



# SCHOOL CHOICE VICTORIES

Iron Light's successes  
in 15 states

**CLIENTS:**

Opportunity Arkansas

The Cardinal Institute

Empower Illinois

Iowans For Tax Relief

Palmetto Promise institute

Respect New Hampshire

**IRON LIGHT**



*SIGNATURE VICTORY*

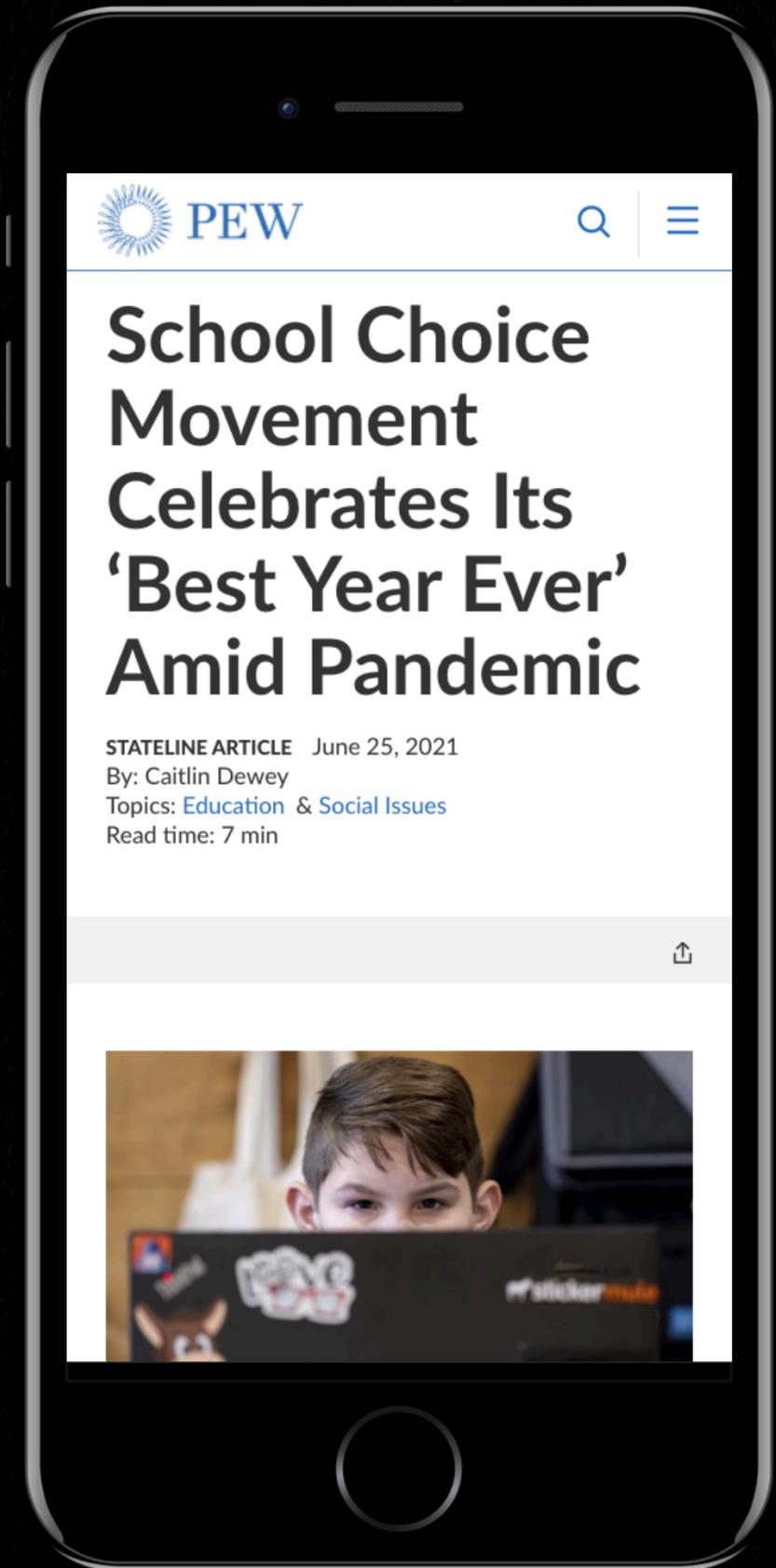
# Introduction

Families across the country suffered tremendous hardship throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in no small part because union-dominated public school districts shut down in-person instruction. But this phenomenon came with a silver lining.

Where the 2020-2021 school year was dubbed the “best year ever” for the school choice movement—with more than a dozen states passing laws to create or significantly expand programs that fund students instead of systems—the movement to empower parents has only grown since.

Iron Light was proud to play a role in most of the most important school choice victories in the U.S. from 2021-2023.

We partnered with organizations to execute effective storytelling, community building and political pressure to **drive policy wins in 15 states** that expanded or protected access to educational choice hundreds of thousands of students nationwide.



# Arkansas

In the months leading up to Arkansas' 2023 (biennial) legislative session, Iron Light designed and launched the brand for Opportunity Arkansas, including building the first marketing strategy for this new organization.

Working with no paid marketing budget, we focused on design pieces such as research reports, email marketing, and 1-2 page legislative summaries that our client's CEO used effectively around the Capitol. We developed (non)Debatable, a statehouse newsletter that served to preview, summarize, and influence legislation around the statehouse. Beginning only with Republican state lawmakers, engagement and word-of-mouth on this product was extremely strong. (non)Debatable has extensive reach and influence in the statehouse, including with Gov. Sarah Sanders, who has an open rate of 89%.

These efforts culminated with an astounding 20 legislative victories in 2023, including **The LEARNS Act, a universal K-12 school choice program**—all from an organization that did not even exist until late the year before.

This work is currently a finalist for two Reed Awards from Campaigns & Elections: Best Use of Email and Best Field Program for a Bootstrapped Campaign.



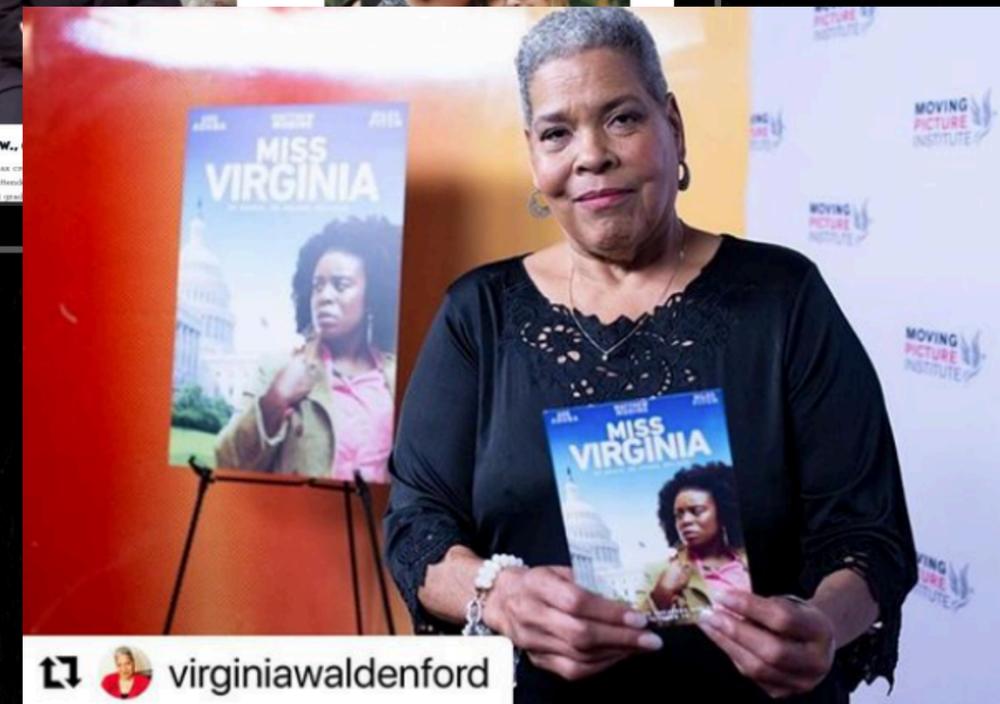
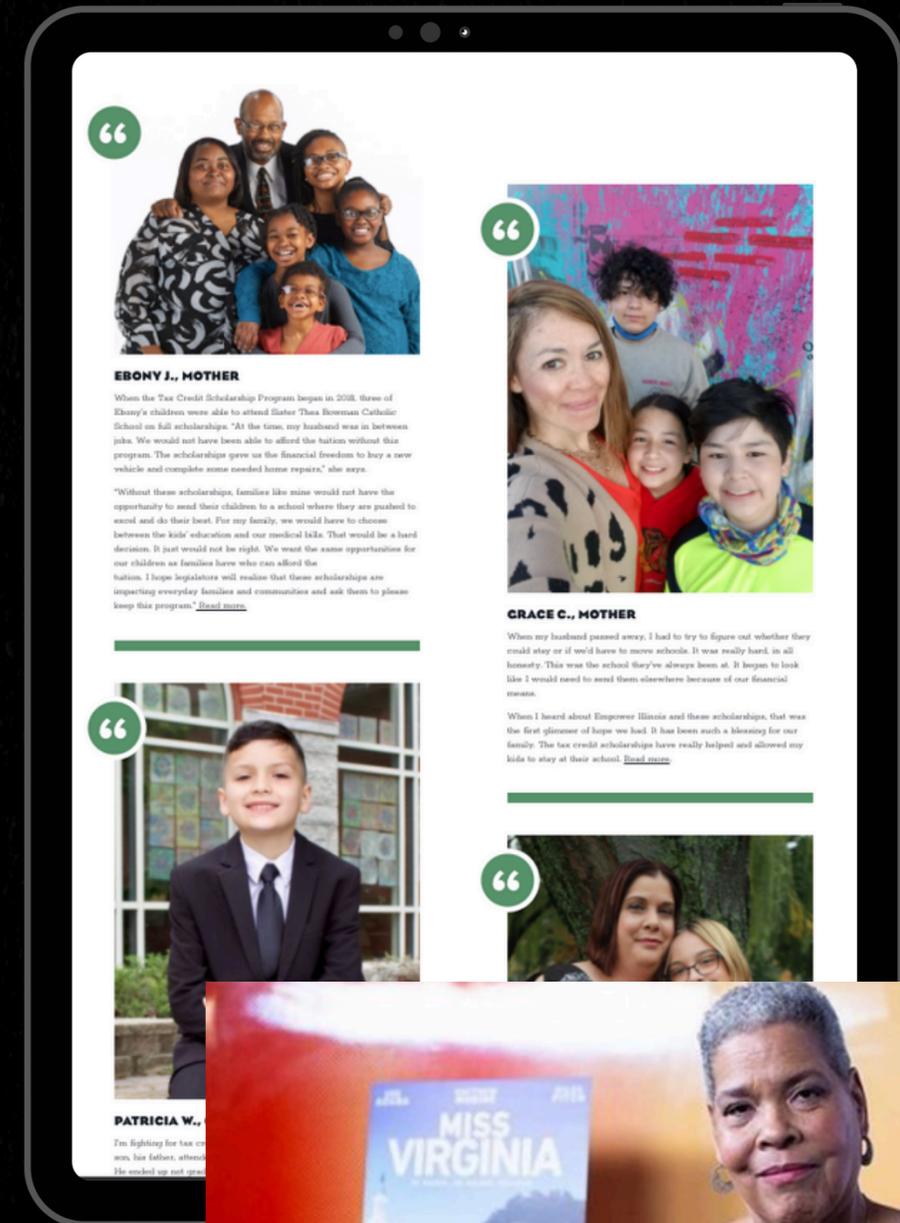
# Illinois

Gov. J.B. Pritzker put Illinois' school choice program in his crosshairs during the 2021 budget season, calling it a "corporate loophole" slated for dramatic cuts. The state's tax credit scholarship program, launched in 2017, was also scheduled to sunset in 2022.

Our team focused on telling the stories of the children and families that were benefiting from the program, producing stories on 11 families in a matter of weeks. This content, which was focused on constituents of key swing lawmakers, was instrumental in advocacy efforts, enabling us to generate nearly 4,000 calls and emails to 14 targeted lawmakers. In the final week of session, our client was able to arrange for Virginia Walden Ford, renowned education activist and subject of the movie *Miss Virginia*, to meet with lawmakers and speak at a school participating in the program. Our team was there to film the event and produce a polished video within 72 hours.

Support for the program proved too great to ignore, as lawmakers defied the governor's wishes, and powerful teachers unions, by refusing to make any cuts to the program.

Lawmakers also passed a one-year extension to the program, a major win given Illinois rarely extends any programs until their sunset is imminent, and the fact that teachers unions would have made this a major issue during midterm elections under the previous sunset date.



# Iowa

Strong Republican majorities swept into office following the 2020 elections, emboldening Gov. Kim Reynolds to pursue education reform policies as a major tentpole of her agenda. However, many ideas were competing for attention, and GOP lawmakers in rural parts of the state saw this only as a city problem. Our client was also strictly limited against doing anything that could remotely be considered a lobbying activity.

We created a compelling narrative of the families that would be impacted by school choice and education scholarships accounts, creating nine unique storytelling pieces, and a short-documentary style video on a Christian Academy in Des Moines within a week. We also created five editorial cartoons and helped our client grow its email list by 4,000 subscribers, with an 84% increase in open rates and 137% increase in average unique opens – all done with 100% of our audience targeting specifically in critical legislative districts or around the capitol building when lawmakers were in session.

Our efforts were instrumental in getting several key reforms passed in 2020, including an expansion of charter schools, expanded open enrollment, and increases in two tuition tax credit programs.

These efforts helped set the table for a three-year effort culminating in a comprehensive school choice program being signed into law in January 2023, which was described as "seismic" by the state's largest newspaper.



TEF Iowa

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With the unexpected death of her daughter, Coretha took on the responsibility of raising her three grandchildren. She quickly found that all three were being bullied at the public school they attended. She found an alternative school for them to attend however was unable to afford it on her own.



TEF Iowa

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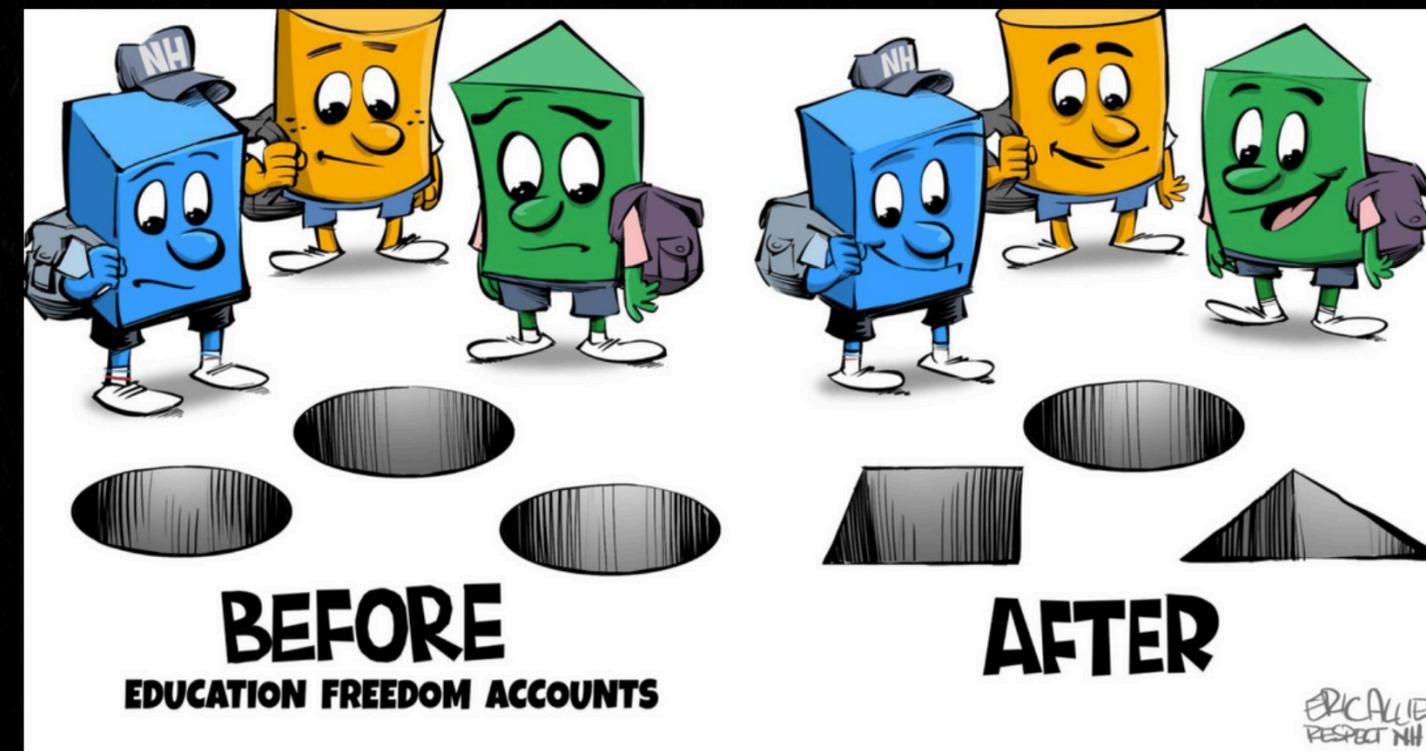
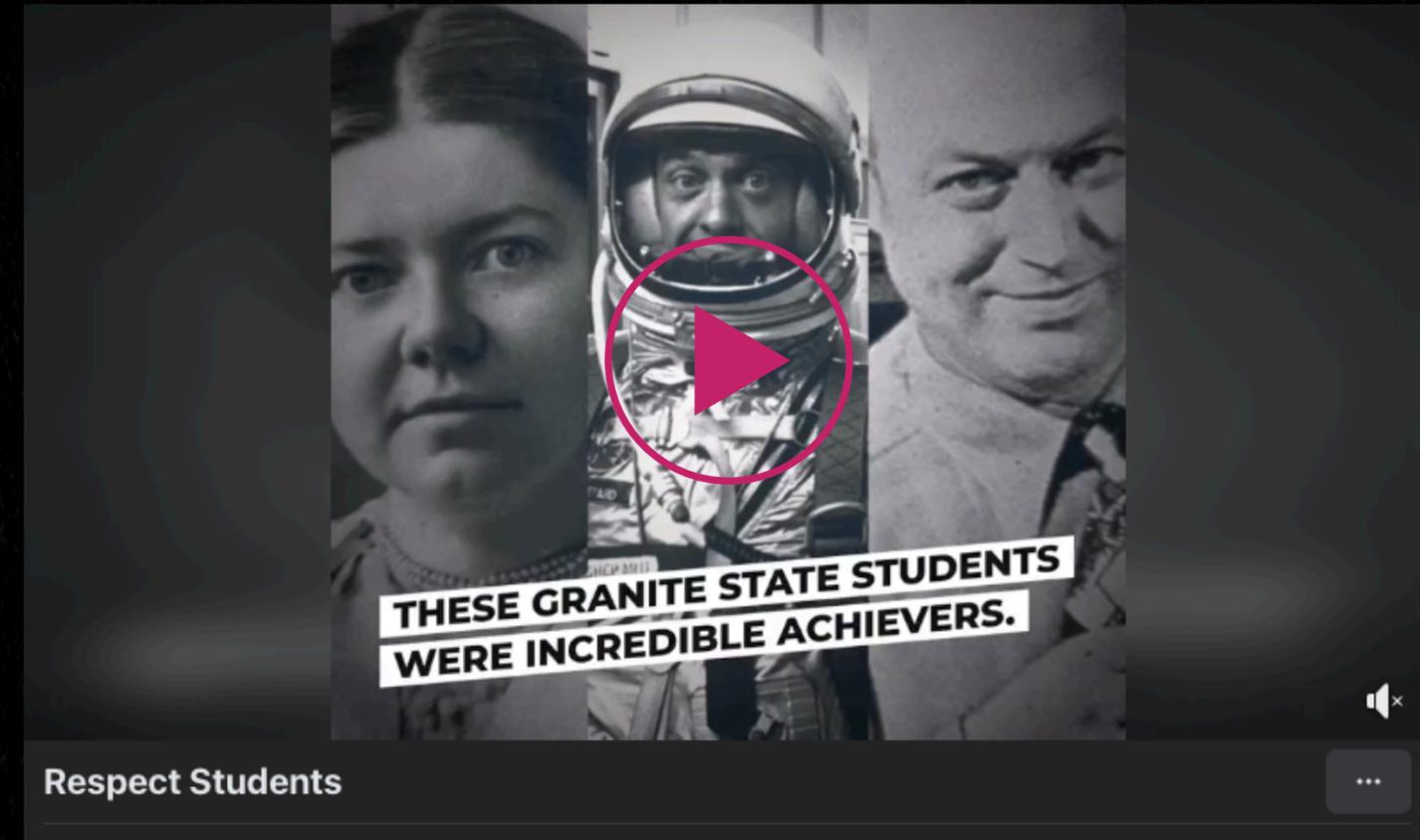
Johan and Kelly, both teachers, wanted their children to receive the best education possible. To them, this meant a school with smaller class sizes that not only focused on academic but also social, emotional, and spiritual development.

# New Hampshire

New Hampshire was home to the only state legislature in the country to flip from Democratic to Republican control in 2020, but passage of a marquee school choice program was far from certain. Teachers unions mounted outreach campaigns targeting soft Republicans months ahead of the vote.

Iron Light partnered with Respect New Hampshire to produce compelling storytelling, explainer videos, owned audience campaigns, original cartoons, lawmaker pressure campaigns and a successful in-person event led by two local moms, which effectively positioned Respect New Hampshire as the leading voice on digital in favor of passing education savings accounts (dubbed education freedom accounts, or EFAs, in this case) in the Granite State.

EFAs were included in the state budget, which was signed into law by Gov. Chris Sununu on June 24. All families making less than 300% of the federal poverty level are now eligible for grants that average \$4,600/student.



# South Carolina

Lila Mozingo is, in her mother's words, "a beautiful vivacious 8-year-old little girl. She wants to be loved, she wants to be included, she wants to be a part of what's going on. She just happens to have Down Syndrome."

Iron Light was honored to be able to tell Lila's story and show how a particular education reform would help children with special needs like Lila pursue education options that fit their learning style.

The video won three major awards for its storytelling and impact:

- Reed Award: "Best Online Video for Public Affairs Campaign or Issue Advocacy – Social Policy" (Official Announcement)
- Telly (Gold): Social Video – Social Impact (Official Listing)
- Telly (Silver): Social Video – Public Service & Activism (Official Listing)

"We were deeply honored to have the privilege to tell the story of Lila and her limitless potential...and that of every child. And we once again thank Lila's parents, Padgett and Mark Mozingo, for trusting and partnering with us in this important mission."

- Palmetto Promise Institute



# West Virginia

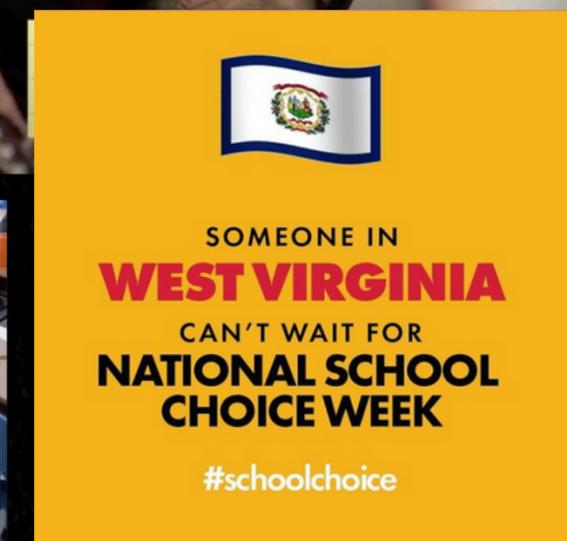
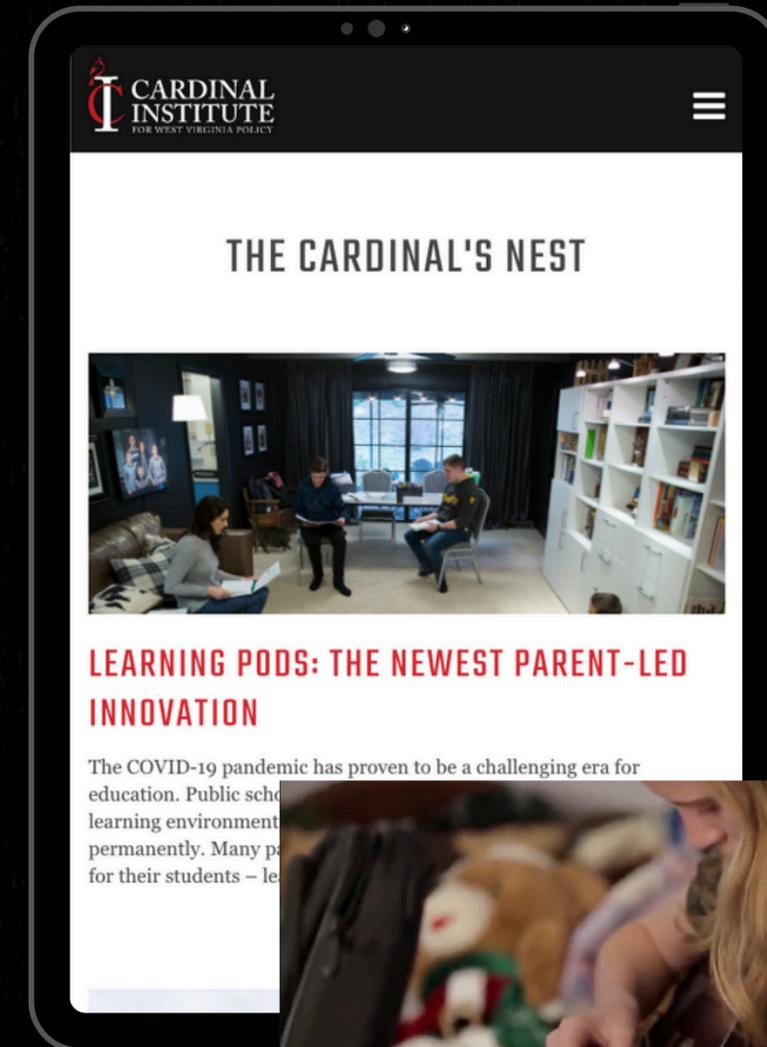
Having been the Cardinal Institute's top policy goal for many years, the results of the 2020 election made Education Scholarship Accounts a realistic possibility for the 2021 legislative session. But as recently as 2018, West Virginia was the darling of the "Red for Ed" movement, as it became the scene of a 13-day statewide teachers' strike. Opposition to school choice policy was going to be fierce.

Our team came into the project just as the legislative session was about to begin, leading efforts including National School Choice Week event promotion, video promotion, growing Cardinal's owned audience by 146%, revamping their email marketing, producing compelling storytelling on families impacted by school choice, and designing several infographics and handouts for lawmakers.

On March 27, 2021, the Hope Scholarship program was signed into law, making West Virginia the home of the most expansive school choice program in the nation. All families with students currently enrolled in public education are now eligible to receive \$4,600 per student per year to pursue an education option that best fits their needs.

"Our key contributions to this effort included the strongest communications and marketing campaign we've ever embarked on, thanks to partnering with Iron Light."

- The Cardinal Institute



# Nationwide Campaigns

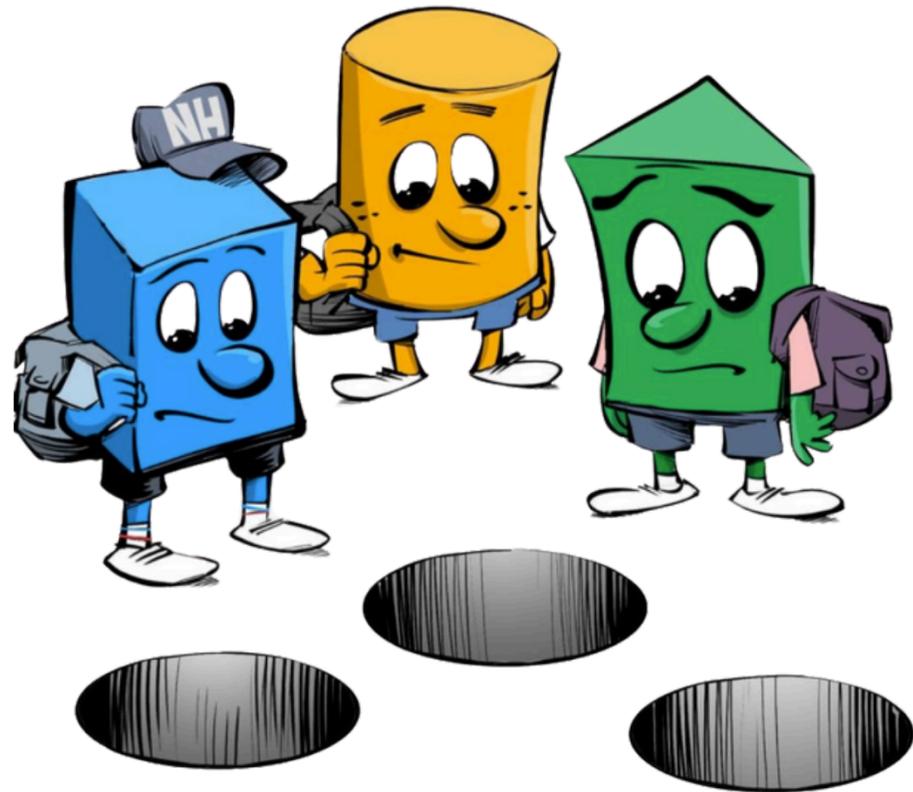
In 2023, we partnered a national advocacy organization to create 15, 30, and 60 second spots to aid efforts in **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Tennessee.**

Our creative team crafted original scripts and creative to specifically resonate with audiences in each state.

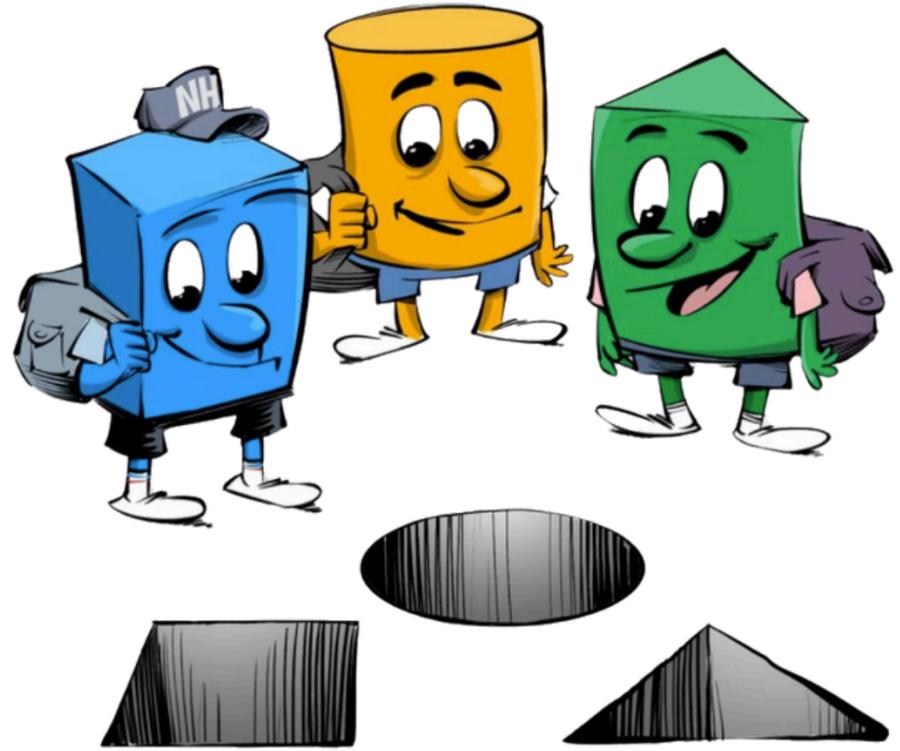
In some cases, we produced these ads in as few as 48 hours from script to delivery to have an impact on certain state legislators or state legislative calendars.

[View our school choice video showcase here.](#)





**BEFORE**  
**EDUCATION FREEDOM ACCOUNTS**



**AFTER**

ERIC ALLIE  
RESPECT NH

# IRON LIGHT

Solving Wicked Problems