

OUR TIME OUR VOTE

OUR TEXAS RISING



TEXAS FREEDOM NETWORK

2019

ANNUAL REPORT



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We can't talk about the Texas Freedom Network in 2019 without talking about 2020.

Two notable things will happen in 2020. It's in 2020 that TFN celebrates our 25th anniversary of social justice advocacy. And 2020 represents an important election that could bring historic change to our state.

Our focus on 2020 drove many of our efforts in 2019. That's because you can't expect to see our values – your values – reflected at the ballot box without first putting in the work required to build and energize a movement of progressive Texans that supports reproductive freedom, LGBTQ rights and strong public schools.

And so, in 2019, TFN continued to build that movement with an eye toward an election that will decide who controls everything from the State Board of Education to the Legislature and even the White House.

Here's just a snapshot of what we accomplished together in 2019.

At the Capitol we scored victories on LGBTQ equality, voting and worker rights, and public education. TFN's Texas Rising program worked in communities across the state to register the next generation of voters. Our faith program, Just Texas, spread the message of a growing faith voice for reproductive rights and LGBTQ equality. And we launched Teach the Truth – a campaign to bring medically accurate, comprehensive sex education to Texas public schools.

In 2020, you can expect to see all of the above from TFN and much more.

We have ahead of us a big year, a big TFN anniversary and a big moment in the history of Texas – and our country.

We're ready. We know you're ready, too.



KATHY MILLER
TFN PRESIDENT

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TFN BOARD MEMBER
PHIL DURST
(1956-2019)

TFN lost a dear friend in 2019.

Longtime TFN board member Phil Durst passed away in October. The accomplished Austin attorney and collage artist served on our board since the organization's earliest days in different capacities, including as chair.

No one loved TFN more than Phil – or did more to help build it into the organization it is today. Phil's loss leaves a big hole in the community and at TFN.

A Once-in-a-Generation Chance to #TeachTheTruth on Sex Ed

For the first time in more than two decades, the Texas State Board of Education began a revision of state health curriculum standards – which include guidelines for sex education – in a process that should conclude in the fall of 2020.

OUR MESSAGE TO THE BOARD: IT'S TIME TO
#TEACHTHETRUTH.

More than
80% of the state's
school districts
teach **abstinence-only**
or no sex education at all.

Stubbornly sticking to a failed abstinence-only approach has contributed to the state's high incidence of teen pregnancy and repeat births to teens.

TFN is leading a campaign to ensure the new standards include such things as information on contraception and disease prevention. Partnering with SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change, TFN issued a report with recommendations on how to make the next generation of sex ed standards medically accurate, comprehensive and LGBTQ-inclusive.

**JOIN THE #TEACHTHETRUTH CAMPAIGN:
TFN.ORG/SEX-ED**



"It's past time for Texas to teach students the truth about sex education. That means teaching them not just about abstinence, but also how to protect themselves from disease and unintended pregnancy when they decide at whatever point in their lives not to be abstinent. This common-sense approach will help students make healthy, responsible decisions based on facts as well as their own and their families' values."

- CARISA LOPEZ
TFN POLITICAL DIRECTOR

Texas Rising: Getting Young Texans Hooked on Voting and Activism

THROUGHOUT ITS BRIEF HISTORY, TEXAS RISING – TFN’S PROGRAM ORGANIZING TEXANS UNDER 30 – HAS FOCUSED MUCH OF ITS EFFORTS ON REGISTERING NEW YOUNG VOTERS.

That was still true in 2019, when the program began its campaign to register an additional 100,000 voters in time for the presidential elections of 2020 – a year in which the generation it represents will be part of what is expected to become the largest voting bloc in the country.

But there’s much more.

IN 2019, TEXAS RISING:

- Helped stop a bill at the Texas Legislature that threatened to discourage, and even criminalize, voter participation.
- Played a role in the coalition that made earned paid-sick time a reality for thousands of working families in Dallas and San Antonio.
- Moved quickly to support the community in the days following the mass shooting at a local Walmart in El Paso.
- Continued its fight to overturn juvenile curfew ordinances.
- Stood with immigrant communities and partnered on Know Your Rights campaigns in the Rio Grande Valley.
- Joined in the Climate Strike movement in several major Texas cities.

The day when the Texas Rising generation’s impact would be felt is here. It’s happening now, and this is only the beginning.



PHOTO BY:
MARSHALL
TIDRICK

TEXAS RISING BY THE NUMBERS

Presence on

25+

Colleges and
universities

Texas Rising
staff members:

9

Organizers in
the field

40+

Paid campus
organizers:

35

A goal to register

100k

new voters in 2020





PHOTO BY: JORDAN STEYER

Just Texas: Faith Leaders for Social Justice

Throughout its history, TFN has sought to organize a growing community of progressive faith leaders and clergy. In 2019, TFN’s Just Texas program took voices from diverse faith traditions to the Capitol in Austin and to communities, large and small, across the state.

During the Texas legislative session, Just Texas members were at the Capitol to lead a “One Voice for Justice March” in support of LGBTQ equality, reproductive freedom and immigrant rights.

Just Texas also made headlines when it led efforts to bless abortion clinics in Austin and McAllen, in addition to bringing the total number of Reproductive Freedom Congregations – faith communities who support access to reproductive health care services – to 23.

For far too long, a single faith perspective dominated the narrative at the Capitol. The progressive faith leaders and clergy members of Just Texas are changing that.

“We have a network of freedom-minded clergy members who want to both support our LGBTQ community and uplift Texas women. It just made sense to bring them all together under Just Texas.”

- SONJA MILLER
TFN OUTREACH AND FAITH DIRECTOR

TFN at the 86th Texas Legislature

The Texas Legislature met in 2019 for a session that featured fewer of the culture war battles that have become common.

Still, on certain issues — like abortion — lawmakers continued to pass extremist laws based on lies at the expense of Texas women.

But TFN can report some important victories on LGBTQ equality as we worked in coalition to defeat all but one (largely symbolic) anti-LGBTQ bill.

On reproductive rights, more than 30 bills were filed that sought to restrict access to abortion and reproductive health services. All but three were defeated.

On voting rights, Senate Bill 9 would have criminalized honest mistakes while voting or registering to vote, threatening to discourage potential voters. We and our coalition partners killed it.

And not one bill on private school vouchers made it to the floor. Texas remains voucher-free.



TRIBUTE & MEMORIAL GIFTS

In honor of

James Aldrete

By Robert Evans Jones

Elizabeth Grenadier

By Marianna Grenadier

Yvonne Gutierrez

By Cheryl & Jim George

Diane Ireson

By Joan & David Hilgers

Michael Kuhn

By Audrey & Ray Maislin

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TFN Impacts Local Reforms

TFN was part of successful efforts to pass a paid-sick ordinance in Dallas and to defend one already in place in San Antonio. Together with an ordinance in Austin, thousands of working families can earn paid-sick time.

In several communities, we are part of Democracy from the Ground Up. This is a coalition effort to advance local policies that would encourage voter participation and make it easier to vote. It's a contrast to right-wing efforts at the Legislature focused on limiting participation.

"If the state legislature won't act to encourage voter participation, local governments must step up."

- CHASE PHILIP
TEXAS RISING STUDENT LEADER

2019 FREEDOM COUNCIL

*Thank you to all our activists, volunteers and donors.
Your time, talent and tribute made an impact in 2019.*

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2020 MARKS TFN'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY.
THANKS TO OUR GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS, WE HAVE MUCH TO CELEBRATE.