



**DFI**

Defense of  
Freedom Institute

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2023 Spring Report





5 Amicus Briefs



Submitted 7 FOIAS



2 New Hires



959 Total Media Mentions



9,000+ New Followers on Social (Jan. to Apr.)



1,550



106



7,404



128



45,112 Social Media Followers



We envision a republic where freedom, opportunity, creativity, and innovation flourish in our schools and workplaces.

Our mission is to defend and advance freedom and opportunity for every American family, student, entrepreneur, and worker and to protect our civil and constitutional rights at school and work.



# Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are pleased to present to you **DFI's Spring 2023 Report**. Some key highlights include: hosting a day-long convening of over **28 of the best minds** in higher education policy to discuss accreditation reform; publishing a report on the state of federal accreditation policy and recommendations for reform; filing five amicus briefs, including one joined by **five former Secretaries of Education** opposing President Biden's student debt cancellation policy; and organizing coalitions of like-minded thinkers to fight the Education Department's proposed Title IX rules and illegal student loan forgiveness policies.

This year, DFI has received over **587 media mentions**, including op-eds for *Fox News*, *The Federalist*, *RealClearEducation*, *The Washington Examiner*, and *National Review*, which recently published our piece entitled, *Just Do It: A Plan to Close the Federal Department of Education*.

DFI is also growing and is proud to have Don Daugherty (Senior Counsel, Litigation) and Clairece Marker (Digital Media Associate) join the team this year.

DFI's work would not be possible without your continued support. We greatly appreciate your commitment to freedom, opportunity, and innovation in America's schools and workplaces.

Sincerely,



*Bob*  
Robert S. Eitel  
President & Co-Founder



*Jim*  
Jim Blew  
Co-Founder



# As of May 31<sup>st</sup>

5

Amicus Briefs

3

Reports

4 Rulemaking  
comments

2 Grassroots  
campaigns to drive  
public rulemaking  
comments

1

Conference

1

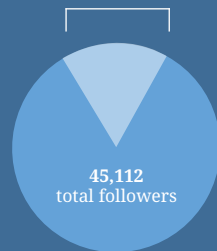
Panel

7

Investigations

9,000+

New followers on social media



2

New Hires

42,948+

New email subscribers

(88,773 total email subscribers)

7

Op-Eds

587

Media Mentions

(959 total media mentions)

Briefings for  
key public  
policymakers

4

Coalition Letters



# Defending Civil and Constitutional Rights in Schools and Workplaces

America is facing an historical moment, when the left is demanding policies that violate core constitutional and civil rights essential to a free society governed by the rule of law. Front and center is the Biden administration's extremist rewrite of Title IX that seeks to leverage federal regulatory power over schools, colleges, and universities to remake American education, society, and culture.

This year, DFI has fought in court and at the grassroots to oppose the U.S. Department of Education's radical Title IX policies.

In court, we've filed **four amicus briefs** to support women's sports and the rule of law:

- ***The State of Tennessee v. U.S. Department of Education***—Arguing the Biden administration does not have the statutory authority to change the definition of “sex” in Title IX to include “gender identity”
- ***Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools***—Supporting four female athletes who were forced to compete against males in high school track competitions and who missed opportunities for prizes, scholarships, and recognition
- ***B.P.J. v. West Virginia State Board of Education***— Supporting West Virginia's “Save Women's Sports Bill” and arguing that the law is constitutional and does not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Federal Constitution
- ***Henderson v. Springfield R-12 School District***—Supporting public school administrators in their First Amendment fight against their school district's “woke” education policies



At the grassroots, we've formed a diverse coalition of dozens of like-minded allies to stop the Biden administration's plans to propose a new Title IX Athletics rule:

- **We launched a social media campaign on Title IX** to educate the public, including a portal that provided over 12,500 Americans the opportunity to submit comments on the Biden administration's Title IX Athletics rule
- **We organized a coalition letter** urging the administration to give the public more time to have its voice heard on the rule
- **We submitted a public comment** on the rule, arguing the proposed rule would transform the meaning of Title IX to require schools to force female athletes to compete against biological boys and men



# Advancing Opportunity in Postsecondary Education

DFI works to nurture a vision for long-term higher education reform through a unique blend of legal advocacy, policy development, and coalition-building.



## Student Loans & Abuse of Executive Power

- In an historic Supreme Court filing, DFI **teamed** with five former Secretaries of Education—Betsy DeVos, Margaret Spellings, Rod Paige, Lamar Alexander, and William Bennett—to file an **amicus brief** in *Biden v. Nebraska*. The brief explains why Biden’s mass student loan debt cancellation program is unconstitutional and illegal.
- A DFI-led **coalition** of higher education experts is fighting Biden’s student loan bailout, as well as its Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) program overhaul (just another backdoor student loan bailout by another name).
- DFI’s **public comment** on the IDR proposal explains how the Biden administration is turning federal student loans into a targeted grant program that unjustly places the burden of college costs on taxpayers.
- DFI co-hosted with The Heritage Foundation an **expert panel** on the IDR plan, its potential policy impacts, and legal vulnerabilities.



## Accreditation Reform

- In January, DFI hosted a convening of experts on federal accreditation policy to discuss the state of accreditation and potential reforms.
- DFI published a **report** in March describing action Congress could take to reform accreditation and ensure students have access to rigorous academic higher education opportunities.
- Taking a page from its **support** for accreditation reform in Florida, DFI encouraged UNC-Chapel Hill’s trustees to resist political meddling by the university’s accreditor and joined a **letter** supporting the university’s plans to develop a School of Civic Life and Leadership.



## Chinese Communist Party Influence

- DFI launched its Chinese Communist Party Project, an oversight effort over ED’s failure to investigate CCP investment in American higher education that has garnered national attention.
- DFI’s senior counsel for oversight and investigations **appeared** on Fox News to discuss this project and the tens of millions of dollars in gifts from China to UPenn following its creation of the Biden Center.
- In an **op-ed**, DFI argued that colleges and universities should lose access to federal funding if they fail to disclose foreign gifts and contracts.
- We sent an oversight **letter** to Secretary of Education Cardona demanding agency records related to the Department’s foreign source disclosure policies for universities, including UPenn’s Biden Center.

# Promoting Education Freedom in K-12

Our nation's one-size-fits-all K-12 education system is failing far too many students.

Worse yet, union leaders and their allies on school boards have used their political power to push aside parents, families, and classroom teachers to dominate public education in ways that harm students and limit their opportunities.

DFI has issued **three policy reports** this year examining how the teacher unions, local school districts, and ED have failed students:



## The Corrupt Bargain

Spotlights how teacher union bosses use collective bargaining agreement negotiations to embed their leftist ideology in school district policies and impose woke curricula on public school students and teachers.



## Pills and Pronouns

Details how eight of America's 20 largest school districts allow students to choose names and pronouns aligned with their gender identity without parental knowledge and consent while requiring parental permission for the school to give over-the-counter medication.



## Catching the Trash

Exposes how public school districts and teacher unions perpetuate the systemic problem of teacher-on-student sexual assault and harassment and documents the failure of the Biden Education Department's Office for Civil Rights to take effective measures to investigate and seek accountability for this conduct.



# Influencing Education Policy with Bold Ideas

DFI's co-founders were substantial contributors to **Project 2025's** "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise," a policy road map published in April. The book includes DFI's ideas for the next administration seeking to stop "woke" education policies and President Biden's student loan bailout, as well as to reduce the federal role in education.



## Communicating Our Policy Solutions:

Education  
**Just Do It: A Plan to Close the Federal Department of Education**



Lyndon B. Johnson Department of Education Building in Washington, D.C. © Carol M. Highsmith/Archives/Library of Congress

By ROBERT S. EITEL & JIM BLEWETT  
April 22, 2023 6:30 AM

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Washington Examiner  
POLITICS

**Randi Weingarten isn't fooling anyone**

By Paul Zimmerman April 27, 2023 02:26 PM

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Washington Examiner  
POLITICS

**Stanford Law's refusal to enforce its free speech policies calls into question its accreditation**

By Robert S. Eitel & Paul Zimmerman April 06, 2023 09:19 AM

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Published April 5, 2023 10:06 AM EDT  
**Give parents this simple solution to take back their rights in education**

Today's parents' rights movement demonstrates little has changed in the public school wars

By Robert S. Eitel Fox News

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FEDERALIST

**How Public Schools' 'Equity' Policies Make It Impossible For Students To Succeed**



RealClear Education  
Newsletters Articles Video Education

NEWS HEADLINE: HONG KONG SHOULD DISCLOSE CHINA TIES OR LOSE FEDERAL FUNDING



**Higher Ed Should Disclose China Ties Or Lose Federal Funding**

By Robert S. Eitel & Paul R. Moore  
February 14, 2023

Published January 23, 2023 10:06 AM EST  
**Ron DeSantis's blueprint to dominate teachers' union bosses**

More should copy DeSantis's blueprint to fight back against teachers' unions

By Paul Zimmerman Fox News

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DESANTIS LAUNCHES 2ND TERM WITH EYE ON 2024  
POLITICAL EDITORIAL REPORT

# Expanding Our Reach:

**88,773** total email subscribers

**115** total media markets

**45,112** total social media followers

**959** total press hits

Rep. Virginia Foxx cites DFI's Pills and Pronouns report in hearing with Sec. Cardona



DFI's Leveling the Playing Field series earns a reach of **244k** on Facebook and Instagram combined and **44k** impressions on Twitter



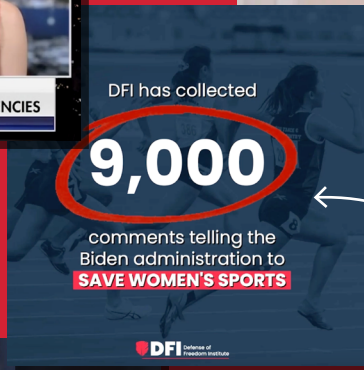
DFI Spokeswoman Angela Morabito joins Fox at Night to discuss recent declining NAEP scores



DFI Senior Counsel Paul Moore joins Fox News to discuss foreign donations to UPenn



DFI's content on foreign influence in our universities earns a reach of **111k** on Facebook and Instagram combined and **21k** impressions on Twitter



DFI collects over **12.5k** comments telling President Biden not to destroy women's sports



DFI Policy Counsel Paul Zimmerman joins The Heritage Foundation's panel to discuss Income-Driven Repayment



DFI Spokeswoman Angela Morabito joins the Glenn Beck Program to discuss saving women's sports





# Meet the DFI Team



**Donald  
Daugherty, Jr.**  
Senior Counsel,  
Litigation



**Cari  
Isham**  
Vice President of  
Development and  
Operations



**Clairece  
Marker**  
Digital Media  
Associate



**Paul  
Moore**  
Senior Counsel



**Paul  
Zimmerman**  
Policy Counsel



**Robert S. Eitel**  
President & Co-Founder



**Jim Blew**  
Co-Founder