



## **Organizations from Burundi, India, United Kingdom, and United States named as finalists for Atlas Network’s 2021 Templeton Freedom Award**

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(GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Atlas Network—the nonprofit organization connecting 500 free-market organizations in almost 100 countries to advance the cause of liberty—has announced the six finalists for this year’s Templeton Freedom Award. Named for the late investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, the prestigious award annually honors his legacy by identifying and recognizing the most exceptional and innovative contributions to the understanding of free enterprise and the public policies that encourage prosperity, innovation, and human fulfillment via free competition. The winning organization receives a US\$100,000 grand prize and the runners-up each receive US\$20,000. The award is generously supported by Templeton Religion Trust and will be presented during Atlas Network’s 2021 Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner on December 14 in Miami, Florida.

The six finalists for the 2021 Templeton Freedom Award are:

### **Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy (Charleston, West Virginia)**

*Initiating Education Choice Reform*

Quality education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty, but for decades, West Virginia students have been trapped in a system consistently ranked at the bottom of national rankings, with no alternatives available. Leaders of the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy knew there was a better way, and in 2015 they began a journey to transform education in their state. As a result of their tireless efforts, West Virginia opened to charter schools in 2019, and this year the West Virginia legislature adopted the Hope Scholarship Program, a nation-leading education reform that provides funding directly to families and students rather than systems. Parents across West Virginia now have the agency they need to make the best decisions for their children, and by introducing competition into the education marketplace, Cardinal Institute has revolutionized educational choice, creating the gold standard for reform and bringing a West Virginia “miracle” closer to fruition.

### **Cato Institute (Washington, D.C.)**

*Working to Eliminate Qualified Immunity*

Just a few years ago, “qualified immunity” was an obscure legal concept known only to a small handful of lawyers and legal scholars. Now, it’s a household term. Uniting advocacy groups and

leaders from across the political spectrum, Cato Institute demonstrated how qualified immunity enables government officials to violate the civil rights of citizens with impunity. Their work to promote public awareness of the topic has been so successful that more than 60% of Americans now favor ending this abusive legal loophole, and legislative efforts to ban qualified immunity are picking up steam. Several jurisdictions—including Colorado, New Mexico, and New York City—have already banned the legal defense, clearing the way for citizens to bring lawsuits against officials—including police officers—who have violated their rights. Bills to that effect have also been introduced at the national level by members of Congress representing three political parties. Cato Institute's efforts aim to restore the civil rights of every American and give renewed energy to the creed “liberty and justice for all.”

### **Centre for Development and Enterprises–Great Lakes (Bujumbura, Burundi)**

#### *Opening Borders to Increase Trade*

In the landlocked Central African nation of Burundi, oppressive regulations, complicated bureaucracy and physical barriers at border posts force Burundians desperate for cross-border trade to enter the informal economy, condemning millions to lives marred by poverty and abuse by border officials. The Centre for Development and Enterprises–Great Lakes, or CDE, is determined to reduce these barriers and create the conditions for formal, open trade—and, consequently—for a better life in Burundi. CDE launched their "Fungua Njia" or "Open Road" campaign in 2019, which has culminated in fewer required commercial documents, the elimination of 90% of non-tariff barriers; the establishment of a simple local travel document to replace costly passports; the reduction of regulatory agencies from 19 to 4; and, most importantly, the legal recognition of over 30,000 women traders, who have finally been extended protection against sexual harassment, illegal seizure of their goods, physical violence, and bribery at the border. These changes have cleared the way for explosive growth in trade that is not only more frequent, but also more affordable and secure. CDE's work demonstrates the power of free enterprise and trade to bring dignity and prosperity to millions of people across Africa's Great Lakes region.

### **Centre for Civil Society (New Delhi, India)**

#### *Securing Legal Protections for Street Vendors*

Street vendors are essential to India's economy, accounting for over US\$10 million in transactions each day. But these entrepreneurs often operate at the mercy of local authorities who arbitrarily extort, abuse, and threaten them, seizing their goods and charging them hefty fines. Centre for Civil Society, or CCS, has been a consistent champion for street vendors, securing the passage of the landmark Street Vendors Act in 2014. Sadly, implementation of the law has been fragmented and remains unfinished in states across the country. With sustained research and publicity campaigns on behalf of and in partnership with vendors, Centre for Civil Society has maintained pressure on government officials to protect street vendors' economic rights. Moreover, CCS' work to educate vendors about the law is enabling millions to stand up for their rights, ultimately allowing them to earn a livelihood free from the fines and fear that have prevented them from plying their trade in peace.

## **Institute of Economic Affairs (London, United Kingdom)**

### *Revitalizing a Free Trade Champion*

Just over forty years ago, the Institute of Economic Affairs, or IEA, laid the intellectual groundwork for sustained economic expansion across the United Kingdom, and today they have once again helped to lead the country out of crisis. Out of the uncertainty created by the Brexit referendum, the IEA worked to make the most of the opportunity to redefine economic policy in the United Kingdom. For four years they played a significant role in changing hearts, minds, and policy with a clear vision for advancing free trade. Their “Plan A+” programme became a media sensation and was championed by a wide range of policymakers and UK leaders who have since implemented dozens of free trade deals worth over US\$1 trillion. Overcoming immense opposition from think tanks, regulatory agencies, social media attacks, and even targeted burglaries, the IEA achieved their most monumental policy contribution in decades. Their steadfast commitment to open trade has helped to secure a more prosperous future for the people of the United Kingdom, rekindled Britain’s deep liberal tradition, and created a model to be emulated around the world.

## **Libertas Institute (Lehi, Utah)**

### *Unleashing the Potential of Utah’s Small Businesses*

Red tape and bureaucracy often discourage aspiring entrepreneurs, overwhelm small businesses, and hinder established companies from reaching their full potential. Utah’s Libertas Institute aims to change this stifling environment with the nation’s first comprehensive regulatory sandbox. This innovative system allows business owners to seek exemption from onerous regulations, giving entrepreneurs and enterprises time to innovate while providing lawmakers the opportunity to review and repeal outdated or restrictive policies. By decreasing unnecessary regulations, Libertas Institute’s regulatory sandbox creates a welcoming environment for fresh business ideas. Sandbox programs in Utah have helped dozens of companies serve their customers more cost effectively and efficiently by reducing their regulatory burden. Libertas Institute is encouraging similar sandboxes across the country and hopes to see their policy proposals adopted on the national level. Libertas Institute’s concerted deregulation efforts are allowing a new generation of entrepreneurs in Utah to achieve their dreams, making the state a beacon of innovation and opportunity in the United States.