



State Solutions. National Impact.

FALL 2021

State Legislative Highlights

The Network advanced significant reforms in 2021 to preserve freedom and opportunity for all Americans.



Tracie

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CONTACT US

1655 North Fort Myer Drive
Suite 360
Arlington, VA 22209

Phone: 703-243-1655

Fax: 703-740-0314

info@spn.org

SPN.org

 /StatePolicy

 @StatePolicy

 /company/state-policy-network

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 63 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 organizations 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 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,

It is tempting to get discouraged by what is happening in Washington, DC. But, know that you are making a significant difference in the lives of Americans by staying laser-focused on what can be achieved in the states. And that through the states, we are pushing back on harmful reforms coming from the federal government.

That's what this Network is focused on, because of your partnership. And because of your support, in just the last few months we saw significant advancements for freedom that are having national impact.

Now that most state legislative sessions are over, it is the perfect time to reflect and take stock on what you have made possible. In this newsletter, you will read about the dozens of state solutions the Network helped enact that will get Americans back to work, provide children more educational options, reduce red tape to help businesses reopen strong, preserve the integrity of our elections, hold government unions accountable, and keep the lifesaving healthcare solutions that got us through the peak of the pandemic so we can face the challenges ahead.

You will also read about the power of this Network through our connectivity. Three state think tank CEOs, through connections made in this Network, have come together to solve one of the country's greatest problems: How to lift people out of systematic poverty and move them from a path of dependency to meaningful work. Their plan is to start in their states and create a pathway for every state to help the most vulnerable in their communities. These solutions will empower individuals to improve their standards of living and create better lives for their children and grandchildren.

You'll notice that one thing remains constant in these stories: You have improved the lives of Americans by standing with SPN. Good policy takes root and spreads across states, making a national impact that isn't mandated by the federal government, but chosen by the people who live in each unique state. That is the path to true recovery and liberty—that is federalism.

Thank you for making this possible.

Tracie Sharp





State Solutions Make **National Impact**

The Network advanced significant reforms in the states that are improving the lives of Americans across the country.

Most legislative sessions in the states have come to an end. Thanks to the generosity of those who support State Policy Network and our state-based affiliates, we have much to celebrate.

You may not hear about these victories for freedom in the mainstream news. In fact, you may feel discouraged when you only hear about debates and policies coming from Congress or the White House. But together, we have created a groundswell for positive, free-market reforms in the states that are actually helping people and solving some of the biggest problems in their communities.

And these reforms didn't live and die in one state—in all cases, good ideas spread from state-to-state, and many others will consider these reforms in next year's legislative session. Your support is making sure that state solutions have national impact.

Here are just a few highlights of what you helped achieve this year.

Election Integrity

Politicians have suggested national election reforms that would take the power to make common sense reforms away from the states and replace them with a one-size-fits-all federal system. The states are the rightful place to enact reforms to secure our election processes so that we can restore election integrity in the US. In 2021, members of the Network worked to educate lawmakers about how to keep power in the states while making it easier to legally vote and harder to cheat to restore public trust in our elections.

Network leaders have been instrumental in passing reforms that ensure that voting laws are followed and vote counting is accurate and transparent. These reforms include: cleaning up bad voter information, limiting ballot harvesting, and increase transparency and accountability in election processes in the states. SPN engaged with both state and national partners, offering targeted investments, messaging support, and in-state connections to accelerate these efforts.

In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation to improve transparency and restore trust in the democratic process. **The Foundation for Government Accountability** noted that the bill enforces voter ID, prevents ballot harvesting, secures drop boxes, and helps ensure that voter rolls are up to date and accurate for each election.

Texas passed a law that protects elections from inappropriate influence of private funding. **The Texas Public Policy Foundation** explained the bill prohibits outside special interest groups from flooding Texas with millions of dollars to run thinly veiled, ideological and partisan get-out-the-vote campaigns using government officials as cover.

In Wisconsin, the **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL)** filed a lawsuit on behalf of two voters challenging the use of ballot drop boxes. They are asking the court to make it clear that there are two legal ways to cast an absentee ballot in Wisconsin: through the US mail or delivered in person to the municipal clerk.

Notably, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld election integrity in Arizona in their ruling in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, indicating states have the authority to implement commonsense voting reforms. **The Pacific Legal Foundation, Cato Institute, and Liberty Justice Center** submitted amicus briefs supporting this important decision.

States will continue to lead on this issue in the coming years to ensure that every registered voter can easily cast their ballot, it is hard to cheat, and every vote is counted accurately.

Education



2021 became the “Year for School Choice,” ushering in a wave of reforms in over a dozen states to bring better education opportunities to students. COVID-19 opened the door wide open for education reform, and thanks to you, this Network charged right through it.

One of the most substantive education reforms of the year came right from a leader in this Network. Thanks to the **Cardinal Institute**, West Virginia passed the state’s first Education Savings Account (ESA) Program and the country’s most expansive. The program, which would start in 2022, would apply to all public-school children in the state and offer \$4,600 per child to use for an education that meets their needs. Now, they are advising other organizations in the Network on how to replicate this in their states.



COVID-19 OPENED THE
DOOR WIDE OPEN FOR
EDUCATION REFORM,
AND THANKS TO
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CHARGED RIGHT
THROUGH IT.”

“I want to thank SPN, EdChoice, and all of these wonderful organizations that helped make this possible. If it wasn’t for them, we would not be sitting here,” said Garrett Ballengee, CEO of the Cardinal Institute. “If you back it up even further, **it’s the generosity of donors who are willing to go hand-in-hand with groups like Cardinal and SPN...that are willing to go year after year, fight the good fight, and stand beside us.**”

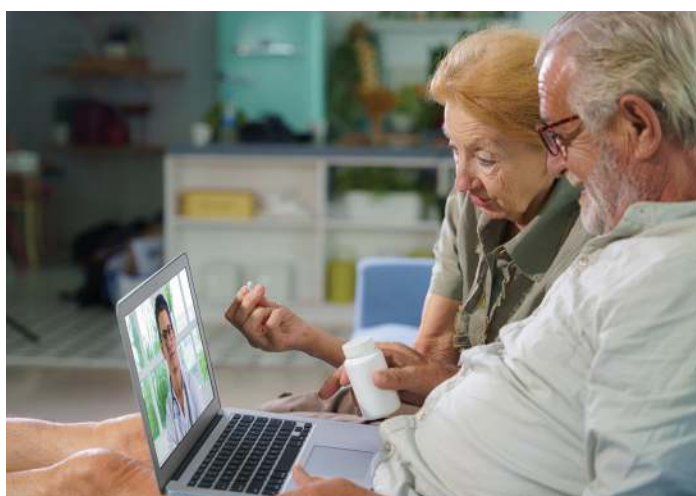
Across the country, we saw unprecedented momentum for ESAs. Prior to this year, five states had ESA programs. But in 2021 alone, six states successfully advanced some form of ESA legislation—Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Missouri—and two states expanded existing ESA programs—Florida and Arizona. **EdChoice** estimates that 4.2 million K-12 students are newly eligible due to new and expanded choices programs in 2021.

This Network also led the charge to protect innovative education solutions that have come about from the pandemic. Families took matters into their own hands and formed “learning pods” to teach their children in small groups when public schools shut down. SPN commissioned a 50-state study to see where the biggest regulatory threats existed to families forming learning pods. SPN then worked within the Network to create model legislation that would protect learning pods from burdensome red tape. As a result, the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** and **Georgia Center for Opportunity**

helped policymakers pass the nation's first "Learning Pod Protection Act," quickly followed by Texas.

There is still much work to be done to open up education options to more students going forward. These wins will need to be protected from pushback from the public education status quo, and good solutions like those in West Virginia will need to be successfully implemented. In addition to providing students with more alternatives, there is a growing need to hold public schools accountable and make sure parents have full transparency over what children and learning. Because the Network is always connected and sharing what's happening in each state, we can adequately identify opportunities for reform for the year ahead.

Healthcare



At the height of COVID-19 in 2020, this Network passed temporary healthcare reforms in the states that saved lives. In 2021, we set out to make many of these reforms permanent, and with success. Network leaders secured 27 healthcare wins in 12 states, ensuring people have safe, affordable access to healthcare *all the time* and not only during emergencies.

For example, Network organizations including the **Goldwater Institute** in Arizona, **Frontier Institute** in Montana, **Libertas Institute** in Utah, **Mississippi Center for Public Policy**, **Texas Public Policy Foundation**, and the **Platte Institute in Nebraska** helped achieve permanent telehealth reform. These new laws greatly expand access to healthcare and provide a safe and convenient option to get care online or by phone.

Network leaders also worked with SPN to expand scope-of-practice laws for medical professionals, ensuring there are enough providers to meet demand. A few of them include **Empower Mississippi**, **Palmetto Promise Institute** in South Carolina, the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** in Michigan, and the **John Locke Foundation** in North Carolina.

One of our newest Network members, the **Frontier Institute** in Montana, came out in full force and helped to pass significant healthcare reforms in the state. Less than a year after launching with the help of SPN's startup program, they put forth eight policy recommendations from their "Montana Recovery Agenda" and successfully got seven of them adopted.

"I've talked with a lot of other CEOs in the Network, and it's been wonderful. They're willing to share success stories and the lessons they've learned from managing their organizations," said Kendall Cotton, CEO of the Frontier Institute. "This is all new to me, so having the experience of other leaders in the Network is immeasurably beneficial."

Frontier worked with lawmakers to pass the biggest direct primary care expansion to date, giving patients an affordable alternative to insurance companies. This builds upon the Network's multistate efforts over the past several years to enact direct primary care in at least 26 other states.

The Healthcare Working Group will continue its momentum for free-market healthcare reforms in the states, as many of them are taking off to create multistate impact.

The Economic Recovery

What Is a REGULATORY SANDBOX?

THE PROBLEM

As human progress has been moving forward by leaps and bounds in recent decades, government has begun regulating nearly everything.

States follow this pattern, creating thousands of crimes and penalties, and almost never repealing outdated rules. This hurts businesses, yes, but also that end consumer.

There are 200,000 pages of federal code!

HOW CAN A SANDBOX HELP?

1. It provides a space for entrepreneurs and innovators, from small start-ups and large corporations, to try new ways of doing things without excessive, outdated regulation.
2. Sandboxes allow regulators the flexibility to safely monitor and foster new ideas instead of simply shutting them down.
3. An "all-inclusive" regulatory sandbox is big enough to include all industries—especially future industries that no one has thought of yet.

LIBERTAS
INSTITUTE



Credit: The Libertas Institute.

As we continue to live with the effects of the pandemic, states are navigating how to revive their local economies and get people back to work. During the 2021 legislative session, this Network helped enact at least 29 economic reforms in 15 states to provide tax relief, cut red tape, and support businesses.



DURING THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION, THIS NETWORK HELPED ENACT AT LEAST 29 ECONOMIC REFORMS IN 15 STATES TO PROVIDE TAX RELIEF, CUT RED TAPE, AND SUPPORT BUSINESSES.

Thanks to the **Libertas Institute**, Utah became the first state to pass an all-inclusive “regulatory sandbox” that allows entrepreneurs to start new ventures with limited regulation. Libertas CEO Connor Boyack originally took this idea to SPN’s LaunchPad program in 2019, where they refined the strategy and created a plan to get it done. Now, Libertas is working through the Network to see this state solution spread to others. For example, West Virginia and South Dakota recently passed regulatory sandboxes for the insurance industry.

Several state organizations led their legislatures to enact needed tax and fiscal reforms. Among them were the **Bluegrass Institute** in Kentucky, which helped usher in pension reform for newly hired teachers; **Kansas Policy Institute**, which achieved a major property tax victory for residents; and the **Platte Institute** in Nebraska, which helped secure a three-part tax reform that will allow businesses and taxpayers to prosper for years to come.

To ensure businesses can more confidently stay open, state leaders in SPN’s Economic Recovery Working Group helped legislators enact policies to protect businesses from frivolous lawsuits related to COVID-19. **The Beacon Center of Tennessee**, **Alabama Policy Institute**, **James Madison Institute**, **Buckeye Institute**, and **Pelican Institute** were all active in the victories achieved in their respective states.

“You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. If you find an approach that works you can spread that like wildfire across the coun-

try,” said Justin Owen, CEO of the Beacon Center of Tennessee.

Throughout the past year, SPN has also closely watched Congress as they debated various COVID relief packages that funnel billions of dollars to the states. SPN sprang into action with analysis and recommendations for state leaders to ensure those funds are used in productive ways that help families and businesses without harming the long-term fiscal health of the state.

For example, thanks to the efforts of **The Buckeye Institute**, Ohio businesses are avoiding a \$1.5 billion tax increase. Buckeye encouraged state policymakers to use money in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to pay off Ohio’s unemployment insurance debt to the federal government.

You can bet the federal government will continue to push more tax dollars on the states as the pandemic evolves in the coming months. We will remain steadfast in our commitment to evaluate the impact of these efforts and advise state and federal leaders on the best course of action to support hard-working Americans and fiscal responsibility going forward.



Labor Reform

This June marked the third anniversary of the historic *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision brought by your partnership and members of this Network. Despite granting workers the right to choose union membership, many public-sector employees remain trapped because of government union-supported laws that make it difficult to exercise their rights. Today, 30 Network organizations across 27 states are expanding campaigns to notify workers about their rights, defend workers in court, mobilize employers to inform workers about their rights, and provide union alternatives.

Where this Network is active, we are seeing results. According to the *National Review*, government unions may have lost nearly 1 in 5 dues-paying members since *Janus*. Between the 2016 and 2020 elections, overall government union spending on politics in the states fell by 14 percent, or \$27 million.

In 2021, the Network focused on gaining ground in the states and stopping a significant threat to worker freedom on the federal level: The PRO Act.

The PRO Act, proposed this past spring, would have eliminated all right-to-work laws in the states and make it extremely difficult to work as an independent contractor. SPN helped orchestrate a strong resistance campaign to educate lawmakers about the dangers of the PRO Act, including with Republican leadership in Congress and the Republican Attorneys General Association. Our analysis was cited in federal committee hearings. As of the time of this publication, the Act has not passed.

Meanwhile, states took action to protect right-to-work in their own states. Thanks to the **Beacon Center of Tennessee**, the state's right-to-work constitutional amendment will proceed to the ballot in 2022, helping to curb future threats to worker freedom.

Momentum continues to build to enforce the *Janus* decision and the right of workers to expressly "opt-in" to union membership. **The Mackinac Center** and other Network organizations worked together to enact opt-in reforms in Michigan, Indiana, and Texas. This protection, first introduced in Alaska in 2019, would ensure that states are respecting the rights of workers to freely choose union membership by notifying them of their rights and asking for their consent. In Michigan, which has long been a right-to-work state, approximately 13 percent of unionized civil service employees dropped unwanted membership after this new policy was implemented.



Government Overreach

Over the past year, governors across the country have taken center stage because of their COVID-19 powers. Many of them significantly grew their ability to make decisions that impact almost every aspect of our lives – without legislative approval.

This Network continued its important work holding state leaders accountable and fighting back when they infringed upon American civil liberties.



THIS NETWORK CONTINUED ITS IMPORTANT WORK HOLDING STATE LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE AND FIGHTING BACK WHEN THEY INFRINGED UPON AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES.

For example, the **Kansas Policy Institute's** litigation partner, Kansas Justice Institute, sued Douglas County on behalf of a small business owner to protect their due process rights. KPI then launched legislative efforts to dramatically reform the state's Emergency Management Act with success. The first-in-the-nation legislation placed county health officers in an advisory capacity and strengthened county commissions, gave legislative bodies explicit oversight of continued emergency action, and ensured that all Kansans had due process rights when subject to shutdowns, mandates, and the like during an emergency.

In Kentucky, the legislature voted to override the governor's veto of a bill that would place safeguards on executive emergency powers. **The Pegasus Institute** produced a report on state declarations of emergency and their executive director, Josh Crawford, testified on the subject before the Interim Joint Committee on the Judiciary. Pegasus noted the passage of this legislation brings the Founders' vision of limited and balanced government back to the state.

As governors continue to push their bounds, this Network will work to ensure no one person is too powerful to make sweeping decisions with consequences on our livelihoods without proper checks in place.

Thanks to your investment and the power of this Network, we saw unprecedented advancements for freedom that Washington, DC can't ignore. The next several months are critical as we assess the lay of the land, identify opportunities to go bigger in 2022, and do the groundwork to get ready for next year's legislative cycle.

Fighting Poverty and Joblessness Through State Solutions

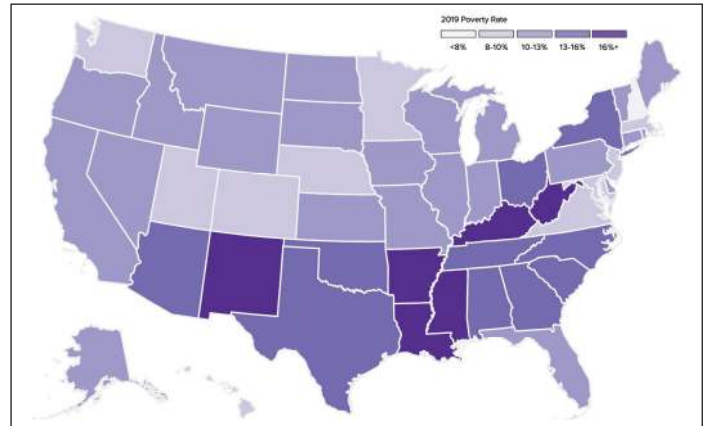
Network leaders come together to form the tri-state Alliance for Opportunity aimed at lifting one million Americans out of poverty.

For many Americans, poverty has been a reality their entire lives, across generations, and within entire communities. In 2019, despite having the strongest recovery in recent history, more than 70 million Americans participated in at least one welfare program. More Americans participate today given the hardships exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, federal aid intended to provide relief is resulting in more people staying home and not reentering the workforce.

Network leaders, on the ground in their states, see the effects of poverty every day. And unfortunately, government programs designed to help often keep people trapped in the cycle and create barriers to economic mobility. Instead, we need solutions that help people get back on their feet and find meaningful work that will bring a sense of fulfillment, purpose, and improve their quality of life for the long term.

That is why three leaders from this Network have come together to offer solutions where government has failed. CEOs from the **Pelican Institute** in Louisiana, **Georgia Center for Opportunity** (GCO), and **Texas Public Policy Foundation** (TPPF) have formed a tri-state initiative to make poverty alleviation a priority through their new Alliance for Opportunity.

Their goal is to create a free-market, anti-poverty agenda that will move 1 million people out of poverty over the next decade.



2019 State Poverty Rates

They'll start in their home states and through the power of this Network, they aim to spread the agenda to other states for national impact.

Why Georgia, Texas, and Louisiana? When you look at a map of the US, most of the states with the highest poverty rates are in the South. Louisiana has the second highest poverty rate (second to Mississippi), Texas is 40th and Georgia is 38th, according to the American Community Survey.

But the South is also an area with great promise. The region is urbanizing and attracting major industries. People are flocking from states up North like New York and New Jersey to South-



LEFT TO RIGHT: Randy Hicks (Georgia Center for Opportunity), Kevin Roberts (Texas Public Policy Foundation), and Daniel Erspamer (Pelican Institute)

ern states like Florida and Texas. And in many Southern states, there are policymakers willing to take on these issues and partner with leaders from SPN's Network to get it done.

In other words, there has never been a greater need and greater time to take action.

Randy Hicks (GCO), Kevin Roberts (TPPF), and Daniel Erspamer (Pelican) met through SPN's Network of state think tank CEOs who regularly get together and collaborate on opportunities in the states. Through SPN's working-group model—where we bring the best and brightest minds together from multiple states to solve problems—they formed a group of leaders focused on fighting poverty in low-income communities.

"When we started meeting, we recognized there was a real need for a handful of states to come together to leverage resources and *bring greater firepower* to address some of these issues," said Hicks.

Through this effort, Hicks, Roberts, and Erspamer have created a framework to tackle the myriad issues surrounding poverty and a 3-year plan to get it off the ground. In the process, they will work with state and local business leaders to identify barriers to opportunity, conduct market research to learn more about the needs of their communities, and deploy targeted legislative strategies that will serve as models for other states.

This includes policy solutions that strengthen skills training programs, connect job seekers to job providers, reform our welfare system so it incentivizes work and is reserved for the most needy, and remove government barriers to employment like job licensing and criminal justice reform.

Already, TPPF, GCO, and Pelican have had success advancing these solutions in their states.

Texas became a role model for criminal justice reform thanks to TPPF's "Right on Crime" program—and paved the way for national criminal justice reforms under the Trump Administration in 2018. This year, they helped enact reforms to reduce in-court costs and fines so individuals reentering society have better opportunities for self-sufficiency. This legislative session, they also helped pass 11 bills pertaining to welfare reform, including pilot programs and studies that show what happens when funds are reallocated from welfare programs to workforce development programs.

In Louisiana, Pelican helped pave the way for a legislative task force to review justice funding to help prevent onerous fines from keeping people locked up. They also were among the several states to pass job licensing reforms in 2019 to make it easy to keep your job when moving from one state to another as a military family. This year, they expanded upon these reforms to families of medical professionals. Regarding welfare reform,

Pelican helped pass a resolution that would require the state to conduct an efficiency audit of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

In Georgia, GCO has continued their important work reforming welfare and working with local businesses and community leaders to provide job opportunities through their "Better Work" program. Using a one-of-a-kind model, GCO highlights the devastating effect "benefits cliffs" have had in holding people back. When people start making more money, the system is designed in a way where sometimes, they can lose certain government benefits that ultimately leave them worse off than before. Now, GCO has policymakers from all over the country and private-sector businesses interested in leveraging their model to help more people find fulfilling jobs and reform the system for good.

While there are encouraging signs of progress, a lot remains to be done to tackle such a longstanding issue. With the support of investors and SPN's community of leaders, they are well poised to help Americans all over the country benefit from these reforms.

"We would never have been able to get moving with as much as we've taken on already if we did this in silos," said Erspamer. "By banding states together, it strengthens the cause. Legislators are encouraged by the fact that similar reforms are underway in Texas, for example. This will empower governors to voice this in all three states and gives it a greater chance to raise the issue to the national level."

This project also shows the evolution of the Network over the years thanks to your investment. Decades ago, state think tanks started with a focus on their state. But as we have evolved into a larger freedom movement, organizations are applying lessons from success in their states to other states for regional—and eventually, national impact.

"We are seeing state groups come together to create policy solutions to some of our most pressing problems," said Kathleen O'Hearn, Vice President of Policy Advancement at SPN. "We are seeing powerful results when groups band together to do something bigger than any one group can do on their own."

Investors in the project see the enormous potential created when Network leaders come together to solve problems.

"Donors tell me this project is innovative and courageous—and that this area is why they are conservative," said Roberts. "They see the effects of poverty and welfare in their communities. They like that three organizations are taking the lead on this and reminding us that this is a core principle of conservatism: freedom for the sake of flourishing."

ALABAMA

ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE • alabamapolicy.org

In 2018, the **Alabama Policy Institute** dedicated a majority of its work in Montgomery toward making civil asset forfeiture reform a reality in Alabama. Unfortunately, last-minute changes condemned the reform to the “good-idea-but-no-thanks” bin in the corner of the State House. Or so it seemed. In 2021, after the Institute’s years of editorials, radio interviews, meetings with legislators, and work on the bill itself, civil asset forfeiture finally was limited in a meaningful way. Though the process is still legal in Alabama, the state’s new law will prevent the most flagrant violations of due process rights.



ALASKA

ALASKA POLICY FORUM • alaskapolicyforum.org

Thanks to the **Alaska Policy Forum**, Alaska businesses are now protected from unnecessary litigation regarding the coronavirus. APF spent much of early 2021 releasing op-eds, videos of impacted business owners, and educating policymakers to convey the importance of this issue for restarting Alaska’s economy. APF noted this policy is a big win for businesses and Alaskans by bringing stability to local economies.



ARIZONA

GOLDWATER INSTITUTE • goldwaterinstitute.org

In 2021, Arizona became the first state in the nation to pass a transformative telehealth reform developed by the **Goldwater Institute**. Arizona’s innovative new law will allow patients to get help from their healthcare providers via smartphones, computers, and landline phones. By making the patient the “nexus” of care, the new law creates an almost universal registration approach by allowing healthcare providers who are in good standing in other states to provide services to Arizonans. Rather than limit telehealth to certain professions, Goldwater’s reform allows for a much broader array of services. Arizona’s new law will help the state realize the potential of innovative, patient-centric medical care via available technology and communication. This is exactly the kind of bold thinking and action that lawmakers across the country should embrace and pursue. To join Goldwater in advancing this reform in more states, please contact Heather Curry at hcurry@goldwaterinstitute.org.





ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

The Arkansas governor announced he will call a legislative special session this fall to reduce state income tax rates, a priority issue of the **Arkansas Policy Foundation**. The governor has indicated support for the idea of reducing the top income tax rate from 5.9 to 5.5 percent using part of an estimated \$1 billion state budget surplus. Arkansas Policy Foundation research has noted cutting Arkansas' top rate to 4.79 percent would place it among the third of states with the lowest rates, a reversal of its relative position in 2015 when it ranked among states with the highest rates. Policymakers in three states that border Arkansas have reduced income tax rates in recent years. Tennessee eliminated its remaining income tax on dividends and interest, Oklahoma cut its top rate from 5.0 to 4.75 percent in May, and Louisiana voters will decide in October whether to reduce the top rate from 6.0 to 4.25 percent. Texas, another state that borders Arkansas, does not have an income tax.



CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER • californiapolicycenter.org

California parents, many of them members of **California Policy Center's** Parent Union, joined together this spring to stop a bill that would have gutted charter schools and stripped children of one of the few educational oases to thrive during the COVID-19 school closures. Union-elected politicians proposed Assembly Bill 1316 to effectively destroy online charter schools by stripping their funding and restricting their ability to provide unique, tailored educational offerings to students. Parents rallied, launching an extensive informational campaign across the state. When it came time to hear from the public during a Sacramento hearing on the bill, dozens of parents, students, and educators spoke up against the legislation, leaving only three union reps to speak favorably of the bill. Ultimately, lawmakers shelved the bill at least for 2021, thereby allowing California students some limited educational choice. The Parent Union is also working with parents to reopen schools. Notably, parents compelled the Desert Sands School District to reopen schools this spring, despite union demands that they be kept closed.



PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • pacificresearch.org

While many California school districts floundered during the COVID-19 pandemic, senior director of **Pacific Research Institute's** Center for Education Lance Izumi wrote, "[Some state lawmakers] took aim at charter schools, which are among the few remaining school-choice options available for parents dissatisfied with the regular public schools." Izumi exposed in a widely read op-ed published in the *Orange County Register* that the latest attack on charter schools—Assembly Bill 1316—would deny non-classroom based virtual charter schools full state funding if enacted. One day after Izumi's op-ed was published, Assembly Education Committee chairman Patrick O'Donnell pulled the legislation, killing the measure for the year. The defeat of AB 1316 was the culmination of PRI's research-focused policy outreach campaign, using real-life examples and study data, to educate lawmakers and inspire parents and students to fight proposed charter school restrictions like AB 1316.

DELAWARE

CAESAR RODNEY INSTITUTE • caesarrodney.org

In Delaware, post-COVID recovery has been slow. Although the unemployment rate has fallen since its height during the pandemic, it has not fully recovered to pre-COVID levels. At its current rate, those levels won't be reached until 2028. Projections show that wages will remain lower than average even once jobs are recovered. **Caesar Rodney Institute** has a plan. With funds from the American Rescue Plan, Delaware ended the 2021 fiscal year with a historic surplus. The moment cannot be squandered. Delaware desperately needs to spur economic growth. The Caesar Rodney Institute's most recent analysis of the past 40 years of Delaware's personal income tax reveals that each time tax rates increased, total tax revenues decreased over time. The opposite happened when tax rates decreased: overall tax revenues increased due to increased economic activity in corporate and personal incomes.



FLORIDA

FOUNDATION FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY • thefga.org

Over the summer, the **Foundation for Government Accountability** celebrated its 10-year anniversary! For a decade, FGA has advanced the power of work to help millions achieve the American dream—and it is just getting started. Using its proven multistate model and government affairs network, FGA made it a top priority this legislative session to restore electoral confidence and get voters off the sidelines in future elections. After advancing a 20-point election integrity reform agenda in 31 states, FGA had more than 50 election integrity wins in at least a dozen states as of June 2021.



THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • jamesmadison.org

During the 2021 legislative session, Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Wilton Simpson, and House Speaker Chris Sprowls showed great leadership in enacting strong policies to help all Floridians. **The James Madison Institute** applauds Governor DeSantis for signing into law a proposal defending intellectual diversity on college campuses. This law requires Florida higher education institutions to conduct an annual assessment of intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity on their respective campuses. In October 2020, JMI released a policy brief entitled "Combatting 'Idea Suppression': How Florida Universities Can Continue Their Rise to National Prominence." The report compiled a variety of measures that examine how well today's universities protect free speech, promote a campus culture open to different viewpoints, and respond to speech-bullying by those seeking to drown out viewpoints they oppose.





GEORGIA

GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • georgiaopportunity.org

As part of its efforts to expand educational options, the **Georgia Center for Opportunity** was able to advocate on behalf of special needs students in the state. Georgia passed legislation that expands the special needs scholarship. This is a huge win for students and parents affected by the bill, and GCO helped policymakers understand the value of such reforms by connecting them with stories of real students. GCO also rebranded its Hiring Well, Doing Good project to become BETTER WORK. The project focuses on collaborating with local businesses and services to move people off unemployment and into work. This rebrand has enabled GCO to market directly to those seeking work in local communities. Currently, BETTER WORK is up and running in two Georgia cities heavily affected by unemployment, with expansion to more cities planned for the coming year.



GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • georgiapolicy.org

The **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** is excited to celebrate 30 years of “Changing Georgia Policy, Changing Georgians’ Lives” with an anniversary dinner September 16 at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. The keynote speaker is *Wall Street Journal* columnist Jason Riley, author of a new book, *Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell*. Information about the dinner can be found at www.georgiapolicy.org/dinner/. In the 2021 legislative session, Georgia became the first state in the nation to pass legislation prohibiting state regulation of learning pods. These voluntary microgroups of families joined forces to continue their children’s schooling amid the uncertainties of the pandemic, and the approach became an essential education option. An SPN-led push, backed by the Foundation’s fact-based research, informed and emboldened lawmakers. Among the ongoing initiatives in 2021 at the Foundation are a renewed push for housing access and affordability, an investigative journalism initiative to tackle the issues that Georgia newspapers lack the staff or inclination to report, and an examination of Georgia’s tax policy with an eye to lowering rates.

HAWAII

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • grassrootinstitute.org

Most of the “good policy” bills supported by the **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** in the 2021 Legislature failed to make it to the governor’s desk, including a measure to rein in the governor’s emergency powers. That bill included provisions Grassroot Institute had proposed in January, but the measure died on the last day of the session. Other “good policy” measures—related to housing, certificate-of-need laws, the state’s “sunshine” laws, and more—also failed. On the upside, the Institute helped defeat some incredibly bad “bad policy” ideas, including a massive new government housing program and a bill that would have given Hawaii the highest personal income tax rates in the nation, among other egregious tax increases. Outside of Hawaii, the Institute was part of Alaska’s effort to obtain an exemption from the federal Passenger Vessel Services Act. The Institute submitted research to the Alaska Legislature in support of the exemption, which was eventually authorized by Congress and approved by the president.



IDAHO

IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org

The **Idaho Freedom Foundation** decided to find out if colleges and universities are producing men and women of character who leave campus with valuable job skills. The Foundation's investigation revealed that, instead of focusing on critical thinking skills, Boise State University is preaching divisive social justice theories to impressionable students. These theories compromise the achievement of truth and the free exchange of ideas while cultivating anger and resentment among the supposedly aggrieved. The stability and mutual toleration that contributes to individual happiness and good citizenship ends up dangerously undermined. The Foundation's report ignited a fierce debate in the Idaho Legislature during the 2021 session.



ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org

The Illinois Legislature passed new ethics rules about lobbying, financial disclosures, and the legislative watchdog. The bill was improved from earlier versions and incorporated many measures advocated by the **Illinois Policy Institute**. Illinois Policy noted voters have demanded changes to reform public corruption that stop lawmakers from playing by different rules than everyone else. Illinois made an important first step in its break with the corrupt practices that defined the legislative process under former Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan.



IOWA

TAX EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF IOWA • tefiowa.org

The **Tax Education Foundation of Iowa** scored a victory when Governor Kim Reynolds signed a tax reform measure that saves Iowa taxpayers \$1 billion. Some of the key measures of the tax reform law include lowering the top income tax rate to 6.5 percent in 2023 and repealing the county mental health property tax levy. This spring, in partnership with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, TEF Iowa released the *Conservative Iowa Budget*, which advocates keeping spending in line with population growth and inflation. Thanks to the prudent spending by Governor Reynolds and the Republican-led legislature, Iowa's fiscal house is in order, and revenue growth is strong. It is estimated that Iowa will have a \$500 million surplus while maintaining full reserves. TEF Iowa is continuing its work to advance further tax reform next year. Finally, Walt Rogers, deputy director of TEF Iowa, has been traveling the state speaking to groups regarding school choice and the need for reform in public education.





KANSAS

KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org

Kansas Policy Institute worked with a broad group of elected officials and advocates from around the state to further reform property taxes through much-needed Truth in Taxation legislation. For too long, elected officials have been able to hold mill rates steady while letting valuations skyrocket. Modeled after Truth in Taxation legislation in Utah and Tennessee, states that have had property tax transparency in place for more than 30 years, this demonstrates how great policies can spread across the country. KPI created a “Bee Honest” website and a petition urging lawmakers to revisit the Truth and Transparency legislation this session. The Institute is proud to say that Truth in Taxation is now the law in Kansas.

KENTUCKY



BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • bipps.org

Based on ideas from the **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions**, the Kentucky Legislature overrode the Kentucky governor’s veto of pension reform legislation, creating a new pension tier in the Teachers’ Retirement System. Bluegrass recommended the state create a hybrid pension plan offering new teachers a generous defined benefit at retirement while protecting taxpayers from future unfunded liabilities by including defined-contribution components. The bill, which applies to teachers hired after January 1, 2022, was quickly vetoed after passing the General Assembly. The state House of Representatives voted 63–31 to override the veto, and the state Senate quickly followed with its own 25–13 vote in favor of the override. Bluegrass Institute President and CEO Jim Waters said, “We commend legislators for recognizing that no child should be denied a better public education just because they don’t happen to live in the district where the school which would provide them that opportunity is located.”



PEGASUS INSTITUTE • pegasuskentucky.org

As in many states across the country, COVID-19 brought draconian lockdown and business closure measures to Kentucky. The governor, by declaring a state of emergency, assumed wide ranging and unchecked powers by KRS 39A. That needed to change. **Pegasus Institute** set out in the early summer of 2020 to research and craft changes to KRS 39A that would protect fundamental rights and re-balance—or limit altogether—the powers of state government. The Institute partnered with Pacific Legal Foundation to put forward even more reforms, and as a result, Senate Bill 1 was born. Kentucky was the first state in the country to pass a comprehensive emergency powers reform package. The governor then sued to stop the enforcement of the changes, and the reforms are in the hands of the Kentucky Supreme Court. Pegasus remains hopeful the Court will do the right thing.

LOUISIANA

PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • pelicaninstitute.org

Pelican Institute for Public Policy enjoyed a major legislative accomplishment this year with the passage of a tax simplification package that will set Louisiana up for complete tax reform in coming years. The package makes a few important reforms to both the corporate and individual tax codes. For individuals, the deduction of federal income taxes paid is removed and exchanged for lower income taxes across the board, bringing the top rate down from 6 to 4.25 percent. For corporations, the same deduction is removed and buys down rates, also compressing the structure from five to three brackets. The legislation also eliminated the bottom bracket of the franchise tax and began the phase-out of the other bracket. The package includes revenue triggers on both the personal and corporate codes that reinvests future revenue growth to bring income tax brackets down even further. The final stop for approval is on this fall's ballot.



MAINE

MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE • mainepolicy.org

Maine Policy Institute's biggest win this legislative session has been holding the line on tax increases proposed by an increasingly progressive legislature. The Institute's team submitted legislative testimony and activated citizens across the state in opposition to a flurry of proposed tax increases, including a three percent surtax on income earned over \$200,000, a lowering of the estate tax exclusion amount, a six percent digital streaming tax, a "one-time" wealth tax, and a graduated real estate transfer tax. Citizens used Maine Policy's website to submit more than 9,000 emails to lawmakers, legislative committees, executive branch departments, and officials in opposition to these ideas and other bills debated in the legislature this session. The closest Maine came to enacting a tax increase this year was the six percent digital streaming tax, a tax on Mainers' digital subscriptions, like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, etc. After Maine Policy Institute issued a press release on the topic and notified the media to issue corrections to their original budget stories, the six percent digital streaming tax was stripped from the \$8.3 billion majority budget passed in late March.



MARYLAND

MARYLAND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE • mdpolicy.org

Maryland Public Policy Institute chief economist Dr. Stephen Walters wrote in the *City Journal* on May 5 about the harmful effects of police defunding in Baltimore City, where homicides continue to climb. Then in early June, the Maryland Public Policy Institute urged the city to establish an independent auditing board to monitor allocation of \$640 million in federal stimulus funds to agencies and community organizations. More transparency is needed to ensure relief is going to the right places. In an April 9 *City Journal* article, Walters called on Detroit to slash its confiscatory property tax to narrow the racial wealth gap. The *Journal* also interviewed Walters about his Stanford University book, *Boom Towns*, in a June 7 Q&A column. Walters outlined policies that remedy capital shortages and redefine property rights in cities. In a June 23 article in the *Baltimore Sun*, Maryland Public Policy Institute visiting fellow Louis Miserendino described how a coalition of Baltimore merchants is withholding city taxes and other fees "until and unless basic municipal services are restored."





PIONEER INSTITUTE
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

MASSACHUSETTS

PIONEER INSTITUTE • pioneerinstitute.org

Pioneer Institute framed the debate about a graduated income tax proposal headed for the statewide ballot in November 2022, publishing 15 reports; appearing in more than 1,000 television, radio, and print media outlets; and generating 5 million social media impressions. The Institute also executed a campaign targeting 10 states considering school choice legislation with social media, a toolkit, and promotion of *A Vision of Hope*, a book highlighting Catholic school successes. Pioneer established JobMakers, a podcast on immigrant entrepreneurs, completing Pioneer's podcast portfolio, which includes Hubwonk (topical policy interviews) and The Learning Curve (national education policy). The governor advanced Pioneer's recommendation to establish a two-month sales tax holiday, and the legislature passed a bill to make telehealth changes permanent. At Pioneer's prodding, the Department of Public Health made its reporting on COVID cases and deaths in long-term care facilities more transparent.

MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mackinac.org

Let military members and their families use their existing licenses. Ever ask someone from a military family where home is? You get a lot of interesting answers. Military families are transient—they move around and get restationed frequently—and they tend to be highly trained. More than one-third of military spouses work in a field that requires a license or certification, but many states don't recognize out-of-state licenses, which helps drive an unemployment rate for military families three times higher than that of the general population. That's why the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** urged Michigan lawmakers to pass a package of bills allowing military members, veterans, and their families to use their training hours and out-of-state licenses to fulfill licensing mandates in Michigan. This bill package was reintroduced in 2021 with support from Governor Gretchen Whitmer and a bipartisan group of lawmakers; it passed by an overwhelming majority.

MINNESOTA

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • americanexperiment.org

Center of the American Experiment's biggest legislative win is a two-year pause in the implementation of new social studies academic standards. The Center was the first entity to sound the alarm on the direction taken in the first draft of new standards released by the Minnesota Department of Education. Thanks to the Center's research and commentary, 5,000 Minnesotans sent comments to the Department voicing their concerns about the omission of important historical concepts and the insertion of Critical Race Theory-informed perspectives. The Center also launched RaiseOurStandardsMN.com and embarked on a 17-city tour educating Minnesotans on the new standards and the growing presence of Critical Race Theory in Minnesota schools. This led to a legislative hearing in the Senate (with testimony from American Experiment) and an eventual agreement on a two-year moratorium on any new standards. A House provision requiring an Ethnic Studies curriculum in all Minnesota classrooms was also stripped out in the final negotiations, again because of the Center's efforts. The standards moratorium was one of the few conservative victories from the only divided legislature in the country.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • freedomfoundationofminnesota.com

The polls are closed on the primary election in New York City, yet the election results are still unsettled—an appropriate metaphor for an unsettling change in how New Yorkers’ cast their 2021 ballots. New York City is the latest place to experiment with ranked-choice voting (RCV)—an idea that the progressive left has been pitching that threatens the fundamental meaning of “one-person, one-vote” in American elections. After the unsettling results of the 2020 elections, the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** launched a three-part election reform project that began with a comprehensive look at the inherent flaws in RCV. A second report will examine the attempt by several states “to evade the constitutional amendment process and manipulate the Electoral College out of existence” by joining the National Popular Vote Compact. The Freedom Foundation has researched, printed, and now widely distributed these two reports to explain these flawed electoral schemes and outline how to defeat them.



MISSISSIPPI

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI FOUNDATION • empowerms.org

Empower Mississippi led on the passage of legislation that will expand parole eligibility as part of justice system reform in a state with one of the highest incarceration rates in the country. This came almost one year after the governor vetoed similar legislation. In the ensuing time, Empower launched a major campaign to advance the legislation, including immediate and constant commentary on how it is a conservative issue, a “thank you” campaign to legislative champions, legislative hearings, message polling, personal stories, and the building of a broad coalition that included several conservative organizations. In the end, a veto-proof majority supported the Earned Parole Eligibility Act in the House and Senate, and the governor signed the legislation. Parole reform means the state can safely alleviate prison overcrowding by allowing individuals who pose very little societal threat to earn second chances, while also directing limited resources to individuals who pose the biggest threat. Parole eligibility itself creates an incentive for good behavior and rehabilitation in prison.



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mspolicy.org

With the 2021 legislative session over, the **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** is preparing for a major new initiative to advance school choice. Mississippi currently has some of the worst education outcomes in the United States, and only choice, competition, and accountability within the public education sector will give young people in Mississippi the opportunities they have a right to expect. The Center is engaging with audiences and communities across the state as a first step toward assembling a broad, inclusive coalition for reform, united behind a common vision. The Center is also working with national partnership organizations to deliver change. In addition to this groundwork for legislative reform, the Center is starting to message test and use data targeting in order to ensure capability for the mass engagement exercise needed to win this battle.



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

MISSOURI



SHOW-ME INSTITUTE • showmeinstitute.org

After many years of false promise and stalled progress, Missouri has moved the ball forward on school choice. A new bill will allow students in St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, and Columbia to apply for an Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA). The account will give families money to spend on a variety of education-related expenses, such as private school tuition, tutoring, and virtual education. The scholarships are funded by donations to nonprofit organizations, and donors will receive a 100-percent credit on their state taxes for the amount donated. This was the first time the legislature allowed access to a substantial school choice initiative for families outside of the City of Saint Louis and Kansas City. **Show-Me Institute** researchers have been championing school choice for more than a decade, and headway has been slow and hard won. This is a big step in context, and the Institute is hopeful it will set a precedent for more progress.

MONTANA



FRONTIER INSTITUTE • frontierinstitute.org

After a historic election in 2020, Montana policymakers needed ideas on how to get the economy back on track after the coronavirus. To address this challenge, the **Frontier Institute** developed and promoted “The Montana Recovery Agenda”—an extensive report outlining eight specific policy proposals aimed at limiting government growth, reforming the state’s healthcare system, and protecting individual rights. Frontier shared the report with key policymakers and even had a meeting with the new governor’s transition team. Throughout the legislative session, Frontier met with legislators weekly to present ideas in the report and answer policy questions. In addition, Frontier placed several op-eds on the study and several prominent television and radio outlets interviewed Frontier’s CEO Kendall Cotton to discuss the findings. After the legislative session ended in May, Montana adopted seven of the Frontier Institute’s eight recommendations from the Montana Recovery Agenda. The new policies will improve access to healthcare, make the state more attractive to businesses and entrepreneurs, and protect taxpayers by putting firm limits on spending growth.

NEBRASKA



PLATTE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH • platteinstitute.org

Increasing property taxes are a common concern nationwide, as real estate prices rise in a tight housing market. But they’re of particular concern in Nebraska, where owner-occupied housing is taxed at the country’s eighth highest rate. At the beginning of 2021, **Platte Institute** polling showed most Nebraska voters were unsure or unaware of public hearings where local governments set these tax rates. But these voters told the Platte Institute they would like to be notified about how to express their concerns. Thanks to a Platte Institute legislative effort, Nebraskans will now have the opportunity to make their voices heard with the state’s new Truth in Taxation law. Under this policy, property owners will receive direct notification of property tax hearings by mail. The transparency requirement, based on a law enacted in Utah in 1985, will require postcards to be mailed to taxpayers with information about a public hearing when cities, counties, school districts, or community colleges seek a property tax increase greater than 2 percent, plus real growth, resulting from rising property valuations.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • jbartlett.org

New Hampshire passed an Education Savings Account program on June 24, realizing the **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy**'s biggest priority this session. After working on this issue for years, the Center hired a staffer to focus exclusively on this issue and published a study of the proposal in March. Both legislative chambers cited the Center's work numerous times during the debate. Legislative wins also came on tax cuts, business regulations, and occupational licensing reform.



NEW JERSEY

GARDEN STATE INITIATIVE • gardenstateinitiative.org

New Jersey entered the pandemic as one of the most indebted states in country. Yet in the summer of 2020, the governor and legislature ignored expert advice and authorized \$4.3 billion in new borrowing to fund a budget shortfall that never materialized. In op-eds, media interviews, and targeted digital campaigns, the **Garden State Initiative** highlighted that the bonds, which were issued as non-callable and cannot not be repaid early, could create deficits in future years and open the door to a first-in-the-nation statewide property tax—in a state which already suffers under the highest property taxes in the United States. Garden State argued that in the state's fiscal year 2022 budget, suddenly flush from cash in surging tax revenues and federal aid, the state must make an attempt to pay down existing and limit new debt to avoid that fiscal cliff. As part of the budget enacted in June, the legislature allocated \$1.2 billion to pay future infrastructure projects out of pocket rather than through bonding, and \$2.5 billion to reduce existing debts. While the state still has a long way to go to restore order to its fiscal house, these moves were a recognition of that need.



NEW MEXICO

RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION • riograndefoundation.org

The **Rio Grande Foundation** has hired a full-time education coalition builder and started a new education coalition called Opportunities for All Kids New Mexico (OAKNM). Edwin Aybar Lopez, who previously worked at the Libre Institute in New Mexico, is heading the effort. OAKNM supports school choice and creating systems where “money follows the children,” but the political situation remains challenging in “deep-blue” New Mexico. So, in the meantime, OAKNM will also focus its ongoing efforts on bringing much-needed reforms to New Mexico's failing K-12 education system. For example, Lopez published a piece in various New Mexico media outlets on the success of recent reading reforms in Mississippi and detailing how New Mexico had also attempted those reforms (based on efforts by Jeb Bush in Florida) only to abandon them due to political opposition from the unions.





NEW YORK

EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • empirecenter.org

On March 25, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued a directive that required the state's nursing homes to accept coronavirus-positive patients from hospitals, even if they had not fully recovered yet. A growing debate ensued over how big a role this policy played in exacerbating the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes. In June 2020, the **Empire Center for Public Policy** uncovered soaring vacancy rates in nursing homes. In a report, Empire argued this suggested the state was not revealing the true death toll of nursing home residents. That number, according to Empire, had to be thousands higher than officially reported. Empire filed a Freedom of Information Law request to give New Yorkers the accurate picture of nursing home deaths that the government was not providing. The data confirmed what had been suspected for months: The document listed the dates and locations of nearly 16,000 deaths involving long-term care residents—six thousand more deaths than the New York government had claimed. This revelation lit the match that ultimately led to Cuomo's resignation in August 2021.



NORTH CAROLINA

JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • johnlocke.org

The **John Locke Foundation** has had a productive legislative year, having helped pass the essential donor privacy bill in the state senate, secured election integrity via bills banning collusive settlements, and fought for major tax reform now included in the senate budget. This is a huge victory for fiscal conservatives, as it will reduce personal income tax and eliminate the corporate income tax. The Foundation also took the lead on North Carolina's first "regulatory sandbox" bill, championed academic transparency in K-12 public schools, and worked to ensure school choice access for low-income families through expanded Opportunity Scholarships. A Taxpayer Bill of Rights constitutional amendment is closer to appearing on the 2022 ballot, thanks to the Foundation's efforts. During this time, the Foundation has grown its owned audience substantially and hosted weekly virtual panels, offering fellow SPN friends a platform to share their research.

OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • buckeyeinstitute.org

The pandemic-related school closures set back Ohio's children, and parents in Ohio had fewer options than those in other states to address educational performance issues with their children. Simply put, Ohio was falling behind, and so were its students. The solution was clear: Ohio needed an Education Savings Account program, which offers an innovative and cost-effective way for Ohio to manage its education budget. **The Buckeye Institute** had long advocated this path forward and inspired policymakers to create the state's first-ever ESA program and expand existing school choice options for Ohio's students. Both provisions were included in Ohio's biennial budget and signed into law. The Afterschool Child Enrichment Education Savings Account program, or ACE, will provide parents with \$500 to spend on desperately needed educational resources for their children. The program will help children in low-income families—particularly those in rural and urban areas—who are at increased risk of falling behind their peers, and it will help *all* parents—who need support, certainty, and flexibility to ensure their students' success—regardless of their school district.



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • ocpathink.org

This year, thanks to the ongoing efforts of the **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs**, Oklahoma lawmakers passed some of the most transformative school choice measures the state has ever seen. Decades from now, thousands of Oklahomans will have achieved great things thanks to the education made possible this year when lawmakers voted to provide up to \$25 million annually in tax credits to those donating to scholarship-granting organizations. Previously, the Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship program was limited to \$3.5 million in tax credits, which has allowed around 3,000 students to receive a quality, private-school education. Now that this cap has risen to \$25 million, as many as 22,000 children may do the same. This tax-credit scholarship program has helped homeless children, those recovering from addiction, children trapped in failing schools, and more. Senate Pro Tempore Greg Treat, Governor Kevin Stitt, House Speaker Charles McCall, and all the lawmakers who supported this program deserve thanks. By increasing school choice, lawmakers voted to make Oklahoma a better place—one where families from all backgrounds can thrive.



OREGON

CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • cascadepolicy.org

In Oregon, restaurants may sell beer, cider, and wine for delivery and take-out orders; and distilleries can sell bottled liquor and cocktail kits to go. However, bars and restaurants were barred from selling pre-mixed, to-go cocktails in sealed containers for offsite consumption. A December 2020 emergency session of the Oregon Legislature temporarily legalized cocktails to go, and this law was originally set to sunset 60 days after the end of the governor's state of emergency. However, **Cascade Policy Institute** analysts wrote that Oregonians should have the freedom to purchase cocktails to go after the emergency orders expired. If purchasing cocktails is safe during a pandemic, then it's certainly safe after the pandemic ends. Senate Bill 317, passed and signed by Governor Kate Brown in the 2021 Regular Legislative Session, did just this. This bill recognizes that Oregonians are capable of safely enjoying cocktails to go with their take-out orders even after pandemic restrictions are eased and restaurants return to full capacity.



PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • commonwealthfoundation.org

On May 18, Pennsylvanians turned out in record numbers for a primary election to cast their vote in a referendum on Governor Tom Wolf's emergency powers. A majority voted to prevent Wolf from extending his disaster declarations indefinitely and ruling unilaterally under the pretext of a statewide emergency. **Commonwealth Foundation** began the movement to restore checks and balances to Governor Wolf's pandemic response last summer. By supplying lawmakers with policy analysis and supporting data, Commonwealth persuaded the legislature that Wolf's sweeping business shutdowns and restrictions had gone too far. In response, lawmakers passed numerous bills, including legislation that paved the way for the constitutional amendments, to protect Pennsylvanians' civil liberties and to preserve lives and livelihoods. This year, Commonwealth achieved victory on the ballot referendum by employing a multi-faceted issue campaign with tailored messages for both right-leaning and left-leaning voters. Thanks to this statewide team effort, no governor can ever rule Pennsylvania by fiat again. As many legislators, community leaders, and media figures acknowledged, Commonwealth Foundation's leadership was instrumental to this historic triumph.





SOUTH CAROLINA

PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • palmettopromise.org

Palmetto Promise Institute is excited to partner with US Sen. Tim Scott in announcing PPI's new center, The Artis Ware Center for Education Opportunity. Named to honor the inspiring legacy of Sen. Scott's grandfather, the Center will address the education crisis facing South Carolina students and parents, with a special focus on education finance, education choice, and prioritizing the voices and needs of students and families. As the nation moves on past COVID-19, it is undeniable that the pandemic has reshaped the education conversation. Parents have never been hungrier for flexible alternatives to one-size-fits-all systems, teachers have reached a breaking point, and students are lacking the skillsets to succeed later in life. This cannot be the new status quo. The Artis Ware Center for Education Opportunity aims to be at the center of the conversation and will be an asset for students, parents, teachers, and legislators alike.



TENNESSEE

BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • beacontn.org

This year, the Tennessee General Assembly took the final step necessary to give voters the opportunity to put right-to-work in the state constitution—**Beacon Center of Tennessee's** top policy priority this year. Right-to-work states like Tennessee have higher wage growth, employment growth, and population growth. Voters will now have the choice to enshrine this important right in the state's constitution during the 2022 election cycle. Throughout the pandemic, Governor Bill Lee used executive orders to temporarily waive regulations, increasing the Tennessee healthcare system's capacity to fight coronavirus. Beacon has consistently argued that if a healthcare regulation had to be waived to more effectively fight a pandemic, what purpose did it ultimately serve? Luckily, lawmakers agreed with some of Beacon's suggestions for reform, making many of Governor Lee's actions permanent: eliminating and reforming certificate-of-need laws, expanding providers eligible to use telemedicine, and eliminating onerous duplicate licenses on laboratory testing facilities. With Beacon's increased focus on an innovation-first agenda this year, it should come as no surprise that a huge victory was the passage of one of the most significant broad-based innovation freedom developments in Tennessee, one of the first states to pass such a law. This law ensures new online marketplaces like Uber, Instacart, and Airbnb do not face a patchwork of different regulations at the local level; only the state government can regulate the operation of such marketplaces.

TEXAS

TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • texaspolicy.com

This year, **Texas Public Policy Foundation** has worked tirelessly on election integrity issues. TPPF undertook research on voter ID, voter verification measures for mail-in ballots, and legislative leadership on protecting elections. Election security should not be controversial, and election security and integrity measures are not suppressive or racist. TPPF's report, "Election Integrity Case Studies and Policy," revealed that current problems pre-dated the 2020 elections, and that voter turnout has steadily increased. While 60 percent of voters lack confidence in our elections, 80 percent support election integrity measures. "Election integrity and confidence in elections are key issues facing the state of Texas. Much good was accomplished during the 2021 regular legislative session, but much work remains to be done," the paper read in part. "The purpose of this paper is to document the still-lingering vulnerabilities in the Texas Election Code and describe the legislative fixes that were proposed during the 2021 regular session that should be passed during the July 2021 special session."



UTAH

LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • libertasutah.org

Libertas Institute has been working hard during the "off-season" this year. In September, the Institute will release its first edition of *The Libertas Guide to Local Government*, a primer for local officials to help explain the appropriate role of government at the local level. It provides examples of both good and bad government, as well as explaining the principles underlying good government. Libertas is also doubling down on regulatory sandboxes by offering grants to other SPN groups who are working on getting sandbox legislation passed. Libertas hosted three policy calls to help educate partners on both sandboxes and digital privacy. For more information on the sandbox grants, interested groups can email jessica@libertas.org.



SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE • sutherlandinstitute.org

Sutherland Institute launched its Civics Initiative—a statewide campaign focused on restoring civics education starting in Utah and beyond. The multi-platform communications effort began by featuring American Enterprise Institute's Yuval Levin, who emphasizes the importance of institutions of civic education in a new video and radio series. Sutherland is hosting cottage meetings—focusing on a grassroots approach—to grow awareness around the critical issue of the nation's K-12 education.



VERMONT



ETHAN ALLEN INSTITUTE • ethanallen.org

While Vermont remains a dark place for the liberty movement, the **Ethan Allen Institute** did play a role in two positive outcomes from the 2021 legislative session. The first was on pension reform, a growing problem that for years has been ignored. But this year, working with a bipartisan coalition, the Institute was able to get the state treasurer to acknowledge the problem and the legislature to begin the process of reforming the system. Real success, if it comes, will come next year. The other major success was helping to slow the march of the Transportation Climate Initiative. Working with other SPN affiliates across the region, the Institute was able to raise awareness of the potential impacts of this de-facto carbon tax on motor fuels to the point where only three states were willing to sign onto the memorandum of understanding. Of those three, two remain tied up in legislative limbo. With more hard teamwork, the Institute looks forward to announcing the program's ultimate demise in the near future.

VIRGINIA



THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • thomasjeffersoninst.org

Having secured more than two dozen new taxes or tax increases in the last two years, Governor Ralph Northam's string of success may have come to an end. His effort to impose a new gasoline tax—in the form of the Transportation and Climate Initiative, an interstate compact raising taxes to 50 cents a gallon and forcing rationing on motor fuel—is itself running out of fuel and time in Virginia, due in no small part to the efforts of the **Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy**. Despite a dozen commentaries in papers including *The Washington Post* and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, two major studies, an online video with social media advertising and an online petition, Northam and his staff have remained mum about their plans, other than to have promised a General Assembly vote, which likely will not come.



VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • virginiainstitute.org

Of the issue-focused coalitions in which the **Virginia Institute for Public Policy** is currently involved, engaging on policies ranging from energy reform and healthcare freedom to administrative governance and regulatory reform, one of the fastest-growing coalitions to date is Virginia Fair Elections. The focus of this coalition, as President Lynn Taylor penned to every legislator in Virginia, is to recognize that it is not relevant whether voters' worries about our election processes are grounded in absolute fact or not. What is important is that approximately half of all Virginia voters—Republican, Democrat, and Independent—do not trust the veracity and transparency of the country's elections. Virginia Fair Elections pivots on the desperate need to restore Virginians' faith in the Republic. This coalition exists to streamline the work of the growing number of organizations, activists, and advocates into a concentrated tide of action behind legislative models produced specifically for this purpose.

WASHINGTON

FREEDOM FOUNDATION • freedomfoundation.com

The **Freedom Foundation** celebrated the third anniversary of the *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision by announcing its national expansion. In Washington, the Foundation obtained video of a union representative trashing the organization and lying about its work in a state employee orientation training session. In Oregon, the Foundation filed a first-of-its-kind lawsuit against the first-in-the-nation state legislative staff union, while the Foundation's outreach has resulted in SEIU membership plummeting to a 36.5 percent non-membership rate. In California, canvassing teams have relaunched outreach efforts in the state's university system, with significant, positive results. In Ohio, government employees are finding their administrators are abiding their wishes to stop union dues deductions from their paychecks, even when the union tries to deny them their rights. In Pennsylvania, Foundation outreach efforts resulted in the shuttering of one of the Keystone State's three unions affiliated with the Office and Professional Employees International Union. The Freedom Foundation currently has nearly 80 lawsuits fighting against public sector union abuses.



WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER • washingtonpolicy.org

1.2 million. That's how many people have watched a video from the Free Markets Destroy campaign, less than a year after launching. Free Markets Destroy, a project of the **Washington Policy Center**, is an innovative, bold effort to explain the power of the free market to the next generation. WPC launched this project in response to a growing fascination with socialism among young Americans. WPC wanted to show young people how markets can help us build a better world. The effort includes informative, interactive videos, a campaign website, a merchandise line, live engagement events and much more. The project specifically targeted 18-40-year-olds, engaging more than 11 million social media accounts across North America. More than one million users have actively engaged in the campaign—the majority of them in Washington state. In less than a year, the campaign has been liked on social media by more than 20,000 Generation Z's and Millennials across every corner of the United States.



WEST VIRGINIA

CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • cardinalinstitute.com

With powerful storytelling, the **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** was able to bring education opportunity to thousands of children in West Virginia. The Institute collected stories from across the state to highlight the diversity in education needs, and to show the value that programs like Education Savings Accounts (in the form of the Hope Scholarship) could bring to people's lives. Cardinal also worked with teachers to help shift the narrative that school choice reforms are somehow "anti-teacher," which helped them gain new allies in their push to improve the state's education offerings. Through their efforts to share the stories of parents, teachers, and students, the Institute secured a massive win for education freedom. Cardinal is now working to inform West Virginia families of the new education options available to them.



WISCONSIN



BADGER INSTITUTE • badgerinstitute.org

In May, the **Badger Institute** learned that while legislative Republicans had removed some 400 items from Governor Evers' budget proposal, they quietly kept \$100 million for a state-run venture capital project. The Badger Institute asked Visiting Fellow Andrew Colson to write a piece examining the risks of such a proposal and reached out to the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, the MacIver Institute, Americans for Prosperity Wisconsin, and Empower Wisconsin to draft a joint letter encouraging lawmakers to create a level playing field for all entrepreneurs, not a scheme to benefit a few at taxpayers' expense. When proponents said Michigan had benefited from a similar program, Badger reached out to friends at the Mackinac Center to get figures that debunked that claim. In June, Republican legislators announced the measure was being dropped. The governor signed evenhanded police reform bills that Badger recommended in a 2020 report, increasing transparency, data collection, and reporting of use-of-force incidents. The legislature also passed a bill Badger championed, clarifying that Wisconsin hair braiders need not acquire a cosmetology license to practice their vocation.



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

The **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** is at the forefront of the fight against political indoctrination in the classroom. WILL released a comprehensive report, entitled "Opening the Schoolhouse Door: Promoting Curriculum Transparency," showing how public-school students are being taught controversial curriculum materials, including the tenets of Critical Race Theory, across the state, in both urban and rural districts. The pandemic and virtual learning gave parents an unprecedented peek into their children's classrooms, yet it remains immensely difficult to access the materials that are being used—WILL was asked to pay thousands of dollars in fees for these materials. In response to these challenges, WILL drafted model legislation and worked with legislators to create a bill that will require transparency and access to learning materials in all public-school classrooms. This bill should receive a hearing and be voted on in the fall.



INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT • reforminggovernment.org

The **Institute for Reforming Government** released a comprehensive, first of its kind oversight manual that prescribes best practices for the state legislature when conducting oversight of the executive branch and municipalities. Wisconsin is witnessing an alarming trend in executive and bureaucratic failures, as well as claims of power for which there is no support in the constitution or statutes. In the last year alone, Wisconsin has witnessed unprecedented delays in processing unemployment insurance applications, unlawful invocations of emergency power, a failure to keep track of educational needs for more than 20,000 students during the pandemic, and many other instances of questionable activities in both state and local governments. Justice Daniel Kelly, IRG's Senior Fellow in Constitutional Governance noted this oversight manual encourages the Legislature to be curious about executive branch failures and unjustifiable intrusions on legislative authority, and provides step-by-step guidance on how to channel that curiosity into effective oversight investigations and hearings.

THE 1851 CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL LAW • ohioconstitution.org

The **1851 Center for Constitutional Law**'s proposed amendments were written into Ohio's pandemic and emergency powers reform bill, SB 22, which—though far from perfect—limits the duration of declared “emergencies” and permits the General Assembly to rescind executive orders. 1851 Center amendments rein in local health department authority, vest Ohioans with the right to challenge pandemic orders in their home counties, and require the state to pay “reasonable attorneys fees” to those who “successfully challenge an order or rule,” and preclude gamesmanship.



1889 INSTITUTE • 1889institute.org

The **1889 Institute**'s work to get out transparent data regarding COVID-19 helped to bring a relatively early end to the state of emergency and mask mandates in Oklahoma. Due to the Institute's initial efforts, a bill requiring the state's Supreme Court to post a docket passed the legislature. On educational policy, the Institute has long been calling for more scrutiny of curricula, and a recent success was the passage of a bill banning Critical Race Theory in schools. A measure to move school board elections to November, which the Institute called for, is still alive. Two measures that were the Institute's early ideas died in the House, but passed the Senate: 1) state-provided liability insurance for teachers, which would have weakened unions, and 2) price transparency in medical services. In Michigan, the Mackinac Center leveraged a co-published paper, presenting the idea of a compact among states to end corporate welfare, into a new law. The Institute has many more ideas and proposals that would make a difference in other states.



AMERICAN CONSUMER INSTITUTE • theamericanconsumer.org

As the third quarter of 2021 begins, the **American Consumer Institute** continues to fulfill its mission of raising awareness of how government policy affects consumers. ACI has published op-eds in national outlets such as *Real Clear Policy*, *Forbes*, *The Hill*, and *The Morning Consult*. ACI also launched a new podcast, *Policy-ish Talk*, that raises awareness on major policy issues, including the shared economy, drug pricing, and broadband infrastructure. Last quarter, much of ACI's work focused on tech policy and the need for Washington to create an open regulatory environment that fosters growth and innovation. Specifically, ACI focused on explaining how a departure from the consumer welfare standard as the basis of antitrust law in favor of a big business is bad mentality will harm consumers. Five bills introduced by the House Antitrust Subcommittee, as well as growing public and political support for reining in big tech, underscore the need for this work.



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI • goacta.org

In May, the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** learned of Senate Bill 135, introduced by Ohio state Sen. Jerry C. Cirino. This bill adds more accountability and transparency to how institutions manage their endowments. ACTA leaders met with Sen. Cirino to learn about his interest in higher education reform and guided him to several ACTA publications that cover the importance of free speech and donor intent. On June 16, SB 135 passed the full Ohio Senate by a vote of 31–2, and it is now in consideration in the House of Representatives. The bill, which provides limited standing to donors to enforce the terms of their gift agreements, is the most significant revision to the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act in recent years. Should it pass the House, Ohio will have some of the strongest protections for donors' rights.





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

Over the coming months, four **American Enterprise Institute** scholars will release new books designed for a wide audience on critical issues facing America today. Titles include *Uncontrolled Spread*, by Scott Gottlieb, on the nation's pandemic response and how to prepare for future threats; *The Poor Side of Town: And Why We Need It*, by Howard Husock, on how current housing policy is hurting the very communities it intends to help; *No Way to Treat a Child: How the Foster Care System, Family Courts, and Racial Activists Are Wrecking Young Lives*, by Naomi Schaefer Riley, who sheds light on our broken child welfare system; and *Agency: The Four Point Plan (F.R.E.E.) for ALL Children to Overcome the Victimhood Narrative and Discover Their Pathway to Power*, by Ian Rowe, who offers a blueprint for empowering disadvantaged young people. If you would like to request a copy of these books or are interested in hearing one of these scholars speak, please contact AEI's external affairs team at AEICoalitions@aei.org.



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

The **American Legislative Exchange Council** laid the foundation for individuals to enjoy greater transparency in their states' tax laws with its Truth in Taxation model legislation. In Nebraska, taxpayers will now receive a notice when their property taxes are increasing by more than two percent, whether the increase is due to a change in their home's valuation or in the tax rate. In Kansas, Governor Laura Kelly, a Democrat, signed the Truth in Taxation property tax reform into law, demonstrating bipartisan support for this common-sense policy. After the success of Truth in Taxation in Utah and Tennessee, Kansas and Nebraska have set a new gold standard on this policy initiative. The ALEC model Education Savings Account Act also took off this year, with four states creating new, innovative ESA programs: Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, and Indiana. As state legislators continue to build the immediate post-pandemic future, ALEC looks forward to continuing to demonstrate how ALEC model policies can help states create countless opportunities to ensure government accountability and preserve individual freedom.



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

This year, **America's Future** launched a new membership program specifically built to empower young professionals to make an impact in their communities, their careers, and their lives. Members unlock a host of benefits such as monthly briefings on pressing issues; monthly professional development events and workshops; volunteer opportunities; and a nationwide network of support from like-minded peers, leaders, and friends. These offerings help members build confidence in defending their values, build skills to advance their careers, and experience deeper community involvement. This year, AF members have discussed student loan forgiveness with experts at Reason, learned effective interview techniques from Talent Market, discussed social media censorship with the Lincoln Network and the American Principles Project, and more. Members also received exclusive access to apply for AF's new Mastermind course. For 12 weeks, participants work with each other and an expert trainer to refine skills that are crucial for enacting change. The Mastermind program features two tracks: grassroots, featuring expert trainer Jessica Anderson of Heritage Action, and professional development, featuring expert trainer Chaz Cirame of Cc:External Affairs, Inc. With more than 225 members and counting, AF membership is a growing hive of active, civil, and curious citizens who are making an impact and helping each other flourish.

THE BEACON HILL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH • beaconhill.org



A study by **The Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy** finds that the proposed “millionaire’s tax” headed for the Massachusetts ballot in 2022 will likely harm the state’s economy with the loss of jobs, investment, and disposable income. Several studies have warned of its harmful effects, but few have identified the economic losses in detail by using a tax model. Beacon Hill’s study, based on the Institute’s State Tax Analysis Modeling Program (STAMP) found that the state would lose high-income households to other states. House Bill 86 would amend the Massachusetts constitution by imposing a four percent surtax on income exceeding \$1 million. Overall, the proposed surtax would decrease the demand for labor services and the quantity of labor services supplied. It would further increase the cost of obtaining capital services by reducing the after-tax profits that owners could plan on receiving from investments in their business. These effects would further manifest themselves as a reduction in private-sector jobs, disposable income, and state gross domestic product.

BECKET • beckletlaw.org



On June 17, **Becket’s** victory bell (hanging in the office) was rung loudly! In a unanimous US Supreme Court decision, Becket’s clients, exemplary foster mothers Sharonell Fulton and Toni Simms-Busch and their Catholic foster care agency, were protected. In *Sharonell Fulton et. al. v. City of Philadelphia*, the city told Catholic Social Services, who has been serving children in need for more than two hundred years, that it had to either change its religious practices or close down, thus preventing children from being placed with loving foster parents like Sharonell Fulton and Toni Simms-Busch. Writing the opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts made clear that the city cannot exclude foster parents or Catholic Social Services simply because city officials disagree with the religious agency’s sincere Catholic beliefs about marriage. But it’s even bigger than that, and its effects will be far-reaching. Besides determining the fate of Catholic Charities’ foster and adoption agencies, the decision will affect all other faith-based services, such as soup kitchens, recidivism programs, battered women and children’s centers, and many other do-good organizations critical to a prosperous civil society.

CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER • capitalresearch.org



Without question, the biggest legislative wins by the **Capital Research Center** in 2021 are the legislative battles continuing throughout the country regarding the banning of outside private spending on elections. The Center has covered the role Mark Zuckerberg’s foundation played in funding the Center for Tech and Civic Life at length, and testified in Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina to help guide those state legislatures as they passed election reform bills.

CENTENNIAL INSTITUTE • ccu.edu/centennial



Centennial Institute hosted a sold-out, in-person Western Conservative Summit June 18–19 in Denver, with thousands joining online from across the country. Keynotes included Victor Davis Hanson, Andy Ngo, Brandon Tatum, Lauren Boebert, and Chad Wolf. The event can be watched on Centennial’s YouTube channel. There viewers can also access seven hot-topic workshops from The Heritage Foundation, American Federation for Children, FreedomWorks, Heritage Action, the Freedom Center at Liberty University, and Americans for Prosperity, and six mini-documentaries on the following issues: public lands, energy, education, the 2nd Amendment, young conservatives, and the American Rodeo.



COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • cei.org

Competitive Enterprise Institute will host a series of major in-person events this fall in Washington, DC, at The REACH at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The Julian L. Simon Memorial Award events will begin with a dinner Tuesday, September 21, at which CEI will toast the escape from the collective “Upside Down” world to honor this year’s award winner, William Easterly of New York University. Tim Harford—author of *The Under Cover Economist* and *The Data Detective*, and host of the Cautionary Tales podcast—will deliver the keynote address at dinner. Both guest speakers will participate in CEI’s exclusive half-day policy summit the following morning. Visit <https://dinner.cei.org/> to purchase individual registrations for either event, or contact Heather Browning at 202-331-2272 or heather.browning@cei.org to reserve your table.



EDCHOICE • edchoice.org

The wins just keep coming for **EdChoice** and families who need K–12 educational options. This year, 14 states enacted 18 new or expanded educational choice policies—and there are a few more potentially in the wings as of this update. The pandemic has awakened the spirit of educational choice, and families are going to keep pushing to make sure things don’t go back to the status quo.



FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE • firstliberty.org

First Liberty Institute appealed an IRS determination denying tax exempt status to Christians Engaged, a nonprofit organization that exists to educate and empower Christians to pray for our nation and elected officials, vote, and be civically engaged. In a letter issued in May, the IRS argued that Christians Engaged was not eligible for 501(c)(3) status in part because “[B]ible teachings are typically affiliated with the [Republican] party and candidates.” Christians Engaged incorporated in July 2019 as a Texas nonprofit corporation “formed exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, or scientific purposes.” From its religious perspective, Christians Engaged provides nonpartisan religious and civic education, focusing on encouraging and educating Christians to be civically engaged as a part of their religious practice. Christians Engaged applied for tax exempt status in late 2019. On May 18, 2021, IRS Exempt Organizations Director Stephen A. Martin denied the application, contending that Christians Engaged “engage[s] in prohibited political campaign intervention” and “operate[s] for a substantial non-exempt private purpose and for the private interests of the [Republican] party.”



FREE STATE FOUNDATION • freestatefoundation.org

Free State Foundation scholars have been leading voices in opposing the Biden broadband plan, which initially proposed that the federal government spend an additional \$100 billion dollars, over and above billions already in the pipeline, to spur ubiquitous broadband deployment and adoption. While the goal of achieving universal deployment and adoption may be worthy, the Biden Administration’s plan contains several troublesome aspects: (1) prioritizes municipal and nonprofit networks rather than private investment; (2) does not prioritize unserved areas; (3) implies a need for rate regulation; and (4) prefers fiber networks to all other technologies, regardless of economic efficiency, due to so-called future proofing. A series of recent papers by FSF scholars critique the Biden plan and encourage market-oriented, federalist solutions on broadband policy.

INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH • ifs.org

Ten states now boast strong citizen privacy protections, thanks to successful efforts in four states this year to pass legislation shielding the membership lists of nonprofit organizations from prying state officials. The **Institute for Free Speech** played a key role in raising awareness of the need for reform and advising local stakeholders, including SPN state affiliates. The push comes after a determined effort by politicians to silence criticism of their agendas by monitoring Americans' support for groups that speak about government. Citizens should not have to risk harassment or retaliation from state bureaucrats to exercise their First Amendment right to join and support a cause. Democracy functions best when every American is safe to associate with fellow citizens and participate in political discussion. In 2021, legislation protecting citizen privacy passed in Arkansas (S.B. 535), Iowa (H.F. 309), South Dakota (S.B. 103), and Tennessee (H.B. 159). These four states join Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Utah, and West Virginia with similar protections.



THE JESSE HELMS CENTER • jessehelmscenter.org

It's been a busy summer and fall for **The Jesse Helms Center**. The team has been hosting its signature outreach experience for high school students, the Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge (FELC). Now in its 26th year, FELC is a weeklong leadership camp held on college campuses throughout the nation. It teaches teens the value of the free enterprise system and the importance of America's founding principles. In early August, FELC hosted the same experience virtually. For more information visit www.felcexperience.org.

In mid-June, Marshall Billingslea, former President Trump's special envoy for arms control, was the featured speaker for the Admiral James W. Nance Foreign Policy Lecture Series. Ambassador Billingslea shared about the threats posed to America by China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. His remarks may be viewed at www.jessehelmscenter.org.



JUDICIAL WATCH • judicialwatch.org

Judicial Watch received records detailing Wellesley Public Schools in Massachusetts using "affinity spaces" that divide students and staff members based on race as a priority and objective of the school district's "diversity, equity, and inclusion plan." The school district also admitted that between September 1, 2020, and May 17, 2021, it created "five distinct" segregated spaces. Judicial Watch obtained the documents after filing a Massachusetts Public Records Law request for records concerning the number of affinity spaces, the policies regarding their creation and use, the topics discussed, and any analysis of whether affinity spaces that exclude certain races are consistent with state and federal law, which would include the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution, the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment, and the Massachusetts School Attendance Law. Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton stated, "These documents confirm how Wellesley Public Schools segregated students and staff by race without thinking about what's legal in pursuit of extremist critical race theory agenda."



LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE • leadershipinstitute.org

As June ends and half of 2021 is complete, the **Leadership Institute** is happy to share that there have been 35 Communications Trainings, with 475 graduates and a total of 142 training hours. A couple highlights from the first half of 2021 include the Capitol Hill Speech Writing Workshop held at the Conservative Policy Institute (CPI) and the Introduction to Television Techniques Workshop with Sen. Rand Paul's staff. The Capitol Hill Speech Writing Workshop was one of LI's first hybrid events broadcast from CPI, and a total of 65 people (online and in-person) received training. Ten staff from Sen. Paul's office attended the Introduction to Television Techniques Workshop. This same training will be offered every day at the SPN 29th Annual Meeting from August 30 to September 2. In addition to the Television Techniques Workshop, LI will offer four On-Camera Television Workshops.

LINCOLN NETWORK • joinlincoln.org

On June 17, **Lincoln Network's** Vice President for National Security and Government Oversight Dan Lips testified before a subcommittee of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on cyber threats facing state and local governments. Lips argued that the federal government should assist state and local governments by streamlining federal rules, prioritizing cybersecurity within an existing DHS grant program, and sharing meaningful threat information and security recommendations. Lips also recommended that Congress conduct a strategic review of national cyber threats and assess current and future resource needs to manage long-term cybersecurity risks.

PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH CENTER • perc.org

This legislative session, **Property and Environment Research Center** remains committed to advancing conservation through market principles at a state and federal level. In Montana, PERC helped stop a bill that would have banned environmental nonprofit organizations from purchasing more than 80 acres of agricultural land. Policy director Hannah Downey testified that there is no reason for believers in individual liberty, property rights, and free markets to abandon the defense of those values when a conservation group's rights are at stake. PERC also supported a state legislative effort to promote elk tolerance and conservation by landowners in Montana by creating additional landowner-sponsored elk hunting licenses. Though the bill ultimately did not pass, PERC is committed to working with state wildlife managers, legislative leaders, landowners, and stakeholders to move the idea forward.

REASON FOUNDATION • reason.org

Texas lawmakers have passed a groundbreaking state employee pension reform plan that will save taxpayers approximately \$15 billion in long-term costs, ensure that legacy pension benefits are fully funded, and shift new state workers into a financially sustainable 401(k)-style retirement plan designed to avoid future unfunded liabilities. The plan, which will serve more than 300,000 active and retired Texas state employees, was developed with assistance from **Reason Foundation's** Pension Integrity Project in collaboration with state Sen. Joan Huffman, Governor Greg Abbott and his policy team, state Rep. Greg Bonnen, the Texas Public Employees Association, and Texas 2036. The team also drew on the expertise of Americans for Tax Reform, Americans for Prosperity-Texas, Equable Institute, the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and other stakeholders who share a commitment to keeping Texas prosperous. "Under this new plan, Texas will be able to deliver all of the promised retirement benefits to past and current employees while avoiding new, financially unsustainable promises for future workers," said Reason Vice President of Government Reform Leonard Gilroy. Reason launched the Pension Integrity Project in 2014 to help states across



the country develop financially sustainable retirement plans. Today, unfunded liabilities for retirees at the state and municipal levels have grown to more than \$1.5 trillion, and public officials around the country are drawing on Reason's expertise in developing accurate forecasting and defined contribution pension systems. For more information, contact Leonard Gilroy at leonard.gilroy@reason.org.

THE COLLEGE FIX • thecollegefix.com

Higher education has been identified as one of the key battlegrounds for the future of this nation. With that, the Student Free Press Association continues to sound the alarm and drive the national discussion on problems plaguing colleges and universities through its flagship daily news publication, **The College Fix**. The website (www.thecollegefix.com) receives well over 10 million page views each year and thousands of other news sources cite its articles annually. This year the association also created a large-scale database of campus cancel-culture incidents to highlight and quantify the massive, ongoing problem. The database collated the cancel-culture impact on higher education in a powerful one-stop-shop format that allows lawmakers, policy makers, watchdogs, and others to use the information on a regional, statewide, or national level to help shape policy and legislation to fight and halt censorship and political correctness. In 2021, to advance a mission to reform the media, the association also hosted the most journalism fellows in its 11-year history, sending nearly a dozen students and recent grads in the spring and summer to work at respected news outlets to help launch their media careers.

THE FUND FOR AMERICAN STUDIES • tfas.org

The Fund for American Studies was pleased to welcome students back to Washington, DC, in person for a variety of programs teaching liberty and leadership. Despite restrictions inhibiting the organization's flagship international programs, TFAS hosted its first-ever program in Croatia from July 17 to July 31. Held at the University of Dubrovnik, 30 students from South Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe participated in the two-week interdisciplinary course where TFAS professors Ibrahim Al-Marashi, PhD, and Nikolai Wenzel, PhD, led modules on political and economic liberties. Stateside, TFAS hosted more than 330 students for its undergraduate Academic Internship and Law Fellowship Programs in Washington, DC. Students interned at the nation's leading think tanks, nonprofits, law firms, and government offices while taking upper-level economics courses with world-class TFAS faculty at George Mason University and attending professional development workshops and guest lectures. TFAS facilitated the exploration of free-market economics, individual liberty, and limited government for students and law fellows, thereby preparing them to become honorable leaders of the future.

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION • heritage.org

States have a chance to lead safety-net reform and operate programs in a way that respects and advances the dignity of low-income beneficiaries, details a May 2021 report from **The Heritage Foundation's** Visiting Fellow Leslie Ford. Among the key work-promotion policies covered in detail are 1 statutory work requirements, 2 frequent check-ins with the work-capable, and 3 effective job-training programs. By focusing on the core principles of work promotion, program integrity, and parental responsibility, state legislators and administrators will be more effective in helping vulnerable individuals permanently rise above poverty and better at preventing despair and alienation among recipients who deserve better. If they are successful in those areas, state policymakers will achieve their mandate: to improve the well-being of the citizens they serve. For more information, see "Safety-Net Reform: How State Policymakers Can Lead," at heritage.org/welfare.


THE COLLEGE FIX





1655 North Fort Myer Drive, Suite 360 • Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: 703-243-1655 • Fax: 703-740-0314 • info@spn.org

SPN.org

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