



NETWORKNEWS

A Mainstream Voice for Religious Freedom, Civil Liberties and Strong Public Schools

Moving Texas Forward – A Successful 2012 for TFN

January



TFN partners with the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy to present a one-day symposium on "Religion in the 2012 Elections" in Houston (Pictured: Pulitzer Prize winner Leonard Pitts)

April



TFN student chapters host civic engagement trainings in Brownsville, Austin and El Paso

June



TFN packs the house for its workshop at the Texas State Democratic Convention

October



Award-winning documentary film "The Revisionaries" – starring TFN! – premieres in Dallas, Houston and Austin

November



TFN activists help Get Out the Vote for State Board of Education elections across the state

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TFNUPDATES

2012 IN REVIEW

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- Rabbi Neil Blumofe
- Stephanie Chiarello
- Joni Cohan
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Network News is the official newsletter of the Texas Freedom Network.



A year ago in this space I wrote to you about the substantial science victory TFN achieved, despite the best efforts of the far right, at the Texas State Board of Education in 2011 and the optimism I had going into the new year. I'm happy to say I wasn't disappointed, and this time we have you, the voter, to thank.

With the defeats of board members Carlos "Charlie" Garza and Gail Lowe in this year's elections, and the retirement of Terri Leo, next year we will be looking at a far-right SBOE faction that is at its smallest since 2006, a victory that validated much of what we do and what you do to ensure that our children get the best education possible.

That's just one of the great things that we and our supporters accomplished in 2012 – a year that saw TFN break new ground in every aspect of its work and makes me believe we are poised for a successful 2013.

For instance, we started the year in Houston where, in partnership with the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy and the Rice University Religion and Public Life Program, we brought together some of the nation's leading

voices to discuss the role religion would play in the 2012 elections.

Speaking of elections, we mobilized thousands of Texans to get informed and vote in SBOE races, issuing a widely distributed voter guide and making our first-ever public endorsements in SBOE races.

In the media, our work fighting religious extremism at the SBOE was prominently featured in the award-winning documentary "The Revisionaries," a film that continues to receive glowing reviews at screenings across the country.

Our youth organizing grew to include student chapters at nine university campuses across the state in 2012. TFN student chapter presidents garnered national media attention from *Seventeen Magazine*, NBC Latino and Anderson Cooper's daytime talk show. Our student chapters registered and mobilized thousands of young voters across the state.

I could go on, but I'll let you read about our past and future work in these pages. Please pay special attention to pages 4-5, where we'll preview what's next at the SBOE – the adoption of science textbooks next year – and at the upcoming legislative session. There is a lot of hard work ahead and we'll truly need your help on both fronts.

From everyone here at TFN, I thank you for your support. With your help, I am confident that a year from now I will once again come to you with another message of victories to celebrate and optimism for the future.

REMEMBERING A FRIEND

The TFN family lost a dear friend this October with the passing of Joe Brown of Houston. Joe was one of the founders of Texans for Advancement of Medical Research (TAMR), which, under Joe's leadership, grew to become one of the state's leading voices in the struggle to promote and protect stem cell research.

TFN worked alongside Joe and his wife Nina over a number of years, always finding them a source of encouragement and inspiration. That's why we awarded them our highest award – the Samantha Smoot Activist Award – in 2007.

Even to the last, Joe would call TFN's offices regularly to check in, making sure the fight to defend medical research

was still joined, even if he couldn't be on the front lines any longer. We honor his commitment and courage.

We'll miss him.



Joe Brown and his wife Nina accept TFN's 2007 Samantha Smoot Activist Award from TFN President Kathy Miller



TFN STUDENTS

A YEAR FOR THE RECORD BOOKS

In 2012, TFN launched its first-ever voter registration and get-out-the-vote effort, a push led by our Student Leadership Council and TFN student chapters across the state. By Election Day, TFN student volunteers had registered nearly 4,000 young Texans to vote and then contacted

students by phone, email, text message and door-knocking to remind them to go to the polls. In total they made more than 32,000 contacts with young voters this year – a tremendous effort that will help the next generation of voters in Texas.



*left picture:
TFN registers students to vote on the UTEP campus*

*right picture:
TFN UT-Austin student chapter volunteer Katy Waters*



*left picture:
University of Texas-Pan American students take TFN's pledge to vote*

*right picture:
Sarah Walker, Olac Fuentes, Alyssah Roth, Liz Polinsky, Lauren Pace, Daniel Jurado*

By election day, TFN student volunteers had registered nearly 4,000 young Texans to vote.

a year for the record books



TEXAS
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NEWS+POLITICS

TFN PREPARES FOR BIG CHALLENGES AT SBOE, LEGISLATURE

SBOE Elections Bring Important Changes

This year's State Board of Education elections marked another big step toward ending the culture wars in Texas public school classrooms. Because of election defeats and retirements, the board lost half of its members this year – including a number of the board's right-wing extremists.

Recall that just four years ago, the board's faction of creationists and far-right ideologues was seven. To win on any given vote, they merely needed to win over one wavering board member — and, too often, they succeeded.

From 2008 to 2010 they passed science standards watering down evolution and social studies standards that highlighted right-wing heroes and suggested that separation of church and state isn't a key constitutional principle. They deliberately made it more likely that public schools will teach blatantly sectarian Bible courses, and they promoted divisions between Christians, Muslims and other people of faith.

In 2010 and 2012, however, we've seen five far-right board members go down to defeat in elections or choose not to seek re-election at all. This represents important and hard-won progress. (You can find a listing of winning candidates

SBOE: Exit Stage Right



Charlie Garza, 2012



Gail Lowe, 2012



Terri Leo, 2012

in the 2012 state board elections at tfn.org/sboe2012.)

But make no mistake: the board's religious-righters will still be strong enough to keep the fires of the culture wars burning. Next year the board will consider new science textbooks. Already creationist pressure groups are preparing to hijack that adoption and force publishers to include junk science attacking evolution in their textbooks. The board will then adopt new social studies textbooks in 2014. All of those textbooks will be in classrooms for nearly a decade.

So take a moment to celebrate our progress in moving the state board closer to the center and protecting our children's classrooms from the personal and political agendas of right-wing extremists. But then be prepared to help TFN defend sound science education in 2013 and fact-based history in 2014. We'll let you know how in the coming weeks.

The 2013 Legislature: Defending Our Values

The Texas Legislature, on issues ranging from women's health to funding for public education, swung sharply to the right in 2011. The Texas Freedom Network is planning for another tough legislative session in 2013. TFN is preparing aggressive strategies on a number of key issues:

- Fighting off renewed efforts to pass private school voucher schemes that would drain even more money out of public education
- Stopping the right's "war on birth control" and protecting women's access to affordable contraception
- Protecting religious freedom
- Promoting responsible, evidence-based sex education in Texas schools
- Defending science and stem cell research
- Standing up for equal rights for LGBT Texans

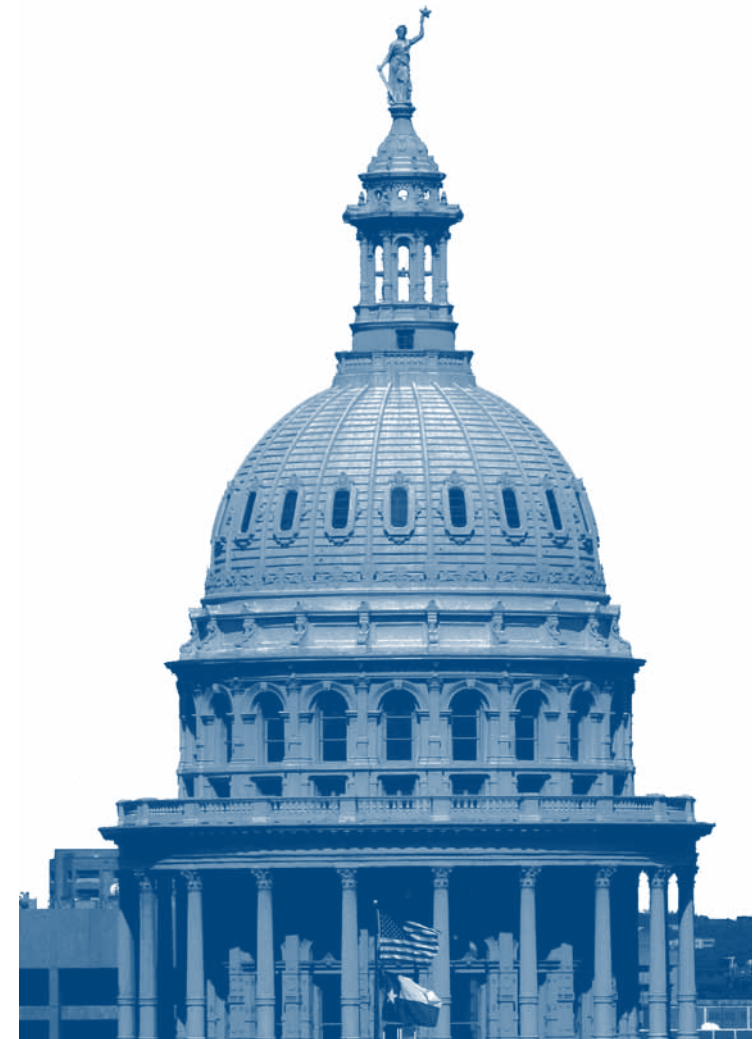
You can help TFN stand up for mainstream values by signing up for a Rapid Response Team on issues important to you. Go to tfn.org/rapidresponse.



Don McLeroy, 2010



Cynthia Dunbar, 2010





TFN CELEBRATIONS

EPIC EVENING A SUCCESS!

On Sunday, October 21, TFN's Epic Evening celebrated mainstream values with a sold-out crowd of 500 guests. Supporters enjoyed a cocktail reception, silent auction and seated dinner. Celebrity guest Susie Essman of HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm* provided some much-needed comic relief through her political humor and choice words for the religious right.

A real highlight of the event was the awards ceremony. Matt Winkler, Ph.D., received the Walking the Walk Award for placing himself on the front lines to stand up for sound science education in Texas. TFN's

Student Leadership Council members received the 2012 Samantha Smoot Activist Award for their impressive advocacy on behalf of sex education in public schools, civic engagement across the state and efforts to change the State Board of Education.

This event was a huge success due to the support of event chair Hon. Sarah Eckhardt, the planning committee, generous sponsors, silent auction donors and tireless volunteers.

Thanks to all who made the event truly epic!

TFN'S EPIC EVENING



*Clockwise from top left:
Kathy Miller presents
Matt Winkler, Ph.D., with the
2012 Walking the Walk Award;
Susie Essman and Student
Leadership Council;
Marc & Suzanne Winkelman,
Diane Land & Steve Adler;
Hon. Elliott Naishtat, Susie Essman,
Hon. Sarah Eckhardt*



*Photos by
Seabrook Jones & Chris Caselli*



protecting religious freedom
defending civil liberties
strengthening public schools

San Antonio

TFN returned to San Antonio to celebrate 17 years of fighting the good fight. Carrie and Steven Sinkin welcomed TFN supporters to their beautiful home.

Guests joined TFN Board members, elected officials and staff for this fantastic reception.

Thank you, San Antonio!



*from left to right:
Congressman Lloyd Doggett,
Susan & Tommy Smith;
Carrie Sinkin & Ann McMullan*

Photos by Mike Markovich



THANK YOU SUPPORTERS

Texas Freedom Network donors provide the resources and commitment that are critical to fighting the religious right. We couldn't accomplish our mission without their support.

Freedom Council

We offer heartfelt thanks to the TFN Freedom Council – donors who contribute an annual gift of \$1,000 or more – for their generosity in 2012.

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Suzanne & Marc Winkelman
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Sarah Woelk & Phil Durst
Megan Woodburn
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As of 11/12/12

thank you

TFN Education Fund Freedom Council

We are grateful to the very generous supporters of the TFN Education Fund for supporting groundbreaking research, leadership training and advocacy efforts.

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Barbara & J. Victor Samuels
Betty Sanders
Texas Civic Engagement Table
The Alliance for Medical Research
Barbara Cook Wendland
Peggy & Matt Winkler

As of 11/12/12

A GIFT HAS BEEN GIVEN

In Memory of:

Marjorie Love
by Shirley & Marvin Rich

Terry Redman
by Ethyl Rosenblatt, Laura & Paul Hyman

Joy Waits
by Ruth Stewart

In Honor of:

James Aldrete
by Karen Gross

Stephanie Chiarello
*by Barbara & Richard Chiarello
by Braden Frame*

Diane Ireson
by Annette Carozzi & Dan Bullock

Cheryl Pollman
by Rabbi Nancy Kasten

Student Leadership Council
by Dale & Steve Sonnenberg

Matt Winkler
by Ann & David Hillis



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Join a TFN Rapid Response Team and help **defeat voucher schemes, defend religious freedom and protect women's access to contraception** in the Texas Legislature in 2013!

Rapid Response Teams help TFN defeat the radical right by:

- ★ Following critical legislation on TFN issues
- ★ Receiving regular, targeted alerts from TFN's lobby team
- ★ Taking immediate action when bills are on the move

Bills are already being filed... sign up now!

*protecting religious freedom
defending civil liberties
strengthening public schools*

Sign up **NOW** at tfn.org/rapidresponse.