Identifying and Understanding the Groups Working to Undermine Public Education

Presenters: Carol Schnaiter and Diane Chapman
Illinois Education Association-Retired
Competency Theme: Advocacy

Theme(s) and Progression Level(s): Competency Theme: Advocacy
- Utilizes best practices in advocacy and political efforts
- Engages and builds mutually beneficial relationships to advance advocacy and political goal
- Acts as a political advocate
- Foundational Level 1: Learns issues to better understand content; shares key messages with members, the community and partners

Skills: strategies for advocacy, how to be an advocate
Meets the needs of all constituency groups
Session Goal(s) and Objectives

By the end of this session participants will:

- Recognize and understand the well-coordinated nation-wide effort by groups who threaten public education and the reasons for their determination to seek privatization
- Use advocacy strategies to effectively share information about the groups who threaten public education and our retirement benefits and about the pro-public education groups that promote public education and how we can advocate for public education-friendly candidates and issues
- Share the knowledge acquired through their discussions during the presentation with their state and local affiliate members, family/friends, and their community
5 Minutes in your groups

Why Do We Need to Identify Our Adversaries
WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF OUR ADVERSARIES?

• Eliminate public education in favor of privatization

• Use government to suppress voting rights

• Eliminate the collective voice of voting blocks of groups of citizens

• Destroy unions and oppose pro-worker candidates’ campaigns

• Undermine the power of government to act for the common good, i.e., social programs: Social Security, Medicare, SNAP, minimum wage, child labor laws, health insurance, environmental protections and regulations, food and drug safety, clean air and water, safety in the workplace, preserving public lands from privatization, free, public national parks, etc.
WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF OUR ADVERSARIES?

• Diminish the public’s confidence in government’s ability to legislate efficiently and effectively

• Eliminate all government regulations and taxes on business and commerce

• Oppose state tax reform that favors the average citizen
SHAPING FAR-RIGHT WING THOUGHT

- John C. Calhoun Senator from South Carolina
  - His Goals
  - His Playbook

- James McGill Buchanan
- After the New Deal
Outside Groups Working to Suppress the Vote and/or control the schools

ALEC
The Policy Network
The Koch Brothers Network
The Cato Institute
The Libre Initiative
Donors Trust/Donors Capital Fund

The Bradley Foundation
Sinclair Broadcasting
Fox News
Stand for Children
StudentsFirst
Stand Together
INTRODUCTION: An Overview: Beginning with ALEC

ALEC: (The American Legislative Exchange Council) invites state legislators from around the country to a private retreat where legislators, licensed lobbyists, and “think tank” staff meet and work on ideas for legislation. After the retreat, the Policy Network endorses any ideas that reflect its philosophy. It is then engaged in direct communication with state legislators.

ALEC’s 50 Years of Trusted Policy Solutions (Episode 6: Education Opportunity) (youtube.com)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ngty26ia2bc&authuser=0
THE KOCH EMPIRE

• Americans for Prosperity
• Freedom Partners (was previously Association for American Innovation)
• Freedom Partners Action Fund – a Super PAC
• Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce
• Concerned Veterans for America – “one of the most muscular arms of the conservative Koch network
• Believe in People
• Stand Together
• yes. every kid
The LIBRE Initiative

• Grass-roots group
• Under the umbrella of another group
• Goals
• www.thelibreinstitute.org

The Reason Foundation

• Think tank
• Funding
• What it does
HOW OUR ADVERSARIES IMPACT US AND OUR STUDENTS

Use their wealth and influence to:

• Sway public influence
• Promote right to work laws
• Promote private schools
• Elect politicians
• Weaken the middle class
• Support big business
• Support deregulation

Key players

• Jeff Yass
• Betsy DeVos
WHY ATTACK PUBLIC EDUCATION?

- James Buchanan
- Create an enemy
- Shaping people’s views

- Charles Koch
  - Influenced by A.F. Harper
- A. F. Harper’s beliefs
- Attack Higher Education
THE CATO INSTITUTE and EDUCATION: Public Schooling Battle Map

Latest Battles:

• Blanket Explicit Material Policy — Maine, November 28, 2023
• Riot Over Teacher Attending Pro-Israel Event — New York, November 20, 2023
• Flag Prohibition Policy — Ohio, November 16, 2023
• "All Are Welcome Here" Flag Fosters Tribalism? — Indiana, November 16, 2023
• Parental Notification Proposal Prompts Walkout — California, November 15, 2023

https://www.cato.org/public-schooling-battle-map
Why Control the Courts

Henry Manne’s approach
• Find Investors
• Protection and enhance of corporate profits
• Form close relationships

George Mason University
• Created a research and design center
• Outcome of influencing thought
Influencing Thought at the State Level

Policy Networks
• Limit unions
• Cut funds for public education
• Control curriculum
• Control how students identify selves at school
Former news anchor, Dan Rather had a very pointed opinion about Sinclair Broadcasting.

Rather, Dan. “News Anchors looking into camera and reading a script handed down by a corporate overlord, words meant to obscure the truth not elucidate it, isn’t journalism. It’s propaganda. It’s Orwellian. A slippery slope to how despots wrest power, silence dissent, and oppress the masses.”

2 April 2018. 1:54 PM. Tweet.
How is the control of the wealthiest few diminishing the collective rights of the majority of Americans?
WHO FUNDS OUR ADVERSARIES?

THE BRADLEY FOUNDATION
SEARLE FREEDOM TRUST
FORMER IL GOV. B. RAUNER
DEVOS FAMILY
STAND TOGETHER (KOCH)

DONORS TRUST

ALEC
FRANKLIN CENTER
AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY
CATO INSTITUTE
POLICY NETWORK
ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE
HEARTLAND INSTITUTE
NRA
CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY
COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE
CITIZENS FOR SOUND ECONOMY
CLUB FOR GROWTH
LIBERTARIAN PARTY
HERITAGE FOUNDATION
FREEDOM PARTNERS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
TC4TRUST
CENTER TO PROTECT PATIENT RIGHTS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY/A. SCALIA LAW
501(c)(3) vs. 501(c)(4)

501(c)(3):
- Tax-Deductible Donations
- Less Restrictive Lobbying and Advocacy Limitations
- Cannot Endorse Political Candidates
- Activities Must Focus on Exempt Purposes

501(c)(4):
- Unlimited Political Advocacy and Lobbying
- Ability to Accept Donations From Corporations
- Donations Are Not Tax-Deductible for the Donor
- Less Favorable Tax Treatment
Supporting Public Education in Our Communities

National Education Association
Illinois Families for Public Education
Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education
Rethinking Schools
UN KOCH My Campus
Wear Red for ED
Does it matter if you are a Republican or Democrat???
Attempts to Restrict Access to Books in all of 2022
An attempt may include challenges to multiple titles

[Map of the United States showing states with varying degrees of book bans]

Titles Challenged Between January 1 and August 31, 2023 (preliminary data)
Attempts to censor books during this period: 531.
Total titles challenged in those attempts: 3923.
A challenge may result in access being retained, restricted, or revoked at a school or public library.

https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/how-many-book-bans-were-attempted-in-your-state-use-this-map-to-find-out
Time to Speak Up For Public Education

Public schools provide a free education to ALL students

Public schools build communities

Public schools prepare our youth for civic life

Public schools provide social services

Public schools are diverse
Discussion

The political atmosphere and the time is right for us to Stand Up! Speak Out! Be an Advocate!

So, What Will YOU Do?
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us!

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Visit the IEA-Retired website.

www.ieanea.org/retired
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• “How Public Schools Became The Koch Brothers ‘Lowest Hanging Fruit’. *Education Opportunity Network*
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upert-murdoch-timeline.html


upert-murdoch-21st-century-fox.html
SLIDES ON FUNDING SOURCES:


• Donors Trust.org

  
  