

# *The Character of America*

*2023 Annual Report*



GEORGE W. BUSH  
PRESIDENTIAL CENTER

“AMERICANS *are* A RESOLUTE PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
RISEN TO EVERY TEST *of* OUR TIME.  
ADVERSITY *has* REVEALED THE CHARACTER *of* OUR  
COUNTRY, TO THE WORLD AND TO OURSELVES.”

January 28, 2003

*George W. Bush*





FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

*We live in changing times, and the George W. Bush Presidential Center aims to be a rational voice supporting timeless compassionate conservative values. In 2023, we amplified that voice.*

Our job here is to provide sensible solutions and model civility and compassion both at home and abroad. Using America's soft power diminishes extremism, which is bred by poverty and despair.

Take for example a signature program from the Bush Administration – the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). This became the most successful and compassionate humanitarian program ever implemented in the world. We celebrated the 20th anniversary of PEPFAR in 2023 and marked the milestone of 25 million lives saved, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. The program now operates in more than 50 countries, where it has saved lives and reduced political instability.

Our work to advance free societies also includes combating corruption and kleptocracy globally, championing political dissidents around the world, advocating for economic freedom, drawing attention to disinformation and misinformation, and calling out autocrats, particularly those in Russia and China.

America may not always get things right, but our voice is needed now more than ever. If we retreat from our global leadership position, the void will be filled by bad actors. Instability will result.

Our efforts to ensure good governance abroad must start here at home. It is impossible to project our values around the world if we don't have our act together. This is why the Bush Center led 12 other presidential centers and foundations in September in issuing a statement reaffirming the democratic principles of this country. We continue to urge Americans of all persuasions to

strengthen our democracy by exercising civility and showing respect in political discourse. We're proud of our leadership programming, which brings together changemakers from across the country and political spectrum to solve pressing challenges.

Our domestic opportunity focus area also demonstrates our compassion, as we work to level the playing field for all. This includes veterans and transitioning service members, schoolchildren who must be adequately prepared for the 21st century job market, and immigrants who legally seek freedom on these shores as they flee injustice, oppression, poverty, and violence. Our economic growth series demonstrates how cities and states can best position themselves to be springboards for success.

We also proudly grew our engagement in 2023. We completed updates to the George W. Bush Presidential Museum, with an emphasis on PEPFAR and the post-presidency work of President and Mrs. Bush. Our special exhibit, *Freedom Matters*, allows visitors to examine the concept of freedom. Engagement is growing across all our platforms, from our museum attendance to our publications like *The Catalyst: A Journal of Ideas from the Bush Institute* and *The Strategerist* podcast to our *Engage at the Bush Center* lecture series presented by NexPoint.

Our work continues to be extremely relevant in today's world, and it wouldn't be possible without your help. Thank you for all you do to support President and Mrs. Bush's values of freedom, opportunity, accountability, and compassion. Together, we can pave the way to a better future for our nation and world.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KH'.

KEN HERSH  
President and CEO,  
George W. Bush Presidential Center







## GEORGE W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL MUSEUM

The permanent exhibit in The Boeing Company Exhibition Gallery tells the story of President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush's life of public service during his two terms in office. It gives visitors a sense of the importance of public service in a free society and a better understanding of the American presidency.

The museum offers a moving exhibit on September 11, 2001, a replica Oval Office, and a simulation in presidential decision-making. The Decision Points Theater, presented by Steve & Amy Van Andel, walks visitors through interactive, real-world scenarios that the Bush Administration faced.

The Bradford M. Freeman Exhibition Gallery hosts a variety of temporary exhibits that delve deeply into unique topics and provide insights into government, history, and other important cultural aspects. Past exhibits have included President Bush's original paintings that tell the stories of veterans and immigrants; humor in the White House; presidential retreats; the role and influence of America's first ladies; the history of U.S. campaigns and landmark elections; and baseball's relationship with America's presidents and how it has reflected America's social struggles.

The current special exhibit, *Freedom Matters*, uses rare artifacts, historical documents, interactive activities, and personal perspectives to examine the concept of freedom. Artifacts include a 14th century copy of the Magna Carta and rare versions of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, and Bill of Rights. Through these significant historical documents and the stories of those who have fought for freedom, the exhibit explores the importance of building peaceful, stable democratic societies and reinforces the civic responsibility of the individual in advancing freedom and liberty.

## LAURA W. BUSH NATIVE TEXAS PARK

The 15-acre Laura W. Bush Native Texas Park reflects President and Mrs. Bush's love of the native Texas landscape, their long-standing commitment to environmental conservation and restoration, and their belief that the Bush Center should contribute to the everyday life of nearby communities while enhancing the experience of visitors.

The landscape, designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, contributes to the Bush Center's ambitious sustainability objectives by increasing biodiversity, restoring native habitats, reducing the need for irrigation, and employing an organic maintenance program. These significant landscape achievements helped the Bush Center building, designed by Robert A.M. Stern, earn Platinum-LEED certification.

By using native plants and a careful stormwater management plan, almost all on-site water is reused, and irrigation demands are reduced by more than 50%. A 252,000-gallon cistern collects rainwater to irrigate more than 900 trees, 400 of which were transplanted from the Bushes' Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas. The native lawns are a blend of five drought-tolerant grasses, while the prairie and savannah areas are planted with different native grasses and wildflowers.

The Bush Center grounds are open to all. Visitors can enjoy a one-mile network of paths punctuated by benches and bridges that provide places to stop and observe the landscape through the seasons. The Carolyn and David Miller Amphitheater offers a place to sit and convene, and partially shaded lawns create inviting public spaces for relaxing, picnicking, and playing. In the spring, the Rory Meyers Meditation Garden is a great place to take in the rich palette of native Texas wildflowers, while in the fall, visitors can experience the annual monarch butterfly migration through North Texas thanks to the park's many pollinator friendly plants.



## GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE

The George W. Bush Institute is a solution-oriented nonpartisan policy organization focused on ensuring opportunity for all, strengthening democracy, and advancing free societies. Housed within the George W. Bush Presidential Center, the Bush Institute is rooted in compassionate conservative values and committed to creating positive, meaningful, and lasting change at home and abroad. We utilize our unique platform and convening power to advance solutions to national and global issues of the day.

On the following pages, we highlight the impact made by the Bush Institute.



# 2023 highlights

THE GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE CONTINUES TO BE A LEADER IN PURSUING DOMESTIC EXCELLENCE AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP.

THE BUSH CENTER AND OUR EXPERTS CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION.

**7.4+ million**

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENINGS BY THE GO FURTHER PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV IN AFRICA SINCE INCEPTION

**1,400+**

VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE SPOKEN TO *CHECK-IN* CONNECTORS SINCE INCEPTION



**25+**

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING EVENTS, INCLUDING *ENGAGE AT THE BUSH CENTER*, PRESENTED BY NEXPOINT IN 2023

**97,310**

VISITORS TO THE BUSH MUSEUM IN 2023



**173,000**

SUBSCRIBERS TO THE *FIVE FOR FRIDAY*, THE BUSH CENTER'S WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

**\$300,000**

AWARDED IN SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP 75 NORTH KOREAN ESCAPEES AND THEIR CHILDREN PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE INCEPTION

**\$1.5 million**

AWARDED IN LIBRARY GRANTS TO 300 SCHOOLS ACROSS AMERICA IN 2023 TO UPDATE AND DIVERSIFY THEIR BOOK AND PRINT COLLECTIONS THROUGH THE LAURA BUSH FOUNDATION FOR AMERICA'S LIBRARIES



**1.1+ million**

READS OF BUSH INSTITUTE ARTICLES AND *THE CATALYST: A JOURNAL OF IDEAS FROM THE BUSH INSTITUTE* IN 2023



**47,600**

PODCAST DOWNLOADS ACROSS TWO PRODUCTS: *THE STRATEGERIST* AND *OVERHEARD AT THE BUSH CENTER* IN 2023

**720,000+**

READS OF IMMIGRATION CONTENT ON THE BUSH CENTER WEBSITE SINCE 2021

**1,060**

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM ALUMNI SINCE INCEPTION



**525+**

NEWS ITEMS FEATURING PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE BUSH INSTITUTE DISCUSSING PEPFAR AND GLOBAL HEALTH

**4,240**

CITATIONS OF BUSH INSTITUTE EXPERTS OR THE BUSH CENTER'S WORK FEATURED IN LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS IN 2023

**805,000**

FOLLOWERS ACROSS BUSH CENTER SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



# 2023 year in review

## FREEDOM

### The Struggle for Freedom Series

The Bush Institute kicked off a monthly series profiling dissidents and democracy champions from around the world. Among them was Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, who later won the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize. The series is a reminder of the courageous individuals who risk their freedom and lives in pursuit of the same values Americans enjoy.



### Freedom Matters with David Rubenstein and Sharon McMahon

Carlyle Group Co-Founder and Co-Chairman David Rubenstein and “America’s Government Teacher” Sharon McMahon joined a sold-out audience at an *Engage at the Bush Center* event presented by NexPoint for an important conversation on democracy. The event highlighted the historical artifacts featured in the *Freedom Matters* special exhibit, many of which are on loan from Rubenstein’s collection, and the role of “extraordinary ordinary people” in advocating for freedom and liberty.



### Colonial Williamsburg Comes to the Bush Center

“Thomas Jefferson,” “Martha Washington,” “James Armistead Lafayette,” and “Ann Wager” – key figures from the founding of our country – came to the Bush Museum in September during a family friendly and educational edition of our *Engage at the Bush Center* series presented by NexPoint. Guests met and interacted with Colonial Williamsburg “Nation Builders.”

### Supporting Refugees

President and Mrs. Bush welcomed 15 Lindsay Lloyd North Korea Freedom Scholarship recipients and other North Korean escapees to Dallas in September for the second annual North Korea Human Rights Workshop. Hosted by the Bush Institute and Liberty in North Korea (LINK), the event helped equip attendees with the skills to succeed in their communities while advancing support for North Korean human rights.



### Confronting Authoritarian Regimes

North Korea, China, and Russia have formed an alarming partnership that threatens the world order and furthers the human rights abuses posed by the regimes. North Korean escapee and Bush Institute Program Manager Joseph Kim spoke at an informal meeting of the United Nations Security Council in March to highlight North Korea’s ongoing human rights abuses. A Chinese representative at the meeting used China’s veto power to cut off the planned livestream of the event, preventing a wider audience from hearing the testimony.

In September, the Bush Institute released a report outlining how the U.S. government and international partners can hold these countries accountable. The report’s release coincided with a highly publicized meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

## OPPORTUNITY

### Promoting a Modern Immigration System

The Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative remains dedicated to an immigration system that meets the needs of our economy while respecting safety, security, and human dignity. In 2023, we continued to provide vital counsel and research on the immigration debate. This included releasing recommendations that can mitigate the flow of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border through self-petitioning pathways.

### Economic Growth in Central America

Lack of economic opportunity, combined with violence and corruption, has led many Central Americans to flee their homes. The Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative engaged with leaders in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to advance policy solutions to strengthen the region. A 2023 paper outlined recommendations for a hemispheric collaboration to increase economic development and reduce forced displacement.

### Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries

The Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries awarded \$1.5 million in library grants to 300 schools across the country. The grant awardees were revealed at the annual Laura Bush Book Club event, as part of the *Engage at the Bush Center* series presented by NexPoint, with support from H-E-B. The sold-out event included a conversation on the enduring meaning and importance of Harper Lee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Audiences heard from Academy Award nominee Mary Badham, who portrayed Scout Finch in the 1962 film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Thomas DiPiero, SMU Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean of the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, who has studied the complex racial and cultural issues in the classic 1960 novel.



### Forum on Leadership

The sixth annual Forum on Leadership explored how our nation is empowering the next generation to make an impact in their communities. Keynote speaker Glenn Youngkin, 74th Governor of Virginia, discussed governing in a polarized world.



### Tackling Education

The Bush Institute’s education team continues to be a sought-after voice on education. A report released in conjunction with Texas 2036 revealed that Texas eighth-grade students stand to lose \$104 billion in future earnings because many are not ready for their next step. The report made several recommendations to improve this. Texas 2036 highlighted the report’s alarming findings and solutions during a Texas House Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment hearing in July.

### North American Competitiveness

Canada, Mexico, and the United States benefit greatly by having a friendly trading relationship. There’s also opportunity to advance workforce development under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative and NASCO published recommendations on using trilateral cooperation between the neighboring countries to bolster North American competitiveness.

### ‘Democracy Holds Us Together’

The Bush Institute organized and led a first-of-its-kind coalition of 13 Presidential Centers and Foundations in releasing a statement reaffirming a commitment to American democratic principles and outlining the roles and responsibilities of leaders and citizens in a healthy democracy. *The New York Times*, Associated Press, *The Washington Post*, and many other news outlets wrote on the historical moment and quoted Bush Institute Executive Director David J. Kramer.

### Freedom Matters Special Exhibit

The *Freedom Matters* special exhibit opened in March at the George W. Bush Presidential Museum. Visitors are immersed in an interactive journey through the experience of freedom itself, including where freedom comes from, what it means, the characteristics of free societies, and the role of the individual in protecting and spreading freedom around the world. *Freedom Matters* features historical documents and artifacts that, during their time, were used to inform citizens in an era before mass media.



### The Pluralism Challenge Series

Pluralism is intrinsically tied to the success of our democracy. To remind us of the importance of pluralism, the Bush Institute launched *The Pluralism Challenge*. The series highlights leaders across industries who promote social tolerance for individuals or groups who have different backgrounds, views, or beliefs. The series has opened doors for our experts to connect with thought leaders across the nation.

### Recommending Policy Changes

The Bush Institute released 13 policy briefs outlining priorities from education and immigration to stabilizing democracies and human freedom as the new Congress was sworn in. The policy briefs and landing page received over 26,800 views. *The Washington Post*’s newsletter, *Democracy Digest*, *Real Clear World*, and *The Hill* all mentioned and featured the policy briefs. Bush Institute experts were invited to meet with various congressional staffers and many media outlets requested interviews or op-eds on the briefs.



### Celebrating Our Leaders

More than 250 alumni of the Presidential Leadership Scholars Program attended the October reunion to celebrate nine years of the program. Last year, we also welcomed a new cohort of a diverse group of midcareer professionals who honed their leadership abilities through interactions with former presidents, key administration officials, leading academics, and business and civic leaders. The Stand-To Veteran Leadership Program also celebrated five years of equipping more than 200 Scholars with the tools needed to break down the civilian-military divide.



### An Uneven Journey: Reading Policy in Texas

For decades, Texas has attempted to battle its literacy crisis. Bush Institute experts tracked Texas’ attempts to adopt the science of reading and shared lessons learned in a two-part series, published in a media partnership with *The 74*. The series continued to amplify areas of improvement in policy among school districts and was recognized around the country.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

### PEPFAR at 20

When President George W. Bush announced PEPFAR in 2003, fewer than 50,000 people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa had access to antiretroviral therapy. Today, PEPFAR has saved an estimated 25 million lives and operates in more than 50 countries. The Bush Institute’s event, PEPFAR at 20, celebrated the program’s accomplishments and was a reminder of the work that still needs to be done. President and Mrs. Bush, Ambassador John Nkengasong, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Bono were some of the many speakers at the February event in Washington, D.C.



### Letter to Congress Goes Viral

A diverse alliance of 30+ global health, faith, and democracy leaders joined the Bush Institute in a letter to Congress underscoring PEPFAR’s global impact. The letter was featured in more than 170 media outlets with *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* breaking the story. More than 15 congressional offices reached out to the Bush Institute once the letter was published.



### Educating on the Importance of PEPFAR

The Bush Institute released a series of papers with in-depth analyses on PEPFAR’s success and what lessons have been learned over the last two decades. Highlighting the timeliness of the conversation, President Bush and Bush Institute experts were featured in more than 525 news and media articles discussing the topic of PEPFAR and global health.

### Go Further Partnership

*Go Further* is a partnership created in 2018 by PEPFAR, the Bush Institute, UNAIDS, Merck, and Roche fighting to end AIDS and cervical cancer. PEPFAR has supported over 7.4 million cervical cancer screenings for women living with HIV since 2018 as part of the partnership. Additionally, more than 302,000 women have been treated for preinvasive cancerous lesions.



### Love Comes First

America’s favorite sister duo, Jenna Bush Hager and Barbara Pierce Bush, celebrated their new children’s book, *Love Comes First*, at the Bush Center in November.



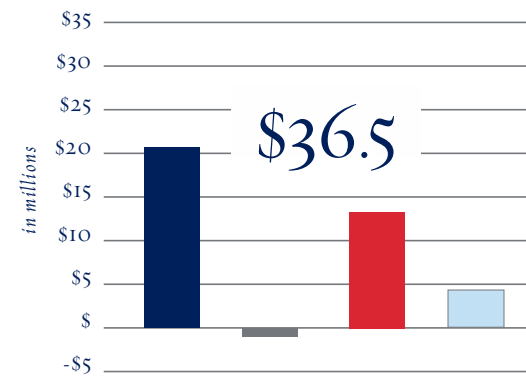
## 2023 FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Bush Center strives to operate in a financially sustainable and responsible manner to ensure that our work will continue long into the future. While successfully managing its expenses, the Bush Center continues to receive tremendous support from individual, corporate, and foundation donors and entered 2024 in a healthy financial condition.

## 2023 SOURCES

(DOLLARS IN MILLIONS)

- Gifts from Bush Center Supporters, Net of Expenses\*
- Bush Center Operations, Net of Expenses\*\*
- Bush Center Endowment Contribution to Operations
- Transfer of special facilities endowment\*\*\*



\* Includes expenses related to membership and direct mail campaigns.

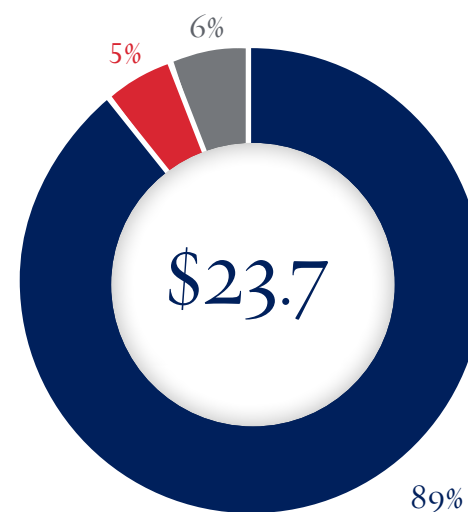
\*\* Bush Center Operations includes revenue activity from the Bush Museum, public programming, facility rentals and parking less associated direct expenses and those administrative expenses allocated to these activities. 2023 was the first full year the Bush Center assumed operational control of the museum from National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

\*\*\* Represents a one-time funds transfer from NARA to the Foundation from a Special Facilities Endowment that was funded by the Bush Center in 2013. This transfer was precipitated by a new Joint Use Agreement, which became effective on January 1, 2023.

## 2023 USES\*

(DOLLARS IN MILLIONS)

- Program Services\*\*
- Fundraising
- Foundation Administration & Support Operations



\* Expenses before depreciation, other non-cash charges, provisions for uncollectible contributions receivable, and distribution of Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries grants. Also excludes all direct expenses and those administrative expenses allocated to Bush Center Operations above.

\*\* Includes the Bush Institute, the Laura W. Bush Native Texas Park, and alumni activities.

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The George W. Bush Presidential Center extends its deepest appreciation to our supporters of *A Call to Service*, our museum sustainability campaign, as of December 31, 2023.

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