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Joel earned his juris doctor at the Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law, with a dual emphasis in Alternative Dispute Resolution and Federal Income Taxation; he is currently a member of the State Bar of California. At Chapman, he was a charter board member and treasurer of the Investment Law Society, served as a charter member and vice-president of the Chapman chapter of the California Republican Lawyers Association, and competed on both the mock trial and mediation teams.

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Prior to Heritage, he worked as a researcher for a former member of The Wall Street Journal editorial board. Joel also was Deputy Research Director at the National Association of Counties. Most recently he was Director of the Center for State Fiscal Reform at the American Legislative Exchange Council. Numerous media outlets have featured Joel's written analysis, including The Hill, The Wall Street Journal, Forbes online, Investor's Business Daily, The Washington Times, the Orange County Register, and Times of Israel. He also made appearances on Fox News and Fox Business News.