

annual report

2022

the RELENTLESS fight for FREEDOM

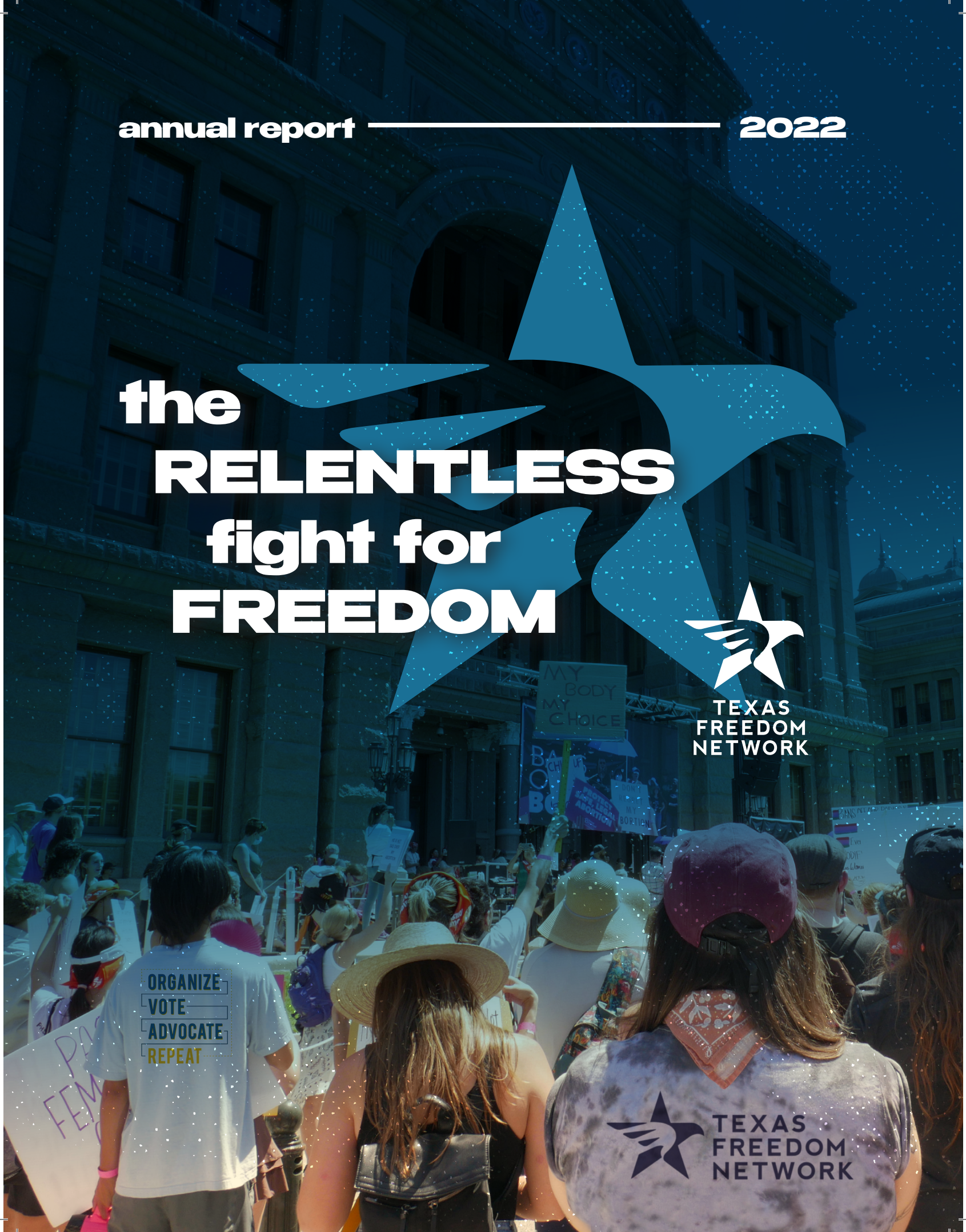


TEXAS
FREEDOM
NETWORK

ORGANIZE
VOTE
ADVOCATE
REPEAT



TEXAS
FREEDOM
NETWORK



a SPECIAL message from the PRESIDENT

We are Texas. Every single one of us—from Amarillo to the Rio Grande Valley—are the ones who make this state bold, and courageous—a place you don't mess with.

Yet, in 2022, just like so many years before it, our leaders underestimated our power, abandoning their responsibility to serve all Texans.

Creating change is not easy in this state, but through it all, Texas Freedom Network has defended our democracy and met this year's challenges with a vision for the future, and a **relentlessness** that can never be matched.

We've been the watchdogs of the religious right in Texas for almost 30 years. And in that time, we've grown from our roots as an educational advocacy organization to leading a strong, bold progressive movement that's mobilizing Texas communities around the issues that shape our lives.

This year, we have had to be absolutely **relentless** in our pursuit of social justice.

When right-wing politicians attacked transgender children and their loving families—attempting to designate gender-affirming care as child abuse, we fought **relentlessly** for the equality of LGBTQIA+ Texans in every space we could.

When religious extremists finally succeeded in their decades-long crusade to overturn Roe v. Wade, against the will of the people, we didn't let ourselves stay in the depths of despair. Instead, we were **relentless** in our advocacy for safe, legal access to abortion.

When our neighborhood schools were under attack from politicians obsessed with banning books and censoring education, we were **relentless** in demanding the State Board of Education allow public schools to teach the truth about our history and the diverse communities in our state so that we can build a better future together.

We at Texas Freedom Network will always be **relentless** in ensuring our children are free to learn, thrive, and be who they are at school.

It can sometimes feel like our work is an uphill battle. I won't say this year has been easy or that I expect 2023 to be any easier as we enter another legislative session where politicians are poised to continue enacting cruel policy after cruel policy. But I can feel a shift toward hope and action as our progressive community continues to grow and build our power. We are so close to finally creating a Texas that reflects who we are.

I could not be more proud of the organizing and grassroots power I've seen each and every day at Texas Freedom Network.

Together, we will continue to be **relentless**.

Val Benavidez
TFN President
(she/ella)



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a texas-sized MOVEMENT for PROGRESS

dallas

Advocated for passage of the GRACE Act, a slate of pro-choice city resolutions

austin

Led a massive campaign to register and mobilize young voters

san antonio

Fought for climate action by demanding Spruce Coal Plant & CPS Energy shut down their dangerous plant by 2030

el paso

Organized for reproductive justice by demanding the D.A. pledge not to prosecute or file charges against people who access abortion services

corpus christi

Mobilized the community to fight climate change by getting out the vote for pro-climate justice candidates

houston

Led the Democracy From the Ground Up Coalition to ensure protection of voting rights

rio grande valley

Knocked on thousands of doors to get out the vote for a slate of progressive candidates



TEXAS RISING STUDENT CHAPTERS

the RELENTLESS pursuit of social JUSTICE

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM OVER OUR BODIES AND FUTURES

This year, TFN relentlessly fought for reproductive freedom in a post-Roe world.

Alongside our youth organizing project, Texas Rising, we mobilized communities and urged for the passage of pro-choice resolutions named the GRACE ACT in several cities, while simultaneously conducting vital research with our partners that confirmed the majority of Texans do not support abortion bans—with 60% of Texas voters proclaiming they support access to abortion.

Just Texas, our project changing the narrative about abortion in faith communities, organized alongside clergy members and Reproductive Freedom Congregations to proclaim their support for reproductive justice. Our movement, inclusive of all faiths, continues to dismantle the myth that all people of faith oppose bodily autonomy and dignity through access to abortion.

In the digital space, we continued our powerful advocacy by creating our Action Center, which offers information on the evolving landscape of abortion access in post-Roe Texas. Learn more at tfn.org/roe.



OUR WORK TO TEACH THE TRUTH

As the watchdogs of the religious right, a cornerstone of our work has always been fighting educational censorship, particularly at the State Board of Education (SBOE). 2022 was no exception as we mobilized Texans from all walks of life to testify in support of more inclusive social studies standards through our Teach the Truth campaign. Ultimately, the Republican-led board caved to an extreme minority and paused on the adoption of standards that #TeachTheTruth.



Make no mistake: The battle is far from over, and we will never stop fighting for accurate, honest education in Texas public schools.

To us, the students we're fighting for are the future—like Avital, a Texas student who helped us launch the Teach the Truth campaign and spoke at the SBOE this year.

“Our schools currently hold the next generation of world leaders, doctors, teachers, and so much more, and if our education is censored and limited, then by the time we are exposed to new things we meet them with bias and hate.”

— Avital (they/them) during the *Teach the Truth* campaign launch



#TEACHTHETRUTH READ-IN AT THE CAPITOL



While organizing at the SBOE, we sounded the alarm on harmful book bans spreading across Texas. This culminated in our Read-In at the Capitol, where students, activists and elected leaders gathered to celebrate the freedom to read.

THE FIGHT AHEAD—2023 SCIENCE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION

Texas will adopt new science textbooks in 2023, and our fight for accurate and honest education in public schools will meet yet another challenge. While the new standards adopted by the Board in 2020 do a far better job than the previous standards when it comes to evolution, the SBOE decided to water down mentions of human-caused climate change.

Texas is one of six states that failed a national report card examining how climate change is addressed in science classes. This textbook adoption process is our chance to ensure the state doesn't fail again.

We're ready to demand the SBOE teach the truth about climate change in our public schools!

Y'ALL MEANS ALL

In February, TFN sprung into action when Ken Paxton and Greg Abbott directed Child Protective Services to investigate gender-affirming care for minors as child abuse.

While they attacked transgender children and their loving families, we organized in both the physical and digital worlds. Our digital advocacy led to more than 7,000 people proclaiming they support transgender kids and their families through our online petition.

On the ground, we fought for the equality, safety, and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Texans in the courts, at public hearings, and in the media. We held officials accountable—demanding they listen to the stories of the families they were choosing to tear apart.

On Transgender Day of Visibility, we were grateful to add our contribution by organizing a rally—a day of joy and community—where we came together to uplift and celebrate the beautiful, powerful presence of transgender children and adults in Texas.



JUST TEXAS and the people of faith in OUR FIGHT for freedom

Just Texas was founded in 2013 to connect clergy and faith communities who are dedicated to social justice as a key component of their faith. In 2016, the Just Texas team created a process to designate congregations as Reproductive

Freedom Congregations by providing training on how to support values for reproductive freedom and educating congregations on the need to speak about abortion access.



Freedom Congregations vow to trust and respect people who can become pregnant and believe access to comprehensive and affordable reproductive health services, including abortion, is a moral and social good. As we navigate post-Roe Texas, our Just Texas community has been vital in the ongoing fight for reproductive freedom.

We could not be more grateful for the clergy members we've worked alongside in the pursuit of social justice.

"I became a minister out of a call that is rooted in anti-racism and gender justice. [Two events] that inspired me to finally go to seminary were the killing of Trayvon Martin and Wendy Davis' filibuster for abortion rights. I just thought, 'in different ways, one person's life can really make a difference, and I'm going to devote my life to this work.' "

– **Rev. Erin Walter** (she/her)



Executive Director of the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry, Rev. Walter calls on our communities to side with love and justice always.



In the fight for LGBTQIA+ and reproductive justice, Rev. Johnson speaks truth to power as an LGBTQIA+ advocate, Presbyterian minister, and healthcare professional.

"As people of faith, it is our job to tell the truth, respond in compassion, be caretakers in our community who love our neighbors selflessly, and remind everyone that there is a place for them."

– **Rev. Remington Johnson** (she/her)

THANK YOU to our donors and supporters!

We are grateful to all the donors whose generosity and vision supports TFN's commitment to boldly meet the challenges of today and fight for a better tomorrow.

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