POLICY WINS ACHIEVED

Lives Changed
Measurable impact

In 2019, the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) accomplished more to move millions off government dependency and on the pathway to the American Dream than ever before. Winning policy reforms that improve lives is the only score that counts—and thanks to you, our donors, that number has never been higher.

We took the new, expanded association health plan rule issued by the Trump administration and helped nine states—including two with Democrat governors—change their laws to take advantage of it. We also worked with seven states to align their laws with the new federal rule that opened the short-term insurance market. With an average win rate of 55 percent, these reforms are bringing affordable health care to all types of Americans, from entrepreneurs to retirees not yet eligible for Medicare.

Our workforce solutions also gained momentum with nine states passing our Fresh Start solution, which breaks down barriers to work for those with criminal backgrounds. The reform drew bipartisan support and even inspired a Democrat state legislator to sponsor the bill in Maryland. We also successfully advanced relief for people struggling with student debt in five states, ensuring they don’t lose their occupational license and the ability to earn a living.

At the state level, we achieved 63 policy victories in 26 states, including a first-time win in Montana.

We took the momentum from our state wins to win even bigger at the federal level, with the White House finalizing six of our federal reforms.

These wins at the federal level impact every state, including those that would never change on their own. To put this in perspective: just one rule change from December 2019 resulted in up to 1.5 million more people moving off welfare.

The impact of these wins is huge—and is only possible because of generous donors like you. Thank you for partnering with FGA to lift millions from government dependency and empower them to achieve the American Dream.
787 total victories
235 state victories
13 federal victories impacting 552 state policies

9.5 million individuals leaving welfare over four years
$160 billion in taxpayer savings over the next decade

2014-2019 individuals off welfare, cumulative
Real people, real change

Health care choices make a difference for families

As a realtor and single mother, Desiree’s options for affordable health insurance are limited. But thanks to a short-term health plan, she has access to the coverage her family needs at a price she can afford. As short-term plans successfully advance, millions more people like Desiree will be able to enjoy the flexibility of entrepreneurship while still having options for affordable coverage.

Removing barriers empowers Americans to experience the dignity of work

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds knows from experience that any dream is possible if you are willing to work. It took years of overcoming adversity, balancing work and motherhood, and enduring late nights for Gov. Reynolds to earn her college degree at age 57. Now, her administration champions our workforce solutions like Fresh Start to help other Iowans into good jobs.

Tens of thousands of Iowans have access to better jobs with bigger paychecks thanks to Gov. Reynolds’s leadership on FGA’s workforce solutions.
Jeff Snyder was unemployed for more than nine months when he found out he was subject to Arkansas’s Medicaid work requirement. He traveled to his local government workforce center to look for a job and was immediately matched with employers in the area looking to hire. Today, Jeff is making nearly $18 per hour, roughly twice the minimum wage in Arkansas, in an industry he loves with room to grow.
Inside the strategy

Many bipartisan solutions

With the noise that comes from a mainstream media fixated on hyper-partisan politics, it’s easy to forget what real people want. The reality is, ordinary Americans think more about their own health care or their daughter’s student loan debt than the latest breathless breaking news story from the media.

Our solutions solve real problems for real people, and it doesn’t take an “R” behind someone’s name to see the value of commonsense reform—just ask all the Democrat legislators and governors who sponsored and supported our reforms. It’s why our health care and workforce solutions averaged a 55 percent win rate in 2019: good policy extends beyond party lines.

Incorporating federal lessons in the states

In 2019, we gave the Trump administration a big menu of ideas—and the response was tremendous. The administration publicly committed to 30 of the 40 regulatory reforms we introduced, finalizing six rules this past year alone. So, we challenged our own assumption about our state strategy.

The result? An expanded menu of solutions for 2020. The response and buy-in has been excellent. Last year, Ohio lawmakers chose seven of our policy solutions, and now they have committed to nearly 20. Florida lawmakers also increased their selection from six to more than 20. The same is playing out in state after state.
The power of the right research at the right time

FGA does whatever it takes to win, and our research is no exception. In October 2019, we partnered with the Bryant administration to track more than 50,000 people impacted by food stamp work requirements in Mississippi. We gathered the data, completed the analysis, then wrote and published the tracking study—in less than one week.

It’s a similar story in Washington, D.C. Our research provided the policy and legal justification to close a loophole that states were using to avoid enforcing work requirements for food stamps, keeping millions of able-bodied adults from opportunity and instead trapped in dependency. Our research also provided USDA with tools to make the rule significantly stronger. As a result, the final rule will move up to 1.5 million people back to work—double the effect of the initially proposed rule.
Providing solutions

FGA’S COMPREHENSIVE STATE AND FEDERAL SOLUTION SET FOR 2020

Allowing workers to earn while they learn while completing an apprenticeship would give workers on-the-job experience that counts towards licensing requirements.

Apprenticeships

Child Support Cooperation for food stamp recipients

Disability
- Disability Program Integrity
- Disability Benefits for Non-English Speakers
- Reforming the Disability Grids

Public Housing Work Requirements

Medicaid
- Opposing ObamaCare’s Unsustainable Medicaid Expansion
- Medicaid Work Requirements
- Medicaid Program Integrity

Occupational Licensing
- Licensing Protections for Workers
- Licensing Recognition

Varying standards between states force workers to pay high fees and can cause them to lose out on wages when they move to a new state. This also often can result in unemployment or a shortage of workers in the state. States should simplify the licensing process for those who are moving by recognizing their licenses and work experience.
In 2020, FGA will build on our momentum with an ambitious and visionary menu of reforms that tackle the kitchen table issues facing families across the country. Each of these reforms is designed with our goal in mind: helping millions of Americans experience the freedom of work.

Easing restrictions on association health plans (AHPs) would make it easier for small businesses to join together to purchase affordable, high-quality health insurance for their employees.

With student debt at crisis levels, students and their parents have a right to know all the options available to them, because a four-year university isn’t the only route to a well-paying job. They should have the facts about vocational tech, apprenticeships, the real cost of a college degree, average graduation rates, and a list of the most in-demand jobs in their state.
The people of FGA

Our success is driven by the people who embody the values of FGA. Our deep bench of talent—from lawyers to writers to policy experts—is committed to one thing: winning. We get the policy, we know the politics, and we prepare our partners to win. It’s the FGA way.

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Leadership

Tarren Bragdon, President and Chief Executive Officer
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Nick Stehle, Vice President of Communications
Kelly Fischer, Executive Operations Manager

Communications

Corina Gilbert, Creative Director
Mikayla Hall, Communications Manager
  Mikayla and her fiancé were engaged in December.
Sarah Hubal, Internal Systems Director
Olivia Klosterman, Development Communications Manager
  Olivia and her fiancé were engaged in February.
James Miller, Digital Marketing Director
  James and his wife purchased their first home in September.
Kelsey Philie, Communications Director
  Kelsey and her husband moved to Texas in July, and welcomed their baby boy in December.
Jessica Rizutto, Digital Marketing Manager
James Scimecca, Press Secretary
Donlyn Turnbull, Production Director

Development

Judy Cook, Development Director
  Judy and her family completed a much-anticipated visit to the United Kingdom in August.

Dan Remmenga, Donor Relations Director

Jonathan Ingram

VICE PRESIDENT OF POLICY AND RESEARCH

FGA’s mission is truly powerful. I am honored to use my policy expertise to help millions of people achieve the American Dream through work.

On the cover, Katie Rodgers and Tarren Bragdon strategize FGA’s health care solutions.
Olivia Klosterman
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

I believe in FGA’s mission because work provides you with a sense of dignity and purpose. It allows you to constantly challenge yourself and see the direct effects of those efforts, creating a positive feedback loop.

Policy and Research
Sam Adolphsen, Policy Director
Nic Horton, Research Director
Joel Allumbaugh, Visiting Fellow
Josh Archambault, Senior Fellow
  Josh and his wife welcomed 3-month-old twins in July through foster care.
Jonathan Bain, Research Fellow
Scott Centorino, Senior Fellow
  Scott and his wife moved to Virginia in August.
Hayden Dublois, Research Analyst
Victoria Eardley, Research Fellow
  Victoria and her husband purchased their first home in March.
Greg George, Senior Research Fellow
  Greg and his wife celebrated their first anniversary in December.
Haley Holik, Senior Fellow
Chase Martin, Legal Affairs Director

Government Affairs
Nick Adolphsen, Government Affairs Director
Tom Newell, Government Affairs Director
Gregg Pfister, Government Affairs Director
Megan Schmidt, State Affairs Manager
Robin Walker, Senior Director of Federal Affairs
Don Smith was one of the few generous and brilliant people whose light shines on long after they leave this world.

The first time I met Don in 2013, I had a classic inquisition with him, Julie Smith, Richard Greenberg, and Jon Hartsel. It was cordial but probing. His philanthropic approach seemed to be an extension of his investment strategy—look deep for value, understand the details, and get a good return—but his impact on me and FGA was so much more than financial.

Years ago, Don saw potential in me and our organization that I didn’t yet, and he took a bet so we could grow that potential into a mature organization. He was a catalyst and partner, not just a donor.

Don showed me the difference between being frugal and being stingy. He was the epitome of the humble humanitarian, quietly changing the world.

Don taught me how to enjoy the grind of hard work and how it leads to new insights and innovations.

Don showed me that you can simultaneously be an art lover, be moved by the poor half a world away, be a giddy newlywed, be a loving and doting father and grandfather, be a brilliant entrepreneur, and just be a good person, all in one day and every day.

My only regret is that I didn’t have a chance to tell Don this directly. But even from that, Don taught me a lesson: to love strongly and be grateful for the people in your life every day, because life is precious and far too short.

I am so grateful I had the chance to know him. The world needs so many Don Smiths.

Donald G. Smith

1941-2019 | Founder & CEO/CIO | Donald Smith & Co., Inc.