

The logo graphic for the State Policy Network (SPN) features three orange dots of varying sizes connected by three curved orange lines, forming a stylized network or orbital pattern.

# SPN

2023 STATE POLICY NETWORK  
ANNUAL REPORT





*"The federal government could not possibly be less credible, less effective, and less admirable than it is today. For that reason, the work of the people in this room could not be much more important."*

– Former Governor Mitch Daniels



*"Americans are turning to state government to make needed reforms, and to point us back to the road of prosperity. We can only get there with great leaders and strong policy reforms in the states. SPN is an invaluable resource not only to state think tanks and legislators, but also to governors who are facing massive opposition from either side of the aisle. When it comes to state policy, SPN knows what we need before we know what we need, and there's nothing better than having a partner who is a step ahead."*

– Former Governor Scott Walker



*"There is a significant opportunity to preserve our values, improve lives, and make a lasting impact at the state level. SPN and their 50-state Network advance solutions from the bottom up, starting in communities and states, eventually resulting in national impact. SPN's ability to drive the national conversation, share best practices, and bring leaders together to spread ideas across the country is where SPN truly excels."*

– George Coates, SPN Board of Directors



*"Investing in the states is, to me, a guarantee that we can keep our republic and stop the encroachment of government overreach. If we invest in the state and the local levels, that's where you are going to see real change. It is my hope SPN continues to do what they've done for over 30 years—the success of our country depends on it."*

– Betty Jane Strong, SPN supporter and Founding Chairman of Opportunity Arkansas





## A Message from the President and Chairman of the Board

**The year 2023** was monumental for free markets and free enterprise. You wouldn't know it if you watched the news, as it focused on political fights and bickering in Washington, DC. Because of our incredible Network partners and the generosity of our supporters, the states quietly, but boldly led significant reforms that have nationwide effects. Make no mistake—momentum is on our side, and thanks to you, we are resolutely driving our successes forward.

Over the last three years, the most significant advancements for freedom have come from the states. Unlike any other time in history, Americans understand how urgently we must change the status quo in K-12 education. Our Network of state and national partners have invested decades in education reform, and in 2023, the Overton Window blew wide open. In 2022, only two states had universal education freedom programs that enabled all children to access an education that meets their needs. One year later, seven additional states passed these programs. Just as important as the victories, we continue to work in a powerful coalition with our partners and local education entrepreneurs on the critical task of ensuring new programs are successfully implemented.

If that weren't enough, over the same time period, 25 states passed income tax cuts, providing much-needed relief from rising costs of living. This "tax cut revolution" is only growing stronger, as states look to reform other taxes to spur economic growth and opportunity. And since the pandemic, we have seen unprecedented deregulation of healthcare red tape in the states—reforms that have saved lives and enabled patients to get the care they need when they need it—not just during a crisis.

In our 2023 Annual Report, you'll see stories like this and many more of how your support has clearly improved the lives of millions of Americans across the country. Everything we do is in close partnership with our Network leaders, who are on the ground fighting to make their states better places to live and raise families. Our leadership programs are designed to connect these groups and accelerate their success. It is in the power of these connections we see the beauty of our federalist system—one where states learn from each other and spread winning ideas across the country. Our newly launched Center for Practical Federalism is designed to go on offense, protecting the progress we've made in the states by reining in the administrative state and holding federal officials in check when they inevitably push their bounds.

While there's much more to be done, we hope you read this and are inspired by what you've made possible to secure freedom and opportunity on the state and local level.



Tracie Sharp  
President and CEO

*Tracie Sharp*



Carl Helstrom  
Chairman of the Board

*Carl O. Helstrom IV*

## OUR VISION

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



## OUR MISSION

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



## WHO WE ARE

State Policy Network is a coalition of 62 state think tanks representing all 50 states, over 66 state allied organizations in key capacities (like litigation, journalism, and advocacy), and more than 100 national partners, all dedicated to the principles of liberty and federalism. SPN exists to make these organizations better, faster, and stronger than if each worked alone. The power of the Network is in scaling critical state and local solutions so they spread from state to state, leading to national impact.



## WHAT WE DO

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





## 2023 By the Numbers

**62**

state-based  
think tanks

**100+**

national nonprofit  
partners

**66+**

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

**33**

states have some form  
of durable freedom  
infrastructure

**\$194M**

in total revenue across the  
state think tank Network

**\$9.9M**

in targeted investments in  
the 50-state Network

**50M+**

lives improved from  
state policy victories

**250**

SPN-sponsored trainings  
and events that bring the  
Network together

**1,801**

unique attendees  
participating in SPN-  
sponsored events

**1,648**

people registered for SPN's  
31st Annual Meeting from  
all 50 states

**4**

organizations in SPN's  
startup program

**680**

leaders enrolled in SPN  
peer-to-peer networks

**110,000**

Network and SPN  
media mentions

**\$27M**

raised in 2023 to advance  
SPN's mission

## ■ SPN State Affiliates







# Restoring the Power of the States: The Center for Practical Federalism



■ State Policy Network launched the Center for Practical Federalism in 2023 thanks to the generosity of key supporters and strategic counsel of our partners across the 50-state Network. **It was a critical year to build the infrastructure and strategy necessary to act, when our country must seriously challenge the federal government's role in imposing its authority over states, communities, and citizens.**

There are roughly half a million elected officials across all 50 states and more than 3,000 counties, many of whom have more authority than they realize to challenge illegal federal directives. In 2023, the Center for Practical Federalism created essential tools and strategies to empower policymakers to resist federal overreach.

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

### Equipping State Leaders to Exercise Their Authority

■ One of our first priorities in the Center was to build out detailed research and training materials so that we can best empower lawmakers with the tools they need to push back on overreach both from the federal government and within the executive branch in their states. To help build the oversight muscle in state legislatures nationwide, SPN worked with Network partners to provide practical training and guidance for state policymakers to learn how to exercise oversight, investigate agencies, question the strings attached to federal dollars, and hold unelected bureaucrats accountable.

**SPN hired Steve Johnson**, the former chairman of the Michigan oversight committee, to lead our oversight efforts and provide customized training and consultation on how to conduct oversight.

## SPOTLIGHT

In November 2023, **Steve Johnson and the James Madison Institute's Sal Nuzzo testified before the Tennessee Joint Working Group on Federal Education Funding** on the cost of doing business with the federal government. In his testimony, Steve suggested they consider the financial implications and loss of autonomy with accepting federal funds. The working group also issued a hard-hitting report with the majority of recommendations coming from Steve and Sal's testimony to reform its state education bureaucracy.

CPF partnered with several Network members in 2023:



ALASKA  
POLICY FORUM



### Engaging Key Audiences

■ Reinvigorating federalism requires building up a coalition of state leaders who are inspired to submit comments, raise objections, and file legal challenges against federal overreach. As the top legal officers in their states, state attorneys general can bring the full power of their offices to bear against federal actions that undermine state and local self-governance. In June 2023, **Tony Woodlief presented at the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) annual meeting**, alongside Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill, North Carolina Congressman Dan Bishop, and West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey. Tony took this opportunity to describe the Center's vision and how state attorneys general can be important allies in the pushback against the federal government.

Steve Johnson



Tony Woodlief presents at the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) annual meeting





## Elevating Federalism Heroes

Thanks to the generosity of early supporters, SPN launched a new online platform, *American Habits*, to tell stories of federalism in action and lift up leaders who advocate for practical federalism in the states. *American Habits* aims to reach state and local officials by exposing undemocratic, unconstitutional behavior by federal officials, and by providing practical solutions to counter federal overreach that serve as lessons for other states. SPN brought on editor Ray Nothstine, former journalist for the *Carolina Journal*, to run the platform and build a bench of contributors who possess unique insight into the interplay of local, state, and federal government and can speak with authority about the benefits of empowering local communities to solve problems. *American Habits* has readership in 40 state capitols.

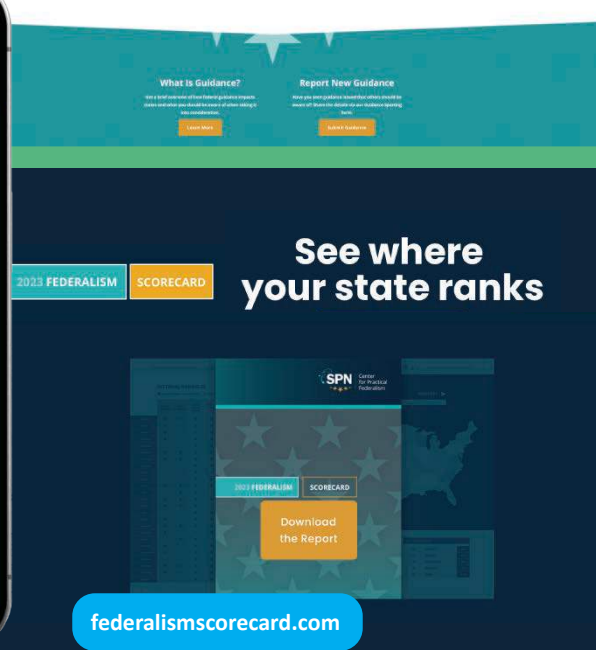
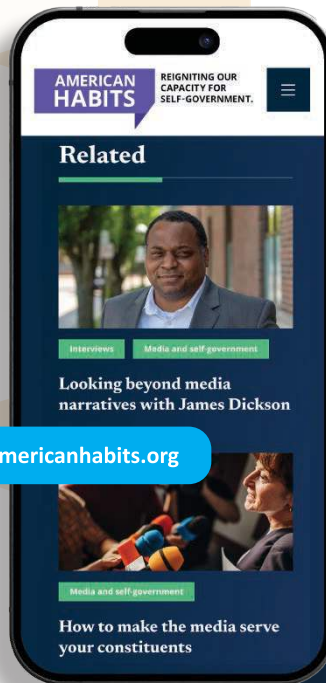
## Building the First Federalism Scorecard

In 2023, SPN created the **Federalism Scorecard** to measure all 50 states, highlighting states that perform well, and those that come up short, in terms of how friendly they are to federalist principles. The key to bolstering federalism across the country is to identify a state's vulnerability to federal overreach as determined by the state's own laws and procedures and inform state leaders accordingly. **Our first-of-its-kind, 50-state Federalism Scorecard** reveals how vulnerable each state is to federal influence and offers practical steps that legislators can take to shore up these susceptibilities and improve their rankings.

## Tracking Federal Regulation and Guidance

The federal government consists of over 400 agencies and sub-agencies that produce thousands of proposed rules that impact the states. These rules do not go through Congressional approval and are largely driven by unelected bureaucrats with little accountability to the American public.

SPN worked with our litigation partners, policymakers, and analysts to **submit well-crafted comments to encourage agencies to rescind harmful proposed rules and to provide legal support to challenge** rules that violate the law. Agencies have also increasingly relied on sub-regulatory directives—guidance letters, bulletins, memos, “dear colleague letters,” and issuing other direct communications with little transparency before Congress or the general public—that serve the function of subtly inducing people and organizations into complying. **In 2023, SPN developed an early warning system** for state organizations and policymakers to identify and track subregulatory action for programs that substantially affect state and community sovereignty.



“As the national government continues to grow its power over Americans, I’m encouraged to know that State Policy Network’s new Center for Practical Federalism is pushing back. I’m sure leaders across the country will welcome SPN’s help in defending our constitutional principles of self-government and separation of powers.”

— Art Pope, Chairman, John William Pope Foundation

## Monumental Education Reform Sweeps the States

■ 2023 was undoubtedly the year for historic K-12 education reforms that empower families to choose the best education for their children, regardless of their means or zip code. Millions of children have suffered learning loss since the pandemic, with national scores in math and reading reaching all-time lows. At the same time, many families have also discovered that they prefer different learning models to the status quo. In response to the urgent need for more education choices, states have pursued reforms like Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) that allow families to use their education dollars to pursue an education that works for them, whether that be a private school, homeschooling or microschool.

The tremendous momentum we're seeing today for education reform has been years in the making, thanks to key supporters, education advocates, public officials who champion students, and leaders in our Network (both state organizations and national partners).

In 2023, seven states passed universal education freedom bills, with several other states moving the needle on education

reform. Prior to 2023, only two states had universal education freedom programs.

### IOWA

Iowa passed the first universal ESA program of the year with its Student First Act, enabling all families in the state to access up to \$7,598 annually for education-related expenses. SPN worked closely with Inspired Life and the in-state coalition to gain policymaker support for the reform. SPN's rural lawmaker strategy also helped train "education ambassadors" to convince lawmakers that this reform was popular within the community.



### UTAH

The Utah Fits All Scholarship allows up to \$8,000 per student to access educational models that meet their needs. The Libertas Institute played a key role advocating for reform and is taking the next step to ensure the program is successfully implemented. SPN brought together key coalition partners to gain support for the reform and provided strategic messaging, targeted investments, and government affairs coaching to Libertas.



### ARKANSAS

The Arkansas LEARNS program will provide for costs equal to 90 percent of the state's per-student funding for public schools over a three-year phase-in period.



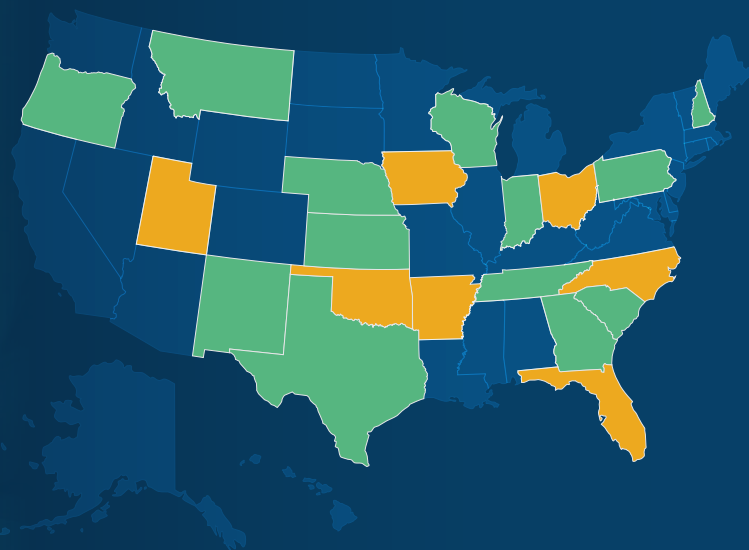
**Opportunity Arkansas**, a member of SPN's startup program, was a key player in pushing this reform to the finish line.



States that passed universal education freedom reforms in 2023



States that passed substantial education reforms in 2023





**FLORIDA**

Florida expanded its Family Empowerment Scholarship program to all K-12 students. SPN provided targeted support to **The James Madison Institute** to bolster their efforts to make ESAs eligible for all students.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

Lawmakers unveiled a budget plan that includes an expansion of the “Opportunity Scholarship” to include all families in the state. **The John Locke Foundation** and the education coalition helped educate lawmakers to drive this victory.

**OKLAHOMA**

The Parental Choice Tax Credit Act provides tax credits from \$5,000 to \$7,500 for K-12 students to attend a private or charter school outside of their assigned public school. SPN provided the **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs**, a longtime advocate of education freedom reforms, with coaching and targeted investments to support these efforts.

**OHIO**

Governor DeWine expanded the Educational Choice Scholarship to a universal program, which allows participating K-8 students a \$5,500 voucher and \$7,500 for participating high school students. **The Buckeye Institute** has produced research making the case for school choice for years, helping pave the way for this reform.



“We are incredibly grateful for the support of the State Policy Network in our efforts to advance education choice in Utah. SPN provided critical resources financially and physically—from grants for marketing to boots on the ground, strategy, and coalition leadership—SPN was a critical partner in our success.”



— **Michael Melendez**  
Executive Vice President, **Libertas Institute**

**SPOTLIGHT****Unleashing Education Entrepreneurship**

■ As more states expand education freedom, the demand for greater education options is only growing. SPN’s Velinda Jonson Family Education Fellow Kerry McDonald traveled the country to host workshops with school founders to help fill this need and connect them with state think tanks to remove barriers to innovative learning models.

**Kerry McDonald**

■ In 2023, Kerry McDonald worked with K-12 education entrepreneurs in 10 states, connecting them with SPN affiliates to learn about their challenges and explore opportunities to advance practical solutions. SPN hosted a workshop in Richmond, Virginia, that brought together our local affiliates, the Virginia Institute for Public Policy and Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, with local school founders. They had the opportunity to tour these schools and see a diverse array of students thriving in highly individualized learning environments. The Deputy Secretary of Education for the Youngkin Administration attended the workshop, listened to the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs, and offered to convey their concerns directly to the governor. The SPN affiliates and local entrepreneurs continue to work together to improve education opportunities.





## Where Policy Meets People



Americans face numerous challenges that likely won't be solved by politicians in Washington, DC, from poverty to barriers in education. The good news is that, in the spirit of American ingenuity, thousands of entrepreneurial people are innovating every day to solve problems in their communities. SPN's LaunchPad creates a unique environment where diverse leaders, including Network leaders, Fortune 500 CEOs, social entrepreneurs, and practitioners, collaborate with these innovators to refine their business plans and scale their impact. Project owners become valuable partners to our Network in implementing new policy solutions, including universal education freedom and poverty alleviation through the free market. They work closely with our Network to ensure policies go the last mile and truly help those they aim to serve.

LaunchPad **identifies** innovative entrepreneurs and ideas through highly-competitive **prizes**; **refines and improves those ideas** through intensive co-creation workshops bringing multiple perspectives together, and encourages our Network to **adapt and apply** ideas and lessons learned.

**"LaunchPad is absolutely critical for those of us who have ideas and want to bring them to life. We tackled a year's worth of hurdles in two days. It provides the community that is necessary to bounce ideas, create milestones, and put checks in place."**

**- Arianne Craig Jolla, Cash Academy**



2023

## LaunchPad Co-Creation Workshops

### LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

SPN's first LaunchPad workshop of 2023 was in partnership with National Microschooling Center founders Don and Ashley Soifer, who were winners of the 2021 Ed-Prize. Andrea Keith, executive director of **Let Grow**, presented "Kid Freedom Days," a project to encourage independence and resilience in children. Jenny Clark, founder and executive director of **Love Your School**, pitched a plan to ensure parents and providers are taking advantage of the new ESA program in Arizona. And, Las Vegas microschool owner and founder Felicia Wright of **The Learning Outpost** presented a project to build out a high school option in the years to come in order to continue serving her students.

### ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The summer LaunchPad workshop welcomed three new projects focused on providing education alternatives to students of color. In partnership with **Black Minds Matter** (a LaunchPad project in 2021), these education entrepreneurs presented their ideas to fill the need for more school choice options in the wake of expanding programs all over the country. One project, **Cash Academy**, aims to fill the critical need for better financial literacy among younger generations, setting them up for long-term success. Another project, **Kind Academy**, aims to expand the microschool community in Florida after the passage of the state's universal ESA program. And the third project, **Leaders to Legends**, aims to grow the homeschooling community, tailored for low-income communities of color, across Nebraska.

### DENVER, COLORADO

In the fall, SPN hosted a workshop in Denver with local advisors focused on anti-poverty efforts and housing affordability. Greg Brooks of the **Better Cities Project** and Lee Sands, local government policy analyst at the **Libertas Institute** in Utah, presented "Free to Build," a joint effort between the two organizations to use market-based solutions to increase the housing supply in areas where affordable housing options are scarce. **Rocky Mountain Partnership's** Matt Horn and Jody Nowicki presented their project that supports employers so they can provide housing assistance to employees.

**CrossPurpose's** Juan Peña and Mike Ansley presented their "Cliff Effect" project, which helps educate low-wage workers, such as single mothers, who lose housing and government benefits after a raise or working additional hours.



# Accelerating Solutions: Ed-Prize and Pathways Prize

■ With the wave of education reform in the last four years, the demand for more customized education options has never been greater. Ed-Prize recognizes and accelerates innovative, forward-thinking projects that offer creative solutions to current and future K-12 challenges. We are proud to have run the Ed-Prize program since 2020, thanks to the generosity of past sponsors, including The Rupe Foundation, The Challenge Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, and Stand Together Trust. Each year, SPN awards \$150,000 toward a select group of projects that meet our rigorous application process and evaluation.



The purpose of Ed-Prize is to identify, reward, and connect the most creative and enthusiastic education entrepreneurs in the United States to our Network. The prize supports and accelerates entrepreneurs in their work, and learning about innovative education solutions in action across the country strengthens our Network.



*"Thank you to those supporters who made this possible. It brings tears to my eyes to see how one person's actions can create a wave of change. I'm excited to see how the movement grows and what policies and data will come out of listening to the stories of so many families impacted by this movement."*

—Nasiyah Isra-UI, Founder, Canary Academy



## 2023 Ed-Prize Winners

- **Let Grow** is a project that encourages foundational building blocks to foster independence in learners while encouraging adults to take a step back to allow children to become more self-sufficient.
- After she noticed her brother was struggling with his homeschooling lessons, 15-year-old Virginia native Nasiyah Isra-UI designed a learning program for him, incorporating a curriculum that adapted to his style of learning. She built **Canary Academy** in 2020, a one-stop shop where homeschoolers can get the best content, instructional materials, and customizable courses based on their learning needs.
- **Red Bridge** is a school with a mission to develop a sense of agency in every child as the foundation for academic and life success. Orly Friedman, Red Bridge founder and head of school, plans to apply the mission of Red Bridge to assessments and use the Ed-Prize grant to develop a competency-based evaluation system called "Learning Credits," which puts students in control of what they are assessed on and when.



## THE PATHWAYS PRIZE

■ Thanks to the generosity of The John Templeton Foundation, Rising Tide Foundation, and Beth and Ravenel Curry Foundation, SPN has launched a new prize program to inspire and accelerate new market-based solutions to challenges of poverty. Poverty is a complex problem in America, and we know that the best solutions have failed to come from top-down DC mandates. Rather, we are exploring solutions that involve those working on the ground in anti-poverty efforts in addition to experts in our 50-state Network.

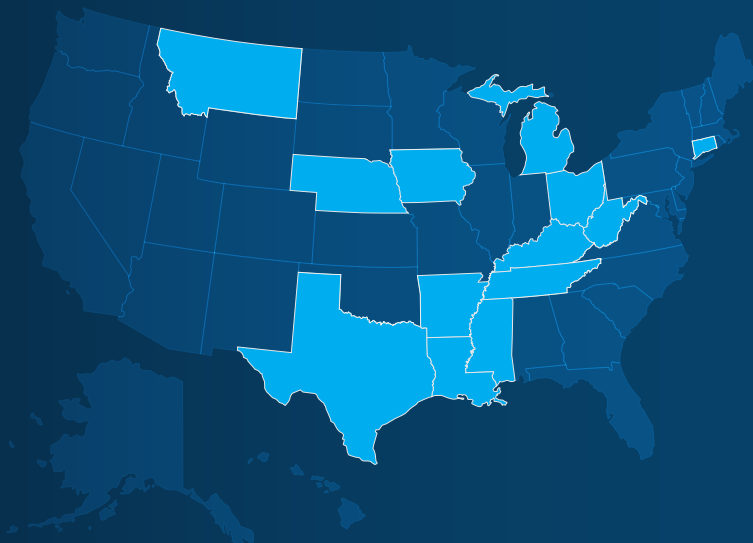
The Pathways Prize, modeled after Ed-Prize, includes \$150,000 in grants to the most promising projects that address root causes of poverty, including access to a quality education, housing inequality, and unemployment, to name a few. It will also serve as a critical tool to find new projects for consideration for upcoming LaunchPad workshops as either project owners or advisors. The first Pathways Prize will launch in 2024.

**THE PATHWAYS PRIZE, MODELED AFTER ED-PRIZE, INCLUDES A \$150,000 ANNUAL GRANT AWARD**



## The Tax Cut Revolution

■ Tax reform has dominated in the states since the pandemic. Over the last three years, more than half of the states have passed tax relief measures. While Washington, DC, advocates for tax increases on hardworking Americans, at least 13 states in 2023 passed tax reforms, driven by members of the 50-state Network.



■ States that passed tax reforms in 2023

### MISSISSIPPI

Thanks to the efforts of Empower Mississippi, state lawmakers passed full expensing, a pro-growth economic policy that gives businesses capital investments for research and experimentation. By encouraging the expansion of businesses, the state will also boost the local economy, making it attractive to out-of-state companies and workers. Empower is also a member of SPN's Fiscal Policy Working Group—a coalition of Network leaders who are advancing policies that increase economic opportunities in their communities.



### IOWA

Building on its historic tax reform passed in 2022, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed property tax reform into law, delivering Iowa's taxpayers an estimated \$100 million in economic relief. The Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation (ITR) was instrumental in seeing this reform to the finish line, publishing a toolkit for policymakers that details the history of property tax in Iowa, along with effective, practical solutions for reform. ITR has been an active member of SPN's Fiscal Policy Working Group and participated in SPN's Organization Accelerator program, which helps state think tanks strengthen their advocacy and other organizational capabilities.



### MONTANA

Governor Gianforte signed several housing reforms into law, rolling back stringent zoning regulations that stifled new housing developments in the state. The Frontier Institute has been a staunch advocate of housing reform, publishing the Montana Zoning Atlas Project, which highlighted zoning barriers to home ownership and new housing developments, and formed a bipartisan coalition in favor of reform. SPN helped secure Frontier president and CEO Kendall Cotton's op-ed on zoning issues in Montana for the *Washington Post*, and the piece received state and national attention. Kendall was invited by Governor Gianforte to serve on a housing policy task force, which provided recommendations to the state legislature to address Montana's housing crisis.



*"Through our partnership with SPN, we identified full expensing as a policy option for Mississippi's 2023 legislative session and saw it pass unanimously just a few short days after its introduction. The assistance SPN provided throughout that process was invaluable. As a result, Mississippi's full expensing law is now the model for other states to emulate."*



— Forest Thigpen, Senior Advisor, Empower Mississippi

# Healthcare, Energy, and Labor

## Making Healthcare Reform Permanent

Since 2021, more than 40 states have removed barriers to healthcare so patients can get the care they need when they need it—even during a crisis. These policies enable doctors to practice across state lines, nurse practitioners to provide care when there's a shortage of doctors, and healthcare centers to expand their facilities when they reach capacity. For the last three years, Network organizations have doubled down to ensure that these reforms last beyond temporary emergencies. Instead, patients can have better, more accessible healthcare without massive government programs.

■ **West Virginia:** West Virginia repealed certificate-of-need (CON) laws for hospitals and birthing centers, expanding opportunities for West Virginians to access quality healthcare options. CON laws make it more difficult for hospitals and healthcare providers to expand, despite the healthcare shortages we've seen in the states, putting patients in dire need of treatment at risk. The Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy provided timely research and publications on the dangers CON laws posed to patients.

■ **South Carolina:** Governor Henry McMaster signed a bill repealing most of South Carolina's certificate-of-need requirements for healthcare facilities and services. CON

requirements will still be necessary for long-term care facilities, and the CON for hospitals will sunset after three years. Palmetto Promise Institute was a key driver in advancing this reform, working closely with national and local partners.

*"The Network, both in-state and nationally, was vital to our success. First and foremost, State Policy Network believed in us and provided funds that were matched locally to launch a crucial social media campaign directed at legislators and their free-market-aligned constituents."*



— Oran Smith, Senior Fellow, Palmetto Promise Institute

## Reclaiming American Energy Dominance

Americans are facing rising energy prices and unreliable energy grids all over the country. To address the need for reform and state-driven solutions, SPN relaunched its energy policy working group under the leadership of energy policy fellow Amy Oliver Cooke. Amy's decades of experience and influence in energy policy and close work with state groups has put her in the prime position to lead this effort so that Americans can have affordable, clean energy they can count on. The working group—which comprises energy experts from across the country—met in 2023 to share strategies, collaborate on opportunities, and provide a free-market agenda for energy policy that can set the stage for dependable energy now and into the future.



Amy Oliver Cooke

## The Enduring Legacy of *Janus v. AFSCME*

■ 2023 marked the fifth anniversary of the historic Supreme Court decision in *Janus v. AFSCME*. Since the ruling, the Network has continued to defend workers' rights and support labor reforms that protect workers from illegal deductions of their hard-earned pay by government unions who do not serve their interests. More than 20 percent, or over 1 million workers, have chosen to exercise their rights since the decision.

...over 1 million workers, have chosen to exercise their rights since the decision.

■ **Tennessee:** Six years ago, the Beacon Center of Tennessee set the ambitious goal of enshrining right-to-work in the state's constitution. With SPN support, Beacon ran a successful campaign that yielded greater than 70 percent of the public voting in their favor in late 2022—taking effect in 2023. This protection can be replicated in other states to protect right-to-work in the event that the politics in the state change.

■ **Arkansas and Florida:** Thanks to efforts of The James Madison Institute, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Freedom Foundation, and other national partners, both states passed paycheck protection laws that prohibit the government from automatically deducting union dues from workers' paychecks—making it so workers must explicitly consent to membership and have their dues taken directly by the union.





# Cultivating State Leadership

■ We know that for our ideas to flourish, both now and in the long term, we need best-in-class leaders who have a vision for what can be done in their state and the skills to execute the plan to get there. All of our leadership development programming is aimed towards strengthening, supporting, and sharpening leaders to deliver transformative results for the people they serve. The real power is in the connectivity of this Network—for leaders to put their heads together to strategize, share best practices, and provide the community necessary to press forward.



■ **Startup Services:** SPN works alongside leaders in states who want to start up a new organization to fill a critical need—whether it be policy research, messaging/communications, or litigation. Many successful state think tanks got their start in SPN’s startup program.

■ **Organization Accelerator:** SPN identifies organizations with significant opportunities to build critical infrastructure to get long-term wins. The organization accelerator program provides a deep bench of services and targeted investments in these organizations.

■ **Strategy Development:** SPN’s strategy workshops help organizations focus their priorities and leverage the best opportunities before them. Many policy victories begin at the strategic development table—as we bring in key stakeholders to help cast the vision for the organization’s long-term success.

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

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

■ **Conferences and Retreats:** Through critical gatherings, like SPN’s Annual Meeting and our annual Executive Leaders Summit, SPN encourages our leaders to raise the bar and go further, faster, together.



“The strategic planning session with the SPN team was one of the most helpful exercises I’ve experienced in my professional life. Free market policies can make great progress in even the most challenging conditions—but only if organizations have clear priorities and realistic strategies for advancing them. The SPN team is unparalleled in its ability to help us identify opportunities, remain aware of potential pitfalls, and create actionable roadmaps for significant pro-freedom reforms. Our supporters and the people of our state—who desperately need better policies—are incredibly well served through the time the Yankee Institute staff spends working on strategic planning with the experts at SPN.”

– Carol Platt Liebau, CEO, Yankee Institute for Public Policy



“As we work tirelessly to preserve our freedoms in our own states so we can ultimately fix national problems, it’s incredibly life-giving to have a network of peers that cheer you on and champion your successes along the way. We all know that sharing ideas and best practices will make us stronger and help broaden our influence, but to have a space where that is fostered, demonstrated, and encouraged is immensely helpful.”

– **Mandi Broadfoot**, Vice President of Development,  
Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs



“SPN’s peer group program is the most effective thing SPN does to cultivate leaders. If I want to learn about leadership I can take a class or watch a webinar or read a book. Or, I can sit with some of the leaders I admire most—people who are working with generous donors to build institutions and movements.”

– **Michael J. Reitz**, Executive Vice President,  
Mackinac Center for Public Policy

## By the Numbers

# 250

SPN trainings and events to bring the Network together

# 1,801

Network leaders participated in SPN programming

# 680

leaders enrolled in SPN Peer Networks

# 32

leaders received 1:1 coaching from SPN affiliated coaches

# 10

organizations participated in SPN strategy development workshops

# 4

organizations received startup support services



# Frontier Institute

■ Kendall Cotton, a fourth-generation Montanan, left his position in government to start a new think tank to address the needs of a state in transition. Montana is called “the last best place” for its beautiful landscape and economic opportunity. But as the state changes with the flood of new residents, so do the policy challenges they face. When the 2020 election ushered in a new Republican administration, Frontier was ready with a policy agenda on Day 1 and has been involved in several major victories ever since.



■ Kendall, as a policymaker, attends **SPN's Annual Meeting** for the first time. SPN connects him with think tank leaders who help him understand what it would take to start his own think tank.

■ Frontier's policy menu, the Montana Recovery Agenda, makes waves in the legislature. They help pass the largest **Direct Primary Care** program in the country, repeal the state's **certificate-of-need** law, adopt the **Montana Conservative Budget** and put protections on **digital privacy** in the state's constitution—which passes with 80 percent voter support.

■ Frontier joins SPN's **Organization Accelerator Program**, which focuses intense resources on organizations through strategic planning, coaching, and targeted investments. With a bipartisan coalition, **Frontier shepherds sweeping housing reform** that addresses zoning barriers and housing affordability. They also help pass significant reforms to **healthcare licensing** and an **expansion of the state's school choice program**.

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

■ Kendall creates the Frontier Institute and joins **SPN's startup program**, which provides full-service support to new organization (development, operations, communications, etc). Frontier creates a robust policy menu ready for the incoming Republican administration.

■ Frontier partners with SPN on **strategic positioning** to set their agenda for the next legislative session, along with ongoing startup support. They also publish critical research on the state's housing crisis, setting the stage for reform in 2023.



“SPN provided a Network of support I just didn’t have in Montana. No one else was doing this. Connecting with others in SPN who are doing this in their states has been incredibly valuable and has made me a better leader and CEO.”

— Kendall Cotton



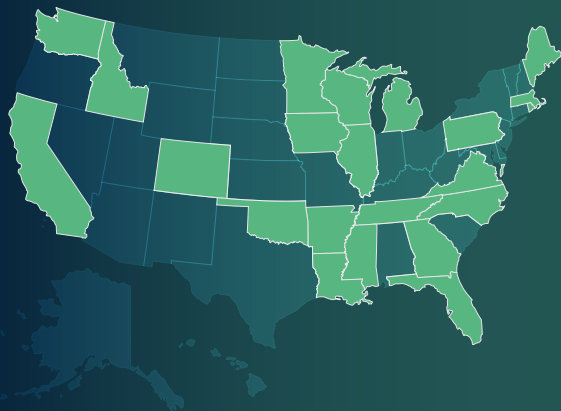
# Building Durable Freedom Infrastructure in the States

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

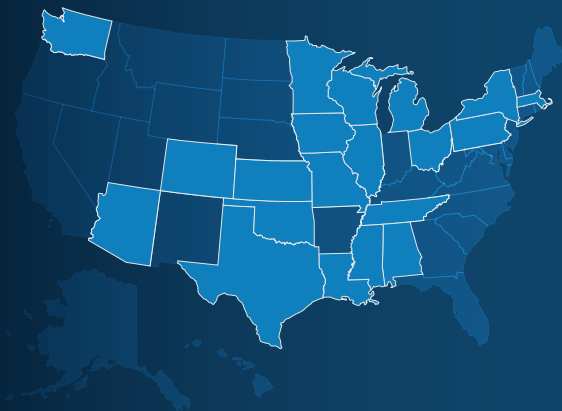


■ State Policy Network's mission is to build durable freedom movements in the states, anchored by high-performing, independent think tanks. State think tanks, together with other critical capacities in their states like advocacy, litigation, and investigative journalism, create a powerful force to uphold and advance free-market principles for the long term.

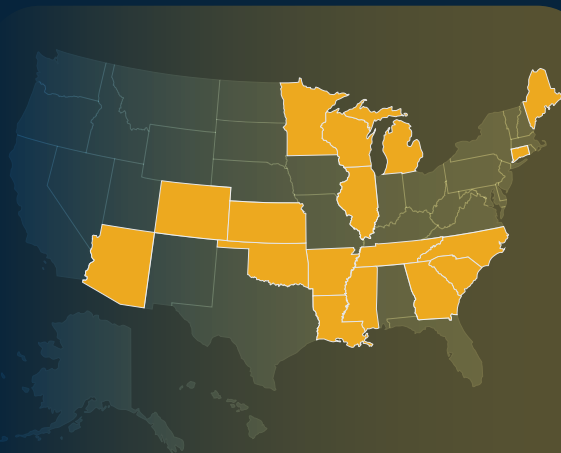
33 states currently have some type of infrastructure for freedom in place.



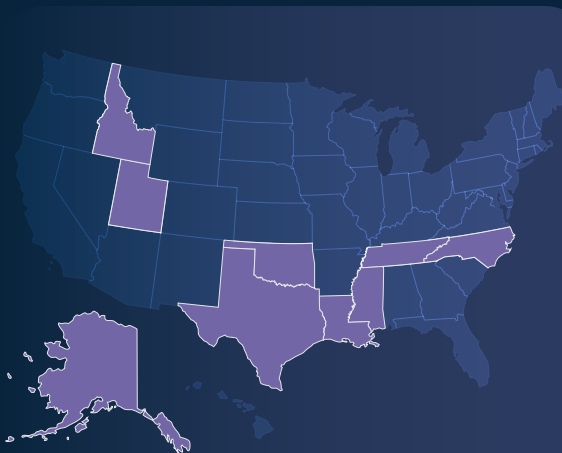
**22** States with state think tanks that have partner advocacy organizations.



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



**16** States with state think tanks that have partner investigative journalism outlets

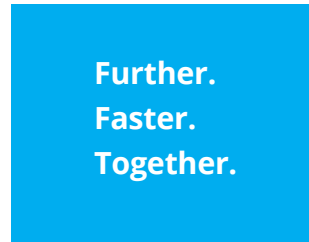


**9** States with state think tanks that have leadership academies

## Federalism's Comeback Story: **SPN's 31st Annual Meeting**

■ While news continues to be discouraging from Washington, DC, there is much hope for the future when you look to what's happening in the states. That's what SPN celebrates every year with Annual Meeting—the incredible leaders, organizations, and victories at the state and local level to break down barriers to opportunity and improve lives across the country, from the ground up.

At SPN's 31st Annual Meeting, we welcomed a record-breaking number of attendees who came together to make meaningful connections, sharpen their strategies, and exchange ideas so that what works in one state can spread to others for national impact.



"SPN's Annual Meeting is a must-attend event for me every year. It is a high point on the freedom movement's annual calendar."

— **John Kramer**, Institute for Justice



"I wholeheartedly encourage every person involved in the liberty movement to attend the State Policy Network's Annual Meeting. It is the best place to learn from experts and peers as well as network with people passionate about the same issues. I return every year feeling refreshed and excited to jump into the work we have ahead."

— **Sarah Montalbano**, Alaska Policy Forum



"This was the best SPN Annual Meeting that I have attended. I left completely inspired and ready to tackle the challenges ahead."

— **Carrie Tynan**, Adolph Coors Foundation

**1,648** total registrants

from **500+** organizations

in all **50** states

and **\$1.2M** in sponsorships



2023 SNAPSHOT

## Generation Liberty Fellowship

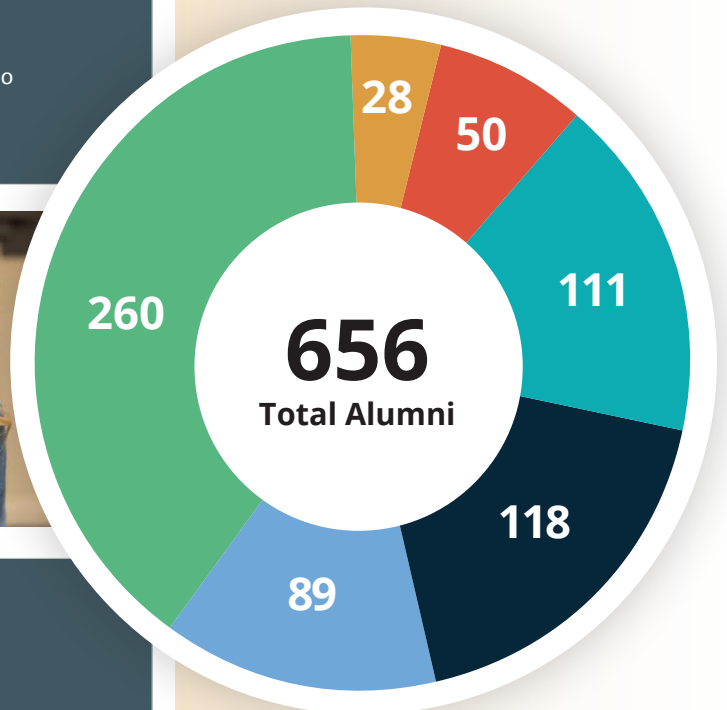
**38** fellows

**21** states represented

## Generation Liberty Fellowship Program

■ SPN cultivates tomorrow's leaders through our Generation Liberty Fellowship program. Each year at Annual Meeting, the GLF program convenes young professionals from across the country for professional development, training, and networking opportunities to build critical skills needed to succeed in today's policy workforce. Alumni have gone on to lead promising careers in government (including elected officials), for-profit businesses, and public policy organizations.

Additionally, 37 state think tanks offer young professionals programs to cultivate the next generation of leaders.



"Living in California, I often wonder if it is my generation that is one step away from the extinction of liberty. Coming to Chicago, as part of the Generation Liberty Fellowship program, I realized we can be a force for good in America. We can sustain liberty for our children and grandchildren. I feel so privileged to have met key young leaders in our movement."

— **McKenzie Richards,**

Pacific Research Institute and 2023 Generation Liberty Fellow



"I have been working in the policy and government world for about ten years now. I'm so glad I did GLF at this point in my career! I'm normally a "policy wonk," but I was able to get essential communications and media training that will help my work reach my target audience. I know the lessons I learned here will help my ideas make a real impact!"

— **Thomas Savidge,**

American Legislative Exchange Council and 2023 Generation Liberty Fellow



**28** Work in Higher Education

**50** Work in State, Local, or National Government

**111** Work for National Nonprofits

**118** Work in the Liberty Movement

**89** Work at State Think Tanks

**260** Other



# Annual Meeting Awards

## 2023 THOMAS A. ROE AWARD WINNERS

■ At SPN's Annual Meeting, we recognized the leadership of **Commonwealth Foundation president and CEO Charles Mitchell** and **Commonwealth Partners president and CEO Matt Brouillette** through our flagship Thomas Roe Award. The Roe Award pays tribute to exceptional leaders whose achievements greatly advance free-market solutions and serve as a model for other states. Charles and Matt have built a powerful stronghold for freedom in



Pennsylvania, comprised of partner organizations in key capacities like research, litigation, and advocacy. Commonwealth's holistic approach to policy change has led to criminal justice reform, pension reform, union reform, defeating tax increases, and even expanding school choice. Together, this infrastructure is protecting the rights of citizens and standing up to the opposition in one of the most politically important states in America.



## 2023 Bob Williams Awards for Outstanding Policy Achievement

■ The Bob Williams Awards celebrate state organizations doing exceptional work to advance policies that help states implement free-market solutions that will have national impact.



### WINNER 2023 Biggest Win for Freedom:

#### Preserving Right-to-Work in Tennessee

**The Beacon Center of Tennessee** received this award for their efforts to help enshrine right-to-work in the state's constitution. By doing so, they ensure that workers' First Amendment rights are protected for the long term. This is a model reform for other states looking to protect their right-to-work laws from being overturned.



### WINNER 2023 Biggest Home State Win Award:

#### Relief for West Virginia Taxpayers

**The Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** received the Biggest Home State Win Award after it helped secure the largest tax cut in West Virginia's history, saving taxpayers over \$700 million.



### WINNER 2023 Most Influential Research Award:

#### Diagnosing Rising Housing Costs

**The Georgia Public Policy Foundation** received this award for its research, "Government Regulation in the Price of a New Home: Georgia." GPPF's research helped lawmakers understand the burden of regulatory costs on prospective home buyers and serves as a model for other states looking to examine rising home prices.



### WINNER 2023 Best State-Based Litigation:

#### Exposing PPP Fraud

After discovering paycheck protection program (PPP) fraud by public sector unions, the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** deployed a legal strategy to seek justice for Michigan taxpayers. The Michigan Education Association (MEA) fraudulently collected \$12.5 million in PPP loans, compared to the average of \$126,000 taken home by 127,000 eligible businesses in Michigan. As a result of MCPPP's lawsuit, the MEA had to pay back taxpayers for their abuse of funds in addition to hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines.



### WINNER 2023 Best Issue Campaign:

#### Education Freedom in Texas

**The Texas Public Policy Foundation** won this award for its efforts to advance education reforms in Texas. TPPF conducted research, engaged with policymakers, hosted local events, and communicated through a variety of digital platforms to make a compelling case for education freedom.



## 2023 Communication Excellence Awards



### 2023 Bold Brand Boost Award

#### WINNER: Institute for Reforming Government

The Institute for Reforming Government recently launched their new Center for Investigative Oversight, which champions the idea of increased oversight over the state's executive branch. Through the Center, IRG's earned media, digital advertising, and marketing efforts have shifted Wisconsin's discourse into expecting more oversight of the executive branch coming from the state legislature.

### 2023 Expanding Your Audience Award

#### WINNER: Opportunity Arkansas

As a member of SPN's start-up program, Opportunity Arkansas achieved remarkable wins in its first year in areas such as education and welfare reform. The organization's (non)Debatable Newsletter was launched to educate lawmakers with policy news, information, and resources to set the agenda for positive free-market reforms in the state. They focused their efforts on cultivating an engaged target audience of policymakers rather than building up a large, general audience database. As a result, the newsletter saw significant engagement and growth from high-ranking state officials and legislators.

### 2023 Powerful Storytelling Award

#### WINNER: Yankee Institute

The Yankee Institute received the Powerful Storytelling Award for their reporting that highlighted the failures of Connecticut's mental health system. Yankee was able to put a human face on the failure of the state to adequately address problems in the system, which led to widespread media attention and several tips from citizens concerned about abuses they'd also witnessed. In 2022, the Yankee Institute launched an investigative journalism project called the Connecticut Inside Investigator. Through this outlet, Yankee has investigated abuses of power, failings of government, and a wide range of issues important to the people in their state.



## 2023 Network Award: Historic Education Reform

With seven states passing universal education freedom, the Network Award recognized state and national organizations who worked tirelessly together, leveraging each other's strengths, to bring about more education opportunities to millions of American children. The Network Award was given to the Libertas Institute, Oklahoma Council for Public Affairs, The James Madison Institute, Opportunity Arkansas, The Buckeye Institute, Sutherland Institute, Inspired Life, EdChoice, SchoolForward, ExcelinEd, yes. every kid., The Heritage Foundation, American Federation for Children, and Americans for Prosperity.





# Changing Hearts and Minds

Often, the national media focuses on battles in Washington, DC. SPN fellows provide the much-needed context on what's happening in the states that people feel in their daily lives. SPN also connects our Network leaders with top media outlets to elevate important stories and trends from the states that have nationwide effects.



Governing  
For the people making government work.

the  
FEDERALIST

NATIONAL  
REVIEW

THE  
HILL

Newsweek

NEW YORK POST

The Washington Times

Washington Examiner

FOX  
NEWS  
channel

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

110k+

Media mentions of SPN and state think tanks in the Network per year.

WSJ 67

Network citations in the *Wall Street Journal* per year

85

Op-eds placed through SPN's state media program

41

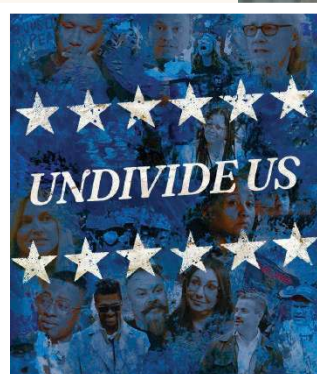
Op-eds authored by SPN experts in national media outlets

UNDIVIDE US

At its core, federalism relies on a belief in communities and their ability to solve problems close to home rather than through top-down mandates from Washington, DC. But as the media and political elites in Washington work to divide the country, Americans are being conditioned to view every challenge as an existential crisis far too complex for any individual, community, town, or state to address.

together to restore American democracy and civic engagement.

*UNDIVIDE US* premiered to a near sell-out audience at the Big Apple Film Festival in New York City. **Since the premiere, the film has achieved placement at fifteen prestigious film festivals.**



"UNDIVIDE US is a film everyone in America needs to see."

—Jonathan Lipp, director of the Big Apple Film Festival

In 2023, SPN collaborated with award-winning producer and director **Kristi Kendall** on *UNDIVIDE US*, a documentary that dives deeper into the forces that tear us apart, and in turn, how we can come

The film is poised to make its way around college campuses in 2024 to serve as a guide for the younger generation to return to civil discourse, open debate, and greater self-governance.





# SPN Leadership

## BOARD

**Lawson Bader**, DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund

**George Coates**, Commonwealth Foundation

**Carl O. Helstrom, III (Chairman)**, The JM Foundation

**John Hood**, John William Pope Foundation

**Nicole Hoplin**, Hoplin-Jackson Charitable Advisors

**Adam Meyerson**, Stand Together

**Tracie J. Sharp (President)**, State Policy Network

**Stanford D. Swim (Secretary)**, Bill of Rights Institute

**Carrie Tynan**, Adolph Coors Foundation

**Bridgett G. Wagner**, The Heritage Foundation

**Thomas L. Willcox (Treasurer)**, The Roe Foundation

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**Tracie Sharp**  
*President and CEO*



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



**Emily McCalister**  
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**Lynn Harsh**  
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**Rebecca Painter**  
*Vice President of  
Strategic Partnerships*



**Todd Davidson**  
*Vice President of Programs*

# SPN Financials

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

## SPN 2023 Assets and Liabilities

### ASSETS

Cash and Equivalents: \$3,815,637

Investments: \$15,096,320

Accounts Receivable: \$1,261,415

Prepaid Expenses: \$419,216

Fixed Assets, Net: \$115,534

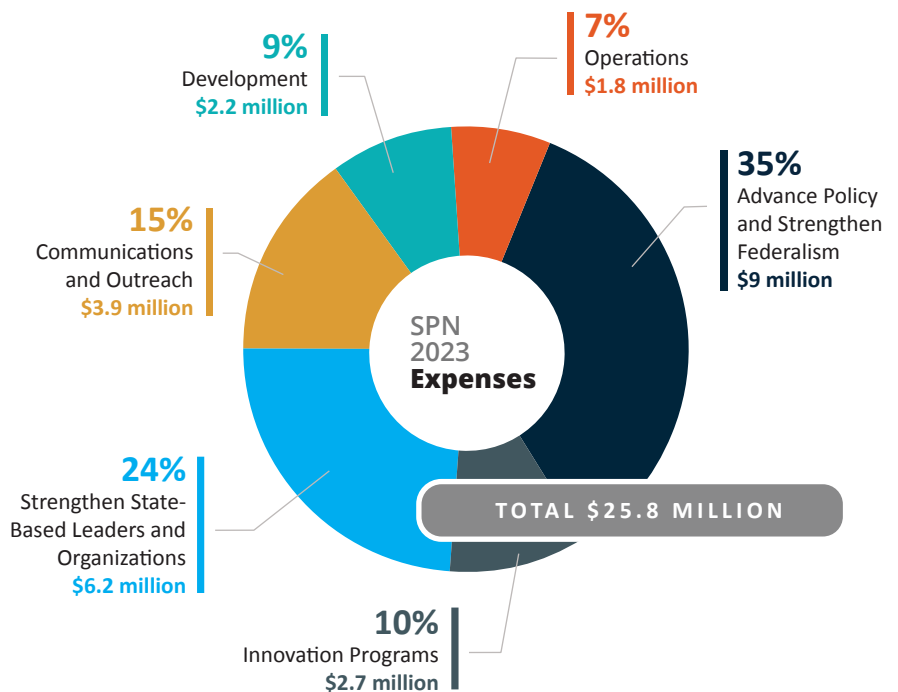
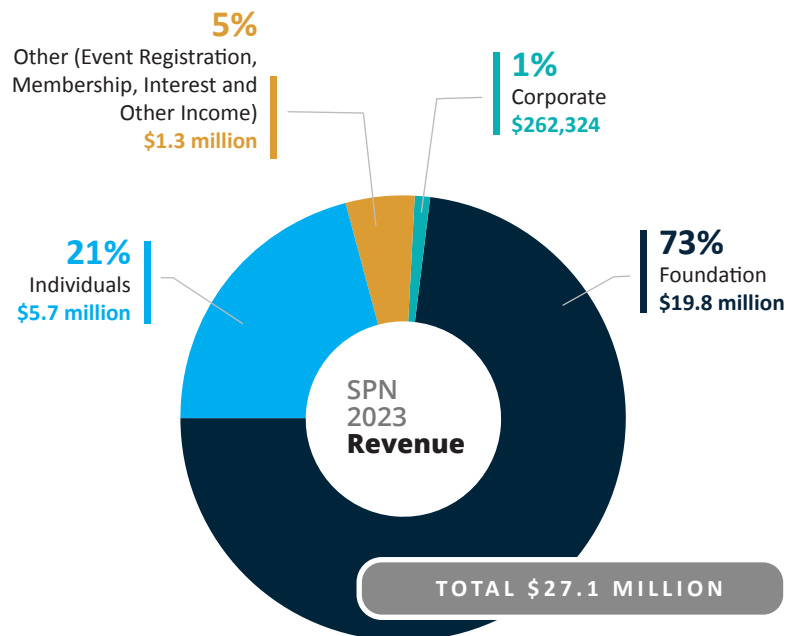
**Total Assets: \$20,708,122**

### LIABILITIES

Liabilities: \$656,266

Net Assets: \$20,051,856

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets: \$20,708,122**



# Ways to Give



## By Mail

Checks should be made out to State Policy Network and sent to:

Attn: Tracie Sharp  
State Policy Network  
1500 Wilson Blvd, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22209



## Online

Visit [spn.org/donate](https://spn.org/donate) to make a contribution via credit card on our secure donation page. If you would like to arrange a recurring donation by mail, please contact Victoria Wakefield at [victoria@spn.org](mailto:victoria@spn.org).



## Wire Transfer or Appreciated Stock

If you wish to donate via Wire Transfer or Appreciated Stock, please contact Victoria Wakefield at [victoria@spn.org](mailto:victoria@spn.org) to let us know that you would like to make a gift.



## Leave a Legacy

If you are interested in more information on how you can include State Policy Network in your will—or would like to explore other legacy giving options and **become charter member of the Thomas Roe Legacy Society**—please visit [spn.org/legacy](https://spn.org/legacy) or contact Nitsa Ioannides at (619-244-4580) or [legacy@spn.org](mailto:legacy@spn.org).

■ Thanks to the generosity of the Roe Family, we have a special matching gift opportunity. If you share with State Policy Network that you plan to make a legacy gift to SPN, the Roe Foundation will contribute an additional \$1,000 to SPN (up to \$250,000).





## Stay Connected

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