

GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE

QUARTER FOUR 2023

# BUSH INSTITUTE BRIEFING



The Bush Institute is focused on ensuring opportunity for all,  
strengthening democracy, and advancing free societies.



*President George W. Bush welcomed veterans to Prairie Chapel Ranch for a warrior mountain bike ride on Veterans Day.  
(Photo by Grant Miller for the George W. Bush Presidential Center)*

## A NOTE FROM DAVID J. KRAMER

Last year had moments of great joy and great despair. At the Bush Institute, we remain optimistic that our work to promote civility, compassion, tolerance, pluralism, and respect for others throughout our nation and world is the best path toward peace and prosperity.

The year began with one of those joyful moments – the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which has saved 25 million lives and helped 5.5 million babies be born HIV free. But this lifesaving program is not yet reauthorized, despite the urging of the Bush Institute and a diverse group of PEPFAR’s allies in [a letter to Congress](#). We remain hopeful that reauthorization will happen in 2024 to provide the important congressional imprimatur for and needed oversight of the program.

At the same time, a new surge of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border is further stressing an already overextended immigration system, which requires top-to-bottom reform. My colleague [Laura Collins](#), Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative Director, and Cristobal Ramón, Advisor to the Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative, released a [policy paper](#) in December outlining ways Congress can relieve some of the pressure at our border through the expansion of self-petitioning pathways.

The Bush Institute continues to stand with those fighting for freedom and human rights around the world. Ukrainians are an inspiration to all as they defend their independence against invading Russian forces, and the West must continue to support them. Israelis suffered a horrendous terrorist attack from Hamas on Oct. 7, and the ensuing tragic loss of life has left the Middle East on edge. What happens elsewhere matters here at home.

Our leadership programs give us great hope, as we see the way our Scholars engage in civil debates and air disagreements without resorting to personal attacks. This quarter, we will be announcing the newest class of Presidential Leadership Scholars and selecting the next class of Stand-To Veteran Leadership Scholars. Both programs are examples of how leaders from different backgrounds and experiences can work together to compromise.

This election year will be one in which our country and our fortitude will be tested. Some will seek to divide us. We must choose civility and compassion. We must listen to our friends and neighbors who may have differing viewpoints. Fervent disagreement, after all, is a cornerstone of our democracy. We cannot let emotion get in the way of healthy conversation.

So we are kicking off 2024 with a discussion on [The Art of Disagreeing Better](#). Our next *Engage at the Bush Center* event presented by NexPoint will tackle how to argue passionately yet civilly, a skill that’s critical for each of us to work on to promote a healthy democracy. We hope you can join us on Jan. 22 in Dallas.

Thank you once again for your support for our work on ensuring opportunity for all, strengthening our democracy, and advancing free societies.

Sincerely,



David J. Kramer  
*Executive Director, George W. Bush Institute*

## POLICY IN FOCUS

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### STRENGTHENING OUR DEMOCRACY

We are excited to announce the [extension](#) of the *Freedom Matters* special exhibit in the George W. Bush Presidential Museum through 2024. It features rare versions of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, Magna Carta, and other historical documents which encourage visitors to consider the pursuit of freedom throughout history.

This year was filled with great achievements and milestones. The Presidential Leadership Scholars Alumni Reunion gathered more than 250 Scholars. We were left feeling inspired and energized, thanks to the Scholars’ commitment to serving their communities and working across divides. We also heard a powerful story about

how the Presidential Leadership Scholars Program taught one Scholar [the importance of strong collaborations](#), especially with those from other sectors, to create lasting, positive change. [Kelley Jiou](#), Director for Leadership and Programming, and her team do a great job in leading these efforts.

The Bush Institute’s [Chris Walsh](#), Director of Global Policy, and Senior Editorial Advisor [William McKenzie](#) continued to explore how pluralism is working in our country today. *The DC Journal* recently published an op-ed by Walsh and McKenzie, [“Free speech is meaningless if campuses don’t practice pluralism.”](#) The article discusses why committing to pluralism is important for college campuses and free speech.

## ADVANCING FREE SOCIETIES

In a recent article on the [danger of cryptocurrency in terrorist financing](#), [Albert Torres](#), Program Manager of Global Policy at the Bush Institute, explores the need for a globally coordinated approach to counter the risks associated with virtual currencies.

The Bush Institute remains steadfast in providing support to Afghans. [Natalie Gonnella Platts](#) and [Jessica Ludwig](#), both Directors of Global Policy at the Bush Institute, [published an op-ed in \*The Diplomat\*](#) on the need for oversight on sanction exemptions for members of the Taliban. We look forward to releasing new papers on Afghanistan and the Taliban in 2024.

[The Struggle for Freedom](#) series by Bush Institute Fellow Ellen Bork continues to profile democracy and human rights activists such as [Pham Doan Trang](#) and [Gubad Ibadoghlu](#). Trang is a Vietnamese writer who was sentenced to nine years in prison and whose release has been championed by the United States, while Ibadoghlu is an Azerbaijani economist who stands up to President Ilham Aliyev's authoritarianism.

## ENSURING OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE

To celebrate Veterans Day, President George W. Bush hosted a bike ride at his Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, with Team 43 alumni and new veterans. [Fox News' Dr. Marc Siegel joined the ride](#) and discussed with President Bush how our country can support veterans and remain positive. We're grateful to have incredible veterans as citizens in our communities and are forever thankful for the sacrifices they, and their families, have made.

The *Dallas Morning News* published an op-ed by [Anne Wicks](#), the Ann Kimball Johnson Director of Education and Opportunity at the Bush Institute, in November that stressed the [importance of accountability in our schools](#).

[David J. Kramer](#), Executive Director of the Bush Institute; [Igor Khrestin](#), the Bradford M. Freeman Managing Director of Global Policy at the Bush Institute; and [Laura Collins](#), Director of the Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative, published an article titled "[Doing nothing isn't an option. We must fund causes at home and abroad](#)" that discusses how Congress can restore order at the border while increasing financial aid to Ukraine and Israel.



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