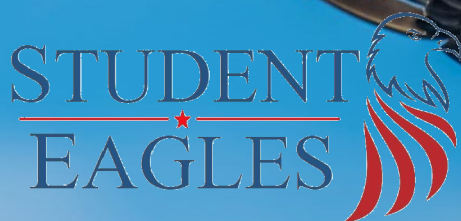


Interview with Becky Garritson and More



Lead. Soar. Inspire.

Published by Students, for Students

Becky Garritson is the Executive Director of the Alabama Eagle Forum and has been leading her state's forum since 2019. She has garnered praise for her tenacious and passionate spirit. Her drive comes from her goal to ensure her children and grandchildren will live in the land of the free and home of the brave.

Interview with Becky Garritson

By Mady Segrest, 6th grade and Kenneth Rogers, 11th grade

Kenneth: How did you first get involved in politics?

Becky Gerritson: Hmm... I was never political. I wasn't into politics at all. I mean, I voted, and I was very patriotic, but I did not keep up with politics. I didn't even watch the news. But I went to a Christian conference in late 2007, and they were talking about how if you are a Christian and you want to affect things and you want to promote biblical values, then you've got to pay attention and you've got to be involved. And that was a turning point for me. So I started watching the news -- and this was right at the beginning of 2008 now -- I'm starting to pay attention, and Obama comes on the scene. And I was really excited because I thought "Oh, this is great, we're gonna have a black president, this is such progress.", but then I started researching him and I realized very quickly that he was not what we wanted, and I just kinda got hooked on politics from then. That was during the election year, and he got elected, and I was so depressed, because I just knew this was not going to be good for the country. And then in February of 2009, right after he got inaugurated -- there was a rant at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange from a guy named Rick Santelli¹. It's really a great clip to watch. But he basically went on this fantastic rant and everybody was watching. It made all the news, it went viral -- though this was before things really went viral -- and one of the things he said was "Do we need to have an old-fashioned Tea

Party?" like in, you know, Revolutionary times. And that caught fire. And so, a week later people started having Tea Parties. My husband and I had heard that there were gonna be tax day Tea Parties coming up on April 15th, and we knew there was gonna be one in Montgomery. And my husband said to me: "you know, we should just have one in Wetumpka, because we've got a lot of old people who might not want to go." And I was like, "oh, ok". So we decided to have one at the park; we had some homeschool kids come and talk, and I got on the radio a couple weeks before and said "hey, we're gonna have a Tea Party up here in Wetumpka." We had no idea what we were doing, knew nothing about organizing or anything, had never done anything like this. But we had been praying that at least 50 people would come. If 50 people would come, then we wouldn't look like complete idiots. We had over 460 people show up. At noon, on a Tuesday in Wetumpka. and we have a really small community, so to have that many people come was remarkable. And from that moment on we realized people are hungry, people want to be engaged, and so we started having monthly meetings after that. And from then on life changed for us. And in 2016 I decided to run for Congress, and so I did that. Didn't win; kind of got back into the Tea Party after that was over and then just kind of went through a little bit of a lull, trying to decide what God wanted me to do. And, I'd been working with Eagle Forum for a long time. -- in the Tea Party realm, we worked together on a lot of things -- and they were looking for a new Executive Director. And that's how I started with Eagle Forum, it'll be three years in January. So I kind of went from knowing nothing to being in the middle of the craziness. And we were just trying to educate people. People don't know their history, they don't know what

being a conservative means, they don't know what's happening in our government is such a kick in the face to our biblical values. And that's what we really want to help people understand and learn, and help them push back. So, anyway... I'm sorry, that's a really long answer, but maybe you can pull something away from that.

Mady: How did you end up in Eagle Forum?

Becky Gerritson: Well, I just had been praying. The Tea Party was kind of... People weren't into meeting as much. And it had lost some momentum. And, so I had kind of stepped away and wasn't really doing anything, being a stay-at-home wife. But God had given me so many connections. I couldn't just let things go the way they were going. So I was just really praying "Lord, what do you want me to do?" And Eunie Smith, our President, we had been talking on the phone and she said "you know, our Executive Director is gonna be leaving soon, and I'm looking for somebody." She was asking me so I'd look for someone else, and I said "Ok, well, I'll ask around. Send me the job description." And I got the job description and everything on there was me to a T. And I came back to her and I said "Eunie, I don't know if you want to hire me, and I don't know if I really want a job, but this is perfect for me. And so, we just talked about it, and they went ahead and hired me. And it's been a wild ride ever since.

Mady: How much do you work with Eagle Forum nationwide? Do the state branches largely do their own thing?

Becky Gerritson: Ok, that's a great question. Eagle Forum nationally -- they do their own thing on Capitol Hill and we get information from them often, but we have a leader's call every month for Eagle Forum leaders all across the nation. And yes, every Eagle Forum chapter in every state they kind of do their own thing. And some may focus more on family issues, some may focus on everything -- we kind of focus on everything, it seems like, and we're very active. There's several states that are active, and some have a lot of volunteers, some don't have so many, but yeah, they all kind of do their own thing. It's just sort of the makeup of the state, the makeup of the members, what they're interested in. But when it comes to national issues, we do look a lot to national Eagle Forum and what their policies are, what they're pushing, what they think is good, we really fit well with -- and kinda take our lead from -- them on the national issues.

Kenneth: What is the difference between what Eagle Fo-

rum does nationwide, and what they do locally in the states?

Becky Gerritson: Ok, so a big difference for us in Alabama is we are so busy in the state right now. Probably the first year or so I was able to pay attention to national stuff. And we sort of had a really good mix of that. But right now there's so much happening in our state -- once Covid hit, and so many important bills that were happening at the state level -- that I just wasn't able as the Executive Director to really keep up with everything that was happening in DC, so I relied on national to tell us what's going on. So national Eagle Forum, they focus on things that happen at the federal level, and then we really specialize in what our state government is doing, what laws are being passed in our state. And we do pay attention to the other stuff too, but, as you'll notice, when the legislative session is in, January to May timeframe, every year-ish, we really are focused on the state stuff, so most of our alerts are about that, and trying to get people to lobby their legislators and make phone calls and stuff. But on our Board we do have someone who really pays attention to what's happening at the national level, and so she keeps us informed and, you know, I'll send out information. But I really feel like right now we're very focused on Alabama. Because at the national level, we have such a minority, that we can't really affect a whole lot of things. It's important to be educated and to know what's going on, but we really don't have a whole lot of power there. But right now we do have a lot of power in the states, so I think a lot of the Eagle Forum is really focusing in on that.

Mady: What is the biggest thing you've been a part of in state politics?

Becky Gerritson: Ooooh... I think one of the biggest things and one of the most recent things- ok, a couple of things. Back in 2010, the Tea Party was really strong and was just starting out. That was back then, but I think we have written some really important legislation since then, and I credit Margaret Clarke, our general counsel, for a lot of this. We wrote a bill, it's called VCAP, it stands for Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act, and it's to protect children from the transgender medical things that are happening to eight-year olds, 11-year olds, and it hasn't passed yet, but it's a bill that was introduced in 2020 -- the first year we made it really far and we were doing really well with it, but then Covid hit, and the session stopped. So we tried it again last year, and we had a lot of support for it. It should have passed, but unfortunately, our Republican, supposedly "conservative" leadership didn't want to have anything to do with it. And so they killed the bill. So we'll try again next year; and I think that is - as far as what

I've been involved in - I think that is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation, and I'm excited about it, because it's a really good bill, and I hope we get it passed this year.

Kenneth: That brings up something I'm really curious about, so on the national level, you know how most of the legislation is written by lobbyists, or party leadership, and so on? Is that so much the case on the state level?

Becky Gerritson: Yeah... it is true but there is a lot of really good legislation that comes out of the State House that's written because of some personal issue that has happened to someone in the state. So, in 2019, we wrote a bill, again, Margaret Clarke, called the Campus Free Speech Bill because -- I don't know if y'all remember, but that was the time when they were having these little free speech zones and if you were a conservative you couldn't say anything without going stand on the little circle over there and that was your free speech zone. And that's not right. That goes against the principles of our Constitution, and so we wrote a bill and were able to get it passed, to protect students, so they can say what they want to say, and we got rid of those free speech zones. It's still being violated, unfortunately, in the state of Alabama but it is a law in the books and they're trying to hold them accountable. Now with the Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act, we had people come to us; we had a counselor come to us and she said "I am so worried about this transgender ideology and I counsel students, I counsel kids, and if I don't affirm what they are believing, that they were born in the wrong body even though they're not, if I don't come alongside them and say 'yes, I agree with you', I'm afraid I'm gonna lose my job." And so that was the reason we started writing that bill, to protect counselors. But I do think the majority of the bills probably do come from lobbyists. And the ones that we do write, and we work so so hard to get just perfect, who would ever want to go against this bill, it's so great, it's the lobbyists that come in and change them up. And so the legislator is the go-between. We give the bill to the legislator and he says "ok, this is a great bill, we're gonna do it!" and then the lobbyists get ahold of it and they say "No. We don't like this. You need to strip this out and strip this out and add in this." And that's how the bills get all messed up. So, a lot of times they don't always end up the way they started out.

Footnotes:

1- CNBC's Rick Santelli's Chicago Tea Party Rant- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp-Jw-5Kx8k&t=9s>

Biden's Agenda

By Kenneth Rogers, 11th grade

President Biden's long-term legacy will not rest on his gaffes or political flip-flopping. Ultimately, he will be judged on his political agenda. I'm going to try and explain what this looks like.

On November 15, Biden signed his one trillion dollar infrastructure bill, the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework" into law. As its name suggests, the bill was (somewhat) bipartisan. It did not include the "human infrastructure" which Democrats had been pushing for. Instead, the bill allocated money to roads, public transit, the electrical grid, and expanded internet access.

There wasn't any *content conservatives should seriously object to in the bill, except possibly federal over-reach (which is so common, it's almost not worth mentioning). However, it was expensive. The federal government plans to pay for only part of it, ignoring the rest and increasing the deficit. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill will add 256 billion dollars to the deficit over ten years. Politicians (especially Democrats) refuse to recognize that spending borrowed money is dangerous. Sooner or later, we the people will have to pay every cent back with interest.*

Right now, the major bill in the works contains all the "human infrastructure" thrown out of the first bill. "Build Back Better" has an official price tag of two trillion. It's full of supposedly temporary provisions that will most likely be made permanent, once Americans get used to them. The exact contents are still under debate, but here are a few of the likely inclusions.

-Enhanced Child Allowances: The most expensive item in the bill; this would extend the increased child tax credit, which gives families 3,000 to 3,600 dollars a year per child (up from 2,000), for another year.

-Expanded Obamacare Subsidies: In March, Obamacare's eligibility was expanded to people making 4 times the poverty line. In addition, subsidies were increased, moving costs from the patient onto the taxpayer. This provision would extend all these subsidies, as well as the eligibility limit, through 2025.

-Universal preschool: This would fork out money to states to create universal preschool. While it will supposedly expire in six years, this provision would unquestionably be made permanent. It's left to us to wonder when this preschool will become mandatory.

-Increasing the cap on State And Local Taxes (SALT) deductions: This one's a little confusing, so follow me carefully.

Currently, one can get a federal tax deduction of up to 10,000 dollars for the local or state taxes one pays. Democrats, especially from the East Coast, are fond of this deduction, since their states have high tax rates. They can freely raise taxes, and their taxpayers simply pass the cost (up to 10,000 dollars) to the federal government. Currently, the SALT deductions are set to expire in 2025. This provision would raise the deduction to 80,000 rather than 10,000, and extend it until 2031.

The “Build Back Better” bill should have conservatives worried. Not only is it incredibly expensive (I’ll dive into that in a bit), it’s an attempt to make the middle class reliant on the government. When politicians give their voters “free” stuff, Americans begin to expect the government to take care of them. This is diametrically opposed to American values of self-reliance and independence.

Another serious problem with the bill: the cost. Officially, it will cost “only” two trillion, with 367 billion dollars added to the deficit over ten years. However, the real cost will likely be much higher. Here’s why: the programs are temporary, but once Americans are hooked, most of them will become permanent. According to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, the actual cost of the bill will be about 4.9 trillion through 2031.

Will the bill pass? Quite possibly, but it faces a fraught path. After months of negotiations, Democrats in the House reached an agreement on its contents. It passed almost entirely on party lines, with only one Democrat voting against. In the Senate, Democrats plan to bypass the filibuster with the budget reconciliation process. Since the Senate is tied 50-50, a single Democratic dissenter will kill it.

This domestic agenda will be President Biden’s legacy. He ran as a moderate, but he is no moderate. His chief of staff, Ron Klain, boasted that his plan is “twice as big, in real dollars, as the New Deal.” If Democrats want to create a culture of entitlement and government dependency, this is the way to go about it.

Further Research:

1. [Biden Signs \\$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill Into Law](#)
2. [What’s in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill? From Amtrak to Roads to Water Systems](#)
3. [CBO Estimates Infrastructure Bill Would Add \\$256 Billion to Deficits](#)
4. [The future of monthly child tax credit payments rests with Biden's Build Back Better Bill](#)
5. [Opinion | The Real Biden Bill: At Least \\$4.6 Trillion](#)
6. [House Passes Roughly \\$2 Trillion Social Spending and Cli-](#)

[mate Bill](#)

7. [Build Back Better Cost Would Double with Extensions](#)
8. [Biden’s New Deal Ambitions Run Into Political, Economic Constraints](#)
9. [Biden signs the \\$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill into law](#)
10. [Biden Build Back Better bill: House passes social safety net and climate plan](#)
11. [8 big problems with Biden’s ‘Build Back Better’ bill](#)
12. [SALT deduction in Democrats' spending plan provides little middle-class help, analysis shows](#)

Rise in School Shootings

By Paul Taussig, 9th grade

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! is the terrifying sound that an unfortunately large number of students have heard as they sit placidly in their classrooms; the sound of a school shooter. School shootings have always composed some of the most tragic and deplorable headlines in the news. Recently, however, these grievous acts have become more and more frequent as the mental health of Americans has plummeted.

All people recognize the tragedy of school shootings, the shedding of innocent blood, and the blatant disregard for the sanctity of human life. However, few are willing to accept the true reasons for these catastrophes.

School shootings are generally executed by a very similar demographic of people. The typical school shooter is male, 78% have had a history of suicide attempts or suicidal ideations, and almost all have been the targets of severe bullying. The intent of most shooters is to get revenge against a specific person or group of people or to end a life that is no longer worth living, and take as many who have made it so with them.

It is widely agreed upon that the way to combat school shootings is to recognize potential shooters and get them the help they need, before they do harm. Most school shooters leave clear signs of their intentions before they execute their plans. These signs often appear as threats on social media, distinct changes in behavior and habits, or an increase in interest in violence. If ever these signs are shown it is imperative to report them; lives may be at stake.

If a threat is identified, they will be exposed to

numerous attempts to stabilize their mental health. This often includes counseling, therapy, and exposure to new friends in hopes of establishing new self worth. However, these targeting measures are not enough.

The real problem is not that we can't stop the shooters once they have already conceived of a plan, but rather that they go so far as to think of a plan at all. The root of the problem is a decrease in society's view of the value of life. Today, in modern society we are constantly told that there is no meaning in life, no meaning in death, and that we hold no purpose in this world. We are told to believe that there is no absolute truth and that there is no difference in value between us and germs, only billions of years of evolution. How can we expect people to not become school shooters if we tell them that they are not going to be held accountable for their actions, and the lives they are destroying have no meaning? Who can help but be depressed in such an atmosphere?

All of this false rhetoric must stop. Life does have inherent value. If these facts would be acknowledged and taught there would be a significant decrease in school shootings.

As the mental health of America has plummeted due to the unprecedented circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, many have lost hope. It is crucial to impart hope and truthful ideals into society today. If you recognize any of the warning signs of school shooters it is imperative to report them to your school or to the police. Although the rise in school shootings is a very alarming reality, it can serve as a platform through which we may gain insight and eventually begin to prevent school shootings. The future is bright if parents, teachers, and students can return to the solid ideals that brought purpose to innumerable human lives.

9. [School Counselor in Mitigating Violence](#)

10. [US Sees 14 School Shootings Since Classes Resumed in August](#)

National Student Eagle Chairman's Note:

Over the last two years, I have developed a guide for teacher's to instruct middle and high school students on the matter of emotional health and intelligence. While this teacher textbook was written in light of the national "pandemic," it has the potential to be used by teachers to help students who are facing the bullying, and general disregard for human life that is mentioned in the last article of this student newsletter. With this new textbook in hand, middle and high school teachers in private, parochial, or home school settings can teach their students how to address their own emotional health, and strengthen their emotional intelligence, leading them to be more prepared to withstand the stresses of being an adult as well as living a better life as a teenager. This curriculum has numerous links for further research, Power Point and Prezi presentations that can be used to teach classes, and weekly student homework assignments. It was written by this teacher, for teachers. "Emotional Health and Intelligence for Students: Teacher's Guide" by Frances Arthur can be purchased on Amazon.

Further Research:

1. [School shootings increase in 2021 as pandemic wanes](#)
2. [School Shootings This Year: How Many and Where](#)
3. [Gunfire on School Grounds in the United States | Everytown](#)
4. [Research & Policy](#)
5. [Are School Shootings Becoming More Frequent? We Ran](#)
6. [The Numbers – Guns & America](#)
7. [Why Do Shootings Occur?](#)
8. [School Shootings and Student Mental Health: Role of the](#)

About the Authors

Andy Aschinger is the Director of Research for the Student Eagle Newsletter. He is a high school freshman and is a member of the Eagle Forum Student Eagles.

Ava Aschinger is the Senior Director of Research for the Student Eagle Newsletter. She is a high school junior and is a member of Student Eagles in Missouri.

Marty Green is Chairman and Coordinator of the newsletter and is currently in 10th grade. She is a homeschooled student in Tennessee and has been a part of Student Eagles for two years. She enjoys learning languages, history, and reading.

Kenneth Rogers is the newsletter's Chief Writer and an 11th grader in public school. He is very involved in Alabama Student Eagles. During the summer, he works as a lifeguard, and in his (rare) spare time he enjoys reading.

Mady Segrest is a 6th grader in Montgomery Alabama and is part of the Prattville, AL Student Eagles. She enjoys piano, guitar, singing, and anything involved with politics; such as Teen Pact, Student Eagles, and anything she is given the opportunity for.

Chayah Shepard is Chief Editor of the newsletter and contributing writer. She is involved in TN Student Eagles for the second year. Chayah is homeschooled and in the 9th grade. Her hobbies usually involve reading, painting, and cooking.

Paul Taussig is a writer from Illinois and is currently in 9th grade.

If you have any questions, would like to join our team, or have a topic you would like to see reported on please contact Marty Green at the Student Eagle Newsletter Email, studenteaglenews@yahoo.com

