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# Veritas

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

## Bonton Farms: Transforming Lives Through the Dignity of Work

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Come and Take It: TPPF's Approach to Second Amendment Policy

How to Talk About Immigration Reform



Texas Public Policy  
Foundation

# Veritas

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

With the final chapter of 2019 having been written and the page turned to 2020, I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done to make last year one of the most successful for TPPF and Texas as a whole. Truly, together, we have reinforced Texas as bastion of liberty and opportunity, and by keeping Texas, Texas, we defend the extraordinary values that make America exceptional. I am excited for what we have already accomplished this year and for what we will achieve as the year unfolds.



It is my pleasure to share with you updates on TPPF’s current efforts as well as new projects. Our workforce development initiative, Right on Work, strives to connect Texans and Americans to labor opportunities that instill purpose in an individuals’ life. On the following page, you will read about Bonton Farms, an inner city Dallas ministry highlighting the importance of workforce development programs promoted by TPPF’s Right on Work initiative.

We have also launched the Second Amendment Initiative, a new project that will defend our constitutional right to bear arms. TPPF’s influence and voice are needed now more than ever on this issue. Our research, expertise, and messaging efforts will ensure that policymakers and the public have the information they need to protect this fundamental right. As Texas goes, so goes the nation, and this remains especially true concerning the Second Amendment.

A staple event for TPPF is our annual Policy Orientation. This year we hosted our 18th Policy Orientation with more success than ever before. Policymakers and citizens from across Texas and the country convened to discuss pressing issues, collaborate on solutions, and discern priorities. You can read about the highlights of Policy Orientation 2020 in the following pages.

While public policy can be abstract, our work together truly transforms lives. I encourage you to read this issue’s powerful piece conveying the sentiments of women who have directly benefitted from our criminal justice reform work.

Recently, we conducted valuable research on values that drive Texans and Americans concerning issues like healthcare, immigration, and regulatory reform. The insights gleaned from this research have informed our policy work. You can read about what values motivate people on immigration, and how to use an understanding of those values to start conversations on immigration reform.

Finally, I encourage you to read Arlen Edgar’s story. Arlen has graciously included TPPF in his estate plans to secure a future of liberty and prosperity for his family and future generations. His powerful story reminds us of why we fight for the values we hold dear, and I hope you will consider including TPPF in your estate plans.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge that, as I write this, much is uncertain in our world right now. I pray that your family is safe and healthy, and I hope you find reassurance in the fact that, no matter what may come, TPPF will continue to defend your freedoms and ensure our country remains the beacon of liberty for the world. We are grateful for your unwavering commitment.

For Texas,

Kevin D. Roberts, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



Veritas is a publication of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute. The Foundation’s mission is to promote and defend liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the

Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach. Our goal is to lead the nation in public policy issues by using Texas as a model for reform.



# BONTON FARMS: TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH THE DIGNITY OF WORK

by Roy Maynard



It's never about Daron Babcock—especially when you're talking with Daron Babcock. The founder of Bonton Farms, a ministry based in a small, forgotten inner city Dallas community, Babcock always redirects praise and even questions; he wants to talk about the people in the community, not about himself.

"These people saved my life," he said at Texas Public Policy Foundation's Policy Orientation 2020. "These are my friends. My family."

The broader story is one of redemption. The Bonton community, once a neighborhood with high crime rates and little hope, is now an oasis of peace and opportunity. Its residents include former prison inmates, the homeless (and recently homeless), former drug dealers and addicts, and mostly, people just trying to get by on streets more accustomed to random gunfire than routine police patrols.

That's getting easier because the Bonton Farms project has taken root, and the fruit the ministry is now bearing is getting attention.

As Babcock likes to explain, it didn't happen because of big government coffers or grand government plans. The success of Bonton Farms hap-

pened one person at a time, through meeting one need and then another, and establishing strong relationships based on respect and faith.

"Bonton Farms worked in spite of government programs," says Babcock. "Not because of them."

The truth is, Bonton Farms fought City Hall more often than not. Permits and permission were hard to obtain; sometimes, Babcock and his workers went forward without them. As a result, lives have changed, and a community has been reborn.

## Beginnings

When Daron Babcock was 32, he lost his wife to cancer. He acknowledges this was the first real adversity he'd faced in his life; he'd been a successful high school and college athlete, and a successful businessman. He had no idea what to do.

"I turned to drugs and alcohol," he admits.

It was a dark time. His two sons watched their father's life descend.

"It was a crisis; a faith crisis, and a crisis in every regard," he says. "But my family and friends never let me go. They wouldn't give up on me."

Soon, he found his faith, and with that, an increasing sense that there's a world beyond business and finance, with suffering people he was called to minister to.

He began volunteering in Bonton, a troubled community with a long history of crime, poverty and neglect. He met former prisoners who opened his eyes, he explains.

"I tell people that sometimes you see things you can't see; what I saw in those men was that they'd been through so much more than I ever had been, and they were still standing," Babcock says. "I was able to walk with these guys, through their journeys. And that blessed me."

Trips into Bonton weren't enough, he knew.

"I realized that to be a part of their lives, I had to be here," he says. "And so eight years ago, I moved in."

## Bonton Farms

The needs in the Bonton community were overwhelming.

"I had no idea what to do, where to start," Babcock says. "So I started meeting and talking with people. Every one of those conversations ended with one

thing—jobs. I'd ask what they needed, and they all said jobs."

With his background in the corporate world, Babcock knew that resumes must be built on work—any kind of work.

"So we started picking up trash," he said. "We were mowing yards and fixing roofs—anything we could do to help our neighborhood get on the right track, and use that work to build resumes."

But Babcock was confused when some of his workers—people he knew were sincere in their desire to better themselves—wouldn't show up some days. He soon learned that health problems—including diabetes and kidney disease—often prevented his people from coming to work. Babcock found that Bonton was in a food desert.

"The food we had was just what they sell in the liquor stores, and if that's all you eat for long enough, you're going to get sick," he says. "Bonton is in the middle of Dallas County; we're like a donut hole. And in that donut hole, we suffer from more than double the rate of cancer and stroke and heart disease and diabetes and childhood obesity than the county we're in."

continued >>





And that’s where the farm project—and its adjacent farmer’s market—came in. It’s a place where locals can get fresh produce and eggs; it’s also a place where they can find jobs and learn skills; and it’s a place where the community can come together, in peace.

### The Lessons

“There’s a huge misperception about people born into places like Bonton,” says Babcock. “That misperception is they don’t want to work. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

He tells the story of his friend Willie, who was on one of those first trash-collecting crews. Babcock’s instructions were simple; pick up the trash and leave the bags on a certain corner. Willie couldn’t seem to follow even those simple directions.

“When I asked him why, he said it was because I always pointed,” Babcock says. “He couldn’t see. He never told me that because he was afraid I wouldn’t let him participate. These folks want to work so badly that they’ll lie and hide disabilities and disadvantages just so they can have these opportunities.”

That’s why a jobs program alone—or a skills training program alone, or a life skills program alone—

won’t turn lives around, Babcock believes. People must be taken as a whole—and loved as themselves.

“We now serve men and women who are coming out of incarceration, homelessness, domestic abuse and human trafficking,” he says. “It doesn’t matter what you’re coming out of; you’re no longer locked up or beaten or high anymore, but you’re also no more prepared to go out and flourish than if you were. So we’re the bridge between what you came out of and where you’re going.”

Government assistance hurts more than helps, he says.

“Government entitlements paralyze a person—not only them, but the kids who grow up with them—because they create a cycle of dependence,” Babcock says. “We have to change that. We need to remove barriers, and the sense of security that government assistance can give is a kind of barrier.”

Most importantly, Babcock contends, is that people must be met where they are.

Programs don’t change lives, he says. Relationships do.

TPPF’s Right on Work initiative aims to build a coalition of companies, organizations, and individuals working together to support innovative and targeted workforce programs, like that of Bonton Farms. We are proud to partner with programs like these which demonstrate the real-life effects of the policies advanced through TPPF initiatives. Bonton Farms is successful, in part, because of TPPF’s legislative efforts to promote workforce development programs that truly transform lives. ★

For more information about Right on Work and TPPF’s work on this issue, visit [www.TexasPolicy.com](http://www.TexasPolicy.com).



**Roy Maynard** is the Senior Writer at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Roy has written articles and worked as an editor for many other publications. Roy’s passion for writing pales in comparison to his dedication to hiking. Roy hiked a portion of the Appalachian Trail last summer and is looking forward to completing the trail at the end of June.





# COME AND TAKE IT: TPPF'S APPROACH TO SECOND AMENDMENT POLICY

by Alicia Pierce

In recent years, the debate over the Second Amendment has devolved into slogans like “more kids, less guns.” But there should be a new slogan to better represent the facts behind the debate: “more data, safer Americans.”

The Texas Public Policy Foundation is uniquely positioned to provide just that; with our focus on individual freedom and liberty in every facet of life, our experts are committing themselves to studying the Second Amendment issues and helping determine which policies work—and which don't.

While we are always willing to connect our research to the broader policy discussions of the day, we maintain a discipline of not pursuing every policy topic as a major area of study. That discipline allows us to remain true to our roots, to focus on the policy areas most critical to our mission, and not to replicate the good work of other policy groups and institutions.

That discipline is part of why our decision to engage in the debate around gun violence is noteworthy. It is not that TPPF was silent on Second Amendment policy, but we are now bringing a formal focus to the issue and dedicating a considerable amount of time and resources to this initiative.

## What changed?

Last year, it became clear that the time had come to unabashedly join the debate surrounding gun violence—not because the issue had become any more or less important, but because TPPF is needed to provide an essential perspective in getting these policies right. The need for fact-based research and data analysis on this topic is more urgent than ever.

TPPF Executive Director Dr. Kevin Roberts put it this way in a video announcing the new initiative: “You see us planting the flag. It's a flag planted for truth, it's a flag planted for the unique analysis we bring to every policy area—which is to look at the data, to look at the research and tell you what policies are, in fact, proposals that are going to work.”

As a research institution, TPPF can analyze the actual data on gun violence, and make determinations unswayed by popular assumptions. Not only is TPPF as a research organization capable of bringing a fact-based perspective to the issue of gun violence, but our lead policy expert on the issue is also uniquely qualified.

Derek Cohen, Ph.D., is director of TPPF's Center for Effective Justice and Right on Crime. In addition to his expertise and policy experience related to criminal justice, Dr. Cohen is an expert in statistical analysis.

In his November research paper, “Come and Take It: What Will and What Will Not Improve Public Safety in Firearm Violence Prevention,” he breaks down decades of data to find the long-term trends and truths about gun violence in our state.

For example, even though gun violence is going down in Texas, tragic and high-profile mass shooting like those in El Paso and Sutherland Springs skew our perspective.

As Dr. Cohen wrote in an op-ed published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, “The very reason these horrific acts capture the national spotlight is how relatively rare public manifestations of visceral carnage have become in recent years. Across all per capita metrics,

gun violence has been falling in Texas. The state's firearm homicide rate is 25 percent lower than two decades ago.”

As calls to “do something” become the mantra of an understandably concerned populace, we must resist the dangerous temptation for government to act for action's sake without examining the effectiveness of policy, and without evaluating the damage to the rights of law-abiding citizens. Not only is such pacifying action ineffective, it is also dangerous.

First, pleas to “do something” falsely promote the idea of the government as a savior, instead of an institution of the people and for the people. Chasing fear-soothing policies simply for the sake of “doing something” turns us away from the real problems and keeps us from pursuing real solutions.

Second, cries to “do something” give a foothold to those who want to grow government control and interference in our lives without regard to individual rights. Expanding government control in one facet sets a precedent (and expectation) that it will take control in others.

As Dr. Roberts said in the official launch of TPPF's Second Amendment initiative, “It is no coincidence that every elected leader who wants to abridge our other rights, has in his or her sights our right to bear arms.”

Unfortunately, we live in a world where those who want to expand government control will consciously or unconsciously leverage tragedies for their agenda. To combat such manipulation, we must present facts and well-researched strategies.

Indeed, the proper response to a “do something” culture is not to be “do nothing” obstructionists. Instead, we should work on solutions ourselves and evaluate all proposals through the critical lens of data, with a focus on effectiveness and the preservation of rights.



**Alicia Pierce** is the Vice President of Marketing here at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. A graduate of Abilene Christian University, Alicia was a 2016 recipient of the prestigious Gutenberg Award recognizing professional achievement in the field of mass communications. Speaking of prestige—Alicia has a Marvel comic book character (Andrea Pearson) loosely based off her! On top of that, she has an extensive background in statewide policy communications having served four Texas Secretaries of State and managed multiple statewide voter education campaigns. Before moving to Austin, Alicia worked in D.C. both on Capitol Hill and as a White House intern.

Dr. Cohen's “Come and Take It” paper begins that process by evaluating existing proposals. Specifically, he looks at calls to extend background checks, reporting stolen guns to law enforcement, restricting gun and ammunition ownership, new and increased criminal penalties, increased suspicious activity reporting, and, finally, increased efficiency of existing laws, procedures, and programs.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Cohen finds many of the suggested policies would be of limited value and would often be implemented at the expense of protected individual rights.

He writes in his conclusion: “Crafting firearm law is distinctively difficult. Many policy approaches—especially the more controversial proposals— illustrate the problem with restricting an explicitly enumerated right for a perceived modicum of increased safety. These proposals often represent an incontrovertible abridgment or negation of the right to keep and bear arms because of something that may allegedly happen in the future. It is paramount that any policy proposal recognizes the fundamental nature of this right, the nature of man, and the limited ability of a bureaucracy to intercede in either.”

Like all public challenges, the solutions for gun violence will not happen overnight. Policies take time to formulate and evaluate. In the wake of tragedy, the instinct to “do something” is natural and even noble. But if we act only out of fear, we risk forgoing our most essential liberties for policies that hurt more than help.

TPPF's entry into this debate couldn't come at a better time. We must move beyond slogans and into thoughtful, data-driven discussion of what will make us all safer and more secure in our constitutionally endowed rights. ★

**For more information about TPPF's work on this issue, visit [www.TexasPolicy.com](http://www.TexasPolicy.com).**





2020

# ★ POLICY ★ ORIENTATION

The Texas Public Policy Foundation's Policy Orientation and Visionaries Meeting has become the most dynamic policy event in the nation. This year's January 22-24 conference, hosted at the AT&T Hotel & Conference Center in Austin, Texas, welcomed more than 900 Visionaries, elected officials, legislative staff members, and guests to engage in conversations on the biggest issues facing Texans and Americans.

Keynote speakers at this year's event included:

- Congressman Dan Crenshaw and Congressman Chip Roy, who spoke on efforts to reduce the role of government in the lives of the American people;
- Tim Carney, a Washington Examiner commentary editor and visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, who spoke on the sentiments that have caused cultural and economic changes in America;
- Former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who spoke on federalism and the future of the conservative movement;
- Alice Marie Johnson, TPPF Senior Fellow, who shared her moving story of incarceration and redemption;
- Brooke Rollins, Special Assistant to President Trump and Former President and CEO of TPPE, who spoke on taking Texas' policies to the nation; and
- The Honorable Jason Chaffetz, who spoke about the resiliency of the American spirit, saying "the answers to our problems are not in D.C., they never will be, they're in our neighborhoods, our own state...right here at home."

In addition to the in-person attendees who heard these addresses, more than 2,100 individuals livestreamed panel and keynote discussions during the three-day conference. If you were not able to attend Policy Orientation 2020, you can view every keynote and panel discussion on the TPPF YouTube page. Simply go to [youtube.com/user/TexasPPF](https://www.youtube.com/user/TexasPPF) and select "Policy Orientation 2020" under playlists to view all video content from the conference. ★

**1ST ROW:** TPPF's Robert Henneke moderates a keynote discussion with Congressmen Dan Crenshaw and Chip Roy. | Experts Sherry Sylvester and Bob Garrett discuss Texas' portrayal in the media.

**2ND ROW:** TPPF staff and guests enjoy dinner as the first day of the conference comes to a close. | Representatives James White and Nicole Collier discuss the next steps Texas should take in criminal justice reform on a panel moderated by TPPF's Marc Levin.

**3RD ROW:** TPPF's Andrew Brown moderates the "Families First" panel, which examined reforms to family and child protective courts, as well as the various ways TPPF has worked to vindicate the fundamental rights of families.

**4TH ROW:** The Honorable Jason Chaffetz delivers the conference's closing keynote address. | Policy Orientation attendees visit before a meal begins. | TPPF's Alice Marie Johnson shares her touching story of redemption.





# WE ARE SAVING LIVES

by Derek Cohen

**R**ecently, Right on Crime staff members Derek Cohen, Ph.D., and Mary Katherine McNabb visited Mountain View Unit, a women's prison in Gatesville, Texas. TPPF's Right on Crime initiative supports conservative solutions for reducing crime, restoring victims, and reforming offenders, including the women in the Mountain View Unit. After visiting the prison, Dr. Cohen wrote about his experience visiting the women whose lives have been transformed by policies advanced through Right on Crime's efforts. You can read the story of this moving visit—and the real-life effects of TPPF's criminal justice reform work—below.

Mountain (which is a stretch, it's more of a large hill) View is a women's facility and home to the STRIVE program, a program that seeks to facilitate the "warm handoff" that is so critical in reentry success. STRIVE stands for Strength Through Restoration, Independence, Vision, and Empowerment, which perfectly summarizes the unique pillars that make this reentry program so successful. The typical vocational education component is there, but more importantly they allow the women to actually begin work on their pursued trade prior to release. Getting a Commercial Drivers' License? They get their wheel-time on both sides of the fence. Going into a customer service profession? They complete the same training that Southwest Airlines flight attendants complete. These women all have well-paying jobs lined up for them when they return to society, thanks to Texas Department of Criminal Justice's partnerships with employers across the state who are beating down the facility's gates to get access to this workforce.

As incredible as the STRIVE program is, the impression paled in comparison to what we heard from staff. While the 86th Legislative Session was frustrating at times for criminal justice work, there were some key victories championed by TPPF staff that allow programs like STRIVE to succeed. These pieces of legislation include House Bill 1342, which focuses on various occupational licensing reforms for individuals with criminal records, and House Bill 918, which provides releasees with all pertinent employment documents/certificates and interview preparation.

During the tour, I asked the prison staff about how implementation of these legislative items was proceeding, expecting to hear the usual gripes from a put-upon government employee. To our surprise, the staff were beaming. While a handful of the best practices were adopted piecemeal by some facilities, these bills got the entire agency moving in this direction. The superintendent of Windham ISD (the "school district" exclusively serving the state's prisons) was so thankful for the standardized forms and processes to help get her folks their education credentials and other items for licensure where applicable. She said that once session concluded, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation has become much more proactive in prescreening for licensure and helping the women find what they are eligible or ineligible for.

“Often, those who benefit from TPPF's work will never know our names. While this is certainly true for the vast majority of our work, during our visit 34 women were moved to tears hearing the names of TPPF staff members who very directly and very powerfully bettered the lives of women pursuing redemption.”

However, the most moving part of the visit were the testimonies we heard from the women who are directly benefiting from these policies. While in the program's classroom, we were introduced as having connection to the legislation that helped facilitate the program. The women—many tearfully—thanked us profusely for this opportunity. These women shared remarks I'll remember for the rest of my life, such as:

“I started to fall in with a bad group at [other prison], and I prayed to God to help me get out of that situation. Two days later I was transferred here, and three weeks later I was brought into the program. I thank God every day for this opportunity.”

“I was released from state jail before, and with nowhere to go I went right back to using and prostitution. I now have the skills to get out of that life and never return.”

“This is the greatest blessing I have ever received.”

Often, those who benefit from TPPF's work will never know our names. While this is certainly true for the vast majority of our work, during our visit 34 women were moved to tears hearing the names of TPPF staff members who very directly and very powerfully bettered the lives of women pursuing redemption. Through this work, we are saving lives. ★

For more information about Right on Crime's work, visit [www.rightoncrime.com](http://www.rightoncrime.com).



**Derek Cohen, Ph.D.**, is the director of the Center for Effective Justice and Right on Crime at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Dr. Cohen graduated with a B.S. in criminal justice from Bowling Green State University, and earned his M.S. and Ph.D. in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati. His academic work can be found in *Criminology and Public Policy*, the *Oxford Handbook on Police and Policing*, and the *Encyclopedia of Theoretical Criminology*. He has presented several papers to the American Society of Criminology, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and the American Evaluation Association on the implementation and outcomes of various criminal justice policy issues.

# FINDING COMMON GROUND

## How To Talk About Immigration Reform

by Katherine Donovan

**M**ost Americans agree that our immigration system is broken. In fact, recent data from a TPPF poll reflects that 95% of conservatives, 69% of independents, and 82% of Texans believe there is currently an immigration crisis.

To solve this crisis, we must implement immigration reform that preserves national and state sovereignty, puts American interests first, and respects the inherent dignity of immigrants, all while maintaining the rule of law. But to move toward this reform, we must be able to communicate with people of different backgrounds, opinions, and political ideologies.

That's where TPPF comes in. In addition to our research, TPPF has begun a series of polling efforts that provide insights into what people care about and why. The results of these polls can help you speak to your family and friends about often-controversial topics, like immigration reform, and will shape how TPPF communicates about our policy initiatives.

Our polling has found that Americans across the political spectrum have more common ground than you may think. For example, most Americans' opinions on immigration are driven by three underlying concepts: morality, unity, and the rule of law.

### Morality

Many Americans' immigration opinions are rooted in the belief that the immigration process should be humane and uphold human dignity. We all want people to have a fair chance to achieve the American Dream, and for some that dream begins with immigrating to this country. We want immigrants to be safe in their journey to America, no matter how far or how long that journey takes. However, the current corrupt system of coyotes and smugglers working to bring people here illegally offers danger—not security—to migrants.

The unprotected border allows for these smugglers to continue to act, but increased border security will make it more difficult for these coyotes to maintain their businesses. Ultimately, this increased security will benefit immigrants. Smugglers who promise safe passage across the border often lead immigrants directly into human trafficking. Decreasing the number of illegal crossings through increased border security reduces human trafficking. We have a moral responsibility to make sure that criminals cannot take advantage of our immigration policies and endanger innocent people. Understanding the moral implications of securing the

“While we are united in our pursuit of the American Dream, we must acknowledge that our country has been built on decades of legal immigration. To effectively communicate about immigration policy, we must understand that we are coming from shared experiences intertwined with a respect for the rule of law.”

border can open a conversation about the importance of border security with friends and family members who base their views on immigration in morality.

### Unity and the Rule of Law

All Americans are bound by a common humanity and desire to treat others in the way we wish to be treated. As Americans, we need to remind ourselves of our founding principles and the rule of law, but we cannot forget that these ideas were brought to us by forefathers who immigrated to this great nation we now call home.

We all have a unique history, but nearly every American story begins at some point with immigration to the United States. We are here because our parents, grandparents, or other ancestors ventured out in search of a better life, just like the immigrants coming to America today. While we are united in our pursuit of the American Dream, we must acknowledge that our country has been built on decades of legal immigration. To effectively communicate about immigration policy, we must understand that we are coming from shared experiences intertwined with a respect for the rule of law.

### So How Can You Use this Information?

Our data show that Americans care about the same underlying issues when it comes to immigration, but we encounter stumbling blocks because of how we communicate about these issues. For example, conversations on a physical border are more likely to cause friction with fellow Americans when not grounded in values. We all want immigrants to be treated with dignity, and focusing on what binds us—a shared history and respect for the rule of law—rather than what separates us will lead to more fruitful conversations and true reform.

We must approach conversations on immigration reform with an open heart and the understanding of our shared values, especially the desire to respect the inherent dignity of all immigrants. Our polling is helping us to do exactly that. ★

For more information about TPPF's work on this issue, visit [www.TexasPolicy.com](http://www.TexasPolicy.com).



**Katherine Donovan** is the newest member of the TPPF development team, joining as the Development Associate in January 2020. She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and was an intern for U.S. Senator Ted Cruz before joining us at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Katherine has always had a love for traveling and has been to 12 countries and 19 states. She looks forward to expanding that list in the future.



# BUILDING A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

## ARLEN EDGAR

Even before graduating high school, Arlen Edgar knew he wanted to work in the oil business, although, he was not quite sure at the time how to achieve that goal.

It probably was only natural that he would develop an interest in the oil and gas business. Arlen grew up in Stephenville, where his dad was a long-time professor at Tarleton State University. With his hometown just a stone's throw from the historic oil fields of Ranger, Desdemona, and Electra, the young Arlen became intrigued by all the equipment he saw drilling and pumping "Texas Tea." Although Arlen's uncle was a flamboyant "oil man" who owned and flew an airplane, it was actually a senior friend during Arlen's junior year in high school who opened his eyes to petroleum engineering.

Once Arlen understood what a petroleum engineer was and how to become one, he was on his way. He earned an Associate Degree in Petroleum Engineering from Tarleton State and went on to earn a B.S. in Petroleum Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. While at UT, Arlen worked three summers in the Permian Basin oil fields, earning just enough to eke out each ensuing school year.

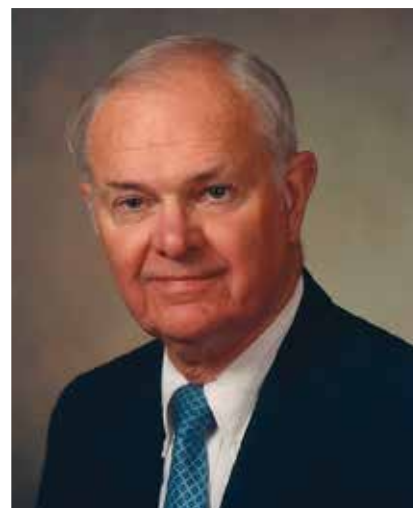
Arlen met his future wife, Betty Knudson, while at Tarleton State. When he left for UT, she went on to Baylor where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in biology with a minor in chemistry. They married in 1957 after graduation and moved to Odessa. Betty worked as a registered medical technologist and Arlen for Pan American Petroleum (later to become Amoco), his employer for all those summers. A couple of years later, the Edgars moved to Midland, where their two sons were born. Then, after a two-year stint with Tipperary Land Corporation in Brisbane, Australia, the Edgars returned to make Midland their permanent home. Ultimately, Arlen became an independent petroleum consultant and investor.

The Edgars first became acquainted with the Texas Public Policy Foundation at a Midland Country Club reception where they met then-TPPF President Brooke Rollins. Over time, the Edgars attended several TPPF luncheon events, hosted other Midland conservatives as their guests, and became TPPF donors at the Visionary level.

Sadly, Arlen lost his beloved Betty in 2010, but he has continued his involvement, donating to the capital campaign that built the foundation's 901 Congress headquarters and more recently to the Energy 101 Video Series, which is designed to educate students and the general public on the fundamentals of electricity and electric power. Recently, Arlen became a member of the Lone Star Legacy Society when he included TPPF in his estate plans.

In speaking of his TPPF involvement, Arlen reflects admirably on the foundation's mission, the dedication of its staff, and the results he's seen through his investment in its work.

"All of us have benefitted from the work of others, and in all of our lives a time comes for us to pay back," Arlen says. "I call it 'payback time' but in a very positive way. I encourage anyone who appreciates the mission and work of TPPF to consider including the foundation in their plans when their own 'payback time' comes."



For more information on how you can become a member of the Lone Star Legacy Society, contact Shari Hanrahan, Director of the Lone Star Legacy Society, at [Shanrahan@texaspolicy.com](mailto:Shanrahan@texaspolicy.com) or (512) 627-9831. ★



## OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

### Announcing TPPF Legacy Planning Website

The new TPPF legacy giving website illustrates ways to help you protect loved ones, organize everything in one place, and save on taxes. Learn how to create your estate plan—or update an existing one—with your FREE Personal Estate Planning Kit. You can find a printable copy at <https://tppf.planmylegacy.org/>.

### You Can Influence the Future in One Sentence

As someone who gives to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, you rightfully expect to see results. Over the last few years, whether you invested to solve a specific problem or to affect large scale change, TPPF worked hard on your behalf to secure more freedom and prosperity in Texas and beyond.

TPPF has achieved results for you from protecting your property rights from overreaching government through annexation reform, to reducing the burden of your property taxes, to forcing accountability on Texas schools, to once again emphasizing traditional civics and history in schools, to returning dignity and productivity to the formerly incarcerated, and so much more.

Imagine, then, how rewarding it would be to extend the impact of your generosity beyond today to future generations in a simple and affordable way.

By including a gift to the Texas Public Policy Foundation in your will, you can support our mission. And, it's as simple as adding a single sentence to your will.

Is including a gift in your will right for you? If you can answer "yes" to any of the statements below, you're ready to write the Texas Public Policy Foundation into your life's story through your will.

- You want the opportunity to guide decisions about the future ownership of your possessions and the legacy you leave behind.
- You want to make sure your support of our work is still available after your lifetime.
- You want to balance your generosity to us with an assurance that loved ones are taken care of first.
- You want the flexibility to change your mind about your gift at any time.

If you would like more information about including TPPF in your will, you can find exact language at <https://tppf.planmylegacy.org/> or feel free to reach out with questions or for information to Shari Hanrahan at (512) 627-9831 or [Shanrahan@texaspolicy.com](mailto:Shanrahan@texaspolicy.com).



# Happenings & UPDATES

“ On June 6, 2018, President Donald J. Trump granted clemency to Alice Marie Johnson and the world watched as she ran across the street into the arms of her family. ”



## Alice Marie Johnson Joins TPPF

In 2020, Alice Marie Johnson joined TPPF as a Senior Fellow with Right on Crime.

In 1996, Alice was sentenced to a mandatory life sentence plus 25 years without the possibility of parole for her role in a nonviolent drug case. This was her first and only conviction ever. Her story received world-wide attention when reality star and business mogul Kim Kardashian West advocated for her release from prison. On June 6, 2018, President Donald J. Trump granted clemency to Alice Marie Johnson and the world watched as she ran across the street into the arms of her family.

During her nearly 22 years of incarceration, Alice accomplished what has been termed “extraordinary rehabilitation.” She has been deemed a “catalyst” for the successful passage of the First Step Act. Since being granted clemency, she has steadfastly committed herself to continue to fight for criminal justice reform and for the women and men who are still incarcerated.

TPPF is proud to welcome Alice Marie Johnson to the Right on Crime team, where she will use her compelling storytelling skills and personal experience to further Right on Crime’s reentry work so that others may have the same opportunity for redemption and rehabilitation.



## Center for the American Future

TPPF’s litigation team, the Center for the American Future (CAF), continues to defend and advance liberty in the courtroom. In December, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) individual mandate is unconstitutional. CAF Director Rob Henneke represents the two individual plaintiffs in the case, and in July, Rob presented oral arguments before the Fifth Circuit Court. This important victory demonstrated that the arguments Henneke and the CAF team have been presenting are valid, and it further proves that the federal government cannot force Americans to purchase products they do not want or need.

This validation was furthered in March, when the United States Supreme Court announced that it will review this case. “The decision by the Supreme Court to review the challenge to Obamacare brings the case one step closer to finality and Americans one step closer to freedom from a failed and unconstitutional system,” said Henneke. The case will likely be heard in the fall with a decision expected in the summer of 2021.

## Election Integrity Project

On March 4, TPPF launched its Election Integrity Project, which seeks to ensure that each and every citizen is afforded their right to vote.



The Texas Public Policy Foundation’s Election Integrity Project will provide resources and materials across the state to educate voters about election laws and how they can identify when, where, and how their ballot may be compromised.

As a part of the project, digital billboards, like the one pictured above, were placed in regions where voter fraud is common in order to encourage individuals to protect their vote.

For more information about this project, visit [www.TexasPolicy.com/ElectionIntegrity](http://www.TexasPolicy.com/ElectionIntegrity)





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Our Visionaries Meeting offers special programming for Visionary-level donors. To register for our 2021 Policy Orientation/Visionaries Meeting or to learn more about Visionaries membership, please contact Annie Casteel at (512) 615-7982 or [acasteel@texaspolicy.com](mailto:acasteel@texaspolicy.com).