

Identifying the Groups Working to Undermine Public Education



It is important to learn the identities of the adversaries of public education and to be informed about other groups as they emerge. Our adversaries use many names, which sound innocuous; while trying to end collective bargaining, and destroy unions and public education.



Awareness of the authors of articles of on-line or in print materials and of the sponsors of radio and television ads aids in the ability to make informed decisions about candidates and the issues.



ALEC (The American Legislative Exchange Council) was founded in 1973 by conservative activist, Paul Weyrich. Nealy ¼ of all state legislators are members of ALEC. It brings legislators to private symposiums where the legislators, licensed lobbyists, and “think tank” staff meet and work on ideas for legislation, learn about model laws on issues including voting, public education, and other issues of interest to the organization to take back to enact in their state houses. After the retreat, ALEC endorses any ideas that reflect its philosophy. It is then engaged in direct communication with state legislators. In 2019 it formed Political Process Working Group, a working group on redistricting, ballot measures, and election laws.



The Koch Brothers Network- Fred Koch (1900-1967) started this network to bring forward ultra-conservative beliefs, a belief in right- to-work laws, contempt for those who need government assistance, and a hatred for taxes and organized collectivism. Presently the Koch Political machine is declaring itself as part of the NeverTrump effort for 2024. This group, which is active all across the U.S, wants to destroy teachers’ unions, privatize education with public funds, allow families to join together to create their own “micro-schools” as an alternative to public education, expand educational saving accounts, and develop technologies that let parents pick and choose private classes and tutors much like on-line shopping. This network also funds outside groups to promote their conservative agenda during election years and to lobby for its conservative agenda on business and social issues. *To read articles about this group, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/capeillinois/-bad-guys>*



Groups supported by the Koch Network:

The Freedom Partners Action Fund is a Super PAC that says it supports “candidates who believe in freedom, who will empower innovators and entrepreneurs over special interests to expand opportunities, create strong communities, and give everyone the best shot at a better life” (PolitiFact)

This group works to achieve its goals through many different entities within the network.

Some of these entities are **Americans for Prosperity, Freedom Partners, Freedom Partners Action Fund, Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, and Concerned Veterans for America.**



Stand Together is a Koch run group led by Gretchen Reiter- They oppose the For the People Act because they believe it restricts their first amendment rights. They also believe it violates dark money donors’ freedom of expression by making them disclose their names, if they contribute more than \$10,000 to nonprofit groups involved in election spending.



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People United for Privacy is a group fighting to keep nonprofit donors' identities secret

Americans for Tax Reform is led by Grover Norquist. This group believes that the disclosure of nonprofit donor's identities would cause a lot of harm.

The Libra Initiative: This is a grass-roots group was founded in 2011 under the umbrella of the Koch Brother's Americans for Prosperity group. It is targeting Hispanic families to push the agenda of public funding for private and charter schools. www.thelibreinstitute.org

The Reason Foundation was created in the 1970's as a think tank funded by the Koch network. It believes in the selling of public lands and properties, outsourcing public services to private corporations, and lessening the strength of the Federal government.

The Cato Institute was created by Charles Koch. According to its website the mission of the Cato Institute is to "originate, disseminate, and increase understanding of public policies based on the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace. Its vision is to create free, open, and civil societies founded on libertarian principles." <https://www.cato.org>. After the 2008 election the Cato gained more and more control over the Republican Party through their "by invitation only" seminar and through its staff and hundreds of scholars to initiate non-stop propaganda against its foes.

Policy Network- There are over 60 policy institutes and over 100 affiliates across the country with a presence in every state.

Its main priorities are

- Opposing Unions
- Privatizing public schools and public-school services
- Fighting environmental standards, such as emissions

Sinclair Broadcasting Group- This group is the largest TV broadcaster in the United States and reaches 38% of U.S. households. It is currently on a merger/business quest to increase to 72% of U.S. households. This group requires the inclusion of "must-run" conservative elements in its local programming, with many news items which are not pro-public education. 42% of registered voters trust their local news, while only 27% trust the national news. This group has taken a major role in forming public opinion.



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Donors Trust/Donors Capital Fund: According to its website, Donors Trust is a donor-advised fund committed to supporting and promoting the principles of liberty. It makes grants to charities that do not rely on government funding to support the principles of a civil society: limited government, personal responsibility, and free enterprise. Through their contributions they encourage philanthropy and individual giving as an answer to society's needs instead of governmental involvement to solve our society's problems. It was founded in 1999 in "collaboration with a small group of donors and nonprofit leaders who were actively engaged in supporting and promoting a free society as understood in America's founding documents." Lawson R. Bader has been the President and CEO since 2015 He has also worked for free-market research and advocacy groups. <https://www.donorstrust.org/> Donors Trust and its affiliated group, Donors Capital Fund has raised more than \$500 million for far right causes, distributed over \$400 million to more than 1,000 conservative and libertarian groups, helps wealthy contributors who want to anonymously donate millions to what Donors Trust views as the most important causes and supported The Heartland Institute, ALEC, and the attack on collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin.

The Heritage Foundation- This group was formed over 40 years ago by 1980 Paul Weyrich, (pronounced where ick). The conservative founder of the Heritage Foundation stated: "I don't want everybody to vote... As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down." According to its website, it advertises itself as "a research and educational institution whose mission is to build and promote conservative public policies." They communicate these policies, which include anti-union and anti- public education policies, on a daily basis through their website, The Daily Signal, and social media. *To read articles about this group, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/capeillinois/-bad-guys>*

3 Groups connected with the Heritage Foundation:

Moms for Liberty-their mission is fighting 'for the survival of America by "unifying, educating, and empowering parents.

Parents Defending Education- right now is focusing on opposing Critical Race Theory with "Know your rights" .

Education First Alliance -is focusing on tracking and fighting curriculum wars throughout the nation.



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Stand For Children- This organization undermines public schools by touting the virtues of alternate forms of education and has a strong presence on FaceBook.

To read articles about this group, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/capeillinois/-bad-guys>

StudentsFirst- This group was founded by Melissa Rhee of Sacramento, CA to advocate for the creation of more school choice for parents and accountability for teachers. It operates in various states under the banner of StudentsFirst, but has merged with the national, Washington, DC based organization 50Can.

To read articles about this group, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/capeillinois/-bad-guys>

American Federation for Children: According to its website, it was founded in Milwaukee in 1998. Their mission: “to empower families, especially lower-income families, with the freedom to choose the best K-12 education for their children.” It promotes school choice, not public education.

According to Source Watch <https://www.sourcewatch.org/>: It “is a conservative 501(c)(4) dark money group that promotes the school privatization agenda via the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and other avenues. It is the 501(c)(4) arm of the 501(c)(3) non-profit group the **Alliance for School Choice**. The group was organized and is funded by the billionaire DeVos family.” Also affiliated with Black Minds Matter and School Choice Boyz.

<https://www.federationforchildren.org/>

The Fire: The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's mission is to defend and sustain the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought — the most essential qualities of liberty. FIRE educates Americans about the importance of these inalienable rights, promotes a culture of respect for these rights, and provides the means to preserve them. They are funded by the Koch Foundation and the Bradley Foundation. They believe in free market economics and libertarian and conservative issues.

www.thefire.org

Pioneer Institute- Governor William Weld of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts “hired almost everybody” out of the State Policy Network affiliate Pioneer Institute following his election. Illinois government witnessed a similar event (but not the same scale) exemplified by Governor Bruce Rauner and the Illinois Policy Institute.



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Groups Specific to Illinois

The Illinois Policy Institute is part of the nation-wide Policy Network. It uses the tactic of anti-tax advocacy. In this way it can address such topics as local and state government revenue as it promotes its issues, one of which is the idea that educators and firefighters are overpaid. It is a way to gain leverage to promote and enact its legislative agenda. Its staff of skilled vocal advocates for its issues has grown from 18 persons to over 50 in the past few years. IPI is adept in traditional and local media and has invested heavily in social media such as FaceBook and the creation/marketing of websites.

Illinois News Network (INN) - This media arm of the IPI hires reporters and generates its own media content. It is often referred to as a “project of the Illinois Policy Institute.” In contemporary Illinois the struggling newspaper industry is understaffed and relies on wire services such as the Associated Press and INN, so opinion/editorial pieces submitted as *free news articles* are routinely used. At the end of the article it will state the name of author. Sometimes that author is listed as on the staff of the Illinois Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank. Newspapers in Illinois use this approach with great frequency.

Illinois Radio Network- This network was purchased by the INN. Across all IRN affiliates throughout Illinois the radio show “Illinois Rising” has replaced the typical news roundup show “Eye on Illinois.” A classic example of their news format is the first show in which the host and guest discussed how the progressive income tax is negative. Research reveals 39 radio stations receive news exclusively from the IPI.

Economic Freedom Alliance PAC (IL Coalitions for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity PAC)- This group funds candidates and ads to maintain a free market system. Their vision of a free market system endorses school choice and using public funds for private and charter schools. Their largest donor is The Illinois Manufacturing Association.

Liberty Justice Center- This is the legal arm of the IPI. The Liberty Justice Center filed a lawsuit to prevent same-day voter registration in Illinois, filed as petitioner in complete support of Mark Janus, and supplied legal counsel for the petitioner in the recent fair-share Supreme Court case, Janus v. AFSCME.

The Franklin Center- This is an example from the state of Texas. Most funding for this group comes from Donors Trust which indirectly funds IPI and the State Policy Network. (now 64 groups in 49 states and Puerto Rico). They indirectly fund IPI and State Policy Network reporters to construct articles ranging from anti-teacher pieces, i.e., tenure, pensions, etc, to articles questioning President Obama’s birth certificate.

Liberty Principles Political Action Committee – This committee, formed by Dan Proft, has saturated legislative districts with its version of campaign information using a newspaper format. An example is The Prairie Wire, which appeared to be a real newspaper, but was not. This rich and powerful PAC raises and spends millions of dollars on “media buys.”

Illinois Opportunity Project – This group was founded by Dan Proft on behalf of IPI and actively recruits legislative candidates who meet the goals of IPI.

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Newsinator - This media firm was created by Brian Timpone. It uses money from Liberty Principles to support *liberty oriented candidates*. Liberty Principles spent \$195,434.00 in 2016 to mail *political content* to voters in a newspaper format. Newsinator also engages in paid political work under the name Interactive Content Services.

Local Government Information Services- This is a Dan Proft/Brian Timpone creation and administers the websites and publications created by Newsinator. There are now 29 websites and 11 publications, such as, the North Cook News and the Grundy Reporter.

Think Freely Media- This non-profit is dedicated to limited government, and Dan Proft is a consultant for them. It spent \$346,660.00 on websites with content described as news.

Awake Illinois: According to its website it “was launched by everyday parents and citizens in May 2021 and chartered the first chapter in Naperville, Illinois, and is expanding throughout all 4 corners of the state with 30+ chapters. In 2023, we plan for Awake chapters to launch in surrounding states.” An affiliated not for profit 501c3 launched Spring 2023. Its website gives information about a pledge to “fight woke”, to oppose a national standard for sex education, and fight gender affirming care. The Chicago affiliate of NBC news June 19, 2023 included a segment with Shannon Adcock discussing the organizations opposition to the new Illinois law that stated that libraries in Illinois which receive state funds cannot ban books. Ms. Adcock stated that she supported that *obscene reading material* and socialist or Marxist materials also not be available to students. <https://www.awakeil.com>

Heartland Institute- This group denies global warming and attacks any attempt to address the issue. It financed billboards with pictures of the unbomber saying he believes in global warming. They make free textbooks available to teachers with instructions on how to teach/lesson plans on how to deny climate change in the classroom. It also worked to undo the Great Lakes Compact, which was a multi-state agreement to protect the Great Lakes and its water sources. Governor Rauner donated \$50,000.00 directly to the Heartland Institute.

People to Watch: Richard Uihlein, Dan Proft, Bruce Rauner, The DeVoss family,

