



State Solutions. National Impact.

WINTER 2020



## State Solutions. National Impact.

State Policy Network celebrates the biggest policy wins of the year and gears up for a busy year ahead.



*Tracie*

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#### OUR VISION

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

#### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

#### OUR STRATEGY

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

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Dear Friends,

As we welcome the end of such a tumultuous year, I want to thank you for your unwavering support of State Policy Network and the values of liberty we share. It may not seem like a good year for free markets and limited government on the surface. But if you look back at some of the silver linings of the past year, there is much room for optimism.

The election was a lot closer than most people predicted. The massive "blue wave" of extreme politics did not come to fruition. As a result, we face a divided government in Washington and little political change in the states as we enter 2021. Our polling data also tells us that Americans are more receptive than ever to our ideas: For example, 55 percent believe that the free market is the best way to grow our economy and create good jobs for Americans.

The states will be fertile soil for opportunity in 2021. Because of you, SPN has already laid the groundwork for key reforms that will accelerate the recovery, get people back to work, fix our broken education system, improve healthcare outcomes, and hold government accountable.

A few examples: This year, your support made it possible for state-level healthcare reforms to sweep the nation—providing greater access to healthcare in more than 40 states when the coronavirus hit its peak. This Network also successfully fought back against governors who overstepped their power, like the case in Michigan that the Mackinac Center won in the state Supreme Court challenging their governor. And in ballot measures, the Network won big on taxes—the Illinois Policy Institute helped taxpayers say "no" to a progressive income tax, and the Independence Institute helped pass an income tax cut.

As we approach a new year, it is important to hold on to this truth: Politicians and elections aren't at the center of real, meaningful change. The president isn't going to be the one to fix your local school. It is individuals, coming together to build movements of influence on the ground, that drive change. It's not a perfect system, but more relevant, responsive, and accountable to those directly affected. Conservative writer Yuval Levin echoed this sentiment when he wrote: *"Such challenges can seem impossibly immense when we look at our country from the top down. No president could resolve them, no Congress could address them. But from the bottom up, there are more opportunities to take them on."*

That is the future, and we are building a Network, in the states, positioned to help lead that push, regardless of what happens in Washington.

My best,

Tracie Sharp



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# Outstanding Policy Achievement

State Policy Network recognized the hard work and success of the 50-state freedom movement at our Bob Williams Awards ceremony during SPN's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

2020 has become one of the most challenging years in American history. Despite these challenges, America has seen positive advancements for freedom thanks to your support of this Network.

We honored some of the biggest policy wins of the year at State Policy Network's virtual Annual Meeting, which drew over 1,000 attendees (yes, even virtually!) from all 50 states. SPN's Bob Williams Awards, named after a beloved Network policy expert, acknowledge state organizations that have advanced meaningful policy reforms that not only improve lives in their states, but also serve as models for other states.

This year's Bob Williams Award nominations shows an impressive scope of impact: **More than 32 million people heard the Network's messages; more than 70 policy reforms were advanced; and more than 60 million Americans were positively affected by these reforms.** All of this has been possible because of the people who support this Network, so thank you.

## 2020 Network Award: National Healthcare Impact

Without question, your support has improved healthcare outcomes for all Americans this year. 2020 was plagued by a sudden and urgent healthcare crisis that started to overwhelm hospitals and medical systems. Because of sound policy reforms passed in more than 40 states, Americans had better access to care during their greatest time of need.

This is all thanks to you and your support of this Network's decade-long coalition dedicated to advancing market-based healthcare solutions that prove that Americans do not need socialized healthcare.

SPN's Healthcare Working Group (HCWG), formed in response to the creation of the Affordable Care Act, was ready with five key policy recommendations, which states took up immediately. The group consisted of healthcare experts from across the country who came together to advance reforms that can be applied to multiple states.

As a result, more supply-side healthcare reform happened



Members of the SPN-sponsored Healthcare Working Group meeting outside of the White House.

in 17 days than has happened in the last 10 years. Early in the pandemic, the HCWG helped pass reforms that removed red tape preventing hospitals from getting much-needed medical equipment and hospital beds. They opened doors for Americans to use telemedicine so patients could see doctors from home during the pandemic. And they increased the supply of medical providers through reforms that expanded the number of healthcare responders and allowed them to work across state lines.



THE HEALTHCARE WORKING GROUP HAS QUIETLY CHANGED THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN HEALTHCARE," SAID JAMESON TAYLOR, MEMBER OF THE WORKING GROUP AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR POLICY AT THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY.



LEFT: Members of the Alabama Policy Institute are recognized for the most influential research.

BELOW: : The Center of the American Experiment's "Back2WorkMN" campaign won the organization the Best Issue Campaign Award.

The Network Award was granted to key members of the working group, including The Buckeye Institute, Foundation for Government Accountability, Goldwater Institute, The James Madison Institute, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Mississippi Center for Public Policy, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, and Show-Me Institute.

"The Healthcare Working Group has quietly changed the history of American healthcare," said Jameson Taylor, member of the working group and vice president for policy at the Mississippi Center for Public Policy.

## 2020 Most Influential Research: Alabama Policy Institute

In response to the coronavirus crisis, the Alabama government created a special task force to address the economic downturn and reopening plans. They looked to the expertise of the Alabama Policy Institute for guidance on what a "return to normal" could look like, how the response to the pandemic had affected jobs, and how the pandemic had impacted civil liberties.

In response, API created just-in-time research on two key issues: emergency powers and the impact of unemployment benefits. They found that the shutdown violated citizens' constitutional rights, resulting in legislation to create a better separation of powers. In addition, they found that the Alabama Department of Labor's (ADOL) response to the economic downturn disincentivized people from going back to work. Within two days, the ADOL issued guidance on their website warning that failing to return to work may qualify as fraud.

"I know right off the bat that people were grateful because they knew someone had their back—that they were saying "we have to go back to work, we have to keep businesses active, and we're ready," said Phil Williams, director of policy strategy at Alabama Policy Institute.



## 2020 Best Issue Campaign: Center of the American Experiment

After the Minnesota Governor issued one of the toughest lockdown orders in the country, the Center of the American Experiment (CAE) launched a campaign to protect the livelihoods of millions of Minnesotans. Their campaign focused on getting Americans back to work and highlighted powerful stories of the damage done by these strict response measures.



The Yankee Institute's economic reforms won the organization the Biggest Home State Win Award.

One such story was from the owner of a glass repair shop whose business was shut down. Her business didn't qualify for the Paycheck Protection Program because it was too small, and when the program did open up to small businesses, it ran out of money before she could get any relief.

Another story came from the owner of a salon, who hadn't worked in months, although clients were texting her and wanting her services.

"I feel that I am essential. Being able to have complete control over the cleanliness of my salon is huge. I don't want a government handout, I just want to go back to work," she said.

CAE's campaign resulted in over 50,000 Minnesotans reaching out to their representatives, demanding that they ease the shutdown. Legislators told CAE they were being inundated by anti-shutdown emails from constituents in response to CAE's "Back 2 Work Minnesota" campaign. In the end, the government had no choice but to ease their measures, allowing businesses to reopen, churches to reconvene, and people to get the financial peace of mind they needed.

## 2020 Biggest Home State Win: Yankee Institute

Even in a blue state, this Network was able to get recommendations adopted to ease the economic burden created by the coronavirus crisis and shutdowns. Connecticut's Yankee Institute released an economic policy package that the governor quickly adopted early in the crisis. First, they eased licensing restrictions to get people back to work. Then, they advanced tax reform to diminish the financial burden on businesses forced to temporarily lay off workers. And finally, they pushed for a reopening task force and advocated for it to include small businesses in the discussion.

As part of their campaign, Yankee also created the "Beam of Light" initiative to highlight stories of hope and support. One story came from a small pizzeria in Ridgefield, Connecticut, that offered free pizza to anyone who came in the door hungry

during the pandemic. They made a guarantee that anyone who couldn't afford a meal could come and get one at their shop.

"Yankee Institute was very eager to make it clear that it wasn't just the government that was helping people during this crisis—that people were helping people and businesses were helping people," said Carol Platt Liebau, president of the Yankee Institute.

## 2020 Biggest Win for Freedom: Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation's sustained efforts to help Pennsylvanians reenter the workforce through criminal justice reform were awarded SPN's "Biggest Win for Freedom" prize. These reforms, passed with bipartisan support, reduced Pennsylvania's correctional supervision rate (the second highest in the nation), its more than \$2.5 billion Department



of Corrections budget, and its high parolee recidivism rate. These reforms are expected to save taxpayers \$48 million and can potentially help hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians reenter and contribute to society.

Commonwealth Foundation's recommendations included reducing the prison population through automatic parole for nonviolent, short-term offenders; increasing the use of alternatives to incarceration; creating a consistent and effective probation system; providing better access to treatment; and improving sentencing practices. They also championed licensing reforms that allow citizens to reenter the workforce and make an honest living in their communities.

"What the Bob Williams Award recognized in Pennsylvania was that over the last year, we got a whole package of bills passed to change stupid laws in Pennsylvania that don't make us safer. They just keep our fellow Americans, our fellow Pennsylvanians, from living the American Dream and they cost us a lot of money and make us less safe," said Charles Mitchell, president of the Commonwealth Foundation. "We are safer when we make commonsense criminal justice reforms like what we've gotten done in Pennsylvania last year and also in the last 10 years."

# The Network Effect: Why Networks Matter in Driving Change

By Michael J. Reitz

## Why do some social movements succeed while others fail?

This simple question motivated author and social change expert Leslie Crutchfield to examine social changes in the United States over the last 40 years: gun rights, anti-smoking efforts, drunk driving laws, and same-sex marriage. She identified six patterns that distinguish successful movements, where the changes that occurred were intentional, not accidental. A key driver, she discovered, is the power of networks:



Michael Reitz presenting with a panel of Network executives at SPN's 2019 Annual Meeting.

"These changes occurred because of the relentless advocacy of vast networks of individuals and organizations, campaigning

in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and often against entrenched, powerful opponents." (*How Change Happens*, pg. 5).

In his prescient 2013 book, Martin Gurri, a former CIA analyst and specialist in the relationship of politics and global media, says networks are simply "friends of friends." (*The Revolt of the Public*, pg. 301). Networks can exist in the connectivity between leaders and organizations that have shared missions and goals, as well as among the grassroots communities that bolster a cause. Networks are distinguished by the many-to-many, not a top-down hierarchy. Often, networks are self-organized, and the strongest ones emerge from the voluntary opting in of their participants.

Networks are powerful because of the belonging and trust they foster. They are so influential that marketing expert Seth Godin calls connection the "asset of the future." When people join networks, there is a sense of comradeship in a fight and a trust conferred through a common purpose and the relationships being built around it. If I receive a call from someone at the Commonwealth Foundation in Pennsylvania or the Texas Public Policy Foundation, I am happy to connect—even if we have never met. This connection and comradeship translate to faster communication and transaction speed, which, over time, can be channeled into real momentum for social change. This is the "network effect," and thanks to today's digital connectivity, it can scale even more rapidly.

Our own movement features several examples of networks. The late Thomas Roe envisioned such transformative power when he established State Policy Network. The Mackinac Center ran a biannual Leadership Conference for 13 years, training



WHEN PEOPLE JOIN NETWORKS, THERE IS A SENSE OF COMRADERY IN A FIGHT AND A TRUST CONFERRED THROUGH A COMMON PURPOSE AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BEING BUILT AROUND IT.

600 public policy leaders from 47 states and 47 countries. The Federalist Society assembled a network of conservative and libertarian lawyers, whose influence is now seen in judicial appointments. Illinois Policy Institute cultivated a community of thousands of activists in its Lincoln Lobby Facebook group. The Goldwater Institute inspired multiple state-based public interest litigation centers.

“  
NONE OF OUR WORK  
IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT  
ANOTHER SPECIFIC,  
SPECIAL NETWORK:  
PHILANTHROPISTS AND  
THOUGHT LEADERS WHO  
SUPPORT THE FREEDOM  
MOVEMENT.

The network effect is responsible for some of the most substantive advancements that have come from organizations in the State Policy Network. For example, if it weren't for a multiyear effort to support workers via right-to-work victories in multiple states, we would never have set the stage for the historic *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision (litigated by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and Liberty Justice Center) that freed millions of workers from forced unionism. Today, reforms are spreading across multiple states to lift red tape that prevents people from getting and keeping jobs. Organizations like the Goldwater Institute in Arizona, Platte Institute in Nebraska, Beacon Center in Tennessee, The Buckeye Institute in Ohio, The James Madison Institute in Florida, and Mississippi Center for Public Policy have created momentum for multistate occupational licensing reform. And

just this year, we saw a coalition of healthcare policy experts come together to implement much-needed market-based healthcare reforms in more than 24 states at the peak of the coronavirus crisis.

None of our work is possible without another specific, special network: philanthropists and thought leaders who support the freedom movement. Philanthropists and activists dedicated to a cause have significant impact, including contributions to some of the advancements I mention above. Through your network and the power of your philanthropy, you are creating a movement right now that is bringing about greater freedom, opportunity, and security to Americans.

If networks *are* the asset of the future, how can we seize the opportunities ahead? Four suggestions:

- Given the digital revolution and the speed of communication, we should study the features of networks and understand their accelerants.
- Organizational leaders should hire people with an abundance mindset—people who are generous, who engage communities, who contribute to the success of others around them.
- To increase our impact, we must be open to expanding our Network and partnering with people affected by our policy reforms.
- We must listen to our networks. Gurri writes about the surprise and disbelief of the ruling class when the public revolts—the elites are always astonished because they fail to listen. Companies know this, which is why the most successful listen to their individual customers and the meta-trends of feedback. We should cultivate the same humility.

Some causes succeed. Others fail. By understanding the reasons *why*, we can build a strong movement for liberty and human flourishing.

*Michael J. Reitz is the executive vice president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Michigan.*



STATE THINK TANK AFFILIATE UPDATES

ALABAMA

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

The Alabama Governor's Special Task Force on Reopening the Economy asked the **Alabama Policy Institute** to produce a report on how to return to normal after the pandemic. API's report focused on two main topics. First, API considered the impact of the shutdown on civil liberties and identified five areas in which constitutional rights may have been violated had the emergency orders remained in place. Second, API addressed the unintended consequences of increased unemployment benefits and recommended that the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) do more to limit fraud and abuse as well as ensure that the new benefits do not cause individuals to refrain from returning to work. The governor's Task Force and ADOL immediately used API's research. The report quickly reached leadership at the ADOL and within two days, ADOL updated their website and issued a warning that leaving work or failing to return to work in order to collect increased unemployment benefits may qualify as fraud and be subject to prosecution.



ALASKA

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

**Alaska Policy Forum** added two full-time staff members to its team in 2020, doubling the size of the organization. In 2017, APF was a one-woman shop. The organization grew to two staff members in 2018, and it began 2020 with its dedicated CEO and vice president of operations and communications. In April, APF brought on a policy manager, who rapidly increased the organization's ability to analyze policy options and respond to the pandemic quickly. In November, APF hired its first vice president of external relations. This role has allowed APF to craft and implement a comprehensive plan to engage directly with policymakers and stakeholders on viable solutions to Alaska's most dire problems. In 2021, APF looks forward to growing its team and its capacity to address Alaska's challenges with solutions that increase prosperity across the state.



ARIZONA

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

In 2020, the **Goldwater Institute** led a nationwide effort to break down barriers to work and allow for the universal recognition of out-of-state occupational licenses. Following the passage of landmark legislation in Arizona in 2019, the Goldwater Institute moved quickly to advance this reform in states from coast-to-coast. In the 2020 legislative session, more than 20 states introduced a version of the Goldwater model. Following Arizona's lead, 10 states have now enacted universal recognition, making it easier for skilled workers across the country to relocate without having to repeat training or duplicate testing. At a time when so many Americans are unemployed, states should act swiftly to break down unnecessary barriers to work. In 2021, Goldwater hopes to take this effort to even more states.





## ARKANSAS

**ARKANSAS POLICY FOUNDATION** • [arkansaspolicyfoundation.org](http://arkansaspolicyfoundation.org)

Teachers union opposition to school choice, coupled with government public health restrictions, are increasing demand for alternatives to traditional K-12 public schools. For the first time, the Arkansas school choice market is approaching 100,000 students, including students in charter, home, and private schools. The **Arkansas Policy Foundation** has long advocated for the expansion of school choice programs such as Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, and individual tax credits.

## CALIFORNIA

**CALIFORNIA POLICY CENTER** • [californiapolicycenter.org](http://californiapolicycenter.org)

**California Policy Center** is rising to meet the unique demands of the coronavirus by strategically adapting its core areas of focus. CPC has been hosting California Local Elected Official (CLEO) meetings online that have drawn four times the normal attendance. CLEO is a membership-based organization that trains, supports, and advises local elected officials throughout the state—in districts, city councils, and county boards. Additionally, the pandemic underscored the importance of CPC's Parent Union, a group of parents who unite with community members to ensure all students receive an outstanding public education regardless of their ZIP code. The Parent Union is conducting meetings over Facebook Live and sharing information on the ever-changing education landscape. Finally, California's coming fiscal storm is an opportunity to reform the corrupt public employee pension systems. CPC is not going to let that opportunity pass by and is working to restore the Golden State to long-term fiscal health.

**FREEDOM FOUNDATION (CALIFORNIA)** • [freedomfoundation.com](http://freedomfoundation.com)

A **Freedom Foundation (California)** study examined more than 450 public records requests and 100 Internal Revenue Service and Department of Labor forms. The study found California's public labor unions have lost nearly 11 percent of their total membership, equaling \$100 million in lost annual revenue, since the *Janus v. AFSCME* decision. Thanks to the Foundation's efforts, California's Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1000, a major political donor in the state, has lost nearly 43 percent of its members since the 2018 *Janus* ruling. In September, the Foundation litigation team filed suit against Governor Gavin Newsom to open California's schools to optional full-time in-person instruction. That lawsuit joined other coronavirus-related suits the Freedom Foundation filed against the governors in Oregon and Washington. Additionally, Freedom Foundation made a splash with billboards that noted "King Newsom: Families are essential—let us work!"

**PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE** • [pacificresearch.org](http://pacificresearch.org)

Throughout the chaos of 2020, **Pacific Research Institute** President and CEO Sally C. Pipes has been a prominent national voice making the definitive case that a single-payer healthcare system would worsen future healthcare crises like the current pandemic. In *False Premise, False Promise: The Disastrous Reality of Medicare for All*, Pipes documents that a single-payer healthcare system would lead to rationed care, long wait times, new and higher taxes, doctor shortages, lack of access to the latest treatments, and stifled medical innovation. The book was the number one best-selling health law book on Amazon.com for several weeks. She has spoken to many audiences nationwide, detailing heart-wrenching stories of patients suffering under single-payer and offering a workable vision for delivering the affordable, accessible, quality care Americans are seeking. PRI's free-market healthcare message is changing hearts and minds. In August, Pipes won a virtual Soho Forum debate against University of Massachusetts Amherst professor Gerald Friedman, one of the nation's most prominent proponents of single-payer healthcare.

## COLORADO

**INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE** • [i2i.org](http://i2i.org)

After earning more than 197,000 signatures, **Independence Institute's** initiative to lower Colorado's flat income tax met the criteria to appear on the November ballot. Proposition 116 would decrease the state income tax rate from 4.63 percent to 4.55 percent. A competing initiative, a \$2 billion progressive tax increase, failed to make it past the signature-gathering phase. Independence Institute has long held that Colorado's prosperity rests upon two pillars: the state's Taxpayers' Bill of Rights (TABOR) and the state's flat income tax. In 2020, residents have a chance to strengthen both. In addition to Proposition 116, its sister measure, Proposition 117, also appeared on the 2020 ballot. Proposition 117 requires voter approval for new state enterprises if the enterprise's projected or actual revenue from fees and surcharges exceeds \$100 million within its first five years.

## CONNECTICUT

**YANKEE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY** • [yankeeinstitute.org](http://yankeeinstitute.org)

The **Yankee Institute for Public Policy** released a database that features every collective bargaining agreement at the state, local, and regional level. The database is helping Connecticut towns negotiate better contracts by making it easier for them to compare similar contracts in other towns. Additionally, Yankee challenged a 5.5 percent contractual pay raise for state employee workers that went into effect on July 1, 2020. Through a powerful public awareness campaign, Yankee facilitated over 4,000 constituent messages to state legislators and the governor, drove record-breaking web traffic to their webpage, and had one of the best-performing ad conversions the *Hartford Courant* had ever seen. Further, Yankee hired Frank Ricci as the new senior strategist. Ricci is a retired firefighter and former union president. He brings the inside knowledge of contract negotiations and arbitration that will help Yankee in their efforts to make negotiations fair for all taxpayers.





## DELAWARE

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

In 2017, Maryland approved an offshore wind project that included constructing as many as 200 wind turbines along the coast between Ocean City, Maryland, and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. Delaware beach property owners were concerned that the unsightly wind turbines and an electric power substation in Fenwick Island State Park would hurt tourism, rental income, and property values. As the project began in 2020, the **Caesar Rodney Institute** launched the “Save Our Beach View” campaign to give homeowners a say in the matter. Caesar Rodney Institute’s energy expert, Dave Stevenson, researched the impact this project would have on Delaware beaches. CRI promoted this research and their campaign through letters, emails, and media outreach. As a result of CRI’s campaign, the wind turbine developer and the State Parks Division withdrew the plan to use Fenwick Island State Park as an electric power substation, and 84 percent of people now strongly oppose the project.

## FLORIDA

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

As the pandemic began to spread in March, the **Foundation for Government Accountability** (FGA) worked nonstop to develop a coronavirus rapid response policy menu, providing more than three dozen solutions for state leaders. These reforms included allowing retired medical providers to reactivate their license immediately to deliver care, conducting unemployment system cross-checks to prevent fraud, allowing more flexibility for home-based businesses, and extending deadlines for vehicle inspections and driver’s license renewals. Through FGA’s national network of state-based policymakers and FGA’s on-the-ground liaisons, the organization conducted several briefings and presentations to governors’ staff in dozens of states. By the end of May, 22 governors implemented FGA’s solutions through multiple executive orders, resulting in 71 policy reform victories. More importantly, these reforms helped workers in the industries hit hardest by the pandemic to switch jobs without losing medical coverage. FGA’s reforms also bolstered the healthcare system and helped families cope with lost sources of income, providing real and immediate relief for millions in the earliest stages of the pandemic.

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

Just as the pandemic hit, **The James Madison Institute** helped Florida enact permanent healthcare measures such as scope-of-practice expansion, ambulatory surgical center expansion, certificate-of-need repeal, and pharmacy “Test and Treat,” which allows pharmacists to test for common illnesses like strep throat and the flu. These reforms will improve health outcomes and reduce the cost of care for Floridians. The reforms also ensured the state’s healthcare system could tackle the many challenges of the pandemic. After Florida passed these reforms, JMI’s vice president of policy, Sal Nuzzo, authored an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, encouraging other states to also lend greater flexibility to healthcare providers and allow physicians to focus on caring for the patients in greatest need.



## GEORGIA

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

The **Georgia Center for Opportunity** focused on the impact the pandemic was having on mental health, community health, and upward mobility. After meeting with community leaders, it was clear people needed jobs most of all. GCO was already set up to address this issue with its Hiring Well Doing Good program, a platform that helps communities leverage nonprofit services and businesses to get people into long-term gainful employment. GCO modified this tool to help individuals find jobs before addressing other known issues. This, along with partnerships and marketing campaigns, has led to nearly 100 people signing up for the program in under a month. GCO is already seeing change and is capturing the stories that will be the next wave of communication on how to effectively move people out of government dependence.

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

Due to the pandemic, the **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** moved its annual Legislative Policy Forum to a series of eight virtual events in July and August. Fortunately, the virtual aspect of the Forum attracted more national experts and speakers, including US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. In October, the Foundation released a new report: “Guide to the Issues 2020.” With a nod to Georgia’s new normal as a result of the pandemic, the 13 chapters offer principles, facts, and Georgia-focused recommendations. The report tackles K-12 education, higher education, pension reform, healthcare, long-term care, Medicaid, and tort reform. The report also provides a state fiscal overview and policy ideas on tax reform, welfare reform, occupational licensing reform, and criminal justice reform. Finally, Keara Vickers joined the Foundation in September as communications director, just in time to maximize outreach for “Guide to The Issues 2020.” Vickers has worked at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Reason Magazine, and Carnegie Mellon University.

## HAWAII

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

The **Grassroot Institute of Hawaii** released a groundbreaking study on how much the protectionist federal maritime law known as the Jones Act costs Hawaii residents. Conducted by John Dunham & Associates of New York, the report shows the Jones Act costs Hawaii about \$1.2 billion a year, including \$1,800 per family. It also costs 9,100 jobs. The study was the first report to provide such numbers. US Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) and US Rep. Ed Case (D-HI) made presentations during the news conference, announcing the findings and explaining why other members should support reforming the Jones Act. Grassroot streamed the event, and viewers tuned in nationwide.





## IDAHO

**IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION • idahofreedom.org**

Long before politicians' response to the pandemic devastated the nation's economy, Idahoans faced another barrier to maintaining a roof over their heads: ballooning property taxes. As federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act dollars poured into the state, the **Idaho Freedom Foundation** worked with Governor Brad Little to use the funds for tax relief and mitigate compounded local spending that would cause higher taxes in subsequent years. More than half of Idaho's cities and counties signaled their intent to use the program and return money and economic power to individual Idahoans. In 2020, IFF's policy will save 300,000+ Idaho households up to \$200 million. As the year went on, some local government officials became nervous about staying in the tax relief program. They claimed IFF's program went against US Treasury guidance and were worried they would have to repay the money. IFF's analysis of US Treasury guidelines demonstrated the CARES Act explicitly allowed funds for tax relief. IFF's direct communication and relationship with local officials convinced multiple cities and counties to remain in the program and provide property tax relief to residents.



## ILLINOIS

**ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE • illinoispolicy.org**

Illinois lawmakers have long used tax hikes, fund transfers, and loans to mask the state's fiscal mismanagement. The **Illinois Policy Institute** advanced legislation that will force the statehouse to confront the root of Illinois' crisis: an unsound pension system. On September 24, US Rep. Darin LaHood filed a bill modeled after IPI's Taxpayer Protection Program, advancing the Illinois Policy Institute's first federal legislation. The legislation places conditions on states receiving federal funds to use aid money for its intended purpose of supporting critical government services and bolstering strong economic recovery. States with a history of fiscal mismanagement, such as Illinois, would be required to implement reforms to protect their residents and ensure federal funds support essential government services during the pandemic. To IPI's knowledge, this is the first piece of federal legislation in US history to put forth a comprehensive solution to the state and local public sector pension crisis.



## IOWA

**TAX EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF IOWA • tefiowa.org**

The **Tax Education Foundation of Iowa** published a 2020 Candidate Education Guide as a resource for both state legislative candidates and concerned citizens. The Candidate Education Guide covers key policy issues confronting Iowa: school choice, tax reform, and reform to state tax credits. The policy guide contains valuable public opinion information on how Iowans view these key issues, and it has equipped TEF Iowa with a tool to visit and educate current legislators, as well as first-time candidates running for the Iowa Legislature.

## KANSAS

**KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE • kansaspolicy.org**

Throughout the coronavirus crisis, **Kansas Policy Institute's** legal center, Kansas Justice Institute, defended constitutional rights in Kansas. KJI stood up for Kansans' First Amendment rights when a county order prohibited residents from attending an Easter parade. After officials in Linn County, Kansas, issued an order requiring businesses to keep a record of who visits their establishment and when, KJI filed a lawsuit on behalf of two residents. County officials quickly removed the requirement to record and disclose customer information. Thanks to KJI, residents were no longer subject to warrantless searches and government overreach. In addition, Kansas Policy Institute discovered the Kansas Department of Health and Environment doctored a coronavirus case chart to justify mask mandates. Without KPI, this manipulation would have gone unchecked. KPI's work on the doctored data caught the eye of *The Wall Street Journal*, which cited KPI in a feature article.



## KENTUCKY

**BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS • bipps.org**

After Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) proposed a property tax increase in the middle of the coronavirus, the **Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions** stepped in to prevent implementation of this tax. Bluegrass built and promoted a petition to recall the tax. More than 38,000 taxpayers signed the petition, placing the recall on the November ballot. Bluegrass CEO and President Jim Waters noted demanding such a tax hike during a pandemic, especially amidst all the wasteful spending occurring, is insensitive and immoral. The JCPS school board spends over \$17,000 per student annually—thousands of dollars higher than the cost in cities of similar size like Nashville, which spends only \$11,045 per student. The \$1.8 billion JCPS budget is more than twice the size of the entire Louisville Metro Council's spending plan, and it is more than enough to adequately educate the district's 98,000 students.



**PEGASUS INSTITUTE • pegasuskentucky.org**

When Joshua Crawford took over as executive director of **Pegasus Institute** in October of last year, he did so with a concrete plan of what his year would look like. It wasn't too long into his tenure that he learned just how quickly the best laid plans of mice and men can go awry. Amidst a global pandemic, significant government-imposed restrictions, and local civil unrest, Pegasus rose to the challenge. Despite a transition to working from home, Pegasus staff and fellows produced more blogs and more podcasts than they ever had in a six-month period, all while maintaining a strong long-form research agenda and earned media presence. Notably, 50 percent of Pegasus' most viewed blogs came from this period, as did their most-listened-to podcast episode on emergency declarations. Pegasus also managed to defeat an attempt to defund the Louisville Metro Police Department.





## LOUISIANA

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

Despite the difficulties of 2020, Louisiana lawmakers adopted a number of recommendations from the **Pelican Institute for Public Policy's** Get Louisiana Working campaign. Policy solutions aimed at removing needless barriers to jobs and opportunity for Louisianans were supported by award-winning videos, a series of Facebook live events called "PeliCasts," and an aggressive digital and earned media effort in advance of the legislative session. More than 6,000 Louisianans joined the Pelican Institute's ranks in response to this campaign. Among a half-dozen legislative victories were achieved—from rural broadband expansion to lawsuit abuse reforms to occupational licensure reform—based on Pelican-modeled policy. Perhaps the most significant was a legislative package to update Louisiana's outdated and toothless expenditure limitation. This solution will add much-needed stability and predictability to the state's out-of-control budget process, encouraging job growth that leads to a better life for Louisiana families.

## MAINE

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

**Maine Policy Institute** mobilized vocal opposition to statewide stay-at-home orders, non-essential business designations, and other emergency executive actions that have substantially eroded Mainers' individual liberty and economic freedom. Maine Policy understands the coronavirus is a real concern for Maine's aging population. However, the organization called on Governor Mills and her administration to trust Maine people to take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their loved ones while respecting individual rights. Unfortunately, the governor responded with punitive, heavy-handed rules that restrict Mainers' most basic and fundamental liberties. Maine Policy ran a campaign encouraging Governor Mills to reopen Maine's economy and another campaign urging lawmakers to reconvene the Legislature, giving Maine residents a voice in the state's recovery process. MPI ran digital ads on social media for both campaigns and netted almost 10,000 petition signatures while spending less than \$580 combined on both campaigns.

## MARYLAND

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

The **Maryland Public Policy Institute** created the conditions for Governor Larry Hogan to veto a \$32 billion education funding proposal known as the Kirwan plan. The Institute commissioned a comprehensive statewide public opinion survey showing that the majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents in Maryland wanted the state to redirect existing funds to pay for education instead of increasing the state budget. The Institute also released an analysis that found Maryland is already one of the biggest spending states in the nation when it comes to public education. *The Washington Post* featured the Institute's work in an editorial opposing the Kirwan plan. The Institute also published a series of op-eds from its policy analysts in *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and other outlets, highlighting data that shows previous spending increases failed to improve student performance in Maryland. Governor Hogan vetoed the Kirwan plan in May.



The Maryland Public Policy Institute

## MASSACHUSETTS

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

At a national level, **Pioneer Institute** submitted amicus briefs in support of the landmark US Supreme Court case, *Espinoza v. Montana Dept. of Revenue*. The case dealt a major blow to the Blaine Amendments in nearly 40 states that have blocked access to private schools for hundreds of thousands of families. To highlight this case, Pioneer held two events, a webinar, several podcast episodes, and public statements featuring the lead plaintiff and Institute for Justice attorneys. Pioneer has focused on this issue for more than a decade, most recently through a communications campaign including a documentary film viewed by over 1.5 million people, events, research, op-eds, and other media appearances. The campaign illustrated the benefits of private and religious education, the financial struggles many families face to cover tuition, and the bigoted history of Blaine amendments. Within Massachusetts, Governor Baker issued two executive orders removing barriers to telehealth during the height of the pandemic, and pending legislation promises to make telehealth permanent—a change that Pioneer has pursued through research and media appearances for years.



**PIONEER INSTITUTE**  
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

## MICHIGAN

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

In a landmark decision, the Michigan Supreme Court struck down Governor Gretchen Whitmer's unprecedented use of emergency powers. The court unanimously decided that the governor's attempt to continue a state of emergency after April 30, 2020, without legislative approval was illegal. In a 4-3 decision, the court ruled that the Emergency Powers of Governor Act of 1945, which the governor argued allowed her to maintain unilateral control for an indefinite period, is unconstitutional. The **Mackinac Center Legal Foundation** filed the case on behalf of three medical practices that were unable to provide necessary care and a patient who was unable to receive care under the governor's previous orders. By circumventing the Legislature, the governor took away the voices of 10 million Michiganders. Thankfully, this decision returned representation to the people by resuming the normal constitutional order of governing. Every outlet in the state and hundreds of national outlets covered the case. Notably, the Monday following the decision, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial called the Mackinac Center the "legal firepower" behind the case.



## MINNESOTA

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

**Center of the American Experiment** produced three virtual town hall events on the pandemic. The first event featured American Experiment economist John Phelan and Chris Phelan, chairman of the Department of Economics at the University of Minnesota. They discussed the economic consequences of Minnesota's shutdown orders, and how the state can best revive its economy. The second event featured the South Dakota Governor, who discussed her state's response to the pandemic. The third event featured Avik Roy of the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity and Karin Housley, a Minnesota state Senator who chairs the Senate's Committee on Family Care and Aging. Almost 9,000 people attended the three town halls. The events played a key role in shaping American Experiment's policy recommendations and messaging on the coronavirus.





**FREEDOM FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA** • [freedomfoundation.publishpath.com](https://freedomfoundation.publishpath.com)

Every election year the **Freedom Foundation of Minnesota** hosts issue forums for current and prospective legislators. Due to pandemic restrictions limiting the size of in-person gatherings, the Foundation had to rethink how best to serve candidates eager to prepare for the campaign trail. Rather than hosting their usual day-long issue conference in 2020, the Freedom Foundation has been hosting issue seminars virtually for these potential policymakers. Through these well-attended briefings, legislators and candidates hear from experts from across the United States and learn more about crucial issues, such as preserving the Electoral College. Most importantly, the seminars inform legislative candidates about issues of importance to Minnesotans all across the state.

## MISSISSIPPI

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

**Empower Mississippi Foundation** introduced a historic new tool for parents who are left scrambling to find education options in the midst of the pandemic. The Mississippi School Finder is a comprehensive database of all the schools available to parents in the Magnolia State. While much remains uncertain, parents can now find the best option for their child from the safety and comfort of their own home. Additionally, Empower released a survey with data directly from Mississippi employers detailing how the pandemic has impacted them. “Unleash Mississippi Employer Survey: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Mississippi Employers” is a report that includes first-hand information from Mississippi business owners and employees about the real challenges they are facing. The report offers policy solutions that make it easier for businesses to operate and recommends repealing regulations that make it more difficult for Mississippians to work.

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

At the onset of the pandemic, **Mississippi Center for Public Policy** shifted focus to needed policy reforms, storytelling initiatives, and litigation targeting unconstitutional executive orders. In the spring, MCPP worked on executive orders that expanded access to telemedicine and allowed medical professionals licensed in other states to work in Mississippi. MCPP then released a detailed recovery agenda, outlining needed healthcare, regulatory, and education reforms that became all the more relevant during the pandemic. MCPP also launched a new storytelling effort to share the stories of businesses who were harmed by government shutdowns. Mississippi Justice Institute, MCPP’s constitutional litigation center, then focused on overreaching and unconstitutional executive orders. Greenville, Mississippi, tried to ban drive-in church services. Jackson, Mississippi, tried to restrict the right to openly carry a firearm—because of the pandemic. Both mayors let their orders expire immediately after the litigation.



## MISSOURI

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

On July 6, 2020, the Missouri Governor signed House Bill 2046 into law, significantly expanding universal licensing reciprocity in Missouri. Through this reform, Missouri will now recognize most licenses from other states, making it possible for professionals to move to Missouri and start working immediately rather than jumping through bureaucratic hoops. A doctor who wants to treat Missouri patients during this critical time can come to the state and help right away. Teachers who have relocated can immediately start teaching students, which is crucial in this tumultuous education environment. The **Show-Me Institute** has been fighting for this reform for years, and their work was instrumental in putting this idea front and center for Missouri lawmakers. The impact of this law will reverberate across Missouri, benefiting thousands of licensed professionals and the people who need their services.



## NEBRASKA

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

At the **Platte Institute for Economic Research’s** Virtual Legislative Summit, CEO Jim Vokal presented the organization’s first Legislative Achievement Award to Nebraska state Senator Sue Crawford. With the pandemic threatening closure for many businesses in hospitality and food service, legislation sponsored by Senator Crawford helped more Nebraska small businesses enter the food industry. Previously, Nebraska had a restrictive cottage food law, which is the law allowing the sale of many foods made at home. Cottage foods could only be sold at farmers markets. But thanks to Senator Crawford’s bill expanding the cottage food law, Nebraska food entrepreneurs could sell products from their homes and even start online businesses without any cap on their potential earnings.



## NEVADA

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

As part of its strategy to reach new audiences, grow engagement on key policy issues, and fill an intellectual (and entertainment) void in the state’s political culture, **Nevada Policy Research Institute** launched a groundbreaking podcast: Free to Offend. The show “radically defends free speech...by regularly practicing it.” Hosted by the Institute’s communications director and former national columnist and talk show host, Michael Schaus, Free to Offend is a biting podcast, designed to reach beyond the studies and commentaries of public policy and engage Nevadans in an honest, entertaining conversation about what it means to live in a free society. Free to Offend can be found at NevadaPolicy.org, as well as on Amazon Music and iTunes.





## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**JOSIAH BARTLETT CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY** • [jbartlett.org](http://jbartlett.org)

The **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy**'s research led state legislators to adopt a reverse online auction for the state's pharmacy benefits management contracts. In an on-line reverse auction, pre-qualified suppliers provide competing bids (typically over multiple rounds) to a single buyer. It is the reverse of the more familiar forward auction in which buyers compete to purchase a product or service from a single seller. In the short run, the state will save tens of millions of dollars and hundreds of millions in the long run. During the pandemic, the Center's guidance on reopening the economy safely found its way into numerous reopening plans and executive orders, and it continues to prompt additional regulatory reductions, saving tens of thousands of jobs.

## NEW JERSEY

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

**Garden State Initiative** launched an aggressive social media campaign against a proposal from Assemblyman John McKeon that would place a tax on stock trades that were processed electronically in New Jersey. GSI President Regina Egea asserted the tax has been proposed many times over the years and rejected due to the ability of brokerage firms and exchanges to simply relocate their IT infrastructure to states where there is no tax. Noting that New Jersey led the nation in financial sector job losses from 2018-2019, she added this would likely make a bad situation worse. Governor Phil Murphy and Senate President Steve Sweeney resurrected this idea. GSI's campaign educated the public and legislators on the ramifications of the tax, and while the tax was ultimately dropped from this year's budget, it will likely resurface again and at great cost to New Jersey's business reputation.

## NEW MEXICO

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

Deep Blue and economically unfree New Mexico is a notoriously challenging policy environment. Despite the numerous challenges **Rio Grande Foundation** faced in putting forth public policies palatable to the state's political leadership, the organization had a great success in 2020 on pension reform. The New Mexico Legislature, with the input from the Rio Grande Foundation, the Reason Foundation, and a bipartisan group of supporters, passed reforms to the State's Public Employees Retirement System of New Mexico (PERA), which faced \$6.7 billion in unfunded liabilities. The reforms are a big step toward making New Mexico's pension system solvent.



## NEW YORK

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

The **Empire Center for Public Policy** filed a lawsuit against the Cuomo administration after the Department of Health failed to release records detailing how many nursing home residents perished from the coronavirus. "This case isn't about assigning blame or embarrassing political leaders," Empire Center Senior Fellow for Health Policy Bill Hammond explained. "It's about gaining a full and accurate understanding of what happened, which is crucial to improving our defenses against the next pandemic." Hammond also penned an op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal*, detailing Governor Cuomo's tight political alliance with the powerful hospital trade association that encouraged the governor to issue the directive forcing nursing homes to accept coronavirus patients into their facilities. Empire Center raised an early alarm on the questionable reporting from the Department of Health, which failed to include in the nursing home death tally the patients who were transferred to hospitals in their final days.



## NORTH CAROLINA

**CIVITAS INSTITUTE** • [nccivitas.org](http://nccivitas.org)

**Civitas Institute** launched A Better Carolina, an extensive policy campaign that is built on five policy pillars: election integrity, education reform, a fair tax code, private property rights, and healthcare reforms. The campaign is devoted to helping the public and lawmakers think about the policy realm holistically, understanding that it's a suite of policies that stand to make a meaningful difference in the lives of North Carolinians. The campaign emphasized the progress North Carolina has made over the past decade due to much-needed reforms, while inviting the public to consider future changes that will put the state's citizens on even surer footing. Alongside A Better Carolina is the Civitas Poll, which showcases the organization's robust polling capacity. The poll has proven relevant to legislators, the press, and grassroots leaders, as they have come to rely on it for insights into public sentiment on important state issues.



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

After Governor Roy Cooper imposed a broad and rigid government shutdown order on more than 10 million residents, the **John Locke Foundation** gave a voice to North Carolinians by providing analysis and context illustrating the governor's failure to balance public health with economic health and the constitutional right to earn a living. Researchers have posed questions about missing data, provided deeper perspective on the publicly available data, and called out Governor Cooper's prohibitions for being at odds with science and data. Importantly, the team has also created a game plan to ensure a Carolina Rebound despite the governor's roadblocks to economic well-being. While researchers cover the numbers, JLF's journalism arm, *Carolina Journal*, covers the people, putting a face on the economic carnage and private heartbreak. *CJ* publisher and JLF CEO Amy Cooke's video series pushes the reality of the Cooper Shutdown into every corner of North Carolina and beyond, while JLF's weekly virtual panel discussions give a live voice to the people and policymakers who bear the burden.





## OHIO

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

Through a popular series of policy memos and briefs, entitled “Policy Solutions for the Pandemic,” **The Buckeye Institute** established itself as a national leader offering commonsense policy solutions that would protect taxpayers from unconstitutional taxation; protect businesses, schools, and frontline workers from coronavirus lawsuits; permanently expand access to telehealth; cut needless government regulations that limit the ability of medical professionals to provide care to patients; provide parents the resources they need to ensure the best education for their children; and help struggling business keep their doors open and workers employed. Buckeye’s pandemic policy solutions also detailed how Ohio could balance its budget without raising taxes and how Ohio could better prepare for subsequent waves of the coronavirus or a future pandemic. By adopting many of The Buckeye Institute’s fiscally sound and commonsense policy solutions, Ohio strengthened its healthcare system and helped families and businesses facing unexpected economic hardship during the pandemic.



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

The Freedom Foundation opened its Ohio office in October 2019 and expanded operations even though the pandemic shut down the state’s economy for much of 2020. **Freedom Foundation (Ohio)** assisted the Allen County Jobs and Family Services staff members decertify their union (Communications Workers of America Local 4319). The Foundation also worked with the Ohio Department of Administrative Services to ensure the Ohio American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) honors hundreds of opt-outs sent in the first quarter of 2020. Over the course of the year, the Foundation helped more than 1,000 Ohio government employees resign their union membership and stop paying dues, at an annual cost of nearly \$1 million in lost dues to the union coffers. During one memorable week in August, the Freedom Foundation helped hundreds of Ohio teachers leave their union. The Freedom Foundation had a strong inaugural year in the Buckeye State and is already gearing up for 2021.

## OKLAHOMA

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

On April 1, 2020, the Oklahoma Governor ordered a statewide closure of all “nonessential” businesses. Thousands of Oklahomans lost their jobs and means of providing for their families. To help these families get back to work, the **Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs** launched a Reopen Oklahoma campaign. OCPA created a “You Are Essential” website to help small businesses navigate the shutdown orders and show Oklahomans that any small business can be “essential” to the families that depend on it to make ends meet. Additionally, OCPA circulated a petition that encouraged local and state governments to begin the process of lifting all shelter-in-place orders. Less than one week after launching the petition, OCPA collected more than 10,000 signatures. OCPA hand-delivered the petition to the governor, and that same day he announced Oklahoma would begin reopening on May 1, 2020. Through this campaign, OCPA doubled their audience and added thousands of new members to their Facebook group.



## OREGON

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

**Cascade Policy Institute** carried out a planned expansion in 2020 to improve its research and outreach capacity by adding two full-time staff members. Helen Doran joined Cascade as a program assistant for external relations. She focuses on improving communications with the many groups Cascade interacts with, including donors, potential supporters, journalists, and public officials. Helen produces Cascade’s new podcast, “Coffee with Cascade,” which releases episodes weekly. Vlad Yurlov joined Cascade as a policy analyst. Along with Helen, Vlad was part of Cascade’s excellent summer intern class of 2019, during which they and Micah Perry coauthored a groundbreaking report critiquing the Metro regional government’s Parks and Nature program. The report, “Hidden Lands, Unknown Plans: A Quarter Century of Metro’s Natural Areas Program,” demonstrated how Metro has underperformed on its promises to Oregon taxpayers for decades.



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

This summer, **Freedom Foundation (Oregon)** fought continued state shutdown orders against Governor Kate Brown on behalf of small business owners trying to save their companies and residents who did not want to or could not physically comply with the statewide mask mandates. In July, after obtaining emails by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the Foundation discovered OHA was overcounting Oregon’s coronavirus deaths by counting all deaths of individuals who had previously tested positive for coronavirus as a “coronavirus death.” OHA also tallied deaths of “probable” cases in which the individual who died did not have a positive test. The Oregon report came after the Freedom Foundation (Washington) found the state’s health department was inflating coronavirus deaths by as much as 13 percent, even including gunshot victims in the tally. The ensuing scandal, including similar coronavirus lawsuits in Washington and California, earned the Foundation statewide and national media attention and exposure to new donors across America.



## PENNSYLVANIA

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

Pennsylvania led the nation in criminal justice reform in 2020, demonstrating that safer communities and smarter corrections spending is possible. This victory followed more than a decade of **Commonwealth Foundation** advocacy and brought Republicans and Democrats together for a rare bipartisan victory. These reforms will increase public safety, control spending, and help returning inmates become productive members of society. Commonwealth was also involved in a policy win that literally saved a life. April Hynes, a mother of three from southeastern Pennsylvania, needed to work with a physician across state lines through telemedicine to get an expert medical opinion on the continued treatment of her stage-four cancer. But April’s hospital told her that Governor Tom Wolf banned this practice. So, as the Commonwealth Foundation team fought for expanded telemedicine rights in the Pennsylvania Legislature, the organization also connected April with her state representative and helped her obtain a special exception due to her life-threatening circumstance.





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

**Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania)** opened its Pennsylvania office in February 2020, just before Governor Tom Wolf ordered a statewide coronavirus shutdown. While the government mandated shutdown made in-person contact difficult, the Freedom Foundation grew its Pennsylvania team and used billboards, radio ads, videos, postcards, emails, and social media in its outreach efforts to inform thousands of public employees of their rights to leave their union. Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania) also made a splash with billboards sharing the message that “Families are essential—let us work!” The team also made itself known in the Keystone State through several published editorials and began building relationships with media and key Pennsylvania stakeholders. During the course of the year, Freedom Foundation (Pennsylvania) helped its first thousand public employees resign their union membership and stop paying dues, at an annual cost of more than \$600,000 in lost dues to the union coffers.

### RHODE ISLAND



#### RHODE ISLAND CENTER FOR FREEDOM & PROSPERITY • [rifreedom.org](https://rifreedom.org)

**Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity** launched a counter-campaign to the government-union led effort to raise taxes in the state. The campaign, *#RaiseSailsNotTaxes*, reminds Rhode Island lawmakers that raising taxes during an economic crisis will lead to even more job losses, more business closings, more out-migration, more poverty, and a slower, longer economic recovery.

### SOUTH CAROLINA



#### PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE • [palmettopromise.org](https://palmettopromise.org)

On July 20, 2020, Governor Henry McMaster partnered with **Palmetto Promise Institute** to announce Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE Grants), which are independent school tuition scholarships of up to \$6,500 for 5,000 low- and moderate-income families. The program uses \$32 million in funding from the governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Since the announcement, more than 15,000 families expressed interest in the program. But soon after, the South Carolina Education Association and the Orangeburg County School District sued the governor and PPI, citing South Carolina constitutional concerns about the program. Since then, the school choice conversation in South Carolina has been at the front and center, with op-eds placed throughout the state’s news outlets and one from PPI President and CEO Ellen Weaver in *The Wall Street Journal*. While Palmetto awaited a South Carolina Supreme Court decision, the organization launched a campaign to share stories of SAFE grant-eligible families struggling with virtual learning and income loss due to the pandemic.

### TENNESSEE

#### BEACON CENTER OF TENNESSEE • [beacontn.org](https://beacontn.org)

In response to the pandemic, the **Beacon Center of Tennessee** focused on healthcare and economic solutions that would both protect public health in the short run and ensure Tennesseans had jobs waiting for them. Overall, 15 of the 25 solutions Beacon proposed in its policy briefs have been adopted, and several of these put a stop to bad policy ideas. When the Tennessee Legislature contemplated delaying the Hall Tax repeal in order to balance the budget, Beacon argued that was tantamount to a tax increase, and the plans were dropped during budget negotiations. Thus, the Hall Tax will indeed meet its demise on January 1, 2021, and Tennessee will truly become income tax-free. Governor Lee called state lawmakers back to Nashville for a special legislative session to deal with several matters they failed to pass during the regular session, including coronavirus business liability and telehealth. Beacon worked to ensure lawmakers preserved many of the telehealth changes issued by Governor Lee in his executive orders and instituted coronavirus liability reform to give businesses peace of mind about reopening while punishing bad actors who willfully refuse to protect their workers and customers.



### TEXAS

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

In order to combat the media’s fear-inducing narrative during the coronavirus, the **Texas Public Policy Foundation** created The Snapshot, which provided fact-based information on topics such as hospital bed capacities, active case rates by county, and economic recovery. TPPF also released the Recovery Agenda which included practical steps and real solutions for overcoming this crisis. On the Road to Recovery podcast, TPPF experts discussed education, healthcare, regulations, and the economic impact of the pandemic. Additionally, in a new video series, TPPF visited local businesses and examined how they adjusted their products and practices to meet the needs of their community during this difficult time. As Texas begins to reopen, TPPF is continuing to advocate for policy solutions that will help Texans recover and return to a sense of normalcy. TPPF has also started to look ahead as the 87th Texas Legislative Session begins on January 12, 2021.



### UTAH

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

**Libertas Institute’s** acclaimed Tuttle Twins children’s book series is a platform that helps parents convey the principles of freedom to their kids in a fun way. Each book focuses on a different aspect of the principles of a free society: free markets, competition, individual rights, the non-aggression principle, personal responsibility, protectionism, and a variety of other issues—all boiled down to core concepts that children ages 5-10 can easily grasp. Sales have exploded in popularity, tripling since the beginning of 2020, with more than 4,000 books sold each day to families across the country. Libertas is also creating an animated cartoon series based on the books. Learn more about this exciting new project at [TuttleTwins.tv](https://TuttleTwins.tv).





#### SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE • [sutherlandinstitute.org](https://sutherlandinstitute.org)

**Sutherland Institute** assisted in the promotion and passage of a special needs tax credit scholarship during Utah's general legislative session. Utah students with an individualized education program (IEP) will now have the opportunity to purchase a range of educational options outside of just school tuition, including textbooks, therapies, fees, supplemental materials, and more. During both the general session and special session that created a compromise bill, Sutherland made statements of support, published a Frequently Asked Questions document, and worked with a coalition of supporters. The Institute believes the legislative success of this program will encourage more education choice in Utah.

## VERMONT

#### ETHAN ALLEN INSTITUTE • [ethanallen.org](https://ethanallen.org)

The **Ethan Allen Institute** highlighted a Gallup poll that finds climate change is far down the list of America's most important problems. According to the poll, there are 12 things Americans consider to be bigger problems than climate change. Ethan Allen noted this is something for Vermont legislators to ponder as they consider passing the Global Warming Solutions Act and other proposed climate legislation.

## VIRGINIA

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

With government employee unions making inroads in Virginia and the local collective bargaining agreement process set to begin next May, there is a new urgency to ensure teachers are aware of their rights. The **Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy** initiated a program designed to inform teachers of alternatives to unions. In January, the Institute created a teacher choice video that earned 240,000 views on YouTube and Facebook in four weeks. This threw the Virginia Education Association (VEA) off-track during the first month of General Assembly lobbying. In August, the Institute identified 12,000 freedom-leaning teachers, sending each a package with a letter from a former teacher, a response form, and information on how to switch to one of three independent education associations. A digital advertising campaign followed. As of October 1, 2020, the alternative education organizations reported at least 100 teachers had left their union in the first weeks of the campaign, reducing revenue to the VEA by nearly \$100,000.

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

In 2018, the **Virginia Institute for Public Policy** created a program that takes research produced by the Institute and its coalition partners and manufactures Virginia-specific legislative models focused on making distinctive changes in the healthcare system. This program bridges the gap between good public policy ideas and good legislation, providing the specific set of goals necessary to transform education into action. The Institute is excited to announce the expansion of this program beyond healthcare. The Virginia Institute is now working on legislation focusing on energy reform, regulation, and election integrity. The development and success of each piece of legislation requires the involvement of numerous members and organizations—particularly given that the Institute develops these Virginia-specific models but does not carry them through the legislative process. Through the Institute's monthly conference symposia, the Institute and numerous partners and speakers educate the Commonwealth's advocacy community on the nuances of today's most pressing policy concerns.

## WASHINGTON

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

In May, **Freedom Foundation (Washington)** made national news by reporting the Washington Department of Health was inflating coronavirus death numbers by as much as 13 percent, even including gunshot victims in the total. The report forced the state to admit it padded the Washington death toll by classifying deaths resulting from other causes in the coronavirus death tally. The state subsequently announced it would change its reporting methods. In July, after obtaining emails from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Freedom Foundation (Oregon) reported that the OHA was also overcounting coronavirus deaths by counting all deaths of individuals who had previously tested positive for the coronavirus and by counting deaths of "probable" cases in which the individual who died did not have a positive test. In addition, the Foundation's legal team continued to fight state Governor Inslee's shutdown orders on behalf of small business owners trying to save their companies, as well as on behalf of citizens harmed by the statewide mask mandates. The ongoing lawsuits earned the Freedom Foundation national media attention and exposure to new donors across America.

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

The **Washington Policy Center** examined Washington state's coronavirus testing rates and the governor's widely touted "COVID-19 Risk Assessment dials," which the governor used to make decisions about reopening the state economy. Through its research, WPC found the governor's risk assessment dials were unscientific, sometimes not tied to any data and other times connected to incorrect data. WPC sent this information to media outlets, shared this information on their social media channels, and highlighted it on their homepage. *The Olympian*, a state capitol newspaper widely circulated among lawmakers and their staff, featured WPC's work in a front-page story. WPC's Todd Myers wrote an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, which led to an interview on the "Ingraham Angle" on Fox News. As word spread, reporters started to ask the governor questions about WPC's findings at his regular coronavirus press conferences. Thanks to WPC's efforts, the governor abandoned his risk assessment dials and opted for new metrics.

## WEST VIRGINIA

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

After several legal challenges and years of court proceedings, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has upheld that the right-to-work legislation is constitutional. When passed in 2016, West Virginia became the twenty-sixth state to pass such legislation. The **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy** has been working on the right-to-work issue since the organization's inception in 2015. Cardinal also launched the Forgotten America podcast, which focuses on the many places in America that are flown over, driven past, or just plain forgotten. In each episode, Cardinal diagnoses the unique challenges rural America faces and explores solutions to those challenges through a free-market lens.





## WISCONSIN

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

The **Badger Institute** held virtual events to discuss the pressing issues affecting Wisconsinites. In September, Badger hosted a Democrat Missouri state senator and a Republican Missouri state representative to discuss their role in the bipartisan passage of Missouri's universal licensing recognition bill—the strongest in the country. Attendees included Wisconsin legislators and legislative staffers from both parties, a high-ranking administration official, a policy analyst from the US Department of Labor, and others. Following protests and violence in Kenosha, Badger invited Jon Ponder, founder and CEO of Hope for Prisoners in Las Vegas, and Kevin McMahon, undersheriff of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, to discuss their remarkably successful approach to community-police relations. Top law enforcement officials throughout Wisconsin, the secretary of the Department of Corrections, and elected officials from around the state attended the event.

### MACIVER INSTITUTE • [maciverinstitute.com](https://maciverinstitute.com)

The **MacIver Institute**, the Badger Institute, Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, and Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin collaborated to help Wisconsin leaders respond to the coronavirus. This group, called the Free Market Coalition, provided solutions and policy recommendations to assist the state's workers and businesses, provide more certainty during the crisis, and spur a quick and lasting recovery. In April, the Wisconsin Legislature and Governor Evers passed a bipartisan coronavirus response package that included policy recommendations from the Free Market Coalition. These reforms offered temporary relief from regulatory barriers so healthcare providers could respond to the health challenges from the coronavirus. To allow continued care and innovation in healthcare, the Free Market Coalition is encouraging policymakers to make these reforms permanent.

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

When Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers signed the state budget on July 3, 2019, he carved it up with partial vetoes. This is a common practice in Wisconsin; the partial veto power in the Badger State is, famously, one of the most powerful and expansive in the country. The **Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL)** identified four ways Governor Evers used the partial veto to fundamentally change several policies enacted by the Wisconsin Legislature. Specifically, Governor Evers turned what was a grant program to replace school buses into funding for electric vehicle charging stations, altered local government funds for improving local roads into a virtually unrestricted fund, and expanded the definition of "vapor products" in a way that altered tax and regulatory authority. WILL filed an original action to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in July 2019 challenging the legality of these vetoes. On July 10, 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court held that three of the four partial vetoes WILL challenged were unconstitutional. The decision recognizes limits to the partial veto power that will safeguard liberty and uphold the separation of powers.

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATE UPDATES

### 1851 CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL LAW • [ohioconstitution.org](https://ohioconstitution.org)

The **1851 Center for Constitutional Law** litigates constitutional issues related to property rights, taxpayer and entrepreneur rights, regulation, parental rights, and search and seizure. This summer, 1851 Center for Constitutional Law's litigation resulted in the opening of Ohio daycares and restaurants that were shut down for alleged mask violations. These wins follow the Center's court victories opening gyms, amusement parks, and eliminating criminal penalties for restaurants. Several of these cases continue on appeal.

### AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE UNION FOUNDATION • [conservative.org](https://conservative.org)

The **American Conservative Union Foundation's** Center for Legislative Accountability completed its analysis of more than 8,000 lawmakers from the second session of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and all 50 state legislative sessions. The Center analyzed 105,000 bills and compiled over 146,000 votes to create ratings for every elected lawmaker in the country. Once again, Tennessee ranked as the number one most conservative state legislature. Visit [ratings.conservative.org](https://ratings.conservative.org) to view the scorecards and more analysis from the nation's gold standard in congressional and state legislative ratings. Visit [cpac.org](https://cpac.org) to register for the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland, from February 24-27, 2021.

### AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI • [goacta.org](https://goacta.org)

On August 5, 2020, the Florida Department of Education withdrew a proposed rule that would have weakened a 2017 law requiring Florida students to "demonstrate competency in civic literacy" in order to graduate from a state college or university. In May, the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)** joined a petition seeking determination in administrative court that the proposed regulation was an invalid exercise of the authority delegated to the Florida Department of Education. The petitioners argued that the proposed rule would undercut the Florida Legislature's intention by allowing community college students to demonstrate civic competency by attaining a mere 60 percent on a newly constructed memorization test derived in large part from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Test. The withdrawal of the proposed rule means that colleges will continue to require students to complete a foundational course in US history or government or demonstrate proficiency on an exam designed to assess true, collegiate-level understanding.





#### AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE • [aei.org](http://aei.org)

The **American Enterprise Institute** is helping the country navigate the immense challenges brought on by the pandemic. Across many challenges in healthcare, the economy, education policy, and beyond, the White House, Congress, and statehouses have acted on AEI scholars' ideas. A signature product stemming from AEI's work over the past year is a new volume of essays titled *Governing Priorities: Advice for America's President, for 2021 and Beyond*. Edited by Yuval Levin, essays in this volume include: James Capretta on how to think about deficits, debt, and healthcare costs; Nicholas Eberstadt on how to understand America's core strengths and weaknesses in a confusing moment; Michael Strain on how to prioritize today's core macroeconomic challenges and pursue broad-based, sustainable growth; and Ryan Streeter on how to restructure education, worker training, and welfare to help more Americans thrive.



#### AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL • [alec.org](http://alec.org)

The **American Legislative Exchange Council** (ALEC) gathered virtually with ALEC friends and partners at the ALEC Annual Meeting to develop solutions to the day's most pressing issues. ALEC members passed liability protections for businesses and policing principles to ensure no one is treated differently based on the color of their skin or ethnic background. In addition, members passed the Truth in Taxation Act, which requires public notice of property tax increases. The ALEC Commerce, Insurance, and Economic Development Task Force is an initiative that promotes policies that enhance competitiveness, promote employment, encourage innovation, and limit government regulations imposed on business. The Task Force began an Independent Contractor and Joint Employer Working Group to develop solutions across states and organizations for these issues. Finally, ALEC announced the forthcoming release of a new publication, the "Laffer-ALEC Report on Economic Freedom: Grading America's 50 Governors."



#### AMERICA'S FUTURE FOUNDATION • [americasfuture.org](http://americasfuture.org)

America has seen a strong surge in young people supporting socialism. More than ever, young Americans need to see that fulfilled and happy lives are built by free, empowered individuals. And they need to drive that culture shift in their social circles and local communities. **America's Future Foundation** (AFF) launched a nationwide membership program that equips members with the right tools, resources, knowledge, and relationships to make that change a reality. The membership's pilot program—which engaged 122 young leaders across the country to build programming and give feedback—has been a resounding success. Full membership will open to the public beginning January 1, 2021, and will offer members exclusive trainings and opportunities for networking and community engagement from wherever they are located.

#### ARCHBRIDGE INSTITUTE • [archbridgeinstitute.org](http://archbridgeinstitute.org)

Despite some disruptions due to the pandemic, the **Archbridge Institute** published important research on the key drivers of social and economic mobility. Archbridge collaborated with Dr. Edward Timmons by exploring opportunities to reform state occupational licensing restrictions—specifically focusing on reform opportunities in Iowa. Dr. Timmons is an associate professor of economics and director of the Knee Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation at St. Francis University. Dr. Clay Routledge, a professor of management at North Dakota State University and a leading expert in existential psychology, joined the Institute as a senior research fellow following the publication of his report, "Why Meaning Matters for Freedom and Flourishing." Furthermore, Nobel laureate and Archbridge Senior Fellow Dr. James Heckman authored a report, "Promoting Skills," that focused on the root causes of economic success or failure and provides a thorough look at why skills are so important and how they are best developed.



#### ATLAS NETWORK • [atlasnetwork.org](http://atlasnetwork.org)

Atlas Leadership Academy (ALA) is evolving into a certification-based training program, the Atlas Network Academy (ANA), starting in November 2020. **Atlas Network** is excited to launch this next phase of increasing their reach and impact in the freedom movement through relevant, powerful, and actionable training experiences. The program will offer certifications in think tank foundations, skills, and leadership—designed to provide practical and useful training to individuals working to advance liberty through a think tank. These certificates will include interactive elements that allow participants to learn by doing—and are designed to relate directly to a think tank's work. Certificate completion will signify mastery of knowledge and skills in that area. Atlas plans to add new certificates as they continue to grow and identify needs within the movement. Webinars that focus on evolving and time-sensitive topics remain a vibrant part of the high-quality learning experiences available.



#### BEACON HILL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH • [beaconhill.org](http://beaconhill.org)

A new study from the **Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research** explores the economic cost of municipal taxes to fund transportation projects. In an effort to secure revenue for public transportation, the House and Senate are considering empowering local governments to skirt Proposition 2 1/2, Massachusetts' renowned tax limitation law. Using its Massachusetts State Tax Analysis Modeling Program, the Institute considered how a new tax like this might affect Suffolk County. The Institute found the adoption of a one-percent sales tax by Boston, Revere, Winthrop, and Chelsea—the four municipalities that make up Suffolk County—would cost 1,185 jobs in the first year. More significantly, investment would fall by \$112 million, and consumers would enjoy \$51 million less in disposable income in the first year. The losses are greater than the expected \$60 million in revenue. The study is available at [beaconhill.org](http://beaconhill.org).





#### BECKET • [becketlaw.org](https://becketlaw.org)

**Becket** won two US Supreme Court victories on July 8, 2020. The first gave the Little Sisters of the Poor a permanent exemption from the Affordable Care Act contraceptive mandate. The second protected the right of religious schools to make hiring and firing decisions free from government interference. In addition, Becket won lawsuits against governors in Minnesota and Wisconsin for their unequal treatment of churches during the pandemic. In November, the Supreme Court will hear Becket's case defending Catholic Social Services from the City of Philadelphia. It will answer an important question: Can the government shut down faith-based organizations for not subscribing to their view of morality? The outcome will affect every religious ministry around the country, including soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and all kinds of faith-based organizations that are critical to civil society.



#### CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER • [capitalresearch.org](https://capitalresearch.org)

News broke of left-wing nonprofit network Arabella Advisors' plans to "carpet bomb" the 2020 election, per a report detailing the \$635 million in revenues the network boasted in 2018. State races are part of Arabella's plans to deploy "dark money." The profligate spending by left-leaning political action committees (PACs) at the state level has already succeeded in Colorado and Arizona. Arabella's added influence via what **Capital Research Center** President Scott Walter calls "phony groups" is intended to buttress that success. This network includes some 340 pop-up nonprofits that coordinate efforts to influence state elections. How does this work? The firm operates as a for-profit company based in Washington, DC, and runs four distinct nonprofit organizations. Each organization, in turn, launches countless projects—phony groups like Arizonans United for Health Care, Floridians for a Fair Shake, and North Carolinians for a Fair Economy. Combined, these projects allocated hundreds of millions of dollars in "dark money" advocacy spending in 2018.



#### CENTENNIAL INSTITUTE • [ccu.edu/centennial](https://ccu.edu/centennial)

**Centennial Institute** premiered its new documentary, *America! America! God Shed His Grace on Thee*, as a kick-off to the 2020 Western Conservative Summit. The film reveals the profound role faith and the Bible played in the founding of the nation. It features interviews with some of the most respected leaders of our time, including the final interview with Herman Cain. You will laugh, cry, and feel inspired about the miracle that is the United States of America. Watch the film at WCS20.com.



#### CITIZENS AGAINST GOVERNMENT WASTE • [cagw.org](https://cagw.org)

The Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, the lobbying arm of **Citizens Against Government Waste**, opposed efforts to pass \$915 billion to bail out states in the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. The bill passed the House but not the Senate. The funds would have been added to the \$150 billion included for states in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The \$915 billion would have allowed states to backfill revenue shortfalls that are unrelated and existed prior to the pandemic. According to a Department of the Treasury report, of the \$150 billion provided to the states under the CARES Act, 37 states have spent less than 25 percent of their allocated funding, and 23 of those states have spent less than 10 percent.

#### EDCHOICE • [edchoice.org](https://edchoice.org)

The debate over schools reopening during the pandemic has included considerable feedback from educators and parents. We are not hearing as much from the students themselves. How are they feeling? Are they worried about catching the coronavirus—and what do they think about safety protocol? Do they prefer remote learning or coming back to the classroom, and do they have the tools they need? How has the pandemic affected their social lives and what they care about? In August, **EdChoice** initiated its first look at how students ages 13-18 feel about their schooling, the pandemic, and other hot topics. Learn more at [edchoice.org](https://edchoice.org).



#### EXCEL/NED • [excelined.org](https://excelined.org)

States can offer high-quality career and technical education (CTE) programs that lead students to middle- and high-wage careers. To do this, states must first evaluate whether the credentials students earn align with workforce demand. To that end, **ExcelinEd** and Burning Glass Technologies launched "Credentials Matter" in 2019. This research and accompanying interactive website explored the industry-recognized credentials students earn, the credentials demanded by employers, and the impact of credential attainment on long-term student outcomes. In 2020, ExcelinEd released "Credentials Matter Phase 2." In this new phase, ExcelinEd updated the website and published a new report to present and analyze current credential attainment data from across the nation.



#### FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE • [firstliberty.org](https://firstliberty.org)

In September, **First Liberty Institute** sent a letter to Los Angeles County officials encouraging them to reverse a policy barring Jewish residents from observing the High Holidays with other families inside private homes. The original policy prohibited "having dinner with extended family and friends to honor the High Holidays." The policy was then changed to prohibit "having a meal with extended family and friends for a religious or cultural holiday." After Los Angeles County allowed political gatherings of up to 100,000 attendees, it was outrageous that the county would publish a policy threatening to crack down on families sharing a meal for Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. After First Liberty's letter, the county announced that it would not dispatch Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies to the homes of Jewish families gathered for religious meals.



#### FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY • [freopp.org](https://freopp.org)

In 2020, the **Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity** (FREOPP) was the first think tank to put forth a comprehensive, evidence-based plan to reopen the economy. This plan, featured on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, informed federal, state, and local policymakers how to protect the most vulnerable citizens while mitigating the harmful effects of the lockdowns. FREOPP also released an influential plan to safely reopen schools during the pandemic. Additionally, FREOPP expanded its three primary focus areas of healthcare, housing, and education to include energy, criminal justice reform, and financial services. FREOPP scholars testified before Congress nine times on topics including the use of data in shaping pandemic policy; how to safely reopen businesses, schools, and colleges during the coronavirus; and how regressive environmental regulations hurt the nation's poor. Finally, FREOPP shaped a new healthcare reform bill in Congress, the Fair Care Act of 2020, which would expand health insurance coverage while reducing costs and increasing innovation.





#### FRASER INSTITUTE • [fraserinstitute.org](https://fraserinstitute.org)

Nevada is the highest rated US jurisdiction in the **Fraser Institute's** annual survey of mining and exploration companies. The survey assesses how mineral endowments and public policy factors, such as taxation and regulatory uncertainty, affect exploration investment. The aptly nicknamed Silver State is ranked third in the 2020 edition of the survey, dropping from first place in last year's survey. Even so, US states dominate the top 10. In addition to third-ranked Nevada, the survey's top 10 includes Alaska at fourth, Idaho at eighth, and Arizona at ninth. Western Australia grabbed the top spot from Nevada. Finland jumped to second place (up from seventeenth on last year's index), and Portugal skyrocketed from forty-sixth to fifth. Other jurisdictions in the top 10 are South Australia, Ireland, and Sweden. The survey rated California as the least attractive US jurisdiction, falling from forty-ninth to fifty-second. The full report can be found at [fraserinstitute.org](https://fraserinstitute.org).



#### FREE STATE FOUNDATION • [freestatefoundation.org](https://freestatefoundation.org)

In March, just three days before the pandemic lockdown in Washington, DC, the **Free State Foundation** held its twelfth annual Telecom Policy Conference. Themed "Broadband Beyond 2020: Competition, Freedom, and Privacy," important telecom, broadband, internet, 5G, privacy, and competition issues were addressed at the well-attended event. Keynote speakers included Jeffrey Rosen, deputy attorney general of the United States; Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai; FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly; Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Commissioner Christine Wilson; and special assistant to President Trump, Robin Colwell. Several senior industry leaders also participated in the program. In spite of growing health safety concerns at that time, the conference was the most successful event yet.

#### INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE • [independent.org](https://independent.org)

The **Independent Institute** has greatly advanced liberty-centered issues in education. Its "490 B.C. Project" calls attention to the lack of classical Greco-Roman history in high schools. Independent also published several commentaries critical of the mandatory ethnic studies curriculum for high school students in California. The proposed ethnic studies were anti-capitalist, training students to be agitators instead of showing how ethnic minorities can climb the ladder to success in America without dwelling on victimhood. The California Governor vetoed the curriculum before California high school studies implemented it. Additionally, Independent created one of the most exhaustive annotated reading lists ever assembled on the issues of civil rights, police reform, race relations, and the welfare state. "The Crisis in Civil Rights: Best Books and Articles on Race, Police, and the Welfare State" reintroduced a deeper shared understanding of the relevant achievements that scholars have made in the fields of history, economics, law, and political philosophy.



#### INSTITUTE FOR FREE SPEECH • [ifs.org](https://ifs.org)

The **Institute for Free Speech** supplied key evidence in numerous debates about political speech issues in 2020. Following the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, IFS reviewed the First Amendment records of judges on President Trump's shortlist, including eventual nominee Judge Amy Coney Barrett. IFS published two analyses of Judge Barrett's record within a week of her nomination. Research Director Scott Blackburn analyzed money-in-politics trends in the ten years since *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, finding the decision improved democracy by allowing voters to hear more speech about candidates. Research Intern Alec Greven found no increase in public corruption since the ruling, debunking a major prediction by its critics. Legal Intern Heather McGuire researched a little-noticed spending limit on political party conventions. Policy Analyst Alex Baiocco published guidelines for effective and First Amendment-friendly political ad disclaimer laws in response to a trend of tougher rules that violate Americans' privacy.

#### INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE • [ij.org](https://ij.org)

The **Institute for Justice** defended school choice on behalf of the Espinoza family in the US Supreme Court case *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*. Thanks to the arguments presented by IJ's litigation team, the High Court announced its 5-4 decision in IJ's favor this past June, ruling a state court may not strike down a school choice program simply because it permits families to choose religious schools for their kids. Additionally, with the launch of IJ's Project on Immunity and Accountability, IJ is taking on the efforts of governments and its agents to escape accountability when they violate someone's constitutional rights. In November, the Supreme Court will hear IJ's case in *Brownback v. King*. IJ is defending James King, who police mistook for a non-violent fugitive, then beat and choked him unconscious. The police are seeking to evade accountability for what they did..

#### JUDICIAL WATCH • [judicialwatch.org](https://judicialwatch.org)

The US Appeals Court for the Eleventh Circuit adopted **Judicial Watch** and the Allied Educational Foundation's (AEF) argument to uphold Alabama's 2011 photo voter identification law that requires voters to seek voter verification. "As we argued to the court, voter ID is good policy and protects the votes of all voters," said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. "The left is dishonestly playing the race card to try to stop commonsense voter ID measures in Alabama and elsewhere. We're pleased that we helped the court see through the canard that voter ID requirements harm any American voters." Additionally, Judicial Watch uncovered the Fusion GPS/Christopher Steele timeline since 2015. Judicial Watch released 168 pages of records from the US Department of Justice (DOJ), including a handwritten timeline of meetings connected to Peter Strzok and Lisa Page and Christopher Steele/Fusion GPS, as well as a list of records the DOJ sent to Congress about their investigation into the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrants involving the Clinton-funded dossier.

#### MERCATUS CENTER AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY • [mercatus.org](https://mercatus.org)

The **Mercatus Center at George Mason University** launched a new online magazine, *Discourse*, that will address today's most debated cultural, economic, and political topics. The journal is committed to diverse viewpoints, innovative thinking, and classical liberal values. Learn more at [discoursemagazine.com](https://discoursemagazine.com).





#### PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION • [pacificlegal.org](https://pacificlegal.org)

Across the country, there is a growing movement to tinker with admissions processes for selective middle and high schools. Connecticut, New York City, Maryland, and Virginia have implemented or are considering changing admissions criteria to get a more preferred racial balance. The **Pacific Legal Foundation** launched a new documentary video, *Dream Factories*, that describes Mayor Bill de Blasio's effort to undermine competitive admissions in New York City's Specialized High Schools, in order to reduce the number of Asian students. PLF is currently litigating lawsuits in New York City and Montgomery County, Maryland to stop this unconstitutional race-based discrimination. Learn more at [pacificlegal.org](https://pacificlegal.org).



#### PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH CENTER • [perc.org](https://perc.org)

The pandemic raised many questions about how wildlife trade impacts the risk of zoonotic diseases. **Property and Environment Research Center** (PERC) researchers identified this risk, worked with conservation organizations, and testified before both Congress and the California Senate to promote hygiene and sanitation in wildlife markets rather than banning trade. PERC research fellow Catherine Semcer became recognized as a global expert on this topic, and she was quoted in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Slate*, *Financial Times*, *Mother Jones*, and *Smithsonian magazine*. Other research related to the coronavirus focused on shocks to the energy market and the impacts of declining energy royalties on federal conservation funding. This enabled PERC to talk more effectively about relying on market-based user fees. Also, current coronavirus testing uses an enzyme technology discovered in Yellowstone National Park. PERC examined the use of benefits-sharing agreements to enable national parks to benefit from commercial successes related to research inside the park.



#### REASON FOUNDATION • [reason.org](https://reason.org)

In March, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed pension reforms that promise to generate \$700 million in savings over the next 25 years. The law (SB72) changes the state's Public Employees Retirement Association cost-of-living calculation and increases employer and employee contributions over a four-year window. These reforms will significantly reduce the risk of accruing new unfunded liabilities and help the state begin to tackle nearly \$7 billion in existing unfunded liabilities. **Reason Foundation's** Pension Integrity Project published a paper and two op-eds with the Rio Grande Foundation. Reason also worked with Americans for Prosperity to steer the reforms and win support from labor unions and taxpayer advocates alike. At the heights of the bull market, many pension funds still had yet to recoup their losses from the last recession. Market volatility due to the economic fallout from the pandemic creates a new urgency for pension reform.



#### R STREET INSTITUTE • [rstreet.org](https://rstreet.org)

Despite the ongoing pandemic, **R Street Institute** created thought-provoking content, engaged policymakers and the public, and turned ideas into reality. Since January 2020, R Street published 50 white papers, drafted around 400 op-eds, and hosted more than 30 events, including in-person and virtual panels. The R Street federal team has submitted two testimonies, and the state team has delivered nearly 70. Further, R Street drafted bills and moved important legislation forward, including alcohol delivery and occupational licensure reform in Georgia, criminal justice reforms in Michigan, North Carolina, and Maryland, insurance reform in South Carolina, and much more. At the federal level, R Street has been at the forefront of conversations surrounding responsible spending and coronavirus relief, and the organization helped introduce federal bills to ease occupational licensing restrictions.

#### THE COLLEGE FIX • [thecollegefix.com](https://thecollegefix.com)

The Student Free Press Association drives the national conversation on higher education with an emphasis toward liberty and campus and media reform through its flagship website, **The College Fix**. The website enjoyed 16 million pageviews during the 2019-20 school year—the most in its 10-year history. More than 4,350 different websites and media outlets, including the *New York Post*, cited the College Fix's 2,000+ articles this year. National personalities, such as Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin, also featured some of the website's articles. The Student Free Press Association marked a decade in operation this year with a bevy of new milestones and achievements. Its internship program, which connects talented and ambitious young journalists with national news outlets, has now hosted nearly 100 journalism fellows since its founding. Most of them continue to work in media, including at *Fox News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *National Review*.

#### THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION • [heritage.org](https://heritage.org)

**The Heritage Foundation** has been tireless in its efforts to debunk the radical and anti-American positions taken by *The New York Times'* Pulitzer Prize-winning "1619 Project." The 1619 project aims to reframe America's history by replacing 1776 with the year 1619 "as our true founding." In 1619, an English ship brought 20 Africans to the English colony of Virginia, and they were sold into slavery. Multiple Heritage scholars have thoroughly documented the factual errors, appeared on numerous radio and television interviews, and published dozens of commentaries. *The New York Times*, as a result of pushback like this, has quietly edited the online version. Mike Gonzalez, Heritage's Angeles T. Arredondo E Pluribus Unum fellow, also highlighted the program was making its way into schools: "The 1619 Project isn't just a series of articles placing slavery at the center of the American story. It is also a curriculum that is sweeping the land." Heritage has responded by creating its own curriculum resource for parents, rebutting the left's attempts to rewrite history.

#### THE JESSE HELMS CENTER • [jessehelmscenter.org](https://jessehelmscenter.org)

**The Jesse Helms Center** shifted its Free Enterprise Leadership Challenge online to educate high school students worldwide about the inherent virtues of America's free-market system. The greatest accomplishments of the Center's online sessions was spreading the word about the vast differences between capitalism and socialism to students who have never heard the information. The Center polled students before they took the course and fewer than half (49 percent) viewed America's free-enterprise system as favorable. By the end of the week that number had nearly doubled (90 percent). The Center also welcomed Jeff Atkinson as vice president. Jeff spent eight years in various roles at Wingate University, including positions in the marketing and communications office and office of the president. As the Center's vice president, Jeff will oversee the Center's marketing and communications strategy, assist with fundraising, and advance the Center's free-enterprise programming.

#### THE COLLEGE FIX





**THE PHILANTHROPY ROUNDTABLE • [philanthropyroundtable.org](http://philanthropyroundtable.org)**

By the end of this year, **The Philanthropy Roundtable**, through its policy and government affairs work, will have advanced protective measures on philanthropic freedom in eight states. Called The Charitable Impact Protection Act, this model prevents state officials from imposing unlawful filing or reporting requirements on the charitable sector for parents, rebutting the left's attempts to rewrite history.

**THE POLICY CIRCLE • [thepolicycircle.org](http://thepolicycircle.org)**

To move more women from civic knowledge to civic engagement, **The Policy Circle** launched an Election Series that equips leaders with resources to go beyond the headlines on the issues and policy proposals that impact us all. Centered around The Policy Circle's election policy briefs, the organization has hosted a series of virtual discussions on election integrity, ballot initiatives, candidate assessments, and ways to ensure the election process is administered fairly in accordance with the law. During one training session, 30 percent of attendees signed up to become poll workers in their communities—a vital role many communities need to fill during this election. These experiences are making a significant impact on The Policy Circle's mission to inform, inspire, and develop civic leaders across the country.

**TRUTH IN ACCOUNTING • [truthinaccounting.org](http://truthinaccounting.org)**

In June, **Truth in Accounting** (TIA) launched a new webinar series titled "Ask the Experts." Since then, TIA has hosted a webinar each month on a variety of different topics related to the pandemic: state revenue shortfall projections, federal aid, the national debt, and pension reform. TIA has partnered with the Mercatus Center, Illinois Policy Institute, R Street, The Charles & Agnes Kazarian Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, and more to bring in a diverse group of experts. All attendees have a chance to ask the experts their questions and hear their answers live. Visit Truth in Accounting's event page to learn more about upcoming webinars.

**YOUNG AMERICA'S FOUNDATION • [yaf.org](http://yaf.org)**

As students returned to their studies this fall, remotely or in-person, **Young America's Foundation** held schools accountable while empowering students to share conservative ideas. Abiding by local mandates and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, YAF hosted three in-person programs, drawing students from more than 95 unique schools, for the Free Enterprise Leaders Conference for high school students, Road To Freedom Seminar for college students, and Standing Up for Faith and Freedom program geared toward students at Catholic high schools and colleges. In September, YAF's 9/11: Never Forget Project, the largest nationwide campus activism event in America, saw hundreds of schools place 2,977 US flags in memory of the innocent lives taken 19 years ago. Students used YAF's Campus Bias Tip Line to report troubling situations on college campuses—Iowa State University, Vanderbilt University, and Illinois Central College to name a few.



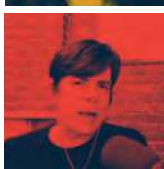
# America At Its Best: The Show



with host  
Rebecca Painter



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State Policy Network's "America at Its Best" series tells powerful stories of good news and fast solutions made possible by the generosity of our supporters. See how your partnership is fueling the Network of 64 state-based organizations and over 90 national partners across the country to solve some of the most critical challenges facing Americans today and shaping the future of our country.



**"America at its best emerges right now.** We see Americans taking charge as concerned citizens, such as neighbors helping neighbors, especially when expected government help is too slow to alleviate suffering. There are so many people in communities working together to find creative solutions. In crises of the past, Americans have risen to the challenge."


- Adam Meyerson, **SPN Board Member**


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