



# The People's Guide to ALEC's Plan for the States



**AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL  
MODEL POLICIES**

ALEC plans to use state governments to squeeze workers,  
give more power to the corporate America,  
and weaken democracy –  
in parallel with Project 2025

# ALEC plans to use state governments to squeeze workers, give more power to corporate America, and weaken democracy – in parallel with Project 2025

## Abstract

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) each year publishes model policies for conservative state lawmakers to advance nationwide, and this year is no exception: in 2025, ALEC has proposed bills attacking voting rights, dismantling environmental protections, reducing social safety net benefits, and much more.

These proposals echo—and further advance—those laid out in the Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025, the 900-page handbook mapping plans for the second Trump administration. The following is a guide to ALEC’s 2025 plan for state legislators and how it could impact our wallets, schools, health, safety, rights, and democracy.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>By the Numbers.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Policies &amp; Impacts.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Making Working People Pay.....	6
<u>ALEC and Project 2025.....</u>	7
Impunity for Corporations and the Wealthy.....	8
<u>ALEC’s Pay-to-Play Model in Action.....</u>	9
Remove Guardrails on Polluters.....	10
No Accountability for Tech and Telecom Companies.....	11
<u>ALEC’s Corporate Sponsors.....</u>	12
Weaken Democracy and Vilify Immigrants.....	13
<u>ALEC and Immigration.....</u>	14
Attack Diversity and Inclusion in Schools.....	15
<u>ALEC Outsources its Attacks on LGBTQ+ Rights and Reproductive Freedom.....</u>	16
Defund Public Schools.....	17
<b>Who’s Behind This?.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>19</b>





## Introduction

Across the country, state lawmakers are introducing [similar bills](#) suppressing voting rights, weakening environmental legislation, and slashing the social safety net. Many of these bills come from the same source: the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). For [more than 50 years](#), ALEC has connected state lawmakers with each other—and also with corporate lobbyists and well-funded activists who pay for access to ALEC’s members.

ALEC’s [2,000 legislator members](#) pay a nominal fee for membership, but the organization’s real funding comes from corporate lobbyists and conservative mega-funders who want to see their agendas enacted in the states. The result is an organization that is remarkably effective at laundering the priorities of its donors into legislation. According to [one analysis](#), between 2010 and 2018, legislators introduced 2,900 bills based on ALEC’s model legislation, and more than 600 became law.

ALEC’s current agenda is available for all to see in its [2025 Essential Policy Solutions](#), a guide to [137 model policies](#) that the organization is highlighting for its members this year. These policies include efforts to weaken protections for working people, cut the social safety net, defund public schools, deregulate polluters, and attack voting rights.

Just as Project 2025 laid out a radical vision for federal policy in Donald Trump’s second term, ALEC’s 2025 plan shows how corporate interests and far-right activists are hoping to remake American politics through the states. The following is a guide to ALEC’s 2025 plan for state legislators and how it could impact our wallets, our schools, our health and safety, and our democracy.

## By the Numbers

*ALEC's 2025 Essential Policy Solutions contains model policies that could:*

- Make it harder for the [41 million Americans](#) working in the gig economy to access workplace protections.
- Deepen the recruitment crisis for **teachers, firefighters, and police officers.**
- Keep health insurance access from the [1.6 million](#) adults in the "coverage gap."
- Undercut environmental protections by **designating natural gas as "green energy."**
- Discourage regulation of social media platforms used by [95% of teens.](#)
- Initiate voter purges that could threaten the rights of **tens of thousands of eligible voters.**
- Drain resources from public schools that educate [49.6 million children](#) and public universities that educate [13.6 million students.](#)

# Policies and Impacts

## *1. Making Working People Pay*

ALEC wants to weaken protections for working people—making it harder to fight for better wages and collect overtime pay, while cutting funds for healthcare and housing.

**Their plan: Weaken unions to prevent working people from fighting for better wages and conditions. ALEC wants states to use the power of government to make it harder for millions of Americans to organize in the workplace.**

More than [16 million Americans](#) are represented by a union—and an estimated [60 million more](#) would like to be. One roadblock that working Americans face in joining a union are [state laws](#) hostile to labor organizing. In addition, the [41 million Americans](#) working in the gig economy are facing a [fierce lobbying campaign](#) from gig platforms to prevent unionization and labor protections. ALEC, which has long [opposed organized labor](#), wants to make this problem even worse.

ALEC is promoting a [model policy](#) that would coerce private companies to oppose unionization by refusing state aid to employers that voluntarily recognize unions. Three southern states have already [adopted ALEC's policy](#).

ALEC is also urging states to take the side of gig platforms, [formally designating](#) many gig workers as independent contractors in an effort to [keep them from unionizing](#).

**Their plan: Target teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other public employees. Teachers, public safety workers, and other public employees would lose important worker protections, adding to an existing recruitment crisis.**

[Seven million](#) public employees—most working for state and local governments—are represented by unions. These public-sector unions, which represent workers including [teachers, firefighters, and police officers](#), have [long faced attacks from conservative activists](#). ALEC has been [at the forefront](#) of these attacks for decades, and continues to push state governments to weaken protections for public employees.

In 2025, ALEC is encouraging states to either [ban](#) collective bargaining by public employees, or [make it harder](#) by [forcing frequent re-votes](#) on union representation. One study of public-sector collective bargaining bans [found](#) that bans cut teacher salaries and benefits by an average of 6 percent.

ALEC is also attacking pensions for teachers and other public employees, [encouraging states](#) to replace traditional pensions with 401(k) plans. Pensions are a [key tool](#) for recruiting and retaining teachers, firefighters, and other public employees, who often accept salaries far lower than what they'd earn in the private sector. The push to weaken benefits for public-sector employees comes as [schools](#) and [fire](#) and [police](#) departments are already struggling to recruit qualified employees.

**Their plan: Make it harder to collect overtime pay. ALEC wants states to make it harder for working people to collect overtime pay by narrowing the definition of work that qualifies for overtime and making it harder to sue employers who cheat their workers.**

Every year, U.S. employers steal [hundreds of millions of dollars](#) in wages from workers, [most of it](#) by failing to pay for overtime work.

In 2024, the Department of Labor [collected \\$126 million](#) for workers whose employees had cheated them out of overtime pay. But ALEC wants to make it even harder for employees to collect the overtime pay that they've earned. ALEC's [model legislation](#) restricts the activities that qualify for overtime pay and erects extra hurdles for employees who have been cheated to file class-action lawsuits.

**Their plan: Make health care and housing more expensive for ordinary people. ALEC wants states to do the bidding of the pharmaceutical industry by keeping drug prices high; eliminate local housing affordability laws; and refuse federal funding on healthcare, housing, and education.**

Even as ALEC pushes to make it more difficult for working people to earn a living wage, it's encouraging legislators to cut government programs that help those who are struggling.

ALEC wants states to [wean themselves off](#) critical federal funds for programs including "education spending, Medicaid, infrastructure spending, and housing grants" and "plan for the eventuality of their disappearance." The eventual impact of this effort could be devastating. The federal government provides [about 13 percent](#) of the funding for public K-12 schooling, much of it supporting [low-income school districts and special education](#). Ten million Americans rely on [federal rental housing assistance](#).

While ALEC isn't urging state legislators to immediately go cold-turkey on most federal funding, it has fought for a decade to [prevent states](#) from expanding Medicaid access through the Affordable Care Act. In the [10 states](#) that have refused to expand access, [1.6 million adults](#) fall into a "coverage gap," where they can't afford private insurance but aren't eligible for Medicaid. Most of these are members of [working families](#). Sixty-five percent are [people of color](#).

In 2025, ALEC is continuing to advocate for a bill [allowing legislatures to veto](#) Medicaid expansion in their states. It is also [urging states](#) to apply for federal waivers to impose work requirements for Medicaid benefits, a step that analyses show would [do nothing to increase employment](#).

Aside from its dream to cut off critical federal funds, ALEC is urging legislators to [ban municipalities](#) in their states from using rent control ordinances to protect renters. These laws threaten renters in the [305 municipalities](#) that have adopted rent restrictions.

Finally, ALEC is [working to keep drug costs high](#) by opposing efforts to cap drug prices and increase pricing transparency by pharmaceutical companies. The pharmaceutical industry's primary trade group, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, is one of ALEC's [significant funders](#) and the leader [among trade groups](#).

## ALEC and Project 2025

If ALEC's 2025 plan reminds you of Project 2025, that's no coincidence. Project 2025, the **radical second-term roadmap** developed by former Trump administration officials and conservative activists, shares a number of priorities with ALEC's plan for the states.

Both Project 2025 and ALEC plan to go after overtime pay, keep drug prices high, slash the social safety net, give free rein to polluters, and **cut taxes for the wealthy.**

There is significant overlap of the people behind both plans. ALEC was a member of Project 2025's **advisory board** and ALEC's energy and environment director **Joe Trotter contributed** to the project's development. Stephen Moore, the conservative economist who **co-wrote** Project 2025's tax plan, is a member of ALEC's **Private Enterprise Advisory Council** and an advisor to at least two of its major funders.

ALEC also enjoys the backing of **some of the same funders** who support the Heritage Foundation, which coordinated Project 2025. Chief among these are the 85 Fund and the Concord Fund, the funding arm of Leonard Leo's influence network, which in 2023 was ALEC's top known donor and **gave more than** \$1.6 million to Heritage and its political arm.



## 2. *Impunity for Corporations and the Wealthy*

ALEC wants to cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans, while allowing corporations to operate with minimal government oversight.

**Their plan: Cut taxes for the wealthy. ALEC is encouraging states to cut taxes for the wealthy, contributing to budget crises and cuts to critical public services.**

ALEC urges states to follow its “[principles of taxation](#),” which pointedly discourage using the tax code to “soak the rich” or engage in “class warfare.” What this means in practice is lowering taxes [for the wealthiest Americans](#). This year, ALEC is encouraging states to [pass a resolution](#) supporting an extension of President Trump’s 2017 tax cuts, which [disproportionately benefited](#) the top one percent while providing no economic boost to everyday workers.

In its policy guide, ALEC [celebrates](#) the “26 states” that “have engaged in efforts to reduce their income tax burdens.” In reality, this [trend toward state tax cuts](#)—which are largely skewed to benefit the wealthy and corporations—has created a brewing crisis, with some states already facing [drastic cuts to public services](#) and at least one state, Mississippi, facing a [costly credit downgrade](#).

ALEC is also appealing to its corporate members by encouraging legislators to [oppose targeted excise taxes](#) on specific products like tobacco and gas, [which it calls](#) “[discriminatory](#)” taxation. These taxes hit close to home for at least one of ALEC’s [corporate sponsors](#), the tobacco giant Altria.

**Their plan: Dismantle regulations that protect the American people. ALEC wants state governments to take a chainsaw to regulations that protect consumers, taxpayers, and the environment.**

Under the guise of “[streamlining government](#),” ALEC is methodically working to stifle the power of state governments to regulate business practices.

In 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a [sweeping ruling](#) overturning the Chevron doctrine, which required courts to defer to the experts at regulatory agencies in their interpretations of ambiguous laws. As Justice Elena Kagan [wrote](#) in her dissent to the ruling, the doctrine was critical to “regulatory efforts of all kinds—to name a few, keeping air and water clean, food and drugs safe, and financial markets honest.”

In response, ALEC has [redoubled](#) its efforts to similarly curtail the power of regulatory agencies in the states, pushing its [model legislation](#) to ban judges from deferring to agency interpretations of laws. It is also urging states to [remove the power](#) of agency-based administrative judges. ALEC’s policy proposals include a host of proposals to slash existing regulations, including an [automatic sunset](#) on new regulations and an across-the-board [cap on new regulations](#).

## ALEC's Pay-to-Play Model in Action

ALEC is known for its “pay-to-play” model for corporate funders, who can use the group to get the legislation they want into the hands of state lawmakers. While this sometimes takes the form of policies that are broadly favorable to specific industries, occasionally ALEC pushes legislators to adopt laws targeted to benefit one specific company. Such is the case with ALEC’s **Use of AI Firearm Detection Software in Schools** model legislation. As StateScoop **discovered**, ALEC’s model bill is tailored specifically to gin up government business for ALEC member company ZeroEyes, which makes a product that attempts to use artificial intelligence to spot firearms in schools. Some safety experts have **questioned the technology’s usefulness**.

### ***3. Remove Guardrails on Polluters***

ALEC is working on the state level to hinder efforts to curb climate change and let polluters avoid accountability.

**Their plan: Undermine clean energy solutions.** ALEC wants to prevent state governments from promoting clean energy, even attempting to redefine “green energy” to include natural gas.

Americans are already facing the devastating impacts of climate change, including extreme temperatures and weather events that kill [hundreds of people](#) and cost the country [\\$150 billion](#) each year. These impacts [disproportionately](#) impact low-income people and communities of color. This crisis is [expected to only worsen](#) without increased efforts to fight climate change.

Even as the climate crisis worsens, ALEC is working alongside the [fossil fuel industry](#) to stymie efforts to fight climate change. In one example, ALEC has [concocted legislation](#) that would act as [a Trojan horse for gas companies](#), redefining “green energy” in existing legislation to include natural gas. This audacious plan has already worked in Ohio, where in 2023 Gov. Mike DeWine [signed a similar](#) ALEC-backed “Orwellian” bill turning green-energy language on its head. ALEC is [now working](#) to [take the model](#) to other states.

ALEC is also working to protect polluting industries by attempting to [make it harder to shutter coal plants](#) and establishing [taxpayer-funded advocates](#) for traditional energy sources. It is also pushing a [model bill promoted by](#) a [coal advocacy group](#) that would protect traditional energy sources in electrical grids.

**Their plan: Let polluters get away with environmental harm. ALEC wants to protect polluters' profits by stopping emissions restrictions and preventing environmentally-conscious investments.**

Even as the U.S. maintains the [highest per capita](#) level of carbon emissions in the world, ALEC is working to prevent legislation that might hold polluters accountable for their emissions. This includes model resolutions [opposing any state or federal carbon taxes](#) or [other government efforts to reduce carbon emissions](#).

ALEC has also taken aim at Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing frameworks, which allow investment managers to [take into account](#) climate impacts and other long-term forces when making investment decisions. [Sixteen states](#) have laws discouraging or banning ESG considerations for their public pension funds. ALEC is encouraging more states to follow suit by adopting [model legislation](#) banning public pension managers from considering ESG impacts of their investments.

#### ***4. No Accountability for Tech and Telecom Companies***

Under ALEC's plan, social media companies would be left to police themselves on teen use and privacy, and telecom giants would receive billions of dollars in federal spending with minimal oversight.

**Their plan: Allow social media companies to police themselves. ALEC is pushing states to adopt hands-off policies when it comes to teen social media use, content moderation, and user privacy.**

Nearly all American teenagers [use social media](#), more than a third "almost constantly." Nearly 40 percent of children between the ages of 8-12 also report using social media, despite falling below the minimum age of most social media platforms. This trend has led the U.S. surgeon general to [warn](#) of potential "harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents."

Dozens of states have [responded to these and similar concerns](#) with bills meant to protect children and teens on the Internet and social media platforms. ALEC, however, is urging state legislators to take a hands-off approach, and to defer to social media and tech companies to police themselves. Instead, the group wants the burden of protecting children to fall on parents and schools, rather than the companies that design and host potentially harmful platforms.

In a "[statement of principles](#)" for teen social media use, ALEC insists that "legislation should emphasize educating students on healthy social media habits as opposed to prohibiting access" and warns that harm from social media, while a risk, "is impossible to prevent by regulation or changes in platform policy." A [model bill](#) places responsibility for teen social media safety on schools, rather than platforms, by requiring schools to offer instruction on social media safety

ALEC's hands-off approach to tech regulation extends beyond teen social media use. In a wide-ranging document on "[Principles on Online Privacy](#)," ALEC advocates for "self-regulation, industry-driven standards, individual empowerment and a market environment" over "intrusive government regulation" on online privacy. The group is also taking aim at oversight of content moderation, [encouraging Congress](#) to investigate the Biden administration over [its encouragement of social media companies](#) to remove Covid-19 misinformation.

**Their plan: Handouts to the telecom industry. ALEC is working to ensure that telecom giants receive funds for broadband expansion with minimal regulation and without public competition.**

In 2021, Congress [set aside \\$42 billion](#) to expand broadband access throughout the U.S. by addressing the digital divide. States were in various stages of deploying those [funds](#) when the program was thrown into uncertainty with President Trump's executive order [pausing](#) the delivery of funds for 2021 infrastructure bills. Even as the Trump administration [reevaluates](#) the program likely for the [benefit](#) of Elon Musk, ALEC is pushing to make sure that large telecom companies are able to take advantage of the cash infusion with minimal government oversight.

ALEC has for years [advocated](#) for "minimal federal, state, and local regulation of broadband networks" in the name of "competition" and consumer choice. However, the group is rallying against one form of competition to the big telecom companies: municipal broadband networks. Community broadband networks are an [increasingly popular](#) way for local governments to expand [affordable broadband access](#) to rural communities and other underserved areas. ALEC has long opposed these municipal networks and [lobbied states](#)—perhaps at the behest of big telecom donors—to prevent their formation. ALEC is once again [urging state legislators](#) to prevent this type of broadband competition in 2025.

ALEC also continues to support the telecom industry in [opposing](#) all but the most basic net neutrality restrictions, which in the form imposed by the Obama administration allowed the government to [regulate internet service providers](#) as public utilities. (The FCC's attempt to reinstate the rules under President Biden were [blocked by a federal court](#).)





## ALEC's Corporate Sponsors

In 2012, after the murder of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin **cast a spotlight** on "Stand Your Ground" laws, ALEC faced enormous **public backlash** for its role in spreading those laws, as well as restrictive voter ID measures. Dozens of corporate members **withdrew from ALEC**, causing a **funding crisis** for the group.

Since then, however, ALEC has received robust support from industries that appear to see it as an important ally. Industry groups contributing to ALEC in 2023 included telecom trade associations **CTIA** and **NCTA**, electric company trade group **Edison Electric Institute**, and gas industry trade group **American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers**.

Industry influence on ALEC is also apparent in the group's Private Enterprise Advisory Council, a team of corporate and trade group representatives who **advise ALEC's board**. Private Enterprise Advisory Council members **include** representatives of insurance companies State Farm and Guarantee Trust Life Insurance; tobacco company Altria; bail industry group **American Bail Coalition**; charter school administrator Lifelong Learning; global shipping service UPS; and Supernal, a Hyundai-backed startup developing **electric air taxis**.

ALEC has also held seats on its advisory council for people connected with major funders, including Stephen Moore, an advisor to at least two major ALEC funders; Leonard Leo's consulting firm CRC Advisors; drug company trade association PhRMA; and Koch Industries.

Also represented on ALEC's private enterprise board is NetChoice, a trade association that **represents major tech companies** including Google, Meta, Amazon, and X. Another seat is held by StateLinx, a lobbying firm that **represents NetChoice** in front of state governments.



## 5. *Weaken Democracy and Vilify Immigrants*

ALEC is working with well-known election deniers to restrict voting rights and prevent democracy reforms, all while perpetuating President Trump's vilification of immigrants.

**Their plan: Vilify immigrants and endanger voting rights. After two decades of shying away from publicly supporting voter suppression, ALEC is working with prominent election denialists to initiate voter purges across the country—and, in the process, promote President Trump's vilification of immigrants.**

ALEC has teamed up with prominent allies of President Trump to promote his [false claims](#) that Republican losses are due to widespread illegal voting by undocumented immigrants—something that is, in fact, exceedingly [rare](#). These lies serve to simultaneously feed harmful anti-immigrant sentiment and unnecessary restrictions that make it harder for Americans to vote.

ALEC has a long and disgraceful history of voter suppression. An early leader of ALEC, Paul Weyrich, [once said](#), “I don’t want everybody to vote,” noting that “our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down.” By 2012, ALEC was [exposed](#) as a primary driver of a spate of voter ID laws that erected hurdles to voter registration across the country. ALEC faced public backlash—and lost corporate backers—for this and its work on Stand Your Ground bills, and eventually [disbanded](#) its task force on elections.

In recent years, ALEC itself has taken minimal public stands on voting-rights issues, instead [effectively outsourcing](#) its work on voting issues to Honest Elections Project, another secretive nonprofit [connected](#) to conservative activist Leonard Leo. While ALEC’s public-facing materials say little about voting rights, Honest Elections Project has been [organizing ALEC members](#) at ALEC conventions.

While ALEC stated [as recently as 2021](#) that it no longer worked on voting-rights issues, it now seems to have abandoned that resolution. In its 2025 policy plan, ALEC is urging states to adopt its [Only Citizens Vote Model Policy](#), which requires elections officials to remove anyone suspected of being a noncitizen from voter rolls. Similar measures across the country have threatened the voting rights of [tens of thousands of eligible voters](#).

ALEC’s voter-purge policy came [directly](#) from Cleta Mitchell, who was one of [Donald Trump’s top allies](#) in his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Mitchell [leads a group](#) called the Only Citizens Vote Coalition, which is attempting to stir up fears of noncitizen voting and impose stringent voter restrictions in the name of “election integrity.” Mitchell’s influence on ALEC’s voting work doesn’t end there—in 2023 she [became a member](#) of the ALEC task force that approved the voting bill.

**Their plan: Oppose democracy reforms. ALEC wants to stop states and municipalities from instituting inclusive voting reforms.**

Along with its support for outright voter suppression, ALEC is working to prevent states and municipalities from instituting their own democracy reforms.

ALEC is encouraging member legislators to [oppose the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact](#), which aims to override the Electoral College once enough states agree to assign their electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote. It also wants states to ban ranked-choice voting (RCV), which is used in [two states and nearly 50 municipalities](#) to allow voters to rank their top candidate choices in an “[instant runoff](#).”

In recent years, ALEC’s allies Leonard Leo and Cleta Mitchell have [set their sights](#) on stemming ranked-choice voting reforms, which one voting expert [speculated](#) could be because it “could help elect more Republican moderates rather than more extreme Republicans.”

**Their plan: Allow states to ignore federal laws. ALEC is promoting a pair of bills originating in Utah that attempt to blunt federal authority to regulate environmental protections and public lands.**

In 2024, Utah legislators [passed a law](#) creating a process for the state to refuse to enforce federal laws with which it disagrees. The bill’s author specifically cited his opposition to [environmental and public lands regulations](#) coming from Washington. ALEC is now urging state legislators to pass a [similar model bill](#). Another [model bill](#) that appears to have [originated in Utah](#) attempts to wrest control of public lands from the federal government.

**Their plan: Protect dark money in politics. ALEC is fighting efforts to expose the sources of dark money in elections.**

Since the Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* decision, American elections have been inundated with [billions of dollars](#) of secret, untraceable “dark money.” In response, [dozens of states](#) have [passed or considered](#) bills requiring increased disclosure from nonprofit groups that spend money influencing elections. ALEC opposes these efforts at disclosure and is working to stop them in the name of “philanthropic freedom.”

ALEC is [pushing](#) state legislators to oppose efforts to expose the dark money behind political activity. An ALEC [model resolution](#) opposes not just the public disclosure of donors to dark money groups, but also disclosure to state agencies. While ALEC [claims](#) that its resolution is meant to protect donors to nonpolitical 501(c)(3) organizations, it is in fact written to include 501(c)(4) organizations that can spend money on elections.

## ALEC and Immigration

In addition to promoting harmful conspiracy theories about noncitizen voting, ALEC appears to be building up their engagement in anti-immigration issues.

Before the group started backing away from “culture war” issues, it pushed **anti-immigrant model policies** including opposing a path to citizenship for undocumented people and supporting a redefinition of the Fourteenth Amendment to prevent the U.S.-born children of noncitizens from becoming citizens. Arizona’s infamous 2010 “**Show Me Your Papers**” law was **written in part** in an ALEC conference room with the input of a private prison company.

ALEC’s current public policy recommendations have little to say on immigration policy. But the group has signaled a more active interest in the issue, sending state lawmakers on a **tour of the southern border** in 2024 and **publicly criticizing** former President Biden for his border policies.

## 6. Attack Diversity and Inclusion in Schools

ALEC is attacking public schools by advancing policies that intimidate teachers, encourage parental challenges, politicize school board elections, and prohibit state schools from mandating diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

**Their plan: Politicize schools and intimidate teachers. ALEC is advocating for policies that encourage parental challenges of school materials and encourage partisan school board elections.**

ALEC is supporting attacks on public schools by encouraging state lawmakers to impose vague and ambiguous curriculum requirements for teachers. ALEC’s [Honesty in Teaching Act](#) presents ambiguously worded standards for how educators can discuss issues including race and gender, and allows parents, students or fellow educators to file complaints of alleged violations. Similar state laws have [put teachers on edge](#), with some reporting a chilling effect that makes them hesitant to teach about topics related to race and gender.

Another ALEC model policy, the [Academic Transparency Act](#), would similarly hamstring teachers by requiring all learning materials to be posted online for parental review.

Contributing to the trend of politicizing public schools, ALEC’s local government wing, the American City County Exchange, is [promoting municipal legislation](#) that would ensure that school board elections are held on even-numbered years, aligning them with more partisan federal elections.

**Their plan: Attack DEI in public schools and universities. ALEC is using culture-war issues to wage an attack on public universities that educate millions of Americans.**

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has made national news for his [attacks on his state's public universities](#) and what he derides as their "woke activism." Meanwhile, ALEC has been pushing similar threats to the public universities that educate [13.6 million Americans](#). While DeSantis has [banned public universities](#) from funding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, ALEC is pushing [model legislation](#) that would prohibit state schools from implementing mandatory DEI programs, including any program related to "systemic racism," "gender identity," or "race- or gender-based inclusion."

## ALEC Outsources its Attacks on LGBTQ+ Rights and Reproductive Freedom

In ALEC's early years, it **placed a heavy emphasis** on the "culture war" issues being promoted by the Christian Right of the day, including opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. As the organization morphed into the stealth business lobby it is today, however, it started **putting less of its energy** into the culture wars.

In recent years, ALEC has **avoided taking public stances** on controversial issues including reproductive freedom and LGBTQ+ rights. The organization's 2025 plan contains no model policies on those issues. However, like in the area of voting rights, ALEC has effectively outsourced its anti-choice and anti-LGBTQ+ activism.

When the Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, ALEC praised the Court's decision as "properly" empowering state legislatures to decide on abortion access. Since then, ALEC has **brought in anti-choice groups** to host discussions with legislators at its conferences. According to calculations from the **Center for Media and Democracy**, nearly 700 ALEC members have voted to restrict abortion access in their states since the fall of *Roe*.

Some ALEC members have organized separately to promote policies advancing what they call a "**biblical worldview**." The National Association of Christian Lawmakers (NACL), which is "**committed** to abolishing abortion in our nation" and "restoring marriage between one man and one woman," among other priorities, has **significant overlap** with ALEC's membership and has **organized in part at ALEC conferences**. In addition, ALEC has **provided space at its conferences for events** hosted by the Family Research Council and Alliance Defending Freedom, both designated as anti-LGBTQ **hate groups** by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

ALEC CEO Lisa Nelson has also said that her group is "part of" a coalition called **Back to Neutral**, which fights so-called "wokeness" on corporate boards, **including** programs and **ESG investment**.

## ***7. Defund Public Schools***

ALEC is working with state legislators to dismantle public education by diverting school funds to vouchers that primarily benefit wealthy students and encouraging harassment and intimidation of teachers.

**Their plan: Drain funds from public schools. ALEC wants more states to pour money into school voucher programs that starve public schools while primarily benefiting wealthy families.**

American public schools, which educate [49.6 million children and young adults](#), have long been a target of right-wing attacks, including from ALEC.

For decades, ALEC has [promoted state spending](#) on school voucher programs as a way to drain funds from public school systems. Its current top education proposal is the [Hope Scholarship Act](#), which diverts state public school funding to lump sums that [families can spend](#) on private, religious, or homeschooling.

While advocates frame voucher programs as a way to give a leg up to low-income families, [analyses have shown](#) that the benefit more often goes to families who can already afford private school. In several states, the majority of school vouchers have gone to children [already attending private schools](#). While vouchers have amounted to a handout to the wealthy, they have [drained state coffers](#) and slashed public school budgets, particularly harming [rural school districts](#). In West Virginia, public schools lost [hundreds of educators](#) after the state implemented a Hope Scholarship program.

ALEC is also working to drain public school budgets by going after property taxes, one of the [key funding mechanisms](#) for public education. ALEC [notes](#) that its [model legislation](#) “does not technically limit property taxes,” but creates extra hurdles for raising them, making “local elected officials think twice about increasing property taxes.”

In addition to its model legislation, ALEC is [urging legislators](#) to join its [Education Freedom Alliance](#), an advocacy group that has [set a goal](#) of bringing sweeping “private school choice” programs to half the states by the end of 2025.



# Who's Behind This?

Although ALEC calls itself a “[membership association](#),” just a [small sliver](#) of its [\\$11 million budget](#) comes from the [\\$200 biannual fee](#) it charges to its legislator members. The bulk of ALEC’s budget comes from contributions and grants from foundations and individuals, as well as fees from its corporate members, who pay [at least \\$12,000 annually](#), and more to gain access to policy discussions.

While ALEC isn’t required to disclose its donors, tax filings from some of its benefactors give a partial picture of its funding. ALEC’s largest known donors in 2023, the most recent year for which records are available, include:

- **The 85 Fund and The Concord Fund.** The 85 Fund and the Concord Fund are the two main funding mechanisms behind conservative power broker Leonard Leo’s [sprawling influence network](#). In 2021, Leo received an extraordinary [\\$1.6 billion donation](#) to fuel his efforts to remake American politics. Since then, his network has become ALEC’s largest donor, with the 85 Fund and the Concord Fund [collectively contributing \\$676,000](#) to ALEC in 2023. ALEC has worked closely with the [Honest Elections Project](#), [a project of the 85 Fund](#) that promotes voter-fraud panic and works to restrict voting rights. Leo’s consulting group CRC advisors now holds [a seat](#) on ALEC’s Private Enterprise Advisory Council.
- **The Bradley Foundation.** One of the most influential funders of the conservative movement, the Bradley Foundation has funded [election denial efforts](#) and the movement to [defund public schools](#), among other areas. [A longtime backer](#) of ALEC, it was the group’s second-largest known funder in 2023, contributing [\\$500,000](#).
- **Thomas W. Smith Foundation.** The low-profile Thomas W. Smith Foundation has been a [key funder](#) of the manufactured panic over “critical race theory.” The Heritage Foundation’s Stephen Moore, an [author of Project 2025](#) and an [advisor to ALEC](#), serves as a [consultant](#) for the foundation. The Smith Foundation contributed [\\$300,000](#) to ALEC in 2023.
- **Searle Freedom Trust.** The Searle Freedom Trust, which is fueled by the Searle pharmaceutical fortune, is a [quiet powerhouse](#) funding the conservative movement. The Searle trust, which planned to [spend most of its remaining funds](#) last year, gave ALEC [\\$250,000](#) in 2023. ALEC and Project 2025’s Moore serves as a [grant advisor](#) for the trust.
- **The Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund.** This [donor-advised fund](#) allows donors to anonymously funnel money to nonprofits. An unknown individual or individuals sent ALEC [\\$200,000](#) during the fund’s 2023 fiscal year.

- **Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).** A powerful trade group that lobbies on behalf of pharmaceutical companies, PhRMA gave ALEC [\\$125,000](#) in 2023, its largest known contribution from an industry group. PhRMA [holds a seat](#) on ALEC's Private Enterprise Advisory Council.
- **TW Lewis Foundation.** This relatively small private foundation, funded by an [Arizona real estate fortune](#), has provided [large grants](#) to a handful of national conservative groups, along with funding local causes in Arizona. The foundation gave ALEC [\\$120,000](#) in 2023.
- **Donor's Trust.** Donor's Trust, which has been dubbed the conservative movement's "[dark-money ATM](#)," is a donor-advised fund that allows megadonors to funnel money anonymously to their favorite causes. In 2023, ALEC received [\\$111,000](#) from unknown sources through Donor's Trust.

Oil and gas billionaire and conservative mega-funder **Charles Koch** has also been a major donor to ALEC, contributing [\\$2 million](#) to the group between 2017 and 2021 through foundations he controls. Since then, Koch does not appear to have made any traceable contributions to ALEC through his foundations. However, Koch Industries continues to [hold a seat](#) on ALEC's Private Enterprise Advisory Council, indicating that Koch and his network may continue to fund the group through personal or corporate contributions, or other methods.

## Conclusion

For 50 years, ALEC has quietly driven extreme legislation in states across the country. Now, with President Trump back in the White House aligned with their vision, it has the opportunity to steer him toward the interests of their backers and friends. ALEC supports policies that make life harder for working families, starve the social safety net, and harm access to voting. Americans have the power to support our democracy and stop this agenda by holding ALEC member legislators and corporations that support its agenda accountable.

**Democracy Forward is a national legal organization that advances democracy and social progress through litigation, policy and public education, and regulatory engagement. [democracyforward.org](https://democracyforward.org)**