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Veritas

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In the last issue of *Veritas*, I asserted our collective optimism about the ultimate outcome of the 86th Session of the Texas Legislature. The session concluded with some truly landmark reforms—as well as some opportunities for further progress in 2021.

In “How TPPF Made a Difference This Session,” TPPF Vice President for Marketing Alicia Pierce offers a full recitation of our progress—and downright victories—and notes our emerging priority items for next session.

Of course, one of our most significant victories was the \$5 billion in relief to property taxpayers and the ceilings placed on school district and local tax jurisdiction revenue growth. It was the stories brought to us by taxpayers like Gina Castenada and local elected officials like Art Martinez de Vara, whose testimonials appear in this issue of *Veritas*, that helped us illustrate the need for our proposals.

Also in this issue, you will learn about Right on Immigration, a new TPPF initiative to help resolve our nation's crisis at its southern border. Modeled on our highly successful criminal justice reform initiative, Right on Immigration articulates the Texas perspective on the rule of law, national sovereignty, and human dignity.

Another hot-button issue at the federal level is “Medicare for All,” which is being promoted by left-leaning candidates for the presidency. “Why Universal Healthcare Is a Very Bad Idea” summarizes the differing perspectives that guide liberal and conservative solutions and which is capable of actually delivering efficient, affordable, and high-quality care.

Civics education was a frequent topic of discussion during the just-ended legislative session. In an effort to improve how civics and U.S. History are taught in Texas schools, Dr. Tom Lindsay took a hands-on approach by conducting our first-ever TPPF Summer Institute for High School Civics Teachers. Fourteen teachers participated this year and will return to their schools with a new curriculum focusing on the moral, political, and philosophic origins of our nation, which they will teach during the upcoming school year.

This issue of *Veritas* tells the story of Meg Wilson, a world-traveler who describes herself as “just a teacher” who worked on the forefront of the technology commercialization industry in Austin. She went on to become

a member of our Lone Star Legacy Society because she was “thrilled with the effectiveness of TPPF.”

In Happenings & Updates, we proudly announce the departure of talented senior economist Dr. Vance Ginn, who has joined the White House Office of Management and Budget as associate director for economic policy. Also in Washington recently was David Balat, Director of the TPPF Right on Healthcare initiative, who testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform.

In that section, you also can find updates on three of the nine lawsuits being carried forward by our Center for the American Future litigation team. You will enjoy reading about recent arguments before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals by TPPF General Counsel Rob Henneke against the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. And you can relish in our progress against Austin's mandatory paid sick leave ordinance and its potential to impact every city in Texas. Lastly, you can find reason to cheer for Texas rancher John Yearwood, whose case against federal government overreach by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon take our team back to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to argue his case.

Even as our team of happy warriors here at TPPF celebrates our many victories this legislative session, we are focused on the interim work before the 87th. The budget process, agency rulemaking authority, legislative committee interim charges and committee reports, and bill drafting will occupy our time as we begin to craft our policy agenda for the next session in 2021. It was the generosity of our donors that made possible the many accomplishments you will read about here, and it is your continued support that will lead us through the coming months to continue the fight for freedom.

For all you do, we will remain ever grateful!

For Texas,



Kevin D. Roberts, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Veritas

Veritas is a publication of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute. The Foundation's mission is to promote and defend liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach. Our goal is to lead the nation in public policy issues by using Texas as a model for reform.

HOW TPPF MADE A DIFFERENCE THIS SESSION

by Alicia Pierce

As the 86th Session of the Legislature began, our TPPF team of policy warriors already had been at work for months advancing our freedom and prosperity-focused policy agenda. Throughout the 140 days of the session, they remained active participants—often into the night—on your behalf, presenting our ideas, based on thorough research and analysis, and advocating for the ideals that have made the great Lone Star a beacon to all.

To sum it up in three words, the 86th legislative session brought “progress—not perfection.” The following offers an honest assessment of what lawmakers were able to accomplish and what was left undone for the 87th.

Property Taxes – Relief and Reform

Texans will realize actual property tax relief—in fact, an estimated \$5 billion—a goal that has eluded legislative leaders for more than a decade.

While we would like to see more substantial relief from increasingly crippling property taxes, this is real relief—and is coupled with limitations on the taxing structures that drive property taxes. The law now limits the growth of revenue from school district maintenance and operations taxes, usually the largest part of your property tax bill, to 2.5 percent. And most of the other local tax jurisdictions will now have to hold an election if they wish to increase property tax revenue by more than 3.5 percent.

While the ultimate solution for a fair system of property taxes has not yet been achieved, Texans can be confident that real relief is coming their way and

that the runaway growth of local taxation has been checked.

Without question, the TPPF team was vital to achieving this victory by continuing our long-standing calls for limits on tax hikes, promoting our research showing the real dangers of out-of-control property taxes, and delivering polling research showing Texans demand real relief now.

Budget

This session, the Conservative Texas Budget guidelines would have limited increases in state spending to no more than 8 percent for the next biennium. Unfortunately, lawmakers approved a budget that grew spending by more than 8 percent, even when you exclude dollars dedicated to Hurricane Harvey aid and property tax relief.

The last two sessions, lawmakers passed a Conservative Texas Budget, which limits spending growth to no more than population growth plus inflation. However, when the supplemental budget was passed, three of the four years exceeded the Conservative Texas Budget ceiling. These parameters aren't arbitrary—they are instead our standards to make sure taxes, driven by spending, don't increase more than an average Texan's ability to pay.

While legislators did much to limit the rapid growth of local governments, they failed to show that same restraint in the state budget. They did stay under the budget cap constitutionally set by the Comptroller. But in the long term, spending increases like this, even in prosperous years, aren't sustainable. Spending



(l-r) Dr. Vance Ginn, then-TPPF Senior Economist, and The Honorable Talmadge Heflin, Director of TPPF's Center for Fiscal Policy, were on the front lines during the 86th Texas Legislature advocating for a ban on a personal income tax. Thanks, in part, to their hard work, voters will have a chance to weigh in during the November 5, 2019 Texas Constitutional Amendment Special Election.

increases today drive long-term spending obligations tomorrow, and all government spending is done at the expense of taxpayers.

TPPF will continue our work for spending cuts and stress the negative effects on taxpayers whenever any government—federal, state, or local—chooses to spend at a rate greater than the average taxpayer's ability to pay.

Taxpayer-Funded Lobbying

This session, we made more progress on stopping this practice than ever before. Through the leadership of members like Representative Mayes Middleton and Senators Paul Bettencourt and Donna Campbell, not only did this issue receive attention but also a vote—though it failed to become law.

One of the great ironies of Texas government is that lobbying efforts funded through taxpayer dollars for cities, counties, and other taxing entities are so often at odds with taxpayer interests. While local governments are completely entitled to represent their community interests before the legislators, they shouldn't use taxpayer funds to pay for lobbyists to push for more spending power and less budget reform. To the taxpayer, this is a travesty.

If you ever wonder how government leaders can all

seem to support a reform or spending restraint, and yet it does not pass, ask yourself if taxpayer funded lobbyists had a vested interest in stopping the measure. It's a little-known dynamic that 9 out of 10 of Texans oppose when polled.

By educating Texans on this issue and pushing for both incremental and major progress, we hope to soon (as in the 87th Texas Legislature in 2021) put an end to this practice.

Educating Texas on Education

During the 86th Legislature we focused our efforts on education freedom and school finance reform under the aegis of a six-point education plan named Right on Education. The plan concentrated on eliminating the school maintenance and operations tax while restoring funds to the classroom, where spending most directly influences student outcomes. While we were disappointed with the lack of attention to School Choice during the session, I am proud to say that the passage of HB 3 brought our TPPF team—and you—some significant victories.

HB 3 directs school boards to adopt and monitor goals for disaggregated student populations, for student outcomes in early education, and for ensuring the students are graduating career-, college-, or military-ready.

HB 3 allows any school district's board to adopt merit pay programs for their districts' most effective teachers, thus directing increased funding straight into the classroom.

HB 3 also stipulates that in order to trigger a voter-approved tax increase on school maintenance and operations taxes, the school district must first conduct an efficiency audit, then hold a public hearing to discuss the findings as well as release the report to the public. A new taxpayer protection, this trigger requirement ensures that school districts understand where they can operate more efficiently before allowing for a tax increase.

Through policies now requiring school boards to set reading and math goals for districts, conduct efficiency audits, and utilize merit pay programs, we can improve the effectiveness of school funding. Additionally, transparency and accountability are the essential

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“During this legislative session, TPPF advocated for traditional civics education in schools, advanced free speech on public college campuses, and promoted transparency in connection with college degree marketability.”

next steps in making education more student-centric and responsive to families and taxpayers. With one out of every 10 students in America learning right here in Texas, there is simply too much at stake to passively let a bureaucratic education system crush what should be the real goals of education.

Another Chapter for Charters

Even though the Texas Legislature missed an opportunity to expand education choice this session, TPPF stood on the front line to shut down more than 40 pieces of legislation seeking to further limit charter schools.

As charter schools continue to succeed and the demand for education opportunity grows, the long-term prospects for innovation in Texas education choice will only increase. Preserving charter school opportunities is essential for real education freedom in our state and is a mission we at TPPF will not abandon. As a part of that, efficiency requirements coupled with accountability measures supported by TPPF are a path to empowering families and returning the education system to one focused on the child.

Keeping it Civil

During this legislative session, TPPF advocated for traditional civics education in schools, advanced free speech on public college campuses, and promoted transparency in connection with college degree marketability.

- The passage of HB 1244 requires that the U.S. History End-of-Course STAAR exam incorporate 10 questions from the U.S. Citizenship test.
- TPPF supported SB 18, which helps to protect free speech rights on public college campuses, thus allowing a full spectrum of views to be presented, not just those of the academic establishment.

- Also in higher education, we were able to promote greater transparency by requiring reporting on program marketability so students will better understand their potential return on investment before pursuing a degree and incurring debt to pay for it.

An educated populace is essential to any successful state or nation. It is a school's greatest charge to help students become informed citizens and productive workers, and these victories will encourage that outcome. But, our job is not finished. You can rest assured that TPPF will continue working with policy makers to foster an education system that can respond to the needs of a 21st Century workforce.

Fostering More Reform

With a foster care system in crisis, legislators sought major reforms in 2017, including the implementation of community-based care (CBC). In 2019, TPPF worked to protect those advancements and expand the reform.

Rather than operating foster care services through a single, centralized bureaucracy in Austin, community-based care is creating regions of services that can be more responsive to children, their families, and the community as a whole. Not only does CBC provide better outcomes, but it does so more efficiently, particularly in a state as large as Texas with such diverse needs. By being more closely associated with the communities they serve, community-based foster care more ably integrates services from local private and non-profit organizations and, thus, improves outcomes for children and families.

Cronyism

The 86th Texas Legislature made some progress in reining in government-backed preferences for specific business interests, but still has a long way to go to

fully eliminate subsidies, preferential tax treatments, and regulatory favoritism.

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission Sunset Bill is an example of progress and setbacks. The streamlining of the licensing system and the label application process, the end of the archaic distinction between beer and ale, and increased transparency and accountability in the protest process will allow businesses to work more efficiently and will benefit consumers. However, the bill also grants unnecessary authority to the agency, risking perpetuating past abuses of regulatory power. It's a good reminder that even when government agencies are responsive for a time, we must guard against an expansion of power that sets a precedent of intervention for future, less responsible leadership.

The Sunset Bill also included a bi-partisan amendment that had been blocked as a stand-alone bill. Because of this amendment, Texans will soon be able to enjoy the seemingly simple act of taking home beer from their local brewery the same way they already can with wine from wineries or distilled spirits from distilleries. While this is major progress on what should be a simple consumer and supplier exchange, limitations on the amount of product purchased are still prohibitive to real economic freedom and the Legislature should look to build on these advances in future exchanges.

There was also mixed news on the subsidy front. Several programs that subsidize or give preferential tax treatments to some businesses over others have been expanded. The Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program received an appropriation of \$50 million in the budget, more than twice what it received the last biennium. The Legislature authorized several cities and counties to levy or expand their use of the hotel occupancy tax (the revenues from the local tax are meant to support and promote the hotel and convention center industry). The major events reimbursement program saw its list of eligible events expanded.

However, one good piece of news for Texas taxpayers is that they were protected from having to subsidize yet another industry when advocates failed to pass a bill that would have created a new program to transfer some tax revenues to a limited number of music venues and festival promoters in Texas.



(l-r) James Quintero, Director of Think Local Liberty, celebrates the passage of Annexation Reform for all Texans with colleague The Honorable Jason Isaac, Senior Manager and Distinguished Fellow Life: Powered.

We also saw progress against cronyism as a result of our campaign against tax abatements for renewable energy providers. Our outreach efforts resulted in legislation that will bring greater transparency to the tax abatement process, allowing Texans to be informed about what businesses their tax dollars will subsidize.

Compelling an End to Forced Annexation

In the category of things so un-Texan you can't believe it is true, until last session municipalities had the authority to annex lands into their jurisdiction without a vote of the landowners. In 2017 the Legislature limited the practice in some counties but thankfully came back and finished the job in 2019. While forced annexation should have never been a reality in a state that values property rights the way we do in Texas, annexation reform is a perfect example of revolutionary reform through incremental progress. TPPF is proud of our long-standing support of this and other private property right protections.

Making Public Information Public

As a leader of the Texas Sunshine Coalition, TPPF joined groups from across the political spectrum highlighting significant loopholes in the Public Information Act that undermined its spirit of transparency and accountability. In a bi-partisan effort, the Legislature limited some of the most common practices governments employed to keep taxpayers in the dark,

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TPPF Senior Researcher Randy Petersen testifies before the Texas Senate Committee on Criminal Justice about criminal trespass law.

such as undemonstrated needs to protect trade secrets and entertainment event exemptions.

The public's right to know how their tax dollars are spent is fundamental to government accountability. Increased access can lead to increased actions and reform.

Criminal Justice Reform

The vast majority of incarcerated individuals in Texas will eventually be released back into the general population. By focusing on ways to make reentry successful, we can lower the risk of individuals returning to prison and raise the odds of them becoming productive members of society. This session, we had tremendous success in improving reentry in Texas.

First and foremost, through a coalition that included TPPE, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation and other partners, a major licensing reform bill passed the Legislature without a single nay vote.

Additionally, we supported legislation that mandates that inmates be provided with critical identification documentation—including a resume and proof of job training—before they are discharged. Together, these

bills create real opportunity for prisoners to reenter society with a constructive path forward.

TPPF supported and testified in support of two bills passed this session to provide female inmates with dignified treatment. These bills require that pregnant inmates receive proper medical care while in labor and ban the use of unnecessary heavy shackles and restraints on pregnant women. Risking the harm of a mother and her unborn baby goes well beyond the punitive measures of the criminal justice system and is now prohibited in Texas.

Conclusion

Progress only remains progress through vigilance and truth-telling. Between the sessions, we will be watching closely to ensure that school finance reform results in meaningful improvement for Texas kids and that extra funding translates to better outcomes. We will work to ensure that local liberty trumps local control, even as cities continue to work to limit the freedoms of Texans. And we will prepare a bold agenda for the 87th Session, slated to begin in January 2021, to build on the hard-fought victories in this, the 86th. ★



Alicia Pierce is the Vice President of Marketing here at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. A graduate of Abilene Christian University, Alicia was a 2016 recipient of the prestigious Gutenberg Award recognizing professional achievement in the field of mass communications. Speaking of prestige—Alicia has a Marvel comic book character (Andrea Pearson) loosely based off her! On top of that, she has an extensive background in statewide policy communications having served four Texas Secretaries of State and managed multiple statewide voter education campaigns. Before moving to Austin because she was homesick for Texas, Alicia worked in D.C. both on Capitol Hill and as a White House intern. Alicia met her husband, Brian Pierce, at University Avenue Church of Christ where they are still active members.

WHAT TEXANS SAY ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES



Gina Castenada, San Antonio, Texas

“I was born and raised here in San Antonio, in Harlandale. I left for a couple of years for school and came right back. I got married, I had kids. I bought my home for \$180,000 in the early ‘80s in Harlandale. But a lot of the families who were there when I grew up moved out. Why? Well, when you add in the school district, the city, and all the other local governments, my property tax bill is about \$3,300 a year. I’m blessed. My husband has a good job, I have a good job. I’m trying to save money for my retirement so I don’t have to face what 60-70 percent of people in my area are faced with: the possibility of losing their home. There are families being retired out of their homes that they’ve worked for all of their lives. As soon as they retire from their job, people must retire from their

homes because they can’t afford the tax bill. It’s so sad when you go to the courthouse steps and you’ve got the list of foreclosures because the taxes haven’t been paid a family worked for that home their entire lives and now it’s being auctioned. We can’t let our governments continue to raise taxes to the point where homes are being lost, to the point where families have nothing.”

Art Martinez de Vara, former Mayor of Von Ormy, Texas

“Property taxes are reaching crisis levels across Texas. It’s an issue in so many towns. Local government debt is mainly the crisis, because we see local governments venturing into areas they shouldn’t be in. When we started [the city of Von Ormy], one of the things we realized was that we couldn’t compete with San Antonio on tax abatements, utilities, water, road construction. We didn’t have those kinds of funds. But we could beat them in bureaucracy and tax rates.



We started out with zero fees. Everything was free for residential. Commercial was either free or at-cost. As our sales tax base increased we increased our budget to provide more services and discount the property tax. The first or second year we did it, we were the only taxing district in the county that lowered taxes.

This was in the middle of the recession and everyone else was raising rates. Residents were tightening their belts, so should their government. Each year we did that until we were able to eliminate the property tax. And there still isn’t one to this day.

How do you eliminate property taxes? Keeping expenditures in check. Do the basics well. We privatized everything we could possibly think of. We privatized trash collection, recycling, road maintenance, inspections. Today now that we’re fully established, we only have two full-time employees for a population of around 1,300. Everyone else is a contractor.

There are some communities that want an extremely high level of services and want to be taxed for it. But when you look at most cities, their tax bill isn’t current services, around half is funding debt. The avoidance and reduction of debt would allow you to eliminate half or more of the property tax.”



RIGHT ON IMMIGRATION

By Annie Carnegie

Photo: The Texas Tribune

“It is no doubt very desirable,” James Madison proclaimed from the House floor in 1790, “that we should hold out as many inducements as possible for the worthy part of mankind to come and settle among us, and to throw their fortunes into a common lot with ours. . . to increase the wealth and strength of the community.”

We all desire the strong community that Madison spoke of over 200 years ago, and we recognize that immigrants are an integral part of that strength. At the same time we are acutely aware that our nation’s immigration system is broken.

The debate about how to repair that system rages on—in the House and Senate, in our workplaces, in our schools, and around family dinner tables. It continues not simply because of partisanship, but because of what is at stake: the very future of our nation, the authority of our government, and the quality of life for millions.

Sadly, policymakers in our nation’s capital have increasingly strayed from these priorities, thereby abandoning the voice of the states and the concerns of the American people.

The long Texas border with Mexico—and its growing, uncontrolled influx of immigrants from throughout the world—has caused all eyes to focus on the Lone Star State in the search for understanding about the immigration crisis. So in response, the Texas Public Policy Foundation has launched Right on Immigration, a nationally-focused initiative to supply factual and historical context, to foster constructive debate, and to advocate solutions to the immigration crisis from a

border-state perspective and in the interest of all Americans.

The underpinning foundation for Right on Immigration is rooted in the unique and remarkable American principles of freedom and opportunity, while emphasizing border security, upholding national sovereignty, and promoting human dignity. These principles, which are itemized below, confront the issues at the core of the immigration debate, bringing to the table an informed border perspective and a desire to, as Madison said, “Increase the wealth and strength of the community.”

- Securing our border and ports of entry is the essential first step of any immigration reform;
- American prosperity requires the industry and insight immigrants have always brought to America;
- Immigrants must be admitted on a basis of the best interest and needs of American citizens and communities;
- The non-enforcement and selective enforcement of our current system reflects in part a defective body of underlying law;
- The black market in labor can be replaced with a legal temporary guest worker program;
- Welfare and entitlements should not be an economic inducement for immigration;
- Asylum policy properly reflects the generosity at

“By addressing concerns of border security, national sovereignty, and the inherent human dignity of migrants, Right on Immigration can provide a pathway for reform that resonates with Americans across the political spectrum.”

the heart of the American people and must always first serve the American interest;

- Effective immigration reform will address the root causes that send so many migrants from Mexico and Central America northward; and
- The states are proper collaborators in any immigration reform.

Border Security

Border states provide valuable and unique insight into the immigration crisis by sharing the real-world consequences of our broken system. Indeed, as the state with the longest international border, Texas is disproportionately affected by issues of border security.

First, securing our border is critical to the safety of U.S. citizens and of immigrants. A secure border ensures that we remain a beacon of hope and liberty across the world, able to welcome those who come legally seeking freedom from oppression and the opportunity to flourish.

Second, but equally important, border security is the first step to ending human trafficking. Today, cartels and human traffickers exploit the weaknesses at our southern border to smuggle men, women, and children into our country, selling them into sexual slavery, forcing them to relinquish their dignity in exchange for passage, and profiting from this exploitation. We have the power to shut down these evil networks, and we should. Right on Immigration recognizes that the humanitarian crisis can end only when the U.S. border is secure.

Third, Right on Immigration will amplify the voices of border states like Texas by facilitating the formation of a coalition of groups and individuals committed to the principle of securing our border whether through physical barriers, enhanced technology, or increased manpower.

National Sovereignty

Uncontrolled immigration is a threat to the national sovereignty of the United States and every one of its 50 individual states, for we are either a nation guided by self-interest and governed by the rule of law or we will cease to exist. Especially Texans are on the front line of the immigration debate because our state suffers unduly from the consequences of broken immigration policy. When migrants enter the United States illegally, it is our border they cross, our laws that are broken, our communities they come into, and our citizens who are affected.

Nevertheless, we are desirous—as James Madison suggested—of “welcoming migrants to come and settle among us, and to throw their fortunes into a common lot with ours. . . to increase the wealth and strength of the community.” Indeed, migrants who abide by our laws and contribute to our prosperity add much to our nation.

This is why Right on Immigration is promoting a merit-based immigration system, which admits immigrants in the best interest and needs of American citizens and communities.

Inherent Dignity

A quintessential value of America is the recognition of the inherent dignity of each and every individual. Whether our lineage includes a parent who moved to the U.S. as an adult or a seven-times great-grandmother who came as an infant, almost all of us can trace our ancestry to a single person who migrated to the United States because of the idea of inherent dignity fostered through opportunity and freedom. Because we are a nation of immigrants, founded with the understanding that we have unalienable rights endowed by our Creator, it is imperative that we protect migrants’ inherent dignity both to respect our founding principles and to harness the enormous potential of those who believe in the American Dream.

continued >>

Right on Immigration will advocate for replacing black market labor with a temporary guest worker program designed to avoid the kind of cheap labor that undercuts job opportunities for Americans and ensures fair and just treatment of legal migrants who wish to embrace American values.

Conclusion

Irrespective of political philosophy, most Americans can agree that our immigration system is broken. Most can agree that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to this complex issue. And most can agree that—now more than ever—there is a desperate need for sensible reform.

By addressing concerns of border security, national sovereignty, and the inherent human dignity of migrants, Right on Immigration can provide a pathway for reform that resonates with Americans across the political spectrum. This initiative brings a border-state perspective currently lacking in immigration policy and ensures that the states are active collaborators in any solution to the crises at our borders. In doing so, we will achieve the vision for our country that Madison spoke of—a prosperous America for all willing to dedicate themselves to the great American Experiment and to strengthening this great nation. ★

For more information about Right on Immigration and TPPF's work on this issue, visit www.TexasPolicy.com.



Annie Carnegie joined TPPF in 2018 as the Grants Manager. Born and raised in Austin, Texas she graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in psychology. During her time at A&M, she was involved in the Memorial Student Center (MSC), an organization comprised of several committees that produce programs for university students and Bryan-College Station community members. As a senior, she served as the MSC President. Throughout high-school and college, Annie taught cooking classes at a local children's cooking school. Currently, Annie enjoys traveling, baking, and the thrills of wedding planning!

TPPF WELCOMES...

TPPF welcomed its first five Legislative Fellows this summer thanks, in part, to a leadership gift from the Sparks Family Foundation in honor of Gwyn and Don Sparks.

This first group of Fellows anticipate returning to legislative staff positions in time for the 87th Session of the Texas Legislature in January 2021.



Left to Right: Sam Johnson, Elizabeth O'Connor, Igor Magalhaes, and Grace Watson.
Not shown: Austin Griesinger.

FIRST-EVER TPPF SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS TEACHERS

BY ANNIE CARNEGIE

For years, we have known that civic literacy in America is in rapid decline. Most universities no longer require American history and government courses. It should be no surprise, then, that fewer than 40 percent of Americans can even identify the three branches of our government. What's more, a recent survey of college students revealed that 45 percent do not support the fundamental, constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech.

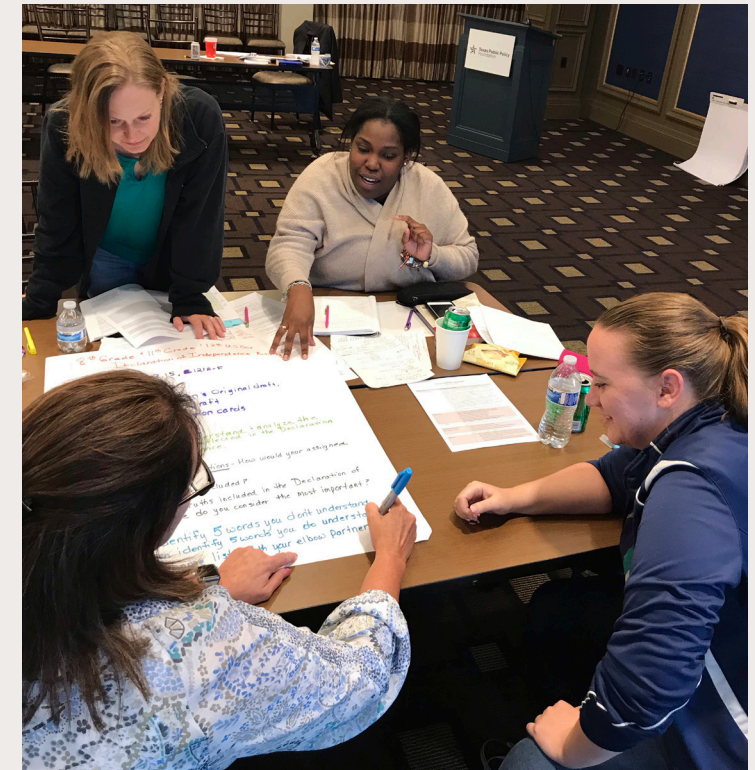
While these statistics are dismal, last month TPPF took a tremendous step toward ending the civic illiteracy crisis in Texas and brightening America's future by holding our first Summer Institute for High School Civics Teachers.

The Summer Institute, which took place at TPPF headquarters in Austin, brought together 14 civics teachers from across the Lone Star State for a week-long workshop dedicated to transforming how high schools approach civic education. Teachers participated tuition-free and received a stipend to defray the cost of their food and lodging in Austin.

Participating teachers received lesson plans, a syllabus, and other resources developed by Dr. Tom Lindsay, a former university professor, president, and Constitutional scholar who serves as TPPF's Director of the Center for Innovation in Education.

In this dynamic, five-day course, Dr. Lindsay focused on the origins of the United States, the basics of American civics, and the threats to American democracy. By connecting texts like the U.S. Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and the Founding Fathers' personal writings, Dr. Lindsay painted a rich portrait of early American history, while explaining how this history still drives the direction of our country more than 200 years later.

Of equal importance, the Summer Institute exposed falsities and "half-truths" perpetuated in the media and in classrooms, enabling Summer Institute Fellows to accurately identify and provide counterpoints to the



TPPF Summer Institute Fellows discuss how best to teach the Declaration of Independence.

toxic falsehoods plaguing our nation's young students.

The Fellows will return to their schools with a new curriculum in-hand that focuses on the moral, political, and philosophic origins of our nation. As a part of their Fellowship, Summer Institute Fellows will teach this curriculum in their schools during the upcoming academic year.

As civic literacy declines, the future of our nation hangs in the balance, but it is possible to reverse course through programs like TPPF's Summer Institute for High School Civics Teachers. As Dr. Lindsay declared in his remarks to this year's Fellows, "We're not giving up, that's why we're doing this."

To learn more about the state of civics education in America, visit www.TexasPolicy.com.

WHY UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE IS A VERY BAD IDEA

by Nick Haydon

All 24 presidential candidates in the Democratic Party support universal healthcare. Every. Single. One. For those who believe in individual liberty and free enterprise, this fact is worrisome. But when 60 percent of Americans now believe that guaranteeing healthcare coverage is the government's responsibility, it becomes clear that candidates' policies reflect a growing sentiment across the country. Among Millennials and Generation Z, support for universal healthcare jumps to over 70 percent.

An enticing aspect of universal healthcare is its supposed benefits. Advocates claim that universal healthcare will increase access, improve quality, and decrease costs—goals that individuals of all political dispositions support. With promises like these, it is no wonder it has the backing of so many.

Different proposals have been suggested for achieving universal coverage such as Medicare-for-All and a single-payer healthcare system. But how would each work?

- Medicare-for-All would expand current government-provided health insurance plans, most likely Medicaid, so that all would have access. Americans would be automatically enrolled by mandate with no ability to opt-out.
- A single-payer system would establish the government as the sole provider of healthcare, eliminating private healthcare insurance providers entirely.

Although both Medicare-for-All and single-payer systems have been endorsed by Democratic presidential

candidates, in reality, neither system would provide the benefits they promise.

If a more efficient, higher quality healthcare system is the goal, then these policies are regressive, not progressive. In fact, universal healthcare will actually make improved healthcare more difficult to attain. For example, the Affordable Care Act doubled the costs of premiums between 2013 and 2017, and the number of small companies that provided private health benefits to employees decreased by 24 percent. In addition, access to care overall declined despite the fact that 20 million more Americans were covered under the ACA.

The consequences of the Affordable Care Act do not bode well for universal healthcare. But why then do so many Americans and all Democratic presidential candidates support universal healthcare? And if both liberals and conservatives agree that healthcare should be improved, particularly with regard to price and quality, why do they disagree about universal healthcare?

Simply put, liberals and conservatives approach the topic from entirely different perspectives.

HERE'S WHAT LIBERALS SAY:

Those on the left believe that healthcare is a human right, and this idea undergirds their push for universal healthcare. Candidates like Senator Bernie Sanders have stated passionately that "healthcare is a human right, whether you're old or young, or rich or poor, everybody in the United States of America... is entitled to healthcare as a right." However, unlike

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other human or natural rights, an individual must purchase healthcare, which creates a distinct difference that informs the conservative approach.

AND HERE'S WHAT CONSERVATIVES ARGUE:

Unlike liberals, conservatives believe that healthcare is a commodity—or a good—because it requires someone else's labor to produce, i.e. the doctors', nurses', and medical staff's time. This distinction differentiates conservatives and liberals on healthcare. As a result, though both strive toward the same ends—better quality, prices, and coverage—we disagree on how best to achieve our shared vision.

Conservatives believe—and evidence proves—that freer markets, competition, and choice will lower prices, increase access, and improve quality in healthcare. For example, seven states attained waivers to escape the suffocating regulations imposed by Obamacare. These waivers empower the states to test alternative healthcare solutions in place of the one-size-fits-all mandate from Washington, D.C. In these seven states with more freedom and less restriction, premium costs fell by 38.7 percent; nationwide they rose by 16 percent. Injecting freedom—even the smallest amount—into the healthcare system yields meaningful benefits for purchasers.

It is no surprise that all Democratic presidential candidates advocate for some form of universal healthcare: they believe it is a human right. But Americans



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should not buy into the pitch that increased government intervention in the healthcare system will improve quality and prices. After all, two of America's government-managed health care systems—Medicaid and the Veterans Health Administration—are not exactly known for providing top quality care in a timely fashion. Instead, unleashing the potential of the free market will empower individuals to receive the care they need.

Most Americans want the same results when it comes to healthcare: better quality, prices, and coverage. By uniting around these common goals, we can objectively see which policies will achieve improved healthcare. It is a free market approach, rather than the universal healthcare options promoted by presidential candidates, that is the best solution. ★

BUILDING A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

MEG WILSON



Meg Wilson

As a child, Meg Wilson and her family lived in Arcola, Illinois and, then, in Brussels, Belgium, during her teens. The family enjoyed many memorable trips throughout the states and Europe. Meg returned to the states to attend college, earning a BA in Politics in 1974 from Ithaca College, and a master's degree in Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin.

After graduating, Meg served as Governor Mark White's Technology Coordinator, and, then, returned to UT as Coordinator for the Center for Technology Development and Transfer. From there, Meg joined Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation (MCC), which was a computer industry research and development consortium.

In 1996, Meg began teaching technology commercialization in UT's IC2 Institute Executive Masters Program in Science and Technology Commercialization. She continues to teach through IC2 in Monterrey, Mexico on a part-time basis.

Meg asserts that she is "just a teacher," and that she and husband Fred Chriswell are just "normal people." Meg learned from her father's careful financial planning. While the investment account he left for her made life easier, she wisely started an additional retirement nest egg while working at MCC through a generous matching 401(k) plan.

As retirement approached, Meg and Fred began thinking through their own estate plan. With no children of their own, they wanted to provide for their own care as they aged, assure the education of some young family members, and leave a legacy through thoughtful and targeted charitable giving. What they learned in conversations with their own financial advisor was how easy it would be to support their favorite charities in a meaningful way through their Individual Retirement Accounts.

One of the charities Meg picked to benefit from her 401(k) is the Texas Public Policy Foundation. A self-described "policy wonk," Meg grew up in a Republican home, spent a few years as a Democrat, and from that experience "better understands the importance of conservative philosophy, our constitution, and the values that underpin them both."

Meg became involved with TPPF after learning about the foundation from a staff member. She arranged for a monthly recurring gift that would allow her to become a Visionary and attend the Annual Policy Orientation and Visionaries meetings. "I have been thrilled with the effectiveness of TPPF," said Meg. In 2018 Meg became a member of the Lone Star Legacy Society by including the Foundation in her estate plans. "It was really easy to begin supporting the Foundation, and they have the people and knowledge to help you figure out the best way to maximize your support. It makes me really feel good that I'm supporting such an effective organization. I encourage other donors—whether they're regular folks like Fred and me or blessed with great means—to consider a legacy commitment to the Texas Public Policy Foundation." ★

For more information on how you can become a member of the Lone Star Legacy Society, contact Shari Hanrahan, Director of the Lone Star Legacy Society, at shanrahan@texaspolicy.com or (512) 627-9831.

TPPF READING CORNER

Educating the Next Generation to Live Free

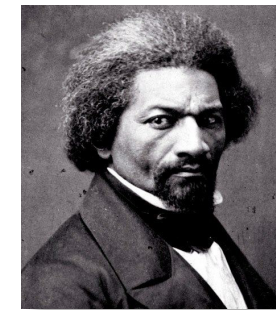
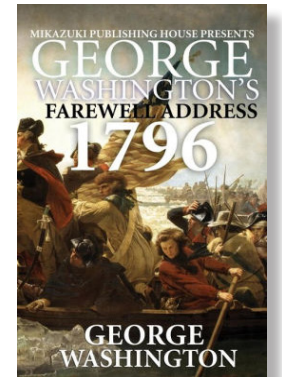
Suggestions by Thomas Lindsay, Ph.D.

IN MID-FEBRUARY, TPPF unveiled its "Six Point Public Education Plan," which includes a plank seeking to "Empower parents to ensure their children have a civics education focused on the founding principles of America." In this issue of *Veritas*, Dr. Tom Lindsay offers two reading suggestions for parents and grandparents who may wish to take on that role.

READINGS

George Washington, "Farewell Address" (1796)

On September 17, 1796, George Washington announced that he would leave the presidency. His famous farewell address encapsulates a view of the Union, the Constitution, and good citizenship that is an important part of American political thought today.



Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro" (1852)

Frederick Douglass gave this speech in Rochester, New York, 76 years after the first July 4th and at a time when the country was fiercely locked in debate over the question of slavery.

Frederick Douglass, circa 1855. Library of Congress. Getty Images.



OTHER WAYS TO GIVE ...

Charitable Gift That Pays You Income

Did you know there's a way for you to donate a legacy gift to the Texas Public Policy Foundation and realize dependable income in your retirement years?

You can fund a charitable gift annuity with a gift of cash or marketable securities. In return, you and/or a second beneficiary receive fixed income for life at a rate based on your age at the time of the donation. Benefits often include a current income tax deduction and fixed lifetime income.

For more information, contact Shari Hanrahan, Director of the Lone Star Legacy Society, at shanrahan@texaspolicy.com or (512) 627-9831.

Happenings & UPDATES



Vance Ginn Goes to Washington!

In early June, the Texas Public Policy Foundation congratulated Vance Ginn, Ph.D., who served as TPPF senior economist and director of the Center for Economic Prosperity, on becoming the associate director for economic policy with the White House Office of Management and Budget. “Vance is a hard-working, passionate, and strong leader who at all times cheerfully championed fiscal conservatism and the Texas Model,” said Kevin Roberts, executive director of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. “He will be sorely missed, but we are proud to have him continue his work in Washington to benefit not only Texans but help all Americans prosper.” Ginn is a leading free-market economist and former university lecturer who was honored with the “Champion of Freedom” award from Grassroots America—We The People. He is a first-generation college graduate and earned his doctorate in economics from Texas Tech University.

David Balat Testifies on Future of Healthcare

At the invitation of former TPPF’er U.S. Representative Chip Roy (R-TX), David Balat, Director of the TPPF Right on Healthcare initiative, testified on July 10 before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform. A former healthcare executive, hospital administrator, and patient advocate, Balat brought his broad perspective to the committee’s debate about the future of healthcare and the Affordable Care Act.

In his remarks, Balat explained, “I firmly believe that we all want affordability and accessibility in healthcare, but we simply have different ideas about how to get there.” He concluded, “Choice and competition, not a one-size-fits-all plan, is what we need for something as local and personal as healthcare. We need a landscape of choices that are as diverse and personal as each of us.”

The TPPF Right on Healthcare initiative is seeking to set the tone for a new bold action by a coalition of partners that believe in healthcare freedom and having states take their rightful role in the care of their communities.



Obamacare Lawsuit Moves to 5th Circuit Court of Appeals

On Tuesday, July 9, Rob Henneke, Director of the Center for the American Future, presented oral arguments before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in *State of Texas, et al v. USA, et al*. As you know, TPPF is leading a lawsuit that has already successfully determined the Affordable Care Act (ACA) unconstitutional in a lower court. This week, we defended that ruling before a three-judge panel in New Orleans, where Rob “told the stories of [his] clients and how they continue to be hurt by the Affordable Care Act.” According to Rob’s post-hearing interview, the panel “seemed to agree with the trial court that the entirety of the law should be struck down.” We expect the panel to release a ruling by December, but our work will not be done. We think it is very likely this case will go all the way to the United States Supreme Court, and we are preparing for that fight.



CAF Lawyers Continue to Fight for Texan Property Rights

The Center for the American Future represents Texas rancher John Yearwood as he defends his private property from the federal government, which is using the Endangered Species Act to target Mr. Yearwood’s ranch. The case is pending before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals but has been stayed. Even though our CAF team of lawyers are awaiting the schedule to proceed, they are preparing to submit briefs for the case soon. A victory here would set an important precedent for Texas and Louisiana by protecting landown-

ers from unconstitutional land seizures. Should the Fifth Circuit Court return an unfavorable ruling, Rob Henneke and his team will take the case to the United States Supreme Court.

Mandatory Paid Sick Leave May Be On Life Support

The CAF litigation team also continues the fight against Austin’s mandatory paid sick leave ordinance, and has opened a new front: a lawsuit in federal court against Dallas’s virtually identical ordinance. Our arguments won in the Austin Court of Appeals, meaning that ordinance will not go into effect. The city, however, has asked the Texas Supreme Court to review the case, in the hope it might return a different ruling. The litigation team did not oppose review by the Texas Supreme Court because other cities in Texas are attempting to mandate similar paid sick leave ordinances. A victory in the Texas Supreme Court would establish the ordinance as invalid for the entire state, not just Austin. Our team has filed the necessary briefs, and awaits a decision by the Court on whether it will review the case. But the federal lawsuit against Dallas’s ordinance could be another nail in the coffin for these mandates, even if the Texas Supreme Court avoids further review.



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Our Visionaries Meeting offers special programming for Visionary-level donors. To register for our 2020 Policy Orientation/Visionaries Meeting or to learn more about Visionaries membership, please contact Annie Casteel at (512) 615-7982 or acasteel@texaspolicy.com.