educated, and how state and local governments should respond. KPI's litigation arm, Kansas Justice Institute, has been involved with numerous cases and actions that deal with protecting civil liberties while keeping Kansans safe. A federal lawsuit brought by the Kansas Justice Institute in Linn County, Kansas, roused national attention regarding a contract tracing order from county officials. The order required businesses to keep a record of who visited their establishment and when. Two residents of Linn County contacted Kansas Justice Institute with privacy concerns regarding the order. After facing a federal lawsuit and a hearing before a federal judge, as well as a motion asking for a temporary restraining order, Linn County's health department issued a new health order that respects the Fourth Amendment rights of citizens and visitors.



KENTUCKY

BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • bipps.org

After the Jefferson County School Board passed a property tax increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions** urged all Jefferson County residents to sign the petition recalling a proposed property tax increase. With enough valid signatures, the tax increase will appear on the November ballot for voters to decide. Bluegrass noted now is not the time to raise taxes on struggling Kentucky residents. Families are hurting, businesses continue to close, and people throughout the state have lost their jobs and are at risk of losing their homes. On top of that, numerous audits show a bloated Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) administration and often misguided spending priorities. Bluegrass added that absolutely no evidence exists that simply throwing more money at education will improve performance.



PEGASUS INSTITUTE • pegasuskentucky.org

Pegasus Institute has now fully transitioned back into long-term research mode, federal work, and preparation for the 2021 Kentucky legislative session. This means dealing with the economic recovery and governance questions surrounding coronavirus and the resulting stay-at-home orders alongside Pegasus' more traditional issues: law enforcement, taxes, education, and criminal justice reform. Pegasus is also working to ensure federal police reform is meaningful but prioritizes public safety. The Institute is focused on defeating the dangerous and radical "defund the police" narrative. In Louisville, despite pressure from local and national groups to do just that, Pegasus Institute research and advocacy ensured that the Louisville Metro Council passed its annual budget maintaining funding levels for the Louisville Metro Police Department. Additionally, Pegasus released research on cross-state comparisons of state declaration of emergency statutes. Pegasus looks forward to making Kentucky a national leader in appropriately balancing the need for emergency powers and the benefits of checks and balances.



LOUISIANA

PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • pelicaninstitute.org

As Louisiana lawmakers entered a shortened regular legislative session and the state government extended its statewide economic shutdown, the **Pelican Institute for Public Policy** launched the "Get Louisiana Working" campaign. This campaign featured policy solutions—legal, occupational licensing, budget, and criminal justice reforms—aimed at removing unnecessary barriers to jobs and opportunity for Louisianans. In May, the Pelican Institute traveled across Louisiana collecting stories of individuals and entrepreneurs impacted by the state's shutdown, and this effort resulted in the launch of the "Faces of the Shutdown" video series. The series featured several industries, from construction to tattooing to craft brewing, and has since earned more than 20,000 views on Facebook. Additionally, Pelican worked with lawmakers to pass legislation that will limit the growth of Louisiana government spending. This legislation is important for reining in the state's out-of-control spending and represents a critical first step toward achieving many other fundamental policy reforms.



MAINE

MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE • mainepolicy.org

In mid-March, **Maine Policy Institute** sent an initial letter of policy recommendations to Governor Mills to improve Maine's immediate response to the pandemic. This letter called for numerous changes that have since been implemented, including delaying Maine's state tax filing deadline, suspending rules concerning medical occupational licensing and telehealth services, and suspending certificate-of-need laws. In April, Maine Policy released a comprehensive plan to safely reopen Maine's economy, encouraging Governor Mills to speed up her economic recovery plan. Maine Policy is now calling on the presiding officers of the Maine Legislature to reconvene the Legislature for the purpose of directing the state's immediate economic response to the pandemic, giving Maine residents a voice in the state's recovery plan. MPI's reopening plan and call to reconvene the Legislature were accompanied by petitions that garnered more than 9,000 signatures.





The Maryland Public Policy Institute

MARYLAND

MARYLAND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE • mdpolicy.org

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan vetoed a \$32 billion education spending mandate that the **Maryland Public Policy Institute** has fought for more than two years. The governor did so in part due to the pandemic's impact on the economy and his refusal to raise taxes on families and small businesses in a recession. As the pandemic continued, the Institute argued that counties are better positioned to make choices about when and how to reopen their economies and, since then, Governor Larry Hogan has given local jurisdictions more flexibility to move forward with reopening at their own pace.

MASSACHUSETTS

PIONEER INSTITUTE • pioneerinstitute.org

During the coronavirus crisis in Massachusetts, **Pioneer Institute** has been a leading voice on the pandemic and related solutions for education, healthcare, economics, and government accountability. Pioneer's interactive unemployment maps and tracker tools displayed the impact of the pandemic at the city and town level across the state, showing both case prevalence and unemployment rates. Pioneer's Research Director served as a key resource for *The Boston Globe* and other TV and radio media outlets for analysis of weekly unemployment updates. The Institute also launched a second podcast with weekly episodes devoted to reopening the economy and schools, online learning, homeschooling, long-term care facility standards, telemedicine, and government transparency. Pioneer launched a series of surveys on telecommuting, manufacturing and retail businesses, and hotlines to highlight violations of civil liberties and open meetings laws. Finally, the Institute helped the state lift restrictions on telemedicine and scope-of-practice for registered nurse practitioners.

MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mackinac.org

From ensuring that schools and families have more flexibility this upcoming school year, to fighting against the use of taxpayer funded corporate welfare programs, the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** continues to be a voice for sound policy solutions in Michigan. While most policy changes happen in the Legislature, there has been an increased need to look to the courts to provide opinions on current policies. The Mackinac Center Legal Foundation is currently representing a variety of clients who have been impacted by Governor Gretchen Whitmer's executive orders. Many of the lawsuits seek to stop the governor from continuing to use her emergency powers to make unilateral decisions. So far, there's been some success. In June, the Michigan Court of Claims ruled that the heightened penalties found in Governor Whitmer's executive orders violate state law. This ruling marked the first time a court has found any of Governor Whitmer's executive orders to be illegal.



PIONEER INSTITUTE
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

MACKINAC CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

MINNESOTA

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • americanexperiment.org

Center of the American Experiment launched a large-scale grassroots campaign to give Minnesotans a way to tell their coronavirus shutdown stories, share the harm the shutdown is causing, and put pressure the governor to “Get Minnesota Back to Work.” The Center produced a video featuring personal stories from small business owners whose livelihoods were devastated by the shutdown. The website Back2WorkMN.com featured the video and prompted visitors to use the simple embedded form to contact the governor and their local state representatives. Several highly visible billboards in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area featured the “Back to Work” message, and the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* ran op-eds from American Experiment’s policy fellows exploring the negative impacts of the shutdown. In total, Minnesotans sent over 51,957 emails to Governor Walz and their legislators. Multiple legislators contacted the Center to note that they were being inundated by anti-shutdown emails from their constituents that came from Back2WorkMN.com. The “Back to Work” campaign succeeded in achieving substantial relaxation of the shutdown.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • freedomfoundation.publishpath.com

Every election year, Minnesota voters are told that “this is the most important election in our state’s history.” This year, that well-worn axiom might be true: Republicans control only the state senate in Minnesota state government, and they hold that majority by just two seats. This November, all 201 legislators will face voters. The outcome will decide if one party controls all of state government or if there is a check on the big government, big spending legislative agenda of Minnesota’s governor. As legislative candidates continued to figure out new ways to contact voters during the pandemic, the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** had a superior idea on how candidates could use their time: Zoom issue conferences. Hosted by the Foundation, these conferences provide a virtual platform where legislative candidates can learn about creative, conservative solutions to some of the toughest issues facing Minnesota. Candidates were briefed about issues such as preserving the Electoral College, the perils of statewide vote by mail, and understanding how a vaccine for the coronavirus is being quickly developed.



MISSISSIPPI

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI • empowerms.org

Mississippi legislators renewed the state’s Education Scholarship Account (ESA) program until 2024. Hundreds of Mississippi students with special needs use the ESA program, which was passed as a five-year pilot program in 2015. Through the Legislature’s action, students will continue to thrive in an educational setting that best meets their individual needs. Through the #SaveOurESA campaign, **Empower Mississippi** has been encouraging policymakers to renew the program. In response to the pandemic, Empower released “Unleash Mississippi,” a paper with policy recommendations for reimagining education and work in a post-coronavirus era. Empower also launched the “Mississippi School Finder,” a tool that gives users a complete picture of public, private, and alternative education options available in their communities. Finally, in the new series, Coffee and Conversation, Empower President Grant Callen talks with all types of educators across the state to find out what obstacles they have faced in the wake of online learning during the pandemic.





MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mispolicy.org

To implement lessons learned from the unprecedented emergency caused by the coronavirus, **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** released “An Agenda for Recovery in Mississippi” at the end of May. This report looked at various areas where government regulations stymied the help they were designed to provide. To expand access to healthcare, the report recommended repealing certificate-of-need laws, expanding the scope-of-practice for nurse practitioners, allowing out-of-state medical professionals to provide telemedicine, enabling commercial drones to provide medical supplies, and expanding Right to Try. The Mississippi Legislature expanded Right to Try this session, and the governor’s executive orders lifted regulations on out-of-state medical professionals. To curtail the regulations that make it harder to work, start a career, and pursue education goals in Mississippi, the report also recommended requiring a full regulatory audit of each government entity, allowing an independent commission to review and repeal regulations. Other recommendations included recognizing out-of-state occupational licenses and expanding online learning options through virtual charter schools.

MISSOURI



SHOW-ME INSTITUTE • showmeinstitute.org

Missouri is now a national leader on licensing reform. For years, **Show-Me Institute** analysts have argued that Missouri needed to reform its licensing laws so qualified professionals licensed in other states would be automatically licensed in Missouri. With the passage of House Bill 2046, license reciprocity is finally a reality. Institute researchers also pressed policymakers to expand telemedicine and change scope-of-practice rules for nurses. Executive orders reflecting these recommendations were issued and then extended, helping Missourians access healthcare efficiently and as safely as possible. On the education front, Show-Me Institute’s call to allow school districts to set their own fall start dates has been answered. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced that it will issue waivers to the state-required start date. Accordingly, districts that want to begin school earlier to compensate for education time lost in the spring can do so.

NEBRASKA



PLATTE INSTITUTE • platteinstitute.org

Nebraska voters and taxpayers made their voice heard on the state’s top tax issue in a series of online events about property tax reform. As the Nebraska Legislature returned for the conclusion of the 2020 legislative session, the **Platte Institute** held five Virtual Property Tax Town Halls in July and August. Town hall registrants were able to submit stories, questions, or ideas about property tax reform at the virtual event. Platte Institute CEO Jim Vokal wrote that Nebraskans may have to work at the grassroots level to see major changes to property taxes. He noted, “My goal is that our Virtual Property Tax Town Halls help create a broader grassroots consensus on property tax reform that reaches every part of our state.”

NEVADA

NEVADA POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE • npri.org

With Nevada families struggling to rebuild their livelihoods in the aftermath of the pandemic, the **Nevada Policy Research Institute** is encouraging policymakers to break down barriers to entrepreneurship and gainful employment. To guide lawmakers, Nevada Policy released a blueprint for restoring opportunity to Nevada workers. The blueprint recommended temporarily suspending occupational licensing fees and public sector union dues. If implemented swiftly, those policies will empower individual workers to more easily pursue their own economic prosperity without government getting in the way.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • jbartlett.org

Several of the **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy**'s recommendations for reopening restaurants were included in the first phase of New Hampshire's reopening plan. The Center's recommendation to switch from an "essential businesses" model to a "safe practices" model for emergency orders was not adopted entirely, but parts were incorporated into the state's reopening plan, allowing far more businesses to restart. Josiah Bartlett's reporting exposed huge flaws in the state's excessive childcare regulations and resulted in lifting unworkable regulations so that day cares could reopen. Legislators also passed a policy Josiah Bartlett recommended that allows restaurants to fill beer growlers during the emergency.



NEW JERSEY

GARDEN STATE INITIATIVE • gardenstateinitiative.org

As New Jersey begins to emerge from the pandemic, attention has turned to the state's fiscal and economic recovery. **Garden State Initiative** has been a leading voice advocating for policies that will place the state on a stronger fiscal footing. Governor Phil Murphy has been advocating for a plan of up to \$14 billion of borrowing, including immediate authorization of \$5 billion of state bonds, backed by revenue from the state's sales tax and a new statewide property tax surcharge. But GSI has long advocated righting New Jersey's finances by modernizing public employee benefits and finding savings in government operations. GSI commissioned a poll, which received extensive media attention, that found likely voters, across all demographic subgroups, overwhelmingly prefer benefits reform and other savings from government operations as an alternative to borrowing or tax increases. The poll sent a clear message that voters recognize more debt or tax increases are not the right prescription to get New Jersey's fiscal house in order.





NEW MEXICO

RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION • riograndefoundation.org

The **Rio Grande Foundation** has shifted its attention to the economic and social impacts of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's coronavirus response policies. Unfortunately, the Legislature's special session in June merely postponed difficult decisions to the 2021 session, which will occur after all 112 legislators are up for election. The Foundation expects tax hikes will be on the agenda in 2021, so the Foundation asked legislators to pledge not to raise taxes. Several fiscally conservative candidates used that information, as well as data from the Foundation's Freedom Index, during the recent primary election. This pledge is available at riograndefoundation.org/pledge. Finally, the Foundation led the charge to suspend plastic bag bans in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and it succeeded in pushing back against a mandatory paid sick leave proposal in Santa Fe.

NEW YORK

EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • empirecenter.org

New York was immediately the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis. As the resulting lockdown went into effect, the **Empire Center for Public Policy** called on Governor Cuomo to halt pay raises for state employees during the pandemic—something that was not included in the new state budget. Empire Center continuously wrote about the benefits of a pay freeze, which would save \$1.9 billion this year alone. Between op-eds, blog posts, and advocacy for the measure, people were listening. The Cuomo administration finally made the decision to delay pay raises for at least three months, and while this measure is not the full solution, it's a welcome step in the right direction.

NORTH CAROLINA

CIVITAS INSTITUTE • nccivitas.org

The **Civitas Institute** released a collection of coronavirus policy prescriptions meant to guide North Carolina legislators as they are forced to make quick decisions related to the pandemic. The recommendations covered agriculture, the state budget and taxes, education, elections policy, and healthcare. Despite flattening the curve, the governor has been averse to allowing many of North Carolina's businesses to reopen, all while earning recognition as the worst state in terms of timely unemployment benefit distribution. In light of this, the Civitas Institute conducted a digital and radio campaign to urge the governor to reopen the state. This campaign engaged tens of thousands of North Carolinians, equipping them with the information they needed to apply pressure to Governor Cooper. It was so successful that the governor's re-election campaign felt the need to send an alert to his donors, pointing to Civitas' work as cause for concern.



JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • johnlocke.org

As North Carolina reeled from the devastating economic consequences of Governor Roy Cooper's statewide shutdown order, the **John Locke Foundation** seized the media and grassroots narrative with a reasoned critique of Cooper's government-knows-best decisions and a game plan to ensure a Carolina Rebound. Covering budget and taxation, education, healthcare, red tape, and the law, JLF's "Carolina Rebound" report gave lawmakers who were in session and candidates for office the intellectual and policy firepower to overcome the governor's shutdown. Additionally, JLF collaborated with the Platte Institute to lead a national effort highlighting a critical flaw in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As written, the CARES Act binds states to spend the money only on costs related to the coronavirus. This means states cannot use the funds to address their budget shortfalls due to lost tax revenue. On April 13, 2020, JLF and Platte, along with 29 other state think tanks, sent a letter to Congress asking for flexibility in how state and local governments spend federal relief funds. On May 1, 2020, a Nebraska congressman introduced bipartisan legislation to give state and local governments much-needed flexibility in how they spend previously allocated federal relief funds.



OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • buckeyeinstitute.org

The **Buckeye Institute** urged Ohio's policymakers to cut the bloated state budget to address the anticipated budget shortfall. Exactly as Buckeye recommended, Governor DeWine announced a freeze on state hiring and ordered state agencies to reduce their budgets by at least 20 percent. As policymakers debated how to reopen Ohio's economy, Buckeye jumped in with additional recommendations. Recognizing the merit in Buckeye's observation that outdoor dining was safe, Governor DeWine adopted Buckeye's idea to allow patio seating to reopen early, which helped many restaurants and bars keep their doors open. Policymakers also permanently adopted Buckeye's recommendation to allow restaurants and bars to offer alcohol on carryout and delivery menus, which was a lifeline to owners and their employees. The Ohio Legislature adopted Buckeye's recommendation to provide businesses and workers with immunity from coronavirus-related lawsuits as long as they are taking reasonable steps to keep their patrons safe. These and other Buckeye policy recommendations, including the expansion of telehealth access, will position Ohio well to recover from the health crisis and economic fallout as quickly and safely as possible.



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OHIO) • freedomfoundation.com

During the coronavirus shutdown, **Freedom Foundation (Ohio)** sent tens of thousands of emails and mail pieces to public employees across the state. By the second anniversary of the *Janus v. AFSCME* decision, the Ohio team had helped several hundred public sector employees leave their unions. Despite this accomplishment, Freedom Foundation received reports of government union leaders preventing hundreds more public employees from resigning membership. The Freedom Foundation (Ohio) state director sent a packet of nearly 500 opt-out letters to Governor Mike DeWine, asking him to take action to release these public employees from their unions. Unfortunately, Governor DeWine's administration responded by choosing inaction over leadership, using a pending lawsuit as an excuse. The Freedom Foundation made clear in a letter to the attorney general's office that it was disappointed in the governor's decision not to stand up for Ohioans in light of the *Janus* decision.





OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • ocpathink.org

Just two weeks before Medicaid expansion was set to be on the ballot in Oklahoma, polls showed that only 22 percent of Oklahomans said they would vote “no” on the measure. After receiving this news, the **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs** knew they had to step up. Expansion would not help the most vulnerable; it would bankrupt the state, and it would not improve health outcomes. OCA launched a campaign to educate Oklahomans on the dangers of Medicaid expansion. The organization ran extensive social media ads, created statewide television commercials, and placed a number of op-eds in opposition. As voting day approached, polls showed the race was tightening. In the end, the vote passed by less than one percent. While the issue may not have turned in OCA’s favor, more Oklahomans are now aware of the dangers of Medicaid expansion, and other states will see that this fight is still worth pursuing.

OREGON

CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • cascadepolicy.org

Cascade Policy Institute stepped up its capacity for research and advocacy with a timely staff expansion in June, thanks to sustained increases in donor support. Helen Cook joined Cascade as a program assistant for external relations. Helen is a recent graduate of Benedictine College in Kansas, where she majored in history. Vlad Yurlov joined the staff as a policy analyst. Vlad graduated from Portland State University, earning a degree in quantitative economics with a focus on mathematics. Although these are challenging times for many organizations, Cascade was able to proceed with this long-planned addition of two full-time staff members due to strong financial growth and a record-breaking revenue year in 2019. These new team members will enhance Cascade’s ability to promote individual liberty, personal responsibility, and economic opportunity as Oregon responds to and recovers from the COVID-19 crisis.

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OREGON) • freedomfoundation.com

In May, **Freedom Foundation (Oregon)** filed a complaint with the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office (SOS) against the political nonprofit front group, “Our Oregon.” The complaint alleges the group is engaging in unregistered political activity by spending millions of dollars influencing state electoral politics while not abiding by Oregon disclosure laws. In June, the complaint to the SOS was referred to the Oregon Department of Justice, indicating the investigation has turned criminal. It’s unclear which specific allegations the DOJ will investigate, but it is a step required under Oregon law when investigators believe a criminal violation may have occurred. Freedom Foundation’s legal team filed yet another lawsuit against Oregon Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 503 for forging the signature of a public employee in order to pilfer dues money out of taxpayer-funded paychecks. The latest Oregon forgery lawsuit brings the total of Oregon forgery cases to four and the total number of Freedom Foundation forgery lawsuits to more than a dozen up and down the West Coast, with more in the works.



PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • commonwealthfoundation.org

On March 19, 2020, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf ordered all “non-life-sustaining businesses” to close. The chaos and harm his arbitrary and unclear order caused to businesses and communities across the state made Pennsylvania’s shutdown one of the worst in the country. Tens of thousands of business owners struggled to understand the order and its accompanying “business waiver” process that allowed select businesses to reopen. This process lacked transparency and accountability, and the worst economic depression in decades quickly followed Wolf’s disastrous order. **Commonwealth Foundation** worked with allies in the Legislature and business community to protect people’s livelihoods without sacrificing public safety. Thanks to a vigorous media campaign and strong intellectual leadership, Commonwealth exposed the governor’s unfair and non-transparent policies and rallied lawmakers to push back with six separate bills forcing reopening of certain business sectors and eventually ending Wolf’s disaster declaration.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (PENNSYLVANIA) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania) opened its office in February 2020, right before the pandemic closed the state. Nevertheless, the Keystone State team has recruited volunteers, published op-eds and letters to the editor, and cut its first Pennsylvania radio ad that airs on stations throughout the northeast part of the state. By June, Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania) helped several hundred public employees leave their union, to the tune of \$260,000 in lost union membership dues. The Freedom Foundation also uncovered questionable spending by the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) during a union convention in Houston in 2019. All told, PSEA officials spent \$152,751 of member dues on hotels, catering, Houston’s Astros tickets, and more. Freedom Foundation used this information to reach out to Pennsylvania teachers, asking them how they felt about how their hard-earned dues dollars were being spent.



RHODE ISLAND

RHODE ISLAND CENTER FOR FREEDOM & PROSPERITY • rifreedom.org

Rhode Island is facing nearly one billion dollars in anticipated revenue shortfall for fiscal year 2021. To help guide Rhode Island lawmakers through this budget crisis, the **Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity** released a new report with proven budget strategies that can put the state on a long-term trajectory toward prosperity. The report notes that Rhode Island’s status quo budget approach—tax, spend, and borrow—will not work in response to this crisis. Among other recommendations, the Center encouraged lawmakers to adopt a “revenue-constrained spending” philosophy, committing the state to spending only money that is actually taken in, at current tax and fee rates.





SOUTH CAROLINA

PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • palmettopromise.org

South Carolina is currently the ninth most restrictive state in the nation for number of services that require a certificate-of-need (CON). CON laws require healthcare providers to first seek permission before they expand their practices or purchase certain devices. **Palmetto Promise Institute** has long advocated for full repeal of these arcane regulations, but it became even more critical at the onset of the coronavirus outbreak as the governor and Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) scrambled to ensure hospitals could care for patients. According to current South Carolina law, a hospital cannot add “one or more” beds to their facility capacity without approval from the state. PPI contacted DHEC and the governor’s staff to share information on what other states were doing to head off bed capacity shortages like those that hamstrung New York’s pandemic response. PPI let them know urgent action was needed, and Governor McMaster’s issued an executive order the next day, rolling back CON for the duration of the outbreak. The Institute will continue to push for full repeal following the expiration of the Governor’s executive order.



TENNESSEE

BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • beacontn.org

After returning from the March recess at the start of June, the Tennessee General Assembly officially adjourned for the year on June 19, 2020. In what was the **Beacon Center of Tennessee’s** top policy recommendation of the year, the General Assembly took the first step to protect the rights of Tennessee workers by putting right-to-work in the state constitution. As Beacon CEO Justin Owen wrote, right-to-work “means that workers in our state cannot be compelled to join a union and pay dues as a condition of employment. It likewise protects the right of those workers to join a union if they so choose. Put simply, this is about protecting worker freedom.” Next year, the General Assembly will have to pass the measure by a two-thirds vote. It will then be placed on the ballot in the 2021 election, and voters will decide whether to add it to the state constitution.



TEXAS

TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • texaspolicy.com

While many headlines and social media posts suggest that Texas is in bad shape due to the coronavirus, those headlines do not tell the whole story. To combat this misinformation, the **Texas Public Policy Foundation** launched a new product, “The Snapshot,” which gives necessary context for reporting on the coronavirus. Recent snapshots have highlighted Texas is number one for most estimated coronavirus recoveries in the US. Texas has the lowest fatality rate in the US and the twenty-third lowest case rate in the US. Twenty-one percent of Texas’ hospital beds and 67.8 percent of Texas’ ventilators are available. In addition, TPPF has continued its Monday livestreams, which garner thousands of views on a variety of topics: Why Celebrating America is Important Now, Productive Policing: Solutions to Build Trust and Keep Communities Safe, React and Recover: Department of Health and Human Services and the Plan to Combat COVID-19, and Reopening America with Congressman Chip Roy.

UTAH

LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • libertasutah.org

As governors across the country issued executive orders suspending restrictive regulations that inhibit the free market, **Libertas Institute** is taking advantage of the opportunity by pursuing statewide adoption of a “regulatory sandbox.” Regulatory sandboxes are unique legal classifications that create space for regulators to temporarily freeze regulations and criminal penalties for a defined time period. The suspension of certain regulations allows industries to more easily provide essential products and services to consumers. Incubated at SPN’s LaunchPad event, Libertas hopes this project will bring permanent regulatory relief to hard-working entrepreneurs trying to navigate ever-changing economic circumstances.

SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE • sutherlandinstitute.org

Sutherland Institute gave Utah’s legislative leaders three free-market ideas for the use of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds: (1) reduce professional licensing barriers for workers laid off during the pandemic; (2) offer temporary property tax relief to Utah taxpayers; and (3) invest in rural economic infrastructure, like roads or improved internet service. These ideas have sparked a legislative discussion about how to use CARES Act funds to help those most affected by the economic impact of the pandemic.



VERMONT

ETHAN ALLEN INSTITUTE • ethanallen.org

With Vermont facing a \$250 million shortfall in general fund revenues, the **Ethan Allen Institute** proposed the state launch a thorough Performance Review. A Performance Review is a careful and deliberate study by knowledgeable, objective people on what state government is doing, how it does it, and how to more efficiently accomplish what the people want done. The goal is to balance the long-term cost of state government’s programs and the revenue from taxpayers without imposing regulations and taxation that would stunt economic growth. Unless this is implemented, the Institute noted Vermont will continue to stumble through the same old cycle of program expansion, increased spending, revenue shortfalls, and tax increases.



VIRGINIA

THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • thomasjeffersoninst.org

With Virginia’s General Assembly session over, attention has turned to the forthcoming special session designed to deal with the coronavirus’ costs to the budget and the governor’s executive powers. Policing reform will also be considered. The **Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy**’s proposal for increasing police accountability by removing discipline from collective bargaining contracts has received widespread support. The Institute is drafting proposed legislation that would reform police training, as well. Joining the Thomas Jefferson Institute’s Board of Directors is former Virginia House Speaker William J. Howell. Howell served in the Virginia House of Delegates for 29 years, the last 15 of which he was Speaker of the House. During his time as speaker, he staved off Medicaid expansion. “We’re honored to have Speaker Howell join our Board,” said Institute President Chris Braunlich. “Frustrated by the policy turns Virginia has taken over the past year, he reached out to us to offer his help, and we are excited and pleased to have him in a leadership role on the Jefferson Team.”





VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • virginiainstitute.org

A recent *RealClear* Opinion poll suggested more families are considering homeschooling as a viable option than at any time in recent memory. The **Virginia Institute for Public Policy** sees this as an opportunity for education choice policy in the Commonwealth. For years, the Virginia Institute has advocated for real choice in education, not just for students but for education dollars, as well. Now is the perfect time to address this issue as parents throughout Virginia consider the challenges facing their children in the 2020-2021 school year. The pandemic has urged parents to the forefront of their children's education, and it seems that many have come away less impressed than they once were. The Virginia Institute is standing up for parents' right to choose what is best for their child, particularly in this new reality of post-coronavirus Virginia.



WASHINGTON

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (WASHINGTON) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Washington) filed a request for a temporary restraining order against Governor Jay Inslee's intended use of the Department of Labor and Industries to investigate and punish entrepreneurs who reopen their businesses, including fines of up to \$10,000. A federal court denied the temporary restraining order request, which Freedom Foundation filed on behalf of owners of a popular waterpark. The owners opened the park regardless in order to save the business and the 150 jobs it provides the local community. In May, a Freedom Foundation investigation uncovered the Washington Department of Health (DOH) inflating coronavirus statistics by falsely attributing deaths to the virus by as much as 13 percent. One month after the Freedom Foundation released its report, the DOH announced it will overhaul its method for tabulating virus-related deaths and remove deaths improperly attributed to the virus.



WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER • washingtonpolicy.org

Washington Policy Center has been relentless in efforts to educate citizens, lawmakers, and the media that a capital gains tax is an income tax. This effort is essential because no matter how many times Washington state voters defeat an income tax at the ballot box, new efforts from income tax advocates arise. The latest tactic? Re-labeling capital gains taxes as "excise taxes" or some other form of tax, with the clear intent of using an income tax on capital gains as a proverbial foot in the door to broader income taxes in Washington. WPC's educational efforts are paying off. The *Walla-Walla Union Bulletin* published an editorial that incorporates WPC research on the issue. The editorial board takes a direct stance against an income tax on capital gains proposal and states: "A capital gains tax... is an income tax, which is simply not allowed under the state constitution. This should not come as a revelation to... any legislator... Trying to hide an income tax by calling it a capital gains tax won't fool the courts—nor the public."



WEST VIRGINIA

CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • cardinalinstitute.com

After several legal challenges and years of court proceedings, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has upheld that the right-to-work legislation is constitutional. When passed in 2016, West Virginia became the twenty-sixth state to pass such legislation. The **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** has been working on the right-to-work issue since the organization's inception in 2015. "The Cardinal Institute has always believed it was important for employees to be able to associate—or not associate—with any organization

without fear of reprisal,” said Garrett Ballengee, Executive Director of the Cardinal Institute. “Cardinal felt it was critical to file an amicus brief advocating for the liberty of workers in the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals case. Workplace freedom does not stop at the doorstep of labor unions, and we were thankful the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals recognized the Cardinal Institute’s contribution in its final opinion on the matter. Now, let us hope the state can put this issue to rest and proceed to other issues that are critical in moving West Virginia’s economy forward in a positive direction.”

WISCONSIN

BADGER INSTITUTE • badgerinstitute.org

In May, the **Badger Institute** released “The Cost of Shutting Down Wisconsin’s Economy,” a report that examined statewide and county-by-county GDP loss as a result of the governor’s partial shutdown of the state economy. The report estimated that the shutdown was costing the state \$178.9 million in lost production daily. The report garnered statewide media coverage and the findings were cited by legislative leaders in regional press conferences and on their social media platforms. The Wisconsin Dairy Alliance cited the brief in a press release announcing that the Alliance had signed an amicus brief with Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce supporting the Wisconsin Legislature’s emergency reopening petition before the Wisconsin Supreme Court. A short time later, the court invalidated the governor’s shutdown order, effectively reopening Wisconsin for business. In other COVID-19-related news, the Badger Institute continues to promote research and reporting that make the case for permanently removing occupational licensing restrictions, expanding telemedicine, and taking steps to decrease the size of government in order to avoid deficit spending or tax increases.



MACIVER INSTITUTE • maciverinstitute.com

This past spring, the Wisconsin Legislature and Governor Evers passed a bipartisan COVID-19 response package that included policy recommendations from the Wisconsin Free Market Coalition, a group that consists of the Badger Institute, **MacIver Institute**, Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, and Americans for Prosperity Wisconsin. These reforms offered temporary relief from regulatory barriers so healthcare providers could respond to the health challenges from the coronavirus. As the relief is only temporary, the Wisconsin Free Market Coalition is encouraging policymakers to make these reforms permanent. Doing so will allow continued care and innovation in healthcare, ensuring Wisconsin is better positioned to respond to future public health emergencies.



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

On May 13, 2020 the Wisconsin Supreme Court held that Wisconsin’s statewide lockdown order was no longer enforceable. The order ended nearly two months of lockdown in Wisconsin and provided one of the first full reopening in the country. Since then, the **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** has monitored the actions of state and local governments to ensure they are no longer using the health emergency to unnecessarily burden rights and liberties. In June, WILL sued the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) after the state agency canceled all in-person hunter safety courses, citing COVID-19. In Wisconsin, the right to hunt is protected in the state constitution and hunter safety courses are required to exercise that right. WILL’s lawsuit argues the agency violated the state constitution and lacks the authority to take this action. WILL hopes this suit serves as a reminder to governments at all levels that the expanded authority afforded by the public health crisis has ended.





1851 CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL LAW • ohioconstitution.org

In May and June, the **1851 Center for Constitutional Law** won cases to open Ohio gyms and water parks on grounds that the pandemic statute relied on by the governor and health director were unconstitutionally vague and that the state violated business owners' due process and equal protection rights. The Center succeeded in its first criminal case, accomplishing the dismissal of all criminal charges against a diner that opened one week before the state lifted the restaurant shutdown. Currently, the Center is litigating to remove unlawful ratio requirements and group limits on children in daycares, as those administrative limits violate state law.



AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • aei.org

American Enterprise Institute scholars continue to address our nation's historic challenges by identifying policy solutions to increase economic and social prosperity for struggling individuals, businesses, and communities. One area critical to the nation's economic recovery is regulatory reform. On May 19, 2020, the White House issued a significant executive order allowing for broad regulatory relief to encourage reopening and the economic recovery to follow. The order closely mirrored some of AEI Resident Scholar Adam White's recent work, including a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed published in early May titled "Deregulate for Coronavirus Recovery." The piece argued that the White House should order agencies to identify opportunities for relief from existing regulations that do more harm than good during a time of economic recovery. Following the executive order, White published an op-ed in the *Yale Journal of Regulation* explaining how the order could spur broader and more fundamental administrative reforms.



AMERICAN CONSUMER INSTITUTE • theamericanconsumer.org

In June 2020, the **American Consumer Institute's** director of policy and research, Dr. Krisztina Pusok, hosted Shane Tews, president at Logan Circle Strategies & visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, to discuss the urgency of accelerating spectrum allocation to help close the digital gap as America reopens. Closing the digital divide by expanding access to high-speed internet is key to improving the country's resiliency in times of crisis. As the crisis unfolds and the demand for increased internet access and 5G deployment keeps surging, the urgency of spectrum allocation should be at the forefront of government's response. During the webinar, Dr. Pusok and Mr. Tews discussed Congress' and the FCC's plans to facilitate more wireless connections, the importance of the upcoming mid-band auctions, the promise of non-traditional broadband access technologies in closing the digital divide, and the benefits that consumers will enjoy with 5G deployment.



AMERICA'S FUTURE FOUNDATION • americasfuture.org

As states and communities across the country reopen, **America's Future Foundation** is driving the conversation among young leaders about how to defend freedom while safely reopening the economy. The month-long #LifeAfterLockdown initiative explored these questions and identified ways to navigate this new world. AFF hosted several events through AFF's digital discussion series and virtual chapter events. AFF partnered with organizations

such as The American Policy Roundtable, Americans for Prosperity, the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity, Heterodox Academy, Pacific Legal Foundation, and the Acton Institute. Many other chapters hosted local entrepreneurs and business leaders to discuss how the state and local coronavirus regulations and reopening plans were affecting the economy in their areas. By connecting the research and expertise of policy and business leaders to young professionals, AFF has played a key role in helping communities navigate the new normal, while holding fast to the principles of limited government and personal responsibility.

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI • goacta.org

The **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** joined in a legal petition to protect a 2017 Florida statute requiring all college students to demonstrate a firm understanding of our nation's Founding principles, history, and political institutions. The petition seeks an administrative determination to invalidate the Florida Department of Education's proposed rule revision, which weakens the statute. By approving the rule, the Department went beyond the powers, functions, and duties delegated by the Florida Legislature. In addition to the overreach of authority, the proposed rule undermines the core academic values of the 2017 statute. The new test replaces 56 of the original 100 questions and makes them all multiple choice. In order to pass the test under the proposed rule, students only need to score 60 percent, the equivalent of a "D."



ARCHBRIDGE INSTITUTE • archbridgeinstitute.org

Ensuring a swift economic recovery after the pandemic-induced downturn is a top priority at the **Archbridge Institute**. The Institute has focused on state strategies that will help businesses more easily reopen and get employees back to work, such as removing barriers to the labor market and prioritizing occupational licensing reform. Archbridge has also argued against policies that hinder economic recovery, like adopting a universal basic income. While enacting policies for a speedy recovery is important, it's also essential to recognize how the pandemic has affected individuals' long-term prospects to move up the income ladder. There are certainly some ways in which the new normal can be better than the old one, and understanding how the pandemic has affected social mobility is key. To sort through these questions and discuss social mobility more broadly, Archbridge President and CEO Gonzalo Schwarz interviewed Nobel-Prize Winning Economist Dr. James Heckman, asking him about his thoughts on social mobility, the American Dream, and how the pandemic could affect inequality.



ATLAS NETWORK • atlasnetwork.org

Atlas Network launched a new podcast, Atlas Nexus, to showcase Atlas Network's partners in the global liberty movement and their work to promote economic freedom, limited government, and opportunity. A new episode will premiere every Tuesday at noon throughout the coronavirus crisis. Atlas also released a new video series, Upward Globility, that explores how people flourish when they are free to make choices that unleash innovation and change. Hosted by Australian adventure traveler Vale Sloane, these stories show Atlas Network partners working to create prosperity for all by supporting local opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, and community growth. Finally, Atlas partners are responding to the pandemic through long- and short-term efforts that take an innovative approach to topics like education, trade, health systems, and government transparency. In coordination with the DonorsTrust's Growth and Resilience Fund, more than \$220,000 has already been committed to projects in 13 different countries across the Atlas Network.





BECKET • becketlaw.org

On July 8, 2020, **Becket** won two tremendous Supreme Court victories for religious liberty. *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* involved several states that tried to force Catholic nuns to provide coverage for contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs. The Court ruled 7-2 in favor of the Little Sisters of the Poor, granting them protection to freely continue serving the elderly, poor, and dying, without violating their conscience. And in another 7-2 ruling on the same day, the Court ruled in Becket's combined cases, *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* and *St. James School v. Biel*, that religious schools have sweeping authority to make hiring and firing decisions about who is best qualified to pass on the faith to the next generation—without interference from the government.



COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • cei.org

The **Competitive Enterprise Institute** released its annual report on the cost burden of federal regulations: nearly \$2 trillion per year, or more than \$14,000 per household. The only item in a typical family's budget that costs more is housing. Regulations are a major obstacle in fighting the coronavirus and moving toward economic recovery. Since the start of the pandemic, CEI has conducted virtual events featuring thought leaders and policymakers, including Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) Administrator Paul Ray, Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia, and legal scholar Cass R. Sunstein. Visit cei.org/events to view past and upcoming events.



EXCEL/NED • excelined.org

Today's high school students are preparing to enter a post-coronavirus world with financially troubled colleges and universities and limited job openings. Now more than ever, high school students need access to opportunities that prepare them for college-level expectations and offer valuable college credit. For students, the college credit earned from opportunities—including Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), dual enrollment, early college high schools and International Baccalaureate (IB)—could reduce their time to achieving a postsecondary credential. For families, it could make college more affordable, or even possible, for their student. **ExcelinEd's** new playbook for policymakers, "Accelerating Students from High School to College and Careers," can help states identify ways to advance college acceleration opportunities that prioritize quality, value, equity, and access for all students. The playbook presents the benefits of these opportunities, examines the challenges facing states, and identifies the nine non-negotiables they need to guarantee high-quality college acceleration opportunities for their students. Visit ExcelinEd.org/CollegeAcceleration to learn more.



EDCHOICE • edchoice.org

EdChoice provides free, informative, printed resource guides about school choice. EdChoice 101 defines the different types of school choice and how they work for families. The EdChoice Study Guide is a brief review of what the research says about private school choice programs in practice, including test scores, parent satisfaction, segregation/integration, fiscal effects, and more. If you are interested in receiving copies, please email info@edchoice.org with the name of the publication and quantity, and we'll get them in the mail at no cost to you.

FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE • firstliberty.org

On behalf of seventy-eight members of Congress, **First Liberty Institute** filed a friend-of-the-court brief in *State of New York v. US Department of Health and Human Services*, urging the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit to reverse a lower court ruling that struck down US Department of Health and Human Services rules providing healthcare workers with conscience protections. According to First Liberty's brief, "To protect healthcare providers' ability to practice medicine in accord with their religious beliefs and moral convictions, Congress has repeatedly passed conscience protections—including the Church Amendments, Coats-Snowe Amendment, Weldon Amendment, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)—prohibiting recipients of federal funds from discriminating against healthcare providers who have religious or moral objections to particular procedures. These provisions are all clear: Federally-funded entities cannot discriminate against healthcare providers who have conscientious objections to these procedures."



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY • freopp.org

The pandemic has been a challenge for the entire world, yet some countries are performing better than others. The **Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity** (FREOPP)'s pandemic response measure examines these disparities in its new World Index of Healthcare Innovation (WIHI), a comprehensive look at healthcare systems in 31 high-income countries. Some say the pandemic highlights the need for a single-payer healthcare system in the US; however, FREOPP found there are single-payer countries at both the bottom and top of our list in terms of pandemic response. FREOPP's overall WIHI rankings are the first ever comparison of national healthcare systems to explicitly take into account science and technology, patient choice, and fiscal sustainability. FREOPP President Avik Roy testified before several congressional committees on coronavirus response, racial disparities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and how to safely reopen workplaces and schools.



FRASER INSTITUTE • fraserinstitute.org

The practice of hydraulic fracturing—or "fracking"—in conjunction with horizontal drilling techniques has allowed for an enormous increase in oil and natural gas production. The modern practices associated with fracking can allow for much more extensive development of natural gas and other hydrocarbons located in shale and "tight sand" formations. Some policymakers are concerned about the side effects of fracking. Although there are some risks associated with fracking, existing research leads us to conclude that they are manageable. Explicit government bans (or moratoriums) are an overreaction to the actual concerns documented in a growing body of research and literature, as the **Fraser Institute's** new report, "Managing the Risks of Hydraulic Fracturing 2020," reveals. "Actual demonstrated harm to human welfare from fracking is still extremely modest, despite the enormous boom in fracking operations and the passage of many years to allow for an assessment of its effects," the report concludes.





FREEDOM CENTER OF MISSOURI • mofreedom.org

In 2014, Missouri voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment to establish the strongest possible protections for their right to possess firearms for defensive purposes. Nevertheless, the Missouri Supreme Court immediately gutted the amendment, claiming it did not substantially change existing Missouri law. Recently, a trial court upheld a total ban of firearms on university campuses. In response, the **Freedom Center of Missouri** filed an amicus brief explaining that when people impose constitutional limits on government authority, courts must respect and enforce those limits. The Freedom Center's director of litigation, Dave Roland, has also been working to help the public understand the proper limits of governmental authority, even in emergencies. He went head-to-head with a former Missouri Supreme Court judge on St. Louis Public Radio in a conversation about the pandemic, then later participated in a legal roundtable discussing emergency powers. He published an op-ed in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* explaining the importance of holding public officials accountable and called for Missouri to pass a law that allows citizens to file civil actions against public officials.



FREE STATE FOUNDATION • freestatefoundation.org

The pandemic has made clear the extent to which the country is reliant on broadband and internet access. Shortly after the lockdown occurred, it became evident that US broadband networks were performing with more robustness and resilience than those in countries that subject broadband to public utility-like regulation. **Free State Foundation** scholars have highlighted the importance of deregulation to incentivize increased investment and innovation. At the same time, FSF scholars have urged that any government funding programs to increase broadband access and adoption target only unserved areas and those persons truly in need.



INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE • independent.org

The **Independent Institute** created a site with resources on the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, giving visitors a comprehensive guide into a liberty-based view of the issues surrounding the pandemic. Independent Institute's experts have participated in streaming video conferences, radio and podcast interviews, and other media appearances relating to the overreach of government and its stifling of the liberty and prosperity of the country. Independent Institute targeted an unfair law in California known as AB5, which passed in 2019 and took effect as the pandemic hit. AB5 forces some freelance or "gig" workers to work as employees of a company instead of as independent contractors. The law impacts ride-share or "app-based" drivers, writers, some artists, and medical workers. The Independent Institute initiated an open letter to California Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Legislature to suspend AB5 during the pandemic so that medical workers and food deliverers could work to meet rising demand. More than 150 scholars and economists signed the letter.



INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH • ifs.org

The **Institute for Free Speech** has fought to protect the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and petition. In April, IFS organized a coalition statement in defense of the right to protest responsibly during the pandemic. More than 30 organizations signed the bipartisan statement, including six SPN affiliates. Whether Americans are protesting in defense of their economic livelihood or on matters of policing and racial injustice, the right to speak truth to

power is critical. IFS also published a review of recent court decisions on state stay-at-home orders that impact First Amendment rights. During a time of social distancing, the right to associate online is also crucial. For many Americans, this entails supporting the causes of their choice privately. While this right is increasingly threatened, the Internal Revenue Service recently finalized a key privacy reform—ending its practice of collecting sensitive donor information from many nonprofit groups on their annual tax forms. IFS, along with many others, has long championed this reform and testified before the agency in February.

INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE • ij.org

The **Institute for Justice** won a landmark 5-4 victory for school choice before the US Supreme Court in the case of *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*. In *Espinoza*, the Court held that barring religious options in school choice programs violates the First Amendment's protections for religious liberty. School choice programs must be neutral regarding religion and allow families to choose the educational placement that works best for their families. "The Supreme Court delivered a major victory to parents who want to choose the best school for their children, including religious schools," said Institute for Justice President & General Counsel Scott Bullock. "This is a landmark case in education that will allow states across the country to enact educational choice programs that give parents maximum educational options." In a decision written by Chief Justice John Roberts, the Court ruled, "A State need not subsidize private education. But once a State decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious."

INTERCOLLEGIATE STUDIES INSTITUTE • isi.org

Fall 2020 marks the launch of the **Intercollegiate Studies Institute** Generations Campaign, which will increase ISI's educational outreach and expand its nationwide network of students, faculty, and alumni. The campaign will serve the growing numbers of students whom higher education is failing. To meet this goal, ISI has set ambitious benchmarks, including increasing student membership and in-person and online educational opportunities by 2023. By the end of the three-year campaign, ISI will have taught thousands more students the great American tradition of liberty—a tradition that most colleges ignore or attack. The ISI community is not only *intercollegiate*; it is also *intergenerational*. In ISI's earliest days, such luminaries as William F. Buckley Jr. and Russell Kirk served as mentors at ISI conferences and spoke to ISI groups. Today, you will find ISI alumni supporting the rising generation as ISI speakers, writers, mentors, donors, and trustees.

JUDICIAL WATCH • judicialwatch.org

Judicial Watch has had several important victories. A federal court ruled the Montgomery County, Maryland, program that provided \$10 million in cash payments to illegal aliens likely violated federal law and caused irreparable harm to taxpayers. The court ordered the county to hold back 25 percent of any unspent funds until the court can fully consider the merits of Judicial Watch's lawsuit. Additionally, the US District of Columbia Circuit Court held a hearing regarding former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's efforts to avoid testifying, under oath, about her email and Benghazi scandals. The appellate court is considering Clinton's extraordinary request to overturn the order issued by US District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth requiring her to testify.



INTERCOLLEGIATE
STUDIES INSTITUTE

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The **Mercatus Center at George Mason University** continues to welcome proposals for policy briefs, working papers, and articles that address the next round of challenges facing the United States and other countries in the response to the pandemic. Anyone interested in submitting a proposal can visit mercatus.org. Since announcing the call for proposals, Mercatus has published 13 research papers and policy briefs on a variety of topics, including a three-part series, *Communities after Coronavirus*, that explores policies on housing restrictions, commuting, and economic uncertainty. Furthermore, Mercatus published research on legal liability and the coronavirus, the benefits of restricting targeted economic development subsidies to address state budget shortfalls, and the costs and benefits of stay-at-home orders and nonessential business closures. Mercatus' efforts also informed the creation of the Office of Regulatory and Fiscal Affairs in the West Virginia Legislature.



PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION • pacificlegal.org

Pacific Legal Foundation filed their first cases challenging unconstitutional overreach by state governments during the coronavirus pandemic. *Christensen v. California Judicial Council* challenges California's unlawful ban on evictions proceedings, and *Ramirez v. Lamont* contests Connecticut's unequal treatment of businesses during the shutdown, specifically the governor's inexplicable push back of nail salon reopening.



POLICY CIRCLE • thepolicycircle.org

Due to the pandemic, the **Policy Circle** shifted their events and advocacy to a virtual format to meet members' needs and foster meaningful conversations about the most pressing issues facing communities. Policy Circle featured senators, a governor, US representatives, journalists, and business and policy leaders. During these virtual experiences, members and thought leaders discussed how this crisis is shaping public policy, and how citizens can lead during turbulent times. The Policy Circle also launched a leadership series to equip Circle Leaders with virtual solutions and resources that offer reliable information and develop leadership and critical thinking skills. Policy Circle has prepared Circle Leaders to contact their lawmakers or local media to share their perspectives, host their own virtual discussions, and engage in complex conversations on the issues impacting their communities.



PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH CENTER • perc.org

The pandemic has raised many questions about wildlife trade and the risks of zoonotic diseases. **Property and Environment Research Center** researchers have studied this disease risk and are working with policymakers and other conservation organizations to promote hygiene and sanitation in wildlife markets as an alternative to banning trade. Beyond the trade of wildlife for food and traditional medicine, a reduction in tourism is further hindering wildlife conservation efforts around the world. In Africa, wildlife conservation is largely dependent on revenues from hunting and photo tourism, but international travel bans are testing the resiliency of African conservation programs. Amidst the pandemic, there is some conservation good news. After decades of neglect, our public lands face \$20 billion of deferred maintenance projects. For years PERC has emphasized that conservation is about taking care of what you own, and Congress is finally poised to create an innovative fund to address deferred maintenance through the Great American Outdoors Act.

R STREET INSTITUTE • rstreet.org

In light of the pandemic, **R Street Institute** has engaged in a new issue area: voting during a public health emergency. Rather than maintaining the status quo, more states should expand access to absentee voting. Unfortunately, many states do not consider the pandemic an adequate excuse to vote from home. Absentee voting is an exceedingly secure and tried-and-true method of performing one's civic duty. Oregon began predominantly conducting all elections by mail in 2000, and Oregonians have since cast tens of millions of ballots with a documented absentee voter fraud rate around 0.000004 percent. Thus, while not perfect, it's incredibly secure. What's more, this form of voting does not benefit a particular party. Utah votes almost exclusively by mail and has remained a Republican stronghold; Oregon and Colorado elected Republican US Senators after implementing their absentee voting systems; and a recent study confirmed that increased access to absentee voting doesn't advantage one party over the other. Of course, there isn't a one-size-fits-all voting system for each state, but highly restrictive states should at least consider allowing Americans to cast their votes in absentia during the pandemic.



THE COLLEGE FIX • thecollegefix.com

Student reporters and editors have reported on the dozens of professors who have been targeted for removal by progressive activists seeking to purge academia of libertarian, independent, and center-right thought. Bringing these important stories to light exposes the shallow frenzy of these activists. But there's more work to be done. While some professors are exonerated, others continue to be hounded, harassed, and pushed out. **The College Fix** continues to flag the many campus activities, protests, petitions, and demands undertaken by Antifa and Black Lives Matter campus activists that aim to defund the police and destabilize communities. Every day, The College Fix's stories are shared by the thousands on social media and alert the masses to the ongoing problems facing higher education, a major battleground in the fight to save the heart and soul of America.

THE COLLEGE FIX

THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE • heartland.org

The Heartland Institute conducted two interactive online briefings for state legislators responding to the coronavirus. The first briefing, "Return to Normal: Getting Our States Back to Work Quickly and Safely," featured great information from Dr. Philip Eskew, founder of DPC Frontier; Dr. Jane Orient, executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons; Dr. Chad Savage, founder of YourChoice Direct Care; Dr. Jeffrey Singer of the Cato Institute; and Dr. Marilyn Singleton, past president of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. Heartland's second briefing, "Reining in Governors Run Amok: Clawing Back Legislative Oversight in a post-Pandemic America," was a lively discussion featuring Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow, Former State Rep. Bette Grande (R-ND), and Rick Esenberg, president and general counsel of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty. The panel discussed responses to the coronavirus and how to save America from the current economic challenge, while protecting those most vulnerable to the disease.





THE JESSE HELMS CENTER
ESTABLISHED 1988

THE JESSE HELMS CENTER • jessehelsmscenter.org

The pandemic nearly brought **The Jesse Helms Center's** summer plans to a halt. However, the Center came up with alternative plans to educate the nation's youth about the free-enterprise system that Senator Helms hailed as "the miracle of America." The Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge (FELC) celebrated its 25th anniversary with a virtual event and a diverse roster of students from 11 states and two foreign countries. Students engaged in debates, presentations on America's founding principles, and a speech contest with the prompt: "Is the free enterprise system the best economic system to get America out of an economic crisis?" In a great success, all presenters argued in favor of free enterprise over other economic systems. This fall, the Center intends to kick off its second annual Nance Foreign Policy Lecture Series. Named after former Admiral James W. Nance, the series will focus on current foreign policy perspectives from conservative policy leaders.

THE STEAMBOAT INSTITUTE • steamboatinstitute.org

The Steamboat Institute launched a campaign called "Stopping the Stampede on Civil Liberties" to encourage people to share their personal accounts of how the government response to the coronavirus crisis is affecting their families, businesses, and communities. These compelling stories can resonate with local elected officials and change the policy debate around how these measures should be enacted and, in due course, eliminated.

TRUTH IN ACCOUNTING • truthinaccounting.org

Truth in Accounting's founder and CEO Sheila Weinberg and Mercatus Center's Eileen Norcross co-authored a piece on how states can better prepare for economic shocks like the one they face now. The article references Truth in Accounting's projections for state general revenue shortfall in 2020. Truth in Accounting estimates that the 50 states will lose a combined \$397 billion in revenue in 2020.

YOUNG AMERICA'S FOUNDATION • yaf.org

Throughout the spring, conservative students and national leaders connected with **Young America's Foundation** virtually. YAF was honored to host US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos for an exclusive briefing on Title IX reform with top student leaders from across the country. Paul Teller, deputy assistant to the President and director of strategic initiatives for the Vice President, briefed dozens of YAF leaders on steps the Trump administration is taking to protect Americans and restore our economy. YAF shared presidential history and inspired conservatives through virtual tours of Ronald Reagan's beloved Rancho del Cielo. Students learned about the place President Reagan called home and gained an appreciation for his character, values, and lasting accomplishments. YAF also hosted 18 virtual training programs, in conjunction with The Heritage Foundation and the National Review Institute, over the course of eight weeks. Reaching hundreds of students, participants learned innovative activism techniques, including how to organize successful campus initiatives, use media to promote their efforts, and host breakthrough events featuring conservative speakers.



America At Its Best: The Show



with host
Rebecca Painter



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State Policy Network's "America at Its Best" series tells powerful stories of good news and fast solutions made possible by the generosity of our supporters. See how your partnership is fueling the Network of 64 state-based organizations and over 90 national partners across the country to solve some of the most critical challenges facing Americans today and shaping the future of our country.

"America at its best emerges right now. We see Americans taking charge as concerned citizens, such as neighbors helping neighbors, especially when expected government help is too slow to alleviate suffering. There are so many people in communities working together to find creative solutions. In crises of the past, Americans have risen to the challenge."


- Adam Meyerson, [SPN Board Member](#)

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