



CORPORATE POWER VS. COMMUNITY PROGRESS

*The Rise of State Bans as a Tool to
Hijack Democracy*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Corporate Playbook: Buy, Bully, Bamboozle</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Community Progress & Corporate Backlash: Laying the Foundations for State Bans</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>The Rise & Scope of State Bans over Time</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>An Unholy Alliance: Corporations, White Christian Nationalists, and Authoritarians</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>22</i>

INTRODUCTION

Over two centuries, corporations and wealthy elites have refined a playbook meant to hijack the tools of democracy and suppress any efforts to rein in their abuses. Time and again, communities have made powerful advances towards greater racial and economic equity, inclusion, and shared prosperity in the face of corporate greed. And some of the most innovative experiments in participatory, multiracial democracy have happened at the local level. In response, corporations, wealthy elites, and their political allies have responded by buying, bullying, and bamboozling lawmakers and the American public to block those advances.

This memo focuses on two key aspects of the larger corporate strategy to amass political influence while dismantling regulations on their power and profit: 1) forging strategic alliances with conservative Christian institutions and leaders to build a political base committed to unregulated capitalism and anti-regulatory sentiment; and 2) pushing laws, policies, and structural changes that increasingly enshrine the interests of corporations at the center of the American political system.

Within a political landscape profoundly shaped by their influence, corporations use state government — and state bans — to continue extracting from our communities without limit. And in their fervent quest to resist regulation and increase their profits, corporations have created the power structure, the playbook, and the social and economic conditions that have fueled the rise of authoritarians today.

WHAT ARE STATE BANS?

State laws — often pushed by corporations, their industry groups, and lobbyists — that prevent local communities from passing policies that create essential protections for working people in one or more issue area. Referred to as “preemption” in some spaces, state bans have become a tried and true strategy of the corporate deregulation agenda by dismantling existing local policies that check their power and profit — like local minimum wage ordinances — and blocking future ones from taking effect. Bans may either 1) block communities from setting local standards that go beyond state law on a specific issue; 2) put strict limitations on how communities can set standards on a specific issue, or which aspects of the issue they can regulate at the local level; or 3) block communities from setting local standards on a specific issue, even when no state standard exists — thus shutting communities out of protections entirely (beyond the bare minimum of what is required by federal law).

State bans now exist in all 50 states, including some form of affordable housing or workers’ rights related ban.¹ We define these bans as:

- ⚡ Affordable housing bans: any state bans that constrain communities’ ability to pass local policies that support access to affordable housing — like rent stabilization, just cause eviction protections, and incentives for affordable housing.
- ⚡ Workers’ rights bans: any state bans that constrain local communities’ ability to pass policies that set baseline standards for working people — like minimum wage ordinances, paid leave requirements, and fair scheduling policies.

Key Terms

Throughout this memo, we use a number of terms to describe the different tactics, ideologies and groups that corporations have engaged in their efforts to amass political power. While some of these have overlapping meanings, we use these terms as defined below:

- i White Supremacist:** The actors, policies, and systems that advance white supremacy – an ideology that emerged in the colonial United States by European settlers who created the concept of whiteness, a hierarchy of racialized value, and the belief in the inherent superiority of white people over all other groups.² This ideology was invented to ensure white wealth, power, and control across American society. Individuals and groups who subscribe to white supremacist ideology have inflicted brutal levels of violence on communities of color throughout US history. They also created the political, economic, and social systems that have enabled and maintained white dominance and exploitation of communities of color, starting with the foundational project of slavery and continuing through unregulated capitalism today.³ White supremacy intersects with and is reinforced by other systems of oppression like class oppression, gender oppression, heterosexism, and ableism – and is a foundational ideology within many other exclusivist ideologies in the US like White Christian Nationalism.⁴
- i Christian conservatives:** The broad set of Christian groups and individuals who have been politicized over time to influence law, policy, and elections in line with an overlapping set of socially and politically conservative beliefs.⁵ In this report, we reference calculated efforts by corporate and Christian leaders beginning in the mid 20th century to organize Christian communities around defending racially segregated religious schools, opposing abortion, and resisting government regulation and taxation. Christian conservatives span different denominations (including Protestant, evangelical and Catholic) and have influenced both Democratic and Republican parties. While not all Christian conservatives are white, Christian conservatives have often been mobilized to uphold and defend white supremacist systems and policies in the US. Christian conservatives include those who have been politicized around increasingly aggressive forms of racism, ethnic and religious exclusion, and anti-democratic ideals, including White Christian Nationalism. Broadly speaking, Christian conservatives tend to emphasize individual salvation and moral order, which stands in contrast to Christian progressive values emphasizing collective action and social justice.⁶
- i White Christian Nationalist (WCN):** The actors and policies that advance the ideology of White Christian Nationalism. This ideology dates back to the 1600s and is based on a belief that the United States was formed as — and should remain — a Christian nation reserved for white inhabitants.⁷ According to this ideology, the presence and power of any groups that stray from the narrow set of identities held by the “founding fathers” — including people of color, non-white immigrants, non-Christians, and LGBTQ+ people — are seen as a threat. White Christian Nationalists inherently espouse white supremacy, oppose pluralism, and they also believe in gender hierarchy and heteronormative family structures.⁸ While not all Christian conservatives embrace White Christian Nationalist ideology, there is a high degree of overlap in beliefs, particularly among white evangelical Protestants.⁹ And while Christian conservatives have often sought to advance their views within the existing rules of a democratic republic, White Christian Nationalists seek to build a Christian theocracy that reshapes our political system entirely to merge the state with

their particular brand of Christianity.¹⁰ This project thereby requires the subjugation, displacement, and/or eradication of individuals and communities that do not fit within their vision of who belongs in American society.

i New Right: The voter base — and associated political views — mobilized by conservative political operatives like Paul Weyrich¹¹ in the 1960s and 1970s that emerged in response to the perceived “moral decay” of liberalism and progressive social movements of the time.¹² The New Right merged socially conservative views (including opposition to homosexuality, the Equal Rights Amendment, and abortion) with explicitly populist, anti-government sentiment that resisted taxation and regulation of corporations.¹³ Demographically, the New Right was predominantly comprised of white, suburban, middle class, Christians, as well as business leaders and strong believers in unregulated capitalism.¹⁴ Christian conservatives were especially influential in the formation of the New Right, becoming an enduring political force that many now refer to as the Christian Right.¹⁵

THE CORPORATE PLAYBOOK: BUY, BULLY, BAMBOOZLE

THE TACTICS CORPORATIONS USE TO PUSH STATE BANS FALL INTO THREE PRIMARY BUCKETS. OFTEN, CORPORATIONS USE A COMBINATION OF ALL THREE:



BUY

Corporations pour funds into amassing political power over lawmakers and voters — like writing campaign checks and hiring pricey lobbyists — and leverage this influence to ban policies that protect community wellbeing.



BULLY

Corporations use legal, economic, and other threats — like lawsuits, raising prices, or leaving town — to pressure elected officials and community members into banning policies that hold them accountable.



BAMBOOZLE

Corporations push misleading information — like political ads and talking points about how tenant protections hurt working people — to sway lawmakers and community members against policies that check corporate power.

COMMUNITY PROGRESS & CORPORATE BACKLASH: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR STATE BANS

Exclusion as the Rule: Minority Rule, State's Rights, and the White Supremacist Roots of State Bans

Corporate and wealthy elite attempts to squash local community power and regulation of corporate profit have their roots in an overtly white supremacist history and ideology — starting in the antebellum, slavery-era South.

Early efforts to block regulation of corporations and wealthy business operators by asserting state government authority emerged from the political ideas of John Calhoun, a prominent pro-slavery politician and political theorist¹⁶ who also served as Vice President of the US. During the 1820s, the ongoing abolition and anti-enslavement movements pushed for federal regulations on Southern plantation operators that limited (but did not eliminate) their participation in slavery as a foundation of their business operations.¹⁷ In response, Calhoun (a plantation operator and enslaver himself) pushed for minority rule — or the quest for elite power over the masses in response to the perceived threat that progressive social and policy gains posed to plantation owners' profit and a white supremacist status quo. In his view, the elite minority was being "oppressed" by the collective action of the majority that was restricting the wealthy class' ability to continue to amass profit through the ongoing enslavement of Black people.¹⁸

Calhoun saw the solution to this perceived oppression of elites as organizing around "state's rights"¹⁹ — an idea that dates back to the 10th Amendment and has consistently been mobilized to defend slavery and segregation and resist progress towards a more multiracial democracy.²⁰ Followers of this idea believed that states have the right to refuse to implement federal policy with which they disagreed or found to be an "overreach." Calhoun and his counterparts saw the federal government swaying to the will of the majority, and (correctly) believed that local governments could be even more easily influenced by collective activity from voters and citizens.²¹ So he and his allies pushed for a weak, small federal government while also attempting to shift the authority of local government to the state.²²

Southern white elites and plantation operators drew repeatedly on this strategy of using state government to block or limit local governing power in order to protect their ability to profit off exploited labor and the enslavement of Black

people. In the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era of the mid 1860s and early 1870s, for example, newly enfranchised Black (male) citizens began experimenting with communitarian “township” efforts at the local level in the South as a means to advance greater racial equality and a more inclusive, accountable democracy.²³ The newly expanded rights and voting power of Black men and the promise of a more participatory local governance model posed a threat to white wealth and dominance. Southern white elites responded with a concerted effort to weaken local power, including through state bills that stripped local governments of their authority on issues like taxation.²⁴ Reconstruction era efforts to block multiracial governing power at the local level thus created the blueprint for the state bans we are witnessing on a variety of issues today.

The Corporate-Christian Alliance

In their larger quest to block regulations on their profit and operations, corporations and wealthy business leaders have repeatedly partnered with Christian conservative leaders to develop a powerful political base loyal to corporate interests while advancing anti-regulatory sentiment across American society.

THE CRUSADE FOR UNREGULATED CAPITALISM AGAINST THE “NEW DEAL STATE”

A key milestone in the emergence of this alliance happened in response to the New Deal policies of the mid 20th century — which included numerous first-of-their-kind checks on corporate excess like an undistributed profits tax on corporations,³⁰ while also creating a robust set of public goods and services for working people. The New Deal created much of what we now consider to be foundational safety net programs that use public revenue to provide support and safeguards to working families, while protecting the most economically precarious segments of society during economic crises. These include programs like Social Security, unemployment insurance, and regulatory bodies like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).³¹

To push back on the threats these New Deal-related policy and structural changes posed to their bottom lines, business leaders initially attempted to persuade the American public on the benefits of “free” (or unregulated) enterprise via new corporate-led political organizations such as the American Liberty League, which was sponsored by industry juggernauts like General Motors, Sun Oil, DuPont, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers.³² But the Great Depression had left in its wake a widespread distrust of businesses, banks, and financial institutions by exposing high-profile corruption scandals and the

THE SHIFTING BATTLEFIELDS OF CORPORATE POWER

Pushing state bans that suppress local governing power has been a recurring strategy for corporate and white supremacist power grabs intended to restrict the rights, freedoms, and authority of everyday people in the face of inequality and corporate greed.²⁵ However, as scholars have noted, corporate executives, wealthy elites and their political allies have focused on state government less out of a consistent ideological allegiance to state government per se, but rather based on their relative ability to manipulate this level of government towards their aims.²⁶ And importantly, this focus has shifted over time in response to evolving political conditions. For example, before the more participatory local governance experiments emerged in the Reconstruction-era South, wealthy white plantation operators held substantial power through the county government system and were proponents of “local control” as a way to uphold slavery and a white supremacist social and political order.²⁷ And today, we are witnessing an unprecedented concentration of corporate and executive power at the federal level under the second Trump regime alongside a massive campaign of deregulation,²⁸ while overt White Christian Nationalist aligned leaders are using the tools of the federal government to advance their agenda.²⁹

Thus, the only consistent allegiance of corporate and wealthy actors seeking to suppress regulation has been to maintain their profit and power via whichever level of government they can best control. This shifting approach has been accompanied by an inconsistent narrative. We can see this today in contemporary corporate lobbyists who oppose local worker protection policies by proclaiming their belief in uniform statewide standards — and then later oppose people-powered efforts to establish higher statewide standards on the same issue, as discussed in the adjacent Missouri case study. Rather than an actual concern for establishing standards, the corporate push for state bans has repeatedly focused on establishing ceilings or limits on everyday people’s wages, rights, and the basic protections they can expect.

reality that unregulated capitalism primarily serves the ultra-wealthy few.³³ After this effort to re-ignite American faith in unregulated capitalism failed, corporate actors regrouped to identify a more trusted messenger for spreading free market fervor.³⁴ In 1938, they decided to approach Christian conservative leaders about using their existing church platforms to move their agenda. By 1947, industrialists like Howard J. Pew Jr., president of Sun Oil, and leaders from General Motors, Chrysler, Standard Oil, Firestone Tire and Rubber, National Steel, Colgate-Palmolive-Peet, and others were making the maximum allowable donations to James Fiffeld's Spiritual Mobilization organization to spread the gospel of capitalism via tens of thousands of Christian ministers across the country.³⁵

Over the following 10 years, this alliance successfully recruited almost 17,000 ministers to preach the gospel of unregulated capitalism in congregations across the country. Collectively, they preached that the New Deal was "a manifestation of creeping socialism" threatening the American way of life, and that the path to defend against it was to "rally around... and make common cause" with business leaders.³⁶ The shared logic of these business and religious leaders was one of meritocracy and "the salvation of the individual."³⁷ In their view, if a person is "good," not only do they go to heaven, but they are also rewarded with money and success under capitalism. The flip side of each, relatively speaking, is hell, failure, and by extension poverty. Within this paradigm, the New Deal — which this alliance perceived as penalizing the wealthy — was immoral and un-Christian.³⁸ Thus began the proliferation of the idea that the Bible supports free will, free markets, and unregulated capitalism as a holy economic system (now known as Christian Libertarianism.)³⁹ Christian Libertarianism has deeply influenced the beliefs and voting tendencies of modern Christians in the Christian Right and New Right.

This was a defining moment of the corporate playbook. By buying off Christian conservative leaders to orchestrate a mass bamboozle in the interests of corporations and capital, business leaders sparked the emergence of an enduring and impactful alliance that reshaped and continues to define the American political landscape.

RACISM, SEXISM, AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT SENTIMENT: FORGING A NEW RIGHT

This alliance was further solidified in response to the progressive social and political gains of the Civil Rights and other social movements of the 1960s. At the time, campaigns to end Jim Crow and uphold the rights and political power of Black people were successfully pushing the federal government to pass policies attempting to block racial discrimination in civic and political life. These included desegregation mandates for public schools, workplaces, and businesses serving the public, as well as landmark policies like the Voting Rights Act intended to intervene in racially discriminatory voting practices.⁴⁰

Evangelical and Catholic conservatives found common cause with conservative political operatives and leaders as they worked to defend the interests of corporations, segregated religious institutions, and "traditional" (gender-hierarchical and heteronormative) family structures that were being upended by social movements of the time. In particular, the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 activated Virginia's governing elite (including groups like the Byrd Organization) to take up a fight protecting their social and cultural order. In the years following this ruling, they began backing and building a network of whites-only private religious schools. Meanwhile, these same conservative leaders in Virginia rallied to end public education altogether as a way to thwart

desegregation efforts.⁴¹

In response to these efforts, in 1971 the IRS prohibited private, segregated schools from evading taxation and required organizations seeking tax exempt status to go through a thorough review process to ensure the absence of racially-discriminatory practices.⁴² At the same time, the federal government attempted to regulate financial donations made to Christian television and radio programs.⁴³ These two examples of federal taxation and regulation of majority white, segregated Christian institutions galvanized conservative evangelical Christian leaders into politics — with anti-government sentiment as a core feature of their rhetoric and ideology.⁴⁴ They argued that “the state was advancing norms and policies that contradicted true Christian values,” and that “Christians needed to organize to resist government power.”⁴⁵ With the additional ruling from the Supreme Court on *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, conservative political leaders like Paul Weyrich were able to politicize abortion in ways that further activated racist and sexist beliefs within the emerging New Right voter base, along with the perceived overreach of the federal government.⁴⁶

These fights against federal regulation cemented the bonds between Christian conservative and business leaders — an alliance that was essential to the rise of neoliberalism and Ronald Reagan in the following years.⁴⁷

The Corporate Capture of American Politics

Building on the newly cemented political base of the New Right, corporations and their political allies continued their quest to avoid government regulation through a swath of policy and structural interventions in the late 20th century. Cumulatively, these efforts advanced the influence of corporations across state and federal legislatures and elections at a massive scale. By blurring the lines between public and private, lawmaker and lobbyist, citizen and corporation, corporate interests were able to massively restructure American politics in the interests of big business.

THE POWELL MEMO

The Powell Memo was perhaps the most influential political document and comprehensive reflection of the multi-decade corporate strategy to amass power and influence across American society.⁴⁸ In the 1970s, Lewis F. Powell, Jr, just prior to his nomination to the Supreme Court, mailed a confidential memorandum to a committee chair at the US Chamber of Commerce. Powell (a corporate lawyer from Virginia who, prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court, sat on the boards of companies like Philip Morris) believed American capitalism was in an existential crisis. Consumers were pushing back on corporate abuse through the legal and legislative systems and winning regulations on business, including through the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration.⁴⁹

Powell's secret memo (which was later leaked to a syndicated columnist and published in 1972)⁵⁰ outlined various ways businesses should defend and counterattack against greater oversight of corporations. The memo advocated for the Chamber positioning itself as a mainstream source of information and education for the public through infiltration of the media, universities, legislatures, and courts. Among many recommendations, it laid out a plan for corporate executives to reform the public and higher education systems in service of "free enterprise" and ideas for how to consolidate corporate power in the media to move a corporate message and agenda. Powell also called on corporate executives to be more aggressive in their tactics to hijack politics rather than remaining neutral on political issues.⁵¹ The Powell Memo is now seen as a blueprint for the neoliberal capture of our democratic institutions by multinational corporations.⁵²

AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL (ALEC)

Shortly after the Powell Memo was released, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) was formed in 1973 as a closed-door forum for corporate stakeholders to work with (decidedly conservative leaning) legislators on creating "model bills" and using these bills to lobby state lawmakers across the country. ALEC was co-founded by Paul Weyrich and launched as a critical vehicle for advancing the political agenda of the New Right.⁵³ Since its formation, ALEC has been a pivotal force in the proliferation of state bans as a cornerstone of the corporate deregulation strategy. ALEC acts as both a clearinghouse for corporate-lawmaker exchanges and an efficient avenue for corporations to push their agenda across multiple states at once.⁵⁴ As the American Prospect notes, "ALEC's agenda extends to almost every area of public policy, as lawmakers

take these model bills written by powerful special-interest and far-right groups — including the tobacco, gun, oil, pharmaceutical, and telecom industries — back to their statehouses and introduce them as their own.”⁵⁵ A 2019 investigation by USA Today and The Arizona Republic found that “bills based on ALEC models were introduced nearly 2,900 times, in all 50 states and the U.S. Congress, from 2010 through 2018, with more than 600 becoming law.”⁵⁶ ALEC has provided the template for numerous state bans,⁵⁷ such as bans on local minimum wage and rent stabilization ordinances, as well as bans on local discrimination protections, gun control, and public health protections.⁵⁸ Notably, lawmakers pay only \$200 per year in ALEC dues, accounting for less than 1% of its revenue. Its corporate members, on the other hand, pay thousands each year to buy access to legislators and drive ALEC’s agenda through seats on the policy task forces that draft model bills.⁵⁹

The organization’s annual meetings provide the forum for developing and sharing model legislation and strategizing to get ALEC’s priority bills implemented. As one example, in May 2011, Wisconsin’s Republican Governor Scott Walker approved Senate Bill 23, banning municipalities from passing paid sick leave ordinances. That summer, copies of the bill were distributed at the annual ALEC meeting, along with a map created by the National Restaurant Association showing where similar laws were enacted, anticipated or defeated. Over the next five years, at least 11 states adopted versions of Wisconsin’s law.⁶⁰

ALEC’s right-wing legacy has included opposing divestment during the anti-apartheid movement under the Reagan years,⁶¹ and developing model “stand your ground” (also known as “shoot first”) laws — which proliferated in the years after the murder of Trayvon Martin.⁶² More recently ALEC has been active in combatting corporate DEI efforts as well as promoting legislation attacking LGBTQ+ rights, shutting down discussion of racial and gender diversity in public schools, and advancing discriminatory voter ID laws.⁶³

THE REVOLVING DOOR BETWEEN CORPORATIONS & CONGRESS

Building on their expanded relationships with lawmakers and growing power over legislation and American public opinion, corporate lobbyists began increasingly running for office throughout the late 20th century, while former members of Congress began taking jobs with Fortune 500 companies. One egregious example of Washington’s revolving door problem came in 2004, when Representative Billy Tauzin announced he was leaving Congress to accept a position as head of PhRMA — the pharmaceutical industry’s main lobbying organization — along with a \$2 million a year salary. Tauzin had previously been chief architect of the 2003 legislation that prohibited the federal Medicare program from negotiating lower drug prices. Tauzin left PhRMA in 2010; that same year he earned more than \$11 million as PhRMA President and CEO.⁶⁴ In 2011, former US Senator Chris Dodd, co-author of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, also known as the Dodd-Frank Bill, became the CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America, and thereby Hollywood’s chief — unregistered⁶⁵ — lobbyist.⁶⁶

These trends are mirrored at the state level today: at least 27 states allow corporations to make direct contributions to political candidates,⁶⁷ and state lawmakers regularly take jobs with companies or organizations actively lobbying their statehouses after retiring.⁶⁸ Recent research suggests that representatives often become more moderate and corporate-leaning just before leaving office to take positions in the private sector, revealing the profound influence of this revolving door phenomenon on American legislation.⁶⁹ And as the adjacent case studies highlight, there are multiple instances where state lawmakers serve concurrently as industry lobbyists, unapologetically legislating in the corporate interest.

CITIZENS UNITED

The power of corporations to access lawmakers and shape policy was later exponentially expanded by the Supreme Court's 2010 ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which reversed century-old campaign finance restrictions and enabled corporations to spend unlimited money on elections by declaring this spending a form of free speech, likening corporations to individuals with inherent rights.⁷⁰ The rise of super PACs and dark money — election-related spending whose donors are kept secret from voters — also surged in the wake of *Citizens United*. While the Federal Election Commission (FEC) regulates political ads within 30 days of a primary or 60 days of a general election, the vast majority of dark money is spent outside of these FEC reporting windows.⁷¹ *Citizens United* and subsequent decisions such as *SpeechNOW vs. the FEC*⁷² resulted in “a fusion of private wealth and political power unseen since the late 19th century,”⁷³ which has radically reshaped American electoral politics in the interests of corporations.

THE RISE & SCOPE OF STATE BANS OVER TIME

In a political landscape profoundly shaped by their influence, corporations — working through ALEC and industry groups — have turned to state bans as a means to efficiently block local regulation on a growing range of issues since the 1970s.

The 1970s: Banning local taxing authority

Starting in the 1970s, corporate interests pushed a wave of state laws banning or limiting local taxing authority. The passage of California's infamous Proposition 13 in 1978 — driven by wealthy businessman Howard Jarvis — has severely constrained the ability of both the state and local governments to collect tax revenue from homeowners and commercial property owners ever since, by capping tax rates based on the year of purchase rather than market value.⁷⁴ This law added fuel to what some refer to as a period of “tax revolt” in states across the country. This movement mobilized (predominantly white) homeowners and business owners along with members of the New Right, including evangelical Christians for whom taxes represented an intrusion into their private religious life — and their ability to operate segregated schooling⁷⁵ as discussed previously. While businesses were split on Prop 13 at the time, its success built on the foundation of anti-tax fervor they had created, and business groups seized the opportunity to push bans in other states since.⁷⁶ Between 1969 and 1989, the number of state-imposed property tax limitations almost doubled.⁷⁷ These laws included state-mandated caps on local property taxes and broader tax and spending constraints on local governments. These bans sharply eroded local communities' ability to raise adequate revenues and, in turn, starved their ability to support good schools, housing, health care, and pass other critical protections for public health and safety.⁷⁸ Laws like Prop 13 have predominantly benefited white wealthy homeowners over homeowners of color,⁷⁹ while making it more difficult to fund needed public services for working people.

Multiple community-led attempts to overturn Proposition 13 have since been squashed by corporate buys and bamboozles. The most recent example was Proposition 15 in 2020, which aimed to repeal the tax cap specifically for the largest commercial property owners. The commercial property tax cap from Proposition 13 has resulted in billions of dollars in tax breaks for corporations every year — funds that are sorely needed for local schools and community services.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the full roster of industry groups in California lined up to oppose Proposition 15 — including the state Chamber of Commerce, the California Business Roundtable, and the California Restaurant Association. And, despite the fact that the measure would only affect corporations owning property worth more than \$3 million,⁸¹ the National Federation of Independent Business (which calls itself the “voice of small business”)⁸² also joined the effort

to protect this mega-corporate tax loophole.⁸³

The anti-Prop 15 campaign relied on extensive fear-mongering driven by corporate ads and talking points that declared Proposition 15 would hurt homeowners and increase taxes for everyone, even though it excluded residential property owners and small commercial property owners. The campaign's official opposition statement was so misleading, a California judge ordered that it must be rewritten.⁸⁴ The corporate campaign to oppose Proposition 15, along with 4 other corporate-led ballot measure campaigns, collectively paid the political consulting firm of Alice Huffman — the CA NAACP President at the time — \$1.7 million to work on the initiatives.⁸⁵ The CA NAACP officially endorsed the No on Proposition 15 campaign, splitting Black voters across the state on the issue.⁸⁶ Huffman resigned from her position following the election amid backlash from progressive Black leaders who felt those corporate-led ballot measure campaigns had disingenuously used a message of racial justice to mobilize voters in support of measures that would actually harm Black communities across the state.⁸⁷

The 1980s and 1990s: Banning environmental and public health protections

This era saw a push to establish more robust local public health protections by environmental and public health movements across the country. These wins in turn prompted a backlash of state bans driven by corporations and industry groups intent on protecting their ability to profit off and pollute the communities where they operated. In 1979, for example, after Mendocino County, CA became one of the first municipalities in the country to prohibit aerial spraying of dangerous pesticides, the chemical lobby pushed state legislatures across the country to ban cities from regulating the use of agricultural toxins. In 1991, agricultural and pesticide corporations came together to form the "Coalition for Sensible Pesticide Policy,"⁸⁸ which descended upon states.⁸⁹ Using model legislation supported and promoted by ALEC, the coalition and other pesticide corporations pushed nearly identical state bans in a majority of states preventing cities and counties from regulating hazardous pesticide use.⁹⁰

The pesticide industry's approach to pushing model state bans laid the path for other industries to follow suit. In the 1980s, in response to public health efforts to establish smoke-free zones and otherwise regulate the public health harms of smoking, the tobacco industry — led by corporate giants like Philip Morris — used similar tactics to push state bans across the country to block local regulations on smoking and tobacco use.⁹¹ A notorious bamboozler, Philip Morris has utilized numerous advertisement techniques over the decades to capitalize on cultural and political trends — including stoking anti-government sentiment — to push smoking among young people and sway voters against smoking regulations.⁹² And the gun lobby — led by the National Rifle Association — likewise pushed a wave of state bans in response to local gun control efforts intended to address rising gun violence in the 1990s.⁹³

The 2010s: Banning affordable housing and wage standards

This period saw a powerful movement of community and labor organizing that led to new city-level wins on worker and tenant protection policies — including numerous cities raising the minimum wage across the country. Before 2012, only 5 localities had minimum wage laws; now, 69 counties and cities do.⁹⁴ In response to this community-labor organizing momentum, corporations began aggressively pushing state bans — in both red and blue states — on local policies to improve wage, workplace, and housing standards.⁹⁵

Directed by their national parent organizations and aided by ALEC, industry groups have used their control over state legislatures to shut down local oversight of housing and wages, driving state bans on minimum wage laws at an especially broad scale over the last 15 years.⁹⁶ And today, 25 states ban local minimum wage ordinances that set wages higher than state or federal law.⁹⁷ The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and the US Chamber of Commerce and its state affiliates have been consistent drivers of minimum wage bans over the last two decades. Both groups have been funded and led by representatives from some of the country's largest corporations,⁹⁸ despite the former claiming to be the voice of small businesses.⁹⁹ In 2013, for example, the NFIB received \$1.5 million from Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, a conservative advocacy group with close ties to the Koch brothers.¹⁰⁰ As discussed in the adjacent case study, the NFIB backed Missouri's 2015 minimum wage ban¹⁰¹ — sponsored by then-State Senator Mike Kehoe,¹⁰² an ALEC alum.¹⁰³ And as discussed in the Tennessee case study, Senator Ferrell Haile — who joined ALEC in 2017¹⁰⁴ — sponsored multiple state bans on local policies aimed at spurring affordable housing in new residential development.¹⁰⁵ Haile openly admitted to working with industry groups to craft the 2018 ban on Nashville's voluntary inclusionary housing policy¹⁰⁶ — including the Tennessee Apartment Association, the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce (whose board includes representatives from Caterpillar Inc., John Deere, Nissan, FedEx, Amazon, and Coca-Cola¹⁰⁷) and the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

2015 and beyond: Killing local governing authority through "Death Star" Bans

Over the last decade, corporate interests have become even more brazen in their efforts to dismantle local governing power through bans on cities' ability to self-govern on a broad range of issues affecting people's daily lives and safety.¹⁰⁸ In 2015, Michigan's legislature passed Public Act 105, nicknamed the "Death Star" bill for its complete destruction of localities' power to enact nearly any policy that could benefit working people — ranging from minimum wage increases to fair scheduling laws, paid leave, and a host of other standards.¹⁰⁹ These "Death Star" bills are a newer type of model policy pushed by ALEC to efficiently block local regulation on a wide range of issues.¹¹⁰ An even broader "Death Star" bill was later passed in Texas,¹¹¹ as discussed in the accompanying case study. Texas's sweeping "Death Star" bill was sponsored by Representative Dustin Burrows, now Speaker of the House, and Senator Brandon Creighton,¹¹² both ALEC members.¹¹³ Texas' Death Star ban was pushed by right-wing think tank Texas Public Policy Foundation, a group whose corporate donors include Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, and the conglomerate Koch Industries.¹¹⁴ TPPF's Vice Chair Tim

Dunn¹¹⁵ is an oil and gas billionaire who has pushed policies and funded groups aligned with White Christian Nationalism at the state and federal level.¹¹⁶

The State of State Bans Today

As of 2026, corporations and industry groups have pushed state bans through legislatures in all 50 states, including some form of affordable housing or workers' rights related ban.¹¹⁷ As discussed previously, state bans on local policymaking have very often been pushed by corporations concurrently working to block states from setting meaningful standards for working people. Rather than a battle between state and local government, corporate-driven state bans instead serve as a means to block regulation — and the raising of standards for working people — altogether.

- ⚡ Half of US states ban local communities from passing local minimum wage laws. 16 of these states have no state minimum wage,¹¹⁸ trapping low-wage workers at the federal minimum of \$7.25/hour (which has not been raised since 2009).¹¹⁹
- ⚡ Many states have banned local workplace protection policies like paid sick laws (25 states), fair scheduling laws (13 states),¹²⁰ and local fair hiring, “Ban the Box” laws (7 states).¹²¹
- ⚡ More than 30 states ban local communities from enacting laws protecting people's access to affordable housing, including rent stabilization.¹²² Meanwhile, 19 of these states are home to residents facing higher than average rates of rent burden — with rental housing costs eating up over a third to a half of their income.¹²³

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE: CORPORATIONS, WHITE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISTS, AND AUTHORITARIANS

The latest chapter of the corporate-Christian alliance has seen corporations, White Christian Nationalists, and authoritarian actors emboldening and enabling each other in increasingly brazen ways. These actors are using the same corporate playbook – and the strategy of state bans – to advance legislation unabashedly targeting LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, and communities of color in ever-more oppressive ways. While this report is focused on state bans blocking affordable housing and workers' rights protections, it's no coincidence that state bans have become a tried and true tactic for advancing racist, transphobic, and xenophobic laws.¹²⁴ And ALEC has remained a critical entity for moving the parallel goals of corporate deregulation and increasingly overt White Christian Nationalist aligned policies through state legislatures.¹²⁵

While some corporate executives and billionaires like Tim Dunn and Farris and Dan Wilks¹²⁶ may hold beliefs that are closely aligned with White Christian Nationalism, other corporate actors may not hold these beliefs but are willing to bankroll state bans and their authors as a convenient means to maintain their power and profit. Much like the business leaders who partnered with Christian preachers as a convenient means to evangelize a corporate agenda in the mid 20th century, corporate executives today may donate to ideologically-driven politicians because of their business friendly, anti-regulatory tendencies – even when these politicians' viewpoints run counter to their public-facing corporate values.

For example, even before the second Trump regime came into power, Amazon was among many corporations that donated to politicians authoring anti-trans legislation, despite being a recurring sponsor of numerous cities' pride parades.¹²⁷ In particular, Amazon donated \$25,400 to Tennessee Governor Bill Lee between 2019-2022, while simultaneously being a corporate sponsor of Nashville's pride celebrations.¹²⁸ During this same period, Governor Lee signed multiple anti-trans bills into law and turned Tennessee into the state with the most laws targeting trans youth on the books.¹²⁹ In other cases, corporations may see the clear economic benefits of backing lawmakers who scapegoat specific communities as a distraction from their actions. The result of this corporate alliance with White Christian Nationalist and authoritarian forces is a deeply intertwined network, where "true believer" politicians and billionaires work hand-in-hand with corporate executives and billionaires who are along for the profitable ride.

The Corporate-Christian Assault on Trans People

Among other issues, this alliance has been notably effective at proliferating anti-trans bans in recent years. Corporate and billionaire donors behind anti-trans bans have varied motivations, including their own deeply held beliefs on gender, an interest in undermining teachers and health care unions,¹³⁰ or the mass distraction that scapegoating trans people offers by diverting attention away from corporations responsible for climate devastation.¹³¹ Despite (or perhaps because of) these varied motivations, anti-trans bans have been richly funded. And these laws have expanded immensely in the 2020s, partly in response to advances in LGBTQ+ protections at the local level¹³² as well as the concerted effort by conservative political forces to mobilize evangelical Christians (who vote in disproportionately high numbers) around gender essentialism and transphobia.¹³³ As of July 2025, 29 states have some form of anti-trans ban on the books,¹³⁴ including:

- ⚡ Bans on gender-affirming care for transgender youth (27 states).¹³⁵
- ⚡ Bans on youth participation in sports teams that align with their gender identity (27 states).¹³⁶
- ⚡ Bans on transgender youth using bathrooms and other facilities consistent with their gender identity (25).¹³⁷
- ⚡ Bans on the discussion of LGBTQ+ people or issues in school curricula (19 states).¹³⁸

Other recent anti-trans laws include policies that require teachers and school staff to “out” transgender youth to their families (6 states) — a devastating policy for youth with unsupportive family members.¹³⁹ And during the 2026 legislative session alone, a whopping 793 anti-trans bills were introduced and 55 passed in states across the country.¹⁴⁰ Many anti-trans laws not only directly block trans and gender nonconforming people (including and especially youth) from accessing basic needs and care; they also often penalize local governments and school boards for creating policies protecting trans people.¹⁴¹

Fossil fuel companies in particular have powered anti-trans bans at notable levels. Recent analysis of the funders behind anti-trans advocacy groups found that 80% received donations from fossil fuel companies or billionaires.¹⁴² Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a Project 2025 adviser that is funded by numerous corporate donors including fossil fuel corporations like Shell, has been a major driver of anti-trans laws. ADF has authored numerous “model bills” targeting trans people for statehouses and school boards across the country,¹⁴³ including bills that force trans people to use bathrooms that align with their assigned sex at birth.¹⁴⁴ Among other corporate donors, Shell USA Company Foundation donated \$58,002 to ADF between 2013 and 2022.¹⁴⁵ Denver-based billionaire Phil Anschutz, who built his wealth in part on fossil fuels, also donated \$110,000 to ADF between 2011 and 2013.¹⁴⁶

In Tennessee, it was actually a state ban blocking protections for LGBTQ+ communities that paved the way to a host of other economic state bans restricting local wage and workplace protections. In 2011, the state legislature passed a ban on local nondiscrimination ordinances, in response to Nashville attempting to better protect LGBTQ+ people at work.¹⁴⁷ Codifying this language in 2012,¹⁴⁸ Tennessee became the first state¹⁴⁹ to prohibit local governments from adopting

or enforcing stronger antidiscrimination standards than those recognized by state law.¹⁵⁰ The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce supported the law, arguing that employment standards “should be consistent across the state and should not create an additional burden on companies,”¹⁵¹ the same argument corporate lobbyists use over and over to push state bans on minimum wage and workplace protections. This refusal to allow Nashville to recognize LGBTQ+ rights in 2012 thus became a portal to bans on numerous labor rights. In the following years, Tennessee lawmakers have since banned local minimum wage, fair scheduling, prevailing wage, paid leave, and gig economy policies.¹⁵²

Mutual Gains: The Reinforcing Loop of Corporate-Authoritarian Power

The increasingly ideological nature of state bans in recent years reflects the foundations of this strategy as a tool to protect the wealth and power of an elite few while suppressing the rights and power of the many. It also offers a window into a larger truth: that the corporate agenda to amass power while blocking regulations has in many ways fostered the perfect conditions for authoritarians to take power.

The two-century effort to enshrine corporate interests across American democracy not only led to the expansion of state bans at a massive scale. It also created the power structure and playbook through which corporations have been able to dominate legislation and elections in the interests of billionaires and big business against working people. This rise in corporate power has driven profound levels of wealth inequality across the country (and the globe).¹⁵³ And the alliances formed between corporate and Christian leaders in the 20th century grew an enduring political base that holds loyalty to corporate interests alongside a belief in moral order, conformity, and an increasingly exclusive vision of who belongs in American society based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. The combination of these political, social, and economic conditions have created the exact conditions that scholars have noted make countries more susceptible to authoritarian power grabs.¹⁵⁴

Today, corporations are able to exploit the conditions they created to fast-track their deregulatory agenda, while fueling ideologically-driven billionaires and politicians to consolidate their power and advance numerous attacks on our communities. Many of our country’s largest corporations have powered and profited from Trump’s mass surveillance and deportation agenda. For example, Palantir signed a \$30 million contract with ICE in 2025 to provide surveillance technology to assist in targeting immigrants and carrying out raids — including mapping out locations where immigrants are likely to live or work.¹⁵⁵ And corporate lobbyists are recycling the same arguments they’ve used to push state bans in ways that are now unleashing dangerous new levels of surveillance and concentration of executive power at the federal level. For example, major tech corporations have poured millions into federal lobbying efforts and used the classic “patchwork of regulation” talking points to push the Trump regime to block state level regulations on the development of AI. Intent on protecting their ability to profit and compete internationally, these corporations have gambled with our collective safety in the face of AI’s myriad dangers and unknown risks when it comes to communities, workers, and the environment¹⁵⁶ — and the overt ways that AI is being used to further authoritarian repression.

The second Trump regime in turn has given corporations and White Christian Nationalists unprecedented access to the federal levers of power, leading to increasingly dangerous uses of government authority to advance both agendas. In addition to placing billionaires with industry ties at the head of agencies intended to regulate those same sectors,¹⁵⁷ federal bans on state and local policies protecting communities from discrimination, pollution, and exploitation have been a cornerstone of the Trump regime's authoritarian strategy. Using executive orders, Trump has attempted to ban everything from sanctuary city policies to DEI programs to financial and environmental protections against corporate greed.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the second Trump regime has created an open season for ideologically driven legislation at the state level as well — opening the floodgates to state bans on sanctuary city policies, DEI programs, discussion of racism and LGBTQ+ communities in public education, and public health regulations of all kinds.¹⁵⁹ Since the second Trump regime came into power, the Tennessee legislature introduced a slew of anti-immigrant policies in 2025 and 2026 crafted in close partnership with Stephen Miller, Trump's Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Homeland Security advisor, as just one example. This sweeping package of laws penalizes local officials who adopt sanctuary policies and requires clinics to report the status of undocumented individuals seeking care to the state's immigration enforcement agency, among other measures.¹⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

State bans have become a tried-and-true strategy for corporations, industry lobbyists, and billionaires to expand and maintain corporate profits and power at the expense of local communities' freedoms. State government has been a repeated stronghold for these actors in their quest to avoid both federal and local regulation. The white supremacist roots of corporate and elite attempts to block regulation and progress towards a more participatory, multiracial democracy through state bans is resurfacing in the White Christian Nationalist attacks and authoritarian power grabs we are witnessing today. And corporations' two-century effort to enshrine the interests of big business across American democracy has been essential to creating nearly every pre-condition for authoritarianism.

The accompanying case studies in this project illuminate the way corporations have pushed state bans to suppress worker and housing rights — and local governing power more broadly — in five key states. Working across both red and blue state legislatures, we can see how the same corporate and industry players replicate and adapt their tactics and talking points to block local communities from gaining even modest protections for affordable housing, livable wages, and safe and humane working conditions. Meanwhile, the same power structure and playbook that corporations have used to push housing and wage bans in each of these states have enabled the growth of ideologically driven attacks — including bans targeting immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, and communities of color at both the state and federal levels.

Collectively, we must expose the corporate actors, playbook and power structure that have plundered our lives and banned our freedom for too long. Understanding the covert ways corporations have sought to advance their power on the backs of the many is essential for our collective capacity to fight back against the corporate-backed authoritarianism endangering us all. Corporations developed their strategies and advanced their plays in direct response to the power and progress of everyday people. Yet we have seen that when communities organize across race, class, gender, and geography to defy corporate greed and confront their toxic tactics, we can push corporations to end their complicity in attacks on our communities and reverse the march towards autocracy. Together, we can make their playbook a losing game and build an economy and democracy that truly serves the people and our needs, not corporations and their greed.

ENDNOTES

1. See “State Preemption Laws,” Law Atlas, lawatlas.org/datasets/preemption-project; “State Preemption of Local Equitable Housing Policies,” Local Solutions Support Center, www.supportdemocracy.org/equitablehousing; and “Workers’ rights preemption in the U.S.,” Economic Policy Institute, www.epi.org/preemption-map/ for maps of states banning these kinds of local policies. All maps accessed May 13, 2026.
2. Tema Okun, “White Supremacy Culture – What is it?” White Supremacy Culture, www.whitesupremacyculture.info/what-is-it.html.
3. Political Research Associates website, Glossary, Updated: Summer 2023, politicalresearch.org/research/glossary.
4. Tema Okun, “White Supremacy Culture – What is it?” White Supremacy Culture, www.whitesupremacyculture.info/what-is-it.html.
5. We use “Christian conservative” as opposed to “Conservative Christian,” as the latter term is often used to mean Christian individuals and groups who believe in orthodox religious views and interpret the bible in literal terms, but who are not necessarily politically engaged. In this report, we specifically use this term to reference the Christian groups that were mobilized through their religious communities and affiliations to influence politics in line with socially and politically conservative beliefs.
6. Dr. Tim Orr, “Why Conservative and Progressive Christians Vote the Way They Do: Theological Views Shaping Political Choices,” Dr. Tim Orr’s Blog, Oct 16, 2024, www.4timorr.org/why-conservative-and-progressive-christians-vote-the-way-they-do-theological-views-shaping-political-choices/.
7. Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies, “Understanding White Christian Nationalism,” October 4, 2022, isps.yale.edu/news/blog/2022/10/understanding-white-christian-nationalism.
8. Americans United for Separation of Church and State website, “White Christian Nationalism,” www.au.org/how-we-protect-religious-freedom/issues/white-christian-nationalism/; Andrew L. Whitehead, “How Christian Nationalism Weakens Democracy and What Can Be Done about It,” *Charles F. Kettering Foundation*, August 21, 2025, kettering.org/how-christian-nationalism-weakens-democracy-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/; Andrew L. Whitehead, “Five Elements of Christian Nationalism,” *Charles F. Kettering Foundation*, September 11, 2025, kettering.org/five-elements-of-christian-nationalism/.
9. Public Religion Research Institute and Brookings, *A Christian Nation? Understanding the Threat of Christian Nationalism to American Democracy and Culture, Findings from the 2023 PRRI/Brookings Christian Nationalism Survey*, February 2023, prri.org/research/a-christian-nation-understanding-the-threat-of-christian-nationalism-to-american-democracy-and-culture/; Institute for Social and Policy Studies at Yale, “Understanding White Christian Nationalism,” October 4, 2022, isps.yale.edu/news/blog/2022/10/understanding-white-christian-nationalism.
10. Andrew L. Whitehead, “Five Elements of Christian Nationalism,” *Charles F. Kettering Foundation*, September 11, 2025, kettering.org/five-elements-of-christian-nationalism/; Training by Political Research Associates: “Challenging the Christian Right: Rifts & Strategies,” May 14, 2026, politicalresearch.org/2026/04/28/challenging-christian-right-rifts-strategies.
11. Chelsea Ebin, “Paul Weyrich: The Religious Roots of a New Right Radical,” *American Catholic Studies*, 131, no. 3, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/27099908.
12. European Center for Populism Studies website, “New Right,” www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/new-right/.
13. European Center for Populism Studies website, “New Right,” www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/new-right/.
14. European Center for Populism Studies website, “New Right,” www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/new-right/.

15. Political Research Associates website, Glossary, Updated: Summer 2023, politicalresearch.org/research/glossary.
16. The Yale & Slavery Research Project, "John C Calhoun," ysrp.yale.edu/john-c-calhoun.
17. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 2-4.
18. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 1 - 12.
19. United States Senate website, "John C. Calhoun: A Featured Biography," www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Calhoun.html.
20. Paul Caine, "State's Rights, the Supreme Court, and a History of Discrimination," WTTW, July 14, 2022, news.wttw.com/2022/07/14/states-rights-supreme-court-and-history-discrimination; Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 3-4, 20. This idea was that the Tenth Amendment supports the right of states to refuse to implement federal laws with which they disagreed, and that the Constitution's authority comes from the states that consented to the Union rather than from the people directly; and therefore state leaders could "interpose" their authority between their constituents and Washington, D.C.
21. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 5.
22. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 5.
23. Yannet Lathrop, *Fighting Labor Policy Preemption That Undermines Local Power and the Democratic Process: The Experience of Colorado, Missouri, and Texas*, National Employment Law Project, October 27, 2022, www.nelp.org/insights-research/fighting-labor-policy-preemption-that-undermines-local-power-and-the-democratic-process/; Daniel Farbman, "Redemption Localism", *North Carolina Law Review*, 100, no. 5, June 2022, scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6894&context=nclr.
24. Daniel Farbman, "Redemption Localism", *North Carolina Law Review*, 100, no. 5, June 2022, scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6894&context=nclr.
25. Yannet Lathrop, *Fighting Labor Policy Preemption That Undermines Local Power and the Democratic Process: The Experience of Colorado, Missouri, and Texas*, National Employment Law Project, October 27, 2022, www.nelp.org/insights-research/fighting-labor-policy-preemption-that-undermines-local-power-and-the-democratic-process/; "Preemption: A history," *Advancement Project*, advancementproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Preemption-Timeline.pdf.
26. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 5. Quote: They are "interested not so much in fighting big government, per se, as in elevating that branch of government they can best control in a given situation."
27. Daniel Farbman, "Redemption Localism," *North Carolina Law Review*, 100, no. 5, June 2022, scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6894&context=nclr.
28. Michael Beckel and Oliver Ni, "Unchecked Exec," *Issue One*, Apr 29, 2025, issueone.org/articles/unchecked-exec/.
29. Adam Gabbatt, "Trump has put Christian nationalists in key roles – say a prayer for free speech," *The Guardian*, April 16, 2025, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/16/christian-nationalists-trump-administration.
30. Joseph J. Thorndike, "Tax History: Remaking America, One Corporate Tax Reform at a Time," *Tax Notes*, February 19, 2024, www.taxnotes.com/tax-history-project/tax-history-remaking-america-one-corporate-tax-reform-time/2024/02/16/7j72t.
31. [History.com](https://www.history.com) website, New Deal, www.history.com/articles/new-deal.
32. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York: Basic Books, 2016, 4.
33. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented*

Christian America, New York: Basic Books, 2016, 4.

34. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York: Basic Books, 2016, 4.
35. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York: Basic Books, 2016, 10-22.
36. "How 'One Nation' Didn't Become 'Under God' Until the '50s Religious Revival," *Fresh Air*, National Public Radio, March 30, 2015, www.npr.org/2015/03/30/396365659/how-one-nation-didnt-become-under-god-until-the-50s-religious-revival; Kim Phillips-Fein, "Laissez Prayer: The Secret History of the 1950s Christian right and its zeal for capitalism," *Democracy Journal*, Fall 2015, democracyjournal.org/magazine/38/laissez-prayer/.
37. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York: Basic Books, 2016, 7, 11-15.
38. Taking this further: corporations and a certain sect of evangelical Christians set out to promote the twin ideas that good people are divine and rewarded with wealth and success, while people who are poor or don't have financial success must be "bad" and "sinful" – concepts that later bolstered the anti-welfare and anti-government sentiments of the New Right.
39. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York: Basic Books, 2016, xiv.
40. Southern Poverty Law Center website, "The Civil Rights Movement: 10 Key Concepts," www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/the-civil-rights-movement-10-key-concepts/; Library of Congress website, "The Civil Rights Movement," www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/post-war-united-states-1945-1968/civil-rights-movement/.
41. Katherine Stewart, *Money, Lies, & God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025, 85-86; Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, New York: Penguin, 2018, 19-25; Mary Reynolds and Carol Mason, "Canaries in the Classroom," *Political Research Associates*, March 25, 2025, Updated July 2, 2025, politicalresearch.org/2025/03/25/canaries-classroom.
42. IRS Revenue Rule 71-441, 197, www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/rr71-447.pdf, accessed December 16, 2025.
43. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2009, 231.
44. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2009, 231.
45. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2009, 227.
46. Katherine Stewart, *Money, Lies, & God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025, 51. Stewart discusses how Weyrich and other conservative operatives intentionally framed abortion around "taming sexual license and restoring the gender order" so "they could bring along evangelical clergy and all the anti-feminists as well as any who felt uncomfortable with the various liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the (false) perception among their target base of white voters was that sexual license was a particular problem for Black people, they could even use abortion to call in the racists."
47. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2009, 213-235.
48. Bill Blum, "The Right-Wing Legacy of Justice Lewis Powell and What It Means for the Supreme Court Today," *Huffington Post*, August 16, 2016, www.theusconstitution.org/news/the-right-wing-legacy-of-justice-lewis-powell-and-what-it-means-for-the-supreme-court-today/.

49. Bill Blum, "The Right-Wing Legacy of Justice Lewis Powell and What It Means for the Supreme Court Today," *Huffington Post*, August 16, 2016, www.theusconstitution.org/news/the-right-wing-legacy-of-justice-lewis-powell-and-what-it-means-for-the-supreme-court-today/.
50. Bill Blum, "The Right-Wing Legacy Of Justice Lewis Powell And What It Means For The Supreme Court Today," *Huffington Post*, August 16, 2016, www.theusconstitution.org/news/the-right-wing-legacy-of-justice-lewis-powell-and-what-it-means-for-the-supreme-court-today/.
51. *Powell Memorandum*, www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-usa-stateless/2024/11/41940985-powellmemorandumtypescript.pdf.
52. The Lever News website, "The Powell Memo," September 20, 2024, www.levernews.com/tag/the-powell-memo/.
53. Tyler Murphy, ALEC: The Right-Wing Group Behind "Stand Your Ground," *Political Research Associates*, July 18, 2013, Updated: September 19, 2024, politicalresearch.org/2013/07/18/alec-right-wing-group-behind-stand-your-ground.
54. Henry Grabar, "The Shackling of the American City," *Slate*, September 9, 2016, slate.com/business/2016/09/how-alec-acce-and-pre-emptions-laws-are-gutting-the-powers-of-american-cities.html; Jeffrey Harris, "ALEC: 50 Years of Attacking Environmental Protection and Democracy," *Greenpeace*, October 3, 2023, www.greenpeace.org/usa/alec-50-years-of-attacking-environmental-protection-and-democracy/.
55. Arn Pearson and David Arniak, "After 50 Years, this Right-Wing Law Factory is Crazy than Ever," *The American Prospect*, October 4, 2023, prospect.org/power/2023-10-04-alec-50-years-right-wing-law-factory/.
56. Yvonne Wingett Sanchez and Rob O'Dell, "What is ALEC?," *USA Today*, April 3, 2019, usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2019/04/03/alec-american-legislative-exchange-council-model-bills-republican-conservative-devos-gingrich/3162357002/.
57. New America website, "Preemption 101," www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/punching-down/part-one-state-preemption-unleashed/.
58. Lisa Graves, "ALEC, 'Model' Legislation, and Preemption," Local Solutions Support Center, March 15, 2023, www.supportdemocracy.org/the-latest/alec-model-legislation-and-preemption. See also model bills on ALEC website: alec.org/model-policy/protecting-businesses-and-workers-act/; alec.org/model-policy/employment-mandate-preemption/; alec.org/model-policy/rent-control-preemption-act/.
59. Arn Pearson and David Arniak, "After 50 Years, this Right-Wing Law Factory is Crazy than Ever," *The American Prospect*, October 4, 2023, prospect.org/power/2023-10-04-alec-50-years-right-wing-law-factory/.
60. Henry Grabar, "The Shackling of the American City," *Slate*, September 9, 2016, slate.com/business/2016/09/how-alec-acce-and-pre-emptions-laws-are-gutting-the-powers-of-american-cities.html.
61. "Reagan vs. Cities: The Battle over South African Apartheid and Lessons for the Trump Era," *Exposed by CMD*, Center for Media and Democracy, June 28, 2017, www.exposedbycmd.org/2017/06/28/reagan-vs-cities-battle-south-african-apartheid-lessons-trump-era/.
62. "Stand Your Ground," ACLU of Kansas, February 9, 2022, www.aclukansas.org/publications/stand-your-ground/; "ALEC's Attacks on People of Color, Civic Engagement, and Dissent," *ALEC Attacks: How evangelicals and corporations captured state lawmaking to safeguard white supremacy and corporate power*, Center for Constitutional Rights, 2019, www.alecattacks.org/alec-attacks-civic-engagement-and-dissent.
63. *Under Fire: The War on LGBTQ+ People in America*, Movement Advancement Project, February 2023, www.mapresearch.org/file/MAP_Under%20Fire%20Report.pdf; Alex Koch, "Leading Free-Market Policy Network Enabling Anti-LGBTQ+ Hate," *Hatewatch*, Southern Poverty Law Center, December 7, 2021, www.splcenter.org/resources/hatewatch/leading-free-market-policy-network-enabling-anti-lgbtq-hate/; Jazper Lu, "Idea exchange or corporate lobbying front? A look into ALEC's influence in NC," *The News and Observer*, July 30, 2023, www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article277216538.html.

64. Alan Zibel, *Revolving Congress: The Revolving Door Class of 2019 Flocks to K Street*, Public Citizen, May 30, 2019, www.citizen.org/article/revolving-congress/.
65. Karl Evers-Hillstrom and Dan Auble, 'Shadow Lobbying' in Trump's Washington, Open Secrets, October 3, 2019, www.opensecrets.org/news/reports/shadow-lobbying-2019.
66. "Former Sen. Chris Dodd to Lead Motion Pictures Association of America," CT Post, March 2, 2011, www.ctpost.com/news/article/former-sen-chris-dodd-to-lead-motion-pictures-1036393.php;
67. "State Limits on Contributions to Candidates," National Conference of State Legislatures, May 2023, documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/Elections/Contribution-Limits-to-Candidates-2023-2024.pdf.
68. Ryan Sabalow, "Do outgoing legislators 'shop' for lobbying jobs in final weeks of the session?," *Cal Matters*, August 15, 2024, calmatters.org/politics/2024/08/california-legislators-job-hunt-conflicts-ethics/.
69. Benjamin C.K. Egerod, "How Do Members of Congress React to the Potential of Lucrative Private Sector Employment?," *Promarket*, January 24, 2020, www.promarket.org/2020/01/24/how-do-members-of-congress-react-to-the-potential-of-lucrative-private-sector-employment/#~:text=Many%20fear%20that%20the%20potential,priorities%20of%20special%20interest%20groups.
70. Daniel I. Weiner, "Citizens United, Explained," *Brennan Center for Justice*, January 29, 2025, www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/citizens-united-explained.
71. Issue Brief: "Dark Money Matters," The Campaign Legal Center, campaignlegal.org/sites/default/files/Dark%20Money%20Issue%20Brief.pdf.
72. SpeechNOW challenged the constitutionality of the Federal Election Campaign Act's political committee registration, contribution limits, and disclosure requirements for independent expenditure-only groups. The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit held that FECA's limits on what individuals could contribute to SpeechNOW, and what SpeechNOW could accept, violated the First Amendment. *SpeechNOW.org* is the first case in which a federal court applied the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*. SpeechNOW is the anti-campaign finance reform project of the Institute for Justice, an ideologically extreme legal action group focused on rolling back labor rights regulations, school vouchers, and private property rights. See Federal Election Commission website, "*Speechnow.org* v. FEC," www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/speechnoworg-v-fec/; Institute for Justice website, ij.org/client/speechnow-org/.
73. Daniel Weiner and Tim Lau, "Citizens United Explained," Brennan Center for Justice, January 29, 2025, www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/citizens-united-explained. The plaintiff in the case was Maryland-based Citizens United, the right-wing video producer of films such as "Trump's Rescue Mission: Saving America." The organization claims to be dedicated to "restoring our government to citizens' control." It is run by David Bossie, who has worked for the election and reelection campaigns of Donald Trump and of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. See Citizens United website, "About David N. Bossie," www.citizensunited.org/who-we-are/about-david-n-bossie/. In 2019, Bossie was accused of using his political group to scam elderly Republican voters for his own financial gain, sparking an IRS investigation. See Gabby Orr and Daniel Lippman, "Trump campaign distances itself over alleged scam," *Politico*, May 7, 2019, www.politico.com/story/2019/05/07/trump-campaign-david-bossie-1309709.
74. Matt Levin, "What is Prop. 13?," *Cal Matters*, projects.scpr.org/prop-13/history/, accessed June 16, 2026.
75. Howard Gleckman, "How The Anti-Tax Movement Changed Politics and Government," Tax Policy Center, Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, April 2, 2024, taxpolicycenter.org/taxvox/how-anti-tax-movement-changed-politics-and-government.
76. "How Prop 13 gave California's richest corporations a multibillion-dollar tax break they didn't want," *Cal Matters*, August 17, 2020, calmatters.org/commentary/2020/08/how-prop-13-gave-californias-richest-corporations-a-multibillion-dollar-tax-break-they-didnt-want/.
77. Bethany P. Paquin, *Chronicle of the 161-Year History of State Imposed Property Tax*

Limitations: Working Paper WP15BP1, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2015, www.lincolninst.edu/app/uploads/legacy-files/pubfiles/paquin-wp15bp1.pdf.

78. Wesley Tharpe, *Easing State Restraints on Local Taxing Power Can Strengthen Democracy, Promote Prosperity and Equity*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 28, 2023, www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/easing-state-restraints-on-local-taxing-power-can-strengthen.
79. Jacob Denney et al, *Burdens and Benefits Investigating Prop. 13's unequal impacts in Oakland*, SPUR, February 2022, www.spur.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/SPUR_Burdens_and_Benefits.pdf.
80. "How Prop. 13 gave California's richest corporations a multibillion-dollar tax break they didn't want," *Cal Matters*, August 17, 2020, calmatters.org/commentary/2020/08/how-prop-13-gave-californias-richest-corporations-a-multibillion-dollar-tax-break-they-didnt-want/.
81. California Legislative Analyst's Office website, "Proposition 15," November 3, 2020, lao.ca.gov/BallotAnalysis/Proposition?number=15&year=2020.
82. National Federation of Independent Business website, "About NFIB," www.nfib.com/about-nfib/.
83. Ballotpedia website, "California Proposition 15, Tax on Commercial and Industrial Properties for Education and Local Government Funding Initiative (2020)," November 3, 2020, [ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_15,_Tax_on_Commercial_and_Industrial_Properties_for_Education_and_Local_Government_Funding_Initiative_\(2020\)](http://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_15,_Tax_on_Commercial_and_Industrial_Properties_for_Education_and_Local_Government_Funding_Initiative_(2020)).
84. Adam Beam, "Judge orders changes to voter guide for property tax measure," KCRA 3, Aug 5, 2020, www.kcra.com/article/judge-orders-changes-to-voter-guide-for-property-tax-measure/3352761.
85. "California NAACP Leader Resigns Amid Conflict of Interest Backlash," California Public Radio (CPR), November 3, 2020, www.cpradio.org/articles/2020/11/23/california-naacp-leader-resigns-amid-conflict-of-interest-backlash/.
86. Laurel Rosenhall, "California NAACP president aids corporate prop campaigns — collects \$1.2 million and counting," *Cal Matters*, September 25, 2020, Updated October 23, 2020, calmatters.org/politics/2020/09/california-naacp-president-helps-corporate-ballot-measure-campaigns/.
87. "California NAACP Leader Resigns Amid Conflict of Interest Backlash," California Public Radio (CPR), November 3, 2020, www.cpradio.org/articles/2020/11/23/california-naacp-leader-resigns-amid-conflict-of-interest-backlash/.
88. *Pesticide Legislation: Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-170)*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Library of Congress, Updated September 11, 1998, www.everycrsreport.com/files/19980911_96-759_cae29ffc2edda2c1eddd8ea3578133e1cf1d09374.pdf.
89. Willa Childress, "Pesticide preemption and the fight for local control," Pesticide Action and Agroecology Network, September 15, 2023, www.panna.org/news/pesticide-preemption-local-control/.
90. Mathew Porter, Factsheet: "State Preemption Law: The Battle for Local Control of Democracy," Beyond Pesticides, Fall 2013, www.beyondpesticides.org/assets/media/documents/lawn/activist/documents/StatePreemption.pdf.
91. Abby Rapoport, "Blue Cities Battle Red States", *The American Prospect*, August 22, 2016, prospect.org/2016/08/22/blue-cities-battle-red-states/; "Study: Big Tobacco set public health back decades by pitting states against cities," January 16, 2020, Corporate Accountability, corporateaccountability.org/media/study-big-tobacco-set-public-health-back-decades-by-pitting-states-against-cities/.
92. Robert K. Jackler, MD, *Propaganda Crusades by Philip Morris International & Altria: "Smoke-Free Future" and "Moving Beyond Smoke" Campaigns*, Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, March 2, 2022, tobacco-img.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/02103210/PMI-SFF-White-Paper-3-2-2022F-.pdf.
93. Abby Rapoport, "Blue Cities Battle Red States," *The American Prospect*, August 22, 2016, prospect.org/2016/08/22/blue-cities-battle-red-states/.

94. UC Berkeley Labor Center, *Inventory of US City and County Minimum Wage Ordinances*, April 9, 2026, laborcenter.berkeley.edu/inventory-of-us-city-and-county-minimum-wage-ordinances/, accessed May 13, 2026.
95. Richard Briffault, *The Challenge of the New Preemption*, Columbia Law School, 2018, scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2090.
96. Kim Haddow, et al, *The Growing Shadow of State Interference*, Local Solutions Support Center and State Innovation Exchange, 2020, stateinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Growing-Shadow-of-State-Interference-Preemption-in-the-2019-State-Legislative-Sessions.pdf.
97. "Workers' rights preemption in the U.S.," Economic Policy Institute, www.epi.org/preemption-map/, accessed May 2026.
98. The board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce includes representatives from many of our country's largest corporations, such as Pfizer, Shell, ConocoPhillips, Hilton, Meta, Microsoft, Comcast, and many others. See U.S. Chamber of Commerce website, "U.S. Chamber Board of Directors," www.uschamber.com/about/governance/board-of-directors, accessed July 2026. And the NFIB has received millions in donations from Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, a conservative advocacy group with close ties to the Koch brothers' empire, as well as \$3.7 million from Crossroads GPS, a conservative advocacy group advised by Karl Rove. Crossroads GPS in turn has received millions in donations from fossil fuel corporations. See Chris Frates, "Koch Bros-backed group gave millions to small business lobby," CNN, November 21, 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/11/21/politics/small-business-big-donor/index.html?iref=allsearch; Catherine Clifford, "Democratic Lawmakers Question NFIB's Motives for Small Business," NBC News, June 16, 2012, www.nbcnews.com/id/wnba47844421; "Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies," *SourceWatch*, Center for Media and Democracy, sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Crossroads_Grassroots_Policy_Strategies; "Top Organizations Disclosing Donations to American Crossroads / Crossroads GPS, 2012," Open Secrets, www.opensecrets.org/outside-spending/detail/2012?cmte=American%20Crossroads/Crossroads%20GPS&tab=donors.
99. NFIB website, "About NFIB," www.nfib.com/about-nfib/.
100. Chris Frates, "Koch Bros-backed group gave millions to small business lobby," CNN Politics, Nov 21, 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/11/21/politics/small-business-big-donor/index.html?iref=allsearch.
101. Press Release: "Special NFIB Missouri Legislative Report from Brad Jones," NFIB, September 30, 2015. Retrieved from LexisNexis, June 23, 2026. On file with author.
102. Missouri Senate website, Bill Summary for SB 455 (2015), www.senate.mo.gov/BillTracking/Bills/BillInformation?year=2015&billid=3882337.
103. ALEC website, "Alumni," alec.org/about/alumni/.
104. David Arniak and Arn Pearson, "ALEC Has Half the Legislative Members it Claims," *Exposed by CMD*, Center for Media and Democracy, December 1, 2022, www.exposedbycmd.org/2022/12/01/alec-has-half-the-legislative-members-it-claims/.
105. Mike Reicher, "One of Nashville's Affordable Housing Initiatives Nears Nullification in Tennessee Senate," *The Tennessean*, March 2, 2018, www.tennessean.com/story/money/2018/03/02/nashville-affordable-housing-inclusionary-zoning-tennessee-legislature/389549002/.
106. Mike Reicher, "One of Nashville's affordable housing initiatives nears nullification in Tennessee Senate," *The Tennessean*, March 2, 2018, www.tennessean.com/story/money/2018/03/02/nashville-affordable-housing-inclusionary-zoning-tennessee-legislature/38954.
107. Press Release: "Tennessee Chamber Announces New Statewide Board Appointments to State's Premier Business Association," February 1, 2024, williamsonchamber.com/chamber-news/tennessee-chamber-announces-new-statewide-board-appointments-to-states-premier-business-association/.

108. “What is Abusive Preemption and Why is it a Threat to Democracy?” Local Solutions Support Center, www.supportdemocracy.org/what-is-state-preemption.
109. Kathleen Gray, “Ban on local wage ordinances becomes newest state law,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 30, 2015, www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2015/06/30/ban-local-wage-benefit-ordinances-becomes-state-law/29523603/.
110. Brendan Fischer, “Corporate Interests Take Aim at Local Democracy,” *PR Watch*, February 3, 2016, www.prwatch.org/news/2016/02/13029/2016-ALEC-local-control.
111. Mason Rouser, “‘Death Star’ bill lands in Texas, limiting local governments across state,” *The Daily Texan*, September 11, 2023, thedailytexan.com/2023/09/11/death-star-bill-lands-in-texas-limiting-local-governments-across-state/; Chris Walker, “Houston Sues State of Texas Over ‘Death Star’ Law Minimizing Local Governments,” *Truthout*, July 6, 2023, truthout.org/articles/houston-sues-state-of-texas-over-death-star-law-minimizing-local-governments/.
112. LegiScan website, Bill Summary: Texas HB 2127 (2023), legiscan.com/TX/bill/HB2127/2023.
113. “Texas ALEC Politicians,” *SourceWatch*, Center for Media and Democracy, www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Texas_ALEC_Politicians, accessed June 17, 2026.
114. TPPF 2010 Donor List, posted by the *Texas Observer*, www.texasobserver.org/wp-content/legacy/media/k2/attachments/TPPF%202010%20I-990_donorlistsearchable-1.pdf.
115. LinkedIn Profile for Tim Dunn, www.linkedin.com/in/tim-dunn-3aa97a125/, accessed June 17, 2026.
116. SPN affiliate Texas Public Policy Foundation advocates for a range of conservative issues including eliminating property taxes, “DEI bans” at public universities, hardline immigration policies, and defunding public education through private school vouchers. And TPPF Vice Chairman Tim Dunn has spent at least \$30 million since 2010 to back efforts to restrict abortion and send taxpayer money to private schools. See State Policy Network website, “The Network: Texas,” spn.org/directory/?state=TX, Texas Public Policy Foundation website, “TPPF Announces Top Priorities for the Texas Legislative Session,” February 13, 2024, www.texaspolicy.com/press/tppf-announces-top-priorities-for-the-texas-legislative-session; Mike Soraghan and Francisco Camacho, “This Top Trump Donor Wants More than Rule Rollbacks,” *Politico*, July 9, 2024, www.politico.com/newsletters/power-switch/2024/07/09/this-top-trump-donor-wants-more-than-rule-rollbacks-00167107; Mike Soraghan, “Meet the Christian oil mogul spending big to elect Trump,” *Politico*, July 8, 2024, www.eenews.net/articles/meet-the-christian-oil-mogul-spending-big-to-elect-trump/; Jerry Clayton, “Three West Texas billionaires are pushing Texas to the far-right,” Texas Public Radio, March 3, 2024, www.tpr.org/news/2024-02-25/three-west-texas-billionaires-are-pushing-texas-to-the-far-right; Robert Downen and Juan Salinas II, “War on white America: Influential Texas group hosting pro-Christian nationalism conference,” *Texas Tribune*, June 12, 2024, www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/texas/2024/06/12/490389/war-on-white-america-influential-texas-group-hosting-pro-christian-nationalism-conference/; Robert Downen, “Influential Texas activist Jonathan Strickland hosted white supremacist Nick Fuentes at office near Forth Worth,” *Texas Tribune*, October 8, 2023, www.texastribune.org/2023/10/08/nick-fuentes-kyle-rittenhouse-jonathan-stickland/.
117. See “State Preemption Laws,” Law Atlas, lawatlas.org/datasets/preemption-project; “State Preemption of Local Equitable Housing Policies,” Local Solutions Support Center, www.supportdemocracy.org/equitablehousing, and “Workers’ rights preemption in the U.S.,” Economic Policy Institute, www.epi.org/preemption-map/ for maps of states banning these kinds of local policies. All maps accessed May 13, 2026.
118. U.S. Department of Labor website, “State Minimum Wage Laws,” www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state, accessed June 17, 2026.
119. “Minimum Wage Tracker,” Economic Policy Institute, Updated April 10, 2026, www.epi.org/minimum-wage-tracker/, accessed June 17, 2026.
120. “Workers’ rights preemption in the U.S.,” Economic Policy Institute, www.epi.org/preemption-map/, accessed May 13, 2026.

121. "State Preemption Laws," Law Atlas, lawatlas.org/datasets/preemption-project, accessed May 13, 2026.
122. "State Preemption of Local Equitable Housing Policies," Local Solutions Support Center, www.supportdemocracy.org/equitablehousing, accessed May 13, 2026.
123. PowerSwitch analysis of average rent burden data by state, as reported by Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_Americas_Rental_Housing_2026.pdf. Data on file with author.
124. "2026 Mid-Session Trends in State Preemption," Local Solutions Support Center, March 31, 2026, www.supportdemocracy.org/the-latest/2026-mid-session-trends-in-state-preemption.
125. "ALEC's Attacks on People of Color, Civic Engagement, and Dissent," *ALEC Attacks: How evangelicals and corporations captured state lawmaking to safeguard white supremacy and corporate power*, Center for Constitutional Rights, 2019, www.alecattacks.org/alec-attacks-civic-engagement-and-dissent.
126. Ava Kofman, "A Pair of Billionaire Preachers Built the Most Powerful Political Machine in Texas. That's Just the Start," Propublica and The New York Times Magazine, October 2, 2024, [The Guardian, Sep 5, 2023, \[www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/sep/05/texas-fracking-billionaire-brothers-prageru-daily-wire\]\(http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/sep/05/texas-fracking-billionaire-brothers-prageru-daily-wire\).](http://www.propublica.org/article/tim-dunn-farris-wilks-texas-christian-nationalism-dominionism-elections-voting#:~:text=Reporting%20Highlights%20%20Statehouse%20Influence:%20Oil%20tycoons,jockeying%20to%20influence%20a%20second%20Trump%20administration; Peter stone,)
127. "Data for Progress' Pride Corporate Accountability Project," Data for Progress, www.dataforprogress.org/accountable-allies-pride, accessed May 29, 2026; "How Amazon employees celebrated Pride around the world," Amazon News, August 02, 2022, www.aboutamazon.com/news/workplace/how-amazon-employees-celebrated-pride-around-the-world.
128. WeConnect website, "Nashville Pride Announces 2022 Main Stage Lineup Including WALK THE MOON, Tanya Tucker and MORE" April 14, 2022, weconnect.lgbt/nashville-pride-announces-2022-main-stage-lineup-including-walk-the-moon-tanya-tucker-and-more/.
129. "Data for Progress' Pride Corporate Accountability Project," Data for Progress, www.dataforprogress.org/accountable-allies-pride, accessed May 29, 2026; "Tennessee governor approves transgender youth treatment ban," PBS News, May 19, 2021, www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/tennessee-governor-approves-transgender-youth-treatment-ban; "Tennessee is the #1 state with the most legislation that restricts trans youth," WKRN, June 1, 2022, www.wkrn.com/news/tennessee-news/tn-anti-trans-youth-legislation/.
130. Kay Gabriel, "Inventing the Crisis," *N Plus One*, Issue 47, Spring 2024, www.nplusonemag.com/issue-47/politics/inventing-the-crisis/; Adewale A. Maye, "Anti-equity legislation reinforces threats to education and unions," *Working Economics Blog*, Economic Policy Institute, September 26, 2025, www.epi.org/blog/anti-equity-legislation-reinforces-threats-to-education-and-unions/.
131. Yessnia Funes, "Fossil Fuel Billionaires Are Bankrolling the Anti-Trans Movement," *Atmos*, June 10, 2025, atmos.earth/political-landscapes/fossil-fuel-billionaires-are-bankrolling-the-anti-trans-movement/.
132. Jared Make, *Preempting LGBTQ+ Rights: How States Undermine Local Leadership and Innovation on LGBTQ+ Equality*, Local Solutions Support Center, February 2024, static1.squarespace.com/static/5ce4377caeab1ce00013a02fd/t/65bbb4cf7a85e37ffc5b78dd/1706800339257/PreemptingLGBTQRights.pdf.
133. "Why is the GOP escalating attacks on trans rights? Experts say the goal is to make sure evangelicals vote," PBS News, May 20, 2022, www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/why-is-the-gop-escalating-attacks-on-trans-rights-experts-say-the-goal-is-to-make-sure-evangelicals-vote.
134. Joshua Arrayales and Elana Redfield, *The Impact of 2025 Anti-Transgender Legislation on Youth*, UCLA Williams Institute, January 2026, williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/anti-trans-legislation-youth/.

135. Human Rights Campaign, *Map: Attacks on Gender Affirming Care by State* www.hrc.org/resources/attacks-on-gender-affirming-care-by-state-map, accessed November 7, 2025.
136. Tekla Taylor, *The State of Schools for Trans Youth in 2025*, Advocates for Trans Equality, February 25, 2025, transequality.org/news/state-schools-trans-youth-2025, accessed May 13, 2026.
137. Joshua Arrayales and Elana Redfield, *The Impact of 2025 Anti-Transgender Legislation on Youth*, UCLA Williams Institute, January 2026, williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/anti-trans-legislation-youth/.
138. Advocates for Trans Equality, *The State of Schools for Trans Youth in 2025*, February 25, 2025, transequality.org/news/state-schools-trans-youth-2025, accessed May 13, 2026.
139. Advocates for Trans Equality, *The State of Schools for Trans Youth in 2025*, February 25, 2025, transequality.org/news/state-schools-trans-youth-2025, accessed May 13, 2026.
140. Trans Legislation Tracker website, “2026 anti-trans bill tracker”, translegislation.com, accessed May 31, 2026.
141. Jared Make, *Preempting LGBTQ+ Rights: How States Undermine Local Leadership and Innovation on LGBTQ+ Equality*, Local Solutions Support Center, February 2024, static1.squarespace.com/static/5ce4377cae1ce00013a02fd/t/65bbb4cf7a85e37ffc5b78dd/1706800339257/PreemptingLGBTQRights.pdf.
142. Yessenia Funes, “Fossil Fuel Billionaires Are Bankrolling the Anti-Trans Movement,” *Atmos*, June 10, 2025, atmos.earth/political-landscapes/fossil-fuel-billionaires-are-bankrolling-the-anti-trans-movement/.
143. “Alliance Defending Freedom: Staunch Enemy of Equality,” Human Rights Campaign, January 22, 2024, www.hrc.org/news/alliance-defending-freedom-staunch-enemy-of-equality.
144. Samantha Michaels, “We Tracked Down the Lawyers Behind the Recent Wave of Anti-Trans Bathroom Bills,” *Mother Jones*, April 25, 2016, www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/04/alliance-defending-freedom-lobbies-anti-lgbt-bathroom-bills/.
145. Geoff Dembicki, “Revealed: Shell oil non-profit donated to anti-climate groups behind Project 2025,” *The Guardian*, August 15, 2024, www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/15/shell-oil-project-2025-climate-crisis.
146. Jacob Shamsian, “Coachella fans are dismayed that its reclusive billionaire owner funds anti-LGBT causes,” *Business Insider*, Jan 5, 2017, www.businessinsider.com/coachella-owner-phil-anschultz-controversy-2017-1?op=1.
147. “Metro anti-discrimination law reversed by Tennessee Legislature,” [Ballotpedia](http://ballotpedia.org/Metro_anti-discrimination_law_reversed_by_Tennessee_Legislature), May 14, 2011, ballotpedia.org/Metro_anti-discrimination_law_reversed_by_Tennessee_Legislature; Nashville Legislative Archives website, “Ordinance No. BL2011-838 amending Chapter 4.28 of the Metropolitan Code to prohibit Metropolitan Government contractors from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity through their employment practices,” legisarchive.nashville.gov/mc/ordinances/term_2007_2011/bl2011_838.htm.
148. Tenn. Code Ann. § 7-51-1802 (2012), law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/2012/title-7/local/chapter-51/part-18/section-7-51-1802.
149. Nicole Dupuis, et al, *City Rights in an Era of Preemption: A State-by-State Analysis*, National League of Cities, 2018 Update, www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NLC-SML-Preemption-Report-2017-pages.pdf.
150. Tenn. Code Ann. § 7-51-1802 (2012), law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/2012/title-7/local/chapter-51/part-18/section-7-51-1802.
151. Amanda Terkel, “Tennessee Anti-Gay Bill, Backed by State Chamber of Commerce, Puts Big Business in a Tough Spot,” *Huffington Post*, May 23, 2011, www.huffpost.com/entry/tennessee-anti-gay-bill-chamber-commerce-business_n_865581.
152. “Workers’ rights preemption in the U.S.” Economic Policy Institute, www.epi.org/preemption-map/, accessed June 17, 2026.

153. Rebecca Riddell, et al, *Executive Summary, Inequality Inc: How corporate power divides our world and the need for a new era of public action*, Oxfam International, January 2024, oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/server/api/core/bitstreams/46bdd471-5c8b-40be-9b1d-cbd87708325e/content.
154. According to scholars of authoritarianism, higher levels of economic inequality in a society are related to the rise of authoritarian regimes, while willingness to obey authority figures, desire to punish people perceived as rule-breakers, and a belief in conformity and convention predict support for authoritarian leaders and regimes. See Matthew Wills, "Authoritarianism's Hidden Root Cause," *JSTOR Daily*, April 18 2016, daily.jstor.org/authoritarianism-hidden-root-cause/; Frederick Solt, "The Social Origins of Authoritarianism," *Political Research Quarterly*, 65, no. 4, December 2012, www.jstor.org/stable/41759308?mag=authoritarianism-hidden-root-cause; Danny Osborne, et al, "The psychological causes and societal consequences of authoritarianism," *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2, no. 4, March 2023, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9983523/.
155. Caroline Haskins, "ICE Is Paying Palantir \$30 Million to Build 'ImmigrationOS' Surveillance Platform," *Wired*, Apr 18, 2025, www.wired.com/story/ice-palantir-immigrationos/.
156. Paulo Carvão, "\$150 Million AI Lobbying War Fuels The Fight Over Preemption," *Forbes*, Nov 28, 2025, www.forbes.com/sites/paulocarvao/2025/11/28/150-million-ai-lobbying-war-fuels-the-fight-over-preemption/; Jared Perlo, "Trump signs executive order seeking to block states from regulating AI companies," NBC News, Dec. 11, 2025, www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/trump-signs-executive-order-seeking-ban-state-laws-ai-rcna248741; Mike Tanglis and Eileen O'Grady, "Generative Influence: More than one quarter of all federal lobbyists are now lobbying on AI issues," *Public Citizen*, February 24, 2026, www.citizen.org/article/generative-influence/; Press Release: "AI Order Seeks to Block States from Protecting People from Big Tech Risks," National Consumer Law Center, December 12, 2025, www.nclc.org/trump-ai-order-seeks-to-block-states-from-protecting-people-from-big-tech-risks/; Makenzie Holland, "Google, OpenAI target state laws in AI action plan," *Tech Target*, March 21, 2025, www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/news/366621060/Google-OpenAI-target-state-laws-in-AI-action-plan.
157. Tom Perkins, "Trump officials accused of stacking top chemical safety board with industry 'mouthpieces,'" *The Guardian*, July 13, 2026, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jul/13/trump-chemical-safety-board; Cathleen Kelly, et al, *How the Trump Administration's Embrace of Oil, Gas, and Chemical Industry Interests Will Endanger Children's Health*, Center for American Progress, February 4, 2026, www.americanprogress.org/article/how-the-trump-administrations-embrace-of-oil-gas-and-chemical-industry-interests-will-endanger-childrens-health/; "Tracker: Trump Appointees' Corporate Conflicts of Interest," *Public Citizen*, Updated July 28, 2026, www.citizen.org/article/tracker-trump-appointees-in-the-pocket-of-big-corporations/.
158. Mayer Brown website, "Trump 2.0: Executive Order Tracker," www.mayerbrown.com/en/insights/resource-centers/washington-update/trump-2-executive-order-tracker, accessed June 17, 2026.
159. *Abusive Preemption in 2025 State Legislative Sessions: Laws Erode Local Authority on Immigration, Higher Education, Public Health, and More*, Local Solutions Support Center, June 5, 2025, [www.supportdemocracy.org/the-latest/abusive-preemption-in-2025-state-legislative-sessions-laws-erode-local-authority-on-immigration-higher-education-public-health-and-more](https://supportdemocracy.org/the-latest/abusive-preemption-in-2025-state-legislative-sessions-laws-erode-local-authority-on-immigration-higher-education-public-health-and-more).
160. Anita Wadhvani, "A model for the nation? Tennessee GOP ushers in sweeping 'Immigration 2026' agenda," *Tennessee Lookout*, April 29, 2026, tennesseelookout.com/2026/04/29/a-model-for-the-nation-tennessee-gop-ushers-in-sweeping-immigration-2026-agenda/.



POWER SWITCH
ACTION



powerswitchaction.org