



State Solutions. National Impact.

SUMMER 2024



State Legislative Highlights

Your support is accelerating victories for freedom in the states that have nationwide effects.

Students from charter school LEAD Academy in Alabama join in celebrating Education Freedom Day ahead of the passage of the state's universal ESA program.

Tracie

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CONTACT US

1500 Wilson Blvd
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: 703-243-1655
Fax: 703-740-0314
info@spn.org

SPN.org

[f /StatePolicy](#)
[@StatePolicy](#)
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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 62 independent state think tank affiliates, over 66 state partners in key capacities, and more than 100 national 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 policy solutions that yield national impact; and,
- Promoting federalism and the authority states have to make decisions without federal government intrusion. This, in turn, protects the hard-fought victories of our 50-state Network.

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DIRECTOR OF FOUNDATION RELATIONS

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DIRECTOR OF FOUNDATION ENGAGEMENT

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MANAGER OF ENGAGEMENT

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Ladan Nowrasteh

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS

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Dear Friends,

With the presidential election coming up in November, many Americans have their sights set on Washington, DC. But recent polling shows that nearly 80 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. Americans are looking for strong leaders who can address the growing challenges that we all face daily—a sluggish economy, rising healthcare costs, unprecedented learning loss in schools, and an all-time low trust in American institutions.

Elites in Washington have, so far, failed to step up to the plate and provide solutions to these issues. The states, however, tell a different story—full of shrewdly deployed action, innovation, and experimentation. Because of you, our Network leaders are working closely with policymakers in their states to create free-market solutions that are responsive to the needs of the people.

Make no mistake, now is the state moment, and thanks to the generosity of our supporters, our 50-state Network is leading the charge to restore American prosperity from the bottom up. The Network has built incredible momentum around the issues Americans care most about. A “Renaissance” of school choice, healthcare deregulation, and tax relief like never before stand in stark contrast to the stagnation felt from politicians in Washington, DC.

This momentum has only continued into 2024. Thanks to your steadfast support, SPN has provided over 50 targeted grant investments to state-level issue campaigns this year, as well as ongoing coaching and support to our partner think tanks in real time.

This issue of *SPN News* highlights some of the victories our Network has secured across the country, from expanded school choice in Alabama and Georgia, to removing occupational licensing burdens in Nebraska, to Tennessee passing first-of-its-kind reform to federal agency guidance based on recommendations from our new Center for Practical Federalism.

And to continue our donor spotlight series, we sat down with entrepreneur and CEO of Garvey Ventures, John Garvey, who shared his thoughts on why the states are more important than ever in the fight for free-market policy solutions.

I look forward to updating you on our progress as we continue to move further, faster, together.

Thank you for all you do to support SPN.

Tracie Sharp

Tracie Sharp
President and CEO
State Policy Network





Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signs Education Savings Accounts into law, giving students greater access to education choice.

State Policy Highlights

Because of you, our Network is securing victories for freedom in the states that have nationwide effects.

Note: At the time of publication, some state legislative sessions are still underway. For real-time updates, please visit [SPN.org](https://www.spn.org).

In this election year, many are turning to Washington, DC, hoping for solutions to the longstanding challenges that Americans face in their everyday lives—rising costs at the grocery store and in healthcare, unprecedented learning loss in schools, and historically low levels of trust in American politicians and institutions.

However, we at SPN know that all too often, the real change happens closer to home—at the state and local level. This year, because of your support, we have worked alongside our 50-state Network to champion policy victories across the country on issues that matter most to the American people. Here are just some of the wins that our 50-state Network has been able to secure this legislative session.

Education

The last three years have been a “Renaissance” of school choice, with many parents seeing their children’s education through a new lens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many states eased restrictions around private or home schools, and many more added new scholarship funds to help children overcome the financial barriers linked to a non-traditional education. These education victories are made possible by your support, the partnership of our 50-state Network, and national partners including American Federation for Children, EdChoice, ExcelinEd, yes. every kid., 50-CAN, and dozens of other state and local partners.

Alabama and Georgia: These two southern states have put children first by adding Education Savings Accounts (ESA) to their list of achievements this year. The **Alabama Policy Institute**, with key partners, executed a detailed public awareness campaign to gain support for the CHOOSE Act, which allocates up to \$7,000 of state funding per student in the form of ESAs. Georgia passed the “Promise Scholarship” program, which will give students in low-performing schools the opportunity to apply for funds to pay for education



THIS BILL WILL LOWER THE BARRIERS FOR ENTRY AND MAKE IT EASIER FOR ENTREPRENEURS TO WORK WITH CITIES AND COUNTIES AS THEY ESTABLISH THEIR MICROSCHOOLS. THE RESOURCES PROVIDED BY SPN FOR THIS EFFORT WERE INVALUABLE.

related items. **Georgia Center for Opportunity** and the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** ran statewide awareness campaigns and worked closely with lawmakers to get the reform over the finish line. Because of your support, SPN was able to make targeted investments in both states and work with our affiliates on their campaigns.

Stephanie Smith, president and CEO of the Alabama Policy Institute, reflected on what the CHOOSE Act means for the state:

"I am so pleased to report that Alabama is the first state to pass a universal school choice bill in 2024! The Alabama Policy Institute, with the State Policy Network's strong encouragement and support, led the coalition toward educational freedom in Alabama. We are so thankful for our partnership with SPN. Because of the passage of the CHOOSE Act, more families than ever before will have the opportunity to choose the best educational environment for their children—regardless of zip code or income."

Florida: The Sunshine State enacted a universal ESA program last year and has built on this win by lifting several burdensome restrictions to give parents more options when seeking alternative schooling for their children. This is an important victory because with universal education freedom programs, the hardest work often comes after the law is passed: ensuring it is properly implemented and doesn't include barriers to access. The **James Madison Institute** pushed for the reform, in partnership with SPN and stakeholders on the ground. Now, legislators in Florida know that state policy groups—and, more importantly, parents—

are closely watching the details of the existing ESA program. Thanks to the dedication of these groups, legislators in Florida will think twice before adding restrictions.

Utah: After passing universal ESAs in 2023, the state passed a bill that amends zoning requirements to give current and aspiring education entrepreneurs more freedom and flexibility to acquire spaces for their students. The bill, driven by the **Libertas Institute** with support from SPN, will give families seeking alternatives to traditional schooling more options, including decreased regulation for microschools. Libertas and SPN remained in close communication throughout the development of the reform, particularly via our government affairs coaching and at SPN's Education Issue Campaign Summit.

"We were able to pass legislation that legalized microschools from a zoning/occupancy perspective. This bill will lower the barriers for entry and make it easier for entrepreneurs to work with cities and counties as they establish their microschools. The resources provided by SPN for this effort were invaluable," said Michael Melendez, executive vice president of Libertas. "By fostering the flourishing of microschools in Utah, it will lead to a robust ecosystem of educational service providers for the ESA."

Fiscal Policy

The Network has also been hard at work getting tax relief to more Americans in an economy with ever-increasing costs of living.



Iowans for Tax Relief President Chris Hagenow speaks with Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds shortly following the signing of the monumental tax reform.

Iowa: Continuing the momentum from two years ago, the Hawkeye State passed a law accelerating their tax cut rate. The new law moves Iowa from a 5.7% income tax rate in 2024 to a flat rate of 3.8% starting in 2025. The change accelerates the speed at which the flat tax rate was set to go into effect and will result in more than \$1 billion in savings for taxpayers over the next six years. Additionally, to help safeguard the win and protect Iowans from future tax increases, the Iowa Legislature approved a constitutional amendment requiring a 2/3 majority to raise the income tax in the future. **Iowans for Tax Relief** have long pushed for this relief, publishing a report before the start of the legislative session outlining a pathway to lower the flat tax, with the goal of eliminating it entirely. Iowans for Tax Relief is also an active member of SPN's Fiscal Policy Working Group.

Georgia: The Peach State passed three bills this session aimed at providing property tax relief. The bills include a rate rollback for new property and ease government restrictions over the statewide homestead exemption. **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** applauded the legislation and intends to push for more in the next legislative session.

Nebraska: Tax relief isn't the only way SPN and the Network aim to return money to the pockets of Americans. Occupational licenses are often full of regulatory red tape and bureaucratic hoops that can leave people looking for work unable to secure a job. For years, the **Platte Institute** has highlighted problems with Nebraska's occupational licensing system and made the case for substantial reform. Their hard work paid off in early March after Governor Jim Pillen signed legislation that eases licensing restrictions so Nebraskans can more easily get jobs. The legislation brings universal reciprocity to Nebraska, requiring licensing agencies to recognize occupational licenses from other states if the holder is in good standing. This will remove unnecessary, state-specific regulatory hoops from those who move to Nebraska looking to continue to work in their current field. Universal reciprocity and other occupational licensing reforms have been championed by this 50-state Network, as well as SPN, for the last several years with reforms spreading like wildfire across the country. Since 2020, 15 states have enacted universal license recognition.



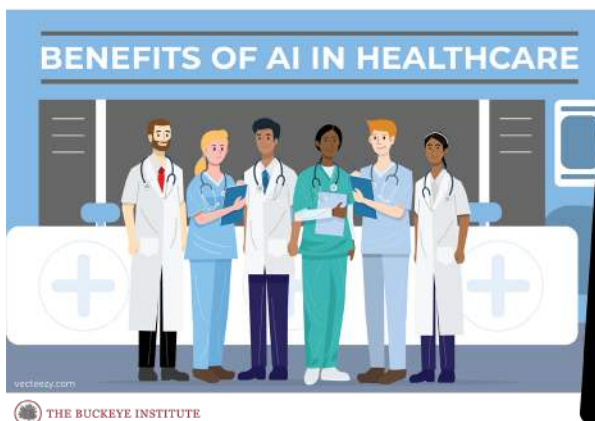
BECAUSE RELIABILITY
IS A MATTER OF LIFE
AND DEATH, STATES ARE
LEADING THE NUCLEAR
RENAISSANCE, AND SPN
GROUPS ARE LEADING
THEIR RESPECTIVE STATES.

Healthcare Reform

Healthcare costs are currently on the rise across the country, and the Network continues to push for innovative, free-market solutions that show the American people that big spending programs from Washington, DC, are not the only way forward.

Tennessee: With the support of the **Beacon Center of Tennessee**, three healthcare reforms have been enshrined into law. A telehealth bill will remove the requirement that the healthcare service provider have an established provider-patient relationship prior to a virtual visit, allowing citizens to access telemedicine sooner. Pharmacy Scope of Practice Reform will increase the access and affordability of healthcare services by broadening the scope of what can be prescribed by pharmacists, and certificate-of-need is taking a step in the right direction with a rollback. **The Beacon Center** published a comprehensive report calling for these reforms at the beginning of the session.

Ohio: Only a few years after the pandemic, the United States is facing another looming healthcare challenge—a large aging



The Buckeye Institute has promoted the benefits of AI in healthcare, including a report exploring potential future uses.



Center for Practical Federalism Fellow Steve Johnson testifies in front of a Tennessee joint working group in November 2023.

population and a shortage of quality healthcare providers. That's why SPN is staying at the forefront of innovative, free-market solutions. Thanks to your generous support, we have been able to fund new research in artificial intelligence across multiple states. **The Buckeye Institute** released a report earlier this year that outlines policy solutions and regulatory changes lawmakers need to make to capitalize on the benefits of AI in healthcare. Studies like this lay the groundwork for future reforms across the country.

Energy

With energy costs, and more politicians turning to green energy as the solution, it is more imperative than ever for our Network to stand both as an advocate and watchdog for reliable, cost-effective energy solutions.

Delaware: The **Caesar Rodney Institute** played a pivotal role in shaping an amendment to the Atomic Energy Advancement Act. The amendment offers substantial funding to any pioneering company that successfully obtains a license for a revolutionary "nuclear reactor" powered by reprocessed nuclear waste. This is a monumental step in energy innovation and independence as Americans grapple with soaring utility and gas prices. SPN Visiting Energy Policy Fellow Amy Oliver Cooke said, "Because reliability is a matter of life and death, states are leading the nuclear renaissance, and SPN groups are leading their respective states. So, it's no surprise that Caesar Rodney would play a significant role in shaping nuclear energy policy. Our groups are well-positioned to affect energy policy at all levels—local, state, and federal."

Reining in the Administrative State

Tennessee: A year after its creation, the **Center for Practical Federalism** has secured a significant win for federalism, this time in Tennessee. Governor Bill Lee has signed a bill requiring

the state's Department of Education to disclose all guidance it receives from the federal government. This is an important step toward government transparency and empowers the state legislature to identify hidden federal directives, as federal agencies are not required to disclose guidance issued to states and localities. This will help eliminate confusion and increase awareness of the guidance issued by agencies, who often treat their own guidance as government-issued mandates.

The bill is the first of its kind in the country and is comprised largely of recommendations made by Center for Practical Federalism Fellow Steve Johnson and former **James Madison Institute** Senior Vice President Sal Nuzzo during testimony in front of a joint working group of Tennessee legislators last November.

"This first-in-the-nation law not only keeps Tennessee lawmakers informed of what the federal government is telling the Tennessee Department of Education to do but it also sends a strong signal to the bureaucrats in DC that the states are waking up and are ready to push back against any unlawful guidance that comes their way," Steve said.

With Washington, DC, embroiled in partisan squabbles that often lead to gridlock, there's no doubt that the states—in partnership with our Network leaders—are better equipped to address the day-to-day needs of their citizens. Thank you for standing with us. The greatest opportunity to advance free markets, protect individual rights, and empower Americans to live free, prosperous lives lies in the states, and, with your help, this 50-state Network is leading the charge to restore American prosperity from the bottom up.



SPN and Alabama Policy Institute staff gather to support education reform.

Supporter Spotlight: John K. Garvey

We're honored to feature individuals and organizations who have shared their time, treasure, and talent with State Policy Network to ensure that America remains a free and prosperous nation for future generations. We recently had the privilege to sit down with businessman John K. Garvey, who has been a loyal supporter of SPN for 17 years. John's distinguished background is rooted in a legacy of entrepreneurship, which he has instilled in his children, who work with him at the family company, Garvey Ventures. He is a passionate advocate for economic opportunity and free-market policy reforms. In this Q&A, John shares his insights, experiences, and vision for the future of free-market principles and the vital role the states play in preserving liberty and cultivating economic prosperity.



Garvey Ventures celebrates the groundbreaking of an industrial development in Arvada, Colorado. From left to right: John Garvey, John R.W. Garvey, Tim Garvey and Aaron Wiechman.

Please tell us a little about your background—your family life and how you got your start.

I grew up with five siblings in Wichita, Kansas. My family life was a bit unusual because locally, everyone knew our name. My grandfather, Ray, and my father, Willard, had left their mark all over Wichita and beyond, developing real estate and supporting educational institutions and the arts. My grandfather was, at one point, the biggest landowner in Kansas and eventually ventured into oil and gas. My father, an advocate of everyone's right to homeownership, was a great real estate developer both at home and abroad, and he was able to expand the company into several other businesses. My unique childhood ignited my passion for learning, business, and innovation. While it would have been natural for me to immediately pursue a degree in business, I took a slight detour. After high school in Wichita, I took a deep dive into philosophy and earned a BA at the University of Kansas. I eventually moved on to an MPPM (MBA) in Business and Public Policy at Yale and an MPA at the University of Denver. I also attended executive programs at Stanford, Harvard, and Wharton. Life-long education is key to me, and I continue to learn every day.



MY PARENTS INSTILLED IN US THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CIVIC-MINDED, PATRIOTIC, WELL-EDUCATED, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL—VALUES THAT HAVE STAYED WITH ME TO THIS DAY.

Your family has a legacy of entrepreneurial pursuits as developers, businessmen, and ranchers. Can you share the values your family instilled in you as you began your entrepreneurial ventures?

My father and grandfather were not just entrepreneurs; they were visionaries. From agribusiness to real estate, their spirit of exploration and risk-taking was an absolute inspiration. One of my fondest memories is when we took part in a 50 million oil barrel discovery in the Cook Inlet in Alaska. I still have little jars of the first oil drilled there sitting in my office. Our family was blessed with a lot of success, but my parents never let that inflate their ego. They instilled in us the importance of being civic-minded, patriotic, well-educated, and entrepreneurial—values that have stayed with me to this day. Entrepreneurs are truly unsung heroes! During our parents' lifetime, my siblings and I divided up the various enterprises. I took over the family business, Petroleum Inc., before I transformed it into my own family office and renamed the company Garvey Ventures. Our office is in a building complex that my father built, with two of the buildings named after my grandparents, R.H. and Live W. Garvey. I am privileged to see my family's legacy in work every day. I also run a small charitable foundation, and I am now seeing my sons take part in not only our business activities but also give back to their communities. It is a great joy to pass on the values my parents instilled in me to my own children, and I am proud that we are now a four-generation company headed into the future.

As an advocate for liberty and free markets, what policies do you believe are most conducive to fostering economic prosperity and individual freedom?

As a libertarian/conservative/Jeffersonian classical liberal, I'm deeply committed to the principles of economic liberty and the free market, and I have had hands-on experience with implementing some of these principles. In 1989, I co-founded Family Businesses of America, which lobbied and provided testimony for repealing the estate tax. Back in '98, I was appointed by Paul Weyrich to be Chairman of the Council on the Constitution, which screened federal judicial nominees with think tanks and trade associations as close allies. I also co-founded a task force on international property rights in the early 2000s, inspired by my father's home-building efforts in numerous developing nations. To quote my father: "Make a man a homeowner, and he will become a capitalist!"

I firmly believe that too much regulation hampers and stifles business, and saddling business owners with high tax rates will drive any economy into the ground. The federal tax reform in 2017 was bold and necessary, and I would love to see more of that coming from Washington. We also need to turn away from cultural Marxism and return our focus to the actual value of business ideas and the talent of the people behind them. Although I think tax incentive structures such as 1031 exchanges and opportunity zones in real estate are great, my preference would be a flat tax rate to eliminate the complexity of our behemoth of a tax code.



I THINK THAT OVERALL, SPN'S COMMITMENT TO SHIFTING THE BALANCE OF POWER TO THE STATES AND COMMUNITIES, AWAY FROM CENTRALIZED CONTROL, IS WHAT MAKES YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIBERTY MOVEMENT INVALUABLE.

You've been a loyal supporter of SPN and our Kansas affiliate, the Kansas Policy Institute, for many years. How did you first hear about KPI and SPN?



From left to right: Aaron Wiechman, John R.W. Garvey, John Garvey, and Tim Garvey

I learned about State Policy Network through other think tanks somewhere in the mists of time. I have known the good people at KPI for many years, going back to the early 2000s, and their emphasis on impactful, state-level policy work resonates with me deeply. I'm proud to contribute to their efforts, and I recently started underwriting their education policy initiative because I believe that educational freedom and choice are imperative. We cannot lose the appreciation for culture, history, core values, and the vision of the founders and the founding documents. We need to teach the core curriculum, not critical theory.

What do you feel is SPN's biggest value add to the liberty movement?

You add a lot of value by supporting state-focused think tanks so they can spark change and promote freedom right where it matters—locally. Your belief in crafting policies for everyone's prosperity truly resonates with me. I think that overall, SPN's commitment to shifting the balance of power to the states and communities, away from centralized control, is what makes your contribution to the liberty movement invaluable.

Many Americans are focused on the presidential election this year. Why do you feel that the states matter, even during an election cycle?

Why do states matter now? Well, with the whole country getting tangled in what feels like a "woke" wave, states are our frontline defense. The states are truly the "laboratories of democracy" where we create and test solutions to fit local needs, not some one-size-fits-all policy from afar. **States are where the action is, where we can protect our liberty, plain and simple.** Most importantly, making sure to vote in all local and state elections will eventually impact whom we see in Washington.



Join Us for SPN's 32nd Annual Meeting

August 19–22, 2024

JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa • Phoenix, Arizona

FURTHER. FASTER. TOGETHER.



Every year, SPN brings together leaders from across the country at our Annual Meeting to connect, collaborate, and ensure good policy solutions in one state spread across the country for national impact. Through inspirational sessions and workshops, attendees learn about critical issues like energy, education, poverty, housing, fiscal policy, and more. We invite you to join us in celebrating the incredible work you've made possible and how, together, we're preserving our shared values of individual freedom, economic opportunity, and limited government for generations to come.

To learn more about Annual Meeting visit spn.org/annualmeeting
or contact Alexandra Prowant at aprowant@spn.org.

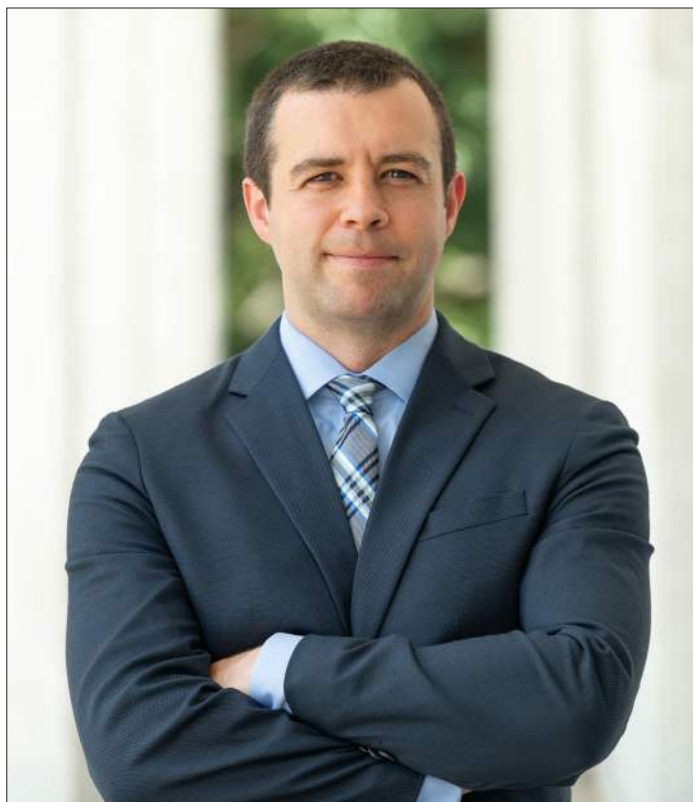
CEO Spotlight: **Donald Bryson** JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

In this series, SPN highlights leaders within our Network who are driving positive change in their states and achieving victories that serve as a model for others.

North Carolina has a rich and storied history. From the Edenton Tea Party in 1774, when 50 women in Edenton declared their intention to boycott all British goods in protest of unjust taxation, to the Wright brothers' first flight in Kitty Hawk, the Tar Heel State is steeped in American tradition and has positioned itself as a hub for economic opportunity.

Today, the state is one of the fastest growing in the country with large corporations like Apple, Amazon, and Google attracting more workers to the Research Triangle Park (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill) than Silicon Valley. Population growth has exploded, and in the last two census cycles, the state came close to getting two new Congressional districts.

The state is also a model for tax reform and education freedom. Once holding the highest tax rate in the South, North Carolina joined the state flat tax revolution in 2013, providing economic relief to taxpayers, and is now in the process of eliminating the corporate income tax. In 2023, the Opportunity Scholarship Program, the state's education freedom program, was expanded to universality. These reforms have been shepherded and championed by the **John Locke Foundation**, an SPN affiliate. Co-founded by SPN board member John Hood and former North Carolina budget director Art Pope, the John Locke Foundation has been the state's leading voice for free markets, individual liberty, and limited government for more than three decades.



Locke doesn't just produce good policy ideas. It also cultivates and shapes the next generation of liberty movement leaders.

2008 was the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and for many fresh college graduates like Donald Bryson, employment opportunities were scarce.

"I had just moved to North Carolina with my wife, and it was very difficult to get a job. I had a spreadsheet to keep track of the 70 different jobs I had applied for, and I was not getting a callback," he said.

Donald's luck finally changed when he saw an advertisement for an internship with the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal in Raleigh. "Going from unemployed to \$8.00 an hour when you're married was a big deal. I was very excited," he said.

This was Donald's entry into the liberty movement. He later worked as **Americans for Prosperity's** state director for North Carolina and president and CEO of the **Civitas Institute**, which has since merged with Locke. The merger came after a conversation with former Locke CEO Amy Oliver Cooke at an SPN CEO retreat, and looking at both North Carolina's shifting policy landscape and the shared goals of both organizations. "We realized that we were less effective separately than what we could be together," said Donald.

When Donald took the helm at Locke in 2023, he noted that running a state think tank is not for the faint of heart, and

“
ONE OF THE PRIMARY WAYS I HAVE INTERACTED WITH SPN IS THROUGH THE CEO PEER GROUPS. BEING ABLE TO TALK THROUGH IDEAS WITH A GROUP OF THINK TANK EXECUTIVES THAT ARE GOING THROUGH SIMILAR THINGS OR HAVE GONE THROUGH SIMILAR THINGS IN THEIR STATE OR ORGANIZATION IS VERY, VERY HELPFUL.

connecting with a community of leaders is essential to accelerate customized policy solutions. “One of the primary ways I have interacted with SPN is through the CEO peer groups. Being able to talk through ideas with a group of think tank executives that are going through similar things or have gone through similar things in their state or organization is very, very helpful,” he said.

Donald has engaged with CEOs from other states, and they have provided valuable insights into policy successes and pitfalls. For example, Donald spoke with the Beacon Center of Tennessee’s CEO Justin Owen on Beacon’s experience securing a state constitutional amendment to protect the rights of workers and how North Carolina could pursue a similar reform. He has collaborated on opinion pieces, co-writing an op-ed with Pelican Institute CEO Daniel Erspamer about the challenges of Medicaid expansion in Louisiana and highlighting the potential risks and drawbacks of expanding Medicaid in North Carolina. While North Carolina has since expanded Medicaid, it was one of the last states to do so, and Locke has been vocal about its challenges.

As the Network has evolved, state think tanks have moved beyond writing white papers to connecting with people and ensuring good ideas resonate with them. And that starts with key messaging and tailoring that message to different audiences. **“Our freedom movement is about ideas,”** said Locke co-founder and SPN board member John Hood. **“Ideas alone don’t drive outcomes. We need to elevate ideas that policy leaders understand and that grassroots organizations and the general public believe in.”**

One way Donald and the team at Locke elevate free-market ideas to new and existing audiences is through the *Carolina Journal*, Locke’s investigative journalism outlet. A brainchild of John Hood, who believed there was a space in the market for a center-right publication to talk about North Carolina policy and politics, the *Carolina Journal* now has a distribution of more than 43,000. “If we want to wield influence on Jones

Street, where the legislative building is, the quickest way to get something done is actually to get a column printed in the *Carolina Journal*,” said Donald. “We have a daily email update that goes out, and every state legislator gets a copy of the print edition.”

Locke is also reaching new audiences through *Noticias Carolinas*, the Spanish version of the publication. North Carolina’s Spanish-speaking population has increased by 40 percent, with the Hispanic electorate almost tripling within the past decade. In 2022, Locke joined SPN’s “owned-audience cohort,” which helps affiliates engage with their communities and new audiences on particular issues through powerful storytelling and crafting key messaging strategies. Brooke Medina, Locke’s vice president of communications, said: “SPN’s support has been invaluable to Locke. Their programming, tools, and one-on-one coaching have had an outsized impact on our organization’s ability to effectively execute a successful owned-audience campaign. SPN took an active mentorship role in our efforts, working with us to clearly define our goals and help us create a roadmap that allows us to meaningfully engage with tens of thousands of North Carolinians we otherwise would not have met.”

As the focus of many Americans shifts toward Washington, DC, and the upcoming presidential election, Donald and the Locke team have been beating the drum on critical policy issues, like energy, education, and tax reform, and keeping voters informed—a critical strategy in a swing state like North Carolina. Despite the media frenzy and political turmoil, Donald emphasizes the importance of state-level policymaking: “What happens at the courthouse and at the statehouse is often just as important as what happens at the White House. Because let’s be honest, Washington isn’t going to do very much,” he said. “The chances of a divided government are still very high in Washington, which means that they’re still going to mostly be fighting over who gets the most soundbites on the nightly news. But in terms of advancing actual policy, it’s going to happen in states like North Carolina, Wisconsin, Florida, and Utah.”



SPN Program Spotlight: What Wisconsin Wants

SPN messaging and polling support helps the Institute for Reforming Government reach key audiences to inform better policy to address the needs of Wisconsinites.

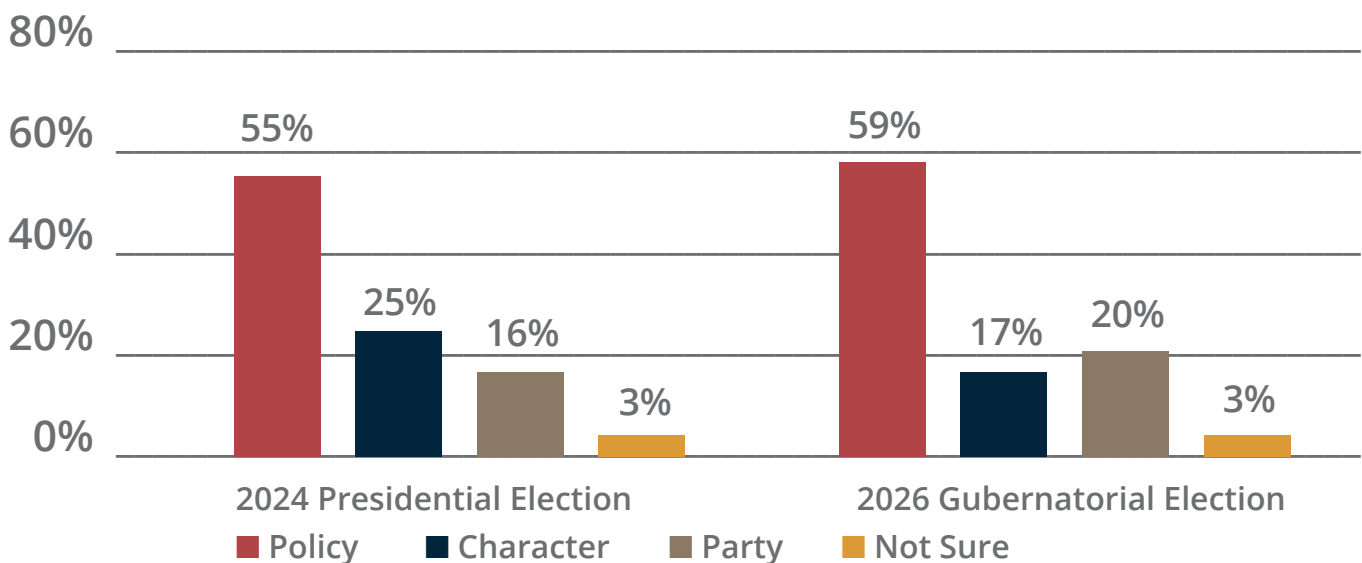
By Erin Norman, Lee Family Fellow and Senior Director of Communications Strategies

In order to connect with an audience, you first have to understand them. That is the theory behind SPN's in-house research capability, State Voices. The program helps Network partners better understand the needs, wants, and realities of voters in their states to inform meaningful policy recommendations and gain public support for them. This public support is critical for two reasons: 1) public support helps lawmakers

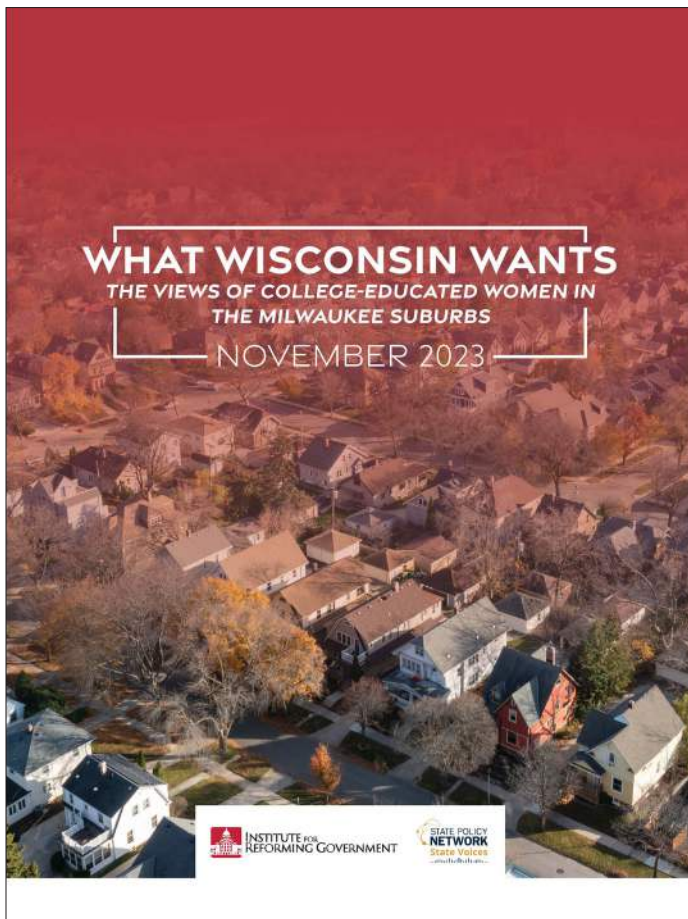
make the case for policy reforms, and 2) policy change is more likely to succeed when it reflects people's needs.

The **Institute for Reforming Government** (IRG) noticed that suburban communities around Milwaukee have seen dramatic shifts in voting patterns since Governor Scott Walker was elected in 2010. Specifically, IRG's analysis found that college-educated women in suburban Milwaukee have been voting for more progressive candidates over time. Change was happening in Wisconsin, highlighting the unmet needs of suburban women, and IRG wanted to understand this audience so it could craft appealing policy solutions that harnessed the power of the free market.

Most Important Factor in Upcoming Elections



Source: SPN's State Voices, May 2024



In the summer of 2023, IRG came to SPN with the idea for a research project to better understand this audience. IRG had limited funds for the project and looked to SPN and its internal research capability for support. SPN partnered with IRG to conduct focus groups in three unique suburban communities and produce a quantitative survey of college-educated women living in the “WOW counties” (Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Washington) surrounding Milwaukee. The results were published in a groundbreaking report, *What Wisconsin Wants: The Views of College-Educated Women in the Milwaukee Suburbs*.

Suburban women in Wisconsin may be voting differently than they were a decade ago, but they are still—as they were in the Scott Walker era—politically moderate. They are focused on the “kitchen table” issues they manage for their families every day—healthcare, education, mental health, and childcare. This audience isn’t opposed to conservative or free-market solutions to these problems, but they aren’t hearing any. Most of the solutions they hear are from the Left and while they aren’t sold on those approaches, they also aren’t satisfied with doing nothing.

“Among the many findings, one is that conservatives can do a better job at solving and messaging everyday issues that are priorities for women,” said IRG CEO CJ Szafir.

The findings from the research gave IRG the right data to champion a new mental healthcare bill in the Wisconsin Legislature that would allow practitioners from other states to provide care to Wisconsin residents via telehealth. While the bill had bipartisan support in the Legislature, Governor Tony Evers vetoed it. However, IRG will continue to push for reform next session.

Working on issues that voters have signaled are important positions our Network partners to be go-to sources of good policy, making future policy wins easier. IRG was able to take on an issue typically lacking a free-market lens and provide a solution that safeguards individual freedom, cuts red tape, and builds trust with a key audience that has strayed from free-market policy. The research-first approach IRG used is a model for other state-based groups that want to maximize their effectiveness with new and expanded audiences.

Thanks to our generous donors, SPN can support Network partners in gaining key insights that lead to better policy and victories for the American people.

“The SPN poll was a wake-up call for Wisconsin lawmakers, think tanks, and donors. When more than 70 percent of Wisconsin voters think childcare, healthcare, and mental health are major issues, it begs the question of what conservatives are doing about those challenges,” said CJ. “And that’s going to play a major role in IRG’s policy agenda, and as a result, help set the debate in Madison.”

See more of our State Voices work at <https://spn.org/state-voices/>.

STATE AFFILIATES

Our Network of 62 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.

ALABAMA

Alabama Policy Institute
alabamapolicy.org

ALASKA

Alaska Policy Forum
alaskapolicyforum.org

ARIZONA

Goldwater Institute
goldwaterinstitute.org

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Policy Foundation
arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

Opportunity Arkansas
OpportunityArkansas.org

CALIFORNIA

California Policy Center
californiapolicycenter.org

Pacific Research Institute
pacificresearch.org

COLORADO

Independence Institute
i2i.org

CONNECTICUT

Yankee Institute for Public Policy
yankeeinstitute.org

DELAWARE

Caesar Rodney Institute
caesarrodney.org

FLORIDA

Foundation for Government Accountability
thefga.org

The James Madison Institute
jamesmadison.org

GEORGIA

Georgia Center for Opportunity
georgiaopportunity.org

Georgia Public Policy Foundation
georgiapolicy.org

HAWAII

Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
grassrootinstitute.org

IDAHO

Idaho Freedom Foundation
idahofreedom.org

Mountain States Policy Center
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ILLINOIS

Illinois Policy Institute
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INDIANA

Indiana Policy Review Foundation
inpolicy.org

IOWA

Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation
taxrelief.org

KANSAS

Kansas Policy Institute
kansaspolicy.org

KENTUCKY

Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions
bipps.org

LOUISIANA

Pelican Institute for Public Policy
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MAINE

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MINNESOTA

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MISSOURI

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Frontier Institute
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NEBRASKA

Platte Institute for Economic Research
platteinstitute.org

NEVADA

Nevada Policy
npri.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy
jbartlett.org

NEW JERSEY

Garden State Initiative
gardenstateinitiative.org

NEW MEXICO

Rio Grande Foundation
riograndefoundation.org

NEW YORK

Empire Center
empirecenter.org

NORTH CAROLINA

John Locke Foundation
johnlocke.org

OHIO

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buckeyeinstitute.org

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
ocpathink.org

OREGON

Cascade Policy Institute
cascadepolicy.org

PENNSYLVANIA

Commonwealth Foundation
commonwealthfoundation.org

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity
rifreedom.org

SOUTH CAROLINA

Palmetto Promise Institute
palmettopromise.org

South Carolina Policy Council
scpolycouncil.org

SOUTH DAKOTA

Great Plains Public Policy Institute
greatplainsppi.org

TENNESSEE

Beacon Center of Tennessee
beacontn.org

TEXAS

Texas Public Policy Foundation
texaspolicy.com

UTAH

Libertas Institute
libertasutah.org

Sutherland Institute
sutherlandinstitute.org

VIRGINIA

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
thomasjeffersoninst.org

Virginia Institute for Public Policy
virginiainstitute.org

WASHINGTON

Freedom Foundation
freedomfoundation.com

Washington Policy Center
washingtonpolicy.org

WEST VIRGINIA

Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy
cardinalinstitute.com

WISCONSIN

Badger Institute
badgerinstitute.org

Institute for Reforming Government
reforminggovernment.org

MacIver Institute for Public Policy
maciverinstitute.com

Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty
will-law.org

WYOMING

Wyoming Liberty Group
wyliberty.org

The updates provided reflect activities by the time of submission for publication. For real-time updates from the Network, please visit SPN.org.

ALABAMA

ALABAMA POLICY INSTITUTE • alabamapolicy.org

Prior to the start of the legislative session the **Alabama Policy Institute** published its “Blueprint for Alabama,” which outlines 30 conservative policy reforms that API believes the Legislature should pursue in 2024. A 120-page “Guide to the Issues” was also released to legislators and the general public to explain each Blueprint idea. One of API’s legislative priorities in 2024 was universal school choice for Alabama. Governor Kay Ivey articulated that passing a school choice bill was her number-one goal this session. In March, Governor Ivey signed the CHOOSE Act. This law allows up to \$7,000 of funding per student to be allocated to a tax-credit Education Savings Account that will be phased in over three years. API has worked tirelessly with the governor and others on this issue for several years. API hosted a well-attended Educational Freedom Day to highlight school choice. Alabama students deserve to be able to pursue the educational option that best suits their individual needs. The expansion of casino gambling, creation of a state lottery, and legalization of unlimited sports betting has consumed much of the regular session. In December 2023, API released a comprehensive report on gambling, detailing both the economic and social harms that gambling legalization could bring to the state. API will continue to work with lawmakers and other allies to provide legislators with data and information to combat the effort to expand gambling in Alabama.



ALASKA

ALASKA POLICY FORUM • alaskapolicyforum.org

In 2024, **Alaska Policy Forum** is focusing on informing legislators about Alaska’s education funding and outcomes. While the chorus for more K–12 funding is growing, APF is demonstrating that Alaska is already spending more per capita than most states, while students have dismal outcomes. Adding more money is clearly not working. Expanding access to education choice options—such as charter schools, private schools, and Alaska’s unique correspondence school allotment program—could give every child a fighting chance to fulfill their potential. Alaska Policy Forum is also exposing the runaway costs associated with the state’s potential return to defined benefit pensions, which promise public employees a certain amount in retirement benefits. In 2005, Alaska switched to defined contribution pensions, which are analogous to 401(k) plans in the private sector. The state is still saddled with billions of dollars in promised pension payments from its previous defined benefit plan, and APF’s work with the Pension Integrity Project at Reason Foundation suggests that the leading proposal will add \$8.6 billion to future state budgets over the next decade. Alaska Policy Forum is fighting for fiscal responsibility in the Last Frontier in 2024.





ARIZONA

GOLDWATER INSTITUTE • goldwaterinstitute.org

The **Goldwater Institute** continues to work to empower patients nationwide with the Right to Try for Individualized Treatments Act. This important state-level reform allows patients to pursue cutting-edge treatments designed just for them. Now law in Arizona and Nevada, this reform extends the benefits of the original Right to Try to patients seeking highly personalized treatments. To learn how this important reform can work in your state, please contact Heather Curry (hcurry@goldwaterinstitute.org).

ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION • arkansaspolicyfoundation.org

Arkansas became the seventh state to enact universal school choice when freshman Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders and policymakers passed the LEARNS Act, which creates an Education Savings Account (ESA) mechanism. The **Arkansas Policy Foundation** has advanced school choice since its 1995 founding and is explaining the growth of Arkansas' school choice market to policymakers. Nearly 115,000 Arkansas students attend charter, home, or private schools, or are enrolled in a public school choice program, state Department of Education and other records show. The school choice market has grown from 66,627 students (2013) to 114,007 in the 2023–24 school year. Factors identified by the Policy Foundation that contribute to growth include dissatisfaction with public schools deemed “failing” in letter-grade surveys, technology that makes distance learning feasible, and religious affiliations. Charter schools are the largest group in the market, numbering 42,261 students. Homeschools are the second largest group, totaling nearly 26,000 students. Another 24,644 are currently in traditional public schools under a program that allows students to cross district lines. Private school enrollment totals 21,240.



OPPORTUNITY ARKANSAS • opportunityarkansas.org

As policy aficionados know, good policy passed into legislation is one thing, but implementation of that policy is another animal altogether. Families across Arkansas had much to celebrate last year with passage of education freedom in the LEARNS Act. While **Opportunity Arkansas** played a key role in passing the LEARNS Act, its work is just beginning. To continue educating Arkansans about the availability and accessibility of Education Freedom Accounts, Opportunity Arkansas is engaging in a multipronged effort, which involves research, polling, and sharing personal stories, to get the word out about this program's success and the generational change that is beginning in Arkansas as a result. Follow Opportunity Arkansas on social media and the webpage to receive the latest updates about efforts on this front.

CALIFORNIA

PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE • pacificresearch.org

With California facing an estimated \$73 billion deficit, according to the nonpartisan legislative analyst's office, lawmakers must exercise careful oversight of budget and policy measures this year. To help, **Pacific Research Institute** has launched Spending Watch, an initiative that will produce short, timely, and powerful analyses of the impact of key bills and budget items on state spending, taxes, the economy, unemployment, and outmigration. The first piece analyzes the controversial proposal from the state Reparations Task Force. Legislators have introduced the first bills to implement the commission's plans. Spending Watch found that the plans, if enacted, would result in a \$2.8 trillion total bill, a 54-percent increase in the tax burden of the average household to fund it, and 1.8 million additional people leaving the state over the first five years. What San Francisco Mayor London Breed calls the "twin troubles of housing affordability and homelessness" continue to grow worse despite billions spent on Governor Gavin Newsom's Project Homekey program, which PRI's research has shown is ineffective. In 2024, PRI is working to educate lawmakers about the need to reform or repeal government policies that have created unaffordable costs of living and made homebuilding prohibitively expensive through the latest booklet from PRI's Free Cities Center by Wayne Winegarden and Steve Greenhut, *Giving Housing Supply a Boost*.



CONNECTICUT

YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • yankeeinstitute.org

The 2024 session in Connecticut runs for a short three months, from February 7 through May 8. **Yankee Institute** showed up in full force at the capitol in Hartford on the opening day of the session to promote its tax-credit scholarship program designed to advance educational opportunity and access. Yankee Institute will be bringing supporters of this reform to testify before members of the General Assembly during a public hearing for related legislation. Yankee Institute will also be presenting and supporting reforms that cap occupational licensing fees, reduce taxes on businesses and residents, and halt the growth of onerous and ineffective regulations—including a renewed effort to require all new car sales to be electric. Yankee Institute spearheaded the opposition to agency regulations to adopt California-style electric vehicle mandates a few months ago, and played a key role in dismissing calls for a special session in January to implement them, which would have denied the public an opportunity to formally weigh in on the mandates.





FLORIDA

FOUNDATION FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY • thefga.org

The 80/20 rule, also called the Pareto Principle, states that 80 percent of consequences come from 20 percent of causes, or “the vital few.” This session, the **Foundation for Government Accountability** has developed its own Pareto policy playbook, focusing on the few things that create 80 percent of the impact. These policy changes make a meaningful difference in people’s lives, and FGA protects these reforms to ensure they can’t be ignored by unelected bureaucrats or unenforced by local officials. So far this session, FGA has been working on bills to create election crimes units in three states, is working with seven states and federal lawmakers on REINS legislation, has 15 bills moving to remove hurdles to teen work, and is partnering with lawmakers in seven states to ban disastrous universal basic income programs.

THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE • jamesmadison.org

Florida, along with the rest of the nation, is currently in a healthcare professional shortage. Fast-track approval and recognition of occupational licenses within the healthcare arena can help address workforce needs. The combination of Florida growing by 1,000 people a day and the high population of older individuals highlights an ever-increasing need to tackle the problem before it gets worse—luckily **The James Madison Institute** is working with the Legislature to get this done and place Florida as a leader in occupational licensing reform.

GEORGIA

GEORGIA CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY • georgiaopportunity.org

Work is key to overcoming poverty not only because it fuels financial independence but also because it fills a deep human need for purpose and belonging. So why isn’t the safety net designed as a bridge to work? In the current system, recipients must navigate multiple, disconnected programs, eligibility requirements, and caseworkers. Every hour they spend in this overwhelming maze is an hour they can’t pursue opportunities to escape it. **Georgia Center for Opportunity** helped Georgia lawmakers craft a reform that can begin to change how the state’s safety net is structured. House Bill 738 would create a task force to study Utah’s One Door model of integrating welfare and workforce services and map out a plan for using it to streamline Georgia’s programs. The task force will also prepare Georgia in the event that Congress reauthorizes the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which could include the process of allowing individual states to pursue their own One Door policy solutions. For millions of Georgians suffering from poverty, the reform is a hopeful first step toward a safety net where the priority is encouraging work and human well-being, not maintaining broken government systems.

GEORGIA PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • georgiapolicy.org



During the 2024 legislative session, **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** pursued initiatives on education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Last year, Georgia came within a couple votes of adopting the state's first Education Savings Account program. Since that time, the Foundation's digital media efforts have reached more than 600,000 people on this issue in key districts. This issue will return as a top priority for the Foundation. Certificate-of-need (CON) is another issue that returns after receiving some traction last year, but nothing crossed the finish line. The Foundation has published the most comprehensive look at Georgia's CON program, while releasing mini-docs of individuals harmed by the state's CON regulations. The Foundation will continue to work to reduce the state's CON burden on healthcare providers. Finally, as tax revenues soar, the Foundation aims to expedite the current tax reform plans already underway, as well as measures to bring property tax relief to Georgia homeowners.

HAWAII

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII • grassrootinstitute.org



Taming Hawaii's housing crisis has been a **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** priority for years, and finally state lawmakers have taken up the cause in earnest as well. Hawaii's governor even issued an emergency proclamation in July 2023 suspending laws that hinder homebuilding, using language that Grassroot could have written. But lawsuits effectively neutered the edict, and it accomplished very little. Fast forward to this year's state legislative session where Grassroot has been working with numerous legislators and community organizations to permanently eliminate or reform some of Hawaii's many homebuilding regulations. Even bureaucracies such as the state Land Use Commission that have opposed state-level housing reforms in the past have been allying with Grassroot. Especially promising are model bills Grassroot proposed that would allow smaller homes on smaller lots and permit residential uses in commercial zones. However it turns out, the 2024 legislative session has been a milestone in Grassroot's efforts to build bridges with legislators and advocacy groups to make it easier for Hawaii families to afford to stay in paradise.

Similarly, Grassroot has been making big strides working with Hawaii's four county councils to achieve property tax relief, zoning reform and improved permitting procedures that also will make homeownership more possible and affordable.



IDAHO

IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org

Big news at **Idaho Freedom Foundation**: Ron Nate was appointed as president and CEO in January. Ron continues the enormous legacy of Wayne Hoffman, who is retiring. Ron is an early retired economics professor of 25 years. He studied economics at the University of Utah and the University of Connecticut. He taught economics at Ohio University-Eastern and Brigham Young University-Idaho. Please feel free to reach out to him at ron@idahofreedom.net. The IFF is making progress in its push for maintenance budgeting to be separated from growth budgeting. Legislatively, the IFF is focused on expanding school choice opportunities, freeing up youth employment, securing digital currency rights, dialing back Medicaid dependency, and holding the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare accountable for its fraud and malfeasance. IFF has big plans for expanding its scope and influence, so support from SPN affiliates is appreciated!

ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org

The **Illinois Policy Institute** is making meaningful progress to help Illinoisans rise out of poverty through its Center for Poverty Solutions. Matt Paprocki, president and CEO of the Illinois Policy Institute, joined other panelists at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago to offer testimony for the Work & Welfare Subcommittee Field Hearing on The Dignity of Work: Lifting Individuals Out of Poverty. In his testimony, Paprocki pointed out that helping individuals find and access work is the best solution to ending cycles of generational poverty. He proposed smoothing out the benefits cliff that discourages federal aid recipients from climbing the employment ladder, increasing support for apprenticeships that can lead to stable careers, and adding work requirements for public benefits. In response to questioning, Paprocki urged policymakers to stop seeing poor people as social liabilities that are paid to go away and instead see them as neglected and underutilized assets to society who should be encouraged to pursue meaning and prosperity through work. IPI is building upon its efforts to promote the dignity of work by backing two reforms in the Illinois General Assembly that would encourage entrepreneurship and expand work opportunities for low-income job seekers.



IOWA

IOWANS FOR TAX RELIEF FOUNDATION • taxrelief.org

Iowans for Tax Relief helped lead the charge on several important policy reforms in Iowa during the 2024 legislative session. High property taxes are a concern for most Iowans and going into the legislative session ITR Foundation focused on the danger of Universal Basic Income (UBI) programs that were potentially going to expand at the local level. Several cities in the Des Moines metro were experimenting with pilot UBI programs, which if made permanent would have had a significant impact on local government budgets and increasing property taxes. Through freedom of information requests and several op-ed articles, ITR Foundation was able to help turn the tide against UBI programs. The legislature passed and Governor Kim Reynolds signed into law legislation prohibiting local governments from implementing UBI programs.

ITR Foundation also helped lead the way on further pro-growth income tax reforms. Prior to the start of this year's legislative session ITR Foundation released Accelerate, Lower, and Eliminate: A Pro-Growth Blueprint to Make Iowa's Tax Code More Competitive, which outlined a potential pathway to not only lower the flat tax, but also place the income tax on a path toward elimination. Iowa's legislature continued the tax cut momentum by passing the fourth round of income tax reforms in recent years. This new legislation will push Iowa's personal income tax down to a single, flat rate of 3.8 percent in 2025, delivering more than \$1 billion of tax relief over the next six years. Accelerating the implementation of the flat tax was one recommendation made by ITR Foundation.

Further, the legislature passed two important taxpayer protections, which include a two-thirds majority requirement of both houses of the legislature to approve an income tax increase and an amendment protecting the flat tax, which would prohibit a future legislature from reinstating a progressive income tax system. The fight for both amendments is still underway as they will need to be passed once during the next legislative session and then approved by the people during the 2026 election.



KANSAS

KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org

At the start of this legislative session, substantial tax reform headed to Governor Laura Kelly's desk in record time. Legislative leadership found a way to get a mixture of the flat tax proposal that **Kansas Policy Institute** has strongly advocated for seasoned with Governor Kelly's tax proposal. Yet, to no one's surprise, Governor Kelly vetoed historic tax reform for Kansas despite having massive cash reserves. KPI continues to push a plan to control spending growth—the Responsible Kansas Budget—and to clarify that tax reform is affordable, vital, and beneficial. On the K-12 education front, spending makes up more than half of state spending, while one-third of students read below grade level. KPI is fighting for transparency in how kids are taught, what they achieve, and how much it costs. The power of exit is central to breaking the education monopoly, primarily through Education Savings Accounts and other school choice vehicles. KPI's litigation arm, Kansas Justice Institute, is seeing the fruits of their labor on asset forfeiture as the House and Senate already overwhelmingly passed asset forfeiture bills. The goal is to prevent innocent Kansans from being caught on the wrong side of this process, ensure due process, and put the focus on those truly committing crimes. Kansas Justice Institute's pathbreaking work in Kansas continues to pay dividends for constitutional rights.





LOUISIANA

PELICAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • pelicaninstitute.org

In this year's legislative session, the **Pelican Institute for Public Policy** anticipates Louisiana's newly elected officials will champion bold, game-changing reforms. With a focus on bolstering fiscal responsibility, curbing excessive spending, and empowering educational choice through initiatives like Education Savings Accounts, Louisiana's leaders are poised to make a transformative impact. Additionally, addressing the state's property insurance crisis, tackling occupational licensure barriers, and enacting meaningful labor reforms are on the agenda.

MAINE

MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE • mainepolicy.org

Maine Policy's biggest goal for Maine's second legislative session is playing defense on a pair of key items that were carried over from the first session. These issues include protecting Maine's split-vote system for allocating its Electoral College votes by rejecting that National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, as well as preventing the adoption of a local-option sales tax. Maine Policy has successfully defeated both of these policies in past legislative sessions, yet they always creep back into focus in Maine's Democratic-led Legislature. Maine Policy's team has been writing op-eds, speaking on TV and radio, and mobilizing activists in opposition to these policies, delivering more than 2,000 emails to lawmakers and legislative committees.

MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mackinac.org

The **Mackinac Center for Public Policy** is focusing on achieving bipartisan policy victories this legislative session. One priority already gaining traction is opening up the governor's office and the Legislature to the state's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). But that's not the only barrier to greater transparency. Government entities constantly use excessive delays, fees, and redactions to deter the public from accessing information. The Mackinac Center has proposed reforms that would fix FOIA and make the state and local governments more accountable. The Mackinac Center continues to sound the alarm over the state's corporate welfare deals. The state currently gives companies hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate welfare deals, yet most of the details are kept secret from the public. If the state insists on continuing these ineffective programs, lawmakers should at least ensure that the deals are fully transparent to the taxpayers footing the bill. One proposal expected to gain traction in 2024 involves allowing inmates to earn credit against their sentences by participating in education and workforce training programs proven to reduce recidivism rates. Mackinac Center research underscores the effectiveness of these programs in improving post-release outcomes. Another area of reform is reducing the burden of state occupational licensure. Policymakers should reduce those burdens and promote a thorough review of other harmful regulations and administrative rules that make earning a living in Michigan more difficult than it has to be.



MINNESOTA

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT • americanexperiment.org

Center of the American Experiment is once again on defense at the state capitol, this time trying to defeat a misguided proposal to make Minnesota a sanctuary state for illegal immigrants. The Sanctuary State bill will prohibit any Minnesota entity—law enforcement, state agency, city government—from cooperating with federal immigration authorities such as ICE. Worse yet, the bill requires local governments to tip off illegal immigrants when federal authorities ask about them. During the 2023 session, the Minnesota legislature granted several new benefits to illegal immigrants including state driver's licenses, free health care and free college tuition. Center of the American Experiment is running an aggressive campaign against this legislation that includes a landing page with the opportunity to send emails to members of the Senate and House. So far, 8,400 Minnesotans have sent emails to their legislators (16,800 emails total) and the landing page has received 33,000 pageviews. Center of the American Experiment also hosted an event on April 2, 2024, with legislators and local law enforcement to publicize the negative impacts of making Minnesota a sanctuary state.



FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA • freedomfoundationofminnesota.com

For several years, Congress and members of the Minnesota Legislature have debated numerous issues surrounding tech policies and innovation. While lawmakers have good intentions in seeking to keep children safe when online, they often miss the mark with proposed legislation that would not protect the privacy of kids, as well as empowering government agencies to retain sensitive information about children with little or no proper oversight. Rather than encouraging legislation that will be tied up in endless litigation, the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota has been interested in jumpstarting a larger conversation about how best to protect minors online and debating alternatives that do not raise constitutional issues. Finding the right balance on these and other emerging issues such as AI and others has been at the forefront of work conducted by the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota**. It was in this spirit that the organization announced at its January 2024 Leadership Development Conference the launch of a "Tech Caucus" for policymakers. The goal is to bring interested legislators together with tech leadership to foster a better understanding of the issues surrounding the industry as well as to encourage policies that will allow developing industries to flourish rather than be suppressed by the heavy hand of government regulation and taxation. Freedom Foundation of Minnesota recently hosted its first Tech Policy Roundtable featuring an expert from Google who spearheads their initiatives focused on keeping kids safe while online. It was a spirited discussion that fostered new understanding among those legislators in attendance. Freedom Foundation of Minnesota will be hosting additional discussions on other tech topics throughout the year and hope to make these roundtable discussions part of its regular educational work in St. Paul.





MISSISSIPPI

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI • empowerms.org

Empower Mississippi is committed to a quality education for every child and continues to push for universal Education Savings Accounts in the state. Families who have a special needs ESA relate how it has changed their lives. One such story is that of Kensley Martin, who received the special needs ESA five years ago. Kensley had repeated first grade three times—while her parents were at their breaking point about how to help their daughter. Once Kensley received an ESA and was placed in an education setting that better suited her needs, she began to flourish. Today, Kensley is a success story of how an ESA can change a child's life. She is confident, thriving in school, and a star barrel racer. Empower Mississippi recently filmed Kensley's story and released it in a targeted effort to reach Mississippi parents who were attending the Dixie National Rodeo—The Greatest Show on Dirt. The Dixie National Rodeo attracts thousands of Mississippians, who gather at the coliseum in Jackson for all the festivities. Empower reached 70,000 Mississippi parents through their personal interest in barrel racing and the rodeo. They watched Kensley's video and then clicked through and spent time on the ESA landing page learning about the program. The campaign was a success!



**MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY**

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • mspolicy.org

The **Mississippi Center for Public Policy's** prime focus is on education freedom reform. To that end, the Center has worked with a coalition to introduce legislation to establish universal Education Savings Accounts. The Center has spent several months helping build a new school funding model. As a result, this session, the state passed historic funding reform that puts students first. With a newly elected Legislature and House Speaker, changes that once seemed unattainable now appear possible. This is especially true regarding the repeal of anticompetitive certificate-of-need (CON) laws regarding healthcare. The Center has published a detailed paper outlining options for CON repeal, and has worked to get a number of bills introduced this session. On May 9, 2024, Governor Tate Reeves signed the bill into law.

MISSOURI

SHOW-ME INSTITUTE • showmeinstitute.org

Education reform was the biggest priority for the **Show-Me Institute** this legislative session, and our efforts paid off in a big way. Governor Mike Parson signed legislation dramatically expanding the state's Education Savings Account (ESA) program, known as the MOScholars Scholarship. The law opens up eligibility for the scholarship fund, giving more students access to the funds, and eases burdens on charter schools looking to open outside of the St. Louis and Kansas City areas. Weekly coalition meetings with state and national partners helped coordinate efforts to push for greater school choice for Missouri families.



MONTANA

FRONTIER INSTITUTE • frontierinstitute.org

The **Frontier Institute** is taking full advantage of the 2024 interim session by building strong coalitions, working with stakeholders, and championing reforms to strengthen Montanans' property rights, foster a robust education freedom ecosystem, enable pro-innovation permitting, and secure Montana's position as the Last Best Place for technology pioneers.



NEBRASKA

PLATTE INSTITUTE • platteinstitute.org

The **Platte Institute** is keeping up the momentum during the 2nd session of the 108th Nebraska Legislature advocating for several pieces of legislation aimed at removing barriers to growth and opportunity in Nebraska. One of Platte's top priorities for 2024 was the passage of LB 16, a workforce bill to allow for universal recognition of job licensees in Nebraska. This bill was the culmination of over a half decade of work and earlier this month, Platte was excited to host a press conference celebrating its passage into law. Platte's second legislative priority is to abolish Nebraska's inheritance tax. Nebraska is one of only five states in the nation that still taxes inheritance and our polling on this issue shows 78 percent of Nebraskans are in favor of ending this tax. Platte's effort faces stiff opposition; however, Platte is optimistic about this bill's chances for success and will continue to champion a more favorable tax climate for Nebraska's farmers, ranchers, families, and small businesses.



NEVADA

NEVADA POLICY • npri.org

Nevada officials unveiled a searchable database of state expenditures—an online state checkbook—on February 13, culminating 15-plus years of work by **Nevada Policy** Director of Research Geoffrey Lawrence and former President Andy Matthews, now the state controller. The pair began working on the idea around 2009. Money was even set aside for the project in the state budget years ago, but the Great Recession, changing priorities, and the inability of state officials to find an effective operating program kept it from becoming a reality until this year, thanks in part to the ongoing efforts of both Lawrence and Matthews. Matthews, who served as president of Nevada Policy from 2011–15, was elected controller in 2022. One of his campaign promises was making the state checkbook, also known as the Nevada Open Finance Portal, a reality. The state checkbook is designed to enhance financial transparency by making information about state expenditures, balances, and contractors available in a web-based format that can be searched by the public. “Now, Nevadans can see with clarity exactly who is being paid out of the taxpayers’ purse,” Lawrence said. “Transparency is the first step to accountability.”





NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • jbartlett.org

The **Josiah Bartlett Center** is focused this session primarily on education freedom and economic deregulation. The Center is providing the data and stories needed to show how the state's young Education Freedom Accounts (EFA) program is helping students who need educational options while saving taxpayers money. The program is under an unprecedented assault of hostile legislation this year. The Center is researching ways to expand educational opportunities at the local level, including partnering with a local college to build a database of local education regulations. In the first two months of the session, the Center played pivotal roles in moving forward legislation to expand EFAs and killing legislation to raise the minimum wage and subsidize electric vehicles. An unexpected fight against a push to limit access to public records is ongoing; the Center notched an initial win, but the end result remains up in the air as amendments to the bill that Bartlett helped block are drafted.

NEW MEXICO

RIO GRANDE FOUNDATION • riograndefoundation.org

New Mexico's 2024 legislative session is over; the session was held from January 16 through February 15. Throughout the session, the **Rio Grande Foundation** reviewed and rated bills and politicians alike and has released its Freedom Index vote-tracking tool. This tool enables New Mexicans to easily find out how their elected representatives voted on critical issues of individual freedom. Important issues for the Foundation included the massive \$3.5 billion oil and gas surplus (and how to use it), the "Clean Fuel Standard" House Bill 41, and paid family leave (Senate Bill 3/House Bill 6). The Clean Fuel Standard passed, and New Mexico's progressive Legislature failed once again to use the surplus to reduce tax burdens and fundamentally improve economic freedom in the state. However, the Rio Grande Foundation was proud to coalition with many other organizations in direct opposition to the paid family leave tax increase, which was defeated in a 34–36 vote.

NEW YORK

EMPIRE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY • empirecenter.org

The **Empire Center** released *Green Guardrails*, a thorough report detailing problems with the New York government's radical plans to decarbonize the economy under Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2019 Climate Act. The cost of renewable energy credits has doubled in just two years, and offshore wind developers are end-running state regulators in pursuit of billions of dollars in extra subsidies. The report also shows that the reliability of New York's electrical grid is in jeopardy because of exaggerated claims about renewable energy outputs and unrealistic expectations about older power plants. The report outlines how lawmakers surrendered policymaking powers to state bureaucrats, who have failed to issue proper cost estimates or other reports detailing the plan's impact. The report makes the case for strengthening the state's administrative procedures act—and shows how troublesome laws such as the Jones Act and prevailing wage laws are making New York's climate goals more costly and less feasible.



NORTH CAROLINA

JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION • johnlocke.org

It has been a fruitful and productive season at the **John Locke Foundation**. Election years provide a unique opportunity to reach reporters, researchers, and engaged voters with a variety of resources to help them make more informed decisions and keep them up-to-date on important electoral trends. The Foundation recently released and updated the following resources: Civitas Partisan Index 2024, VoteTracker, and Carolina Elections Court Cases. *Carolina Journal* reporters are doing the heavy lifting on the news coverage front, making sure that North Carolinians are equipped with the information they need to keep up with the fast-changing dynamics of a swing state during an election year. Recently, Locke researchers and *Carolina Journal* reporters met with about two dozen members of the foreign press, explaining political and election dynamics across the state. Although much of the political cycle will be dominated by election coverage, Locke is laying the groundwork for several policy opportunities in agriculture, taxation, and education. Through a variety of in-depth research and video projects, the Foundation is bringing both the intellectual capital and communications skill to these policy conversations and anticipates promising movement on each of these fronts.



OHIO

THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE • buckeyeinstitute.org

As a result of decades of tireless work by **The Buckeye Institute**, Ohio finally adopted universal school choice in 2023. With demand for EdChoice scholarships accordingly increasing, classroom capacity is now a legitimate and growing concern, especially in economically disadvantaged and rural portions of the state. To ensure that there are available desks for this influx of students, The Buckeye Institute is working directly with lawmakers to give private and charter schools access to much-needed capital to add classroom space. Buckeye recently outlined how Ohio's General Assembly could use its one-time Strategic Community Investments Fund to make a transformational investment in education and create a permanent revolving loan fund for private and charter schools to build out and increase classroom space. This Buckeye Institute-championed policy would allow private and charter schools to apply for low- or no-interest loans for construction and other capital expenses to help them serve more students. As Ohio takes steps to ensure that every student receives an education that best fits their individual needs, classroom space constraints at private and charter schools should not be allowed to stop the great progress Buckeye is making in Ohio.



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE



OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS • ocpathink.org

The **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs'** top priority in the 2024 legislative session is judicial reform. Oklahomans don't currently have a say when it comes to the state judiciary. Justices are selected and vetted by Oklahoma's unelected Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC), guided by a small network of lawyers from the Oklahoma Bar Association. The end result has been that Oklahoma's left-leaning Supreme Court keeps legislating from the bench and throwing out conservative reforms. OCPA is working to repeal the JNC and switch to the US Constitution's method for selecting Supreme Court justices—with the governor nominating and the Legislature confirming or rejecting—that America has used for more than 200 years. If reform one day passes, OCPA will continue to focus on getting the ballot measure passed. Today's judges and justices affect Oklahoma's future. It is not enough to get liberal activist judges removed. Oklahoma needs a better, more accountable system for selecting them in the first place.



OREGON

CASCADE POLICY INSTITUTE • cascadepolicy.org

Last year, the US Supreme Court took up the case of *Tyler v. Hennepin County*, in which Geraldine Tyler lost her Minneapolis condo when she failed to pay the property taxes for several years. *Tyler* argued that Hennepin County violated the Constitution when it kept the \$25,000 left over after the property was foreclosed on and sold to obtain the taxes owed. The Court ruled 9–0 in favor of Tyler. Since then, **Cascade Policy Institute** has worked with Pacific Legal Foundation, which represented Tyler, to implement the ruling in Oregon. The key requirement of *Tyler* is that governments create a system for property owners to claim surplus equity after property taxes, fees, and interest are paid. The reform, recently signed by the governor, will create that system, while relying on existing Oregon law to fill in details of how that system operates. The House Revenue Committee held a hearing on HB 4056 on February 15, and Cascade testified in support.



PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION • commonwealthfoundation.org

During Pennsylvania's 2024 legislative session, the **Commonwealth Foundation** will continue to champion expanding school choice options in the Keystone State. Specifically, the Commonwealth Foundation will prioritize codifying the Lifeline Scholarships/PASS program for 250,000 vulnerable students in Pennsylvania's worst schools. It will also rally policymakers and school choice allies to create an index or automatic "escalator" to match future demand for Pennsylvania's tax credit scholarships—the same programs that experienced historic growth last year due to the Commonwealth Foundation's long-term efforts to make educational freedom a reality for families statewide. Pennsylvania is also facing ballooning annual deficits and questions about the reliability of its electrical grid. Those challenges give the Commonwealth Foundation the opportunity to educate lawmakers and the public about the importance of bringing the state budget under control to avoid tax increases and adopting common-sense energy policies that ensure affordable, reliable power for all Pennsylvanians.

SOUTH CAROLINA

PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • palmettopromise.org

After years working toward the passage of Education Scholarship Account legislation in South Carolina, **Palmetto Promise** is now the foremost organization facilitating the implementation of South Carolina's new Education Scholarship Trust Fund program. Palmetto is undertaking an extensive outreach campaign to eligible families, recruiting independent schools to enroll as educational providers, and running the state's foremost ESA information hub at scschoolchoice.com. The program is under litigation, pending arguments before the South Carolina Supreme Court, and Palmetto has led that legal fight with an amicus brief and coordination with other amici curiae. If the Court rules in the program's favor, students and families across the state will benefit from the hope and opportunity of educational choice. Amid the implementation frenzy, the Institute is also involved with bills for telehealth expansion, judicial reform, retail freedom, educational transparency, and tax reform. So far, many items from the Palmetto Freedom Agenda are on track to pass into law this year.



TENNESSEE

BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • beacontn.org

The Legislature adjourned in April, signaling the end of the 113th Tennessee General Assembly. One area where there was tremendous progress for freedom this year was in healthcare, with the legislature reforming three areas that **Beacon Center of Tennessee** recommended going into this year's session. After years of Beacon calling for a repeal of certificate-of-need (CON) laws, the legislature took another bite out of these laws that have prevented almost a billion dollars in healthcare investment across the state. This year's reform phases out nine CONs and implements several procedural reforms over the next five years. These procedural reforms include making it harder for competitors to use CONs for anti-competitive purposes and making it easier to appeal CON denials. Tennessee's telemedicine law also saw a tweak this year to remove the requirement that you must see your provider in person every 16 months to continue the telemedicine relationship. This served as more of a barrier to accessing healthcare than anything. Under the new law, a patient will establish the relationship in person, and then it is up to the provider and patient to make the determination on how often to come in person. Nearly 90 percent of Americans live within five miles of a pharmacist, allowing pharmacists to have more autonomy and test and treat certain conditions is a significant expansion to healthcare access. A reform made this year allows pharmacists to prescribe medications following the results of certain rapid diagnostic tests, as well as other products such as fluoride, EpiPens, and naloxone.





TEXAS

TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION • texaspolicy.com

The **Texas Public Policy Foundation** released its top ten priorities for the 89th Texas Legislative Session. Among them are creating a strong border force, eliminating property taxes, empowering parents with new educational options for their children, and prohibiting local governments from using tax dollars to pay lobbyists. The Foundation will also work to make the state power grid more reliable, improve access to healthcare, restore the proper mission of higher education and—for the first time—propose responsible guidelines for artificial intelligence. These priorities are part of a larger Liberty Action Agenda, with more than 80 separate reforms to be released during the interim. Before the 89th Legislative Session, the Texas Public Policy Foundation will conduct research, develop communications tools, educate the public, and build issue campaigns to ensure policymakers, experts, and activists across the state join the fight for these solutions.

UTAH

LIBERTAS INSTITUTE • libertasutah.org

Libertas Institute scored key victories in education this legislative session, reflecting the Legislature's commitment to empowering families and fostering educational choice. Firstly, the Utah Education Fits All Scholarship (a universal education choice program that was passed last year) has seen a remarkable expansion. The scholarship originally had enough funding to service only 5,000 students, but demand quickly outpaced supply. It was apparent early on that Libertas needed to expand the program to accommodate the many thousands of families who wanted to participate. Now, with the doubling of its size, the scholarship can accommodate more than 10,000 students! Libertas also worked on broadening the scholarship's unintended restrictions in the way the law was originally written. The Utah Education Fits All scholarship now encompasses military families and those in the process of adopting foster children. This expansion heralds a promising trajectory for future enhancements to the scholarship program. Another top priority of Libertas was fostering educational innovation by shepherding the passage of Senate Bill 13. This bill streamlines the process for establishing microschools, alleviating the burden of cumbersome regulations that previously hindered their proliferation. By permitting microschools in all zones and making building occupancy requirements more reasonable, it's now easier for entrepreneurs to start a microschool. Teachers and parents now have the freedom to create educational environments that cater specifically to the needs of their children, unhindered by over-regulation. These victories underscore Utah's dedication to advancing educational opportunities and fostering innovation in its educational landscape. As Libertas celebrates its achievements, it anticipates further progress in creating an inclusive and dynamic educational ecosystem for all Utahns.



VIRGINIA

THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • thomasjeffersoninst.org

This quarter has been a reminder that elections have consequences. The new majority in the Virginia General Assembly has tried to pass some of the most extreme, anti-free-market legislation the state has seen in some time. The **Thomas Jefferson Institute** has used its extensive relationships, mailing lists, publications in key newspapers, and testimony before committees to help fight off many of these proposals. Bills to expand collective bargaining, impose rent controls, and remove the cap on medical malpractice awards have all been defeated. The Institute continues to fight bills to raise the minimum wage, create a paid family and medical leave program, control pharmaceutical prices, return Virginia to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and impose sales taxes on business-to-business transactions. Virginia, sadly, is one veto pen away from becoming Illinois or California. Legislative efforts to delink Virginia from California's clean energy targets on electric vehicles and to expand education freedom via Educational Savings Accounts have thus far fallen short, but the Institute has created momentum to continue fighting in the next session.



VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY • virginiainstitute.org

Preliminary research strongly suggests there are distinct patterns relative to partisan behavior within legislatures, particularly in purple states like Virginia. Democratic caucuses tend to vote as if they are a single person, while Republicans tend to vote as individuals. This variation fundamentally informs caucus behaviors when in a majority or minority position, and seems to consistently put Republicans at a disadvantage. The **Virginia Institute** has been focused on collecting data to help build effective purple state strategies for the medium and long term. The data will provide insight into bipartisanship behaviors and inform efforts to find fertile ground for good policies among both Republicans and Democrats. For example, the Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance coalition developed legislation for the 2024 session that responded positively to all the concerns Democrats raised over Education Savings Accounts in years past. Many Democrats recognized the benefits these changes would have for students in their districts, yet these same legislators voted without hesitation to table this measure in subcommittee. The scenario repeated when a multiyear sunset of Virginia's certificate-of-need program was discussed and brought before the health subcommittee. Clearly, a new strategy to address calcification within the caucuses is necessary to see good policy prevail in states such as Virginia.





WASHINGTON

FREEDOM FOUNDATION • freedomfoundation.com

After months with boots on the ground, the **Freedom Foundation** was able to collect more than enough signatures from Miami-Dade teachers to officially get an alternative professional organization, the Miami-Dade Education Coalition, on the ballot alongside the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) in the forthcoming certification election. Freedom Foundation and Miami-Dade Education Coalition team members dropped off the signatures to the Florida Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) in Tallahassee. Now, for the first time in nearly 50 years, Miami-Dade teachers will have a choice about their representation. The Miami-Dade Education Coalition is an independent union designed to provide a nonpolitical alternative to the national teachers' union. It was created by teachers for teachers, and it gives educators the option to vote for local representation that will spend their dues money on their needs rather than the radical political agenda of UTD's leaders. UTD, which is affiliated with both National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, has already spent millions of dollars fighting the decertification efforts. And it will have to continue to spend on this election just to maintain the status quo. This is money they no longer can spend on leftist causes. All this was made possible because the Freedom Foundation worked with lawmakers and Governor Ron DeSantis to pass Senate Bill 256, which ended the government's responsibility to deduct union dues from employees' paychecks and requires a recertification vote when a union's membership falls below 60 percent.

WEST VIRGINIA

CARDINAL INSTITUTE FOR WEST VIRGINIA POLICY • cardinalinstitute.com

Over the winter, the **Cardinal Institute** released its first publications under the umbrella of the Dignity Project. In short, this new initiative is focused on examining the factors contributing to the low labor force participation rate in the Mountain State and identifying prospective solutions. The initial report, *Benefit Cliffs and Disincentives for Work in West Virginia*, is the first effort to quantify the magnitude of these cliffs that are widely acknowledged through anecdote. Accompanying that white paper, Cardinal conducted qualitative research through a listening research project designed to help learn about fellow Mountaineers' sentiments regarding the economy, workforce issues, and social safety net programs. Cardinal's findings are outlined in its *Dignity Project Listening Research Report*, and in-depth polling results can be found at wvdignity.com. Taken together, these reports provide an encouraging pathway for West Virginia to improve its economy and reconnect its citizens with the dignity of earned success through work.



WISCONSIN

BADGER INSTITUTE • badgerinstitute.org

A **Badger Institute** priority this legislative session is to reform how Wisconsin's statewide school choice programs are funded by decoupling the per-child funding stream from local property tax levies. This would deprive educational choice opponents of one of their chief avenues of rhetorical and legal attack. The Institute is also providing policymakers with a full look at the tradeoffs of marijuana legalization in other states—Badger's "Real Facts" series of research summaries is up to five installments, with a sixth in edit. In January, the governor signed legislation allowing dental therapists to practice in the state. Badger has long advocated for this reform, which will help solve the state's chronic dentist shortage without subsidies.



INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT • reforminggovernment.org

During the 2024 legislative session, the **Institute for Reforming Government** fought policy wars on two fronts. First, IRG successfully led a year-long effort on teacher apprenticeships, a model that allows future teachers to gain more hands-on experience in real classrooms for a lower cost during their college years. Not only did the Republican Legislature pass a bill soon to head to the governor's desk, but the governor has started a separate pilot. With SPN's support, IRG will gather school, parent, and business stakeholders to get the governor to sign the bill or vastly improve his pilot. Second, IRG is playing enforcer on state reading reforms. Wisconsin's Education Department is already trying to undo the state's Florida- and Mississippi-style reforms, starting with curriculum. IRG has countered the Department in the press, been the first and loudest voice to the legislators, and begun educating schools on the options that are best for them.



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

As Wisconsin's 2023–24 legislative session draws to a close, the **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty** praised Assembly lawmakers for passing two proposed constitutional amendments that, if approved by the Senate, will be one step closer to going to Wisconsin voters. The first proposed amendment strengthens Wisconsin's separation of powers and protects taxpayers by prohibiting any future governor from using their line-item or partial veto powers to raise taxes or fees. The proposed change comes after Wisconsin's governor used his partial veto to create a 400-year appropriation in the last state budget, clearly departing from the Legislature's intent. The other constitutional amendment would explicitly prohibit any form of race discrimination in public employment, education, contracting, and administration. In practice, this amendment would ban government-sponsored affirmative action; racial quotas and preferences; and so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies that use racial discrimination. Last August, WILL's Equality for All Agenda identified 20 state laws and agency programs that discriminate on the basis of race. WILL is also focusing its litigation and policy efforts to once again defend the state's Act 10 law. Bolstered by the ideological shift in the Wisconsin Supreme Court, labor groups have filed a new lawsuit in Dane County Circuit Court seeking to overturn the landmark law that ended compulsory union membership for public employees and saved taxpayers millions of dollars. WILL is intervening on behalf of public school teacher Kristi Koschkee.



WYOMING



WYOMING LIBERTY GROUP • wyliberty.org

As the 2024 Wyoming budget session unfolds, **Wyoming Liberty Group** is actively monitoring various bills related to marijuana legalization and decriminalization efforts. The team is researching the public health and safety implications of marijuana use while striving to ensure that Wyomingites receive accurate information despite the years of prevailing misinformation and marketing. This legislative session presents a range of proposals, including initiatives for cannabis decriminalization and measures to classify all THC products weighing three ounces or less as misdemeanors. Additionally, one notable bill aims to restrict Wyoming hemp producers from incorporating psychoactive substances like Delta-8 into their products. This bill doesn't fully address regulatory gaps outlined in the farm bill, potentially allowing the continued sale of such products in Wyoming. Wyoming Liberty Group is dedicated to advocating for evidence-based policies that prioritize public health and individual liberties and will continue engaging with lawmakers, stakeholders, and the community to ensure that decisions regarding marijuana legislation align with sound research.

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	ExcelinEd	National School Choice Awareness
50CAN	Federalist Society	Foundation
Acton Institute	FIRE	National Taxpayers Union
America's Future	Fiscal Alliance Foundation	Foundation
America First Policy Institute	Forge Leadership Network	New Civil Liberties Alliance
American Conservative Union	Foundation for Economic Education	Pacific Legal Foundation
American Consumer Institute	Franklin News Foundation	People United for Privacy
American Council of Trustees and Alumni	FreedomWorks	Foundation
American Enterprise Institute	Free the People	PERC
American Institute for Economic Research	Free to Choose Network	Philanthropy Roundtable
American Juris Link	Heartland Institute	Prison Fellowship
American Legislative Exchange Council	Independent Institute	Project 42
Americans for Fair Treatment	Independent Women's Forum	Reason Foundation
Americans for Prosperity	Inspired Life	R Street Institute
Americans for Tax Reform	Institute for Family Studies	Southeastern Legal Foundation
Archbridge Institute	Institute for Free Speech	Speech First
Arizona Free Enterprise Club	Institute for Humane Studies	Stand Together Trust
Arizona Liberty Network	Institute for Justice	Steamboat Institute
Association of American Educators Foundation	Institute for Policy Innovation	Students for Liberty
Atlas Network	Institute of Economic Affairs	Tax Foundation
Bill of Rights Institute	Instituto de Libertad Economica	The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty
Capital Research Center	Jersey 1st	The Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University
Cato Institute	Judicial Watch	The College Fix
Centennial Institute	Leadership Institute	The Foundation for American Innovation
Center for Education Reform	Libertarian Policy Foundation	The Free State Foundation
Center for Independent Employees	Liberty Justice Center	The Fund for American Studies
Center for Independent Thought	Louisiana Family Forum	The Heritage Foundation
Center for Individual Rights	Lucy Burns Institute	The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal
Center for Latino Leadership	Manhattan Institute for Policy Research	The Jesse Helms Center
Children's Scholarship Fund	Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance	The Policy Cicle
Cicero Institute	Media Research Center	True Charity
Citizens Against Government Waste	Mercatus Center	Truth in Accounting
Citizens Council for Health Freedom	Middle Resolution Policy	Upper Midwest Law Center
Common Sense Institute	Foundation Mountain States Legal Foundation	Young America's Foundation
Competitive Enterprise Institute	Napa Legal Institute	Young Voices
DonorsTrust	National Review Institute	
EdChoice	National Right to Work Legal Defense & Education Foundation Inc.	

NATIONAL PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: CATO INSTITUTE



The **Cato Institute** is one of the most influential national libertarian think tanks in the country and has been for nearly 50 years. With a steadfast commitment to classical liberal philosophy, Cato's experts advocate for economic freedom, civil liberties, limited government, and a non-interventionist stance in international affairs. Even with changing tides in politics, Cato has stayed true to its core principles and works alongside both Democrats and Republicans in Congress to break down barriers to opportunity for all Americans.

Cato scholars regularly meet with federal and state-level policymakers. In 2023, they held nearly 1,000 state and federal meetings - at least a 10% increase from their meetings in 2022.

While Cato's work in federal policy is widely known, its scholars also provide commentary on critical issues in the states. For example, Dr. Jeffrey Singer, a senior fellow, testified on deregulating prescription privileges for psychologists in Pennsylvania and on certificate-of-need in Kentucky. Policy analyst Colleen Hroncich testified on school choice in Connecticut, and Christopher Hansford testified on residential zoning reform in Arizona, to name a few examples. Cato experts look to SPN as a window into the states and engage with our affiliates through connections made by SPN, involvement in our policy working groups, and at SPN gatherings like Annual Meeting.



"The biggest benefit SPN provides to us is the connections to state organizations. I see high value in networking at SPN events because we build relationships that pay dividends down the road," said Chad Davis, vice president for government affairs at Cato. "There are periods where things just aren't moving at the federal level. But when you have 50 states, you have 50 different governments, and as a libertarian organization, we have many issues that appeal across different ideological alignments. The more we build that out, the more we can get our people in front of folks that can make changes at the state level that align with Cato's mission."

Since 2007, SPN has also been involved with Cato's annual State Health Policy Summit. The Summit brings together healthcare experts, mostly from our 50-state Network, who focus on reforms that can happen in the states to improve healthcare access, affordability, and outcomes.

In the early days, the Summit addressed the threat of Romneycare, then Obamacare, and eventually the *King v. Burwell* legal challenge, and what states could do to fight back.

"The summit and SPN organizations were part of the reason 38 states refused to implement the Obamacare exchange and why numerous states stopped or stalled Medicaid expansion," said Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at Cato.

Then, as new healthcare challenges emerged, this group brought forth innovative solutions from the states to increase healthcare supply without imposing federal mandates - in particular, when it came to licensing barriers. For example, Missouri removed licensing barriers to charitable care, allowing doctors to practice across state lines and care for patients who otherwise cannot afford to see a doctor.

The collaboration between state think tanks, who know the local landscape better than anyone, and national partners like Cato, who provide a diverse array of policy expertise, is vital to ensuring free-market policies gain traction throughout the country.

Expand Freedom in the States, Now and for Future Generations



Building and sustaining an enduring freedom movement in every state is an ongoing endeavor, but SPN exists so that there will be champions in your state and others for decades to come, expanding on past victories and guarding against efforts to erode the liberties we secure. If this fight matters to you, please consider including SPN in your will or long-term financial plans. 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.

There has never been a better time to join. If SPN is included in your legacy plans, please tell us! For a limited time, SPN will earn \$1,000 in matching funds thanks to a generous grant from the Roe Foundation, the family of our founder, Thomas Roe.



Become a Member of SPN's Thomas Roe Legacy Society

- Include SPN in your will or living trust
- Make us a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), or other retirement account
- Provide for SPN through a charitable trust

And more



To join the Thomas Roe Legacy Society and take advantage of this limited-time matching opportunity, or to learn more, please contact Nitsa Ioannides at (619) 244-4580 or legacy@spn.org

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

As a member of the Thomas Roe Legacy Society, you are entitled to special benefits, including recognition on a plaque at SPN headquarters, exclusive invitations to events, and one-on-one meetings with SPN leadership, and more.



1500 Wilson Blvd, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: 703-243-1655 • Fax: 703-740-0314 • info@spn.org

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