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Veritas

A Publication of the **Texas Public Policy Foundation**

Building Grassroots Support

**A Day in the Life of a TPPFer:
Carine Martinez**

**Finding Common Ground:
Education Reform**



**Texas Public Policy
Foundation**

Veritas

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With a new engagement team, TPPF is reaching more people than ever before. By encouraging everyday citizens to engage in the legislative process and providing them with the tools to do so, we're ensuring that everyone can participate in the act of self government.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In the last year, the Texan spirit has been tested to an extent unlike anything in recent memory. Our businesses, schools, places of worship, and personal sanctuaries were stripped from us; pains that were worsened by the outsized role government played in dictating our lives. Moreover, we confronted a tumultuous election cycle that precipitated a 46th presidential administration and Democrat-controlled Congress replete with priorities that run counter to the pro-liberty and prosperity agenda our country so desperately needs.

But through all this, we did not capitulate, and the Texan spirit did not fade. Rather, we acted with the resolve of stalwart patriots, seizing on opportunities and confronting threats. In this issue of *Veritas*, we document the essence of this mentality, highlighting all the incredible work TPPF is doing to advance legislative reforms in the 87th Session of the Texas Legislature and fight for the values that make Texas, Texas.

In the midst of Texas' current Legislative Session, TPPF's meticulous Director of Research, Carine Martinez, has been preparing the intellectual ammunition necessary to fight for freedom. In our "Day in the Life of a TPPFer" piece, you will come to understand TPPF's research process, which ensures that we can provide legislators with the information they need to enact policies that permanently advance the values of liberty, opportunity, and free enterprise.

Early on, you will also read of the tremendous growth of TPPF's grassroots activists, a collection of impassioned "happy warriors" fighting to further the values at the core of the American experiment. "Building Grassroots Support" ultimately highlights how we are empowering citizens to get involved in the democratic process.

For those who attended or followed via livestream, you will have a chance to reminisce on a truly outstanding 2021 Policy Orientation. And for those who were unable to attend, I encourage you to read the Policy Orientation summary so that you can see the vibrancy of the liberty movement in action.

Despite how divided our nation may appear, there are areas where bipartisanship has ripened. A sincere passion of mine as an educator, "Finding Common Ground: Education Reform" delves into policies that are fomenting unity in the name of investing in our future leaders. Further, in "Raising Texans' Energy IQ," you will read that TPPF has its hand in not just education policy, but in crafting curriculum that affords students the chance to engage with captivating, vital materials that all of Texas stands to benefit from.

If there is one thing the last year has taught us, it is that the work of TPPF and our fellow patriots is needed now more than ever. Trying though these times have been, I have remained consistently inspired by the moral courage exemplified by those who remain committed to the values that make Texas and our nation truly exceptional. We are honored to be entrusted champions of liberty, opportunity, and freedom, and we will continue to orient ourselves towards these virtues in all that we do.

Sincerely,



Kevin Roberts

Kevin D. Roberts, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cover Photo by Lisa Hause: 2021 Policy Orientation attendees listen to Texas Governor Greg Abbott's keynote address.

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.



Building Grassroots Support

by Seth Galemore

For decades, the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) has ensured that the most effective and best researched policy outcomes are adopted in the Lone Star State and across America. While our efforts include conducting research, educating policymakers, and influencing legislation, to achieve success depends on something even more fundamental: getting everyday Texans involved in the act of self-government.

TPPF empowers Texans to defend their freedoms and drive the debate about opportunity and prosperity for all. In the past year, we have expanded those efforts to build strong grassroots support for public policy outcomes that improve people's lives.

Jerome Greener, who joined the TPPF family as vice president of engagement in 2020, articulates the vision for this enhanced capacity to involve Texans in the policymaking process. "TPPF has so many good, smart, and meaningful policy objectives," he says.

"Our 'Big Idea' is: Let's broadcast these goals beyond Austin so that our fellow Texans can own them, advocate for them, and hold their elected officials accountable to the will of the people."

TPPF's engagement team has a range of strategies they employ to activate citizens and get their personal commitment to the cause of liberty in Tex-

as. TPPF supporters can start with something as simple as viewing a TexasPolicy.com landing page, where they sign a petition or share their input on an important policy goal.

After taking a simple action like that, people can choose to get more deeply involved in the ways that best suit them—signing up for an email list, joining a Facebook group, or attending a policy primer, all focused on the issues they find most important.

Members of TPPF's engagement and communications teams ensure that our supporters are receiving and interacting with the content that matches their needs and interests. Sam Pohl, director of external relations, and Crystal Bonham, digital director, each play a part in making that possible.

Sam develops and refines our messages for people who have been longtime friends of the Foundation and those who are just learning about TPPF. Speaking directly to people's interests and concerns has paid off. "In 2020, from January 1 to December 31," Sam explains, "TPPF grew by more than 118,000 email subscribers to our various lists, reaching a total of more than 155,000 total subscribers." (In case you're wondering, that's nearly 320% growth!) TPPF's list was already growing before Sam started at TPPF in the summer of 2020, but clearly his messaging savvy has taken TPPF's outreach efforts to new heights.

“They are our blueprint for reaching new and key audiences that will help us further TPPF’s mission of keeping Texas ‘Texan’ and not going the way of California.”

Crystal tracks digital engagement—viewership figures for videos and livestreams, interactions such as “likes” or “shares” on social media accounts, and similar metrics—which verifies that TPPF is providing timely and relevant material not only for our current supporters, but also for new audiences who can benefit from TPPF's principled approach to public policy reform.

These efforts, however, are about more than just outreach; they are truly about engagement. The aim is not simply getting Texans to consume TPPF's content. The aim is to develop a sense of urgency and importance about the values that sustain liberty. TPPF galvanizes citizens to act on their own behalf during the legislative session and beyond.

When Jerome embarked on his new role this past fall, he knew the stakes were high. “Because the session is coming right up, we want to activate as many Texans as possible,” he explained of his plans starting out. “So some of what we've done is to build the plane as it takes off—fortunately for us, TPPF has the best policy and communication mechanics around that will allow us to elevate citizen engagement purposefully and successfully.”

Thankfully, TPPF's robust existing infrastructure has given his work some wings.

TPPF already dedicates itself to broadening the reach of the conservative movement in Texas, through our projects such as the Liberty Leadership Council (LLC), for young Texans under 40; the Booker T. Washington Initiative (BTWI), which speaks to the concerns of the Black community about issues such as education, employment opportunity, and fighting poverty; and the Juan Seguin Project, which embraces Hispanic Texans

in our common struggle for liberty that goes back to the Texas Revolution.

These projects, which now operate together as initiatives of the engagement team, have already been doing what TPPF is working to achieve on a broader scale.

“LLC is the model for what we plan to build out,” says Jerome. “They meet regularly, talk policy, write op-eds, and are already creating an impact. But since they are age-limited to 40 and under, we need to replicate their successes for all audiences.”

Taken together with the excellent work of BTWI and the Juan Seguin Project, Jerome remarks: “They are our blueprint for reaching new and key audiences that will help us further TPPF's mission of keeping Texas ‘Texan’ and not going the way of California.”

Projects like LLC, BTWI, and Juan Seguin are identity-focused and bring in communities of people often left out of the conservative policy conversation. But TPPF is also trying to build affinity-focused groups where people of any age, race, or personal identity can get involved with the causes that speak to them personally: education freedom, economic growth, spending restraint, child and family policy, and so much more.

So what does it look like for concerned citizens to get involved in the legislative process?

“We are the conduit to help them do that successfully,” according to Sam. “We provide the resources and information to the grassroots so they know how to place an op-ed, how to submit testimony, and contact their lawmaker. We give them the confidence to engage meaningfully in the public de-

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Photo: Jerome Greener, TPPF's Vice President of Engagement, is instrumental to our efforts to build grassroots support.



A Day in the Life of a TPPFer: Carine Martinez

by Chassidy Menard

bate.” These activities may include influencing the public debate generally, such as letters to the editor, or participating directly in the legislative process, such as offering public comment before a legislative committee.

Jerome points out, “TPPF does more than involve people in the process. We achieve meaningful legislative success. We don’t want to be graded just on the activity itself. We want to be graded on, ‘Did we accomplish the policy objective?’ Did we end taxpayer-funded lobbying? Did we secure education reforms? Did we make the deregulations adopted in response to COVID-19 permanent? All of which lead to a far greater version of the American Dream for millions of Texans.”

However, the end of session never means the grassroots engagement ends. “Sine Die stops the formality of lawmaking,” says Jerome, “but if you aren’t continuing the drumbeat on policy during the interim, you’re already behind when the next session comes.”

TPPF has plans for that as well. We continuously provide citizens with education, formation, and involvement opportunities so they can hold poli-

cymakers accountable. How is policy being implemented? What was not accomplished in session? What legislation was passed that needs to be reformed? Regular folks need to be part of that conversation during the interim.

TPPF also has the capability to influence federal policy and, as we build out our grassroots support, we will engage more with local governance issues as well. TPPF is building capacity for people to get involved at all levels of government.

In short, TPPF’s engagement team is the arsenal that arms Texans with what they need to keep the American Republic working for them.

The great American patriot Samuel Adams once said, “The truth is, all might be free if they valued freedom, and defended it as they ought.” TPPF is here to help every Texan carry on the fight to defend freedom. ★

To join TPPF’s grassroots community via email or Facebook, please visit <https://www.texaspolicy.com/newsletters> or <https://www.facebook.com/TexasPolicy>.



Seth Galemore joined TPPF in April 2020 as the development writer and is now the grants manager at the Foundation. He holds dual bachelor’s degrees in English and Linguistics from Truman State University in Kirksville, MO and is proud to use his experience in writing and communications to promote TPPF’s successes to its friends and supporters. Seth and his wife Emilie now reside in Georgetown, Texas and Seth’s latest adventure in life is learning how to be a great dad for his six-month-old daughter, Naomi.

In January 2021, Veritas contributor Chassidy Menard spoke with Carine Martinez, TPPF’s director of research, about her role at the Foundation and how she supports TPPF’s mission to advance policy through academically sound research.

Menard: Foundational to TPPF’s success over the years is the investment in highly qualified, talented individuals like yourself. You started at TPPF as an intern—can you tell me about how your position has evolved over time and how TPPF has invested in you over the years?

“I moved from France to America in 2011 and later became an American citizen in 2019 because I wanted to have more freedom ... I was always interested in American politics and policies, and it was my dream to work in a think tank.”

Martinez: One of the great things about TPPF is that TPPF invests in the members of its team—we all have the opportunity to prove ourselves. I moved from France to America in 2011 and later became an American citizen in 2019 because I wanted to have more freedom. Even while in France, I was al-

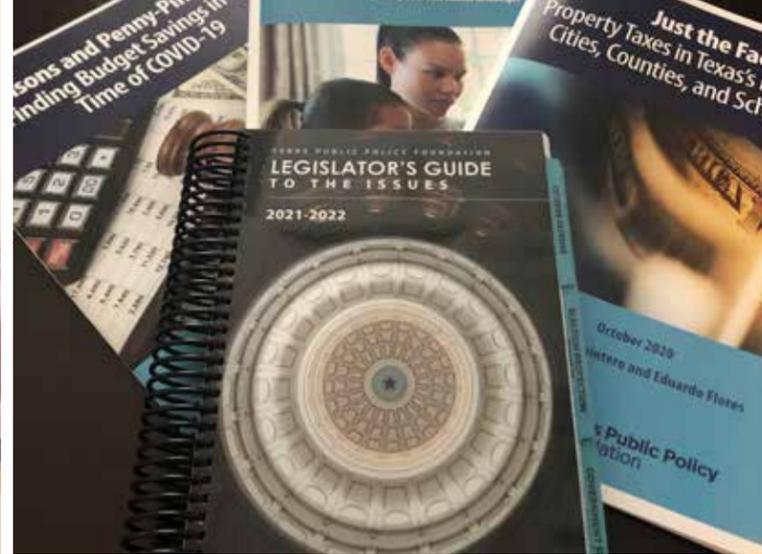
ways interested in American politics and policies, and it was my dream to work in a think tank. So, I was so grateful when I started an internship at TPPF as policy intern in economic freedom. After my internship at TPPF, I worked in a few other positions in D.C. and Texas. Ultimately, I came back to TPPF in 2016 as managing editor of research and had the opportunity to write and research policy areas that interested me like film incentives, the hotel occupancy tax, and the three-tier system of alcohol distribution. Recently, I have been promoted to the position of director of research. So, TPPF has given me the freedom that motivated my move to America in the first place and a space to flourish.

Menard: You’re the director of research at TPPF. Can you explain to our Veritas readers a little of what that means? What does a “day in the life” of Carine Martinez look like?

Martinez: Well... no day ever quite looks the same! As director of research, I oversee and manage the publication schedules for all policy areas TPPF works on. The publication process is quite rigorous because we know that quality research fuels our mission.

Our process begins with our policy analysts developing our Liberty Action Agenda (LAA). This agenda is what we think will be important for Texas and for us—what we want to work on and what we think we can make progress on. From the Liberty Action Agenda, we develop our research agenda and TPPF’s policy staff members research and write

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research papers. Once those research papers are finalized within the policy area, they are sent to me.

Revisions, then, start with me. I review all research papers for quality: fact-checking, making sure all assertions are supported by citations, checking for consistent grammar, spelling, punctuation, and those such things. The papers go through an internal review process after my editing. Within this internal process review, the methodology of the paper and the quality of the research in general are scrutinized. Next, Josh Treviño, Chief Innovation Officer, takes a final look, and then it goes back to the author for revisions. Each paper goes through two more rounds of this process before being finalized.

Once approved, the research paper goes to TPPF's publication manager, Christy Anderson. Christy is the person who, as everyone says, "makes our papers pretty." She lays out the typesetting and design and will do a final proofread of the paper. Once Christy completes her work, the author and I take a final look before it goes to publication. Throughout this process, I make sure that deadlines for research, writing, and publication in print or online are being met. The rigor of our research process makes sure we're putting the best possible information in the hands of Texas policymakers.

Menard: What a process! In addition to overseeing the publication process, you also help with the preparation of legislative testimonies. What are legislative testimonies and what does the preparation process look like?

Martinez: A legislative testimony is a statement presented before a legislative committee; legislative testimonies are an important way that TPPF shares our research and influences policymaking. When we prepare testimonies, the process looks very similar to the publication process I described earlier, but with a more rapid timeline because the policy analyst needs to have his or her testimony prepared in time for a particular hearing. The testimonies are based on research that we have already done. When reviewing the testimony, we check to see that it reflects the research and will edit for grammar and clarity. We want legislators to hear the clearest and most concise arguments possible.

Menard: What are some of TPPF's recent publication projects and how do you hope they enlighten policymaking this year?

Martinez: Every other year we publish a Legislator's Guide to the Issues. The Legislator's Guide to the Issues offers a wealth of information for the full scope of TPPF's policy agenda.

For the first time in 2020, we also published Forging Texas: A Guidebook for Legislators. Forging Texas is more of a narrative around the priorities of our Liberty Action Agenda and how they are crucial to Texans' freedom and prosperity, from K-12 education to immigration. Forging Texas includes an introduction to the main issues and research and TPPF's recommendations in a variety of policy areas. Armed with these tools, legislators will have the resources to make enlightened policy decisions in the 87th Legislative Session.

“The scrutiny of the review process ensures that we have solid ground for our policymakers to discuss and promote conservative policies that keep Texas free and help everyone in the state.”

Menard: For *Veritas* readers, what's the biggest takeaway you would like them to know about TPPF's research publications?

Martinez: What I'd really like for *Veritas* readers to know is that we really strive to produce quality research—checking and double-checking the assertions that are in every research paper. We make sure that the sources we use are reliable and that we cite primary sources. For example, if we have data that is cited by a newspaper, we try to find the original source to make sure no error has been made. We also make sure methodology in research is correct. The scrutiny of the review process ensures that we have solid ground for our policymakers to discuss

and promote conservative policies that keep Texas free and help everyone in the state.

Menard: What would you say is the most important way your job, as director of research, helps TPPF achieve our mission?

Martinez: What I consider as the most important part of my job is the accuracy of the research. It's a different process to write a paper than to edit it, and it can be difficult to edit your own work the same way you edit someone else's work. I'm here to have the policy team's back in terms of research and make sure that no errors get into the research process. It's this commitment to accuracy that allows TPPF to produce the research that promotes liberty, opportunity, and free enterprise in Texas and beyond. Ultimately, I want to make sure that all the research TPPF produces is academically sound because it is important for Texas and Texans that we get things right. ★

To read TPPF's recent policy research and publications, all published according to the rigorous process Carine described, please visit <https://www.texaspolicy.com/issues/?types=research>.



Chassidy Menard joined TPPF in January of 2021 as a development writer. She is a graduate of Wyoming Catholic College where she earned her degree in Liberal Arts and is proud to use her skills in writing and communications to share TPPF's successes. Despite being a native of the swamps of Louisiana, she developed a love for rock climbing while in Wyoming and is a climbing instructor. Chassidy is currently living in Louisiana and enjoys feasting on Cajun cuisine with her family.



2021 POLICY ORIENTATION

The Texas Public Policy Foundation's annual Policy Orientation and Visionaries Meeting has become the most vibrant policy event in the nation. This year's January 13-15 conference, hosted at the AT&T Hotel & Conference Center in Austin, Texas, had a limited in-person audience due to local health and safety restrictions. We welcomed an at-capacity crowd of more than 200 elected officials, legislative staff members, supporters, and guests in-person to engage in conversations on the biggest issues facing our state and nation.

While our in-person audience had to be smaller than usual, our online audience grew exponentially. With more than 17,000 live viewers joining, it's safe to say that this year's Policy Orientation reached the largest audience yet with a message of optimism and hope for the future of the liberty movement.

Below are the highlights from keynote speakers at the 2021 Policy Orientation:

- Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick opened the conference by speaking on the importance of calming leadership in times of crisis and the Radical Left's attacks on conservative individuals and ideologies.
- Rachel Bovard (Senior Policy Director at the Conservative Policy Institute), Matt Braynard (Executive Director at Look Ahead America), and John Davidson (Political Editor at *The Federalist*), discussed the 2020 election results and the often-overlooked positive results for down-ballot conservatives.
- Kimberley Strassel, a member of *The Wall Street Journal* Editorial Board, encouraged the audi-

ence to focus on the "immediate policy fights... that go to the heart of how average Americans live their lives every day."

- Florida Governor Ron DeSantis shared the freedom-focused policies Florida has implemented and emphasized the friendly rivalry between Texas and Florida—two great conservative beacons of liberty.
- Texas Governor Greg Abbott shared his policy priorities for the 87th Legislative Session, as well as his plans for expanding economic prosperity throughout the Lone Star State.
- Congressman Chip Roy (Texas District 21) talked about restoring institutions of civil society and his analysis of the 2020 election results.
- New Congress members Tony Gonzales (Texas District 23), August Pfluger (Texas District 11), Michelle Steel (California District 48), and Beth Van Duyne (Texas District 24) shared their plans for advancing conservative policies in their first terms in office.

If you were not able to attend 2021 Policy Orientation, or if you simply want to re-watch a presentation or share it with a friend, you can view every keynote and panel discussion on the TPPF YouTube page. Simply go to youtube.com/user/TexasPPF and select 2021 Policy Orientation under playlists to view all video content from the conference. ★

Save the Date for next year's Policy Orientation to be held January 19-21, 2022 at the AT&T Conference Center in Austin, TX.



Photos: Above is a selection of photos from the keynotes, panels, and meals from this year's Policy Orientation. We were honored to have keynote speakers Rachel Bovard, Senior Policy Director at the Conservative Policy Institute (first row, left), Texas Governor Greg Abbott (second row, middle), Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (fourth row, second from right), Lt. Governor Dan Patrick (fifth row, left), former Texas Governor and former U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry (fifth row, right), and many others join us.

A High School Curriculum Raising Texans' Energy IQ

by Annie Elliott

Recently, TPPF's Life:Powered team noticed something troubling about the Texas education system. They realized that Texas children are learning about energy, but they're not getting the full story. Instead, students are taught that fossil fuels are inherently bad and that renewable energy sources—like wind and solar—are inherently good. Unfortunately, they're not taught about the fundamental role that carbon-based energy plays in eliminating poverty across the globe. So students are not only being left in the dark about the fullness of energy's role in Texas and throughout the world, but they're also being indoctrinated with a false narrative that fossil fuels are fundamentally evil.

The Life:Powered team set out to solve this problem. They worked with education experts to develop a curriculum for a class called "Foundations of Energy." This semester-long career and technical education (CTE) course provides students with a well-rounded energy education. Through interactive activities, class participants learn about how fossil fuels are obtained and the good that they do in providing a safe, reliable, essential energy source. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) approved the curriculum for use in schools and the first students to participate in the "Foundations of Energy course" began their class in the Fall 2019 semester.

When the curriculum was initially implemented, more than 200 high schoolers in the Fort Worth Independent School District (ISD) signed up to take the course. This phenomenal response proves that

today's students are eager to learn more about the truths behind energy production and use.

After the success of that initial course, the Life:Powered team reached out to teachers and school administrators to recruit new school districts to offer this important CTE class to their high school students. Because of these efforts, the curriculum has been adopted in five additional school districts: Crosby ISD, Humble ISD, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Hallsville ISD, and Bay City ISD. Now, in 2021, the "Foundations of Energy" course is available to more students than ever before.

"Thanks to your generosity, teachers have the resources they need to carry out the kinesthetic, hands-on learning modules that demonstrate the importance of fossil fuel energy."

The Life:Powered team has poured hours into curriculum development and into expanding the availability of the program. They have continued to refine the curriculum and have even been able to visit classrooms and teach a lesson. And perhaps most importantly, because of the support of donors like

"Where electricity is in wide use, there is prosperity. Where electricity is lacking, poverty and deprivation are the norm."



you, Life:Powered provides teachers with all of the course materials and resources at no additional cost to the school. Thanks to your generosity, teachers have the resources they need to carry out the kinesthetic, hands-on learning modules that demonstrate the importance of fossil fuel energy. In doing so, they are able to provide students with the knowledge necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the energy industry and how it contributes to American prosperity.

Your support of TPPF enables important efforts shaping the hearts and minds of Texas' future leaders. Programs like the "Foundations of Energy" curriculum are an important part of this work. Because of you, Life:Powered is able to raise Texas students' energy IQs through this innovative high school course. Thank you for your part in educating Texas children about the importance of fossil fuels as a source of reliable, safe energy crucial to eliminating poverty. ★

To learn more about Life:Powered's work, please visit <https://www.lifepowered.org>.



Annie Elliott is the director of donor communications at TPPF. She was born and raised in Austin and attended Texas A&M University in College Station. She and her husband, Thomas, enjoy spending their free time together visiting friends and family, and hope to become more adventurous travelers in 2021 with the help of a National Park Annual pass.



Jason Isaac, Director of Life:Powered, speaks to a group on the importance of reliable, safe energy derived from fossil fuels.



FINDING COMMON GROUND: Education Reform

by David Dunmoyer

Pundits, elected officials, and the general public alike all echoed the same contrived statement each of us has heard: ‘America has never before been this divided.’ Given all the tumult that we lived through in the past year—be it the election, the global pandemic, or civil unrest—it certainly can be hard to believe otherwise.

However, isn’t it at all possible that such insistence on our division has caused many to overlook areas where there is common ground? Where bipartisan reform is riper than before we were told of this widespread disunity?

We need not look further than the average parent in America to recognize there is a path forward that is agreeable to both the neighbor who had the Trump sign and the other who proudly touted a Biden flag.

For the parents that converted their homes into impromptu learning centers in 2020 and took on a second full-time job as “teacher,” many new questions emerged about education stemming from the seismic shock that COVID-19 inflicted on traditional education. While there may have been as many questions as there were parents with school-age children, all of them ultimately rendered the same desire.

Certainly, we all can agree that we want our future leaders to succeed in school; we don’t want their learning stunted by this shock to the system; and we want our children to find, harness, and pursue that which brings them passion. Put plainly, we want our children to succeed. This is about as controversial a

statement as saying, “3-month-old golden retriever puppies are cute.”

Recent polling conducted by EdChoice allows us to get to the heart of what school parents envision student success looking like in today’s education complex. Initially, more than two-thirds of parents prefer that schools provide multiple learning options, drawing from the belief that schools should have both in-person classes and a virtual option, where parents can ultimately choose which option works best for their child. Parents want options, and they want to be entrusted with the final say in selecting the form of schooling that best suits their children’s needs.

Common ground is being formed here because the consequences of a myopic approach to education amidst COVID-19 is something no parent can bear. Current research indicates a 3-5% enrollment decline in K-12 education, engendering the reality that this will be subsequently followed by less school funding, lower educational attainment, and a higher number of children missing from the system—consequences that will percolate until more unity is established in providing more schooling options.

What’s more, we are witnessing historic shifts in students post-high school. Current studies are pointing to a 16.1% decrease in freshman student enrollment in undergraduate institutions, and a 22.7% drop in community college enrollment. While in recent years, the answers to this conundrum would have been tied to the subscript R or D next to an elected official’s name, TPPF is at the tip of the spear behind

a solution that is generating sweeping bipartisan support in Texas.

TPPF’s work is showcasing why the “go to college and figure it out later” model is woefully misguided and challenging the adage that college is the only viable pathway to success. Rather, providing more robust career and technical education (CTE) opportunities is the solution, and the data and polling continue to indicate near unanimity in this approach.

Currently, in Texas, students who are not interested in going to college or are considered economically disadvantaged are placed in clusters (departments with different courses of study such as agriculture, cosmetology, etc.) based on interest and what is available at their school. Problematically, the clusters that most students end up in are not aligned well with regional job demand, resulting in schools spending exorbitant sums on programs that are “popular,” yet have minimal economic demand. As a result, students are being trained in areas that are minimally profitable.

The existing approach gives a bonus of ~\$5,000 for each student that receives certification in CTE and passes the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA; a test designed to assess student readiness for college). Why are students who do not want to go to college being tested in college readiness? And what about the perverse incentives for schools to offer “popular” CTE clusters to produce more certifications for their bonuses, rather than provide programs that prepare students for gainful careers?

The TPPF solution is simple: schools can get their bonuses from the certification and TSIA components OR by producing students from CTE programs that make above \$37,000 per year in their field. This would almost immediately incentivize schools to of-

fer training in areas where careers are more lucrative immediately out of high school and job demand is higher. As an added incentive, students would receive 10% of this bonus by simply having their employer confirm their wages with the CTE program they participated in. Students will have higher earning potential, schools will attract more students to their CTE programs, and labor market demands will be better met.

“Reasonable, sound approaches to providing students and parents a menu of options to education styles and pathways is popular among all Texans.”

By realigning the incentives of the institutions with the incentives of the individual students, CTE programs will offer dignifying, high-paying jobs rather than an unfortunate alternative to the “college default.” With viable CTE options on the table, students will take pride in and ownership of their passion, recognizing it as a lucrative path forward that does not saddle them with debt and circumscribe them to a linear pathway.

Reasonable, sound approaches to providing students and parents a menu of options to education styles and pathways is popular among all Texans. As TPPF continues to chart the path towards this future, we remain optimistic that education is not only the clearest avenue for socioeconomic mobility, but one of the clearest avenues for bipartisanship. ★



David Dunmoyer joined the Texas Public Policy Foundation in September 2020. While initially brought on board as an intern with the Next Generation Texas campaign, he ultimately found his calling in the chief of staff role. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Strategic Communication from Texas Christian University and is currently pursuing his Master of Public Affairs at UT Austin’s LBJ School of Public Affairs. David began his professional experience as an Account Executive at a public affairs firm in California’s capital city.

BUILDING A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

Joe Plunkett and Laura Klein Plunkett

Joe Plunkett and his wife, Laura Klein Plunkett, met at the town dump. While that may not strike everyone as an ideal place to enkindle a lifelong romance, for Joe and Laura, it's an insight into the values and choices that have underpinned their lives together: personal responsibility, care for the common good, and empowering themselves and others with knowledge.



Living in Berkley, Massachusetts in the 1980s, Joe decided to do something about the city's ballooning waste management costs. The city approved him to launch a committee that developed innovative solutions to handle solid waste, introduce recycling, and eliminate redundancies. Laura was one of the members of the five-person committee. Together, they worked to save Berkley more than \$1 million in waste-management costs over thirteen years. "I'm a conservative in the fullest sense of the word," Joe says of the program's success. From Joe's perspective, conserving our nation's resources—whether through recycling our waste, public spending cuts, or holding on to our country's founding values—is what sets the stage for a more promising future.

Joe and Laura each credit their parents for forming them into the people they have become.

For Laura, her father was a model of personal responsibility, making good choices, and being ready for whatever life hands you. A veteran of World War II, Laura's father trained war dogs and was part of a top-secret program on Cat Island off the coast of Mississippi. Although that war dog program was not successfully implemented as intended for the fight against Japan in the Pacific theater, her father trained hundreds of other sentry, messenger, scout and mine detection dogs during the war. Laura admired her father's grit, determination, and resolve in serving his country with such distinction. She has tried to emulate those values in her own life.

Likewise, Joe admires his mother's example. Despite her modest circumstances, Joe's mother raised him well and instilled in him a zeal for learning and education. Her encouragement led to his earning a degree in electrical engineering after serving in the Navy.

Joe and Laura aim to impart their parents' spirit of service, loyalty, and dedication to their own children and grandchildren—not just through words, but in how they live their lives and the legacy they plan to leave behind. In their retirement, they continue to devote their time to volunteerism and community engagement. When the time comes to pass on their estate, a portion will be reserved for their family, and the rest will be distributed to the causes and charities they hold dear.

The Plunketts proudly acknowledge that TPPF is among their beneficiaries. When they first retired to Texas in 2012, some new acquaintances introduced them to TPPF because of their shared concern for liberty and limited government.



"One of the things I most respect about TPPF," Laura shares, "is the approachability. It's not easy for TPPF to be so available to supporters, but they do it year after year." She and Joe respect how TPPF strives to get the right mix of people, present them with the facts, and find commonalities in their values.

"Their policies are right, they've done their research, and I'm proud of what they're doing," Joe adds. It's more than just TPPF itself that the Plunketts support; they share TPPF's vision of abundant liberty for Texas and America. Joe speaks for us all when he says, "Every day I wake up and thank God I'm back in Texas." ★

For more information on how you can join Joe and Laura as members of TPPF's Lone Star Legacy Society, contact Shari Hanrahan, Director of the Lone Star Legacy Society, at shanrahan@texaspolicy.com or (512) 627-9831.



OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

You Can Influence the Future in One Sentence

As a TPPF supporter, you rightfully expect to see results. Whether you invested to solve a specific problem or to affect large scale change, TPPF worked hard on your behalf to secure more freedom and prosperity in Texas and beyond.

TPPF has achieved results for you from protecting your property rights from overreaching government, to forcing accountability on Texas schools, to reducing the burden of your property taxes, to emphasizing traditional civics and history in schools, and so much more.

Imagine, then, how rewarding it would be to extend the impact of your generosity beyond today to future generations in a simple and affordable way.

By including a gift to TPPF in your will, you can join us in the fight for freedom for generations to come. And it's as simple as adding a single sentence to your will.

Is including a gift in your will right for you? If you can answer "yes" to any of the questions below, then you may be ready to write TPPF into your life's story through your will.

- Do you want the opportunity to guide decisions about the future ownership of your possessions and the legacy you leave behind?
- Do you want to make sure your support of TPPF's work is still available after your lifetime?
- Do you want to balance your generosity to TPPF with an assurance that loved ones are taken care of first?
- Do you want the flexibility to change your mind about your gift at any time?

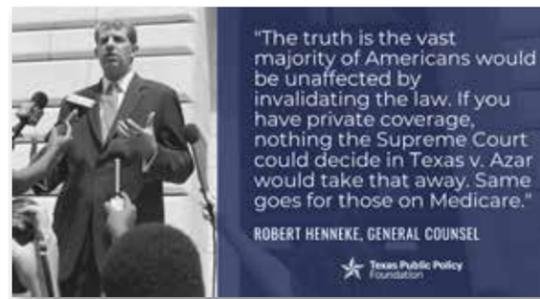
If you would like more information about including TPPF in your will and joining Joe and Laura as members of the Lone Star Legacy Society, contact Shari Hanrahan, Director of the Lone Star Legacy Society, at (512) 627-9831 or shanrahan@texaspolicy.com.

Happenings & UPDATES

Defending Your Healthcare Freedom

In November 2020, TPPF's litigation arm, the Center for the American Future, took the case against the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare) all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. TPPF represented the case's only individual plaintiffs—ordinary people whose lives were upended by the terrible legislation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). TPPF General Counsel Rob Henneke argued that “Healthcare remains a critical national issue. But the ACA already isn't working. Striking just the mandate will only make it worse. Rather than leaving the country and its citizens to make do with a patchwork of what Congress originally enacted, the Court should hold the mandate inseverable. Nothing would spur Congress more quickly to restart the important work of fixing America's still-broken healthcare system—this time following the Constitution while doing so.” The court can release a decision on this case anytime between January and June 2021, so we are anxiously awaiting their results—and hopefully a win for healthcare freedom.

To learn more about this case, and what an end to Obamacare would mean, please visit <https://www.texaspolicy.com/ending-obamacare-wont-eliminate-insurance/>.



Forging Texas: Episodes One and Two



In our August 2020 issue of *Veritas*, we highlighted TPPF's video team and the importance of their storytelling work. Since then, the team has begun an ambitious new project called Forging Texas. This video series focuses on Texas' illustrious history, with the initial episodes centered on the Texas Revolution.

“The story of the Texas Revolution is the story of ourselves—who we are, how we came to be, and what it means to truly be Texan,” said TPPF Executive Director Kevin Roberts, Ph.D. “Texas is the extension of America's founding, based on the principles of ordered liberty, self-government, and equality. Texas' story is a reflection of our national identity

and we continue to fight for the same ideals. How do we live in liberty? How do we resist tyranny? What do we owe to our community? What are we willing to endure for our children's futures? The revolutionaries of the Texas past gave the best possible answers to each of these questions—and we owe it to them to aspire to their standard.”

The first episode in the “Forging Texas” series premiered in October 2020 and the second premiered at Policy Orientation this year. Eight more episodes are planned for release over the coming months and we look forward to sharing more updates with you as this project progresses.

In the meantime, to watch the available episodes of “Forging Texas,” please visit <https://www.texaspolicy.com/multimedia>.

TPPF Releases 2021 Legislative Action Agenda and Forging Texas: A Guidebook for Legislators

In November 2020, TPPF released our Legislative Action Agenda. This publication highlights TPPF's top legislative priorities for the 87th Legislative Session and provides details on the policy goals of each campaign.

You can read the entire Legislative Action Agenda online at <https://www.texaspolicy.com/laa>.

TPPF also produced Forging Texas: A Guidebook for Legislators, published in January 2021. Designed for legislators and their staff, this booklet shares TPPF's research in a narrative format that shows why conservative policy is important for the future of the Lone Star State. While it was created for legislators, Forging Texas: A Guidebook for Legislators, is a great resource for anyone who wants to learn more about policy.

You can find Forging Texas: A Guidebook for Legislators online at <https://www.texaspolicy.com/forging-texas-a-guidebook-for-legislators/>.



David Balat Receives Texas Patriots Award

David Balat, Director of Right on Healthcare, received the Texas Patriots Excellence in Achievement Award at Policy Orientation this year. This award, generously sponsored by Joseph G. and Olga P. San Miguel, recognizes the contributions of a staff member toward TPPF's mission of advancing liberty in Texas and throughout the nation. For his efforts to promote groundbreaking solutions in the field of healthcare freedom, David is a very deserving recipient of this honor.

You can learn more about David's work at <https://www.texaspolicy.com/initiatives/right-on-healthcare>.



Photo (from left): Rob Henneke, Director of the Center for the American Future and a previous Texas Patriots Award recipient, Olga P. San Miguel, David Balat, Joseph G. San Miguel, and Kevin Roberts at the award presentation.



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