"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,

Our nation is at a pivotal moment. Extremists are pushing our schools, colleges, and universities in the wrong direction while abusing federal power to violate the very core of our constitutional and civil rights.

We founded the Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies to strike back against the ideologues, unions, and bureaucrats that have taken over America’s educational institutions and school systems. DFI has laid the groundwork for innovative reform that will tame federal power in education and restore constitutional and civil rights for students, parents, families, and faculty by:

• **Combating President Biden’s radical Title IX rewrite.** Our multi-faceted campaign is countering Biden’s plan to destroy women’s sports, strip parents of their rights, infringe on free speech and religious liberty, and undermine due process on campus. The next year will be pivotal in this battle.

• **Defeating President Biden’s costly, unfair, and illegal attempts to transfer student loan debt to other Americans,** most of whom never went to college or paid back what they borrowed. Despite their Supreme Court defeat in *Biden v. Nebraska,* the extremists in the administration are working through arcane regulatory processes to cancel a trillion dollars of student debt in an effort to buy votes. DFI continues to engage on the front lines of these battles, which will likely become more heated as the general election approaches.

• **Preparing for the future.** While fighting the battles around Title IX, student loan debt cancellation, and other critical issues, we are also getting ready for 2025. Americans want families to be able to choose schools suited to their values and children’s needs. Americans want federal support of higher education to be fair, frugal, and focused on preparing students for their future jobs and lives. Americans do not want to see their individual liberties compromised by increasingly powerful federal agencies like the Department of Education. DFI is preparing for what comes after the 2024 elections.

In our 2023 annual report, we take a deeper dive into our work last year. We hope you take the time to review it and are pleased with what you see. **We greatly appreciate your commitment to freedom, opportunity, and innovation in America’s schools and workplaces. DFI’s work would not be possible without your continued support.**

Robert S. Eitel  
President & Co-Founder

Jim Blew  
Co-Founder
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DFI’s 2023 accomplishments</strong></th>
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| **13,768 public comments**  
on the Biden administration’s  
student loan bailout |
| **6 policy reports** |
| **10 grassroots campaigns & coalition letters**  
on issues like Title IX, student loan debt, and campus  
anti-Semitism |
| **12,815 public comments**  
on the Biden administration’s  
radical Title IX rule |
| **18 lawsuits, investigations, & administrative complaints** |
| **76,235 followers**  
on social media |
| **6 expert comments**  
 opposing the administration’s  
extraordinary effort to  
rewrite our laws through the  
regulatory process |
| **85,865 email subscribers** |
| **15 op-eds** |
| **1,545 media stories**  
in outlets like Fox News, the  
Wall Street Journal, and the  
Washington Examiner |
| **11 amicus briefs**  
on student loan cancellation,  
fair college admissions, Title  
IX, and education freedom |
| **broadcasted in**  
**74 media markets** |
Preserving Civil & Constitutional Rights in Schools & Workplaces

Defending Title IX

The Biden administration’s ideological rewrite of Title IX will radically change American culture unless it is repealed by Congress or defeated in court. Using new Title IX rules, the federal government will require male participation in women’s and girls’ sports, prohibit parental involvement when children question their gender, and obliterate due process rights for victims and accused in sexual misconduct cases, among other things. DFI is fighting at the grassroots, in the bureaucracy, and in the courts to combat this dangerous rule.

At the Grassroots...

DFI launched an online campaign to educate the public about Biden’s disastrous Title IX rule on athletics, with more than 12,000 Americans using DFI’s public comment portal to submit comments to the U.S. Department of Education.

In our “Leveling the Playing Field” video series, athletes, lawmakers, and parents explained the real-world impact of Biden’s rule on women and girls. This series reached over 245,000 people on social media.
In the bureaucracy...

DFI also urged the administration to give the public more time to have its voice heard on the proposed Title IX athletics rule. Nineteen organizations joined our coalition letter.

DFI submitted a 51-page public comment pointing out the dozens of ways the proposed rule would undermine women’s and girls’ athletics.

In the courts...

DFI filed amicus briefs in several high-profile Title IX cases, including:

**The State of Tennessee v. U.S. Department of Education**

Arguing that 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. The Court of Appeals sided with DFI in this case and remanded the case to the trial court for further litigation.

**B.P.J. v. West Virginia State Board of Education**

Supporting West Virginia’s “Save Women’s Sports Bill” and arguing that the law does not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Federal Constitution.

**Roe v. Critchfield and Metropolitan School District of Martinsville v. A.C.**

Arguing that the recent Supreme Court ruling in Bostock does not bar school policies or state laws requiring students to use the public school bathrooms, locker rooms, and sleeping quarters that correspond with their biological sex.
The Supreme Court ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* was a major victory for the Constitution and civil rights protections. DFI filed an *amicus brief* in the case, cited by Justice Neil Gorsuch in his concurring opinion.

The work to ensure that colleges and universities apply the ruling with fidelity has only started. DFI issued a *memo* to all higher education institutions about their legal obligations in light of the ruling when considering students for admission.

Meanwhile, critical race theory (CRT) has invaded too many learning environments and workplaces. DFI is at the forefront of protecting students’ civil rights by opposing efforts to promote race-based stereotypes, assert claims of racial inferiority or superiority, or treat students adversely based on race:

- **DFI Lawsuit:** DFI sued the Biden Education Department for refusing to produce records related to federal funding of CRT and gender theory instruction in public schools.

- **DFI Civil Rights Complaint:** DFI filed a complaint with regard to racially discriminatory policies of Evanston Township High School District 202.

- **DFI Letter to OCR:** DFI sent a letter to the Office for Civil Rights criticizing its resolution agreement with Forsyth County Public Schools in Georgia.
Free speech is the basis of a free society. In too many cases, however, state-supported colleges and universities have failed to honor the First Amendment. DFI is in the fight to protect free speech and hold public institutions accountable when they fail to protect this constitutional right.

In *Speech First v. Sands*, on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, DFI argued in an amicus brief that Virginia Tech’s bias response team poses an unconstitutional burden on free speech on campus when it “responds” to claims of “bias.”

The attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel’s counter-attacks against Hamas revealed appalling anti-Semitism on many of our nation’s college campuses.

DFI filed five civil rights complaints with the U.S. Department of Education—against Yale University, The Cooper Union, Rutgers University, Drexel University, and Arizona State University—for their failure to prohibit discriminatory conduct against Jewish students.

DFI also led a coalition of like-minded advocates demanding an emergency audit of all federal international education and foreign language studies grants made to colleges and universities under Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to ensure that grantees have not been promoting anti-Semitic or anti-American viewpoints.

In *Damiano v. Grants Pass*, before the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, DFI joined the legal battle to protect the First Amendment rights of two public school employees who were fired after expressing their views on gender identity education policies.
Advancing Opportunity in Postsecondary Education & Fighting Foreign Influence

Fighting Illegal Student Loan Debt Cancellation

The Biden administration’s schemes to cancel student debt at the expense of taxpayers are unfair, illegal, and costly. They prove that the federal role in higher education financing needs radical reform.

DFI continues to be at the forefront of exposing and stopping Biden’s plans to buy votes with taxpayer funds:

- In the *Biden v. Nebraska* case, DFI teamed up with five former Secretaries of Education—Betsy DeVos, Margaret Spellings, Rod Paige, Lamar Alexander, and William Bennett—to submit a brief explaining why Biden’s scheme to forgive student loans using emergency powers was unconstitutional and illegal. Siding with the arguments in our brief, the Supreme Court struck down the President’s mass student loan debt cancellation program.

Although the high-profile *Nebraska* case has received the most media attention, the administration continues working behind the scenes to find new ways to “forgive” student loans. DFI continues to push back.

- A DFI-led coalition of higher education experts is fighting Biden’s *Income-Driven Repayment program* called SAVE. DFI’s public comment on the new program explains how the Biden administration is turning federal student loans into a grant program that unjustly places the burden of college costs on taxpayers.

- DFI also submitted a substantive public comment opposing Biden’s plans to use alleged authorities under the Higher Education Act to enact mass loan forgiveness, and we provided critical feedback on the administration’s proposed Gainful Employment regulations.
Reshaping Postsecondary Accreditation

- DFI hosted a January convening of federal accreditation policy experts to discuss the state of accreditation and potential reforms.

- Building on our 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 establish a School of Civic Life and Leadership.

- DFI published a report in March describing action Congress could take to reform accreditation and ensure students have access to rigorous higher education opportunities.

- DFI also issued a coalition letter to block an accreditor from regulating innovative third-party service providers that make education less costly and more accessible. DFI argued that the plan would especially harm low-income students by increasing cost and limiting access to online learning.

Uncovering Chinese Communist Party Influence

The Chinese Communist Party, its proxies, and other foreign powers have spent billions to influence American higher education. Although colleges and universities are legally required to disclose those foreign financial ties, many have failed to do so, and the Biden administration has turned a blind eye. DFI is working to expose those invisible strings that impact campus culture.

We’ve sued the Biden administration for records on its weakened oversight of foreign money pouring into America’s colleges and universities—a development that came on the heels of a dramatic increase in foreign gifts to the University of Pennsylvania after it established the Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement.

DFI also drafted a substantive public comment on the Department of Education’s proposed changes to data collection from colleges and universities regarding foreign gifts and contracts as required by federal law.

Watch the documentary here
Demanding Teacher Union Accountability & Respect for Parents’ Rights

From CRT to DEI, America’s government-run, union-controlled schools are teaching everything but the ABCs. As student achievement plummets to record lows, the teacher unions and their allies have spent their time harnessing political power and imposing a progressive agenda in schools.

Because DFI supports education freedom for all students and teachers, we published original research exposing how the teacher unions and the U.S. Department of Education have failed students:

**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.

**The Corrupt Bargain**

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

**Catching the Trash**

exposes how teacher unions manipulate districts to perpetuate the systemic problem of teacher-on-student sexual assault and harassment and documents the failure of the Biden administration to take effective measures to investigate and seek accountability for this conduct.

**Summer of Woke, The Sequel**

follows up on DFI’s original *Summer of Woke* report and exposes the radical policy priorities of the nation’s two largest teacher unions, the NEA and AFT, and their impact on students, families, and teachers.
In September, DFI and the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies co-hosted the Education Law and Policy Conference—bringing together some of the nation’s most prominent figures in education law and policy to discuss pressing federal issues. 2023’s day-long event featured keynote speakers including the Honorable Eugene Scalia, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, and the Honorable Mitch Daniels, former President of Purdue University and former Governor of Indiana.

Welcome and Opening Address: Philip K. Howard, chair and founder of Common Good

Teacher Unions: Roadblocks to Education Reform or Defenders of Teacher and Student Interests?

Luncheon Address: Hon. Eugene Scalia, former United States Secretary of Labor

Religious Charter Schools: Protected or Prohibited by the First Amendment?

U.S. Department of Education Rulemaking: Hiding Regulatory Elephants in Statutory Mouseholes?

Closing Address: Hon. Mitchell E. Daniels, former Indiana governor and chair of the Purdue Research Foundation
Redesigning Pell Grants to Reflect New Realities:
DFI issued a report on reforming Pell Grants, rather than mindlessly doubling them as the higher education lobby selfishly advocates.

Project 2025:
DFI’s Co-Founders also participated in Project 2025, making substantial contributions to its federal education policy chapter in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*. 
Communicating Our Policy Solutions

The long march of the campus Title IX coordinators
By Robert S. Etel
September 17, 2023 6:09 am

Biden’s Zombie Student-Loan Bailout Continues to Stalk Taxpayers
By ROBERT S. ETEL & PAUL ZIMMERMAN
October 8, 2023 6:37 AM

Give parents this simple solution to take back their rights in education
Today’s parents’ rights movement demonstrates what has changed in the public school wars
By Robert S. Etel | OPINION, Fox News
Published April 3, 2023 1:04am EST

Just Do It: A Plan to Close the Federal Department of Education
By ROBERT S. ETEL & JIM BLEW
April 23, 2023 6:30 AM

Widespread student support of Hamas attacks exposes ‘moral bankruptcy’ of US higher education
Protests at major campuses demand accountability and answers from university leaders
By ROBERT S. ETEL & Paul R. Moore
February 14, 2023

Higher Ed Should Disclose China Ties Or Lose Federal Funding
By ROBERT S. ETEL & PAUL ZIMMERMAN
April 6, 2023 9:30 am

Stanford Law’s refusal to enforce its free speech policies calls into question its accreditation
By ROBERT S. ETEL & PAUL ZIMMERMAN
April 6, 2023 9:30 am
Expanding Our Reach

76.2K social media followers
10M social media impressions
85.9K email subscribers

Fox News’ Outnumbered features DFI’s analysis of Biden’s student loan cancellation plans
DFI leads a coalition to fight anti-Semitism on college campuses
DFI writes about the importance of disclosing foreign funding in our higher education institutions
DFI’s Angela Morabito joins Fox News at Night to discuss Biden’s illegal student loan cancellation scheme
DFI transmits 12.8K public comments on Biden’s radical Title IX rewrite
DFI’s series on Biden’s illegal student loan cancellation scheme garners a reach of 244K on Facebook and Instagram combined and 9K impressions on X
DFI’s Angela Morabito joins Fox News to discuss anti-Semitism on college campuses
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 245K on Facebook and Instagram combined and 49K impressions on X
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Meet the DFI Team

Robert S. Eitel
President & Co-Founder

Jim Blew
Co-Founder

Martha Astor
Associate Counsel

Selena Lin
Research Assistant

Emily Cruikshank
Associate Counsel

Clairece Marker
Digital Media Associate

Donald Daugherty, Jr.
Senior Counsel, Litigation

Paul Zimmerman
Policy Counsel

Jim Blew
Co-Founder