



State Solutions. National Impact.

SPRING 2023



## Federalism's Comeback Story

SPN launches the Center for Practical Federalism to restore the balance of power between Washington and the states.

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, over 66 state partners in key capacities, and more than 90 associate partners.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

## OUR STRATEGY

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

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# Dear Friends,

Congress remains divided and in a steady gridlock, signaling that there is little hope of advancing policy reforms at the federal level. Thankfully, the states are not waiting on Washington to take the lead in making a tangible difference in people's lives. The generosity of our supporters makes this critical work possible. Thanks to your partnership with SPN, our Network stands ready to secure more opportunities for economic prosperity and personal freedom that will build strong, flourishing communities.

The state of the economy, energy reliability, and increased education options are just a few key policy issues that have many Americans turning to state and local leaders. Because of your support, Network leaders are approaching state legislators with the policy playbooks that will improve the lives of the people in their states. While there is still much work to be done, we know that the best solutions to local problems are solved by those closest to home, not by Washington politicians.

This year, SPN has bold plans to expand our work restoring constitutional federalism—the appropriate balance of power between the federal government and the states. We are excited to announce the launch of our new Center for Practical Federalism with the support of many generous donors who provided the seed funding. This Center will be a champion of reinvigorated federalism, ready to defend our right to self-governance and push back against the federal government when it oversteps its authority. In this issue of *SPN News*, fellows from the Center discuss how SPN plans to devolve power from the federal government and hold leaders accountable for policy decisions. They also share why federalism remains our best hope for expanding individual freedom, opportunity, and prosperity.

In addition to our federalism work, SPN will continue its core function of empowering Network leaders to be better, faster, and stronger to advance sound policy solutions. Our leadership programming is second to none, and we find more of our leaders moving on to prominent roles in government. Recently, we sat down with one such leader, Ellen Weaver, who just became South Carolina's new superintendent of education. Ellen, the former CEO of the Palmetto Promise Institute, credits the SPN Network for helping her build leadership skills and champion policy reforms that put students first. We also feature a story from Charles Mitchell and Daniel Erspamer, two Network CEOs, who explain how they've been able to transform their states by building a "network of networks."

And to continue our donor spotlight series, we spoke with Bruce Burianek, a successful entrepreneur and steadfast supporter of SPN, who shared with us why he believes in the power of the Network and how he has seen what state solutions can accomplish when we work together.

I look forward to updating you on our progress as we chart a course forward. Thank you for all that you do to support SPN.

Take care,



President and CEO  
State Policy Network







## A Federalism Revival

SPN launches the new Center for Practical Federalism, focused on reducing the federal government's role in the everyday lives of Americans and returning decision-making power to states, communities, and citizens.

Most Americans today are not familiar with the term “federalism” even though it plays a pivotal role in their lives.

Everything from the quality of our schools, public safety, medical care, our taxes, how we get around (cars, rideshares, light rail), job opportunities, and reliable energy are all connected to state and local policy. States have made different choices on these issues, and in response, people have “voted with their feet” and moved to states that offer greater opportunity. We see this happening today as people flee California, Illinois, and New York for states like Arizona, Florida, and Tennessee.

Federalism at its core is the idea of giving states the authority to make decisions for their citizens so that policies can be relevant and responsive to their needs. It is the system in which our country was founded to help keep government limited and accountable. It is the bread and butter of our work at SPN and the work of our Network partners in the states.

But over time, that balance of power has shifted.

The federal government reached historic spending levels and hit its debt limit at the beginning of 2023. In addition to the White House and Congress, there are also 434 federal departments and agencies that make laws and create nearly 4,000 regulations per year. About one-third of a state's budget is actually money coming from the federal government with strings attached on how the money can be spent. By 2046, more than half of a state's budget will come from federal dollars.

The current administration will only continue to concentrate power in Washington, DC, and take away from the critical progress we've made together in the states. **But that is where there is opportunity to fight back and remind the American people why federalism will give Americans a greater voice in the policies that impact their daily lives.**

With the generosity of key supporters, **SPN has launched the new Center for Practical Federalism** to house our focused efforts on restoring and protecting the proper balance of power between the federal government and the states.

The Center for Practical Federalism builds upon your impact in the states. Over time, SPN has cultivated a Network of 64 state think tanks, 66 state partners in key capacities (like litigation, journalism, and advocacy), and over 90 national partners. Together, you, SPN, and this Network have secured major victories for Americans in education, the economy, energy, health-care, and more. But, if the federal government continues to expand its power at the current trajectory, the incredible achievements you and our entire Network have made possible in the states could slip away. Even worse, it will become harder to create customized policy that meets the needs of people in each state going forward.

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**ON STAGE:** At SPN's Annual Meeting, a panel of experts discuss the need to conduct oversight of the federal government and agencies.



“AS THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO GROW ITS POWER OVER AMERICANS, I’M ENCOURAGED TO KNOW THAT STATE POLICY NETWORK’S NEW CENTER FOR PRACTICAL FEDERALISM IS PUSHING BACK. I’M SURE LEADERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WILL WELCOME SPN’S HELP IN DEFENDING OUR CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AND SEPARATION OF POWERS.”

—Art Pope, John William Pope Foundation

“We named this the Center for *Practical* Federalism because our goal is not to articulate theory, but to revive the *practice* of federalism, by equipping state and local officials with the data, facts, legal arguments, and inspiration they need to fight federal overreach,” said Tony Woodlief, SPN’s executive vice president, senior fellow and author of *I, Citizen: A Blueprint for Reclaiming American Self-Governance*. “Much of the power federal agencies exercise is rooted in bullying, bluffing, and fiscal extortion. Our elected leaders have the power to resist—but they have to know how and have the incentive to do so. That’s where we come in.”

SPN will continue the heart and soul of our mission as we have always done – to work closely with Network organizations to tailor their policies to the needs of the citizens in their states, which is the essence of federalism. Everything we do at SPN is meant to make the Network better, faster, and stronger. This is why SPN is confident in starting the Center for Practical Federalism—because our partners advocate for the people in their states and recognize the growing threat posed by an unrestrained federal behemoth. This is a powerful and distinct lane of influence for our Network.

The Center is a significant step to ensure that the states remain the laboratories of democracy and the firewall to the growth of government in Washington.

“The amount of talent and effort the state Network has put into making America freer is something we need to protect. I am thrilled SPN is stepping into this role,” said Madison Ray, senior director of the Center. “SPN is well positioned to do this because of our relationships with our Network partners, local groups, and our appreciation for the power of what can be done at the state level. We understand how all 50 states are different and should be celebrated for it.”

### Through this initiative, SPN plans to focus on three core strategies to revive American federalism.

1. **Motivate and equip lawmakers to champion federalism** and conduct the necessary oversight to keep the executive branch in check.
2. **Fight federal overreach in the courts** by supporting our Network of litigation partners as they take on administrative and regulatory cases. And...
3. **Make a compelling case for federalism** by offering practical solutions and exposing the undemocratic, unconstitutional behavior of federal officials.

With the generosity of our supporters, we have raised over \$2 million to start the Center and are rapidly scaling our efforts and bringing on top talent to bring this work to life.

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



Center for Practical Federalism senior fellow Tony Woodlief

## Restoring Accountability through Oversight Reform

SPN has brought on Steve Johnson, former chairman of the Michigan House of Representatives Oversight Committee, as a senior fellow to lead our efforts to encourage policymakers to create more oversight of state and federal agencies. Right now, lawmakers have the authority to conduct oversight of agency lawmaking but rarely do they use it.

When Steve joined the oversight committee in 2021, it was a relatively sleepy committee and not one that lawmakers were eager to join. He came in at a unique time when the executive branch under Governor Whitmer was using unprecedented powers to manage the COVID pandemic.

"We started to set the stage of watching what the executive branch was up to," said Johnson. "We get into the mindset that we need to pass laws or repeal laws in the legislature, but we need to do more than that. We need to be a check on the executive branch."

They noticed a concerning pattern similar to what was going on in New York at the time – that the government was sending COVID patients back to nursing homes. The Mackinac Center, through a FOIA request, discovered that the governor was undercounting COVID deaths. As a result, Steve's committee worked with the Auditor General to do an independent investigation and found that they were, in fact, undercounting. They also tackled unemployment fraud, which became rampant during the pandemic to the tune of \$10 billion. The federal government sent a flood of money to the states and the system was simply too overrun to detect instances of fraud. In addition to COVID-related overreach (which was rampant in 2021 when he was in office), the committee also took on oversight with the Secretary of State, who at the time planned to never reopen branch DMV offices even post-COVID for walk-in visits for customers. Their intervention changed the approach and allowed them to re-open.



Former Rep. Steve Johnson joins SPN to lead our oversight efforts based on his experience as chair of the Michigan House Oversight Committee.

"We know overreach is happening in other states. It's a natural progression of the executive branch. We must inspire other legislatures to be a vigilant eye and make sure laws are followed the way they are supposed to," he said.

Steve is working in multiple states with SPN's Network partners to provide lawmakers with custom recommendations on how to conduct oversight. For example, he has partnered with the Institute for Reforming Government and their new Center for Investigative Oversight to equip lawmakers with the resources they need to stop abuses of power in Wisconsin. Building off of the same methodology, we are working to replicate custom blueprints for oversight reform in other states.

**"If you are not paying attention closely, the bureaucracy is going to run the show and you didn't elect a single one of them,"** he said. "We have got to flip that – they need to be scared of the legislature and afraid to go outside of the bounds of what legislation intends." In addition to Steve's oversight work, SPN is also creating a state scorecard to demonstrate which states are creating an environment that favors federalism and which ones are falling short.

## Protecting the Balance of Power through Litigation

Over the last decade, SPN has invested in building up the Network's ability to conduct strategic litigation, with over 20 litigation centers in our Network to date. Litigation is a critical function in holding the government accountable when it oversteps its authority and offering citizens a way of fighting back when their rights are violated. Our Network has a long track record of keeping the government in check through the courts, including several cases that have gone all the way to the Supreme Court.

Through the Center for Practical Federalism, we aim to make





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—Steve Johnson



the ground more fertile for litigation that examines the authority of federal agencies and the laws they impose on states. We are launching a regulatory tracker, or an early warning system to monitor the federal regulations that have a significant impact on the states. For example, when the federal government gave the states billions of dollars during the pandemic, they had strings attached that said they could not be used for tax cuts. In response, several attorneys general sued the Biden administration because it "imposed unconstitutional limits on states."

SPN is working with our Network of public interest litigation partners to identify cases, plaintiffs, and elevate stories of how these policies from Washington, DC, impact real people in the states. Often, our state partners are best equipped to find the most compelling plaintiffs because they are on the ground, in the states hearing from people affected by policy reform. SPN will invest in a pilot project with the Pelican Institute in Louisiana to train our partners in the best way to find plaintiffs that will move game-changing cases to advance and protect federalism.

## Making the Case for Federalism

The mainstream media focuses on battles in Congress and the White House, while quietly, there are powerful stories of people in states across the country changing their communities for the better.

People already have limited confidence in the federal government, but they need to see that there's another way forward and that the answer to every problem isn't more government. SPN will elevate stories from the states in top news outlets and conduct regular public opinion polling to better understand

public attitudes on key issues pertaining to the states. For example, in *Newsweek*, SPN elevated the story of Victor Fuentes, an immigrant who escaped communist Cuba, and who founded a church in Nevada to help the community and recovering addicts. His church was destroyed when the US government diverted their water, drying up their baptism pond and causing the rest of the land to flood. After a long legal battle, they still have not been repaid for the damages caused.

SPN is launching a new online publication, *American Habits*, which targets state and local officials with data and practical steps they can take to reinvigorate federalism. SPN has brought on a seasoned journalist from *The Carolina Journal*, Ray Nothstine, to lead these efforts. In addition to telling stories of the effects of state and local policy, the platform will also expose corruption and federal overreach.

"This isn't what America was meant to be. If you look at Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* – everyone is empowered locally," he said. "We want to remind people that they can make a difference, and to legislators – that they do have the power to push back and not sit and watch mandate after mandate suffocate their state."

Your support has given Americans reason to be optimistic that the current path of the country can change, and we can leave a better legacy for future generations. The original motto of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one), means the states stand in unity, but not conformity. We must protect the system that has enabled states to be the laboratories for democracy and the firewall to Washington, DC politics.

# Building a Freedom Movement in the States

By Daniel Erspamer and Charles Mitchell

We owe America's existence to entrepreneurs, perseverance in the face of adversity. . . and barstools. Therefore, it should be no surprise that today, we owe the most exciting progress in preserving America to the same.

That is no overstatement. John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and many of the other Founding Fathers who pledged their lives, their freedom, and their sacred honor to their hallowed cause were entrepreneurs. They had been blessed with success. And they used their success for the benefit not really of themselves, but of posterity, in fighting the American Revolution.

While we certainly face challenges today, those the American Founders surmounted—most memorably perhaps Washington at Valley Forge, with his barefoot, starving soldiers—make our problems pale in comparison. Watching television news in 2023 may try our patience and raise our blood pressure, but Thomas Paine was correct that *those* were the times that tried men's souls.

On a somewhat lighter note, we know from history that many of the key conversations that resulted in our founding documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—were held in taverns. We, as two leaders in today's State Policy Network, can attest the same remains true, thanks to the support of the latter-day Hancocks, Franklins, and Washingtons who so generously support this Network.

## How do we know? Because we have lived it.

Both of us began our careers in the freedom movement in Washington, DC, Daniel working inside the powerful network for change built by Charles Koch, and Charles fighting against what we now call cancel culture in higher education (back before any of those were household names). Both of us returned to states where we had roots—Daniel to Louisiana, where he had gone to college at Tulane, and Charles to Pennsylvania, where he had grown up—to assume leadership roles at state-based think tanks in this Network. And upon assuming those responsibilities, **both of us set out not just to strengthen those think tanks, but to do what this Network really**



**exists to do: to build a freedom network in our states. Yes, that includes a think tank, but it also includes much more.**

SPN began by focusing on building out a think tank Network in the states, as envisioned by founder Thomas Roe. Today, our Network has evolved into a coalition of freedom organizations within the states. This infrastructure consists of think tanks, litigation centers, investigative journalism centers, leadership academies, grassroots, advocacy organizations, and more. Together, these capacities make up the power centers of the Network, capable of fighting harmful government policies and accelerating wins in the states. There are now at least 34 states that have built some form of what SPN calls the “freedom infrastructure” in their states. They vary from blue states like Illinois to red states like Kansas to swing states like Ohio.

While Louisiana and Pennsylvania are purple states with left-of-center governors and unpredictable legislatures, both states are heading in the right direction because we have adopted this approach, working with SPN and benefiting from the support of its donors. Daniel learned the strategy from the inside, working as an SPN vice president for several years before applying these lessons at the Pelican Institute as its second CEO. And Charles came to Commonwealth Foundation via a grant from SPN that funded his position as chief operating officer for the first year, before becoming president and CEO. Pelican played a leading role in the successful court challenge to the Biden administration's vaccine mandate, in addition to passing historic occupational licensing reform last year, removing barriers to opportunity for thousands of Louisianans. Commonwealth has secured some of the largest increases in school choice in America (despite the governor's efforts) and has beat back 12 tax increases, amounting to \$33 billion, among other victories.



None of this would have happened without the support of Network donors like you, who are carrying out the legacy of our nation's founding entrepreneurs.

Part of what has made the successes of Pelican and Commonwealth possible are the peer networks SPN creates with your support. These are critical to helping Network leaders support each other through tough times. For example, when Daniel took over Pelican, his predecessor had died of cancer, and the organization was in financial distress. He relied on Charles and peers across the country to help right the ship. Now Pelican is flourishing. Similarly, following the reelection of President Obama in 2012, Charles was deeply frustrated about the direction of our country and sought Daniel's help—yes, each of them on a barstool, at an SPN conference! It was out of that conversation that Charles and other leaders at Commonwealth adopted their present commitment to building out a freedom network in Pennsylvania, and the results speak for themselves. Both organizations are gems of this Network and of the global freedom movement.

In Louisiana, alongside the Pelican Institute think tank, Daniel and other leaders have built a litigation center, an advocacy or-

ganization, a leadership academy that trains up Louisiana's future leaders (including supermarket owner Brandon Trosclair, who sued the federal government over the vaccine mandate), and more. In Pennsylvania, over the last decade, Charles and other leaders of Commonwealth have launched a public interest law firm, an advocacy organization, and a union watchdog organization—all of which operate independently, with their own leaders—with a leadership academy and other projects next on the list.

Thanks to supporters of this Network, more and more organizations are building out these state infrastructures and innovating along the way—bringing in new partners to promote freedom in the states. **As the state infrastructure grows, we start to see bigger and bolder wins for freedom.** Together, we serve as the firewall in the states that protects Americans from government overreach at both the state and federal level.

*Daniel Erspamer is the CEO of the Pelican Institute for Public Policy in Louisiana. Charles Mitchell is the president and CEO of the Commonwealth Foundation in Pennsylvania.*

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SPNAM.ORG

# Ellen Weaver Leads New Era of Education Reform in South Carolina

*The new superintendent of education draws on experience being part of the SPN Network to help South Carolina students thrive.*

**A**t State Policy Network, we often talk about the importance of building leaders in the states who have a profound impact on their communities. Our Network leaders not only run effective state think tanks, but they often go on to other leadership roles in nonprofits, the private sector, and in government. In 2022, founder and former CEO of the Palmetto Promise Institute Ellen Weaver decided to take the leap and run for public office to build on her decades of work creating better education opportunities for children in South Carolina. In November, she won her election against Democratic opponent Lisa Ellis and now leads the South Carolina Department of Education and its staff of over 1,000 employees.

This was an unexpected journey for Ellen, as she was happy with her life at the Palmetto Promise Institute for the past decade. She started her career in politics working for Senator Jim DeMint as an advisor and state director. Together, they founded Palmetto in 2013 so there would be a strong free-market presence in the state advancing sound research and policy solutions. Through her time at Palmetto, Ellen also was appointed to serve on—and eventually chaired—the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, getting a behind-the-scenes look at the state's education challenges.



But a health scare changed everything in 2021 and reframed her thinking about what it means to be courageous.

"As I really thought about this opportunity, I realized what would have held me back from doing it was fear: the political arena is very toxic right now," she said. "I thought long and hard about what this would mean to step up at this moment in time, and I realized that there was freedom on the other side of fear. Good policy can help people reach their full, God-given potential—students, teachers, and families. And I had to be brave enough to step up."

Ellen experienced the power of the American Dream through education in her own life. She had several different education experiences, ranging from home school, religious school, and public school. She saw what many parents see—that their children each have unique needs, and there isn't a "one size fits all" that works for every kid. She made it her mission to stand for greater educational opportunities for every child, regardless of their zip code or background.

During her time at Palmetto, the organization helped advance significant reforms for education in the state. In 2022, Palmetto released a study that helped inspire significant budget reform to make education funding more flexible, transparent, and student-focused. They also launched a new education center with US Senator Tim Scott, The Artis Ware Center for Education Opportunity (named after his grandfather), to help more South Carolinians rise out of poverty through a quality education.

With a supportive governor, Ellen hopes to open the pathway for greater educational opportunities for children in the state, in addition to helping kids recover from pandemic learning

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“THE PEER GROUPS SPN SUPPORTS HAVE REALLY BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN MY PERSONAL JOURNEY AND IN SHAPING MY LEADERSHIP AND HONING MY WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO TAKE RISKS.”

— Ellen Weaver

loss. The state currently has a literacy and math crisis, with two-thirds of kids not performing on grade level. The path to improvement won't come easy.

“There will always be opposition to education freedom and that is just the political reality,” she said. “There is a lot of power and money at stake. But the silver lining of the pandemic is that in states all over the country, citizens, parents, and community members are more awake and aware than they have ever been about the needs and opportunities of our students and our education system.”

Through it all, Ellen has found support and community among other leaders across the states who are part of the State Policy Network. She has long been involved in SPN's leadership peer groups that regularly bring together think tank leaders so they can share their experiences, learn from each other, and find opportunities for multistate reform.

“The peer groups SPN supports have really been instrumental in my personal journey and in shaping my leadership and honing my willingness and ability to take risks,” she said. “Some of my best friends in the world are fellow SPN CEOs. We've grown up together in a lot of ways and I'm so proud of the incredible work they have done to build out not just an organization, but an infrastructure of capabilities in their own states. I know no matter what, they are just a phone call away,” she said.

SPN also worked alongside Ellen and Palmetto staff in their “startup phase” when they navigated the ins and outs of running a policy nonprofit. SPN offered guidance on the essentials of operations, fundraising, government affairs, and policy, so they could hit the ground running with a solid foundation

in place. And over the years, as the organization evolved, we adapted our offerings to support their needs. Part of SPN's unique role with our state partners is that we work with them in different ways no matter what stage they are in, whether it be startup, expansion, or starting over with new leadership. Even now, SPN is supporting Palmetto through Ellen's departure and helping to set up the new leadership for success. Our partners trust that we will be alongside them for the long term.

“Having the team at SPN help walk us through the essentials and not just do a data dump and walk away, but holding our hand through the process, has been such an incredibly rich resource,” she said.

Ellen has bold plans for South Carolina, at a time when families need it most. Parents are demanding change in our nation's education system, and leaders like Ellen are charting the course for the future.





## Donor Spotlight: Bruce Burianek

*Thanks to SPN's generous supporters, our Network has never been better prepared or more well-positioned to take on the challenges Americans face today. In our donor spotlight series, we're honoring the individuals who make our work in the states possible.*

**B**ruce Burianek has always been a problem solver. Born and raised in Independence, Ohio, a small suburb of Cleveland, Bruce recalls his dad recruiting him to fix the family lawn mower or figure out why the TV wasn't working. "I always loved taking things apart and hopefully putting them back together successfully. Today, everything seems to come in a chip and is replaceable. But back then, we fixed everything," he said. Capitalizing on his love of tinkering, as well as math and science, Bruce pursued a degree in electrical engineering at Akron University.

Through the engineering program at Akron, Bruce was hired by General Electric (GE) in Cincinnati, where he worked in the jet aircraft engine division. However, he quickly became disenchanted when he experienced bureaucracy in the corporate world. "I went into business with an entrepreneurial, management-oriented spirit and wanted to do exceptional work and make a good product," he said. But Bruce encountered barriers that prevented him from being able to do that exceptional work, in part because of the inefficiency of the labor union and its constant conflicts with management. After 18 months of frustration, he left the engineering department to work in a customer service-related field. Although he was disappointed to no longer be working as an engineer, Bruce took the opportunity to learn about direct sales and fine-tune his customer service chops over the next four years.



Bruce Burianek

Bruce eventually made his way to Houston, Texas, where he was employed by ADT Security Services, which saw the benefit in his technical background and his customer service experience. He was placed in their brand-new fire alarm division and served as technical support for their regional branches. But after five years with ADT, the corporation decided to restructure, and Bruce was laid off, along with hundreds of employees across the United States. Undeterred, Bruce partnered with another contractor to design, sell, and install fire alarm systems. Their small company, Fire Safe Protection Services, became a contractor for large corporations in the Houston area. The company expanded its services and was so successful that it became a competitor to ADT, the very company that had let Bruce go several years earlier.

After building a successful business from the ground up, Bruce wanted to give back to organizations that were making an impact in their communities. "I had this successful business, and I began asking myself, 'What I should do with the blessings that God had given me?'" said Bruce. "I wanted to help other people and be involved in making the world better."

“

WHEN I SEE THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED AT ANNUAL MEETING AND IN THE NETWORK, IT GIVES ME HOPE. TO ME, THAT IS THE KEY AUDIENCE WE SHOULD BE SPEAKING TO, AND SPN DOES JUST THAT.”

— Bruce Burianek

He and his wife, Stephenie, started giving to faith-based organizations working in various communities and began to receive more mail from other nonprofit groups. One day, Bruce received a quarterly newsletter from SPN outlining the priorities and initiatives of state think tank members and national partners. “I eventually realized that SPN was the overarching organization that pulls the Network all together,” he said. “Before that, everything I knew was disjointed, as there were so many different groups working on similar issues. **SPN brings everyone together to make sure that the best ideas get passed along.**”

Bruce was invited to attend SPN’s Annual Meeting in San Antonio in 2017, and his experience helped solidify his view of the organization’s impact. Bruce also credits the Network’s ability to mobilize efforts toward significant policy reform, which he saw firsthand in the *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court victory that pushed back against corrupt unions. “Seeing the work that SPN is doing has always reinvigorated me,” he said. **“I am so grateful that there are groups like SPN on the front lines doing the important work like pushing back against labor unions and advancing education reform every day.”**

Although there are many challenges facing Americans today, Bruce sees a path forward for the future of the country. Through his support of SPN, he remains optimistic, especially

when he sees the next generation of liberty movement leaders working to solve issues facing communities and the nation. **“When I see the number of young people involved at Annual Meeting and in the Network, it gives me hope. To me, that is the key audience we should be speaking to, and SPN does just that.”** Bruce has been a generous supporter of SPN’s Generation Liberty Fellows program, where young professionals from government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector convene at Annual Meeting to receive professional development and build connections to solve problems in the states.

Philanthropists like Bruce are the reason the Network can effectively drive meaningful change in the states and beyond. Thank you, Bruce, for your steadfast partnership and support for the past nine years.

## STATE AFFILIATES

*Our Network of 64 independent state think tanks plays a vital role in society by providing reliable research, analysis, and education to help lawmakers develop and advance policies that serve their communities. For more information visit [spn.org](https://spn.org).*

### ALABAMA

Alabama Policy Institute  
[alabamapolicy.org](https://alabamapolicy.org)

### ALASKA

Alaska Policy Forum  
[alaskapolicyforum.org](https://alaskapolicyforum.org)

### ARIZONA

Goldwater Institute  
[goldwaterinstitute.org](https://goldwaterinstitute.org)

### ARKANSAS

Advance Arkansas Institute  
[advancearkansas.org](https://advancearkansas.org)

Arkansas Policy Foundation  
[arkansaspolicyfoundation.org](https://arkansaspolicyfoundation.org)

### CALIFORNIA

California Policy Center  
[californiapolicycenter.org](https://californiapolicycenter.org)

Pacific Research Institute  
[pacificresearch.org](https://pacificresearch.org)

### COLORADO

Independence Institute  
[i2i.org](https://i2i.org)

### CONNECTICUT

Yankee Institute for Public Policy  
[yankeeinstitute.org](https://yankeeinstitute.org)

### DELAWARE

Caesar Rodney Institute  
[caesarrodney.org](https://caesarrodney.org)

### FLORIDA

Foundation for Government Accountability  
[thefga.org](https://thefga.org)

The James Madison Institute  
[jamesmadison.org](https://jamesmadison.org)

### GEORGIA

Georgia Center for Opportunity  
[georgiaopportunity.org](https://georgiaopportunity.org)

Georgia Public Policy Foundation  
[georgiapolicy.org](https://georgiapolicy.org)

### HAWAII

Grassroot Institute of Hawaii  
[grassrootinstitute.org](https://grassrootinstitute.org)

### IDAHO

Idaho Freedom Foundation  
[idahofreedom.org](https://idahofreedom.org)

### ILLINOIS

Illinois Policy Institute  
[illinoispolicy.org](https://illinoispolicy.org)

### INDIANA

Indiana Policy Review Foundation  
[inpolicy.org](https://inpolicy.org)

### IOWA

Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation  
[taxrelief.org](https://taxrelief.org)

### KANSAS

Kansas Policy Institute  
[kansaspolicy.org](https://kansaspolicy.org)

### KENTUCKY

Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions  
[bipps.org](https://bipps.org)

Pegasus Institute  
[pegasuskentucky.org](https://pegasuskentucky.org)

### LOUISIANA

Pelican Institute for Public Policy  
[pelicaninstitute.org](https://pelicaninstitute.org)

### MAINE

Maine Policy Institute  
[mainepolicy.org](https://mainepolicy.org)

### MARYLAND

Maryland Public Policy Institute  
[mdpolicy.org](https://mdpolicy.org)

### MASSACHUSETTS

Pioneer Institute  
[pioneerinstitute.org](https://pioneerinstitute.org)

### MICHIGAN

Mackinac Center for Public Policy  
[mackinac.org](https://mackinac.org)

### MINNESOTA

Center of the American Experiment  
[americanexperiment.org](https://americanexperiment.org)

Freedom Foundation of Minnesota  
[freedomfoundationofminnesota.com](https://freedomfoundationofminnesota.com)

### MISSISSIPPI

Empower Mississippi Foundation  
[empowerms.org](https://empowerms.org)

Mississippi Center for Public Policy  
[mspolicy.org](https://mspolicy.org)

### MISSOURI

Show-Me Institute  
[showmeinstitute.org](https://showmeinstitute.org)

### MONTANA

Frontier Institute  
[frontierinstitute.org](https://frontierinstitute.org)

### NEBRASKA

Platte Institute for Economic Research  
[platteinstitute.org](https://platteinstitute.org)

### NEVADA

Nevada Policy Research Institute  
[npri.org](https://npri.org)

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy  
[jbartlett.org](https://jbartlett.org)

### NEW JERSEY

Garden State Initiative  
[gardenstateinitiative.org](https://gardenstateinitiative.org)

### NEW MEXICO

Rio Grande Foundation  
[riograndefoundation.org](https://riograndefoundation.org)

### NEW YORK

Empire Center  
[empirecenter.org](https://empirecenter.org)

### NORTH CAROLINA

John Locke Foundation  
[johnlocke.org](https://johnlocke.org)

### NORTH DAKOTA

Roughrider Policy Center  
[roughriderpolicy.org](https://roughriderpolicy.org)

### OHIO

The Buckeye Institute  
[buckeyeinstitute.org](https://buckeyeinstitute.org)

### OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs  
[ocpathink.org](https://ocpathink.org)

### OREGON

Cascade Policy Institute  
[cascadepolicy.org](https://cascadepolicy.org)

### PENNSYLVANIA

Commonwealth Foundation  
[commonwealthfoundation.org](https://commonwealthfoundation.org)

### RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity  
[rifreedom.org](https://rifreedom.org)

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Palmetto Promise Institute  
[palmettopromise.org](https://palmettopromise.org)

South Carolina Policy Council  
[scpolycouncil.org](https://scpolycouncil.org)

### SOUTH DAKOTA

Great Plains Public Policy Institute  
[greatplainsppi.org](https://greatplainsppi.org)

### TENNESSEE

Beacon Center of Tennessee  
[beacontn.org](https://beacontn.org)

### TEXAS

Texas Public Policy Foundation  
[texaspolicy.com](https://texaspolicy.com)

### UTAH

Libertas Institute  
[libertasutah.org](https://libertasutah.org)

Sutherland Institute  
[sutherlandinstitute.org](https://sutherlandinstitute.org)

### VERMONT

Ethan Allen Institute  
[ethanallen.org](https://ethanallen.org)

### VIRGINIA

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy  
[thomasjeffersoninst.org](https://thomasjeffersoninst.org)

Virginia Institute for Public Policy  
[virginiainstitute.org](https://virginiainstitute.org)

### WASHINGTON

Freedom Foundation  
[freedomfoundation.com](https://freedomfoundation.com)

Washington Policy Center  
[washingtonpolicy.org](https://washingtonpolicy.org)

### WEST VIRGINIA

Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy  
[cardinalinstitute.com](https://cardinalinstitute.com)

### WISCONSIN

Badger Institute  
[badgerinstitute.org](https://badgerinstitute.org)

Institute for Reforming Government  
[reforminggovernment.org](https://reforminggovernment.org)

MacIver Institute for Public Policy  
[maciverinstitute.com](https://maciverinstitute.com)

Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty  
[will-law.org](https://will-law.org)

### WYOMING

Wyoming Liberty Group  
[wyliberty.org](https://wyliberty.org)



## STATE AFFILIATE UPDATES

*The updates provided reflect activities by the time of submission for publication.  
For real-time updates from the Network, please visit [SPN.org](https://SPN.org).*

### ALABAMA

**ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE** • [alabamapolicy.org](https://alabamapolicy.org)

This year **Alabama Policy Institute** is focusing its efforts on fiscal responsibility, school choice initiatives, tax relief for all Alabamians, and holding legislators in Montgomery responsible.



### ALASKA

**ALASKA POLICY FORUM** • [alaskapolicyforum.org](https://alaskapolicyforum.org)

**Alaska Policy Forum's** top legislative priority for 2023 is educating Alaskans and decision makers about the benefits of the direct healthcare model. Provider shortages are the norm in Alaska, resulting in fewer personal healthcare options for residents. Geographical distance from the Lower 48 means no easy option to drive to a nearby state to obtain services. Additionally, Alaskans spend more on healthcare than residents of any other state. Protecting and expanding direct healthcare will not only reduce costs but provide more access. To coincide with the opening of public school lotteries in February, APF launched a digital campaign to inform families about Alaska's innovative and distinctive "backdoor" school choice program. The charter school allotment program (CSAP) allows families to receive funds from local school districts to apply toward classes at private schools. Families who might never be able to afford a private school for their children have more educational options with the CSAP program, and APF's campaign is designed to reach families with this information.



### ARIZONA

**GOLDWATER INSTITUTE** • [goldwaterinstitute.org](https://goldwaterinstitute.org)

The **Goldwater Institute** continues to work nationwide to advance innovative policies that change lives. In 2022, Arizona became the first state to enact Goldwater's latest healthcare reform, the Right to Try for Individualized Treatments. This essential expansion of the original Right to Try extends the law's protections to patients seeking cutting-edge, personalized treatments, and is a priority for the Institute in 2023. Additionally, Goldwater's team will continue to advocate for economic freedom reforms to ensure that all Americans have the right to earn a living in their field of choice, free from unnecessary government interference. As part of this effort, Goldwater will work with coalitions in multiple states to ensure the adoption of reforms that reduce the size and scope of the administrative state, with a special emphasis on judicial deference reform. Please contact Heather Curry to learn more. ([hcurry@goldwaterinstitute.org](mailto:hcurry@goldwaterinstitute.org))





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## ARKANSAS

### ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • [arkansaspolicyfoundation.org](https://arkansaspolicyfoundation.org)

Two ideas researched by the **Arkansas Policy Foundation** since its 1995 founding—school choice and income tax rate reduction—were considered by Arkansas policymakers in early 2023. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Arkansas’ youngest and first female governor, advanced these ideas in her inaugural address and in remarks to legislators. “I will make education reform the hallmark of my administration,” Huckabee Sanders said at her inaugural. “To help Arkansas businesses grow and create more jobs, we must continue responsibly phasing out the state income tax. I will work with lawmakers to pass an income tax cut this year—and we must keep cutting it, no matter how long it takes, until we eventually wipe the income tax off the books.” Huckabee Sanders told legislators, “Parents are the foundation of a child’s success. So, let’s give parents a greater role in education, including the right to choose the school that’s best for their child—whether it is public, private, or parochial.” She also urged “another historic tax cut.” Policy Foundation research shows nearly 110,000 students participate in Arkansas’ school choice market. The income tax rate was cut from 7.0 to 4.9 percent (2015–2022). Policy Foundation research showed tax cuts were feasible given the business cycle and state budget surpluses.

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## CALIFORNIA



### CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER • [californiapolicycenter.org](https://californiapolicycenter.org)

In 2023, **California Policy Center** will help parents, parent group leaders, newly elected parent school board members and education reformers build upon the momentum of California’s parent movement and the lessons learned through the tumultuous 2022 election season. In February 2023, CPC hosted its second annual Parent Union Legislative Summit in Sacramento. The theme—Parents, Not Partisans—brought parent groups, lawmakers, teachers, and school board members together to discuss the most critical education issues for the next year. CPC’s efforts will focus on: empowering parents so they can better help school boards understand parent concerns; holding school districts accountable for student achievement; exposing the teachers’ union agenda; and making sure California families have the opportunities and options to secure the best education possible for their children by championing school choice. In addition, CPC’s California Local Elected Officials (CLEO) will continue training and supporting newly elected parent school board members for a parent-directed public education system. CPC recently launched a new virtual CLEO Leadership Academy offering resources, insights, and expertise available to any interested party at [calelecteds.org](https://calelecteds.org).

## PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • [pacificresearch.org](https://pacificresearch.org)

2023 promises to be another year of California progressives promoting bad policy ideas. **Pacific Research Institute**, led by president and CEO Sally Pipes, is planning to stop these reckless ideas and promote market-based alternatives. PRI won a major victory in 2022 when it stopped the controversial push to enact a single-payer healthcare scheme (Assembly Bill 1400). This effort earned PRI a Bob Williams Award nomination for “Biggest Win for Freedom.” Liberals are expected to try again, and PRI will be back educating Californians about what Medicare for All would mean: higher taxes, longer waits, and less access to care. Major cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco have become almost unlivable, due to years of misguided progressive policies. PRI’s new Free Cities Center will show that market-based reforms can improve the quality of life in California’s big cities and alleviate crime, homelessness, and poor economic development. Following the 2022 “parent revolution,” PRI has inspired reformers to stop classroom indoctrination and refocus local schools on what they should be doing: improving achievement and preparing students for the workforce. PRI held a school board training event in November that was attended by dozens of newly elected school board members. After the event, the pro-parent majority in Temecula took what they learned and adopted a resolution banning critical race theory in local schools. More training events, including in other states, are planned for 2023.



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## COLORADO

### INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE • [i2i.org](https://i2i.org)

**Independence Institute** finds Colorado in a precarious position as the 2023 Colorado Legislative Session begins. With electoral gains in 2022, Democrats hold a super majority in the State House and are one vote from the same in the State Senate. These conditions will put the nationally recognized Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) in greater peril than ever before. Independence Institute has three goals for the upcoming legislative session. The first is to continue its 30-year tradition of protecting TABOR and Colorado’s flat tax. Second, Independence Institute will continue to ensure a voice of reason in conversations about environmental policy and bring nuclear energy to the discussion of reliable energy sources in Colorado. The third goal is to make the curriculum being taught in schools available to parents and the public.



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## CONNECTICUT

### YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [yankeeinstitute.org](https://yankeeinstitute.org)

**Yankee Institute’s** 2022 Gala featured special guest Megyn Kelly, who attracted new attendees to the event. 2023 begins with the establishment of Yankee’s Connecticut Center for Educational Excellence. Providing scholarships to students across the state, the Center is designed to complement Yankee’s policy work on parent choice in education. Yankee is working to build more bipartisan relationships and to find areas of common ground for reforms. Yankee is particularly focused on a bill that would create tax credit scholarships for those in grades K-12. Yankee is also advancing occupational licensing reform, free speech protection, and restriction of state bond issuances, among other important issues in Connecticut.







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## DELAWARE

### CAESAR RODNEY INSTITUTE • [caesarrodney.org](https://caesarrodney.org)

The **Caesar Rodney Institute**'s newest initiative in this 2023 legislative session was to engage and connect more with Delaware lawmakers. CRI invited all Delaware legislators to a "2023 Legislative Priorities 'Happy New Year' Luncheon" the first week of the session in Legislative Hall. Some legislators could not attend, so they sent their aides. CRI experts presented their latest research and recommendations for the 2023 session while the attendees ate lunch. CRI experts were able to engage directly with lawmakers and address questions and comments after each presentation. Attendees provided encouraging feedback that the event was informative and included new research they were unaware of. CRI will continue hosting the Happy New Year luncheon annually.

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## FLORIDA



### FOUNDATION FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY • [thefga.org](https://thefga.org)

With just under 700 wins across 42 states, the **Foundation for Government Accountability** is poised to continue growing in 2023. This legislative session, FGA will be tackling education policy through school board election reform, reining in bureaucracy with a state-level regulatory review push, strengthening election integrity by banning ranked choice voting, protecting free enterprise by pushing back against 'woke' ESG investment policies, and encouraging states to conduct Medicaid eligibility redeterminations as soon as possible.



### THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • [jamesmadison.org](https://jamesmadison.org)

Economic freedom and prosperity in the state are signs the Florida experiment is working. **The James Madison Institute** released its 2023 Sunshine State Policy Priorities, which detail a robust and visionary set of initiatives that reinforce the principles of limited government and economic liberty. One area that JMI will be focused on in 2023 is encouraging Florida policymakers to adopt a New A+ Plan for K-12 Education: flexible-use scholarships for all Florida students (that's the A) with weighted funding for special populations, including those living in Title I neighborhoods (that's the Plus). Adopting the New A+ Plan would provide universal coverage for all students, real choices for families that lack them, and new ways to stimulate "positive neighborhood effects" in disadvantaged communities.

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## GEORGIA

**GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • [georgiaopportunity.org](https://georgiaopportunity.org)**

**Georgia Center for Opportunity** is committed to reforming the systems that lead to poverty and trap people in government dependencies and expanding school options for students and parents in the state. The Center is working on legislation that would bring Education Savings Accounts to Georgia's kids over the next two years while advocating for reforms to public school funding formulas to ensure that money follows each child to the school their parents or guardians have chosen. GCO supports legislation to expand the Tuition Tax Credit Scholarship program and has asked the Legislature to appoint a joint committee to investigate reforms that would remove the welfare system's disincentives to marriage and work. One critical piece is state-trigger legislation that would integrate state and federal workforce development services and welfare benefits, taking effect when Congress passes reform legislation. GCO is also working on legislation that requires licensing boards to offer returning citizens the opportunity to get an occupational license upon release from prison. Licensing boards should be doing this already, under previous legal changes, but this new bill would address instances where these boards aren't following the intended procedures.



**GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • [georgiapolicy.org](https://georgiapolicy.org)**

Entering the 2023 legislative session, the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** is hoping to build on the success of the previous session. Last year, lawmakers consolidated the state's six income tax brackets to one, lowered the top tax rate from 5.75 percent to a flat 4.99 percent, and increased personal exemptions. But the changes don't begin until 2024. Since the state has a \$6 billion surplus, the Foundation is pushing to speed up implementation. As part of the Foundation's housing affordability initiative, testimony on the cost of regulating single-family homes before the House Study Committee on Regulation, Affordability and Access to Housing made it into the final report and is guiding recommendations for the Legislature's approach to making housing more affordable statewide. Finally, with a targeted digital and traditional media campaign, a new report on the issue, and a large coalition of allies, the Foundation is making a significant push toward certificate-of-need repeal in Georgia.



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## HAWAII

**GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • [grassrootinstitute.org](https://grassrootinstitute.org)**

The **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** is looking forward to a productive 2023 in its efforts to lower Hawaii's high cost of living, the major reason behind the state's six years of population decline. Last year, the Institute was instrumental in establishing a "Yes in My Backyard" task force to identify government obstacles to homebuilding. It also produced research showing that government regulations, not out-of-state buyers, are driving the state's high home prices. Further research is forthcoming, and influential legislators friendly to the Institute will introduce model legislation to scale back housing red tape. On taxes, the Institute helped block virtually every proposed state tax increase in 2022. This year, it aims to achieve tax reductions, starting with an exemption for medical services from the state's general excise tax. Regarding healthcare, the Institute will be working to reform Hawaii's medical certificate-of-need laws and allow out-of-state medical professionals to practice in the state without obtaining a new license. Beyond the Legislature, the Institute will be active before Hawaii's four county councils and continue fighting archaic federal regulations such as the Jones Act, which limits shipping competition to Hawaii. The Institute has raised funds for a first-ever nationwide study of how the 1920 maritime law affects every state and territory. When completed, this research will make it easier to build alliances in Congress over Jones Act reform.





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## IDAHO

**IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • [idahofreedom.org](https://idahofreedom.org)**

2023 is already an exciting year for the **Idaho Freedom Foundation**. Last year saw a revolution in the Idaho State Legislature as many longtime politicians who stood in the way of liberty legislation were defeated in the primary election. The freshmen legislators who replaced them came to the Capitol full of energy, hitting the ground running to change the politics of this state. This year, IFF is urging the Legislature to adopt true universal school choice to free families from a public school system that is indoctrinating students in socialist ideologies rather than educating them to become productive citizens who can take care of themselves. IFF is expecting to see an Arizona-style Education Savings Account adopted in Idaho this year. IFF has taken the lead in fighting the woke agenda in Idaho, as the Foundation's researchers are digging up instances of CRT, radical gender theory, and other Marxist ideologies throughout state government, from the Department of Health and Welfare to the public school system. The Foundation enters 2023 stronger than ever, growing to meet the challenges of the next decade by shining a light on state government and empowering voters.

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## ILLINOIS

**ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • [illinoispolicy.org](https://illinoispolicy.org)**

Illinois' Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program, which passed in 2017, offers donors a 75 percent state tax credit when they help low-income students attend private schools. Invest in Kids is one of the only private school choice programs in Illinois, and can be life-changing for participants and their families. Approximately 9,000 students rely on Invest in Kids scholarships every year, with another 26,000 currently on the waitlist. But the program is under threat, and will expire on Dec. 31, 2023, if nothing is done to extend the timeline.

In the coming legislative session, the **Illinois Policy Institute** will educate legislators and Illinoisans about the necessity of making Invest in Kids permanent. With thousands of families in Illinois' most vulnerable communities at risk, guaranteeing the future of the program is vital. The Institute's advocacy partner, Illinois Policy, will also combat voter suppression in the Prairie State. Chicago's mayoral election traditionally takes place in February, when freezing temperatures can significantly reduce turnout. To overcome this effect in the upcoming election, Illinois Policy aims to get 37,500 Chicago voters to sign up for permanent vote-by-mail by Feb. 23, 2023.





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## IOWA

**IOWANS FOR TAX RELIEF FOUNDATION • [taxrelief.org](https://taxrelief.org)**

The top fiscal concern for Iowans is a property tax burden that continues to escalate. **Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation's** public opinion polling demonstrates this sentiment, and Iowans across the political divide are demanding property tax relief. After the passage of Iowa's historic income tax reform last year, which created a flat 3.9 percent income tax, an opportunity is now open to reform property taxes. In late 2022, Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation published *Property Tax Toolkit: Solutions to Iowa's Growing Property Tax Problem*, a comprehensive guide that offers solutions to reform Iowa's complicated and out-of-control property tax system with a focus on spending limitations and transparency. Several policymakers are already using the Toolkit to not only better understand property taxes but to craft policy solutions. The source of high property taxes is local government spending. This is why past property tax reforms have failed to provide noticeable tax relief; earlier reforms have merely shifted the burden. ITR Foundation's Toolkit offers solutions that not only address local government spending but bring pro-taxpayer reforms to local government. In this legislative session, Iowa has a chance to make the tax code even more competitive by passing a substantial property tax reform measure. Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation is leading the charge on this issue by educating policymakers and communicating policy solutions through social media, op-eds, and other media placements.



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## KANSAS

**KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • [kansaspolicy.org](https://kansaspolicy.org)**

**Kansas Policy Institute** heads into the legislative session eager to continue prioritizing student achievement. Though education officials claim that more money is needed to improve achievement, results are still dropping despite the increase in per-student funding. KPI will work to bring a universal Education Savings Account to Kansas students and enhance school accountability. KPI will also push for meaningful tax reform during a time when Kansans are struggling with inflation and an unpredictable economy. Reducing income taxes offers effective tax relief and can produce economic benefits. However, a false narrative has existed since Kansas attempted income tax cuts in 2012. This attempt failed to reduce government spending, causing deficit issues that led to the largest tax hike in state history. While it's more than possible to enact pro-business tax cuts while still funding core services, it requires reducing wasteful spending and making existing agencies more efficient. KPI will push for tax cuts coupled with spending reforms, but setting the record straight on the potential success of tax cuts will be an uphill battle.





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## KENTUCKY

**BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • [bipps.org](https://bipps.org)**

Kentucky's anti-educational-liberty forces have retreated to the courts to continue their entrenched opposition against school choice options that most benefit children at risk of failing. The disingenuously named "Council for Better Education," a group of public education bureaucrats, filed a lawsuit against legislation passed in 2022 funding public charter schools and requiring two pilot projects—one in Louisville and another in Northern Kentucky. Joining the lawsuit were the Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville) and the Dayton Independent school board in Northern Kentucky—both of which have poor academic track records with growing achievement gaps. The **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions** warned that allowing this lawsuit to succeed "will result in many Kentucky parents continuing to be denied an affordable option for better PUBLIC educations for their children – an opportunity available to families in 44 other states and the District of Columbia." The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates fewer than one in three eighth graders in Kentucky's public schools are reading at an acceptable level of proficiency; only 12% of Kentucky's Black students are proficient readers, essentially unchanged from a quarter-century ago. A growing mountain of evidence shows that minorities disproportionately benefit when their families have educational alternatives, particularly public options like charter schools. Still, lawsuits keep coming to keep school choice out of Kentucky. "Shouldn't a group calling itself the 'Council for Better Education' be supporting programs that create educational success rather than spending taxpayer dollars on lawsuits to keep such policies out of Kentucky?" BIPPS queried in its statement.

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## LOUISIANA

**PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [pelicaninstitute.org](https://pelicaninstitute.org)**



**Pelican Institute for Public Policy's** goal is to continue to write Louisiana's comeback story, so a full slate of issues for the upcoming session includes tax reform, school choice expansion, recurring audits of social safety net programs, and the defeat of legislation that would stifle the use and growth of technology and innovation—all with the aim of setting the terms of the debate for the fall 2023 statewide gubernatorial and legislative elections. Pelican will continue working to reform Louisiana's antiquated tax structure. The long-term goal is to eliminate the state income tax by first lowering and flattening the state rate. In education, the goal is universal school choice by 2025. In this session, Pelican will work to expand private school choice through education scholarship accounts. The Institute will introduce legislation to increase financial transparency and reporting by public schools. For social safety net programs, a bill requiring regular recurring independent audits of the largest federally funded programs is in the works. The goal is to enable lawmakers to identify inefficiencies, better evaluate program outcomes, and ensure that the programs meet their intended objectives. Leading up to the session, Pelican will release an ambitious paper that outlines "The Roadmap" for Louisiana's comeback story. It will detail what Louisiana must do to harness its built-in infrastructure and resources and make the Pelican State the economic powerhouse it should be.

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## MAINE

**MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE** • [mainepolicy.org](https://mainepolicy.org)

**Maine Policy Institute's** primary policy objective in 2023 is that the state's next biennial budget reflects economic realities: inflation persists and the state isn't equipped to weather an economic downturn. Governor Janet Mills will likely release her proposal in mid-January, and Maine Policy has published its own budget report. Inflation has given the state a surplus over the last two years. Maine Policy aims to develop a program that automatically returns these funds to the people in the form of tax cuts or uses a budget cascade to pay down future tax liabilities. Maine needs to structurally reform how it raises revenue to ensure future prosperity, and Maine Policy is focused on delivering relief to the people this budget cycle.



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## MARYLAND

**MARYLAND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE** • [mdpolicy.org](https://mdpolicy.org)

The **Maryland Public Policy Institute** will be focused on one of the most overlooked hurdles to renewing Baltimore City this year: property tax reform. According to Zillow, Democratic Maryland Governor Wes Moore's Baltimore estate grew in value from \$2.35 million in 2017 to \$2.48 million in 2023, a mere 5.5 percent increase over a period when the consumer price index rose 22.2 percent. While this may not matter much to the governor, for the residents of Baltimore who live in less desirable neighborhoods and depend on home equity as the primary source of wealth and their American dream, negative real home equity growth can be devastating. Baltimore's astronomical property tax rates, which drive homeowners and businesses out of the city and kill demand for city property, are the primary culprit in this wealth destruction. This must be fixed if the city is to have any chance of recovery. Experience shows that cutting property tax rates to competitive levels invariably reverses flight and grows the tax base, ultimately delivering enhanced tax revenue and an improving economy. Baltimore must be the next city to enact this reform.



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## MASSACHUSETTS

**PIONEER INSTITUTE** • [pioneerinstitute.org](https://pioneerinstitute.org)

**Pioneer Institute's** education team is advancing research to expand vocational-technical school seats in Massachusetts and working with groups in other states to help advance similar initiatives. In Massachusetts, the Institute's life sciences team is educating the public and policymakers on how "accumulators and maximizers" limit the value of copay assistance programs for patients; federally, the team is promoting transparency in the 340B drug pricing program, as well as seeking a prohibition on the use of quality-adjusted life years methodologies to determine who is eligible for certain therapies. In the aftermath of the November election and the passage in Massachusetts of a tax on higher earners, Pioneer is working with a variety of business groups to mitigate the impacts of the new tax. Finally, PioneerLegal is advancing litigation on school choice, public pensions, and access to after-school programming.



**PIONEER INSTITUTE**  
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH



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## MICHIGAN

**MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [mackinac.org](https://mackinac.org)**

Michigan's 102nd Legislature brings a new wave of challenges, but the **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** is ready. For the first time in nearly 40 years, Democrats have taken complete control of the Michigan House, Senate, and governor's office. The first few bills introduced this year have previewed an extreme agenda, including repealing the state's right-to-work law. The Mackinac Center has laid the groundwork to defend Right-to-Work since it was passed in 2012 and has spent a decade educating public and private employees across the state about their right to opt out of financially supporting a union. Mackinac has never stopped talking about the benefits of right-to-work protections and is a sought-after source for data and commentary on the issue. Once the election results came in, Mackinac ramped up outreach efforts and hit the ground running with targeted advertisements, media placements, and new research, with the goal of soundly defeating repeal efforts. This new Legislature also brings enormous opportunity to work across the aisle on bipartisan solutions. Making government more transparent is a top priority, as Michigan remains one of the only states that exempts its Legislature and governor from public documents disclosure. Reforming unnecessary licensing requirements and restrictions that stand in the way of hardworking Michiganders who want to earn a living, reducing over-criminalization, and preventing ineffective and expensive corporate handouts are just a few areas that could see bipartisan support this legislative session.

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## MINNESOTA

**CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • [americanexperiment.org](https://americanexperiment.org)**

The November elections gave complete control of the Minnesota Capitol to Democrats, forcing **Center of the American Experiment** to step up its efforts to stop, or at least soften, the policies that the winning party will attempt over the next two years that will reduce the quality of life in Minnesota. Specifically, American Experiment will be fighting hard to stop these proposed policies: a 100 percent carbon free mandate that will cost Minnesota electric customers \$3,888 per year over the next 20 years; K-12 education expenditures without system reform to improve academic achievement; a divisive ethnic studies program addition to the K-12 curriculum; and a paid family and medical leave program that will tax every employer and employee while creating new state bureaucracy.



## FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • [freedomfoundationofminnesota.com](https://freedomfoundationofminnesota.com)

On Wednesday, January 25th, the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** kicked off their annual legislative briefings with a dinner event featuring ALEC Chief Economist and Executive Vice President Jonathan Williams. Mr. Williams spoke to the crowd of legislators about how to “Craft a Taxpayer Friendly Budget: Lessons Learned from Other States.” Mr. Williams was joined by Anthony Garcia of Workday who presented on the topic of how other states have used cloud technology to modernize state government human resources and finance systems to save taxpayer funds, as well as providing greater government transparency. The Freedom Foundation of Minnesota hosts these events for policymakers throughout the year, allowing policymakers to hear from topical experts who present new ideas on some of the most difficult issues facing the state. Additional events are scheduled to occur throughout this legislative session, including presentations on the importance of bipartisan election law changes, workforce challenges facing Minnesota, and solutions to eliminating barriers to work. Finally, legislators attending the January dinner event were given a sneak peek at a new publication produced by the Foundation for Government Accountability and the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota that highlights policy advances enacted in other states on key issues that if enacted, would allow families and businesses in the state to thrive.



## MISSISSIPPI

### EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI • [empowerms.org](https://empowerms.org)

The Mississippi legislative session is underway, and **Empower Mississippi** has hit the ground running. The 2023 session always begins with a huge celebration as Empower gathers with students, parents, and teachers to celebrate National School Choice Week. The student-led celebration, which highlights that every parent wants their child to be in a great school, is back at the state Capitol for the first time since the pandemic began. Empower released a report on violent crime in December 2022 that kicks off its “Protect the ‘Sip” issue campaign. The report discusses possible reasons for the state’s increase in violent crime and dismisses the accusation that recent legislative reforms have caused the spike. Empower will host a lunch for legislators and criminal justice ambassadors in mid-February to give lawmakers an opportunity to hear directly from those affected by the criminal justice system. There are also plans to release a report on nurse practitioners and the quality of care. Mississippi is suffering from the second worst physician shortage in the nation, and four counties have no physicians. Empower’s nurse practitioner ambassadors will gather at the Capitol to urge lawmakers to grant full practice authority to nurse practitioners so that they might stand in the gap of this critical healthcare need in the state.



### MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [mspolicy.org](https://mspolicy.org)

After securing major tax cuts in 2022, **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** began the 2023 legislative session by publishing a responsible budget for the state. “The Responsible Mississippi Budget 2024” shows that capping spending will allow further reduction of the tax burden. The report demonstrates how this would allow faster economic growth and put the state on a similar trajectory to other low-tax southern states, such as Tennessee and Texas. Ten years ago, Mississippi Center helped pass legislation to allow charter schools. Sadly, there are still only a handful of them in the state. To address this problem, the Center is working on legislation to remove many of the restrictions on charter school expansion. Mississippi has some of the worst health outcomes in America. To tackle this, Mississippi Center is working with a coalition to give pharmacists and nurse practitioners greater professional freedom and remove a number of restrictive practices, such as certificate-of-need laws, that push up health costs. The Mississippi Leadership Academy has launched to teach young people about liberty, limited government, and American exceptionalism. During the legislative session, participants will get firsthand experience with the legislative process.



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY

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## MISSOURI

**SHOW-ME INSTITUTE** • [showmeinstitute.org](https://showmeinstitute.org)

The **Show-Me Institute's** top priority for the 2023 legislative session is achieving open enrollment for students in the state. Last year, "Fix the Glitch" legislation passed, which fixed a loophole to ensure that local education funding was equalized for charter schools. There were also improvements to the Missouri Course Access Program; students no longer require permission from their superintendents to enroll in a full-time virtual program. And back in 2021, Missouri created an important new school choice program—Empowerment Scholarship Accounts—that gives funding to low-income students and students with disabilities for additional school choice options. While these are all worthwhile improvements to Missouri's education landscape, the Institute is pushing this year to achieve open enrollment. Other states are doing it. Just last year, Oklahoma and Kansas made it much easier for families to choose a school outside of their residential district. Missouri families should also be able to choose whatever education option works best for them, full stop.



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## MONTANA

**FRONTIER INSTITUTE** • [frontierinstitute.org](https://frontierinstitute.org)

**Frontier Institute** is entering 2023 with a renewed dedication to finding solutions that rely on more freedom, not more government. As the 2023 Montana Legislative Session begins, Frontier Institute will be working to restore property owners' right to build homes where they are needed most; guarantee the impartiality, independence, and integrity of the judiciary; permanently reduce licensure red tape and expand the ability of current practitioners to care for their patients; expand proactive forest management and wildfire response capabilities; protect and bolster Montanans' constitutional rights; and strengthen the separation of powers by enacting permanent regulatory relief.



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## NEBRASKA

**PLATTE INSTITUTE** • [platteinstitute.org](https://platteinstitute.org)

In partnership with the Reason Foundation, the **Platte Institute** has developed a new financial modeling tool that demonstrates how permanent changes in the structure of Nebraska's state education funding system and local property taxing authority can enable major reductions in the property tax burdens in school districts statewide. The Institute has shared this model with lawmakers and plans to release a thorough education funding study to help create legislation for a lasting change to the property tax system. Governor-Elect Jim Pillen has put together a new School Finance Reform Committee, which will provide recommendations on how to update and reform the state's school aid formula. Nebraska remains uncompetitive on taxes, and the Platte Institute will continue championing reforms consistent with the Blueprint Nebraska tax modernization plan to lower or eliminate personal and corporate income taxes, the inheritance tax, and property taxes. It is no secret that Nebraska has a workforce shortage, and the state should use every tool available to put out the welcome mat. Universal recognition is the simple concept that if you are licensed to do a job in another state, you shouldn't have to start the licensing and accreditation process over again when you come to Nebraska. States all across the country have adopted this common-sense approach and it's time for Nebraska to do the same.



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## NEVADA

**NEVADA POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE** • [npri.org](https://npri.org)

In January, the **Nevada Policy Research Institute** ran a three-piece series on the troubled Nevada Public Employees Retirement System, examining its current all-time high level of debt, rising contribution rates for public workers, and the fact that almost all current employees will likely pay in more than they can expect to receive back in future benefits. NPRI outlined steps the program can take to overcome current problems.



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## NEW JERSEY

**GARDEN STATE INITIATIVE** • [gardenstateinitiative.org](https://gardenstateinitiative.org)

Throughout a large part of the 20th century New Jersey was an economic powerhouse, generating jobs and attracting businesses that helped create prosperity and revenues. But approximately 60 years ago the state began to implement progressively higher taxes on businesses and individuals, which eventually led to the state becoming among the most heavily taxed in the nation. A new era of increased taxes coincided with economic decline characterized by subpar job growth and the outmigration of businesses and individuals. While New Jersey stayed the course with its tax structure, other states began to enact change. New Jersey now has an opportunity to begin reversing course and restoring its economic competitiveness. A surcharge on New Jersey's corporate income tax, which suppresses growth and turns away investments, is set to expire this year. However, allowing the surcharge to expire will not go far enough to spur growth in the state. **Garden State Initiative's** research shows elimination of the corporate tax rate (which is the highest in the nation) would boost economic growth for residents and businesses and produce new revenues for government. In the year ahead, GSI will be working with partners across the state to suggest reforms that will enhance New Jersey's economic growth and competitive position. As the state enters the 2024 budget process, New Jersey has the opportunity to enact change with the goal of economic growth.



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## NEW MEXICO

**RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION** • [riograndefoundation.org](https://riograndefoundation.org)

The **Rio Grande Foundation** faces a unique challenge in New Mexico's 2023 legislative session. New Mexico remains a poverty-stricken state that relies on the oil and gas industry for more than 40 percent of its revenues. But the state is in the midst of arguably the largest resource boom in recent American history. After years of rapid spending growth, New Mexico's left-leaning politicians have a 43 percent surplus this year alone! There are numerous ways they can use this money responsibly to improve the state's poor education outcomes and high poverty, and the Rio Grande Foundation will push fundamental tax reform, rate reduction, and both educational choice and accountability. This is a truly historical chance to turn around one of the poorest and most poorly run states.





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## NEW YORK

**EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [empirecenter.org](https://empirecenter.org)**

In the twilight of 2022, a state board charged with figuring out how to implement New York's far-reaching environmental plan—the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)—released a scoping plan. The CLCPA aims to transform the way New Yorkers power their homes, cars, and offices in the name of environmental protection. It also threatens New Yorkers with rising energy costs and economic and power instability. The **Empire Center** will work to lessen the impact on New Yorkers. To say the CLCPA and its scoping plan are complicated would be an understatement. The Center's work starts with a dissection of the CLCPA and its scoping plan. It also includes direct analysis and research in each sector, focusing on particular issues like the cost to homeowners of transitioning to all-electric homes and the growing risk of relying on wind and solar, as opposed to more reliable and cost-effective energy sources, like natural gas or nuclear. The Center's goal is to make the provisions and outcomes of the scoping plan accessible and understandable to every audience—especially the average New Yorker who will bear the brunt of the change. The Center will implement a multitiered strategy that includes an aggressive, sustained media outreach strategy; increased coalition building; and targeted and consistent meetings to elected officials and key decision makers. In short, Empire will help New Yorkers understand the consequences of the CLCPA implementation and directly advocate for a better path forward.

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## NORTH CAROLINA

**JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • [johnlocke.org](https://johnlocke.org)**

The **John Locke Foundation** has put together an ambitious and proactive agenda for the 2023 legislative session on a broad array of policy goals designed to keep North Carolina a highly competitive state to live and work. Providing guidance and research that informs the Legislature and the Utilities Commission's carbon reduction plans will protect North Carolinians' access to affordable and reliable energy. Zoning reforms will increase supply and drive down costs so state residents can afford housing. Last year, CNBC recognized North Carolina as the top state to do business. Locke's researchers and government affairs team will continue to fight for a business-friendly environment by advocating for reduced tax burdens and fiscal restraint in the state budget. North Carolina's greatest asset is the people who live here. Education opportunities should reflect the inherent value of each child, and the Foundation is championing a Parents' Bill of Rights to ensure academic transparency and accountability within the public education system.





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## OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • [buckeyeinstitute.org](https://buckeyeinstitute.org)

The **Buckeye Institute** started 2023 with policy wins, and Buckeye's Legal Center continues to fight against government overreach through the courts. Ohio adopted The Buckeye Institute's universal occupational license recognition and eliminated or reformed 35 licenses based on The Buckeye Institute's policy recommendations. The Buckeye Institute-championed financial technology regulatory sandbox passed. Ohio passed The Buckeye Institute-inspired improvements to Ohio's Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) program. Ohio eliminated its peculiar August special elections, as Buckeye endorsed doing. The Buckeye Institute sued the IRS for forcing nonprofit charities to disclose the private information of their largest donors. The Buckeye Institute celebrated reopening its client The Big Board, a neighborhood bar and grill, as well as an administrative law judge ruling in favor of its owner Eric Flannery in *DC Department of Health v. The Big Board*. The Buckeye Institute filed another legal challenge to Ohio's unconstitutional emergency-based local income tax system. *Kresevic v. Chittok* is the sixth Buckeye case supporting Ohio taxpayers. Buckeye already won *Morsy v. Dumas* when a judge ordered the city of Cleveland to refund all payments collected from Buckeye's client Dr. Manal Morsy during the pandemic shutdown as well as her court costs.



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

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## OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • [ocpathink.org](https://ocpathink.org)

The **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs** is working on several policy issues for the 2023 legislative session, with particular focus on universal school choice. OCPA believes all parents and guardians should be the primary decision makers in what schools best meet their students' needs and in where the state tax dollars allocated for their child's education should be sent. A universal voucher, or Education Savings Account that is not limited by income or geography of the parent or guardian and is not funded separately from the funding formula, should be implemented. It is what Oklahomans deserve, a majority of voters support, and what this most recent election cycle confirmed. Two other policy issues include eliminating the income tax and repealing the judicial nominating commission. By giving the power of choice back to parents, removing the penalty on work, and getting rid of bureaucracy in the state's highest courts, OCPA is pursuing a state where all Oklahomans can thrive.





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## OREGON

### CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • [cascadepolicy.org](https://cascadepolicy.org)

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 744, which allows students to graduate from high school without demonstrating proficiency in reading, writing, or math. By removing academic standards, Senate Bill 744 turned diplomas into participation trophies. Oregon isn't the only state with this problem. During the pandemic, many states relaxed graduation requirements, making a diploma an unreliable guarantor of proficiency. **Cascade Policy Institute** responded by developing an option that would give both successful and struggling students an alternative to a system that is failing them: Turn the little-used GED process into a pathway to demonstrate proficiency and graduate early. Currently, Oregon students under 18 must be emancipated or drop out if they want to take the GED exam. Even if students pass their exams with high scores, they are only awarded the GED, not a formal high school diploma. These two factors make the GED a low-prestige option. Cascade devised a simple proposal—introduced in the 2023 legislative session as House Bill 3068—that would allow a student 16 or older who is in 11th or 12th grade to take a high school equivalency test (including but not limited to the privately run GED program) and receive a high school diploma upon receipt of the GED certificate. Parental consent would be required for students under 18. Students with the motivation to succeed should have an opportunity to demonstrate academic competency; finish high school earlier; and pursue college, vocational school, or employment with an objective credential that employers and colleges respect.

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## PENNSYLVANIA



### COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • [commonwealthfoundation.org](https://commonwealthfoundation.org)

In November 2022, Pennsylvanians voted for divided government: a Democrat House, Republican Senate, and Democrat governor. Historically, **Commonwealth Foundation** has been able to achieve important policy victories under divided government, so it is busy educating a large class of freshman lawmakers and building bipartisan support for market-oriented policy solutions where it can. Commonwealth Foundation will also hold Governor-elect Josh Shapiro accountable for his campaign promises that align with its priorities, such as supporting Lifeline Scholarships for more than 250,000 K-12 students trapped in the worst schools, reforming the regulatory permitting process, and reducing the state's corporate net income tax. If given the opportunity, Commonwealth will rally support for constitutional amendments requiring residents to present a valid identification when they vote and allow the Legislature to cancel proposed regulations with a simple majority vote. Lifeline Scholarships are a top priority for the Commonwealth Foundation and would give the state's most vulnerable students direct access to education dollars and the opportunities that come with an excellent education. Reforming education, corporate taxes, and regulation are critical to stemming Pennsylvania's outmigration and creating the policy conditions necessary for economic prosperity.

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## SOUTH CAROLINA

**SOUTH CAROLINA POLICY COUNCIL • [scpolicycouncil.org](http://scpolicycouncil.org)**

After helping South Carolina pass its first-ever cuts to the state individual income tax last year, **South Carolina Policy Council** is doubling down on tax relief and fighting for another major cut in 2023. Its plan includes bringing the top rate from 6.5 percent to 6 percent in the current year, instead of gradually lowering it over several years, as is currently scheduled. Ambitious tax relief is critical for the state's success, as others in the Southeast are passing historic tax cuts to stay competitive. Of course, Florida and Tennessee famously have no state personal income tax. SCPC's research has helped drive interest in the tax plan among key public officials. Governor Henry McMaster's executive budget has a direct call for accelerated tax relief, and a growing number of state legislators are expressing their support, pending available revenue. SCPC has calculated what the plan will cost and expects that upcoming surplus funds can easily cover the tab. Investing in tax relief over government growth is key for the prosperity of the state.



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## TENNESSEE

**BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • [beacontn.org](http://beacontn.org)**

Over the past 10 months, the **Beacon Center of Tennessee** has traveled the state to listen to fellow Tennesseans about the challenges they face. As a result of that listening tour, the Center has crafted "A Blueprint for a Freer Tennessee: Getting Government Back to the Basics" The tour identified four primary areas for policy reform: affordable housing, education quality, healthcare access, and economic opportunity. The cost to own or rent a home has skyrocketed in recent years. This is a growing trend across most of the state and was the single most frequently mentioned concern. Beacon will work to reduce the cost of both homeownership and renting through a cost of housing reduction package. Tennesseans also expressed concern about the quality of the education system and largely support expanding opportunities. They want to get back to the basics when it comes to what is being taught in the classroom, so that future generations are prepared when they enter the workforce. One in three Tennesseans avoid needed medical care because of the exorbitant cost, and 18 percent delay medical visits because they cannot find a provider in their local community. Beacon has partnered with 12 entrepreneurs to study the barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation in the state. Their work has culminated in a series of reforms designed to make Tennessee the friendliest place to start and grow a business and become a magnet for jobs and opportunity. Tennesseans from across the state have spoken; it's now time for policymakers to act.





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## TEXAS

### TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • [texaspolicy.com](https://texaspolicy.com)

The **Texas Public Policy Foundation** has a robust policy agenda for the 88th Texas Legislative Session to lead the state toward freedom, personal responsibility, and liberty. TPPF plans to work closely with policymakers to advance legislation that will empower parents to take control of their child's education; eliminate property taxes and lower spending as inflation continues to rise; ensure Texans have access to reliable, affordable energy; protect constitutional rights and improve public safety; conduct state agency efficiency audits; and secure the integrity of election results. In March, TPPF will host the Texas Policy Summit, bringing together the nation's top thinkers and leaders to discuss the most pressing issues facing the Lone Star State in 2023. The agenda will cover a wide range of policy issues including Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing, education freedom, and improving rural health. The event will feature keynote speaker Governor Greg Abbott, who will address education in Texas and the power of expanding educational options for all students.

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## UTAH

### LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • [libertasutah.org](https://libertasutah.org)

The **Libertas Institute** has launched its Gig Economy initiative. As a leading think tank in the business of changing hearts, minds, and laws, Libertas has spent hundreds of hours poring through the nuanced issues holding back the gig economy. At the heart of the research are real-world perspectives from rideshare drivers and freelancers, beginning with an Uber driver named Rosemary. This conversation led to a two-year project seeking to make the gig economy sustainable and improve workers' lives. Unlike traditional jobs built around the labor laws of the past century, the gig economy operates outside of the norm. It is driven by people of all stripes seeking a flexible way to earn a living. But despite the upside to flexible work, a few nagging problems persist, often making the gig economy an unsustainable professional choice. Inflexible solutions of the past won't solve these problems. The gig economy needs creative solutions to the problems plaguing these industrious people. In this vein, Libertas is paving the way for the future of work. During the 2023 Utah legislative session Libertas hopes to pass a bill that will fix the issue of gig workers' access to benefits by opening up contributions to portable benefit funds. Expanding the availability of benefits in the gig economy can make this type of flexible work more sustainable.



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## VIRGINIA

**THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [thomasjeffersoninst.org](https://thomasjeffersoninst.org)**

A week before the start of Virginia's 45-day legislative session, the **Thomas Jefferson Institute** unleashed a 34-second video, *Hands Off Our Cars*, mocking a 2021 law linking Virginia car sales to California environmental regulations and requiring 100 percent of car and truck sales to be electric by 2035. Bills have already been introduced to repeal that law. It was just the first of the initiatives the Jefferson Institute will be educating Virginians about. Also on the agenda is Governor Glenn Youngkin's \$1 billion in further tax reductions, which will include doubling the standard deduction and reducing the individual and corporate tax rate—all Jefferson initiatives. The Jefferson Institute has led the fight to repeal or modify the Virginia Clean Economy Act, which seeks to eliminate natural gas from the market by 2050, increases what Virginians pay for electric by \$800 a year, and puts Dominion Electrics' rate-payers on the hook for a \$14 billion wind farm that only creates electricity 42 percent of the time. These increased costs are largely unknown to Virginians. In the fight for educational freedom, the Institute received the \$150,000 Heritage Foundation Innovation Prize for its work advocating for education choice, building multiple coalitions for Education Success Accounts, and increasing the Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit. Antione Green has joined the Institute as its community engagement director to build coalitions in educationally underserved communities—an effort that has already begun paying dividends.



**VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • [virginiainstitute.org](https://virginiainstitute.org)**

The Commonwealth of Virginia is entering a short legislative session: 45 days of jackhammer quick policy discussions and two-minute testimonies. The **Virginia Institute for Public Policy** is shouldering a packed schedule during the session. Lieutenant Governor Winsome Sears and House Education Committee Chairman Glenn Davis just released the closest thing to a universal Education Savings Account that Virginia has seen in years. House Bill 1508 ensures that education funding follows the student without defunding public schools. The Institute and many coalition partners with the Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance have been asked to testify at every opportunity to ensure that legislators understand exactly how this program works. In addition, bills to address voter roll maintenance and reduce early voting from 45 days to 15 are a direct result of the work done by the Virginia Institute on Election Integrity. The Institute has also developed a task force educating advocates and legislators on ranked choice voting. Regulatory reform and the universal sandbox bills are back in the General Assembly this session, with a surprising amount of support since their introduction in 2022. The Institute expects to see even more support in 2023 as positive regulatory outcomes are not a partisan issue. Finally, in an interesting development, the Institute's Legislative Impact Program developed a model which would formalize the use of decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) by tech businesses in the state, hoping to be the standard by which other states might recognize these innovative new types of companies. This exciting model was picked up and filed by Delegate Terry Kilgore with bipartisan support in both chambers of the General Assembly.





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## WASHINGTON

### FREEDOM FOUNDATION • [freedomfoundation.com](https://freedomfoundation.com)

The **Freedom Foundation** began the first quarter of 2023 having helped more than 131,000 public-sector employees leave their union, costing government unions more than \$260 million in lost revenue. Building on its 2022 successes in expanding digital and canvassing opt-out operations, the Freedom Foundation is developing a public employee ambassador program to grow the organization's in-person outreach to teachers and public employees across the nation. The Freedom Foundation currently has more than 60 lawsuits against unions and will be building on that number in 2023. The Freedom Foundation has asked the US Supreme Court to consider four cases appealed from the 9th Circuit. These are precedent-setting cases dealing with instances of unions forging the signatures of public employees and an instance of a union enforcing a dues card signed in 1997.

### WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER • [washingtonpolicy.org](https://washingtonpolicy.org)

**Washington Policy Center's** top priority is to challenge the state's new income tax on capital gains. Up to now, state media has largely allowed the governor and other advocates to call it an 'excise tax' despite WPC's research showing the revenue departments of all 49 other states treating capital gains taxes as income taxes, and despite an advisory letter from the IRS in which the IRS answered whether a capital gains tax is an income tax or an excise tax and declared, "It is an income tax." The new focus on the issue seems to be inspiring a shift in coverage with more skepticism toward the state's label and arguments. WPC has maintained the digital equivalent of a vigil on the courthouse steps with messaging reinforcing key legal arguments including the fact it is well-established as an income tax, the court and the voters have delivered verdicts on this issue many times, and advocates are seeking a re-definition of the state constitution's definition of "property" so that you would not own your income. Questions asked by the Justices in recent oral arguments heard by the State Supreme Court indicate the Justices are asking the right questions concerning the nature of the tax, the long-standing precedent, and the need for a constitutional amendment to impose such a tax, but the final outcome is still impossible to predict despite the overwhelming case. WPC is preparing action for whichever direction the court takes.

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## WEST VIRGINIA

### CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • [cardinalinstitute.com](https://cardinalinstitute.com)

The **Cardinal Institute** has three areas of policy focus as the 2023 West Virginia legislative session gets underway: responsible tax reform, educational opportunity, and healthcare access. Tax reform has been a priority in past years, though progress has eluded the state. However, this year there is early consensus. The governor's plan calls for a 50 percent reduction in the personal income tax over the course of three years with a 30 percent cut in the first year and an additional 10 percent cut in each of the following two years. Throughout this debate, the Cardinal team will be providing updates and commentary on this and other proposals describing the merits and drawbacks of the various plans. On education, Cardinal is focused on defending the gains made in educational freedom over the last few years and providing more options for West Virginia students to find the education that best fits their needs. On healthcare, the Institute is working to liberalize the healthcare system so that providers are able to expand their operations and patients have access to more providers at more affordable costs.



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## WISCONSIN

### **BADGER INSTITUTE** • [badgerinstitute.org](https://badgerinstitute.org)

As the Wisconsin Legislature reconvenes at the beginning of a new biennium budget cycle, the **Badger Institute** will actively educate policymakers and the public on a wide range of policy reforms contained in its recently published Mandate for Madison. The Mandate, a 300-page public policy agenda, includes research and recommendations from Wisconsin and national experts on a range of issues including tax restructuring, school choice, public safety, transportation funding, occupational licensing, healthcare and safety net programs. The Institute also published a number of one-pager fact sheets summarizing several key chapters. The books have been distributed to every legislative office, the governor's office and departments in the administration, the offices of other statewide office holders, several state agencies and influencers around the state. The Badger Institute will work with coalitions, sister think tanks and other allies to educate lawmakers and Wisconsin residents on the need for meaningful reforms and advocate for their implementation in the Capitol. The message will be reinforced through in-depth reporting, podcasts, videos, public events and more. Moving Wisconsin toward a flat tax and expanding education freedom are two of the Institute's top priorities in this legislative cycle. The first bill introduced this session (Assembly Bill 1) would cut personal income taxes for all taxpayers by combining the current four brackets into a 3.2 percent flat rate. The bill's authors cited the Badger Institute's work in the legislative memo seeking cosponsors.



### **INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT** • [reforminggovernment.org](https://reforminggovernment.org)

Divided government continues in Wisconsin as Governor Tony Evers and lawmakers get to work for the new session. The **Institute for Reforming Government**, with its advocacy partner, IRG Action Fund, is taking an aggressive approach to getting real wins for Wisconsin families and holding state government accountable. Oversight of the executive branch remains a top priority. IRG will be building off its work last session, which included releasing the first-ever "Lawmaker's Manual for Legislative Oversight," to help lawmakers to identify and fix problems at state agencies and dive deep into budget reform this spring. IRG will push to get Wisconsin on the path to be the first state in the Midwest to eliminate the state income tax. The team also has comprehensive reform agendas, developed in consultation with national experts, for education, higher education, and healthcare. Outside of the capital, IRG's expanded team will continue meeting Wisconsinites in their communities to hear what they need, in order to build bridges between their needs and policy efforts in Madison.





#### WISCONSIN INSTITUTE FOR LAW AND LIBERTY • [will-law.org](http://will-law.org)

The **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** has a busy legislative session ahead. Despite the reelection of an unfriendly governor, there are ample opportunities to find consensus to make the Badger State freer and more prosperous. First and foremost, WILL is leading a coalition of stakeholders to advance school choice for all. Every parent, regardless of income or location, deserves the opportunity to select the best school for their child. With rising healthcare costs affecting families and businesses alike, the need for market-oriented solutions is more important than ever. WILL is leading the charge to advance healthcare price transparency legislation, which will empower patients to make more informed decisions about their healthcare. WILL also plans to advance universal license recognition legislation, lowering unnecessary barriers for out-of-state workers moving to Wisconsin. In the midst of across-the-board workforce shortages, the state can no longer make it difficult to welcome new workers. Finally, college tuition is out of control and students continue to rack up student loan debt with little consideration for how they will repay it. Students need better financial information to make smart decisions about their future. That is why WILL intends to advocate for legislation that educates students on the return on investment of their degree before choosing a major. For more information visit [will-law.org](http://will-law.org).



## NATIONAL PARTNERS

*Thank you to our national partners who work with us to advance freedom across the country in key areas including education, law, free speech, energy and the environment, and tax reform.*

1851 Center for Constitutional Law	Energy & Environment Legal Foundation	National Review Institute
1889 Institute	ExcelinEd	National Right to Work Legal Defense & Education Foundation Inc.
Acton Institute	Federalist Society	National School Choice Awareness Foundation
American Conservative Union	First Liberty Institute	National Tax Limitation Committee
American Council of Trustees and Alumni	Forge Leadership Network	National Taxpayers Union Foundation
American Enterprise Institute	Foundation for Economic Education	New Civil Liberties Alliance
America's Future	Fraser Institute	Next Generation Freedom Fund
American Juris Link	Free State Foundation	Pacific Legal Foundation
American Legislative Exchange Council	Free To Choose Network	People United for Privacy Foundation
Americans for Fair Treatment	Free the People	Philanthropy Roundtable
Americans for Prosperity	Freedom Center of Missouri	Principles That Matter
Americans for Tax Reform	FreedomWorks	Prison Fellowship
Archbridge Institute	Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge	Property & Environment Research Center
Ashbrook Center	Galen Institute	R Street Institute
Association of American Educators Foundation	Heartland Institute	Reason Foundation
Atlas Network	Heritage Foundation	School Choice Wisconsin
Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research	Independent Institute	Speech First
Becket	Independent Women's Forum	Stand Together Trust
Benjamin Rush Institute	Institute for Family Studies	Steamboat Institute
Bill of Rights Institute	Institute for Free Speech	Students For Liberty
Capital Research Center	Institute for Humane Studies	Tax Foundation
Cato Institute	Institute for Justice	The Center Square
Centennial Institute	Institute of Economic Affairs	The College Fix
Center for Education Reform	Institute for Policy Innovation	The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity
Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University	Intercollegiate Studies Institute	The Fund for American Studies
Center for Independent Employees	Jesse Helms Center	The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal
Center for Independent Thought	Judicial Watch Inc.	The Policy Circle
Charles Koch Foundation	Leadership Institute	Think Freely Media
Citizens Against Government Waste	Leadership Program of the Rockies	Truth in Accounting
Citizens' Council for Health Freedom	Liberty Justice Center	Young America's Foundation
Competitive Enterprise Institute	Lincoln Network	Young Voices
DonorsTrust	Lone Star Policy Institute	
EFoundation	Louisiana Family Forum	
EdChoice	Lucy Burns Institute	
	Manhattan Institute for Policy Research	
	Mercatus Center at George Mason University	
	Mountain States Legal Foundation	

### SPOTLIGHT PARTNERSHIP: PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION



It's no secret that the federal government has increased exponentially in size and scope over the past several decades and often undermines the rights of everyday Americans.

**Pacific Legal Foundation** (PLF) is a national nonprofit legal organization that protects Americans from government overreach and abuse. PLF has an unmatched track record defending everyday Americans, with 14 victories at the U. S. Supreme Court—with three more cases before the Court this term.

As it celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Pacific Legal Foundation has become a “next-generation” law firm whose work extends beyond litigation to include research, policy, and communications to tell the stories of individuals whose constitutional rights are violated.

SPN has long advocated restoring decision-making power to states and local communities, and often partners with organizations like PLF to challenge the federal government when it oversteps its authority. In 2022, SPN helped connect PLF with state groups to challenge the Biden administration's new rules aimed at undermining charter schools. PLF also collaborates with state-based think tanks to educate policymakers on regulatory reform that restores constitutional government.

By partnering with Pacific Legal Foundation, SPN is able to leverage the collective influence of state-based groups to drive meaningful changes in the states and at the national level.

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“AT THE STATE LEVEL, PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION RELIES ON KEY PARTNERSHIPS TO HELP US DETERMINE PRIORITIES AND IDENTIFY AREAS OF COLLABORATION. SPN DOES A GREAT JOB OF CONNECTING STATE AND NATIONAL GROUPS TO HELP US DETERMINE WHERE WE CAN HAVE THE MOST IMPACT.”

—Rachel Swaffer, Outreach Director, Pacific Legal Foundation

# 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.

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

## Joining the Thomas Roe Legacy Society

**Become a member  
of our legacy society  
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estate plans known  
to SPN, such as:**

- A **simple bequest** that remembers SPN in your will.
- An estate gift of **publicly traded stock**.
- A **life insurance policy** that designates SPN as a beneficiary.
- A **bank, investment, or retirement account** that designates SPN as a beneficiary.
- 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 Nitsa Ioannides at (619) 244-4580 or [nitsa@spn.org](mailto:nitsa@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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