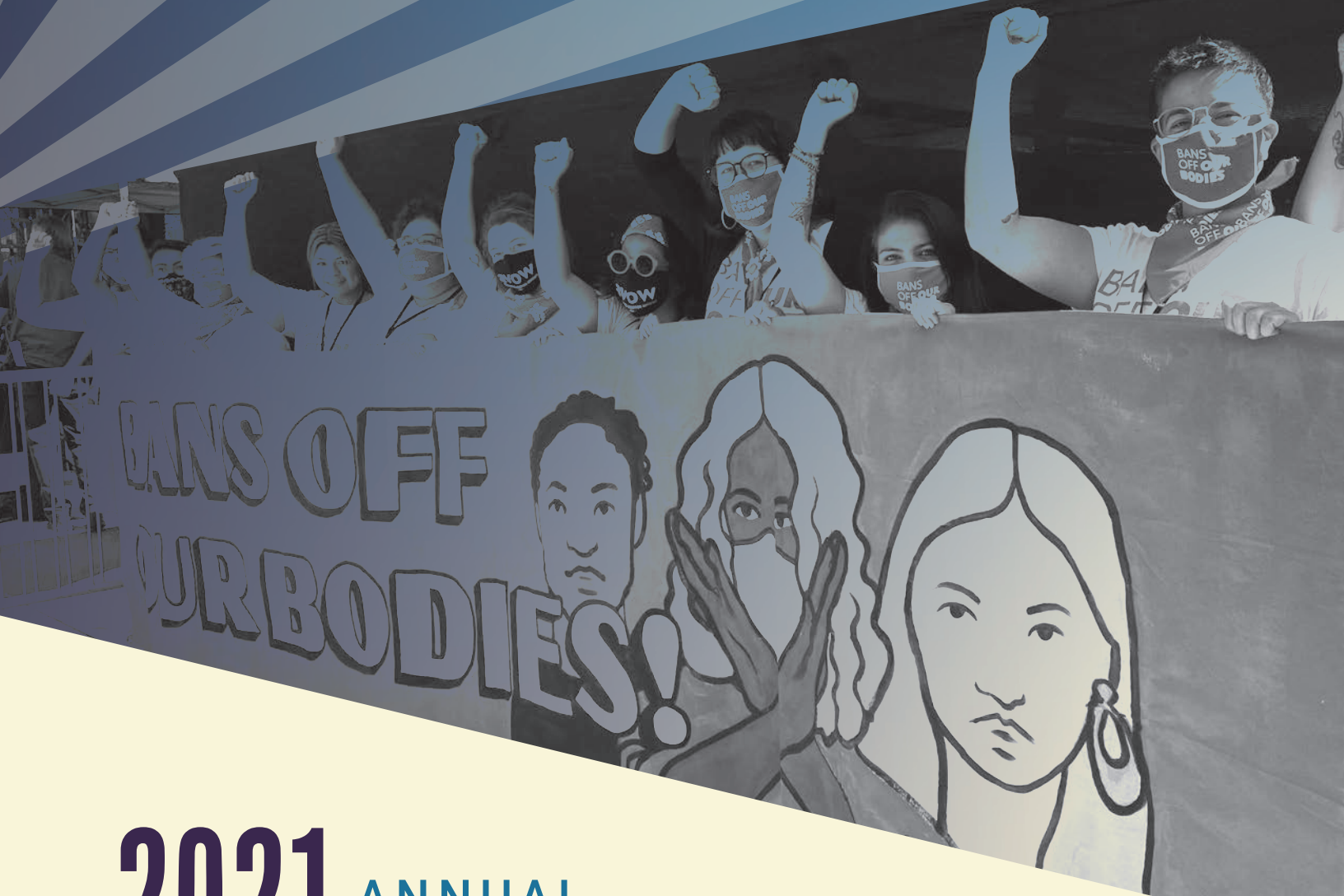




Envision a New Texas



2021 ANNUAL
REPORT

President's Message

More than 30 years ago, Gov. Ann Richards stood in front of the Texas Capitol — her governorship then only a few minutes old — and proclaimed something that I want all of us to envision as we head into 2022 and beyond.

"Welcome to the first day of the new Texas," Ann told the crowd on that January day in 1991.

I share Ann's words with you now first because we love Ann's wit and wisdom. And also because that phrase from her inaugural address so many years ago is what many Texans hope is on the horizon — that day when we can proudly proclaim that a new Texas is here.

It won't be easy.

This past year was a challenge. It was a year that both highlighted the urgent need for a new direction for our state and it was a year that also gave us plenty of examples, some of them needlessly cruel, of how difficult the road ahead promises to be.

The year started with a violent insurrection at our nation's Capitol that threatened the very core of democracy itself. A few weeks later, decades of neglect and failed leadership here at home led to the collapse of our electric grid, bringing freezing temperatures inside the homes of millions of Texans and tragically taking many lives. The COVID-19 pandemic — made worse by the incompetence of our state's leaders — wore on for a second year, too.

Rather than rise to the occasion, our state leaders made a choice to fail us on an almost daily basis.

The regular legislative session — and the special sessions that followed — offered an opportunity to tackle urgent problems and improve the everyday lives of Texans. Instead, Republicans used it to invent brand new ways to suppress our voices and attack the most vulnerable among us.

Lawmakers created a bounty scheme to bring lawsuits against anyone needing an abortion and anyone else who helps someone obtain the care. They told young people to stand on the sidelines and banned them from sharing in the experience of playing school sports if they are transgender. They shamelessly perpetuated

the lies about stolen elections to make it needlessly more difficult to vote — especially for Texans of color — in a state where plenty of barriers already existed.

And they are taking a new state law designed to censor discussions about racism and inequality and using it in one school district after another to spread misinformation about what is taught in our classrooms, intimidate teachers and even to ban from our school libraries books that celebrate the diversity of the people of our state.

Thankfully, Texans like you still have a vote and a say about where we go from here.

The 2022 and 2024 elections will be critical to making sure future legislative sessions aren't dominated by the cruel agendas of extremists like Greg Abbott, Dan Patrick and Ken Paxton. I don't know about you, but I don't want to go through another never-ending legislative year like this one was.

I wish I could tell you when another of the new days Ann talked about will come. What I can promise you is that I, the TFN staff and the many supporters who have kept this organization going for more than a quarter of a century remain as committed as ever to making that day a reality.

It will take a little vision, lots of hard work and when the time comes, a trip down to the ballot box. And TFN will be there, working to do just that, every step of the way.

Let's envision a new Texas and let's make that vision a reality, together.



Val Benavidez
TFN President

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#TeachTheTruth: Sex Ed, Climate Science and a Looming Fight Against Censorship

SEX ED

In 2019, TFN launched its campaign to ensure students receive information about sex education that goes beyond the abstinence-only approach that has failed our young people in Texas for decades. Progress was made in 2020 when a majority of the board agreed to add information about contraception to the health standards that cover sex ed. However, they stubbornly refused to add information even just acknowledging the existence of LGBTQ people.

One final step remained for the campaign in 2021: Approving new health textbooks based on the standards.

The SBOE astonishingly rejected all but one publisher's health textbooks for our public schools. In doing so, board members caved to critics who attacked the textbooks because they included topics related to sex education or because they acknowledged the existence of LGBTQ young people.

The one publisher to gain approval was able to do so only after making major changes board members demanded.

CLIMATE SCIENCE

The SBOE also finished a two-year process revising science curriculum standards. TFN, and experts in the field, worked to ensure that the standards address climate change.

A nationwide review of state science standards conducted by the TFN Education Fund and the National Center for Science Education found Texas scored an F for its coverage of climate science.

The SBOE could have — and should have — done much better. But our campaign resulted in new science standards that for the first time make clear to Texas public school students that climate change is real and that human activity is the cause.

IN 2022, AN UPCOMING FIGHT AGAINST CENSORSHIP

Across the country, far-right politicians spent much of 2021 scaring parents about what is taught about the history of racism and inequality in this country. The Texas Legislature even went as far as passing laws to censor those topics in the classroom. It is an issue that will likely shift to the SBOE in 2022 when the board considers new social studies standards for our schools.

The stakes are enormous. The current standards, adopted by the SBOE more than a decade ago, have been much-criticized for their whitewashing of history. Any attempt to censor our history or ban tough but necessary and truthful classroom discussions would be an even greater disservice to students.

TFN and its partners will be ready to fight the misinformation. We must do everything possible to #TeachTheTruth in our schools.



The Never-Ending Legislative Session

This was a legislative year that felt never-ending. A regular session that proved terrible for millions of Texans was made worse by three additional special sessions in which many of our rights came under attack.



VOTING RIGHTS

Despite a quorum break in the Texas House that stopped state Republicans' massive voter suppression bill, the legislation — SB 1 — eventually passed in a special session. Lies about the 2020 presidential election results were used as an excuse to pass SB 1, which disproportionately impacts people of color and makes it harder to vote in a state where plenty of barriers to the ballot box already exist.

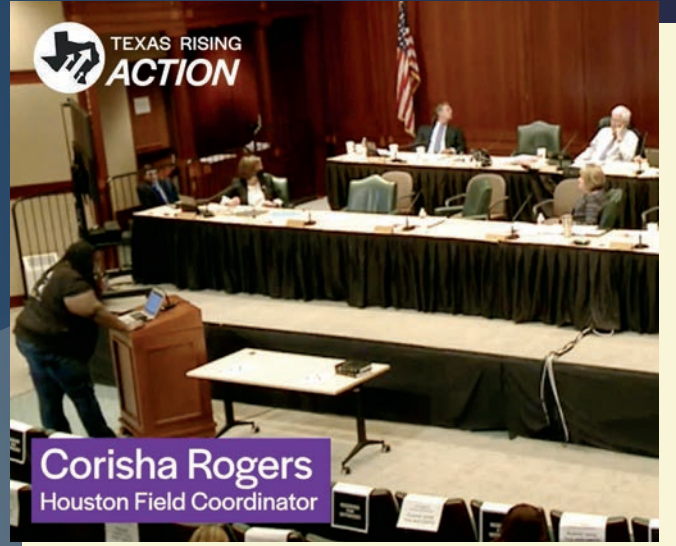
Unless the courts intervene, the provisions of SB 1 will be in place during the 2022 midterm elections and beyond. But TFN and our Texas Rising activists will be working hard to overcome these new obstacles and build on the progress we have made on increasing voter turnout among young Texans of color in recent elections.

ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

The most restrictive anti-abortion law in the country, SB 8, was passed during the regular legislative session, immediately stopping most abortions in the state when it went into effect on Sept. 1.

The law bans abortions at six weeks of pregnancy, before most people even know they are pregnant. And it created an unusual enforcement mechanism that allows anyone to sue anyone who performs or aids in an abortion after six weeks — designed to avoid scrutiny from the courts. As the courts consider multiple lawsuits seeking to overturn the new law, TFN continues to work with partners to defend reproductive freedom for all in Texas.





TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

For the third legislative session in a row, a bill that shamelessly targets transgender Texas was given priority by top elected officials like Lt. Gov. Patrick. Even more shameful this time around, it was legislation targeting transgender children.

As with the voter suppression bill, intense opposition from an array of activists and organizations — including TFN — initially blocked the ban on transgender students in school sports. But it eventually passed later in a special session.

REDISTRICTING

As it does every ten years after completion of the census, the Texas Legislature approved new political boundary maps for Congress, the Texas House and Senate, and the State Board of Education.

Despite people of color driving most of the population growth in the state, Republicans approved maps that vastly diluted their voting power. Here, too, several lawsuits have been filed and are pending.

A Rising Powerhouse



After spending almost a year innovating ways to organize almost exclusively online, Texas Rising — TFN's youth organizing arm — gradually returned to in-person activities as COVID rates eased in parts of the state. In 2021, Texas Rising activists were at the forefront of urgent fights at the Capitol and in communities across the state.

At the Capitol, Texas Rising took a leading role and was the face of TFN's opposition to anti-voter legislation and unfair redistricting maps that threatened to diminish the rising generation's voting power. Texas Rising was also heavily involved in opposing anti-LGBTQ legislation, anti-abortion bills, and more.

With the legislative sessions now behind it, Texas Rising will once again turn its full attention to registering the next generation of young voters and mobilizing them to the polls.

A Leading Voice for Progressive People of Faith

Since our founding, TFN has organized clergy and faith communities. Today, our Just Texas project is one of the leading voices of faith mobilizing in support of reproductive freedom, LGBTQ equality and other progressive values."

At rallies, inside the Capitol and in one media interview after another, Just Texas' faith team was bold and unapologetic in reminding Texans that people of faith support reproductive freedom, including abortion, and uphold the dignity of transgender people to be loved and accepted for who they are.

And in another milestone, Just Texas formally announced its Reproductive Freedom Congregation initiative. The RFC initiative launched in the fall with 25 religious congregations. Another 70 across the country were in the process of obtaining the RFC designation.

Just Texas awards the designation to congregations that pledge to affirm a person's decision to obtain an abortion and work to eradicate the shame and stigma often used as a weapon against people who seek the procedure.





Thank you to all the donors whose generosity and vision supports our commitment to boldly meet the challenges of today and to fight for a better tomorrow. Freedom Council members commit to an annual gift of at least \$1,000. To learn more visit tfn.org/freedomcouncil.

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