



FROM  
**RESISTANCE**  
TO **RESURGENCE**

Texas Freedom Network  
Annual Report 2018





TFN President  
Kathy Miller

**During TFN's more than 20-year history,**

we have talked a lot about evolution, pretty much always in the context of science education.

This time, however, I want to tell you about TFN's evolution. By several measures, the organization in 2018 experienced many changes and tremendous growth. And YOU have been a big part of that.

TFN still holds its founding principles – religious freedom, civil liberties and strong public schools – near and dear. But we've also branched out. For instance, we recognize that positive statewide change must start at the local level. As such, we now

advocate in communities for progressive policies like paid sick time and criminal justice reform.

All of this work, of course, requires extra sets of hands. Our staff is now the biggest it has ever been, with an expanded field team across the state, a robust digital team and added staff to work with clergy and progressive faith communities.

TFN evolved because we know we can play an important role in bringing meaningful and positive change for all Texans. Our state and nation are facing some serious challenges that we need to confront with every resource we have, and the most recent election showed that Texans are stirring – voting in bigger numbers and with more enthusiasm than in recent memory.

With your continued support, TFN will continue to evolve in a positive way. And, together, I'm certain we'll be able to face all of those challenges for the sake of a better Texas. A Texas that trumps the politics of anger, division and resentment. A Texas that truly works for all of us who live and work here. ☆

**“[TFN has...] experienced many changes and tremendous growth. And you have been a big part of that.”**

– Kathy Miller, TFN President

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Photo credit: Robert Hein

# TEXAS RISING, TO NEW LEVELS



**A newspaper headline in Austin read that young voters had become the largest voting bloc in Travis county.**

**In El Paso, another headline** credited young people for driving record turnout for a midterm election. At the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, pictures on social media showed long lines throughout the early voting period. For Texas State University, county leaders were forced to extend early voting hours at the

San Marcos campus due to increased demand.

What those locations have in common: there you will find strong chapters of TFN's program, Texas Rising.

Tens of thousands of young voices will have a say in how we shape our state now and for the next generations.

Texas Rising is, in fact, rising. To new levels. ☆

Texas Rising activists  
**60,000**



Presence on  
**20+** colleges  
and universities

**Took an active  
role advocating  
for immigrant  
communities and  
criminal justice  
reform**



# A YEAR THAT PROVIDED VICTORIES AND EXPANDED OUR WORK

2018 took the Texas Freedom Network everywhere from its familiar battleground at the Texas State Board of Education to local city councils to advocate for positive statewide change that can start at the local level. It was a year of successes on all of these fronts – a year in which TFN turned the resistance of 2017 into the resurgence of 2018.

## PAID SICK


Austin became the first city in Texas to require that employees have the opportunity to earn paid sick leave. San Antonio would soon follow. It's the kind of local policy TFN and its partners have been pushing for in local communities in hopes that one day it can become the standard in all parts of the state. All workers deserve the right to earn paid sick – it's good for workers, their families and for employers. And in a state where accessing some reproductive health services can become a multi-day ordeal, paid sick is a reproductive justice issue, too.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The Texas State Board of Education in 2018 agreed to revise its distorted social studies standards for history first approved in 2010. We scored important victories, including forcing the board to finally acknowledge that slavery was the central cause of the Civil War. But the board kept some of their other favorite distortions. They declined to remove language that says the Civil War was about "states' rights." And Moses, incredibly, remains listed as an influence on America's founding documents.

## TFN BY THE NUMBERS

**TFN Supporters**  
**MORE THAN**  
**150,000**



**Get-Out-The-Vote**  
**messages sent this year**

**▶ 300,000 ◀**

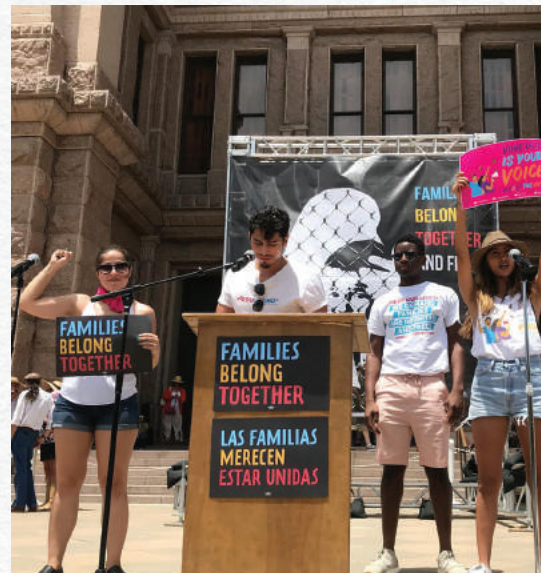
**TFN Members in all**  
**150** **state**  
**legislative**  
**districts**



**177** **Candidates endorsed**  
**this election cycle**  
**THE MOST IN TFN HISTORY**



Rally at the State Board of Education to demand the board #TeachTheTruth.



TFN joined with partners in Austin and across the country to demand an end to family separation.

## MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

Our schools took an important step forward when the State Board of Education voted to create an elective course in Mexican-American studies. It was the culmination of a multi-year effort by TFN and its partners that will give students the opportunity to learn an indispensable part of our state's history.

## SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Trump Administration's policy of separating children from their parents seeking asylum at the southern border was cruel and inhumane. TFN joined our partners in the Rio Grande Valley to organize protest rallies and advocacy efforts to demand an end to the policy and for the immediate reunification of families.

## CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

A historic election meant TFN increased its support for candidates who pledged to fight for our neighborhood public schools, reproductive rights and full equality for LGBTQ Texans. That's why TFN issued its largest-ever slate of endorsed candidates for the U.S. Senate, a pivotal district attorney's race in Dallas County, select statewide offices, the Texas Legislature and – of course – the State Board of Education.

## THE HEIDI GROUP GETS THE BOOT

In 2017, in their effort to strip funding from Planned Parenthood, state officials gave the anti-abortion Heidi Group millions of dollars in contracts for women's health services it was not qualified to provide. Predictably, The Heidi Group failed. In a galling move, officials renewed their contracts. News of that renewal came to light thanks to documents uncovered by TFN and the Campaign for Accountability. In October 2018, the state announced it would cancel the group's remaining contracts and launch an investigation into how the funds were spent.



TFN served as a leading voice in the coalition to pass paid sick ordinances in Austin, San Antonio and Dallas.

# FAITH VOICES FOR EQUALITY

*Texas Believes* toured the state for a series of town halls to ensure that a faith perspective in support of fairness for all Texans is represented and heard by state leaders.



Faith Leaders at the Texas Capitol.

**In 2017, the Texas Legislature** took its attack on LGBTQ equality to a new level when some of its leaders insisted on a “bathroom bill” that targeted transgender Texans for discrimination. There is a good chance similar legislation will be back in years to come. That’s why *Texas Believes*, a project of TFN and Equality Texas, continues to recruit faith leaders who will speak boldly about how their faith calls them to support LGBTQ Texans. Following the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* ruling by the Supreme Court, which left the door open for legalized discrimination in the name of religion, *Texas Believes* toured the state for a series of town halls to ensure that a faith perspective in support of fairness for all Texans is represented and heard by state leaders. ☆

## FAITH IN REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

*Just Texas* believes women, not politicians, should be the decision-makers about their reproductive health.

**Just Texas continues to grow.**

*Just Texas* now counts more than a dozen Reproductive Justice Congregations across the state. This project, first launched in 2015, uplifts the voices of faith communities that support comprehensive reproductive health care for Texas families, including access to safe abortion care and affordable family planning. At the state legislature in 2019 and beyond, *Just Texas* will be at the Capitol to remind lawmakers that people of faith believe women, not politicians, should be the decision-makers about their reproductive health. ☆



The beliefs, words and deeds of clergy and leaders in this congregation will embody these principles at all times. We pledge to make our congregation a safe, accepting space for everyone.

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Thank you to all our activists, volunteers and donors. Your time, talent and tribute made an impact in 2018

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