



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR FRIENDS,

This year, the Scholars Strategy Network contributed to policy victories across the nation. From city halls and state capitals to Congress, scholars advanced ideas and evidence-based policies that benefit Americans and called out proposals that lacked foundations in research. From an Associated Press reporter in Iowa to policymakers across the political spectrum in Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Wisconsin and beyond, SSN responded to frequent requests for advice and research.

SSN grew by 35 percent in 2018, adding over 300 members, publishing 268 research briefs, and ending the year with 1,304 member researchers. New chapters began in Indiana, Nevada, and Sacramento, while scholars laid the groundwork for Alabama, Mississippi, and Oregon chapters that launch in winter 2019. Increasing numbers of universities and foundations worked to make sure researchers' findings are used to improve lives – and they relied on SSN for advice, training, and support.

SSN built larger, more powerful chapters. SSN's new Postdoctoral Fellows are making an impact on policy communities in seven states. SSN piloted its first regional summit for chapter leaders to gain skills and share best practices in engaged scholarship. And scholars on 48 SSN campuses worked on a nonpartisan basis to encourage students to vote.

The work to improve policy and strengthen democracy is more important than ever. We invite you to be part of this community and engage with SSN in 2019.

Avi Green, Executive Director

Theda Skocpol, Director
Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology, Harvard University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01. ABOUT THE SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK**
- 02. COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**
- 03. PROMOTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND INNOVATION IN THE STATES**
- 05. COMMUNICATING THE IMPACTS OF MAJOR SHIFTS IN FEDERAL POLICY**
- 07. INFORMING THE NEWS**
- 08. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY**
- 09. TRAINING RESEARCHERS TO INFORM POLICY**
- 10. SSN'S POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP**
- 11. SCHOLARS.ORG**
- 12. THANK YOU TO OUR 2018 SUPPORTERS**

ABOUT THE SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK

The Scholars Strategy Network connects America's top researchers to policymakers, civic leaders, and journalists to improve policy and strengthen democracy.

Researchers and research institutions have an important role to play in improving policy and strengthening democracy. When decisions are informed by the best research, public policy strengthens communities and spurs innovation.

Across the states, the Scholars Strategy Network is working to advance the use of research wherever policy decisions are made – from city halls to state legislatures to Washington.

PROMOTE EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND INNOVATION IN THE STATES

Federated action through widespread voluntary initiatives in states and localities is the best way to assert and protect valued policies and civic norms. In the states, SSN scholars speak out for cutting-edge policymaking and defend the evidence for programs that work.

COMMUNICATE THE IMPACTS OF MAJOR SHIFTS IN FEDERAL POLICY

In a time of rapid policy change, researchers are well positioned to analyze new policies and explain who benefits and who pays. SSN organizes scholars to deliver timely, accurate information from a variety of perspectives.

STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

People of all political persuasions are concerned about threats to core American values. SSN scholars share what happens in periods when democracies drift toward intolerance and authoritarianism – and how all of us effectively protect democratic norms and institutions.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

In 2018, the Scholars Strategy Network renewed its commitment to seeking rigorous, policy-relevant research from across the United States and amplifying the voices of leading scholars and rising researchers from all backgrounds, identities, and disciplines.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

The Scholars Strategy Network empowers researchers to use their research to improve public policy and strengthen democracy. To achieve this mission, SSN seeks to bring together diverse scholars, policymakers, media, civic leaders, and community members in mutually beneficial relationships.

Too often, people in disadvantaged communities report that scholars do research on and to them, but not with nor for them. And colleges and universities can exclude important voices. To counter such tendencies, the Scholars Strategy Network aims to work with scholars, fellow citizens, and other U.S. residents who reflect the full diversity of the United States, including immigrants, low-income people, women, LGBTQ Americans, people with disabilities, people who live in rural and non-metropolitan areas, and people of color. The network strives to be an inclusive community of publicly engaged scholars from many backgrounds and from all ranks and types of colleges and universities. SSN is committed to growing, evolving, and learning in order to cultivate an environment that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion.

PROMOTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND INNOVATION IN THE STATES

Policy is made in the states. Throughout 2018, SSN chapters activated local scholars to work with policymakers, civic leaders, and journalists in their state.



HELPING WORKING-CLASS MAINE FAMILIES PROSPER

For years, Maine SSN has fostered strong relationships with local civic organizations and policymakers. In 2018, Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP) asked member Luisa Deprez to explain the evidence behind legislation to expand access to higher education for low-income parents. Deprez and Lisa Dodson collaborated with MEJP, writing an SSN brief, giving legislative testimony, and writing an op-ed in [The Portland Press Herald](#), one of Maine's largest newspapers. The bill became law in the spring.



REDUCING INCARCERATION IN GEORGIA

In Georgia, the Mayor of Statesboro tasked Chad Posick and Jonathan Grubb to examine research to inform city efforts to reduce penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana and take incarceration off the table. After Posick and Grubb presented their findings to the city council, the new ordinance was unanimously passed. Posick and Grubb are now planning to evaluate the ordinance's effects.



ENSURING COLORADO WORKERS GET PAID

In Colorado, SSN leaders Rebecca Galemba and Sarah Horton worked with immigrants and organizers to successfully convince the City of Denver that it must do a better job preventing wage theft. The researchers are now working with the city to create and implement new tools to protect workers.

“We consider Randy Albelda and Alan Clayton-Mathews [to be] resources we can turn to. To say that their research has been fundamental to this process is an understatement.”

**Legislative Staffer
Massachusetts Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development**



MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF NORTH CAROLINA VOTER ID LAWS

In 2018, North Carolina voters passed a state constitutional amendment to require photo ID to vote. North Carolina SSN Postdoctoral Fellow Natalie Hengstebeck organized scholars to weigh in, resulting in a report from Ted Arrington and Martha Kropf that empowered legislators to ensure that the new requirement will not infringe on the fundamental right to vote.



EXPANDING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE IN MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts, Randy Albelda and Alan Clayton-Mathews contributed research that was instrumental in crafting legislation to create a state paid family and medical leave program, which was signed into law in 2018. Their model for paid family and medical leave in Massachusetts showed who to cover and how to keep costs low, creating a win-win for families and businesses.



INFORMING VOTERS ABOUT BALLOT MEASURES IN UTAH

Utah SSN brought in national experts to help voters understand the costs and benefits of ballot measures on medical marijuana, independent redistricting, and Medicaid expansion. The effort garnered wide news coverage, giving voters unbiased evidence to help them cut through the ads and make informed decisions. On Election Day, Utahns voted to institute all three measures.

COMMUNICATING THE IMPACTS OF MAJOR SHIFTS IN FEDERAL POLICY

KEEPING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES TOGETHER

The Scholars Strategy Network activated scholars to insert research into discussions of the Trump Administration's immigration policies. The effort resulted in commentaries from SSN scholars in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), [The Hill](#), and the [Morning Consult](#), as well as comments in dozens of news articles designed to empower Americans to respond effectively.

As soon as Trump's family separation proposal was floated by administration officials, Nara Milanich argued against the policy in an op-ed in [The Washington Post](#). Staff for Representative Juan Vargas, a Member of Congress from Southern California, reached out to Milanich asking for research that would assist their work to keep families together. Vargas' district lies along the U.S.-Mexico border and includes a large immigrant detention facility as well as the San Ysidro crossing where refugee caravans attempted to enter earlier this year.

Milanich turned to SSN national staff for help and together they provided Vargas' office with research on family separation policies.



268

TWO-PAGE POLICY BRIEFS

SSN scholars wrote over two hundred two-page policy briefs in plain language to help people gain a quick understanding of research findings.

ADVANCING WOMEN'S HEALTH AND EQUALITY

SSN scholars connected with advocates at NARAL, the National Women's Law Center, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and other national and state-based organizations to learn which research questions would make the most difference in advancing effective policy.

As part of a multi-year project, SSN brought together a multidisciplinary group of scholars who focus on issues related to reproductive health and rights. The convening provided scholars with training on the research-to-policy pipeline, media writing and interviews, how to work with civic organizations, and how to inform litigation and legislation through amicus briefs and testimony.

In Colorado and Massachusetts, SSN connected Kate Coleman-Minahan with policymakers through the State Innovation Exchange to explore legislation to mitigate negative impacts of parental consent laws. SSN also helped Coleman-Minahan explain her findings in an op-ed published in the [Austin Statesman](#).

“SSN helps me understand what’s really going on in the world and, most importantly, convey that to my readers.”

Michael Hobbes
Senior Enterprise Reporter, HuffPost



EXPLAINING THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF MEDICAID WORK REQUIREMENTS

In the spring, President Trump encouraged federal and state social safety net administrators to impose new work requirements for Medicaid recipients. Research shows that these requirements prevent recipients who already work and those who are unable to work from getting the healthcare coverage they need.



82

REQUESTS FOR RESEARCH

SSN fulfilled 82 requests from policymakers and civic leaders for unbiased expertise on proposed policy.

Philip Rocco sprung into action. Rocco submitted public comments during the Alabama State Open Comments period opposing the work requirements and organized fellow scholars to do the same. Since the spring, 22 scholars across ten states have joined the effort, submitting research-based public comments in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma.

Rocco also drafted model legislation to protect broad access to Medicaid from unjustified administrative burdens. He is now working with leaders who expressed interest in the bill at the Arthritis Foundation and the American Heart Association.

1.3 MILLION

NO JARGON DOWNLOADS

SSN released 44 *No Jargon* podcast episodes and reached one million downloads, placing it in the ranks of the most popular podcasts.

INFORMING THE NEWS

From local newspapers to national media, the Scholars Strategy Network helped hundreds of scholars translate research into clear, powerful points and insert facts and evidence into the biggest policy debates of 2018.



AMAZON HQ2

In the [Courier-Tribune](#), Nathan Jensen relayed what scholars have concluded: business tax incentives are an ineffective strategy for luring new companies to an area, and they take away resources cities need to invest in schools, infrastructure, and public services.



IMMIGRATION

Ariela Schachter argued in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) that anti-immigrant sentiments ran strong long before the Trump presidency. And Ernesto Castañeda made the case against family separation in [Morning Consult](#).



CLIMATE CHANGE

As wildfires raced across California, Leah Stokes in [The Los Angeles Times](#) implored journalists to call these extreme weather events what they are: climate change.



ELECTION 2018

For the most watched midterm election in decades, scholars offered advice on how to [increase voter turnout](#), [change the way Americans vote](#), [improve the timing of local elections](#), and [make Congress more in touch with constituents' opinions](#).



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

At the start of a year filled with public debates and legislation to reform America's criminal justice system, Alexes Harris told readers in [The New York Times](#) about the disproportionate burden that fines and fees place on poor and minority defendants.



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

With Harvard University's admissions policies under scrutiny in the courts, Jamal Evan Mazyck in the [Sacramento Bee](#) and Natasha Warikoo and Nadirah Farah Foley in [The New York Times](#) explained the past and mapped out a future for affirmative action.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY



GUARDING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

In 2018, SSN helped scholars work with the Center on Budget Policy (CBPP) and Common Cause to push back on efforts from the far left and the far right to call a new Constitutional Convention. A convention might permanently limit federal spending on social safety net programs and lock in private interests. Already, 28 of the 34 required states have passed official resolutions calling for convention.

SSN connected over a dozen scholars with CBPP to place op-eds in local outlets in [Iowa](#), [Kentucky](#), [Nebraska](#), [Washington](#), and [Virginia](#), states where new resolutions were likely to pass or where there were opportunities to rescind past bills.

In 2018, informed by scholars, the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities, Common Cause, and other organizations, no new states passed resolutions to call for a Constitutional Convention.

CREATING ENGAGED CITIZENS ON CAMPUS

With support from SSN's national office, scholars across the nation worked with the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to increase civic engagement and voting at over 70 institutions.

In 2018, SSN helped 26 new campuses join the National Study for Learning, Voting and Engagement to measure student voting, and won commitments from 61 campuses to continue this work through 2022.

31%

STUDENT VOTER PARTICIPATION

Supported by the work of civic organizations like the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, voter participation among 18-29 year olds jumped from 21% in 2014 to 31% in 2018, a record high for a midterm election.



“I am leaving with several doable tactics for fulfilling my goals of turning research into practice, and there is a supportive community of experts to help me.”

CARRIE MAKAREWICZ, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

TRAINING RESEARCHERS TO INFORM POLICY

In 2018, SSN trained 370 scholars to work with policymakers and civic leaders to inform policy with research, spur innovation, and improve people's lives.

With support from the William T. Grant Foundation, SSN developed the training curriculum by combining SSN's seven years

of experience with over 50 interviews with experts on the factors that determine whether research will be useful to and used by policymakers.

THE SSN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: ENERGIZING CHAPTERS AND INCREASING IMPACT

SSN's nationwide network of chapters is positioned to improve policy across the country. In 2018, seven chapters hosted fellows in SSN's one-of-a-kind postdoctoral program designed to increase impact. In Georgia, Maine, Missouri, North Carolina, San Diego, Tennessee, and Utah, SSN Postdoctoral Fellows increased scholars' capacity to transform research into engaged, public scholarship. Together with chapter leaders, Postdoctoral Fellows formed connections with policymakers and civic leaders, provided evidence to inform policy, helped insert research and ideas into local media outlets, and identified new volunteer leaders.



MATCHING SCHOLARS TO POLICYMAKERS

From research briefs tailored to answer specific questions from policymakers to building advisory relationships, SSN postdocs facilitate connections between scholars, civic leaders, and policymakers on both sides of the aisle. Postdocs are trained and supported to respond to questions from policymakers quickly, building the reputation of SSN chapters as reliable and effective resources.



GETTING IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR

In city halls, state houses, and Congress, postdocs monitor the policy landscape and anticipate research needs and policy opportunities. Then they reach out to key decision makers, helping researchers get in early to inform legislation before it is drafted.



GROWING CHAPTER REACH AND EXPERTISE

Postdocs have helped SSN chapters grow their memberships and cover a wider range of issues by bringing expertise in STEM fields, travelling across their states, and reaching out to engage new scholars.



INFORMING VOTERS

Leading up to the midterm elections, postdocs worked with local civic leaders to cut through the noise on ballot initiatives, encouraged voting in their university and local communities, and analysed a candidate debate on a televised watch party. Moving forward, postdocs are working with policymakers and civic leaders to protect and expand access to the ballot in their states.

SCHOLARS.ORG

In 2018, SSN launched a new website, www.scholars.org, designed to help journalists, policymakers, and civic leaders connect with scholars and find the research they need. Contact buttons to connect with scholars are featured throughout the site. The search function is more sophisticated and powerful, and search results are organized so that readers can more quickly find what they need among the different types of content SSN offers.



50K

MONTHLY
PAGEVIEWS

3K

JOURNALISTS,
CIVIC
LEADERS, AND
POLICYMAKERS
CONNECTED WITH
SCHOLARS
THROUGH THE SITE

316

NEW SCHOLARS
ADDED TO THE
SITE

THANK YOU TO OUR 2018 SUPPORTERS

20 x 24 Studio
 Naomi Aberly and Larry Lebowitz
 Tabatha Abu El Haj
 Ronald Aminzade
 David Anderson
 Daston Arman
 Theodore Arrington
 MV Lee Badgett
 Matthew Baggetta
 David Blatt
 Gloria Bonilla-Santiago
 Robert and Louise Bowditch
 Helen Bowditch
 Lessie Branch
 Saskia Brechenmacher
 Sandra Butler
 Lief and Delight Carter
 Ernesto Castañeda
 Susan Cohen and Michael Klein
 Jonathan Coopersmith
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 Susan Scheid
 Linda Seymour
 Ian Simmons
 Tim Soley
 Amy Thornton
 Phil and Kate Villers
 David Vogel
 Clara Volintiru
 Kim Voss
 Rick Wackernagel
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 Douglas Wolf
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