



WORKING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, POLICY & POLITICAL POWER

VOTE



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**IMMIGRANT RIGHTS &
RACIAL JUSTICE**

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

**LGBTQ RIGHTS &
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE**

“The VOTE Project represents some of the most important work we can do to build our progressive future.”

— Kevin Looper, Oregon Progressive Alliance

VOTE

VOTER ORGANIZING TRAINING & EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

THEORY OF ACTION

WE BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- GOAL SETTING & EVALUATION
- LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
- POLITICAL EDUCATION & ISSUE ANALYSIS
- AUTHENTIC COALITIONS
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & PEER SUPPORT
- FUNDING & TECHNOLOGY

TO EXPAND THE BASE THAT WINS EQUITABLE POLICIES

through CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- VOTER REGISTRATION
- DOOR KNOCKING & PHONE BANKS
- NON-PARTISAN VOTER FORUMS
- GOTV

and MOBILIZATION

- LEGISLATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY
- GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

WORKING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, POLICY & POLITICAL POWER



For the past eight years, Western States Center's VOTE Project has built political power in underserved and historically marginalized communities – resulting in over two dozen concrete policy wins.

- ▶ We start by forming strategic, multi-year relationships with organizations based in communities that have traditionally been shut out of power – youth, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ, low-income, the formerly incarcerated.
- ▶ We provide those organizations with the building blocks they need to engage their constituencies in the democratic process: leadership development, free access to cutting-edge technology, in-depth technical assistance.
- ▶ We bring grassroots leaders together across six states and multiple constituencies to educate each other on the issues, offer peer support, and form authentic cross-issue coalitions.
- ▶ With the generous support of a six-year, \$3 million gift from the Ralph Smith Foundation, we have invested over **\$1.6 million in direct grants** to enable VOTE Project organizations to hire additional field organizers to build a stronger base of members and voters who can win equitable policies.

As we head into another Presidential election year – a year when Ralph Smith Foundation support for this work will expire – it's more important than ever that we invest in the health of our democracy.

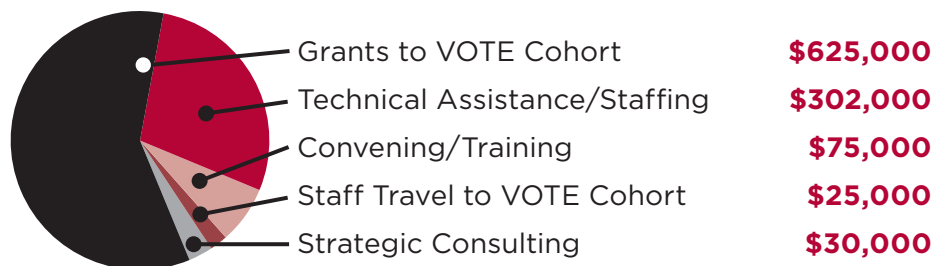
The VOTE Project works at the intersection of the constituencies most affected by the current political environment and the policy reforms needed to help the U.S. achieve its promise of opportunity for all.

If you want to build the capacity of grassroots organizations to drive change through the democratic process, please join us.

Kelley Weigel
Executive Director

Nancy Haque
Building Political Power Program Director

COSTS FOR A TWO-YEAR VOTE CYCLE: \$1,057,000



8 YEARS OF IMPACT

2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

2003-2005 COHORT 1 11 organizations in 5 states (ID, MT, NV, OR, WA)

- Registered 80,000 new voters
- Made 140,000 personal voter contacts
- Engaged 2,000 volunteers

RESULTS

- ▶ Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada wins re-enfranchisement for ex-felons.
- ▶ Montana Women Vote registers over 7,300 women, makes 12,000 personal voter contacts, and organizes a 40-person new voter houseparty covered by CNN.
- ▶ Rural Organizing Project produces and hand delivers 40,000 Oregon ballot measure voter guides.

2005-2006 COHORT 2 6 organizations in 3 states (ID, MT, WA)

- Registered 19,000 new voters
- Made 116,200 personal voter contacts
- Developed 300 new leaders

RESULTS

- ▶ Idaho Latino Vote, Idaho Women's Network, and a coalition of groups hand deliver over 12,000 multi-issue ballot guides to low-income households in five counties.
- ▶ Montana Women Vote and Indian People's Action register 7,500 new voters; voters approve increase to the state minimum wage.

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

2008-2009 COHORT 3 12 organizations in 5 states (MT, NV, OR, WA, WY)

- Registered 34,000 new voters
- Made 313,000 personal voter contacts
- Engaged 2,000 volunteers

RESULTS

- ▶ Oregon cohort defeats expanded mandatory minimum sentences and county anti-immigrant measures.
- ▶ Montana Women Vote wins 70% voter approval to insure 30,000 children.
- ▶ Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada helps pass domestic partnership; educates ex-felons on voting rights, resulting in thousands of new voters.

UNITING PEOPLE, POLICY & POLITICAL POWER

2009-2011 COHORT 4 12 organizations in 6 states (ID, MT, NV, OR, WA, WY) with combined membership of nearly 155,000

- Registered 39,500 new voters
- Made 298,000 personal voter contacts
- Engaged 1,400 volunteers
- Developed 326 new leaders

RESULTS

- ▶ Washington cohort secures domestic partnership; defeats budget-cap ballot measure; wins predatory lending protections; restores voting rights for ex-felons.
- ▶ Oregon cohort wins two progressive tax measures; secures increased funding for higher ed; strengthens anti-bullying law.
- ▶ Montana Women Vote wins 70% voter approval for capping predatory interest rates.
- ▶ Montana Human Rights Network secures LGBTQ protections in Missoula and comprehensive sex education in Helena.
- ▶ Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada collects 80,000 signatures to push for corporate tax on mining.

GOING TO SCALE

2011-2013 COHORT 5 14 organizations in 6 states (ID, MT, NV, OR, WA, WY)

RESULTS TO DATE

As cohort members engage in year-round policy work and plan for increased impact in 2012 elections:

- ▶ Win/Win Network & Central Washington Progress qualify an initiative to create a district-based city council in majority-minority city of Yakima.
- ▶ Statewide Poverty Action Network wins foreclosure prevention legislation in Washington.
- ▶ Equality State Policy Center blocks marriage discrimination and anti-immigrant legislation in Wyoming.
- ▶ Partnership for Safety and Justice secures legislation to keep youth out of adult jails.
- ▶ Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada continues push for corporate tax on mining and transgender equity policies.

2003-2013 VOTE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS



IDAHO

Idaho Community Action Network
Idaho Latino Vote



MONTANA

Indian People's Action
Montana Human Rights Network
Montana Women Vote



NEVADA

Nevada Young Activists Project
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada



OREGON

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon
Basic Rights Oregon
CAUSA
Center for Intercultural Organizing
Community Alliance of Tenants
Oregon Action
Oregon Student Association
Partnership for Safety and Justice
Rural Organizing Project
Urban League of Portland
Voz Hispana



WASHINGTON

Equal Rights Washington
Korean American Voter Alliance
One America
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Win/ Win Network



WYOMING

Equality State Policy Center

Cohort 5 members appear in bold.



"We need to get out of the campaign box and adopt a movement building mentality. This is exactly the strategy that Western States Center uses in the VOTE Project."

— George Cheung, Win/Win Network Director

CHANGING THE RULES



GEORGE, WIN/WIN NETWORK

Yakima, Washington is now 42% people of color, but under its at-large election rules, a Latino candidate has never won election to city council. This stark fact motivated **Central Washington Progress** (CWP) to gather 500 signatures to place a city charter amendment on the August 2011 ballot. When passed, the amendment will divide the city into seven balanced districts, each with their own elected representative.

"Opportunities around redistricting are a fundamental building block for civic engagement for the next ten years," says George Cheung of the **Win/Win Network**, which created CWP as an organizing hub in a part of the state long treated as a fly-over zone.

CWP began building its base by mobilizing 100 high school students to do voter contact to pass the first successful school bond in 18 years. They then raised awareness about the census among Latino voters with an infrequent history of voting.

CWP is also aiming to change the way the county elects its representatives. By collecting 9,000 signatures by August 2011, CWP will force a vote on a process that could bring a new county charter to the November 2012 ballot.

These efforts will permanently change the face of political power in Central Washington. Along the way, CWP is providing opportunities for young people of color to get inspired and building a base of grassroots leaders who can run for office.

CENTRAL WASHINGTON PROGRESS





OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

STARTING THEM YOUNG

Las Vegas native Howard Watts first encountered the **Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN)** at a student involvement fair. Volunteering led to a fellowship and a ten-day organizer boot camp. Now PLAN's Director of Field Operations, Watts brings a direct connection to the youth vote PLAN seeks to build. "Reaching out to high school and college students about issues and elections is something I'm really passionate about," Watts says.

In 2010 PLAN used the Voter Activation Network (VAN) to target 28,000 voters aged 18 – 24 in the Las Vegas area. They recruited a diverse team of paid and volunteer youth to deliver least two personal phone contacts. The result was 50% turn-out among voters contacted, compared to 28% of their peers.

Thanks to the VOTE Project's emphasis on a year-round strategy, PLAN added a short issue survey to their GOTV program, resulting in nearly 800 identified supporters for their tax reform and transgender employment initiatives along with a growing base of volunteers.

The **Oregon Student Association (OSA)** has seen a similar boost in organizational capacity. "Voter engagement work is not new to OSA," says Executive Director Emily McLain. "But the scale of our contact is new."

In 2010 OSA registered 35,000 students and organized 90 phone bank volunteers to talk with 18,800 voters. McLain says of the predictive dialers and VAN, "I've never seen such excitement over GOTV – technology made it so easy and effective."

With OSA's year-round program, voter turn-out connects directly to policy work on the state budget and tuition equity for immigrant students. "Students can see a direct connection between how they participate in the electoral process and how their legislators treat our issues," McLain says.

"The VOTE Project provides a level of mentorship that we haven't gotten anywhere else. As a result we've become an organization that now doesn't need as much help."

— Emily McLain, Executive Director, Oregon Student Association



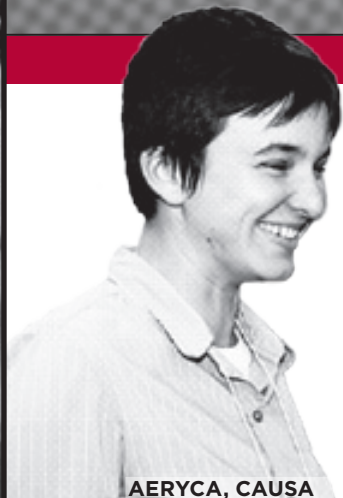
VOTE COHORT

TECHNOLOGY BOOSTS VOTER CONTACT RATES

Old-school manual dialing averaged **12** persuasion calls per hour.

Predictive dialer enables **34** calls per hour.





AERYCA, CAUSA

SHIFTING INTERNAL CULTURE

“For many years we’ve had a strong ally relationship with queer organizations,” says CAUSA’s Aeryca Steinbauer. “But it set up a false dichotomy of straight farm workers helping white urban gays, which is not who our communities are.”

CAUSA – the largest Latino advocacy organization in the Pacific Northwest – has committed itself to becoming explicitly welcoming to the LGBTQ community. “We’re doing this so folks can bring their whole selves to the work and be in leadership positions,” Steinbauer says. “Some were bringing 100% of their immigrant Latino selves but not saying a lot about being gay.”

Staff training now focuses on integrating LGBTQ-inclusive language into CAUSA’s organizing: “We work for the rights for all.” “Everyone has a personal story about someone close to them who is LGBTQ and can hold up those models of courage and leadership,” says Steinbauer.

Fielding an LGBTQ contingent for the large annual immigrant rights May Day march provided intensive leadership development and organizing experience. A queer speaker affected by the DREAM act was a featured headliner at an Immigrant Action Day at the State Capitol. At the same time, CAUSA continues to partner with **Basic Rights Oregon** to educate LGBTQ communities on immigrant rights.

“Our internal LGBTQ work in the last year has focused on education and shifting culture, positioning us to play a more meaningful role for marriage equality in Oregon,” says Steinbauer. “Marriage being on the ballot will give us a chance to engage Latino voters in our LGBTQ equality work.”



“After working with Basic Rights Oregon and the Rural Organizing Project to defeat local anti-immigrant measures in 2009, VOTE Project cohort members are always looking for ways to support each other.”
— Aeryca Steinbauer, CAUSA

DELIVERING THE NUMBERS

“How do you become more relevant?” Alysha Goheen Jannotta asks. “At some point you need to commit to getting the numbers.”

Jannotta, a **Montana Women Vote** (MWV) practicum student in 2005 and now Executive Director, says that their founding coalition of non-profits serving low-income women and families, “weren’t seen as voters so they didn’t get the time of day.”

Today MWV has a database of 10,000 identified voters and over 200 active volunteers. In 2008, members gathered 13,000 signatures for a successful children’s health insurance measure – more

than half the total submitted – creating an engaged base that is continuing to defend the program against cutbacks. In 2010, members gathered one-third of the signatures needed for a successful statewide measure to cap predatory lending rates.

MWV has systematically built its base through an annual Women’s Policy Leadership Institute, which has more than doubled in size since 2005. The event helps emerging leaders build their skills, confidence, and networks by connecting them to experienced leaders. A survey of participants (39% with household incomes under \$30,000) found 74% agreeing “I can have an impact on policy.”

The Governor spoke at MWV’s most recent Leadership Institute and hosted a reception for its 130 participants. “Once you can deliver the numbers,” Jannotta says, “legislators and other organizations pay attention.”



“The VOTE Project helps us make the best use of our resources by learning from each other: How can we get the best bang for our buck? How do we make this work? What’s most effective?”

— Alysha Goheen Jannotta, Executive Director, Montana Women Vote



ENGAGING UNLIKELY VOTERS



“Financial support from the VOTE Project is really helpful, but the assistance in making sure our goals are bold but reasonable and our tactics are strategic is even more valuable.”

— Marcy Bowers, Executive Director, Statewide Poverty Action Network

Most “Get Out The Vote” efforts focus on likely voters. For **Statewide Poverty Action Network** “It’s about remembering that elections are only partly about the issues on the ballot,” says Executive Director Marcy Bowers. “Our philosophy starts with the idea that democracy can only be successful when all people, regardless of income or race, can participate. If you treat an infrequent voter like a frequent voter, they’ll become one. We want people with low incomes and people of color to be frequent voters.”

Poverty Action works to knock down barriers to the participation of low-income voters. Legislation passed in 2009 to restore voting rights to felons who were still working to pay off their fines yielded an estimated universe of 400,000 potential new voters. Using the Voter Activation Network, they targeted precincts where at least 850 people out of several thousand residents had lost their right to vote because of a felony.

Door-to-door and phone outreach engaged prospective voters on two issues: a statewide budget measure and domestic partnership. “Not many people were talking about the issues, and certainly not about them together,” says Bowers. “We talked about basic freedoms, basic rights, basic needs.” Washington voters defeated the regressive budget measure and were the first in the nation to affirm same-sex relationship protections at the ballot.

“Engaging new and infrequent voters, registering voters whose right to vote was recently restored, and talking to people about why their vote matters and how issues on the ballot will impact their communities – it’s about building trust and community,” says Bowers.

“Western States Center builds capacity among historically underrepresented communities to participate in the democratic process and to advocate for much-needed policy improvements. Carnegie Corporation is proud to have supported their work for almost two decades.” — Geri Mannion, Carnegie Corporation of New York



WESTERN STATES CENTER THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS FOR THEIR CRITICAL INVESTMENT IN OUR WORK:

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Ms. Foundation for Women

Northwest Area Foundation
Northwest Health Foundation

Open Society Foundations

Oregon Progressive Alliance

Overbrook Foundation

Penney Family Fund

Pride Foundation

Proteus Fund

Ralph Smith Foundation

Rockefeller Family Fund

Social Justice Fund Northwest

Threshold Foundation

Tides Foundation – Voter Action

Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock

Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics at University of Oregon

Building Political Power Program and VOTE Project donors appear in bold.

ABOUT WESTERN STATES CENTER

Our mission is to build a progressive movement for social, economic, racial, and environmental justice in eight western states: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Through our core programs we:

- ▶ Train people to be community organizers and leaders
- ▶ Strengthen community-based organizations
- ▶ Provide analysis and develop tools to advance progressive issues
- ▶ Bring together people, organizations, and communities to build the progressive movement

Our core programs are: RACE, Gender Justice, Building Political Power and Leadership Development.

