



State Solutions. National Impact.

SPRING 2021

Problems are not solved in Washington, DC.

Problems are solved at
the state and local level.

2021: The State Moment

This Network is driving key reforms in the states and serves as the best check against growth of government in Washington, DC.

Tracie

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OUR VISION

State Policy Network is pursuing a vision of an America where personal freedom, innovation, opportunity, and a more peaceful society help all Americans flourish. State Policy Network was founded to support the growth of a collaborative and entrepreneurial network of state think tanks, including 64 independent state think tank affiliates and more than 90 associate partners.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

OUR STRATEGY

- Incubating think tanks and accelerating their development through strategic planning, training, and coaching;
- Connecting talented state leaders so they can learn, challenge, and grow together, with the aim of cultivating state solutions that collectively yield national impact; and,
- Defending the 50-state think tank network by disseminating best practices, critical resources when members are attacked, and fighting assaults on free speech and citizen privacy.

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For the full SPN staff list,
visit spn.org/staff.

Dear Friends,

2020 may be behind us, but 2021 is already shaping up to be an eventful year mixed with challenges and opportunities. Some of us may be discouraged by what's happening in Washington, DC, with the new administration and makeup of Congress. There is no doubt the Biden agenda will include progressive reforms that will expand the size of government.

But I have a great deal of hope in 2021 for this reason: *The states are our best chance at pushing back and restoring American prosperity at a time when Americans need it most.* And thankfully, because of the generosity of SPN supporters, this Network is well-positioned to lead us on a better path forward.

What do I mean by a better path forward? I mean helping hardworking Americans get back to work when so many have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic-related shutdowns. I mean empowering parents to demand more of our education system and find the best schooling that meets their children's needs. I mean holding elected leaders accountable for how they use their authority during emergencies. And I mean working to fix our broken institutions at the state level, including rebuilding trust in how elections are run going forward.

With your support, we have already laid the groundwork by building a robust network of organizations in all 50 states ready to take on the challenges ahead. If we wait around for Washington, DC, to solve everything, we will be waiting indefinitely; real change comes from states and communities working to make life better for themselves and their neighbors. SPN and our network affiliates are up to the task, thanks to you.

In this edition of *SPN News*, you will read about the rare opportunities for key reforms in the states, including driving the economic recovery, reforming K-12 education, expanding healthcare access, pushing back on government overreach, and more. One important component of our strategy is strategic litigation in the states, which enables us to fight back against harmful policies and enshrine our victories in law. You will read more about how we have equipped this Network to build this core litigation capability and use it to advance freedom in 2021.

Thank you for standing with us as we work toward a better future. The new administration will likely not be a friend to freedom, but it's quite a different story in the states. Thanks to you, there is promise and optimism in the days ahead.

My best,

Tracie Sharp





State Opportunities in 2021

While much attention focuses on political battles and concerning policies coming out of DC, this Network is getting things done in states and communities to address some of the country's greatest challenges.

SPN policy experts share their thoughts on the biggest opportunities in the states this year and how this Network is driving key reforms that help Americans thrive.

Election Integrity

One issue top of mind is how to improve the integrity of our electoral process. Both Republicans and Democrats have called for changes in recent elections to make them more fair, honest, and transparent.

The American public is losing trust in elections as well. Less than half (45 percent) of Americans say they have complete or a great deal of confidence in voting fairness, and a full 33 percent say they have little or none.

The Constitution leaves it to the states to decide the best election processes, and that's where we have the biggest opportunities. Attempts to nationalize our election process will fail—and they go against our Founders' intent. Now, it's up to state leaders to take a closer look at what can be done to restore public trust in elections and uphold this critical institution going forward.

SPN is working to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat by identifying best voting practices, making targeted investments in states with the biggest opportunities for reform, and investing in messaging research to better understand and communicate what Americans believe needs to be done to improve the electoral process.

Stopping Government Overreach



*Kathleen O'Hearn,
Vice President of Policy Advancement,
State Policy Network*

This is going to be a pivotal time to push forward as a new year, new administration, and an incredible set of circumstances could work together to let the government intrude more than ever before.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen an extraordinary increase in overreach with irregular lockdowns and unevenly applied rules that gave little thought to precedent. A recent SPN-sponsored scorecard from the Maine Policy Institute found that 34 states allowed the governor to suspend statutes during emergencies.

SPN continues to challenge obtrusive and restrictive action while encouraging states to rethink the emergency protocols that allowed the overreach to take place. **We want to make sure that no one has the power to make sweeping decisions like shutdowns that drastically impact lives without any checks in place.**

At SPN, we understand that communities are where things get done. To this end, we have been seeking out state-based organizations that we can partner with to reform broken emergency management protocols and restore critical checks

and balances. We know that we can push back because we already have. For example, last year the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation in Michigan successfully fought the governor's strict emergency orders, which were declared unconstitutional by the state's Supreme Court. Working together, we can put a check on unobstructed power and let communities make choices for themselves.

Expanding Opportunities in Education



*Katherine Bathgate,
Senior Policy Advisor,
State Policy Network*

While American society has been disrupted on multiple levels during the pandemic, perhaps it was most evident in the impact it had on education.

Parents are demanding more choices now than ever before, and we have the opportunity to make 2021 the biggest year for school choice wins in recent history.

Some states have been looking to stymie innovation by introducing regulations that would make it difficult for parents to have their children learn together in pods or to take advantage of other options. We are actively working to ensure that families are not denied these innovations in multiple states.

Parents are also starting to question both curriculum and educational funding. With kids learning from home, parents have a better idea of what kids are being taught, which we think should be the rule rather than a byproduct of extreme circumstances. State affiliates are working on curriculum

transparency initiatives which would require school districts to post what is being taught and which materials are being used so parents know exactly what their kids are exposed to at school.

SPN has an important role in expanding educational freedom for families, especially for underserved communities and those who don't have the means to pursue costly alternatives. **We have drafted model legislation and are working with more than 10 states on legislation that would protect the right of families to educate their children as they see fit.** We are supporting school choice efforts in states such as Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Iowa and others that are poised for education reform this year.

With outdated systems of education finally being reconsidered, SPN is standing ready to empower families.

Driving the Economic Recovery



*Michael Lucci,
Senior Policy Advisor,
State Policy Network*

In 2021, SPN is poised to **cut through government red tape to help people get back to work and restore battered state economies in at least 10 states with the goal of spreading reforms across the country.**

Several states are taking action to make it easier to find and keep jobs through occupational (job) licensing reform. These laws impact nearly 3 in 10 workers in America. One such reform that is making rounds is universal licensing recognition, which would allow people to work across state lines without having to be licensed again.

More and more Americans have been working from home in the past several years, and this number increased exponentially when the pandemic hit. Our state-based organizations are leading efforts to fight outdated zoning regulations that restrict operating a business from home and create protections for home-based businesses to adjust for this new reality.

While the pandemic endures, small businesses that have operated in line with public health guidelines need to feel secure that they will not be hit with frivolous lawsuits. Business liability reform would prevent employers from paying hefty legal fees to defend themselves against such lawsuits. Already, our state partners in Ohio (Buckeye Institute) and Tennessee (Beacon Center) have passed reforms that serve as models for other states.

We have the opportunity to make sure federal policymakers understand the consequences of more bailouts and relief



THE PANDEMIC HAS OPENED PEOPLE'S EYES TO THE FACT THAT CITIZENS NEED TO HAVE DECISIONS MADE CLOSE TO HOME, WHERE THE SITUATION IS KNOWN.

packages sent to the states. Our research has found that in many cases, this money will do more harm than good. SPN and the Network will be working with state and federal policymakers to educate them on the impact of federal bills and to ensure they understand the options they have to secure long-term fiscal solutions.

By collaborating together in SPN's Economic Working Group, leaders in other states can take what is working and spread it across the country.

Addressing Energy and Land-Use Issues



*Jennifer Butler,
Senior Policy Advisor,
State Policy Network*

The new administration has been forthright on their aggressive plans for energy and the environment. Should they succeed, the effects will be felt in every facet of American life.

At SPN, we aim to advance human flourishing and improve quality of life while improving the environment. **We will push back on harmful policies by promoting active stewardship, the removal of barriers to entry for innovation, and ensuring that consumers have a choice in reliable, safe, and affordable options.** We also recognize that local control over environmental policy is much more effective than having bureaucrats in Washington, DC, make decisions. The policies we support are grounded in property rights, the rule of law, and application of science.

Harmful policy does not stay within a state's boundaries but, instead, spreads for regional impact. Our Network is built for these types of battles—working together, we can form multistate campaigns to push back on these bad ideas that harm families and businesses. We will also help leaders to understand real-world implications of bad policy like the rolling blackouts in California last summer.

Bringing states together to oppose bad policy is SPN's unique strength and can be replicated for other regional and national issues.

Defending the Rights of Workers through Labor Reform



*Chantal Lovell,
Director of Policy Strategy,
State Policy Network*

The Network remains hard at work on reforms to ensure workers are aware of and free to exercise their freedoms. At a time when stressed families and communities need choices most, these workplace freedoms come into sharp focus.

Last year, the Network built momentum to fully implement the historic *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision by advancing the "opt-in" provision in multiple states. Several state attorneys general issued legal opinions on the idea that workers should expressly consent to union membership, otherwise they stop paying dues. In 2020, thanks to the Mackinac Center, Michigan became the first state to fully implement this requirement, ensuring workers in the state consent to paying dues at a time when many families' finances are stretched thin. **Today, the Network is working in more than a dozen states to advance opt-in and other pro-worker legislation.**

Additionally, the Network continues to defend workers in the courtroom when their rights are violated. To date, there have been more than 132 *Janus*-related cases, 90 of which have come from the Network. Most recently, the Liberty Justice Center issued a warning that they would pursue litigation against the Chicago Teachers Union if they tried to strike over school reopenings. As a result, the union backed down and school doors opened for the first time in a year.



WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT
LOCAL CONTROL OVER
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IS
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State think tanks will also work together to stop efforts by the federal government to impose policies that take away workers' rights and override state decisions. Of particular concern are proposals like the PRO Act—which would undermine right-to-work policies in the states and severely constrain workers' and employers' flexibility to meet the unique needs of workers.

Making State-Based Healthcare Reform Permanent



*Russ Walker,
Senior Policy Advisor,
State Policy Network*

2020 was a big year for healthcare reform in the states, and SPN plans to carry that momentum into 2021. The pandemic forced states to address legacy laws and healthcare shortages that made it impossible to meet the quickly-changing chal-

lenges of the COVID-19 crisis. However, the window of oppor-

tunity to make these changes permanent is sure to close soon after the crisis is over. SPN is supporting the Network's efforts to solidify these reforms and tell stories of how they provide greater access and quality care to patients.

Moreover, the new administration will likely push healthcare policy that reduces competition, limits patient choice, and increases the cost of services. We will need all-hands-on-deck to push back on bad policy initiatives like "Medicare for All." **While national organizations will fight these sweeping changes, it is the states that have the strongest voice for good healthcare policy solutions and will be the most effective in creating good patient-focused, market-driven change.**

Healthcare reform won't be easy, but we know we can make a difference because we already have, thanks to SPN supporters. The Healthcare Working Group's ability to meet, draft, and turn around a policy response to the COVID-19 crisis facing states last March was a huge testament to the success of the working group model and the strength of the Network. The group came up with five policy suggestions (certificate-of-need, licensing, scope-of-practice, telemedicine, and surprise billing reform) that were adopted by nearly two dozen states.

Spotlight:

SPN Welcomes Two New Board Members

State Policy Network is pleased to announce two new additions to our Board of Directors in 2021. We are thrilled to welcome **Carrie Tynan** of the Adolph Coors Foundation and **Elise Westhoff** of The Philanthropy Roundtable as our newest members.

They will be joining our seasoned board members who have offered tremendous contributions to the organization over the years:

Theodore Abram, *American Institute for Full Employment*

Lawson Bader, *DonorsTrust*

Carl Helstrom, *The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation*

John Hood, *John William Pope Foundation*

Adam Meyerson, *Stand Together Foundation*

Stanford Swim, *Bill of Rights Institute*

Tracie Sharp, *State Policy Network*

Bridgett Wagner, *The Heritage Foundation*

Thomas Willcox, *The Roe Foundation*

Elise Westhoff is the president and CEO of The Philanthropy Roundtable, a network seeking to foster excellence in philanthropy, protect philanthropic freedom, and help donors advance liberty, opportunity, and personal responsibility. Before joining the Roundtable, Westhoff was the executive director of The Snider Foundation. She also directed major gifts fundraising for neuroscience programs at the Indiana University School of Medicine and worked in planned giving and major gifts at the New York Public Library.

Carrie Tynan is the executive director of the Adolph Coors Foundation, a philanthropic organization supporting non-profits that promote the western values of self-reliance, personal responsibility, and integrity. Prior to the Foundation, Tynan spent five years as an English teacher at J.K. Mullen High School in Denver, Colorado.

Tynan and Westhoff's diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skillsets will bring valuable contributions to the SPN Board. Both are familiar with the strengths and needs of the state-based policy community, and their experience with seeing policy through to the last mile of implementation sharpens the Network's strategies now and in the future.

Advancing Freedom Through Strategic Litigation

The Network has invested in building up this core capacity to defend Americans from abuses of power and hold governments accountable to the Constitution.

Litigation is an increasingly important strategy as more policy battles are waged in courtrooms across the country. Many significant reforms came from court decisions, including the debate over the Affordable Care Act, marriage equality, and worker's rights on union membership. This reality is something progressives have understood for a long time and have deployed to advance their agendas on issues ranging from education to labor to our country's electoral process.

Decisions made through litigation are felt for years to come—longer than any legislative session or election cycle. As Leonard Leo, co-chair of the Federalist Society and who Fox News dubbed the “Supreme Court Whisperer,” recently said on SPN’s “America at Its Best” show: “If you care about the growth of government, religious freedom, property rights, the scope of the regulatory state, campaign finance, civil rights, or any other number of issues, the court is one of the central places where decisions are going to be made in a way that impacts you. Not being part of that game takes you out of a really important part of circulation in American public policy and American public life.”

That is why this Network has invested significant resources into building up this critical tool in the states for over a decade so that together, we can protect pro-freedom policies and fight back when the rights of Americans are violated.

Today, the Network has at least 15 state-based litigation centers, and we partner with dozens of national organizations in their litigation efforts so that they have the support they need to advance game-changing cases. State Policy Network has directly invested more than \$4 million to accelerate the development of litigation shops, including incubating a new organization dedicated to connecting Network litigators to strengthen their cases and share best practices.

Impact of Network Litigation

Thanks to those who support the freedom movement, SPN’s state-based partners have put forth key legal cases that have set precedent across the country.

Examples of Supreme Court Litigation:

- Network leaders landed a historic victory in 2018 with the *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision brought by the

Liberty Justice Center and National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. The case freed more than 5 million public-sector workers from having to pay union dues as a condition of employment. While workers now have the right to choose union membership, state-level legal battles continue in situations where government unions do not uphold the law and find ways to keep unwilling members trapped in the system. That is why the Network’s continued efforts to fight for workers’ rights remains critical.

- In 2020, *California v. Texas* was brought in part by the Texas Public Policy Foundation and offers the latest challenge to the Affordable Care Act’s individual mandate. Due to President Trump’s Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the penalty for violating the individual mandate of the ACA went down to zero, raising questions about its constitutionality. The case had its oral arguments in the fall of 2020 and is awaiting a decision.



IF YOU CARE ABOUT THE GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, PROPERTY RIGHTS, THE SCOPE OF THE REGULATORY STATE, CAMPAIGN FINANCE, CIVIL RIGHTS, OR ANY OTHER NUMBER OF ISSUES, THE COURT IS ONE OF THE CENTRAL PLACES WHERE DECISIONS ARE GOING TO BE MADE IN A WAY THAT IMPACTS YOU.



Plaintiff Mark Janus stands outside of the steps of the Supreme Court after winning the historic victory for workers in *Janus v. AFSCME*.



Carrie Ann Donnell, president of American Juris Link, hosts an event at SPN's 2019 Annual Meeting.

- In 2020, the Institute for Justice won a landmark education case in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* that opened the door for private school choice in 37 states. The case resulted in a 5-4 Supreme Court ruling that says banning religious schools from school choice programs is a violation of freedom of religion secured by the First Amendment. Several state think tanks, including the Pioneer Institute, Mackinac Center, and Independence Institute, raised awareness about the *Espinoza* case and what it could mean for families in their communities. Through amicus briefs, research, events, videos, op-eds, and other media outreach, SPN members demonstrated how their state's Blaine Amendment limits education choice.
- In 2021, Buckeye Institute in Ohio petitioned the Supreme Court to hear a critical labor case, *Thompson v. MEA*, that would serve to strengthen the *Janus v. AFSCME* ruling. Buckeye's petition calls on the court to hear this important First Amendment case and end laws forcing public-sector employees to accept a union's unwanted representation.

Examples of State-Level Litigation:

- The Empire Center in New York took the Cuomo administration to court for failing to be transparent about the true number of deaths caused by allowing COVID-positive patients to go to nursing homes. In 2021, a judge ruled that the administration's six-month stonewall of the information requested by the Empire Center on these deaths was a violation of the Freedom of Information law. Now, the state must hand over the data and offer greater transparency into what happened and how many lives were affected.
- The Mackinac Center Legal Foundation won a lawsuit in Michigan's Supreme Court arguing that the governor's emergency actions violate the state's constitution and separation of powers requirement. The Michigan Supreme Court unanimously said Governor Whitmer's attempt to

continue the state of emergency after April 30, 2020, without legislative approval was illegal. The case was originally filed on behalf of three medical practices that were unable to provide care under the executive orders, resulting in health complications for their patients. This case is an example of how this Network pushed back against governors who overstepped their power in sweeping shutdown decisions.

- In 2021, the Goldwater Institute won a crucial victory before the Arizona Supreme Court involving the state's Gift Clause—which prohibits government from handing out taxpayer money to private businesses. Goldwater also has a history of helping found and foster state-based litigation centers nationwide. In 2020, Goldwater litigated or helped state-based partners litigate in Arizona, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Louisiana, Minnesota, Florida, and Ohio.
- The Kansas Justice Institute won a COVID-19 case in 2020 that ruled the local government could not ask businesses to hand over personal information about their customers in the name of public health. Thanks to their efforts, Linn County rescinded its contact tracing order requiring county businesses to gather and hand over personal information from anyone who entered. The new order now allows businesses to request a warrant or other approval before such records are disclosed.
- The Freedom Foundation won a case in 2019 defending a government worker who had her signature forged on a union membership card and was forced to pay dues. After the Freedom Foundation stepped in, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) paid \$28,000 to settle. To date, Freedom Foundation has won 125 victories over government unions in support of workers, resulting in over \$710,000 in settlements and fees that government unions have had to pay.

- The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty won a case in 2019 defending a professor's free speech at Marquette University that set precedent for future free speech on campus. The professor, a conservative, was indefinitely suspended after he wrote a blog post criticizing a liberal graduate instructor who refused to permit debate on a politically sensitive issue in class. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the university had breached its contract with the professor by punishing him for exercising his academic freedom.

Strengthening Network Litigation Efforts

Throughout the years, litigators in the Network had been filing a growing number of cases, but at times were working in isolation or duplicating work. In late 2019, SPN partnered with Federalist Society and former Goldwater Institute attorney Carrie Ann Donnell to launch an organization, American Juris Link, committed to bringing litigators together to accelerate success and collaborate on cases for national impact. This new



Plaintiff Kendra Espinoza partnered with the Institute for Justice to give her two daughters more education opportunities. Photo courtesy of the Institute for Justice.

network for litigators in the freedom movement has and will continue to serve as a critical resource in securing future victories and legal precedent. In other words, SPN partnered with Donnell to assist in the creation of the "SPN for Litigators."

American Juris Link serves as a key connector for litigators in the Network, helping them strengthen their cases, gather support, and collaborate on strategies to advance freedom and the rule of law on a number of key issues like educational freedom, COVID-19 emergency powers, worker's rights, and religious freedom.

"SPN has guided multiple successful startups before us, and I'm sure ours will not be the last. The processes, resources, training, and experience the SPN team generously contributed were immeasurably valuable for preparing us to launch with a firm foundation for success," said Donnell. "Because of SPN, we have reaped the benefits from the many lessons and experiences that other free-market powerhouses have learned before us."

In a year full of important policy battles that will make their way into the courtroom, both at the state and federal levels, your investment means that this Network can continue working together to preserve laws that protect the American people and challenge those that infringe on our Constitutional rights.

"As we move into 2021, the work of SPN is of even greater importance," said Leo. "We saw during the Obama years that the states were an important backstop when it came to efforts to engage in federal overreach, and that will be no different in the next several years."



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ALABAMA

ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE • alabamapolicy.org

The coronavirus, and Alabama's response to it, revealed major blindspots in how the state code and constitution allow Alabama's government to operate in times of emergency. The governor, for example, has issued over two dozen emergency declarations without the consent of the whole legislature or public debate. **Alabama Policy Institute** is dedicated to seeing important changes made this legislative session that will protect the citizens of Alabama from such executive overreach. Specifically, API supports a shortened period in which the governor can declare emergencies without legislative consent, as well as measures to allow the state legislature to call itself into a special session (currently only the governor has this privilege). API will also work to restore the balance of power to Alabama's state government. While the Alabama executive's actions have been tame compared to those of Governors Whitmer, Cuomo, or Newsom, these efforts will ensure that, should a Whitmer be elected in Alabama, the legislature will be empowered to hinder any overreach.



ALASKA

ALASKA POLICY FORUM • alaskapolicyforum.org

After a year of intermittent and abrupt shutdowns across the state of Alaska, **Alaska Policy Forum's** top legislative concerns in 2021 are the economy and education. Businesses and workers have painstakingly followed public health guidelines to protect their customers and themselves from COVID-19. Now, it's time to protect businesses from harmful litigation via business liability protection. To restart Alaska's economy and increase job opportunities, businesses that are following health guidelines need to be able to open without fear of getting sued. As businesses struggled to stay open in 2020, Alaska's students struggled to continue learning. When in-person schooling stopped without warning, many children were left without clear guidance or a stable routine. Alaska's fourth graders already had the lowest reading proficiency in the country and, without consistent instruction, they have fallen further behind. It is imperative that policy reforms are enacted to ensure that third graders are prepared to graduate from learning to read and move on to reading to learn as they enter fourth grade and approach new subjects.



ARIZONA

GOLDWATER INSTITUTE • goldwaterinstitute.org

In 2019, Arizona became the first state to recognize out-of-state occupational licenses—so far, more than 2,400 workers have benefited from this **Goldwater Institute** reform. Ten other states have since adopted a version of recognition, and dozens more have introduced bills to reduce burdensome licensure. At a time when so many Americans are out of work, universal recognition is an essential step to getting government out of the way of America's skilled and dedicated workforce. This session, the Institute remains dedicated to advancing this reform nationwide. By providing data, state-specific research, testimony, and real-time support during legislative sessions, the Goldwater team will support free-market colleagues as they pursue recognition in their own states. In addition, parents across the country want to engage the legislative process. A new Goldwater Institute reform focused on academic transparency seeks to empower parents with the information they need to make decisions about their children's education and to ensure educators provide ongoing visibility into the classroom.





ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

The **Arkansas Policy Foundation** is advancing further reductions in the Arkansas state income tax rate, which has been cut from 7.0 to 5.9 percent since 2015. APF's proposal argues it is possible to reduce the rate from 5.9 to 4.9 percent by earmarking budget surpluses and savings from efficiency initiatives. Arkansas currently has the third highest income tax rates in the 12-state Southeast region, with a top rate lower than only South Carolina (7.0%) and Louisiana (6.0%), according to the Federation of State Tax Administrators. Two states in the region (Florida and Tennessee) do not levy a state income tax, and Arkansas Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin has proposed phasing out the tax, noting it places local entrepreneurs at a competitive disadvantage with counterparts in other states. The issue is important because Arkansas entrepreneurs and jobs have relocated to states with lower tax burdens. Arkansas payroll employment—the broadest state-level economic indicator—has trailed the national average.



CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER • californiapolicycenter.org

This legislative session, the **California Policy Center** is focusing on reopening schools given the documented pain caused by classroom closures for little-to-no gain in COVID-19 safety. Specifically, the Center is encouraging fed-up parents to pursue their educational choices, including charter schools that are more likely to reopen because they generally aren't beholden to teachers and districts that refuse to return. California Policy is making this case through original research showing the outperformance of charter schools, op-eds, and grassroots organizing through its Parent Union project.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (CALIFORNIA) • freedomfoundation.com

The **Freedom Foundation (California)** will actively oppose rumored attempts to repeal Proposition 22, which classifies rideshare drivers as independent contractors. The Service Employees International Union bankrolled opposition to Proposition 22 because it wants to unionize tens of thousands of independent employees across the state. There is also an attempt to push a wealth tax through the California General Assembly, although it did not make it all the way through the legislature last time around. The Freedom Foundation is also keeping an eye out for any legislative fixes for the failed Schools and Communities First campaign to strip away portions of Proposition 13, which caps property tax rates. The Freedom Foundation ended 2020 on a strong note in California, having helped thousands of California public employees stop paying union dues and fees. During the month of December alone, the organization's Christmas opt-out campaign resulted in more than 1,400 opt-outs.



PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • pacificresearch.org

Every month, Californians pay significant fees to drive a car or use a cell phone. In his **Pacific Research Institute** study "Nickle and Dimed," University of Southern California professor Michael Thom quantifies these fees, evaluates the worthiness of the programs these fees fund, and proposes reforms to save consumers and improve government efficiency. The debate over reopening schools comes in the aftermath of recent legislation restricting charter schools. In a new issue brief, Lance Izumi, senior director of PRI's Center of Education, highlights these policy challenges, and research showing how charter schools have

more effectively transitioned to virtual learning during the pandemic. Finally, California's economy struggles to recover from the COVID-19-fueled recession, yet policymakers have made it harder for the unemployed to find work in the gig economy. In the latest in the Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity series, Dr. Wayne Winegarden explores the negative impacts of increased state regulation on the gig economy and outlines reforms to expand entrepreneurship.

COLORADO

INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE • i2i.org

The **Independence Institute's** Education Policy Center launched new resources to supplement remote learning or to help students who have academically fallen behind. These included adding hundreds of enrichment activities to SchoolChoiceforKids.org to assist parents as they juggle work with their children's schooling. In addition, offered in both English and Spanish, a new page called Rethinking Education informs parents about learning pods, micro-schools, and other educational options.



CONNECTICUT

YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • yankeeinstitute.org

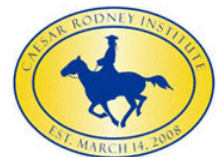
The **Yankee Institute for Public Policy** is pushing five offensive initiatives this session—the most in organization history. These initiatives include occupational licensing reform, government transparency efforts, property tax reform, and two education initiatives. Yankee's top issue this session is an educational access and opportunity scholarship. This program would support nonprofits that provide innovation grants to public schools, transportation assistance to students choosing alternative public schools, tutoring, online learning, school supplies, and reimbursement for homeschooling expenses. The overarching goal is to ensure Connecticut students have access to the educational tools and environment that offer the best opportunities to succeed. School shutdowns and remote learning have put a renewed emphasis on innovation in education. Importantly, suburban families in even the highest-ranking school districts are paying more attention to education issues than ever before. Although Connecticut has never instituted any major education choice programs, Yankee Institute is excited by the renewed opportunity for change.



DELAWARE

CAESAR RODNEY INSTITUTE • caesarrodney.org

The **Caesar Rodney Institute** released a report comparing Delaware's labor productivity with that of other states over the past decade. Delaware has gone through five recessions and its labor productivity has fallen by six percent since 2009. Businesses are not investing in Delaware or launching a new business mainly because of consistently underperforming public schools. Other reasons include high electric rates, corporate taxes, and personal income taxes.





FLORIDA

THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • jamesmadison.org

The 2021 legislative session in Florida will be unlike any in recent memory. Faced with a roughly \$2 billion budget gap to balance, and a projected \$3 billion increase in Medicaid appropriations from the COVID-19 economic lockdowns, lawmakers will come to Tallahassee with one thought in mind: keep spending in check. Fortunately, Florida enters the cycle far better prepared than most other states financially. Policies that encourage economic recovery while not adding any state fiscal commitments will move. **The James Madison Institute** will engage in several policy debates, including consolidating Florida's school choice programs into one comprehensive program with expansion provisions, advancing additional patient-centered and market-driven healthcare policies to illustrate the power of free-market versus socialized healthcare, and protecting Florida's economic recovery via liability protections from COVID-19-related lawsuits.

GEORGIA



GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • georgiaopportunity.org

The pandemic has raised awareness of the need and even the desire to focus legislative action on expanding educational opportunities. Georgia's governor has already set aside federal funds to help students with special needs receive reimbursements for the additional costs incurred during the pandemic. The **Georgia Center for Opportunity** is assisting directly with the promotion and distribution processes for these funds to ensure that the students with the most need receive them. In the upcoming session, the legislature will consider a new educational savings account bill that is likely to gain traction as more parents explore education options for their children. The Center is not only educating people on this bill's benefits for those in poverty but is also sharing stories of parents and students from all walks of life on how such a bill could change their child's future.



GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • georgiapolicy.org

For the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation**, initiatives in 2021 bear a remarkable resemblance to 1991: education, healthcare, and poverty—all exacerbated by COVID-19 (tax reform, almost certain as 2020 began, was sunk by COVID-19 budget concerns). The opportunity for education reform is ripe. Families struggled during the pandemic as public-school districts flitted among in-person, remote, and hybrid classes. Parents seek options that fit their children's needs, including learning pods and education scholarship accounts, and free them from fickle educators. The Foundation will work to highlight innovations and expand existing options. On the healthcare front, a new federal Affordable Care Act waiver eliminates Georgians' mandate to shop via healthcare.gov, expanding access to affordable options. Next, the Foundation will target Georgia's protectionist certificate-of-need laws that reduce patients' healthcare access. The Foundation's third issue for 2021 is housing affordability. Heavy-handed government mandates and subsidies lead to regulatory excess that raises prices and increase dependency. The Foundation will promote market-based solutions and reduced regulation.

HAWAII

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • grassrootinstitute.org

As Hawaii's legislature begins its 2021 session, the **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** has already supplied all legislators with two housing reports that offer market-oriented options to help resolve Hawaii's critical housing shortage; a "Road Map to Prosperity" that proposes 23 ways to help Hawaii's economy revive and even excel after the coronavirus lockdowns—without any new government programs or taxes; and a new civil rights brief urging that the legislature add checks and balances to the state's emergency powers law, under which the governor has exercised extensive unchecked power for almost a year now. The Institute will also continue to solidify its reputation as a watchdog over the state's disastrous budgeting policies, made worse by the lockdowns. Tax revenues, for example, have evaporated, but instead of significantly trimming expenses, lawmakers continue to herald spending, borrowing, and taxing as ways to mitigate the crisis.



IDAHO

IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org

Social justice ideology is turning American higher education into an engine of progressive activism and ideological indoctrination. Its advocates demand conformity to the cult of race, class, and gender victimology cloaked in language like "diversity" and "inclusion." It is bad for free inquiry and for scientific advancement. It cultivates anger and resentment among the supposedly aggrieved while undermining the social harmony and mutual toleration that lead to good citizenship and a prosperous, happy nation. Idaho may be a red state but Idaho's higher education is not immune to the detrimental threat of social justice ideology. A project co-sponsored by the **Idaho Freedom Foundation** and the Claremont Institute's Center for the American Way of Life shows how much social justice ideology has made its way into Idaho universities. Download the latest report, which details social justice's capture of the University of Idaho, at idahofreedom.org.



ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org

2021 began with the end of a 36-year era under Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan, the nation's longest-tenured Statehouse politician and the man who oversaw Illinois' financial collapse. The **Illinois Policy Institute** now has a clear opportunity to advance lasting, meaningful change to how Illinois operates its government and finally put an end to the endless cycle of debt and corruption. The Institute has been working for years to build relationships with lawmakers from all political stripes, and it's evidenced by every single bill in this year's legislative agenda having a Democratic chief sponsor, and many with Republican co-sponsors. This session, Illinois Policy will work to reverse Illinois' culture of corruption and recurring financial crises by dismantling the system that has allowed for one person to control so much power, starting with the House Rules. Illinois Policy is also working to advance constitutional pension reform, a balanced budget, spending caps, school district efficiency and more.





IOWA

TAX EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF IOWA • tefiowa.org

Tax Education Foundation of Iowa is working to advance parental school choice. In 2020, TEF Iowa met with several state legislators as well as Governor Kim Reynolds' policy staff to discuss school choice policy. TEF Iowa is working on school choice reform that strengthens open enrollment and creates an Education Savings Account program. TEF Iowa is also working to improve the economic climate of Iowa by arguing that further tax rate reduction is needed. Specifically, the 2018 revenue triggers need to either be eliminated or revised to ensure that income tax rate reductions occur in 2023. TEF Iowa also partnered with The Buckeye Institute's (Ohio) Economic Research Center to model broadening the sales tax base with the goal of eliminating Iowa's individual and corporate income tax.

KANSAS

KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org

Just a few days into the legislative session, **Kansas Policy Institute's** Truth in Taxation property tax bill was approved 34-1 by the Kansas Senate. Soon it will be under consideration by the full House and then once again put on Governor Kelly's desk. The significance of this bill, which is predicted to pass the Kansas House with similar reception as in the Senate, will be felt by families, farmers, businesses, and fixed-income Kansans around the state. Places like Iola, Kansas, have the highest effective rural property taxes in the country. And the Wichita area will see property taxes increase roughly 20 percent over the next five years because of valuation increases. This bill provides much needed transparency on local elected officials across the state. Local officials will no longer be able to pretend they didn't increase property taxes—they will have to take a recorded public vote on the entire property tax increase they impose.

KENTUCKY

BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • bipps.org

The **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions** recommended the Kentucky Legislature make a historic down payment on the state's financial future by enacting a budget with a \$750 million balance in the state's rainy day fund. In a letter to state lawmakers, the Bluegrass Institute noted: "Members of the General Assembly have inherited a multi-faceted fiscal mess. A critically important step in righting the ship is a credible rainy day fund. In a recent report, "The Lost Decades: Kentucky's Economic Underperformance 1980-2020," the Bluegrass Institute recommended structural changes to the state's reserve fund. Strengthening this fund will put Kentucky on a new, more fiscally responsible path.



PEGASUS INSTITUTE • pegasuskentucky.org

The **Pegasus Institute** is researching ways to restore the balance of power and reform KRS 39A, Kentucky's declaration of emergencies statute. A bill that mirrors many of the Institute's suggested reforms, Senate Bill 1, has already passed the General Assembly and received a veto from the governor. By the time of this printing, the General Assembly will have likely overridden that veto and, in doing so, will have imposed legislative checks on the governor's emergency powers. After succeeding on this issue, Pegasus Institute will turn its attention to continuing to develop a state prison system that treats women, especially pregnant women, more humanely. Building off of the successes of the 2018 Dignity Bill, an outgrowth of Pegasus Institute research, Sen. Julie Raque Adams introduced Senate Bill 84 or—as the Institute calls it—"Dignity 2." The law would further expand protections for pregnant women and new mothers in prison, allowing these women to deliver healthy babies and form meaningful relationships with their children, outcomes that can improve rehabilitation and recidivism rates.



LOUISIANA

PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • pelicaninstitute.org

The upcoming 2021 regular legislative session will provide more fertile ground for the **Pelican Institute for Public Policy** to remove needless barriers to jobs and opportunities in order to get Louisianans back to work as quickly as possible. This spring, the organization will create a new framework to reform Louisiana's complex and burdensome tax code to make it fairer and flatter for everyone in the state. The Pelican team is working with lawmakers to develop a package for tax reform that will put Louisiana in a much more competitive position economically and lower the cost burden on the state's working families. In addition to overhauling the tax code, the Pelican Institute is also working on several legislative items to encourage entrepreneurial investment in Louisiana and to lay the groundwork for significant education reforms.



MAINE

MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE • mainepolicy.org

Maine Policy Institute's priorities for the current legislative session are a state budget without any new tax increases and reformed emergency executive power. After a year of economic restrictions due to COVID-19, the last things Maine businesses and citizens can afford are new tax increases. Government must spend within its means, and when state revenues are down because of economic stagnation, the state budget should reflect that reality. Maine Policy Institute also seeks to reform emergency authority to put an end to some of the abuses of emergency power that occurred in 2020. Maine law allows the chief executive to declare and extend an emergency declaration without legislative oversight or approval. The Institute will be publishing new research in the coming weeks that examines the legislative checks and balances on emergency power in all 50 states. With this data, Maine Policy Institute believes it can help enact bipartisan legislation this session that protects the individual rights of Maine citizens during emergency declarations.





The Maryland Public Policy Institute

MARYLAND

MARYLAND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE • mdpolicy.org

The **Maryland Public Policy Institute's** plans for the 2021 legislative session include stopping the myriad of proposed tax and spending increases—on income, alcohol, and digital advertising—and opposing the Kirwan Commission plan that will increase K-12 spending by \$32 billion over 10 years. The Institute also plans to consult with and advise legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle on proposals related to homeownership, education, and crime and justice policy through briefings, testimony, factsheets, policy reports, and op-eds. Baltimore's economic health remains a top priority, and the Institute will continue working on the design and implementation of a charter amendment to lower and cap the Baltimore City property tax. Baltimore's future prosperity depends on a property tax rate that is competitive with neighboring counties.

MASSACHUSETTS

PIONEER INSTITUTE • pioneerinstitute.org

If performance were the only measure, Catholic schools would be considered an American success story. **Pioneer Institute's** new book, *A Vision of Hope: Catholic Schooling in Massachusetts*, tells the story of the schools' substantive success and offers a blueprint for state think tanks that want to promote and expand private school options in their states. As the book chronicles, the many poor and minority students Catholic schools educate achieve high test scores, graduation, and college attendance rates. The schools also deliver value. Average annual tuition at an Archdiocese of Boston elementary school is \$6,583, most families receive financial aid, and overall expenditures are well below average public school per-pupil spending in Massachusetts, which is nearly \$16,500. Parents are drawn to the unrelenting focus on achievement, classic liberal arts education, discipline, and values that are part of a Catholic education. Despite such excellence, American Catholic education is in an enrollment crisis. *A Vision of Hope* highlights a roadmap to sustainability for Catholic education, which will increase educational opportunity for more children.

MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mackinac.org

The **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** was instrumental in the adoption of many COVID-response policies enacted last spring. Unfortunately, many of those policies were temporary, so Mackinac will focus on codifying Michigan's certificate-of-need laws and expanding scope of practice, both of which were temporarily implemented last year. As a result of school shutdowns, some parents started using "pod"-style learning. Mackinac will continue furthering policies that help parents and students access educational options that work best for them, including pod learning. Mackinac's fight against crony capitalism, including the previously dismantled Good Jobs for Michigan program, continues. While the name may sound great, the corporate welfare program has consistently been expensive, ineffective, and unfair. Michigan is currently grappling with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, but throwing taxpayer dollars at select businesses is not the solution.



MINNESOTA

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • americanexperiment.org

What should students know about history, geography, civics, and economics? That's the focus of a state committee writing academic standards for social studies—and improving their first draft is the focus of **Center of the American Experiment** in early 2021. Not surprisingly, the draft benchmarks and standards lurch to the left and leave out historically important topics like the Civil War, World Wars I and II, and the Holocaust in favor of today's version of political correctness known as "equity." The Center's call to action delivered more than 5,000 public comments on the first draft, and it plans to monitor and comment on future drafts on behalf of Minnesota students who need to learn history, not become indoctrinated. The Center is also crafting legislation allowing residents a state right of action against social media companies if they discriminate on the basis of political, ideological, or religious beliefs. If a critical mass of states (and foreign countries) adopt similar policies, big tech will have to back off.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • freedomfoundationofminnesota.com

Minnesotans deserve an election process that fosters trust and transparency, and invites broad citizen participation. There is much focus on what went wrong in 2020, but the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** is moving ahead with proposals to ensure that future elections are a model for the rest of the nation. FFM recruited some of the best political minds who share the belief that the election system can be more accessible, transparent, market-based, and relevant to the average voter. This task force will be producing bipartisan and timely recommendations for the legislature to enact in time to take effect before the 2022 elections. In addition, FFM will produce and market several citizen guidebooks explaining some of the more controversial election issues proposed by liberal legislators, including ranked-choice voting and the National Popular Vote Compact, and why these are poor alternatives to existing election law.



MISSISSIPPI

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI • empowerms.org

This session, **Empower Mississippi** is working toward criminal justice reforms that will safely reduce the state's prison population, regulatory reforms that will make it easier to obtain employment, and education reforms that recognize the changing classroom in light of the pandemic. Empower will be working on legislation to amend Mississippi's habitual laws, expand parole eligibility and prioritize rehabilitation and treatment options, and offer expungement after a certain period of time. Empower is also backing policies that make it easier to work by supporting legislation that will provide full practice authority to nurse practitioners and ease burdensome licensing requirements for those moving to Mississippi. Finally, Empower is promoting education reforms that will create a full-time, tuition-free online school and provide more local control for school districts.





MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mispolicy.org

The **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** has a bold, ambitious, and coherent agenda of legislative reforms for this session aimed at removing restrictions that hinder economic freedom. MCPP is the architect of several bills that will advance economic prosperity, including a bill to allow universal recognition of occupational licensing. Additionally, MCPP is leading the charge on two bills to allow out-of-state doctors to provide healthcare more widely within Mississippi. After a series of incremental wins against certificate-of-need practices, MCPP is working on a bill that would strike at the law that has enabled many of the restrictive certificate-of-need practices over the past 40 years. Finally, MCPP has a bill to safeguard free speech on university campuses across the state, and a bill to ensure incremental gains toward more school choice. Poor public policy has held Mississippi back. MCPP's policy program gives the state a roadmap to greater prosperity.

MISSOURI



SHOW-ME INSTITUTE • showmeinstitute.org

The **Show-Me Institute's** biggest priority for the 2021 legislative session is making a variety of high-quality education options available to Missouri families. The experience of schooling in 2020 laid bare for many families just how inadequate the traditional public schooling model is for many. The confusing patchwork of in-person schooling, remote schooling, and often-pricey private supplemental options was a nightmare for many families to navigate. Many traditional public schools didn't, or simply couldn't, provide what the families in their districts needed. One-size-fits-all does not work in education. Parents should be able to use public funds to enroll their children in a charter school, a private school, a micro-school, or a virtual school. They should also be able to access public funds to get the tutoring or educational therapies their children need. If Missouri wants to attract families and businesses, it needs to create a system of education that reflects current and future conditions, not the past.

NEBRASKA



PLATTE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH • platteinstitute.org

By avoiding a severe lockdown, combined with a proactive public health effort, Nebraska's economy is rebounding faster than almost any other state. The Cornhusker State recorded a three percent unemployment rate in December 2020. Nonetheless, workforce challenges Nebraska faced previously have become more pronounced, with fewer residents returning to the job market than before the crisis. During the 2021 Nebraska legislative session, the **Platte Institute for Economic Research** is taking action to permanently adopt and expand reforms that benefited Nebraskans in the emergency, including universal recognition of job licensing, which was temporarily extended to healthcare workers in 2020. Other key priorities include making telehealth appointments easier to initiate from home, allowing restaurants and bars to provide to-go mixed drinks as a regular part of their services, and approving a Truth in Taxation law, along with providing virtual options for taxpayers to speak at public meetings on issues like property taxes.

NEVADA

NEVADA POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE • npri.org

In the last quarter of 2020, the **Nevada Policy Research Institute** launched its first podcast, *Free to Offend*. The podcast has already featured national guests from the Cato Institute, the Mercatus Center, and elsewhere—tackling issues as diverse as critical race theory, the controversy over packing the Supreme Court, and why the liberty movement should be optimistic despite rising authoritarianism in the 21st century. As 2021 moves on, the Institute will be using the podcast to connect its audience directly with lawmakers in the legislative session. The Institute is also launching a brand new “bill tracker” during the state’s legislative session—giving the public a simple and intuitive way to connect directly with the legislative committees and lawmakers who are instrumental in deciding the fate of legislative priorities. The newly redesigned tracker (nevadapolicy.org) is interactive and mobile friendly, making an already useful tool even more powerful during an unconventional legislative session.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • jbartlett.org

The **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy** is making a big push this year to explain the benefits of Education Savings Accounts, business tax relief, spending restraint, regulatory reform, and better local housing policy.



NEW JERSEY

GARDEN STATE INITIATIVE • gardenstateinitiative.org

New Jersey closed out 2020 leading the United States in unemployment, a figure that follows on the 2018 and 2019 losses in overall population. What’s driving those trends? New Jersey now has the highest corporate tax rate in the nation and a top income tax rate that ranks third, while shouldering a massive unfunded pension and health benefit burden. But the **Garden State Initiative** sees opportunity and is committed to reversing that momentum and restoring the state’s ability to compete for residents and investment. To bring issues of fiscal accountability and pro-growth policies to the forefront of the public debate, Garden State Initiative will embark on an advocacy campaign to educate the public about the decisions being made in Trenton, how those decisions impact their everyday lives, and what actions they can take.



NEW MEXICO

RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION • riograndefoundation.org

One of the Biden Administration’s first orders of business was to place a moratorium on oil and gas drilling on federal lands. As **Rio Grande Foundation** pointed out in a December 2020 *National Review* column, New Mexico would be the most impacted state in the nation by such a policy, since it has large tracts of federal lands and relies on oil and gas for as much as 40 percent of its annual budget. In the months ahead, the Foundation will be working to educate New Mexicans (and national audiences) on this critical issue. Additionally, the Foundation had a day in court at the 10th Federal Circuit as the Goldwater Institute argued on behalf of the Foundation and the principle of donor privacy in a case related to the Foundation’s efforts in a 2017 soda tax battle in the City of Santa Fe.





NEW YORK

EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • empirecenter.org

This year, the **Empire Center for Public Policy** will be focusing on regulation reforms in New York. Empire's Keep the Change project will highlight ways the state government rolled back regulations during the pandemic and explain why those changes should be made permanent. It's no secret that doing business in New York is expensive: removing regulations is one way to help the Empire State become more business friendly. Another focus for Empire in 2021 is advocating for more government transparency. For example, when Governor Cuomo's administration refused to release the true toll of COVID-19 in New York's nursing homes, Empire submitted a Freedom of Information Law request for the data, resulting in a lawsuit with the state Department of Health for the information. Even if it means going to court, the Empire Center remains committed to pushing for transparency on behalf of all New York taxpayers.



NORTH CAROLINA

JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • johnlocke.org

On January 1, 2021, the staff and resources of the **John Locke Foundation** and the Civitas Institute united to form a policy powerhouse designed to create, innovate, and advocate for freedom-forward solutions across the state and region. The Foundation's top priorities include expanding education opportunity for families, reducing onerous regulations that needlessly burden businesses and citizens, inserting common sense checks and balances on emergency powers, and ensuring election integrity, among several other issues.

OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • buckeyeinstitute.org

With Ohio's legislative session underway, **The Buckeye Institute** is championing policy solutions to help Ohioans recover from the pandemic and ensure people can prosper from their hard work. Ohio must adopt a budget this year that cuts wasteful spending and doesn't counterproductively raise taxes when people are hurting most. As Ohio's budget is debated, Buckeye will also focus on ensuring that any federal relief dollars are strictly targeted to backfill pandemic-related shortfalls and to help businesses recover from the pandemic. Ohio has an opportunity to give parents the resources they need to ensure their children are getting the best education for them to succeed. Buckeye will work with parents and advocates to expand parental choice and ensure Ohio students are well prepared for college, career, and real life. Another top Buckeye priority—adoption of universal occupational licensing recognition—will attract licensed, professional workers to Ohio and help more Ohioans get back to work serving their communities.



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OHIO) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Ohio) is hiring and training new canvassers to engage with more than 57,000 state employees and educators, arming them with the truth about the significant cost savings of discontinuing union membership, the slanted political attachments of unions, the corruption of union bosses at the national level, the historical significance versus current impact of labor organizations, and the declining trends of union membership since 2018. These efforts will empower Ohio's educators to make an independent and informed decision about leaving their union. The team will also host virtual informational forums with Ohio educators about opting out of their union, offering details and support in the decision-making process. The Freedom Foundation is filing a number of public records requests to obtain data that will enable it to reach out to more public-sector employees and inform them of their First Amendment rights not to fund unions.



OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • ocpathink.org

The pandemic has forced states to rethink education policy, and for Oklahoma, that means implementing school choice for all who want it. Currently, Oklahoma has multiple voucher programs that have put limits on spending and choice for parents. Universal school choice would remove those limitations, allow the money to follow the student, and give parents the power to choose the best schools for their children. Another important issue the **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs** is working on is managed healthcare. Last year, Oklahoma passed State Question 802, which expanded the Medicaid system to able-bodied adults beginning this July. The passage of this state question increased enrollees by 10 percent from February to June of 2020, which is the second highest jump among all states. It is estimated that this increase will raise the cost of Medicaid by \$246 billion this year. By contracting a managed care organization, OCPA hopes to bring stability back to Oklahoma Medicaid, provide better care to beneficiaries, and stabilize spending for this large entitlement program.



OREGON

CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • cascadepolicy.org

In January, **Cascade Policy Institute** released a new research report addressing Oregon's homelessness crisis. The report recommends that Oregon policymakers open unused public buildings as emergency shelters, convert the Portland Expo Center to an emergency shelter with transitional services, and create a regional shelter tracking system to identify available shelter space and vacancies. These recommendations build on principles laid out by former Portland Mayor Bud Clark more than 30 years ago: reach out to those who want help, be firm with those who don't, and create an environment where residents feel safe and businesses can flourish. While there is no single solution to homelessness, readily available resources and technologies can provide rapid relief to homeless individuals and restore safety and livability to urban residents.





FREEDOM FOUNDATION (OREGON) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Oregon) is working to expose what would be a first-in-the-nation unionization effort of Oregon State Capitol staff. This is a quickly evolving situation with unexpected pushback from the state against the union. The Freedom Foundation is communicating with legislators who are not eager to unionize state capitol staff and is exploring how to prevent the action. Freedom Foundation attorneys are also investigating potential litigation strategies should the staff successfully unionize. The Freedom Foundation ended 2020 on a strong note in Oregon, having helped thousands of public-sector employees stop paying union dues and fees. During the month of December alone, the organization's Christmas opt-out campaign resulted in nearly 300 opt-outs. The organization also has several COVID-19-related lawsuits in progress to protect small businesses threatened by Governor Kate Brown's continued lockdown orders.



PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • commonwealthfoundation.org

Pandemic disaster declarations have given Pennsylvania's governor, Tom Wolf, unprecedented control of the state's economy—and his arbitrary policies have decimated small businesses. But the **Commonwealth Foundation** is poised to rein in this dangerous concentration of power. CF is working with lawmakers to pass a state constitutional amendment that requires the governor to obtain legislative approval before renewing his emergency powers, making Pennsylvania's future emergency responses more accountable to voters. Once passed, the amendment will go before voters on a statewide ballot referendum, giving Pennsylvanians a chance to permanently enforce checks and balances. Meanwhile, CF aims to protect Pennsylvanians from future budget boondoggles using the same process. The Taxpayer Protection Act (TPA) is a constitutional amendment that places guardrails on state spending based on population and inflation growth—a move two-thirds of Pennsylvania voters back. The TPA ensures state spending grows at a rate Pennsylvanians can afford.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION (PENNSYLVANIA) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania) had a strong first year in Pennsylvania—having only begun operations in March, just before the state lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization published several op-eds, ran radio commercials, and established an outreach campaign that cost public-sector unions more than \$950,000 in lost dues. The Freedom Foundation is ramping up canvassing operations as areas of the state reopen and intends to substantially increase government union opt-out numbers for 2021.

SOUTH CAROLINA

PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • palmettopromise.org

In 2021, the **Palmetto Promise Institute** will seize the COVID-19 moment to deliver the hope of greater education choice to South Carolina families. This effort must be built on the foundation of comprehensive and trustworthy data. PPI recently unveiled South Carolina's first-of-its-kind data tool to compare key education metrics across the entire state and by individual school district. The simple, interactive resource pulls together publicly reported data from across state agencies to present a coherent, digestible snapshot of how current education spending lines up with student performance. With this tool, South Carolinians are equipped to get a clear picture of how their tax dollars are being spent. Among other things, it underlines a conclusion that previous PPI research found: the Palmetto State's educational expenditures do not directly equate to successful educational outcomes. K-12 education represents 40 percent of South Carolina's general fund appropriations—the largest single category—yet only a handful of people could tell you how much the state spends, or more to the point, how it is spent. That must change if South Carolina is ever to deliver effective education opportunity for every student, regardless of their income or Zip code.



TENNESSEE

BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • beacontn.org

Over the last year, the **Beacon Center of Tennessee** and its 501(c)(4) advocacy partner Beacon Impact have set their sights on making Tennessee the innovation capital of the United States. The reforms that Beacon Impact has chosen to pursue in the General Assembly this year will encourage new and existing entrepreneurs to open up shop in the Volunteer State without the overregulation and red tape that discourages entrepreneurship and small business ownership. Laws and rules suspended during COVID-19 serve as a great example of unnecessary red tape that can hurt businesses. Regulations should serve only to protect health and safety and if they can be safely removed during a pandemic, they shouldn't exist in the first place. As part of this agenda, Beacon Impact will work to cement right-to-work in the Tennessee Constitution. Placing right-to-work in the Tennessee Constitution would ensure worker freedom is always protected and that Tennessee will be a place where job creators want to move or stay.



TEXAS

TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • texaspolicy.org

In response to the economic challenges brought on by the pandemic, the **Texas Public Policy Foundation** released five papers that together form a responsible strategy for Texas' immediate and long-term economic growth. The five-step strategy is: (1) pass a conservative Texas budget; (2) reduce government spending; (3) reduce regulatory burdens; (4) reject increased taxes; and (5) use the rainy day fund responsibly. The Responsible Recovery Agenda is a comprehensive approach to addressing the budget challenges Texas faces in the wake of COVID-19 shutdowns while also preserving the success of the Texas Model, which has strengthened the state's economy. Learn more at texaspolicy.org.





UTAH

LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • libertasutah.org

Libertas Institute wants to make it as easy as possible to do business in the state of Utah. To that end, Libertas is pleased to report that Utah's new governor, Spencer Cox, made it his first order of business to evaluate all occupational licensure regulations for necessity. A first-in-the-nation, all-inclusive regulatory sandbox, nurtured through SPN's Launchpad program, is receiving considerable political support, including from the governor's office. Libertas' digital privacy efforts are also receiving political acceptance. All these things set up Utah to become one of the most business-friendly states in the nation.



SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE • sutherlandinstitute.org

Sutherland Institute is working to restore complete, accurate, and comprehensive civics curriculum to Utah public schools. During the 2021 legislative session, Sutherland will be assisting in the passage of a resolution to emphasize critical thinking and citizenship skills along with a bill that will create curriculum transparency in K-12 school learning materials so parents can make informed decisions about their student's education.

VERMONT

ETHAN ALLEN INSTITUTE • ethanallen.org

The **Ethan Allen Institute** is privileged to work with several New England and mid-Atlantic SPN affiliates on the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) issue. Thus far, an overwhelming majority of states involved rejected participation in the carbon tax scheme—at least for the time being. This productive collaboration will continue and expand in 2021. TCI is largely dormant, but it's not going away just yet! Here in Vermont, EAI is facing a new legislature with an ambitious agenda of new taxes and regulations, including an expansion of the sales tax to include services and a shift in education funding away from the property tax and toward the income tax. On the bright side, a number of lawsuits are in the works in Vermont that have the potential to vastly expand school choice in the state and possibly at the national level.



VIRGINIA

THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • thomasjeffersoninst.org

Former Virginia Speaker of the House of Delegates William Howell has been elected chairman of the **Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy** Board of Directors. "Bill Howell is a terrific Virginia leader and the Board could not have made a better choice," noted Institute President Chris Braunlich. "Speaker Howell holds the bipartisan affection of all who served with him, and his ability to advance conservative ideals while encouraging cooperative relationships is second to none." Howell served 30 years in the Virginia House of Delegates, representing the Fredericksburg-Stafford area, and the last 15 years as Speaker. Frequently described as a "pragmatic conservative," during his time as Speaker he fended off Virginia's Medicaid expansion as part of the Affordable Care Act. Newly elected to join the Board of Directors were Peter Lipsett, of Lexington, vice president of Donors Trust, a donor-advised fund dedicated to protecting constitutional liberties and civil society; and Kristi Way, of Richmond, executive director of Moelis & Company, a global independent investment bank.



VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • virginiainstitute.org

The **Virginia Institute for Public Policy** has expanded its modeling program beyond healthcare to include right-to-work legislation, occupational licensing, regulatory reform, and faith in the election system. During this legislative session, five bills drafted by the Institute are being carried, focusing on protections for independent contractors and the gig economy, regulatory reforms allowing for health insurance companies to experiment with innovative coverage solutions, and efforts to remove barriers to telehealth use in the Commonwealth (specifically remote patient monitoring in 2021). The Institute's current focus for this session is the preservation and expansion of the right to work in Virginia. Since the disastrous AB5 went into effect in California on January 1, 2020, people who make their living as contractors and gig workers all over the nation have been concerned about their futures, particularly in the current economic climate. The Virginia Institute is focused on bringing lucidity to this issue by supporting clarity for workers and employers on what constitutes an employee or an independent contractor.



WASHINGTON

FREEDOM FOUNDATION (WASHINGTON) • freedomfoundation.com

Freedom Foundation (Washington) is working hard to scuttle an attempt by the Washington State Legislature to sneak through an unpopular and unconstitutional capital gains income tax. SB-5096 was the first bill of the legislative session to receive a hearing before the powerful Senate Ways and Means Committee, and is the latest in a long series of attempts to fuel government growth by layering a new income tax on top of the already high sales, property, fuel, and business-and-operating taxes Washington residents pay. Freedom Foundation has been involved in numerous fights over the years to reject such a tax, and this session will be no different. Freedom Foundation ended 2020 on a strong note, having helped thousands of taxpayer-funded employees opt out of their union. During the month of December alone, the organization's Christmas opt-out messaging resulted in nearly 800 opt-outs, and outreach efforts are underway to continue this successful trajectory.



WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER • washingtonpolicy.org

Washington Policy Center is working to keep Washington income-tax free. A proposed income tax on capital gains has considerable legislative support. Emails WPC uncovered via a public disclosure request reveal this tax is designed to provoke a court case that might pave the way for a broader progressive income tax. The virtual legislative session led to the full adoption of a long-time WPC proposal calling for virtual testimony. WPC has provided guidance to citizens seeking to have their voices heard in this new format. There are also bills tackling occupational license reform that were inspired by WPC recommendations. While they have bipartisan support and would benefit low-income workers, powerful interests seek to keep the status quo. WPC is also advocating to expand charter schools, for safe and reasonable reopening standards, and to empower parents to direct their child's education dollars.





WEST VIRGINIA

CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • cardinalinstitute.com

The **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** is working alongside partners to educate the public on the importance of education choice and to advocate for more parent empowerment in education. The school lockdowns of 2020 demonstrated the urgent need to reimagine education in West Virginia. As public schools pivoted to remote learning, more than 9,300 West Virginia families fled the system in search of something better. As the debate about how to safely and sensibly reopen schools rages on, the Institute is working to ensure that every family in every community is empowered with the resources they need to educate their children. Governor Justice has declared that cutting the income tax is his number-one priority for 2021. The Institute's policy team is working to ensure West Virginia learns lessons from states like Kansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and that income tax reforms will benefit West Virginia in the long run.

WISCONSIN

BADGER INSTITUTE • badgerinstitute.org

As a new legislative session gets underway in Wisconsin, the **Badger Institute** will focus on promoting free enterprise and tracking government waste. The goal is to reduce barriers to workforce reentry and eliminate government bureaucracy in ways that help Wisconsin emerge from the COVID-19 crisis with a renewed commitment to free enterprise and civil society. The Institute will also focus on who receives CARES Act money and how it is spent. Governments, businesses and individuals in Wisconsin have so far received 195,424 bailout checks valued at more than \$12 billion under the CARES Act. The Institute will also advance corrections reform that ensures justice while providing pathways to work and reduced burdens on taxpayers. Research will include new approaches to electronic monitoring and uneven qualifications for legal representation. The Institute continues to lead the Wisconsin Criminal Justice Coalition, comprised of right-of-center state and national groups. Finally, the Institute will continue to promote licensing reform through research, reporting, and storytelling to open the eyes of lawmakers and the public to the damaging effects of onerous licensing practices.



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

The **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** filed a notice of claim in January putting the City of Madison on notice that an ordinance and resolution creating a new Police Civilian Oversight Board imposes unconstitutional racial quotas. WILL represents seven Madison residents challenging Madison's decision to require nine members of the 11-member Police Civilian Oversight Board to belong to specific racial groups—a clear violation of the Constitution's ban on racial discrimination. While these measures were presumably taken in the interest of racial justice, their effect is quite the opposite. Racial quotas and classifications—enshrined in city law and official policy—are unconstitutional, offensive, and repugnant to basic American values. In this case, WILL's notice of claim starts a 120-day timeline before a lawsuit against the city can commence.

AMERICAN CONSUMER INSTITUTE • theamericanconsumer.org

As a new year and a new legislative session begin, the **American Consumer Institute** intends to continue fulfilling its vision of promoting consumer welfare by raising awareness on how legislation, regulation, and public policy affect consumers in a free market. ACI will be focusing extensively on labor issues, notably opposing the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, championing independent contractors, and opposing increases in the federal minimum wage that will harm both workers and consumers. This focus is shaped by ACI's belief and research showing that the best way to enhance consumer welfare and support economic prosperity is to ensure an open, flexible, and free labor market. Following federal and state suits against some of the big tech companies for alleged antitrust violations, ACI will be working extensively over the next legislative session to educate policymakers and the public about the importance of keeping the consumer welfare standard as the basis for antitrust enforcement.



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI • goacta.org

In 2021, the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** will help legislators confront the twin crises facing public higher education today: the urgent need for colleges and universities to model rational civic discourse and the unsustainable rise of tuition. Vague speech codes, bias response teams, and speaker disinvitations continue to weaken free expression on campuses across the country. ACTA is in the midst of an in-depth qualitative and quantitative study of students' understanding of free speech that will also offer best practices to create a climate that promotes intellectual diversity and open dialogue. ACTA supports the efforts of legislators to motivate institutions to adopt formal policies that emphasize the importance of the free exchange of ideas. With the average student debt reaching \$28,000, ACTA will continue to enhance its HowCollegesSpendMoney.com website, which permits a ready view of the allocation of resources for instruction, administration, and student services at nearly 1,500 institutions. ACTA helps to educate lawmakers about the intricacies of college financial data and provide the tools they need to perform their own analyses of higher education spending in their states.



AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • aei.org

The challenges facing the United States today bear striking similarity to what the country confronted in 1938 when a group of leaders in industry and finance established the **American Enterprise Institute**. America was in crisis; the suffering the Great Depression caused spurred unprecedented government control over the private sector and prompted calls for a greater government role in healthcare, job creation and unemployment, housing, and trade. Concerned for the nation's future, AEI's founders established an institute dedicated to defending free enterprise and its crucial relationship to America's social and political institutions. These convictions continue to animate AEI scholars today. While today's threats are different, the demands for massive government overreach feel familiar. AEI scholars are at the vanguard of defending the free enterprise system and promoting policies that will help Americans through the current challenges without invasive government policies that will burden future generations.





AMERICA'S FUTURE FOUNDATION • americasfuture.org

At the end of 2020, **America's Future Foundation** celebrated their 25th year with a new name, a new brand, and new ways to make an impact across the country. Beginning in December, they officially took the name America's Future (AF) and debuted a new look and feel across their organization both digitally and in-person. In addition, they launched three regional hubs: AF-Northeast, headquartered in Providence, RI; AF-Southwest, headquartered in Phoenix, AZ; and AF-Capital Area, headquartered in Washington, DC. These "chapters on steroids" are regionally based and are action-packed, fast-growing centers of community and events. Members of these hubs will experience an exciting array of both in-person and digital programming options each month, expand their network through connections with hundreds of like-minded peers and leaders, and gain access to opportunities that will deepen their impact in their local community.



AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL • alec.org

To promote a strong COVID and post-COVID recovery in 2021, the **American Legislative Exchange Council** will continue to work with state legislators on the importance of tax relief and budget reform, including on repealing or reducing income taxes in several key states. While these fiscal issues will be among ALEC's top priorities, our model policies on worker reform—including *Janus* rights, independent contractor policy, and occupational licensing reform—would expand opportunities for working Americans dealing with an economic recession. Similarly, liability protection for small businesses will be critical to achieving a full and equal recovery from the pandemic, as will expanding school choice so that parents, not unions, can have more agency on when it's time for their children to return to the classroom. Overall, COVID-19 has also highlighted the need for emergency powers reform at the state level, another top issue for ALEC.



ARCHBRIDGE INSTITUTE • archbridgeinstitute.org

This year, the **Archbridge Institute** will continue to focus on increasing individuals' capacity to succeed in the labor market and climb the income ladder at every stage of a person's life. This includes eliminating the legal restrictions that prevent parents from allowing kids the flexibility needed to grow by giving them increasing amounts of responsibility and independence. Giving kids a chance to engage in unsupervised free play and an opportunity to earn a greater degree of independence helps to build the soft skills necessary to succeed academically and later in life. As students grow older, they will benefit from the Institute's research and policy solutions to build a reliable pipeline to "new-collar" jobs outside the traditional models of higher education. Finally, once students are equipped with the skills to succeed, it's important that a robust labor market is there to meet these jobseekers.

CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER • capitalresearch.org

Capital Research Center is currently in the process of determining issues state legislatures may want to learn more about. These include election-related grants to states from tech billionaires, foreign funding of nonprofits and universities, and funding behind progressive energy and climate policy. The Center will present before any state legislature seeking guidance on these issues.



CENTENNIAL INSTITUTE • ccu.edu/centennial

Centennial Institute shared its 2021 legislative agenda, which focuses on enhancing the sanctity of life, protecting religious freedom, reducing marijuana's harmful impact, protecting parental rights, repairing government integrity, and restoring the economy. Guided by its strategic priorities, the Institute's proposal starkly contrasts with the current status quo in Denver: overbearing government, the picking and choosing of economic winners and losers, and the rejection of parental rights. The Institute's proposed agenda calls for state legislators to embrace tried and true principles to get Colorado back on track. Learn more at centennial.ccu.edu.



CITIZENS AGAINST GOVERNMENT WASTE • cagw.org

During the 2021 legislative session, **Citizens Against Government Waste** and Council for Citizens Against Government Waste will prioritize issues related to drug pricing transparency, the gig economy, independent contractors, occupational licensing reform, sports betting, tax increases, and telemedicine. CAGW/CCAGW will continue to encourage states and local governments to reduce irresponsible spending, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several states have used relief funding from the CARES Act for unintended projects, such as \$24 million to provide essential coronavirus workers free college tuition in Michigan; \$21 million for upgrading government computer systems (which eventually was paid back) in Iowa; and \$200,000 to clean the streets of Chinatown in Honolulu, Hawaii.



CITIZENS' COUNCIL FOR HEALTH FREEDOM • cchfreedom.org

In 2001, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued the Model State Emergency Health Powers Act. More than 20 states enacted it in whole or in part. It authorizes governors to control people, property, and public gatherings through executive orders—leading to ongoing lockdowns, school and business closings, mask mandates, quarantine orders, vaccination tracking, and intrusive contact tracing. To counter fearmongering narratives, **Citizens' Council for Health Freedom** launched a series of initiatives, including videos and a coronavirus "drawer" in our Patient Toolbox (patienttoolbox.org). The first CCHF COVID-19 Update Facebook Live video was posted on March 17, and more than 30 videos followed (now also on YouTube). As a result, CCHF's Facebook followers have tripled. The videos have discussed face masks, how the vaccine works, virus realities, and faulty definitions of "covid death" and "covid case." CCHF is now developing legislation to prohibit the use of vaccine certifications for engagement in commerce and public life.





COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • cei.org

The **Competitive Enterprise Institute** launched a video series asking, “What’s Wrong with the Green New Deal?” The first video predicts what progressives might have in store for the electricity grid. The second examines America’s energy supply and what would happen if the Green New Deal mandates America phase-out of coal, oil, and natural gas. The final video examines the impact the Green New Deal would have on automobility. Another video, a short documentary film, tells the story of one small business owner in Fairfax, Virginia, who rallied volunteers and supporters to help feed people in his community facing hardships in the wake of the pandemic. View *Rushing In: The John Wood Story* on cei.org. Since the start of the pandemic last year, CEI has conducted Zoom events featuring thought leaders and policymakers like Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs Administrator Paul Ray, Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia, and legal scholar Cass R. Sunstein. Find out what’s ahead at cei.org/events.



EDCHOICE • edchoice.org

As families and educators continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic, **EdChoice** is working hard to advocate for policies that will improve access for all students to different learning options. EdChoice strongly believes Education Savings Accounts are the best approach because they empower families to spend the funds set aside for their child on any number of approved K–12 expenses, including private school tuition—like a voucher—but also include tutoring, therapy, technology, support services, online learning, microschooling, or even savings for higher education. EdChoice is excited to help state policymakers with bill design, train advocates on the benefits of school choice, and provide original research and fiscal analysis.



FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE • firstliberty.org

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a second statement of interest in a lawsuit filed by **First Liberty Institute** alleging religious discrimination against the Orthodox Jewish community by the Village of Airmont, New York. The DOJ’s statement highlights the village’s 30-year history of religious discrimination and clarifies that, contrary to Airmont’s “inaccurate and misleading” assertions, the DOJ never approved the discriminatory zoning code. In fact, the DOJ sued the village last month over the same zoning code provisions. The DOJ’s statement was filed in *Congregation of Ridnik et al. v. Village of Airmont et al.* In December of 2018, First Liberty Institute and the international law firm Norton Rose Fulbright filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of several residents, including three Orthodox Jewish rabbis, alleging that Airmont has engaged in systematic discrimination, forcing Orthodox Jewish residents to practice their faith in hiding in a deliberate effort to dissuade them from staying in or moving to Airmont. In December 2019, the DOJ filed its first statement of interest in the case, challenging the village’s claim that the government had approved the village’s zoning scheme. In recent legal filings, the village repeated the same claim.

FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY • freopp.org

What is the best way to help distressed student borrowers without giving excessive taxpayer subsidies to high-earning professionals? **Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity** (FREOPP) Fellow Preston Cooper is constructing a borrower-centered student loan relief proposal that's both fiscally responsible and also directs help to those who need it most. How should the energy sector harness nuclear power to reduce energy costs for Americans living below the median income level? FREOPP Fellow Robert Bryce is developing plans to keep nuclear plants in operation by bringing both parties into the fold to help fight rising energy prices. And how should the country pay for prescription drugs to reward scientific innovation and the creation of new, life-saving medicines? FREOPP Fellow Gregg Girvan is diving into the data to find out where true innovation is taking place—and how public policy can encourage it. As the new Congress sorts out their own legislative priorities, FREOPP stands ready to work with members to achieve progress on policies that will increase economic opportunity for those who least have it.



FRASER INSTITUTE • fraserinstitute.org

New Hampshire retains its status as the most economically free state in the union on the **Fraser Institute's** annual Economic Freedom of North America report (EFNA). Following New Hampshire are Florida (2nd), Virginia (3rd), Texas (4th), and Tennessee (5th). At the other end of the spectrum, New York is dead last yet again, with West Virginia (49th), Alaska (48th), California (47th), and Vermont (46th) joining the Empire State in the EFNA cellar. Find out where your state ranks at fraserinstitute.org. Economic freedom is fundamental to prosperity. In fact, the least-free quartile of jurisdictions across North America have an average per-capita income 8.1 percent below the national average, compared to 4.6 percent above the national average for jurisdictions in the most-free quartile. Members of the Fraser Institute's EFNA Network—58 free-market organizations in 44 states, Canada, and Mexico—are doing an amazing job spreading this message. In the past year, for example, the EFNA Network generated 512 mentions in US media outlets.



FREE STATE FOUNDATION • freestatefoundation.org

In January, the **Free State Foundation** hosted two important virtual events. First, a webinar featuring a farewell address by outgoing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai, followed by reactions by FSF President Randolph May and Senior Fellows Seth Cooper and Andrew Long. Second, a webinar titled, "The Supreme Court, the FCC, and Communications Law," featuring remarks by Ilya Shapiro, director of the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies, and publisher of the *Cato Supreme Court Review*. He is the author of the September 2020 book *Supreme Disorder: Judicial Nominations and the Politics of America's Highest Court*. Shapiro addressed the Supreme Court's current and prospective jurisprudence regarding the nondelegation doctrine, Chevron deference, the status of independent agencies, and other administrative law doctrines as they impact communications law and policy and FCC decisions.





INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH

INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH • ifs.org

The **Institute for Free Speech** is spearheading an education campaign to raise awareness of the speech and privacy-restricting provisions in H.R. 1 and S. 1, priority bills introduced by Democratic leaders in Congress. The massive bills are a compilation of every Orwellian proposal concocted by opponents of free speech and citizen privacy since 2010. IFS has published numerous resources examining the damage both bills would do to free political speech and the ability of nonprofits to fulfill their mission. H.R. 1 and S. 1 would violate the privacy of nonprofits and their supporters, stringently regulate political speech online, compel speakers to include lengthy government-mandated messages in their communications (including the names of their supporters), and force taxpayers to subsidize politicians' campaigns, with the effect of increasing political extremism and creating new incentives for corruption. Worse, H.R. 1 and S. 1 impose draconian restrictions on speech about legislative issues and public affairs by nonprofits. Both bills would radically transform the Federal Election Commission, tasked with enforcing these laws, from a bipartisan, six-member agency to a partisan, five-member agency under the president's control.



Judicial Watch®

Because no one is above the law

JUDICIAL WATCH • judicialwatch.org

As always, **Judicial Watch** is fighting against government corruption and abuse, and the fight continues under the new Biden presidency. There is substantial evidence, from documents and witness statements, that the Biden family, including President Joe Biden, may have been involved in criminal activity involving, among other issues, foreign entities tied to Ukraine and China. Judicial Watch forced the release of an additional 38 pages of records from the US State Department showing that a senior Obama State Department official said he was told by a senior Ukraine prosecutor that he was offered "high-level" access to Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign by the same Democratic lobbying firm that worked for Burisma Holdings. This "smoking-gun" email ties Hunter Biden's Burisma work to an influence-peddling operation involving the Clinton presidential campaign.



LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER

LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER • libertyjusticecenter.org

Is it ok to speak your mind in America anymore? Sadly, it seems like no one's education, job, or voice is safe from being canceled if they have said, done, or even remotely associated with something controversial at any time in their lives. A donation in support of a cause you care about can land you on a blacklist, effectively canceling you from American public life. That's why **Liberty Justice Center** is laser focused on protecting free speech. It's important to remain on guard against the forces of cancel culture and the free-speech police. The country must reaffirm its commitment to First Amendment rights. And donor privacy is key to reviving a culture of free speech. Privacy is a right for all individuals and organizations, not just the politically popular. In fact, America was founded by individuals who held contrarian, not politically popular, points of view. With lawsuits in Montana, New Mexico, and Rhode Island, and upcoming new litigation challenging state laws that threaten donor privacy—along with support of *Americans for Prosperity v. Becerra* in the US Supreme Court—the attorneys at the Liberty Justice Center are ready to fight for free speech and donor privacy on multiple fronts.

LINCOLN NETWORK • joinlincoln.org

Public disdain for big tech companies has increased across the political spectrum. This “techlash” can be approached in a bevy of ways, but the **Lincoln Network**’s goal is to expand ideas and responsible free speech. While the undemocratic acts of those who stormed the US Capitol deserve unequivocal condemnation, the actions Twitter took in response show how the dream of cyberspace as a home for “lovers of freedom and self-determination” is in peril. The Lincoln Institute recently sent out an invitation encouraging followers to join the Institute in building censorship-resistant and decentralized alternatives to the current internet infrastructures. The Institute wants to be part of the solution and is prioritizing technical projects and improvements in Congress to address multiple areas of growing concern.



MERCATUS CENTER AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY • mercatus.org

As 2021 begins, the **Mercatus Center at George Mason University** has several priorities for researchers at the state level. Mercatus will continue to work on regulatory reform research and the rollout of its series on how regulatory burdens are associated with increased poverty (for examples, see Mercatus reports on Arizona, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia). Mercatus will also continue to conduct research and outreach to state audiences on the need for zoning reform to achieve housing affordability. In addition, Mercatus will expand resources on state-based healthcare reforms and continue to grow an informal working group examining how a state compact can be used to limit corporate welfare. Reach out to Mercatus for policy feedback and use the online magazine and podcast resources, such as *Conversations with Tyler*; *The Bridge*; and the new online magazine, *Discourse*.



PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION • pacificlegal.org

With a majority of states still under emergency orders, **Pacific Legal Foundation** is working with SPN organizations to place safeguards on emergency powers and to restore constitutional government and the separation of powers in troubled times. PLF also continues to file lawsuits challenging unconstitutional emergency orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including business shutdowns and eviction moratoria. You can find more information on PLF’s policy recommendations at pacificlegal.org. PLF’s property rights practice group is actively advancing both litigation and legislative initiatives to end home equity theft—which allows government to take a person’s home along with all the equity over a nominal property tax debt. Read more about PLF efforts to end home equity theft in North Dakota at pacificlegal.org.





PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH CENTER • perc.org

In 2021, the **Property and Environment Research Center** is committed to fixing America's forests. Once considered a model of efficiency within the federal government, the US Forest Service is now plagued by dysfunction. Today, layers of regulations and conflicting mandates that prevent or delay forest management hamstringing the agency. This creates significant challenges for modern national forest managers, including escalating wildfire costs, litigation that hinders forest management, and competition between national forest users. PERC research examines the challenges facing national forest management policy and explores innovative, decentralized solutions that can achieve better outcomes for communities and their environments. This legislative session the PERC team is committed to working with states and the Forest Service to reduce regulation and litigation, bolster local management, and promote private solutions to restore America's forests. These efforts can increase the pace and scale of forest restoration to, ultimately, increase forest health and resilience.



THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION • heritage.org

The Heritage Foundation is focused on restoring trust in the American electoral system. It is redoubling efforts to educate Americans about attempts to subvert election integrity, to identify cases of voter fraud, and to make policy recommendations to protect the integrity and accuracy of all elections. Heritage undertakes this effort from a position of strength: its Election Fraud Database, which presents a sampling of recent proven instances of election fraud, was viewed nearly 5 million times in 2020. While it is difficult to make definitive claims about the extent of election fraud, The Heritage Foundation is confident there are far too many vulnerabilities in the current system. The important thing is that people must have trust in the outcome, which is difficult to do, largely because of the vulnerabilities that currently exist. Working with many SPN partners—at the state and federal level—Heritage's efforts can ensure faith is restored. Learn more at heritage.org/voterfraud.



THE JESSE HELMS CENTER • jessehelscenter.org

Each spring **The Jesse Helms Center** hosts the Admiral James W. Nance Foreign Policy Lecture. The Nance Lecture Series is named in honor of "Bud" Nance, a lifelong friend of Sen. Jesse Helms who served as Helms' chief of staff when he was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This year's featured speaker was Dr. Michael Pillsbury, senior fellow and director for Chinese strategy at Hudson Institute in Washington, DC. Pillsbury, author, speaker, and television commentator, has been called a "China-hawk," an "architect" of President Donald Trump's signature policy on China, and a driving force behind the evolution of American foreign policy toward China. Pillsbury's remarks may be viewed at jessehelscenter.org. The Center is finalizing plans for its signature outreach experience for high school students, Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge (FELC). FELC teaches teenage students how to develop as a leader, the value of the free enterprise system, and the importance of America's founding principles.

THE POLICY CIRCLE • thepolicycircle.org

In December, **The Policy Circle** brought thought leaders and change-makers together for enlightening discussions on improving American's financial health and what the Georgia Senate elections mean for the US Senate. Featured speakers included Lorraine Gavicán Kerr, TD Ameritrade; Indiana State Treasurer Kelly Mitchell; Scott Niederjohn, Lakeland University; Ashley Davis, Founding Partner West Front Strategies; and Sara Fagen, CEO, Deep Root Analytics. In January, The Policy Circle graduated 12 women from the Beta class of its Civics Leadership Engagement Roadmap (CLER) is a proprietary, experiential leadership program that takes participants from having general civic knowledge to becoming civic leaders. The curriculum facilitates an understanding of the American founding and the principles that live on today and features one-on-one coaching, mastermind peer groups, networking opportunities, and specific activities designed to build local connections with policy leaders and decision makers.



THE STEAMBOAT INSTITUTE • steamboatinstitute.org

The Steamboat Institute's key issue this session is defending free expression, including civil discourse and robust debate, which has increasingly come under attack. The Institute will defend free expression through its Campus Liberty Tour, which brings together top speakers to discuss key issues on college campuses across the country, and its Stopping the Stampede on Civil Liberties campaign, which activates grassroots citizens to push back against draconian COVID-19 restrictions. Find out more at SteamboatInstitute.org and follow the Institute on social media.



TRUTH IN ACCOUNTING • truthinaccounting.org

This year, **Truth in Accounting** is mobilizing citizens, elected officials, journalists, and think tanks to change governmental accounting standards. Many states have requirements to balance their budget every year, but because of the way they prepare financial reports, budgets that appear balanced are anything but. All too often, government's official financial statements don't reflect reality, because they follow "cash-based" accounting principles. What does that mean? With cash-based accounting, financial reports show expenses only when money is paid, not when debt or future expenses are incurred. By only reporting cash spending, and not accumulated debt, the financial reports paint a much rosier—but far from accurate—picture of government finances. This delusional and nontransparent approach to government accounting has had dire real-world consequences for cities, states, and citizens. When it comes time to pay the previously hidden debt, elected officials face a sudden need to hike taxes or slash services—or both. People suffer.





YOUNG AMERICA'S FOUNDATION • yaf.org

Young America's Foundation is excited to be the new caretaker and owner of President Ronald Reagan's boyhood home in Dixon, Illinois. YAF looks forward to carrying on the important work of preserving and protecting this historic property, which the Ronald Reagan Home Preservation Foundation has managed and cared for since 1980. "Ronald Reagan shaped my values and, most importantly, my optimistic view of America," noted Governor Scott Walker, president of YAF. "Like Ronald Reagan, I grew up in a small Midwestern town. I love visiting Dixon and touring the well-preserved boyhood home of our 40th president. Today, the Reagan Ranch allows YAF to share the values and lasting accomplishments of our 40th president with future generations. It is my hope that by sharing the story of Ronald Reagan's early years through his boyhood home in Dixon, we will give young people and all visitors a new appreciation for one of our nation's greatest leaders and the values he learned and fought for." To learn more about or support YAF's work to preserve Reagan's boyhood home and Rancho del Cielo, visit YAF.org.

Safeguard the Future with Your Legacy



■ **Thomas Roe**, a successful businessman and advisor to President Reagan, created the State Policy Network so there would be a champion for freedom and opportunity in every state. With your partnership, we can preserve the power of state solutions and the profound impact they have on the lives of Americans now and into the future.

Joining the Thomas Roe Legacy Society

**Become a member
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- A gift in trust.
- Other estate gifts in accordance with SPN's gift acceptance guidelines.



We would love to speak with you and help you clarify the legacy you'd like to leave. To begin this conversation, please contact Cindy Kilduff at 703-243-1655 or kilduff@spn.org.

Learn More: [SPN.org/Legacy](https://spn.org/Legacy)


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As a member, you will be recognized on a plaque at SPN's headquarters and will receive special event invitations, a token of our appreciation, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing you are making an extraordinary impact on the future of our country.



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