

THE BRIEF

Celebrating 10 Years of Impact

FROM THE DESK OF GABE CONGER

Dear Friends,

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

When was the last time you heard the famous line above—or anything resembling it—from a public official? Or, for that matter, from the head of any major foundation or philanthropic community?

To be clear: Voltaire probably didn't say it, either. Although the line is most often attributed to the famously irascible French skeptic, it actually evolved from reports on his ideas from his contemporaries and embellishments by later historians. But this crucial idea, and those of other “classical” liberals like Locke and Hobbes, deeply influenced Jefferson, Madison, Adams, and their founding brothers—even informing the documents upon which our constitutional republic is based.

In other words, it wasn't until the American Revolution that readiness to die for freedom led directly, and painfully, to the birth of a nation. Yet, in our age of ignorance, these most essentially American—and most essentially human—principles are out of favor. The notion that such basic rights require that government be carefully watched and limited now seems quaint to most of the nation—when anyone bothers to consider the notion at all.

With a view toward restoring a proper respect for these basic rights and institutions that will once again uphold them, the Bradley Impact Fund community remains steadfast in our shared mission. In this issue of The Brief, we hear from three especially effective champions of religious freedom, the free market, and educational freedom. Honoring their courage and resolve in service of freedom alongside The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, we share with you here their remarks from the recent Bradley Prizes ceremony in the nation's capital. Thank you, as always, for your own resolve in defending our freedoms through your membership in the Impact Fund.

Onward.



Gabe Conger
President, Bradley Impact Fund



DID YOU KNOW?



63% of students worried about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding what they have said or done.



Almost half of students reported they would feel discomfort sharing their views on controversial topics in class.



One-in-five student said that using violence was acceptable to prevent someone from speaking on campus.

These are key findings from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's (FIRE) 2022 Campus Free Speech rankings.



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BRADLEY PRIZE WINNER BETSY DEVOS

Educational Freedom

BRADLEY PRIZE AWARDEES

Now in its nineteenth year, the Bradley Prize is awarded to individuals whose extraordinary work exemplifies The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation's mission. At the annual award ceremony held this year on May 16 at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, the Foundation honored three scholars and advocates for their success in restoring, strengthening, and protecting the principles and institutions of American exceptionalism.

Betsy DeVos served as the 11th US Secretary of Education from 2017-2021. For more than three decades, she has advocated for public policy reforms that allow all students the freedom, flexibility, resources, and support they need to choose where, when, and how they learn. Her advocacy has helped create new educational choices for K-12 students in more than twenty-five states and the District of Columbia and expanded post-high school education options for students and adult learners alike. DeVos has served as chairman of The Windquest Group, a privately-held investment and management firm based in Michigan. She is the former chair of the American Federation for Children, The Philanthropy Roundtable, and the Michigan Republican Party.



Thank you so very much. I am deeply grateful and humbled to be here this evening. Sharing the stage with my fellow awardees, two remarkable and accomplished individuals, is an honor of the highest order.

I'm also grateful so much of my family is able to be here. You all share in this honor because you have been my greatest supporters and encouragers, even in—especially in—the face of relentless opposition.

Dick and I returned from Israel a couple days ago. Our travels took us into the land—quite literally—walking, hiking, climbing, and immersing body, mind, and soul in that holy place.

While there, I thought about my remarks tonight. I also thought about the many sermons I've heard over the years, and how pastors tend to make three points in them. These two trains of thought merged quite nicely as I learned about three particular trees that inhabit that special country.

Trees speak to me—not quite like God spoke through the burning bush to Moses, but they contribute mightily to the refreshment and peace I find in nature... they speak to my soul.

The first tree I encountered as we began the climb up Mount Masada is called the Ar'ar. It's a rather stunning tree—often growing lush and beautiful in the harshest desert terrain. It produces a very appealing fruit about the size of a grapefruit.

But when, with expectation, you break the fruit open—poof!—it's full of nothing but air. And the tiny amount of pulp inside is poisonous.

The Ar'ar is a mirage—it looks good, but it offers very little.

The second is the Acacia, a strong tree with

particularly deep roots. It's remarkably resistant to decay. It can go years without sprouting a leaf and yet remain alive thanks to its root structure. It stands tall in the desert and identifies where there is water, however deep. And its wood is desirable, valuable—it burns hotly, yields sap that's a balm to wounds, and was specified by God for use in constructing the Ark of the Covenant.

The third is the Tamarisk tree. It grows full and beautiful, offering shade that's ten to fifteen degrees cooler than the surrounding desert. But it is slow growing, taking three generations to mature to size. So, whomever plants the tree will not likely enjoy the tree's cooling shade. It is planted deliberately as a gift to those who follow.

Abraham planted a tamarisk to honor the covenant with the Lord God. (Genesis 21:33)

So, what can these ancient trees teach us today? And how do they connect to education freedom—my life's work, and the reason for which I've been given this great honor?

We want empowered parents because parents love their children! We want what's best for them. Parents have primacy because parents—not the government—have the biggest stake.

We live in a culture that plants and celebrates Ar’ar trees. We cultivate what’s on the outside, with far too little work on what’s inside... an Instagram-deep, TikTok-ready understanding of our humanity.

Children are taught to say and do the “right” things, but are often empty inside, just like the Ar’ar’s fruit. Hopelessness, mental illness, and suicides have reached historic highs, and academic achievement has plummeted to record lows.

Students are held hostage in school buildings that may look lovely from the outside, but once inside, you discover they can’t read.

And they’re fed poison, drip by drip:

- Cancel people who don’t agree with you
- Tear down statues and re-write history
- Judge people based on their race
- Choose your own gender and disfigure your body
- Chose victimhood, not heroism

And yet, some with power and influence contend parents shouldn’t have a say in what their children are taught! That the parental rights movement is born out of some form of hatred.

No. We want empowered parents because parents love their children! We want what’s best for them. Parents have primacy because parents—not the government—have the biggest stake.

As Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch prime minister and theologian, put it:

“If there is any axiom in the area of education, this is it. ... The parental rights must be seen as a sovereign right in this sense, that it is not delegated by any other authority, that it is inherent in fatherhood and motherhood, and that it is given directly from God to the father and mother.”

Parental control is rooted in meeting the needs of each individual child. We have an abiding respect for the innate value of each child, and an ambition for them to unlock and achieve their full potential.

Parents yearn for their children to learn, to grow, to flourish.

Government, by its very nature, does not and cannot know a child as a parent does. Not at the school district headquarters, not at city hall, not at the state capitol, and most definitely, beyond a shadow of a doubt, not inside the four walls of the US Department of Education.

Parental control is rooted in meeting the needs of each individual child. We have an abiding respect for the innate value of every child, and an ambition for them to unlock and achieve their full potential. And not just for them, or for ourselves. We know better schools will help grow better citizens and a better America.

This brings me to the Acacia tree. It represents what every parent desires for their child: to grow strong, resilient, resistant to decay, deeply rooted to weather life’s storms. Made of material that burns hot; a passion for life and for vocation. Formed and shaped consistent with the generations that preceded it.

**Please click here to view
Mrs. DeVos’s full speech.**



BRADLEY PRIZE WINNER
JOHN H.
COCHRANE

Economic
Freedom

*Dr. John Cochrane is the Rose-Marie and Jack Anderson Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He was previously a professor of business and of economics at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and is a senior fellow of the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, professor of finance and economics (by Courtesy) at Stanford GSB, a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, and an adjunct scholar of the Cato Institute. He has written articles on macroeconomics, health insurance, time-series econometrics, financial regulation, and many other topics. His most recent book, *The Fiscal Theory of the Price Level*, was released in January 2023.*

Creeping stagnation ought to be recognized as the central economic issue of our time. Economic growth since 2000 has fallen almost by half compared with the last half of the twentieth century. The average American's income is already a quarter less than under the previous trend. If this trend continues, lost growth in fifty years will total three times today's economy. No economic issue — inflation, recession, trade, climate, income diversity — comes close to such numbers.

Growth is not just more stuff, it's vastly better goods and services; it's health, environment, education, and culture; it's defense, social programs, and repaying government debt.

Why are we stagnating? In my view, the answer is simple: America has the people, the ideas, and the investment capital to grow. We just can't get the

permits. We are a great Gulliver, tied down by miles of Lilliputian red tape.

How much more can the US grow? Looking around the world, we see that even slightly better institutions produce large improvements in living standards. US taxes and regulations are only a bit less onerous than those in Canada and the UK, but US per capita income is forty percent greater. Bigger improvements have enormous effects. US per capita income is 350% greater than Mexico's and 950% greater than India's. Unless you think the US is already perfect, there is a lot we can do.

How can we improve the US economy?

I don't need to tell you how dysfunctional health care and insurance are. Just look at your latest, absurd bill.

There is no reason that health care cannot be provided in the same way as lawyering, accounting, architecture, construction, airplane travel, car repair, or any complex personal service. Let a brutally competitive market offer us better service at lower prices. There is no reason that health insurance cannot function at least as well as life, car, property, or other insurance. It's easy to address standard objections, such as preexisting conditions,

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asymmetric information, and so on.

How did we get in this mess? There are two original sins. First, in order to get around wage controls during WWII, the government allowed a tax deduction for employer-based group plans, but not for portable insurance. Thus, preexisting conditions were born: if you lose your job, you lose health insurance. Patch after patch then led to the current mess.

Second, the government wants to provide health care to poor people, but without visibly taxing and spending a lot. So, the government forces hospitals to treat poor people below cost and recoup the money by overcharging everyone else. But an overcharge cannot stand competition, so the government protects hospitals and insurers from competition. You'll know health care is competitive when, rather than hide prices, hospitals spam us with offers as airlines and cell phone companies do.

There is no reason why everyone's health care and insurance must be so screwed up to help the poor. A bit of taxing and spending instead—budgeted, appropriated, visible—would not stymie competition and innovation.

Banking offers plenty of room for improvement. In 1933, the US suffered a great bank run. Our government responded with deposit insurance. Guaranteeing deposits stops runs, but it's like sending your brother-in-law to Las Vegas with your credit card, what we economists call an "incentive for risk taking." The government piled on regulations to try to stop banks from taking risks. The banks got around the regulations, new crises erupted, new guarantees and regulations followed. This spring, the regulatory juggernaut failed to detect simple interest rate risk, and Silicon Valley Bank had a run, followed by others. The Fed and FDIC bailed out depositors and promised more rules.



*"We have to fix
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the table."*

This system is fundamentally broken. The answer: Deposits should flow to accounts backed by reserves at the Fed, or short-term treasuries. Banks should get money for risky loans by issuing stock or long-term debt that can't run. We can end private-sector financial crises forever, with next to no regulation.

There is a lesson in these stories. If we want to improve regulations, we can't just bemoan them. We must understand how they emerged.

As in health and banking, a regulatory mess often emerges from a continual patchwork, in which each step is a roughly sensible repair of the previous regulation's dysfunction. The little old lady swallowed a fly, a spider to catch the fly, and so on. Now horse is on the menu. Only a start-from-scratch reform will work.

Much regulation protects politically influential businesses, workers, and other constituencies from the disruptions of growth. Responsive democracies give people what they want, good and hard. And in return, regulation extorts political support from those beneficiaries. We have to fix the regulatory structure, to give growth a seat at the table.

Economists are somewhat at fault, too. They are taught to look at every problem, diagnose "market failure," and advocate new rules to be implemented by an omniscient, benevolent planner. But we do not live in a free market. When you see a problem, look first for the regulation that caused it.

**Please click here to view
Professor Cochrane's full speech.**

BRADLEY PRIZE WINNER NINA SHEA

Religious Freedom

Nina Shea helped launch and lead the coalition to adopt the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. She was appointed by the US House of Representatives to serve as a commissioner on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom seven times from 1999 to 2012. Shea has authored or co-authored three books on religious persecution, frequently testifies before Congress, and has briefed American presidents, secretaries of state and other officials. Most recently, she met with Pope Francis to discuss China's persecuted Church.



During the Cold War, Natan Sharansky, a Jewish Refusenik in the Soviet gulag, tapped on his prison cell in Morse code, excited to tell other prisoners the news: President Reagan had called the Soviet Union an “evil empire.” Sharansky was elated, he later explained, because the leader of the Free World made a frankly moral judgment, delegitimizing their oppressors.

Sharansky and other prisoners of conscience were freed thanks largely to relentless American advocacy. Reagan said he viewed religious freedom as the Soviets’ “Achilles’ heel.” Eventually, the empire fell, without a shot fired, due to Reagan’s policy of peace through military and economic strength, and public diplomacy that especially focused on religious freedom and that, yes, delegitimized Soviet communism before the world.

The United States has been the world’s indispensable nation in the defense of religious freedom. This is rooted in America’s dedication to the right at home. The United States recognizes certain “unalienable rights” endowed by our Creator, of which religious freedom is the very first guaranteed



[Religious freedom]
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in the Constitution's Bill of Rights. It has been central to our history, traditions, and laws. Think of President George Washington's unequivocal promise to a Rhode Island synagogue, in 1790: the United States "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." These are revolutionary words still. Many countries today persecute their religious minorities.

Our First Amendment's focus on limiting government power is part of American exceptionalism. It bars laws establishing religion and prohibiting its "free exercise." Thus, unlike many places, the US does not license religions nor pick and choose among denominations.

Religious freedom in America is not limited to worship or holding beliefs in the secrecy of one's heart—even North Korea has that. It includes manifesting religion in public. Religious charities run hospitals, schools, and much else; thirty percent of American charitable giving goes to religious organizations.

Religious freedom also includes the rights to convert, criticize, and reject religion. We have the right to educate our children in our faith and morals. Religious objections to other governmental priorities can be accommodated, as seen in recent

Supreme Court decisions for Catholic nuns and Sikh soldiers.

Let me cite some examples from abroad showing why America is seen as the shining city on a hill:

- If you're caught praying in North Korea, three generations of your family can be sent to labor camp. If caught with a Bible, you'll be executed.
- In Iran, all women must wear Muslim headscarves in public under penalty of imprisonment or death. In January, Iran sent hit men to Brooklyn to murder Masih Alinejad, a prominent critic of Iran's hijab law. The FBI thwarted them.
- In Nigeria, extremists have reportedly slaughtered over 5,000 Christians last year alone and attacked some 18,000 churches since 2009—largely with impunity.

Severe persecutors don't share our fundamental values and aren't reliable allies. Secretary of State Pompeo designated China's persecution of Uyghur Muslims as genocide, and it opened the West's eyes to the mortal threat the Chinese Communist Party poses to our values and security. China is the modern face of persecution and the greatest threat to religious freedom today. It uses a dense web of regulations and sophisticated tactics. All religious groups are suspect and must register with the party, which controls houses of worship with high tech surveillance cameras that feed into digitized social credit score systems and police computers.

[Please click here to view
Mrs. Shea's full speech.](#)

GRANT
RECIPIENT SPOTLIGHT:

Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression





Since its founding more than two decades ago as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, FIRE has become the nation's leading defender of fundamental rights on college campuses through a unique mix of programming, including student and faculty outreach, public education campaigns, individual case advocacy, and policy reform efforts.

In 2022, FIRE changed its name to the Foundation for Individual Rights *and Expression* and announced an expansion initiative into off-campus free speech advocacy and legal defense. The board approved the expansion in large part because President Greg Lukianoff and his leadership team increasingly found FIRE's winning model in demand from those defending the First Amendment in venues other than universities and colleges.

FIRE's defense of freedom of speech and inquiry on campus is still central to its mission and will grow in the coming years. And, importantly, there will always be a synergy in every FIRE initiative: protecting freedom of expression on campus is vital to doing so in society at large, just as leading a robust defense off campus can only help preserve freedom on campus. Since leaders are most often formed in universities, a constantly-improving campaign in defense of free speech will remain necessary.

Since its founding in 1999, FIRE has won 529 victories for freedom of expression at 315 different schools, and its impact continues to grow, with 2022 by far its most impactful year yet.

FIRE's team fielded a record 1,526 case inquiries in 2022, intervening in 246 (also a record) through litigation, direct outreach to school leadership, public awareness, or a combination thereof. The

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result? Eighty-one victories vindicating the rights of students and faculty so far, with many more pending action. In preparation for the expansion now underway, FIRE brought seven new attorneys and a paralegal on staff, while expanding its network of legal professionals from 250 to 345 just in 2022.

Over its twenty-three years of advocacy, FIRE has won more than 500 direct advocacy victories on behalf of college students and faculty members (with thousands more resolved behind-the-scenes), secured 425 campus policy changes affecting five million students, helped pass rights-protective legislation in twenty states, and drove a nationwide reduction in the prevalence of the most restrictive kinds of campus speech codes, from seventy-five percent in 2007 to eighteen percent today.

With its accelerating on-campus work forming the basis for the off-campus expansion, expect FIRE's impact to grow exponentially in 2023 and beyond.

[Please click here to
learn more about FIRE.](#)

Leave a (Tax-Advantaged) Legacy with an IRA

NOT ALL ASSETS ARE CREATED EQUAL WHEN IT COMES TO LEAVING A LEGACY.

Designating a donor-advised fund (DAF) as a charitable beneficiary of an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) offers a strategic philanthropic advantage: It allows individuals to efficiently channel retirement savings towards charitable causes so retirees can maximize their impact on nonprofits while potentially minimizing tax liabilities. DAFs provide flexibility, permitting donors to allocate funds to various charities over time.

This approach simplifies estate planning, bypassing potentially complex probate processes. It also ensures that a lasting charitable legacy is established, as heirs can continue to support nonprofits through the DAF. This approach combines tax benefits, flexibility, and a lasting charitable impact, making it a compelling choice for savvy philanthropists like Bradley Impact Fund members George and Jill, who told us why they chose the Impact Fund as the charitable beneficiary of their IRA:

“Our main reason for doing this was to avoid creating the burden of the complicated tax process that results from receiving a retirement account as an inheritance. It is not a simple procedure, and it is quite time-consuming for your children at a time when they don’t need a burden on top of the grief of losing a parent. Secondly, our daughter and her family will receive an ample inheritance outside of my retirement account. And, of course, it’s important for us to support some of our favorite causes following our demise. The Bradley Impact Fund is the perfect solution to facilitate our wishes.”

Before making any distributions from an IRA or other retirement account, be sure to consult your tax advisor concerning how the distribution will affect your own unique circumstances.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about designating the Bradley Impact Fund as a charitable beneficiary, please contact us at: gabeconger@bradleyimpactfund.org or (414) 291-2500.



Bradley Impact Fund's Core Principles

Constitutional Order | Free Markets | Civil Society | Informed Citizens | Donor Intent

Bradley Impact Fund | Board of Directors and Officers

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